

2021

Student Anthology

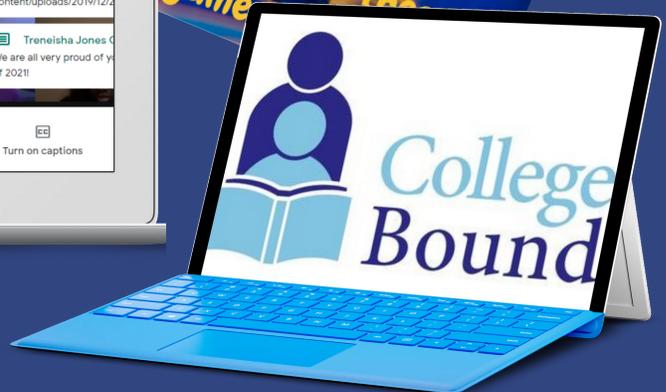
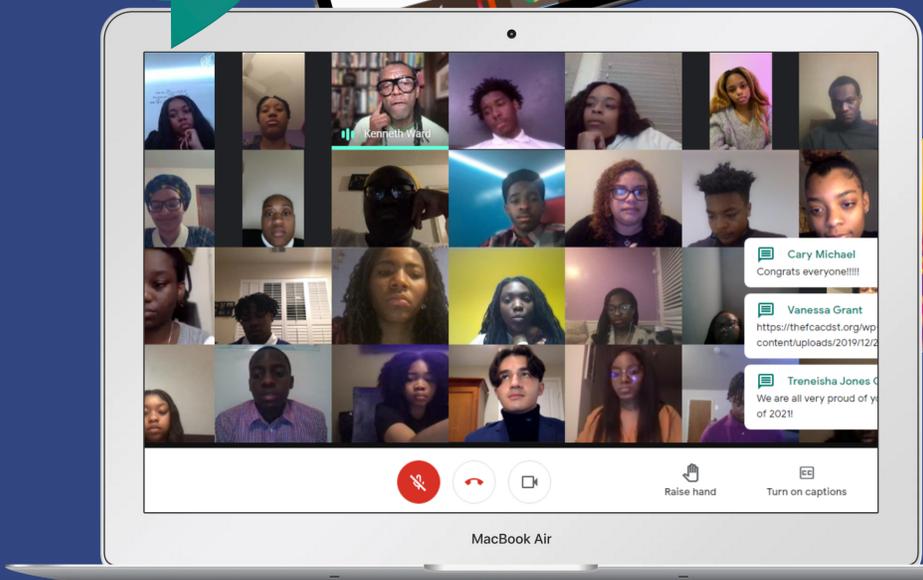
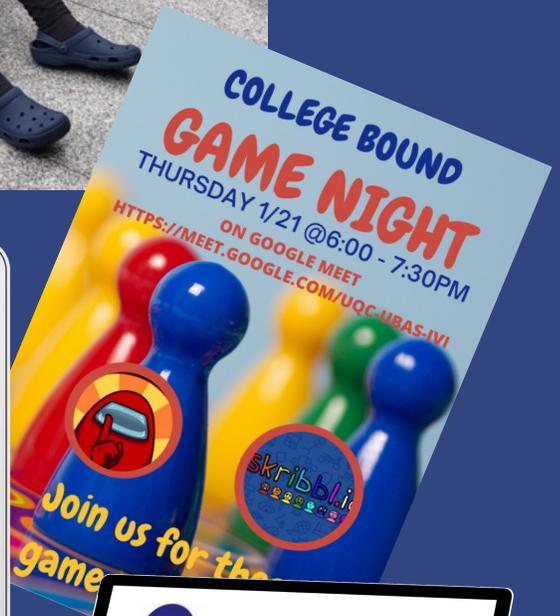
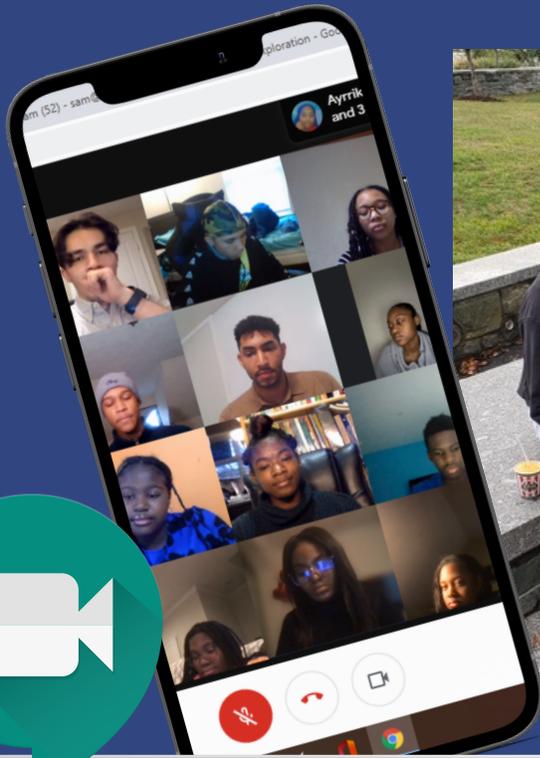
# PEARLS & WISDOM

30<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
END OF THE YEAR  
CELEBRATION



College  
Bound

# We made it through a year apart... **TOGETHER**



Greetings,

It's hard to imagine that it's already May 2021. What's harder to comprehend is the loss of life over the last year, both domestically and internationally. As the flowers continue to bloom and pollen permeates the air adding its own unique hue, I am reminded of the hope that the season brings. I love all seasons, but there is a certain optimism that spring, with its promise of rebirth and renewal, is bringing forth as we reclaim some of our societal norms.

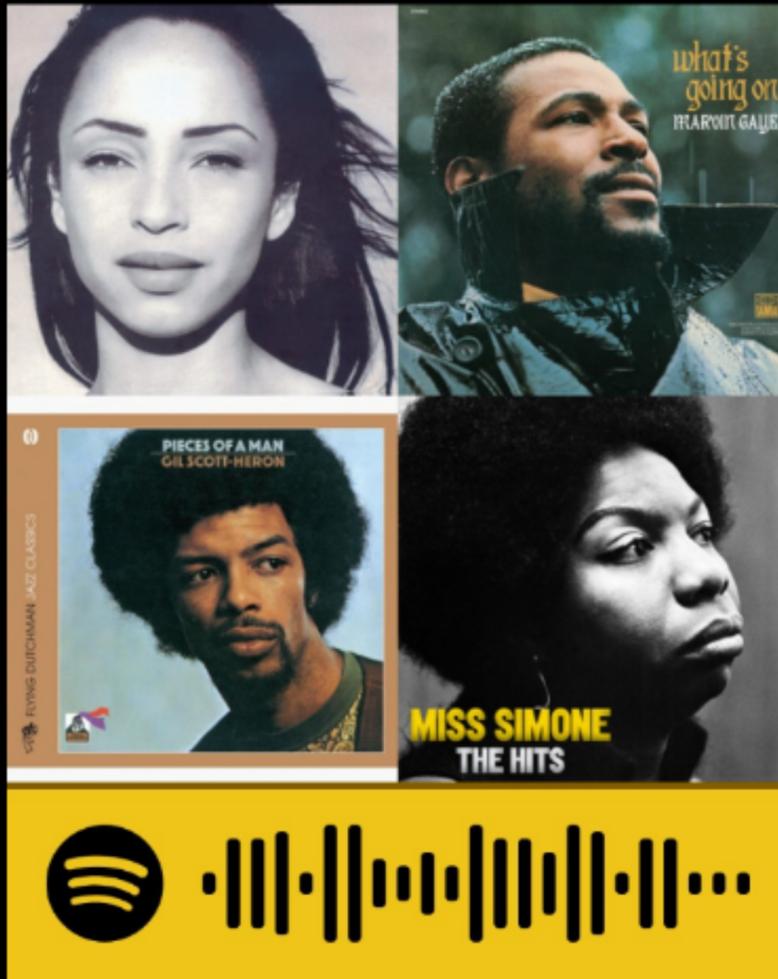
In March 2020, we really didn't anticipate being "virtual" for this period of time, however, we have still been able to support our students and identify new ways to achieve our goals. We've found that there are actually some things that work better in the digital space that we had never considered previously because we only knew the luxury of being face-to-face with one another. At this moment, what is crystal clear is that it's really hard to replace the support and applause that students get when they stand before their site mentors and peers and share their weekly "good news".

College Bound's students continue to inspire us with their grit, determination, and optimism. Watching them navigate through all of the challenges that they face is a constant reminder of the power of this work. Our vision reverberates through each test that they've aced, the new content that they've mastered, and every acceptance letter that they have received. The audacity to keep envisioning a brighter future and trusting us to assist adds to the joy of this season.

I'm grateful to be able to share this anthology of our students' work and I hope that you too will remain inspired by these undaunted voices.

In Solidarity,

*Kenneth*



# College Bound EYC 2021

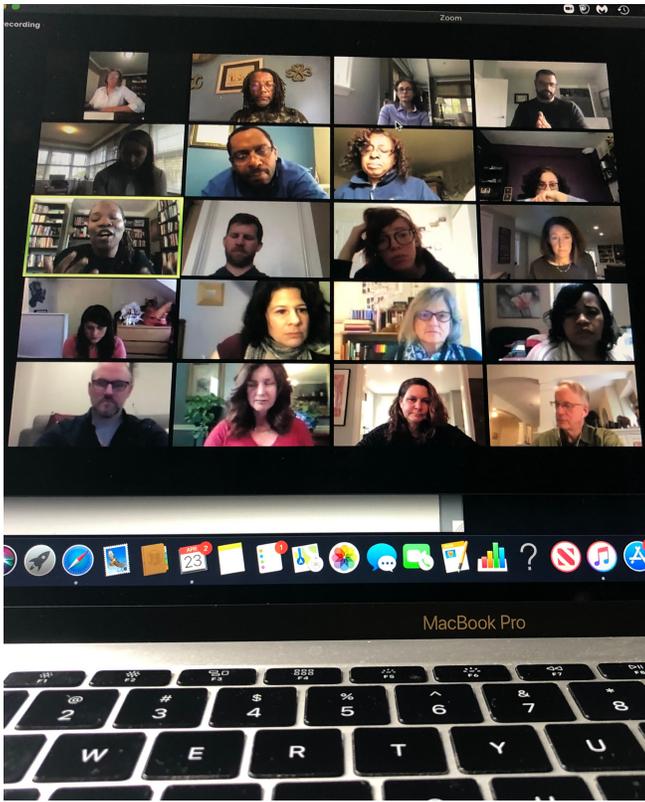


## TYLER M '25

### IF YOU COULD SET A WORLD RECORD, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I would want to set a world record for the fastest man alive. I would want to do this because I like to play sports and I feel like speed is a very important thing to becoming a successful athlete.

I would also want that title because it could get me recognized and allow me to do the things I want to do....Also because I would have bragging rights for being the fastest man alive.



## LALAH C '21

### WHAT MATTERS TO YOU MOST AND WHY?

What matters to me is my creativity. With My creative side I am able to express myself in many forms of art such as Fashion, jewelry designs, culinary arts, and music. My creativity has always been something that stands out and helps me to learn about myself. I am able to see myself grow and evolve as an artist, which helps me see my growth as a student, leader and friend. Having many creative talents is important to me because they portray all of my emotions and feelings.

## NINA-SKYE J '23

### WHAT IS THE CODE YOU LIVE BY?

My code of life could be two phrases: "Treat people the way you would like to be treated" and "there are always two sides of a tale".

All of the wise adults that I look up to have told me to treat people the way I would like to be treated and I still live by that code with the reminder of my family members telling me to. While none of my family members have told me the second line, it was just something I've picked up after watching a ton of movies and television.

Living life knowing there are always two stories to tell helps you live life a little unbiased. This phrase helps me not judge people too quickly and helps remind me that I never really know what is going on in other people's lives, only mine.

I think that both of these values lie heavily on respect, so I live my life valuing respect not just for myself but for others as well.



## XAVIER W '24

### WHAT MATTERS TO YOU MOST AND WHY?

What matters to me is my family, school, friends, shoes and games. Family matters to me because they make sure I have what I need and stay out of trouble. School matters to me because it will help me get into a great college and get me ready for the real world. My friends are important to me because they are the people I have fun with, and they always have my back. Shoes are the way I show my style and who I am, my personality. Games are a way I relax and have fun with my friends and family, which makes me happy because they are the people who matter to me.



## LOGAN L '23

### WHAT IS THE CODE YOU LIVE BY?

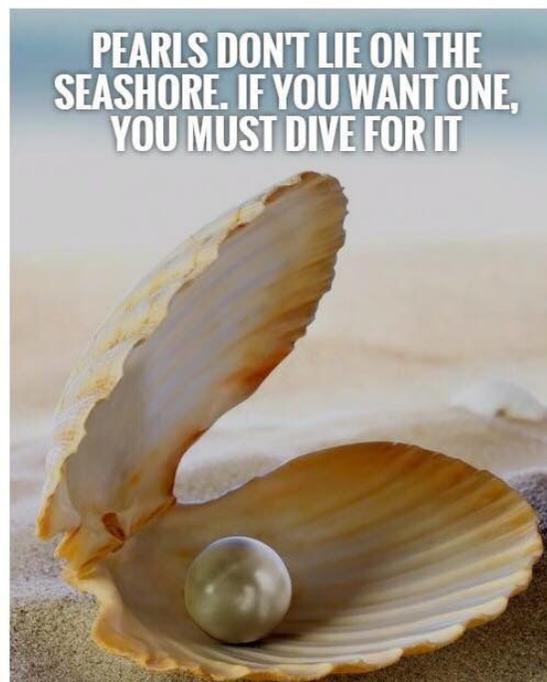
The code I live by is to treat people how you want to be treated. The way I look at it is you will never gain or grow by being mean or rude to others. God is always watching and he will send blessings your way. You never know what somebody else is going through, sometimes all they need is a hug or an outlet to let out their feelings. Life is what you make it and the people you were kind to will value those words you said and you will receive that good karma coming your way.



## MADISON M '25

### WHAT DO YOU THINK "STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE" SHOULD LOOK LIKE? WHAT KINDS OF ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN ON AN INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL LEVEL?

It looks like standing up for and limiting discrimination, racism, etc. from different groups of people based upon things like race, gender, religion and sexuality. Some efforts that could be in place individually and in the community is having conversations to make people closer together, and reducing the foreigners people feel, limiting the divide. On the national level laws and policies like implicit bias training could be put in place. The normalization and trivialization of the killings of black people is disgusting and should not be tolerated. The only way to make real change and improve our communities and outlook on life, is to curb racist, fascist and ableist beliefs against peers.



**PEARLS DON'T LIE ON THE SEASHORE. IF YOU WANT ONE, YOU MUST DIVE FOR IT**

# CHIMAMANDA S '23

## ON BLACK HISTORY

What is history? History is subjective to where it is taught and the environment it creates within our diverse economy. One thing we do and can all agree upon is that black history is not for black people; black history is American history. The structure and foundation we are currently living in has been the result of the engraved history of the contribution African Americans have built despite the continuous cycle of grave disappointment. The United States often masks the truth and revises it by hiding the "mistakes" they've collectively made in the past by inflicting laws, creating a false narrative into the future generations by glorifying historical events and incorporating that into our educational systems. This all led me to my argument that concludes: Although some might say the current history curriculum is fine as is and there's no racial disconnect between what is being taught in the United States school system, I would argue that certain historical content is needed to be focused on the legacy of slavery and white supremacy and this is proven through the teachings of the holocaust compared to slavery and the history of Columbus.

Holocaust remembrance and education has been purposely implemented into almost all curriculum of most European countries even going into the American public schools curriculum where all students are able to understand the depths of the events that occurred. Yet when it comes to the topics of slavery and white supremacy there seems to be a disconnect and sense of discomfort to the board of education who controls the subjects discussed in schools. Trevor Noah, a well known talk show host and celebrity, accounts of his personal experiences with his educational journey through his book "Born A Crime" states that, "In Germany, no child finishes high school without learning about the Holocaust. Not just the facts of it but the how and the why and the gravity of it—what it means." Then Trevor Noah continues to state - "We were taught history the way it's taught in America. In America, the history of racism is taught like this: "There was slavery and then there was Jim Crow and then there was Martin Luther King Jr. and now it's done./It was as if the teachers, many of whom were white, had been given a mandate. "Whatever you do, don't make the kids angry." This recollection alludes to the analogy that most curriculums regardless of the region have intentionally made it a point to



have students learn about holocaust and the emotional and physical outcomes of the event. Then Trevor allows his audience to see the differentiation that is between how these two events were being taught. Through the line "whatever you do, don't make the kids angry", we can see that when it comes to teaching there's going to be a bigger strain on trying to please the students of ethnic background to not promote any controversy.

The memory and celebration of Christopher Columbus has sparked recent controversy over these recent years due to the praise that was given to an undeserving individual who instead of bringing unity, he sparked a chain of horrendous experiences of certain groups of people. students have always seen Columbus as an icon or to the smaller grades, he's seen as an exercise to have a day off of school. To those who see him as an historical figure, our school system has engraved the narrative that this man has provided a key resource to shape what we now know as the United States Of America. Yet on the 18th of January of the year 2019, a group of indigenous people had marched to the certain areas of Washington Dc to bring awareness and allow for the recognition to the harm that the voyage Columbus embarked on actually cause for many natives to die of diseases in which they didn't have the immunity to battle, hence leading to their argument that a man of such nature and harm should not be celebrated. This allows us to see how the educational system has shifted to glorify the people they want us to believe are "heroes" and overshadow the things that have been harmful to others.

Through the actions taken by the board of education/the educational system after the events of the holocaust and the current narrative produced as the result of incorrect information concerning Columbus, are all the more reasons why the teachings of white supremacy and slavery are needed to be taught due to the many it affected similar to those events already stated. Students are in need for a better educational system but in order to provide that, a revised curriculum that is catered to the awareness of slavery and white supremacy is needed to promote for educational inclusivity.

## SHAINA A '22

### WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE MUSICAL ARTIST OR GROUP? WHAT ABOUT THEIR MUSIC DO YOU LIKE?

My favorite artist is BTS. Their songs cover a variety of topics, but they all come back to the concept of self-love.

Self-love absolutely relates to me as I strongly believe that it is essential to living a good life. I think you can only be happy if you are happy with yourself. This life is far too short to live hating yourself or trying to be someone else. Even when the world does what it does and tries to beat you, it is essential that we put ourselves forward and carry on. The moment that we start giving into the hate that the world throws at us on a whim is the moment our life stops being our own. This is my life and I only have one. I am going to keep loving myself and enjoying my life as much as I can.

I absolutely love BTS. Although they are rich and successful now, they certainly didn't start like that. Against all odds, they persevered against a world and industry that was against them and have made it to where they are today. They are honest about the struggles that they have been through and address their audience not as idols, but as humans. They are people that have gone through an array of experiences but still stayed pure and true to themselves. When I think of people with beautiful hearts, it is always them. I think that this is the silver lining that makes BTS so loved by their fans. Of course their music is amazing, that goes without saying, but I find that such beautiful people are extremely rare.

## KAMYIA D '21

### HOW HAS COLLEGE BOUND IMPACTED YOU?

College Bound has affected my life positively by giving me an activity to do afterschool that was guaranteed to be a positive environment and workspace after a long day of school. My mentor and I always enjoy our time together, and meeting her was another bonus from joining College Bound.

Being in College Bound has also taught me a lot about scholarships and the college admissions process before I was in the twelfth grade, so the whole process has been less challenging than it would normally be due to the fact that I had ample time to prepare. Because the Junior Program had us write our essays early, all I had to do for most applications was just fill some simple information out.



College Bound has also eased my and my mom's stress about how I am going to pay for college, because I know that I have a mentor and other adults to help me with filling out scholarships and with answers to any questions about the admissions process. The College Bound staff has always made me feel comfortable with asking questions which is something that I do not always get at school. I have also been able to engage in opportunities such as being able to go to the University Club and talk to professionals in potential careers for an event in my junior year. I have also been able to make friends with people my age from all over the city.



