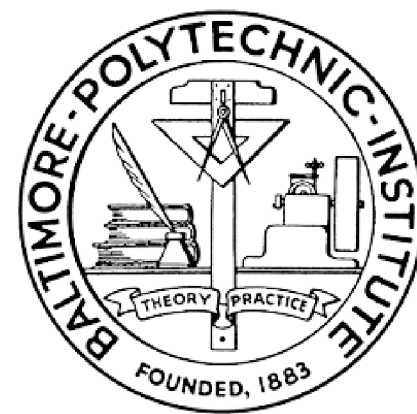


Poly Press



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POLY COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO MIDEAST CONFLICT

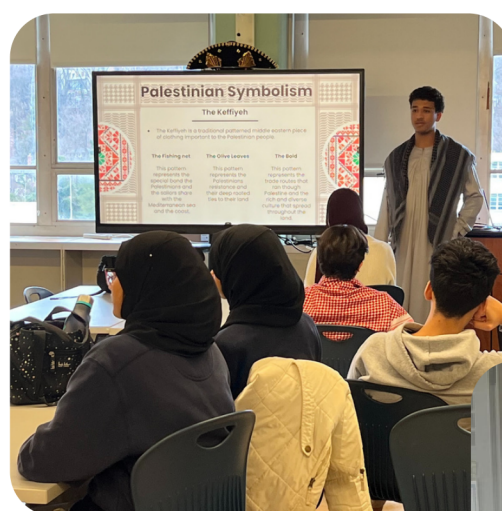
by Max Goodwin

Ever since October 7th, 2023, the world has been in upheaval. People have turned to each other for support, turned against one another, started protests, boycotted brands, and thousands of people have been killed, injured or displaced due to this war. War broke out on October 7th when Hamas attacked Israel, killing 1,151 civilians (source The Times of Israel), and since then more than 20,000 Palestinians have been killed (source Reuters). The war is heavier than what anyone should have to hold on their individual shoulders, and it has brought so many people together while also tearing them apart. The world has been speaking out on their views, while also having to come to terms and find ways to cope with these emotions and events that our generation has never experienced before. This article is going to showcase the thoughts and feelings from Poly’s students and faculty on the conflict in the Middle East.

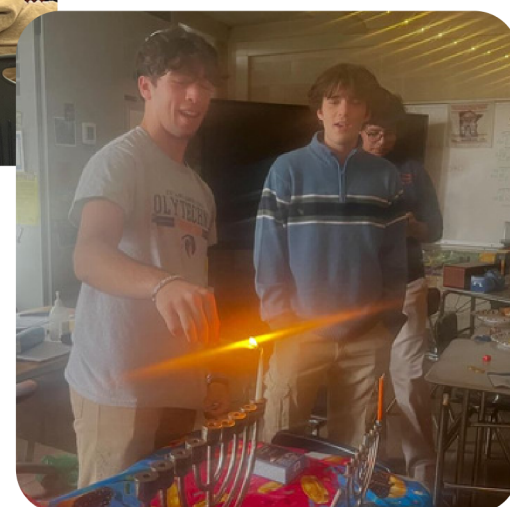
Poly is a widely diverse school with varying opinions, religions, cultures, and ethnicities. We have transfer students from around the world, and we have students with family ties all around the world. Noting all of this, here are some diverse points of view at Poly, a school where many people have family or friends in both Israel and Gaza.

One of many diverse groups of students in Poly is the Muslim Student Association (MSA), and this is what the student leaders have said about the topic. According to Anis Ahmed and Umar Muzni Farouq, leaders of Poly’s Muslim Student Association (MSA), “I think this conflict has affected everyone all over the world and our school is no exception to that. I know myself and the other Muslim students here at poly are absolutely devastated by everything happening in Palestine and we carry that sadness with us through the day. It’s difficult to have to carry on your day as usual while we witness the tragedies our people are going through. Apart from the sleepless night awake thinking of the 8000 Palestinian children that have been massacred in Gaza, I actually have a lot of Palestinian family friends who have been directly affected by the conflict. One of our closest family friends’ cousins was shot and killed in the West Bank a few months ago.” After following up with Anis recently, he stated, “It’s really sad to see that this issue is still going on. After almost 6 months of pain and suffering for people in Gaza, there has been almost no change in their dire situation. It seems that people are starting to care less about the issue cause it isn’t ‘trendy’ anymore, but people are failing to see that Gazans are still suffering. It really shows you how privileged we all are to be able to turn our phones off and step away from the tragedies around the world, which is a privilege that 2 million people in Gaza don’t have.”

