

TEENS **in** PRINT BOSTON

BOSTON TEENS IN PRINT JAN/FEB 2010™



Good hair, bad hair

The politics of follicles

On Page 3

▲ AFH painting by Marvin Bynoe

■ CYBER-BULL PAGE 8 ■ HAT'S OFF TO TOPPERS PAGE 22 ■ CHICK-FLICKS ARE FOR GUYS, TOO PAGE 23

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Cover Story

By Melissa Rodriguez // Staff Writer

Good hair equals white hair, Chris Rock insinuates in his recent documentary, “Good Hair.”

The movie shows that many black females are taking great pains to secure the straight, silky locks favored by society, including burning through their scalps – and their pockets – by the regular use of costly hair relaxer, known on the street as the “creamy crack” for its addictive pull. Some women had begun the practice when they were as young as three years old.

“The lighter, the brighter, the better,” is how actress Nia Long describes the glamorous goal in Rock’s film.

But local teens and hair professionals interviewed say the debate over good hair versus bad hair is not just a case of black and white. Many say that they relax, weave, or otherwise alter their hair out of convenience and style,

and not from a desire to look white. Meanwhile, they say, there are white women who wear dreadlocks or braids and go to tanning salons, and no one accuses them of trying to be black.

Francia Pierre, 15, from Boston Latin Academy, says that her natural hair is short, coarse, and curly.

“It’s hard to manage,” she says.

She says she relaxes or weaves her hair for one main reason: “To look good.”

Kara Blackwell, 15, from Boston Latin Academy, says she refuses to put harmful ingredients in her hair.

“Chemicals mess it up,” says Blackwell, wearing her hair naturally curly.

When she goes to the salon, all she lets her hair-dress-er do is to blow dry it.

Blackwell says she does feel that some black women may relax or weave their hair to look more white.

“I feel like it actually sounds kind of true,” she says.

Helen Roy, owner of Helen’s Hair Connections on the South End/Lower Roxbury border, says that, like many black women, she relaxes her hair, but does so to make it simpler to handle.

Curly hair might take a woman about 30 minutes to style in the morning, she says, whereas straight hair could take someone only about 10.

“Black hair is hard to manage,” says Roy. “They want to soften their hair, to comb it through easier.”

Roy says that she is definitely not trying to be something she isn’t.

“I’m born black,” she says, “so I love to be black.” ■

Hair pieces

T.i.P. staffers weigh in with their own histories of hairdos and don’ts:

Take it or weave it

By Shanasia Bennett // Senior Editor

I was born bald. I had only a tiny string of hair that held one barrette to inform people that I was a girl. My whole childhood, my mother struggled to get my hair to grow.

In first grade, she put single braids in my hair. Meanwhile, my older cousins and aunts had weaves, and I couldn’t wait to get one, too. In third grade, my mother put a perm into my hair. It immediately fell out. I got my first professional perm in fifth grade. I loved it, but I still couldn’t wait to get a weave. It was all I ever saw. It looked pretty to me.

My junior year in high school, the moment had finally come. My mother allowed me to get my first weave. Weave made me feel more secure, more beautiful, and helped hide my personal insecurities. I felt grown. I started spending \$100-120 a month on my hair. My older cousins and aunts never told me the ugly side of having a weave – such as having my scalp constantly itching, or how expensive it is.

Then, at 18 and while a senior in high school, we started to discuss our own identities -- and how others view us. I was tired of investing my hard-earned money on tracking hair, wigs, weave ponytails. I was sick of putting fake hair into my head. My mother always said that hair does not make a person. It took me over 13 years to realize that she was right. Recently, I let weave go, and embraced my natural look. I knew at that point that the hair on my head didn’t reflect who I am inside. I’m not afraid to show my hair to society and my peers because I understand that hair doesn’t make you, and it now doesn’t make me. ■

Teens in Print wants to know:

Where do you stand on the issue of good hair vs. bad hair? Do you straighten your hair with chemicals? Why or why not? Drop us an email with your thoughts to ric.kahn.jcs@cityofboston.gov. Please include your full name, neighborhood, and your date of birth (this won’t be printed but is just to verify your age at the time of publication) and we may run your letter in an upcoming issue.

Oh, natural

By Cheila Martinez // Staff Writer

Natural hair is the way any woman should go. But it is true that an Afro or a crazy ’do may not always get you a job, mainly because people are afraid of diversity.

I personally never chemically altered my hair. But I sometimes do go as far as grabbing the blow-dryer to straighten my hair. To me, that is still natural because I’m not putting chemicals in my hair; it’s just senseless heat.

Why would you want to strip your hair from its natural roots, as if you’re not beautiful the way you are? Be proud of what you have – either curly or straight or in-between. People are born with all different hair types and they should embrace what they have instead of assimilating to those they are not. Just be you. ■

Jamaican my hair crazy

By Roxanne Taylor // Senior Editor

Growing up in Jamaica, one thing I remembered about my childhood was using the hot comb to straighten my hair because it was so difficult to manage. Once I turned about eight years old, I started to get my hair braided for the style. When I moved to America in 2002, hair became a more important aspect of my life, especially when I reached seventh grade. People were so concerned about their hair even at a young age. Whether it was time to get it relaxed or to get it braided, girls became obsessed with their hair and that affected me to the point where I became obsessed with mine. I didn’t want anyone to see me without my hair in a perm, pressed with a hot comb, or braided with extensions. It was too nappy to handle.

In high school, it wasn’t much different. I went in feeling self-conscious and not willing to break the bonds of wearing braids all the time. I wondered why it was so common in the African-American culture to wear a weave, relaxed hair, or to get braids. And then I saw the movie by Chris Rock called “Good Hair.” It answered my questions and opened my mind to why some African-Americans want to get their hair straightened -- because they believe that it will get them ahead in life, because they are more accepted by the white world.

One thing that stayed in my mind after the movie was the statement Chris Rock made at the end. He was trying to get across the message: What’s on your head isn’t as important as what’s in it. I still love getting my hair relaxed because it’s easier to deal with. But I’m confident enough that if I want to wear my hair without braids or without it being relaxed, I’m okay with it. ■

“Frustration Nation” conversation

“Frustration Nation,” the cover story in our November/December issue, drew heated debate in the corridors and classrooms of BPS, as it described the harsh treatment of new immigrants at the hands of other youth. At Boston Community Leadership Academy, members of Kevin McCaffrey’s Writing Workshop for English Language Learners expressed their opinions in these blog entries:

Monica:
Although I grant that immigrant students should speak more English, I maintain that it’s of a great matter to be respected and to be respectful, and, therefore, I believe that immigrant students should not feel hostility or be afraid of going to school.

Vicky:
Although I am an immigrant, my English is not good, and I have an accent, I maintain that I never experienced all this violence. I think it all depends on the community. For example, in BCLA for me this article seems like it is from another place. Students often make fun of my accent, but it doesn’t bother me because I accept how I speak and I’m proud of it. Therefore, I believe that it all depends on the community and how we take the comments.

Ibrahim:
Although I agree with the fact that immigrant students are bullied in their respective schools, and sometimes in their community by some American kids, I must also say that not all immigrants are targets of bullying in their environment. So I think to make this ignorance of certain American kids stop, we should open their eyes on the issues that immigrants face every day of their lives so they can understand what it is to be an immigrant.

Hector:
Although I grant that bullying immigrants is bad, I maintain that anyone who lives in the United States gets bullied, and, therefore, they should resist like anybody else.

Okey:
The factor of assimilating a weaker culture in the predominant one can be a problem to face. Multilingual students are more secluded and forsaken by American students; however, both parts contribute to worsen those complications. If American students are more tolerant and if foreign students are more open and do not isolate, we could reach a balance and a point of social community with different cultures.

Uche:
While it is true that life in the U.S. might be initially difficult for some immigrants, it does not necessarily mean that

it is like that for everybody, and that the situation is not going to change with the passing of time while we adapt to a total new culture. Instead, I think that acts of racism and intolerance in the U.S. take place even among Americans themselves. It is not just an American vs. immigrant situation; violence is everywhere and we need to stop it.

Martial:
Although I grant that immigrant students should be careful when choosing their friends, they should be allowed to wear expensive clothes, or show off their iPods or cell phones and speak any languages they want without bullying from American students. I maintain that immigrant students have been the victims of a lot of bad, cruel, disrespectful, and selfish things from some American students. Therefore, administrators should take this matter into consideration by talking to the bully and the victim at the same time, so they can understand those immigrants aren’t here to take over.

Rakhi:
On one hand, I agree that immigrants are treated badly, beaten up for being quiet or saying no to the Americans. However, on the other hand, American students are jealous of immigrants, how they work hard and become successful in their countries. Immigrants take advantage of the opportunities and move forward, whereas some Americans just don’t care and make fun of others. ■

Love me/sext me/say what you want about me...uuuh, no!

