Hancock Students Walked Out against Gun Violence

By Ezequiel Aranda, Irene Trejo, and Joey Padilla

On March 14, 2018 a national school walkout went into play. This walkout was in memory of the students affected by the Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida and a push for tighter gun control laws. The walkout, which was organized by Hancock’s Student Council and other students, was planned for 17 minutes, one minute for each victim. The walkout started at 10:00 a.m. and students were back in the building at around 10:25.

At Hancock College Prep, there were roars of chants coming from about 600 students from “No more dead kids” to “Donald Trump, Mike Pence, Gun control is common sense!”

As we walked around the school, we did hear some jokes that weren’t relevant to what this day was about. Some students were rhyming the chants with things like drugs, sex, and ditching school. As these jokes were being told, Daniella Cruz, a senior at Hancock, told us when the whole school was in front of the building, “If these guys are gonna joke around about bull***, then they should just leave right now!”

Junior Christopher Martinez says that “gun control is a complex issue since it dates back to the Bill of Rights, and many think it can be fixed with a few minutes outside and a few chants.” Another student, Arturo Martinez agrees and adds that “We only decide to walk out when we know it can affect us. But aren’t willing to do it if it doesn’t.” Which leads us to the question, what about all the innocent kids who die everyday?

Some students were making posters that seemed to be more personal to them, it was related to their close friend Victor, who passed away due to gun violence. There were some students who weren’t

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**Gun Violence March**

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really affected yet still participated. “I wasn't going to go at first because it didn't affect me directly,” said Luis Moreno, a junior, at Hancock. Another junior Maria Martinez said, “It does affect me directly because I hate that all of my friends are dying.”

In contrast to Hancock, at Rickover Military School in Chicago, students participated in a seventeen-minute moment of silence. They lowered their flag to half mast and stood in silence.

*Jordan Espinoza contributed to this article.*

**Quotes From Hancock Students about the Walkout**

Collected by Alejandra Rubio and Yaletza Reynoso

“We should have made more posters because people just saw us walking around the school. They probably didn’t know what was the purpose.”

--Alondra Cervantes

“Around the school, nobody sees us. We should have gone instead from the school to the gas station and around that way, out to Pulaski. Because where we were, we were out of the public view.”

—Esperanza Vega

“I didn’t think it would’ve made a difference. I understand if they went out to as a way to remember those who passed away. But I doubt the government is going to care if a bunch of students gets out of class for 17 minutes. If they really wanted change, they should make petitions, protest in front of the White House and other things like that. And also some people weren’t taking it seriously and just doing it to get out of class which I thought was disrespectful.”

--Alexandra Arroyo

“I'm doing this because I believe that guns in America should be controlled because living in Chicago, there are a lot of deaths involving guns and all of that needs to stop. I want there to be peace in the community and no more dead kids.”

--Melissa Hernandez

“I'm doing this because I believe that guns in America shouldn't really be allowed [among] civilians because they can damage lives and take away a lot of important people and ruin lives.”

--Sydney Shepard

“I'm doing this because I feel like it can make a difference. Although people say, 'What's the point? If Chicago is always having issues,' there's going to be a difference because it shows how many people care and it'll make a difference here with gun violence.”

--Noelya Matiarena

Hancock students marching against gun violence

*Photo by Jordan Espinoza*
Senior Lock In
An all-night Hancock tradition
Photos courtesy of Ms. Lopez
Like many young students across the country, Samuel Castaneda is familiar with the frenzy that comes with the college application process. A high school senior from Chicago Bulls College Prep, Castaneda explains, "I applied to almost 10 schools as soon as applications were being accepted." But like many students as well, Samuel had his heart set on a specific application response, and not one to just any school. "I bought Stanford hoodies, shirts, and even socks before I was even eligible to apply," Castaneda recalls before his eventual admittance rejection.

This is the reality of several students, chasing admittance into a prestigious school that will ultimately reject them. As Castaneda recalls, "I worked towards one school since my 2nd semester of freshman year." This is a common thing among students alike, building up credentials in hopes of being admitted into the school of their dreams, but nobody tells them what to do after they're rejected.

This is significant as Jessica Kane from HuffPost states, "Getting rejected from a school you have your heart set on forces you to really prioritize the aspects you value most in a college experience." This means that a rejection letter can change a student's plans instantly, and oftentimes plans that were made ahead of time. Castaneda remembers his reaction when he first read his rejection letter, "I definitely was upset but I knew that it was their loss. I started to break down my other options."