## CHRISTIAN D '23

I'M JUST LIVING THE LIFE OF A BLACK MAN TRYING TO SUCCEED.

I now am starting my 3rd quarter assessments I'm not really excited about it because now I have more basketball which is literal torture to my schedule. I still have to remember that I have College Bound because I might be site ambassador, that's even more responsibility. But I guess everyone lives this harsh life people always have to work and work. Wrong! I can't believe people really make millions of dollars from dropping out of school then making music but I'm still trying to get an A in math, get on a college team, and become site ambassador. Maybe I expect too much of myself.

I may need to chill out and relax but if I do that what next? I would have regrets of not getting the job done and of not putting some more effort into what I'm doing. I just don't know how to show that I'm working hard. I show my parents my grades but all they see is me on the phone talking to someone. Then when I actually finish an essay my teachers add on, then comes my parents with the "make up your bed" and "read a book, stop being lazy". I know this isn't like therapy where I can list out my problems.

I just think maybe if I can't do it on the court maybe someone else may hear it and think about what I'm feeling for once. It's just too much. I think I just need to dribble a ball, go play basketball for like 5 hours, maybe that might relieve some stress. Who knows but I know one thing: I better be relaxed by the end of the week or my goal of a 3.6 turns into a 3.5. Thank You CB for reading this but there is no help needed because I'm just living the life of a black man trying to succeed.

## MAKAYLA B '23

WHAT ARE SOME POSITIVE THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO YOU IN 2020?

In 2020, I have earned good grades in school. I finally got an apple watch, new phone, and ring light for Christmas.



## KENNEDY S '21

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED?

The best piece of advice I received would be no matter how much you love someone you have to let go when they're showing that you no longer mean anything to them anymore. I say this is the best advice I received because in one year I have lost a lot of people who I thought really wanted to be in my life forever. Another reason I choose this as the best advice because sometimes people feel as though it is ok for them to always walk over when you keep accepting their actions.



## WESLEE J '23

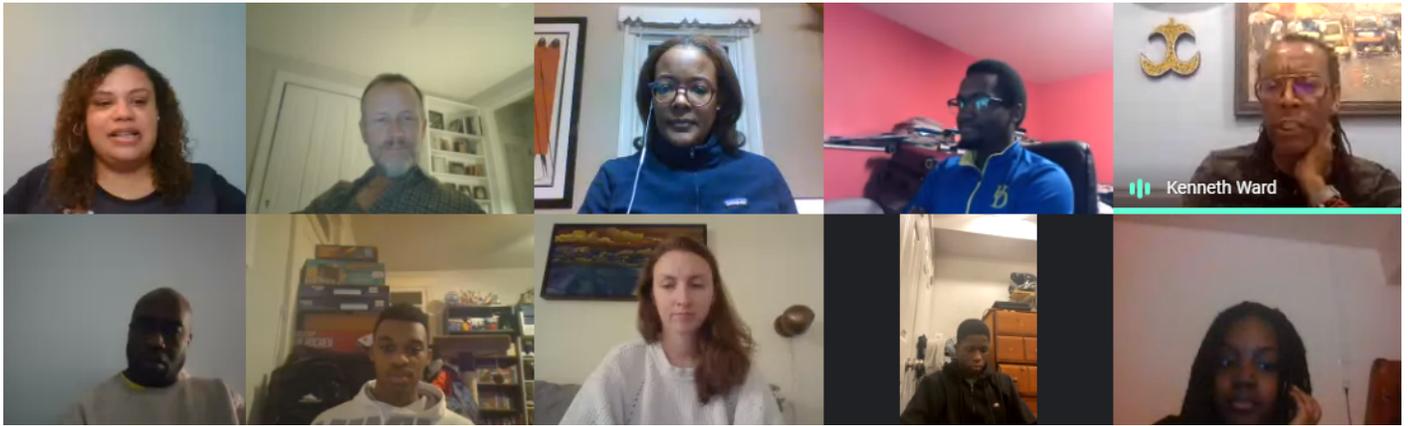
### A THANK YOU NOTE TO A JERK YOU LISTENED TO... AND LEARNED SOMETHING FROM

What's up teammate?

For the past three years, you and I have been playing for our school's basketball team. We have absolutely dominated our competition even going undefeated in middle school despite the immense capability of the teams we played. This letter is to thank you for being the absolute best "jerk" that I have ever met. When we played pick up games outside with our friends, you were kind enough to yell "YOU MISSED" as loud as possible every single time I shot the ball. You were so confident that you even talked trash to every person who ever stepped on the court and challenged you. So fantastic that you punted the basketball we were using onto the roof of our school after losing to someone six inches shorter than you. I especially enjoyed that time that you poured a water bottle on my grey sweatpants and laughed because it looked like I had gone to the bathroom. In spite of all those "heartwarming" moments, at a point in time, I truly did despise you. So much so that your every action made my blood boil with extreme amounts of anger, dismay, disturbance, frustration, displeasure, malice, and plenty more. But again, I would like to thank you for all of this. With every step I watched you take towards the improvement of your skills, I tried to take three steps forward of my own. With every lap I watched you run around our small turf soccer field, I tried to run five more. My rage slowly grew into a full-blown obsession. It got to a point where I was infatuated with proving to myself that anything you could do, I could do significantly better. Though a jerk, you pushed me towards becoming a more excellent athlete, student, and person. Then, of course, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world and your physical presence disappeared from my life.

I may sound a lot like a cliché vengeful villain from one of the Marvel movies. I may have also over-exaggerated quite a bit just to get the point across. You get the message though, you simply made life a little more hellish. Aside from all the bad, I never explained why you're the best jerk I've ever met. You showed me the true value of persistence and diligence with your outlandish aspirations and actions. Every single day of school, you told me that you were "going to make it to the NBA". Of course, at first, I had absolutely no faith in that dream coming to fruition. Yet, simply watching you work hard day after day, even when no one was watching, I had no choice but to believe in your stated dream. You were committed to making sure you could accomplish your dream. You spent absolutely none of your time in classes doing actual classwork and instead chose to watch "Top 10 basketball plays and highlights" on your phone for the entire class. You even had the audacity and gall to challenge a Senior classmate to a one-on-one matchup after they scored ONCE on you. Every action you took and every word you spoke showed how passionate you were about the game of basketball. Don't get me wrong, you're still an absolute jerk; but you're an inspiring jerk with passion, pursuing a dream that is undeniably attainable for someone as stubborn and obnoxious as you. For showing me the importance of persistence and effort, I would like to thank you!

Sincerely,  
Weslee



## NINA E '23

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED?

The best advice I've ever received would be to not hold a grudge, this is so important to me because holding a grudge is only setting you back while everyone else is moving forward. Holding onto all that extra drama doesn't make you any better than the person you are mad at and it is okay to forgive, but you don't have to forget, or else you will end up in that same position again.

## ANTHONY C '21

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED?

Due to my terrible memory, I can't remember a piece of advice that resonated well enough for me to remember but I heard something from a speech that did. This quote wasn't directed towards me but it felt as if it was because of the timing in which I heard it.

"Ease is a greater threat to progress than hardship" - Denzel Washington. This quote reminded me that the hardships I face now are preparing me for success in the future and it gave me the courage needed to face and overcome those hardships.

## WILLOW S '24

ON GROWING YOUR OWN FOOD

I think that when I become an adult, I will start growing my own food. I believe that we should start providing ourselves with our own produce because it is better for you, it will taste better, and you will have a sense of pride knowing that you grew and cooked your own food. This is literally preparing your own food from scratch.

I know that sounds very stressful, but I think that it would be fun to do this. For me cooking is exciting and therapeutic, so if I also grow my food, it would be much more of an exciting experience. Don't get me wrong I will still go to the grocery store to get other things, I will just balance out what I grow and what I don't grow. I think this will be good.



## ETHAN S '25

WHAT ARE YOU READING, WATCHING, OR LISTENING TO RIGHT NOW THAT IS INSPIRING YOU? WHY DOES IT INSPIRE YOU?

Yu Yu Hakusho is the most well written shounen anime because of the things you learn and experience from the show.

The main character of Yu Yu Hakusho is a 14 year old kid named Yusuke, in the first episode he was shown to be a bully and a bad student but also ended up dying because he saved a kid from getting hit by a car. This shows how everyone has good in them no matter how they might look or act. Yusuke ended up in the spirit world and was brought back to life, but he was a spirit detective now and had to stop demons from taking earth. His friend Kuwabara had already had spiritual awareness and ended up assisting Yusuke in his pursuit to stop the demons from attacking the earth.

He ended up meeting Kurama and Hiei, 2 demons, and later on became friends with them. Kurama had a chill personality - he was smart, charismatic, strong, and was an easily and loveable character. Hiei was a darker character - he was rude, edgy, and not cooperative, but he was still loveable. Kuwabara was funny, he also had a lot of honor and pride. Yusuke was a trash talker, he didn't really care about anything and didn't think much either, he shared similar traits to Hiei but he wasn't edgy.

The Dark tournament soon took place and this demon named Toguro was participating in it. Toguro was an evil demon who wanted to kill people. So Yusuke's master, Genkai, had trained him up for the tournament. The winner of the tournament gets a wish granted to them, so right before the finals of the tournament Toguro had killed Genkai, that's when Yusuke had realized the connection he had with his master.

## KHALIQ M '21

### ON THE DEREK CHAUVIN TRIAL

When I was made aware of the verdict in the Chauvin trial, I felt mixed emotions. One side of me was very glad that Derek Chauvin was convicted on all charges but another side of me knows that there is more work to be done. One has to ask themselves, what is true justice in this system? When an innocent person is murdered, especially by someone who has been sworn in to protect and serve the communities of America, what does true justice look like? Unfortunately, that's not a question that I myself can answer.

For hundreds of years, even before most of us were born, Black people in America have been used, abused, mistreated, and killed unjustly by the government and other forces that run and drive America.

One conviction surely does not mark a turning point in American history because there have been convictions in American history before but that did not stop Black people from dying at the hands of our oppressors. It took almost the entire world to put pressure on the court of law to convict one officer involved in the murder. Right after the verdict was made public, more Black people across America died at the hands of an officer.

So in summary, there is much much more work to be done in creating justice for Black people in America that have suffered at the hands of the American government and other powers that be for over 400 years.



## KAIDYN A '23

### WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED?

The best advice that I have ever got was from my mother and a couple of my old teachers. Their advice went something like this: don't ever give up with whatever you plan to do in life, there's always going to be challenges but I will get over them, etc. Their advice will stick with me forever, and will always mean something important to me, because it came from people who have seen my potential and what I have to offer.

## JAVIER S '22

### WHO INSPIRES YOU AND WHY DO THEY INSPIRE YOU?

My mom inspires me because of her mentality and her drive to achieve greatness. She is a very successful woman, and she has done a lot with her life and is still doing more. She treats people with respect and kindness and helps people even when she isn't feeling well. Her determination to be a better version of herself is very inspiring to me, and I hope to have the same mentality and morals in the near future.



T-Shirt design by Ayriika

## LONDON W '25

### WHAT GRADE WOULD YOU GIVE PRESIDENT BIDEN ON HIS FIRST 100 DAYS?

I would give Joe Biden a solid D- for his first 100 days. I am saying that because he is focusing on the groups that suffer from a lesser amount of oppression, such as the Asian and LGBTQ+ communities. Black people are dying at rapid rates and they have yet to pass a bill, so for that reason I think that Joe Biden does not really care about black people like he says he does.

I think that black people fell into this trap so that Joe could get the black vote. Us black Americans only voted for Joe because we really did not want Trump to get re-elected.



# CLARKE O '25

## SHORT STORY, CHAPTER ONE

Third Person POV:

"James! Get your a\*\* down here!"

James jumps up, nearly dropping his bass. He puts down the instrument and runs downstairs. He sees his father, James Sr. Alongside him are his siblings: Bill, Michael, and Genevieve. Bill is James' twin, and he appears to be the only one who seemed to care that James was late.

James's POV:

As I walk down the stairs, I see three things that stand out: my father dressed for work, my siblings in a line beside him wearing their uniforms, and a chair still flipped upside-down on the table. Four other chairs are already on the floor, so the only one that remains upside down has to be mine. My father's routines run like clockwork. Every morning, my siblings and I take our chairs down before breakfast, and then put them back up after dinner.

"What's going on?" I ask with a slight sense of confusion.

"Are you aware that you missed breakfast?" my father asks, a hint of bitterness in his voice.

"No, I didn't realize the time. Why didn't someone come get me?"

"James," Father says with slight irritation in his voice, "You are old enough to look at a clock and come downstairs. Now, everybody out. You have to get to school!"

I follow my three siblings out the door and down the street. Bill walks up next to me.

"Are you ready?" he asks nervously.

"Yeah, It's not the first school change we've had. Stuff like this doesn't really phase me anymore." I tell him.

"What a load of horseshi-" Genevieve starts to say

"Genevieve!" Mike exclaims.

"What do you mean?" I ask, as I turn to face Genevieve.

"You know exactly what I mean James." she says. "You always get shaky and anxious on your first day. Stop trying to deny it, I'm your sister. I know these things."

I roll my eyes. "I'll be fine Genevieve. Besides, George will be there."

George Henderson. He moved here this summer. We met while working at the theater around the corner. He's the only other person I know in this town, aside from my family. He's a real nice bloke, very studious.

"Make sure to try this time, okay? Don't just hang around Bill like last time, make some friends of your own." I hear Mike say.

"Alright, I'll try this time. I promise." I say, just to please him.

"Good. It looks like we've arrived" Mike says, pointing to the prestigious looking building. The sign on the front reads: Persona Academy for Gifted Youth. We walk inside the school and go to the front desk.

"Names and Year?" the receptionist says without looking up from her computer.

We each take turns speaking.

"James McDare, Year 11."

"William McDare, Year 11."

"Michael McDare, Year 10."

"Genevieve McDare. Year 9."

She looks up at each of us. "Why, there's quite a few of you all at once. Anyway, here are each of your schedules."

We thank her and look at the papers. Bill and I have all of our classes together, like we always have. Father most definitely arranged that. Homeroom is.. Algebra

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We say goodbye to Genevieve as she walks down the hall to her classroom. Mike follows me and Bill until he gets to his assigned room. Soon after, we arrived at our room.

"You ready James?"

"No point in being nervous now"

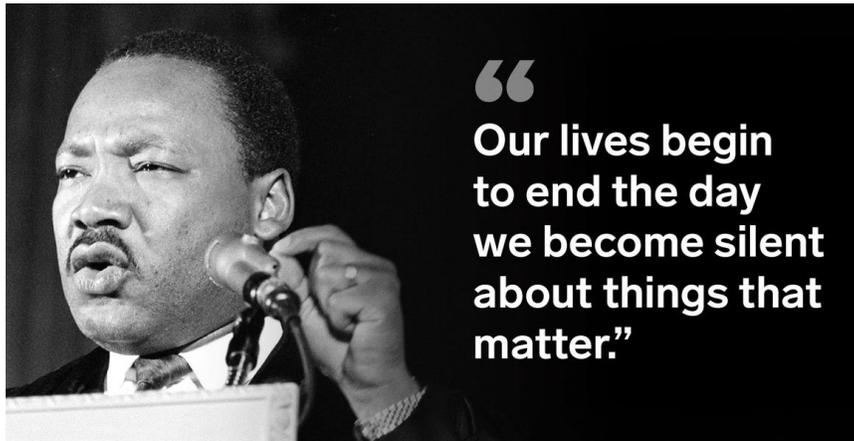
We open the door and step inside the room.

## LUNDYN R '21

### ON THE DEREK CHAUVIN TRIAL

When hearing that Derek Chauvin was, of course, guilty of his crimes, I was so relieved. Having to even go through this long process in order to get justice for George Floyd was ridiculous to me.

While I understand that because our nation has a system, and the court system has to look at it from all perspectives, it was clear that the officer was wrong in so many ways. I feel like to a certain extent justice was served, he will due his time in prison which many people and myself appreciate, but that won't fix the fact that a child and family has lost a loved one. I don't really know if this verdict marks a turning point in history because this is just one out of many crimes/situations that have happened over the past few years.



“  
Our lives begin  
to end the day  
we become silent  
about things that  
matter.”

## DYLAN G '23

WHAT DO YOU THINK “STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE” SHOULD LOOK LIKE? WHAT KINDS OF ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN ON AN INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL LEVEL?

Standing up for justice can take many different forms, but fundamentally it involves taking action on behalf of what you believe is right.

On a national level, we should address things like Asian hate crimes because they are happening all over the country, so the entire country needs to work together to find solutions to these problems. At a time when racially motivated violence has decreased overall, it's disturbing and a violation of justice that such hate crimes specifically against Asian Americans have actually risen in absolute terms in recent years.

## TERRI F '21

WHAT DO YOU THINK “STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE” SHOULD LOOK LIKE? WHAT KINDS OF ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN ON AN INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL LEVEL?

Standing up for justice means defending someone or something that is not being treated fairly.

An individual person should speak out on mistreatment they see in their day-to-day life. Also, it's important that people do their own research about the injustice going on around the world. A community can hold meetings to talk about ways they could stand up for justice, for example, by hosting a protest in the local community. On a national level, the leaders should try and promote more equality and inclusivity.

Important people that others listen to should be involved in this process so when you need to bring attention to the problem you will have lots of people ready to help just because of their influence.

Standing up for justice on a community level would look like someone trying to fight gun laws. Some states have a big problem with gun violence but others don't. Therefore, people who live in states with more gun violence have the greatest responsibility and opportunity to stand up for justice against gun violence by trying to change the laws in their states.

## ZARIAH B '23

### EMOTIONALLY SCARRED

Why? Why are my people lying dead on the floor? Why do we have to have a lighter skin tone to be free? Why is it wrong to be born with melanin skin? Well we don't have an answer just yet. It takes a cold-hearted cop to put bullet holes in innocent people. Do they not know we have families to go home to and kids that look up to us? Taking our last breath. Why? Why are they labeling us as thugs just because we have tattoos? Why are they putting us in jail for a crime we didn't commit? Why are they separating us from our families? Why are they killing so many non-resisting, unarmed Black males? Why is it when we ask the court system for justice, they don't want to punish the cop?

I thought they were supposed to protect us -not kill us and beat us down?

Now who can we call on when we need help?

As we all know, George Floyd, a Black man, was killed by officer Derek Chauvin using his knee. Floyd was not resisting and had hand cuffs on, while on the ground losing his life. Along with many more Black people who were unarmed and not fighting back. How are we supposed to live freely? The truth is we never will.

So I say keep protesting - loud and proud - because we will never be silenced. Why? I say because police officers don't believe in rights for Black people.

Why? Why are my people lying dead on the floor? Why do we have to have lighter skin to be free? Why is it wrong to be born with melanin skin? Why?



Art by Jayda D '25

## DEREK E '24

### WHAT IS THE CODE YOU LIVE BY? HOW DO YOU SUM UP YOUR PHILOSOPHY ABOUT LIFE, HOW YOU TREAT OTHERS AND WHAT YOU VALUE?

I live by a lot of things, really. One of the major things I live by is the Golden Rule (treat others the way you want to be treated). This is highly important in every aspect of life, whether it be at home, at work, or at school. When you respect others, and treat them with kindness, they will reciprocate.

For example, I treat Mr. Ward as both a boss and a great friend, though I started treating Mr. Ward as a friend after he got to know me and see what I am capable of. He has done a lot for me, so naturally I try to be really kind to him. I also try to listen to his advice, since it is always very valuable. Same with my mentor.

But as always, I should not be too casual with people of importance, as it may convey the wrong image of me to that person.

## KENNEDY C '25

### IF YOU CAN SET A WORLD RECORD, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I would want to set the record for the fastest reader because talking fast is a fun talent I have. Sometimes I time myself when reading and I read really fast unintentionally. Also breaking a record would be really cool, as well as getting a plaque.

