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LPC awaits on-campus housing funds

By Asia Alpher

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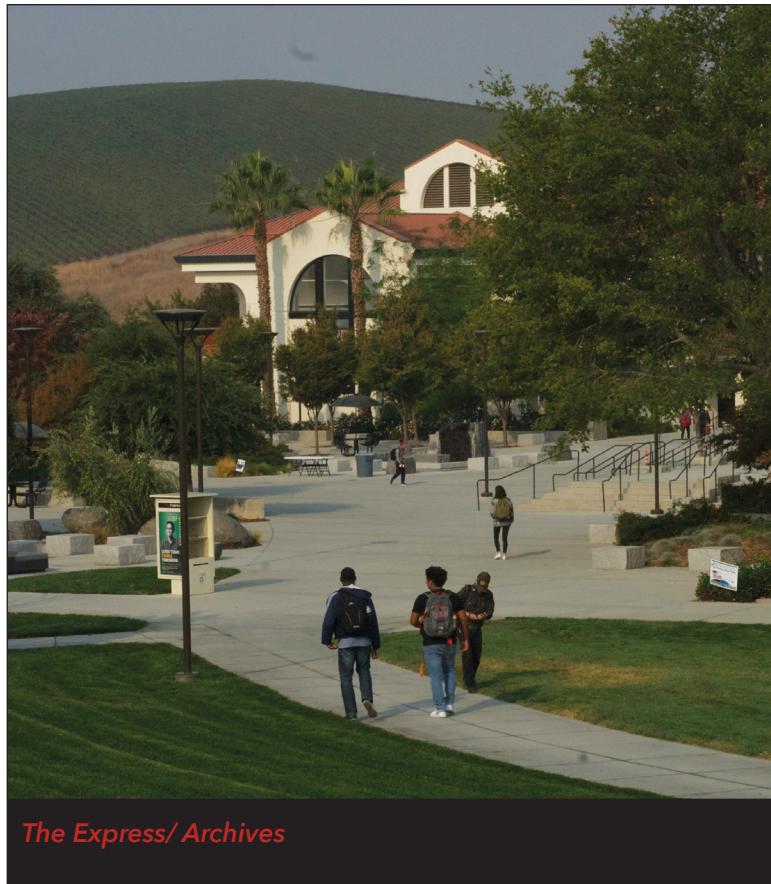
Having a place to work off the months of constant cramming sessions and the alarming amounts of ingested caffeine is essential. As students, we're constantly told to rest up and be ready for what comes next, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Not every student has the luxury of living close to Las Positas, and according to the Las Positas College Student Characteristics Final Census of Fall 2021, only 25% of students live in Livermore, while 75% commute from other cities. For some, living far from campus and traveling daily to class has proved to be inconvenient and stressful, impacting the quality of their lives.

In an article published by The Independent, a weekly Livermore newspaper, Chabot-Las Positas Community College District officials stated that they're preparing to institute on-campus student housing for LPC within the next couple of years.

On-campus housing would cut down time spent on the road and allow further focus on studies. To be eligible, prospective resident students must be taking a minimum of 12 units per semester.

These one-bedroom or two-bedroom units would be affordable, costing students \$1,249 a month in rent. Compared to rental websites in Livermore,



The Express/ Archives

apartments range in price from \$2,445 to \$3,160, nearly double the price of LPC's charge.

The funding will be derived from Senate Bill 169, the Higher Education Student Housing Grant Program. The bill is a three-year \$2 billion plan passed by the California state legislature and signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom in 2021.

The grant program appropriated \$500 million for student

housing in 2021-22, and another \$750 million each in 2022-23 and 2023-24. Half of the money was made available for community colleges — just 12 of 116 in the state have on-campus housing — along with grants to conduct studies and create plans for what they would need. According to The Independent, CLPCCD received \$510,000 to conduct a study on the needs of students who would need on-campus

housing.

According to the article, the president of LPC, Dr. Dyrell Foster stated "This has been a conversation that has occurred across the state within the California Community College system," Foster said.

He continued, "Based on the data and feedback and input that we've received from community college students about their needs, affordable housing is one of the most critical factors that keeps rising to the top." On behalf of college administrators, Foster said that they want students' efforts to focus on their studies, not on finances to survive.

Although the college is exploring this option, not all students are in favor of the idea of on-campus housing. According to LPC student Camelia Allen, she thinks that the on-campus housing would not in particular benefit her.

Allen states, "As someone who only travels 18 miles to and from school every day I don't particularly see it as a commute." It wouldn't be worth it for me." Another student, Juan Patino says he would not be in favor of it as well. Patino states, "It's not that bad of a drive and personally if I were to commute the 20 miles I would choose to go to a college that was closer to or in my own city."

If all goes as planned, the grants for Chabot and Las Positas will arrive in 2024-25.

The face of Las Positas is changing

By Sophia Sipe

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Las Positas is smaller, browner, younger and less affluent than it's been in a generation.

Data unveiled at a faculty meeting on Wednesday, Dec. 8, put the student headcount at 6,826 for the fall 2022 semester. A 24.7% decline in enrollment since the onset of the pandemic has the college below 7,000 students for the first time in 25 years.

A significant portion of the school's funding is directly tied to enrollment. So low enrollment means budget cuts.

