



For a student's perspective on Foundation Day, high school senior, Vincent Chow, was selected to write an article. Vincent shares what he took away from the experience after listening to our distinguished alumnus on May 20, 2019.

It goes without saying that Wyoming High School is an excellent institution. Although it has its faults, as an educational establishment, Wyoming ranks among the top schools in the state, and even the nation as a whole. But for many students, it can be difficult to envision how exactly a good education here at Wyoming can translate into a fruitful career and fulfilling life outside of the city. Wyoming's nature as a socially-isolated community does little to remedy this matter- but what does help address the issue is Foundation Day, the High School's annual event where alumni from previous graduating years come back to the school to give advice and answer questions from the current pupils. Here, the full benefits of a Wyoming education can become clear, in the form of a successful Wyoming graduate who can explain how their education helped them achieve their accomplishments and propel them to greater heights.

On May 20th, Wyoming High School hosted Wyoming alum Philip Arnold Jr. for this year's Foundation Day. Mr. Arnold, of the class of 1964, has worked in many positions in his life- Cold War spy for the US Air Force, marketing director or consultant for firms like Oracle and Bank of America, and Board of Parole commissioner in his own Contra Costa County, to name just a few. But in his Foundation Day speech, Mr. Arnold put most of his job experience aside, and opted instead for a much more personal, intimate, and inspiring approach as he addressed his experience growing up black in the US during the era of segregation.

Going into Mr. Arnold's speech, expectations were already high. The Pendery Auditorium was buzzing over the previous announcement that the high school media center would be receiving a new renovation, becoming the "Dan Jones Research and Innovation Center." But whether listeners were beaming with joy while considering the new facility's potential or balking at the prospect of attending school with construction nearby for many months more, Mr. Arnold quickly grabbed the audience's attention with the opening of his speech, as he recounted stories of growing up in what was at the time an apartheid country.

Over the course of the next forty-or-so minutes, Mr. Arnold walked through the story of his life, detailing his childhood, his family's roots in Wyoming, and his experience in a newly integrated school system after *Brown v. Board of Education*. Mr. Arnold continued through his military service after high school, his college education and marriage to his wife, and the process of raising a family of his own. The speech was well-structured, interspersing Mr. Arnold's personal tales with brief historical recaps of what was going on in the world at the time, which helped to keep audience members grounded in the narrative Mr. Arnold was establishing. Engaging topics such as Mr. Arnold's wildly successful high school sports career helped keep listeners focused, as did a bold and boisterous element of humor- for example, when Mr. Arnold stated that his grandmother had been a "drug dealer," before explaining how she attended college for pharmacy and subsequently ran a drugstore in Cincinnati. By the end of the speech, though the presentation had run twenty minutes over schedule, my friends and I still felt like the speech had been an enriching and enjoyable experience.

Considering Mr. Arnold's speech in retrospect, I find myself personally left with two main takeaways, though there are many other lessons to be learned from his address. My first takeaway is a sense of reassurance- as a graduating senior, I'm about to move off to a college more than three hundred miles away from Ohio, and while I'm excited to find myself in new places and have new experiences, I'm also apprehensive about leaving behind the familiarity and comfort of Wyoming. Mr. Arnold's speech, describing his own journey after high school, how he went with the military across the Atlantic Ocean and used his own skills to succeed in an unfamiliar place, have certainly helped assuage some of my nerves as of late.

But more importantly, Mr. Arnold's speech contained some content that I think many in the high school will find personally challenging. Mr. Arnold did not gloss over his experience with racism in Wyoming. He directly addressed his struggles in an integrated school post Brown v. Board of Education- the loneliness, the slurs, the bullying. Mr. Arnold detailed how he'd been instructed not to interact with the white girls at the school, and how during an away-game for school football, he was unable to stay at the hotel the team had booked. This perspective on racism- racism that happened *here*, in Wyoming, Ohio- is one which I found much more personal than most social studies lessons or discussions, and I think the same will be said by many others in the audience. It's not a subject that's commonly broached in large settings like this, even when it's simply addressing the widespread issue of racism and not specifically detailing how it occurred in this community. I felt that this aspect of Mr. Arnold's speech stuck out as one of the most powerful.

Then what of the initial question- Foundation Day and how it helps students realize the benefits of a Wyoming education. Well, Mr. Arnold was loud and clear in that regard as well. He dedicated time to thank multiple teachers throughout his speech, both from the black-only Oak Avenue school before the process of integration, and from his high school experiences. And more so, Foundation Day enabled Philip Arnold Jr. to pass his own wisdom to Wyoming students looking to enter an ever-uncertain world. The laughter and applause which accompanied the conclusion of Mr. Arnold's speech were sure signs that Wyoming students appreciated the chance to hear from a man who found so much success and fulfillment in spite of his tumultuous schooling and youth.