

Dispensing misinformation

Pharmacies foul up facts on morning-after pill

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A SPECIAL REPORT
.....

By Rodrigo Saavedra, Givona J. Dietz, Jocelyn Santos // Staff Writers
and Alicia Perez // Senior Editor // Photo image by AFH

Worried that she might be at risk of being pregnant, a fifteen-year-old Boston Latin Academy student said she called her local Walgreens in Hyde Park and asked how old she had to be to buy the popular morning-after pill known as Plan B. The girl, who did not want to be identified, said a pharmacy employee told her that she had to be 18 or older with a valid ID to purchase Plan B. While she was eventually able to obtain the drug through a friend's older sister, the girl said she was later surprised to learn that the minimum age to purchase the Plan B pill is actually 17 years old.

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▲ AFH photo by Bill Le

▲ AFH photo by Seljan Drake



▲ AFH photo by Bill Le

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Cover Story

Continued from cover

The girl shouldn't have been taken aback. Because more than 24 months later, that Hyde Park Walgreens on Truman Highway was still dispensing misinformation. And a joint investigation by Teens in Print and the New England Center for Investigative Reporting at Boston University has found that this is not an isolated case. Teen reporters presenting themselves as consumers visited or called 24 pharmacies across the city, including that Walgreens, and discovered that personnel at 71 percent of them did not respond with the correct age or ID requirements needed to buy the emergency contraceptive pill.

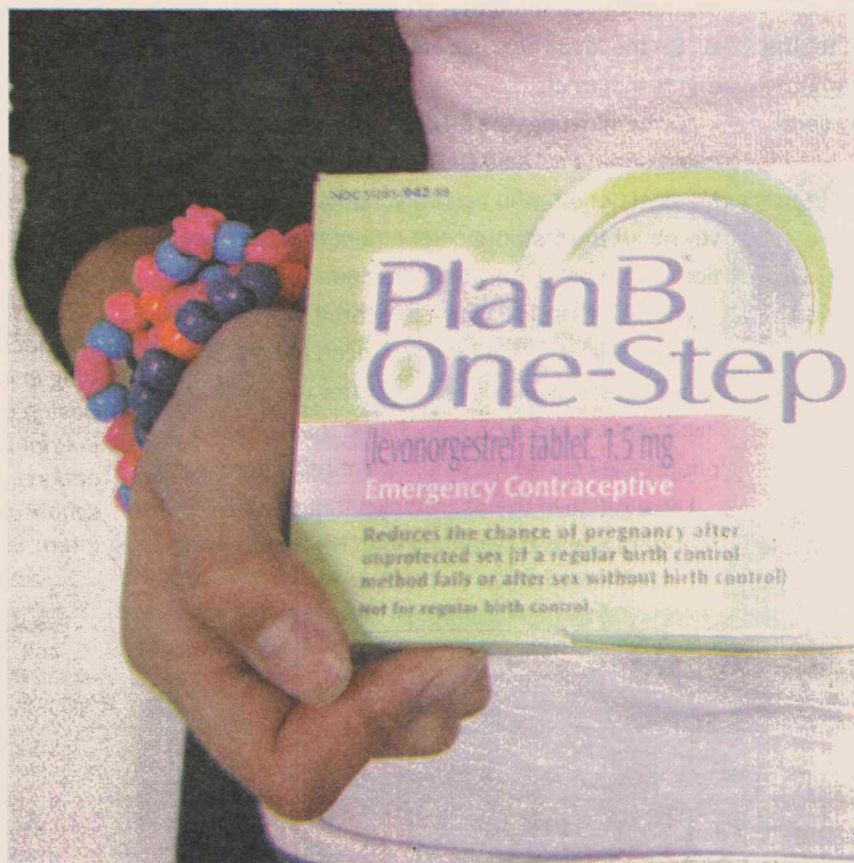
"This is very serious stuff," said Enki Gjerci, 18, from BLA. "If you are selling Plan B, you have to know the law."

Here is the rule, according to the federal Food and Drug Administration: Anyone 17 and older with a valid identification – including a school ID with a photo – can purchase the Plan B pill without a prescription. Those younger need a prescription to obtain it.

Yet at more than half of the 24 Boston drugstores checked by the TiP/NECIR reporters, pharmacy employees told them you have to be 18 or older to purchase Plan B. In fact, the owner of one family pharmacy even went so far as to claim you have to be 21 to buy the Plan B pill.