LPC had 6,555 students for the fall semester of 1997. But it was the fourth year in a five-year stretch of steady growth. Enrollment climbed as high as 10,061, nearly double the student population from 15 years earlier.

Conversely, the numbers from this semester are part of a steady decline. This is the fifth consecutive year of lower enrollment, beginning with the 9,372 students in 2017.

The school has experienced a precipitous drop since the pandemic, losing more than 2,200 students since the pre-shutdown fall of 2019, when LPC had 9,061 students.

The decline at Las Positas is aligned with a statewide drop in enrollment. California community college enrollment is at its lowest in 30 years, according to data reported in the Los Angeles Times, after an 18% drop since the pandemic.

Lizette Navarette, Interim Deputy Chancellor of California Community Colleges, told the California State Assembly last month that the distance learning

COVID-19 forced on students forever disrupted higher education.

"We gave (students) a taste of what a flexible, adaptive education meant," Navarette said, contending that students "no longer want something that looks like the education they received before."

Another major change has been in the diversity of the campus. In 1997, 74% of the students enrolled were white. The largest minority group was the Latinx community, making up 10% of the population. But as of this fall, the largest population based on ethnicity is the Latin committee at 31%. Whites make up 30% of the student body.

The Asian population has grown from 5% to 11% in 25 years. Multiethnic students make up 8%. The Black population is

now the smallest identified ethnicity at 4%.

Additionally, Las Positas is now 40% 19 years old or younger. In 1997, the two largest age groups were 25% of 19-and-under students and 24% of 40-and-over students. But the presence of past-college-age students has declined significantly. The over-40 crowd is down to 11%

53% of LPC students 25 years ago were 25 and up. Now, 71% of students are under 25.

The fountain of youth for the college, at least in part, was a shift to an emphasis on transferring. The push to get students through Las Positas and on to four-year schools came at the price of life-long learning. Now, two-thirds of the students have the educational goal of transferring.

Trustee investigated for 'homophobic' social media



Image Courtesy of Shabnam Ghazi

The LPC Academic and Classified Senate makeup half of the board constituency. At the meeting, Hayward Trustee Luis Reynoso (second from right) was the subject of forming an investigative committee following complaints about his social media posts and activity.

By Lizzy Rager

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The room, a windowed office inside the school cafeteria—a space often filled with laughter and good eats—was stilted with unease. A line of lengthy tables formed a square in the center, woolly audience seats adjacent to them. At these tables sat the Chabot and Las Positas Board of Trustees, along with LPC President Dyrell Foster, LPC Chancellor Ronald Gerhard and LPC's Academic and Classified Senate. Murmurs resounded from tight groups outside the room, deadpanned security officers lined the exit and nervous smiles and laughter anticipated a vicious congregation.

Trustee Luis Reynoso, from the Hayward jurisdiction, came under scrutiny at the October Chabot Las Positas College Community College District, or CLPCDD, meeting for his online social media activity on LinkedIn, a professional networking website. Students and faculty criticized his posts and interactions with students on the platform for not supporting diversity and fostering a safe and welcoming environment for all community members. The posts were called homophobic, transphobic, bigoted and insensitive.

The LPC Academic Senate, LPC Classified Senate, Chabot Classified Senate, Chabot Faculty

Senate and Chabot Student Senate all declared a vote of no confidence for Trustee Reynoso.

The main subject of the November CLPCCD meeting was action to appoint an AdHoc Committee to investigate complaints about Reynoso's social media. According to the code and ethics and standards of practice board policy 2715, when complaints are received, two non-subject board members shall be appointed to determine the validity of the complaint and report its findings.

Reynoso called the action a mob movement.

He called out for reports that connected him to this agreement, to which Academic Senate President Sarah Thompson answered and read out the social media posts that caused concern and explained Reynoso's inappropriate conduct with students.

"CLPCCD represents and serves one of the most diverse populations in the world. Our district values diversity, equity and inclusion and proudly stands against all forms of racism, marginalization, differentiation, oppression, violence, bigotry and hate," she said.

She continued, "Students have choices as to where to attend college. Trustee Reynoso knows those comments and actions are a detriment to our institutions, values, commitments, and our sense of well-being and safety.

And as important, his comments and actions are a detriment to the business of our district, which is to recruit and retain students."

Complaints about Reynoso and other board members came to light during public comment.

Gregory Rees, a regular attendee of the meetings, called out Vice Chancellor Wyman's absence. According to sources, Wyman is typically late to meetings to miss Reese's public comment.

Reese cited corruption among the board: poisoning doubt of the appointed trustees and calling trustee Luis Reynoso homophobic.

"Hayward unified will be spared Reynoso's puppet. Reynoso, I am on my way to remove you from that seat," he said.

After Reese's comment, Gregory Correa, Reese's companion, also called out Wyman's absence, criticized the lack of TV broadcast at the meeting and called Reynoso's actions a disgrace.

"This is sad. You know how corrupt you are. It smells like s—," Correa said.

Tom Wong, running for the Hayward Unified School District board, or HUSD, and endorsed by Luis Reynoso, defended Reynoso during public comment. Wong cited a lack of due process, saying Reynoso should've been afforded an attorney

and had a proper investigation and that there was no formal complaint against him.

"It's unbelievable what people do, throwing words out there and seeing if it sticks...We're burning Mr. Reynoso alive because someone claims he's a witch," Wong said.

