

Scholar Voices 2024



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SCHOOLS REPRESENTED

Barringer High School	Newark, New Jersey
Central High School	Newark, New Jersey
Dollarway High School	Pine Bluff, Arkansas
East Side High School	Newark, New Jersey
Orange High School	Orange, New Jersey
Pine Bluff High School	Pine Bluff, Arkansas
Robert F. Morehead Middle School	Pine Bluff, Arkansas
Weequahic High School	Newark, New Jersey
West Side High School	Newark, New Jersey
West Side Leadership Academy	Gary, Indiana
Woodrow Wilson High School	Camden, New Jersey

Introduction

Dear Scholars, Alumni, and Friends of Pathways to College,

This is always a favorite time of year for those of us privileged to develop the annual edition of *Scholar Voices*. This year we decided to take another look back in time – but not just at the earliest days of Pathways to College – 2003 and 2004. We also wanted to revisit the first two editions of *Scholar Voices*, published in 2010 and 2011. And now, some 15 years later, we're proud of what we see.

The artistic and written ideas of our Scholars always startle and inspire, especially when we consider ages and grade levels. And this 2024 edition of *Scholar Voices* does not disappoint. In fact, we have found it interesting in new ways! Not only does this issue share the insightful observations and concerns of our current Scholars, but it also allows us a glimpse of what was on the minds and in the hearts of our Scholars when they first were invited to share these thoughts with us. What anxieties, hopes, and joys concerned and delighted them then, and do so now?

It is exciting and gratifying to note the academic progression and plans, careers, and interests that alumni have pursued. Interestingly, several have become journalists, or authors -- and we are delighted to have offered encouragement at a time when some may have just begun to explore these abilities.

But even more remarkably, we can see, through their writing in 2010 and 2011, that some former Scholars were already signaling where they were headed.

Jamal, an 11th grader, wrote a convincing poem describing in detail what he saw as his life's purpose – “doing things the Scholar Way.” Jamal chose education as his career. Now he has become a Pathways to College teacher, helping our Scholars to both understand “the Scholar Way,” and to encourage them to emulate it in their lives.

As a high school senior, **Calvin** wrote, “I am from a family who believes that you can accomplish anything you want if you put your mind to it...” Calvin took his family's beliefs to heart. He recently completed a resolute 12-year journey from rural Dollarway, Arkansas, to earn a PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision.

Although he was only in ninth grade, **Xavier** clearly recognized the value of making thoughtful choices, especially when choosing friends. In his essay, “Wrong to Good,” he wrote, “...People make mistakes so they can learn from them...I say

thank you to these mistakes.” And Xavier learned. He and the friends he chose to work with at Teach for America (TFA) won accolades and special thanks from TFA’s vice president as “an incredible team” that she was “delighted to lead.”

Katelynn wrote her poem “Fairytale” when she was in 11th grade. Now she is the author of two books, *Spiraling* and *The Empath*, both favorably reviewed on Goodreads.

Twenty-one years ago, I began Pathways to honor two persistent personal commitments. One was to find ways to help students believe that their dreams of accomplishment were attainable, no matter their present circumstances. My second commitment was to help them uncover and practice the personal habits that were most likely to bring those dreams to life. As did the Scholars described above, I found there was a long road ahead before I could keep my commitments. And, also like the Scholars above, I would write something, early on, that turned out to have held a seed. Looking back, I see that the poem below forecast what would become my life-long occupation: catching dreams.

The Trouble with a Bubble

The trouble with a bubble is that when it gets all blown,
And reflects your face, and sunlight, and colors all its own –
It looks so round and beautiful shimmering in the air
That you MUST reach out to touch it – and POP! It isn’t there.
I think when I’m a grown-up, I’ll make a dreaming mold,
And spend my days inventing bubbles you can hold.

The art of catching dreams and making them come true is the unique currency that makes Pathways to College a priceless gift. Without it, many valuable dreams might well have been lost. At Pathways, it is both our honor and our privilege to focus on catching these dreams, preserving and nurturing them no matter how unattainable they may seem. So, Scholars and alumni, keep dreaming! And keep working at turning your dreams into reality, igniting the ambitions of those who are following in your footsteps.

We believe in you. And we are your cheerleaders! **Remember, if you can dream it, you can do it!**

JUDITH BERRY GRIFFIN
Founder and President

SCHOLAR VOICES 2024 WINNER

SAMUEL

Grade 11

Fight

In shadows deep, where doubts reside,
A soul once frail, now set to stride.
Not for himself, but for the ones who stand,
A pillar strong, in this foreign land.

Each step, a testament to grace,
Forged in the furnace of their embrace.
With every beat, a heart resounds,
Echoes of faith, in endless bounds.

In their eyes, is a vision clear,
Their belief a flame, banishing fear.
In every word, a silent prayer,
Lifting higher, beyond despair.

Through stormiest seas and darkest nights,
Their love, a beacon, guiding light.
With every challenge, a battle won,
Their strength, the armor, until it's done.

For every tear they've wiped away,
For every dawn a brighter day,
In their dreams, I find my might,
Their undying support, my guiding light.

So then I rise, a hero strong,
Fueled by their beliefs, my lifelong song.
Not for glory, nor for fame,
But for the ones who've lent to me their name.

In their love, my brightest hour,
In their faith, I find my power.
For every dream they dared to share,
I become stronger, beyond compare.

I am he, whose resolve, none can tear.

(Inspired by great writers such as Hideaki Anno and Akira Toriyama. May his soul rest in peace.)

ALISSA
Grade 12

Heavy Heart Finds a Spark

I'm doing what's best for me,
It can get lonely at the top
But soon you'll see,
Been putting in work to become a better me,
Long days and harsh nights that nobody has seen.
I've been knocked down consecutively,
But I build myself back up piece by piece.
It takes courage and strength to be me.
Walk a mile in my shoes
I bet you'll retreat.
This is my path that God paved for me,
Can't nobody interfere with what God has made for me.

CHELSEA

BA, Spelman College, 2017

MA, Kansas State University, 2019

PhD candidate, University of Minnesota – Twin Cities

Everybody Can't Be No Poet

Honorable Mention, Scholar Voices 2011

I write poetry to express the way I feel
Not to show off my literary skill.
It just happens to come out in similes,
metaphors and hyperboles.
You see, EVERYBODY CAN'T BE NO POET!