This process made Castaneda question the application process as a whole due to his outstanding requirements. As Castaneda explained, "I had a 32 on my ACT, 1350 on my SAT, a 4.2 GPA, ranked 12 out of 241 in my class, and completed countless internships." With credentials like these, he was eligible for a spot in the most competitive schools in the country, so Castaneda thought. As Nedda Gilbert, a reporter for Forbes education explains, "Admission offices strive to round out their incoming classes with balance. That means gender, geographic, academic, racial and ethnic diversity enter into the mix."

As time passed Castaneda accepted his rejection and started to understand it. As Castaneda explains, "All I could do was receive condolences for not being chosen. There's nothing else you can really do." As Julia Schemmer, a reporter from the LA Times' HS Insider states, "When a college rejection letter comes in the mail, it is easy to immediately invalidate everything you have ever done and view your experiences as a high school student as incomplete or inadequate." Castaneda knew that the hard work spent on chasing his dream college wasn't entirely wasted. He did not make it to Stanford but had the credentials to make it to about any other school he desired. Samuel took his loss and started doing what he had to. He redirected his focus on finding the perfect college fit for him.

Through this process, Castaneda realized things he otherwise wouldn't have: he realized how much time he would be away from his family, and especially how much his mother would be impacted as he's an only child. Jessica Kane a reporter from HuffPost confirms this as she states, "You may overlook some

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key factors about the school you wouldn’t have liked if you attended it.” This is significant as it shows the positive side of getting rejected: you can find the college that truly fits your needs and truly make a thoughtful decision. Castaneda reafirms this as he now believes that he’s narrowing down the right school for him with his family in mind now.

Through this experience Castaneda realized the courage it takes to chase your dreams, but the bigger courage it takes to accept reality and make the best out of what you can work with. As Nedda Gilbert from Forbes Education explains, “You have not been rejected...You just have not been selected...It still hurts, but there is a difference.” This is important for every student going after a prestigious college to keep in mind. Our worth has nothing to do with our selection. As Jessica Kane from Huffpost explains in her article, even highly successful people get rejected from these schools. People such as Warren Buffet with a net worth of 87 billion, or Steven Spielberg with a 3.6 billion net worth have been rejected from these level institutions.

Overall, getting rejected from a dream college could hurt without a doubt and can drastically alter plans. For Castaneda, however, it’s far from the end, as acceptance and award letters continue to come in from schools such as Duke, USC, U of I, and Pomona College. Castaneda explains, “I want to prove that they made a huge mistake, and it further drives me to be the best student I can be.”

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I Have a College Degree, but I Can’t Find a Job with It

“Post college is a very difficult time searching for a job,” stated Elvin Gonzaga who graduated from Northern Illinois University with a degree in political science. Elvin graduated in 2017 and came out with no career in his desired major. Elvin struggles to help out his family after having to spend so much at a four year university. Elvin is currently working at a forging company, where he works with metals, which has nothing to do with his major.

Elvin was originally supposed to go to law school, but states, “Seeing the position I was in, I wasn’t able to go to law school.” Elvin had to come back and help provide for his family. Elvin agrees that “post college is a difficult time because there are no jobs.” Even after college students feel that their hard work should come with a set career, but that’s not the case at all. Students and parents expect to have a set career after college. Many students feel as if a college degree can’t even get you any job anymore. It leaves us to question why are so many college graduates left unemployed? When entering college, the ultimate goal for every student is to have a set career in the major they took time to learn. Elvin believes, “If you plan ahead, the chances of having a career are greater.” Many of the jobs in today’s world don’t necessarily require a college degree, but require a skill. According to the researchers from the Census Bureau, “In 2012 about 44% of grads were working in jobs that didn’t require a college degree.” This is almost half of the grads that are in jobs that don’t require a college degree, including Elvin.

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Unfortunately, even some are left jobless or unemployed. Many believe all money put into college will eventually get paid back to them with their career. According to the Atlantic, about 1.5 million or 53.6 percent of bachelor’s degree holders under the age of twenty-five last year were jobless or unemployed. This is half of the population of college grads without a job. Elvin thinks this is occurring because of the easy access to technology. Elvin says that, “You can get everything you want with a click of a button.” Therefore, instead of people receiving the college degree, they’ll learn the skill and be employed. According to the Atlantic, this is not the reason for unemployment rates for college grads. The Atlantic adds that “now that the market is flooded, diplomas count less, and specific skills count more.” Major companies want to pick somebody who has the skill rather than a degree on their resume. College grads feel it’s better to have more skills or internships to open more opportunities.