"Anytime we hear about situations where people are not being told the facts, that's definitely concerning," said Tricia Wajda, Director of Public Affairs for the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts. "If misinformation is being put out, there are dangerous consequences."

One possible source of the confusion that teen reporters encountered is the fact that the FDA in 2009 lowered the age for over-the-counter access to



▲ AFH photo by Andy Guan

to be followed.

"People's personal choices are compromised [by] employees' careless mistakes," said Lauren Anderson, 16, from Boston Latin School.

During the TiP/NECIR investigation, the drugstore chain with the worst record was Walgreens. There, 88 percent of the eight stores checked got either the age or ID requirements wrong.

The second worst was CVS, which had the age or ID information incorrect in 86 percent of the seven stores checked.

At Rite Aid, 60 percent of the five stores checked got the age or ID information wrong.

Only one chain managed to hand out the right information to teen reporters every time: Osco Pharmacy.

"Every single pharmacist and technician goes through rigorous training once a year," said Steve Sylven, a spokesman for Osco's parent company, Supervalu.

Company representatives for CVS, Walgreens, and Rite Aid all said that they were concerned with the investigation's findings and would follow up with each of the pharmacies cited.

At Walgreens, spokeswoman Tiffani Washington said that the company is intent on ensuring that its pharmacies are aware of the current policies.

"We do our very best to make sure our staff have appropriate training," said Washington, who recently left the company.

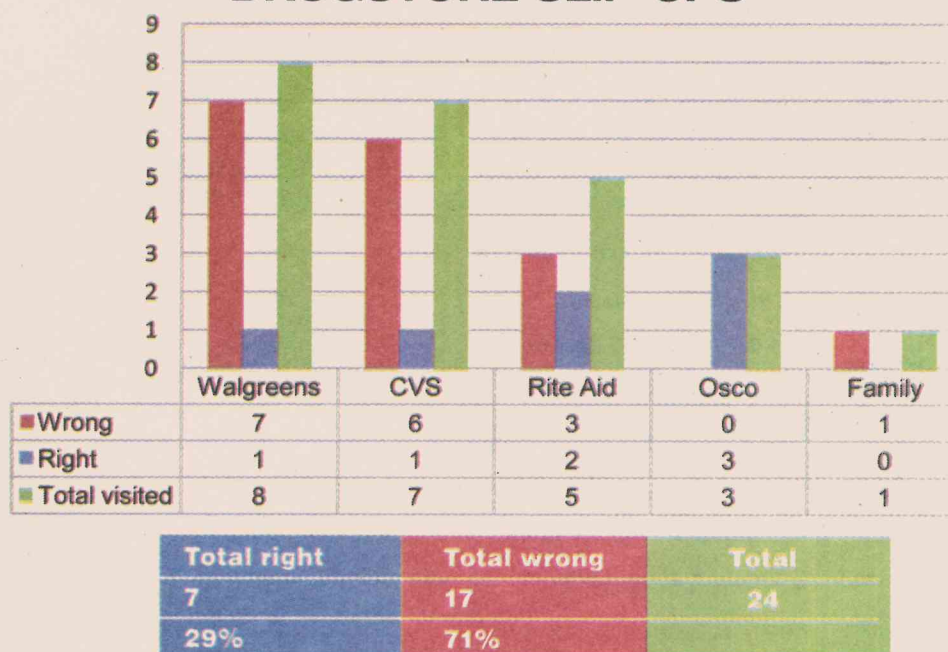
A CVS spokesman said the pharmacy chain does not take its responsibilities lightly.

"CVS pharmacy's policy is to comply with all laws and regulations relating to the dispensing of medications, including emergency

contraception," said Michael DeAngelis, Director of Public Relations for CVS, in an email response. "We apologize that a few of our pharmacies inadvertently provided the incorrect minimum age to purchase the

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DRUGSTORE SLIP-UPS



Source: All data provided from a joint investigation by Teens in Print and the New England Center for Investigative Reporting

the emergency contraceptive from 18 to 17. Another potential problem: The law only requires that a pharmacy request an ID when selling Plan B over-the-counter to those 17 and older. The state does not lay down specific training protocols that need

Continued from page 3

morning after pill without a prescription.”