I write rhymes that'll leave your mind scattered and disoriented
- you know, discombobulated!
Have you going home askin' yo' mama to translate it
- cuz I'm just that fly!
I spit lyrical rhymes that you'll judge as a crime
Have you thinkin' till the end of time
Tryin' to remember my last line
Cuz, EVERYBODY CAN'T BE NO POET!

You see, poetry - it ain't simple!
You gotta have heart, skill,
And most of all something important to say.
And if you ain't got that,
Then you ain't no poet!!
Just because it ain't got a rhyme scheme
Don't mean it ain't poetry, you see.
ALL THINGS AIN'T AS THEY SEEM!

ANNESSA

BBA, Berkeley College, 2022

A Story Like No Other

Honorable Mention, Scholar Voices 2011

My name is Annessa Priya Ramana, and my story is like no other. My parents were born in a very poor country, named Guyana, which is located in South America. I was born and raised there, with one brother and a sister. My family and I recently came to the United States of America for a brighter and better future. When I was living in Guyana, I saw my parents struggle to send me and my siblings to school. As the days went by, they would sit and kneel at night to pray - wishing and hoping to find a path that could help us get through this difficult time. My father is disabled, so he couldn't work. It was then put on my mother to provide for us. We never really had much, but my mother always put education first in our lives and today I want to make my mother proud to know that whatever she did for me, I will put it to good use in fulfilling her and my dreams. It was my parents' desire for my siblings and me to get educations even though we had little money. As I became older, things did not work out in my country. As schooling became more difficult, we had to find a way to get an education. We had an option to come to the United States of America, which we took after thinking very hard about it. My mother couldn't come with us. This move changed my life.

I'm currently a junior attending Barringer High School. I have refocused on my work and have returned to being a good student. I was very excited to start a new school, to meet new people and to make new friends. It took a while, but I finally began to fit in perfectly. I was once a shy and nervous girl who didn't know what was going on around me. I would sit alone. Well, I am not alone anymore. There are always loud noises surrounding me when I arrive at school in the morning. Today I am an Honor Roll student. I'm a well-rounded student, and am also known to be a very hard working and dedicated person with great interest in doing her work and getting it done on time. I am always prepared and organized. The time and effort I put into everything makes it a job well done and I'm very proud of myself for getting this far.

One of the after-school programs I joined is a program called Pathways to College. Last Thursday I was invited on a trip to Boston with my teachers and some fellow students. We went to visit colleges and many historical places. This was a great opportunity for me because I haven't been away from home since I came to this country, and I was able to get experience and a sense of knowledge - bright path of light. I never went there before, but I increasingly anticipated the visit, because I was going to visit Boston University, Harvard, and Northeastern University.

The trip there was a very long trip, and everyone was very tired. We had to wake up very early that morning to start. Upon entering the city, I discovered that it was beautiful, with small shops and restaurants. We arrived at a fast food place called Uno's and the food there was delicious. After we finished eating, we took off for the tour of the first school on the list: Harvard. It was a beautiful school with large buildings and exciting things to see, like the artwork of students on the walls and pictures of some of the students involved in activities. When we arrived on campus, I was struck by how the school was situated, branching off in the center of the city, while holding its roots on a river, with the air splashing upon my face and a sweet scent to inhale. I was starting to become infatuated by the school. After finishing the tour my friends and I asked the tour guide to show us where the nearby bookstore was, and she handed us a map with many directions on it. We followed the map and reached the bookstore. We entered and walked around; it was filled with many souvenirs of Boston, such as shirts, pants, key chains, cups, candy, toys, and many others. We had 15 minutes, so we had to make it a quick visit.

After we all finished eating, we started to gather outside to wait for the bus to take us to our hotel. Everyone was present and we started to board the bus. When the bus took off, my friends and I started to talk about our thoughts about the school. I said that the university was exactly what I wanted - a diverse school with immense opportunities, situated in a small city. The small city part is very important to me. Also, other schools I have visited were small or had no history. In Boston, I would have everything at my disposal – a world class education, great experiences, social opportunities, and a taste of the wonderful city life.

ASHLY

BA, Saint Peter's University, 2017

Dear Nancy Sommers...

Scholar Voices 2011

Ever since I was a little girl I wrote all the time. In elementary school the most important thing to do was write neatly. After that it was spelling and grammar. In high school all of what I was taught I had to apply together. I've had so many experiences in my almost 18 years of life and it affects how I write. In my AP English class we read "I Stand Here Writing," and it has changed the way I look at my writing in indescribable ways. I noticed that what you really want for your students is to actually take away facts: that make them better writers.

You are one of my favorite writers. My teacher, Mr. Dos Santos, teaches my class to know the sources that we use inside and out, and use them in a powerful way. When you stated "I want them to learn how sources thicken, complicate, and enlarge writing, but I want them to know too how it is always the writer's voice, vision, and argument that create the new source," this automatically made me think of the essays I have to write for my class. The person who writes something creates a new source that their audience sees as a new way to create ideas.

Mr. Dos Santos teaches his students to use their voices through their essays so they can be more powerful. While reading "I Stand Here Writing" I enjoyed the journey that you went on to become the writer you are now. I noticed that, after your debate tournament, you soon began to find rarely used words and use them throughout your essay. You are inquisitive and I admire that you don't stop what you do for anything. "I want to understand these living, breathing, primary sources all around me," you've stated in your essay and it stood out to me the most. I always wonder why things work the way they do. When I find out new things I enjoy writing about them more and more because it's almost like learning how to ride a bike. At first you wonder how things work and when you find out, you continue to keep pedaling.

Your essay has inspired me to step out of my box and explore the new and old things in life. I've always wanted to be a writer when I grow up; whether it's fiction, non-fiction, journalism, or even lyrics to a song. I love how thoughts can go beautifully on a piece of paper and be someone's intellectual property. Being a writer makes things more personal to me. I make sure I try hard every time I write because I want my ideas clearly stated.