According to an anonymous student leader of the Poly Jewish Student Union, “I feel that the Israel and Palestine conflict has had an effect on the school environment. I feel there is a kind of heightened sense of awareness of people’s identities and there is this kind of baseline discomfort or need to ‘get things right’ when interacting, and there’s definitely been a lot more conversation surrounding these topics. I do believe that the conflict has impacted the school environment. There are definitely a lot of people who have a lot of questions, and will tend to go to certain people to get those questions answered because of identities that they hold. The current situation has affected me a ton, in a lot of ways, not just in school, definitely outside of school. The majority of what I’m seeing on social media platforms is about this conflict, which is not a bad thing in the slightest. This is something that needs to be talked about. Palestinian resistance is a beautiful thing and it needs to continue to receive attention, but also the rise in anti-Semitism across the country and in the world is something that deserves a lot of attention. As a Jew, it’s stressful to go out day to day. It’s stressful because I don’t want anyone looking at me and thinking that just because I’m Jewish, that doesn’t mean that I don’t see that there are thousands of innocent Palestinian people and children and women who have been murdered by the Israeli government. I don’t want people to look at me and think that my Jewish identity discounts that, because it doesn’t.”



Students meet with Poly’s MSA (Muslim Student Association) to learn about Palestinian culture and symbolisms shown throughout media (left).



Students meet with Poly’s JSU (Jewish Student Union) to celebrate the Hanukkah holiday (right).

Poly Responds to Mideast Conflict, cont'd.

Several Poly students wanted to share their thoughts anonymously since the conflict is so controversial and people on both sides have become very accusatory to opposing viewpoints. "I'd say on a large scale level, it hasn't really affected the school population. However on a smaller level, it has created some tensions between people that have contrasting opinions on the matter (especially those of Jewish and Muslim faiths). Overall, most people [at Poly] respect each other's perspectives. Most people in the school have aligned stances on the issue, so there weren't too many disagreements on the matter. I personally know people in Israel, so my family has been worried for their well-being (I don't stand with Israel, though). It's also interesting to see the different takes people have. I've been trying to educate people on the issue at hand, but some people don't find my perspective legitimate, and even biased. My performance in school hasn't been affected too much, however; I still complete all of my work on time and am overall focused in my classes."

Another anonymous student shared, "I do not believe that the conflict between Israel and Palestine has actually affected the environment around the school. At least not on the outside of people. Personally as a Jewish student here at Poly, I have not felt unsafe or at harm or any risk. While I understand that many people support a side I do not 100% agree with, it has not affected regular life. School has seemed normal for the most part besides the rare ignorant comments by people who have not researched facts, for both sides. Those types of comments have made me space out at times in class, but overall the politics of the matter have steered mainly clear of Poly."

We also have faculty at this school with varying points of view. One faculty member (who also wished to remain anonymous) shared, "From my own observations based on daily interactions with students or staff, I have not felt, seen, or noticed a large, direct impact of the atrocities committed against Israelis on October 7, or the ensuing wide scale and tragic, retaliatory violence impacting civilians in Gaza on our community. This, however, does not mean that students and staff are not suffering. There are perhaps individuals at Poly who have familial, spiritual, or other ties to Israel and Gaza and we as a community should be mindful and respectful of that when engaging in civic discourse about this highly complex and sensitive issue. Since being flooded by the news on October 7, I have felt deeply saddened, unsettled, and disturbed. I have spiritual ties to the region, and often ask myself not only 'how could this have happened?' but the more difficult question 'what comes next?' in a volatile and unstable part of the world plagued by cyclical, self-perpetuating, and seemingly interminable violence. Sometimes during my planning period, I turn to one of my various news sources for updates and routinely find myself horrified by what I encounter. On the day-to-day, the heartbreak and anxiety I feel does not so directly impact my work at Poly, but outside of school I do have moments of reflection where my mind wanders and my insides are stirred."

Another anonymous faculty member explained, "I am not sure if the staff has been affected, but I have seen evidence of staff and some students showing their support for those involved, whether that be Israelis or Palestinians. I have not noticed any way the school environment has reacted to the conflict. If there are strong sentiments about the conflict, there hasn't been any buzz in response to say, a protest, or demonstrations planned to display such sentiments. The events haven't affected me personally, but I have been exposed to some images resulting from the attacks from both Hamas and Israel. The amount of carnage that I have seen (online) saddens me to my core. The disregard for human life is completely abhorrent and truly unfathomable. Given that it has been months since the onslaught of the initial attack, I do hope the world is watching. Just like I hope the world is watching the suffering in the Congo and Sudan."