Elvin Gonzaga has recently applied to the Chicago Police Department and hopes that his hard work will pay off with the career of being an officer. Elvin took the exam for the Chicago Police Department and in just a couple months Elvin will begin his training.

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Hancock Student Gets Arrested in Washington D.C. at Immigration Protest

By Daniella Cruz

I boarded the plane at 5:45 p.m., embarking on a journey with no idea what to expect, except that I would learn how to take action. My mother gave me “una bendición,” a blessing through the phone, as I was about to depart from Chicago to Washington D.C. After weeks of feeling restless, the elevation of the aircraft intensified the tension. I’m fortunate enough to have been born in the very soil that promised my parents and sister the opportunity to flourish. That is where my privilege lies, but I was afraid.

As a proud daughter of immigrant parents, my heart was eliminated of all the fear I had once felt and had converted it into something else: anger. I felt angry because my father has had to work over 12 hours a day, seven days a week just to keep us afloat since his arrival, angry because the government’s lack of action caused thousands who had come out of the shadows to go back to hiding, angry because I felt there was nothing I could do to help.

United We Dream, the largest immigrant youth-led organization in the U.S, created spaces for DREAMERs and allies to collaborate on March 5th. The day held significance as the deadline Trump had given Congress to make a decision about DACA. Everything back home went at its regular heartbeat, while mine accelerated as I put down my name and contact information to say: “I am willing to put my body on the line for my people.” That weekend, nearly three dozen of us planned, in the basement of a Baptist Church, our civil disobedience, accompanied by 75 others.

The nerves swam through my whole body and made their stay in the pit of my stomach. The chants still ring in my ear, screaming at the top of our lungs: “We have nothing to lose but our chains.”

The cold ground felt bittersweet under us, as we sat in formation as planned the night prior. Chains and locks bound us at our waist and ankles. Tubes, carabiners, and rope secured our arms and hands together: the ultimate sign of

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unity. Being swarmed by cameras and people yelling, the crowd kept the Capitol police distracted long enough for us to hold our ground on Independence Street, a block away from the Capitol building. Two hours of sitting, chanting, and waiting for the tight zip ties to be sealed around our wrist and our “ice-cream truck” awaited to take us to the warehouse. At our arrival, a yellow band was strapped around my wrist with big bold letters stating “LOCK UP.”

Everyone of us was to share a small cell with the cockroaches crawling up and down the walls. We were woken up at 3 a.m. to be given wristbands, withheld for eight hours to await a court hearing, and fed a sandwich with a Dixie cup of water. We sat in a tiny waiting room occupied by 40+ women to hear from our public attorneys. Let me tell you, the conditions of the facility were anything but a safe haven. Yet, we found a way to liven up the white, dull walls by sitting in a circle and having a dialogue. We sang, danced, laughed, and gave a chance to the women who were there for personal reasons the opportunity to give their two cents in the small dose of hell we endured for only 24 hours.

The pain of these women brought light to another problem: our incarceration system, the very facilities that were made to oppress people of color, reminding me of those suffering in detention centers. The light we shined, for a sliver of a second, was suddenly dimmed by the realization of a million things that still needed to be reformed, changed, and even destroyed.

As the clock ticked, we maintained our sanity as one by one we were called by our numbers. In these facilities, in the government’s eyes, you don’t deserve to be called by your name -- you don’t deserve to be human. Walking through the zig-zagged hallways and being rid of my ankle cuffs, I walked into the arms of the people who worked all night to ensure we were out with no charges. That’s when the tears started flooding my face.

We were left with no permanent solution, left with nothing done by our government -- again, left disappointed. A lot has been lost, but our hope still remains. There is much to be done. There is much to be said. And there is so much to change. United, we were able to raise tensions, hold our ground because we truly did have nothing to lose but our chains. Time and time again, they’ve tried to tumble us down. They’ve tried to keep us underground, treating us like dirt over and over: “They tried to bury us, but they forgot we were seeds.” We will flourish. We will rise. We WILL win. I believe that we will win, do you?

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**Yo, Seniors!**

*If you haven’t yet, pay that graduation fee in the main office.*

*It’s $50. But if you had good attendance first quarter, you get a $10 discount.*
Snapshots of Hancock Life
Photos by Jose Lezama, Joselyn Lemus, and Joey Padilla

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