By Cheila Martinez // Staff Writer

Sexting: The act of sending sexually explicit messages or photos electronically, primarily between cell phones. According to The Center for Parent/Youth Understanding, the majority of revealing images are being sent from females to males. For girls, the recipient is often a boyfriend. In some cases it may even be an ex-boyfriend, as an act of getting him jealous. If sent to a boyfriend, the female most likely wants to keep him interested, as in: “Maybe if I send this he’ll want to be with me more.” But, some teens wonder, is it really worth it?

Smucker Almonord, 15, from the John D. O’Bryant School of Math & Science, says that when he started to sext, “One thing led to another, and we started talking about her breasts and my privates – but I don’t consider myself a man-whore.”

Locally, the number of sexting incidents was not readily available. But nationwide, the promiscuous practice is out of control. Thirty-nine percent of teens interviewed said they sent or posted sexually suggestive messages, according to a recent survey by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, and CosmoGirl.com.

Girls view celebrities such as Vanessa Hudgens and Miley Cyrus as role models – and they had racy pictures surface worldwide. Just because you see a so-called star doing it doesn’t mean you have to, teens say. “A guy would only like you for sexual reasons,” says Almonord.

On the 2009 season premiere of the show “Degrassi” on TeenNick, Alli sent naked photos to her boyfriend Johnny hoping that it would make their relationship more public. But it backfired when, out of anger, he sent those

messages to one of his friends. As a result, Alli’s reputation was ruined.

In the real world, the consequences can be more serious. In one case, in September, a 13-year-old Florida girl sent a topless picture of herself to a boy she liked. The image got into the wrong hands. Schoolmates called her a slut. The teen ended up hanging herself in her bedroom.

Joe Kidd, New Media and 21st Century Learning Skills Coordinator for Boston Public Schools, says that when explicit information is found on a phone, “It should immediately be turned in to the administrator if confiscated in school.”

Some girls may think that you could keep a guy in the relationship if you do dirty things – such as sexting and maybe even physical sex when you’re not ready, just to either please him or to build a wall to block your insecurity.

Taylor Martin, 15, from the O’Bryant, says: “It’s really stupid, because obviously the person you’re

sending it to isn’t going to keep it to themselves. If a guy really loves and wants to be with you he wouldn’t ask you to take racy pictures. He’ll want to be with you for who you are inside. It’s not just a photo or a video of yourself; it’s a basic disrespect of your body.”

Jaquan Wallace 15, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, agrees. “Sexting is not a good way for teens to communicate to one another,” he says. “I would never do it.”

No one can protect your body but yourself. According to law enforcement authorities, it is illegal to force anybody under 18 to pose in a nude photograph for sexual gratification. So, stand up: DON’T PRESS SEND. ■



▲ AFH photo by Vicki Chin

Letter, go!

Dear Editors of Teens in Print,
As editors of a fellow publication for teens, we want to compliment T.i.P. on it’s timely, well-written features – not to mention your cool layout. We recognize the extremely talented teen writers who are featured each month in T.i.P. and want to commend your success.
Teen writers become the next generation of journalists, novelists, and great thinkers, and so, we wanted to inform you and your readers of our new online literary journal also designed to celebrate writing by and for teenagers: The Young Adult Review Network or YARN. We publish all kinds of creative writing for a teen audience – fiction and essays as well as poetry and an interview.
Part of what makes YARN special is that we want to discover great new teen writers, and publish you alongside the well-known writers you, and we, already admire. In our first issue, for instance, we’ve lined up Tina Ferraro, Alisa Libby, and Susan Beth Pfeffer. For more details on how to submit your writing, and to find out more about our very first issue, we hope you’ll visit our website at www.yareview.net, and fan us on Facebook!

Thanks for your time, and we hope to read your writing soon.

Sincerely,
Kerri Majors & Shannon Marshall
Editor & Assistant Editor of YARN



Was it something we said?
Or didn’t say?
Something with which you agree
– or disagree?

Let Teens in Print know what’s on your mind by sending us an email at ric.kahn.jcs@cityofboston.gov
Please include your full name, neighborhood, and your date of birth (this won’t be printed but is just to verify your age at the time of publication) and we may run your letter in an upcoming edition.
Thank you.

Sextual beings

Be smart: Think before you send pictures, knowing that nothing is private in cell phones or cyberspace. These photos can wind up in the hands of potential employers or college admissions officers.
Be strong: Don’t do anything you’re not comfortable with, like sending a naked photo.
Be responsible: Never ask someone to send nude photos to you, and never forward nude photos to others.

— Cheila Martinez

Sources: BPS and eSchool News

SeXXXting marks the spot

- Thirty-three percent of young people have been involved with sexting naked images.
- Girls are more likely than guys to share a nude image of themselves, 13 percent to 9 percent.
- Sixty-one percent of those who have sexted a nude photo or video of themselves say they were pressured to do so at least once.
- Twenty-nine percent of those who have sexted naked images of themselves sent them to people they knew only online, and had never met.

— Cheila Martinez

Source: September 2009 Associated Press/MTV study

Illicit sext

For teenagers in Massachusetts, sexting can lead to serious criminal charges that include:

• Possession of child pornography.
• Posing a minor in a state of nudity.
• Distribution of harmful matter to a minor.

– Cheila Martinez

Source: Berkshire District Attorney’s Office

Out of Africa

The mythology of misery

By Martial Romuald Ngankam // Contributing Writer

I believe that many organizations and people have portrayed Africa as the center of misery, instead of seeing the place from a different point of view, where Mother Nature represents certain peoples' spirits. Africa is a beautiful place, and one of the rare continents on the planet with a strong biodiversity.

I am from Cameroon. As a kid living in Africa, I never imagined youths being the product, and model, for some charities to use for expanding their boundaries. But while growing up, I started to understand the world I was in. The word "charity" is just for entertaining others and making people give money. Innocent babies are only living so that money can be given. All these babies don't always get the money from the charity, and most of them are left without

hope to taste the good their images were spread around to help collect. The money these charities collected is only to help the charities' pockets get bigger because the target is only a stranger: little babies they don't even know. As time passes, people's thoughts are getting worse about the place. Some even ignored that Africa's a continent and not a country.

Africa gets the attention from a one-sided perspective, and people are putting negative energy into a wrong cause. The charities are showing only one picture of Africa, making me feel sad to see people not able to provide something to eat for their families, sleeping with bodies exposed to disease. But this is not all of Africa. Producers are only filming places where hunger grows faster than a tree.

Instead of focusing on this dirty corner, they can show the real visage of the continent. I am sure people are dying and suffering everywhere around the world, and any documentary will turn out to be a déjà vu scene where people share poverty like breakfast. But if we open our eyes from this long dream we are stuck in, many of us will realize that we were blinded by the media. Charity shouldn't pretend to take care of needy people when using only the neediest as marketing.

Don't judge me wrong: donations help. Misery is in Africa, but it comes from somewhere. Instead of dealing with only misery, we should focus on corruption there. If we fight corruption in Africa, misery will be the same there as anywhere around the globe. Then, people will not have just one picture of Africa in mind. ■



▲ AFH painting by Uka Agwu

Columbus daze:

recasting the American icon as evil

By Tianee Geronimo // Contributing Writer

In history, we are all familiar with the story of how Christopher Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492 to search for new land and ended up in the Americas. It is said that Columbus was the first to find the Americas. He became an historical American figure.

While some of this is true, there are still many untold details behind this story to make you question whether Columbus is a hero or a villain. Many say that he is a hero because of the new skills he brought back to his homeland. Others feel that he was a villain for exposing the Indians to the harsh new life he gave them. For this reason and many more, I feel that Columbus is definitely not a hero, but a villain.

How much do you truly know about the story and how much of it is kept secret in favor of Columbus? Columbus is stated to be the first to discover the Americas, when in reality he was nowhere near that. The Indians were there before anyone else;

they migrated from Asia chasing the bison.

I believe that Columbus should not be given as much credit as he is. Sure, he did some good things for his society, and helped improve his country's way of living. But at whose expense? The rise of his homeland to him meant the destruction of someone else's homeland.

A lot of the information that is left out is done purposely to make this historical figure seem flawless. When Columbus went to the Americas, not only did he rob Indians of their things, but his army is also said to have enslaved them. Columbus and his crew brought many diseases to the Indians' land, such as chicken pox, malaria, yellow fever. Would you call a man with these characteristics America's historical figure?

I'm not alone when I say that I feel Columbus is not a hero and that he should not be celebrated on Columbus Day. Will you see Columbus for whom he really is, or will you cover up his flaws to make him seem like the hero he is not? ■

“I feel that Columbus is **definitely not a hero**, but a **villain**.”