While not everyone who cares about this issue has direct ties to the conflict in the Middle East, many people are still being affected by what is happening and feel strongly about what is happening. Here is the perspective of Poly junior, Ace Foly Ehke, one of those students. "I do believe that this conflict has had some effect on the school environment and the way students/faculty have been. Even though not many students or faculty members have publicly expressed their opinions or addressed the topic, some have, which in some cases could cause debates to prove which side is 'in the right.' Students (and in some cases faculty) have found ways to express their perspectives and bring some awareness. Despite this, I don't believe many people at our school are aware of the situation at hand, and if they are, you don't really hear many conversations about it. These events have changed my outlook on life a lot even though I don't have personal connections with it, if that makes sense. It hasn't necessarily affected my performance in school, but it has opened my eyes in other ways."

While all the Poly stakeholders interviewed have varying views on what has been going on around the world, everyone seems to agree on one thing. Everyone agrees that the entire conflict has caused great pain, suffering, confusion, and mourning, not only at school, but in personal lives outside of the Poly building. The conflict has caused so much pain for so many people, no matter the viewpoint of others, and everyone can agree that we need to find a way to be with each other and support one another in times like this.

This is a much different type of topic than normally presented in the Poly Press, but it is an important one to bring up, talk about and educate one another on. It's a sensitive topic, but one that needs to be brought to light so that more people are informed about it.

*"most people
at Poly
respect each
other's
perspectives"*

by Jaden Stokes & Morgan Brooks

One of the oldest but most promising clubs here at Poly is Los Ingenieros. Los Ingenieros is a 15-year-old club that aims to bring together many people of the Spanish-speaking community while also educating people who are not a part of the Spanish-speaking community. The club is filled with 9-12th grade students from all walks of life. Emelyn Gomez, the president of Los Ingenieros, says, "Our goal is to bring people of Hispanic culture together to learn about different experiences. We make Hispanic students at Poly feel welcomed when they join Los Ingenieros. We also educate non Hispanic students on the importance of Hispanic culture. "Nuestro objetivo se compone de reunir a la comunidad Hispana y aprender sobre las diferentes culturas encontradas en los países latinoamericanos. Nos enfocamos en tratar de hacer que la comunidad Latina se sientan seguros y bienvenidos en Poly. También tratamos de luchar por una mayor diversidad en Poly. Es por que intentamos educar a personas de diferentes razas sobre la comunidad Hispana."

The club educates other students by sharing experiences and talking about things they've gone through. The club dedicates themselves to many different events and peaceful protests to help advocate for their cause. According to their advisor, Ms. O'neal, "We always had buses leave straight from Poly with about 20 Los Ingenieros on route to the capital to protest." The club also used their resources like art teachers to make signs. They also take classes on how to safely protest without getting arrested. "We participated in Desfile, where we are one of five highschool clubs. This is basically a parade to celebrate the Hispanic community," says Emelyn Gomez, Los Ingenieros president. One of the members, Alexa Anaya, talks about the different events held during September and October to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, one of which is a festival held in the lunchroom after school on October 18, 2023. Mi Fiesta Hispana gathered all the members of the club together to eat different dishes from different Hispanic cultures. Alexa says, "It was great to try different dishes and share traditions with other Hispanic students." Los Ingenieros is a promising club that welcomes all students at Poly with the simple goal of learning about and advocating for the Hispanic Community.



Mi Fiesta Hispana sponsored by Los Ingenieros during Hispanic Heritage Month. The event was opened to the community and had food, music, face painting, games, and awards. It was visited by student families and students and staff from schools around the district.

Heats Up

by Ziyen Gates, Kiara Byrd & Josh Fleming



As the winter chill sets in, the competition is heating up on the courts, tracks, and in the pool as our school's winter sports teams gear up for an action-packed season. The boys and girls basketball, indoor track, and swimming teams are ready to make a splash, dash, and shoot their way to victory.

Boys and Girls Basketball: A Slam Dunk of Entertainment
Our basketball teams are dribbling, passing, and shooting their way to success.

