

# SCHOLAR VOICES

Spring 2018



Original art by Stephanie M.  
Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 10

## INTRODUCTION

Judith Berry Griffin, President, Pathways to College

Welcome to the 2018 issue of *Scholar Voices*, the literary magazine of Pathways to College.

Perhaps more than any other in recent memory, 2018 has been a year to read about, write about and celebrate young people exercising leadership - truly, a year to remember. Pathways teachers and Scholars have talked together not only about 2018, but also other years and times when young children and teenagers have acted with courage and determination, leading efforts to bring about needed and positive change in our country. We know about their leadership because it was written about, and pictures were taken of their activities. Writers and photographers focused the attention of people everywhere on what these children and teenagers did, why they chose to do it, why it took courage, and what happened as a result. And history was recorded, for all of us to read and remember, as it was happening.

One series of events that Scholars and their Pathways teachers discussed was *The Children's Crusade*. In Birmingham, Alabama in 1963 thousands of children, some as young as seven or eight, volunteered to participate in peaceful demonstrations and marches to support Martin Luther King's mission to end discrimination against people of color. The children's courage as the youngest leaders in this movement for equal rights was so inspiring to so many people that laws were passed making segregation illegal, and the lives of millions of people across the United States and around the world were affected.

Scholars and teachers discussed another series of similar events that began in March of this year and are continuing to take place. After a gunman entered their school and killed fourteen of their classmates, high school students in Parkland, Florida, led a nationwide and international *March for Our Lives* in support of better gun control. Hundreds of thousands of young people and their supporters around the world have joined in, and other activities are in the planning stages.

The people who wrote about these efforts, and other efforts like them, spread their messages to many thousands whom the students would never meet, but who would be informed and inspired by their actions and perhaps be encouraged to also support or lead social causes that they believe in. So the eyes of the nation can be opened through the courageous activism of its youngest citizens. Leading and writing: close links in a chain that can alter the course of history.

***Scholar Voices*** was created for and by Pathways to College Scholars as a place to express and share their ideas, through writing, art and photography, with each other and with readers both within and beyond our Pathways family. We know that writing is not always easy, but it is always important. It brings gifts of knowledge, of pleasure, of recording, and remembering and making history. It doesn't matter if your efforts end up published in books, newspapers, or online, or if you keep them in a journal or share them as messages with friends. All of your efforts are important.

So to our Scholars: continue to tell your stories in writing, speaking and art of all kinds. In whatever form you choose to share them, your ideas are more important than you will ever know.

We are your cheering section! Keep thinking! Keep recording your ideas! Keep sharing! And keep leading!

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## WINNER - POETRY

### *My Country, My Life Even Without Sovereignty*

Aishat O., West Side Campus, Grade 9

Nigeria, my country, my life  
Freedom is a slave without an owner,  
Or a person without a passport;  
Not having a care in the World.  
Today, I am red, tomorrow green,  
When am I going to be stable?  
Corruption today, violence tomorrow.  
Even I am one of the most populous countries in Africa,  
white banners Green-white-green flags flail;  
In the airstrips that promise loyalty and honor, faith  
Asleep, every negro dreams about the wellness of Nigeria  
Awake, every negro thinks about how to stop corruption,  
Every citizen struggles and fights for their freedom,  
They live in poverty and,  
Even wish to attend school,  
So they will be able fight away poverty.  
But not to think about the politicians,  
They embezzle the country's money.  
Nigeria, when are you going to rise up against corruption?  
But with all that is happening in my country,  
Nigeria will be my country forever.  
But one day I know, someone will rise,  
And fight for the freedom of Nigeria.  
I know All Nigerians once lived with freedom  
But now everything has turned upside down.  
Nigerians leave and are still badly crippled by  
the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination.  
One day, Nigeria will be a great beacon.  
And will come out as a joyous daybreak, and bring an end to the long  
night of our captivity.  
All Negros will be free,  
And Nigeria will be free again.  
Nigeria was once free,  
And will be free again.

## WINNER - STORY

### *Egregious Nerd*

Shah M., East Side High School, Grade 11

Thomas trembled in fear.

He did not want to go in the room. The boys were pushing him to go in. The school was empty. He didn't have a choice. When he opened the door, he was shocked. The room smelled musty and rotten. After he walked in a few steps, the boys ran out of the room, closed and locked the door and laughed.

Thomas was scared and asked to be let out. He was sweating, even though the room was cold. He heard a sound and looked back, then screamed. The boys were scared by the scream and ran.

This started Thomas' first day of high school. He was excited for the new chapter of his life. Thomas entered the school and felt a smack in the back of the head. When he turned, he saw three boys, Jaden, Will, and Asher.

They were sophomores and were bigger than Thomas. He didn't want to get into trouble, so he ignored them. As time passed, Thomas learned that those boys were known as a bully gang in the school. Thomas was a good student and was known as a nerd. One day, the boys told Thomas to meet them after school by a storeroom.

There were rumors about the storeroom - that a girl had committed suicide there. Staff members said they saw the girl near the window. After the incident, the room locked by itself from the inside and could not be opened, even with keys. Thomas was scared to go in, but he didn't want to get beaten up. He saw the boys were there and his heart beat faster. They told him to enter the room - or else.

The next morning, after the boys left Thomas in the storeroom, they were anxious about what happened to him - not because they were not worried about him, but because they didn't want to get in trouble.

They were shocked to see him walking and acting as if nothing happened.

During lunch Thomas came to them.

"There's no ghost," Thomas said, laughing. "Those were only rumors."

"What was the scream about then?" Asher asked.

"I just wanted to scare you guys," Thomas said. "You can come with me after school and I can show you that ghost doesn't exist. Come only if you're brave enough."

This last sentence hurt the boys' egos. They agreed to go and met him at the storeroom after school. The storeroom was open from the inside, but they didn't let Thomas know they were scared. Everything was fine — until a strong gust of wind slammed the door shut.

There was no wind, but everyone felt it. Everyone was nervous, except Thomas.

"Don't be afraid," Thomas said. "Let's explore the room. Are you brave enough?"

Thomas laughed again.

"Shut your mouth," Asher replied, "unless you want some punches to your pretty face."

Asher walked towards the bookshelf. Thomas broke the silence again.

"Hey, Asher," Thomas said, "do you know Laura?"

All the boys were looking at Asher.

"What about her," Asher asked Thomas, "and how do you know her?"

"Yesterday, when you locked me in this room," Thomas said, "I heard a noise from the bookshelf where Asher is standing. I heard someone calling my name. I saw a body of a girl. It was rotten. I could only tell who it was by her hair. She opened her eyes and they were blood red. I felt pain in my chest and felt dizzy. I knew it was a heart attack and my body fell to the ground. There was no one to help me. I died a painful death. I still had my whole life. But it all came to an end because of you three."

The moment Thomas stopped talking, Asher looked behind the bookshelf and saw Thomas's body. Suddenly, the room smelled rotten.

Will ran towards the door. Laura's image appeared.

"Will," she asked him, "don't you want to upload more of my photos?"

Will ran back to Asher and Jaden.

"Please forgive us," Asher whispered to Thomas. "We won't bully, ever again."

"You should've thought about that before blackmailing Laura or forcing me in this room," Thomas said. "Laura was helpless. I helped her get justice."

The three boys were crying, but Laura didn't have mercy on them.

The next morning, a teacher saw blood coming from that storeroom and called the police. This time, the room opened. The room was full of blood and four bodies. Next to Thomas's body, there was a note.

It read: "I'm happy that I helped her."



## WINNER - ESSAY

### *The Helping Hand*

Josias M., James Hillhouse High School, Grade 11

Have you ever been walking down the hallways and all you can hear are words you don't understand? Have you ever been given a piece of paper and all you can see are words you can't read? Have you ever been asked a question and all you can think of to say is "yes," because you don't know what you've been asked? There's a scientist who developed a cure to end those problems. His name is Fidel Kazadi.

