

# Fresh Perspectives

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## Children of the Future by Petra Vega

A writer, whose name is now unknown, once wrote, “We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.” Some parents are so stressed about instilling educational advantages into their children such as Baby Einstein games that they don’t take out the time just to listen to their children. And even when they do try to listen, parents don’t really pay much attention because they think children don’t have the slightest idea of what they are talking about. Parents don’t believe that their children have as many problems or concerns as they may make it out to be. I want to be that one person a child can go to who will give him or her all my undivided attention and listen. I want my office to be the one environment where they feel comfortable talking about anything that is on their minds. I believe children are the future, and we need to start paying more attention not only to what they need but also to what they have to say. This is why I want to be a child psychologist.

I first knew I loved being around children when I participated in the Early Childhood Education program at the Sullivan County BOCES in my junior and senior years of high school. One of the class requirements was to be complete an internship at an elementary school. I decided to work in a second grade classroom at my local school, Emma C. Chase Elementary School. Our internships ran from the end of January to the beginning of June, and we spent three days a week at our internship work sites. During the other two days of the week at BOCES, my classmates and I learned how to make lesson plans, block plans, activities for all areas of study and to decorate bulletin boards. So when I got into my classroom at Emma Chase, I was able to use all these resources to make my experience there more enjoyable and memorable. I created some math and spelling games that the students are still using today.

I really enjoyed being in the position of being the teacher, and I thought I wanted to be one until I discovered I just couldn’t maintain an emotional distance. It would hurt me when one of my students failed, whether it was because of me or not. If I were a teacher, I would still feel that it was my fault for not teaching the material in a way that would make it easier for them to learn. I wouldn’t be able to live with myself knowing I had let one of my students down.

So, being a teacher was out of the picture, but I definitely knew I still wanted to be around children, so I began doing community service at the Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School. Actually, I was around children more than I was around people in my own age group, and I didn’t mind it one bit. I was a teacher’s aide in a fifth grade classroom, and the students were completely different from my second graders yet similar at the same time. The fifth graders would voluntarily come up and tell me their life stories as if we had known each

*I believe children are the future, and we need to start paying more attention to not only what they need but also to what they have to say.*

other all our lives while I had had to initiate conversation with the second graders, so they knew I was their friend. This aspect of community service was what I absolutely loved. Children have so many things to say, and they're just looking for that one person to sit there and listen to them. Luckily, I was that person. I discovered that I would rather work one-on-one with a child, so I can give him or her my undivided attention. In groups I feel like I have to listen to everyone at once and not everyone speaks his or her mind when in groups; I know I don't.

While I was doing community service in the fifth grade classroom, I had a lot of time to get to know those children really well. One of the girls had a father who was in jail, and I would ask her every day how he was doing. And every day she would tell me more and more stories about him as she began to trust me. She would admit that she missed him a lot and wished she could talk to him more. I reassured her by letting her know that when he got back they would catch up and it would be like he had never left. She didn't seem to believe me, so I told her that he missed her as much as she missed him, if not more. And she smiled. One of the little boys in my class was always being called "gay," and it hurt his feelings every time. So I made all the boys look up the definition of "gay" in the dictionary, and when they read that gay meant happy and isn't something you should be ashamed of, they slowly ceased to use that word. I told them that only mean people would use a word like that to put some else down and that it just wasn't right, that they were better than that. In the end, they stopped making fun of the little boy.

I want to be a child psychologist because I genuinely love helping people. I don't like when people are upset, and I try to do as much as I can to make them feel better. I'm also good at it too. When one of my best friends went through a difficult breakup, I talked to her for hours, almost as if I were the psychologist and she the patient. Usually that's the cure: the patient just needs to have a good talk and let it all out. In conclusion, I love children, and I love to help people. I would rather not be a teacher and feel as if I am destined to be a child psychologist. I'm going to keep my head in the books and try my hardest to make sure I will fulfill my goal of helping others.

## Breathe by Xue Bai

Then:

I thought I would lose me in a world full of dense fog.  
I thought I could see my road when I grew up.  
I thought my life was like a long path.  
I thought I crossed the line of youth.  
I thought I just could wear a dress my whole life.  
I thought high heel shoes would take me to the end of the world.  
I thought I would only have sun in my life.



Now:

I still lose my way in dense fog, even now when I am grown.  
I still stay in the child's world.  
I still love to wear a dress but jeans come to my life.  
I begin to let my feet kiss the ground.  
My life is in the ice age; I will freeze.

Soon:

I want to find my road.  
I want my face to stay young.  
I want my mind to pass the line of the child.  
I want to have a new man to come knock on my door.  
I want the sun to come back in my life.



## Pieces for the Piano by Danielle Huslinger and Johnny Lugo

*It's just you and the piano. Black with black and white keys; it makes the music for the song you are about to sing.* That is what I told myself as I looked at my toes, preparing to sing my NYSSMA solo. *There is no judge; no teacher; it's just you and the piano.* I begin to sing my solo, no longer worried. That was how I got over my stage fright that day.

*What is wrong with me now? Why can't I remember the words? Why is fear flowing freely through my body? What has changed from now to then?* I know what has changed. The people sitting in front of me expectantly are people I see every day. I can't sing, leave, and never see them again.

I look up, and my teacher begins to play. As the piano begins the tune, the words come flowing back, and my fear is gone. It is just me and the piano.

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A piano all alone waiting to get played by someone. The piano and bench are looking at each other not knowing what to do, waiting for an audience to sit down on those blue chairs facing them. With so much space, they don't understand why nobody is there. It is such a beautiful day as the sun shines brightly through the windows in an auditorium with walls colored mostly white. They feel like going behind the dark curtains since there isn't a living soul to watch them and hear what they can really do. They are embarrassed, the curtains looking straight at them. They have such an empty feeling as if they are forgotten.

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## Democracy by Michelle Chavarria

The periodical *Social Education: Confronting Real World Issues* is the official journal of the National Council for the Social Studies. This magazine is published for the general public and discusses historical and political topics in today's society. One of the articles found in the magazine is "Living Democracy: How Constitution High School Molds Better Citizens" by Marc Brasof. In this article, Brasof explains a school's working imitation of the democratic system and how it is used to maintain Constitution High School (CHS), Pennsylvania. The school provides the students with authority that is not usually seen in a school setting. Brasof states that granting students legislative power allows them to deal with academic and social issues. Based on this periodical, I believe Constitution High School's democratic system is well developed and provides the students with important information about how our government works.

Marc Brasof explains the role of the democratic environment at CHS through the example of a school election. A well known student runs for the position of president and wins the election. A few days after the election, the administration discovers that he does not qualify for the position. A typical solution would be to remove the student, but CHS dealt with the issue as if it were a real presidential election. Because the student had not taken up his role as president, the school was unable to conduct an impeachment trial. The school followed the example of the federal government, which in these situations, has "citizens petition the Supreme Court" (208). The school's Supreme Court, which consisted of seven student and faculty members, decided to institute on a transition of power and to hold another election.

As the lead social studies teacher at CHS, an education consultant for the National Constitution Center, and a member of on the teacher advisory council for the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Marc Brasof is aware that democracy can be chaotic. He believes that it is through exposure and experience that one can understand the inner workings of this government structure we call democracy. According to Brasof, empowering students to take part in their school administration allows them to get accustomed to what they will encounter later on in life. According to Brasof, "Researchers in civic education found that schools provide opportunities [to know] but few opportunities [to do]" (209). CHS is one school that puts teaching into practice. At CHS, Civics is the first social studies course that the students are required to take. Then they are encouraged to participate in the school government.

Personally, I feel the CHS method of involving students is a great idea. I attended Mother Cabrini High School and was involved in the Student Body Association (SBA). As a freshman I was elected to be class representative and

*Brasof's article shows how a complex type of student government can work.*

continued to fill this position during my sophomore and junior years. As a senior, I was elected senior class treasurer. Each grade had their own president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and reps. The entire school had an executive board. One of our duties in the SBA was to set an example for the student body. We had to follow all school regulations and properly wear our uniforms. We were allowed to give our peers detention if they were found breaking rules such as: chewing gum, being in the wrong locker room, and not having the proper uniform. CHS allows their students to make decisions and work hand in hand with the administration. Like CHS, Mother Cabrini allowed its students to bring the administration's attention to matters that needed to be fixed.

Brasof's article shows how a complex type of student government can work. I found the democratic set up interesting. CHS has a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, Supreme Court, legislative branch, executive branch, and judicial branch. They follow the steps that our actual federal government follows. It is interesting to see how high school students are able to put their civics courses into use and better their school. CHS gives students the opportunity to have their own voice and opinion, allowing them to respond positively toward the school, as well as learn how to engage citizens who actually understand how our government works and can see that participation really matters.

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## Ratoma: Memoirs of a Boy by Umaru Barrie

A place with experience, memories, people, and personality is a home. The home is where the heart is, and it is a safe and pleasant place to be. When I think of my home, I feel my heart warm up with joy, and my mind feels the rush of happiness and pride. My home is not just an apartment in a tall building within a crowded city, rather a thick wall surrounded by a store and a shop, a mango tree, neighbors' houses, and people who taught me my values and gave me my identity. Before coming to the United States, seven years ago I lived in my home located in Ratoma. Ratoma (commonly pronounced as *RAHH-TO-MAH*) is a commune in the city of Conakry, the capital of the Republic of Guinea.

