



The Rise of Awareness

By Nyasia Brown &
Amari Lopez Cruz

Black History Month is when we celebrate the history of important people who changed the world. [But where did the idea of Black History Month come from?](#) In the summer of 1915, Carter G. Woodson thought of it after he traveled to Washington, D.C. He and four others formed the Association for the Study of African Life and History. 1926 saw the creation: [Black] History Week, which grew to become Black History Month in the 1960s. Around the world, Black History is celebrated by paying tribute to Black people who made an impact in the world.

This shows progress. However, America experiences challenges around culture in general. Racism is still a serious problem. The Black and African-American community continues to [struggle](#) with harmful stereotypes, hate speech, and [police brutality](#). The Hispanic and Latin population in America also has to deal with stereotypes, discrimination, and issues around education and employment. Many Hispanic Americans worry that [“they or someone close to them could be deported.”](#)

Americans from the Middle East, [particularly Muslims](#), have been discriminated against and stereotyped as dangerous or even terrorists. This was especially common after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.



Artwork by Parker Bamberger & Juli Akramovich

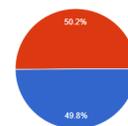
Additionally, Asian-Americans face discrimination. During the Covid-19 Pandemic, some Americans blamed Asians for starting the infectious disease and bringing it to America. As a result, violent [hate crimes against Asian Americans, including racial slurs and assault, have become more common.](#)

The future of race and culture has both negatives and positives. The negatives are people disrespecting and dehumanizing different populations because racists are scared of people who

are different from themselves. The positives in 2023 include the media showing more representation of other cultures and people. Now more than ever, there is more learning about different groups of people in the media and schools. The rise of awareness and respect for each other's races has grown rapidly from what America was in the past. As a society we have grown to be more accepting of people and we should continue walking that path.

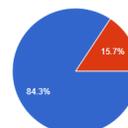
STUDENT POLL:

Do you think your culture is represented at Rippowam?



50.2% No
49.8% Yes

Is your culture important to you?



15.7% No
84.3% Yes

What Is Culture?

By Mia Davis

Culture varies throughout the world and is what defines us. But what is it?

According to the [Cambridge English Dictionary](#), culture means “the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time.” Life can be expressed through culture in various ways, but what is it even? What is this concept that supposedly defines us and writes our story of life? This discussion is being had every day and is constantly changing. But what won't change is the immense amount of culture in the world.

To start, culture isn't a one way street. It isn't this really defined term. It's an umbrella term. I would say there are two big elements under this umbrella. Surface level elements are things you can see, like faces, hair, and bodies. These things do make an impact on culture, but the impact of factors that you cannot see is far greater. What's invisible is the most important, as people rarely make opinions on things they cannot see firsthand. Like most defining traits of people aren't what you can see, it's the quality of their character which is invisible. This idea can be applied to culture.

The most defining factors of culture are what's simply not seen. It's what changes the meaning of culture within oneself. If you think about culture, you won't think about skin tone or hair color; you think about your own experience and interactions with your culture. In my opinion, culture is defined however your life says it is. You have to think about what resides within you, what you know and think. So throw out the dictionary definition. Here's a brand new one: culture is ambiguous. 🗣️

An Interview with Spanish Teachers Ms. Cedeño, Ms. Charles & Ms. Rivera



How is culture important to people?

Ms. Cedeño: “I think culture is a feeling. It represents being part of something greater than yourself. My Cuban heritage is very important to me. Cuba is an island that has had many trials and tribulations, therefore knowing I am part of a culture that has survived so much makes me feel so proud...”

Ms. Charles: “People feel they belong to a community when they share the same language. People of the same culture... share the same values, history and ideologies in the same country. Culture provides a sense of stability and security...”

Ms. Rivera: “Ultimately culture is important to everyone because it is what defines a lot of who we are as individuals and as a society. What do we value? What traditions do we keep? What do our meals look like? How do we dress? How do we see the world? How do we see ourselves? Culture impacts all aspects of our lives.”