Already, I have started to write a non-fiction "novel" because I enjoy how my imagination can go anywhere. My closest friends and my mom are the only people who have read it so far and they enjoyed it. I write because it makes me happy. In order to be really good at something I have to love what it is. By creating something I've become an inventor of my own intellectual mind.

The reason I push myself to be all that I can be is because I want to make my grandmother proud. She passed away from breast cancer 10 years ago and we were extremely close. Every day I miss her more and more and I know that she watches over me. As I push myself to excel to my highest potential I think of my grandmother, who didn't give up without a fight. I want to create stories that can be brought to life and make readers want to know more with each page they turn.

CALVIN

BS, Henderson State University, 2014

MS, Henderson State University, 2017

PhD, University of the Cumberland, 2022

I Am From

Scholar Voices 2010

I am from the North side of Pine Bluff, also known as “Piney Wood.” I come from a place where I played tag, hide and seek, kickball, and baseball with neighborhood kids like Jasmine, Marheath, Sedric and many other friends.

I come from a religious family who always went to church. My grandmother, who died when I was two, raised her children and grandchildren in church. Although years have passed since my grandmother’s death, my family is still involved in the church.

I come from a very traditional family; a loving mother and a positive father who have always been there for me. My father believes that a man should be the head of the household and should always take care of his family. My mother takes the role of a very nurturing, caring, and loving parent. I am from parents who want their children to be the best that they can be.

I am from a neighborhood where Jasmine and I went to the little, muddy, worn out sandbox and made dirt pies and ate them with little golden goldfishes.

I am from going outside and playing kickball with the neighborhood kids.

I am from singing the morning sunshine song at James Matthews Elementary School with my kindergarten class.

I am from going to Antioch Missionary Baptist Church and Mrs. Albertine’s Sunday school class and reporting what I learned.

I am from a family who believes that you can accomplish anything you want if you put your mind to it and put God first and keep Him first.

DANI

AAS, Wiregrass Technical College, 2019

Untitled

Honorable Mention, Scholar Voices 2010

I am talented and good.
I wonder how the future is going to be.
I hear a bird's sound.
I see another world.
I want to become the best.
I am talented and good.
I pretend to have flying powers.
I feel the persistence of my ancestors.
I touch the hearts of good people.
I worry about life turning against me.
I cry the missing family members.
I am talented and good.
I understand life can be fun.
I say I want to make my dreams a reality.
I dream to become the greatest game designer in the world.
I try to make the best in high school.
I hope my life will be a grand adventure.
I am talented and good.

DEVANTE'

Hunger

Scholar Voices 2010

What is Hunger?

Is it the gnarling growls of my stomach as it desperately waits for relief?

Does it devour the pains that are on the brink of starvation?

Is it the desire of my veins bursting out of capitation in the presence of nourishment?

Is it the watering of my mouth or chattering of my teeth when a tasty substance touches my tongue, savoring its flavor?

Then finding out that it was only a dream from my mind of wonders.

What is Hunger?

Is it the clinching of a pen and paper sitting at your desk just starving for a word of fulfillment, but the linguistic form is invisible?

Is it a Friday afternoon and the clock craving for time to reach its destination?

Or is it the final week of your high school adventure and the mind is yearning for that degree to be placed into your hands?

What is Hunger?

Is it the tight grasp of a title?

Or the sultry, smooth voice of my tutelage mind to thirst for mastery?

Or is it the bold, cocky, mentality of my pen as it begins to construct a masterpiece?

What is Hunger?

Is it a desire to start my production of shaping and molding the delicate thoughts of children?

Moving their notions to a deeper level of thought?

Or, is it to broaden my awareness about the importance of the human spirit, and not allow my sheepskin to move to the wasteland?

I hope it is a hunger that can be fulfilled by prosperity, attainment, and productivity.

But what is Hunger?

ESSENCE

Essex County College

The Surgery

Winner, Scholar Voices 2010

A tall and handsome 24 year old man named Bishop Allen weighing 184 pounds, with black hair and blue eyes and wearing a doctor's jacket with black slacks, walked through the front entrance to St. Bern's in Berlin, England to start his work. Bishop had an important job in the hospital, and that was being very skilled and the best cardiologist the hospital had.

He walked up to the information desk where Alice the secretary worked and said, "Good morning." Now Alice was a very shy young woman and always caught herself fantasizing about him. But Bishop is a family man with a good wife and two 4-year-old twin boys.

"Good morning, Dr. Allen, here's your file on today's patient," Alice replied, handing Bishop the file.

"Thank you," Bishop replied, smiling, taking the file and going into his office to change for the operation.

After changing into the surgery attire, which is green scrubs, Allen went to talk with the family of the patient he was performing the surgery on. Dr. Allen explained to the family that open-heart surgery is a very vital procedure and that anything can go wrong. John Phillips was the patient and the family was scared for him but Allen assured them that he is always responsible and careful of the patient and his workers' health and safety. "So please don't worry, Mrs. Phillips. Your husband John will be in good hands," Dr. Allen said. Elaine Phillips replied, "Thank you Dr. Allen, and please look after my husband."

Late that evening, Dr. Allen and two nurses and another doctor who was assisting him on the surgery washed their hands and put on their lab coats and gloves and went over to John, who was lying on the operating table waiting for the event to play out. One of the nurses, named Julie,

was hooking John up to the IV while the other doctor, Dr. Riaz, was starting to give the anesthesia to John.

“Now, John, I want you to count backwards from 10 to one, okay?” Dr Allen said. John nodded a yes in response.

“Okay then, let’s start,” Allen said as the anesthesia kicked in on Mr. Phillips.

Dr. Allen started the procedure by using his sharp scalpel to cut open John’s chest and also using an instrument to stretch the chest to see the heart. After Nurse Julie cleaned the bloody area with a suction pump, Dr. Riaz assisted Allen with repairing the clogged vessels in the heart while the second nurse, Amy, kept a close look at his vitals. After completing a seven-hour operation on John, doctors Riaz and Allen congratulated Nurses Julie and Amy on a good job.

After 12 weeks of recovery, Mr. Phillips complained to his wife of having sharp chest pains and trouble breathing at night. While Mr. Phillips was talking to Dr. Allen on the phone, his wife Elaine snatched the phone from her husband and said, “Sorry to cut in on your conversation, but can we come in today for a check-up to see what my husband is talking about? I think he isn’t doing as well as everyone expected.”