▲ AFH painting by Billy Nunez

Courting trouble Cyberbullying upheld as free speech

By Katryna Mahoney // Senior Editor

Recently, I read an article about an eighth-grader in California who was targeted by a group of schoolmates with a “bad-mouthing” video posted on YouTube. When the victim told her school what happened, the bully was briefly suspended. In turn, the bully took the case to federal court, saying her free speech rights were violated. In a recent decision, the court agreed, and said she shouldn’t have been suspended at all.

After reading about this incident, I felt a couple of emotions, especially because cyberbullying is a topic I care about and want others to, as well. I felt bad for the eighth-grader who was picked-on, because it was an act of humiliation and unkindness. But I was also disappointed in the adults who showed little to no sympathy for her. Cyberbullying is an issue that happens a lot in the young-people-world, especially

now with all of this advancing technology, and it can be very harmful. I think older people, generally, don’t understand how hurtful it can be, which is why the cyberbully in this case only received a punishment of two suspension days.

Those opposing my opinion may believe that people have the right to say whatever they please, without considering others’ feelings. Yet I believe that at these times in our lives where some of us are “emotionally fragile,” we should be aware and caring of others’ sensitivities. Just because we have the right to say nasty things doesn’t mean that we should. In 2006, a Missouri teen committed suicide after hate-filled words were sent to her online.

Also, where are the parents and guardians? I think it’s time for people to step up and teach young people about the dangers of cyberbullying. ■

Cyberbullying



No argument here: Debate is great

By Gena White // Staff Writer

A recent study found that African-American students who participate in organized debates do better academically than those who don’t. Learning specialists in the Boston Public Schools believe that debating spurs even more widespread success. Below, New Mission High School sophomore and T.I.P. staffer Gena White writes about how being a member of the Boston Debate League has led her down a promising new path.

Debate. Most of us do it every day in our lives, though most do not do it as an organized sport. Yes, I would have never thought of debate as a sport, yet it is just as hardcore as any physical one.

Before joining the debate team, I would not have considered arguing such a heated competition, unless it benefited me. Usually, I was known as the athlete; arguing was just a side-thing that happened naturally to me. From verbal sparring with classmates, though, my English teacher realized how natural I was at it, and felt

that it would benefit the school’s debate team, as well as me.

Coming in to New Mission High School as a freshman, things were tough and my grades were rocky, which was the reason my teacher took the initiative to pursue me as part of the team. She also believed joining debate would make my grades skyrocket, and help me become an honor student.

At first, I did not want to do it. Yet if I did not decide to take my teacher’s prodding into consideration, I would not be the way I am today. Through debate, my skills have flourished in many areas that have helped

me in my journey to become a successful learner. It has helped me get better at analyzing things, such as documents and words that people say.

In debate, we have to learn how to evaluate the pieces of evidence we are given, to help create a strong case of arguments to beat an opponent. Through this, I have strengthened my interpretation skills, which has let me articulate my words in a more precise way that helps people better understand what I am saying.

All of these tools are very useful in academics, yet joining this debate team has also helped me socially. I can start con-

versations better, since I feel like a more confident speaker. Debate also helped me meet new people, from upper-classmen in my own school to people outside of it. It has made me a lot more open to creating friendships, because people may look a certain way, yet they are often not what they may seem.

Through hard work and many tournaments, I have become the successful student I am today. I owe many thanks to my coaches for pushing me to do this. In the end, debate has helped me discover my goal in life: to attend Harvard and become a lawyer. ■

Erica Corsano, fashionista

By Roytel Montero // Contributing Writer

For years, Erica Corsano was the self-proclaimed “bag lady of Boston.” Even on the rainiest and unappealing of days, Corsano could be found strolling through Saks or Neiman Marcus, shopping bags in hand, looking utterly absorbed by the inspiring fashion around her.

Months ago, I asked Corsano to meet me for coffee at Boston’s Copley mall. My objective? To learn more about her fascinating career. Now the editorial director of Stuff Magazine, Corsano was a freelance fashion writer, stylist, and consultant when I met her.

On the afternoon of our get-together, I caught up with this style maven at

Boston: “New York is the training ground for this business – the boot camp.” At this point, my eyes tripled in circumference and I could not wait to hear more.

It is impossible to mention fashion careers and not get images of dragon ladies and ruthless dream-shattering, as in “The Devil Wears Prada.” In the world of fashion and media, Corsano explained that it is indeed “cutthroat” and very easy to get caught up in the glamour and glitz of it all. However, she does not go without mentioning: “It’s really important to have a balance, because it can get really overwhelming. Like me – I meditate and I do yoga.” With a surprisingly nonchalant and inspiring undertone, she says, “At the end

“Our lives are insignificant unless we help each other. I believe it’s all of our callings in life.”

– Erica Corsano



▲ Photo by Mike Diskin

Neiman’s, one of my favorite stores. A fashion enthusiast, I could not help but be momentarily captivated by the display of men’s shoes at the entrance.

Corsano, 31, is upbeat and engulfed in an air of insouciance when she greets me at the top of the escalator. We dip into the nearest Starbucks. This is, of course, after we stop and chat about the Ferragamo and Louis Vuitton shoes in window displays.

Corsano was raised in a family where fashion was a passion. The sister of a fashion editor, she got her first fashion job in public relations at a major house of style, Bottega Veneta. Though it did not take much for me to become fascinated by her many lessons, my interest really piqued when she started talking about the difference between working in New York City and

of the day, it’s just clothing. I mean, it’s just shoes and bags here; we’re not curing cancer.”

All this stress does not come without some hefty rewards. Corsano enjoys the aspect of working in a smaller city such as Boston, as opposed to New York City, because she is what some would call the “wearer of many hats.” In a smaller city, with smaller publications, it is more likely that you will do many jobs and not be stuck in one role in a huge operation. As for her day-to-day life, her many tasks may include: “deciding which stories to pitch... meeting with local personalities and business owners...styling shoots with a team of people to create a fashion spread.” This is in addition to actually writing and editing.

In five years, Corsano wants to “be run-

ning a national women’s publication to inspire women across the country.” And in 10? She hopes to be the next Oprah. We share a laugh and I can see that ambition is indeed the most stylish accessory for someone to sport.

Along with big plans for fashion, Corsano enjoys doing non-profit work mentoring teens and working with senior citizens. Her demeanor takes on a more excited dimension when she says: “Our lives are insignificant unless we help each other. I believe it’s all of our callings in life.”

By the time the interview comes to an end, I can see again just why I want to

work in fashion.

Upon saying goodbye, I know this is certainly not our last time communicating. I am grateful for the opportunity I have been given to meet such a role model. Exiting the mall through the same doors I entered a little over 30 minutes prior, I look in the mirror without hesitation and see myself in a new light. I am capable and ready to make my dreams come true. As I dart through the night’s pouring rain into the subway, I just know I am on my way to the world of dragon ladies and ruthless dream-shattering and, for some reason, that does not scare me one bit. ■

Teens say: Get it through your head... we need more sex-ed!

By Shanasia Bennett // Senior Editor

“You gon’ think I invented sex.”

That is one of the lines in hot R&B singer Trey Songz’s recent single, “Invented Sex.” The song is very bold and out there, helping make having sex even more the It thing to do for youth.

“There are many messages about sex that youth are seeing daily and talking about now at younger ages,” says nurse practitioner Jane Tuitt of the Codman Square Health Center.

According to the 2009 Boston High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 54% of Boston Public Schools students have had sexual intercourse, but only 39% used a condom during their most recent time. This means that many youth are not protecting themselves enough.

Among the reasons: “My boyfriend doesn’t like them.” “I don’t like the way they feel.” “They make me itch.” “I’m allergic.”

Another reason, some teens say, is that they are not getting enough sex-ed, or that they simply do not know who to go to for information and advice. Most Boston teens interviewed said they have only had sex education between grades 6 and 10, and that it just wasn’t enough. One student said that from middle school until the ninth grade, she did not receive any sex-ed at all.

To help tackle this problem, this year BPS kicked off a comprehensive sex-education curriculum known as Get Real. The program, which teaches everything from self-awareness to responsible decision-making skills, is in 19 middle schools, and aims to introduce sex-ed to kids at a younger age. “Some children are going to through puberty early, which means they need education earlier,” says Barbara Huscher Cohen, a health-education specialist at BPS.

One thing for sure is the importance of getting your annual checkups. For the STI chlamydia, 75 percent of infected women show no symptoms, according to the federal government. So if you’re not getting checked out, you could be giving your partner an STI and not even know it.

Some teens think the best way to avoid problems is to just not have sex at all until marriage.

“One of the reasons it’s good to be a virgin is because...you don’t have to worry about pregnancy or getting an STI or STD,” says Gaelle Pierre, 18, of the Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers.