# JANELLE C '22

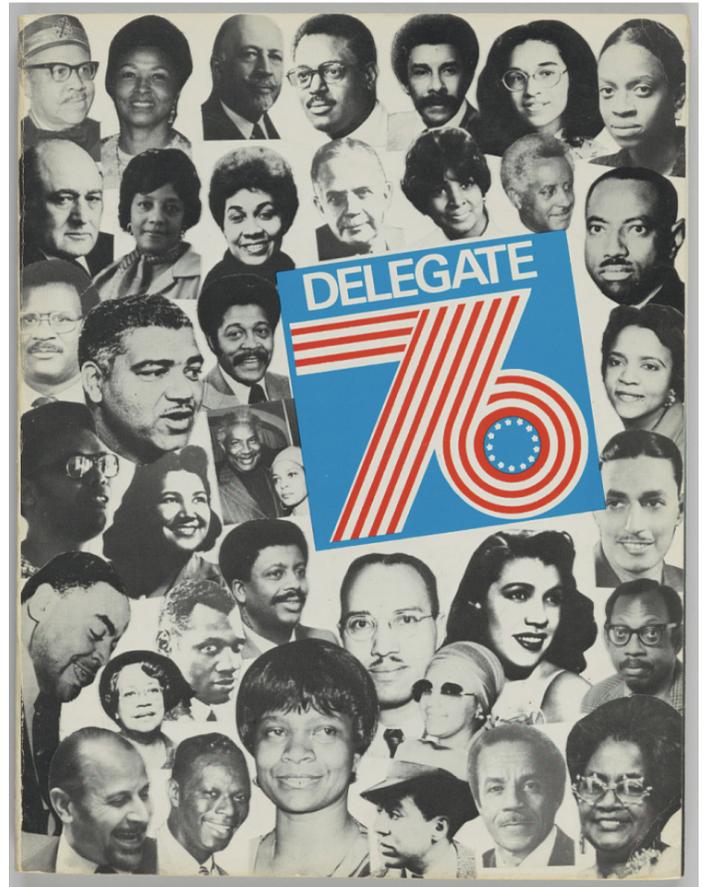
## VISUAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS ESSAY

African Americans had to fight for many of their basic rights. Many people in this picture are historic for what they did in the black community for the people as well as the overall community. In this picture created by C. Melvin Patrick, he appeals to the viewers emotions, allegory, and character to convince the audience what these people did and how they fought for African Americans.

The creator appeals to the viewers emotions because of the impact they did for African Americans. The creator wants the viewers to understand that many people fought for African Americans to have the rights they have now. Many people in this picture have strength because they fought through a lot of police brutality and racism. It invokes empathy by making people think of everything African Americans had to go through. For example, many of the people in this picture were arrested or beaten by police officers and other white people which made lots of people angry, hurt, and upset. Therefore, the audience will feel empathy for everything African Americans have gone through to get many of the rights they have now.

Allegory is used in this picture. Looking at this picture only a group of African Americans is shown. This picture shows the many people who fought so that African Americans and white people could be treated as equals. For example, you see Rosa Parks who fought to let black people in the front of the bus. When she fought for African Americans to sit anywhere on the bus it eventually happened and a lot more other things became desegregated over time. This visual makes one think of what many African Americans did to get their rights and how hard they fought and how hard they had to work to be treated as equals to white people. This picture shows how over time black people came from being separated from white people to eventually being treated as equals in some areas of life. We know that we are still in the struggle.

When analyzing this picture it allows the viewer to see who these people are and what they did. The people in this picture all fought to have something changed in the African American community. The picture is set to tell a story on how African Americans have



evolved over time. Even though the image does not specify anything it tells you a lot about what African Americans had to fight for. This picture leaves the viewer with a deeper understanding of what African Americans had to go through to get where they are today. If the viewer did not have prior knowledge about African Americans this picture helps them understand African Americans as people better. As you look at the individuals in the picture it gives you the opportunity to reflect on each of their lives and the roles they played in the lives of our people.

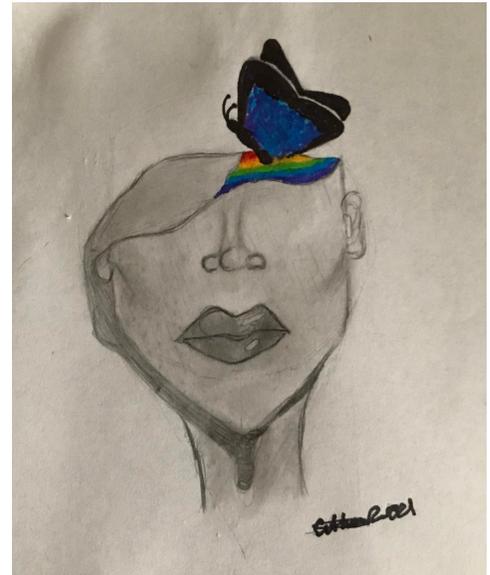
In this picture C. Melvin Patrick, is convincing the viewer on what many people in this picture did and fought for in the African American community. The intended audience for this picture is anyone, so multiple people are acknowledged about how African Americans and their rights have evolved over time. This picture speaks to all people. It speaks to black and brown people even more today as we look at the things that are happening in the United States in the past few years. It makes us wonder how they would respond to the things that are happening in our Country today. In some instances it gives us hope of what we can hope for in the future.

## ARNETT H '22

DO YOU THINK SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE A LATER START TIME? WHY OR WHY NOT?

A later start time has pros and cons. If school started later, most people my age have a great production rate around 11 AM, but school will be out later than most want it to be. A later start time gives us (students) more time to prepare ourselves for a long 8 hours, but students will also be thinking about after school plans. Extracurricular activities, programs to improve etc. later times can ruin students plans of doing something after school.

Personally, I don't think a later start time would be bad for students, but I think some school districts should be more aware of students' after school plans.



Art by Ciahna C



## ANIYAH H '25

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE BEEN GIVEN?

The best advice I received was from a friend: "Be you, Do you, For you." This advice is important to me because it stuck with me and was the answer to a lot of things I came across. To all the things I've wanted to achieve, accomplished. This advice changed my mindset and point of view of life for the better.

## DONYE R '24

ON BLACK HISTORY

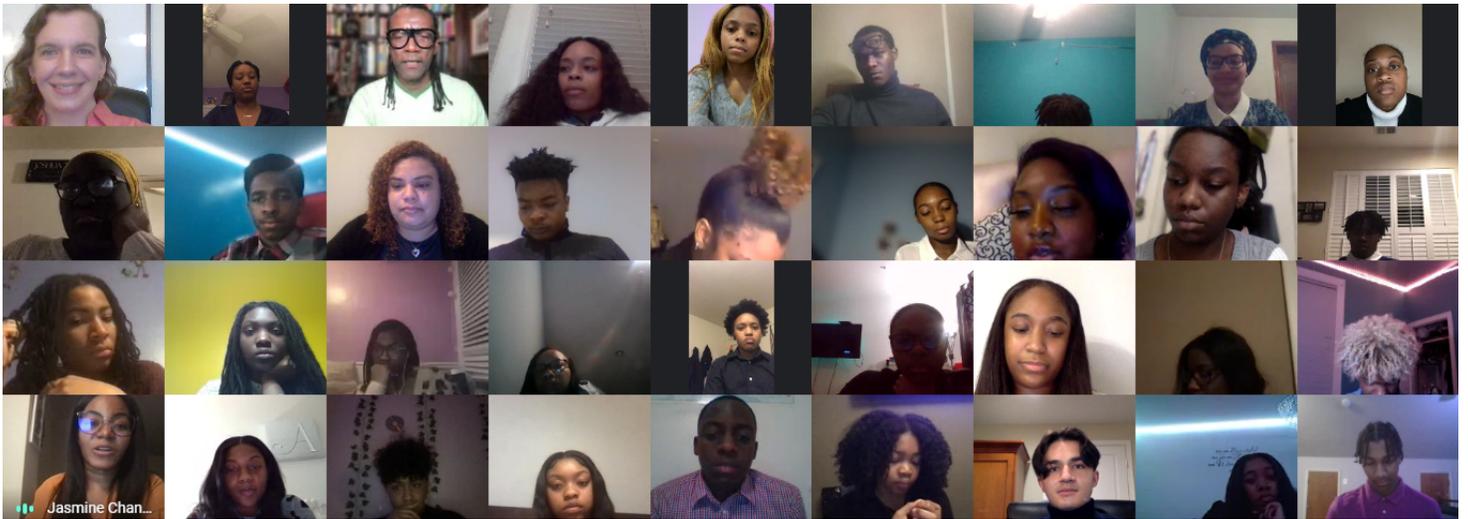
I think my experience in studying social studies/ history in the past has been great. I believe when studying social studies/ history in the past, I've enjoyed learning about the past and comparing them to current events. For example today worldwide many Black Americans are dying from Police Brutality, Racism and more. We've been going through this for many generations, for instance Martin Luther King jr and Malcolm X have been protesting for years just to get equal rights. This is one reason why I enjoy learning about social studies/history. What I've liked most about studying social studies/history is learning through interactive activities. In the past, I've participated in projects, Kahoot games, fun classroom activities and group projects. Topics I really enjoy learning in social studies/history are Wars, Great Depression, Black History month, Slavery, and fun facts from the 1700s-1900s. Some challenges that I've had in social studies/history courses are staying engaged, because learning about the past can sometimes become boring. Ways for teachers to help me enjoy and be more engaged in class is to find interactive and fun ways to learn about our past. Coming up with fun activities and group projects would be super fun and will allow us to see things from others perspectives. Other ways my teacher can support me in being successful in this course is by being encouraging, providing a safe space to learn, and making me feel like my voice is being heard.

## KADI B '22

### IF YOU COULD GET ONE "DO-OVER" IN LIFE WHAT WOULD IT BE? WHY?

If I could get one do-over in life it would be to redo my 9th-grade year. I want a do-over because I know I could have done better if I studied more. I realized how important my 9th-grade year was when I heard that college admissions counselors look at your 9th-grade transcript. Your freshman year grades are important because they significantly affect your GPA. Having B's is not bad, but colleges are going to look at the people with A's.

Since my 9th grade year, I have been improving my study habits and have started to ask for help when I need it. Before, I would let myself fail and just redo the assignment, but now, I have been going to office hours and sending emails to the teacher when I have a problem. As a result, I now get better test scores and understand my work. For example, when I have studied for Algebra 2 quizzes this year, I have scored nearly perfect. When I was in 9th grade, I did not study and scored poorly on quizzes. Along with this, my grades have changed a lot since 9th grade because back then, I would slack off at the beginning of the year. Now that I have changed my work tactics, I have received honors in my first three quarters in school. Although if possible I would redo my 9th-grade year, I learned some valuable lessons and I have become a better person since then.



## NASSIR P '21

### HOW WILL YOU DESCRIBE THIS TIME TO FUTURE GENERATIONS? WHAT IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THIS EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE REMEMBERED AND SHARED?

I would explain this time as a time when I had to learn to be alone but at the same time not feel lonely. I would tell future generations that this was a time when I had time to think about and fix my bad habits. This was a time when I could focus on myself and not have to worry about other distractions. This was a time of panic and fear but also a time of action. A period in history when colored Americans decided enough is enough and stood up for what's right and what needed to be brought to attention in a wider and more focused view.

## CHRISTOPHER H '24

### HOW SHOULD PARENTS SUPPORT A STUDENT WHO HAS FALLEN BEHIND IN SCHOOL? WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A PEER WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH SCHOOLWORK AND FEELING LIKE CATCHING UP IS IMPOSSIBLE?

I think a parent shouldn't yell at their child. They should first ask them why this happened and how it happened. Then a parent can say what's wrong and what can I do to help you with your studies, or what topic do you need the most help with and I can maybe help you study that topic.

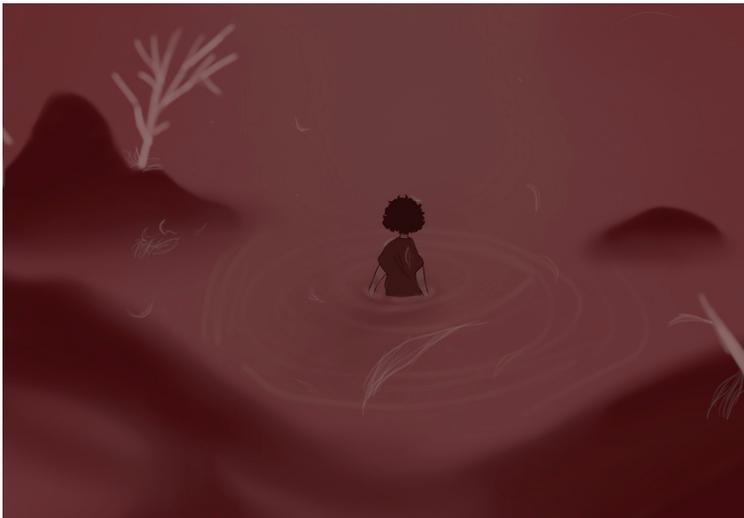
A piece of advice I would give to someone who is struggling with catching up with work is to do the work in pieces and split it up so you don't get exhausted. Another tip that I would give is not to procrastinate because that does nothing for you. You should put your work first so that you can do other things later.

## KYLER G '24

WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION?

I think the Biden-Harris administration needs to prioritize building the relationships with our former international parties that Donald Trump has harmed. These were key relationships that were very useful in past years, and can serve as very useful in a case of crisis and emergency. Also, I would like to see some transparency out of the Biden-Harris administration, and I would like for them to demonstrate some authenticity with their plan of action. President Biden says that he was to speed up the process of normalization and will be focused to maintain the spread of COVID-19 and that he should be very dedicated in doing so.

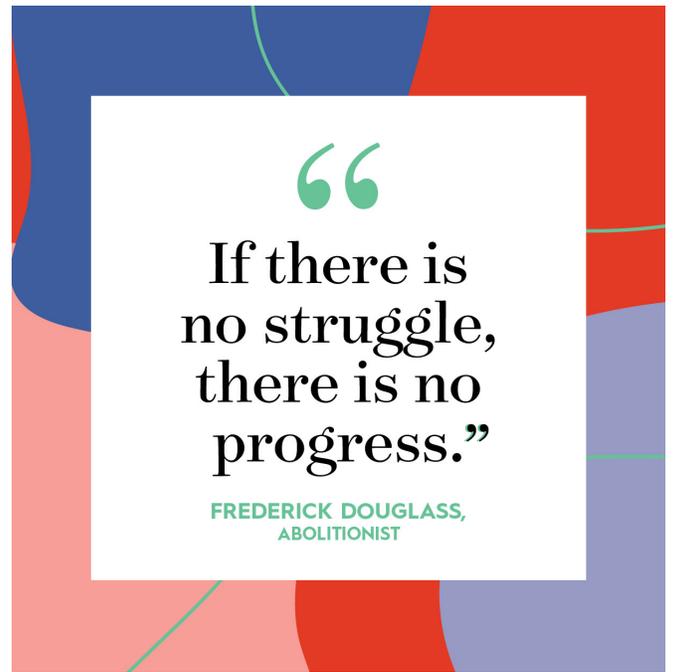
Art by Jayda D



## NIKYAH J '23

ON THE DEREK CHAUVIN TRIAL

Derek Chauvin being found guilty on all charges is a huge turning point in history. In the many situations, where unarmed black people have been killed by police officers, there are rarely any times where the police have been tried and found guilty. I personally feel that there are more officers that need to be held accountable for the things that they have done. Derek Chauvin being found guilty is hopefully the first step to change.



## GABRIELLA S '24

WHAT DO YOU THINK "STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE" SHOULD LOOK LIKE? WHAT KINDS OF ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN ON AN INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL LEVEL?

I feel like standing up for justice should be non-violent, verbal (you fight fire with water not fire, because fighting fire with fire just causes more destruction), and persistent with good cause so that all people are treated equally, kindly, and equitably no matter race, gender identification, sexuality.

I feel that standing up for justice should reach the wealthy and the poor so that people can get all the support in their stand for justice that they need. Also, I believe that people should not use the excuse of justice or any excuse at all to do unjust and prejudiced things.



# REGGIE G '21

## THE FALLEN ROSE

Roses can be many things. They can represent sweetness, kindness, warmth, and softness.. My grandmother was the definition of a rose. Her heart was full of kindness and selflessness. She was one of the most important women in my life. She taught me how to take care of my unconditioned hair, how to clean up after myself, how to read newspapers, and how to be a gentleman. She was the true definition of a rose that was willing to help others. She gave up her rose petals to the people in need and what I mean by rose petals she gave some of her belongings to others that needed it. She was the definition of kind hearted. She would give up all her rose petals until there was no more to give. There wasn't any more to give because she shared all her rose petals and all the kindness and joy she had to the people in need. On September 17, 2019, the sweet, kind rose had fallen.

To my grandmother I was her little rose. She saw I was kind and sweet to others and I told myself that I was a rose just like her. When my grandmother passed, it felt like all of my rose petals were gone too. I felt like I had fallen with her. I was mentally broken inside. The joy that she saw in me was gone. I struggled after my grandmother's passing. The biggest struggle I had was with school. My focus was gone. My drive was gone. Every time I closed my eyes, I just wanted to cry. Even though my grandmother was sweet and kind, she was also strong and if I was a rose just like her I had to be strong too.

Roses are red but they are also strong inside. That's what my grandmother has been teaching me all along. I had to dust myself and keep trying. She always taught me to never give up and always do my best, no matter what. It took a little time, but I overcame obstacles such as getting honor roll, passing my engineering test, and getting a 4.0 on my report card. I know my grandmother is proud. She was my drive to keep going because I know if she was here she would want me to do so. I know she's watching and I know she's very proud of the young man I have become. Also, she would be proud that her little rose managed to rise up again.





## KENDALL C '23

HOW WILL YOU DESCRIBE THIS TIME TO FUTURE GENERATIONS? WHAT IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THIS EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE REMEMBERED AND SHARED?

This time, for me, has consisted of a lot of self-evaluation and thinking. I have spent most of my days listening to music and on my phone, just like other kids during this time. I do feel this time was needed though. It was a wake up call for those who don't take being sanitary seriously, and a time for people to kind of take a break from their busy life.

Important aspects that will be remembered about this time was that my loved ones and I survived because most people didn't. Also, how I grew because even though it wasn't a drastic growth I still grew and tried to better myself.



## NYA G '23

HOW SHOULD PARENTS SUPPORT A STUDENT WHO HAS FALLEN BEHIND IN SCHOOL? WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A PEER WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH SCHOOLWORK AND FEELING LIKE CATCHING UP IS IMPOSSIBLE?

I think the parents should ask the child what's going on because often parents think it's just that the child doesn't wanna try, but most times that's not the case. Sometimes the child is too embarrassed to speak up about their struggles until it's too late.

I speak from experience with this topic. A few years back I was going through a hard time with discovering myself and I was having trouble with friends. I was so distracted that school came second but that was never my intention. I didn't realize how bad it was until it was too late.

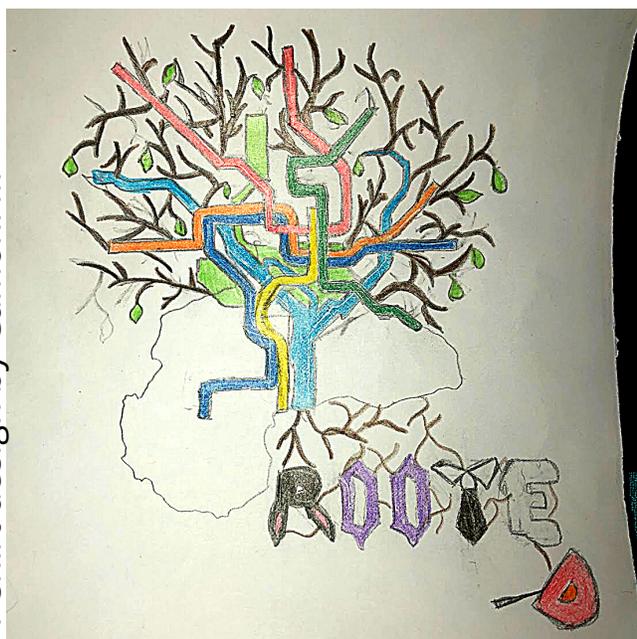
My advice to someone who's behind would be that it's not going to be easy but if you put in the work you can do a lot also don't wait until the last minutes because it's just going to be very stressful which would encourage you to give up.