Dr. Allen replied, “Sure, Mrs. Phillips. Your husband can come in to the hospital for a check-up to see why he is having chest pains and shortness of breath.”

“Okay, that will be fine,” Mrs. Phillips said.

“Okay, see you in a few. Bye,” Dr Allen said, hanging up the phone.

After Mr. Phillips’ check-up, Dr. Allen discovers John has accumulated a numerous amount of blood clots around the vessels in his heart. After receiving the results, Dr. Allen asked Mrs. Phillips to step into her husband’s room so he could explain why John has been having complications of chest pain and shortness of breath.

“Mrs. Phillips, the only way this could have occurred is due to your husband not taking the blood thinners as directed,” Dr. Allen said.

Mr. Phillips replied, “The medication was taken as directed by my wife.”

Dr. Allen mentioned that the medication was not being given to John in the dosage he prescribed.

Two days after being admitted into the hospital, John Phillips expired of a massive heart attack. His wife was devastated over the death of her husband. Taking the matter of her husband’s death into her own hands, she immediately filed a civil suit against Dr. Bishop Allen for negligence in her husband’s death.

On December 11, 1981, Elaine Phillips arrived at St. Bern’s hospital for a conference with Mr. Scott Louis, who is the director of St. Bern’s hospital, Dr. Bishop Allen, and Mrs. Phillips’ attorney, Allen Reebes, to discuss the accusations against Dr. Allen for the wrongful death of Mr. Phillips.

The outcome of the conference was not guilty of the accusations against Dr. Allen for causing Mr. Phillips’ death. The reason why Dr. Allen was found not guilty was because of Mrs. Elaine Phillips’ negligence in dispensing the right amount of medication prescribed by Dr. Allen for her husband.

JAH'MIYAH

Grade 12

Mind Over Heart

Have you ever thought you were in love? Or it just felt like a battle between your mind and your heart? I wish I was as smart as my heart was. Have you ever met somebody and thought they were the one for you? This is how the story goes. I'm an overthinker, she's a communicator. When something bothers me, I shut down and I have no choice but to drown in my thoughts. When something bothers her, she tells me everything, but she thinks of me leaving. I tell her "Baby I'm not leaving I'm not going nowhere." I took her to get some fresh air, I took her on dates, and got her flowers. I felt as if she had power, not strength, but power within herself. She's a communicator and tells me everything that's wrong. I'm an overthinker; of course, I shut down when I feel I am wrong. I know we belong together; I've never decided the weather but with her she's made my cloudy days turn into sunny days. There are so many ways to make your day. I hate when she's away; I overthink that she's with someone else, but I know it's not true. I let my mind take over my heart. I hate that part of a relationship. An overthinker and a communicator would be perfect together. Even though it may have pros and cons, they can grow together and learn from each other.

ISRAEL

BS, Saint Peter's University, 2017

If Tomorrow Comes

Honorable Mention, Scholar Voices 2010

Leaders of tomorrow
But left in deep sorrow
By those with a vowed duty
To protect their humanity

For longer than a century
No one has bothered to query
When would the tomorrow come?
It is not far when this generation is gone

Poor me! Poor hope!!
That tomorrow is next to today
But the case is far-fetched
No one knows the length it would take

Later, poor me on my starving point
I cried and wailed for the tomorrow
All to no avail, hope lost and shattered
Hunger is only my next door neighbor

Now, poor me on my dying bed
I cannot but see only hopelessness
Trust gone too far with my fading life
When would the tomorrow come?

If tomorrow comes
Tell him I have gone too far
I have lost hope in man and the world
They offered me nothing but pain and sorrow

If tomorrow comes
Tell him to go away and wait forever
Til the bones of those died in his hope rise
Til those who deserve something get it sooner

If tomorrow comes
Tell him that I have been starved by today
I have been overpowered by gluttons
Who spent tomorrow's resources only for today

JAMAL

BA, University of Central Arkansas, 2016

MS, Strayer University, 2021

EdD candidate, Capella University

The Scholar Way

Scholar Voices 2011

Martin Luther King had a purpose. He wanted to fight for African American rights,
Benjamin Franklin's purpose was to observe the principles of light.
Michael Jordan's purpose was to be the most outstanding basketball player alive,
Rosa Parks' purpose was detected as a crime.

Everyone has a purpose that influences what they do and say.
My purpose influenced me to do it the Scholar Way.
This path is not any path, walked on by any ordinary man.
To carry on this way you have to start with "I CAN."
You believe in yourself, never allowing anyone to step in your way down the road.
You pass them on by, smile, and keep aiming for your goal.
When saying "I can," you follow that with a plan of success,
Knowing how you are going to define your destiny, and always doing what is best.

Despite all of the things that are thrown on your course,
The only way for you to be heard is if you use your Scholar Voice.
It may seem hard and you may want to give in,
But quitting is not the scholarly message that you want to send.
Enduring all the pressure of things being thrown in your face,
You are only a few inches away from finishing out your race.
Finish it off by earning your ticket to the doors of the Success lobby.
Stand there and proclaim to the whole world that YOU ARE SOMEBODY.
Cross the finish line and notice now what the world has to say;
Let them know that my purpose was to become somebody,
and I did it The Scholar Way.

JONAE

AAS, Southeast Arkansas College, 2014
BA, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, 2016
Graduate Certificate, Liberty University, 2023

Love Lost

Winner, Scholar Voices 2011

My heart was once a vivid flower full of life,
the strongest muscle in my body.
If my heart was a person it would yell
to let you know it's okay.
But now my heart is as slothful as a snail,
dull as the lead on a pencil,
as dry as the Sahara Desert, and
as weak as a string of hair.
Why is it this way, you ask?
The heart my heart loves beats no more.
It is still and taciturn in a small box,
locked and trapped away from society,
forbidden to ever return to my life again.
My heart does not know how much longer it can last.
It will try to be effervescent for as long as it can,
because a love that is lost is a love that is dead.