Waiting until your wedding night to have sex may be the safest method, but there are many others, including male and female condoms. So, before you lay in that bed, use your head and remember to protect yourself. ■



▲ AFH photo by Rich Philippe

AP in the H-u-b

By Roxanne Taylor // Senior Editor

What if you could choose classes in school that you wanted to take, and get college credit if you passed them? Sounds interesting, right, but are you aware these classes even exist? If not, you’ve probably never heard of Advanced Placement courses, AP for short.

Until recently, many Boston Public Schools students could not take AP courses. But that is changing: According to BPS, the number of juniors and seniors enrolled in AP jumped from 1,582 five years ago to 2,304 today.

Now, thanks to a \$2.4 million federal grant, BPS hopes to expand the reach of AP even further, city officials recently announced at the John D. O’Bryant School of Math & Science.

Nigel Robinson, 17, a student at the O’Bryant, said at the school’s October assembly that he believes AP helped him a lot. “[I’ve] learned what it takes to challenge yourself,” he said.

Students who pass an AP exam in

high school are three times more likely to complete college, officials said. To encourage that, some students can earn privately-funded cash bonuses for passing AP tests

But don’t get confused. AP classes are tough. “AP classes push students to work harder than they ever have before,” Michelle Boyle, an AP English teacher at English High School in Jamaica Plain, said at the O’Bryant event.

The O’Bryant is one school that offers AP on campus. But, for example, this can’t be said for Fenway High School, according to Melissa Duggan, spokeswoman for BPS. However, through Emmanuel College, Fenway students can take advanced courses there.

The federal money is expected to support work in 32 high schools and 14 middle/K-8 schools – a good sign for BPS kids who want to go to the best colleges in the U.S.

As Mayor Tom Menino said at the O’Bryant: “These are very valuable days to you. Don’t waste them.” ■

The ABCs of AP

- BPS today offers 136 AP classes, a 37% increase from 2004-2005, when there were only 99.
- BPS high schools have AP courses in 28 subjects.
- Over the past several years, BPS has trained 281 teachers, headmasters, and guidance counselors in AP instruction and placement through the College Board Institute.

– Roxanne Taylor

Source: BPS

BSAC BUZZ

By Raychel Wingert // Contributing Writer

This year in BSAC (Boston Student Advisory Council), we are working on three main projects. They are: teacher-to-student constructive feedback, student involvement in teacher hiring, and the BPS homework policy. I’ve talked about all of these projects and more in previous articles, but in this issue I would like to focus on homework.

What is homework? The dictionary definition for homework is “preparatory school work done outside school (especially at home).” That being said, homework is to prepare you for school work that is being done in your classes. This is a time when you are able to take the work home from class, and review the lessons you

learned in school in a quiet environment. Homework is not supposed to be a test. It is when you are allowed to make mistakes, and learn from them to do better on the tests and quizzes.

We feel that homework should not be graded on whether the answers are right or wrong, but on the amount of effort you put in. For example, have you ever spent hours on a couple of problems in your math homework, and gotten a zero for a grade because you weren’t sure how to use the formula? This is not fair to the student. Homework is an assessment to see where you are in your learning.

Another problem BSAC is working on with school officials is to make sure the homework being given is not just

busy work, but allows the student to actually be thinking. In every homework assignment, we believe critical thinking should be involved. This allows students to learn and use their brains on a different level. For example, has your teacher ever given you homework that has nothing to do with the lessons that were done in class that day? How are you supposed to know what to do and how to go about the problem if you have never seen anything like it before?

Also, each subject (not including Advanced Placement or Honors) should only take you about 30 minutes to an hour. I don’t understand why one teacher will tell you to read five chapters and have an outline summary on each

due in class the next day, knowing she is not your only teacher, and that it will take you hours to complete the assignment.

Lastly, BSAC believes that homework shouldn’t count for more than 20 percent of your grade – except for longer research projects. As high school students, we all know that there aren’t enough hours in the day to do all your homework, go to extra-curricular activities and sport practices, and still find time to eat, sleep, and breathe!

If you are interested in joining BSAC or getting more information about our work, please contact Maria I. Ortiz at mortiz@boston.k12.ma.us or at 617-635-8079 ext 104. ■

Want to be a student reporter?
Join T.i.P. Please call us at
617-541-2651



DANIEL ALFARO
Celebrity crush: Jennifer Aniston
New Year's resolution:
Not to come 17 times late to school anymore
Favorite brand of jeans: Ecko
Text or AIM: Text!



SHANASIA BENNETT
Celebrity Crush: Jeremih
First song you learned the words to: "Barney Theme Song"
Favorite scent: Burger King food
Favorite brand of jeans: Levi's



LADONYA BUCHANAN
Celebrity crush:
A-Rod (He's secretly my bro...LOL)
First song you learned the words to:
"Greatest Love of All," Whitney Houston
Favorite brand of jeans: Hydraulic
Quesadillas or tacos: Taquitos LOL



PAIGE CARRUTHERS
Celebrity crush: Johnny Depp
New Year's resolution: Run five miles.
Unlikely, but I'm staying optimistic
Favorite scent: Citrusy smells
Quesadillas or tacos: Yo quiero Taco Bell



TYLER COHEN
First song you learned the words to:
"Rockin' Robin"
New Year's resolution:
To get a third dog
Favorite scent: Pine
Quesadillas or tacos: Quesadillas, no doubt!



JOEY DICHARA
Celebrity crush: Mr. Peanut
First song you learned the words to:
"Bohemian Rhapsody," Queen
New Year's resolution: To stop spending
money at those evil movie theaters
Favorite brand of jeans: Bullhead skinnys



XHERSI LAKA
Celebrity crush:
Any Victoria's Secret model
New Year's resolution: Don't know yet
Pizza or Chinese food: Pizza
Favorite brand of jeans: Lucky

TEENS
in
PRINT

MEET THE STAFF

Boston **Teens in Print** unites the city's teens to create
an outlet to inform, communicate, and provide
positive change through written expression.

Write for Teens in Print!

➤ **SEND** your essays, letters, articles,
commentaries, poems, pen-and-
ink drawings or cartoons, and photos.

➤ EMAIL submissions to
ric.kahn.jcs@cityofboston.gov
➤ Send them as either MS Word
attachments or email messages.

➤ Provide your name, age, grade
and school. You must attend one
of the Boston Public high schools.

➤ **FORMAT** your writing

➤ Double spaced
➤ Times New Roman, 12 point font
➤ In the upper left corner—your name,
Contributing Writer, and a title
or headline

➤ Whatever you submit has to be
YOUR OWN CREATION. We only print
original work. Please write "this is
my own creation" next to your name.

➤ You will not get your work back.
KEEP A COPY for yourself.

➤ Teens in Print reserves the **right to**
EDIT your work for length, content,
or appropriateness.

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Send submissions by mail to:
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c/o WriteBoston
7 Palmer Street,
Roxbury, MA 02119

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TOM LEU
First song you learned the words to:
"Happy Birthday"
New Year's resolution:
To be more positive
Quesadillas or tacos: Tacos
Text or AIM: AIM



KATRYNA MAHONEY
Celebrity crush: Larenz Tate
First song you learned the words to:
Probably some Barney song
New Year's resolution:
They never work for me
Favorite scent: Fresh air



CHEILA MARTINEZ
Celebrity crush: Taylor Lautner
First song you learned the words to:
"Twinkle Twinkle Little Star"
New Year's resolution:
To go to as many open mic nights as I can
Favorite scent:
Pink by Victoria's Secret



KAMEISHA MOBRAW
Celebrity crush: Tristan Wilds
New Year's resolution: To let go
Pizza or Chinese food: Both
Text or AIM: Text



MELISSA RODRIGUEZ
Celebrity crush: Leonardo DiCaprio
First song you learned the words to:
The "Chicken Dance"
New Year's resolution:
To try new things and meet new people
Favorite scent:
Outside after it rains



DAJA TAYLOR
Celebrity crush:
Johnny Depp, Taylor Lautner
First song you learned the words to:
"This is Halloween"
New Year's resolution:
To be a better person
Pizza or Chinese food: Chinese



ROXANNE TAYLOR
Celebrity crush: Trey Songz
First song you learned the words to:
Jamaica's National Anthem
Pizza or Chinese food:
General Tsao's Chicken
Favorite scent:
Sky Blue, Dolce & Gabbana



GABRIEL WARD
Celebrity crush: I have a ton, but when
I met them, they were all short
First song you learned the words to:
"The Batty Rap"...Fo' shizzle
Quesadillas or tacos:
Both, with asparagus
Text or AIM:
Text? AIM? What is this gibberish?



