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# The COMMONS

Published biweekly by and for the Upper School students of Riverfield Country Day School in Tulsa, OK

VOLUME IV NO. 11

## THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

96.7% of all quotes are made up.



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weekend weather

SAT 59

SUN 62

INFORMATION FROM WEATHER.COM, 3/12/10, 9:30 A.M.

## First soccer games



(Left) Steven Sesso takes the ball down the field. (Right) Bonnie Duffield takes a corner kick in Tuesday's game against Hale. PHOTOS BY ROBERTA PEAKE

By Ryan Peake  
STAFF WRITER

For the 2009-10 year, Riverfield Country Day School decided to form its first competitive soccer teams in school history.

The boys team, assisted by Abby Saizow and Bonnie Duffield, has played a total of eight games so far this year, while the girls have played two contests. In their first ever game on February 25, the Ravens lost to Summit Christian 2-1, but Kevin Daroga scored the first goal in school history.

The team then played a tournament in Tahlequah on February 27-28 against 6A Muskogee, 5A Coweta, and 4A Stilwell. The team lost to Muskogee 8-0, Coweta 3-0, and Stilwell 2-0. This was some tough competition considering we would likely be classified as a class B school.

Last week Riverfield played Fort Gib-

son's JV and tied in a game that went back and forth. Each team had chances to win the game but just couldn't capitalize. The Lady Ravens played a tough game, but were outmatched against Fort Gibson, losing 10-0.

On March 6, our boys played in the Cushing tournament, winning their first game against Sequoyah 3-1, then losing to Booker T. Washington's JV squad. Riverfield was going to play Cushing but they would have had to wait two hours. They decided not to wait because they will be playing each other in Cushing on March 22 anyway.

On Tuesday, March 9, the Riverfield girls and boys played Nathan Hale. The girls won 3-2, Bonnie Duffield scoring all three goals. The boys pulled a 7-0 shutout, with scoring coming from several players on our team.

Come out and support your Riverfield Ravens in Cushing on March 22!

## 'Killer' whale at SeaWorld

By Sam Laney  
NEWS EDITOR

Recently, the fairytale atmosphere of SeaWorld in Orlando was shattered by the horrific death of a trainer. Dawn Brancheau was mauled and drowned by Tilikum, a killer whale with previous aggression issues. The 22,000 pound orca grabbed Brancheau by the hair and pulled her under.

Orcas are members of the dolphin family, and adult males can weigh in at as much as 22,000 pounds. They are very smart but lack the ability to deal with their anger. The cause of its anger is unknown, but it is believed that Tilikum attacked out of pure rage.

Orcas are smart mammals, prone to boredom and discontent just like humans. We contain them and use them for our entertainment. While they may be treated well, these massive mammals need respect and space that simply doesn't exist in a setting like SeaWorld.

Killer whales are essential to SeaWorld. While Tilikum will not be used for further shows, other orcas certainly will. The probability of another attack like this one is very low, but it could happen.

This tragedy will soon be forgotten, but let's hope a lesson has been learned. Three strikes is too many to allow. This orca should not have been used for shows because of his previous aggression, but "the show will go on," and SeaWorld will remain a tourist hotspot.

## Toyota issues recall for thousands of vehicles

By Sam Laney  
NEWS EDITOR

Unintended acceleration and failing braking systems have caused a massive 8.5 million vehicle recall of certain Toyota models.

Recently released internal documents showed that safety concerns were "laughed at" and not taken seriously. The problems have caused a public relations nightmare for Toyota on top of bringing a federal investigation.

Some believe Toyota has misled

owners and relied on a hastily arranged study to reassure the public. Toyota's webpage devoted to the recalls tries to underplay the issue, saying the

recalls only cover "some" of their models. The webpage also contains numerous links to public reassuring videos.

The effected vehicles are as follows: 2005-2010 Avalon, 2007-2010 Camry, 2009-2010 Corolla, 2008-2010 Highlander, 2009-2010 Matrix, 2004-2009 Prius, 2010 Prius, 2009-2010 RAV4, 2008-2010 Sequoia, 2005-2010 Tacoma, 2007-2010 Tundra, and the 2009-2010 VENZA.

