



CASSANDRA RICHARDSON – COUGHLIN

# LISTEN

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A COLLECTION OF PIECES WRITTEN  
AND CHOSEN BY MCSM STUDENTS  
WITH MESSAGES TO BE HEARD

# LISTEN:

*A collection of pieces written and chosen by MCSM students with messages to be heard*

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Cassandra Richardson- Coughlin

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Cassandra Richardson- Coughlin

[Cassandra.src@gmail.com](mailto:Cassandra.src@gmail.com)

Email for eBook/ printed book inquiries

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# Dedication

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I dedicate this book to Skyler Justice Anderson- Coughlin AKA Sky, my little brother. The death of your physical body birthed within my heart the need to make life meaningful; this book is a product of that need.



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# Acknowledgements

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This is a collection of writing pieces that were the product of assignments given over the 2015-16 school year. Even though I created and assigned the tasks, the reality is that this book wouldn't have been possible without the creation of the Writing Program and support of the principal of Manhattan Center for Science and Math, David Jimenez. I was never limited in any way as a teacher, and because of that I was able to help the students produce some really amazing and heartfelt pieces of writing. You allowed me, and subsequently the students to grow as writers and people, thank you so much.

In my last and most stressful weeks teaching, my friend and fellow teacher Laura Taylor took the time she could have used elsewhere, and sat with me to help me organize all the writing pieces into a single document that I could then bring to the students to review. Without her help that day, I am almost positive I would have given up on this whole book project, but because of her help, I was able to continue. She pushed this book farther into the realm of reality than she realizes in many ways. Thank you Laura!

And to all of my wonderfully smart, beautiful and creative students, thank you, thank you, thank you. I will cherish your writing and our class times forever. You put a lot of work into your writing pieces, and you probably weren't sure if anything would ever come from it. I am so happy to give this book to you, even if it's late, Ms. Richardson style. It was a true blessing to be your teacher and to learn so much from you. I will always have your back in any positive way possible, rooting for your success, happiness, and ability to find and be your true self, always.

And to the person who created it all, funded it all and supported it all from day one, Seana Ann Coughlin AKA Mom, who taught me the value of freedom, independence and self-made worth. Oh Mom, I will have to write another book to give you the proper "thanks" that you deserve. Thank you, and I love you!

There are many others, former teachers, professors, students and friends I would like to mention, but I will save it for the next book. Nothing is done alone in this world and I acknowledge and appreciate all I have received to make this possible.

# Preface

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What would you write if you knew you would have an audience to read your words? This is essentially the question I asked my 9th and 10th grade ELA Writing students while introducing to them this final publishing project of the 2015-16 school year.

Two truths that revealed themselves repeatedly over the year were how writing reflects different aspects of the writer's identity, and the message within the writing is just as important as how that message is delivered. We must first have a sense of who we are and what our message is and then we can translate that into the words that aim to best deliver that same message. And that's not easy, it means doing the labor of writing and rewriting our words, our beliefs and even who we understand ourselves to be. And that's what we did for a year in my writing class: we wrote, revised our ideas and re-wrote again, and in doing so we evolved. Naturally at the end of the year I wanted to acknowledge and reward their hard work and accomplishments, while also continuing to support their growth, so I thought what better way to do so then by publishing their work in a single book, and offering it to the world in whatever way I could.

As much as I can argue that this was something that was beneficial for the students, I must admit that this was something I also did for myself. Because after just 2 years of teaching I had to leave the profession almost as quickly as I had entered it; and it did not suffice to simply walk out of the building in June. I wanted proof of the existence and capabilities of our class, which could easily be denied and underestimated. And I wanted to remember, remember what I had helped facilitate as a teacher, remember the love shared amongst us as a class and remember the hope the students gave me through their intelligence, humanity and potential.

But only remembering is not enough. And so I not only want to remember, but I want to share their words; there are messages to be heard. And amongst those individual messages of each piece I hope you

hear a larger message, one that may carry information that can evolve your own perception of who and how people like us in the world are. Will you listen?

# Introduction

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This book is the product of the end of the year project in my ELA Writing classes for 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders during the 2015-16 school year. There were only 2 requirements for this assignment: first, it had to be something the students wanted an audience to read, and second it had to be revised, edited and polished into a final draft ready for publishing. Students chose the piece they wanted to include, as well as the name they wanted to publish under.

The students have written these pieces, but I have formatted, edited and made changes to create a high quality and safe book to the best of my ability. I allowed students to choose the name they preferred to be published under, but I also chose to completely remove the names of the some of the authors and replace them with the initials S.N.W. (Student Name Withheld). With that being said, this book has nonfiction as well as fiction writing pieces; this book has nonfiction pieces with a little bit of fiction and fiction pieces with a little bit of nonfiction. I told the students throughout the year that this was a writing class, not a witness stand in a court of law; our goal was to create effective writing with powerful messages. I would never want any student to be held to, defined by, or in any way limited by what they wrote and contributed to the book. In fact, I hope the contrary; I hope the student writers will be able to use their published work to their own benefit and promotion.

The 14, 15 and 16 year olds in these writing classes came from all different kinds of home lives, cultures, languages, stories and paths. So even though each piece was written by a student of mine, each piece has probably been slightly tweaked or edited by to help better illuminate the students message. In a similar light, a part of learning about writing and its process included learning how to research and incorporate outside information. Due to the natural learning process, there may be information that is not cited because...well learning how to cite properly takes time, and is a process, and we are all at different stages of that process. With this in mind, I hope readers can better understand this book and its purpose.

I have divided this book into 5 different chapters or sections based on the category of writing I felt each piece fell into: Poetry, Research Essays, Narratives, Speeches and finally Reviews & Reflections. The first page of each of these sections lists the title, author and page of each individual piece included. The authors name and approximate date of composition is listed at the end of each piece. At the end of the book I have included a list of the authors names and the pages where their work can be found.

## Poetry

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# A Piece of Cheese

---

Now I know that some people can view poems as,  
how should I say it...?  
ordinary...nah...  
cliché.

Let me tone it down for you,  
they are simply,  
cheesy.

Now this poem is not gonna be one of those,  
let's get started  
poems placed in the middle of the page  
(ahem... cough... don't judge...)

The kind that always rhyme  
Let's see here...  
*"I once had a cat  
Who was oh so very fat"*

Yawn...  
Man, already getting bored.  
Poems were somehow used to describe an object,  
like an advertisement  
ahem...

*"Adidas black and white like orcas  
I swim in them"*

Okay...  
What about these Adidas?  
Moving on...  
Then there were those poems that would  
always repeat themselves...  
They would go on to say

*"And they will always stay together"*

*forever, forever, forever  
forever, forever, forever.”*

Or sometimes in the end of  
poems  
you see  
the letters  
getting smaller  
just as it's  
going to  
End.

- *Denise Saldana, June 2016*

# In the Night

---

In the night is where monsters come out and play,  
No one agrees with those that believe in the dark extraordinary.

Truth be told: Night is where shadows rise from their places on  
the ground; a  
humongous sun has set and the moon takes place; stars fight for  
dominance.

Elusive corpses rise from their graves

Nowhere the good is found, for  
in the night is where monsters come out and play.  
Great depths are where marine animals hide to shield themselves  
from the night.

Hand trick- juggles- but where are hands? The balls are juggling  
themselves

The hands are nowhere to be seen because the night has taken  
them from their host.

- *Jeannie Reyes, June 2016*

# The New York City We Know

---

Growing up in modern New York City is strange.  
Movies portray us as happy and spoiled rich kids.  
What people don't know is that most of us live in the projects.  
What people don't know is that we come from broken homes.  
They don't realize that life in the big rotten apple, isn't so fun.  
Now, I'm not trying to sound ungrateful.  
We've got places to live.  
And food to eat.  
At least, I'd assume that most of us do.  
But I know that we feel like there is no point, sometimes.  
We say love doesn't live with most of us.  
We have to grow up too fast, but not because we want to.  
We are all made fun of for being unique and different.  
Some for religion.  
Some for their clothes.  
Some for their race.  
Some for their nationality.  
Some for their gender.  
Some for their sexuality.  
And some for any other reason.  
This is the city of broken dreams.  
We say we're too poor to become a 'somebody'.  
We say we'll never make it out of here.  
Most of us look to the streets for help.  
We think that jumping into the abyss that is drugs, sex and violence will mend the pain in our hearts.  
And damn, were they right that this city never sleeps.  
The accuracy of the movies.  
There's always a brawl.  
I heard 3 guys got shot last night in different boroughs.  
This is the New York City we know.  
We always dwell on these negative things.  
We never realize that positivity only starts when we allow it to.  
I say, allow originality and creativity to fluctuate and you'll see some changes.

I say, start fixing yourself before you point to someone else.  
The New York City we know, is us.  
We're so caught up in depression and in our own broken self-esteem.  
We never want to see anyone else progress.  
We bring ourselves down.  
I say, pick someone up and be part of a solution.  
I say, smile at yourself every morning.  
Be confident when you do good.  
And the rest of New York City will shine.  
We are the skyscrapers. We must be sturdy and tall.  
We are the street lights. We must be bright and illuminating.  
We are the coffee. We must be energized and provide energy.  
We are the concrete. We must be strong enough to withstand the constant comments, abuse and situations thrown at us.  
If we are not in bliss, then the city will never glitter.  
Even through our blackouts, we must be the crowded city that we are.  
The New York City WE know must be restored.

- *Christal G, June 2016*

# Am I Pretty Yet?

---

Am I pretty yet?  
I must be, since everyone at school  
tells me how beautiful I've become,  
and how much they envy my body.  
Even though my limbs have become too thin,  
and my face has sunken in.  
“Eat less,” is all I can say,  
when they ask me how I've become so thin.  
My parents however,  
aren't as happy  
about my new and improved image.  
“Eat more,” is all they tell me  
even forcing me to eat meals.  
Their faces full of grief as they see  
how I've lost almost 20 pounds  
in just a month.  
I'm merely a shadow of who I used to be,  
my reflection stares back  
disgusted at the person I've become,  
and I stand there questioning  
if this is truly what I want  
But it's ok, right?  
After all, beauty is pain.

- *BLURRYFACE, June 2016*

# A Single Lily

---

It seems like I can't speak,  
My heart beats so loud, but my voice remains silent.  
Whenever I hold back what I want to say,  
all my words seem to pour onto one single lily,  
Dropped into an ocean.  
In this ocean, I can't make a sound  
my anger, hatred, sadness, hopelessness  
all well up in my eyes.  
The tear drops onto this single lily  
The tears are so burdened with emotion  
That the floating lily weighted down by these tears  
goes into the abyss...  
Until one day the weighted tears are gone  
And the single lily rises to the surface of the ocean  
One day  
It will reach someone

- *Lubiana Mabrin, June 2016*

# My Name

---

In English my name is Tianming Zhao

In Chinese my name is 照 (Zhao) 天 (Tian) 名 (Ming)

照 (Zhao) has the same pronunciation as 照 (Zhao) means light

天 (Tian) is the sky the universe

名 (Ming) is high hopes

In Chinese my name means sun

And I was an outgoing student

In English my name doesn't mean anything

And I am isolated from each other

Because of the language problem.

But the great sun still lighting in my heart.

and it will turn me back sooner or later

- *Tianming Zhao, September 2015*

# Are We That Different?

---

Every person is different,  
Some tall some short, Some skinny some chubby,  
Long hair short hair,  
Glasses, no glasses,  
Yet we are still connected to one another-

All these languages,  
All these differences,  
All these meanings-  
Yet we're all somehow connected-

Are we really that different?  
Here displays the same 5 lines  
All just translated into a different language  
Sure, this language may look unfamiliar  
But did you know,  
They both have the same meaning?  
Yes, we are all connected

So...  
End the wars  
End the fighting  
And start relating, Because we're not so different-  
We are all connected...  
After all

،غيره عن يختلف شخص كل  
قصير بعض ،طويل بعض  
سمين بعض ،نحيف بعض  
قصير شعر ،طويل شعر  
نظارات بدون ،نظارات  
البعض بعضنا مع اتصال على نزال لا فإننا ذلك ومع

- *Jenny Li, June 2016*  
*Translation by Mena Attia, June 2016*

## AB OVO OSQUE AD MALA

---

A new beginning a new start in life,  
people that love you and care about you.  
There are many things that you've never seen before,  
things that you can't understand.  
You are filled with curiosity.  
So many dreams to accomplish.  
You are knocked down,  
the real world hits you in the face.  
The little world you were once in, no longer exists and you are  
now part of a cycle that everyone follows.  
An energy is forcing you to follow this path.  
You break free,  
you realize you are not alone there are others like you.  
Who share the same ideas as you,  
who are always there for you.  
You no longer feel overwhelmed.  
A new path has opened;  
the world has become meaningful again.

Father time has pushed the fast forward button,  
your children no longer fit in your arms.  
They now have their own children,  
they waddle toward you calling your name.

Your body isn't the same as before, it's harder to move.  
Laying in a bed, unable to move,  
millions of hours have passed.  
All the people you have known in life have come to visit you,  
wishing you to be well as they leave.

Now everyone around you has a sad look on their face.  
Now the air around you is heavy.  
Now it's harder to breath.  
Someone grasps your hand.  
Someone else is crying.

Their faces make you sad.

Smiling, you tell them, “it’s going to be fine.”

Slowly, you close your eyes.

Memories rush to you all at once.

From beginning to end.

- *Izumi Thapa, June 2016*

# Adolescents

---

The Entire Empty Sphere Studying You Viciously...  
Doing Everything to Break Your Columns Down...  
Your Soul Contemplating their Blissful Visage...  
Telling Yourself, "I Don't Want to Be Around."

Your Whole Anatomy Breaking Down to Pieces...  
Despite this, You Constrain Your Face to Shine Like a Super-  
Bright Pulsar...  
But Your Confidence is Lower Than the Dead Sea.  
You Traipse Around the Streets, Analyzing your Everyday Play...  
Visions Invade your Mind, Shows an Older You.  
It All Seems so... Authentic? Phony?  
That Building was Already Broken.  
Unknown... That's what Everything is Now.

Your Hand Took Grip of a Blade Controlled by Pain and Frustration.  
Drawing Across Your Skin Lines that Don't Make Sense to Outsiders.  
Water, belonging to the Red Sea, Fell Down Your Arm.  
You Just Stared at it.  
Drawn into a World of Shadows, They Whisper to You  
"You Are Safe Out Here"  
It Was a Long Dream to Never Wake Up from.

- *Phoebe A.H, June 2016*

# The Killer

---

I have done it again and again...  
My actions cannot be halted.  
The need to kill is incredibly intense.  
The haul of my sickle knife across a throbbing throat feels  
exhilarating...  
Reflective silver of doom  
Filled with my beliefs of perennial damnation  
Great sharpness that slices souls  
Reflective silver of doom  
Lucifer, stop me for I do everything in your volition  
Fill me with evil and I will pray in your name, not that of seraphs'  
Give me more of your turpitude filled concoction  
And plenish my soul with perennial malevolence  
  
Help me, Satan, The Killer who cannot be stopped;  
The Killer who will forever kill;  
The Killer that is knocking at your door;  
The Killer that could be right behind you at this moment...

- *Jeannie Reyes, June 2016*

# Relief of Life

---

He who has the opportunity to fall will be better tomorrow

I feel betrayed by the people I love; courage is the curse of life

Love your enemies and challenge your soulmate

I am life and death, I am not here by accident

Hope creates hatred amongst failures

Holy is the man who trusts in a mouse

I was born to be a cursed at school

I will be rich if I study and grow

Working to pay the rent

All we need is love

- *Jose Morales, June 2016*

# My Name

---

Today my name is wonderful, but I used to be awful.

Yesterday my name was burden, because I was the extra baggage  
my parents carried with them.

Tomorrow my name will be unforgettable, but I fear I will amount  
to nothing.

People believe my name is peace, but my mind is drowning with  
thoughts of war.

I long to be a more positive person, yet there is not a drop of opti-  
mism in me.

I don't know who I am.  
But I do know that I'm bound to figure it out sooner or later.

- *Kaylin Pennant, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

# Culture Poem

---

I love culture,  
Culture represents who you are,  
Asian, Black, Hispanic, White,  
We all have cultures,  
It makes us individuals,  
We all believe in a form of culture,  
Music, storytelling, dancing,  
These are forms of cultures,  
My culture takes form of all three,  
Whatever your culture is,  
Is precious and precious to those around you,  
Culture brings us together,  
It brings me, you, and other people together,  
To enjoy a wonderful form of art,  
As friends, mates, Grandpa, Grandma,  
Kids, and others,  
Love who you are,  
Love your culture.

*- Prestige Guedegbe, June 2016*

# Lovely

---

Aren't we both just so lovely?  
We are each other's waking destruction  
My eyes are burning red  
as if you have the power of blinding me  
I am naïve and I believe with all my heart  
you are glowing  
We are apparitions  
I seem to only know how to exist in your dreams  
but you tell me they are nightmares  
I can't see you anymore  
Not even with my eyes closed  
but somehow, you haunt me more  
We are both drained  
I am exhausted in such a way that  
not even sleep can fix me now  
You know this already  
Do you think I will ever stop chasing this desire?  
It is obvious to us where we both stand  
-to others, not so much-  
I lie on a bed of flames  
while you and your guilt control the fire  
You know you can sleep it all away  
Because you are tired of me  
And I am restless for you

- Zarqa, 2016



## Research Essays

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*How do Perceptions of Afro-Textured Hair Affect Identity?*

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*How to Become an Architectural Engineer* by Ibrahima

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# How do Perceptions of Afro-Textured Hair Affect Identity?

---

Imagine hating the way your hair looks every time you stare in a mirror, and because you dislike your appearance you feel the need to risk your health by using chemicals to straighten your hair in order to achieve the “right look.” People with Afro-textured hair feel this way all the time. They feel something is wrong with their hair, but they don’t quite know what it is. The reason they feel insecure about their hair is because of the way it is perceived. However, it is not directly the faults of the people with Afro-textured hair because they have been subconsciously fed that their hair isn’t beautiful by Europeans who deem their own hair to be the example of beauty. People with Afro-textured hair in the Western world suffer the most from this because of the history they and Europeans share. Afro-textured hair does not naturally conform to the Eurocentric beauty standards and therefore isn’t perceived in a good light, which causes those who have this hair to feel as if they need to change it; this prevents them from fully accepting their identity. Articles that focus on the relationship between Afro-textured hair and self-perception reflect this.