Rite Aid spokeswoman Ashley Flower said that the company’s pharmacy associates are trained when hired, adding that Rite Aid is not aware of any complaints from consumers.

“We take very seriously the sale of emergency contraception,” said Flower.

In response to the findings of the TiP/NECIR investigation, the Massachusetts Board of Registration in Pharmacy sent out an email advisory in December to drugstores, professional associations, and pharmacy schools that reiterated the rules for distributing emergency contraception.

After the advisory was circulated, TiP/NECIR reporters rechecked seven of the pharmacies that had

originally given them wrong information about Plan B. On the follow-ups, six of them still got the requirements incorrect.

“Disseminating [the advisory] cannot erase all the misinformation,” said Dr. Tracey Wilkinson, of Boston Medical Center, who helped conduct a national survey about the distribution of emergency contraception. “It’s a pretty universal problem.”

Wilkinson’s study, which appeared in a December issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association* that was published well after the TiP/NECIR investigation was launched, found that 19% of the pharmacies called were doling out bad information.

Locally, one of the pharmacies that the TiP/NECIR reporters rechecked regarding Plan B was the Hyde

Park Walgreens on Truman Highway. For at least the third time, the drugstore got the facts wrong.

“I think that these pharmacies need to have some sort of training,” said the Plan B-seeking BLA student, now 17, “because if sending out the advisory wasn’t effective, then they need a more direct approach.”

The New England Center for Investigative Reporting (necir-bu.org) is a nonprofit newsroom, specializing in investigative journalism, that is based at Boston University. NECIR’s collaboration with Teens in Print is funded by a grant from The Hearst Foundations, and is intended to teach Boston public high school students investigative reporting skills. NECIR intern Sarah Kuranda contributed to this report. ■

PHARMACY FALLOUT

Pharmacy	Address	Did pharmacy ask for age?	What age asked for?	Ask for ID?	Right or Wrong
CVS	350 Longwood Ave. Fenway/Kenmore	Yes	17	Yes	Right
CVS	942 Hyde Park Ave. Hyde Park	Yes	18	n/a	Wrong
CVS	210 Border St. East Boston	Yes	18	Yes	Wrong
CVS	587 Boylston St. Back Bay	Yes	17	Rejected valid school ID	Wrong
CVS	240 Newbury St. Back Bay	Yes	18	n/a	Wrong
CVS	900 Commonwealth Ave. Allston	Yes	18	n/a	Wrong
CVS	631 Washington St. Chinatown	Yes	18	Yes	Wrong
Oscor	1065 Commonwealth Ave. Allston	Yes	17	Yes	Right
Oscor	1377 Hyde Park Ave. Hyde Park	Yes	17	Yes	Right
Oscor	45 Morrissey Blvd. Dorchester	Yes	17	Yes	Right
Rite Aid	1329 Hyde Park Ave. Hyde Park	Yes	18	Yes	Wrong
Rite Aid	90 River St. Mattapan	Yes	18	n/a	Wrong
Rite Aid	971 Bennington St. East Boston	Yes	17	No	Wrong
Rite Aid	179 Brighton Ave. Allston	Yes	17	Yes	Right
Rite Aid	1295 Boylston St. Fenway/Kenmore	Yes	17	Yes	Right
Roslindale Pharmacy	452 Hyde Park Ave. Roslindale	Yes	21	n/a	Wrong
Walgreens	429 Brookline Ave. Fenway/Kenmore	Yes	Over 17	n/a	Wrong
Walgreens	825 Morton St. Mattapan	Yes	17	No	Wrong
Walgreens	1890 Columbus Ave. Roxbury	No	18	Yes	Wrong
Walgreens	1 Kelly Sq. East Boston	Yes	18	Yes	Wrong
Walgreens	2275 Washington St. Roxbury	Yes	17	n/a	Right
Walgreens	416 Warren St. Roxbury	Yes	18	Yes	Wrong
Walgreens	465 Cambridge St. Allston	Yes	17	No	Wrong
Walgreens	1035/1065 Truman Hwy Hyde Park	Yes	18	Yes	Wrong

Source: All data provided from a joint investigation by Teens in Print and the New England Center for Investigative Reporting

Hungering for an answer

By Ambar Mateo // Contributing Writer

I have no experience in knowing what hunger is and the desperation to find at least a few crumbs of bread on the floor. But I do know it exists in faraway countries as well as here in the United States, and it can be a daily grind to find anything that is edible in order to survive for one more day.