TREVOR WARD
First song you learned the words to:
The "Pokemon Theme"
New Year's resolution:
Less video games
Favorite scent: Rotisserie turkey
Favorite brand of jeans: Dickies



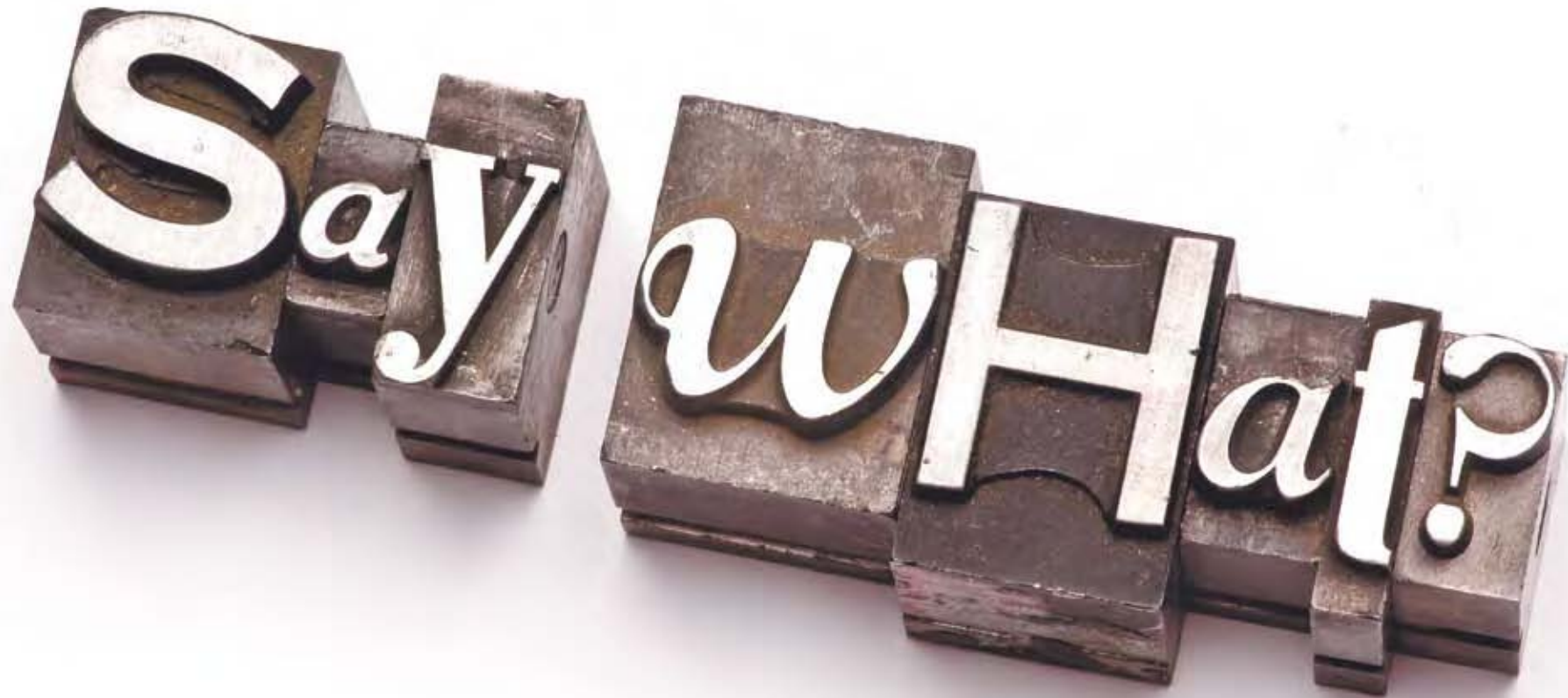
GENA WHITE
Celebrity crush:
Taylor Lautner, got the werewolf fever
New Year's resolution: Give up soda,
my one true weakness
Favorite scent: Freshly-done laundry
Text or AIM: Neither. I don't like virtual
hugs! I like the real deal

The tragedy in Haiti



We know that many of you have been
affected by the devastation in Haiti. In
our next issue, we plan on publishing
essays from the classroom about the
unfathomable destruction of people
and places in your homeland.

We hope that you will be able to
contribute your own writings so that
other teens will better understand
the true situation both here and there.
If you want, please send us a
word document, or an email, to
ric.kahn.jcs@cityofboston.gov,
and we will get back to you.
Our thoughts are with you all.



Ballistic linguistics

Getting the hang of slang

By Trevor Ward // Staff Writer

Is slang being abused to the point where people can't understand each other? That's a very good question, and it all depends on what one would think is too much. "Yo, that game is so whack, it's cold." Has slang actually escalated to become a problem? "It all depends on who you talk to," said Zachary Grasso, 15, a student from Boston Latin School. "It can be over-used by some people, but not very much by others. It matters where you are or what school you're in." But that's not the opinion of Arivu Anukanth, 16, another student at BLS. "I don't think it's being over-used. It's just a way for people to express themselves." Seemingly, not a lot of teens think slang is a problem, and that is just as it should be.

In the long span of recorded history, scientists and historians have discovered that there have almost always been forms of written or spoken communication, also

known as language. With every formal language there is bound to be an informal language to go with it. In terms of English, most teens today know what other teens are talking about, or at least they should.

Now, slang isn't just something that appears right away in languages. No, it has to form over time. Slang is most often formed by "cliques" of people, and teens often tend to hang out like that. That just strengthens the odds of slang forming. "It tends to be an 'in-group' kind of language associated with younger people," said Charles Meyer, 57, a professor of applied linguistics at UMass/Boston. "It's also used as a means of establishing themselves as part of a peer group."

But that's just the tip of the iceberg. With the rise of Internet use, words even form from typos. The term "PWN" originated a few years back, but what a lot of people didn't know was that PWN was a typo of another slang word,

"own," which meant in that context: "To win or defeat an opponent in a landslide," or if you prefer urbandictionary.com's definition: "To beat someone in a game in a manner that displays a much greater level of ability." But own is not a new word on its own (no pun intended), but a form of synonymous slang. Synonymous slang means it is an official English word used in a different context than its original definition, for example "That movie was bomb." In that sentence, bomb becomes the synonymous word as it is not being used in its original context, but as a replacement word for awesome. Synonymous words are some of the most common types of slang formed in groups of teens.

Slang can often be confusing, but it is also a sign that language is always forming and changing. Nothing in this world is forever, and language is just proof of that. So as far as we've seen, slang has, and always will be, an important part of language. ■

On dawgz, we're dumb sick of hearing that word, kid!

By LaDonya Buchanan // Senior Editor

A picture is worth a thousand words, but what are those words worth?

Words sometimes determine one's emotions. Sticks and stones can break people's bones but they say that words can't hurt their feelings. Well, some words hurt feelings while others hurt ears. Teens in Print went Downtown to do a survey, and we asked: "What word or phrase are you tired of hearing?"

"Kid – Mad people say it. A 12-year-old walked up to me and said, 'Wassup, kid' "?

– Hamza Aitirhli, 18, East Boston

"That's my {N-WORD} – It's rude and it shows signs of inner oppression."

– Shayla Bruce, 16, Dorchester

"I DON'T KNOW – That's the phrase. People use it as an excuse."

– Diane Joseph, 16, Mattapan

"On dawgz – It's annoying."

– Crisonis Marte, 15, Hyde Park

"{THE N-WORD} – It's immature and tiring."

– Pablo Ovalles, 17, Roslindale

"Dumb as an inappropriate adjective – Everybody's saying it and it doesn't make any sense."

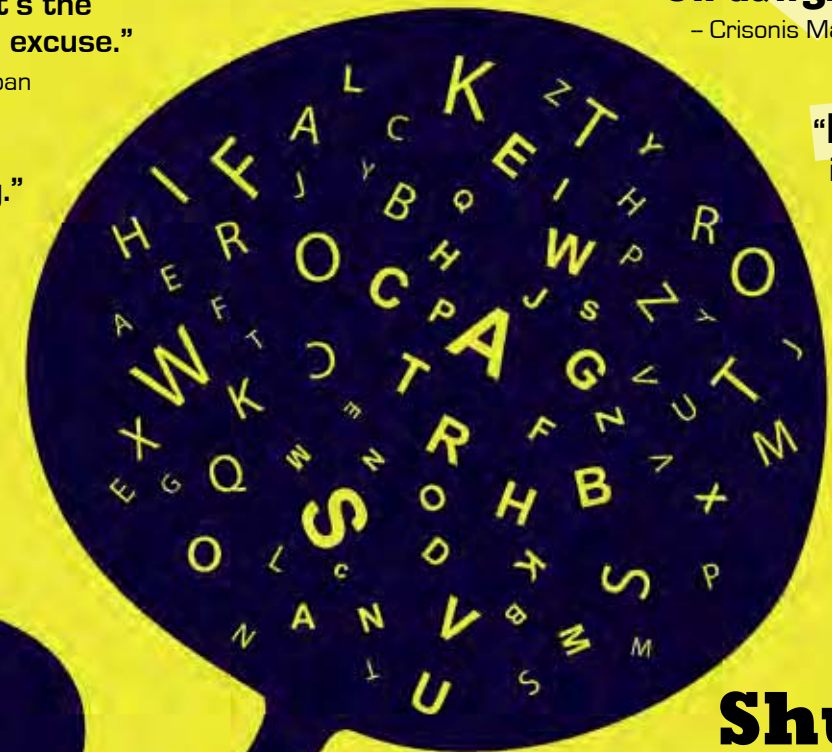
– Jessica Charles, 16, Mattapan

"Rash – The meaning isn't used properly."