Those who aspire to Eurocentric beauty standards feel that Afro-textured hair is not good enough. Ideas that African features are inferior to European features have been around since Whites took West Africans from their home. The slaves who worked in the fields had to cover their hair while slaves who worked inside had to wear wigs identical to their owner (Thompson, 1). Slave owners also regarded slaves with straighter hair to be better than those who didn’t because straighter hair appealed to the Eurocentric beauty standards; since the slaves with straighter hair appealed to the beauty standards centered on European features, they were also treated with more importance than those with a tighter curl pattern (Donaldson, 2). As a result, those with Afro-textured hair naturally wanted to change their hair, a part of who they are, to be perceived in a better light, or as an equal, by their slave masters.

Years after slavery, the idea that Afro-textured hair isn’t suitable still lives. The media promotes that Afro-textured hair isn’t appropriate

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through its failure to display a variety of celebrities with Afro-textured hair. Black celebrities that experience a large amount of popularity are not frequently shown with their Afro-textured hair. With such a lack of representation in the media, those with Afro-textured hair feel embarrassed to even wear their natural hair out. Furthermore, Afro-textured hair is made out to be something that should not be brought into the workplace (Donaldson, 2-3). Afro-textured hair is susceptible to dryness because the curliness of the hair does not provide a straight path for oil to pass through the hair shaft (Hudson, 2). Therefore, to retain moisture, this hair needs protective styling (Hudson, 3). Braids are a form of protective styling, but when Cheryl Tatum, a thirty-seven-year-old cashier was working, her manager did not take a liking to her braids and fired her (Hudson, 3; Donaldson, 3). If the manager understood Afro-textured hair, he would not have fired Tatum because of her braids which benefitted her hair. Tatum could have changed the texture of her hair by chemically straightening it; she would still have her job, but that could have led to great damages to her hair (Donaldson, 3). People with Afro-textured hair are made to feel as if their hair's existence is a sin to the point that they aren't able to keep a job. To keep a job, some people with Afro-textured hair will find the need to chemically straighten their hair and risk the possibility of deteriorating health.

The chemical straighteners used to alter Afro-textured hair cause dryness which later leads to breakage (Thompson, 4). According to a certified dermatologist, Dina Strachan, breakage is not what her patients with Afro-textured hair want as they complain to her about their hairs inability to grow (Thompson, 4). Traction alopecia, (the process of gradual hair loss caused by major pulling of the hair), also results from the use of chemical straighteners (Thompson, 4). It seems that some people with Afro-textured hair really don't know how to treat their hair because they have been blinded by the desire to satisfy White beauty standards. People with Afro-textured hair attempt to meet White beauty standards because such action provides an environment filled with less contempt (Thompson, 2-3). Because of the impossible beauty standards put on those with Afro-textured hair, those with this hair must perform the difficult task of learning how to take care of their hair all over again (Thompson, 2).

As Whites benefit from privilege and an upper hand, they have enforced their beauty standards as the true beauty standards while downgrading the beauty of those with African features; evidence of this bias is shown when we see more straight haired people than Afro-textured hair people represented in the media. White beauty standards have also made it hard for people with Afro-textured hair to gain or keep a job which is necessary in order to pay bills and buy food. Because of this, those with Afro-textured hair struggle to meet those beauty standards that weren't created to benefit them. Chemical straightening and lack of knowledge on Afro-textured hair reflect this. Instead of wishing to meet the beauty standards of people whose hair relies on a different method of survival, it would benefit those with Afro-textured hair if they connect once again with their African roots and learn to take care of their hair correctly, allowing them to secure a part of their identity while embracing their natural beauty.

-Y.D. June, 2016

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# How to Become an Architectural Engineer

---

An architectural engineer designs interior structures such as heating, lighting, air conditioning and plumbing. They also design the building's safety systems such as emergency exits and fire prevention systems. An architectural engineer works with an architect. An architect designs buildings and manages construction projects.

Right now, you may be in your home, enjoying simple comforts such as heating, ventilation, and plumbing. You may not be grateful, but you should thank architectural engineers (not to be confused as “architects”) for these luxuries. An architectural engineer designs the interior structures of a building; their work often involves communicating with architects. To become an architect one has to use their skills in math and science to design the interior structure of buildings, one has to be passionate, one has to go to college/university to learn about engineering, and be able to present their ideas in different ways, such as a report or visual presentation.

An architectural engineer uses their skills in math and science to design the interior structures of buildings for the government or private companies. They focus on internal factors such as heating. An architectural engineer should be passionate; this will help them accomplish their goals and get work done. On a daily basis, a hired architectural engineer works with other engineers and architects to design and manage the construction site. They focus on structure, stability, and safety. One engineer known for his creativity is Santiago Calatrava; Calatrava is known for his sculptural bridges and buildings. Calatrava studied architecture at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain. He then studied structural engineering (a form of civil engineering related to architectural engineering) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zürich, Germany. One of his famous works is the Montjuic Communication Tower in Barcelona, Spain.

For one to become an architectural engineer, a college bachelor's degree is needed. Also, one has to graduate from a program accredited or accepted by the ABET (the Accreditation Board for Engineering and

Technology). In college, an aspiring architectural engineer will most likely major in mathematics and science and engineering, therefore taking courses involving math, science, physics, civil engineering and mechanical engineering. Before students can graduate they have to complete a research or design project in which they showcase the skills they have learned. Two schools with exceptional architectural engineering programs are Columbia University and New York Institute of Technology. To gain acceptance into these prestigious schools one must have excellent grades combined with rich involvement in extracurricular activities. On the application one might need to write an essay, send in letters of recommendation, and may submit ACT or SAT scores. These schools are not looking only for students who are “smart” or those who have an interest in engineering. Rather, these schools look for students who are creative, hardworking, and involved outside the classroom.

As a high school student one can work towards their goal of becoming an architectural engineer by making sure their skills in classes such as algebra one and two, calculus, and physics (especially thermodynamics) are great. Students can also apply to summer programs at colleges and universities that may teach them about architecture. One such program is ACE; ACE teaches you about opportunities in architecture, engineering, and design. Even though writing may not seem like something an engineer does, there are times when an engineer must write. Writing is part of the way engineers communicate with their co-workers. Writing is a way they present their ideas in the form of proposals and reports. Additionally, before Engineers graduate they have to complete a research or design project, in which they must write and present their research.

For one to become an architectural engineer or anything they choose to be, one must be hardworking, and tenacious. In this changing society, getting the best education and the best jobs out there is more difficult than ever before.

## **Important information to keep in mind after reading:**

A structural engineer checks a structures design to see whether it will withstand gravity, wind or other natural forces. He/she makes sure the construction materials will support the building's weight. A structural engineer works closely with an architect and architectural engineer.

*- Ibrahima Barry, June 2016*

# Technological Predictions Are Defining our Future

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Just think about all of our amazing, supportive and astonishing technology! The motor of our life, which makes our daily routines so much simpler and effortless. Around the globe, it helps people with questions, concerns, education, activities, health, and even just a simple curiosity you may have. Many individuals ask themselves if technology will one day rule every aspect of our life; meaning that even work will be done by technology, without humans having to assist. This is something many researchers have put their eyes on. Evidence of the future of technology such as new phones, computers, machineries and other inventions can be found everywhere, and it certainly makes an impression on how predictions make you want to be in the future now.

Predictions have been proven to be surprisingly accurate. They can be from a standard individual, or from a professional worker who knows more details about the topic. John Elfreth Watkins Jr. made predictions such as, "... hurry traffic will be below or above ground when brought within city limits" and, "photographs will be telegraphed... If there be a battle in China... snapshots of ... events will be published in the newspapers an hour later... (with) all of nature's colors" (Watkins Jr, 1). These predictions, made in the 1900s, and many others he made became true. Every subway in New York goes at a 30 /55 mph speed; not only do cameras take pictures now, but even our phones can take colorful pictures and send it to ANYWHERE in the world in just less than 1 minute. Things that were not nearly possible 116 years ago, are now the most common things happening everyday - and they were predictions made by a normal civilian. BBC News asked their readers to make predictions of what they think the world will have in 100 years. Futurologists Ian Pearson and Patrick Tucker reviewed their predictions and voted on how true they were by giving it, from 1 to 10, a rating. Some of them such as, "Oceans will be extensively farmed and not just for fish" by (Jim 300) and "Thanks to DNA and robotics, we will have created incredible intelligent humans who are immortal" by (game over) were heavily supported with a 9/10 rating from the futurologists; plus, some good reasons

why they'll become a reality. This proves predictions to be important, significant, and powerful as they may be defining the times to come.

Technology is fun and provides innovative solutions to any problem you may have. Trends as explained by Greg Satell, a Forbes reporter, “get a bad rap.” He explains that it probably happens because people confuse it with fashion, but later on explains the true meaning and talks about the newest and most useful trends used in today's societies. He mentions things such as the no-touch interfaces, local and social entertainment and other online massive inventions. The most interesting part though, was his concept of computers and how as they disappear “... technology companies are becoming increasingly driven, investing in things like native content to get us on board their platform, from which we will sign onto massively...” (Satell, 1). He believes that one day, technology “systems will know us better than our best friends...” and also that, “we're beginning to expect that computers adapt to us rather than the other way around” (Satell, 2). What he means by this is that with a new gadget coming out every day, and so many of them helping make our lives so simple, technology is going to change and make us humans become more co-dependent. It is true that computers are certainly the most helpful and diverse system out there, and as more research and prototypes get done, the future of technology gets engagingly brighter. It has become more interactive, informative, groundbreaking and surprisingly amusing to all ages.

Besides the convenience of future technology, however, others are concerned about what will become of us humans. Where will we live, where will we work, how are we going to support our families if technology is taking our jobs away? According to writer and social theorist Jeremy Rifkin, “Even if you retained the entire workforce... so that they would be qualified for these high-tech jobs, there would never be enough work for... (some) sectors to absorb mass labor” (Rifkin, 2). What he means is that even if you prepare the workers and create more jobs, mass labor won't be helped because machines are too innovative. When you read parts of Rifkin's book, *The End of Work*, it actually makes you wonder, *is technology going to 'exterminate' the human race?* Think about it from a business owner's point of view; machines make goods more rapidly, cheaper, and with more quality, meaning better. Which leads to what they need the most for supporting their business - cash. Machines are certainly

quicker than our hands, which result in more product in less time. They will only have to invest once in the machines- plus a couple of upgrades now and then, but ultimately no more paying workers every week. After that, it'll be easy to retain the calm in factories or anywhere the work is done because you don't have to worry about the masses of laborers doing something wrong. It is a delicate and exhausting topic to deal with, but it's something you should get into just in case worse situations, such as new technologies or any decisions that could leave you jobless, occur.

As technology grows, more and more people keep asking themselves whether technology will be able to get any job done without intervention from humans. Having to go to work and outperform these machines, will be some real labor; lazy people, like me, hope for these predictions to come true and help our societies grow smarter and superior to what they are now. Many of the gear and inventions used most often today, were first an idea that later on became a product in progress; which after its release, changed the world remarkably. This process applies to the future as well. The predictions are the ideas, the prototypes transform the ideas into the working progress and the outcome becomes the outgoing, visionary and ironic future being defined.

- *Perla Castro, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

# How to Solve a System of Equations

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A system of equation is two or more equations graphed on the same line. Often a system of equation contains 2 different variables, and each equation contains information to help you solve for the solution. The solution is the point(s) where the graphs intersect. Depending on the function family that your equations belong to, your system can either have one solution, two solutions, infinite solutions, or no solution, where the graphs do not intersect. Our system consists of equations for the linear function family. There are two ways to find your solution you can graph or solve algebraically. To graph a system of equation, the equations need to be simplified to slope intercept form:

$$y = mx + b$$

but you can also find the solution algebraically by using one of the two methods: substitution or elimination. During substitution, you solve one of the equations for a variable. Then plug in what you get into the other equation of the system then solve. Remember a system of equations has two variables. When using the elimination method, you eliminate one variable and solve for the other variable. In the word problem “At the local bodega, Will and Sarah are getting snacks for the friends. Will buys 3 soft drinks and 2 hot dogs at the cost of \$ 7.70, while Sarah buys 2 soft drinks and 1 hot dogs at the cost of \$4.55. Find the cost of one soft drink and one hot dog” I would use elimination to find the solution to the problem.

To solve a word problem, we must use L.E.S.C.A to help ensure that our answer is accurate. First we create a key which is L in L.E.S.C.A where we define our variables, so let h be hotdog and d be drinks. Then we set up our system of equation; E in L.E.S.C.A., for Will's order

$$3d + 2h = 7.70$$

and for Sarah's order:

$$2d + 1h = 4.55.$$

In order to eliminate one of the variable you must have a negative reciprocal so we proceed to the S part which is solve. I want to eliminate the hot dogs ( $h$ ) first, so I multiply the whole equation of

$$2d + 1h = 4.55$$

by negative two so I can have a  $-2h$  in one equation and a  $2h$  in the other. They will cancel out.

$$-2(2d + 1h = 4.55).$$

The new equation now would be

$$-4d - 2h = -9.1$$

so then we line up the variables and the equal sign of both equations vertically and add them up. The resulting equation will only consist of one variable the  $d$  because the hot dogs ( $h$ ) had been eliminated

$$-1d = -1.4.$$

Then we use inverse operation to divide  $-1$  on both sides ending up with

$$d = 1.4.$$

Now that we found the value of  $d$  we plug it back in one of the equation. Now there is only one variable  $h$  which we will solve for.

$$3(1.4) + 2h = 7.70$$

simplifies to

$$4.2 + 2h = 7.70.$$

To solve for ' $h$ ' we have to completely isolate it on one side of the equal sign. First we subtract  $4.2$  from both sides of the equal sign giving us

$$2h = 3.5.$$

Then we use inverse operation to divide  $2$  on both sides of the equal sign give use the final results  $h = 1.75$ .

Once we have our solutions we move on to the C part of L.E.S.C.A which is check. To check our answers, we plug the solutions back in each equation and solve for a true statement. In Will's case, we have

$$3 (1.4) + 2 (1.75) = 7.70$$

which is simplified to

$$4.2 + 3.5 = 7.70$$

once you add 4.2 and 3.5 you get  $7.70=7.70$  which is a true statement. We can't stop there because there are two equations in a system therefore we have to check for another equation Sarah's case. The check would be

$$2 (1.4) + 1 (1.75) = 4.55$$

and when simplified becomes

$$2.8 + 1.75 = 4.55$$

then after adding 2.8 and 1.75 we get  $4.55=4.55$  another true statement. There is one solution to the system of equation because for each variable there is only one possible value. Lastly A of LESCA answer, in a word problem you have to always go back and state the answer in words. The cost of one soft drink is \$1.40 and for a hot dog 1.75.

*- Edward Uchiha, June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

# The Next Big Thing

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Quantum physics...Woah! What a complex and brain melting topic right? Well no, not at all it can be quite simple. Quantum computers have been one of the most popular topics for 2015 and 2016 in the scientific community. A lot of the excitement about quantum computers are their possibilities in convenience and ability to revolutionize the world. However, even the scientists themselves ask the question, “how do these quantum computers work?” These amazing quantum computers function from the use of quantum gates superposition and entanglement. But first, why do we *need* and not just want the quantum computers?

We need quantum computers because of the limitations that are present in normal silicon based computers. In normal computer's there are tubes called transistors that are switches to carry information that can be turned on or off. However, newer technology has resulted in the size of transistors to shrink to the size of a few atoms. All transistors in computers now are smaller than a red blood cell. This is where the issue arises, there is a law in quantum physics called “quantum tunneling” that states if a structure is thinner than the atoms then it can pass through the structure no matter what (Jones, 1). So, if you turn off the transistors the information will keep passing through and the computer will stay on or do things on its own. So how will this quantum computer be different?

What sets aside a quantum computer from a normal silicon computer is superposition. This law of physics affects the computers qubits which are the 0 and 1 values in computers that carry information. In the physics world, a qubit in superposition is all combinations of 0 and 1 at the same time (Jones, 1). Therefore, superposition is where a value is all the values it can be. So, one qubit in superposition is 16 values at the same time while one bit in a normal computer is just one value (Bonsor, 2). This gives the quantum computer a huge edge in task completion speed. As each qubit is like a normal bit to the 16th power. In just 20 qubits there is the power of 1,000,000 normal bits. This would make tasks that would take years on a normal computer to just take a few seconds on a quantum computer. However, superposition when put through a filter will make one value, but the qubit has to go through a single filter. This would

make things very complicated as you would need a filter for every qubit. Entanglement then comes in and helps this big issue.

Entanglement is the final step to making these computers possible. Entanglement makes it so when the qubit turns into its final value it turns all the other qubits to its value from any distance (Jones, 4) So, when one qubit turns into a one value or zero, then all the other qubits turn into that value without going through a filter. This saves a huge amount of space and time, and helps scientists study quantum computers faster as they don't need to observe every qubit as they only need to look at one and they now know the other values. But with all these input values there are no outputs or answers. That's where quantum gates come to give the answer.

Both laws, superposition and entanglement work together in the quantum computer with other normal computer parts except for the logic gates that turn to quantum gates. Logic gates are the system in a computer that decide what the right output (answer) is. Now that it's a quantum gate, it works with superposition, in order to work faster. Quantum gates allow qubits to pulverize (pass) through the gate in all directions (Bonsor, 2). This lets 12 qubits go through the gate at once, making the process faster as normal logic gates only allow one bit to pass through at a time. Now we know both laws that make a quantum computer and its answering system, but how do they come together to power such a complex machine?

The two laws (superposition and entanglement) and one system (quantum gates) all work together in one machine to make a quantum computer. They do this by starting out in the transistors with qubits. The qubits then become affected by superposition and hold 16 values at once and travel through the transistors. The superposition qubit while traveling in the transistors is changing the other qubits in the transistor to its value because of entanglement. Then all the qubits in the transistor become the same value. Then the transistor leads to a quantum gate and the qubits pass through it to become their final value. Then the answer is made and the task is done.