I have seen videos of people crawling in the dirt because they don't have the strength to lift themselves up anymore. But more heartbreaking are their facial expressions of pain and the desire to end it all instead of the slow, miserable death that they have to deal with day and night.

You might ask yourself, "What in the world could possibly be more disappointing than this?" I will tell you what: the fact that we don't do something about this in our daily lives; in fact, we do the opposite and throw away food. Instead of wasting thousands of dollars on food, we should consume what we need and donate the rest of the money to needy families.

Before you toss that rice on your plate, pause for a second and think about the children in Africa and how they wish they could eat the leftovers that you are about to throw away.

Although we have many people starving in this country, we have services and much community help that can support them. This is not so in many foreign lands.

Not a lot of us know the meaning of hunger. It is not the growl that you hear because you missed breakfast or the intense desire you get suddenly when you feel like snacking. I know that it would hurt you intensely if a sister, brother, or your own mother was going hungry.

Help can be achieved as long as your heart is strong and humane enough. Oceans shouldn't be the factor that stops your goodwill.

I understand that the economy is tight, but there are foundations where you can donate as little as \$20 a month and they extend the money to the children. And if you still can't afford that, there are many other things that can be done, such as raising funds from garage sales, can runs, and more.

So, please place yourself in the shoes of these starving children and understand their daily struggle not to give up and get eaten by the vultures waiting nearby for them to die so that they can feast. ■



▲ AFH photo by Carolyn Hochalski

Caught in the undertow of emotions

By Penda Seck // Staff Writer

Yes, our emotions can lead us to things that we don't know. Life without emotions is a stage not known to humanity. But when a person is overwhelmed with emotion, it can become an obsession.

Our emotions are delicate. When we can't control them, and let them control us, it can become a nightmare that we will not know how to wake up from. It interprets our thoughts to be who we are not. It blinds us to not see the people who are there for us.

When a person is too emotional, it subjugates our personalities and discriminates against our true selves.

Lately, I have noticed that my emotions at home, and everything that I have been through, changed the true me. It made me a person I had never wanted to become. My perspective of loving and caring for others had changed. The fights and arguments with my family took away my belief in the existence of love in

this world. I became less nice.

My emotions consulted me and told me that my existence didn't matter. Tears became my comfort. Emptiness and sadness took away my mother's love, even though I miss her so much. I went back to the memories of a happy time, when I was eight years old, that had been washed away with the rain.

Our emotions contribute to misleading others. It divided me from the people that I value most in this world. Our emotions create the false reality that no one can stand the other. We become slaves to our emotions, and no amount of truth could show us that there are solutions to our problems. Each of us was victimized by anger and tried to solve things by ignorance.

So, be careful with the way you deal with your emotions because they might be more than what you can see – and what you can handle. ■

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▲ AFH photo by Bill Le

Famous for fighting

By Parnian Nasirahmad // Staff Writer

In our times, it seems, many teenagers think that to become famous they need to harm others. I think many teens want to be famous, but they don't know what they want to be famous for. So they hurt others, videotape it, and post it on the Internet.

One of the videos recently put on YouTube is titled, "Helpless Asian man attacked and jumped by 7 others behind school."

The young Asian man was apparently getting attacked because of a pair of shoes. But as I continued to watch the video, those guys were hitting him even though they already had his shoes.

Marvi Francisco, 16, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, thinks that teens damage others because they want to let people know that they are dangerous and strong.

"They probably think they are going to get more respect by doing these stupid actions," Francisco said.

Seventeen-year-old Klismam Mendes, from Brighton High School, said putting the video on YouTube gets them exposure.

"They want to intimidate others or they just want to influence people to do violent acts like they did," said Mendes.

Francisco believes that capturing images can be used in a more positive way.

"Schools should have vigilance cameras, because by doing that students would think twice before doing something stupid in school," Francisco said.

Bonnie Ramos, 16, from East Boston, feels that teachers need to make more connections with parents to help stop this kind of violence.

Meanwhile, Mendes said that if he saw someone getting attacked by a group, he would not hesitate to try to help that person in any way. ■



▲ AFH photo by Seijah Drake

Rejection

By Penda Seck // Staff Writer

Rejection. Have you thought of this word? This is one word that gives many teenagers a shivery nightmare while they are awake in the middle of daylight. When someone or something is rejected, it causes a particular sensation, like you don't matter and your whole world with dreams will fall apart.