James Lentz, the president and COO of Toyota, commented in his testimony to the committee on energy

and commerce that, "In recent months, we have not lived up to the high standards our customers and the public have come to expect from Toyota. Put simply, it has taken us too long to come to grips with a rare but serious set of safety issues, despite all of our good faith efforts...while all auto companies have recalls and all major auto companies have experienced complaints about unintended acceleration, Toyota's recalls have caused concerns among our customers."

Toyota is the top selling auto brand in the U.S. and has had a great track record up to this point, so the company has a chance. However, the company needs to regain the confidence of the consumer.



Admitting problems with unintended acceleration and failing brakes, Toyota has recalled thousands of cars from Camrys to Priuses.

PHOTO BY RAMSEY TALLADIVEDULA

# 2 Sports & Features



A girl could be overwhelmed by Riverfield's surplus of guys.  
PHOTO BY RAMSEY TALLADIVEDULA

## Riverfield's boy/girl ratio not balanced

By Ramsey Talladivedula  
STAFF WRITER

Everyone in the Upper School has noticed that we have more boys than girls, but how do they feel about this fact? Is it better to have more boys?

Bonnie Duffield says, "I think if we get more girls, we should get more boys. The ratio is awesome." A lot of people I talked to agreed with Bonnie, and they are happy with the way it is. "I like it. I get along better with boys because they are good and there are plenty of them," said Kendall Cannon. Some girls here, including myself, like to hang out with boys because they are very laid back and fun. It's hard to not hang out

with them since there are so many here!

Brandon Miller said, "We need more girls! I think the boys' locker room should be bigger than the girls' locker room since there are more of us!" Abby Saizow said, "Girl athletes are what we need. It's hard to get girl teams together because some of the girls here don't play."

Some grades have different ratios, but the total boy/girl ratio in the Upper School is 13:10. In the 10th grade, there is an obvious disproportion with 21 boys and only six girls, but in all the other grades it's pretty even. The overall ratio isn't very dramatic, but it does cause some people to think we need more balance.

## The swarm intelligence of ants

By Kenzie Zwyer  
STAFF WRITER

Ants. You may remember watching them under a magnifying glass in Science class or on a sidewalk. Maybe you kept an ant farm as a kid, repeatedly spilling the cheaply made, top-heavy container onto the carpet and finding bits of dirt and ants crawling across the floor for weeks afterwards.

Some people never grew out of this stage and have devoted their lives to studying ants and their colonies. They have discovered that the more ants there are in a colony, the more intelligent they become. Somehow, even though there is no central plan or commanding individual in the colony (contrary to popular belief, the queen has little

power over the other ants, and exists simply to lay eggs), the ants are able to complete a large task simultaneously, en masse. Ants as a colony seem to be far more intelligent than an individual ant; it is as if they function as a single entity.

People learn from previous generations. That's why we can progress over time. Since ants have no individual identity and cannot carry information through generations, once one knows something, the whole group must know it. Deborah M. Gordon, a biologist at Stanford University, believes that ants communicate with each other via pheromones and may use tactics, such as a "collision meter" to cover territory as efficiently as possible.

Ants have been documented

changing their assigned tasks as soon as the collective needs another task to be finished. "No ant can possibly know how much food everybody is collecting, how many foragers are needed. An ant can't assess globally how much food the colony needs," says Gordon.

Scientists are baffled as to how the ants are able to sense the collective's need, and they attribute it to collective intelligence, more often called "swarm intelligence" or SI for short. SI is not unique to ants. It is exhibited in flocks of birds and their simultaneous turns in flight, and also in schools of fish, bacterial growth, and animal herding. We have much to learn from the information-gathering and communicative tactics of ants.

## Major League Baseball preview

By Carl Berry  
STAFF WRITER

With spring training just underway, baseball season will soon be in full swing. Here's my outlook for each team this season.

Baltimore, Toronto, Washington, Florida, Kansas City, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Oakland, San Diego, and Arizona should all finish in last place or next-to-last place in their divisions. They won't be contenders, but look for some improvement in each team's young talent.

I expect the NL East to come

down to a two-team race between the Mets and the Phillies. The Mets have improved drastically since last season with the return of their superstars from injury, and they could make a run to the postseason. In the NL Central, St. Louis should be the easy winner, with the Brewers finishing second, about ten games behind. In the NL West, the Giants' pitching staff will propel them to the postseason, with Colorado finishing second and winning the Wild Card. The Dodgers' pitching staff is not good enough for them to really contend this season.