For those who do not know, Guinea is a crescent shaped country, which borders the North Atlantic Ocean between Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone in West Africa. Countries such as Liberia on the southeast, Mali at the northeast, Senegal on the northwest, and Ivory Coast on the east surround it. Guinea has a population of 10,057,975 as of July 2009 ("Guinea", CIA). "This population is broken down into some 24 ethnic groups each with its own language, which include are the pastoral Fulani and the agrarian Malinké, Susu, and other peoples" ("Guinea," *Encyclopedia*). I was able to learn and speak French, Fulani, Susu, Malinke, and Landouma from my community. I am part of the Fulani group, which is about 40 percent of the whole population; this group of people is the majority living in the capital of Guinea. While Conakry is the largest city in Guinea, there are smaller and much important communes located inside the city. My house was part of the commune Ratoma.

At the center of the community, the housing complex was a beautiful place to live. Surrounded by a thick wall, we lived in a place of inter-dependence. The wall, created after multiple thefts, robberies, and violence gripped the community, served to safeguard us against the dangers of the streets. The nerves from my body shook as fast as they could every time I heard of the horrid news, but behind the wall, I felt untouchable. I remember looking at a wall that stood ten feet tall made up of cement bricks with barbed wires across the top and thinking to myself, I wanted to climb this wall. I would always dress up as if I were going to climb a mountain with my attire, a rope, and my cleats to try to grip rough concrete of the walls with my little brother, Boubacar. "THUD" followed by another "THUD" was what I heard as our bottoms met the ground, and the rope stuck on the barbed wires at the top of the wall. Whenever we engaged in random activities like playing soccer, climbing walls or trees, bothering mad dogs, approaching monkey, or other reckless activities, my neighbors or my mom were only few feet away at the side of the wall.

Along with the corner store, my mom's shop was located at the north corner of

*The nerves from my body  
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the wall. The corner store, with its red roof, gated windows and one-step floor where people stood to order their items, was my favorite place. Boubacar and I usually went there to ask the owner, Mamadou Diallo, a good friend of my mom, for some butter-rolls, juices, and candies. Right next to his store, there was my mom's shop. My mom worked every day from dawn to sunset, even sometimes into the darkest nights in this little place to support the family. My father had left for America, so it was her duty to help us survive. In a country where 47 percent of the people were poor and only 4.392 million people worked, to make a living, she sold peeled and regular oranges, hard and soft candies, cold water, mangos, apples, cigarettes, pens, books, and household objects ("Guinea," Info Please). My mom always dressed in African clothes or dresses, and sandals whenever she was to work at her shop. The clothes were of the local designers, and they defined her sweet personality and amazing beauty. Sometimes I sat on my mom's place, with a smile as bright as the sun, my heart racing like a train as I gave people their merchandise, and they gave me the Guinean Franc. When I was not at the front next to the store and shop, I was usually in front of my house.

Within the walls of the house, a mango tree stood tall in the center of it all. At 50 feet tall, with branches that extended and towered over our little houses, the mango tree was the basic identity of my housing complex. Four houses made up my housing complex, our house, my next-door neighbor's house, the owner's house north of us, and their next-door neighbor house south of them. The tree served to provide shade from the blazing yellow sun of Guinea, and it was a relaxing place to sit and feel the breeze touch our cheeks. Below the tree, we sat on carpets and read the Qur'an, the young people who included people in the ages of seven to seventeen with a close ear nodded at comments made by the older people who were discussing life, politics or social events. Three pans of rice and mafes (sauces) were distributed below the mango tree; the people would either wash their hands or use utensils to take a bite of the food. With each spoon inside the mouth, the stomach sang songs of happiness and joy. But of all the memories of that occurred under the mango tree; the food, the lectures by the older people or the holiday feasts, the most precious one I have is of my big brother, Amadu. He would climb to the top of the mango tree, and with his long hands rip the mango from its leaves. I looked at him with my pupils dilating in awe, my mouth open and my mind trying to learn every single step how he got there. Climbing a 50 feet tall tree was my dream.

[...]

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## Dear Ms Freel...

11/05/09

Dear Miss Freel

I am...

Who am I?

You ask me of my name.

I dare not say a word.

You ask me of my mom's name.

I do not say a word.

You ask me of my dad's name.

I still do not say a word.

Then I look at you,

I tell you that my name just tells of who they think I am, what they gave me, not who I am and what I did.

You can call me by all words, and it will be me.

But if you do not know it yet,

Do not call me the word boy or all that speak of my age,

As for I have grown to be a man.

I chase my goals and help those who need my help.

You ask of my race.

I do not say a word

Then I tell you I do not see black or white, as I am blind.

You ask me of my place.

"Where are you from?" you say.

I do not say a word

Then I tell you,

"I am from the earth and you?"

So please do not look at me by my race, or by my place to say who I am

Let me be just like you.

See me as you see you.

Still, if you want to know, let me tell you who I am:

I am the love that my mom and dad gave me

I am the drive that keeps me up when I start to fall.

I am the dream, by which I sleep to wake up and live my life.

I am you; you can see your fate through my eyes.

You can say I bring peace, and not war, or hate.

I am just me, so dare not call me by a name, or race, or place.

I do not wear these coats.

If you in fact want to know,

Let me tell you: I am who I am.

Umaru Barrie

## Dear Ms Freel...

October 29, 2009

Dear Mrs. Freel,

My Turn

I did write a line in the past,  
Guess how long did it last?  
Many things I write in my class...

I rose from the bed,  
And out of my head,  
The words for a song, flew and spread,  
Out the door and past the trees they fled.

I tried to catch all those words,  
But they flew like birds,  
They fled and met in groups of thirds,  
I want those swift, quick words.

“Come back to me now!” I say.  
I will not let you fly all day;  
I need you for my song to stay,  
And then you may go out and play.

So the words came back to me,  
To the door, in groups of three,  
And I wrote this song, you see,  
In the end, they set me free.

- Fuat B. Kapucu



## Yankee Stadium by Cinthia Pimentel

Most people have a place that they will remember for the rest of their lives. We remember a place more if we get the chance to experience it physically. This place can be a high school field, behind an alley, at the pool or a favorite hang-out spot. When we are there, we do not feel anything special about it. I wonder if residents in China feel that the Great Wall is mysterious. Do the residents in Paris feel that the Eiffel Tower is an amazing piece of art? Are the residents in Mexico still stunned by the Mayan pyramids? These are the same feelings that I have for Yankee Stadium.

Some people think that the great pride of the South Bronx was built with the hope and dream of winning victories. The original Yankee Stadium had concrete walls reaching toward the sky. On April 18, 1923, 600,000 excited fans rushed into the new gate to see their favorite baseball legends (Sullivan 1). Another 10,000 disappointed fans had to be turned away from the world's greatest stadium (Sullivan 1). Everyone was so excited to rush through into the new gates. Women and men at this time were just getting out of poverty (Sullivan 36). Yankee Stadium was a treat that they could enjoy.

This was the same reaction that happened when tourists and visitors came from all over the world to the original stadium, which closed this past May. It could only hold up to 57,545 fans ("Fields of Dreams"). The crowd of rushing people purchased hot buttery popcorn and steamy hot dogs. Women's bathrooms were packed with urgent desperation to get back before the game started. Men's bathrooms emptied like the last D train on a midnight run. Fans shouted, choked on hot dogs, screamed, cried, and cheered for victory. Mom or Dad took out their camera and gathered their children to take pictures at the opening gates, so they could remember this amazing day. To visitors, it was the one and only Yankee Stadium.

If only these were the same feelings of the people who lived in the neighborhood. Residents walking their dogs at midnight and leaving their dogs' droppings behind live around the Yankee Stadium. Music from the old days, from windows widely opened, filled the air with a fast tango jazz beat. Strangers walking by mumbled to the songs being played outside. Random guys stood out on the corners, wearing baggy pants and checkered boxers. Mothers and fathers passed the stadium looking at their cell phones and watches as they ran to get home. No one really sees Yankee Stadium as all big and mighty.

All we see are the rushing fans push and shove each other as they enter and exit the train. The loud moans of drunks screaming and hollering about disappointment on the other team's victory stumble around. All we see is the mess that they leave behind after a game. Plastic cups, paper plates, and ticket receipts fly

*No one really sees  
Yankee Stadium as all big  
and mighty.*

all over the place. They cover the streets with a mixture of white and gray spots everywhere. They leave our street dirty and unwelcoming. This is why the residents feel conflicted about Stadium because of the overexcited fans. This also contributes to my feelings of conflict too.

I love that there is a landmark right next to me. I love how the Bronx is known for Yankee Stadium instead of all the crime and violence that happens. I feel that the Bronx looks and feels like a family environment because of Yankee Stadium. I live next to the “House that Ruth Built” (Frommer 34). I think that sounds amazing. Then again, I feel that people think Yankee Stadium is the only good in the Bronx. I feel that there are also many other places visitors should go and visit. Some places like the Bronx Zoo or the Bronx Art Museum are very wonderful to visit as well. The Bronx is known for creating one of the greatest music in the world, hip hop. We also have the Botanical Gardens.

Sometimes I feel that Yankee Stadium is no big deal. Yankee Stadium is just there. The Bronx should not be only known for it. There are a lot of unique places and people in the Bronx. The Bronx is more complex than we think. It is the only borough that has the “the” in front of it. Sometimes we have to look beyond Yankee Stadium.