These two laws, superposition and entanglement and the system of quantum gates make a normal computer into a quantum computer. Without these laws, the computer wouldn't function even close to how a quantum computer functions. With quantum computers we could do tasks millions of times faster, making things so much more convenient for everyone.

- Marlon Balbuca, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016

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# A Memoir

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## Faces

I read somewhere that you have three faces. The first face, you show to the world. The second face, you show to your close friends and your family. The third face, you never show anyone, only to yourself. It is the truest reflection of who you are.

\* \* \*

## Invisible

I stared into the vast blue sky. There wasn't a single cloud today, which made the sky look completely bare, yet tremendously beautiful. I could hear the trees and the wind whispering slowly among themselves, completely disregarding my presence.

You're nobody. You're invisible.

No one realizes how much I'm struggling every day.

I've never been the kind of girl that likes to open up to people and talk about my feelings. I don't feel like explaining myself all the time, especially to people who don't get it. I guess that's why I make myself invisible. I have fences between my inside and outside that nobody can climb. Maybe that's the reason why I'm always defined by what's on the outside even though I have so much to offer on the inside.

What's wrong with me?

\* \* \*

## Billy

He smiled as he softly asked, "Why are you so ugly?"

I was speechless. I felt vulnerable and stupid. I could feel my blood boil out of anger; it freaking hurt. I wanted to answer his asinine question. But I didn't. I just stayed quiet and walked away. I let him win.

\* \* \*

## **Family**

"You're a piece of crap. You, worthless pig," spat my brother, right on time. His hurtful words pierced through my ears and I had to pretend I didn't care.

Once again I was speechless. My mind was as white as a piece of paper, and all my witty comebacks were scrubbed from my brain. Still, I kept my head held high. I was determined to not let his dirty and hurtful words get to me.

I've changed the way I am many times, but nothing works. Everywhere I go people look at me but they don't notice me or they just notice my flaws. Maybe that's why my family sees this lonely girl that needs to be fixed somehow. The hardest thing is accepting that no matter how hard I try, it is never enough.

Just give up. There is nothing you can do. Accept it.

\* \* \*

## **Lies**

I was just lying to myself. Truth was they did. I felt like a piece of crap and a worthless pig.

The funny thing is that either society, your family, your friends, and many other people are going to label you and attack you without provocation. In that time, you will figure out if they will affect you or not, if you are weak or strong.



## **Moment of clarity**

Sitting alone in the park, recounting those awful moments in my life, I could smell the roses and hear people whispering. I could feel the cold breeze on my rough skin. I decided to climb a tree. I was thankful for some time alone. It allowed me to clear my head and it helped me think critically about everything I do and everything I am.

I looked down at the ground. I keep waiting for someone who will stand on the ground ready to catch me and save me from falling. To save me from shattering into oblivion.

I was buried in my thoughts, though I could still hear the wind and the trees battling with each other. The leaves of the tree I climbed were hiding me from the real world, and for once in a long time, I felt safe. I wanted to be like that tree. That tree who's had so much done to it and it was still standing tall and looking as beautiful as ever. I knew I needed to stand up and face reality and as hard as it was, I did it.



## **Promises**

When I got home that day, I made a list of promises. These promises, I was hell-bent on keeping:

1. Never let what people say about me affect me in the slightest. They can think whatever they want because in the end all that matters is what I think.

2. Never depend on anybody to catch me when I'm falling. I can do it myself.

3. I'm not going to be weak anymore. I'm going to be strong and stand up for myself and not let people have the pleasure to make me feel less than what I am.

4. Every time I'm knocked down, I'm gonna keep getting back up.

You will get your worst bruises from people who didn't even touch you. I may be scarred all over, but I am still alive.

- J.D.L., *June 2016*

# A Love Like No Other

---

I found that in life, there are many ups and downs. Many obstacles and challenges that we all have to go through. But how far will you go for the love of your life?

A young woman, living in a small town in Occidental Mindoro, Philippines, wasn't all that rich and her parents couldn't support her education for college. Life was hard for her and her family and the young woman eventually, had to become a working student. However, her job was far, so she had to move away from her family. Little did she know that is where she would meet him.

A young man, living in Cagayan de Oro, Philippines, wasn't all that rich either but he could afford himself an education, unlike the young woman. He was a working student himself as well, but was much closer to home and to his family. Little did he know that she would be the one.

After getting to know each other, the young man began to notice her struggle. He wanted to help her, so he paid for her schooling and her education. He even helped her with her studies and tutored her with the stuff she needed help with. He wasted all his savings for her. They eventually fell deeply in love with one another. By 2001, the young woman was pregnant. The young woman's parents didn't like this at all. In fact, they were angry with her. She was only 22 and they expected better things from her. But she wasn't the only one with disappointed and angry parents, the young man's parents were angry as well. It was clear that both their families didn't want them together, but the young man wasn't going to let the young woman go through the problems alone. No matter what they said, he wasn't going to let her go.

Months passed and more problems came. The young woman needed money to support the baby she carried. The young man decided to take an opportunity to become a nurse for the military. This opportunity guaranteed enough money to support their child. But the young man's new job is in Dubai. Dubai is far from the Philippines and you need to fly to get there. Both the young man and woman work hard every day to earn

enough money to buy a ticket to Dubai. Before they knew it, he was on his way flying to Dubai.

By December 2001, the young woman gave birth to a healthy daughter. The moment the child was born changed both the young man and the young woman's life forever.

*-Cyleen, June 2016*

# The Story that Never Ends

---

It all started last summer, the summer of 2015. We were going to the park. It was the last day of summer, and we wanted to remember it forever. We met at 172nd and Amsterdam and began speaking about what we wanted to do on this final day.

We were coming up with ideas that were boring, and some that were too crazy for us. Then I came up with the idea that we should do something with a cop. And one of my friends said, "let's break a cop car." At first, nobody was with it. That changed after an entire day of planning. Finally, we came up with a plan.

The night came and everyone was ready; we got on our bikes and we headed towards Precinct 33. While we were on our way there, we filled out pockets with rocks. After we were getting close to the precinct and we saw all the cop cars we started throwing rocks at them. Then, we started peddling fast and headed to the riverbank to lose the police.

For a moment, I thought that the police were going to catch us, because they had cars that were faster than our bikes were. But after all that, I thought that I had escaped the police. However, I was very wrong, because the police were at my house looking for me; I was scared. They arrested me for public violation and I was sent to prison for 6 months. I am telling this story because prison is very bad and you don't want to be sent here.

- *Ranssel Pinedo, June 2016*

# Saying Farewell to Saigon

---

## **Every day**

My children do not have enough to eat.  
I sew and I sew  
but no one wants to buy baby clothes.

No matter what I do my children's bellies are never full.

## **April 17**

My husband's best friend pays me a visit  
We must leave, he says.  
I do not wish to risk my children's safety fleeing the only home  
they have known.

But then again, what will become of them when the Communists  
have gotten to them?

I have made my decision.

## **April 29**

He has been very kind to my family  
but there is only so much he can do.  
He has his own family to worry about.

What will happen to my family?  
Where will we go?  
I wish I did not have to make this decision,  
alone.

## **May 2**

The boat has been emptied of half its people  
and yet it is still hot and sticky  
and my stomach is in knots  
I have never been good with being out at sea.  
My children are hungry again especially my youngest  
I cannot bear to see them like this  
but I will not go begging for scraps.

## **August 15**

Alabama is hot  
and causes me to perspire.

We are staying in the basement of our sponsor's house, to stay  
hidden from his wife's eyes.  
She did not look very pleased to see us.

## **September 2**

It is very important that my children learn English. I have trouble  
learning and understand my daughter's frustrations.

English,  
so complicated and confusing  
Not like the language I have known all my life.

How will I ever get a job without knowing English?  
While the kids are asleep my eldest teaches me the language.

It is a slow process but I am learning.

So many rules

It is hard to keep track.

## February 1

Now that I know my husband is gone,  
he can rest in peace.

My English has gotten better and I think I can get a better job.  
Surely there are better things out there than just working at a factory.

I know that one day all of my children will aspire to great things.

Maybe one day I will too.

- *Melissa R, June 2016*

# Chaos and Awkwardness

---

**Estelle:** Jenny, I need to tell you something. Please don't get mad at me or him, but mostly me though. *My mind starts going crazy.*

**Me:** Estelle, you're scaring me. What are you doing? *I wanted to hear the truth from her mouth even if I knew it already. She kept on repeating "Don't freak out" over and over again.*

**Estelle:** Like I said Jenny, don't get mad at me or him," *her voice got quiet. Then she blurted out the truth.*

*FLASHBACK TO BEFORE CONVERSATION WITH  
ESTELLE*

**Marie:** Jenny, I got something to tell you. *We were in a four-way group convo.*

**Me:** What is it?

**Marie:** Well you're not gonna like it...

**Me:** Come on, just tell me. Time passed as Marie kept wondering whether or not to tell me what was going on.

**Marie:** Okay, Estelle seems to be with someone right now who you used to liked and it might be a date,"

**Me:** Silence

**Me:** What do you mean it might be a date? Before I even saw the next message, I just left the convo so that I didn't have to deal with more pain.

FLASHFORWARD TO AFTER CONVERSATION WITH  
ESTELLE

*Just when Estelle finished on what she was saying, I hung up the phone without giving her a response and felt a sharp pain in my heart. It felt like a nightmare, even though I knew it was actually happening.*

THE NEXT DAY

Ughh, I still have to go to her house. Why did I make that promise to her earlier that week?! I mean part of me wanted to stay home and hide under my blanket, but the other part told me to get the problem solved before it gets worse. Either way I had to talk to her sooner or later.

Even after what happened, I kept my promise of hanging out with her.

Upon arriving at her front door, I knocked and waited while my thoughts went crazy.

*Just put on a fake smile, just put on a fake smile...the awkwardness will pass by.*

Just as she opened the door, that smile came on my face but I got another surprise that I wasn't expecting. Her dog jumped on me with excitement since I hadn't seen her in a while.

"AHH" I said, with pain in my legs from dog's nails digging into my legs.

Estelle said, "Oh my god!!" while she was holding her dog back. After the chaos there was silence.

Later on that day, we shared a few giggles while watching *Everybody Hates Chris*, but I sensed that she wanted to talk about what happened.

I felt guilty about how I reacted and treated her when I heard the news, but I mean she went on a date with Carlos when she had a boyfriend named Sebastian! Yes, Estelle and Sebastian had some issues, but that doesn't mean Sebastian should be treated like that. The fact that I had to find out what was happening from my close friend, Marie, still hurt me.

Time passed by and we had small awkward conversations like, “have you seen that new movie trailer?” or “Chris has bad luck on the show.”

Realizing the time, she said, “Oh it’s getting late.”

She was right and my phone was about to die so I said, “yeah, I better get going. I’ll see you next week or something”

“Okay,” Estelle said as she walked me to her front door.

We said our goodbyes and everything went back to the way it was before. Normal with no drama between us anymore.

In the end, things got better and my emotions were in control again. It made me think that I should give her a second chance even if she did cause me pain at that time.

A show I’ve been watching called *Once Upon a Time*, taught me that I can forgive someone even if they’ve done a lot of bad things and made mistakes in their life and give them a chance to redeem themselves. I still think of Estelle as one of my closest friend like Marie and I’m grateful that she’s a part of my life. Also, I really care about her happiness. I learned that you can forgive and move on from the past and not get stuck in the drama that came before.

- *Jennifer Nguyen, June 8th 2016*

# Bestie

---

I was excited, finally Yancel, (my best friend), was coming to visit me, Yancel is from Dominican Republic and her parents were going to leave her with me for the entire summer. We were supposed to meet up in Brooklyn on July 16th at four o'clock. I didn't recognize Yancel when they arrived, she was in a gray car with her uncle.

I could feel my nerves all over my body.

"Yancel!" I exclaimed.

"Chary!" We hugged each other and started crying,

"Let's go home," I said.

After that we were talking about our problems, like we never had before. Yancel and I were hungry so we ordered Popeye's (WE LOVE POPEYE'S). We spent the entire day taking a lot of pictures, then we were in the backyard listening to music. Yancel loves One Direction, and I love Chris Brown but it didn't matter, we just listened to one after the other.

The next day we were preparing breakfast and we made a real disaster; there was flour everywhere in the kitchen. That was fun, but we got tired really fast. We, Yancel and I, were playing with our phones. I took Yancel's phone away and she got mad at me. I put it on the table in the backyard, and she followed me and took the hose and started to spray me, we started laughing.

We went to the Pizzeria because we were really hungry and didn't eat anything after breakfast. Then, we were at the park and she initiated a bad attitude with me

So I asked her, "do you want to play with me?"

She said, "of course I want to play with you, my love, why are you asking me?"

"I am asking you because I thought you didn't want to, because of the attitude that you have right now."

She just took me in her arms and hugged me, afterwards we went home. When we got there she called her boyfriend Kevin, he is the most stupid person in the entire world, he just gets me on fire. He is so bad for Yancel because he is always making her cry and is always having hoes.

While they were talking about their relationship and all of that, she ignored me and left me alone; I was feeling like no one cared about me,

like I wasn't there, I got mad at her and I started crying, she came towards me and said, "why are you mad if I'm just talking ..."

I screamed, "why are you doing this to me?! I'm your best friend and were supposed to be together, but you just left me all alone."

"Sorry," she said.

My feelings came back that were there before. I started thinking, *why were we best friends? If we are so different, and she likes different things than me...* but I just calmed myself and just laid down until she finished her conversation. When she finally finished, she started crying so I asked her why.

"Why are you crying?"

She didn't answer me, I thought she didn't want to talk to me, but it wasn't like that.

One hour later she started telling me that the problem was her boyfriend, something about if she didn't get into the same school as him, she wouldn't have known him.

"I was thinking he is an idiot, I don't want you to cry for him ever again," I said. She just sat in the middle of the bed and started crying again.

I hugged her and said, "baby, everything is going to be alright, every little thing in life is about happiness and sadness so don't worry, you're gonna be alright."

She took a deep breath and said, "I LOVE YOU"

"I LOVE YOU TOO," I replied, "thanks for always being there despite everything without expecting anything in return."

"You don't have to thank me for anything because I'm your best friend. It doesn't matter what happens or what the circumstances are, I'm always here and I always will be..."

- *Charity Mendoza, June 2016*

# The Noxious World

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## Prologue

It's 2255, where did the time go?! I never believed that all those days, what I had thought was wrong. I wasn't expecting for this to come. People warned me. All their faces said the same thing. They all had the same gaunt expression; behind them were dancing, frenzied shadows swarming without them knowing they were there. Am I the only one who could see those devilish beings with their shark grinning expressions? Taunting my my miserable existence in a corrupted, gray world. Oh, if I would have just listened. Simply remembering those occurrences only made me feel more mocked, worthless, dehumanized, and inferior to them. All of them! They are all the same! They all have identical robotic, rotten, roguish, neglectful, anguished yet intelligent, conceited, and fear-some souls. In fact, not even the word 'soul' was accurate in describing them and their selfishness. Disregarding all those aspects about them, I still should have listened to them, but I just had to be that stubborn and single-minded girl. I wish I could go back in time. I regretting my decisions while I sit alone in the dusty, cold, and silent throne with a golden crown tilted carelessly on the tip of my head as I ponder the thought of murdering the dear fellow king.

## Chapter 1

Hot molten lava, flowing through the rocky ground. Steam leisurely and calmly travelling everywhere. Behind the valley of volcanoes was pitch black; there was nothing there, but the smell of fearful anger.

Surprisingly, a girl with dark brown hair in pigtails, looked at me and did not breaking her stare. After about 5-10 minutes, I realized it was my friend...Ace. Before you know it, Ace was swallowed, by a gust of smoke, leaving me with a confused look on my face. I then heard a scream, I turned 180 degrees and then I also got eaten by the smoke.... I felt a hand on my shoulder and shaking me gently. I stirred up a bit, but it wasn't enough for me to wake up,

“Flick! Wake up!” My eyes popped open and I looked over to my left.

“What is it, Ace?!” She seemed shocked from my reply.

“Well the news-” before Ace could finish her sentence, the news reporter began ranting on live TV.

“Breaking news!” said the male news reporter.

“The vampires and humans are having a war again!” My mouth formed the letter 'O' without me noticing it. “...taking place in Washington D.C.” Oh Washington D.C used to be a beautiful attraction where tourists traveled from their home country to see our White House. It was so beautiful, super sturdy, and held immense power symbolized by the eagle, which also signified leadership.

However, now the White House was the opposite of what I described it to be. It looked decrepit, battered, filthy, broken-down, and old.

“...don't worry, our 10th Lady President is safe and has been taken to a suffrage. We don't genuinely know where she is at specifically, but she is somewhere-” just before he could complete his sentence, a dark magical blast hit the news reporter causing the TV to go 'ZZZZZ' and made our TV screen go black and white. Ace shouted out an inappropriate word that started a letter 'F'. Life is sure getting worse, I thought.

Today is Sunday, and I have after school tomorrow. My day couldn't get worse.

“Why is this happening?!” Ace complained. I didn't respond, but I let my eyes wander, the usual. Looking irritated, Ace stood up and went into the kitchen. While she was in the kitchen, it was my chance to go to her bedroom to nap.

As I was about to open the door, I remembered my lost and destroyed room, my home. But now not only was my home gone and forgotten, my family was missing. I vow one of these days to search and find my family, but it seems hopeless because there are criminal vampires running loose and only a few human survivors.

I walked in Ace's room, and then I set up my sleeping materials. My bed is so much more 'awesome' than hers. Are you ready to hear this? I sleep on the floor while she sleeps on her bed, a real bed. Wow, I'm so lucky... I hope you caught my sarcasm. Anyway, I laid down with a blanket covering me and I fluffed my pillow. I made a quick peek from under the blankets before letting the darkness wash over me.

- *Destiny Howell, June 13th 2016*

## A Dramatic Dialogue

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**Alex-** You said that it was going to be easy, ‘a piece of cake.’

