

David Hill *advocates* for *social justice* in his communities

Social justice is a passion that lies at the forefront of Math Teacher and Department Head David Hill's life. Hill speaks on his journey advocating for social justice in the school and beyond, as well as his other interests.

Elena Alexander /
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In spite of varying levels of skill, Math Teacher and Department Head David Hill said hometown loyalty is what grounds his support for the Chicago Bears, Bulls, Blackhawks and White Sox.

"I'm a masochist," Hill said. "I support my Chicago teams even when they're terrible."

Hill said he grew up in Chicago, Illinois, and, after garnering many science and math credits in high school, went to Massachusetts Institute of Technology for his bachelor's degree, with a major in mechanical engineering. Hill said that he actually wanted his degree to be in math, however.

"I was encouraged to not do a math degree because like a lot of people told me, 'You [can't] get a job from that,'" he said. "So, I did mechanical engineering, and didn't want to do that at all."

While at MIT, Hill said he participated in a teaching program over the summers where he discovered his passion for educating. Thus, after graduating, Hill pursued a teaching

certification from a program in Washington D.C. called D.C. Teaching Fellows.

Hill proceeded to teach in D.C. public schools for five years and in a magnet school in Virginia for four years, before arriving at ASL. He is currently in his third year at the school as a math teacher and his first as the department head.

Throughout his life, Hill said he has picked up several passions. The first, evidently with his position at the school, is math. Hill said he always had a strength in math growing up, eventually tutoring MIT sophomores and juniors in his calculus class while a freshman himself.

"I was, you know, the quote unquote 'nerd' who did math for fun," he said. "I got made fun of for it, but I didn't care because I was like, 'I don't care. I like doing math.'"

Meanwhile, Hill said his biggest personal interest is music. Hill said – with the exception of country – he enjoys listening to all music, particularly hip-hop and jazz.

"That's my escape," he said. "That's how I kinda prepare myself for the world and allow myself to

be introspective with my thoughts."

Another major interest of Hill's is social justice, which he said stemmed from his early life experiences and plays a role in his educational goals now.

Hill said his background growing up in low-income neighborhoods and experiencing segregation caused him to confront a lot of injustice, which inspired his interest in learning about and advocating for social reform. He said the majority of his life he has observed inequity and discrepancies between how groups of people live and has then taken time to learn the history behind those realities.

"I spend a lot of my life trying to get people to understand that, you know, like wealth gaps, and like, education and achievement gaps – a lot of that is a product of... systemic, you know, institutional racism."

In his strategy to advocate for "an equitable and just society for everybody," Hill said

his first step is to educate himself, followed by others.

Hill said he has completed training and college courses and facilitated workshops surrounding social justice. At his previous school in Virginia, Hill said he held the position of Equity Lead and was in charge of cultural competency and equity work for the school.

Pertaining to racial justice work at ASL, Hill said he is faculty advisor for the Students of Color Affinity group.

"Being the faculty advisor [for the] students of color group has been good to give students a space to be able to talk about their experiences of students of color here, where they can be comfortable," he said.

Hill is also a facilitator for DEI workshops for the school faculty, this year and last, and he led a faculty DEI workshop with English Teacher Phoebe Krumich.

In terms of social justice in the wider ASL community, Hill said he aims to impact the student body by investing in DEI work.

He said he does this so that "all students are educated properly around cultural competency" and faculty and staff are also held accountable for moving forward with this work.

Specifically, Hill said an area of improvement for the school is to focus more on uncommon viewpoints, rather than all viewpoints, including dominant ones.

"What we really need is to focus on the perspectives that are uncommon, and that people don't have, to un-

derstand how there are groups of people who have privilege over others," he said. "People of color, like people in the [LGBTQ+] community, don't get their perspectives heard and their experiences heard, and they are the people who are experiencing the inequity."

Giving priority to marginalized perspectives, Hill said, may cause confusion for people from the dominant groups of a community, but he said it is necessary as these uncommon viewpoints lack recognition.

"If you're part of that culture, you might think, 'Oh, okay, like those people want to feel special,'" he said. "[But] it's like, 'No, we don't want to feel special, we just want to be considered – period.'"

Moreover, Hill said he aims to uplift uncommon perspectives in the school.

"My hope is to influence our community to prioritize the voices that are often not heard – the voices that are often silenced – and getting people to understand that, even the smallest and most well-intentioned actions and words that you may have personally, lead to silenced and marginalized people," he said.

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- David Hill,
Math Teacher and
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