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## A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

by Genesis Maria Reyes

The South Bronx, home of the Yankees, is said to be one of the most terrible areas in the borough. In 2007 *Harper's Magazine* stated, "There were 9,735 crimes committed there [the South Bronx] last year, which means that as many as 1.8 percent of the population could be criminals." Let me paint you a picture: Yankee Stadium is located on Jerome Avenue approximately three to four blocks away from the family and criminal courthouses. Police are always posted and the streets are filled with people from the stores nearby. Everyone is watching, and yet there is still a reason to watch your back as you walk the streets that connect. The South Bronx is a place for the tough and a place my friends didn't really like getting caught in at night. Ironic, given that a place of high crime is always raided by cops. It's not a pretty picture at first glance, but they say a picture is worth a thousand words.

If you looked past the negatives you would see the things I saw; a community coming together to enjoy America's greatest pastime. A population of individuals of different age groups and ethnicities who gathered on roof tops, trying to catch a glimpse of a live Yankee game. People lined up against the elevated subway gates that run by Yankee Stadium, hoping to catch the balls that soared out of the park. Furthermore, lines and lines of eager fans crowding up the sidewalks to make their way into the most legendary ball park in America. Everyone loves Yankee Stadium, and if you aren't a fan you still respect it for the history it holds.

Known as the greatest baseball franchise in the business, the Yankees have taken Major League Baseball by storm, snagging 26\* championships and living up to their nickname as the Bronx Bombers. Game days at the stadium are always exciting. You can look out into the crowd on any day and see the stadium jam-packed with people. I've gone down to Queens to watch several Mets games in Shea Stadium before Citi Field was built, and I can assure you those games were never as enjoyable as the ones in the Bronx. Yankee games are filled with suspense and action from dedicated players like Derek Jeter who dives into stands to catch a ball for an unforgettable out (Chancey). The Yankees are proud residents of the Bronx as well. So proud in fact, that another stadium was built across the street from the original one. With two amazing stadiums to charm passersby, I believe New York City's other boroughs don't stand a chance.

[Essay Excerpt]

*If you looked past the negatives you would see the things I saw; a community coming together to enjoy America's greatest pastime.*

\* Editor's note: After the essay was written, this number became 27!



## New Paltz Duck: A Monologue by Zoe Anne Link

I am a duck. I have been living in this pond my whole life. There are dangers in this pond. Geese, they're huge; they have been taking over for years, plotting our demise. No one likes them. No one thinks they are cute. No one come to the pond to feed the geese. No, they come to feed us, the ducks, and hope the geese don't get in the way. There are muskrats too. We won't really talk about them—they are just gross with their small eyes and long tails, but at least they aren't trying to take over. They know their place.

I have kids now. Tommy, Judy, and Sid. They need protection from this place. How can I know it will be safe for them when the geese really take over? Will they have a place to live? Will people still come and give them bread crumbs? How can we know? We can't. All we have left are the winters when these geese take a break from their colonizing and overpopulation, when it gets too cold for them. Maybe this generation will be strong enough to fight them off...

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## ***Journal of Behavioral Medicine* by Indira Tavarez**



As a future doctor, I'll be involved in doing research about different topics related to my career, such as new and better medicines, medical techniques and treatments. My learning will never end, but I am willing to keep studying. For this reason, I navigated through the library to find articles related, directly or indirectly, to my career. While skimming through some journals, I found the *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*. In this journal I found three articles that caught my attention.

“Childhood Trauma and Adulthood Physical Health in Mexico” by Charlene K. Baker, Fran H. Norris, Eric C. Jones and Arthur D. Murphy is an article published in volume 32 of the periodical that talks about how childhood trauma affects adults and their physical and emotional health. A study was conducted in Mexico in order to find the response to this inquiry. 2,509 adults—907 men and 1602 women—were interviewed. At the end of the study, researchers found that 35% of the interviewed adults reported traumatic situations during childhood: nineteen percent were men and sixteen percent were women (Baker et al.).

These results surprised because I always thought that women experienced more traumatic events than men during childhood. After I read the article, I realized that I always looked at trauma from the sexual violence and domestic violence perspective, forgetting how trauma can also affect men. Different types of trauma that women and men experience besides sexual abuse or domestic violence are: being a war veteran, witnessing a murder, and being in a disaster, fire, or serious accident. These traumas cause physical malfunction in adulthood, such as gastrointestinal disorders, pelvis pain (commonly found in sexually abused people), headaches, chronic back pain and shortness of breath as a result of physical maltreatment. In addition, it was found that the loss of parents, one of the most traumatic events in one's life, does not cause any physical health problems in adulthood (Baker et al.).

[...]

The third article that caught my attention was “Mediating Variables in a Parent Based Intervention to Reduce Skin Cancer Risk in Children.” This article is the one related the most with my future career: infantile oncology. The rate of cancer has increased, especially breast and skin cancer, in the past years. Around 340 parents were educated in two different regions in the United States about skin cancer, its causes and consequences, and how to prevent it. The researchers

found that appearance and society were the two factors that led people to over sunbathe (Turrisi et al.). I believe that this high rate of people suffering from skin cancer, especially children, is due to the ignorance and lack of information provided to parents. In addition, parents have become too materialistic, focusing in their socio-economic status without caring about their children's health, which should be the number one priority to everyone. The study suggests that many parents want their children to look tan as a reflection of their economic status (Turrisi et al.).

All these articles were taken from a scholarly periodical designed for health professionals and researchers. Although the magazine has no colorful illustrations and has only charts and tables, while going through the journal, I was captivated and interested in reading more. While reading the articles, I felt like I was a doctor researching more information about my field to enlarge my knowledge and to give better medical assistance to my future patients. I enjoyed this journal a hundred percent and would recommend it to anybody, whether they are interested in medicine or not.

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## My Dandelions Paradise by Deanna Baker

There is a long driveway off 9W in the small town of Milton, New York. This long driveway is a dirt road that is about a quarter mile through lush foliage, around twisted turns and over a small bridge that covers a small stream. This dirt driveway ends at a white raised ranch with black shutters and a black roof. Behind the raised ranch there is a small back yard with thousands of purple wild flowers, and a steep forty foot hill that leads up to a clearing of baby trees and moss covered rocks. From the stream to the clearing at the top of the hill is the property of this raised ranch. This raised ranch belonged to my grandmother and was my paradise and my home as a child.

My favorite part of my grandmother's house was the stream at the front of the property. The stream served as a border from the outside world and it made me feel safe, like nothing terrible would happen as long as it was there. The stream was about 6 feet wide and seemed to go on for miles before and after it entered my paradise. On the opposite side of the stream stood a colossal weeping willow tree whose branches hung down from the heavens to my side, and created a shelter around itself. Scientists call this tree a *Salix Babylonica* (weeping willow), but my cousins and I lovingly referred to her as Grandmother Willow from the Walt Disney feature film *Pocahontas*. We would use Grandmother Willow's branches to swing from one side of the stream to the other. We would climb her branches and use her leaves for shade from the scorching summer sun. We would also swim in that stream, catching crayfish and chasing ducks who had found their way into our neck of the stream.

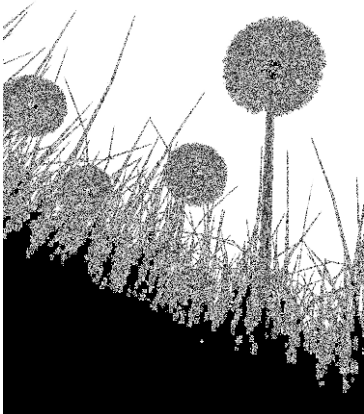
The front lawn was best during spring time. My grandmother's garden was her pride and joy. She had hundreds of flowers that were every color of the rainbow and that she knew by name. I loved the flowers, but what I loved even more was the thousands of dandelions that bloomed and took over the lawn. My grandmother would call them weeds, but I thought they were beautiful. According to *Gardeners' World*, dandelions are the 3rd most hated weed in America (*Gardeners' World*), but they were my favorite flower since they were the only flowers on the property I could pick.

The garden was off limits to me. I could only admire the beauty of the flowers, but the dandelions were a different story. I would pick hundreds of them, making dandelions crowns, dandelions necklaces, and dandelions mud pies. On any given summer day little six year old, blonde haired blue eyed me, would run around the lawn with a crown of dandelions, a necklace of dandelions and then another behind my ear. I would be covered with dirt from all the mud cuisine I had been making but the most important characteristic was my smile. That was

*I could only admire the beauty of the flowers, but the dandelions were a different story.*

the smile of a perfect summer day. Then the end of summer approached, and the yellow dandelions would turn into a white fluffy seed head. I would once again collect them and pucker my lips and blow the seeds all over the grass, knowing that soon enough my favorite flower would once again take over the lawn.

The only place more magical than the front yard was the back. There was no grass in the back yard, only wild flowers. Wild violets had taken over the back yard years before I was born and are still there till this day. I also saw these as flowers, but Wild Violets are a persistent perennial weed and one of the most difficult to control (Prostak). I would love to lie in the flowers and talk to them (I was an only child; my only friends were flowers and trees). Behind the back yard was my steep hill that I called “the mountain”. I would get a walking stick and trek my way up the mountain. When I reached the top it was all worth it. My mountain was a clearing of about 20 by 20 feet, and up there I would do and be what I wanted. The clearing was nothing but baby trees and moss covered rocks. It was my kingdom and I was the queen. I would stay in the woods for hours, climbing trees and pretending I was an Amazon woman. At dusk I would hear my name being called and this meant my day was coming to an end. I would say goodbye to my kingdom, but always promise that I would return the next morning.