Kyle Johnson, the former LPC student president who initially questioned the nature of Reynoso's posts, called Reynoso and Wong's relationship quid-pro-quo. Since Wong is running for the HUSD board, he gains support from Reynoso's endorsement. Reynoso can also have an advocate and voice through Wong in HUSD, which he was kicked off of for trying to serve HUSD and CLPCCD simultaneously.

In October, Wong and Reynoso were featured on Newsmax, a far-right-wing cable news channel. The segment was headlined, "School trustee must publicly apologize for meme." Reynoso said his post was based on common sense and he thought only his followers could see it.

"Right now we have a society that's gone upside down, and this is a statement to that," he said.

Wong accused Hayden Sidun, a student who complained about Reynoso's posts, of having engaged with it for political gain as he was running for Livermore school board. Sidun also gave an interview to NBC about the post

along with Johnson in October.

"It's just so unbelievable how the LGBTQ is supposed to be for all this diversity and inclusion, but they're not. It was really ugly at the (October) meeting," Wong said.

Wong, on his campaign website, called for support of Reynoso "against the alphabet MOB." He refused to give an interview at the meeting, citing that he had his own reporter.

The discussion to form the AdHoc committee endured for almost an hour. Reynoso repeatedly asked for the board to hire him an independent attorney and argued that he was given unfair attention compared to other trustees who have complaints against them. He also said Trustee Mojadeti Harris could not vote on the matter to appoint a committee. Harris refused to be interviewed at the meeting.

"He must not be part of voting for the future. He's already biased. The last meeting he stepped away crying, so put that on the record," Reynoso said.

Trustees Linda Granger and Hal Gin were appointed to the committee and will report their findings in the meeting on Dec. 20.

Wong and Reynoso both left after the committee was approved.



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New coach and teammates revive a star's passion



Farai Mutiro/The Express

Monique Cavness, a freshman forward, at practice ahead of the team's road game at College of Marin. Since their opening game in November, at San Jose City, Cavness has consistently put up double-digit numbers in rebounds. On Dec. 3 at Cuesta College, Cavness scored 20 points, 20 rebounds, two blocks and an assist.

By Gibran Beydoun

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Caleb Theodore, head coach of LPC's women's basketball team, spoke with freshman star forward Monique Cavness prior to the 2022-23 season. Asking what Cavness loved and missed about the team sport she couldn't play the same way since 2020. Eventually, Theodore and Cavness's teammates found that passion for basketball Cavness had and helped reignite that spark for her.

As the saying goes, if you love something, set it free. If it comes back, then you know that love is real. Cavness let basketball go. The pandemic came between her and her beloved game. It became too hard to hold on. In her heart, she let it go. She was done with basketball, resigned to the everlasting memories of a great high school and AAU career. She pacified her loss with the school work, prepared to shift her focus to a career.

But the love was real. She knows because basketball came rolling back to her. They were meant to be. The game drew the Richmond native to Livermore, where she could rekindle her affection for the sport while helping Theodore revive the Las Positas College's fledgling program. Thanks to her coach, her teammates, and the thrill of competition, it didn't take Cavness

long to find her groove.

The Hawks got a star forward on the 2022-23 roster. Cavness's experience and level of rebounding and blocking shots convinced Theodore to have her on the team.

"It was great that someone saw the potential and growth in me," Cavness said of her new coach. "It feels amazing knowing I still have potential and a drive to continue."

Cavness's early roots in basketball began at the Richmond Parkway YMCA at 10 years old as she watched the sport as a kid. Cavness also joined two youth programs called Trust the Process and Eastbay Soldiers.

Trust the Process is a young basketball program that develops players from childhood to early high school to become the best. Eastbay Soldiers is a grassroots youth program that's federally recognized, formed to bring the community's youth a positive athletic and academic experience.

There was a particular moment during Cavness's time with Eastbay Soldiers where she realized this is genuinely something she wanted to continue doing in her future.

"When I played for East Bay Soldiers, there was one game where I felt like a forever member. I was the only girl on the team and there were players my age or older than me. I was being aggressive and blocking shots on

these boys who were taller than me. At that point, I was able to prove a lot of people wrong and this was something I could channel my energy to.

I was able to see a better side of me," Cavness said.

Cavness got more serious with the sport and played for El Cerrito High in El Cerrito, California. She won Player of the Year during her sophomore year with the El Cerrito Gauchos,—Spanish for cowboys—with averages of 18 points, 11 rebounds and 7 blocks per game.

The cheering and playing under the gym lights wouldn't last long for Cavness, as COVID-19 began spreading in early 2020, and lockdown forced everyone to avoid close contact. Meaning athletes like Cavness couldn't play team sports until restrictions were lifted. It wasn't easy on the dominant player whose heart is on the court.

"It was hard not being able to play basketball on the court, trying to find outdoor courts but they were taken out. I've been trying to stay fit and do some at-home workouts. Finding a routine helped me push through," Cavness said.

Those rough moments while social distancing was in place would soon come to an end for Cavness. When California State University basketball was ongoing in the 2021-22 season, Cavness would meet her future head

coach and mentor to encourage her to pick the ball up again.

Theodore was an assistant coach at California State University, East Bay and Cavness was the student manager at California State University, San Marcos last year. When Cavness came by to visit, the two remembered each other from their previous encounters and the ball started rolling.