– Brianna Millor, 15, Dorchester

"Salted – It's a seasoning and they misuse it."

– Ashlee Johnson, 19, Roxbury



Shush!

What's the word on the words you're sick of? You may be sick of other words, but these are the words that Americans are most sick of:

- Whatever.....47%
- You know.....25%
- It is what it is.....11%
- Anyway.....7%
- At the end of the day...2%
- N/A.....8%

– LaDonya Buchanan

Source: The Marist Institute for Public Opinion

Bored in Boston

No money...no problem

By Tyler Cohen and Gabriel Ward // Staff Writers • Photographs by Joey DiChiara

How many times have you been caught in the middle of Boston with little or no money? This seems to happen a lot with Boston teens; you don't feel like going home, but you're incredibly bored when you get in town. One can think of something to do, but it's usually expensive or inaccessible. But what if you had a list of things to do without a heavy cost? We had a mission to create such an inventory. It was a brisk and breezy Wednesday when we set out on our journey. Here's the free and cheap stuff we came up with.

The Computer Clubhouse

To get to the Computer Clubhouse, we took the Green Line to Science Park, and walked to the Museum of Science. On the second floor next to the garage was a door where you could pick up a phone and ask for the code to get in. When we walked through, the first things that caught our eyes were the clusters of computers lined across the walls. Straight ahead was a green screen. At the Clubhouse, you can be a game designer or an editor, with all the top notch professional software, and at absolutely no cost. But probably the best aspect of the Clubhouse is the friendly and helpful staff and mentors.

Game Stop Demos

When we got to Downtown Crossing, we felt like playing a good video game. We simply walked into Game Stop on Winter Street, and waited for our turn at the "Super Smash Bros. Brawl" stand. After getting to the controls, we played quite the heavy battle; well, not really, the entire session was just a can of pure wup-ass from one to the other.

Boston Common

As we walked toward Park Street, the overwhelming open space surrounded us. There are lots of things that we did in the park.

We think the fresh air can get to your

head, because most of it was just goofing off. We saw a huge and majestic tree, ripe for the climbing. After climbing as high as we could, we jumped down.

Chasing squirrels is a great way to blow off steam, especially since they're impossible to catch. But we almost did. After getting inches away, we came to the realization that rabies does exist in this world, so we backed away, and proceeded to do something else. After doing some flying high fives, we played leap frog, and, may we add, failed epically at doing so. Clearly just being on the Common makes you want to run around like you have a bee on you, but it's a great way to spend your day having fun and exercising.

Public Garden

It's pretty relaxing and conveniently placed next to Boston Common and Copley. The Public Garden has great things to do. We began by sitting on the docks where the swan boats take off. It's calming, stress free, and it has a great view. Another fun activity is to just join a random jogger who's running by. It was awkward at first, but the guy that one of us ran with got over it. It's a great way for exercising. The garden is a peaceful place, which is great for walking your dog, and ending a long day. But we're far from done.

Hats and Sunglasses

I don't think it really matters where you go – Downtown Crossing, Faneuil Hall, or Copley – you can have some fun anywhere. Going into Filene's Basement on Boylston Street to try on hats was what we did next. Odd, good-looking, or straight-out ugly, there's a hat for everybody. Finding it was a blast. We went through bunches of hats and finally spotted a couple of good ones. After putting those down, we proceeded to the sunglasses. They're not that great at Filene's, but if you go to Newbury Comics – on Newbury Street or at Faneuil Hall – it's quite the experience. Newbury Comics had around 100 different pairs of sunglasses, shutter shades, and fake



Gabe and Tyler start their journey.....



The great squirrel chase.....



Sittin' on the dock of the bay.....

“Faneuil Hall may *seem expensive*, but when you think about it, it's a good place to *just sit down and witness civilization.*”

glasses. Just finding an actual pair of real sunglasses is almost impossible, which makes it fun. There's 3-D glasses, Cyclops glasses, one way mirror glasses – enough to make your head spin. If you take a camera, you can capture the whole experience and show it to your friends.

The Inner Harbor Ferry

We used the Inner Harbor Ferry to get from Long Wharf, which is right next to the Aquarium, to the Navy Yard, which is in Charlestown. It's a 10-minute ride that was relatively smooth. The Harbor air was brisk and refreshing. At night, it has the best lit-up view of the city, and during the day you can see the planes really close up as they take off from Logan Airport. Although your student pass doesn't get you on, it only costs \$1.70, and all link passes work. This is an exciting way to travel, as long as you don't get sea sick.

Faneuil Hall

Going through Faneuil Hall may seem ridiculous without money, but you'd be surprised. There are a lot of things you can do without cash there. Just walking in, we could see all of the street performers, from drummers to extreme-stunt-artists. There were enough people to keep us entertained all day. After the street performers, we took a little stroll through the food court and grabbed a bunch of free samples. We went outside to the carts and shops and went window shopping for a few. Faneuil Hall may seem expensive, but when you think about it, it's a good place to just sit down and witness civilization.

After our trip, the main conclusion we came to is that a fun day doesn't depend on how full your wallet is. It seems there's fun in all corners of Boston; you just might need a friend to help you find it. ■



The end.

William Shakespeare



▲ AFH photo by Rob Gibbs

Under the tutelage of mentors from the Actors' Shakespeare Project, six students from the Boston Arts Academy recently performed alongside ASP pros in a production of The Bard's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," at Midway Studios in Fort Point Channel. While Artists for Humanity's Rob Gibbs and Andy Cardosa painted the backdrop, three of the BAA youth chronicled their experiences before the curtain went up on their budding thespian careers.

The audition

By Lenise Farrier // Contributing Writer

During theatre class, we got introduced to "A Midsummer Night's Dream." It sounded like a fun play, especially the fairy part. I really wanted to be a fairy, because my thoughts of them were how they are pretty and fun and exciting, as in Peter Pan.

The day of the auditions came, and as I was waiting to be called I saw different people working on their monologues. I started having doubts about whether I was actually as good as them. I thought to myself, "Who am I kidding? I will never get a role as a fairy. I am probably just not the fairy type."

As it was my turn to go into the audition room, I wasn't nervous at all because I knew I wouldn't get the role, and I had no idea there were other roles available. The direc-

tor explained to me what the scene was about. So I took a minute and just placed myself in that fairy position and just went and did the monologue. All along I thought that the fairies were these beautiful magical creatures, but they were just like normal people with different attitudes. After I did my monologue, the director told me I was good and said I could leave. I just knew I didn't get the part.

The following week came and I didn't bother looking at the board to see if I got the part. When I went to theatre class, the teacher said: "If you got into the Actors' Shakespeare Project, stand up." Then she looked at me like: "What are you doing? Stand up!" I was confused because I didn't know that I got a role.

So I left the classroom and checked the board. It said,

"WALL," and I walked back in the classroom and said, "Are you kidding me? I am a wall." Everyone laughed. The teacher said that it was a big role, and that I had more lines than the fairies. I am like, "So I am a talking wall," and once again everyone laughed.

I went home telling people that I was cast as a wall. Later on in the week, we had a meeting with the director and he explained each role. Turns out that I was a mechanical named Snout the tinker. In the play within the play, I star as the Wall.

I thought about it and decided this was much better than just being a wall. It wasn't the role that I was looking forward to getting, but it is the role I decided I wanted to keep. ■

The actor's life

By Nelson A. Martinez Jr. // Contributing Writer



▲ AFH photo by Rob Gibbs

Acting. It may seem like a simple and fun thing to do, and for the most part it is when you're doing it with friends or family. But a lot changes after a certain amount of obstacles are put in front of you – for example, something, like, I don't know, maybe an audience. Now, if you don't feel even that makes you nervous, how about doing scenes with many enthusiastic and very-trained professionals? This is what I have been doing for two weeks now, and I have realized how scary it can be to work with experienced actors. So, I want to help you learn how to get down to business with the pros.

DAY ONE

I entered a room just after coming from school auditions, and I felt weird and very nervous, but excited, as well. As I stepped through the doors, I saw the entire cast just watching me enter. My stage manager came up to me and said: "You're late." My heart dropped and I felt like crap but, hey, there has to be a way of making this right, and there is. We are teens. We make mistakes. Don't let that be your excuse. Don't be late, but if you are, make up for it by explaining why to your director.