## MARCUS H '23

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED?

The best advice I've ever received was from an Eagle Scout. His name was EJ Ellis and he also attended college bound. He came back from his freshman year of college and called in all the scouts to talk. He talked about his personal things but what he told us was to finish boy scouts because it played a big part in his future. He said that he was at a meeting and he met a guy next to him. They were talking about how they were both Eagle Scouts. Later that meeting he found out that man was a millionaire and he gave him some money for college. So I used that story and the advice he gave to finish my Eagle Scout so that maybe one day that will happen to me.

T-shirt design by Camoni M



## COBI C '21

HOW SHOULD PARENTS SUPPORT A STUDENT WHO HAS FALLEN BEHIND IN SCHOOL? WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A PEER WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH SCHOOLWORK AND FEELING LIKE CATCHING UP IS IMPOSSIBLE?

I think parents should help students that have fallen behind in school by just being supportive. With school being virtual, many students have fallen behind in school. Many students have lost motivation since they are not in school, not around their friends, and staring at a screen for most of the day.

Some ways that parents can support or help students that have fallen behind in school is to discuss with them and try to find the problem. As someone who has struggled during virtual learning, I have learned to take breaks between each assignment.



Taking a break is important so you won't feel overwhelmed with work. Also, to keep myself organized I set reminders to turn in work and upcoming assignments.

During virtual school, my parents have helped me with scheduling to stay organized. They also have assisted with reviewing papers and projects when directions are unclear. My parents have kept me motivated by taking me outdoors so I can take a break from computers and supporting me with college applications.

I think it's important for parents to talk to their children especially if they are falling behind as virtual learning is still new to everybody.



## GRAHAM U '23

### WHAT IS A CODE YOU LIVE BY?

"Live life to the fullest because no one makes it out alive."

I live by this quote because I think if you don't live life to the fullest then you will have a very boring and dull life. I love having fun and without fun, life would stink, and then you would die thinking "man, I had a bad life".

## AYANNA L '23

### WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT YOU ARE WATCHING OR READING THAT INSPIRES YOU?

Over this past weekend I bought two new books, "The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness" by Michelle Alexander and "Grown" by Tiffany D. Jackson. I am eager to read these two new books because they both go into different genres of reading that I am interested in.

"The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness" is an educational eye opener in regards to indictment and the treatment of black Americans in the nation's judicial system. The book tackles a topic that society often pushes to the backburner; which is the systematic cycle that black Americans are trapped in. I am always eager to expand my mind on topics I care and resonate with deeply about, including that mass incarceration as that hits home for me personally.

I am also excited to read "Grown" because I have read two other books written by Tiffany D. Jackson and though they are fictional they were both real and both touched on important topics such as poverty, the rate young African American girls go missing and how they are not reported or looked into. I've heard nothing but great things about this book and I cannot wait to see what "Grown" has in store for me as a reader.

## TRINITY F '25

### WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT YOU ARE WATCHING OR READING THAT INSPIRES YOU?

The show I am currently inspired by is criminal minds, it teaches me not to give up and how different people go through things to end up how they did, it teaches me that no matter what I have to work through everything, no matter how hard it might be. It teaches me that I can move on, that everything is temporary, it inspires me to keep moving to keep doing what I have to do to get through something, I know it sounds repetitive but it indeed shows me that I need to move on and try another way no matter what.

## MIA H '24

### ON THE DEREK CHAUVIN TRIAL

He went to jail...as he should! and as of right now justice has been served, but it doesn't change the fact that there has been so many other horrible encounters with the police since then and are continuing to happen now. So no i do not think that this was a turning point, even though it brought to light apart of how brutal police can be to the people of the black community i think there is still much work to be done.



Pre



## BENJAMIN E '21

### WHO INSPIRES YOU AND WHY DO THEY INSPIRE YOU?

In the year 2008, I was given hope. Though I was just four at the time I knew these next few years would be filled with hope. President Barack Obama, the 44th President of the United States of America had just been elected. His amazing eight years in office taught me what proper leadership is. Leadership is the ability to listen to both sides of an argument, leadership is the ability to bring together millions of people and comfort them with your words, leadership is the ability to persevere through adversity, leadership is unity. Throughout his two terms as President of the United States of America, I learned how to be a better leader. I used to ask myself “What would Obama do”, in 2014 I was at a Lego robotics competition and we needed to demonstrate proper leadership in order to move on throughout the ranks and get a reward. I was fortunate enough to be the team leader, I felt like the weight of the world was on my shoulders and that if I made one mistake it would be over, if I made one mistake my team would’ve failed. Before my team and I entered the room to be tested

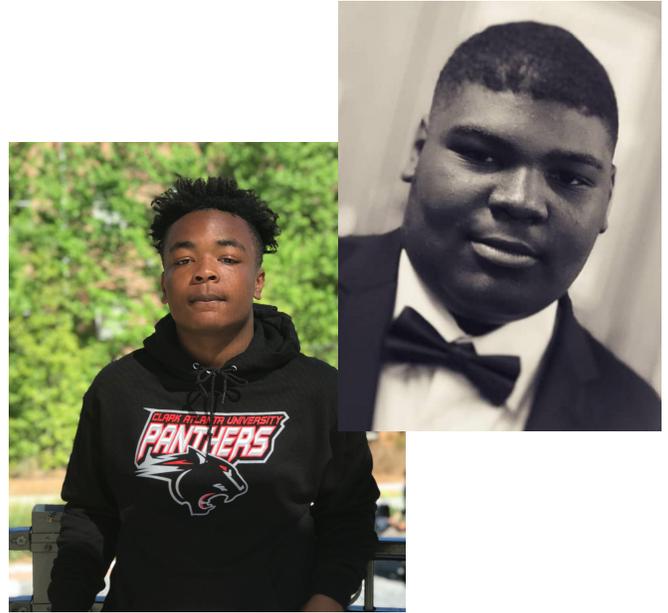
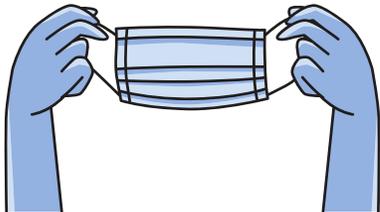
for “Core Team Values” I asked myself “If Obama was in my shoes, what would he do?” My dad always played C-SPAN and NPR in the car and the speakers typically talked about Obama, and one thing they never stopped talking about was how the former president was a risk-taker.

With this in mind, I got up and led my team to victory. With this mindset, I succeeded in everything I put my mind to. In 2016 the President gave his final State of the Union address, I made sure I got home on time so that I could hear the man speak. Looking back at this I realized proper leaders gain support and attention, they don’t demand it. Unlike leaders and politicians now I no longer rush to hear what they have to say, instead, I turn off the TV when they start speaking, their messages further divide the country and not unify it. I know I’m not the greatest leader in the world but I know what great leadership looks like. Barack Obama inspires me to be a leader and achieve great things.

## RAYMOND K '25

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS TIME TO FUTURE GENERATIONS?

Telling the future generation how this year went, I would say that back when I was young, roughly about 13 years old, we had this virus called COVID-19. We called it COVID-19 because it was announced in December 2019. At the start of the COVID-19 we had to do this thing called quarantine, which meant you would have to stay in the house, and be bored. But 2020 wasn't too bad because we had this app called TikTok, which kept us from getting bored. TikTok was an app where you can make skims, story times, etc. You are probably wondering what we did for school, Well, we had to use computers to do school. We had a computer app named zoom and Google Meet. Mostly every school used zoom, it was a hard school year, it made you push even harder while in school. Towards the end of 2020 the COVID-19 got weaker and weaker which let us go outside again. That's how I grew up.



## SKYE G '23

WHAT DO YOU MISS DOING THAT YOU CAN NO LONGER DO DURING THE PANDEMIC? HOW WILL YOU AVOID TAKING IT FOR GRANTED IN THE FUTURE?

The five things I took for granted are being in "in-class" school, going to concerts, spending more time with my grandparents, going skating, and just going outside in general. In the future if corona is over, any time I get to spend outside or with my grandparents I will take it and use that time wisely.

## JALA F '22

WHAT DO YOU THINK "STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE" SHOULD LOOK LIKE? WHAT KINDS OF ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN ON AN INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL LEVEL?

I think that standing up for justice should look like all communities to come together and solve their differences. Then taking it to the "higher power" individuals and holding a civil fight with them . Civil fights would look like protesting either silently or loudly with chants, writing multiple statements to send them in, maybe boycotting certain services and remaining calm unless violence is brought to them!! As an individual you must state your perspective , and your ideas because you are a part of the collective whole ! As a community you must be willing to hear everyone out therefore you all can come together more as a team. As a nation we need to accept advice which is provided!

# ROBERT W '23

## MY STORY

Many people aren't going to understand what it's like being me. Many people don't know the real me, the real Robert. Many may look at me and think I have an easy life, but many don't understand that I wasn't always the person I am today. I never speak on the hard times I had growing up, or the dark days I have had. Growing up my only wish is to be successful, to become the best man and or male my family can have. My name is Robert, and this is my story.

I am from a city full of hate, a city where the smallest things matter. Where I'm from, making it to the age 20 is a blessing. Where I'm from, you get killed or die over stupid stuff like clothes and shoes. Many people that didn't grow up in DC would think living here is so great, but in my head it's not the best. DC is a place where Black people are a target, where Black people are automatically looked at as criminals. A place where white people only see a crackhead and blue and red lights mean to run.

I am from Montana Avenue, AKA 15th street, a place that many would call a "hood". A place where standing outside means you're selling drugs or doing something negative. I have lost many people to the streets of this area, I lost three of my friends, who I call my older brothers, and 1 uncle. Growing up myself and my older brothers used to always talk on what we were going to do when we grow up. All our objectives were to make it out the hood and when we do we were going to bring our love ones with us. My older brothers' names were Colby, Saoun, and Quan, its hard knowing that I must walk around with saying LONGLIVE in front of their names. 1 of them got shot on accident, another got shot by a police officer, and another I don't even want to speak on. Typing this is a struggle because as I type I am thinking about it. Before all of them passed away I made them a promise. I promised them I will make sure I make it out, make sure I achieve my goals. One of my goals are to go to UCLA and graduate McKinley tech.



The day my life changed was when I got accepted into McKinley tech. I have wanted to go to McKinley tech since I was in the 5th grade. I always wanted to follow in my granddad's footsteps, but in a different and better way. I always told myself to make sure I look back at my role models like my grandfather and LeBron James. I feel as if without going through those stages in my life I wouldn't be who I am today. I feel that without all the conflict and problems I would had never figured out who I am.

I am an African American teenager from DC who is trying to be successful. An American citizen who is trying to do better for his family. Growing up with 2 parents a brother and a baby sister. I would have never thought that I would be able to have the chance to be able to go to the best high school in DC. I used to always doubt myself, I used to always think that I wouldn't be able to make it. But even though I made it, I still haven't achieved my dreams; I haven't achieved my goals. I haven't done what I promised my brothers and family, which is to get them away from the struggle.

## KAMAIA B '22

HOW SHOULD PARENTS SUPPORT A STUDENT WHO HAS FALLEN BEHIND IN SCHOOL? WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A PEER WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH SCHOOLWORK AND FEELING LIKE CATCHING UP IS IMPOSSIBLE?

Parents should be supportive through everything their child has gone through no matter what the circumstances are. I believe parents should support their child if they fail in school physically and mentally. Being a high schooler can cause a lot of stress and anxiety. As a junior, I have a lot of school work and other pieces of work outside of school that cause me a lot of stress. My parents tell me to take a break sometimes and evaluate whether what's causing stress will help me in the long run. Eventually they tell me this is what comes with trying to have a career you want. They always talk through my concerns with me and are supportive throughout everything through the challenges and accomplishments. They have always been there.

The advice I would give a peer who is struggling is there's nothing wrong with asking for help and do not give yourself too much work that you know you can not handle. If you know you're doing too many things and you're overextending yourself, maybe you need to cut back on something that you know that you do not need nor want to do in your future. Do the things you know that are best for you. Never put too many burdens on your back just to get the future you want. There are other options for you. But never quit either. Always stay strong and do not let anyone come in between what you are trying to accomplish in life, even if it's yourself sometimes.



## KHALIL T '23

WHAT DO YOU THINK "STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE" SHOULD LOOK LIKE? WHAT KINDS OF ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN ON AN INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL LEVEL?

Standing up for justice should be people addressing the problem that revolves around social justice. Like if you see someone getting treated the wrong way because of ethnicity or their income you should do something about it.



## AYRIKA J '24

HOW HAS THE CURRENT PANDEMIC CRISIS IMPACTED YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?

This crisis has made me stressed. Before the pandemic I already was carrying a lot of stress. Then I just got 20 lbs of stress just dropped on me. It is very stressful working virtually. I have to find a way to all of my work done at home and still have a social life. I'm starting a new school with a lot of new people. It's hard to connect with people virtually.

## JORDYN M '21

WHAT ARE YOU READING, WATCHING, OR LISTENING TO RIGHT NOW THAT IS INSPIRING YOU? WHY DOES IT INSPIRE YOU?

Now and again, you need a good book to read. Outside of the beauty of discovering literary devices, reading books has felt like exploring a new world for as long as I can remember. Books have allowed me to not only gain knowledge but realize the complexities of relating to others in this thing we call life. Recently, I have begun reading the novel *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho. I had been eager to find a book outside of school that I had a desire to truly read. It wasn't until I was standing in the middle of a Barnes and Noble book store, and a manager recommended that I should read the novel. Often when I find books, I choose to pick a random page to see if it will be interesting to read. This time I choose to start with page 1. After reading page one of the *Alchemist*, I wanted to know more about the shepherd boy.

It held my interest so much that I chose to sit in the corner and continue to read it until I got to page 10. I took a leap of faith and decided to buy the book. So far the lessons I have learned from the novel have been worth more than anything money can buy. *The Alchemist* is currently the novel I have read that is offering me an abundance of wisdom. I am inspired by *The Alchemist* to be curious and pursue my purpose. The novel has shown me the curious nature of humans and our desire to explore. I've learned that we all want to know more about something or seek to find out more. I've primarily seen this through the main character, the shepherd boy. Also, I am inspired by this novel because it touches on fulfilling your own "personal legend".



This is so inspiring to me because during this current moment in my life I am about to make one of the most important decisions about furthering my education and pursuing a field of interest that aligns with my future career path. In order to do that, I believe it is important for me to have an awareness of fulfilling my own purpose / "personal legend", requires me to not conform to the norms of the society but to be different. By knowing that God has assigned me a specific task to fulfill, it gives me a purpose to continue to walk with faith and not by sight.

As I enter into this new stage I am inspired to walk in my purpose confidently similar to how the shepherd boy dies even though the other town people chose to give up on their "personal legends". I will continue to seek to obtain more knowledge and be determined to persevere through trials and tribulations because it is all for a greater reason. I am still in the process of reading *The Alchemist* but it has sparked so much light into my life over these past few weeks. I hope that once I finish the novel, it is no longer just a novel but a reference to how picking up a book can certainly change your life by revealing things that money just can't buy. *The Alchemist* has given me wisdom, laughter, tears, and a confirmation of how we all have a purpose. I am excited to see where it will take me next.





## MATTHEW A '21

MY D.C.

When I walk out my door I see unity  
When I walk out my door I see my community  
Now look we may not be perfect  
But we want to be free  
The man at the top thinks he can beat me  
I look him right in his eyes with the burning of despise  
Because he tried to stop me from getting my prize  
He looked at my size with crying eyes  
Because he see my community backing me up  
Because we rock solid and we never give up  
But here's one more thing  
Our council members thinks he's ruling like a king  
But the thing is he keeps doing the wrong thing  
Mr. White if you can hear me please come over here  
So I can understand you clearly  
Please explain to me what you want us to be  
because you're making the future for my DC

## KENDALL T '24

HOW SHOULD PARENTS SUPPORT A STUDENT WHO HAS FALLEN BEHIND IN SCHOOL? WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A PEER WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH SCHOOLWORK AND FEELING LIKE CATCHING UP IS IMPOSSIBLE?

How I think that parents should support the child that is failing is that they try to help, like reaching out to the teacher to see how they can help. Also shouldn't put them down or like yell and get angry at them because it's hard to do school because of the virtual school year and maybe their child only works best at school. Some advice i can give is to try your best and try to stay focused.



## ARNETT H '22

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A MENTOR TO SOMEONE ELSE?  
HOW DID MENTORING MAKE YOU FEEL?

I really wouldn't say I have mentored someone before. If you include a collaborative project in school, then I would say I had leadership duties due to the fact that I was more knowledgeable on the subject but, I really can't say or think if I had any experience in mentoring another student or anyone at that.

## KAELA B '22

### WHAT MATTERS TO YOU MOST AND WHY?

Some may call it selfish, but the thing that matters most to me is my self-interest. I take on enough responsibilities that I feel I have the right to look out for my own satisfaction. The act of looking after myself comes with the intention of expressing gratitude. When someone else does you a service expressing thanks is a given, it's just good manners, but how often do we do that for ourselves. For this reason, I am unapologetically generous towards myself. Foods that are bursting with flavors I enjoy and cooked with love, matter to me. Stories that build cathedrals in my mind and make me sob with one word, matter to me. Music I indulge in that resonates with my soul, matter to me. After midterms ended, I realized how I should focus a little more on myself so that I don't fall apart when finals come up next time.

Now finals are here and I've felt more prepared than ever, I'm in a proper growth mindset thanks to the self-care I've given myself and prepare to study to ace all my exams.



## KALYNN T '23

### WHAT IS A CODE THAT YOU LIVE BY?

Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."

I live by this code because it shows my understanding to everything I understand and it also, like Beyoncé, says "my aspiration in life". My values are to try to live a holy life and to not fall short of Christ Jesus.



## JOANA A '23

### ON THE DEREK CHAUVIN TRIAL

My reaction to the Verdict in the Derek Chauvin Trial was really happy. George Floyd's family got justice from what happened almost a year ago. I was really disappointed from what happened a year ago when Derek decided to put his knee on George Floyd. These police officers are killing innocent people that hadn't done anything. It's the police officers' fault for deciding that they should use extra force to calm them down. I was angry at first when the news announced that the trial had to be 4 weeks even though we have actual proof that he did kill George Floyd.

I was celebrating with my family when I heard that Derek is going to jail. Justice has been served for this case and I'm glad that the government is actually doing something to make other people have their justice.

There is still much to be done because there are other people who got their lives taken away from these police officers. Just because one case is solved, that doesn't mean that America is going to be fixed. People are still getting killed by police officers and they need justice to put those officers in jail.

# KANIYAH W '21

## THE MANY WAYS IN WHICH COLLEGE BOUND HAS CHANGED ME



College Bound is a non profit organization who offers public charter school students grades 8-12 academic enrichment and resources to prepare for and succeed in college. Throughout high school, College Bound has helped me tremendously. When my mother first introduced me to College Bound, I was apprehensive about joining. I knew that it was an enriching opportunity that would provide me with great experiences, but at that point in my life I was not prepared to venture out of my comfort zone. When I started high school I liked to stay in my own bubble and was not very outgoing. Because of College Bound, I can now say that I am the complete opposite. College Bound has provided me with great academic opportunities and prepared me for college, and I would encourage any student who is entering high school to take advantage of the opportunity to join if able. Throughout my high school career, College Bound has changed me in numerous ways personally, socially, and academically. I am grateful to have been a part of the community and to be able to share my story with others.

Over the past four years in College Bound, my communication skills have flourished which has helped grow relationships with my peers and mentor. I have taken advantage of having a personal mentor and I can say that we have built a very strong relationship. My mentor has played a big part in the success of my College Bound experience. Plus my mentor gives such good advice and is there for me when I need her, I believe she has helped prepare me for college. I truly value how my mentor takes time out of her day to help youth such as myself set up a path for success in college. Moreover, I was able to learn from different College Bound experiences, such as fairs and information seminars. Attending College Bound gatherings like Family Day also helped my communication skills because I got to teach my family about what the College Bound organization does for me, while sharing it with other families.