JORDAN

Pathways' Lyrical Success

Winner, Scholar Voices 2010

The best power in the world is the power of knowledge
So sign up for Pathways it's a free trip to college
Please don't be misinformed education is the source
If you study hard enough you can pass any course
Cause at the end of the road there's so many rewards
Anybody can be successful because everybody's special
So just develop your talents because having no education will
not settle
Treat education like a bike and keep moving with the pedals
And if you get a flat tire there's a tutor to help you
Education is the money and your brain can save you
Treat education like religion and fly with the angels
Pathways is the way anything else is shameful
Take a look at your history with an epiphany
And I bet your future will shine as bright as a Christmas tree
If you don't learn nothing you won't survive in this industry
Of course you fall down and acquire some injuries
But I'm right back healed and people remember me
Just follow these footsteps and you will be a success
So study all the time so your grades are the best
Only love education and wear it on your chest
If you knew what your brain could do you will be impressed
So please think about your future and start taking some steps
Education is the sky and there is nothing higher
So if you can touch the sky there is a future to desire
Like a big house nice car 20 acre backyard
And you can get all of this if you're willing to take it this far
Read articles and books so you can be that shining star
When you step outside you want people to know who you are
Like that's that kid who is so so smart
Education is permanent so get it tattooed on your heart
If you join Pathways there's even pizza involved
And if there is a problem Pathways gets it resolved

Just ask your professors because they are the boss
They can pay for your future no matter the cost
NOT out of their own pocket, money from Pathways scholarships
Treat education like a gun and the books are the hollow tips
So, shoot yourself in the head with this rap pledge
And you can be anything that motivation says.

JUANA

BS, Louisiana State University, 2017

Goodness and Beauty

Scholar Voices 2011

The difference between goodness and beauty
Is where the senses lie.
Hearing, seeing, feel, touch, taste
The truth or cause for one to celebrate.

Goodness is taught,
Not easily, though.
It sometimes leaves he who teaches and learns
In woe.
Those who are good
Have places in the world
Though not the best-looking people,
A misunderstood parchment waiting to be unfurled.

Beauty is a sight.
Not the easiest quality to have.
Though those who try to pursue it
It always leaves their grasp.
It is only a sight, however;
Something only to see.
Not goodness, nowhere close
But don't doubt it could be achieved.

This difference so special
So unique, so striking.
Take this to heart
Only if to your liking.

Beauty and Goodness
Different, but perceived the same.
Not unreachable
Just once one is found, the other's hard to tame.

JULIUS
Grade 12

We Are the System

We are the system

We are the ones that will push through any obstacles that attempt to impede us

We are the system

We are the ones who come from broken homes and still succeed

We are the system

We are the ones who look at our younger siblings and that's the reason we keep going

We are the system

We are the ones who can break the system by stopping the repeated cycle of drugs and murder

We are the system

I mean the system can be unlocked we just got to have the right key

We are the system

The same system they used to tear us down is the same system we can capitalize on

We are the system

They say the system evolved around us so let's change it

We are the system

Us being young, then lost the people that's closest to us, because of bad decisions and the system

We are the system

Sometimes I look and see my little brother and say I'm going to break the cycle for him

We are the system

KATELYNN

BA, Rutgers University, 2017

MI, Rutgers University, 2020

Fairytales

Honorable Mention, Scholar Voices 2011

She wished they were real, this girl I know
She wanted a prince charming, but got a useless thug
She wanted a castle, but got a dingy shack
She wanted love from her man, not bruises and smacks
She wanted a happily ever after, not screams and shouts
She longed for fantasy, instead of cold reality
She wanted to wake up from this horror story
To see a knight with shining armor graced in bravery and glory
She wanted velvet, silk and satin with a diamond crown.
But I keep telling her to put those fairytale books down

MICHAEL

Colorado Technical University

Mom's Love

Honorable Mention, Scholar Voices 2010

Mom loves you, Mom loves me
Mom loves everyone as far as I can see.
I love Mom more than my little dog Mutt
And she loves me more than a squirrel loves nuts.
Love, love, love.

Mom's love is like a sneeze in the breeze
It will float all around but it will never leave.
Mom's love will never go away
It's like a trained dog it's always there to stay.
Love, love, love.

When Mom's gone, with me her love will remain
I know to do a lot better so in peace she will be lain.
When she's gone I'll make people understand
What she did to make me a better man.
I love Mom.

LAQUITA

BS, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, 2016

MS, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, 2021

I Am From

Honorable Mention, Scholar Voices 2010

I am from a town called Pine Bluff, a place that used to be more active, with fewer businesses closing down and more places to have fun: toy stores, arcades, a mall, skating rinks.

I am from parents of leniency, allowed to make my own decisions and shape my own values as long as they are not too far-fetched. From a father who thinks there should be no reason to be bored, but to have fun and enjoy life, so he lets me be independent and live a little, unlike my mother at times. From a mother who is sometimes overprotective of her only daughter and youngest child, who would not let me drive by myself until I was more experienced at it; but of course I could not get more experience at something I did not do, as my father reminded her.

I am from a feeling of being an only child, forgetting at times that I have siblings after my grown-up brothers moved out of the house and with only rare visits from them from time to time.

I am from cold, rainy winters, where going outside in the rain is fun, despite warnings from my mother that I will get sick, though my father does not seem to mind so much.

I am from warm springs, where picnics were talked about but never done, and eggs for me to find were hidden each Easter.

From hot summers of vacationing with my parents, experiencing new environments nearly each year. From summers of family reunions to see people with whom I had no emotional connection.

From lively autumns, when trees change colors and cover the ground with their leaves. From where walks home from school underneath fall-colored trees are pleasurable. From visiting my grandmother's house in

November, meeting aunts I never knew I had, taking home a plate of Thanksgiving dinner to my mother who never came along.

I am from loving parents who want me to succeed and be everything that I hope to be.

MIOSHA

Expressions of Life

Winner, Scholar Voices 2011

July 2nd of 2006 is the day I will never forget. As I looked at the pulse machine, the numbers were going down: three, two, one she is gone. I began to think my life was coming to an end, but instead, it was just a new beginning. I thought the loss of her would hurt me, but instead it helped me. It did not break me down, but built me up, and there is one thing I can say that I have learned from her – to never give up. Because she was so strong, I knew that I had inherited her abilities and I will go far in life.