In the AL East, the Yankees

are obvious favorites to win the World Series, even though their core is aging fast. This will be the last year when the Jeter-Rivera-Posada-Rodriguez combo wins a championship, at least until the Yankees buy another one. Boston should win the Wild Card, but won't go deep into the playoffs. I expect the AL Central to be easily won by the Twins. None of the other teams are going to come close. The AL West could be one of the toughest divisions in baseball this year. The Mariners pitching and defense will win the division this year, but LA and Texas will come close.

## NCAA Division I Basketball Playoff Predictions



Kentucky has proven they can win in close games, but the close ones they have won have been against lesser teams.

The one close game they lost was against a team of equal ability.

Despite their athleticism, I predict Kentucky will fall to Kansas' depth, consistency, and experience. FINAL: Kansas 76, Kentucky 68

—Bryce Rossler, Staff Writer

## 2010 FIFA World Cup

By Ben Rao  
SPORTS EDITOR

Rumors of being replaced, a workers strike ... somehow none of that mattered. South Africa has survived a barrage of possible hurdles and now is only three months away from hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

Twenty years ago it seemed impossible that a country culturally reminiscent of the southern U. S. in the 1860s, complete with white supremacists and a bigoted hatred of blacks, would have the whole world come to their country to marvel on the world's biggest stage for the world's biggest sport.

With five new stadiums having been built, it seems as though the journey of making the 2010 World Cup come to fruition has been smooth. But that is hardly the case. On July 8, 2009, 70,000 workers building the new stadiums went on strike. While their problems remain unresolved, South Africa has found a way to get the stadiums built anyway. And at

a total cost of over \$1.6 billion U. S., more than just the fate of soccer matches is riding on these stadiums. While a single American sports team (Yankees) can spend that amount on one stadium, a middle of the road economy like South Africa's putting this kind of money into new sports buildings is an extraordinary investment.

Furthermore, the possibility of future World Cups being held in Africa depends on how well this one goes, so the hopes of a whole continent are riding on how well South Africa pulls it off.

While it's sad to think that Africa's first World Cup could be its last, it is not hard to understand why. The poorest continent on earth, one that has as much war and strife as the Middle East, is not very attractive to the business bigwigs of FIFA. Yet, maybe an event like this could unite the region and change things forever. When looking at the history of the host nation itself, all Africans can believe that anything is possible.

## 3 A&amp;E

TENNIS ANYONE? Come out and watch! (3/25) Riverfield vs. Rogers, 4 p.m. at Tracy Park... (3/31) Riverfield vs. Central, 3:45 p.m. at Central...and more matches coming up in April!

## Music Review: Rebirth

By Bryce Rossler  
STAFF WRITER

Recently, Lil Wayne's mainstream success has been astounding. His past two albums, *Tha Carter I* and *Tha Carter II*, sold 1.2 million and 1 million copies in their first weeks, respectively. In an attempt to gain even more fans, Lil Wayne made the decision to make a rock-rap crossover album, and he was self-assured it would be epic. But, after leaks, featured singles, and months of delays, *Rebirth* only sold 176,000 copies in its first week.

This is surely not an album that will make me miss Wayne while he serves his jail time. Just by sheer observation of the track listing, it's obvious that Lil Wayne flounders with the concept of rock. With no guests that contribute the slightest knowledge of the rock genre, Lil Wayne pro-

ceeds to abuse the guitar and run completely counter to the basic singing style of the genre.



**Bryce was not impressed with this album, to say the least.**

PHOTO BY RAMSEY TALLADIVEDULA

Lil Wayne brings absolutely no rock-esque energy to this album. In addition, the tragic misuse of the guitar is, quite

frankly, despicable. The production fails to be anything but annoying. With watered-down screeches, unamplified power strumming, and uncoordinated bridges, Lil Wayne exhibits how little he knows about rock.

If it's possible to get past the terrible instrumentals, you can then move on to the poor lyrics. From depressed, heart-broken rants from a pedophilic perspective ("Prom Queen") to black, violent angst ("Drop the World"), Lil Wayne words his lyrics in such a way that is a careful scrutinization of *Rebirth's* libretto, resulting in facepalming.

All in all, *Rebirth* is an album devoid of quality presented in any way shape or form. Lil Wayne may not be able to make good rock music, and he may be disappointed by his album sales, but let's hope he remembers how to produce a proper album.