Kazadi is originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Central Africa. He was born in the city of Lubumbashi and grew up in the country's capital, Kinshasa. He officially arrived in America in 2000, all alone, leaving his family behind. He graduated from the University of Kinshasa with degrees in English language and literature, and then continued at Southern Connecticut State University, where he earned a master's degree in teaching English as a second language.

Kazadi now teaches English to those who cannot write it and barely speak it. He is also known as a teacher who doesn't teach just for the sake of teaching. He says, "Impacting the lives of people and helping them towards their success is the key to me. When I get in the classroom, my objectives are preparing students to be responsible and knowledgeable citizens. Every time when I get in the class, I always tried to bring something that's going to change their lives, and make their future brighter. It's always a joy for me to see my students succeeding in their lives."

When he was immigrating to the United States, Kazadi had a lot of help. Today, he is also known as "The Helping Hand." Kaitlyn Goodwin, Kazadi's fellow ESL teacher says of him, "Mr. Kazadi helps me in the classroom with students who I cannot help. He is extremely helpful to the students. He is able to speak languages that no one else can. And he creates strong relationships with his students."

Kazadi's students describe him as unforgettable, because of the way he provides help.

"Mr. Kazadi is a great teacher, he loves his students," says Carlos Ynoa. "When I first walked in his classroom, I was lost, I didn't know anything. Due to him, I came out of it knowing everything that I needed to know."

Kazadi encourages his students to never let their hands drop. He often cites one of his favorite quotes: "Nothing is new under the sun," meaning that anything that happens to anyone happened to others before them, and it will happen to others afterward. If one person survived an adverse situation, others will too.

"Mr. Kazadi helped me to see the importance of never giving up on anything you are trying to achieve," says Aline Mbaga, another of Kazadi's former students.

Kazadi is truly an outstanding teacher, unforgettable, funny and a helping hand.

I know for sure. Once upon a time, I, too was his student.

## WINNER - MEMOIR

### *Mixed and Matched*

Lyric M., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 9

I'm black. I'm white. I'm Honduran. I'm Indian. Some people think I'm **"full African American."** Others think I'm not black enough; that I **"act white."** I'm not Honduran because I don't speak Spanish.

*Sometimes people say, "You have long hair for a black girl."* When I tell people I'm Indian some say, *"That explains why you have 'good' hair,"* as if they just solved a math problem.

All this hurts. I mean it used to, but now I'm more annoyed. Matter of fact, I'm angry.

Why does it matter *"what"* I am? Why is everyone trying to figure me out?

There's no need to figure me out. I've got me figured out. I'm not a math equation that needs to be solved.

What does it mean to be **"full African American?"** There's no such thing. When **"African Americans"** were slaves, many women were raped or forced to have children by white men. And **"African American?"** Seriously? Don't try to sugarcoat it or censor yourself. Just say black. I'm not gonna get offended.

I would like to know what a white person "acts" like. You can't act like a race. Everyone has his or her own personality. You can't judge someone based on race. That's like walking past someone black and assuming he or she is in a gang or has been to prison.

*"You're not Honduran," some people tell me, "because you don't speak Spanish."*

They're right, I don't. But I understood it when I was little. Then when I went to kindergarten no teachers talked to me in Spanish; all they did was teach me English. But I was really supposed to be in a Spanish class.

*"You have long hair for a black girl,"* other people tell me. A lot of black girls have long hair, I say. You just can't tell because of something called shrinkage.

*"Oh, that explains why you have good hair," they respond.*

The fact that I'm Indian has nothing to do with my hair. I have "nice" hair because I actually take care of it. I trim it every three months; I wash it when it needs to be washed. I do hair treatments every now and then. I used to straighten my hair every time I got home from swimming class. And when it actually was in its natural state, my ends were straight. My hair looked shoulder length but if I measured my healthy hair it probably was up to my ear. So no, that's *not* why I have "*good hair*."

My ethnicity is mine. Not for anyone else to tell me who or "what" I am.

I'm not one thing. I'm mixed, but to me, they all match.

## **WINNER - STORY**

### ***The Story of the Twin Brothers***

Osman F., West Side Campus, Grade 9

Once upon a time, there were two brothers who liked to help others who were facing difficulties. They lived in a small town called **"NEVERIDE."** The brothers were twins; the older one was called Joe and the younger one was called Sami. They liked doing things together. They were called compassionate because they helped people. They both liked helping people but the older one helped in order to make money while the younger one did it because he was a selfless person.

One day a visitor came to them for help. After helping, the older brother told the visitor,

***"Excuse me, please; you can't just come empty-handed. You need to give us something. Everything comes with a price."***

***"What are you doing? That's not good. Can you just stop, please?"*** said the younger brother.

The younger brother then said to the visitor, ***"We are done. Please, you can go now."***

But the oldest said, ***"Excuse me, I already told you that you must give us something before you go."***

The younger brother whispered in his brother's ear, ***"We don't need to take anything from helpless visitors. We are doing this for free, not for money, because that's what we were taught by Mom and Dad."***

The younger one again told the visitor to go. After the visitor left the brothers started arguing.

***"Do you have a problem with what I'm doing? Huhhh? Do you know better than me? You'd better keep quiet when I'm doing my stuff,"*** said the oldest brother.

***"Why do I need to stop what I'm doing; you are doing the wrong thing. I can't watch you do the wrong thing in front of me,"*** said the younger brother.

They continued arguing. And all of a sudden, it turned into a fight.

The oldest one told his brother, ***"I help people so that we can get money from them to buy expensive things."***

The younger one advised his brother, ***"Look - you have to change your behavior."***

But the older brother did not listen to his brother's advice and continued taking money for helping others until everybody noticed his behavior.

Finally, all the people in the town started hating him. He then realized that he had to change his behavior, so he went to his brother for advice.

***"Brother, today I have come to you to tell you I'm sorry,"*** said the oldest brother.

The younger brother said, ***"You have done nothing wrong to me. You did it to the people. The only thing you can do is to apologize to the people because you did them wrong."***

***"But how?"*** said the oldest brother.

***"Just do what I told you and you will gain back their trust,"*** said the younger brother.

So the younger brother helped his twin to get back to his senses.

The older brother went to the people and asked for forgiveness, but the people did not forgive him on the first day. He went back a second day and the people still refused forgiveness. Everyone was waiting to see whether he would come again the next day to determine if he was really serious about his apology. He did come the next day, so finally they all accepted the apology and forgave him.

***"We were waiting to see whether you were serious,"*** the people said. ***"At last, the lost soul has come back home."***

They gave a surprise party for the oldest brother, and finally, everyone came together. They all lived a happy and a peaceful life in the small, unknown town which now has a new name: ***"PEACEFUL TOWN."***

## WINNER - PHOTOGRAPHY

### *Life is Your Canvas*

Ananjellis R., Arts High School, Grade 11



Your hands are the paint brush with the power  
to control the canvas of life.  
Paint bright. Paint proud. Make your future your masterpiece.

## HONORABLE MENTION - POETRY

### *YELLOW*

Hulamatou D., Arts High School, Grade 11

She is the color of happiness.  
And the color of energy.  
Yet Miss Yellow is under-appreciated.

She warns you of the dangers that lurk ahead on the road,  
And sometimes reminds you of your own cowardice.  
And, she's under-appreciated.

She is what gives your skin that golden glowing tan,  
And what pops up each Spring when the sunflowers grow.  
But, she's under-appreciated.

This combination of red and green, makes your day bright on dark or rainy days.  
She is the paint on the walls of the parents who declined the gender reveal cake idea.  
Still, she is under-appreciated.

She deserves SO much more.  
The color Yellow is always under-appreciated and consistently beautiful.



## HONORABLE MENTION - MEMOIR

### *How Could This Be?*

Sumayah B., James Hillhouse High School, Grade 12

"Sorry, I know you don't want to, but the only way you'll be able to have any children is if you take birth control."

I sat alone in the cold office just staring blindly out of the window blurring out the rest of the world around me. I was trying to make sense of what Laura, my midwife, just said.

