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The Epitaph is a forum for student expression and not subject to prior review, in accordance to Education Code 48907. The staff is comprised of HHS Journalism students. Views expressed do not necessarily represent views of the school, its staff or the district. Editorials are opinions of the editorial board.

The Epitaph welcomes letters to the editor but reserves the right to edit submissions. Letters should be limited to 300 words. Include contact information. Unsigned letters cannot be published, but names will be withheld upon request. Send via homestead.epitaph@gmail.com, or drop letters in the newsroom or the office mailbox.

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Staff Editorial

Student safety requires better communication

Safety is a top priority for many schools across the United States, but with school violence on the rise, according to the K-12 School Shooting Database, practical systems to maintain safety are necessary. Last month, when HHS initiated shelter-in-place protocols, the notification system for such emergencies failed to warn students effectively.

On Feb. 3, HHS was placed in shelter-in-place just after 8 a.m. due to a report of potential gunfire. The order was lifted at around 8:30 a.m., when there was determined to be no threat to students.

However, the emergency system did not properly alert students, as it failed to send out warning emails in a timely manner.

Emergency email notifications regarding the shelter-in-place were sent out around 15 minutes later at 8:34 a.m., and the lift notification was not received by some students until 9 a.m.

With school starting at 8:30

a.m., many students arrived on campus unaware of the shelter-in-place. In a more dangerous situation with a real threat on campus, this delay could put students at even greater risk because many would be unknowingly walking into danger.

Currently, FUHSD policy requires information to be completely verified by law enforcement before any official messages are sent out to students, superintendent Graham Clark said. After verification, an email will be sent out, but this only occurs once more details, such as the cause and circumstances of the situation, are known, Clark said.

This system of checks is justified, as misinformation could cause unneeded panic among parents and students. However, HHS would benefit from a more immediate push to send out current information, even if doing so omits certain details.

FUHSD must take steps to push for more timely notifica-

tions to inform students of potential risks. Doing so will prevent any further harm during emergencies at school.

For shelter-in-place protocols, a notification stating the current situation without a specific cause would still ensure students do not enter campus when there is a threat. Later, when the cause of such an event is verified by the proper authorities, FUHSD could send out additional details in a follow-up email.

Additionally, alternative communication methods are needed to reach students more efficiently. FUHSD must implement quicker call and text notifications that would better inform students of emergencies in case they fail to check their emails.

Programs such as ReachMyTeach can be utilized as they can notify students and teachers through phone instead of email, providing a more accessible format for quick communication.

Furthermore, increased training and drills for both students and teachers are necessary to address scenarios where students are arriving at school during an emergency. These drills should be frequently spaced out across the school year and practiced during tutorials or before school. By doing this, students and teachers are prepared for any possible situation.

Whether HHS is in shelter-in-place or lockdown, more comprehensive and timely information is needed to prevent potential harm to students and teachers.

FUHSD must prioritize implementing better communication systems and more training in the case of emergencies. These new measures could mean the difference between keeping students safe or putting them in harm's way.



FUHSD must improve communication systems and training to effectively protect students during dangerous situations.

Politicians twist DEI to serve personal agendas

DEI blaming neglects victims, discredits experts

Sachin Chandran

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, also known as DEI, has been a highly debated topic through the recent election cycle and the months following. Unfortunately, this debate has lost its merit as political figures exploit tragic events to push their agenda against DEI policies.

DEI is a process that aids historically marginalized groups by providing them an advantage in areas like the job market or college admissions, according to CNN. However, DEI has been a point of contention, especially among conservatives, as they argue it prioritizes diversity over competence.

Regardless of one's stance on DEI, using tragedies to market political beliefs is not only ignorant to those affected, but also overlooks the ability of individuals who have rightfully earned their accomplishments.

A recent example of politicians manipulating DEI in the face of tragedy is president Donald Trump's response to the crash between a U.S. Army helicopter and an Amer-

ican Eagle passenger plane on Jan. 29, which claimed 67 victims. This crash was in part caused by a miscommunication by air traffic control, according to USA Today.

However, instead of comforting grieving families, Trump and his allies decided to use this incident as an opportunity to blame alleged DEI hires within air traffic control, according to NBC News.

A tragedy like this should warrant empathy from our politicians, yet Trump brushes off this painful event to further his agenda against DEI.

By choosing to blame the crash on completely unrelated issues like DEI, Trump's disturbing response completely neglects the grief of the families that have suffered losses. After devastating events like the crash, politicians must comfort and protect victims instead of trying to push their policies under painful circumstances.

Another example of harmful DEI accusations is the verbal and online attacks against LA fire chief Kristin Crowley after the widespread LA wildfires that began in January. Right-wing political figures like Elon Musk took the fires as an opportunity to label Crowley as incompetent and dismiss her as a DEI hire solely because she is a member of the LGBTQ+ community, according to the LA Times.

These attacks are incredibly mis-

guided because Crowley has served the Los Angeles Fire Department for 22 years, earning promotions based on her own merit, according to the Los Angeles Fire Department. These baseless claims discredit Crowley, who is clearly qualified for her position, solely because she is a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

The American people and media outlets must stand up against politicians who use tragedy to manip-

ulate people into supporting their policies. The responsibility lies on us to not be convinced by these destructive falsehoods, but to call out them out.

Additionally, we must protect those who are attacked by baseless DEI allegations as well as the victims who are being taken advantage of. If not, innocent people will continue to be hurt by completely unwarranted political attacks.



Illustration by Sachin Chandran

Tragedies should warrant empathy and support, not political attacks against DEI.