When I think of my grandmother’s house, I think of barbeques and family. I think of swimming for hours with my cousins until we had purple lips and wrinkled fingers. I remember looking at stars and catching fireflies. This was a time where a stream was a river and a tree was my friend. It was a time where a hill was a mountain and the woods were an enchanted forest where I was the sovereign. Back then an 80’s prom dress was attire for a queen and my grandmother’s cooking was better than 5 star cuisine. Dandelions were flowers, and summer nights never ended. My childhood was not an easy one. I had many problems and scary things happened to me. My grandmother’s home was an escape from the abuse and from the unwanted troubles of a little girl. Those memories at my grandmothers are my happiness as a child and without them, I do not know how I would survive. My grandmother’s house saved my life; it was my paradise.

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## A Taste of Defeat by Matthew D'Agostino

The day I turned seventeen is one of the most memorable days in my life. I was armed with my learner's permit and a completed driver's education course certificate. I had only one thing in mind: the driver's license. I was so ready to take the road test that was scheduled on the day I turned seventeen, and I had been counting down every day until it happened. I also had my truck that I had bought the previous summer, a 1997 Red Ford Explorer, sitting in my driveway ready to go. Just thinking about how I would be able to go anywhere, anytime I pleased, put me in a state of euphoria. The only thing in the way of making that a reality was the road test. I had practiced a decent amount of times driving with my instructor and my parents when I could. My friends told me all about taking their road test too, so I felt pretty prepared for the test.

The test day had finally come, and I was so anxious to go and get my license. My mom and I drove to the testing area, where my next hour was spent sitting in a long line just thinking about what to do once it was my turn. While waiting, I was easily able to see who had passed and who had failed from facial expressions of the kids taking the tests. Now my mind started to race with nervousness because I did not want to be one of those kids who failed. I thought about everything I had been told not to do and all the things I was supposed to do at once. This jumble of thoughts didn't help, and I was up next.



I was now in the car alone, waiting for the road test instructor to make her way to my passenger side door. I remembered to say "Good morning" and tried to seem as nice as possible (as if that would help me). The instructor sat in the car, and she scribbled away at her clipboard while telling me to start the car. All at once, I felt my confidence fly out the window. Instead of thinking about what I was going to do once I got my license, I was now thinking about how I was going to survive the next five minutes.

The test had now begun, and my instructor directed me. I started to shake uncontrollably, my foot trembling on the gas pedal. Sweat accumulated on my forehead, my back, and everywhere else on my body. My excitement had turned into horror, and I could not concentrate. All the time I had practiced now meant nothing. What was a couple of minutes seemed like hours of pain. I had failed my first road test horribly, hesitating on every move and going extremely slow. I drove back to the starting area where I stepped out of the car, drenched from head to toe in sweat. The depression I felt was indescribable; I just felt like I had made the biggest screw-up in my life.

I was a complete wreck the entire day. I was so ashamed of myself that I could not even bear to look at myself in the mirror. That first road test is now imprinted in my mind forever. However, I soon realized the world was not over and that I was not a complete failure. I can now laugh at the scar the first road test left on me because all I needed was a second try.

## ***ESSAY EXCERPTS* ♦ *ESSAY EXCERPTS* ♦**

### **Family by Katy Donnelly**

I believe in family, people always being there for each other. A family, though, may not always be made up of your blood relatives. So much of a relationship depends on trust, and I feel that if I can't trust a person and have the feeling that they will be there for me when I need them, then I do not consider them part of my family. My father has not been a very strong role model in my life, but I have learned from his absence what a good and trustworthy person is through one of my best male friends. We became friends in the fifth grade, as soon as I moved into the new town, and we have been incredibly close since then. We have a very strong relationship and got each other through difficult times of family issues and dealing with the drama of high school and everyday life; we are still best friends and always here to listen and help the other. We have the same likes and sense of humor and everything else about each other. We can make the other laugh, cry, feel loved and be there to trust, which is what everybody needs in their life. Although being part of a family is not the most important thing, a further relationship with a friend who you trust in that same way is necessary. Everybody needs a person whom they can trust throughout their whole life. When you know that you cannot get through a day without someone, they are your family. When it seems like everything about your day is going wrong and a person makes you laugh, they are the people you can love and trust. When you can't stop worrying about someone, hoping that they will never be hurt, that is how you know who your family is, and the people you can trust and love the most.

### **Father Where Art Thou? by Chris Chismar**

Today, it seems as though many kids are growing up without a father. Whether it's due to death, divorce, or babies born out of wedlock, kids are not able to learn from a male figure. Not many people have to experience this until they have kids of their own. Some people, like myself, had to learn the struggles due to an absent father. Many males have the need to grow up with a father figure as someone to look up to and use as a role model. Children learn from their parents and not having a father can affect a lot of things in the child's life. Academic success, behavioral problems, financial struggles, and even health problems can be a result from the lack of a father figure. According to David Papenoe's book *Life without Father*, nearly fifty percent of all American children will go to sleep without saying goodnight to their dads.

Growing up without a father brings on many stresses and anxieties. According to *Cure My Anxiety*, a website that helps teens deal with stress due to death and divorce, many of these anxieties can lead to a loss of focus in school. Some children will even pick on other siblings to entertain themselves. Growing up after the death of my father, I began to feel some sorts of anxiety. My attention and schoolwork was never really affected but at home many things affected me. Sometimes when my mother would go out with friends I would begin to worry especially if she was running late. Because of my father's death, I would always think the worst when I wouldn't hear from my mother too often. I have a sister who is three years younger than me. Because there is no father figure in my house, I have the responsibility to protect her and teach her the right things to do.

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***ESSAY EXCERPTS\* ESSAY EXCERPTS\******Brain Gain by Nicholas Alvarez**

“Brain Gain” by Margaret Talbot, is an essay explaining the effects of drugs such as Ritalin and Adderall and how they are used to help enhance a person’s brain and to help him or her to concentrate. Many people see these drugs as a way to cheat, just like steroids, but others feel it should be legal just as caffeine is for coffee. I feel that using the drugs just to try and gain an advantage is the equivalent of using performance enhancing drugs such as steroids. There are many ways to do the same thing to stimulate your mind such as drinking coffee or working out, but by taking the drugs you are giving yourself an edge against all other students.

Many people may disagree with me saying that it is fair because the drugs are not teaching the students anything that they do not already know. However, when athletes take steroids they already know how to play the game at a professional level, yet they are just enhancing their skills. It is the same way students enhance their skills with the A.D.H.D. prescribed drugs when they do not even need them. Taking these drugs without a prescription should not be allowed, and students should seek other ways to attempt to concentrate instead of taking these illegal drugs.

**Brain Gain by Anairis Gomez**

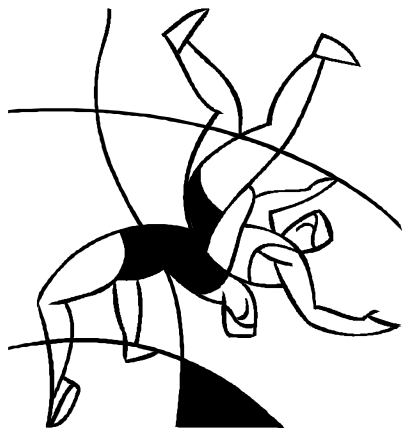
“Brain Gain” by Margret Talbot is about neuroenhancing drugs and the different people who use them. One kind of neuroenhancer is called Adderall, and it’s prescribed to people diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder to calm them down. Some people who have not been prescribed Adderall want to take the drug in order to make them smarter and to make them focus more. For example, a neurologist interviewed a student from college. The student said that the stimulant made him focus and helped him to get his work done. However, he also states the side-effects: “alternating when speaking, loss of memory, and loss of appetite.” Still, he speaks of Adderall with great appreciation and is happy that it helped him through Harvard. This to me is understandable because having loads of work can be stressful and a person can hit a wall. Adderall gives you a boost. On the other hand, if two friends have the same class and they are both getting B’s in the class, but one decides to take the pill and gets A’s, I think that is cheating because you are using something to make you better. It’s like steroids and baseball.

The author also interviewed a middle-aged woman who is a lawyer. She said she hadn’t had any problems at work, but recently she had begun having problems memorizing things. The neurologist thought it was because of old age and suggested regular exercise and intellectual stimulation, but the woman said that she would rather take the pill, even knowing its side effects. This anecdote shows me that the pill isn’t only used for focusing, and it also doesn’t only target college students; it targets all kinds of people—lawyers, doctors, and people you would have never thought of taking these drugs.

## *Dear Ms Freel...*

27 October 2009

Dear Mrs. Freel,



When I was on the mat, I felt the blood rush to my head, and I got scared and shook. With the guy I had to beat in front of me, I thought of a way to take him down in my mind.

I hoped he would not knock me down and pin me first; it would be such a shame if he did. This match was a test of strength and will, and I lacked both of these skills. The match had not even started, yet I felt like I had already lost. I was not cut out to do this sport.

I blinked and tried to calm down as I pulled out all of the will left in me to fight and not to back down. I faced him and stared him straight in the eye. With all the strength I could find, I let out one last sigh and faced him head on. Sweat dripped from our arms, legs, backs, chests, and hair as I tried to take him down to the floor. Both my arms grabbed his legs, and with a sharp thrust, I pushed him on the floor. With no other thought, I moved up to his chest and worked to squeeze, choke, and hold him in place, so he could not pin me. I heard a sharp noise, and I knew that the round was at an end.

It was hard for me to get in place for the next round, but I had faith I could win. He was in the down pose and good to go, so I got on top and as soon as I heard the sharp noise again, I went at it like a gun and shot off. I felt the rush of blood through my arms, legs, and head, and I felt pain through each part. I ached. This was a good kind of pain; I knew I could do this and take him down. I looked at the time left and tried to move with haste with my arms and legs. As I blinked off some sweat near my eyes, I saw that I had put him in a pin. With a smirk on my face I knew all that was left was the wait for the count of three. That count of three would mark the day of my first win since I had joined the team.