Furthermore, during partner outings I was able to connect with my mentor on a personal level and have fun. Making new connections with my partner and other peers has helped me further prepare for opportunities such as personal career programs and internships. Through the College Bound I have become more comfortable with public speaking and even ran for site ambassador. Being in College Bound has made me become more flexible within my thinking, and range of expression, enabling me to better my character. I have gained a tremendous amount of connections within the College Bound community that will have a lasting impact. The impact our connections have within College Bound has created a strong viewpoint of a variety of opportunities to look forward to. Being introduced to new organizations like the University Club, that provides support and money for my college tuition, has also been beneficial to my growth. I've learned to rely on the connections I have made to further my education.

In addition to connecting personally with other College Bound implements a variety of resources including site coordinators, college coaches, SAT programs, senior seminars and junior/senior retreats. When the time came to complete the FAFSA I appreciated how my site coordinator, Jasmine Chance, found a mistake in my FAFSA and immediately updated my parents and I. Also the college coaches were able to give feedback and personal help on my college essay. The SAT program became a great help because I was able to boost my SAT score up 200 more points, just from the help I received. Another great thing about College Bound is that the alumni of the program have shared their experiences, scholarships and any information that I may need. Specifically, I have appreciated their advice on what not to do and what to do when going into college. Using the college application organizer that College Bound has provided has come in handy and made me feel more organized with my work. The senior seminars are beneficial sessions that have helped me through the process of scholarships and FAFSA.

While attending College Bound career nights, I spoke to multiple people about their specific career fields and how it felt to be in their shoes. Also I asked about inquiring what it takes to take your work interest to the next level, while being a new college graduate. The career nights were a positive hands on experience for me that left me considering multiple career based programs. In addition to career nights, I genuinely enjoyed the college tours and overnight trips because they're very informative and a great way to find a college that fits your character and liking. When going on the college tours, I was very open minded because as a high school student I didn't know what to expect. I am happy to say that I have applied and been accepted to my number one school, Clark Atlanta University, which I visited on the College Bound overnight tour. I was able to speak to the students and get their input on the college life, to understand on a deeper level. Touring colleges has affected the way I look at schools because I was able to step into a whole new environment, with thousands of people from all over.

My four years in College Bound taught me to expand my horizons and use all the resources that are there for me to grow my knowledge. I was given a variety of resources to use to my advantage. These advantages will help me in my future to prosper my character into a better individual. This opportunity has benefited my skills that I will utilize for success to give back to my community. I would like to thank college Bound for being one of the best opportunities I have received. I enjoyed all of the four years that I was a part of and I am extremely grateful for all of the help I have received. I would also like to thank my parents for getting me into College Bound.

Thank You College Bound!



## AMANI H '24

### WHAT MATTERS TO YOU AND WHY?

There are many things that matter to me, such as my family, friends and school. All of that matters to me because without them I wouldn't be where I am today.

My family matters because they give me love, shelter, food, etc.

My friends matter because they provide happiness and make me laugh.

School matters because you need to be smart in order to get into college and be successful.

## BRIANA M '22

### ON THE DEREK CHAUVIN TRIAL

I'm content with knowing that George Floyd's family got justice, but that doesn't change the fact that he is gone.

He didn't deserve to die at the hands of the police. None of the innocent black men deserved to die.

Justice still needs to be served because, as we know, many innocent black men and women are still getting murdered by police everyday.

## NIANI B '25

### ON THE DEREK CHAUVIN TRIAL

I was very amazed and excited about the verdict in the Derek Chauvin case. I am very happy that George Floyd will receive justice. However, the question really is: will the other cops be served justice? How come every time we get a plus one for the black community there is always something else going wrong, whether it be somebody else getting killed or another white cop acting out?

I get that Chauvin will go to prison and this is a major event in history, but, at the same time, Duante Wright was killed and The Police always try to make up excuses. "He was having a bad day", "he was not complying", or "he had a gun." YOU ARE THE POLICE! Why in the world do you feel threatened by someone who can't comply or somebody who has a gun? You can taze them, you can talk it through with them, and you can arrest them...Now somebody please tell me, as a CERTIFIED POLICE OFFICER, how do you mistake a gun for a taser? That doesn't even make sense.

So yes, I'm glad that Chauvin was found guilty, but he needs to get life without parole and so do those 3 other cops that were with him and saw him put his knee on George Floyd's neck and still didn't do anything, or even tell him to stop! Now, as America, how can we show this racist country that they are racist and that it's wrong to be violated or be threatened when you see somebody who has a different skin color than you? This is only the beginning of a long road. We look up to and call the police for help, not to be killed.

## TZAI R '22

### WHAT MATTERS TO YOU MOST AND WHY?

What matters to me is my happiness and the happiness of my loved ones. I feel that it is my job to make an effort to check on my family members, so they can feel comfortable talking to me about feelings of being unwanted and unimportant. Many people often struggle with sharing feelings of sadness, anger, and more unpleasant feelings. I see myself as someone who is easy to communicate with, which is more of a reason for friends and family to express their difficult feelings with me.

With isolation becoming a normal way of life, feelings of loneliness are likely to arise. I want to be a reminder to my family and friends that there is someone who cares about their well being.

# KNOW YOUR WORTH

## LATRELL D '21

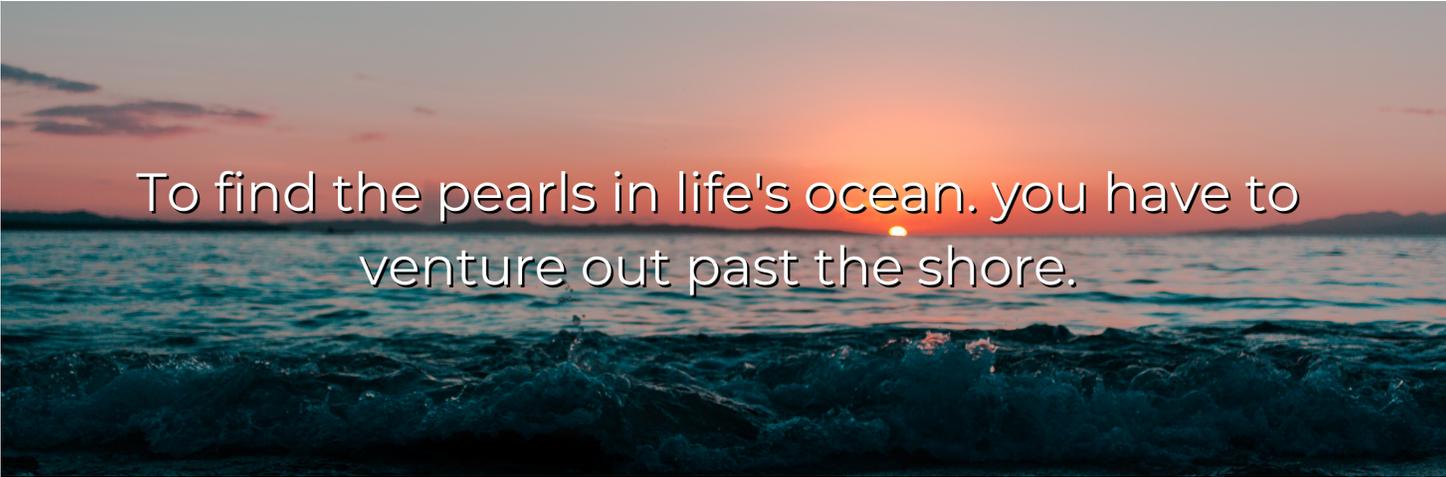
### IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT THE WORLD, WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

If I could make one change about the world I would make College completely free. Nobody should have to pay ridiculous amounts of money to colleges. College is insanely expensive and people should not have to worry about paying off student loans.

American citizens should be able to get a college education without it breaking their bank accounts. The prices to attend college are despicable and disgusting. We need to make this change in the world because going to college gives people the opportunity to network and gain knowledge of their future career path.

College is a must these days and the work environment is competitive so a college education is necessary. College should be a good time in your life not something that sets you behind financially in the long run. Make college affordable and economies worldwide will benefit from it.





To find the pearls in life's ocean, you have to venture out past the shore.

## AARON W '24

HOW HAS COLLEGE BOUND IMPACTED YOU THIS YEAR?

I felt as though collegebound had a very positive effect on my grades and behavior. I had started out with C's and my grades over time got better as I got more accustomed to my mentor and actually heeding his advice. I've come to enjoy my mentor's company because we have a lot in common, and it's very helpful to hear advice pertaining to school from somebody so similar to me.

I'm very appreciative to collegebound because I would never have gotten him as my mentor without collegebound. My grades would still probably be C's. Now I am shooting for first honors this final quarter of my 9th grade year.

## KENNEDY C '21

IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT THE WORLD, WHAT WOULD IT BE? WHY WOULD YOU MAKE THIS CHANGE?

If I could change one thing about the world, I would change all the vices that the world carries such as racism, having to pay for education, discrimination, bigotry, war and hatred. I would make this unlikely change because the world will benefit greatly from less negativity.

## JACKSON L '23

"THE NEW NORMAL"

Over the last couple of weeks, many things have changed, which created extra precaution, and has become the norm within the past six months. These things that I have taken for granted for years are now gone.

One of the most important things that I miss the most is simply seeing my friends. I miss going to my friends' houses and having fun gaming, talking, and laughing. I also miss going to the gym.

Working out used to be one of the most relaxing and fun things I did. My friends and I were all determined to get stronger and prepare for this year's wrestling season. With that probably not happening and without my friends, it's tough to stay disciplined and motivated. I miss traveling a lot as well.

I was planning to spend a couple of weeks at my uncle's house in North Carolina. Spending time with him would have been a great experience, and I could have learned many new things, but now I'm stuck at home. I miss going out to eat a lot as well. While some restaurants are still open in these times, the extreme precautions they have to keep people safe make it hard to enjoy.

Finally, I miss being in school. The constant zoom classes with little to no breaks in between are exhausting. Connections between teacher and student are missing without being in the classroom. Most of the teaching comes from worksheets and handouts anyway.

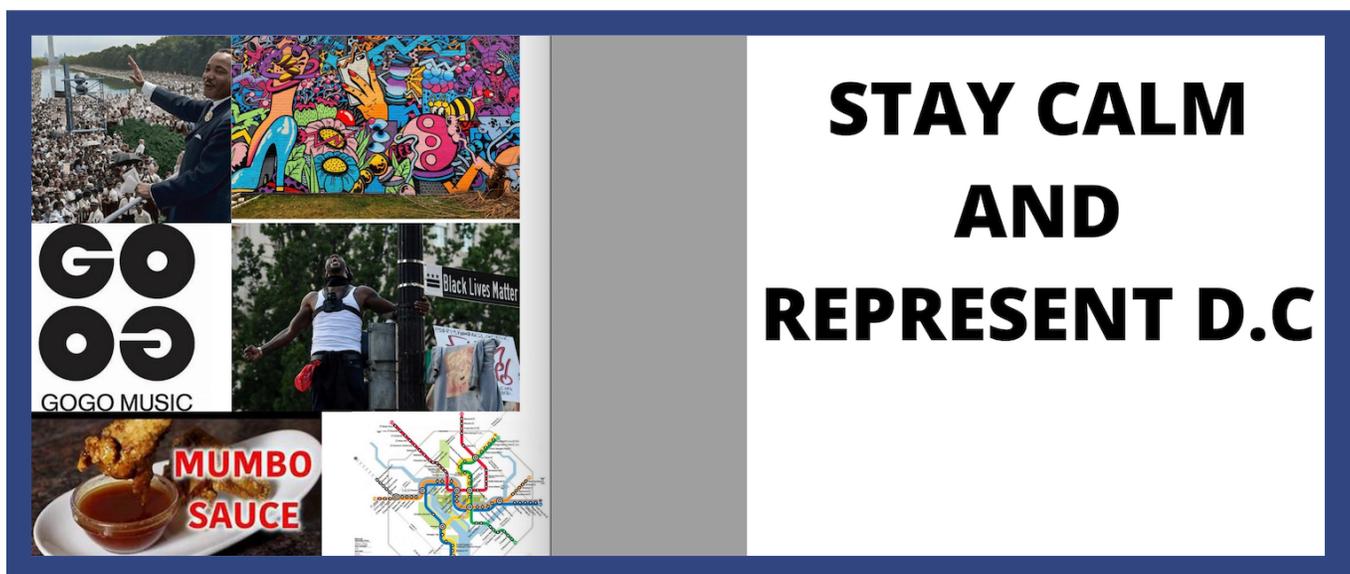
## ARYN M '21

### WHAT EFFECT HAS THIS CRISIS HAD ON YOUR OWN MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

This crisis did not affect my mental or emotional health tremendously until the beginning of the school year. School ended earlier than expected and I was able to distract myself by hanging out with family during the summertime.

However, once school began I had to focus more on my school work rather than my next "cousin date". Then, my grandfather passed away which caused a huge transition in my emotional and mental health. I barely wanted to do anything, indolence had taken a major toll over me. I began to become very sad—crying multiple times a day and becoming stressed by the workload that was piling up while I was trying to take care of myself. Although my teachers told me they understood, they actually didn't.

I had to realize that the world does not revolve around me, and time won't stop for me. Therefore, I had to get myself together, bring my grades back up, and prepare for college within a short time span. At times, I still get in those moods thinking of my grandfather and how I won't be able to call or visit him anymore but then I realize that if he was still here, he would tell me to keep going.



## JUSTIN C '25

### WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU HAVE COME TO MISS DURING THE PANDEMIC?

During the pandemic, there are several things that I have come to miss. One thing is hanging out with my friends. I still talk to them, but it's just not the same. I really miss going to school. If I was there and had a question about work, I could go to a teacher and ask him or her that question. My mom won't let me get my favorite food, sushi. I miss eating it. I also miss my tutor. She was nice and funny as well as effective at teaching.

I can't wait to get back to those things after the pandemic and will make sure I savor them. One thing I won't miss about the pandemic is having to wear a mask while going out. It keeps fogging up my glasses.

## DARWIN Z '24

### WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR 2021?

My number one goal is to be able to pass the grade without failing any subjects, pass with good grades, and to make my parents proud of me. I also hope to go back to the country where I was born, visit my mother, meet my family, and spend time as a family as it was before.

Those are some of my goals to meet this 2021 and I hope to meet them. One of my goals is also to learn English very well to be able to speak it fluently with other people. I never disrespect others when I was older and neither did my parents always get along with those around me.

## ABSIRA G '25

HOW HAS COLLEGE BOUND IMPACTED YOU?

My time at College Bound and with my mentor was great. The time I had with my mentor was fun, especially the outings. One outing that I enjoyed was our own Versus battle with a CB twist. We had different genres to play from and had ground rules even though there was not a win or lose, I had a great time listening to music and playing a game at the same time.

## DORIAN C '22

WHAT IS BEST ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?

The best advice I've ever received would be to not to react to most things with emotion. This is important to me because remembering to do this allows me to give a thoughtful response.

## BRIANNA W '25

WHAT DO YOU THINK "STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE" SHOULD LOOK LIKE? WHAT KINDS OF ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN ON AN INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY, AND NATIONAL LEVEL?

"Standing up for justice" can look like many different things such as protesting, using your voice, and making petitions so they can be signed. Actions that should be made on an individual level are going to protests and getting petitions signed. On a community level taking actions should be like people coming together from their neighborhood to discuss what they can do as a community to solve certain issues that are affecting them as a whole. But on a national level organizations should be founded/created all around the world to focus on major issues that are affecting people.

## XAVIER W '24

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN YOU HEARD THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS? HOW DID YOU FEEL?

I was at my grandfather's house eating when the President got elected and I was happy that we got a new president.

## CENARIA F '21

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A MENTOR TO SOMEONE ELSE? HOW DID MENTORING MAKE YOU FEEL?

Someone I have mentored were my younger sisters. Even though I don't mentor them through a special program, I assist them with different factors in life. What I gained from mentoring them is a better connection with them and things they are interested in. Also, I was informed about any goals they have in the future and how they will reach them. Mentoring made me feel good because I was able to help someone else around me. Even if they are within my immediate family.



Art by Gregory C

# LAURENCE P '21

## "LOOK FOR THE UPSIDE"

Have you ever been in a situation where it feels like you're losing a piece of yourself and then having to struggle with giving up what you love most at a very young age? Having surgery at the age of nine that will alter your life forever. Constantly hearing over and over again that you may not be able to play your favorite sports before you even make it out of the fourth grade? Let me tell you about a major roadblock in my life story that I didn't allow to block my success or future goal. This essay is about my life interrupted.

I wasn't the average kid. I was very energetic and very athletic therefore my mom put me on a baseball, football and lacrosse team at the age of six. This is when my love for sport started. I started to become the best player on the teams I played with, in every sport I played. Then I started to learn that sports could be taken to the next level. After I heard that it was my goal to be able to take my skill far enough to be able play at the college level. I had my goal already until I started to feel pain in my right leg. At the age of nine I was running a 5 K for breast cancer with my mom when I started to have major hip pain. My mom took me to Children hospital and I was diagnosed with Perthes.

Perthes disease is a rare childhood condition that affects the hip. It occurs when the blood supply to the rounded head of the femur (thighbone) is temporarily disrupted. Without an adequate blood supply, the bone cells die, a process called avascular necrosis. Yes, a nine year old with a disorder me and my mom had never heard of until I was diagnosed. The next year of my life would be in and out of Children hospital seeing my orthopedic doctor and receiving physical therapy. Like most kids my age I thought playing sports was my future. I had fallen in love with Lacrosse and was part of DC Winner's Lacrosse team for my Elementary school and was one of the top players. Now I have this Perthes disorder and, for a year plus, I will be in recovery. I was in a wheelchair for the



first month and then on crutches for eight months. After I received it I didn't let the diagnosis determine my future. Two years later my doctor agreed that I could play Lacrosse, I started out slow as a goalie because it didn't require major movement, but by middle school I was playing the Attack position. I also tried out for the middle school basketball team and made it. I never gave up on the ideal that I would never play sports again. My mother, even though I sometimes had hip pains and will continue to have pain, never made me stop playing sports. This was the beginning of my present goal to be involved in the sports field for life.

I thank God that I have a strong mom and that's very creative. My mom signed me up for junior sports illustrated and would watch the ESPN sports channel daily with me each just to distract me and entertain me. This is when my knowledge of sport analysis and sport management started.

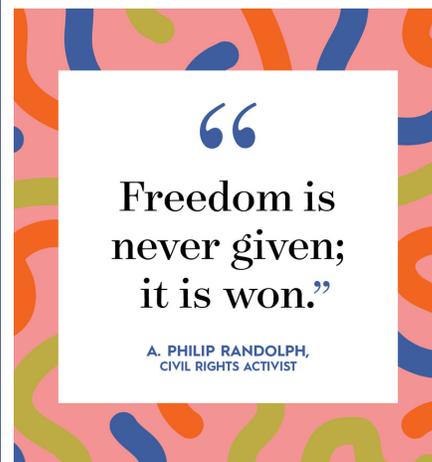
Sports management is the field of business that focuses directly on sports and recreation. The study of sport management in college will allow me to pursue a Science degree with many different subjects such as administration, finance, law and ethics. A degree in sports management can lead to career opportunities in the world of sports and recreation. This will allow me to continue my love for sports while earning an income. I would be able to have a job that's also a hobby.

My life took a major turn at a young age when I was diagnosed with Perthes, but through support, hard work, and commitment I returned to sports. While I was medically unable to play, through sport magazines and sport channels I realized that playing sports is not the only way to be part of the sports world.

## SIYAN T '23

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED?

The best advice that I'd received is that nothing is hard, just new. I found this to be really good advice because something that I might find to be really difficult is probably easy for someone else, so I can understand it too if I expose myself to it more. Hearing that made me feel like nothing is out of my ability and I am just as capable as everyone else. The more that I think about it, the more it resonated with me because I've found some things to be incredibly difficult the first time around and then straightforward and comprehensible the second time around.



## GIBREL C '22

WHAT IS A CODE THAT YOU LIVE BY?

Don't look at your mistakes as failures because you never lose anything when you make mistakes. You will always gain knowledge from your mistakes and knowledge is power. Everybody falls sometimes but you never fail if you get back up.