*How could this be?*

*It just sounds so contradictory.*

"No thank you," I whispered, after a few seconds, "but I'll call if I have a change of heart."

I walked out of the office that day and sat in the lobby crying, as my mind raced. I first learned about Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), when I was diagnosed with it two years ago. It is a syndrome where many cysts grow on the ovaries.

Later that week, I felt so pressured that I called my midwife. As I tell her I am going to take the medication, I hear her smiling on the other end of the phone.

The thought of taking birth control is abnormal to me. I have been taught the sole purpose of this medication is to prevent pregnancy, not to treat a syndrome. I remember being in eighth grade Googling the symptoms that I was feeling, as my heart began to pound out of my chest and my eyes started to water. PCOS emerged as one possibility for my discomfort. What really concerned me was that a common side effect of this symptom was infertility. I know it seems silly for a 14-year-old to be concerned about infertility. However, I am not your "average" teenager. Having children of my own is one of my biggest dreams. So to have "Dr. Google" shoot that down was heartbreaking.

Overwhelmed with thoughts of birth and infertility at the age of 15, I slowly became consumed with natural water birthing. As I was researching this, I was coping with my concern about my syndrome. Then, I thought, *Why not help other people deliver their babies?* Especially if there is a chance that I may not be able to have my own one day.

I want to give back to the world. Helping other women who share my struggle would provide me with purpose and a legacy. By tending to newborn babies and women, pregnant or not, I would ensure that no young lady has to be in my shoes walking into a midwife's office by themselves, worried. To extend my research and commitment, I've done an internship at Yale-New Haven Hospital working alongside nurses and patient care associates, building a solid network of connections. In addition, this experience has provided me a more in-depth experience with newborn babies, their mothers, and the hospital setting.

Furthermore, my religious identity as a Muslim has impacted my desire to help. I want other young Muslim females to know they can advocate for themselves and not feel ashamed. Part of my Islamic religion requires us to cover ourselves in front of men. There's a level of shyness and discomfort some of us feel addressing other people and issues. I have the strength of character and intelligence to make a difference in the lives of a generation — working with mothers and babies.

## HONORABLE MENTION - ESSAY

### ***My Name is Mohamed and I am NOT a Terrorist: Prejudice against Muslims is "the Last Sanctioned Racism"***

Mohamed N., James Hillhouse High School, Grade 11

My heart has been broken and my tears fall like rain seeing or hearing people calling me or any other Muslim a terrorist.

It makes me feel like we are in a different world. All the people from around the world should be aware of the apocalyptic terrorist attack that happened in the United State on September 11, 2001. They should be aware of the sadness it brought to at least 5,000 families.

But the profiling and stereotyping of Middle Eastern people, a result of that event, must stop. We all know and hear that the 9/11 attackers were Muslims. However, it doesn't mean that since those particular terrorists — who had no heart — were Muslim that all others Muslims are terrorists.

Why is being Islamophobic acceptable? The call for a temporary ban on Muslim immigration tramples all over "American values" and everything we stand for, including the Constitution, which protects freedom of religion for U.S. citizens.

Newspaper headlines regularly print the words "Islam" and "Muslim" next to words like "fanatic," "fundamentalist," "militant," "terrorist" and "violence." Violent acts such as the Iranian Revolution, the Gulf War, 9/11, Syrian Civil War, and other events in Southwest Asia get a lot of negative attention, making many non-Muslims think that this is all that Islam is.

Many non-Muslims think most Muslims are terrorists, if not all of them. However, out of 1.6 billion Muslims in the world, very few are extremist.

The terrorists who call themselves Muslims and kill people in the name of Islam and Jihad are not Muslims because the Holy Quran — the book all Muslims must follow — states that, "if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to speed mischief in the land — it would be as if he killed all humankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all humankind."

The people who are using the Quran as evidence for killing people are twisting it to make it say what they want. Terrorist groups like ISIS are saying that they are Islamic. However, in Islam, there

are very strict rules for going to war. These are rules of conduct collected from many hadith, or sayings of the Prophet Mohammed in Islam, including: *"Do not wish for an encounter with the enemy; pray to God to grant you security; but when you [are forced to] encounter them, exercise patience"* and *"No one may punish with fire except the Lord of Fire."*

Which one of these and many other rules has ISIS not broken?

I hope one day soon people will realize that it isn't the fault of Muslims in America that a terrorist group in another country carries out an attack. It isn't anyone's fault except for that terror group.

Nobody hates terrorists more than Muslim themselves. That's why it brings tears to my eyes when people call me a "terrorist."

My name is Mohamed, and I am NOT a terrorist.

## HONORABLE MENTION - POETRY

### *Guardian Angel*

Karla G., Arts High School, Grade 10

You are my guardian angel.

You have dropped the shield of protection you were given to hold in front of me.

You no longer have my trust.

You never seem to listen,

Refuse to hear why it is so important to stop.

A conversation with you turns into complete silence.

Not a single word said, but our thoughts surround our heads so loudly.

You are my guardian angel,

Told to protect me from all evil, yet deceived by it so easily.

Your liquid friend who sits so comfortably in your hand,

Your friend that you refuse to let go.

You are my guardian angel.

When will the time come when you finally understand,

That friends aren't everything you need.

Do you even know what sober is anymore?

When will it be too late?

You *were* my guardian angel.

### ***The Future***

Tiffany G., West Side Campus, Grade 9

The Future  
Time is delicate  
Awakening as we speak  
The sun goes down  
And comes back up  
A routine that we keep  
It is frightening  
That a new day follows  
When we still think about the past  
Nothing in life comes easy  
Hold my breath, and pray that it lasts  
The future  
Which is unknown  
Hope is in my heart  
That something good will come along.

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### ***Untitled***

Tucksinh S., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 11



Remnants of a generation past.

## *The Dream Lives On*

David T., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 10

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has been quoted as saying, "*If a man has not discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live.*"

As we approach the 50th anniversary of Dr. King's death, I ask myself what I have learned from his life that I can use as a model for how I can live my life. What specific lessons can I take from his examples and incorporate into my life, now and in the future? How have Dr. King's dreams for a better tomorrow continued to live on nearly 50 years after his death?

Dr. King fought for what he thought he deserved. This can be a model for me to never give up on my dreams, to be hard working and to eventually complete my life goals. The lessons Dr. King has taught me include respecting people, never giving up on your dreams, and walking a peaceful path.

In the future, hopefully we can all do this to eventually have a nice and peaceful world. Dr. King's dreams for a better tomorrow continue to live on nearly 50 years after his death because some people are still fighting for the rights they deserve. I believe that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. had a major impact when he led the Civil Rights movement because he kept encouraging people to keep protesting for their rights and they did not give up.

In the spring of 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. organized a demonstration in downtown Birmingham, Alabama. Entire families attended. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was jailed along with large numbers of his supporters, but the event drew nationwide attention. Through his activism and inspirational speeches, King played an important role in ending the legal segregation of African-American citizens in the United States, and the creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. King received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, among several other honors. However, King was criticized by black and white clergy alike for taking risks and endangering the children who attended the demonstration.

King was assassinated in April 1968, and continues to be remembered as one of the most influential and inspirational African-American leaders in history.

## *Don't Speak*

Antonella S., Arts High School, Grade 11

No one really understood why I never spoke.  
They thought I was weird  
and that terrified me.  
I wanted to speak  
Just not what they wanted me to speak about  
I believed in love,  
but I guess I had another definition.  
I wanted to speak about me,  
and who I wanted to be,  
but I didn't speak.

How I wanted to feel was wrong  
What I wanted to be was shameful  
I thought it was a phase too.  
I questioned why I felt like this.  
I kept saying I was okay,  
But then again,  
I didn't speak.

I wasn't fine,  
I was broken.  
My heart was shattered glass  
I felt alone when there were hundreds of people surrounding me.  
It's too late now,  
Too much blood has fallen from the wrist  
Of people ashamed for who they love and kiss  
I guess that's what I should have said...



