

Oakland Slide

Winner of the Junior Prose section
of the Chronicle competition 2023

Oakland High School: 246th Anniversary. The cloth banners hung majestically down from the third and second floor of the hall onto the wooden ground below; the end of the banners dragged along the bottom floor, occupying the already minimal seating space and occasionally tripping those who dared to look straight ahead while walking. It was a dubious action. Yet, every time somebody tried to whine and moan, another banner was added in the name of “maintaining the culture and tradition of this school” and the necessary “one percenters” stood down. The two original banners, which only appeared as a promotion to the annual ball, had long been an artefact of the past. The students were blessed every year with dozens of new banners with various designs but always printed in a mixture of black and white. The new banners dwelt at every part of the school: the geography block, the art block, the gym, the technology block, and even the janitor’s shed had one of those banners.

No one knew when everything started, but I knew; I had access to the school’s heritage website which was shut down about a hundred years ago. Well, that wouldn’t have really mattered anyway. After all, ever since the school formed a monopoly over the Cambridge exam system, I only viewed my relationship with the school as an exchange: they received my exam results to further boost their reputation while I received their education and extracurricular opportunities. In fact, I had utterly no interest in any schooling politics. All I wanted was to just move on with my daily life.

Just like any other morning, I woke up to the sound of the toilet. Yes, the flushing of the toilet, not my alarm. It was just my habit actually. My mum always worked on a strict schedule for her morning routine, and it just so happened that the time when she finished using the bathroom was perfectly synchronised with when I should wake up. Naturally, the first thing I did in the morning was to check my watch in the hopes that it would allow me some extra sleep time before I had to wake up at eight. However, it was soon apparent that the day’s first task was incredibly difficult. Navigating my hand through the pile of jumpers, jerseys, jackets and exploring the void of space between my bed and my drawer, I finally found my watch. The clock reads 8:11 a.m. I let out a screech of agony in my soul while flopping my body (with much difficulty) onto the floor. This way of getting out of bed was pretty much a part of my getting out-of-bed routine now; it almost seemed like my torso would not allow me to get out of bed to go to school without my mind forcing it to. Standing there beside my bed, something interesting caught my eye: an insignificant recommended books section printed on the back of my Scholastic poster which I got from a book fair. It was actually two book covers, placed side by side. One was titled *Where Happiness Lives* and the



B Pawson 6F



D Daniels 7F1

other was titled Billy Bully depicting a primary school kid graffitiing a wall (while looking very malicious of course). I guess the absurd title picture from both books stood out to me, but I felt like there was something else that made me look at those two covers, yet I couldn't really put my finger on it.

Before I could fully comprehend why I was staring at my poster when I was already late behind schedule, my door trembled with three loud bangs. It was my mum. "Boy! It's already 8:30! Are you not yet going to school? You are going to be late!" roared my mum. It was closer to a blackmail than anything else. I could not believe that I was gazing at my poster for 20

minutes. Of course, I was furious with myself. However, it was equally tempting to say: "Screw you mum, the more you talk, the lower my aggregate drops!" as a friendly reminder to get her to talk more nicely, but I knew I would never do that because I knew the consequences.

Somehow, I managed to get into the hall for assembly in time. I was not sure what happened after I heard my mum threaten me to go to school. I guess my brain went into auto-pilot mode since my consciousness was crowded with fear, fear of my mum, fear of a three-hour detention for coming to school late, and fear of not completing my morning schedule systematically. The appearance of the hall changed quite a bit

from a hundred years ago, without considering the inconvenient banners hanging down from the second floor, a lot of the walls were now covered with the school rules, school songs, and incredibly motivating slogans like "The standard you walk past is the standard you endorse" and "Work hard, Obey hard." It was funny identifying the overused parallel structures in those slogans, but it was more humorous seeing the absurd slogans there while everybody walked past them every day and accepted them. I mean was nobody smart enough to think that the slogans were a bit like propa-

Morning school, please stand. Let us pray....