T-shirt design by Eve

## ZAMIYA M '24

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A MENTOR TO SOMEONE ELSE? WRITE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE

I've never actually mentored someone before. But I'm an older sibling so I guess you can say I mentor in a way. I try to set a good example for my younger siblings and to show them how to be a responsible teenager. For, example when I want to go out with friends I have to make sure my mother has all the information about my plans, or there is no way I will be able to go. I have to know the where, when, why, and how of my plans. And to add a cherry on top she also had to speak with at least one parent of the child that is going with me. There were no late plans, it had to be discussed at least a week ahead of time. With my sisters, I try to stress this to my sister who is right after me especially because she's the one my mother has to worry about. She's the complete opposite of me. She likes to go out with friends A LOT, and she has tried to make plans but sometimes she wants to go out the day after she tells my mom! She makes all the plans with just friends as if the parents don't need to know. And that's something my mom doesn't stand for. It's a struggle for me because I sometimes slip up and don't model the behavior I should. My siblings are VERY strong-minded and mimic my behaviors. It's hard to set a good example, but at the end of the day it's for a good cause.

## LADAWNAH B '21

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A MENTOR TO SOMEONE ELSE?  
HOW DID MENTORING MAKE YOU FEEL?

I have never been a mentor directly to someone, but if I really think about it, I am sort of a mentor to my best friend. When we met it was my sophomore year and her freshman year in school and we met because of the volleyball team at our school. I became a mentor to her about a year after we became friends because this is when we truly got really close and we were with each other all the time so we knew everything about each other and our families, so we became family; we now refer to each other as sisters. Because I am older than her, I was experiencing things and getting involved in things that she wasn't necessarily and when I saw that she was beginning to get involved in certain things I felt it was my duty as her best friend/sister to guide her and give her advice on certain things so that she would make decisions knowing what she was getting into.

My junior year I went through a lot and experienced a lot and most of the time she was with me but not necessarily participating. So, when she did start to get into things, I always made sure I let her know what it may be like and I always gave her advice. Sometimes I even took it upon myself to let her know whether or not she should or shouldn't do things. It became a frustrating experience when she didn't listen because I didn't want her to in any way get hurt or into any trouble, but I had to learn that just like me she is young and needs to experience things for herself. However, it still felt bad because I sometimes blamed myself for her mistakes because I felt like she was just following in my footsteps because I am her big sister. But it was and still is a great thing because it gives us more things to relate to and bond over and it keeps our friendship strong. Now it hurts a little because I keep thinking about how I am going to be leaving soon and I'm not going to be around as much or have as much impact on what she does.

## ZAKHIYA G '22

WHAT ARE SOME POSITIVE THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO YOU IN 2020?

Some positive things that happened to me in 2020 are: my mom got a house and I've become more comfortable with online school and turning in all my assignments. Also I've caught up on a lot of work



## LANIEJAH L '22

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN A MENTOR TO SOMEONE ELSE? HOW DID MENTORING MAKE YOU FEEL?

I have mentored someone before. I was in middle school and the school had SGA ( student government association) and I was the president of it. I had a specific group of kids that I had helped and mentored while I was there, I would help them with their homework and they would come to me for advice and things like that. Mentoring didn't really make me feel anything, but I did make friendships with some of the students and I still keep in touch with them, they still ask for help and advice.

## BRANDON H '21

### WHAT IS AN EXPERIENCE THAT YOU LEARNED AND GREW FROM?



On a Wednesday afternoon I was in my house looking for volunteer opportunities. Soon, my mom came home and started talking about a 10-day camping trip called the jamboree. While she was talking about it I wasn't really interested, but I later found out that she had already paid for the trip, so my opinion didn't matter. I was telling her how I didn't want to go, but she really didn't care because she already paid for it. She was telling me how every Sunday we will have meetings until the trip started and how I will be meeting new people. I really didn't want to meet new people, plus I was kind of shy to even go, because at the time I was alone and a shy person. So two Sundays went by and that's when I started to go. When I first got to the church where we met up, I was shy, just talking to two people that I knew. Later we had to introduce ourselves so everyone went around and when it got to me I didn't want to talk, but I had to and that's when I spoke. The next Sunday we got split up into patrols and sadly I wasn't in the ones with my friends so that's when I really got shy and didn't communicate unless I had to. Throughout the Sundays we were doing team building exercises which I barely wanted to participate in, but the leader tried to make us work as a team because he kept on saying "when we get to this jamboree we will all have to work as a team". That last Sunday of the meetings, they gave us our equipment that we had to take for the trip and told us what we should expect when we first get there and such. I kind of got better than I was the first time I got there but when the Sunday meetings were over my mood went back the way it was. Now after the last meeting I've been preparing myself for the trip and just getting ready for the day we depart to go on the trip.

So on that Sunday morning my dad woke me up early around 5am. I was so exhausted and didn't feel like getting up but I had to. So after I got dressed and packed my car, we headed to the site where everyone is supposed to meet up at. I was the first person there and we were very early. So around 7:45 cars started to arrive and everyone was getting in their troop lines so that they could get on the bus. The thing that made me mad was that my troop was one of the first groups who arrived but got on the bus last. After waiting so long for the bus we got on and started to approach west Virginia where the jamboree was located. On the bus I was really quiet, didn't talk to anyone that I knew and only spoke to 3 people. We finally arrived at the jamboree after that long drive, we all hopped off the bus, grabbed our stuff and got in a line for some type of registration. As I was in line I saw two of my friends that I knew. Back home, so I reminded myself after I get out the line to go speak. When everyone out of my troop gathered their bags and accessories we started walking to our camping site. Once everyone sets up and relaxes I realize something was missing. I realized that my mattress got left somewhere around the registration place, so I told my leader and ran back to the registration place, luckily it was up the hill so I didn't have to go that far. Once I got there, I asked if they saw a mattress and everyone said "no". Once they said no I was very upset because then I felt like this was going to be a terrible week. Next day we chose to go hiking on a mountain as a troop. As we got to the mountain I really didn't want to do this because we walked miles just to get there.

Everywhere we wanted to go we had to walk miles and that was annoying. But as we were climbing the mountain I'm slowly interacting with like one or two people and just making conversation. Few min later we reach a point of the mountain where there is a falling point, so The person who was behind me stepped on my shoe and that's when my right foot slipped of the hill and luckily I grabbed the bottom of a tree and hung on to that because if I didn't I would of fell right down the hill. I was terrified when that happen, when they helped me come back up my leader came and said "let's go back to the campsite and make dinner". So after we made dinner I decided to play football and gaga ball which was exciting.

After we played gaga ball and played football against different troops I actually started to feel comfortable being around different people and talking to them. I guess that football game gave me the mindset of working together and communicating so That sort of took me out of my comfort zone. The only bad part was that the showers were freezing cold and It was hard for me to change clothes in the shower and so that really had me irritated because all that week I would know I had to take cold showers. But anyways, the next day I woke up late and mixed breakfast and when I woke up everyone ate the food they cooked and I had nothing before we went white water rafting. That also was an activity that was fun and a good experience for me but at the same time I was very hungry. However me and my group on the boat were talking and actually had things in common and they really seemed cool after that. We went rock climbing, shooting guns ,watersports, went to the game store, food court and everything together. At the jamboree they had a concert which was very exciting because that was my first one I went to. However, of course the day of the concert had to be ruined. While everyone was going to their campsites, people were running, jumping, playing around and I was really trying to go to mine. So I decided to climb a little hill to go around the people but then I slid in PortaPotty waste and it was wet. I was so angry and upset because I knew I had to go take a cold shower and had all of that waste on me. But that wasn't all the terrible things that happened during the trip, there was a day where it was nice and sunny and I didn't expect it to rain at all. Coming back from my day activities I heard a big boom in the sky and it started pouring out of nowhere. I had on shorts, a shirt and a backpack without rain gear in it. There was no place nearby to dry off other than my tent and I knew once I got in my tent I would wet it up. I stayed in my tent for hours. While everybody else was eating dinner, I decided to stay in my tent because I didn't want to take the chance of me getting wet again.

On the day we left, I found my mattress at the pavilion near my site . I don't know how it got there after I asked everyone who worked there but I was just happy that I found it and was hoping nobody used it. After we all packed our bags, tents and made sure we had everything, we walked to the spot where we had to wait on our bus. Again we were the last ones on Which made me mad but I got used to it because of how this whole trip went when there were lines we had to wait in for a long time just to do one activity. As we're on the bus everyone is just talking about the trip, talking about what they've been through and just chillin. While I'm finished talking, I'm just reminiscing about how I just survived a whole weekend by myself and how I really got out of my comfort zone. I realize that it's not hard to adapt and try new things. I personally matured over the trip and became a more responsible person and learned how to live without certain things and how to be more careful. Ever since that trip I have loved to travel and explore/ experience new things.



## PAUL D '22

### WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH?

One of my biggest strengths is perseverance. Most of the things that I'm new to I don't do my best at, in the beginning, but as time passes and I keep improving. I develop muscle memory on how to do these things.

Another strength of mine is being able to help others when I understand what they are struggling with, especially when I have experienced the problem myself.

This is what distinguishes me from other students. I not only persevere through my struggles, I can also empathize with other students and help them based on my experiences. I enjoy passing on the knowledge I've learned to help other struggling students.



T-shirt design by Zamiya

## LALAH C '21

### WHAT MATTERS TO YOU MOST AND WHY?

What matters to me is my creativity. With My creative side I am able to express myself in many forms of art such as Fashion, jewelry designs, culinary arts, and music. My creativity has always been something that stands out and helps me to learn about myself. I am able to see myself grow and evolve as an artist, which helps me see my growth as a student, leader and friend. Having many creative talents is important to me because they portray all of my emotions and feelings.

## AYA W '21

### WHO INSPIRES YOU AND WHY DO THEY INSPIRE YOU?

Two people who really inspire me right now are my current favorite musical artists, Kill Bill: The Rapper and Rav. A big reason for this is the fact that they're independent. Obviously there are great artists who aren't independent, but lately it has seemed like making music is a means to become rich and famous for many people, not an art form. This leads to a lot of uninspired, copycat songs that get pretty exhausting after a while. I think the fact that they are still independent is a testament to how there are still people out there who really are making music because they love it, which is very inspiring. I also like that they're both very genuine seeming people, it makes it feel like achieving a dream as they have done is possible. Especially now, it's easy to feel hopeless, but that makes things feel a little easier.

# LIZA G '24

## WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH?

As a student, I feel that my strengths are organizing my schoolwork and homework and persevering as a female and student through anything. What distinguishes me from other students is that I have a different mind frame. I focus on the bigger pictures in life than the smaller ones; I believe in order to be successful we have to strive for our goals.

My character has changed the way I view things and how I define them. During the years 2020 and 2021, I have changed mentally and physically. I can really say that I am a different person. I have become a more independent person. I have also adapted to a positive mindset throughout the years. I have come to realize giving yourself a pep talk about the things you want can really have a big impact. Time has taken its course.



# DIMYA B '21

## WHAT INSPIRES YOU?

Instead of evolving into a product of my environment, I dream of graduating from college and returning to uplift and inspire younger peers. Just as in my own childhood, our city is stocked with young dreamers who have yet to be exposed to a higher purpose. Their environments may reflect my own - a place where those who have the greatest influence may not present the best examples.

My desire to attend college has kept me on the right track many times when alternative voices tried to lead me astray. I want to be that inspiration so desperately needed in my community. My highest hope is that attending college will be therapeutic. To spend years amongst other scholars, not worried about fitting into the right subgroup, or presenting a macho persona just to travel to and from would be a burden lifted from my shoulders.

I have struggled with a lot more than one young person should expect, both socially and emotionally. My life so far has been like trying to write an essay with an incomplete outline, an outline filled to the brim with illiteracy and unorganized ideas. College will be my writing coach. I want to attend college so the essay that is my life will turn out revolutionary.

Next fall, I will be one of the few in my immediate family to attend college. This step towards higher education will set the stage for generations beyond me. I want to inspire my closest peers. I want to attend college so that when my name is spoken, it is mentioned with pride. Earning a degree in Mechanical Engineering will be one of my finest accomplishments.

My descendents will hear my story and know first hand that through struggle there is strength. As the American poet E.E. Cummings once wrote "It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are." I aspire to be a great engineer.

## LAILA H '22

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE THE CLASS OF 2021?

The advice I would give to the class of 2021 is be aware of your surroundings, don't hang out with the wrong crowd and focus on yourself and education. Hanging with the wrong people can make you look bad and start messing with your focus. Focusing on your health, education and the people that are actually good for you, will probably make your college experience good.



## DAMONIE R '22

HOW WILL YOU DESCRIBE THIS TIME TO FUTURE GENERATIONS? WHAT IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THIS EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE REMEMBERED AND SHARED?

I would describe this time to the future generation as dysfunctional. I think that economic stock should be remembered as a tragedy. Taking school more seriously should be remembered and shared due what this pandemic has cost.



## CAMONI M '21

AS A SENIOR, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE YOUNGER STUDENTS IN THE PROGRAM?

I can go on and on about words of affirmation advice for every year you continue to evolve in your education and as a person. But what I have learned the most is time management. I know a lot of people talk about time management in the context of being an athlete or making sure you get all your homework done but I want to bring a new meaning to the term. You need time to rest, have fun, feel productive as well as fulfilling all of your responsibilities within every role you play. Figure out what you enjoy, how you like to stay organized ( to do lists/ alarms) and what relaxes you so when the time comes where you have finished most of your assignments you can truly feel free from school. We have to care for ourselves so we can always put our best foot forward. Being aware of your mental wellness when dealing with stressful projects or not feeling like you have enough time to truly enjoy life is important to the work you put out. Make it your priority through time management to understand how you like to study, how you best retain information, and when you do your best work and figure out a schedule that works for you. And be open to the schedule changing because you are changing every day so change is inevitable, embrace it! Do your best, Think your best, and Be your best, you got this. Self reflection is key. Don't limit your evolution to academics and activities but continue to invest in yourself through awareness, self care, and your energy!



## BRIANA W '25

### WHAT IS A CODE YOU LIVE BY?

The code I live by is a variety of many things but one of them I will never forget is having a positive mindset leads to a positive life. My philosophy about life is small for right now because I still have so much to continue to learn but I will say live life to the fullest, without any regrets. Treat others how you want to be treated and I value my family/friends because they are the ones who stood by my side through the happiest and darkest moments in my life.

## JAMIA H '24

### IF YOU WERE ABLE TO CHANGE PLACES WITH ANY SUPERHERO WHO WOULD YOU CHOOSE AND WHY?

I would want to change places for a day with the legendary, super intellectual Wonder Woman, a superhero. I chose Wonder Woman because she is such a good leader and a role model to women, young girls, and everyone who looks up to her. In movies, there are fewer women superheroes. Wonder Woman is the first widely recognized female superhero, making her Detective Comics (DC) most important. Wonder Woman has powers of superior strength, speed, and agility. These powers will come in handy when trying to solve big or small problems such as someone stealing, a cat stuck in the tree, and when someone is getting harassed.



T-shirt design by Arnett H

## ISAIAH B '22

### WHAT IS A CODE THAT YOU LIVE BY?

The code that I live by is "if it is not worth working for, it is not worth having". This philosophy is something that helps me continue to work hard in school. This is what motivates me when things get hard and I do not want to continue. It is a reminder that nothing I want to achieve will be achieved if I do not work towards it and also reminds me that eventually all of my hard work will pay off. It's the idea that I have to be realistic with myself and realized that if I do not put forth my best effort I will not get what I desire.



## CIERRA J '22

HOW SHOULD PARENTS SUPPORT A STUDENT WHO HAS FALLEN BEHIND IN SCHOOL? WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A PEER WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH SCHOOLWORK AND FEELING LIKE CATCHING UP IS IMPOSSIBLE?

For a person who is struggling with school work and feeling like catching up is impossible I would tell them to never give up. I would tell them that in order to get through a problem that you have to face it head on. I would tell them that I was once in their shoes where I felt like I should give up. However, I didn't and I stayed the course and continued to persevere. I would tell them a phrase that they should repeat to themselves whenever they are nervous or anxious or ready to give up. That phrase is "to do better, do more to do more, to better, Never settle".

## RAINELLE M '25

WHAT DO YOU THINK "STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE" SHOULD LOOK LIKE? WHAT KINDS OF ACTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN ON AN INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL LEVEL?

Standing up for justice can be in many forms. For example, having a protest, sit-in, etc. Things you could do individually would be telling your friends and family members to spread the word about doing something and meeting at a specific place. On a community level, the neighborhoods could come together and plan something and then everybody does what they need to do to make it all work together. On a national level, the government can use their power for an advantage and use it to help communities.

## CHANGAMIRE A '22

IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT THE WORLD, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

If I could change one thing about this world I would make it so slavery was not a thing. Slavery was the begining of dicsrimination and racism towards blacks in america and I think if it did not happen then we would be a lot farther in history and more advanced. I also think that without slvaery, racism, and discrimination there would not be as much chaos in this country.

## BAILEY A '23

WHAT WORKSHOP WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN HAVING FOR TASTE OF COLLEGE NIGHT? HOW CAN WE MAKE IT ENGAGING IN THE VIRTUAL SPACE?

IA workshop that I would be interested in having for Taste of College Night would be maybe a mental health table. It can talk about how mental health is okay to have and how to deal/cope with it. I feel as though this would have an impact because you may never know what anyone is going through and this can help someone guide themselves through this part of life.



## KRISTEN M '24

IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT THE WORLD, WHAT WOULD IT BE? WHY?

If I could change 1 thing about the world I would change the fact that people judge others, or the virus COVID-19 going around the world and that people can use people, hurt them, or make them suffer. I would make these changes because these problems make the world worse than it already is and no one should ever feel like they are annoying, like they are a problem.

## ADORRE F '24

DO YOU THINK A LATER START TIME FOR SCHOOL WOULD INCREASE STUDENT SUCCESS? WHAT WOULD BE THE ADVANTAGES OR DISADVANTAGES?

I think that a later start time would increase student success because then we would be able to wake up refreshed and ready to start class. Sometimes it is very difficult to wake up in the morning, especially after staying up late completing work the night before.

## TORREN C '23

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN YOU HEARD THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION? HOW DID YOU REACT?

During the election for the most part I was home. I was a little worried and stressed about who was going to win because of the back and forth. In the end, I was at my friend's house and when I woke up, I looked on Instagram and saw that Biden was the president. I was relieved and kind of happy because we don't have to worry about our president messing up and dividing the USA.

## JAIDEN F '24

WHAT DO YOU MISS DOING THAT YOU CAN NO LONGER DO DURING THE PANDEMIC? HOW WILL YOU AVOID TAKING IT FOR GRANTED IN THE FUTURE?

I miss going out to skate, going to a recording studio to make music, going out to eat, and going to see family members most of all, in the future I will definitely take time to appreciate what I have in the moment and not take it for granted.



## JACKSON L '23

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS TIME TO FUTURE GENERATIONS?

I would describe this time as a quarantine because of an international pandemic which is what it is. I think one of the most important takeaways from this time is that even if you are doing the right thing you can't always be sure that other people are doing the right thing as well. Even though many people were in quarantine from the beginning many others were throwing parties and not wearing masks and spreading germs causing us to go from what should have been a one to two month quarantine to almost 9 months now. Also, an important takeaway is taking care of friendships and making sure that you can keep those friendships over time and distance.



## CHRISTOPHER P '21

### MY COLLEGE BOUND TRIP TO GHANA

I have never seen anybody this happy for a bookbag until now.

The night before I was happy but also nervous because I have never been on a plane for that long and I knew the seats were going to be tight. The next day I do not go to school because the flight is at 5:30 so I sit in the house preparing about what I'm going to see and to what I'm going to say to the people, and also how they will react to me. Arriving at the airport I am as nervous as I have ever been but I know this will be a wonderful experience. On the airplane I prepare to arrive in a new environment and to visit where my ancestors originated from. When I arrived in Africa and left the airport I was sad to realize that as I expected the African people and kids are not wealthy. I noticed that the kids did not look like me. I noticed how their hair was cut low and that they did not have the latest pair of shoes on, but they were so happy and filled with joy and it just made me think about the way I live. With the college group we visited a school and that's when it really hit me and I realized that I had an excellent life but I always wanted more and expected everything but these kids have little to nothing and are happier than me.