**Bruno-** (*with a cynical smile*) It’s too late to back out of this, remember you were the one that did all the dirty work.

**Alex-** It was you that planned everything, I just did what you told me to.

**Bruno-** If you say something, anything to ruin my plan I will kill you, get that clear.

(The voice of someone in distress is heard down the hallway)

**Alex-** I am not willing to do this anymore, stop it, she is in pain!

**Bruno-** Serves her right. Don't you remember all the things she made us do? She saw this coming.

**Alex-** It's true; she was really annoying and treated us like dogs, you know how it feels like. So then why are you making her go through it?

**Bruno-** You are so foolish to think that I will let her be. It’s true I planned everything in such detail, you could never imagine. Finally, today I will make her pay.

**Alex-** The day we signed the contract she told us that from that point on we were nothing, you were the one who agreed to this.

**Bruno-** Who cares? I am going to kill her, she lied to me, she lied to us. Do you think that after all those things she did to me I can keep my dignity as a man? NO!

**Alex-** (*smiles to a little to himself*) You are not doing anything to her, believe me when I tell you this.

(**Bruno** looks at **Alex** closely, when he notices that **Alex** is recording their little conversation.)

**Bruno**- Damnit, you useless rat! I warned you. Now you will see what becomes of you.

(**Bruno** takes out a gun and points at **Alex**)

**Bruno**- Any last words superhero?

(The two grapple with the gun. A shot is heard, one of them falls to the ground and the other runs towards the crying we heard before.)

- *Ashley Fernandez, June 7<sup>th</sup> 2016*

# Letters to Jill

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## First Letter.

*Jill:*

*At last I found your whereabouts, do not ask me how, but I did. I have been looking for you for years, but now that I found you, I do not dare to see you in person. During all that time, I did not know about you, I dreamed to see your smile again, or hear your sentences full of sarcasm. Now the reality is different. I am afraid to see how much you have changed since the last time I saw you. When you fell from that roof when we were in the middle of a fight against some criminals... and now you are 6 feet underground.*

*So, to calm this pain I feel burning in my chest, I made the decision to write you letters. The bad thing is...*

*The letters do not reach the sky, right Jill?*

*-James.*

## Second Letter.

*Jill:*

*The CIA has greatly improved. We have many branches in many countries. But it seems, the more progress we make, the more bioterrorists that appear. The fall of Teras has only served to make things worse.*

*There is a vivid rumor running through all our facilities, about something called B-42. What is that? According to what I heard from David, it is an apocalyptic project that will end with the whole world.*

*Curious no? I thought the world had ended when you left.*

*I guess we all have a different definition of what the world is.*

*-James.*

### **Third Letter.**

*Jill:*

*I do not know if I talked to you about this or not, but I'll tell you anyway. That summer of June 2005, my sister went to Los Angeles in my search. You remember Lizza, right? She and a guy found themselves trapped in the bioterrorist incident, just like you.*

*Now the guy, which now I know as Ethan Hunt, became a government agent. And with no other experience more than the one he learned during the incident, he was sent to rescue a group of kidnapped people.*

*At the end, he rescued all of them. But he came back with something else. He brought with him a number of documents about a new biological weapon. It can spark a murderer instinct in the host, as those infected people we saw in the labs of the CIA. Only that they obey the orders of someone in particular.*

*Laugh now about this if you want, but I think I am infected with the virus of Jill, and now I can only follow the orders of your memories.*

*-James.*

**Fourth letter.**

*Jill:*

*You've never wondered whether it is worth it or not to keep fighting? Well I do. Since... What assures you that it will all end? That every breath you take makes the difference?*

*I'm asking you because you know the answer to those questions. But you cannot speak. Or much less hear the beating of your own heart as you used to do when looking for a solution to everything.*

*Maybe tomorrow I will go to see you in your grave ...*

*And maybe find some answers ....*

*-James.*

**Fifth letter.**

*Jill:*

*Visiting you in the cemetery gave me an idea. Let each and every one of my letters sit in front of your headstone. Since leaving them there is as close to heaven as they may be.*

*Today while walking through the halls of the CIA, I found one of those things you used to open the doors. And took it in my hands. It's called a picklock, or something.*

*Perhaps you used one before you went to free this new James?*

*-James.*

*PS: I liked the other James, Jill. Yeah, the one, which you liked.*

## **Sixth Letter.**

*Jill:*

*One of these days I'll go to Europe to capture new bioterrorists. And for some strange reason, I feel that this mission will be different from the others. As ... as I am going to find the answer to all those questions that I ever did.*

*By the way, I visited your father in jail the other day, I told him what happened with you. I thought it was wrong to have told him about your death. But, because of it, I now have your good luck hat.*

*At night, it helps me put all my ideas together in my head.*

*-James.*

## **Seventh Letter.**

*Jill:*

*It's official, later I'll go to Africa. And as I said before, I have a feeling. And every minute it becomes stronger.*

*Because of this mission, I will not be able to write letters very often as I do now. I cannot really write any letters.*

*But I promise that the next Letter will be more special.*

*Attn: James*

## **Eighth Letter.**

*It makes no sense .... it makes no sense to write this letter knowing you're still alive and that you are ... back home. I went to the cemetery in search of those letters I had written. But they were not*

*there, much less that tombstone which held onto me as if it was really you. But it does not matter, I wasn't going to show you them anyway.*

*I knew that this mission was going to be special. You cannot imagine the surprise it was to see you there. You, Jill. Alive, working with the enemy, but alive. Yeah, it gave me a few blows like hell, but it was worth it. And you know what else is worth it? The struggle. To keep fighting for a new dawn without fear.*

*When we were finally home, after all I had to do to keep you by my side, you told me:*

*"After what happened, it would be better to give us some time"*

*Those were the exact words you said. So, I leave you with this letter. Only this time I will not leave it before your headstone. And do you know why?*

*I found a place closer to heaven: the door of your new home.*

*Goodbye Jill, someday we will see each other again. And I promise you, that when that day comes, I will never leave you again.*

*-James.*

## **Epilogue.**

Jill dropped her head on the couch with a sigh after reading all of this. And a tear ran down her cheek. Already she had her backpack ready to go from there, but reading everything opened a new door.

In each line, in each word, she felt his love. Therefore, she had to care for him, but at a distance, because that was best. She took her backpack and put it on her shoulders. She went to the front door and just before turning off the lights she looked back towards the piles of letters on that old wooden table.

“Of course we will see each other one day.” --- she said very determined. ---“But not now. Not when you are in danger by being close to me.”

Then she turned off the lights and left.

- *Johanna Garcia, June 2016*

## A Girl Like Her

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She was that girl you'd see a smile on her face. She was always happy. She always made everyone feel better. She was what you'd call a true friend, and she was my best friend. She had a boyfriend who she really loved. She never left his side, she was always there for him. She chose him before everyone else. But one day everything changed ... I saw her in the hallway, crying. She didn't want to tell me what was wrong. She just walked away and said, "I'm fine, I just wanna be left alone." Throughout the day I didn't see her. But I saw him... he was with another girl. And there she was... so heartbroken... tears were coming down her face. As I was approaching her, she told me that, "I wasn't good enough for him." And she ran away in so much pain.

I decided to follow her home. I rang the bell, but there was no response. I waited and waited and finally her mom opened the door. She let me in and I went to her room. She was laying down crying. I told her she'd find a boy that would treat her right. And she responded back with, "I don't want to start over with another boy." I mean I understood that we were still young and of course they'll be some heartbreaks but she, she didn't understand that. All she thought about was him, him only. He always controlled her and would never let her go out without his permission. And if a boy would ever talk to her it was always her fault. She didn't see that it was time to let go and move on. She didn't see he wasn't worth it. And she told me, "Everyone sees the bad in him, but I see the good in him, yes he's made mistakes but I've always been there through it with him." But he didn't realize she loved him and that's what hurt her more.

I was on my way home and I saw him. I approached him and asked him, "why would you hurt her?"

He responded and said "I'm not really into her like I was before."

He moved on pretty quick, but you can't force something if it's not meant to be. So, I didn't bother to make a big show. I just went home. ...Weeks went by and I guess she was getting over it. As long as I saw her happy and not crying for him I was happy. She was moving on little by little. She was even learning to love the way she was. She was insecure, but she was learning to love herself. She would still read old conversations, view his page, and think about him. But not as much like before.

For him things weren't working out. You can say he was missing her. He would still look at her once in a while. And he didn't seem as happy with his new girlfriend anymore. One day he even came up to her and told her he missed her. And she still had feelings for him but she knew she was better off with-ought him. All she did was smile and walk away, and he knew he had lost someone who once cared about him so much.

- *Kimberly Balbuena, June 2016*

# The Day I Got Hit by a Car

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Before this incident occurred, I was a totally different individual. I acted very differently, I was very bad. Some teachers referred to me as the troubled child, and most adults referred to me as a terror. In school, I would always act up, and not do any of my work in class. When I was in the fifth grade, I used to always bother my teacher Mr. Rodriguez; I threw gum in his hair. Also, I got into an altercation with another student, the teacher tried to stop it, and I punched him. I used to be very disrespectful towards my older family members. I never listened to anything they told me to do, but after this incident everything changed, and I'm going to tell you how.

It was a windy morning in January. My mom Taina, my cousin Ciara, and I pulled up in front of my school P.S.171 in the red BMW X6.

“You girls get out of the car, and go across the street to Blimpies to get your breakfast.” My mom said to me and Ciara.

Ciara and I got out the car as fast as we could, and waited for the light to change so we could cross the street. Ciara was able to cross the street safely, and as I attempted to cross the street, a big black truck drove up and came to a stop.

“Go ahead you can cross!” The white man with glasses yelled to me.

As soon as I got to the middle of the street, I heard the revving of the truck engine, I turned my head and saw the truck coming towards me as fast as lightning. I looked at the truck in shock...

“Oh my god! My life is over!” I thought.

Then BAMMMM! The car hit me, I rolled to the other side of the street. Laying down on the hard pavement crying hysterically, scared for my life. The black truck came to a stop and Ciara ran up to me and yelled.

“Oh my god! Shaina, are you okay?!”

I was not able to answer her; I was still in shock from what had just happened.

“Wow, I can’t believe this just happened to me!” I thought.

Suddenly, my mom ran from her car and came to me.

“What the hell happened?!” She yelled at the top of her lungs

She looked at me with a concerned face, and said “We have to go to the hospital!”

The man who hit me came out of his vehicle, and asked “Would you like me to take you to the hospital?”

“No thank you, we are going to call the ambulance,” she replied.

“WHEEE-OOOO WHEEE-OOOO WHEEE-OOOO!”

The ambulance arrived as quick as possible. I was put on the stretcher and loaded onto the back of the truck.

“Oh my god, I hope everything’s okay, and nothing wrong.” I thought.

“How are you feeling?” The lady ambulance worker who was white, and had short brown hair asked me.

“I’m okay, I’m just very scared.” I replied.

Shortly after, we arrived at Mount Sinai, and they rushed me to the emergency room entrance. They put me into a room and asked me if anything hurt.

“My neck, and my knee hurts,” I told the lady doctor.

“Does it hurt here?” she asked as she applied pressure on a section of my neck.

“OWWWWWWW!” I thought.

I finally replied back to her and said, “Yes.”

The doctor put me into a wheelchair, and made me wait for X-rays to be taken.

“Shaina Frazier?” A tall, male doctor yelled out.

“Yes,” My mother replied as she rolled my wheelchair towards him.

After my X-rays were taken I was told that everything was okay and none of my bones were broken.

“You will be able to return to school in about a week or two since your body might be sore,” the doctor told me.

After two weeks, I returned back to my school, and everyone in my class wrote me “Get Well” cards. From the day I got hit by a car I learned to appreciate life and live life to the fullest because the next second is not promised and anything can happen. Getting hit by that car changed my actions still to this day. Before I would be mean to everyone, act very badly towards mostly everything and not look at life as a gift, but

now I am very grateful and I wake up every day thanking god for blessing me with the opportunity to live another day. Now, I can honestly say I am more appreciative.

- *Shaina Frazier, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

# The Crash

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I slowly began to tear the bright pink wrapping paper off, like I was uncovering a mysterious code. As I saw parts of what seemed to be a bike, my hands started shaking. I felt tension in the room; I started to sweat. The fear that had been taunting me for years was present and making everything worse. I couldn't even speak when my mom asked, "So do you like it?" How could I tell her that this had been the worst present she'd ever given me?

"Mom I love it but I don't know how to ride a bike anymore, you should just return it I guess," I responded.

I remembered the day like it happened yesterday, I was about 3 or 4 years old when I was riding my bike down a hill, the feeling as if I was flying took over and distracted me. The bike quickly bumped into a pole making me fly off the bike and onto the hot sidewalk. With hot tears rolling down my cheeks, I felt a burning sensation on my elbows and knees. And as I look down, blood rolled down my legs and arms. I went from feeling like I was flying to feeling immense pain and became a bloody disaster. From that moment on, every time I saw a bike I tried my best to avoid it and never get near them. It became a nightmare different than the usual scary monster nightmares little kids that age dream of.

"Can't you just learn again?" My mom asked as she interrupted my flashback, I looked at her like she was crazy. Did she want me to fall again?

"Yeah, mom... why not learn again," I said sarcastically. Well not sarcastic enough, because my mom said, "Great! your Uncle will come by tomorrow and he'll teach you."

I wanted to say NO!!! that's not what I meant but I was interrupted by a knock on the door. It was my dear Uncle who was going to help me die by making me get on a bike again. He walked in smiling having no clue that my eyes were getting watery already and I hadn't even gotten on the bike yet. My first bike lesson turned out to be better than I thought, however I did not learn in one day. Overcoming my fear was the worst part, little by little I would practice every day in the hallways of my building. I remember I would always get frustrated when I wanted to pick up my foot and start pedaling but the fear of falling would overcome me. *God damn it, it's just a bike what can it do? It's not the bike's fault you're so afraid of even getting on it.*

One day, I decided I was ready to lift my foot from the ground and actually start pedaling. I rolled my bike out to the hallway, my heart was pounding, I gripped the handlebars tighter than ever. Here goes nothing. I started pushing myself with my foot, and as I picked up speed I quickly picked up my foot and started pedaling. I rode to the end of the hallway and back, I ran inside the house and told my mom, “Mom I did it, I did it!!” jumping up and down excitedly.

“That’s great honey; come inside dinner’s almost ready,” she said.

At that moment, I was so proud and happy I actually faced my fear. This meant a lot to me because it changed me, whenever I do something that seems impossible I try to remember the dedication I had when I was learning to ride a bike again. This event motivates me in all the things I do making me push myself harder towards my goals. The patience and determination I used helped me notice my own emotional and physical strength. Life can be hard but we need to push through to reach our goals. Whenever you feel like you’ll never make it, remember a time you accomplished something and how you felt about accomplishing it. The sky is the limit; we as high schoolers have a long way to go and we should always remember to give it all we got to succeed.

- *Fernanda Brita, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

# The Solution to my Problems

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I woke up this morning, took a shower, and got dressed. I walked out the door with nothing but myself and nothing to do. It was pouring out, making everything absolutely wet and icky. It wasn't even the warm type of rain you we usually get in the summer. Instead, it was an ice cold rain that was going to give me a cold for sure. So far, the day reminded me how much my life sucked. *What is life?*

Walking down the hill to the bodega near my house, I pondered the idea of what high school I was going to end up in. (Notice I say "end up in", instead of "go to".) It's crazy, really. Who knew picking a high school would create as much anxiety as it has? (Not me). I always thought it would be more of a one, two, three type of thing. How come no one told me it would be all this work? I mean, I guess they kind of did... but still.

I get to the bodega and look around a bit, trying to decide which unhealthy, and heart disease causing snack I would want to waste my money on. Slim Jim's, my favorite. So, I go to the cashier to pay, reach into my pocket and realize, "Damn! Just great, I can't find my money."

Well there is no way I'm going all the way back home just to get my money now. Whatever, I think to myself. I began to walk aimlessly out of the bodega, without my snack. I'm walking, just walking to wherever my legs take me. Eventually, my legs and I arrived at 205 Hazel Ave; they decided to take me to my grandmother's house. I stop and reminisce. Many of my happiest and saddest moments happen here.

I remember getting my very first pet, Sammy. Sammy was a white little hamster with a small gray streak going down his back. I also remember the day he died. It happened while I was at school. Later that day, when my dad got out of work, we buried him in the backyard right next to the tool shed. I even remember how I used to always hang out at the neighbor's house. I figured I might as well go and see how much things have changed since I've been around. So, I go to say hi to everyone and of course we're all happy to see each other. It was nice to see that not too much had changed.

While I was there, I noticed their cousin. And hey, I'm not gonna lie, he was something to look at. He was tall, dark, and had really nice hair. It was just the right length and his curls were on point. We started conversing and just hanging out; it was amazing. Over time, we got to know each other more and more. He was a really cool guy I realized.

Thinking back on my day, all the way back to the beginning of the day. My questions seemed to have an answer today. Life is something that can really suck, but it's certain that the little things are what make it worthwhile; whether it's visiting old friends or the nostalgia you get from your grandmother's house. And for me, over time, it became him. He makes it all worth it. From the cold rain, to forgetting my money at home, to just questioning life, I push through it all for him.

- *Michelle Moreau, June 2016*

# El Cambio de la Vida

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El olor de hospital me duerme; todo me duele, todo me cae mal. Pero me preocupaa que esto es mi culpa. La edad no importa lo que importa son las decisiones que tenemos que tomar. Saber distinguir que es Bueno y que es malo. Cuando estamos jóvenes no, nos importa nada. Tal vez es tiempo de hablar y contar mi historia, ya que solo mi familia la sabe y una persona mas de cuenta que nunca debió de haberse enterado. El contar esto no me hace sentir nada bien; nadie en mi nueva escuela sabra por lo que e pasado y menos ahora todos me juzgaban por mi pasado. Contar esto no es fácil, es muy difcil de explicar mis sentimientos a mi pasado. Cuando estamos jóvenes todo se toma como un juego pero nunca pensamos en las consecuencias que puedan traer. Si me pidieran que describiera mi vida en tres palabras durante mi periodo de la secundaria te diría “excitante, fácil, vacía ” en la vida e tomado decisiones que me enorgullecen como persona pero hay unas que no me hubiera gustado haber tomado; como el haberle mentido a mi madre que me iba con mis amigos al parque o a el cine lo mientras me iba con alguien más. Una decisión que me enorgullece haber tomado fue que siguiera con mi vida apesar de lo que los compañeros de las escuela decían y se burlaban cuando pasaba por el lado caminando.

