

Opinions in Letters to the Editor are the express views of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly. All published letters will include the writer's name and city/town of residence -- we will only accept letters from those who live in, or own a business in, the communities comprising Lamorinda (please give us your phone number for verification purposes only). Letters should be 350 words or less; letters of up to 500 words will be accepted on a space-available basis. Visit www.lamorindaweekly.com for submission guidelines.

email: letters@lamorindaweekly.com; Regular mail: Lamorinda Weekly, P.O.Box 6133, Moraga, CA 94570



Letters to the Editor



Editor:

Viva Moraga!

2015 was an Extraordinary Year in our little Town of Moraga! Most of the important good things continued as hoped; our schools maintained their excellence, street repairs continued, people were safe (though there was a small uptick in property crimes), and as always, a large number of people volunteered for the betterment of the Town, everything from school fundraising to pruning orchards to throwing fiestas and festivals, to youth sports...and, and, and! Let's just say, there are a lot of great things going on in Moraga. We are blessed with wonderful geography and a great climate, and most would agree; brown lawns beat humid summers and snowy winters! I think it is fair to say, we've got it pretty good here in Moraga! Other than the grace of climate and geography, this has not happened by accident! From even before the founding of our Town, residents have worked hard, "moving mountains" to maintain the quality of our community. Freeways have been quashed, hilltops and open space have been protected, and urban crowding and other problems have been avoided. Property values have benefited. And, as a result, we continue to enjoy a high quality of living. Beautiful views, no parking meters, not much congestion...

So it is not surprising that Moraga residents rallied this year against a proposal for high density, 3-story urbanizing housing development right next to the Moraga Country Club and the Sonsara neighborhood. Despite widespread opposition, Town Staff and the Town Council approved the development, spurring a referendum campaign, highlighted by a very successful signature gathering petition to put the issue to a vote. Though 1,003 signatures were needed to qualify the petition, over 1,500 voter signatures were gathered in just three weeks. A developer lawsuit was able to suppress the referendum on technical issues, despite review and certification by the Moraga Town Clerk and the Contra Costa County Elections department.

Unfortunately, the Town, as directed by the Town Council, sided with the developers to avoid the opportunity for residents to decide the issue at the ballot box. At the moment, that is how things stand on this development; a judge has put the referendum aside. Possible next steps are being considered to maintain the semi-rural atmosphere that adds so much to the quality of our lives here in Moraga. We would like to thank the hundreds who have pitched in to our effort, from those who signed our petition, to those who gathered signatures, provided moral support, and those that provided legal help, financial assistance, and the thumbs-uppers, horn honkers, smilers, noddors and wavers...Thanks! And hold on, we'll be back...2016 is going to be quite a "Doozy"!

The Committee to Stop Moraga Town Center Homes
Scott Bowhay, Janet Dobbs, Steve Huxley and more...

Editor's Note: Over the past several weeks, Lamorinda Weekly received the following Letters to the Editor from Miramonte High School seniors participating in a government class, with a focus on understanding the impact of world issues on government and lifestyle.

Editor:

I would like to raise awareness of the problem of police brutality. Here are some facts about police brutality: More than 900 people are killed every year by policemen, black Americans are more than twice as likely to be unarmed when killed during police encounters than whites, excessive force is the most common form of police misconduct.

Thank You,
Pat Hallahan
Miramonte High School senior

Editor:

We have been working on a large collaborative research project for our government class. We have been specifically focused on the history of the Drug War and its effects both inside and outside our borders. The biggest issue currently presented by the War on Drugs is money in two different ways. One way is the fact that Mexican cartels can generate \$35-45 billion on the black market due to the fact that most recreational drugs are illegal and that the majority of their markets are in the US. The second way is that the amount of non-violent drug offenders in prison cause the cost of enforcing the drug war to be about \$48.7 billion. The issue of money is closely followed by the issue of people in terms of relevancy. A third of the state prison population consists of non-violent drug offenders that only harm themselves. Additionally the countries sponsored by the U.S. to combat drugs in South America often infringe on the rights of their people. The fact that so many people are affected by drugs, either by using them or wasting tax dollars on them, should cause it to affect every single citizen.

Alex Smith, Julian Cremer and Angie Moretti
Miramonte High School seniors

Editor:

I am fighting to provide more federal funding to embryonic stem cell research. As technology rapidly advances and the potential for scientific discovery is unlike anything we've ever seen before, the possibility of monumen-

tal benefits within the field of stem cell research is quickly becoming a reality. Embryonic stem cell research has an incredible opportunity to further the overall well being of the human race by developing treatments for a breadth of critical diseases from Alzheimer's, to diabetes, to arthritis. However, the time and resources that this promising research demands requires the support of federal funding and that, in turn, requires the support of the public. Fundamentally, I believe this is an issue that affects us all and its potential to change the world and save millions of lives cannot be ignored nor hindered by a corrupt political system any longer.

Sincerely,
Carolyn Brager
Miramonte High School senior

Editor:

We are writing to you in order to address the issue of climate change. From the research that we have collected we have found that changes in our lifestyle is a must in order to limit the effects of climate change. We have learned that many politicians and organizations are working to help change the effects of climate change. If you could publish an article talking about the importance of climate change and how it affects society today as well as informing people that regulation of the environment is a very tough and worthwhile task nationwide it would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Alexander Kao, Caleb Chen, Daniel Davis
Miramonte High School seniors

Editor:

I've been doing some research about Climate Change and have been disgusted with what is going on around the world. Pollution is a serious issue that affects everyone. A main cause of the pollution is CO2 from cars. America needs a way to try to reduce the amounts of CO2, whether it be finding a new resource, or making a law to restrict driving. In Mexico City, they have already made a stance. They have something called the Hoy No Circula, which restricts driving from certain vehicles a certain day of every week from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. If we did this, the results would be astonishing. If we don't protect the world, who will?