Sincerely,

Kenny Pan (Wrestler for 1 year)



27/10/09

Dear Ms. Freel,

Life is a piece of cloth, white and clean,

Draw on it.

It could be just black and white,

It could also be filled with blue, green or red,

Change it any time if you want.

Add more and make it cool.

Life is a song,

You write it on your own.

The notes jump around you.

They may be fast or slow,

The song may be bad or good,

It is all yours.

Life is a book, thick or thin,

You don't know what it means only if you read.

It is thick, for it has many pages;

It is thin, for you can make it short.

No one can tell you.

Life is a cup of tea,

Some tea is clear and light, while some is not.

Don't wolf down the tea,

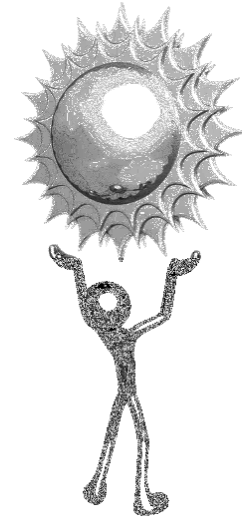
Smell and take a sip.

It may be not as good as you think,

But it takes time to taste the sweet.

Just sit down and close your eyes,

You will get what you need.



Life is a boat,

The helm is in your hand.

Set off in your boat,

Be brave on the sea,

Don't hide,

Don't go back,

Judge the wind and act right.

In the end, you will get to the shore.

Life is but a dream,

When you wake up, you lose much.

But you also get a lot.

Go for your dream,

Be brave and you will earn what you want.

Yours,

Danwei Zheng



## The Sojourner Truth Library by Monica Argentina

The stacks were all a blur. At least that's the way I saw them. It was late, and I wasn't sure what time it was. I pulled away the skin-tight thermal that felt like a leech, draining the energy from me the longer I wore it. My watch read 1:34 a.m. "Not bad," I thought to myself in an encouraging tone. I had stayed up later before but had never felt as tired and drained as I felt now. Since 10:00 p.m., I had been in the library studying for my psychology exam. After a couple of months, I had gotten to know a lot about the Sojourner Truth Library. Although it was labeled by some as the dreaded place one went to in order to cram in late-night study sessions for an 8:00 a.m. exam, I found it much more intriguing. The rather large tapestries that flowed from one end of the study room to the other added a rather calming touch. It felt like my little abode. In fact, I preferred the library to my own dorm. It wasn't because I was sex-iled from my room because of promiscuous roommates or the fact that my neighbors felt that it was necessary to blast Lil' Wayne at 2 a.m. No, it was because the library embodied a soothing presence that I had never felt before coming to New Paltz.

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## Vacationland by Jessica Abrams

When you think of a vacation spot, Maine probably does not come to mind first. Florida, Virginia Beach and Hawaii are typical vacation destinations, with warm weather and sandy beaches, but a vacation spot is not just about the beaches and the weather. Visiting southern Maine is an experience that includes shopping, seafood and sightseeing in different towns is part of the experience.

What's the first thing you think when someone says Maine? Moose and lobster. Yet there are many other things to Maine. In southern Maine there are a lot of high-end shopping stores such as Brooks Brothers and Nike, and some well known beaches can be found in York and Old Orchard. As you go further up in Maine it becomes much different from southern Maine; there is Acadia National Park and the beginning of the Appalachian Mountains. Acadia National Park is the only national park east of Mississippi River (Acadia National Park Maine).

My family and I went to Saco, Maine from Albany, New York for the first time this summer. The weather was an annoying rain all week. We didn't go swimming that much, even though the Ferry Beach was 500 feet away. Every morning I could smell the saltwater in the air and hear the waves crashing but not see the ocean because it was usually foggy out.

One place we had to visit was Freeport because they have the L.L.Bean factory. Even though we have an L.L.Bean store near me, I had to visit the main store. We spent half the day there. We spent so much time there that we went back another day. There were so many stores besides the L.L.Bean store. Freeport has a lot shopping places such as Cool As A Moose, J.Crew, and The North Face. Everywhere we went there was so much shopping to be done from Freeport to Kennebunkport to Kittery. It was hard not to shop because there were so many unique stores that we had to go in.

Another place we visited was the Portland Headlight. I was especially excited because I love lighthouses. We did get lost a few times but eventually we got there. The lighthouse is actually located in Cape Elizabeth and not Portland. The lighthouse was the first lighthouse built on the coast of Maine in 1791 (Totten). When we got there it was amazing except for the fact that it was foggy. The Portland Headlight is the most photographed lighthouse on the east coast (Totten). On the way out we got lost again but ran into this food shack called Kettle Cove. In Maine you just run into these little seafood shacks, and they turn out to have the best food around.

Going to another lighthouse just made my week. We visited Cape Neddick or Nubble lighthouse. It is called the Nubble lighthouse because it is located on a "nubble," which means that it is close to the mainland (Totten). This lighthouse

*Maine is more than  
lobster and moose: it is a  
new adventure every day.*

was a lot harder to find because it was in a residential area. When we finally found it, it was hard to see because it was foggy once again. At one point the lighthouse keeper had a child that went to school by going down the ski lift; it was also used to get groceries and packages (Totten).

Yes, Maine is known for their lobster, but they are also the largest producer in the United States for blueberries (Maine Senate). Speaking of lobster, Maine traps about 90% of American lobster (Maine Senate). I wanted to try lobster at least once when I visited. We went to a place my friend recommended, Mike's Clam Shack in Wells. I was disappointed that lobster was nothing special. The lobster may not have been that great but in general the seafood is delicious.

Besides lighthouses and lobster there's Lenny. So maybe I didn't see an actual moose but I got to see the world's only life sized chocolate moose. Lenny is made up of 1700 pounds of chocolate (Len Libby Chocolate). We happened to see Lenny on his 12<sup>th</sup> birthday. Unfortunately he was not wearing his birthday hat. Other than the chocolate moose Len Libby has a lot of homemade chocolate. Len Libby has a wide variety of chocolates including chocolate lobster, truffles, moose pops and much more.

While we were heading out, we ran into a 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade in Ocean Park. It was annoying because we had to take a detour to get around the parade. What we really wanted were blueberry muffins. When we started to head into town we saw the parade. Everyone was dressed up in red, white and blue and we could feel the excitement in the air. The kids were so excited to see the floats come down the street. The floats were colorful and playing patriotic music. While we were watching the parade people in the floats were throwing out candy for the kids. It was a Mardi gras style parade. This small town came alive when it came to 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

Maine is more than lobster and moose: it is a new adventure every day. A vacation in Maine gives a whole new meaning to vacation. Vacationing is different for everyone; some like to lie on the beach, others want to climb a mountain, and for some just getting out of town is a vacation. The list of things to do in Maine is almost endless, making Maine magical for any willing tourist.

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## Teaching like Dr. Seuss by Kendra Campbell

A teacher's job is to teach and to enrich a student's knowledge. Sometimes teaching students may be challenging because a lot of children have a hard time paying attention and focusing in class. This makes a teacher's job harder. This problem in the classroom also creates a distance between teachers and students. Theodore Seuss Geisel, famously known as Dr. Seuss, is a children's book author who changed that distance. He is a role model for educators because he delivers lessons to children through fun.

Dr. Seuss was born 1904 in Springfield Massachusetts. As a child, he enjoyed going to work with his mother in a family bakery where he would memorize the names of the muffins and made rhyming songs out of them and sing them to the customers. When Dr. Seuss graduated high school, he went to Oxford University in England. At Oxford University, he met Helen Palmer, his first wife. She was a children's book author and editor, and she inspired him. After college, Dr. Seuss's first job was at *PM Magazine* where he worked as a political cartoonist. At that job, he met a co-worker, and they started to make animated films. It wasn't long before he was offered a contract with a company called Viking Press where he started drawing children's book illustrations. Dr. Seuss's first book, *And to Think that I Saw it on Mulberry Street* was denied publication twenty-seven times before it was published in 1937. His last book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go* was published in 1991, a few months before he died. Throughout his years of writing, he wrote over forty children books, all of which deliver a lesson ("Dr. Seuss Biography").

Older children and adults can even learn from his books because his stories are metaphors for bigger issues. When I was a sophomore in high school, my social studies teacher read the class a Dr. Seuss book titled *Yertle the Turtle*. As my teacher read the book to us the first time, we felt like little babies again with all the rhyming and colorful pictures. It was about a turtle named Yertle who wanted to be the king of the pond and all he could see. "I'm Yertle the turtle. Oh marvelous me! For I am the ruler of all that I see" (Seuss 6). Yertle made the other turtles stack up on top of one another while he sat on top. At first we thought the story was just about a selfish turtle, but as my teacher read the book again, we saw the deeper meaning. Yertle represented a dictator, and the other turtles represented the citizens. This book shows readers how dictators run their countries.