El jueves 13 de agosto recuerdo cuando todo pasó. Todos los días de mi vida seran horribles, peor cuando recuerdo lo que pasó unos meses después. Empezó durante las vacaciones, yo lo mire y el me miro. El es una persona muy coqueta con una mirada dulce no tan alto como de unos 5 pies máximo, de piel morena, pelo negro y una sonrisa como la de cristiano. Por lo coqueto que era me enamore de el. Antes de enamourâmes de él tenía un novio que se había casado a la edad de 18 años. Nunca pense que algun novio mio se casaría en tan temprana edad y sin decirme nada. Bueno por lo dicho el me puso los cuernos con alguien más si saberlo, pero cuando me di cuenta él ya lo abia echo. A las tres semanas o menos lo deje, no se necesita a algún hombre para seguir con tu vida y menos de un patán como el cómo pudo jugar con los sentimientos de una muchacha que solo estaba enamora de él. Por lo que me cuenta hoy él está separado de su mujer él me ha contactado, pero yo lo ignoro no quiero saber nada de él por lo que me queda de vida. Cuando terminamos o más

bien cuando me aleje de él después vino otra persona que me cambiaría la vida para siempre de manera drástica. La nueva persona hoy es alguien muy especial para mi. Aunque he tomado malas decisiones y buenas de unas de ella no me arrepiento pero solo hay una que en toda mi vida me estare arrepintiendo que incumbe a esta persona.

Todo tuvo tiempo, nombre, locascio, me enamore profundamente de él; tal vez no me crean porque no tengo la edad de estar enamorada pero es la verdad. Mentiría al decir que él no fue alguien grande en mi vida, me enseñó muchas cosas y tambien aprendi lecciones que nunca las olvidare. En Agosto del 2013 me encante de su mirada. Nos volvimos novios unos días después de habernos conocido y a ver platicado. nuestra relación era como la de todos los adolescentes. Salíamos a ver películas, platicamos por teléfono todo el tiempo. Otra cosa que hacíamos era pasar mucho tiempo juntos. Moisés y yo pasamos muchos tiempos agradables como cuando salimos a ver la pelicula de “Hunger games” ese dia fue tan lindo ya que me la pase toda la tarde con el, también fuimos a los juegos que había cerca de mi casa. Algo que me gustaba de él es que no le importaba si llevaba a mis hermanos, lo único que importaba era que estuviéramos juntos. La verdad yo solo estaba con él para olvidar a mi ex pero al pasar los dias el se fue convirtiendo en una persona más especial para mi y se fue metiendo en mi corazon y mi mente mas que a nadie. Pensaba en él y no podía aguantar al llegar a casa para hablar con él o para verlo. La primera vez que estuvimos a solas fue muy raro porque no sabíamos de qué hablar o decir. Mi mejor amiga en este tiempo jugaba un gran papel porque ella me ayudaba a escaparme de la casa para verlo. Era un poco chistoso porque ella me dijo que dejara a mi ex para estar con este muchacho y después ella no le caía bien porque ya no pasábamos mucho tiempo juntas. La relación que tenía con ella es muy importante, ya que me traiciono. Ella era mi persona de confianza y todo lo sabía ella, éramos como hermanas; hasta del mismo plato comíamos, éramos como “friends goal” porque todas querian una amiga con la mia, nunca se separaba de mi.

Tiempo después Alondra se alejó un poco de mi, no platicabamos como antes. Tampoco caminábamos a la escuela juntas, me empese a preocupar y le pregunte porque ya no pasaba tiempo conmigo o porque ya no caminábamos a la escuela juntas como antes. Lo único que me contestó fue que ella se levantaba tarde y que su madre la ponía a hacer

muchas cosas de la casa por lo cual era mentira porque ella es la única hija y es la consentida no como yo que tengo tres hermanos y una hermana. Esto lo tome como ella lo dijo, y no le pregunte más cosas seguimos con nuestra amistad y nos veíamos cuando íbamos a la escuela, y después de la escuela. Apesar de mi relación con moises mis grados estaban altos nunca los baje, todos los meses era una de las estudiantes con honores. Con mis grados altos mi madre no sospechaba si tenía novio o no tambien no se daba cuenta que faltaba a la escuela porque nunca debía tareas o algún proyecto.El tiempo pasó y de ahí estaba en el 2014. Nunca pensaría que esto me iba a ocurrir, a pesar de toda la protección que tuvimos entre los dos. Quede embarazada a principios de el 2014 y me di cuenta en marzo.

En el tiempo que tenía era 9 semanas de embarazos cuando fui a el hospital para confirmar. Al principio que me entere fue una tarde después de la escuela recuerdo que eran como por las seis de la tarde me dieron muchas nauseas y solo quería estar en cama; sin consultarle nada a mi madre de mis malestares le conte a mi novio. Cuando le conte de la posibilidad de que estuviera envarazada el se puso feliz pero en cambio yo no sabía que iba hacer, que pasaria con mi vida. Pense en mi carrera y cuanto me gusta estudiar y viajar a otros países. También pense en lo que mi madre me podria hacer o decir si ella se entareba de lo que estaba sucediendo. Para estar claros el me trajo una prueba de enbarazo y la prueba salio positiva. Todo se cumplio después de ver el resultado y pensar como mi vida cambiaria en poco tiempo. Desicidi contarle a mi otra amiga que tambien estaba enbarazada pero ella ya tenía mas tiempo que yo y ademas ella era más grande que yo. Ella me dijo que fuera a el hospital y que iba hacer mas bien que fuera ahora a que fuera mas tarde. Cuando llegue a el hospital me dijeron que a que iba y les die que hacer una prueba de embarazo y solo me pidieron mi identificación y la edad cual tenía 16. Lo mas sorprendente de ese día fue que la persona que me iso la prueba me confirmo que si lo estaba. “felicidades serás mama” lo mas fuerte que escuche ese día y nunca olvidaré el momento. Cuando me pasaron a un cuarto porque me iba a revisar una doctora me senti rara porque nunca había estado en un hospital sola sin mi madre y tambien tenía nervios de lo que podría pasar, o que me preguntaran algo que no supiera la respuesta. Pero lo que más me preocupaba era el haber decepcionado a mi madre. Ese día me preguntaron que si quería tener al bebé o como le quieran llamar. La respuesta que yo di fue ahí cuando comenzo

mis problemas con mi familia y mi novio. Moisés nunca me dio la contraria el me apoyo con la decisión. Para hacer más clara dije que no lo quería tener y que era mejor abortar a que lo tuviera.

Nadie dijo que no lo podía hacer en cambio ellos me dijeron que era mi cuerpo y que podía hacer con él lo que quisiera. Lo más triste que me puedo recordar de esto fue cuando me hicieron un ultrasonido para ver a el bebe si estaba bien. Lo logre ver una vez y empecé a llorar como nunca, no se si fue emoción o miedo. Cuando le conté esto a moisés él se puso un poco triste porque el no logro ver a el feto. Después de unas citas se confirmó la fecha de cuando la ocasión tenía que suceder. Otra persona que estuvo en este proceso fue mi hermano. Mi hermano siempre me a apoyado en todo lo que echo como yo a el igual. Abril 21 fue el ultimo día para la persona inosente que llevaba adentro de mi. Aunque trate de ocul-tarlo no podía y me puse llorar porque supe que fue una de mis peores decisiones que pude haber tomado. Mi vida pasó lentamente, aunque quería que el tiempo pasará más rápido nunca pasaba. Mi amiga ya no me hablaba, tenía peleas con mi novio y lo peor de todo tenía que fingir que todo estaba bien al llegar a casa.

Cuando mi mama se entero de esto me quería exterminar, pero era demasiado tarde. Toda mi familia no me quería ver, yo me sentía mal con mi mama. Lloré mucho como nunca lo había echo. El río callo de mis ojos a mis pies. Sufrí y me recordé de ese día que me levante de esa cama en el hospital llorando. Tuve que mentir, me echaron de la casa, me pegaron tal vez hasta pudieron matarme pero me mataron de la manera más horrible del mundo. Me aplicaron la ley del hielo. Todos era raros en casa, nadie me hablaba, yo lloraba por las noches. También lloraba cuando estuve embarazada. Sin mi mamma notandolo yo estaba desesperada sin saber qué hacer. No quería que él se fuera de mi lado por que si el se iba yo no sabía qué hacer. Tomar la decisión más grande de mi vida fue muy difícil. No se porque lo hice, tal vez no quería tener un bebo a tan temprano a edad, pero algunas personas dicen que fue lo mejor. Tenia 9 semanas cuando termine con el sueño de algún. Sin pensarlo, eso fue el peor error de mi vida. Mi madre me odia nadie me quiere me odia nadie me quiere en casa. Durante el verano mi madre me sacó de la casa y me dijo que me fuera con moisés, no tenía otra opción entonces lo ise. Al principio del año escolar yo no estaba en mi casa y nadie lo sabía porque

nunca contada nada. Pasaron dos meses cuando volví hablar con mi madre me dijo que regresara. Cuando regrese me vigilaron como si estuviera en una prisión. Nunca olvidaré lo que pasó mi familia se destruyó por completamente. Toda mi vida a sido confundida. Destruído a todo el mundo a todas las personas que me quieren. Pero todos lo bueno de esto es que todavía estoy con el que siempre está a mi lado. Tal vez la vida es de decisiones que saber que es lo mejor para ti.

- S.N.W, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016



# Speeches

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# The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Should be Abolished

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*“Test scores don't predict the potential success of future students.”*

When you think about the perfect college application you think of a student with straight A's, a long list of extracurricular activities and strong actions of leadership. Contrary to popular opinion, admission offices now look at something else: The College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). This is a 3 hour and 45-minute test, which is taken by over 2 million students yearly according to The College Board. This test is greatly considered by admission offices, and therefore it can make a huge difference in whether you get into an Ivy League College (the aspiration of many of us and our parents) or an average level college. Out there, there is a great amount of evidence supporting the statement that this test does not show our level of intelligence. So why make us go through the stress and the pressure that comes along with taking this test? The SAT test should be abolished because our future should not depend on a four-hour long test that does not show our level of intelligence, at all. Not all of us function under pressure; and most importantly, the skills necessary to ace this test come with expensive materials (books, online programs and classes) that most of us, scholars, taking this test cannot afford.

The possibility of you being chosen by a good college mostly depends on how well you do on the SAT. Arguments with evidence have surged indicating that this standardized test does not measure the capacity of the students who take it. The president of the University of Wyoming, Robert Sternberg, “...was stupid in elementary school...” just because his IQ test stated so. Everyone expected him to do poorly on his classes and test; however, in fourth grade a teacher named Virginia Alexa saw that there was something remarkable in him so she conveyed her expectations. Shortly after that, he became an A student. He earned a bachelor's degree in Yale University and a doctorate in psychology at Stanford; he later became president of the American Psychological Association. “Not so stupid after all.” The IQ is not much different than the SAT, it labels us and this effects how well we serve our community and our results on future tests. Jill Tiefenthaler, provost of Wake Forest University in the article, “SATs Do Not Take the Full Measure of a High School Student” declares that, “When we [...] began to rethink our admissions process, we

looked for the best ways to choose students who would rise to the challenges of our rigorous community and enliven it by their presence. We wanted to affirm the full range of talents, skills, and values that we seek in the students we enroll—things that don't show up on standardized tests: integrity, work ethic, open-mindedness, and that passion for learning that drives students to lose themselves in classic literature or intricate math problems.” The point that I have been trying to make is that, colleges need students to meet certain qualities and values that standardized tests cannot measure. A test score is just a number; we are much more than a bunch of numbers.

Some of us are just not good at taking tests. The pressure that comes along with taking a test, interfere with the way we think. On the SAT, there is only about 1 minute to answer each question. The level of most of these questions is really high in addition to reading passages which are long. We get overwhelmed with the situation and in lot of cases that affects our score. When I took the PSAT I did poorly, it was not because I didn't know what I was doing but because the pressure that was put on to me, prevented me from thinking straight so for most of the questions I chose the first option that sounded somewhat right and that did not work out well. I believe you can relate to this because all of us have gone through the stress of taking the PSAT. It is not possible for us to show our intelligence when we can barely think about the correct answer. In the article “The case against the SAT” Thomas Rochon says that, “some potential students are deterred from applying to colleges that require a test score because they are not comfortable taking standardized tests.” By taking the SAT, the level of intelligence of those who take it cannot be measured simply because some of us just cannot work under the stress that this test implies.

The skills necessary to ace this test come with really expensive materials. Not all of our parents can afford to pay hundreds of dollars for a test preparation. The article “What's Holding Students Back? The SAT” states that, “Scores are highly correlated with family income; Harvard law professor Lani Guinier calls the SAT a “wealth test.” Type “SAT” into Amazon.com, and you'll have to scroll past more than 200 test-prep volumes before you get to one book that's a history or critique of the test.” Those 200 test-prep volumes are costly and not all of them have the help that some of us need. What happens if we do not have the money to buy those books? Does that mean that we have to be labeled as “stupid” and go to a low-quality college?

On the other hand, The College Board claims that the SAT has its benefits. “The SAT Suite of Assessments helps students navigate their path through high school toward college and career, and offers a range of unique benefits to students.” States their online page. They claim that the SAT is helping high school students by opening doors to college and helping them build skills over time. However, if we worked 17 long years really hard to get a decent grade and our transcript states so, why do we have to take a 4-hour long test session just to prove ourselves to get into a good college when some of us students don't even speak English well. Therefore, students should not be labeled with a test grade that determines whether they get into a good college or not when not the same learning materials are given to us, these factors make this test biased.

The SAT was intended to be a tool that could predict how well we might do in college and serve our community. On the contrary, the SAT has just managed to widened the gap between the wealthy and the poor as those unable to afford courses, score lower and as a result get into less prestigious schools. Those who take test preparation score significantly higher than does who don't. The capability of an individual to function in a community should not be measured by a high-pressured test that instead of doing so is just stressing students. It should be measured by a long-term factor like GPA's. Admission offices should focus more on grades that are given daily and show the effort of an individual day by day and not just their effort in 4 hours.

- *Nayeli Rojas, June 2016*

# Catcalling

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When I walk places where there are boys, I am usually drowned with fear; fear that as a developing teen I will be forced to endure verbal or sexual harassment; fear that my choice to not respond to the degrading whistles, and hollering, that creates the illusion that I am not a person but instead a performance, will trigger negative comments such as “fuck you then” or “dumb bitch.” It is a fact that I must be cautious of what I wear so that I do not accidentally “attract” eyes, or that I’m told by my mom: “Be safe, there are perverts out there,” when going somewhere as simple as the store. Is this ok? The appropriation of these absurd, disgusting acts of most men shouldn’t even be questioned, it is not ok.

Catcalling demonstrates a woman is nothing more than her body and the clothes she wears. To a man, what a woman wears and what she is developing/has developed is more important than the woman herself. He automatically wants to get your number, your Kik or “your name on the book” because he is not attracted to your personality, but instead your physical appearance. As Ariel Chates states, catcalling is like “an audience member expected to give feedback to a performance,” in men’s eyes, women are just a performance; women are present for entertainment. And that’s one of the main reasons we aren’t treated as equally to men in most places.

The saddest part is, women aren’t only catcalled in the United States; we are catcalled and viewed as the inferior gender everywhere. Sociology professors Ross Macmillan, Annette Nierobisz and Sandy Welsh conducted a survey in Canada.; results showed 80% of the Canadian women surveyed had been harassed publicly by a male stranger. Another survey in the USA by Penn, Schoen and Berkand associates on the telephone revealed 84% of women considered changing their behavior to avoid street harassment. Lastly, in a survey conducted by the Egyptian Center for Women’s Rights, 83% of the Egyptian women reported enduring sexual harassment. What does this reveal about the world as a whole?

There are women that say, “catcalling is flattering, deal with it” like Doree Lewak, but this shows women are beginning to follow the views of society; the misconception that catcalling is a compliment shows women do not know their worth. Women that take these insulting, dehumanizing remarks, as compliments, haven’t yet created a clear image of

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their place in society. Women are queens not dogs, and catcalling does not agree with this. “Women don't care about or need recognition from slimy men, or even men of non-slimy variety” (Don't Call Me Baby: The History of Catcalling). It is important for a woman to love herself and not look for comments from men as a form of confirmation that she is beautiful. These rude comments, should not be mistaken as, “he's saying I'm sexy” because they are belittling you as a woman; these comments are saying “your physical appearance is sexy, not you.” Then, there are the guys that believe it is the woman's fault for wearing certain clothes. Women struggle throughout their life to accept their body; part of accepting your body is wearing clothes that flatter your shape. Men shouldn't blame us for our appearance but should instead blame themselves for their slimy view of women, their filthy hormones, and their absurd idea that women are inferior to them.

Women are the most disrespected people in the world. We do not wake up every morning looking for the catcaller of the day. Classy women do not get dressed in the morning with the intention to impress men but to instead feel joyful, comfortable, and happy in their skin. Why does everything a woman do have to be criticized? Is it because society expects women to follow male commands or society couldn't handle us if we had more power?

- *Jahnay Bryan, 2016*

# Discriminations/ Prejudice

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Since 1995 racism has increased 8 percent in our society, according to a CNN article. Today people are experiencing prejudice and going through racism just because of their nationality, religion or skin color. Most of the time that they are being prejudiced against, it is because of their skin-color, nationality, job-status, or social class. Most of the people that have received racism are as a majority either African-American, Hispanic, or Muslim. No one should face prejudice because of their nationality, social class, or religious beliefs because these things do not define who they are or what they are capable of.