Although I struggled accepting the loss of my mother, I now have a better understanding of why things happened the way they did. She was not supposed to stay on earth for a long period of time; it was just a temporary visit, because of her illness. God considered me as her strength, so he took her away and kept me here to fulfill her dreams and mine. Even though people all over the world have similar ways of expressing themselves, everyone has something unique about them.

The best way I express myself is through dancing, singing, and writing. The moment I start dancing I feel vivacious and secure, as if I can sense my mother's presence with me. When I sing, the words come out so gracefully that I can hear her voice within me. In order for me to escape reality, I begin to write and express my emotions. Whether it is through poetry, a story or a song, it takes me through a euphoric state of mind and into another zone.

To enhance my ability to become a better dancer, singer, and writer, I have participated in school activities that will help me accomplish this goal. For the past two years, I have been dancing in school performances, on dance teams and dance lines, and at the Dance Academy. Throughout my entire high school years these activities have helped me improve.

Also since I was a little girl, I have been singing in church and school talent shows. For example, I started in a private school singing in a gospel choir, and then I attended a public school, singing with a music choir called "TriM." Currently, as a writer, I have joined a program called Pathways to College. This program assists students with their college selection and application process in addition to supporting positive, individual growth. Most importantly, Pathways to College has helped me understand a different perspective on life.

To conclude, while my mother's passing has caused me to feel morose, it did not break me down because I inherited some of her abilities. I know I will continue to work assiduously to hoard the knowledge and skills that will help guarantee me a successful future. Additionally, I will continue to develop my dancing, singing and writing talents to the best of my ability, for my mother. After all, if death meant just leaving the stage long enough to change costume and come back as a new character...would you slow down? Or speed up?

PATRICIA

BS, Rutgers University, 2017

The Making of Champions

Winner, Scholar Voices 2011

I denounce those who think they're Gods
Who believe that they are the unconquerable heroes that all must heed
Those who prey on the weak and say that is power
"The Champions" they call themselves
Never shall they say, "I must follow the people. Am I not their leader?"
Oh how I loathe their ways, their hypocritical ways
Their dim-witted actions
And their despicable customs
But everything they lack, true champions have. . .
They are vessels of potency, Solomon(s) of wisdom and advocators of
truth
They are the fighters that cannot be defeated, passionate souls who
sing the
Words of ice and fire
The ones who embrace the spirit of virtue
Those who will not be deprived of their zeal to fight and surmount
Champions are created when you believe in the possibility of perfection
When you believe in the flyer though she continues to fall
When you believe in the dreamer who has never dreamt
They are the ones who never die but live on in us
Who take our pain and make us stronger
Who teach that we cannot be defeated by rage, hurt nor blade
They say that to be a champion you must be a master
Well I say that the true meaning of a champion is
Believing in others as you stay true to yourself
And for each obstacle you face and overcome
You are a champion
You are the one who refuses to falter in attack
The weapon that restrains all iniquity
And the one who can never be mistaken

Champions today. . .
Champions tomorrow. . .
Champions for life. . .
We are champions!

SHAUNTAY

BA, Kean University, 2014
MSW, Rutgers University, 2017

Untitled

Scholar Voices 2010

College is definitely the next step in the right direction for me. I want to grow academically and give back to my community. I am passionate about psychology and in the future, I look forward to providing my services for people who are in need of emotional support.

Life is not easy; however, this is one of the many reasons I want to study psychology. Everyone has obstacles; one of my obstacles has been my family's economic situation. For instance, my mother tried her best to pay her bills to support both me and my brother growing up. She will try her best to help me pay for college. We make the best of what we have, but I can help by applying for scholarships and I will do so happily. Applying to college and continuing to achieve my goals would be the best present that I could give my mother. It would show that all her love and hard work is paying off.

My family has provided me with many tools to be successful. Some of the students I have known have had no motivation from their families or school figures. Children are left to raise themselves, and many of them are not fortunate enough to have members of their families to care for them. In turn, they may go to the streets for support and guidance. I have been very fortunate in having a mother who always encourages me to be the best I can be. I have also had the privilege of having motivational teachers. They consistently remind students about the importance of maintaining good grades, which ultimately result in a successful career.

I am not worried about the transition from high school to college; in fact, I welcome the challenge. Every task that we take in life can be viewed as a challenge. Going to college is just another experience. I plan to excel! Attending a university will provide me with the knowledge, structure, and foundation that's needed in my life. It will give me the

opportunity to earn Bachelor's and Master's degrees in psychology. College will make it possible for me to search and conquer the career of which I have been dreaming.

As for the future, I plan to further my learning by eventually earning a Ph.D. While I am accomplishing these goals, I would like to work in a community outreach program. I want to give as much as I can back to my community and help the teens who need it.

STEPHENIE

Untitled

Winner, Scholar Voices 2010

I would always hear my dad saying, "Wow, I have come a long way." Whenever he made such statements, I would always look at him strangely, mainly because I never understood what he meant. Lately, since I have become much more responsible and mature, I find myself saying the same thing. That is because I have come a long way; looking back now I can visualize all the struggles I faced as a young child in elementary school. For some people, school brought out the fun in their lives, but for me, I found it challenging in so many ways.

I still can remember my first day at Wilmington Primary School in St. Thomas, Jamaica. I see this little girl walking beside her mother towards the building. When they reach the building, the little girl's mother politely asks where the kindergarten class is. As they head for the classroom, the look on the little girl's face changes suddenly to one of terror. She has never been away from her mother for an entire day. The mother introduces herself to the teacher and they have a very concise conversation; then, the mother leaves. The little girl stands there all alone in a classroom filled with strangers.

That little girl was me, and yes, I was terrified of attending school. Growing up I was a very taciturn child; people would sometimes ask if I ever talked at all. I lived with my mother who was very ill and my dad who only came home when he felt like it. After my mother passed away, I went to live with a friend of the family. That is when my entire life changed. I changed location, school and friends, even though I never really had many friends. My new school was called Yallahs Primary School, where my guardian (Audrie) was one of the guidance counselors. As usual, I was not excited to start a new school; I was petrified of what the other students' perspective of me might be.