It feels like a fire that infiltrates your skin, closing all the doors of life and love in a person's heart. Rejection makes you feel like trash that is dumped in the garbage.

Aboubacar Diakite, 19, from Boston International High School, says that when you are rejected by people, you feel lesser, like you don't fit in society and that you are not good enough for anybody.

"You want to forget it but you can't because there will always be a mirror that reflects the day that you were rejected," he says. "Like when I came from

[Guinea], people in school didn't want to see my face or have anything to do with me because I couldn't speak English and because of my black skin tone."

Edwin Rivera, 16, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, says that being rejected is like someone choosing not to be your friend.

"It makes me feel bad," he says, "because there is not faith for most to regain the part of them that they lose by being rejected."

At 20, Mariame Dieng, of Roxbury, offers an older perspective.

When people are rejected -- especially by those they love -- there will be nothing left in them but their frozen world with darkness, says Dieng, and some things that should be important will never matter to them again. ■



▲ AFH photo by Christopher Glover

Above the influence

By Shanae Saddler // Staff Writer

My friends did it – why can't I? They came out ok. Those words will haunt a teenager's life. Influence. Many teens choose not to live above it. It's hard to keep your head up high with the temptations of trying to get high.

Many teens lack the motivation the community may not provide them. The feeling of insecurities overpowers the right ways of what we all should do.

Many teens have the mentality that we should do what we like and not live to see the consequences. For example, the common peer pressure that most teens have is the temptation of weed. I have witnessed some friends smoking too much weed and ending up dropping out of school due to lack of drive because they got addicted to smoking.

I have my own experience because of my Christianity. I learned to live above the streets and the

stereotypes because I learned how to handle influence in a religious way. Many teens may not have the support that I do.

With my religion, I learned to balance and build my choices on faith. Most teens need love and an inspiration to pick the path of achievement. Influence should also come in the positive. To many teens, it seems like a transparency; those words that linger in our heads: "That will never happen to me. I am better than that."

These are the same words that seem to eat us alive. Influence is both a victim and a villain because it's a conspiracy of good and bad. It is the cause of many deaths, but it also helps us to be successful.

You can never really live anyone else's life, but what we do control is the influence we apply through our own being. ■



▲ AFH photo by Timmy Nguyen

Breaking news: tired of teen violence

By Taika Lamy // Staff Writer

Day by day I see Boston as a disgrace. It isn't the place, but the individuals surviving that make it so. Seems as if people are sent to their maker when it isn't their time.

Gunshots ringing, birds singing, parents crying, someone dying. Every day, violence destroys the lives of the victims, murderers, and loved ones. I'm worried about the future generations.

I'm tired of waking up to see the media filled with, "Breaking news in Roxbury, Dorchester, Roslindale....Teen found dead or injured." I'm also tired of waking up afraid to walk the streets without feeling like I might be the next innocent bystander who gets killed.

I recently received terrible news about someone I know.

He had been shot several times around his body. Still not sure if it was meant to happen or whether it was an accident. I later learned he was doing fine, but it still hurts to know that teens are trying to kill other teens.

Teens should never be in this type of predicament. They should be thinking about their grades, futures, lives, families, and friends. They shouldn't be worried about walking to the corner store and having their lives in danger.

This is a city filled with historical dreams and events, such as the British troops arriving, or the Boston Tea Party. But now, things feel different.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream didn't reach so far to be ruined now. Why can't we all get along? ■

A life and death moment

By Sandy Nguyen // Staff Writer

Every day, I try to cross the street without thinking, but sometimes I get paranoid and I freeze for a couple of seconds. I need to try to live with it. I can't keep on staying away from the street, or walking with my friends.

Every day, I take one step at a time to overcome my fear.

Every day, I think: "What if it happened badly and I was gone?"

As I crossed the street off Dorchester Avenue, I never saw the car coming. The only thing I remember was that I was on the ground and my eyes were closing and I saw a white light.

The only thing I heard was people's voices, a friend asking, "Sandy are you ok?" and "Sandy I love you."

The only thing I could feel was the love of my friend holding me, and the tear slowly going down my face, and someone wiping it. I couldn't feel my body.

The only things I thought were: "Am I going to die or am I ok? Would I see my mom and my brother again and the people I loved?"