The fast-paced nature of the game keeps spectators on the edge of their seats. Whether it's a three-pointer at the buzzer or a swift steal leading to a breakaway dunk, basketball offers an adrenaline rush that's hard to beat. Come out and support our talented athletes as they showcase their skills and teamwork. The boys and girls teams both started off their seasons strong this year with the boys team beating Douglas 74-16, and the girls team winning their first game by a whopping 72 points (75-3). Coming off of a 23-3 season last season and being ranked #1 in the city, Coach Peace and the Lady Engineers basketball team plan to pick up where they left off and have another successful season. Coach Chris Cromartie believes that with his team this year and the chemistry they have that they have the potential to be the best in the city and win states.

Boys and Girls Indoor Track: Racing Towards Glory

Indoor track brings the thrill of speed, endurance, and the pursuit of personal bests. Cheer on our runners, jumpers, and throwers as they sprint, leap, and heave their way to triumph in the upcoming regional and state competitions in February. With the boys team being led by 2023 coach of the year, James Davis, and the girls team being led by Coach Johnson, both teams won big last season with the girls winning regionals and placing 5th at championships, and boys winning championships and coming in 2nd at regionals. Poly recently won the City Championships this January. According to Caleb Andoh and Callaway Lipkin, "It's been a lot of hard work, and the hard work has begun to pay off." They praised their teammate Elijah Isbell, sophomore, who distinguished himself and the team with 3 golds and the 4x8 relay school record!

Boys and Girls Swimming: Making Waves of Success

Last year's boys swimming team winning the city championship and girls coming in second place, as well as both teams advancing to regionals. We dive into the excitement of swimming as our athletes glide through the water with precision and power. The elegance of each stroke, the fierce competition in the lanes, and the breathtaking finishes make swimming an exhilarating sport to watch. With the excellent coaching from Ms. Vasiliki Karpodinis, Poly's current season record stands as the Baltimore City Champions!

Unleashing the Warrior Spirit: Cheer on Our Wrestling Team to Victory!

As the winter season unfolds, the mat becomes the battleground where strength, strategy, and skill collide. Our school's wrestling team is engaging in an exhilarating season with a record of 11W 3L, promising to deliver moments of grit, determination, and triumph as we approach the regional tournament. Join us in rallying behind these fierce competitors as they grapple their way to success. Coach Gibson and the Poly Wrestling team are on course to have another successful season. "We did a good job last year, now this year we are looking to do great," says coach Gibson.

Beyond Budgets: Investing in Baltimore's Educational Future

An editorial by Taijah Robinson, Morgan Washington, and Kayla Wilkins

Baltimore City Schools have long been the heart of education for thousands of students in Maryland. However, the system has faced significant challenges due to insufficient funding, impacting the quality of education provided to its students. The issue of funding in Baltimore City Schools is a critical one, influencing not only the academic outcomes of its students but also their overall well-being and future prospects.

For years, Baltimore City Schools have struggled with inadequate financial resources. This lack of funding has resulted in a variety of issues, ranging from outdated buildings to insufficient classroom materials and limited access to extracurricular activities. These challenges have disproportionately affected schools in low-income neighborhoods, exacerbating educational disparities among students.

Here in Baltimore City, there is no money set aside for clubs within the federal grants and state funds given to schools. In the opinion of many students, the neglect of extracurricular club funding undermines the overall educational experience for Baltimore's students. These clubs play a pivotal role in fostering creativity, teamwork, leadership, skills, and a sense of community and belonging among students. Sadly, many clubs face severe financial limitations or struggle due to inadequate funding.

Low club funding presents a challenge for clubs or organizations, impacting their ability to execute planned activities, events, etc. It often limits resources for essential needs like materials, venue bookings, transportation, or promotional efforts. Clubs facing low funding might need to find creative ways to maximize resources, seek alternative sources of income, or rethink their strategies to operate effectively within budget constraints. In order to have money, clubs often conduct pizza fundraisers after school, sell Double Good popcorn, sell candy grams during holiday seasons, and more. To address the funding gaps in education, collaborative efforts are essential. These efforts involve policymakers, communities, parents, and educators working together to advocate for equitable and sustainable funding.

Additionally, raising awareness about the vital role played by extracurricular clubs in a student's educational journey is essential. Advocacy efforts should aim to highlight the positive impact of these clubs on student development and academic achievement, fostering a deeper understanding of their significance.

In conclusion, the underfunding of extracurricular clubs in Baltimore City Schools poses a significant obstacle to providing a well-rounded education for students. By acknowledging the importance of these clubs and ensuring equitable distribution of resources, we can create an environment that nurtures the diverse talents and interests of students, fostering a more inclusive and enriched educational experience for all. It is imperative to recognize that investing in extracurricular clubs isn't merely an expense but an investment in the holistic growth and future success of Baltimore's youth.



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