Theodore said, "(Monique) Cavness is an outstanding athlete and an even more incredible woman. We relate on a lot of things, and we've had a lot of conversations on how her impact will help elevate this program. We've been able to come to terms and agreements on the same things and how she can help elevate the program as a team because at the end of the day, it's a team sport. Monique's been on the same page with us, she's locked in, and we couldn't be more happy to have her."

It took time for Cavness to get back into it, but the passionate spark had come back to life and she got comfortable on the court. When the team started building chemistry and connection, they felt the comfort and passion amongst themselves and within each other. When everybody started learning each other's strengths and weaknesses, that's when Cavness started finding that love that she missed for so long.

HAWK SQUAWK

Basketball

WOMEN'S TEAM

Currently, their record is 0-8. So far, the team has lost two games in December.

Top scorers:

Ranaye Manu: 23 ppg
Monique Cavness: 20 ppg
Mi'Ari Garnett: 18 ppg

MEN'S TEAM

Currently, their record is 8-2. So far, the team has won three games in December.

Top scorers (points per game):

Jalen Patterson: 18 ppg
Jordahn Johnson: 17.9 ppg
Isaiah Victor: 14.9 ppg

Soccer

WOMEN'S TEAM

The team finished with a record of 9-7-5. They went on to the Northern California playoffs, where they won their first-round matchup against Santa Rosa. They lost to Sierra in the second round.

Top Scorers:

Alyssa Fitting: 7 goals
Cebrina Chagoya: 6 goals

MEN'S TEAM

The team finished with a record of 7-10-4.

The team made it to the Northern California playoffs, where they won their first match on penalty kicks against Santa Rosa. They fell to Cosumnes River in the second round by a score of 6-1.

Top scorers:

Colin Miller: 6 goals
Griffin LaFleur and Edwin Zabala: 5 goals

Returning athletes step into leadership roles



Sophia Sipe/The Express

(Left) Hawks talk strategy prior to heading into overtime during their Dec. 8 game versus West Valley College. (Right) Sophomore Jaden Phillips plays (No. 22) prior to receiving a technical and succumbing to a loss of 94-89.

By Jacob Fogelstrom

@JACOBFOGIE

The eyes of the campus are all over the Las Positas men's basketball team this season, after having a historic run to the Elite 8 of the state tournament just last season. Garnering more and more attention calls the big question: Will the Hawks be able to repeat the magic of last year and punch themselves a ticket to the state tournament?

This program has a name to uphold, when one thinks of Las Positas sports, basketball is at the top of the discussion. The basketball program has been the premiere, most accomplished program in the last seven years behind the mind of head coach James Giacomozzi. The Hawks have shown year after year why they are a team that deserves to have their names up there with the best in the state, and that this year will be no different.

At a glance, the team's roster is promising. A group of guards and players who take consistent shots is more than appealing, but is it enough?



Sophia Sipe/The Express

Freshmen Henry Palmr after losing to West Valley within the last two minutes of overtime.

Though last year was an irreplicable season, the only way is up. They hope to continue to build on the formula to winning they achieved just last year.

The team started off hot last season, boasting a 16-1 record through 17 games and a 27-4 record overall while losing just three games going into the regional tournament. This year's team has already lost two contests to San Jose and Modesto in their first seven games, indicative of the improvements still needing to be made.

"Your number one recruit should be your returning athletes"

-James Giacomozzi

"We definitely learned two very different lessons with each loss," Head Coach James Giacomozzi said.

He continued, "In the first game we lost a 24 point lead. We have to learn to value each possession the same no matter the score, while in the second game we learned we control the controllables, we didn't make enough plays to put ourselves in a position to run away with the game from shooting to rebounding."

Considering only Brandon Fisher, Isiah Victor, Jordan Johnson and Evan Johnson are returning players who got minutes in last season's run, it's vital the rest of the team steps up by bridging lost time and practice. The quad and their leadership, however, will likely be a deciding factor for their success.



Every successful team has to have players with a strong voice that the team can respect and follow, no voice in the Hawks locker room will be stronger than the ones that have already been around the program in previous years. This trio is coming off of a historic season that they all had their hands in, they know what needs to be done to repeat that, and the locker room will follow their lead with that component in mind. "Your number one recruit should be your returning athletes, there's a level of trust and familiarity within the returning athletes to the point where having those three guys now take on larger roles. This has been huge for us," Giacomozzi said.

Though new to the starting five, the returning sophomores are no strangers to competition. The three know what to expect. They've already lived it. Met by high standards in their first season, Fisher, Victor and Johnson carry the responsibility of leading by example and raising the bar higher.

"Being in a successful program requires you to be very consistent," Fisher said. He continued, "Going to practice and competing against tough players everyday, making sure we're going all out every rep no matter if it's a practice or a game."

Going all out and staying consistent is certainly one of the program's highest points of emphasis and has been a pillar in the practices day in and day out.

The standards are no different for the new players. The team's premiere transfer has proved to be Jalen Patterson, a sophomore from Arizona Western College. Patterson's early season statistics are phenomenal, boasting a 18 points per game average shooting over 40% from behind the three point line, while dishing out over 6 assists a game.

Patterson is well aware of the precedent set at Las Positas by previous teams, and credits his decision to transfer to the school to coach Giacomozzi's gradual formation of unified teams.