## Webcomic Review: Axe Cop

By Malachi Keeter  
STAFF WRITER

When I was a little kid, I loved superheroes. Who didn't? Sometimes I would invent my own and make up stories to go with them. It was great fun. Having grown up doing that, you can imagine how ecstatic I was to find *Axe Cop*.

At the time of this writing, there are nine episodes of *Axe Cop*, a comic strip written and created by a five year old (named Malachai, coincidentally) and drawn by his twenty-nine year old brother.

*Axe Cop* is the dramatic story of a cop who is a superhero and has an axe. It has a

developed back story and a multitude of characters, both heroes and villains, that *Axe Cop* encounters. The website also sells t-shirts and other merchandise.

It is the most fantastic thing I have ever read, and I am serious when I say that. It is written with a level of ridiculousness that only a superhero-loving five year old could muster. The story, characters, and dialogue are hysterical if viewed from an adult perspective and intensely awesome if viewed from the perspective of your inner child. Either way it's thoroughly enjoyable.

I cannot say enough good things about *Axe Cop*. Read it. Right now.

## Rebellion against what, exactly?

By Malachi Keeter  
STAFF WRITER

There are a lot of problems in the world. Subsequently, there are a lot of things to rebel against.

However, though many people tend to start rebelling around 12 years of age, they can't really come up with a legitimate reason for rebelling until much later. During the in-between years, the only way many have to rebel is through fashion.

Walking down a hallway full of middle-schoolers in many schools is akin to walking down a hallway full of Hot Topic ad-

vertisements. The skinny jeans, plaid patterns, chains, spikes, and black, blot out the sun and squelch the mind. It's disgusting, and I'll tell you why.

You see, the reason that people take issue with young, well-off kids dressing like this is simple: it's not genuine. It is an abuse of legitimate alternative fashion, cleaned up a bit and sold to suburbanites.

The leather and chains that Rob Halford took off and threw onto the heavy metal stage as a personal rebellion against the rejection of the scene become meaningless when they are only worn so that other kids can see that you like to cry.

The homemade clothes with patches and plaid, safety pins and the modified boots that Darby Crash and Joe Strummer wore as they and the world's other sick boys slept in the streets as a rejection of consumerist society become meaningless when they are sold from the very consumerist outlets they were created in rebellion against.

Why dress up in such clown-like fashion anyway? It's attractive to adolescents, that's why. Mommy doesn't like it, so it must be cool, right? No. If you can't back up why you do it, or if you can't even explain what it means, then don't wear it.

## Ben Rao's spring makeup tips

By Ben Rao  
STAFF WRITER

You may be wondering why I am writing this article. Well, when you have little writing skill but a huge sense of entitlement to judge others based on their fashion sense, then you too may have enough nerve to write an article about cosmetics someday. Of course,

only 5% of the Upper School cares about this, but I will publish it here anyway so I can subject the entire student body to reading this monstrosity.

So, What colors are in for Spring 2010? I'll tell you. Orange body paint is definitely in, to give you that natural winter glow. Next time you go to Wal-Mart, go to the kid's crafts section and get a whole gallon of

orange finger paint and take a bath in it. It will be so chic!

Also, smeared red lipstick is a hot way to show you care about what others think about you. After all, the superficial ideals that we base our society on are number one on your mind, and believing in New Age ideals of working on your inner self can go to die!

Finally, two-inch fake eye lashes should be the finishing touch to your façade. Revealing the depths of your soul through your eyes is something that only happens in fairy tales. Making yourself into the next Britney Spears is way more important!

If you follow these simple rules, everyone will love you! And by everyone, I mean the 5% of the high school that cares, of course.



**It's spring...time to clean up that makeup drawer!**

PHOTO BY RAMSEY TALLADIVEDULA

## Bryce's fantabulous fashion forecast

By Bryce Rossler  
STAFF WRITER

So totally yes, spring is HERE! I cannot wait for Spring Break!

With the arrival of spring comes the dismissal of winter. The months of December,

Thus, long pants and long-sleeved shirts are *so out* and short pants and short-sleeved shirts are *so in*.

Boys, it's time to ditch the sweaters and jeans and put on the cargo shorts and polos. Ladies, it's time to throw away those scarves, wool tops, and jackets, and start sporting flip-flops, short sleeves, and athletic shorts.