## *My Best Ability*

Kenneth C., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 12

I'd like to start off by saying I was always different from others growing up. I was into science fiction — superheroes, different dimensions, and multiverse theories.

Since I'm an only child, I had to entertain myself. Not many of my family members were my age, or even present, to play with. I mostly went outside to the back of my great-grandmother's house to climb the trees, fences, and cartwheel up and down in the yard. Life was so fun, but still lonely.

Once my mother and I moved, suddenly I was more of an inside person. Before I knew it, high school had crept up on me and had taken my youth. But I wasn't involved with pretty much of anything around this time. Freshman and sophomore year I was quiet. Of course I had peers I talked to and associated with, but when they'd ask me things like, "When are we gonna chill?" or "What are you doing over break?" or say, "Let's get together this weekend," I wouldn't really have a response other than, "I'll let you know," or "I'm gonna get back to you."

I tried to be socially active, but that didn't really work. I was usually with my close friends after hours when I got out of school. Then came my junior year and things changed. I started doing a sport, branching out and taking more of an initiative to do things for my own benefit. That may not sound like much of a big deal, but in my eyes it was one of the most courageous things I've done with my life.

Running track was one of the best decisions I ever made. It expanded my circle of companionship. Track was also an outlet for me, a stress reliever. It has given me a sense of belonging, and being a part of something more than just running around a track with a bunch of people I go to school with. My first meet was life-changing, nerve wracking, and lively. I didn't know what to expect. The team hadn't even received uniforms yet. Of course we still ran, but our team wasn't really coordinated with the attire. Still, I knew I had to step out on that line. My first event was a relay and I was first leg.

"Thank God for that at least," I thought to myself, "I can get this over with quicker." My confidence then wasn't the greatest, but I couldn't let that get to me.

Running in my first meet was nothing compared to when I won my first high-jump match. Jumping is a completely different skill in track. There's a certain way to go about jumping and I don't just mean

the running up, and making the curved turn to line up and jump over the bar, or even the leap over the bar itself. You must have a feel for it.

The height of the bar was five feet, 11 inches and I was the last one to jump. We jumpers from all the competing schools were familiar with each other because this wasn't the first time we'd competed against one another.

As swiftly as I had been jumping for the previous heights, it wasn't enough for me to get over. I did and only one other jumper did. I earned third place. I was still so proud to jump to my best ability.

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### ***Different Colors***

Nardia A., West Side Campus, Grade 10.



As different colors of ink make a picture beautiful, why do not different colors of people make the world beautiful? Stop racism.

## ***EDUCATION***

Aishat O., West Side Campus, Grade 9

Malcolm X once stated, "Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

This quote explains that education is compulsory in the developed world, yet so many of us don't appreciate it enough. We should value our education, and work harder because it adds value to our lives. There are many positive outcomes of education, but most of them come under the two banners of allowing us to develop personally, and improving our potential professional opportunities.

Education reduces poverty in a number of ways. It creates employment opportunities. Through employment, one can afford a decent living. Education helps to increase economic security, create income opportunities, and improve the livelihood of the economically disadvantaged by providing sustainable environmental management mechanisms. Today, anyone who receives education further alleviates poverty through skills acquired during the learning process, including carpentry, plumbing and masonry (stonework). One can acquire these skills through technical and vocational training.

Schooling is one of the basic requirements for job applications. Without reaching a certain level of education, getting a job is almost impossible. Former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan elaborated more on this statement by explaining that, "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress in every society, in every family."

Coaching helps to reduce poverty and promote employment, which also provides job opportunities for educated people. Putting acquired knowledge into use can only foster science and technology, including new ideas to improve the standard of living and make things easier by improving techniques and types of equipment used in carrying out daily activities.

Educated people are health conscious and live longer than their counterparts because they engage in healthy habits such as eating balanced diets, exercising regularly, and going for regular medical check-ups. Education serves to create room for technological advancement in the field of medicine and agriculture. These advancements have led to an improvement in people's general health and an increased life expectancy.

Detractors might argue that formal education does not benefit students. They might argue that today, a quality education has become

a means for discrimination and that education does not bring income — without education, someone can still make it in life. These opinions are absolutely wrong.

If an individual is educated, and he or she does not apply his or her acquired skills in dealing with problems, financial or other types, or can't technically solve problems, there is no way that individual can succeed.

Education is the only means of alleviating poverty, improving people's health, and increasing economic growth. Improving literacy levels in marginalized societies will improve human living standards. This development increases people's potential and allows them to form good relationships.

Without education, one cannot succeed. Education changes and develops individuals, communities and societies and eventually, the entire world. Education never ends, no matter how old people are, and learning will never cease.

How could education have a negative impact on an individual?

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### ***Put It Down***

Zakeema W., East Side High School, Grade 12

Put it down, why is it loaded  
Provoked by your past, you don't have to show it.  
Put it down, please don't pull that trigger  
31 kids in a class, they have dreams of becoming bigger.  
Put it down, stop the gun violence,  
From shootings in schools to street gang violence.  
Put it down, let's talk about this,  
Signs of depression, suicide,  
Please don't take that risk.  
Put it down, we can work this out,  
We don't want to see you go down with 25 to life,  
No getting out.  
Put it down, enough is enough.

## *Andrew Carnegie: An American Hero?*

Rashod D., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 10

I choose to challenge the claim, "Andrew Carnegie should be considered a hero to the working people." Carnegie put his workers in poor working conditions. Carnegie also paid his workers almost nothing. He cared more about charities than his workers.

Carnegie put his workers in such terrible conditions his workers had to go on strike. His way of dealing with the workers on strike was going on vacation and letting one of his head employees deal with the problem using violence. His workers worked 12 hours a day with rarely a day off fighting through poor conditions each and every day. Carnegie pushed his workers to work more hours and lowered their wages. When a machine exploded and killed several workers, he seemed to care more about the loss of production than the death of his workers.

Carnegie was the richest man in his time, but refused to pay his workers fairly. He pushed his workers to work more for less money, which some did. He gave his money to charities instead of his workers. He made donations to libraries and foundations all around the world. He spent more money on trips than he did his workers. He only cared about his product and being able to be the most reliable steel producer.

Carnegie cared a lot about charities even more so than his workers. He gave a lot of money to various charities even though his workers worked for more than 13 hours a day, in terrible conditions. He founded the Carnegie Institution to fund scientific research and with a \$10 million donation, established a pension fund for teachers, which is good, but he could've used that pay his workers. During his lifetime Carnegie gave away \$350 million. In the end he gave all his money away.

Carnegie was not really a hero to the working people, but he really changed the world in an enormous way. If he didn't do what he did, we wouldn't have the libraries in his name that are open to every race and culture. He also helped produce steel in the most efficient way.

## ***Women Strong***

Vashu P., West Side Campus, Grade 10



A century ago, women were treated like puppets.  
My sister has the ability to do anything she wants; she's free.

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## ***"I'm an Artist! Who are You?" (A Tribute to Emily Dickinson)***

Sherell P., Arts High School, Grade 12

I'm an Artist! Who are you?  
Are you - an Artist - too?  
So there's plenty of Us!  
Don't show! They Steal - you know!

How Dull - to follow - normalcy  
How Weak - like a phone  
To tell one's artistry - the Lively arts -  
To an admirable Mix!

## ***Aveiro the Magnificent Boy***

Vashu P., West Side Campus, Grade 10

6th October 2009 - Angelwood High School is an environment with a vast array of different beliefs and mediums through which these beliefs are presented. Students can get lost in an overwhelming sea of influential ideas and concepts not necessarily intended for their eyes and ears. Aveiro the new sophomore was looking for his next class, which was Algebra II. He asked one of the staff members who was standing beside a classroom where room 220 was. The staff member directed, "Just take the first left, then your second right." Aveiro, in his wheelchair, steered himself toward his next class. Aveiro had a bountiful amount of intelligence. He solved problems quickly. When other students were starting their worksheets, he was already finished with three questions.