A good friend of mine from Emerson College (a really well-known theatre school) told me that the best thing that a director can tell you on the first day of rehearsal is to tone it down; start with a big block of ice and chip at it slowly until it's a beautiful ice sculpture.

DAY TWO

This was rough and it will always be rough because you think you're ready, but you're not. You need to make sure that you keep your energy high so that you don't look out of place more than what you probably already do.

DAY THREE AND BEYOND

These days will be smoother because, by now, you can actually go about creating a unique and interesting character. I play Snug the joiner/the Lion. Make sure to listen and take notes about what you are told. Directors want sponges who are looking to absorb knowledge, not rocks stuck on one idea and unwilling to change. Everything that is said to you goes beyond the theatre world. It's life. ■

The moth that roared

By Avante Lopez // Contributing Writer

Working with the Actors' Shakespeare Project has been such a great experience. ASP puts a unique and urban twist to "A Midsummer Night's Dream." I played the character of Moth, a jittery, active, tough, and restless fairy.

On the first day of rehearsal, I knew that it was going to be interesting. Even though the times were a bit long, the great things going on were very beneficial to me. The first rehearsal was a blast. We did a read-through of the play and I never expected the actors to put so much feeling and energy into it. They had connections with one another as if they were actually performing the scene. Their focus and commitment helped me get fully dropped into the scene and my character.

As a small role, I was not expecting much. But my character was put in many times. I always

got to move around in the space, and I had a good feel for the environment of the play. Also, I never expected to pick out my own costume: baggy green sweatshirt with the words "Rebel Spirit" on the back, bright yellow shirt with a purple parrot on it, ripped jeans, and sneakers. Choosing my own costume allowed me to have a better understanding of my character.

In rehearsals, I did many acting exercises that helped me find out how my character walked and talked and interacted with others. The thing that I definitely did not expect was practicing dance routines. In a Shakespearean play? It was an interesting idea to put in a Shakespearean play, and I definitely enjoyed breaking a sweat! Overall, the rehearsal process gave me a sneak peek into what working in a professional play is going to be like, and I hope to take part in more of them in the future. ■



▲ AFH photo by Rob Gibbs

Video venture

Led Zeppelin rises again in fantasy game

By Xhersi Laka // Staff Writer

Led Zeppelin first formed in 1968 as The New Yardbirds in a room below a record store on Gerrard Street, in London. Led Zeppelin is a god above bands, but the group’s songs rarely get put into any Guitar Hero or Rock Band video games.

That’s why I decided to make a fantasy video game called “Guitar Hero Led Zeppelin.” This is going to include all the albums Led Zeppelin has ever produced. Obviously, the game will have a story mode. During the story mode, you will be able to visit places where famous concerts took place. An example would be the very first concert of the 1971 UK tour, in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Another place you could visit is Knebworth, England, where the band played a festival in ’79. Last, but not least, you will be able to check out Zeppelin at the world famous Madison Square Garden, in New York City.

To advance in the story mode, you will have to beat the songs in order. In the game, the songs will be placed as they appear on each album, and the albums will be listed in order yearly. ■



▲ Photo courtesy ledzeppelin.com



▲ Photo courtesy ledzeppelin.com



Animenia

By Daniel Alfaro // Staff Writer

Every year, thousands of teens gather at the Hynes Convention Center for Anime Boston, a three day extravaganza of Japanese anime, manga, and pop culture. Though the eighth annual Anime Boston doesn’t take place until April 2 to 4, it is already receiving much anticipation as a happening that promises to deliver fun, shopping, and entertainment.

Japanese animation is very popular in America; it is practically the equivalent of cartoons here. Another attraction are Japanese manga, or graphic novels, some of which have been turned into popular animated shows in America such as “Pokémon,” “Yu-Gi-Oh!,” and “Dragon Ball Z.”

Anime Boston holds events that promote interaction of fans, panel discussions, and Q & As with creators. There are other experiences such as an anime music video contest and game shows. Many fans participate in the “Masquerade,” a series of skits depicting characters from different anime or manga.

“I love the masquerade because it’s just funny to see skits and laugh at how the characters are represented,” said Priya Ban, 15, of Boston Latin Academy.

It is customary to arrive with a creative costume, and an award is given to the best outfit. If you’re into anime and games, you are bound to make friends.

“We all have a common interest; we all know that,” said Tony Chan, 17, from City on a Hill charter school.

Chan has attended every Anime Boston, and has participated in tournaments.

“There is competitive play like Tekken, Super Smash Bros.,” said Chan.

There is also a flea market, at which vendors sell limited-edition merchandise at low prices. It is a great way to save cash, and to be able to get an upper hand on early-release-edition merchandise.

“I have a collection of a lot of different mangas,” said Jivani Cassar, 18, from the John D. O’Bryant School of Math & Science.

Anime Boston caters to the interest of hardcore fans.

“For a brief moment,” said Cassar, “you are able to step outside that box that is everyday life.”

Please check www.animeboston.com for pricing information. ■



▲ Art by Derek Taylor

“Japanese animation is **very popular in America**; it is practically the **equivalent of cartoons here**. Another attraction are Japanese manga, or graphic novels...”

The Know-it-All

By Gabriel Ward // Staff Writer

Dear Know-it-All,

This holiday season was awful! I spent \$3,000 on my family, and for what? I simply can't keep up with this new generation; every gift I give to these kids they say is "lame." For crying out loud, I got my niece, Alexis, the most expensive doll on the market, and she sighs and says it's not the one she asked for. I bought my nephew, Robert, one of the latest and highly recommended video games, and he says it's boring. And on top of that, I bought Ricky, my 14-year-old son, a \$1,000 laptop, and he looks at me, complaining, "Toshiba?"

What the hell is wrong with these kids?! I sit in line from midnight until 4 in the morning on black Friday, in the freezing cold, spending my past three paychecks, and they don't feel a grain of gratitude?! Even now, they're still complaining. If I got those gifts when I was a kid, I would be thrilled! I need help here. Is there any way I can make this all better?

– Name Not Given

Well "Name Not Given" – if that's your real name – I have a couple of comments to make. First of all, this new generation isn't "Rapidly Moving Forward," "Fast Thinking," or "Technologically Inclined." They're just picky. So what do you do with them? Simple, call them brats and don't get them anything.

That being said, they had some pretty good points. Perhaps little Alexis didn't like the doll because she didn't know where it was from. You know, 83 percent of toys come from China, and we all know that gives her a 67 percent chance of touching one that contains a fatal substance. And don't you know that this generation isn't easily excited anymore; they won't get a rush from a stupid video game. If you really wanted to give Robert the excitement of a video game, you should have dropped him in a parallel dimension with a level-seven laser gun and the keys to a dungeon full of radioactive aliens. He'll have a blast! And Toshiba, really, Toshiba? Next time, why don't you do a little research?

But now to get to the actual question: How can you make it all better? If you must buy them all something, make it a roller coaster. Don't even question it. Don't have money? Inherit some. Don't have space? Find it. Don't have a permit? Get one. By the end of the month, if they get a roller coaster, they might actually think of you as a somewhat adequate person.

– The Know-it-All ■



That's all folks: Toppers assistant Krista Watson shows off the inventory.

▲ AFH photo by Mattaya Fitts

Toppers Glad hatter to students and stars

By Daja Taylor // Staff Writer

Hats. They can define a look, make a statement, or just hide a bad hair day. But where can we find hats that break the mold? Where can we find head-gear that sets us apart from the crowd? The answer is right Downtown, and if you've ever gone to the movie theatre there, you've probably walked past it a thousand times. If you want original, good quality hats, then Toppers is the place for you.

About 25 years ago, Toppers was being run out of carts and kiosks in Providence, RI. The business later moved to Newbury Street, and, as of three years ago, Toppers has been located on Tremont Street.

It is a tiny spot, and these aren't your everyday, run-of-the-mill hats that fill it. There are no sports caps here. But they have just about everything else, from fedoras to berets to flapper hats. "We cater to everyone," says owner Dave Dawson. The young, the old, and even the famous shop here. Celebrities such as Nas, Mick Jagger, Shaq and many more have purchased hats for tours, videos, and concerts, Dawson says.

"We have something for everyone," says Dawson. "We have young kids, teenagers come in here, and we have old church ladies come in here, so I'd say we're pretty well-rounded."

Prices range from \$15 to \$500. Knitted hats are usually around \$15, while designer hats are the most expensive and are typically in the hundreds range.

"Some of the hats can be a little pricey, but you're paying for the quality," Dawson says.