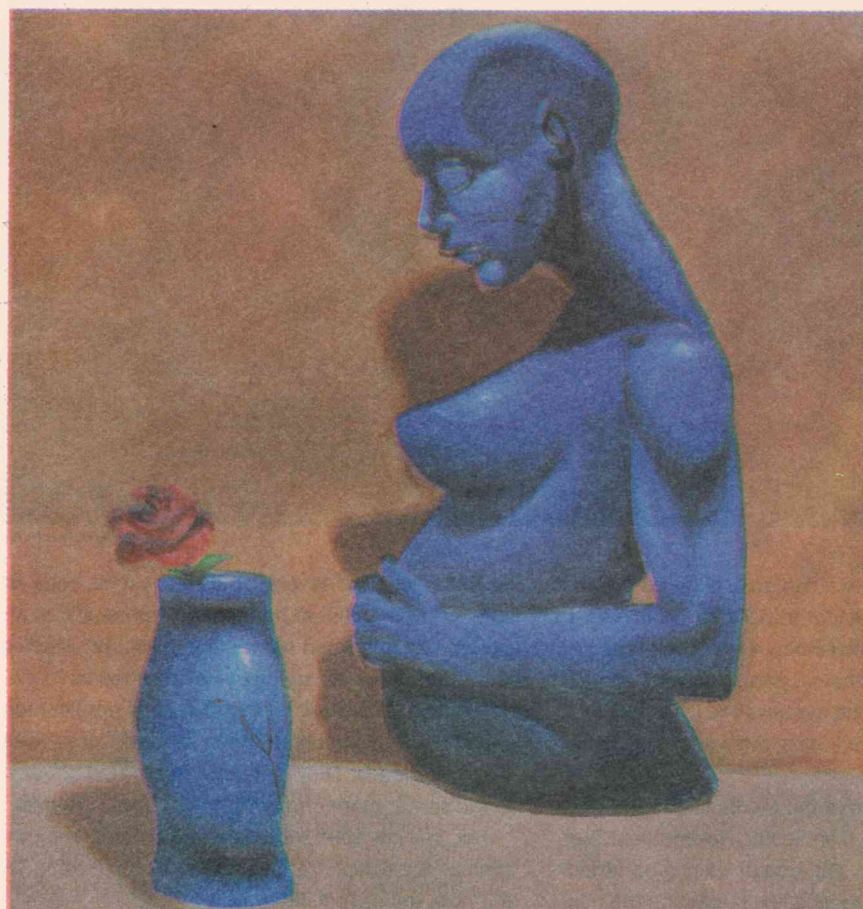
Recalling everything that went down with me and my mom, I wanted to say "sorry," and tell her that I love her, and I would try to be good, and that I would start over.

When I was at Boston Medical Center with bruises and a broken pinky, I was trying to think: "Did this really happen to me or was it a dream?"

In the end, I know I was happy to be alive and to see the people I love the most. This happened on November 11, 2011. A day I will never forget. ■



▲ AFH photo by Michelle Nguyen



▲ AFH art by Billy Nunez

"Precious" and me

By Caroline Depina // Staff Writer

"Precious" wasn't an easy movie to watch. Sixteen-year-old Claireece "Precious" Jones is a young New York woman who became pregnant twice by her own father. She's been abused physically, emotionally, and sexually by her mother.

Still, even now – two years this month since the movie's release on DVD – many teens see her as being in just another "black movie" rather than looking at the big picture message it is sending its viewers.

I don't see it as that because people need to stop being selfish and realize that what's going on is something serious. Precious is a young teenager going through a hard path in her life, and people shouldn't sit there and look down on her. They should try and do something because this type of situation doesn't only affect Precious, but also other teens who have been abused.

I understand some of what Precious was going through because I was once judged as a person. I looked at her story like it was my own – people think judging is something cool, but it's not.

Because of my skin color, some people in middle school thought something was wrong with me and they started criticizing the way I looked, dressed, talked, and walked. I didn't feel good about it. I would cry in my room because the words they used were hurtful. But I stood up for once and I didn't let people write my life story for me. I know who I am. I'm the only person who has the key to my life and future. I'm the one to write my own story about the person I will become, and I'm proud of it. ■

Confessions of a former classroom sleeper

By Ariana Martinez // Staff Writer

"Wake up, wake up!" Through all the loud kids screaming or teachers teaching, sleeping in class was my specialty. No matter the class or the time, I was sleeping whenever and wherever I could.