I was now starting the second, grade but I had one major problem: I did not know how to read or write. This was one of the most embarrassing factors of my life. I never really had anyone to teach me how to read

mainly because my mom was ill and my dad was illiterate. My community did not consist of highly educated people; they were all pretty low on the social scale and most of them did not even finish high school. For instance, my mother dropped out of high school at the age of fifteen when she became pregnant with my brother. My father, however, did not even start high school; after he graduated from elementary school, he went to learn a trade.

For me to get to the level of education where I am today took a lot of studying and hard work. Audrie was determined that I would learn how to read despite my lack of self-confidence. As much as I wanted to accomplish this goal I did not have the courage to do it. I remember my second grade teacher, Mrs. Stamp, asking me to read a paragraph out loud. Everyone sat there patiently waiting for me to start reading. I tried to pronounce the words but they came out all wrong. Mrs. Stamp asked me, "Do you know how to read?" I said no; by this time all eyes were on me. I felt like a failure. It was then I realized that I had to work on my reading immediately.

To accomplish my goal I decided to make flashcards and study them every evening. Audrie would assign new words every Saturday and I would study them until I was able to pronounce and spell all the words correctly. It was not always easy going; sometimes I did not pronounce or spell all the words correctly and she would punish me. My punishments were usually disciplinary actions like doing extra chores, not getting allowance and sometimes scolding. I did not reject punishment because I knew that it would benefit me in the end, although sometimes I wished I did not have to be punished.

After a couple of months, my reading skills were beginning to improve. I was pronouncing and spelling words like an expert. I was even reading more fluently. I began participating more in class and was no longer a reserved little girl. Now that I was able to read I decided to join clubs and broaden my horizons. I was recommended to become a member of the Girl Scouts Club (GSC) and I was even getting compliments about my reading. I was excelling and there was no turning back. My guidance counselor realized that I was a fast learner and placed me in a class with more challenging work and smarter students.

TARYNCE
ITT Technical Institute
University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Is When it All Begins
Scholar Voices 2011

It all ends with that traditional toss of the cap
After the class has been announced
It all begins with that first day of, "Hello, my name is Tarynce"
And saying it all day long

It all ends with an acceptance letter
From the college you chose
It all starts with good grades,
Great rep and work ethic
It all ends with a letter of recommendation
For that particular scholarship

It all starts with buying uniforms
For the first days of school
It all ends with buying a cap and gown
Before the last day of school

With every beginning, soon after comes an ending
Fortunately, after every ending comes a brand new beginning
The beginning of something more serious, yet fun
Very expensive but well worth it
Something with curfews but all the freedom you want

Something with mid-term exams and all the help you need
The beginning of extremely strict and ruthless professors
Producing torrents of research papers with ASAP deadlines
The beginning of extremely nice people out there
Waiting to meet you before it all ends
However, that's ok it's cool because when it all ends
Is When it All Begins

TRARON

Grade 10

Scholar Voices Rap

Stacking up these grades,
No time for delays,
Gonna win that hundred dollars
Again in a major way.
Investing in my future,
College on my mind,
Stacking up success, like Oprah on her throne,
Building an empire, making dreams of my own.
Inspiring others, spreading love and light,
Just like Oprah, shining so bright.
No limits, no boundaries, I'll reach for the stars,
With determination and passion, I'll go far.
This rap ain't no freestyle, it's crafted with care,
Spreading a message, making the world aware.

TRINITY
Grade 11

Rain, Rein, Reign

Everyone's story has a pinnacle era of character development. Well, my time for such events started in middle school. During that time, I always felt like an outcast, whether it was in class or just in general. I never felt like I belonged and thought it was my fate to not fit into society. That thought led to me trying to be someone else, cursing my life to fit into someone else's narrative. It was a thin line between me wanting to stand out, and not wanting to stand out at all. Anytime I stood out, it would be met with ridicule and mockery about my body, reminding myself that I wasn't the norm. However, anytime I didn't stand out, I felt unnoticed and had no faith of ever being able to fit in. It was almost as if everyone else was inside a bubble, while I stood alone, doomed to sway away from everyone, and any time I got close to the bubble, I got an uneasy feeling that I'd make it pop. I felt like you had to be chosen to fit in, and group projects were the impediment to this idea. I was always bound to be one of the last picks or in an uncomfortable state of mind. Sometimes I was too worried if someone didn't want me to be in their group or not. It wasn't as hard to make friends, although it was shocking to ever find someone with the same interests as me, which I rarely did. I was a bad people pleaser, it got me into the habit of putting others before myself. My first thought was whether someone else liked or accepted my next move. I was going through this every single day. Not as soon as I should have, I started being me, Trinity. I realized first that I was surrounding myself with people who didn't see me, so I decided to see myself. It took having nothing, to find everything. When I came to the conclusion that no one would choose me unless I chose myself, things changed drastically for me. When I found my sense of clothing style I've never felt so confident in myself. At least fashion was a sense of expression because I struggled with expressing myself. Over time, I found a lot of things that gave me a sense of individuality. My way of thinking always stood out to me, so I decided to show that more. After just being myself for a while, my peers noticed a change, but it was unpleasant to them. I wasn't the girl they could run over anymore, or look at as "less than." I could say middle

school was my worst era, but I won't. Because of it, I am the girl I wanted to be then, but I'm even better. I allowed the rain to hit me, to let me be Rein, just for in the future I could reign.

VALERIE

BA, Rutgers University, 2016
MSW, Rutgers University, 2018

On the Path to Failure

Scholar Voices 2010

Pathways to College is a program created with the goal of helping students prepare for the future. Being a part of Pathways, I have been granted membership to a family -- a family of students who share my hopes and dreams. In the midst of a corrupt and unjust world, we walk together on the same path. This program has opened multiple opportunities for me and allowed me to broaden my perspective. Various guest speakers and trips have enabled me to learn about the world that lies ahead. Thanks to this program I have been exposed to experiences and information I could have not obtained otherwise. Still, regardless of these crucial benefits, the program might not be around next year.

It breaks my heart to know that next year there may be kids who lack help with their personal statements, kids who have no exposure to college environments, kids who would have found role models in our guest speakers, and kids who will walk the streets rather than expand their perspectives. These kids will not have the opportunities I had, and why? Because Pathways may not be funded. What about my hopes as a senior? What about incoming freshmen? Don't I deserve equal opportunities? Don't they?