No one should be prejudiced against because of their nationality because it can destroy communities and create divisions within society. In others words, it causes segregation which can reduce education or the opportunity to have the “American dream” for these people. I believe that it is dehumanizing for a person to discriminate against another because they take a person’s opportunity of having the same rights as them, and that is an opportunity that should be available to all people equally.

I believe that in this day and in this century people should not face prejudice because of the color of their skin, religion and nationality. Especially, in this country where people have freedom of religion; it is unbelievable that we are in the 21st century where women have the right to vote, where African- Americans have civil right and we still see racism with Muslims and others. For example, CNN wrote a story about a girl named Alia Sharrief, an African-American whose parents converted to Islam. According to her, every time that there is a terroristic attack she always gets discriminated against, her words were "When (San Bernardino) happened, I heard things like, 'all you Muslims are dangerous,'" she says. "I have never had a thought like that. I have never wanted to hurt someone." She believed that her only weapons are music, and she also says that she has to deal with the struggles of not only being African American but also Muslim, her words were, "I deal with the struggles of Islamophobia and the prejudices against black people." Can you believe that a person has to deal with two types of discrimination just because other people don’t know how to grow up and start thinking that we are all equal and that we all have the same rights? They should not be treating people like objects. Another recent example is with the terrorist attack in Brussel, people were writing offensive words or letters towards Muslim

with the trending hashtag **#stopIslam**. I believe that it is an injustice that Muslims receive this type of discrimination just because ISIS/ ISIL is mixing the name of Allah with the attacks that we have seen before. It is unfair that all Muslims have to pay the price, and/ or carry all the responsibility of ISIS/ISIL.

We as a society should be united because our skin-color does not define us, our religion does not make us different and neither does who our sexual attraction is towards. We are all different because of the way that we think and see the world, and that is amazing because we are all unique; we shouldn't be unique by our religion, skin-color or sexuality. We all know that our society has some bad things in it, but if we work together as a team we could change it because it is not that hard, you just need to start with yourself and then the things around you will follow.

- *Winy Moran, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

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# The Life of a South African Man and his Notions against Apartheid

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~ Akhona Naidoo ~

I have lived in South Africa, my homeland for 56 years. I have seen the struggle of the people of my country under the rule of the British Empire. My wife and children live in terror, due to the many repercussions that result if one disobeys the British.

I was preparing myself to attend work yesterday, and do you know what my youngest of 6 years, Ebele, asked? Ebele asked, “Papa, why do you leave so early to go to work and return very late? Mama is getting scared and keeps mentioning that we should live together closer to your job.” I was awestruck; it is not every day that someone so young asks you such a strong question which you do not know how to grapple.

I responded by my saying, “In life, not everyone is completely free. Some of us just need to ignore the situation at hand because we will not be victors. We are subjugated under apartheid and I am afraid that a positive change for the Africans will not be facile to produce.” She stared at me in shock and got up from the couch in which she was sitting; Ebele left.

Sometimes I ask myself, *‘why is a majority considered a minority in their own country.’* I feel as if that question is perennial with an unending answer, to those that understand its meaning. The laws that the British have enforced on South Africa can be considered as stupid. What kind of nonsensical law, such as the “Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, of 1953,” separates the whites from other races? How ironic it was for the whites to react toward us Africans as if we had the plague. If I am correct, it was Europe, not Africa, that had a history of sickness resulting in the perishing of one third of the population due to their interaction with Chinese merchant ships during the 1300s in an event called the Black Death. I almost forgot, Britain was also affected by the bubonic plague in 1348. Hypocrites are what they are, hypocrites are what their children will become. How shameful it is to have a nation full of two-faced people. The British have everything; however, they want more.

I went to the hospital almost 2 weeks ago and was disturbed. My fellow South Africans had yellow eyes and fatigue-filled faces. Some of the patients were ushered toward offices for them to be taken care of. It is terrible how one doctor attends 44,000 human beings in the blacks' cases, but one doctor handles 400 whites. If that does not tell you something is seriously disarrayed, I do not know what will. We all know that it is the British's fault since we have had to succumb to their rule by being under strenuous labor. Not the labor of slavery, but of human rights. It is not fair how our children's lives have been taken as shown in the increase of child mortality among blacks. 20% of our children die, 2.7% white children die. Who knows, probably more black children die, and statistics are playing with minds to veil the truth. Not only are our children subject to the abhorrent treatment by the British, but our capital is as well. The share of the national income of blacks in South Africa is less than 20%; meanwhile, that of the whites is of 75%.

If you want to help us Africans in the struggle against apartheid, do so. Become a part of a cause greater than yourself and one that is imperative to millions of people. Play a part on our way to freedom by helping us revolt against the British as well as demonstrate. Remember, a cause cannot be stopped without your helping hands.

- *Jeannie Reyes, June 2016*

# Can Graffiti Ever Be Considered Art?

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Hi, my name is Ashley Mota and it is a pleasure to be here, speaking to you about graffiti. Can graffiti ever be considered art? What is your opinion? My opinion is that a person with the ability to take a pen or pencil and be able to draw is an artist. I want to prove that a person that does graffiti is an artist. I want to show people that graffiti is art. I would like to show you the way famous painters and students feel towards graffiti. One piece of evidence is that there are many famous graffiti-art makers. One example is Banksy, Banksy is an England-based graffiti artist, political activist and film director. His exhibitions were in the Bristol Museum in the summer of 2009. The exhibition hosted more than 100 works by him.

Graffiti is defined as permanently marking, painting, drawing on, etching, engraving or scratching property without the owner's permission. Graffiti is classified as a separate property offense under the law. It carries a punishment range that is tougher than criminal mischief. Street art, known as graffiti is an important part of the history and the identity for many metropolises.

Graffiti can help people to express themselves as a way to show themselves their abilities and skills by using their creativeness in a positive way, and helping them gain confidence without the fear of committing a crime. There is a place called the "5 Pointz NYC" in which people could do graffiti while keeping the police from attacking them.

Graffiti, as I was saying, is a way people can express themselves, but it is also a way gangs can break up too. According to the article, "**The South Bronx: Where Hip-Hop Was Born,**" found on the WNYC News website, "Hip-hop historian Marcus Reeves says that the bustling energy that laid the groundwork for today's hip-hop culture came out of gang culture in the '70s." He went on to explain the harsh and unfair conditions people were living in during that time, adding that after people get fed up with their living situation, "then you begin to have this growing new cultural movement that comes out of the gangs to counteract the violence...and the negativity that come out of gang cultures."

Graffiti can help people get out of trouble and get into believing in themselves. Like when other people bully them. For them this is a way to forget, or for others this is a way to express themselves telling others to say no to bullying. Graffiti has many positive messages; this is a picture that shows us graffiti artwork with a message to remind us about the importance of stopping pollution:



As you can see, graffiti has many more positive effects than negative. Thank you for listening and always believe in yourself.

- *Ashley Mota, June 13<sup>th</sup> 2016*

# Music Shaming

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You know that old saying, “Don't judge a book by its cover?” Well how about we modify that to, “Don't judge a person by their musical interests.” Honestly, I am so sick and tired of people being stereotyped or judged because of the genre of music they prefer to listen to.

To start, I would like to say that music is the most wonderful thing on the planet. Though this may be a personal opinion, I believe that most other people would say the same. Music serves as a therapeutic way to actually help make you smarter while boosting your mood and bringing people together all at the same time. In the article, “Can Music Make You Smarter?” by Wendy Harris, it says that, “Nothing activates as many areas of the brain as music...By introducing children to music, so many areas of the brain benefit at the same time, like the mathematical and language centers” (Hodges & DeCorsey, 1). This shows how music in general can help to benefit the children of tomorrow in succeeding and accomplishing more than the adults of now can. In the same article the mother, Jill, says, “Rose is 3 and she is reading...she has the gift of language and I can't help but believe it's because of rhythm and rhyming and the flow of music.” Every single song has a beat. Without the beat, it wouldn't be classified as a song, it would be a poem. The flow of the music and rhythm are the whole reason you are able to comprehend and express information easier, not because of the certain type of music you choose to listen to. Just listening to a single beat will benefit your everyday life because it allows you to communicate better.

Everyone feels some sort of emotion every day; this is one of the things that makes us different from inanimate objects. But have you ever wondered about the connection between music and your mood? Music can bring many emotions up to the surface one second then help you push them in and bring out new ones. Did you know that, “ancient philosophers from Plato to Confucius and the kings of Israel sang the praises of music and used it to help soothe stress?” (Music and Mood, 1). There is a reason why this happens actually, according to the same article, “When we listen to a rhythm, our heart actually begins to synch with it. A slow heartbeat with a strong diastolic pressure tells our brain that something sad or depressing is occurring. Very fast beating is obviously related

to excitement, whereas a dreamy rhythm with occasional up beats can signify love or joy.” This shows how music can be listened to in everyday life and allows for people and society as a whole to develop. People will always have emotions and the beats used in music aid them in the expression of themselves. Everyone listens to what they please in order to get their emotions across, so does it really matter what specific genre they listen to? You have no idea how a person feels, so there is no room for you to be judging them in any way.

People may argue to say that music can have a bad influence on the youth of tomorrow. Some songs can have a terrible lyrical meaning that makes kids believe that they can be cursing and doing all those inappropriate things. But c'mon. I guarantee that those kids already knew about those inappropriate things way before they heard it in a song. Also, if you've ever been on public transportation, (which I know you have) then you will hear handfuls of curse words used in most sentences, whether it is an adult or a child talking. It is not uncommon for kids to know these things and you can't blame that on the lyrics in songs. To be honest, most of this is due to people constantly using foul language as a means of communication so we should be focusing more on developing stronger vocabulary than on how lyrics can “corrupt” the minds of children. If this is how they want to express themselves and be seen in public, who are we to say they can't do this? Isn't there something like freedom of expression?

If there is one thing I want, you to take from this speech it is that you shouldn't be afraid to be judged and you shouldn't be judging other people. I know that I have mostly focused on being judged based on musical taste, but this is only a small section of the big picture that everyone seems to be missing. If we can accomplish this task of not judging people on their music, then we will be taking one more step in the direction of being in a community, and eventually country and hopefully world, that is judgment free. Everyone says they want peace, I say, let's take the smaller steps necessary to reach that goal.

- *A.C., March 9th 2016*

# Stereotypes

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Have you ever wondered why people stereotype others? Well the answer to that is when we first meet a person or even glance at them, our brain makes a thousand computations: Are they rich or poor? Are they a friend or foe? The average person makes these major decisions about people within the first seven seconds of meeting. They are part of our everyday life; we hear stereotypes every day and everywhere. Sometimes we can even find ourselves in a situation where we stereotype large groups of people. What is stereotyping really? How can we deal with stereotypes? Can we look beyond the stereotypes that are going around? Stereotypes are really based on first impressions of someone, but what really affects our first impressions of someone? People should judge others based on what is on the inside because we are all different in our own way. I have experienced this problem first hand when someone meets me for the first time or see me they think I'm Indian because of my skin color and hair. Most people will relate to stereotyping no matter where they are from, it is just something we can't avoid nowadays.

Today I want to discuss something that I read in an article and it said the following, "Psychologists once believed that only bigoted people used stereotypes. Now the study of unconscious bias is revealing the unsettling truth: We all use stereotypes, all the time, without knowing it. We have met the enemy of equality, and the enemy is us." Meaning that making stereotypes is like a human instinct, we can't control it. There is a way to deal with stereotypes and that way is to research; remember that stereotypes are mostly inaccurate and often lead to discrimination. If you are curious about something or someone, base your view on facts, or better yet, go ahead and ask the person. Another way is to change your attitude: don't let yourself generalize (make general or broad statements) people and give people the benefit of doubt.

In this day and age, people don't give others a chance to be judged by what is on the inside rather than outside. A good example of this is Donald trump with the Muslims, he thinks they are all terrorists, but he hasn't met any of them for the people they really are. Also, the Mexicans, he sees them as rapist, delinquents, drug dealers, etc... You get the point. Like come on don't we all say that everyone is unique in their own way?

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So why do people judge by what is on the outside just by a quick glance of that person? We still have the option to change this and that is by judging a person for what is on the inside not the stereotype that is going around about the type of person they appear to be.

There are people who think stereotypes are just a way to separate people. “Each of us has a biased world view because we are all limited to a single camera perspective.” Meaning that because we only have one point of view it would be easier to judge people in this type of way. Also, stereotyping happens because of our ignorance. One disadvantage is that it makes us ignore differences between individuals; therefore, we think things about people that might not be true. The use of stereotypes is a way to simplify our social world, since they reduce the amount of processing that we have to do when we meet a person. By stereotyping we infer that a person has a whole range of characteristics and abilities that we assume all members of that group have. Which happens a lot to my culture and in this country.

“If you judge a book by its cover, you might miss out on an amazing story.” Meaning if you should judge a person based on what you see, you might miss out on the amazing person they might be. Most stereotypes give a negative impression about a person. Negative stereotypes are far more common than any other. We should judge based on what we know about a person and not on what we see.

*Starlyn Hiraldo, March 18<sup>th</sup> 2016*

# Double Standards Speech

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First and foremost, what are double standards exactly? They are, “a rule or principle that is unfairly applied in different ways to different people or groups.” Double standards are everywhere, from the office environment to the local drugstores, and school environments, and even the web. Double standards are awful since the majority of them praise one gender in a certain area over the opposite gender; why can’t we have gender equality? There is the double standard between single fathers and single mothers. The double standard between gays and lesbians, and lastly the double standard between a girl losing her virginity versus a boy losing his virginity.

Okay, the single dad versus the single mom double standard. What’s that all about? When someone sees a single mother, they assume that she wasn’t capable of keeping her husband, or that she is careless. Although when someone sees a single father they are amazed at his ability to take care of children all by himself. How come whenever society sees a single dad we perceive him as a “hero” for his kids, we pity him and feel sorry that he has the burden of taking care of his children all alone. However, when we see a single mother with her kids we automatically assume that the father probably left the mother or that she can’t keep a steady man. Or even the possibility that she had the kids before marriage, so she is then looked down upon. But you must understand that when we praise a man for taking care of his children, isn’t that called parenting? When we say, “wow, look he can actually take care of his kids by himself,” we’re actually saying that men can’t take care of kids well and when we see single fathers, we are then amazed at their ability to parent. But don’t both men and women have the same role when parenting, so why not treat them the same?

Moving on to the gay and lesbian double standard. In this day and age, it's acceptable in society to be gay, lesbian, transgender, queer, bisexual and etc., but some are more accepted than others. When our society sees 2 men kissing we're all like "aww get out, that's some gay shit." However, when 2 girls are kissing we're all like yeah they're just girls, nothing much, or we simply just enjoy the scene. This doesn't apply to only gay and lesbian people, how come straight girls can hug each other, give a kiss on the cheek without getting called all sorts of names. But as soon as two straight boys hug or get too close society automatically labels them as being gay. Why are girls allowed to show affection to one another but guys can't because it's not manly? What's up with that?

Finally, the double standard between a man losing his virginity vs a woman losing her virginity. If a woman loses her virginity a little too early, she is then automatically labeled as "desperate" or "careless" or that she doesn't respect herself but, meanwhile it's okay for a man to lose his virginity because "that's what men do" and that is considered the norm in society. So basically, if a woman loses her virginity before she is married she is then considered a slut or someone who gives their body up too easily, whereas if a man were to lose his virginity he would be looked upon as cool or someone who can get girls. Although on the other side if a woman were to be a virgin until marriage she is then considered smart, safe and pure, but if a man were to be a virgin he is then looked as a loser who can't get girls, so it goes both ways actually.

But there are some instances where some may say that double standards are a good thing. They say that double standards separate us to show us what we are and embrace it. Like the gay pride parades or black history month. Or the fact that men are physically stronger than women and that women are more in touch with their inner feelings. This shows how some things just don't apply the same to everyone the same. But it's stuff like this that is unfair, so what if men are physically stronger, a woman can do the same as a man. A man should be allowed to show his emotions without fearing any judgement from society about his masculinity.

Double standards, they're everywhere and a lot of them are in the world. You can't get rid of them with a snap of your fingers, but if you just take the time to just treat everyone fairly what would be the problem? Also, most double standards shouldn't even be considered a double standard since they're regular things that don't need to be praised, or looked down upon. I reckon that treating both females and males the same way, like for instance, in parenting, or in the workplace, would make the world a much simpler place. So, let me ask you, is it that hard to treat everyone the same?

- *Tasnia Rupanti, 2016*

# The Dangers of Pollution

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Many people around the world either don't know about the true dangers of pollution, ignore it and don't care about what negative effects pollution causes, or try to help raise awareness of pollution and prevent it as much as they feel they should try to. Do you understand how important pollution truly is to the environment? Pollution can cause cancer and many other health problems. Pollution is not only harmful to the earth, but also to humans and many other living creatures. Pollution is extremely harmful to living people, the earth and animals. Pollution is caused by many daily day activities and is very common, also pollution can be prevented very easily if everyone tried as much as they could to help put an end to pollution for good.

Pollution is extremely harmful to people, animals, and the earth. A site called [eschooltoday.com](http://eschooltoday.com) stated, "pollution can cause various kinds of cancer, problems within the respiratory system, and unhealthy vegetables to grow in polluted soil." The unhealthy vegetables grown in polluted soil could lead to a chain reaction of every animal getting sick. The sickness could spread from an herbivore eating an unhealthy vegetable, then to a carnivore eating an herbivore and could end up reaching humans when we eat the dead meat of that animal. Pollution can also attract rodents that will give nearby towns diseases. Normally landfill pollution is burning which can lead to air pollution. A site called [epa.com](http://epa.com) stated, "too much nitrogen and phosphorus in the water causes algae to grow faster than ecosystems can handle. Significant increases in algae harm water quality, food resources and habitats, and decrease the oxygen that fish and other aquatic life need to survive." The evidence explains how harmful pollution can be to humans and can even destroy habitats of animals. A site called [Conserve-energy-future.com](http://Conserve-energy-future.com) states, "noise pollution is caused when noise which is an unpleasant sound affects our ears and leads to psychological problems like stress, hypertension, hearing impairment, etc. It is caused by machines in industries, loud music, etcetera." The evidence explains how much of a danger normal things like cars and other machines are to humans. Air pollution can cause many problems to humans such as asthma, lung cancer, chest pain, congestion, throat inflammation, and even more severe health problems. Greenhouse gases are a combination

of extremely dangerous gases that over time cause the global warming. The main gas of greenhouse gases would be carbon dioxide which is produced by many things for example burning fossil fuels to use cars, produce heat and electricity for buildings/homes, some industrial factories, and even more. Pollution is extremely harmful to many living things and the planet earth.