Aveiro was a stupendous student. He had a good G.P.A., and 65 hours of community service. One thing he lacked was participation in sports, not impossible but difficult for him as he was disabled. His one mistake cost him dollars to pay. He lost sensation in his legs due to playing soccer. In 8th grade, during a match, a defender brutally tackled both of his legs. Just after the match he fell while going up an escalator, ending up hitting his knees on the edge of the stairs which made him disabled.

10th October 2009 - During lunch time, he was sitting alone and lonely as always. Then a boy advanced toward him. "Come sit with us, don't be lonely -- and I am not asking you, I am commanding you. Come on, let me help you get to our table," the boy said him with a sly smile. The boy wheeled Aveiro to his table. The table was full of good, smart but sarcastic people. The table was like an 'anti-racism' group; there were all types of people: Africans, Indians, and Americans, etc. The boy said to Aveiro, "My name is Patel, how about yours?" Aveiro replied, "I am Aveiro." The people exchanged basic information, cracked jokes and had fun. Patel said this last thing to Aveiro: "Remember this quote 'We don't want to tell our dreams, we want to show them.' [Cristiano Ronaldo] And it was a big coincidence, because Patel transferred to another school the day afterward.

13 October 2009 - This day, a gruesome incident occurred with Aveiro. He was moving to his next class. He said, "Excuse me" to the students who blocked his way but they didn't listen. He waited for them to move out of his way. Then, suddenly a boy pushed him from the back and he fell. They waited for him to get up by himself. Aveiro

tried, but it was impossible. The boy then said to his friends, "I told you, he cannot get back up. "Aveiro was in pain. He shouted for help, but the guards were busy chatting as were the students. One of Patel's friends saw Aveiro down on his knees, but went past as if Aveiro wasn't there. No one helped him until a teacher picked him up and dropped him off at his class.

14th October 2009 - A motivational speaker visited the school to give a speech. He asked a question of the students: "Which superpower would you rather have? Flying or invisibility?" Then Aveiro raised his hand and answered, "I would rather have the superpower of flying." The speaker asked, "Why?" Aveiro answered, "I already have the superpower of invisibility, but I now want to fly, fly so high that no one can catch me and drop me down."

15 June 2015 - Aveiro graduated from high school in 2011 and college in 2014 and became a surgeon and a tactical manager of soccer. Thirty per cent of what he earns, he donates to a charity, an orphanage or to the homeless. He also visits different schools and gives speeches about his life.

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### ***Untitled***

Elaxis E., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 11



Quick pit stop during my run.



## *Darien*

Sonny P., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 11

It was early in the morning on the weekend when I found out the news. I can hear my mom screaming something, but it was faint; it didn't help that I stayed up until almost 3 a.m., catching up on my favorite TV show. My mom continues to scream as if she was in pain. I could hear my stepdad, barely awake, questioning what was wrong.

Then, they banged on my door. With one eye open and the other shut from the beaming sunlight coming through my window, I opened it.

"Darien died! Darien died!" my mom screamed in Laotian.

"What?" I said. "What are you talking about?"

At first, it didn't hit me, so I just started asking questions.

*How? When? Where?*

My grandmother was the one to tell everyone in the family the news, so we decided to go to her house together, to mourn. We later found out that when my dad, stepmom and my little brother went to Thailand for vacation, my stepmom's grandmother was watching him. She turned around for a second and he was gone. Sadly, it was said that he drowned and was later found in a river, or lake, or some body of water, later that day.

As I get to my grandmother's house, it still hasn't hit me that my younger brother is dead so I just sit in silence while everyone in the house is crying. But then my aunt and uncle came in looking like they had been crying for hours. Seeing the looks on their faces, the next thing I know I feel two tears running down my face as if they're racing toward the floor. Seconds later, I'm drenched in tears; my face as wet as if I just took a shower. As the hours pass, more family comes and the feeling of sadness comes with them.

Hours later, more family and family friends have come to celebrate the death of my brother. In the Laotian culture, people traditionally celebrate deaths to help the person move on. Throughout the day we continue to celebrate and eat. It isn't until that night that it hits me again, so I just lie there in silence, in the dark, until I fall asleep.

## *A Dead End*

Chyan L., Arts High School, Grade 11

I am wandering in an abandoned building,  
Hoping, Praying, Someone, Anyone, might find me.

Help. Please.

My calls for help echoed among deaf ears ... No ears.  
These walls that hold me already have scratch marks of my past struggles.

I've been here before.

An empty space in my mind.  
An obstacle that was made for me to overcome, yet I never have.

I am still wandering for what seems like hours and suddenly I am falling.

SPLASH.

I'm in water...  
It is warm and comforting, but my lungs hurt.  
I see nothingness in the endless voids of the water.

No hero to save you this time.

A sudden relief as I am safe once again.  
Happiness ripped away from me as soon as I see the same scratch marks on the same walls that continually keep me captive.

I am right back where I started.

## *When Justice Flees*

Coree B., James Hillhouse High School, Grade 10

What does it take for someone to be considered a leader? What does it take for women to be treated the same as men? What does it take for African Americans to be considered by everyone else, to be part of the human race?

These are all questions that bounce in our minds.

On August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave a speech in Washington D.C. about justice and equality, addressing all of those questions. He focused on his audience taking one step forward, then three steps back. In his speech, King said, "But 100 years later the Negro still is not free."

It has been years since his speech and that "Negro" still is not free. Whether it is whips cutting into our backs, a dog biting at our souls or batons beating at our bleeding hearts, the Negro still is not free.

In America freedom tends to avoid people of color. Which then makes one wonder, does freedom apply to everyone? We scream and cry because danger tends to lurk into our lives without warning, but when does it stop?

King also said in his speech, "Free at last, free at last, Great God almighty, we are free at last." Although we are free to sit at the front of the bus, free to go to school with white children, and free to drink from the same water fountain as white people, we are NOT free to walk around our communities with a hoodie on. We are not free to drive in our cars without fear of being stopped by the police.

These are the reasons why I aspire to become an assistant district attorney.

I want to be able to make sure that what happened years ago to Trayvon Martin never happens again! I want to be the one who helps repair the criminal justice system. It will be my mission to make sure that the criminal justice system never fails another black brother or any another human being because of the color of their skin, whether they're white, black, or purple.

The question that remains is: Why does justice hide every time that African Americans go knocking on its door?

King's ambitions were for justice to become a reality for all God's children. His dream was that all black people would be treated as equals. But his dream no longer seems to have an impact on the development of America today.

Rather than for the "N-word" to be eliminated from the English vocabulary, some black high school students use it to greet each other. They ignore the fact that it was once used by white men to degrade and devalue African Americans. But no matter what words are thrown towards us to humiliate and belittle us, we are stronger than steel and we keep growing. We are powerful and indestructible.

The strength that drives our minds and souls is grounded in King's nobility and integrity. He has helped to shape the lives we live today. He is the illustration of what it means when a dream comes true.

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### ***Sanzio of the Renaissance***

Catarina M., Arts High School, Grade 11

Born in 1483 in Urbino, Italy,  
Raffaello Sanzio who became so artsy.  
An Italian artist, considered one of three masters,  
Of the Renaissance times where Italy was flipped from disaster.  
Classical heritage and wealthy merchant classes,  
Italy and the rest of Europe underwent a rebirth.

His nickname was the "Prince of Painters,"  
Greatly admired for his clarity of form.  
Under the influence of artist Leonardo,  
He created a series of Madonna del Prato's.  
His art contributed to a more realistic depiction,  
Of the human form and dignity of the human spirit.

Sanzio died in April 1520,  
Which might have been also on the day he was born.  
The cause of his death was unknown to everyone,  
But he was rumored to be only 37 years old.  
Before he passed, he was working on a project,  
On his largest canvas called "The Transfiguration."