I soon realised that the headmaster, Mr Wasline, was already on stage, and everybody around me was standing for our daily prayer like always. I was actually rather fortunate; the dangling banners provided great coverage from the icy stares of the headmaster. At least there was one useful thing about those banners. It was at that moment that I again saw someone sitting down like me; his name was Stuart. I didn't know why I didn't turn back forward despite the risk of getting in trouble growing exponentially every second. He had no reason to not be standing. I mean he couldn't have forgotten to stand like me. No emotions, No embarrassment, not even the slightest hint of panic, just a straight face, nobody could possibly do that, but he could. Stuart never talked to anybody in the class or anyone to be honest. He wasn't in any extracurricular activities nor was he close with teachers. Nobody would care about him if he disappeared for a term. It was concerning how he endured four years at this school without a social life.

Thank you, boys, please be seated.

Before I knew it, the prayer finished, and everybody sat down all at once perfectly synchronised and perfectly correlated like everything was supposed to be. A sense of relief flushed over my brain. I was glad that it all ended and how lucky I was not to get a three-hour detention despite the constant surveillance of the teachers. Wishing that Stuart would demonstrate at least



J To'o 6H1



B Pawson 6E



V Flaws 6C1

a sense of relief on his face, I turned back trying to catch a glance at him, again, nothing.

Now, I would like to draw your attention to a serious issue of vandalism, particularly graffitiing, in the school toilet. This matter is a serious offence against the Oakland community as this is a recurring offence that has been happening over the last week. In fact, the school suspects the student involved in this case of destroying school property is a repeat offender. This shows that the particular student has not owned up to his mistakes and made the decision to disrespect the school further.

Boys, I would like to remind you of the "Oakland Strand" in which a student actively chooses to isolate himself from the rest of the cohort by engaging in offensive behaviours which puts the school under disrepute. A student who is going on the "Oakland Strand" demonstrates severe anti-social behaviour and thinks their disrespectful doings are justified; they're not. I would request all students to report anybody who is demonstrating symptoms of the "Oakland Strand" immediately and promptly. After all, ignoring such appalling means you are endorsing such appalling behaviour, and you'll be held accountable as well.

"How impressive!" That was what first came to my mind when hearing that somebody had the guts to vandalise the school twice in a week. That "one percenter" was clearly in the top one percent for his superior courage and bravery. Just imagine how skilful that student has to be in his vandalising abilities to demonstrate his rebellious nature in a practical environment. I look up to him with all my heart for he had the courage to stand up against a repressive organisation, realising how much of a bully the school was. I will forever remember you Graffiti Guy alongside those who were suspended in their eternal combat against the new banners.

Of course, those were simply what I wanted to think: somebody with the audacity to rebel against the evil doings of the school. Yet, I knew that those delusions would only ever remain a delusion. I knew more repressive actions of this school than any other student; I have access to the school's heritage website after all. But, why would I not rebel? Why would I not fight for a better school? Is it because I'm not courageous enough? Am I a coward perhaps? No, it wasn't because I'm a wimp. It was because I'm smart. Being in the top class of this school, I undoubtedly did my fair share of reading. Specifically, I had the tendency to read mostly philosophy books. I classified people into four categories when put under the forces of repression: the Fools, the Normals, the Braves, and the Intellectuals.

The Fools are mindless creatures who are unaware of the repression but rebel anyway. The Normals are people who are unaware of

the repression and live their lives without rebelling. The Braves are people who are aware of the repression and rebel for a better life. The Intellectuals are people who are fully aware of the repression but don't rebel because they are also aware of their lack of influence and the dangers of rebelling.

As for the people who rebel against the school, I classified them as the fools of the Fools. Their reasons for rebelling always remained unjustified. As for the Graffiti Guy, he probably just wanted to vandalise the toilet because he thought it would be funny or perhaps if he was a little bit more intelligent, he was vandalising the toilet because his vape was confiscated after being caught by the security cameras. In actual fact, I'm sure that Graffiti Guy is nothing but a degenerate, and I would never wish to meet him in real life.

Shiqian He 4A



W Ratnayake 6E1



T Lavrent 7C



Y Sun 7H