As always, the hottest spring colors will be the bright, vivid hues of yellow, sharp green, pink, and light blue. The striped and plaid patterns of winter are out now, and floral patterns and polka dots will be deliciously fantabulous this spring.

However, as you fashion mavens out there know all too well, these hip trends aren't for certain. One factor that could change things in a New York minute is the attire of the superstars that occupy media discussion and tabloid pictures. Actresses and heiresses alike will serve as highly important catalysts for the fashion trend movements of this March, April, and May.

But wherever the trends end up taking us, there is no doubt they will highly influence our fashionable leanings this summer. And we all know we're looking forward to summer!



**I'm sure this one will be a hit!**

PHOTO BY RAMSEY TALLADIVEDULA

January, and February yielded some good times, and I'll miss them. However, that's OK, because spring is such a good excuse for me to hit the mall.

During the spring, the sun finally un.masks itself from the dreary clouds of winter, showing its bright face to the world.



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# 4 Opinion

COMING UP IN OUR NEXT ISSUE: Arts curriculum expanding, NBA stars, Happy Birthday Chuck Norris, texting while driving to be illegal, and more . . .

## Why do ALEKS?

By Meghan Kelkar  
STAFF WRITER

It's a required course we take at school, it has to do with our mathematics, and students seem to have a lot of issues with the program. What people need to look at, though, are the benefits of ALEKS.

ALEKS helps prepare students for their next math test, and it also helps improve their math skills in general. The pie chart helps keep track of the areas students may need to spend more time on. It also helps prepare students for the SAT and ACT exams they will take in their junior year.

When asked about his purpose in adopting the ALEKS program, Mr. Clark said, "We started ALEKS a few years ago to let students from 3rd grade math through Pre-Calc advance at a faster pace. It is for students who want to advance in math, and it is also for those who may need help. It is a true evaluation of where people are." He also added, "Yes, we are still behind this program, and it will be around for awhile."

Sophomore Ramsey Talladivedula says, "ALEKS is helpful when you do not understand the content of the math." Another positive opinion was expressed by Carl Berry who said, "It helps students immensely in mathematics."

In conclusion, instead of looking at the cons of ALEKS, look at more of the pros and consider how they are helping people succeed in mathematics rather than fail.



Meghan shows the pros of ALEKS.

PHOTO BY RAMSEY TALLADIVEDULA

## No more Hummers

By Chris Dickey  
STAFF WRITER

On February 24, Sichuan Tengzhong Heavy Industrial Mechanics Company said it had pulled out of the deal to buy the Hummer brand from General Motors. The Chinese manufacturer said it failed to get clearance from Chinese regulators.

Although GM executives said they will honor existing warranties as well as saying, "We are disappointed that the deal with Tengzhong could not be completed," they also said "GM will now work closely with Hummer employees, dealers, and suppliers to wind down the business in an orderly and responsible manner."

Hummer sales have been

steadily declining since 2007's fourth quarter from about 60,000 to about 20,000 today. Even though Hummer is shutting down, there will always be a small group of loyal followers that will keep driving Hummers no matter what.

When Sam Laney was asked what he thought about the Hummer shutdown, he said, "The Hummer is ending its reign of terror. The streets will no longer shake as the overpowered beasts run over the surface of the Earth. God save the Queen, or in this case, the planet."

Carl Berry agreed, saying, "Hummers encompass everything I hate about life in America. They're pretentious, they're wasteful, they have too many blind spots...at least they are relatively safe."



One of the few remaining Hummers for sale in Tulsa makes its last stand.

PHOTO BY RAMSEY TALLADIVEDULA

## Facebook drama increasing

By Meghan Kelkar  
STAFF WRITER

With Live News Feed and improvements to their instant chat, Facebook seems to be taking drama to a whole new level.

According to a recent poll, more than 60% of people will say things over the internet that they would not normally say in real life. Thanks to Facebook's Live News Feed, you are now able to view wall-to-wall comments, picture comments, and even who was tagged in which picture more easily than before.

Some people will say what they really think on Facebook instead of being tactful like in real life. This can damage relationships.