"My goals for the team this year are the same as what was achieved last year, I'm just coming to join and pick up where it was left off," Patterson said. He continued, "We want to finish the job this year and hopefully put a ring on all our fingers."

While having a team composed of well-versed athletes and knowledgeable coaches never hurt anyone, the team fully represents the notion that hard work you put in will show when the lights are the brightest.

LPC students see themselves in 'Black Panther: Wakanda Forever'



Image Courtesy of Marvel Press Media Kit

By Sagurika Uujal

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Rising from the ashes. Building something new.

Four years after the release of the original Black Panther film, the Marvel Cinematic Universe has returned for its sequel, Black Panther: Wakanda Forever.

Commended for its progressive casting and diverse racial representation, the film's telling of minority stories in a new heroic light isn't typically seen in the mainstream American film industry.

With a predominantly Black and Latinx cast and Black directorship, the film stays true to its intent and maintains authenticity during the creative process.

"I was worried before seeing the film about the portrayal of a Latinx based culture versus a portrayal of an African culture being a minority v. minority movie despite the fact they are both powerful and proud cultures. I was relieved by the uniting of the people in the end and how that's a great message!" LPC student, Eric Albarico Jr said.

Directed by Ryan Coogler and produced by Kevin Feige and Nate Moore, "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" tells a tale of grief, loss, heartbreak and healing. It weaves together a story of destruction

and creation, oppression and rebellion and cultural pride and power.

Since the first film, "Black Panther" has been intrinsically connected to race and culture.

The roots of race and identity grow deep in the fictional nation of Wakanda and travel back in time, touching on pivotal historical moments and eras, such as Western colonialism, the Haitian Revolution and the Civil Rights Movement.

While the original "Black Panther" comics are believed to have little connection to the Black Panther Party, the film draws parallels between their shared intentions.

Established in 1966 in Oakland, California, by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, the Black Panther Party promoted self-defense from police brutality, the Black power movement, community aid programs and socialist ideals.

Similar principles of armed self-defense are adopted by Wakandans throughout the movies, evident in the existence of the Dora Milaje, Wakanda's powerful women warriors. Black power and pride also stand strong throughout the film, vocalized through the "Wakanda Forever" salute.

The film also pays tribute to the Haitian Revolution through the discovery of the late King T'Challa's son, Toussaint, on the shores of Haiti.



Image Courtesy of Marvel Press Media Kit

Tlalocán.

A large focus of the film lies in the conflict between the two minorities, the Talokanil and the Wakandans, ironic in the face of other threats Wakanda encounters in the shape of primarily white world superpowers.

"I loved the way the film continued to showcase African culture, and Ryan Coogler went a step further and introduced a version of Namor that was heavily inspired by central and southern American culture. The little boy in me was completely elated to finally see a superhero that looked like me," student Jose Luis Peralta said.

With the unfortunate 2020 death of actor and "Black Panther" hero, Chadwick Boseman, many LPC students felt that the film did a notable job of honoring Boseman's memory and the work he did as the inspirational character of King T'Challa, the Black Panther, on the screen.

While T'Challa paved the way for the future of Wakanda, his sister Shuri, the new Black Panther played by actor Letitia Wright, offers something different through her intelligence and resourcefulness.

"I enjoyed the new villains and thought their storyline was really interesting. I still think Black Panther: Wakanda Forever

The 1791-1804 Haitian Revolution, led by Black general Toussaint L'Ouverture, was a successful slave-led rebellion that toppled the French regime in Saint



Image Courtesy of Marvel Press Media Kit

Domingue, today known as Haiti.

The naming of T'Challa's son after this revolutionary leader honors Haiti's legacy and reflects the similar values that Wakanda also fights for: autonomy, freedom and Black power.

A new revelation to Wakandans and fans alike comes in the form of Namor, the anti-hero god-like leader of the hidden underwater kingdom of Talokan, played by Latinx actor Tenoch Huerta.

The introduction of the Indigenous Mayan leader Namor, the Mesoamerican-inspired nation of Talokan and the people of the nation, the Talokanil, presents a secondary angle to the discussion of culture and race in the film and provides a wider field of representation.

This civilization is said to closely reflect the underwater city of Atlantis, but is also based on the mythological Aztec city of

lacked a lot compared to the first one, but it was still a decent sequel and I loved that a big portion of the film was to pay tribute to Chadwick Boseman," student Ariana Finley said.

After the loss and hardships Wakanda has faced through the death of their protector and the loss of their source of vibranium, an overhanging sense of unease lingers as Wakanda sits on the brink of war with the world.

However, the ending gives way to a sense of hope after the successful lab recreation of the vibranium-filled Heart-Shaped Herb.

While the future of the "Black Panther" films appears open-ended, one thing that can be expected is the continued discussion of race, culture and representation in the world of Wakanda.

Is it time for 'Merry Christmas' to go go go?

By Mason Newbould

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We have officially entered the holiday season. Colorful light bulbs pollute neighborhoods alongside Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is You." Kids drool in desire for new toys in shopping mall windows, while their parents work overtime.

At its heart, the holiday represents family and faith. After Christianity became the Roman Empire's main religion, its civilians held the first Christmas feast on Dec. 25 in 336 A.D. Eventually, the holiday and Christianity saw overlap in religious festivals. That said, America doesn't have one sole religion, and its citizens are free to choose their own per the Constitution's first amendment.

