



Council member Mike Kasperzak; right, leads a group of teens in discussion during the 2004 Diversity Youth Forum at ALZA Corp. on March 5.

NORBERT VON DER GROEBEN

Talking about D-I-S-R-E-S-P-E-C-T

By Julie O'Shea

The theme of this year's Diversity Youth Forum seemed like an Aretha Franklin song, but with a twist. It was "disrespect."

More specifically, the emphasis was on the word "dis."

Roughly 100 middle and high school students at the forum last Friday talked about what it's like to be "dissed" and ways in which to curtail the unkind act.

"You might not mean anything by it," said Kenneth Lee, a student from Los Altos High School, "but it means something to somebody."

Said Kamilla Khaydarov, a student at Harker School, "Every little thing is dissected. No one says what they think anymore. Everyone's got two faces. It's not a good balance."

Unfortunately, noted many students, making fun of others has become a part of everyday life that it will be a hard cycle to break.

"Maybe we should find ways to not have history repeat itself," said Alicia Bouiware, a Mountain View High School freshman.

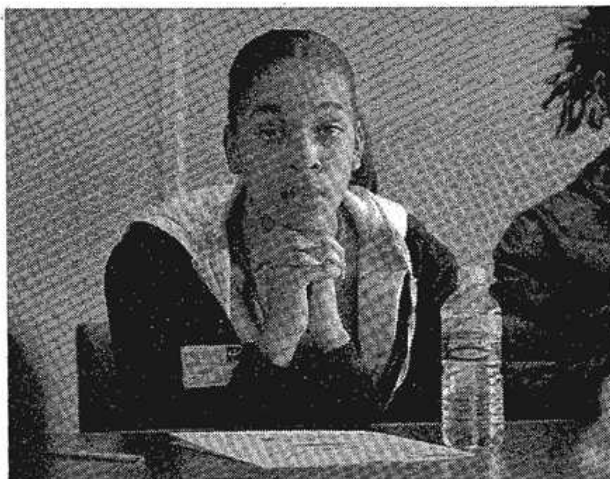
Students from Crittenden and Graham Middle Schools, Mountain View and Los Altos High Schools and others participated in the seventh annual diversity youth forum put on by the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce and Oriki Theatre. It was hosted by ALZA Corp.

"This forum is about you.

Please take it seriously," said Chike Nwoffiah, the director of Mountain View-based Oriki Theatre, in his opening remarks. "It is supposed to be a forum to get you outside of your box."

"Get to know people. Step out; step out of your box. Get to know someone else," Nwoffiah added. "There are things that tie us together." ▀

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Alicia Bouiware, a freshman at Mountain View High, was one of the roughly 100 teens to participate in last week's event.

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