While we were in the school I talked to one of the kids one on one and I asked him a variety of questions. I wanted to know why her hair is short or why don't they have the type of shoes that I want and the response she gave to me was she is happy with the little that she has and that she knows that her family is struggling so she takes sacrifices. Once she said that I fully understood the fact that I needed to be grateful for what I have and always be grateful. While I was there I took pictures with many kids and I saw the joy on their faces for not being able to take many pictures.

The main focus that I took from this was not to take school for granted. Once I got back I started to want more for myself and started to improve my work ethic and also to try to improve my mental state. This has led me to want more for me and my mentor and to make sure me and him have a good relationship because other kids do not even have this chance.

Throughout the trip I had many experiences just like this which is the reason I have changed my ways. When I came back home it was close to Christmas time and instead of asking for so many things I asked for one thing and taught my brothers to be happy with what you have. I encouraged my dad to go so he can have a life-changing experience just like I had and 2 months later he went. The fact that a trip to Ghana changed so much about me and the way I live made me want everyone in the world to be able to do the same.

Even though I've complained about cheer so many times and said I wanted to quit a few times, I never went through with it. I might complain about how much time cheerleading takes up and how I don't have a life outside of it but I don't think I could dedicate the amount of time I did with cheerleading to any other sport. There was this one time where I was so overwhelmed from cheerleading and school that I had a mental breakdown and wanted to quit. It was around the time of our competition so for 2-3 weeks straight almost everyday. Practices were long and late so I would be tired but I would have to stay up to do my homework because I didn't want to fail. For those 2-3 weeks straight I was just in so much pain from cheer and so tired from staying up late to do my homework. I just kept telling my friends that I didn't want to cheer anymore and how I was over cheerleading and wanted to quit. Everyone kept telling me not to quit but I just wouldn't listen. After a while I got over it and I ended up not quitting because I kept trying to think about my life without cheer and it just seemed so boring to me. Another time we had practice for maybe a week and a half or 2 weeks and we were doing our cheer routine full out every practice. My body was so sore from practice and I just kept complaining during practice but the coaches didn't really care, they just kept pushing us to keep going. My body became so sore that it was hard for me to do a lot of my parts in the routine and eventually I stopped doing some parts that didn't require anyone else. For example my tumbling, my jumps, my dance, and the extra stuff I had to do, I marked it. Marking the routine in cheer means to go over it without actually doing it.

## LAURYN P '25

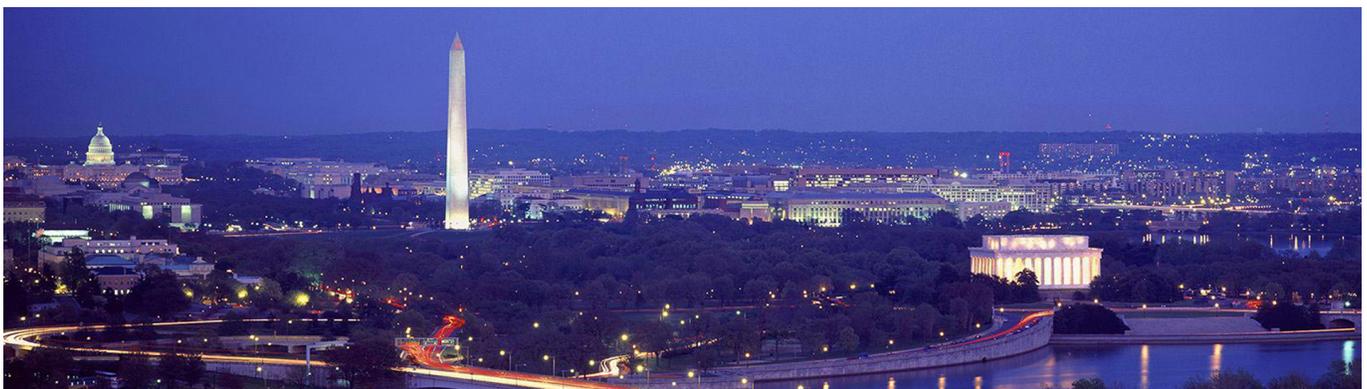
HOW WILL YOU DESCRIBE THIS TIME TO FUTURE GENERATIONS? WHAT IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THIS EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE REMEMBERED AND SHARED?

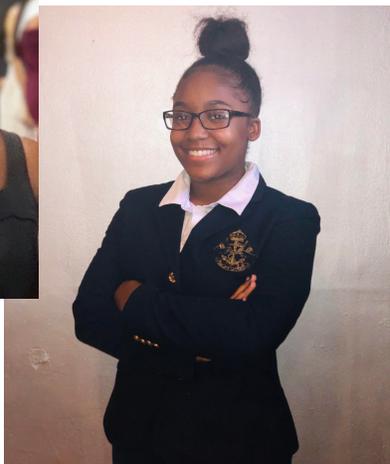
I would describe this time as difficult because we can't really do anything but stay inside at the moment. Important aspects that should be remembered is that colds can spread very quickly.

## JAYLEE D '22

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE CLASS OF 2021?

Some advice I would give to the class of 2021 is that it's okay to take a mental break. Constantly pushing yourself every day and every night is going to mentality drain you, especially with online learning. If you give yourself one day of the week to nothing school/work-related, you can go back and be refreshed.





## JAZMIA Q '22

### WHAT MATTERS TO YOU AND WHY?

There are many things in my life right now that matter to me. My parents matter to me because without them I wouldn't have a lot of things that I have such as clothes, shoes, food, a home, etc. My family in general matters to me because they are my support system. They support me through everything that I do and they are there for me when I need them the most. My life overall matters to me because some people do not get the chances to come into this world and some don't get the chance to live this long.

## ZANIYAH B '21

### WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE IN 2021?

Something I want to accomplish in 2021 is to start eating better and working out again. I haven't done a serious workout since 2018 and I don't eat horribly. It's just sometimes I don't eat as healthy as I should. I've gained about 25 pounds since we got out of school in March and I haven't worked out to maintain it.



## BROOKE D '24

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE CLASS OF 2021?

Always plan ahead for the future. You never know what could happen. You could spend all your time and money on courses for a job you really wanted, and you probably won't know what to do when you don't get it. I've already planned ahead so I can either avoid failing life or make sure there's no way I can fail. Don't feel sad if you aren't able to get the job you wanted. Many people won't be able to achieve their dreams. You probably shouldn't have spent all your time in classes aiming for that one job you really wanted. Maybe working a 9 to 5 job will pay more anyways. It's ok getting a boring 9 to 5 job. You'll just have to work a lot of shifts and learn how to deal with stress. Everyone isn't special.

**"ALL GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS REQUIRE TIME."**

-MAYA ANGELOU

# LORDES W '22

## WHAT IS A TALENT YOU ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT?



One special talent that I have is that I am a cheerleader. I can tumble, like doing backflips and I do stunts like lifting people up. I've been cheering since I was 7 so I have a lot of tumbling skills now. Cheering was always something I wanted to do before I even started tumbling and cheering. I used to beg my mom to sign me up for cheering but she didn't think I was serious about it so she waited a year to see if I would bring it up again and I did. It took me a while to really get the hang of cheerleading but after a few months I started to get the hang of it. Tumbling to me is really hard at first because I overthink everything and I would always scare myself while I'm tumbling. I would never know what might happen especially when I have to go in the air to do some of my flips so I would shock and scare myself. I try not to overthink while I'm tumbling because when you start to overthink about it I get nervous and freak myself out and sometimes I fall and hurt myself. This one time I was learning how to do a new tumbling skill and it was time for me to try it by myself but someone was standing close to me. I went to go do the flip and I fell on my butt and back. I was crying for a while but I ended up getting back up and trying it again.

When I'm stunting there a lot that can possibly go wrong. In a stunt there are 4-5 people who all have a role to play so that the stunt won't come down but most of the time it's 4 and sometimes it can be 2 or 3. With the stunt groups that have 4-5 people, there's a backspot, a main base, and secondary base, and a flyer. If one of those 4 positions mess up the whole stunt can possibly come down. I'm a back spot and sometimes a secondary base. As a back spot my job is to keep them from falling back but it can be scary because they can fall on your face, chest or stomach. Sometimes you can fall back when you catch them. As a side base I have a foot and I'm responsible for holding them up. The scariest part about being a side base is that they could possibly step on your face and other parts of your body. They could also fall over your head if they are moving a lot in the air and it's hard to catch them sometimes when you are doing certain stunts. If I didn't mention cheerleading in any essay it would be incomplete without it because cheerleading and tumbling is a part of my life. I've won so many trophies, metals, banners, jackets and rings that cheer has literally been all I ever wanted to do.

One thing I love about cheerleading is that it teaches you a lot of lessons and skills that you can use in life. For instance, it helps you learn how to work together with others. It also teaches you that when you work together as a team you can accomplish a lot and things will turn out way better than if you did it alone. Cheerleading is honestly the most supportive sport out there. Unlike any other sport, everyone depends on everyone. If one person messes it up, it will most likely mess up the whole routine up or majority of the team up. You can make a small mistake and it will affect the rest of your routine and possibly mess up your final score of your routine. If you are in a stunt group, everybody has a role to play in the group and if one person messes up or does something wrong it could mess up the whole stunt. The flyer could fall which would make one of the bases who have to catch them fall and if your stunt group falls that will cause your final score to go down. There are other parts in the routine other than stunts that could cause all or most of the team to mess up but it just depends on how the routine is choreographed.



## RACHAEL D '24

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE NEW BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION SHOULD BE?

I think the goals and priorities for the new Biden-Harris administration should be to raise the prices of stimulus checks and students and kids under 18 should be able to get one also. I also think that he should have a better approach about protesting and listen to the protesters and hear their voices. Another thing I think they should be looking for is a cure for Covid, or find a faster way to cure Covid so schools and other places can reopen and we can stop wearing these masks.



## CLARKE W '23

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN YOU HEARD THE ELECTION RESULTS?  
HOW DID YOU REACT?

When I found out that Biden was elected president I had actually just woken up and a text message from my friend came across my screen. We had been following the election ever since the presidential debates and it had been the talk of our group chat for days. Then when I went on Instagram and TikTok was flooded down my timeline and fyp. One really cool thing is that when I finally got out into the streets to get my nails done everybody was honking their horns and screaming in the streets. Saturday was really just a vibe and everybody was so happy and in good spirits.

## JANIAH L '22

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE NEW BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION SHOULD BE?

President Biden has stepped in during a time of struggle for the United States. There are many issues politically and socially that need to be addressed. In President Biden's first 100 days I would give him the grade of a B. He came in after a leader who abused his power and often had the wrong judgment and way of dealing in several situations. So with President Biden in office now he has had to correct those mistakes and reform the country. Since he has been in office the vaccination for COVID-19 has surpassed and a lot of U.S. citizens have followed through with the shot and the number of Covid cases is slowly decreasing. The shift in leaders below the president has also left a positive impact on the United States. I think President Biden and his team should aim their next focus on social justice. There are a lot of discriminatory acts that still occur in the United States. From personal relationships to police brutality. Racial discrimination, gender discrimination, etc. should be addressed.



## RENIYA C '21

WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION?

I am more than thrilled to have the new Biden-Harris administration in place! I'm proud to see a black woman be so high up in the federal government. Some of the goals for the Biden-Harris administration are to improve the economy for the youth. I like that Biden has made it clear that he will clear out student debt for college. This is important for me as I will be a college student within a year and it would be amazing to have the government ensure that finances will not bear any weight upon my success.

I also am extremely happy to see that Vice President Harris has expressed her intent to improve the country's maternal care, specifically for black women. This is monumental for me because as a young black, my health and the health of my sisters is crucial! I aspire to be a neonatal surgeon and a businesswoman so this initiative really pulled my interest. I believe that black women are disregarded in the medical field and as a black doctor, I'm making a huge impact on closing the gap between the mortality rate of black women—specifically mothers. I hope to do my part in achieving this goal and work with members of the Biden-Harris administration to start seeking out young black professionals aspiring to be doctors.



## CHARLES E '23

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE THE CLASS OF 2021 ?

As a 10th grader I feel like there is not a lot of advice I could give to someone transitioning from high school to college. However I can imagine how much pressure and excitement they might feel finally taking this big step in life.

I would say my first piece of advice is to take a step back and be proud of yourself, do something to show yourself appreciation and love. Going to college seems like a simplistic task but it isn't, this is a goal you've been having from all of high school and you finally did it.

Another piece of advice I could give you is stay focused and determined. By that I mean don't get burned out on the month there, that happened to me in high school and you want to start off on a good footing.

My final piece of advice is to make sure to enjoy yourself as well, yes you want to make sure your academics are in order but also make sure you're enjoying life. Go out sometimes, make friends and partners, have new experiences, and make your college experience something memorable.

## MADISON W '25

WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED?

The best advice I have ever received from someone was DON'T ever force someone to stay in your life obviously GOD took them out for a reason. It's important to me because I feel as though I always try to force people to stay in my life but when that person told me that it made me realize that God does things for a reason.

## JAMIE G '23

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY READING OR WATCHING THAT INSPIRES YOU?

At the moment I am reading Dear Martin which is inspiring me to be even more invested in the BLM movement than I already am. I say this because it sheds light on how people perceive black people and it educates people who don't really know about the topic. It made me think of how it doesn't matter how I act towards someone, my skin can always be seen as a weapon.

## TONY M '24

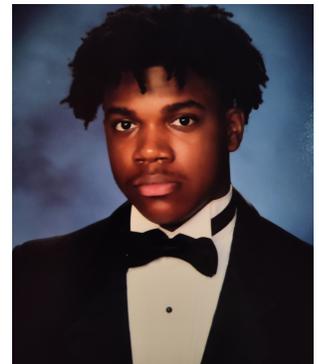
ON THE DEREK CHAUVIN TRIAL

I think everything went how it was supposed to, and he got everything he deserved. However, I don't think that justice was served. George Floyd is still deceased, and there is nothing that we could do to change that. I feel like this trial has served a good purpose though and it shows a change in reaction to police brutality, as usually the cop will be innocent. I hope it continues like this in the future and justice is served for future victims..

## ASSATA B '23

DO YOU THINK THAT A LATER START TIME TO SCHOOL WOULD INCREASE STUDENT SUCCESS?

I do not think that a later start time to school would increase student success. Personally I feel like getting or starting things earlier in the day is more productive. Also school preaches about how they are supposed to prepare you for the real world but in the real world you can't change the time that something starts for your benefit.



## KAYLEE M '25

WHO IS SOMEONE THAT INSPIRES YOU?

Someone who inspires me is Nicki Minaj. She inspires me because when she came out in 2009 there weren't many female rappers out there and female rap had in a way dialed down. But when she made her debut album in 2010 it made big sales and showed people that she was here and she would be taking over things in the female rap community. Another way she inspires me is her boss attitude and how she is a business woman and is about her money, and that she is not to be taken lightly. Another way she inspires me is by all of the respect she has in male dominated rap industry. Throughout the years she's stayed on top and was the only girl doing rap who was better than these men from 2010-2020. Overall she just inspires me to be myself and stand up for myself and be a boss.

# DERRICK L '21

## HOW COLLEGE BOUND IMPACTED ME



I was becoming a trouble maker and a bad influence to my peers, who already looked up to me. When my mom had enough she kicked me out and I went to go live with my father. I moved in with my dad the summer going into 6th grade and I was “feeling myself;” I thought I couldn’t be touched. So going into the school year with new peers, new teachers, new everything, I thought I could be the toughest guy in school. I got into fights every week, got suspended a couple times, stole, and got caught here and there. I was a little guy trying to act like a big bad man. My father taught me through punishments and long talks that respecting orders and your elders would take me down the right path. He made me realize that I wasn’t that kid who fought for no reason or the kid that stole just to fit in. I took my next summer break maturing mentally and finding myself at a very young age, and my peers would now see a new me because of my ability to better myself. After that summer, I completely changed. I had no more aggression toward anyone, and I made a better choice in friends. I also started to focus more on my athletic abilities; trying to be the best and more importantly, became a great student all around.

As the new school year started as a seventh grade at a new school, I focused on finding more of myself and friends that would push me in a competitive way to be an even greater me. Then I joined College Bound, a nonprofit organization that helps students get into and succeed in college. Also, being in this program showed me how to be a role model for others, how to not focus on the next person, and also showed me how to be a respectable young black man. With the skills I acquired through College Bound, I combined them with my athletic abilities and became a leader on all three fields; baseball, football and basketball. I felt the need to join these clubs to be the leader that our young team needed and along the way I feel like I helped my teammates mature on and off the playing fields. I was not only helping out people I knew, but my family and I would also help those in need whether it is food, a ride, or directions somewhere. Big or little, we tried to spread positivity.

I joined College Bound, the chess club, the debate club and close to every sports team at school. I joined these clubs and activities because I wanted to gain the ability to think faster. Not only am I a level headed individual but I am also a convener. I work hard to keep my grades on track to graduate and excel in class.

I will not only be focusing on school but the clubs, sports and opportunities that college has for me. Going to college for these experiences and opportunities will help me connect with others like in high school, programs that I am in now developed my optimism by allowing me to see that I was not the only one that was going through difficult times. Seeing other people go through the same experiences like me, if not worse, and seeing them go to college and be successful showed me that anything is really possible. I am looking for a school that has a strong political science and business management program that would help me on my journey of helping others.



## NAIMAH S '24

### WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS FOR 2021?

Academically, I want to accomplish 3.7 or higher GPA.

Personally I want to accomplish maturity and being moral in situations where I lack it. When my friends are in a negative situation I rely on positivity but overall, if I were in their situation, having someone lecture me into thinking positive doesn't really get me anywhere, it just keeps me at an annoyed and even more negative state. I also saw this post on Instagram talking about toxic positivity and it was basically speaking to me. I didn't know good could be toxic! I want to learn how to respond to situations in which I don't tell a person to be enlightened because I know it's good to be sad, to be mad, etc. I want to respond in a way where I am actually listening to them.

## KIAN A '23

### WHAT DO YOU MISS ABOUT LIFE BEFORE THE PANDEMIC?

I miss walking home with my friends after school and having fun. I miss talking to people face to face without worrying if they have a facemask. I miss going to stores without being six feet apart. I miss going to parties and talking with my friends. And lastly, I miss seeing people my daily time on my phone went from 5 hours a day to 7 hours a day because now all I do is use my phone and laptop because all I do is stay inside and use my devices.

## BRANDON D '22

### WHAT WERE SOME POSITIVE THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO YOU IN 2020?

There were a lot of downs in the very tragic year of 2020. It is good to sometimes look at all the positives in the year. Where most people think of 2020 you think of hurt. Although there were many bad times there were still good ones. In this essay I will touch on some of the positives I had in the year of 2020.

If it weren't for the year 2020 I don't think I would've mentally matured as much as I have. There are so many life lessons I have learned in such a short span of time due to the overwhelming amount of time I spent alone by myself. Not only did I mentally grow but I physically grew. I better do my physical health by losing 40 pounds. This was much of a mental and physical challenge. To grow this much in one year I definitely think is a positive.

In conclusion the healthy thing to do is not to allow the shadows to cover up the blessings. This is something I constantly told myself to the year to keep myself on the right track.



## ANTOINETTE J '24

### WHAT IS THE BEST ADVICE YOU HAVE RECEIVED?

The best advice was from Tyler Perry. An actor, producer, director, and more that I really admire. He once said while accepting his BET award “every dreamer in this room: there are people whose lives are tied into your dream. Own your stuff, own your business, own your way.” The reason why this is important to me is because as an individual I have always wanted my own and built on my own. Therefore I would have to rely on anyone else or have someone tell me when I have to do something and how much I will get paid. Not saying that's a bad thing but I want to work hard as possible to own my dream and own my way through life.