## *The Power of a Woman*

Makayla D., James Hillhouse High School, Grade 11

the power of a woman is one that cannot be replicated  
they are so powerful that they're able to carry another life for 9  
months  
they give birth to the oprah's, lupita's, rihanna's, lauryn's, nicki's,  
beyonce's, and to michelleobama's  
they are praised as aunts, cousins, mommys and grandmamas  
people say they are dumb  
they aren't smart enough  
they aren't deserving of an education  
they are told to stay in the kitchen  
to clean and to look after the kids  
they are looked at as weak and vulnerable  
too emotional  
they are taken advantage of  
told they "wanted it" because of the material  
they clothed themselves with  
forced to do the unthinkable to provide for themselves  
forced to work in uncomfortable locations to provide for their families  
forced to take harassment from their coworkers to pay their bills  
the most mistreated gender  
they have laws made against their bodies  
told that they're horrible for deciding to terminate a life  
spoken of in derogatory terms if they keep a baby  
asked constantly when they'll find a man  
or have kids at family gatherings  
frowned upon if they decide to become mrs. & mrs. and not mrs. & mr.  
told that they aren't equal to others  
harassed in their workplace  
paid less  
dealing with racism in the workplace  
they are oppressed  
told to lose weight when the week before they weighed less  
they dress to impress to cater to a guy that could not care less what  
comes out of their mouths but is eager to look at their chest  
a guy that doesn't care about what their mind and soul holds  
or anything less  
a guy that constantly sends the "wyd" text

a guy that is only worried about taking a piece of her and moving onto  
the next  
even though women tolerate so much b.s.  
told they're meant to birth and nothing more or less  
they prove that stereotype wrong  
they go to school  
they work  
they provide for their families  
they cook and clean  
some do all of the above and more  
the stigma around women being nothing, they diminish  
they get up put their big girl underwear on and go about their business  
the power of a woman is one that cannot be replicated

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*Untitled*

Andrew M., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 11



Dreams will come true if you put in the work and earn it!

***The River Isn't Just Beautiful***

Raul W., West Side Campus, Grade 10



The river is not only beautiful but it brings joy to us,  
even when we are depressed. There is a lot more to the river;  
the river help us to think clearly.

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***Unchained***

Katie T., Arts High School, Grade 12

I step with caution  
Feeling every nerve of my body scream telling me to turn around  
I move forward with overwhelming doubt coursing my being.  
The chains around my neck making sure I don't get anywhere  
They pull me back to the corner I belong  
They serve lies that feed my insecurities  
A step forward and one step backward  
I'm exactly where I started  
My mind can't seem to grasp anything.  
I struggle to break free but my roots call me  
They show me my history  
I see my ancestors in cotton fields and my blood spilled on the ground  
I see my chains unwinding as our heroes rise  
I feel my chains loose as I continue to break free  
I will be the best I can be for my history, for my family but most  
importantly for me  
Two steps forward and no steps back.

### *My Shining Star/My Dream*

Mahdeen K., James Hillhouse High School, Grade 12

I started thinking about that time when we were strolling down the street.

Everything was blank, empty, nothing, like an empty canvas waiting to be painted on, to have meaning.

But as you continued forward, unbothered by the hollowness, the bare and desolate landscape, the shallowness of the world, color magically flowed out of you and into the world--your blank canvas.

I'm lying on the soft grass, enjoying the gentle breeze and joyful light with a tree slightly covering the sun.

You come and hover over me, the star shining bright as day, and I finally get to see your beautiful face.

My chest becomes light and pure, a sensation I have never felt before.

The birth of happiness in my soul.

Your face covers the sun, but its rays try to obscure your image, as if it is trying to do battle with you over whose light shines brightest.

Yet you pay it no mind.

Your smile does not falter, and neither does your radiance.

Untouched, as if you are the Holy Maiden of light.

It is then that I realize the Light comes from you, surrounding you and enshrouding me like a warm embrace.

It is your Light that makes me feel light inside, as if the spark of my soul is reignited.

You, my Shining Star, complete me.

I only hope that I will get to see you again.



***Companionship: A Basic Human Need***  
Jamelie C., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 9

Throughout the poem "Alone," Dr. Maya Angelou reveals her perspective that everyone needs companions. Moral support makes everything easier; someone else is there to carry one's burdens. In "Alone" she asserts that people hunger for human contact, regardless of how many possessions they have. She concludes that being a human is a group effort, writing that no matter who you are, we all need somebody. Many people have heard this saying, the poem's theme.

Throughout the poem, Angelou uses analogy, similes, and repetition and metaphors, but for the majority of the poem, she enhances the plot to emotionally relate to others. "Alone" demonstrates Angelou's belief that trying to face life alone can be problematic, but the guidance of others makes it manageable.

In the lines, "Where water is not thirsty and bread loaf is not stone/I came up with one thing and I don't believe/I'm wrong that nobody but nobody can make it out here alone," Angelou writes that conversing with other people provides a way to release thoughts. Without conversation people can generate negative thoughts. Angelou once spent five years without talking to anyone else. Conversationally, she was alone. However, physically she had people to take care of her and she survived. Although conversation was not her way to recuperate, there was still a form of human contact that helped her so she was not alone.

Angelou's poem then highlights that even for materialistic people, their possessions cannot support them; family and friends are needed: "There are some millionaires with money they can't use/Their wives run round like banshees; their children sing the blues/They've got expensive doctors to cure their hearts of stone." The quote reveals even though the millionaires have all the components they need, they are still unhappy. It is not that they are physically alone, it is the idea that they are. "Their wives run round like banshees" symbolizes the millionaires' wives losing their minds because they are unhappy. On the surface, the message is even one's wealth cannot help one face life alone.

Angelou writes that as a society, America is growing apart: "Storm C.s are gathering/The wind is gonna blow/The race of man is suffering and I can hear the moan." Today, people detach themselves too much; being a human is a group effort. The quote also includes an analogy to indicate that something awful is going to happen, which

leads readers to infer that it will involve people who are trying to survive alone.

Overall the poem's message is, if people all stick together things can get done easily. As a case in point, the Civil Rights movement, African-American people came together and practiced civil disobedience to eventually gain equal rights. Angelou worked closely with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to create a project for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Their and others' hard work helped the organization to remaining standing. Working together produces better outcomes; it benefits everyone as a group.

Through Angelou's assertion that companionship is something people cannot live without, it is now clear communication is key. Many people today have all the components they need, which is why they believe they can survive alone. But Angelou asserts that people need to stick together.

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### *Newark*

Kelly R., Arts High School, Grade 11



Once we leave that bubble of contentment, we progress. Longtime residents have embraced their weaknesses and diversity and used their talents to make Newark a city of the arts.

## *The Story of My Life*

Ifeoluwa A., Arts High School, Grade 10

*Dear Older Me,*

*Don't look back.*

Life right now is an unfair place to be in. Every single day, you might hear some sad news, either on the TV, or from someone. My life has been all over the place these past few days. I'm always stressed out, either because of schoolwork or the way things are at home. I wasn't born in the U.S. I was born in Nigeria; that was when things weren't right. I didn't know my father for 10 years. *Ten years.* That's a long time not knowing your own father. He traveled to the U.S., I think, right after the day I was born. I'm the only girl and the middle child of two brothers.

My dad came home to Nigeria to visit at least two or three times. Whenever he came, I couldn't recognize him at all. Only my older brother could. I went to a private school. My mom had to pay a lot of money for our education, even though we were poor. My mom also worked at that school. At one point, she was my math teacher. We lived in a one-bedroom house, with no bathroom. We had to share it with other neighbors. We had to cook outside using a small stove. The living conditions were terrible. Every now and then, we would hear gunshots. We even got robbed twice. To make things even worse, my house caught on fire and burned down when my mom, and one of my brothers and I were at church.

There was no place to call home anymore. We lost everything.

Thankfully, one of my mom's colleagues offered us her house to stay in. Four of us living under one roof. Things got a little better when we got our visa to come to America to stay with my dad. We always had a stereotype of America, in which we thought everyone has big houses and is very rich, but when we got here, that wasn't the case. We would see homeless people on the street almost every single day. When we first got here, we lived in a one-bedroom apartment. My older brother and I would sometimes sleep on the cold floor in the living room. America wasn't what we thought it was.