Taking money from education helps our economically impaired future how? Taking aid from the poor, putting more underprivileged kids on the streets when taking away after school activities; how will this alleviate things? Exposing kids to the violence of their neighborhoods and putting them in the hands of gangs will not create a better New Jersey. It will create streets full of crime, young black and Latino boys with dreams of being basketball stars or building careers will have nowhere to make their dreams grow, and so they might fade. Fade into the darkness and frustration of poverty.

Many of my schoolmates linger in instability at home, in school; on the way from one to the other. Programs such as Pathways to College were established for valuable reasons, with visions in mind. Visions of helping students reach their goals by exposing them to the right environment and providing them the right tools. Through this program, students have been given the tools to reach goals such as being the first in their family to attend college, getting scholarships and admissions to prestigious colleges.

Removing the program that grants these opportunities will only add to the instability Governor Chris Christie claims he wants to abolish. How is it logical to battle instability with more instability? This one-sided perspective can only worsen New Jersey's current situation. Destroying the structure of educational programs designed to aid severe social problems will make the people of New Jersey more vulnerable at a time of crisis. Let us hope with all our hearts that Pathways will continue to be around next year, and that the demon of injustice does not prevail.

YASIR
Essex County College
Hudson County Community College

Untitled
Scholar Voices 2011

As kids, we all wanted to be astronauts, princesses, cowboys, or maybe even an astronaut-princess-cowboy (if you have a vivid imagination such as I). My dream was a tad more realistic; considering today's talent I wanted to be a famous, multi-platinum, sold-out stadium-selling popstar. I had the spunk, the pizzazz, the charisma, and the talent to do so; so why was my dream so far-fetched, right? I was terribly wrong.

I remember the days spent at my aunt's house, putting on shows for the family and doing my world-renowned impersonation of Michael Jackson in the living room. In my head, I knew I was destined for stardom. As the years went on, I progressively got taller, more rambunctious, and my musical talent developed. I mean, you couldn't shut me up. All throughout my house the musical stylings of N'SYNC and Christina Aguilera flooded the rooms, the halls, and even seeped their way into the bathroom. My mom grew more irritable and impatient with each song.

She enrolled me in a musical middle school, the Newark Boys Chorus School. But you know what they say about too much of a good thing. My love for music quickly shifted into loathing. You see, in the Newark Boys Chorus School half of the day was spent taking classes; the other half was constant drilling in the field of music. We took piano lessons, music theory classes and chorus classes, nonstop. It was absolutely dreadful; they were turning us into fine-tuned musical robots, which violently sucked the fun out of every note. I flew under the radar, seemingly unnoticed, I thought. Then one day I was singled out.

While rehearsing for our huge Christmas extravaganza, my choir director, Mr. Morris, asked me to sing a line from the medley of Christmas carols. I sang it perfectly, thinking he was calling me out to insult me, but he wasn't. Mr. Morris had more sinister plans up his

sleeve for me; he wanted me to sing a solo. While I ate dinner, I didn't know if it was the pressure of singing a solo or the pseudo-Mexican food they gave us that was tying my stomach in knots. The clock behind me was slowly ticking down, and soon it was time for us to board the bus. As we arrived at the venue, I grew more and more queasy. My knees felt like logs of jelly, ready to give in at any moment. My time came, and I stepped up to the execution stand ready to face the music (pun intended). I opened my mouth to sing, and nothing came out. I strained and strained, but what came out was not what anyone expected. I vomited all over my spiffy red bowtie, crisp white shirt, and navy blue blazer. I ran off stage like I'd reached the final stretch of a marathon and bawled my eyes out.

Now, I could say that I never sang again, that I was scarred for life, or that I dropped out of school and was never seen again. But that's not me. The next concert we had, I sang my solo, and it was absolutely astounding, if I do say so myself. And I sang many solos after that. But after that day, I realized maybe the spotlight was too bright for me. A new dilemma approached. I love music, and being a singer has been my dream since I was born. But my feelings had changed. It wasn't the same. Then it hit me; I have the spunk, pizzazz, the charisma, and the talent, so why not be a correspondent on a show made just for music? The world can now know about my abilities, and I won't have to vomit in front of an audience anymore.

My career came into fruition before my eyes. I realized that I could be a writer or correspondent on a television show and talk about music, which I still love. Now I don't imitate the great MJ or Justin Timberlake, instead I imitate Ryan Seacrest and Joy Behar from "The View." I still hold in the back of my mind the dream of being the male Madonna though, and who knows - one day it may happen. What I'm trying to say is never let go of your dreams. If it doesn't work out, twist and contort that dream until it does. You don't have to be an astronaut, you can be an astronomer. You don't have to be a Princess, you can be a Duchess. You don't have to be a boring old cowboy; you can be a gun-slinging outlaw. Your dreams are never out of reach; maybe you just need to change your approach to make them a reality.

XAVIER

AS, Essex County College, 2015

BA, Pomona College, 2019

ME, Arizona State University, 2021

Wrong to Good

Honorable Mention, Scholar Voices 2010

They say people make mistakes so they can learn from them. It's weird how things work out. You make the wrong choice so later on you can make the correct one. Well, this was my case, and I say thank you to these mistakes. I hung out with the wrong people and did the wrong things. Experiences make you stronger and a choice is the outcome! In my old environment there was no choice, just one simple way of being; you were the emotionless hoodlum. Well, I lived it. I realized that people are only going to stab you in the back; the only solution was to break away from the cycle. I did so. I only became stronger from there. I learned to live outside the box and away from the crowd. I changed all mind sets to eliminate any sign of confusion or retaliation towards the past. Barack Obama once said, "If you're on the right road and you're willing to keep walking, eventually you'll make progress." I now realize that I'm on that road and the only way to go is forward. No longer should the top get higher the more I climb because I will reach my goal. I live by one simple quote: "To achieve all that is possible you must attempt the impossible." After all, negatives do come before positives!



Front cover

JAYDEN, Grade 12

Untitled

Back cover

JAH'MIYAH, Grade 12

“Eye Hide”



Pathways to College
pathwaystocollege.org
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