In 1937, Dr. Seuss presented the idea of teaching children through fun stories and rhymes, and teachers quickly picked up on that idea and brought his approach into their classrooms. Today, many teachers plan lessons and activities around Dr. Seuss's books. These fun activities help children learn better and pay

*Dr. Seuss is the perfect role model for educators because he knew how to capture children's attention through fun lessons.*

full attention in class. An example would be a lesson taught along with *Green Eggs and Ham* where teachers help children learn about the color green by having them make a list of green foods. Another example would be, *The Foot Book* where teachers teach students math by having them count the number of feet in the class (“Dr. Seuss Activities”). These activities show how Dr. Seuss’s books can be turned into fun lessons which help the bonding of teachers and students and give children new vocabulary while teaching them to sound out words through rhyming. In addition, the rhyming words help children to remember new vocabulary presented. Before Dr. Seuss, a lot of other children’s books only taught how to memorize simple words such as “look” and “up.” Today, Dr. Seuss’s books and teachers work hand-in-hand, from teaching children how to read to teaching them content lessons, such as the way my history teacher taught us.

Dr. Seuss is the perfect role model for educators because he knew how to capture children’s attention through fun lessons. Most adults know who Dr. Seuss is as he has made reading fun for children for over seventy years since his first book *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* was published in 1937. Dr. Seuss revolutionized teaching; he showed through his books that the best way to deliver a message or lesson to a child is to deliver it with fun. Dr. Seuss books are great metaphors that teach students of all ages.

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## The First Lady of The World by Rebeca A. Baker

Albany, New York, the United States of America, and then the United Nations. Anne Eleanor Roosevelt lived her life fighting for whatever she believed in. She opened the many doors for women, busted down racial barriers, and gifted opportunities to the underprivileged. She was a fearless woman, whose vision sparked the country's progressive Civil Rights movements during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I believe that without her leadership and influence the minorities of our country would still hold a second class status.

Eleanor's passion for civil rights started when she was a child and continued until her death in 1962. Born, October 11 1884 into a family of privilege, she could have easily lived the role society set for a women of her class, but Eleanor would take a different path. She would become one of the most influential freedom fighters in American history. Eleanor became aware of the underprivileged early in life as most of her family was engaged in some form of humanitarian aid (Roosevelt 12, 13). This ancestral influence of sympathy, understanding, and kindness afforded her the astonishing qualities it took to change the minds of the world. Eleanor had many personal losses in life. Her mother and older brother died when she was eight and her father before she turned ten (Roosevelt 11, 12). She was privately tutored and did not receive formal education until the age of fifteen when she was sent to a girls' finishing school in England (Roosevelt 20). Even though, she was deprived of her proper parental upbringing, she still managed to become a sophisticated, compassionate woman. Shortly after her return to the United States, Eleanor worked as a social worker in New York City. She later met and married her 5<sup>th</sup> cousin, Franken Delano Roosevelt, who would serve as a New York State Senator, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, the Governor of New York, and, of course, as the President of the United State of America ("About").

Consequently Eleanor was submerged into a life of government and public service. After her husband's infidelity was discovered, their physical relationship practically vanished, and their relationship became purely ceremonious. She let her enthusiasm for public service transform into political advocacy, which was to become her life's work.

Eleanor, in my opinion, was the reason President Franklin D. Roosevelt was so successful during his presidency. A few years after the World War I, during which Eleanor volunteered with the American Red Cross, Franklin developed poliomyelitis in 1921 and was paralyzed from the waist down ("About"). During this time, Eleanor became his political surrogate. She traveled America as it was struggling through the Great Depression and keep tabs on the "New Deal" and its programs aimed at relieving the finical burdens on Americans. She worked

*This ancestral influence of sympathy, understanding, and kindness afforded her with the astonishing qualities it took to change the minds of the world.*

with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and National Council of Negro Women. The women of her time considered her to be an advocate for woman's suffrage. During World War II she visited General Dwight D. Eisenhower, King George, Queen Elizabeth and Ambassador John Winant in England on her husband's behalf (Roosevelt 239).

When looking back at her life, I believe that Eleanor's work in the United Nations was the most important of her endeavors. After her husband's death in 1945, she continued her work for human rights working in the United Nations as the spokesman for America. She was a major contributor in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was voted on and adopted by the general assembly on December 10 1948 (Roosevelt 322). She not only brought equality to America, she brought it to the world. Article one of the UDHR states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" ("Universal"). In 1948 this statement was very progressive for its time. Even though African Americans had the right to vote in many states Jim Crow laws were still in effect.

Eleanor Roosevelt's life story influenced me to do what I thought was right in my heart. I graduated from high school with a strong sense of duty, and I was drawn to the idea of giving back to society. Deciding that I owed something to the many people who had died for my freedoms and liberties, I joined the army. I spent five years, not serving my country, but honoring the men and women who had given their lives so I could have one. Eleanor used her public position and influence to become one of the first and most successful advocates for Civil Rights. Like Eleanor, I would like to make my life's work something important such as civil service.

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## There was a young college student who... (an anti-drug version of the classic children's song) by Rebeca Baker

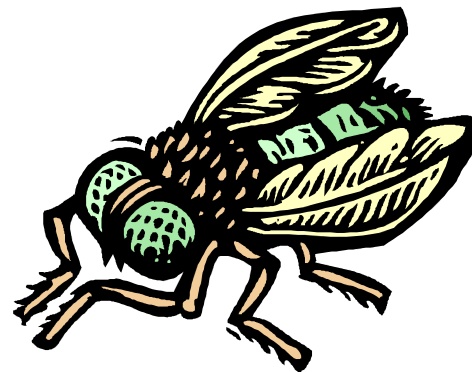
There was a young college student who smoked some weed.  
I don't know why she smoked some weed.  
I think perhaps she'll die.

There was a young college student who swallowed some speed,  
that let her do her best, studying for the test.  
She swallowed the speed to counteract the weed.  
I don't know why she smoked the weed.  
I think perhaps she'll die.

There was a young college student who swallowed some ecstasy.  
How absurd to swallow some ecstasy.  
She swallowed the ecstasy to continue the party.  
She swallowed the speed to counteract the weed.  
I don't know why she smoked the weed.  
I perhaps she'll die.

There was a young college student who swallowed some valium.  
with out a doubt, she was out for the count.  
She swallowed the valium to get some sleep.  
She swallowed the ecstasy to continue the party.  
She swallowed the speed to counteract the weed.  
I don't know why she smoked the weed.  
I think perhaps she'll die.

There was a young college student who snorted some cocaine.  
What a dope, to snort some coke.  
She snorted the coke to start her day.  
She swallowed the valium to get some sleep.  
She swallowed the ecstasy to continue the party.  
She swallowed the speed to counteract the weed.  
I don't know why she smoked the weed.  
I think perhaps she'll die.



There was a young college student who shot up some heroin.  
I don't know how she didn't get a clean needle.  
She shot up the heroin because the coke was a joke.  
She snorted the coke to start her day.  
She swallowed the valium to get some sleep.  
She swallowed the ecstasy to continue the party.  
She swallowed the speed to counteract the weed.  
I don't know why she smoked the weed.  
I think perhaps she'll die.

There was a young college student who contracted HIV...  
She's dead of course!





## Two Views of the Quad by DaShawn Wilson and Erica Pena

As I sit near a tree filled with pink and white flowers, I feel completely relaxed and clam. I can hear the birds chirping, the grass whistling, and the footsteps of students walking to class. The cold breeze blows against my cheeks, making me shiver a little. The scenery here is incredible. I haven't experienced anything like it. I come to this very spot to clear my head of all stress and negativity. It really helps me loosen up and appreciate life. As my friends and other students walk by, I am enjoying the view and look up at the clear blue sky. Looking up to the sky, I see animal-shaped clouds. Some look like elephants and others like birds. I take off my shoes and lie on top of the grass and flowers, which smell like perfume. I rest my head behind my hands and take a deep breath and sigh. I feel great. I love it here in New Paltz. It's a place I call home: a place that I can feel at ease and be myself.

I hear the howling of the wind as I walk through the strange path ways. The wind blows every fifteen minutes. As I walk through the rustling leaves hearing the crunching sound on the disintegrated leaves, I wonder, "Where am I heading?" I have no clue as I look up to the clear blue sky. It's silent and peaceful, a tranquil setting indeed. An old building is hidden behind the ravishing white trees, and an old lonely wooden dusty bench sits in front of the garbage can while the wind chips away the rusted paint. Looking up into the clear blue sky, I feel cherry bloom petals fall on my face. Cherry blooms are supposed to be omens of good fortune, but when the wind blows, it also brushes the petals off the majestic tree. As the light pink petals touch my cheek, my uncertainty grows. What an old beautiful grand tree— it's truly sad to see its petals fall. The sun moves away, and with a chill, the wind comes rushing back. I have to tuck in my jacket, duck my head, and put my hands in my pocket so the fierce wind won't take me alive. As the wind passes, more leaves fall from the branch, a sign that a new season is near.

## The Dominican Republic—Paradise by Ileana Garcia



The language, the fast Spanish, the way the “r” rolls off their tongue; this is what distinguishes the Dominican Republic from other Spanish-speaking countries. The beauty, culture and people of the Dominican Republic are the reasons why it is so close to my heart. It might be just another beautifully advertised country where others explore as tourists. For me? It is home. I see the significance behind every inch of space, every detail, and noise that makes up this place.

“No human eye has ever beheld a more beautiful land; nowhere is nature so immeasurably lush, so green, so untouched” were the words Christopher Columbus wrote in his diary when he reached the Caribbean Island of Hispaniola in 1492; Dominican Republic’s first name (“Dominican Republic”).