Later, we moved into a two-bedroom apartment, then into a three-bedroom apartment, where we currently live. My dad overworks himself to pay bills and provide for us. When I ask my parents for something I really need, I can tell in their eyes they really want to get me that something, but because of money, they can't. Sometimes, I cry in my room silently at night because of the way I see my parents

overworking themselves to give us a better life. Hopefully, by the grace of God, things will get better.

Life is all about struggles. Whatever we face now, is how our future will be. The future depends on the past. Our past may be either good or bad. But whatever it is, the past is in the past. We shouldn't focus on our past at all because it may affect us in the future. We should focus more on the future because it is our tomorrow. So, dear Older Me, don't look back because if you do, you may cry everyday just as you did in the past. Keep looking forward and don't look back.

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### *Untitled*

Zia Grace G., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 9



Even in harsh weather, nature fights through.

## UNIVERSE

Sharon O., West Side Campus, Grade 9

... the shadows came over the expanse that stretched from the sunset towards east, the C.s were rumbling, the rivers were howling the name of my world ... where am i?, what is this place called ?. ... a place with a rawboned reflection of lucency, where water is the terra firma, white slimy paraphernalia that is as clean as a whistle.

\*\*\*\*\*

In a beautiful flowing black gown, glamour manifesting her beauty, a small golden crown sitting soothingly upon on her head, she walked along the world of imperfection with her head high, a slumped shoulder - her body structure disappointing her confidence; her blue glinty eye imperceptibly losing its lambency.....

I'm almost there. ...

Almost there,

just a step more, will take me there

\*\*\*\*\*

A little boy, rebuked by sunlight, his classic spiked coquelicot hair bringing into evident his green eyes  
... Gbum, gbum, gbum; his heart winning over him; wanting to jump out of its cage

Their eyes meet; "she looks like she's fifty years of age," Then she screamed out to the void world inhabiting two beings. . .

" The king is here" . . . "here" . . . "here";

Don't dither

Don't quaver

My voice brings more shivers than usual

In my world

This beautiful perfect world

Full of imperfections

Angelic in its own way

Godawful in its own manner

This beautiful perfect world

Is a world of mine

A world created

For your sovereignty and freedom

You rule, your possessions

Your imaginations

Your thoughts

Your dreams

And freedom

This pulchritudinous universe  
Burned up in the furnace  
Living as an outcast through existence  
Knowing i'm the cause of reality of other worlds  
Yet... abjuring the fate of extinction  
My world . . .  
My mind . . .  
My weapon, be true to myself  
to predict the unpredictable future via imagination  
to explore the unexplorable.  
The name of this imperative world is the MIND.

---

***Travis Scott***

Sharmaine D., James Hillhouse High School, Grade 10



The scream of Travis Scott

## *You're Not Alone*

Jaroly C., East Side High School, Grade 10

Feelings

What can I do about them

Thoughts

How "far and wide" will they go to hurt me.

My mind

How long will it take for it to finally take over

Trying to fix something, but there's nothing left to find

Until I'm finally trapped

Trapped under the waves

The midnight sea of thoughts

And only two are forever trapped,

Depression and anxiety

Depression,

The thoughts

Anxiety,

The tension,

Stress,

Now once and for all,

Comes the staircase of reassurance,

"I'm okay," you'll tell yourself

But you very well know that's a lie.

Be truthful to yourself

Stop living under the veils of unreality

Take a look in the mirror and love what you see

Trust me,

I've seen reality

I understand how you feel,

You are not alone,

And when someone comes around

Takes the time to care and listen,

Don't push them away,

I know,

It's hard, it's hard to trust,

But if the person takes THEIR time, to make sure that YOU are okay,

Hold onto that person

At least for a moment.

Enjoy life to your fullest, stop caring so much

Stop caring about the little things that,

In six months won't mean a thing.

Live, Laugh, and Look forward to Success.

### *Dr. King Essay*

Jada S., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 10

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. changed the minds of many Americans and other people around the world about race and race relations. Even though King knew the consequences of his actions, he still pushed through and fought for what he believed was right.

He continues to show people what leadership is. He pushed for minorities to have a voice throughout our country and we have now continued and followed in his footsteps. His countless efforts to provide the best for his people is what has made America what it is today and what has made and changed my mindset on such a wide variety of issues.

Dr. King's dreams for a better tomorrow have still lived on for the 50 years after his death and still continue to grow and become more powerful to a variety of citizens. Once the 14th Amendment was passed, giving equality and a voice to all minorities, people believed it was over when that was just the beginning. Dr. King hoped for people to look past skin complexion and how people said things and pay more attention to people's character.

Our society isn't as blind to factors such as race and gender as it was decades ago. We have come far from where King left us and people can succeed based on their merit, which can finally be viewed not only in workplaces, but also in schools.

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### *Sonnet*

Fatimah D., Arts High School, Grade 12

He could never show he was sad  
When he was young crying wasn't allowed  
So when he grew everything turned bad  
They would say suck it up your cries are too loud.  
So that moment forward no emotion was shown  
He kept his head held high  
Even though he felt like he was dying alone  
That loneliness felt like he could electrify.  
But he was taught to show no emotion  
He thought emotions could keep him going  
But that sadness was like a potion  
And that potion was no longer slowing  
All he felt was sadness  
What came after was blackness



## ***Overcoming the Stress Monster***

Anthony C., Arts High School, Grade 11

Stress is a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances. Though all of us have experienced a period where stress may seem unbearable, for some, this toxic state can push them down into a dark, never ending, and spiraling hole. Some of us only need one simple task to trigger our stress, while others who are a bit more stable need an abundance of physical and mental labor to reveal a hint of anxiety. This recurring feeling has become familiar to me, occasionally leading me into a wave of hopelessness. Once an adverse demon, it is now a tolerable burden.

The first wave of this soon-to-be-familiar feeling occurred after death claimed two of my loved ones. This first was a pet I had since I was four years old: a loved street cat that was shared between my cousins who happened to live upstairs, and me. I've seen her grow up, mature, become a mother, and in her last moments, when I tried to nurse her back to health. On her last day she laid upstairs and progressively crawled downstairs until she reached the front door of the apartment. There she lay until she passed away. I can still remember the sadness on my parents' faces, the tears on my cousins' faces, and the sorrowfulness that characterized me as well as the atmosphere.

Not too many days later, death claimed my grandfather. I was on a bus ride home and received a call from my mother letting me know that she had news to tell me when I got home. I could tell by the uneasiness in her voice and the weather, which actually seemed to match her feelings, that it wasn't the best of news. I stepped inside my house, looked at my parents' faces, and my body started to shake and tears began to form. I already could tell what the news was before she uttered her first word. She sat me down and with tears escaping her eyes, she informed me that my grandfather had passed away. I ran into my room, stuffed my face into a pillow and began to transform my dry pillow into a sorrow-filled sponge.

These waves would continuously drown me in a sea of hopelessness. At times stress would trigger the wave, and at other times it would come spontaneously, engulfing the fun around me and leaving me in a corner of darkness. I fell into a hole filled with depression and suffering and my brother and cousin seemed to be battling this monster as well. They had previously, but only recently, conquered their own demons. My cousin had it so rough, that she was

to stay at a hospital for multiple nights. I was left lonely trying to protect my sanity from an increasingly strong demon. I continued to struggle with this plagued demon, but after revealing the truth to my close friends they began to comfort me and at times come to make sure I was okay. Seeing my cousin and brother fight this feeling encouraged me to not let this characterize my whole life. I needed to take my life by the horns and not let it overcome me.

Through this journey, I have discovered that life is nothing but a series of ups and downs that people must overcome, by digging deep within themselves, finding the true meaning of self-worth, and demonstrating that life is not to be feared. After this wave of hopelessness, I know there will be another, but I no longer fear it. I wouldn't change anything about these events; in a way they have strengthened me and made me more resilient.

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*Untitled*

Jerry T., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 12



The beauty of a twilight, found between darkness and light.  
As I lay on my bed surrounded by thoughts of how I'll start my day,  
I capture the scene before the golden rays.