The greatest aspect of our country is its melting pot mentality—a conglomerate of identities, cultures and faiths. According to a 2019 Gallup poll, approximately 71% of Americans celebrate Christmas, leaving 29% of Americans who celebrate other holidays or prefer to not participate. Over time, the number of those celebrating the holiday has declined. More than a decade ago, 85% celebrated Christmas regularly. In order to reflect this decline, America should become more inclusive by swapping their "Merry Christmas" greetings for "Happy holidays."

Around friends, family and people who

observe the Christian holiday, it's expected to use "Merry Christmas" often. However, using a more inclusive greeting or farewell when around strangers seems more appropriate as to not assume their religious beliefs.

Retailers and other stores should also use inclusive greetings, whether on decorative banners or using greeters at the front door. Dominic Belluomini, a second-year student at Las Positas, shared the same sentiment. "Stores should definitely use happy holidays when greeting their customers. It's more inclusive to all groups, and it should be normal to respect different cultures," he said.

While urging people to change their habits may produce a unified environment, it needs to be approached gently. Nothing good comes from blunt force. Using "Happy holidays" should become a new norm, but the change should be encouraged gently. Screaming at people to change their opinions without sufficient reasoning can lead to anger and resentment, and nobody needs more of this, especially at a time as stressful as the holidays.

Tyler Martin, another second-year student at Las Positas, opposes this ideology. "It's the holiday I celebrate, and the holiday the majority of Americans celebrate. People who don't celebrate Christmas probably wouldn't get offended by that," Martin said.



Sophia Sipe/The Express

Family presents stack beneath the Christmas tree addressed to the editor's nickname "Pia."

In the case Martin offended someone, he said, "I would apologize. It's a traditional saying, and I mean no harm by it. I wouldn't change how I interact with people around the holidays because one person got offended."

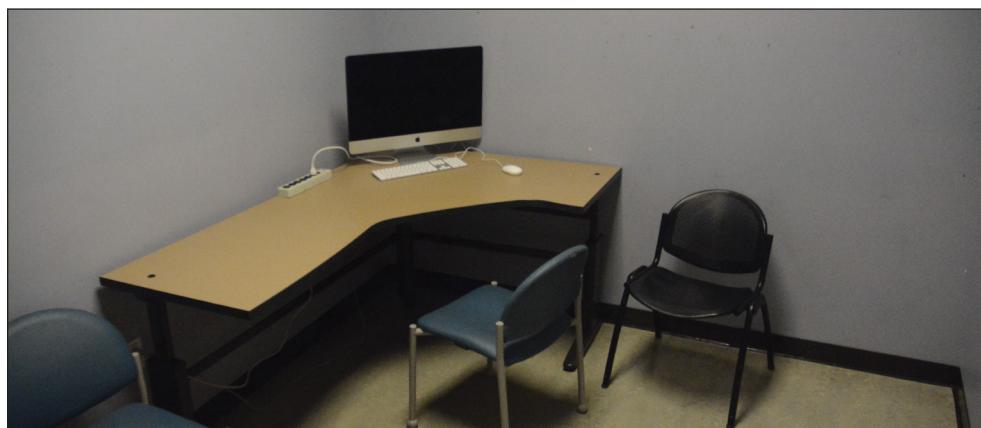
It's difficult to see why someone would take offense to a simple holiday tradition. However, it's not my place to say

what other people should or shouldn't be offended by. The best way to display that to people is by exposing them to people of different cultures and religions.

This season is hectic, and it's easy to use "Merry Christmas" as a default holiday greeting. But let's respect our American brothers and sisters who don't celebrate Christmas and prioritize inclusivity.

EDITORIAL

We need better program funding, not on-campus housing



Lizzy Rager/The Express

The Journalism and Media Studies podcast room in the 4000 building occupies a small desk and a few chairs delivered by Journalism students. Back when LPC had a radio program, it was packed with microphones and audio recording technology.

Las Positas does not need on-campus housing. It needs funding to keep its programs alive.

Senate Bill 169, part of the Higher Education Student Housing Grant Program passed by state legislature, designated \$500 million for student housing, half of which goes to community colleges.

While LPC might not need to pay students to attend its school like the College of Alameda, it was hurt tremendously by the pandemic. Enrollment rates are down per a report presented by Rajinder Samra, LPC's Director of Research. Prior to COVID-19, the school was seeing figures upwards to 10,000 students. On-campus housing

would've likely been more necessary then. Now, however, the school's current number of 6,826 students is significantly lower. Declining along with that figure should be the prioritization of on-campus housing. Other aspects of the school should take its place.

If you don't exactly know where we're going with this sentiment, let us bring you up to speed. Around late October, during which a voting member of Chabot and Las Positas Community College District attracted attention for anti-trans social media posts, Chancellor Ron Gerhard sent out a statement on diversity and inclusion that reads: "As an inclusive college

environment, we welcome and support the diversity that is represented within our student body and within our broader community."

While Las Positas can try to promote inclusivity through words via an email or raising a flag on campus, to help LGBTQ+ students, LPC needs to offer resources. Allocating funds to prove their commitment would speak volumes. There is always room for improvement, and it's our belief that there are bigger issues than housing that demand such, beginning with LGBTQ+ students.