## MEKHI F '22

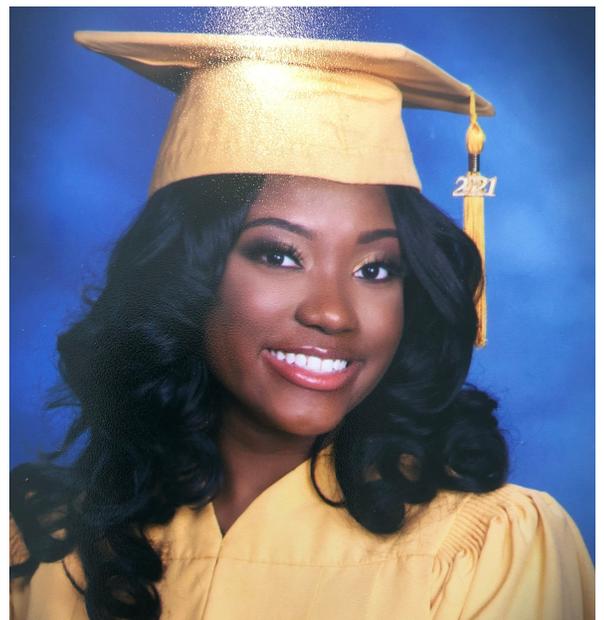
### HOW SHOULD PARENTS SUPPORT A STUDENT WHO HAS FALLEN BEHIND IN SCHOOL? WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO A PEER WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH SCHOOLWORK AND FEELING LIKE CATCHING UP IS IMPOSSIBLE?

I'd advise the parents to be patient and understanding. I'd also advise them to try and change their thinking on school and accept that there probably is something wrong with the students that has changed their habits and beliefs or the way they think. They all should try to get to the root of the problem and find a truly acceptable solution. To the student, I would advise them to be honest and reasonable, and to take their time with everything they're dealing with. I would tell the students to try and climb small hills on their way to conquering the mountain they may feel is in front of them. In other words, do the little things/assignments first, and take part in the little things that make you feel better than you might normally feel.

## MELL M '25

### WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE PRESIDENT GOT ELECTED, AND WHAT WAS YOUR REACTION?

When the president got elected I was actually still sleeping in my house. When I found out I was happy because I believe that Joe Biden can do good things. Another reason I was happy was because Joe Biden actually tries to talk to the hispanic community and isn't racist.



# KUNMI B '21

## MY NAME IS MY CROWN



I'll just start by saying that my name is O-L-U-W-A-B-U-K-U-N-M-I (Oh-lu-wa-boo-koon-me), but in this country I go by Kunmi. Oluwabukunmi means God blessed me or God's blessing. The decision to go by Kunmi wasn't made by me, but by the social barriers I face everyday and have faced since I was young. Being born and raised black in America is already a difficult task, but imagine being a black Nigerian American born and raised in DC. The "invisible" social division that happens between black Americans and black Africans is oftentimes overlooked, and is nonexistent to many. It wasn't until the Black Lives Matter movement that I realized how important it is for us to be united, and to take ownership over our own identities.

My parents came to the United States in 2000 and, like most immigrant families, they came for a better future for themselves and for their children. They had me in 2003 after trying for four years, making me the blessing they'd been waiting for and also the youngest of three. Growing up, I've always been a highly driven child. Honor Roll and the Principal's List weren't just things that I strove for, but were expected of me. Many may think this diligence is due to my being raised by my traditional Nigerian parents, and they are partially correct. Being raised in a Nigerian home, my parents insisted upon academic excellence for my siblings and me from childhood.

If there's one thing my parents hammered into my siblings and me, is to never forget that we are Nigerians and to be proud of being so, especially when society makes us feel otherwise. You see, growing up I didn't understand that I wasn't treated the same as my peers. I thought that my name needed to be shortened, or that being Nigerian was a negative thing. I remember my first day of kindergarten. I was excited to finally be out of the house and amongst other children. My teacher began to take roll. As she went through the list, I noticed that she didn't say my name. She instructed the class to raise their hands if anyone hadn't heard their name. I raised my hand with a beaming smile and said "Me! Me! You missed me!" She turned around and said "Oh yes, that's because it's too long! Let's give you a shorter name. Um, how about Kunmi? That's a part of your name anyway." Being the five year old that I was, I agreed happily, not knowing that she should have been corrected. The problem wasn't that she called me Kunmi, because that is my name, but the fact that it was shortened for me, rather than by me.

Honestly it wasn't until the recent Black Lives Matter movement that I came to the realization that I want people to Say My Name now. One thing that the black community broadcasts to one another is that you should NEVER allow someone to take your crown. Your name is your crown. My name is my crown. Allowing people to not know my full name or how to pronounce it is allowing them to take my crown. I don't want people to start saying my name when I'm gone; I want people to know the importance of my name, and my culture. I want people to take the time to learn to say a name that they might struggle to say, because it's my identity. From now on, I am going to embrace the crown that I wear, and I am ready for people to know the power of my name.

A MENTOR IS  
SOMEONE WHO  
ALLOWS YOU TO  
**SEE THE HOPE  
INSIDE  
YOURSELF.**

- Oprah Winfrey

## LEYAH H '25

HAVE YOU EVER MENTORED SOMEONE BEFORE? DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE.

No, I have never mentored someone before but I have been mentored by one of my favorite teachers. Her name was Ms. Whitehead in elementary school. She helped me with the school when I was younger and helped me learn about different things. She was one of the best mentors I had in my whole elementary school life.



## BRIANNA W '25

WHAT GRADE WOULD YOU GIVE PRESIDENT BIDEN ON HIS FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE?

I would give Biden a B- on his first 100 days. Some issues he has mishandled or neglected are the number of kids on the border alone, I just think his immigration plan needs to be better. I hope Mr. Biden and his administration direct their focus on Police Brutality, and Global Warming.



## NOELLE M '21

WHAT ARE YOU READING/WATCHING CURRENTLY THAT INSPIRES YOU

Right now, I'm writing an essay about A Song of Ice and Fire, the book series that inspired the television show, Game of Thrones. In my essay, I am writing about the different types of female strength shown through three main characters, Arya Stark, Sansa Stark, and Daenerys Targaryen. The series does a good job of demonstrating how each character handles different challenges in their own ways. Arya grew up as a tomboy, always being compared to her sister, Sansa, she always wanted to go out and fight with her brothers and someday wanted to lead an army or land, as a result, when faced with challenges, she often either runs away from them or fights them. Dany was born in the shadow of her brothers, as well as the rest of her family line of former kings, queens, and conquerors. This causes her to make every decision go towards her goal of getting on the iron throne, she faces her challenges head on.

## EVE E '21

WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY READING/WATCHING THAT INSPIRES YOU?

I am currently watching the sitcom *Girlfriends*. *Girlfriends* is an early 2000's American sitcom written and produced by a black woman, Mara Brock Akil. Who's written for *Moesha*, executive produced *The Game* and created *Being Mary Jane*) alongside executive producer Kelsey Grammar, chronicled four very different and dynamic Black women living in Los Angeles and showed us how they individually and collectively exemplified Black girl magic. *Girlfriends* inspire me because it's one of the few sitcoms from the time that I was growing up that promotes women empowerment, and forever friendship among black women. Having a show about Black women juggling their multifaceted lives, lets me know it's okay to express myself and not fit into anyone else's box. *Girlfriends* helped usher in these ideals of the importance of your girlfriends, for a new generation at the turn of the millennium. As an aspiring storyteller it is important for me to have these examples when curating new ideas. I appreciate *girlfriends* for giving me the courage I have to write about the things I think are important to show about Black Culture.



## JADA G '21

WHO INSPIRES YOU AND WHY DO THEY INSPIRE YOU?

My grandmother inspires me greatly along with my mother. They've raised me to be one strong, independent woman. They've encouraged me to do my best no matter what.



## MOSELLE S '21

HOW WILL YOU DESCRIBE THIS TIME TO FUTURE GENERATIONS? WHAT IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THIS EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE REMEMBERED AND SHARED?

Don't take going outside for granted and enjoy every aspect of life as much as possible is what I would tell future generations. That time was difficult and upsetting. History repeats itself and during this time there were protests, riots, and injustices. It was hard to learn virtually and it was hard to enjoy life to the fullest when we were only limited to doing a certain amount of things. It was a time of social distancing and quarantine. Everyone had to stay at least six feet apart and wear a mask in public settings. The lives lost due to the virus should be remembered. The lives lost due to police brutality should be remembered.

## CAROLINE R '22

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE THE CLASS OF 2021?

As an 11th grader who is currently going through the stress of my junior year I would say to take a deep breath and pat yourself on the back as the class of 2021. You persevered and overcame, excelling and preparing yourself for the real world is difficult without a pandemic going on but even in the midst of that you were able to go above and beyond to secure your future. Then after taking a breath and congratulating yourself, begin to plan once again for your entry into higher education or the road ahead because you can not go through life without a plan.



## WILLIAM C '22

DO YOU THINK A LATER SCHOOL START TIME WOULD INCREASE STUDENT SUCCESS? PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY.

I do believe that a later school start time would increase student success. I believe this because as a fellow student, It's hard to do your homework which results in less sleep. This can ultimately lead to less sleep which is a necessity for better performance during school. By giving students a later start time, we have the time to complete the immense workload as well as get enough sleep to jump right back into action the next day. The more energy you have the more material you can learn and retain.

## MARYORI M '21

IF YOU COULD SET A WORLD RECORD, WHAT WOULD IT BE FOR?

If I could set a world record, it would be for helping people and being engaged in the community. I am always active and helping others despite their attitude towards me. I always try to make a difference because God knows me and he is the best judge. I love being engaged in the community and my friends know that I am always there for them because I am all about giving and caring. One thing that I have learned throughout life is that we should forgive and that we should help the ones that need it because it benefits us positively. Everything that you give is always returned through your life in some kind of way. The more you give, the richer your life will be with positivity.



## KENNEDY S '21

### WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

The day I found out my grandmother Ivy passed away... I asked my mother "Can we go see my grandmother?" She was sent to the hospital due to complications related to lung cancer. My mother said, "No, we have other plans, but we will go see her another day soon." I was dissatisfied with her answer, but was hopeful.. The next day around 7:00 pm my mother yelled upstairs, "Kennedy come here and shut the basement door behind you!" When I got downstairs, my mother's face was red and swollen, my mother had been crying. Before I could ask what's wrong, my mother said, "Kennedy, your grandmother Ivy passed away." As soon as I heard her response, I dropped to my knees and started crying. My grandma Ivy was and still is to this day my favorite person in the world. I repeatedly screamed in disbelief, "How could she be gone?!" My grandmother meant the world to me. She was my go to person, my confidant, protector, and I could rely on her more than anyone else in my family. After learning she transitioned, I didn't want to be bothered with anyone, all I was thinking was my grandmother was gone. I found myself feeling lost, depressed and hurt.

Things all changed for me when I attended my grandmother's funeral and I saw her body. I had flashes of our previous conversations, where she told me, 'Kennedy, don't be like me. I want you to go to college. Don't listen if your parents tell you, like mine did, 'Don't go to college, wait to start a family and don't lay all your eggs in one basket.'" From that point on I started to actually think about my future. In school, rather than quickly finishing my assignments, and putting my head down, I now began to actually pay close attention and try to be engaged during the entire class. I earned higher test grades than ever before. Outside of class, I began researching career fields and came across Criminal Justice. I am particularly interested in this field because I want to get justice for cold cases where a long period of time has passed and families are still waiting for answers. As a career I hope to be a cold case detective. Watching criminal shows with my grandmother made me realize it's not about the money for me, it's about me being happy in the career field and knowing my grandmother is happy.

## GREGORY C '22

### HOW DID YOU EARN YOUR COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS?

I earned my community service hours by helping pass out presents and giving a speech at the 90th anniversary at Woodridge Library. I also helped and participated in the teen lounge at Woodridge Library.



# AMAYA B '21

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



“Back Banneker's Move!” is what I and over 100 other Benjamin Banneker Academic High School students shouted as we marched the halls of the Wilson Building, where the DC council members reside, in hopes that they'd give us the new school building we pleaded for and very much deserved.

As a student at one of the top public schools in my city, the pressure is always on. Banneker is an amazing academic school but lacks the necessities any high school should have. When the school was built in 1981, it was intended to be a middle school and to hold no more than 400 students. The school currently has a student population of over 500 students, and there is not enough room to comfortably accommodate its current student body. As a student athlete, the lack of space has personally been a huge issue. The basketball court that I have had the opportunity to play on for the last three years doesn't compare to that of any other high school gym. Practicing on our middle school regulation court never fully prepares us for the extra ten feet of space we are met with at every away game. Classes are overcrowded, and there are not enough seats in the cafeteria.. Although the rigorous work and grueling workload have been nothing but stressful, attending Banneker has truly prepared me to be successful at your school.

Being a Banneker student has taught me the importance of diligence and perseverance. More students should be given the opportunities and knowledge that being a Banneker Achiever has provided me. For months, I worked alongside nine other Banneker students on the front line of the campaign: writing, speaking, and petitioning our DC councilmembers. Together, we spent weekends, lunches, and our free time emailing councilmembers and reaching out to school officials. We pleaded for a building big enough to hold all the students deserving of a Banneker education. Advocating for myself, my school, and other students was such a rewarding experience from which I grew so much. Being a part of that experience has uncovered leadership skills in me that I didn't know I had, as well as a sense of passion in contributing to something greater than me.

On May 14th of 2019, 200 Banneker students, staff, and parents crowded into a waiting room, watching the City Council members voting on various city budgets and awaiting the vote for our school's fate. After hours of waiting, “Now to the matter of Benjamin Banneker..,” the chairman announced, and the room fell silent. Each Council member voted then explained their decision and reason for making the decision they did. When it came down to the last voter, we were all on our toes, as the current vote stood at four yes's and four no's. After months of protesting and advocating, our hard work paid off when the final member of the council voted “yes” to giving Banneker the new building with the complete budget. We jumped for joy and embraced one another after the good news. It is now a year later and the new building is nearly finished. Although I will never get a chance to be in the new building, The skills I've gained from that experience are transferable to situations in my future. I know now that there is only opportunity to grow in the future, I have a solid foundation, and that I will always want to give back in a way!

## MAYA C '21

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN THE PRESIDENT GOT ELECTED, AND WHAT WAS YOUR REACTION?

I was sitting in my living room when the President was elected. In fact, I was sitting in front of my television for hours waiting for the results of the election. I believed this to be one of the most important elections ever. When I finally heard the news that Joe Biden won the next day I remember being on the street and people were honking their horns and shouting that Biden won. I remember everyone in the street being genuinely happy and united. I was happy because I hoped at that very moment that our country would return to some type of normalcy.



## IVONE C '22

HOW WILL YOU DESCRIBE THIS TIME TO FUTURE GENERATIONS? WHAT IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THIS EXPERIENCE SHOULD BE REMEMBERED AND SHARED?

I would describe this time to future generations as something that was very bad and caused unexpected adjustments to the lives of everyone during this time. I would describe this time using very few positive words. Important aspects of this experience should be remembered and shared

## KEVIN M '24

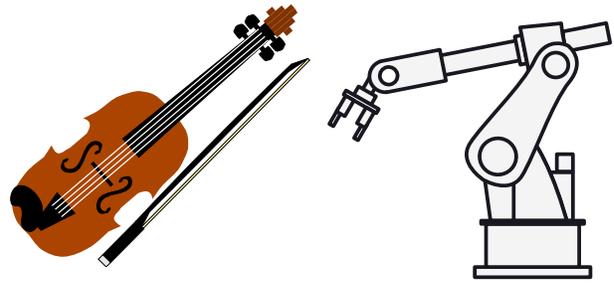
WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU ARE CURRENTLY LISTENING TO THAT INSPIRES YOU?

I am currently listening to Eminem and he inspires me by not caring about what anyone else thinks and does what he does best. I look up to that because I always feel judged but Eminem's music let's me know that it doesn't matter what people think about you, if you put your mind to it you can do anything. Especially with staying home, whenever I talk to my friends, I feel like my family silently judges how we talk to each other and the topic of our conversations. But after having that feeling of not caring about what people think, I feel more free and start to be able to relax and chill.



# MATTHEW A '21

## UNLIMITING MY POTENTIAL



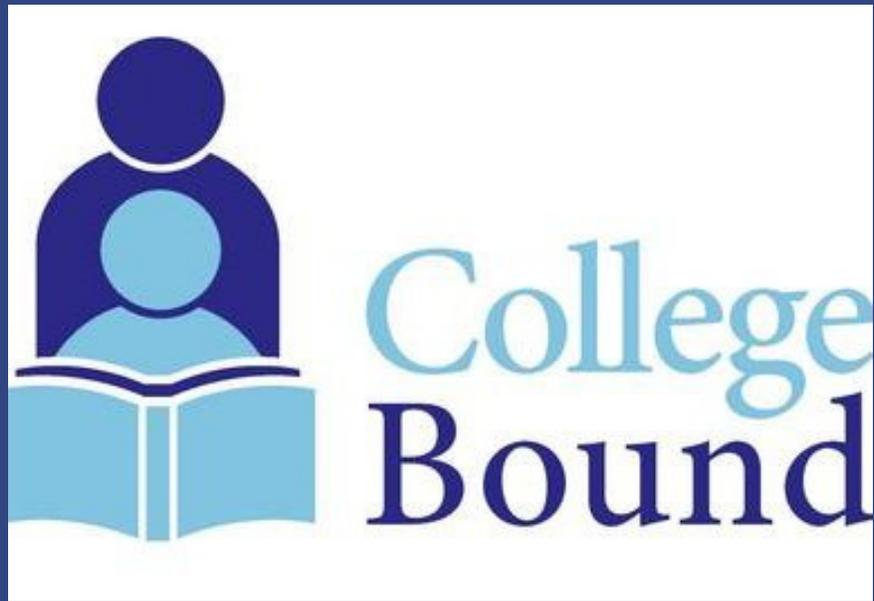
As a young African American male, when I get on the train people often ask what position I play. When I am asked this question, I get irritated because I feel like people are limiting my potential to just playing sports. It happens very often and I wish that I would be asked, "What field do you want to work in?" The day I am asked that question, I will have the biggest smile on my face and I will go into the details.

This problem is significant to me, not just for my sake, but also because of the impact on other young men. For example, my younger brother is being encouraged by people in the neighborhood to run track or play basketball. He is the fastest kid in his friend group. When adults see my younger brother run, they say, "That kid should just run track!" But my little brother loves to write. Other than my family, no one is encouraging him to become a writer.

Beyond playing sports I have a keen interest in robotics. I got into robotics in the 6th grade. I started in the Project Lead the Way class and found a liking in robots. But I didn't start competing until 9th grade. I learned about my school's team at an event called Engineering Day. On Engineering Day, my engineering teacher made the students help out with the event. I was assigned to help the robotics team and I started talking with the team mentor and the captain at that time. And that's when I joined the team. Besides robotics, I am also a musician. I started singing in my church, where I found a love for music. With a new found love, my Mother got me my first instrument. The instrument was the violin and I had class two times a week, but I picked up the violin so fast that I joined the 7-12 years old's orchestra when I was only 5 years old. Then I just started to learn more and more instruments. Now I use the instruments that I learned to produce music and to make my own songs. With all of these skills that I have, I choose engineering over everything because I can see myself in ten years still enjoying it. Whereas, as an athlete you enjoy it in your first couple of years before your body is beaten down.

The cost of being a professional athlete can be devastating. I have a friend, 14 years old, on the basketball team at his school, and already his knees ache and he has to play with a knee brace. I don't want this to happen to me, but I keep hearing whispers in my ears to keep playing. The whispers fuel my drive to do great things and to show my community that sports are not the only thing we as young African American males are good for. This cultural narrative is what I am fighting every day of my life. From the days before I was born to the day I die this narrative will always follow me. This narrative is one of many things that is keeping the world from shining.

Being put in a box because of my size is going to take more than just me to fix it. It's going to take everybody coming together and focusing on a solution. One solution is to give opportunities and experiences to people so they can choose their own careers. By participating in career fairs and tours young African American males in the community will get exposed to careers that they may never know they could do, but they can achieve great things and not just in sports.



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