## ***Animals Should Not Be Used for Commercial Purposes***

Stephanie M., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 10

The definition of the phrase "commercial purposes" is: "the carriage of property for any fee, rate, or other direct/indirect connection with any business intended for profit."

This means that any money-making activity is commercial. Unfortunately, animals such as cows, chickens, and mice are used for the sole purpose of commercial benefit, some way or another, ending their lives in critical circumstances. Cows are sexually exploited, chickens are physically abused and lab mice endure sick experimentation. For these reasons, animals should not be used for commercial purposes.

Sadly, cows are sexually exploited throughout their entire lives. Cows, like humans must be pregnant in order to lactate. For this reason, cows are forcefully and repeatedly impregnated. According to Foodispower.org, "The pregnancies are initiated by artificial insemination." The place where cows are impregnated is also known as the "Rape Rack." Cows have a life expectancy of 20 years. Unfortunately the dairy industry mistreats and exploits cows. Dairy industry cows live up to an average of four years, often collapsing or dying of bone-related diseases. Their hips may break and they may stop producing clean milk. Over the past several decades, milk production has become scientifically refined. According to Foodispower.org, "Annual milk production per cow has risen from 2.3 tons in 1940 to 10.1 tons in 2007." This eye-opening increase is due to factors such as selective breeding, and injecting cows with Bovine Growth Hormones.

In nature, hens only lay about 17 eggs per year. The egg industry today increases this number to about 376 eggs per year. According to Peta.org, "Today, most chicks take only six to seven weeks to reach "processing" weight, and chickens raised for meat weigh an average of one-fifth more than those raised in the 1950s."

This confirms genetic and physical abuse. Chickens are physically abused daily. The torture starts even as babies. Their beaks are chopped or burned off with rarely ever any anesthesia. This process, called "de-beaking" is to prevent them from plucking their own feathers out during emotional situations. Unfortunately, de-beaking is the number one cause of death of chickens, due to the extreme pain and inability to eat or drink water.

Female chickens are starved and mistreated in order to force them to lay more eggs. Starvation puts their bodies into a shock that causes egg production to increase. No federal laws protect chickens in the United States. They are excluded from the Animal Welfare Act and from the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act. Therefore this means that there is no punishment for mistreatments.

People could argue that some animals are necessary for humanity's wellbeing. Or that the use of lab mice keeps people safe and helps scientists find cures for diseases. However, according to Lindsay Marshall, a Humane Society International science communications officer, "animal research certainly fails animals, in terms of the distress and suffering caused, and fails people too, in terms of the slow, unproductive route to useful treatments. More than 90 percent of drugs that have passed animal trials for safety are not successful in treating the human disease for which they are intended."

This proves how unnecessary lab mice are. They endure sick experimentations, which later show no results and consist of pure suffering. Some examples of the experimentation include a skin irritation test which may completely burn off the skin, an eye irritation test which, in some cases, involves the lab mice's eyes to be pinned open for up to four whole days, causing permanent blindness, and toxicity tests which include force feeding subjects dangerous chemicals.

Money-making industries try to hide atrocities from us all, including sexual exploitation of cows, physical abuse of chickens and experimentation on mice. For these reasons, animals should not be used for commercial purposes.

## *Procrastination*

Jennifer C., Arts High School, Grade 11

There she sat, eyes staring back at the glaring white light of the screen.

There she sat, fingers hovering over the array of letters on her keyboard.

There she sat, feet clicking and tapping on the brown hardwood floor.

There she sat, sore back straightening against her chair.

There she sat, a grimace in her face and a furrow in her brow

There she sat, sweat beading on her forehead and tears forming in her eyes.

There she sat, frustration building up and calmness going down.

There she sat, her phone letting out a ring, and she, a sigh.

There she sat, hands itching to grab the device but refusing to back down.

There she sat, shaking her head, trying to focus.

There she sat, mind turning and thinking about everything other than her task.

There she sat, legs shaking in a quick and speedy pace.

There she sat, realization and anxiety kicking in.

There she sat, fingers smacking down in a lightning speed.

There she sat, winging her essay with her time running out.

There she sat, it is 11:59.

There she sat...

*\*Click\*Submit \*Click\*Enter \*Click\**

There she sat, with a deep exhale and a smile.

### ***The Dream Lives On***

Alisha M., Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 10

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has helped people change their perspectives.

He once said, "If a man has not discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live." King was a civil rights leader and activist who wanted to protest in a nonviolent way.

As we approach the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination, we can learn to be better people in a way where we can help each other. King shows people that no matter what color or race they are, they will always be equal.

King is an amazing role model. Five years before his assassination, his "I Have a Dream" speech helped everyone at that time to realize what was going to possibly happen in the future. This speech called for people to be united and not separated. He was a very inspiring man who cared for everyone and he believed in himself even if others wouldn't. He would always put everyone else first.

King showed people that the forces of good can eventually win even if they have to fight for a very long time. He helped people understand that if they want something to be heard they have to raise their voices, no matter the problems they might have to face. He won over so many people into helping change the world.

King showed that people should always believe that anything can happen, if they try to make it happen.

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### ***Life is a Strange Road***

Akai B., West Side Campus, Grade 10



Life is a strange road filled with uncomfortable circumstances.  
Everyone born is strong, strong enough to take on the world  
and its obstacles,

## *Untitled Essay*

Crismeldy J., Arts High School, Grade 11

Growing up in America, I have had to learn about the lives of a race who were oppressed by another race for many years and are still oppressed today. But you're not thinking about that. You're probably thinking: why is this white girl writing about oppression and our struggles throughout history on *our* month? She is nothing like us. Well correction: I am **not** white. I am Dominican. I am the product of a somewhat white man and a brown woman, so don't call me white just because the color of my skin isn't the same as yours. There are many like me who go through this at least a few times in our lives. We are the ones who struggle to pick what race we are on a standardized test because you can either be white, black or African American, Asian, Pacific Islander or American Indian.

So today, the 27th of February, I'm telling you that you can judge me by the way I walk, you can belittle me with your words but don't you dare judge me by the color of my skin. Just like you, we also live in poverty, work two jobs, fear the cops or better yet, ICE, and know how it feels to be oppressed. We too have gotten on our knees and looked up at God and asked Him, "Why?" We too have fought for our freedom, maybe while you were fighting for yours.

Sometimes I wonder why one race would oppress another that thinks like them, bleeds the same blood as they, and cries the same tears. But it's simple. They judge us by the color of our skin. Others have stepped on you to keep you right where they want you, but now, it's your choice. Will you allow them to do that? Will you throw away the hard work of your ancestors? I know I won't. Right now, standing here, I'm doing that.

If this were 1896 and I were here in America, I too would have to fear for my life because I can't pass as white. I too would have to sit in the back of the bus and use a certain water fountain. Most importantly, I too would have to wake up every day with fear that my life just might end just because I was being judged by the color of my skin.

So what's the difference between you and me again? Was there any difference to begin with? Or was it just the colors of our skin?

### ***More than Just Friends***

Sha'Kee S., West Side Campus, Grade 11

A boy looked out of his window at the girl next door, as if for the very first time. Was it love or was it a simple high school crush? He could never tell the difference; all he knew was that she always seemed to brighten his day. Her smile made him smile. Without looking away, his mind went on a tangent, thinking about all 10 years of memories he had with this girl. ***The girl!*** The girl who only sees him as a friend. But he wanted to be more than friends, he wanted to be hers. He began to envision what a future with her would look like, when he heard a soft, familiar voice speak to him. He left his daydream and returned to reality to find the alluring eyes of his true love, staring into his soul. His heart skipped a beat. She smiled at him, and almost instinctively he smiled back. For a second there seemed to be a chance that they **could** be more than just friends.

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### ***My Cat***

Sha'Kee S., West Side Campus, Grade 11



People say that your cat being your best friend isn't normal.  
Well, normal people scare me.





Photo by Andrea C.  
Wilbur Cross High School, Grade 10



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