In this day and age, pollution is very common and caused by many everyday normal things. The site [Conserve-energy-future.com](http://Conserve-energy-future.com) stated, “air pollution is the most prominent and dangerous form of pollution. It occurs due to many reasons. Excessive burning of fuel which is a necessity of our daily lives for cooking, driving and other industrial activities, releases a huge amount of chemical substances in the air every day, these pollute the air.” The evidence from this site explains how just doing normal things can cause an increase in air pollution which is the most dangerous type of pollution currently. The site [climate.ncsu.edu](http://climate.ncsu.edu) stated, “78% of the atmosphere is nitrogen, 21% is oxygen, and the remaining 1% are other gases.” The evidence shows how currently air pollution is so common that currently 78% of the gas in the Earth’s atmosphere is nitrogen. Air pollution is so bad in certain places, such as India for example that it causes chronic asthma, breathing problems, and many other respiratory problems. The main human causes of all the nitrogen in the Earth’s atmosphere is from agriculture processes such as cultivation of soil for growing crops and using animals to make food and other needed resources, burning fossil fuels for everyday useful things such as cars, homes, etcetera, and industrial processes which normally has to do with factories producing items.

Even though there is an extreme amount of pollution throughout the planet Earth, it is still very possible to put an end to pollution if everyone tries as much as they can to help stop pollution once and for all. Pollution can be prevented greatly if people began to consider recycling more seriously, try to produce nitrogen less and burn fossil fuels less, also to just spread the word on how harmful pollution truly is and how pollution can easily be prevented. An article called “Pollution Prevention” by Amy Peterson stated, “your family can do its part to help save mother earth by making simple changes, discuss what pollution is, and decide what steps you and your family can take to prevent pollution.” The article shows how it’s not impossible to stop pollution if everyone were to try to

help stop and prevent pollution by trying as much as they can. Currently there is an extremely large amount of pollution all over the world, but it can be prevented greatly and even stopped if people tried to put an end to pollution for good.

In conclusion pollution is very dangerous and can be harmful to many and even all living things and is also harmful to the Earth itself. There are many different types of pollution and an abundance of it all over the planet Earth. Pollution is not only harmful to the planet Earth, but is also very harmful to humans and animals. Pollution is very common and caused by many normal things that are used practically almost every single day. There are many ways you and your family alone can greatly help reduce the problem of all the pollution in the world. It probably won't be easy but you and your family can greatly reduce pollution just by simply spreading the word on how to stop it and how harmful it is, or even just by recycling and more. If everyone helps it will cause at least a significant reduction in the amount of pollution in the world.

- *Emmanuel Bryce Perez*, 2016

# Homelessness

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PATH.

When I say PATH, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Some of you may be thinking about a road, a pathway or perhaps if you think figuratively, a decision in life. But, when I say PATH, I think of the Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing Office. I think about the life I never would have had if it weren't for temporary housing. Every day, temporary housing enables children to continue to go to school, helps people become financially stable, and even helps decrease crime. Temporary housing opens up more opportunities for those who aren't as privileged.

I remember in sixth grade when I was twelve, I had just returned to school, after being absent for a week and a half. During that time I was at PATH, my family and I had been evicted from our apartment. All those comments and questions my classmates would ask me:

*Where were you?*

*Where did you go?*

Or, You're so lucky to be able to skip school for so long.

I didn't know what to say. In all honesty, I felt ashamed that the reason I no longer had good attendance and was behind in all my school work, was because I was homeless. But, now that I look back, I realize that there was nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, roughly 75% of those in shelter are families, including nearly 24,000 children.

So, what does that mean? That means that nearly 24,000 kids have a roof over their heads. That means that nearly 24,000 kids don't have to worry about living on the streets and getting held back a grade, all because they missed too many days of school. That means nearly 24,000 kids are able to continue their educational career and grow up to live a financially stable life.

Speaking of financial stability, money has always been a problem for most people. I am sure my parents aren't the only ones that are always worrying and arguing about paying bills and rent. But, there have been a few instances where my parents couldn't quite catch up on the rent and pay the bills. Which led to having to pack our bags with no place to go. That is until we were able to find a shelter. Temporary housing has allowed my parents, along with thousands of other people, to be able to find better jobs. All without having to worry about where they'll be sleeping each night. It gives people time, time to get on the right track and finally meet the financial criteria. Allowing them to live a life with relatively stable finances.

Did you know that each night, over 60,000 New Yorkers will sleep in homeless shelters?

Although a sad fact, this also implies that there are 60,000 less homeless people on the streets; meaning less loitering. This results in a decrease in crime because not as many homeless individuals will have to steal nor turn to illegal and hostile situations, thinking it will do them good. Thus proving that temporary housing, isn't necessarily beneficial to only those in poverty, but to the community as a whole.

Now, many may say that temporary housing is a waste of space, a waste of money. Many may believe that temporary housing is a liability, and therefore will not invest money in programs and building projects that will convert abandoned buildings into ones used as homeless shelters. However, what most fail to acknowledge is that it is because of temporary housing that people are helped and better able to find jobs, increasing employment rates. In turn helping businesses and the economy itself thrive.

I hope it is now clear to see that shelters should be more positively acknowledged and supported, because having encountered homelessness first-hand, my life was changed. But, temporary housing and programs such as PATH are what made life better, for me and tens of thousands of people each day.

- S. N. W. March 22nd, 2016

# Underlying and Unforeseen Issues of the Media

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Have you ever seen breaking news on TV where white protesters are labeled as, “fighting for what they believe in,” but black protesters are labeled as, “violent” or “thugs” or even “animals?” These media portrayals depict the white race as the superior one in every way, while everyone else is portrayed by their stereotypes. The media upholds white privilege but demonizes people of color (P.O.C) One thing that the media does is empathize with troubled lives of white suspects, but then pin the blame on P.O.C. The media portrays P.O.C as being older and guilty, while portraying white criminals as innocent and still in adolescence. They choose incriminating photos of P.O.C, but charming photos of white victims, and they even label shooters of color as “terrorists” and “thugs” while white shooters are shown as “mentally ill.” For as long as I can remember, I have seen news channels depict this type of verbal segregation.

I would like to discuss how the media humanizes and empathizes with the troubled lives of white suspects, but then settles with the labels of P.O.C stereotypes. For instance, in one CNN article is stated that “far more often for white suspects than suspects of color, the media labels depict white suspects as being “bullied,” “kept to themselves” or had a “hard life.” By calling a white male suspect mentally ill, the blame shifts away from the person who chose to commit the crime and it reinforces stigmas about mental illness. This relates to how criminals are portrayed in the media based on their race. Which is so sad and unfair to P.O.C because they do not get the luxury of getting a pass of innocence like Caucasians get due to white privilege, which is favoritism.

In this day and age, the media shows young P.O.C as being older and guilty while Caucasian criminals as “immature” and innocent.” For instance, “black children often morph into potentially menacing adults after they’ve been victimized, while white mass shooters are depicted as children even well into their 20s. Media reports and police statements referred to a 12-year old Tamir Rice shot by police while playing with a toy gun as a “young man” while a 25-year old James Holmes who shot dozens at a movie theater was described as a “normal kid,” “a typical American kid,” and even a “smart kid.” Cases have shown that people of color are profiled more often than Caucasians based on their physical appearance instead of the actual facts. The media manages to criminalize P.O.C. in every way but make white criminals look like “saints.”

Some might say that the media sometimes shows the achievements of people of color and acknowledges their accomplishments and good-doing; like with everyone else. Which is true, because the job of the press is to deliver the people of the community with current events and details that we need to be aware of in our society. However, it is proven that Caucasians are uplifted more in the media and are shown doing better than P.O.C are even recognized for. This is crazy because we all get our information from the mainstream media which feeds us biased portions of the truth.

Furthermore, people of color are being subtly oppressed by the media while Caucasians are receiving white privilege. Society needs to understand that the media gives white suspects a pass but always blames P.O.C. and makes them seem violent and older than they actually are, while white criminals are portrayed as innocent and youthful. In addition, the media makes society believe in racial stereotypes because of the incriminating photos they take of P.O.C as compared to taking the flattering photos of white victims. The media makes a choice; we all take photos that make us look impressive and photos that make us look like we are up to no good. Which is what started the trending twitter hashtag called **#IfTheyGunMeDown**. This topic is crucial to me because I just want readers to understand that society is oppressing people of color in America and this issue is being swept under the rug so that many do not seem

to notice. Due to this, it leads to problems such as police brutality, hate crimes and many more. Which also lead to another twitter hashtag called **#DontShootUs**.

Racial inequality isn't the only thing that the media is impartial to either. If citizens of America realize how the media holds back on crucial information such as recent bombing in Syria or Africa, they would notice how the media deems what is unworthy of attention. However, the real criminal here is the government regulating the media releases. Open your eyes America.

- *Vanessa Akwada, March 17th, 2016*

# Why Standardized Testing Should Be Abolished

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Today I would love to cover a topic addressing a question a lot of people have asked: how well do you think standardized tests measure a person's abilities? I honestly don't think that standardized testing is a good evaluation of what students do all year in their classes. What I am saying is students basically spend most of the school year preparing for a test that's supposed to monitor teachers and students. These tests are used as a way to figure out how smart each student is and to see how well the teachers teach during the school year. The craziest part is that a little over 25% of students in public schools across the United States do not pass these standardized tests while the other 75% of public school students pass the test. This already tells you that there must be something wrong with the test itself and the way students are being prepped for these tests.

These tests are not a strong representation of what students do in class because there are a lot of students that go to the next grade even when failing these tests. I have experienced this problem first hand, from 3rd grade all the way to 8th grade. I have not passed not one state exam at all no matter how much preparation I had prior to the test. I do not know why I could not pass a test even though I had an 85% average. I guess because I always knew deep down that these tests cannot prove who I am and what I am capable of as a human being, I never let these tests or their results bring me down. But the point is- the test does not affect your chances of going to the next grade, yet people make a big deal about passing them.

Today I would like to go a little further with this topic, and also share some outside information with all of you about the truth on standardized testing and what its real purpose is. So, I have recently watched this video on YouTube called "Standardized Testing is not Teaching" by a YouTuber named "Chris Tienken." He made some excellent points on the effects of standardized testing. It is messing with the way we look at our teachers and students. I believe that these tests are altering the way people view themselves as individuals. It's so bad that someone who gets a passing grade on the state exam feels that they will be a success in life

while a person who might have not gotten a passing grade on the test will think that they are a complete failure and that they cannot accomplish anything. So, as you can see these tests have people viewing themselves based on what they can't do versus what they can do. When we discuss this topic, there are so many different views on how standardized testing tests the abilities of students and staff, but there are also other opinions that states that students don't learn anything on from taking these tests at all. The NYS regents are a good example, students study a lot for the test, yet they don't study for skills they will really need in life such as knowing how to work with others, pay bills, money management and so much more that's needed to live a stable life in the 21st century. That's the thing, we spend so much time focusing on these tests that only take up a few days of the school year that we forget about the things that will be necessary throughout life in order to be on the right path instead of some ridiculous test.

I would like to discuss this topic on a bigger level, as I told you all I watched this YouTube video titled "Standardized Testing is not Teaching" which said that students spend at least 60% of the school year preparing for this test that only takes up 2% of the school year. This means everything being taught in the school year is all needed for a test rather than to get to the next grade. Students in the United States don't even get to do enough creative activities such as science projects, and when I say science projects I don't just mean some essay or booklet I mean like creating real models based around what they have studied in class. Or they can even do speeches in their ELA class to voice how they feel based on a text they read in class, these are things that teachers and the Board of Ed should put in place instead of some test that only shows less than half of what a person is capable of doing. Even class tests provided by teachers are more fair than standardized testing.

I would also like to mention that the way the test results are returned is also problematic. For starters the test results take a long time to be sent back to parents and students, I mean by the time they get the results back the school year is over, and when you get the results they don't specifically show what questions were answered incorrectly which is not helpful when a parent or educator is trying to help the students improve on their mistakes, so I don't like the way the results are shown to students.

I also want to suggest that it is harder for students to learn when everything that's being taught is for a test as opposed to when the teacher is teaching for understanding. So here's a tip for the teachers and the Board of Ed, teach kids for their lifetime not just 6 days out of the school year.

I have already given my point on how I don't think standardized testing can actually test a person's abilities, but there are other people who believe standardized testing is a crucial part of a student's education. So, for example some people say that standardized testing is an easier way to find out what's really happening in the classroom and to see how the teachers are teaching and how the students are learning and understanding what content being taught. Some people say that since we can't get to every student to find out what they have learned we have to create a statewide test to evaluate what students across the United States are learning and to see which states have good education systems and which ones need improvement. There are also people who say that this is a logical way to see if students are ready to make the move to the next grade or if they should be held back. Personally, I don't feel these are valid reason to replace standardized testing with the teaching jobs of the Board of Ed.

So, does standardized testing measure a person's ability or what? To be honest it all comes down to how you feel about testing and the experiences you might have faced with it or the way you feel students and teachers should be evaluated. Personally, I do not think that standardized testing can prove the ability of a person or how smart they are, I just think that there is just way too much time being given to test that takes up about 6 days of the school year. I also feel that kids should be learning things that they need in order to get a job in the modern world, but I don't know why the Board of Ed doesn't think of things instead of testing. I'm not here to convince anyone or change anyone's point of view, I just want to bring awareness to this topic.

*- Jalen Fuller, March 16th, 2016*

# Why We Should Be More Empathetic

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Why is it that you may know that stealing is wrong, but it isn't that obvious to other people? Is it because you're better than them in some way? It's probably because you were taught not to steal by parents who could afford to provide you with your basic needs, whereas others may have seen their father steal in order to feed the family, which led them to understand that stealing is okay. Each of us have different experiences which create our different perspectives and different opinions. That's what we all need to understand.

Understanding things from perspectives other than your own is what is known as empathy. When I was in eighth grade, I read *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, and a quote that really stood out to me was, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view- until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." We are often too absorbed in satisfying our own needs and interests, that we don't see the stories of the people around us. It is important for people to develop empathy because it leads to better decision-making which is the solution to many of the problems within society.

Empathy influences our decisions and actions to a big extent; it is the force that urges us to help others in need. I agree with President Obama when he said, "...when you choose to broaden your ambit of concern and empathize with the plight of others, whether they are close friends or distant strangers, it becomes harder not to act, harder not to help." Empathy explains the formation of organizations, such as UNICEF, that help improve education in countries with low education rates, save the lives of thousands dying from hunger, and help countries in emergencies like the April 2015 Nepal earthquake that destroyed many buildings and killed thousands. It explains people donating money for such purposes and funding such organizations. It also explains acts as simple as helping or offering your seat to an elderly, disabled, or pregnant person.

If you don't understand other people you will end up hurting their feelings, either by disrespecting their values, talking about something that is sensitive to them, or by saying the wrong things, at the wrong time, and

to the wrong people. An example of this lack of empathy would be talking to a vegetarian about eating meat, or eating meat in front of a vegetarian that has strong feelings against killing animals. Another example would be laughing at or teasing someone who already feels bad for getting a low score on an exam. When people fail to understand each other, problems such as bullying, prejudice and hate begin to develop in society. Problems could get as serious as genocide, such as the Rwandan Genocide that resulted from hate between the two ethnic groups: Hutus and Tutsis. More than 800,000 were killed, mostly Tutsis. Another example is the Holocaust that resulted from Hitler's anti-Semitism, and led to the death of over 6 million Jews.

There are times when something is really bothering you, and someone comes up to you and says, "I don't understand why you're making such a big deal?" Or sometimes, we are the ones who don't understand why others are making a big deal out of something we believe to be minor. How can we learn to understand others? The most important thing is to listen. Listen to what people have to say. Listen to everything they have to say. While listening, you should also pay attention to not only what people are saying, but also to their tone, and facial expressions because they usually indicate a lot about emotions. Another thing is considering the other points of view even if they oppose your own, and validating and respecting them. This will help you understand why people react to the same things in different ways. It is important not only to share other people's feelings, but also to show them that you know how they feel. This relates to what you say to them: If someone just lost a close family member, instead of saying, "Get over it! Thousands of people die every day," you could say, "I'm sorry for your loss. I know how it feels to lose someone special."

There are people, especially in the U.S. who say, "Every man for himself" and we shouldn't be worrying about other people's problems when we have our own problems to worry about. However, we all live together on the same planet, and we deal with and talk to people every day. If there is something affecting them, it will affect their work and behavior, and you will be affected too. When your partner in a group project doesn't do a good job because of something bothering them, you will get a bad grade on the project too. In other words, their problems are your problems the same way your problems are their problems.

I believe that empathy can change the world. Think about it. It can transform a self-centered world that is full of prejudice, judgment, and racism into a caring one where people are more considerate, kind, and altruistic. Which world is better? The caring world of course. This is why it is important to be empathetic. Next time you ask yourself questions like: Why doesn't that boy like to talk to people? Why is that lady being mean? From your point of view, it may seem like there is no answer, and no reason for their behavior. However, the answers are there. All you need to do is put yourself in their shoes.

- *Mena Attia, June 8th 2016*

## Reviews & Reflections

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## For Esme with Love and Squalor

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“For Esme-- With Love and Squalor” is included in “Nine Stories” by J.D. Salinger (the same man who brought you “The Catcher in the Rye.”) This story talks about a rather shy and reserved soldier who spends his rainy evening in a coffee shop with a vivacious young girl who enjoys reading and the tone of complex words. The story follows through as his conversation with the young girl develops, revealing a little bit of her background and personality. As the girl, Esme, leaves the coffee shop, she asks that our narrator write a story for her full of “squalor,” which seemed to be both an awkward and unusual request for a young girl like her; but our narrator does just that and promises to keep in touch with the girl through means of writing letters.