Our pride is music. The fast Bachata and Merengue and the suave and skilled salsa are most of the cultured dances Dominican Republic provides. The Dominican people consist of many different characters. They are very family oriented; while growing up, we are taught that family is our main priority. Dominicans are full of life and love, and it seems that they make the best of every situation because things can always be worse. The Dominican Republic’s people work very hard to earn what they have. Some of these jobs consist of the plantain pickers working from dawn to dusk. The cabbage sellers trample on the packed and humid streets selling their products. The cooks stand over a hot dish as the steam tickles their skin; the tailors takes a break from the steamy shop and catch some air outside. There are also the shoe repairers and the maids who have a mop and broom in one hand, swiveling around the house making sure everything is tidy and organized. We can also see the teachers who try to round up the kids from recess and scurry them into the classroom, the doctors and pharmacists who are our sources for a healthy life, and the list goes on. Children are laughing and playing. Elderly ladies are rocking back and forth in their rocking chairs, fanning themselves with their dish towels as the food is being cooked in the back room and scents of rice, chicken and beans travel through the house making our mouth water. Trucks pass by on their way to the factories; the sun beams down like a hot light. The young ones on their motor scooters zoom by. The palm trees give off a light breeze and the beautifully set blue ocean water gives a sense of tranquility. Music comes from every which way, and I cannot help but to close my eyes and take in a deep breath. I can picture myself there right now and paint a picture in my head. This is home, La Jolla, Dominican Republic.

*“No human eye has ever beheld a more beautiful land; nowhere is nature so immeasurably lush, so green, so untouched” were the words [of] Christopher Columbus ...*

I wake up one morning and know I am not in the city anymore because there are no ambulances zooming by to pick up patients, and there are no cars honking in traffic. Instead, I hear the soft Spanish Bachata playing in the house across from me. I open my eyes to see the shades of the windows open as the Dominican Republic has no glass for the windows. The Haitian ice-cream seller rides his bike around advertising vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry ice cream. The fan sitting on top of the drawer brushes my hair away from my shoulders, and I breathe in the oh-so-familiar air. I love it here; it is home.

My aunt has lunch on the table; my favorites: white rice, beans and chicken with a side salad. I could get used to this. My day starts off perfectly; I walk around waving at all the familiar faces, past the basketball courts, and the markets where mothers are gathering groceries, and the men are packing fresh vegetables into bags. It might be a downgrade from New York City, but I would rather have this. I would prefer having the traditional meals at specific times than eating whenever I decide to wake up and to speak my primary language loosely without having the guilt of making any person feel uncomfortable because one does not understand me. Lastly living here would allow me to feel comfortable in the environment I have grown to love since birth. Dominicans are so cultured and would not change for anything! I greet the workers who have been working since morning, the nicest people anyone can ever meet. “The people of the Dominican Republic are surely some of the friendliest people in the Caribbean, if not the world. This country hosts a multi-racial and multi-cultural society of over eight and a half million people, with three quarters of mixed origin and the other quarter of either European or African descent” (“The People”). One thing about Dominicans is that they go out of their way to make their guests feel welcomed and comfortable, making sure everything is to their satisfaction.

[...]

If one has never visited the Dominican Republic, I am recommending it. It has one of the most beautiful sceneries imaginable. The beautifully lit blue sky that dances with the white clouds, sway by without a care in the world lightening up the morning day. The mixture of reds, oranges, and yellows, come together to portray a masterpiece right in front of our eyes, as the sun slowly disappears behind the ocean’s body of water. Everything seems so unrealistic. It seems like paradise and we are away from all our troubles and worries. [...]

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***ESSAY EXCERPTS\* ESSAY EXCERPTS\******Autism by Samantha Sanchez**

After working for a year with people who have autism, I came to appreciate my own ability to mentally process things effectively and to verbalize things clearly. I also came to appreciate my physical well-being. These things seem common to an average person, but are incredibly difficult for those who have disorders such as autism. Autism is a developmental disorder that affects the brain's normal development of social and communication skills. My work with autistic people gave me firsthand experience with the effects of this disorder.

When working with people who have a social and communicative deficiencies, it is somewhat of a challenge at first. One may be unsure of what people with autism are like and wonder if what they see will be out of the ordinary. Society consists of diverse and unique people. However, people with autism experience life differently than those who have developed behaviors that follow social norms. People with autism display a range of behaviors without knowing. Some individuals living with autism block another person out mentally and visualize them as though they are a wall and cannot hear or see the person. A person may encounter an individual with autism who is having tantrums and who is very aggressive and will not respond to instructions. When people with autism are in an aggressive state, it may even get out of control. The best way to deal with the behavior is to go through a learning process with people who have autism. Working at a school called QSAC, I learned many new ways of how to help children with autism deal with aggressiveness.

**“Traveling through the Dark” by Joyce Armijos**

This short poem written by William Stafford is about his encounter with a deceased pregnant doe at the edge of the road. The doe was dead, but the fawn living inside her was still alive. This man was alone with no one around him, but he gently pushed both doe and fawn into the river.

The short poem is sad because not only is the doe dead but her baby is alive inside of her. It is also sad that he does not know what to do. He has to make a decision to save a life or finish it, and he is the only one there. Usually this type of situation, or any situation dealing with life, is one where you wish someone else would take control and make the decisions for you. The speaker ends up facing a choice between life and death, side by side in that moment, thinking whether he should just end that last living thing inside her. Someday we might be in that situation or deal with a different decision that we, you, or I, must decide on our own with no help. Sometimes when we do make the decision, do we really think it is the right decision? Is the decision of the poem's speaker the right decision?

Sometimes the decision we make is not the right one, even if we have already thought about it enough to decide. Possibly his decision is right; maybe it was the only way or maybe he hadn't thought things through enough to think of another option. Regardless, the deed is done, and he is alone, and he is the only one to make that decision. The poem is really short, but it had such powerful thoughts, like the idea that you might be alone with a fading life and you must decide what will be done.

## Different Beyond Measure by Keishla Feliciano

I grew up in a neighborhood called Washington Heights. There I was constantly surrounded by peer pressure and negativity and discouraged by the low expectations others in my community had of me. It is unusual for a Hispanic female from Washington Heights even to graduate from high school, much less attend college. Those who do are left feeling different from everyone else in the neighborhood, and this feeling of difference is the most difficult part of being a first generation college student from Washington Heights.

Being a Puerto Rican female in Washington Heights, I am already different because I'm not Dominican. Just due to the simple fact that I am a female Latina, people who don't live in the same area make assumptions that I will become another pregnant teenager, drug abuser, high school drop-out, etc. They don't take the time to get to know someone like me and wish the best for me; instead, it's envy and competition about who's wearing the latest trend that crams the streets. Money, sex and drugs are what teens in this society tend to care about. Education is never rarely one of their priorities and growing up in that type of environment can influence a lot of teenagers to take a negative path. In my own family, for example, both of my older sisters started having children at the age of 15 and both dropped out of high school. Imagine being surrounded by that type of influence in your own household when you are trying to succeed. It can be hard, but not impossible. In my case, I learned from my sisters' mistakes and have made it a goal to be different from them and change the stereotypes.

## An Amazing Tour in Hainan Island by Danwei Zheng

I have been to several places in China, among which Hainan Island is my favorite. I went to Hainan Island during the summer when I was in middle school. Hainan Island is the main island of Hainan Province. It is “a large tropical island that is the southernmost point in China” (Dorothy 200). When we mention “Hainan” in Chinese, we usually refer to Hainan Island rather than the whole province. Sometimes the name is confusing for tourists. It is the second largest island of China, just after Taiwan. Even though it is about 3 years since I last visited it, I still remain impressed by the natural scenery and the ethnic culture there.

During that summer I traveled with my parents, my aunt, uncle, and cousin, following the tour guide Jiang Heng assigned by the travel agency. We went there by airplane and the plane arrived at Haikou, the capital of Hainan Province. It was located on the northern coast of the island. Because Hainan Island was a tropical island, I used to think it was very hot and wet. However, when I got off the plane, it was really cool. I asked Jiang Heng and he told me temperature differed during daytime and night. Another important factor was that the airport was near the sea.

The next day, we went to Sanya by bus, the “main tourist center on the southern end of island” (Dorothy 200). It is “the most beautiful place on the island” (“Hainan Scenery”). We first traveled to the Areca Park. It was a National Natural Reserve, which was located in the boundary of Baoting and Sanya. After we stepped into the park, green areca filled my sight as birds chirped and insects hummed. People from an old tribe in the park, who had brown and black skin and strong bodies stopped us. They were almost naked, just with hula skirts on. They held some boxes in their hands, taking out some yellow lotion with herbal smell and smearing it on our faces. I asked my uncle, “Why did they smear this nasty lotion on our face?” My uncle smiled, “You know, this is a forest so there are many insects. The lotion can protect them from being bit by the bugs because the bugs hate this smell.”

Suddenly, I saw many girls and guys dancing in a circle in the middle of the road. I tried to pretend I did not see them and passed by fast because I did not know how to dance. However, I felt my arm caught by someone. “Oh, my god,” I said to myself. I turned around and saw sincerity. I awkwardly joined the dancing people, who were jumping and singing. Gradually, I began to sing, waving my arms. After that, we watched the performance of the native people. As they lived a primitive life, fire was a basic necessity and they were fond of playing with fire. They burned their arms, licked the hot armor plates, and held firebrands in their mouth.