Sincerely,
Eva Shaw
Miramonte High School senior

Editor: Over the past fifty years police brutality has been an atrocity that Americans seem to notice, but have failed to take action on. With cases involving Michael Brown and Eric Garner publicity has risen to an all time high. People all across America from Ferguson, Missouri to Baltimore, Maryland riots have been raging. Police brutality has been shown in a new light and is an issue that the American government and people need to do something about. Although police brutality has gained a lot of attention in the past couple of years, we still haven't done anything significant to address the issue. In order to deter officers from committing such heinous crimes and in order to give officers a just punishment we should implement the use of body cameras. Body cameras will prevent deaths and brutality of innocent citizens in America.

Alex Harnett and Alex Zamanian
Miramonte High School seniors

Editor:

In our government class we were asked to choose a topic that seemed important to us to research for our semester project. We chose the topic, the war on drugs. This topic appealed to us because we believe that the war on drugs is not decreasing the use of drugs, it is just hurting our economy from all the spending that goes into it.

It is no secret that drugs are very common in our day and age, and people want to protect their children from the damages of them. In California, eleven people per day die from drug abuse. Though the use of drugs most definitely needs to decrease, this war on drugs and making them illegal is not helping anything. Making drugs illegal just means people have to be more sneaky about getting them, it does not stop them from using them at all. The rate of drug addiction has stayed about the same since 1970, whereas the amount of drug control spending has gone through the roof. Instead of imprisoning people in possession and making drugs illegal, drugs should be harder to access and cost more. This way people will not be able to get to them as easy and maybe that will draw them away from them. Rather than trying to defeat the problem, it is better to compromise with or come up with alternatives. So, in order to make our community and America great again, encourage the end to the war on drugs. Do it for you children and their children to make the world we live in safer from drug abuse.

Sincerely,
Karina Dulberg and Hailey Eberle
Miramonte High School seniors

Editor:

Having spent my childhood living in Oakland, I became familiar with the sound of sirens and alarms. Playing out-

side at my preschool, these sounds meant that something exciting was occurring. While sirens were a source of entertainment for my friends and me, this is not the case for everyone. Unfortunately, fear of the police has become more prevalent. Today's youth feel less that they can depend on the police to ensure their safety.

The black community has been disproportionately affected by police brutality. The prominence of the use of lethal force is concerning. There were more fatal shootings by police in the first five months of 2015 in Stockton, California, than have ever occurred in the entire country of Iceland. This is not to say that all law enforcement workers are "bad cops," but rather is indicative of a larger problem with American police practices. For this reason, we feel that it is important to bring attention to reform and accountability of police action.

Rachel Gamson and Dale Gemino
Miramonte High School seniors

Editor:

We are writing to address our concern for NSA spying on U.S. citizens. As high school seniors we feel domestic spying on US citizens violates the Constitution. The Fourth Amendment "prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures and requires any warrant to be judicially sanctioned and supported by probable cause" (The Bill of Rights). NSA Spying on US citizens is definitely classified as an unreasonable search and because the NSA doesn't use a warrant to complete its unsupervised spying it is judicially unconstitutional. In addition, the National Security Agency is supposedly "there to protect the Nation," and, "customers know they can count on [them] to provide what they need, when they need it, wherever they need it." While the NSA protects the US against foreign aggression through online surveillance, why does the agency feel the need to spy on it's own people? NSA spying is illegal. As active members of our community we believe this matter needs to be addressed in order to affirm citizens' right to privatize personal information.

Thank you,

Sophie Jacques and Hannah Sanders
Miramonte High School seniors

Editor:

We are writing to you regarding the recent increase of tuition costs at the Universities of California and the impact that it has on students. As we are soon to be freshman in college, the rising tuition cost in UC's and other colleges worry us. The UC's tuition costs will increase from \$12,804 to \$15,564 in fall of 2019. The current median income for families in California is \$61,933. That means that although some families make above this number, many families make much less than this. A family that makes \$61,933 would have to use their entire income for one year to pay for college. This does not include room and board, transportation, books and materials, or even food while in school. Of course this is not possible, as families have other necessary living expenses. Many students have to take out loans in order to pay for their college education, and as we have all heard, the interest rates on loans add up. When we surveyed students at our own school, 88% of them said the affordability of college is the main factor when deciding which college to attend. This clearly shows that the majority of students worry about being able to afford the college of their choice. Some college graduates spend their entire life paying off their student loans. We believe that college students should have the opportunity to succeed once they graduate from college. We are worried about the rising costs of higher education and the loan debt from that. We would like to see a decrease in the future costs, so that more students will be able to attend college, and have it be more affordable for them. College gives people a chance to find themselves and it gives students the resources they need to succeed after graduation. Since this is the case, we believe students should not be burdened by debt before they have the opportunity to succeed.

Thank you,

Lillian Hunter-Reay and Ali Fitch
Miramonte High School seniors

Editor:

We are writing to you in order to inform you of the issue of animal testing. According to the Humane Society International, animals used in experiments are commonly subjected to force feeding, forced inhalation, food and water deprivation, prolonged periods of physical restraint, the infliction of burns and other wounds to study the healing process, the infliction of pain to study its effects and remedies, and many other things. One specific company, Church and Dwight, that manufactures brands such as Oxi Clean, Arm and Hammer products, and Kaboom inhumanely treats their animals when testing their products. Our goal is to raise awareness of this issue so that we can further create laws that will protect the health, safety and well-being of these animals that are being used in labs.

Sincerely,

Cecilia Gee and Danielle Chan
Miramonte High School seniors