How do you bring your culture into your classroom?

Ms. Cedeño: “I have several paintings and artifacts from Cuba in my classroom... I also have other Spanish countries represented in my classroom as well. But if you pay attention you can tell I'm Cuban and I am very proud of my culture. I also love to do a Countries project every year where 6th grade

students pick a Spanish speaking country and present facts of the country to the class. We all learn something new every year, including me.”

Ms. Charles: “I often try to bring stories of my experience as I was growing up in a different country than the United States.”

Ms. Rivera: “I share my experiences as a Latina growing up and living in Stamford and I also share Puerto Rican cultural traditions that are important to me. Most importantly, I encourage students to share their own cultures in the classroom since so many beautiful countries are represented at Rippowam.”

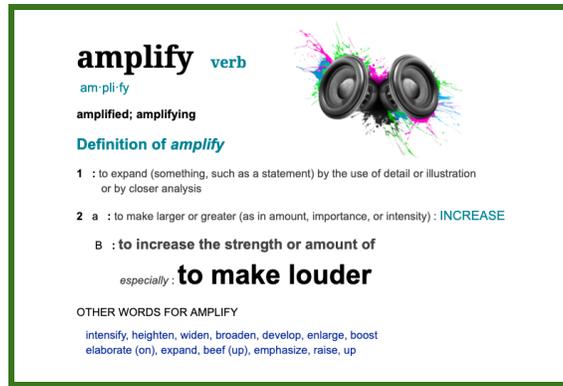
What is your favorite cultural food or dish?

Ms. Cedeño: “That is such a difficult question for me. Cuban food is my favorite but I do have a favorite dish, Arroz con Pollo (yellow rice and chicken)... I can eat Cuban food every single day!”

Ms. Charles: I have many dishes that I like in Mexican food. [One] of them [is] “Enchiladas Suizas” which are chicken tacos with a green sauce made of tomatillo...”

Ms. Rivera: “So many to choose from... I love Latin American flavors, and it's always a great day for sushi! 🗣️”

The Amplifier - Submission Information and Guidelines



What is The Amplifier?

- The Amp is a monthly publication, like a newspaper or magazine, that serves as a platform for student voice. It is run by a team of 8th grade students at Rippowam Middle School with adult support and oversight.
- The goals of The Amplifier are to **1)** ensure that students' views are heard, **2)** educate and raise awareness, and **3)** strengthen the community of students and staff here at Rippowam.

Who can contribute to the Amplifier?

- Any student of Rippowam Middle School is welcome to submit ideas, written articles or artwork.
- Once submitted, our team will review content and select material for publication.
- If a submission is not published that month, it may be considered for use in a future issue.

What are the guidelines for content submission?

- The Amplifier is all about educating and raising awareness. Written articles should *never* call out individual students or staff members with the intention of hurting, shaming or embarrassing.
 - **Lead Story (300 - 350 words):**
Lead stories should educate and raise awareness about real-world events and issues. These stories are not typically directly about Rippowam, however, they should be relevant to Rippowam's students. For example, a lead story about bullying should focus on bullying in general, across Connecticut or America, rather than in our school.
 - **Artwork:**
Calling all artists! We welcome submission of student artwork! Artwork may be related to the lead story or focus of a given issue. Stop by Room 204 or email mdesimone@stamfordct.gov for info on the next issue!
 - **Polls:**
This is an at-a-glance look at where students and staff stand on particular questions.
 - **Opinion Piece (200 - 250 words):**
Opinion pieces may focus on an aspect of Rippowam's school community and may connect directly to the Lead Story.
 - **Student & Staff Interviews (110 - 160 words):**
Interviews allow individual students and adults to share their views. We welcome suggestions and recommendations!

How to Submit Content:

- Visit Mr. DeSimone in Room 204, Ms. Lonigan in the Media Center or email us at mdesimone@stamfordct.gov.
- Please be sure to include your **name, student ID number, grade (6-8) and 7th period teacher.**