*Finally, we arrived at the sea, my dream place. The sea melted into the sky along the horizon, harmoniously.*

[...] Finally, we arrived at the sea, my dream place. The sea melted into the sky along the horizon, harmoniously. When I stood on the hot and soft sand, seawater flowed, like naughty kids, kissing my feet. Then we were brought to the “Tianyahaijiao.” Two huge steel grey stones stood there. Both of them were carved with big red Chinese characters. On one stone it read “Tianya,” which meant the edge of the sky, while the other one read “Haijiao,” which meant the rim of the sea. Jiang Heng told us the length of each stone was 60 meters and the height was 10 meters. He also introduced the legend about the two stones. Long time ago, a boy and a girl from two feudal families fell in love. Undoubtedly, family members of each tried to separate them. They did not want to give in to the families. Therefore, they fled to the southernmost part of Hainan Island, but the servants who were assigned to catch them found them and ran after them till the South Sea, where they just jumped for love. After that, two huge stones stood on the beach. It was said that the couple changed to the two stones and then they could stay with each other forever. From then on, the couples always use “Tianyahaijiao” to express their love. When they swear to each other, they will usually use the sentence, “I will follow you to the edge of the sky and the rim of the sea.” I think it is especially a worthwhile spot for couples to visit.

[...] I also visited many other places in Hainan Island, such as the Wanquan River, the Deer Looking Backward and so forth, and I really enjoyed them. The island is a paradise which “boasts excellent air quality, clean water and the chance for a healthy life style” (“Eco tourism in Hainan Island”). It is full of charm and mystery, no matter the nature or the history and culture of the island. We know that many places have already been polluted but Hainan has been developing eco-tourism for the past decade and still keeps its original beauty. Now it is already one of the most popular tour cities in China, and I believe it will have an even brighter future as a tourist attraction.

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## If You Don't Succeed at First, Try, Try, Try Again

### by David Manis

Anyone can walk down the board game aisle of his/her local toy store and scrutinize all the board games that are available for purchase. Possible games include *Monopoly*, *Battleship*, and *Sorry*. Word games, such as *Scrabble*, *Pictionary*, *Boggle*, and *Upwords*, are a great opportunity for families to have fun together while testing one's knowledge of words. "Try" is a very interesting word, because it is used at various times throughout the day. Whether we are practicing a sport, doing our homework, inventing something, or fixing our computer, there are various ways that the word "try" easily fits into our daily life.

Athletes are a prime example of how the word "try" applies to everyday activities. From Tiger Woods, to Derek Jeter, to Michael Jordan, all three are known for being dominant in their respective sports because they all try hard. Tiger Woods goes to the driving range and hits hundreds of golf balls over and over again, until he believes that his swing is how he wants it. Then, he will go to the putting green and putt for hours, trying to get the ball in the hole from various distances, until he is satisfied. Derek Jeter will practice fielding a ground ball over and over again, until he is finally ordered to leave the field. Michael Jordan practiced shooting the basketball thousands of times in his career, and as a result led his team to win six championships. For all three athletes, and numerous others, their desire to become the best in all aspects of their sport, forces them to try their hardest whether it is during a practice or a competition. If these athletes did not practice or perform at their full potential, they would not have become the world renowned celebrities that they are today.

Students are another excellent example of how the word "try" can be applied to everyday events. When students are instructed to complete an assignment, they are expected to complete it to the best of their ability. For example, if a student was assigned an essay, he/she would create many drafts before submitting the final version. Each rough copy would have multiple improvements and corrections, showing that various parts of the essay were changed from the original draft. The student may also bring the essay to his/her teacher so that he/she can review it. This shows the teacher that the student is trying to improve his/her essay so that he/she can earn the best grade possible.

Inventions are a part of everyday life that are often taken for granted. Electricity, the personal computer, and the television are three examples of inventions we often cannot live without yet take for granted every day. Life would be drastically different if these products had never been created. Thomas Edison, Bill Gates, and Philo Farnsworth all had to try multiple times before successfully creating their products ("The Time 100"). They constantly had to try different meth-

*In Scrabble "try" would be worth six points, while in Boggle it would be three points. No matter what game people play, they still need to "try" their hardest in everything they do, every day.*

ods to their building before everything finally worked properly. Through trial and error, inventions are reworked to include solutions to problems that may have appeared in the last trial. While inventors always try to make their invention seamless, that is not always the case.

The saying “nobody’s perfect” can apply to inventions as well as people. An example of this is the personal computer. Overall, the computer is an incredible invention while, at the same time, it can also be very annoying. They can be so sensitive and sporadic, always breaking down at the worst possible moments. From the possibility of getting a virus, to the risk of forgetting a password, computers can be a user’s best friend one day, and worst enemy the next.

Ironically, as I was writing this essay, one of my friends from high school instant messaged me, explaining that she forgot the password that is required for access into her account on her laptop. She was able to sign in as a guest, but normally she logs into her account, which is the administrator’s account. This meant that she could not change any passwords without being logged in as the administrator. I did my best to help her think of different ideas of what her password may have been, sounded like, or anything that would spark her memory of what it was. I asked her how she usually created her passwords, if anybody else might know the password, etc. Even with all the ideas I tried, she still could not think of it. She tried calling technical support but they were closed. The more serious problem was that all of her college application essays were saved in her account, which she could not access because she forgot her password. She even tried hacking into her own laptop, but that did not work either. While we both tried many different solutions, and none worked, I am sure that she will eventually try to log in again and remember her password.

In *Scrabble* “try” would be worth six points, while in *Boggle* it would be three points. No matter what game people play, they still need to “try” their hardest in everything they do, every day. Athletes, students, inventors, and people all over the world always “try” everyday. From playing a sport, to finishing an essay, to inventing something, the word “try” easily applies to any activity or task that needs to be accomplished. Although, not everyone likes the word “try.” In *Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back*, Yoda tells Luke Skywalker “Try not. Do. Or do not. There is no try” (“Memorable”). Looking deeper into Yoda’s quote though reveals the fact that in order to do, one must try his/her hardest each time he/she tries.

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## Words of Mass Destruction by Drewnesha Thompson



Throughout our lives we may have heard the phrase, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Is that a true statement, or is that something people say to help others cope with bad situations that involve the misuse of words? Many people grow up believing that words cannot have a negative effect on one another, but

in fact they do. People are not supposed to let what others say bring them down, but it is not that simple. In reality, verbally abusing someone can damage self-confidence and diminish self-esteem. It can have an everlasting effect on people. Words are constantly being used as weapons and that has a great effect on people in more ways than anyone knows.

It is difficult to disregard what people say about one another, especially growing up in a time when appearances are all that people judge us on. Walking through the hallways of school and getting visually inspected from head to toe is very common among peers; if we are not up-to-date with the latest fashion trend, we will become victims. Targeted by those in school who are considered the “best dressed” or known as the “popular kids,” students often get called names such as “bums” or even words like “ugly” simply because of their choice of attire. If students are more concerned about school work and less on appearance, students will get called “geeks,” “nerds,” or “dorks.” Intimidated by what others will think, students begin to distance themselves and become more and more anti-social as time passes. Threatened by the fingers pointed in their direction along with continuous stares so intense that it feels as if they will break under the pressure, students begin to create this shell where there is only room for them. Unknown by the students who are causing this problem, the hurtful words that they say penetrate deep as a stab wound would.

Getting crushed and pounded on by a heavy boulder is similar to being told we will never amount to anything; the only difference is there is no external bruising. Some people may think that what is said travels in one ear and out the other, but if the same thing is constantly drilled into a person’s head, one might actually believe that it is true. Many individuals who grow up in a household where they are constantly battered and butchered with words similar to how a baseball hit is right after a homerun that they begin to believe what they are told. Whether it is coming from a parent or guardian, being called “dumb” or “stupid”

*Words are constantly  
being used as weapons  
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because we are not performing as satisfactory as we should, can make us rebellious. In order to protect themselves, people could begin to use words as a defensive shield. Saying things like “*I hate you*” or “*I hope you die*” could become people’s way of mentally defending themselves from the harsh things which have been said.

People can endure only so much pain and a mixture of pressure and anger can fester up and cause something catastrophic; something that can damage a person mentally as well as physically. In many cases, people not only begin to hurt themselves, but they begin to hurt anyone who crosses their path. The misuse of words can give people ammunition to cause self-inflicted damages. I witnessed this when a childhood friend of mine used to get picked on frequently by the kids around my neighborhood, and was called *dirty* on occasion. As a result she began to cut herself and no one knew about this. There were even times when she would become so distraught, to the point where she would get violent with other people and not only hurt them, but herself in the process. She would jump on them and begin to punch and kick them and in the process she would scream “I am not *dirty*; I am the same as you!” She could not with stand the constant verbal harassment and this caused her to explode, which was something that no one was expecting. Her outburst made the individuals that were causing her pain to realize that they were truly hurting her. Ending this harsh treatment towards her was the best solution because she is now a better person.

Words are not only words, but they can become weapons as well. Most people think that what is said has little or no effect on the people they direct it towards, but it does. Words are invisible weapons that strike hard and have a lasting effect on people. They can cause people to feel insecure or even have self-hatred because of these negative words said to them. The more we watch what we say to one another, the more we can control how our words impact each other because words can destroy us.

## Tribute by Omar ELJamal

I remember the way you smile,

I remember the way we used to laugh, always together like parallel lines, with no graph.

We would always work together like a staff

I can't wait to see you sis I hope the day comes fast

I didn't cry the day you died sis I was in shock

I thought you wouldn't leave me I thought you were around the block

When they told me that you died my eyes opened and it felt like I swallowed a rock

I thought you were coming back sis, I wish I can bring back the clock

I wish that I didn't fight with you, I wish I could have been a little more nice to you and when

you asked me I wish I would have given the bike to you. Your favorite color was purple and

mine was blue, but since you left me sis I like the same color as you, so now I like purple too.

I've grown now, sis, I have a beard now, at night I try not to think of it I don't want to shed a tear

now

Even though I know you are in a better place now

I miss you Tasneem