The story eventually transitioned into a moment with a sad and sick sergeant named Sergeant X who has a conversation with his jeep partner, Corporal Z. Unlike our narrator’s conversation with Esme, this one is a little less enjoyable in the sense that Sergeant X keeps unintentionally piquing Corporal Z by discrediting something his wife had said. The conversation was one that was had just because it was the polite thing to do. A conversation with a person who gives you no reason in particular to despise them, but you do a little anyway and feel bad about doing so afterwards.

The part that absolutely struck me as a brilliant piece of writing was where the story breaks [in television terms] the “fourth wall.” Sergeant X receives a letter from a young girl named Esme apologizing for the long hiatus between when they have first met and when the letter has been sent; she also includes her deceased father’s wristwatch as a talisman to the poor sergeant, whom we figure out is the narrator all along.

Why has this story had such a lasting impression on me? Maybe it’s what made my love for rainy weather and coffee, or maybe the idea of joining the army had always appealed to me, and the mysterious and introverted lifestyle of this soldier probably looked attractive to that small part in my brain. Maybe I thought that I had some things in common with Esme, who thought big words were pretty and had a different manner when speaking. She cared a lot for her brother, loved to read, and was rather self-conscious with her hair when it was wet.

Throughout the conversation between Esme and our narrator, there is almost nothing implied or suggested about our narrator himself. This conversation was meant to reveal more about Esme than the narrator, but Salinger cleverly integrates the identity of the soldier, and in a way, switches roles between Esme and Sergeant X through Esme's willingness to talk. In that case, we find out just as much about our newfound narrator as we do with Esme.

I thought this way of revealing the character's personality is wittier than listing out the traits, and was an effective way of introducing characters and showing character development. I believe that just implying things about the characters in a fictional text really does leave a lot for the brain to imagine; and I think that's what reading fiction is truly good for. I imagined Esme's hair to resemble mine and I imagined Sergeant to look like my chemistry teacher; he means no harm, witty, and has a lot to say. I had to do a lot of guesswork on the narrator beforehand, but the real challenge was interpreting what the author meant overall when deciding to mark his characters in the way that he did.

It can be possible that the Sergeant and Esme keep in touch for many years, like sort of an intimate-family member relationship, and Esme grows up to be a singer (like she had wanted to be) and remembers that day where she had met a mysterious man at that coffee shop. I hope to have a long-term friend who is out of place someday, and wishes to communicate by means of letter. I'm not sure if that could even work out, but how lovely would it be to have someone so far away connected to you by pen and paper?

-UYRB, *June 2016*

# Harry Potter and his Popularity

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Who hasn't heard of Harry Potter? Why is he so popular among kids....and even better, among adults? What is the secret behind J.K. Rowling's books that has made her characters so immensely interesting? What is it that makes people so excited to talk about Harry Potter?

So many children, all around the globe, have probably read at least one of the seven series of Harry Potter, or watched one of the movies. In my opinion, the presence of all those mythical characters like witches and wizards, centaurs and goblins, dragons and werewolves have added such a tremendous amount of magic into these novels that make it so that one cannot stop reading the story once they pick it up. The plot, however, gives the realistic touch to the story and gives us a feeling that "the wizarding world," which is a caricature of the real world and has trains, hospitals, newspapers and competitive sport, is not merely fictional, but possibly real.

Harry's adventure starts right from the time he is a toddler, when his parents are killed by the evil wizard, Voldemort. Surprisingly, Voldemort loses all his power when he tries to kill Harry; the name 'The Boy Who Lived' is eventually given to Harry. His journey begins when he turns 11; he is taken to the magical school of Hogwarts. He has to fight Voldemort, at any cost, to save the wizarding world. Those who haven't read this great novel may ask.... is that all? Is that the whole story? That's what you find in each book in the series? The answer is no! Each book has a new adventure! Each book is full of surprising twists and turns! Each book introduces astonishingly new characters! Ms. Rowling unwinds Harry's past and entwines it with his present and future bringing a remarkable effect on the reader. For example, after reading *The Prisoners of Azkaban*, Harry's godfather, Sirius Black became one of my favorite characters among others like Lupin, Nymphadora (Tonks), Moody, Fred and George, Cedric Diggory, and even Snape! Their death really stunned me!

The fictional world Ms. Rowling created is so detailed in her books that it is unimaginable to write another book like that. The book not only keeps you engrossed in it, but also makes you relate yourself to the characters and helps you put yourself into their shoes. I think that is

why most people feel thrilled reading the Harry Potter series and are fascinated by magic and the wizarding world. Just as Harry faces Voldemort, non- wizard people face many unseen forces in their lives. These similarities keep the non- wizard readers interested in this page- turner. Despite the fact that the Harry Potter series is a fantasy book, we can learn so many things from it and implement them to our own lives.

- *Sandhya Vaidyanathan, June 2016*

# Lions of Little Rock: A book review

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## Introduction

The outstanding and explosive book, *Lions of Little Rock* is based on a true story in which an African American girl named Liz, tries to pass as a white girl and ends up becoming very good friends with Marlee, a Caucasian girl. Liz and Marlee are very much different but very much alike at the same time. One day the school finds out that Liz was actually black and from there on, Marlee and Liz's friendship start to be questioned. With Red after them this is just the beginning of a long story.

### **“Liz and Marlee “A Real Relationship”**

When one looks at a friendship in books they are usually perfect. But not all friendships are as books portray them to be. Liz and Marlee are not very much alike, but sure know how to handle each other. Many things happen throughout their friendship, but these best friends refuse to give up on each other no matter the cost. One example of this claim is when Marlee found out that Liz was actually black; most people would feel betrayed and never want to hear from that person again. Marlee is not like that. When she found out about Liz, they sat down and talked about the problem and went right back to being good friends.

Another example that shows this claim is when Marlee was being threatened by Red. He said he was going to hurt both Liz and Marlee because they were race mixing. Even though they were both being threatened, neither of them gave up on each other. While being threatened Liz and Marlee would still meet up in the zoo just to see each other. They refused to give up on each other no matter what the cost was, they would not separate. They remained as one at all times.

Last but not least, when Red took the dynamite and Marlee fell into the trunk of the car, Liz didn't just leave Marlee alone, she went after her and tried to help her. She took risk of being caught by Red and JT just so she could save Marlee. This shows that Marlee and Liz have a strong bond. No matter what happens Liz and Marlee still stick together and work through the problems so they could stay connected and still be best friends.

“Ahhh”

In the interesting book of *Lions of Little Rock*, the protagonist Marlee has a very special way of describing people. She describes each person as a drink. The drink she describes the person as shows the way they act or the way they make her feel. For example, in the book she says, “Daddy is a glass of milk, usually cold and delicious, but every once in a while, he goes sour.” This is very positive description. With this quote, she is trying to say that her dad is most of the time great, helpful and joyful. Once in a while though he would get mad and just get down or get aggravated and shut down.

Another example is when she described David. According to the book *Lions of Little Rock* she says, “David is a sweet iced tea on a hot summer day.” What she means by this is that David, her older brother is very helpful. “Iced tea on a hot summer day”, when your hot, sweaty, and drink a glass you feel way better and refreshed.

Last but not least, it said in the book, “Nora is a weak fruit punch”. By this she means that Nora can deliver a punch but she's not fully there. This means that she starts something and just stops in the middle of it. It is like you're assigned to do a 1-page essay and only do 1/4 of a page. This is a bad way to feel. It's just basically adding a little bit of powder into the water and still feel like your drinking water.

### **“Change Ignites Fear”**

When one looks at the world most people are scared to change. Well it's the same in the great and interesting book, *Lions of Little Rock*. With the KKK and the supporters of the KKK still out there you got to be careful with everything you do. You don't want to upset them. Maybe this is the reason why you're scared to speak out. Change Ignites Fear.

One example of this is when Marlee's mother gave the speech. She said, “Maybe like me you were scared to speak.” This shows that she was scared to speak or show her opinion or how she feels about things. Throughout the speech she also said that she never liked to separate schools or schools closing because of race mixing, but she would always act like she did because she was scared if she spoke against the crowd they

would come for her. She was scared about the things that would happen to her if she went against them.

Another example was when Marlee's father told the story of when he brought a colored pastor to the church. The next day the KKK sent a letter to him saying that if Marlee walks to school by herself he would never see her again. Imagine the KKK sending a letter to your house saying that they are going to kill your daughter because you brought another human being into church. After that Marlee's father was mad and was against the segregation, but was also scared to speak out and even let his daughter walk to school alone.

### **“The Oreo Relationship”**

*Dear Kristin:*

*I recently finished reading your book, **Lions of Little Rock**, and I just love the way that you made this book with the relationship with Liz and Marlee. I like to call it the “Oreo Relationship.” I call it this because in the book you have Liz (the Oreo) and Marlee (the vanilla flavoring inside) and with these two ingredients you have a yummy cookie.*

*I especially love the way you made folks of color and Caucasian folks connect in such a big way, especially in a time like back then. I love the way you made them go through all that and still stick together throughout everything that happened. The way they became leaders not followers and became very open minded which was very hard and deadly at certain points. It was hard because back then race mixing and integration was not really supported. I love the book entirely.*

*Sincerely,*

*Edwin Guerrero*

### **“A Little Something”**

My name is Edwin Guerrero and I am 14 years old. I am the author of *Lions of Little Rock Companion* book. I was born and raised in Barahona, Dominican Republic. I now live in the Bronx, New York and go to Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics. My favorite subject is Math, especially Algebra. Outside of school I love to play baseball or any other sport. I love playing any extracurricular activities for my school and supporting my school. I like action books, like *Divergent* and *Lions of Little Rock*.

- *Edwin Guerrero, 2015*

# Emotions

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Love includes not only embracing the perfections of a person; love is recognizing the imperfections of that person and accepting those imperfections as the ones which contribute to an individual's perfection; the flaws prove to be a part of the beauty of that person. You love your best friends because they are crazy, mad, and silly, and even though you fight sometimes, you know that they would have your back no matter what, will be there for you when you most need their advice; they are not perfect, but that's not what really matters. Love can also be fast and furious because it comes without warning; to me this is a little bit unfair because sometimes in relationships work out and others do not go as well, but who said life is fair. Life remains a constant battle in which sometimes you just want to give up, start again, go back through time or just work on the present to hope for something better in the future. Life provides continuous change based on your choices; this result is ironic in some cases because you do not control your heart or with whom you fall in love. This kind of love can make one do unpredictable things.

Trust resembles a beautiful glass rose: precious, beautiful and very fragile. Trust can take years to build and only a moment to shatter. If you do not take good care of the magnificent beauty that trust is, you can lose your loved ones. There exists broken trust in families, friendships and relationships; therefore, do whatever it takes to prevent the destruction of trust because once that is broken, it will never be the same.

Fear proves to be a dangerous feeling that always keeps you in the dark and never lets you fully shine. There are many types of fear, but in reality, they are all excuses that retard your growth in life. You are not afraid of the dark; you are afraid of what might be inside, afraid of the possibility that something or someone might hurt you, that it is standing in front of you, but you do not know what it is because in the dark you are blind. You are not afraid of letting someone go, rather you are afraid to accept the reality that he or she did not want, love or care about you. You are not afraid of trying again; you are just afraid of being hurt again. Most people are afraid of the unknown, of revealing their full potential, because they are scared to succeed. With great success comes greater responsibility, and they are afraid that maybe they are not good enough to accept this responsibility; they are simply afraid of failure. Do

not let your fear take your light, your full potential, your chances to shine because it is better to fail many times trying than never to fight for your desired dreams, for what you want. Do not let a “no” put you down; when a door closes, there are a million more open to you. Do not let the fears of your past define your present; the past is the past. You are the one who constructs your present and your choices, your actions will define your wonderful future.

*-A. Lopez, June 2016*

# Questions

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How different would the world be without me in it? There would not be much of a difference. For my family and friends some things would change; however, for the whole world, would there be a noticeable change? Chances are, the world would keep spinning and humans would go on with their lives, like nothing happened, unless I was supposed to be a revolutionary leader or something, which I don't see myself being.

I guess the world would only be happy because there would be one less person to feed and to reproduce things for. In addition, the earth would be happy to receive my dead body and be able to convert it into its food. I guess that for some people and some things, death is not a bad thing.

But, what about the families and friends I would leave behind? Would they miss me the same way I would miss them? Would I be forever alive in their hearts? I do not know and I cannot guarantee that their love and affection towards me will live forever in their souls.

Will death relieve me from something bad or will it drag me even deeper into the sadness I feel inside? Nobody knows for certain. I don't think anybody will. It is one of the mysteries of the world and our creator, God. Will death be ever the cure for our pain? Or will it weaken us? So many questions, yet no answers. All that is left to do is wait. Be patient and be brave. As long as you are courageous and strong, and also faithful, certainly you and I will win the battle.

-S.N.W, *June 2016*

# A Message of Inspiration

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When we think about life, we only focus on a small part. We often forget how majestic and glorious everything else is. All there is, from the smallest to biggest things in existence, such as a grain of sand or a mountain, is amazingly incredible. You might ask what makes a grain of sand majestic; it is its complexity and the fact that anything that existed and will ever exist has a one out of infinity probability of existing. This is what makes it majestic; as a matter of fact, that is what makes everything and everyone unique.

Unfortunately, we simply do not see the beauty nature has granted us with. We have been blinded by so many people that now the things that matter the most to us are our friends and the items we possess. We have been taught so many wrong things that we have forgotten what is really important: our future. We are too distracted to even notice what is happening.

Today we live under the unwritten laws of society; we are to do everything we are told just to be a part of it. We are guided by people who claim to know the way, but they are just lost souls who plan to bring hell to earth. We think we have control over all, when we do not even have control of who we are. If we are to keep these misconceptions about ourselves, then for sure there will be no future, because there is no tomorrow without today, and there is no today without us.

In order to survive in today's world, we must obey the amendments imposed by society. Nobody will get anywhere without creating an outstanding impression of themselves under the rules society has created. We have been taught to care about the way we look and act. Women must look clean and elegant; they must wear makeup, which just hides the real beauty that lies within; *they shall be powerless and weak*. Men must look strong and mean; *they shall protect and defend the weak*, and pay for ladies. We have been taught that the things we have must be new and expensive, because if not, *you shall be laughed at*. We use social media to presume to people that what we have, they do not. When you take a picture, only pure lies are what you are to see, your beautiful ugliness is in a picture you take. *We must be polite*; all of us were taught this. *It is bad to swear*, people have said, as if someone will get a heart attack from hearing such words. Words are just

sounds that represent something. There is nothing offensive in what nature has created. We have been taught to care about these things and that has made us forget our future. We care so much about the way we look and showing ourselves off to people, that we do not care about the thing that should be the most important in our lives: knowledge... which we need, as it is the key to the world.

We think of ourselves as free people who make their own decisions, but this is not true at all. Our subconscious brain controls 98% of the decisions we make. We do not have control over our lives. Everything we do is controlled by internal processes which occur at their own rate. This is why we need to be careful with what we listen to or what we watch. Everything we experience changes our mind, and thus changes who we are. Violence, blood, drugs and corruption in movies put ideas into our brains that change us and make us think different. Everything induces ideas in us and makes us crave that thing we were shown or we heard. We have to be careful and aware of our surroundings. In the end, you will become who you are with and there will be no way to go back. That is why: *you shall tell me whom you are to hang out with, and I shall tell you, who you ought to be.*

When we think about death, we do not really care about it. People always assume there will be a light at the end of the tunnel. Nobody ever thinks there might only be darkness at the end, or even if the tunnel has an end. When I say death, I mean the death that makes your body tickle and makes you nervous. The death that accelerates your heartbeat and makes you feel the blood rushing within your body. The death in which there is nothing after. The death that wipes out all your memories, puts you asleep forever, and makes you think about what you are doing with your life. Only in the end, when someone steps forward, and you have to kiss his or her shoes, only then will you always remember what once was really important.

- Jhoan L. Espinal, June 2016

# Have I Changed?

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Sophomore year has been the best high school year, so far. I made new friends, met new amazing teachers, but also I studied and learned a lot. This year was my first year here in MCSM and my first year here in the USA. When I first walked into the class, nobody knew I spoke Spanish, because I was shy and did not talk a lot. The funny thing is that since I know Spanish, I understand all the things my classmates, now my best friends, were talking about. After a week, when they knew I spoke Spanish, they were very surprised; however, I did not really understand why they were impressed.

Sophomore year is now ending. When I hand in this paper, it will be our last class and our last lesson for the year. Sincerely, without the support from my friends, I would not walk so far. They made the classes happier and more exciting. I feel like I have known them since I was little; they are already a part of my life.

This year, I learned to solve problems by myself and to manage my time. I also learned that sometimes we cannot depend too much on others; we have to solve our own things by ourselves. At the beginning of the year, I did not even know what the 'Regents' were. I had to figure it out by asking my guidance counselor. I will be taking 4 regents which are: Global, Algebra 1, Geometry, and Chemistry. For me it is not about passing a test or not, it is how much effort I put and do my best to get a high grade.

The writing piece that I included in my portfolio is "How to Become an Internist" because I wrote something that I would like to do in the future and it means a lot to me. To become a physician is my biggest dream and my future career. I really like science, especially chemistry and biology, and math. I researched for many days on what it is like to be a physician, and what should I do in order to become successful in my career. Written in the book *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* by Robert Heinlein it says, "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch," meaning that we have to work hard to get what we want; nothing in life is free. We cannot just sit at home and wait for money or your dreams to come.

This year in English class, I learned and improved a lot in writing and reading. Now, thinking about it, without Ms. Richardson, I would not learn so much about the native people of America, stereotypes, annotation, speeches, poems, debates, grammar, different types of essays, expressing myself, figuring out what I really want to become, and much more. Those little things that we do every day will become something great in the future. We just do not see a difference between today and yesterday, but if we look back to one year ago or more we can see a difference on what we learned and improved. I would give myself an 85 because I know that I still have a lot of space for learning and I did not take advantage of all the opportunities and time to focus on learning and studying.

- *Sherley Chen, June 2016*



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