LPC's LGBTQ+ Resources page lists a plethora of external resources for queer students, ranging from information centers to scholarship foundations. The problem, though, is that there isn't one on-campus resource included. Here are some ideas: create an LGBTQ+ student support program or build a physical space for LGBTQ+ students to feel safe in. And no, the Queer-Straight Alliance club doesn't count as it's led primarily by students. Where is the administrative involvement?

In addition to helping marginalized students, the school could simply fund their programs better. Take the journalism program, for example.

The Express and Naked magazine staff largely contribute to the journalism and media studies program at LPC, furthering journalism on this campus. We receive funds from the bookstore through a co-curricular account to keep printing news-

papers and magazines, and to maintain our websites. But year after year, our budget is cut down again and again.

We went from a weekly, to a biweekly to a monthly newspaper. Our team struggles to continue printing as inflation increases. Given the decline in newspaper readership, the price of printing newspapers isn't what it used to be. Not many places provide printing services. The need is scarce. This leaves us lodged between a rock and a hard place.

We also struggle to see how a full-time student, living alone, could afford to pay tuition and rent working minimum wage. According to the Independent, this bill would make the maximum cost of rent around \$1,249. If a student makes \$15 an hour, works 20 hours a week as recommended for full-time students, they would make \$900 a month before taxes.

They'd be unable to pay rent, much less other costs of living like utilities or food. As community college is the local option for students who can't afford a four-year or to live on their own, it doesn't make sense to implement on-campus housing. The small number of students who this would help cannot be promised the same cost of rent in five or six years when the buildings would go on the market, either.

This bill misunderstands the needs of community college students. It is a leap when we should be taking small steps. Foster the present, not the future.

Navigating life as a hyper independent woman



By Sophia Sipe

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Nestled between a Subway and a beat-up video store in Waterford is the Pioneer Market. Inside this local grocer was my sweet paradise, also known as the candy aisle. Treats hanging from shelves. Posters of chocolate and oatmeal cookies plastered on the walls. So much color. Reds and pinks and yellows and greens. The store was a temptress. Pioneer Market was a quiet store, yet I was entranced by the sounds of extreme sour candies begging for me to give them a taste. I stumbled upon the wonderland after wandering off during one of my family's weekly grocery hauls. While my mother called for me in despair from a couple aisles over, I was entranced by cotton candy bubblegum and fruit-flavored Tootsie Rolls. When she finally found me, as I was reaching my short, stubby arms out and up towards the hanging treats, my mother grabbed my grubby hand and spun me so I could look her in the eyes. Worry scrunched her eyebrows and deepened her tone.

"What if something happens to you?" she yelled, her eyes widened and lips trembling with motherly trepidation. "You can't trust anyone, and you can never be too careful."

That was the first time I heard those words, in the aisle of sugar and dreams. But they would be on repeat in my life, frequently recited to me with varying degrees of emphasis. I would come to learn the world was a scary place, and I was no match for it. So much so, I clung to my mother when crossing the street at 6. By age 7, I hid behind her body when any gentleman came near. By age 8, I feared hugs from my uncles.

Her coined mantra burned a brand on my mind, shaped like a warning sign and

beaming nervous red. Soon, it replaced my own voice.

Being conditioned to see the world as an ever-present danger, a playground for evils to harvest out of nowhere, made for a rough upbringing. What began as mistrust blossomed into full-blown paranoia. Safety didn't exist outside the presence of my mother. She had a keen sense for potential harm. Her skepticism and worries were always at the highest levels. It was like a superpower, how she could spot the danger lurking in every instance. And without a superpower of my own, I was but helpless bait in the eyes of prey.

This idea that everyone exists solely to make my life a living hell is called paranoia. Often, it leads to paranoid personality disorder, or PPD. The Merck Manual states PPD is characterized by a pervasive pattern of unwarranted distrust and suspicion of others that involves interpreting their motives as malicious.

Eventually, paranoia would interfere with my ability to live. At 16, I realized how much of a hostage I'd become to my mom's fears. I was weighed down by years of psychological chains. The byproduct was a slew of mental disorders — PTSD, OCD and anxiety — all hiding under the umbrella of depression, the same way I once hid from shadows. Of course, the development of such conditions, especially PTSD, put me at higher risk for suicide, per a multitude of studies. My mother's efforts to protect me, ironically, pushed me closer to a kind of harm she never anticipated.

Gradually, methodically, the shackles of irrational worry interfered with my daily life.

"It's your third time here this week," the nurse at Richard M. Moon Primary school said as I dangled my feet from the firm, parchment-lined recovery couch. Even at age seven, I recognized her suspicion. She wasn't buying my favorite excuse: a tummy ache. "Does it last a long or short time?" the nurse would ask. "Does it hurt in one place or your whole tummy?"

I never knew what to say. "It doesn't stop," was all I could manage.

No lies were told, technically. Whatever was seizing my psyche seemed everlasting. It manifested physically, the best way for my body to alert my underdeveloped brain something was awry. It would be years

later I'd come to learn physical pain and anxiety were actually separate ailments.

By 13, worst-case scenarios became my entire world. Other teenagers rode bikes and scurried to the park to play for hours. Me? I visualized being kidnapped on innocent bike rides or abducted on a walk to the park. My body became a prison, the shell where a once-lively child lived.

My brain would spiral into vivid daydreams of imaginative horrors. The off-white paint of the car stealing me away. The subtle crunch of the brown leaves beneath my terrified feet. The gripping terror of my stomach dropping as freedom fades away on the horizon. Every detail would play out in my mind.