In addition, Facebook has options to create groups and fan pages. These options can be used to create fun, creative pages that are good. But it can also be used for evil because

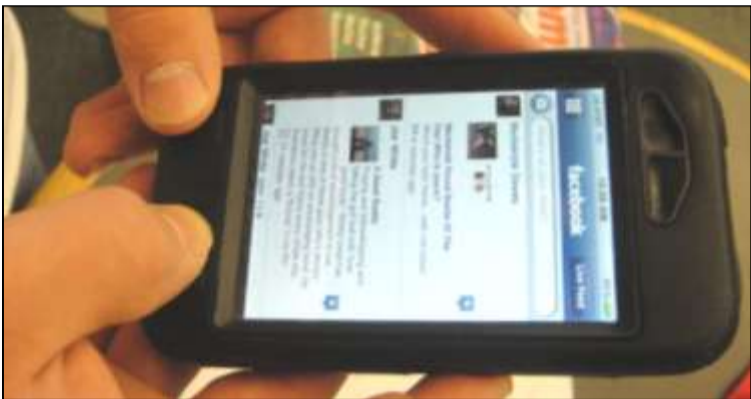
anyone can create a malicious group or page that can damage a person's self esteem.

Here are some opinions of Upper School students about Facebook drama.

"I find it stupid, but it is entertaining in some ways," says James Colpitts. Ramsey Talladivedula said, "I think people should deal with their problems in a one-on-one session,

because posting it is immature." Ryan Peake stated, "It's stupid, and I think people should share those conversations privately rather than posting them for the whole world to see."

If everyone thinks it is immature and stupid, then why must it continue? Changing Facebook to the point where it is no longer student-friendly should be stopped.



A student checks Facebook for the latest drama...

PHOTO BY RAMSEY TALLADIVEDULA

## Wiccan worship facility damaged

By Malachi Keeter  
STAFF WRITER

I am sure that as Americans we are all familiar with the First Amendment. I am sure that as people, we are all familiar with the principle of acceptance towards others. I am also sure that we have learned the difference between right and wrong.

Some, however, may not have. On the Army base at Fort Hood, Texas, a Wiccan group has been allowed a ritual site equivalent to a Christian chapel or a Jewish synagogue. There are 92 chaplains for various religions on the base, several chapels for various sects and religions, and the Wiccan group has existed

there since 1997. The group has faced considerable opposition from locals, politicians, and soldiers of other faiths, and has dealt with a myriad of inconveniences and minor acts of vandalism. However, when the coven's altar, a huge marble slab weighing nearly half a ton, was smashed and crosses were scrawled all over their circle recently, a major line was crossed.

There are a lot of misconceptions surrounding Wicca. Wicca is a collection of druidic and "pagan" beliefs that has been around in various forms almost as long as Christianity. It stems from the early nature-based Celtic religions, and is practiced today by about 50,000 people in the U. S. alone. Wic-

can beliefs are very pacifistic and natural. It is not the animal-sacrificing, demon-gathering group that many think.

If you are Christian, how would you like it if someone came into your church and smashed the crucifix, scrawling another religion's symbols in your holy space?

People need to move past their misconceptions and closed-mindedness. These people are fighting for your rights as an American! Hate crimes like this shouldn't even be happening in modern times, especially not in America. If I remember correctly, we are all endowed with the freedom to practice whatever religion we choose.

## Haiti quake forgotten already?

By Omar Rana  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On January 12, 16 miles outside of Port au Prince, the nation of Haiti was rocked by a devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake. As of this writing, the death count has reached 170,000 and the number of injured has reached 300,000+. Haiti, which already had the worst economy and infrastructure in the northern hemisphere, has been plunged into insanity.

You may be asking yourself, why is there an article in this newspaper about the Haiti earthquake? It happened so long ago. The reason I am writing about the Haiti earthquake is because only days after the disaster, the media turned their attention back to "What will Miley Cyrus do next?"

According to Carol Tabor of the Family Security Foundation, "Our generation has a lack of morals that our nation has never seen before. Our generation is more focused on pop culture than anything important."

I'm not saying she is right, but I do think our generation needs a reality check. I mean, seriously. According to a poll taken by *Newsweek*, the majority of young women in America would rather "have the world suffer a nuclear holocaust, lose both their parents, and suffer a massive brain tumor than be considered fat." Now I'm pretty sure when the women of Haiti were pulled out of the rubble, they weren't concerned if the people that were rescuing them considered them fat.

I think America is the best nation in the world to live in and

it has many beautiful aspects, but I think we need to realize what is really important in life, and I hope that a natural disaster isn't what shows us.



Omar reminds us to donate.

PHOTO BY RAMSEY TALLADIVEDULA