From fancy to fun to functional, this store has all kinds of hats for all kinds of people. So, next time you're Downtown, top it off with a trip to Toppers. ■

Location:
151 Tremont Street, Boston

Hours: Mon-Sat 12:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.;
Sun 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Tw-Guys Dudes are turning into vampire-series enthusiasts

By Tom Leu // Staff Writer

"Twilight." Just the name makes many men across the country shudder with disgust. But among them are a select few who genuinely like the "Twilight" series, and among those are a slimmer population of guys who are courageous enough to admit their fascination. Let's welcome the men who openly proclaim their love for author Stephenie Meyer's international phenomenon – the Twi-Guys. These sharp, brave guys have a keen eye to see the appeal in "Twilight" that most men neglect.

Meet Paul Nguyen, age 19, from East Boston. Nguyen is a student at UMass/Boston and works as a delivery man. He is also a certified Twi-Guy. Although he has only seen the movies, he says that he plans on reading the books ASAP. It is common for a person to see the movie and become a casual fan, but Nguyen is different. He says he is leaning towards being the more die-hard fan. The relatable characters are what really won Nguyen over.

"I just feel like they're people I know," he says as he recalls his high school years. His favorite character is Edward, who he says reminds him of himself. "Edward seems strong, passionate, and is a smart individual."

Let's take a look at the premise of "Twilight" before judgments are passed. "Twilight" follows a teenage girl named Bella Swan who moves to Forks, Washington, to live with her divorced father. As she finds out soon enough, Forks is more than just a small and quiet town. Edward Cullen, a student at her school, is a vampire who craves her blood. His resilience to stay away from her only draws them closer together until they eventually fall in love. Between these two lovers is Jacob Black, the werewolf who has eyes for Bella, as well. In part two – "New Moon" – the audience is exposed to Jacob's compassionate feelings towards Bella; Jacob is just as strong and pro-

TECTIVE as Edward. The "Twilight" series is a story of love and dependence; it has provoked the thoughts of readers by prolonging the answer to the question: Will Bella become a vampire?

Another brave Twi-Guy who kindly revealed himself is 16-year-old Abeizer Ayuso from Dorchester. Ayuso got into "Twilight" before it was widely famous. His friend recommended the books and he loved them. He is neutral when it comes to the vampires vs. werewolves debate, but his favorite character is Sam, the werewolf leader. Ayuso enjoys the theme of "See the light in the hardest times," and says there is nothing wrong with a guy liking "Twilight."

Or perhaps you prefer more of a werewolf fan-boy. Meet Jeichaël Henderson. As a senior at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, Henderson is made fun of by other students for being into the series, but he simply shrugs off the hate. Henderson has read the books and seen the movies; he prefers the books because they are more detailed in storytelling. As for which side he is on, Henderson is Team Jacob because his character genuinely cares about

Bella without having an immediate attraction. The message Henderson gets from the books is the stereotypical but heartfelt: "True love comes out of cost."

Tw-Guys are a proud group of men who profess their passion for the series. Their existence brings about the disproving that "Twilight" is only a girl thing. Although some can feel awkward being male fans, the fascination is too hard to resist. As Henderson would say: "I feel weird all the time, but I don't care." ■



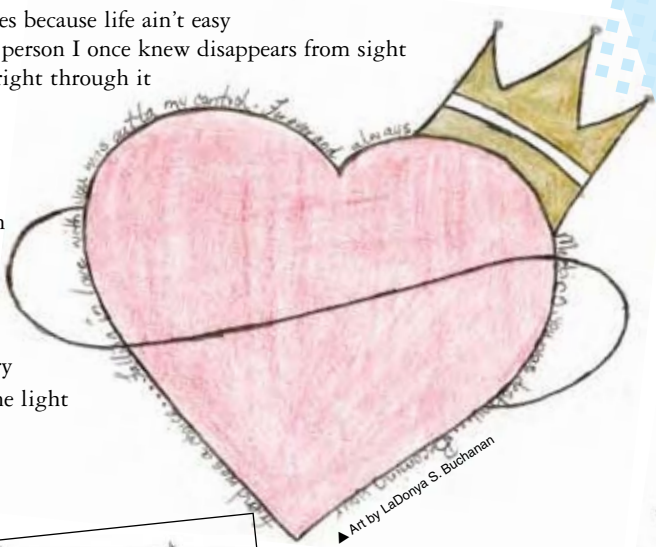
▲ AFH photo by Mattaya Fitts



"I'M HERE"

Gena White

It hurts to watch a smile fade away off someone's face
 Day by day it tears my insides apart
 For all I want to do is help
 People deserve to wear frowns on their faces because life ain't easy
 But I can't sit and watch helplessly as the person I once knew disappears from sight
 You put that fake smile on, but I can see right through it
 I hold out my hand for you to take
 Because I know how it feels to die inside
 I know that horrid, empty feeling
 But you're not alone
 I'll be by your side through thick and thin
 No matter the obstacle
 That smile brightened the day of others
 Yet where did that shine go?
 I'm here to help you find it
 Being stuck in darkness by yourself is scary
 So take my hand and I'll help show you the light



Daniel Alfaro

"Schemers trying to control their little worlds. I'm not a schemer. I try to show the schemers how pathetic their attempts to control things really are."

- The Joker in "Dark Knight"



Trevor Ward



悪魚, or in English, "Evil Fish," is a demonic creature which has only allegedly been spotted in the region of Kantō, Japan. It is thought to have some link to "El Arena Diablo" (literally, The Sand Devil), but there is no proof connecting these two. However, both do represent two of the four natural elements, earth and water.

I wanna give a shout-out to OB class of 2010! 2'X...All blue everything!

-- Frijoles

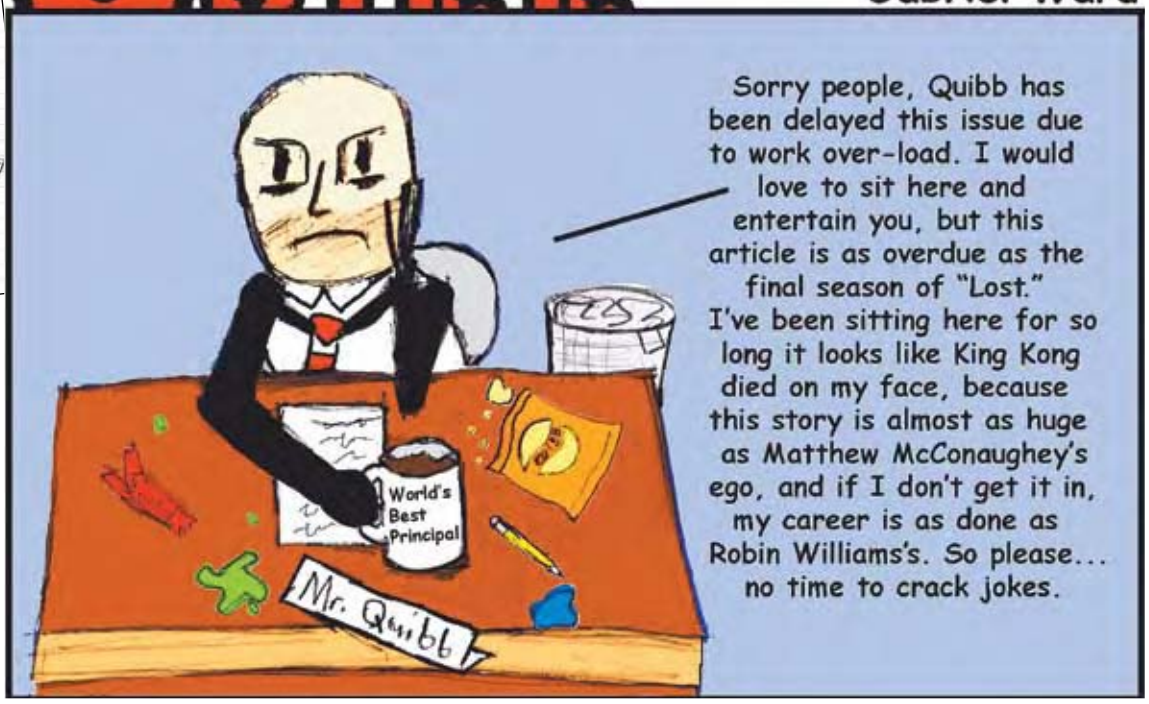
"If you ain't rock 'n' roll, you ain't a man. So put on the leather, the ripped-up Kiss T-shirt, studded belt, fingerless gloves, and the bandanna. Now turn the radio up, 'cause you've just sold your soul to rock 'n' roll."

- Xhersi Laka



QUIBB

Gabriel Ward



Sorry people, Quibb has been delayed this issue due to work over-load. I would love to sit here and entertain you, but this article is as overdue as the final season of "Lost." I've been sitting here for so long it looks like King Kong died on my face, because this story is almost as huge as Matthew McConaughey's ego, and if I don't get it in, my career is as done as Robin Williams's. So please... no time to crack jokes.