Age made such hypothetical scenarios even more disturbing and debilitating — because I became increasingly able to protect myself from imagined horrors. I avoided barren public spaces. Wherever I was, staying required first planning an escape route. How to get away quickly became my superpower. I could spot exits like a spy in a movie.

Obviously, this wasn't conducive to forming relationships.

Much like the way fuel worsens a fire, my preconceived ideas of trust damaged every relationship I have been in. Guys often tell me I neglect to open up fully or that I have a bad habit of bottling my emotions. When the problem isn't one of the two, it's because I avoid going out.

Trust is nearly impossible when fearing the worst in others comes so easily, especially when I can vividly conceptualize how even my loved ones could hurt me. The result is always handling tasks alone and neglecting offers of assistance from others. And sometimes I really need help.

According to HealthMatch, the prolonged hyper independence stems from emotional damage usually caused by abandonment, broken trust or betrayal. It is the projection of fears to the highest degree. I'm talking Samsung Premier LSP9T 4K Smart Triple Laser level of projection.

The difficulty of this condition is that understanding it doesn't equal control. Adopting an avoidant personality challenges every connection, from familial to friendly, from platonic to romantic. This type of internal conflict provokes loneliness and alienation, perpetuating the notion that I don't work properly with oth-

ers.

Despite affecting 2.3% to 4.4% of the U.S. population, PPD isn't entirely curable. Most psychiatrists suggest cognitive-behavioral therapy, antipsychotic or anti-anxiety medication and repeated use of relaxation techniques like breathing exercises.

Cure or no cure, the easy solution—the most masterful exit route—is to be resigned to solitude. Acceptance won't disappoint like hope.

The best I can hope for is to find candy aisles where I can. Not the literal kind where wrappers shimmer with the promise of candied indulgence. But the young adult version: assurance, patience and rest.

These simple pleasures — valuable, albeit temporary—reprieve from my Defcon 1 mentality. I've come to appreciate the present moment, whatever preciousness my thoughts can cling onto, knowing it's but a matter of time before worry and fear will return.

This life doesn't have romance. The happy chemicals can't release properly when fantasies can't fully form. The fluttering butterflies of attraction, the tingly giddiness of being adored, the longing that comes with new love, tends to dissipate when visualizing a love interest taking a kitchen knife to my insides.

This life makes friendships tough. My extensive periods of isolation make it hard for them to unconditionally support me.. It's hard to pour into a friend, provide the kind of reciprocity that makes friendships last, when I'm so consumed with the scary movie in my conscience, the pursuit of safety from the relentless villains I concoct.

I can only imagine how it will impact my career, or influence my choices for one. There will be no late night projects with cute co-workers trying to secure an account because he'll for sure push me out the high-rise window. No bonding trip to the woods with colleagues because I'd be certain at least one of them brought a chainsaw.

Even if I didn't hear the rumbling of a motorized blade, I'd surely spend the occasion hearing the petrified yell of my mother. "You can't trust anyone, and you can never be too careful." You know how scary movies go. However you try to leave the scary forest, you'll always be met with more danger.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR: FROM WRITING JOURNAL ENTRIES TO ARTICLES

To our readers,

At six years-old I started writing in my first journal. The baby pink book featured a cartoon monkey on the cover and a hundred colorful lined pages held together by a metal lock. During free time in my first grade class, the journal made frequent appearances alongside my purple sparkly gel pen. I wrote about everything and nothing simultaneously, detailing the drama in my friend circles, incidents on the playground and my budding crushes. As I got older and times got tougher, the content of my entries changed. My writing shifted from my favorite Disney Channel shows to the loneliness I experienced—capturing the effluvia of my growing pains. My journal was a place to be vulnerable

when spoken words failed to serve their purpose. And boy, did they fail me a lot. By 17, I was a serial writer. Though writing became a habit, it never dawned on me that it was anything more than that.

About a year and a half ago, I was completely lost academically and personally. I settled with working towards a teaching degree, as I've always loved to read and write. It was something to do, but I wasn't satisfied. I didn't think I ever could be.

Enrolling in my first mass communications class was the start of a growing fire beneath me. From there, one of the Express' mentors and professors, Marcus Thompson, guided me towards joining the paper. I had no experience writing in an

article format, didn't know AP style and had touched a camera once. I joined the paper anyway.

After learning the basics while in my first semester on the Express, I became the editor-in-chief under the guidance of another mentor and professor: Melissa Korber. Now as I sadly abandon my position to complete my journalism degree at California State Long Beach, I reflect on my times at LPC. The past three semesters spent pushing deadlines in the newsroom and cramming words to fill blank pages have been the highlight of my young life. It has brought hope back to a formerly bleak world and such intense passion that I only ever dreamed of feeling. Now that I'm in this field, I couldn't see myself doing

anything else.

I greatly cherish this small newspaper family formed through stress, hell sheets and carpal tunnel. The knowledge I've gained and the friendships I've formed will be taken with me wherever I go. While our readership isn't at all akin to The New York Times or the Chicago Tribune, I am so grateful. To those who open our paper, scroll through our website or peek at our social medias, thank you. Because of you I can unload my pent up trauma and still feel like it counts for something. Because of you, I can learn more and become more.

Thank you for completing me.

Signing off, Sophia Sipe.