Waking up at five-thirty in the morning, getting to school at seven, having an hour-and-a-half class, and then the bus ride home were all taking a toll on me. I couldn't last all day without having a nap in school; I needed to rest my head on a table.

I would tell myself that I would only nap for about 20 minutes and then I'd get up. But before I knew it, class was over and I had slept through it.

Great, I told myself, now I have no clue what was taught. As I started to get ready for the next class, the bright lights hit my eyes and, right away, they gave me a headache. Marks from sleeping were on my face, so

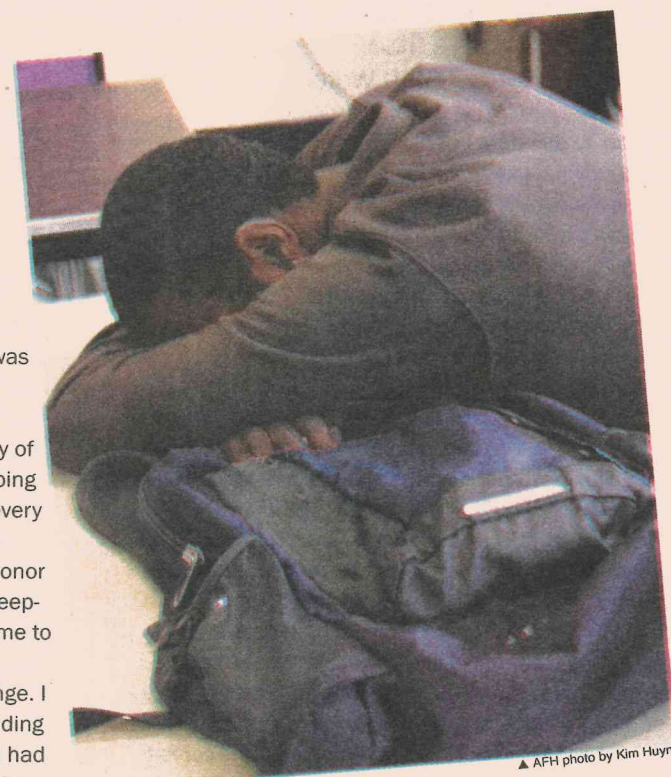
everyone knew I had just woken up. Too bad there was another class I had to endure.

"What am I going to do?" I thought. I was still so tired I didn't think I could last the day. The possibility of taking another nap was definitely on my mind. Sleeping in class had become addictive, and it was a battle every day not to snooze.

After dozing my way through middle school with honor roll, I was slapped in the face with the reality that sleeping in high school was just not an option. It caused me to get C's throughout my freshman year.

From that point on, I knew something had to change. I knew my grades were way more important than nodding off in school. I had to get more sleep, which meant I had to go to bed earlier. Once I made these changes, B+'s and A's were the way I started my sophomore year.

Now, the sky is the limit for me because I no longer have to think about sleeping in school. ■



▲ AFH photo by Kim Huynh

How to stomach the roller coaster

By Edwin Rivera // Contributing Writer

The first time I went on a roller coaster, I was afraid. But I eventually overcame my fear each time I rode the roller coaster, whether it was at Canobie Lake Park or at Six Flags.

When I was small, and went on the first roller coaster ride of my life, I was screaming. But if you are someone who doesn't scream, and just breathes in and out, then you are in luck, because you don't want to be sitting next to someone who doesn't like to be yelled at.

If you are a student who goes on an end-of-the-year field trip to, say, Six Flags, then you are going there just to have fun. You will have so much fun that you won't even know you are riding a roller coaster, which means that you overcame your fear without even noticing.

One experience I have on a roller coaster is that when it roars up to the top and then rushes down, I feel my stomach and heart go up in my chest, like they are about to come out my mouth.

I trained to conquer this by going up and down on the swings at the park or beach. I got used to the feeling.

Another lesson is that I had to start easy. I recommend going on a simple ride, and adapting your body to the conditions. But bring a bag just in case you need to do your business. ■



To my best friend

By La`Neece Byrd // Staff Writer

For four years I have been cool with this girl I call a best friend, Shanique Lewis. We are always together and put up with each other's nonsense. We also have our ups and downs, but those don't stop us from being friends.

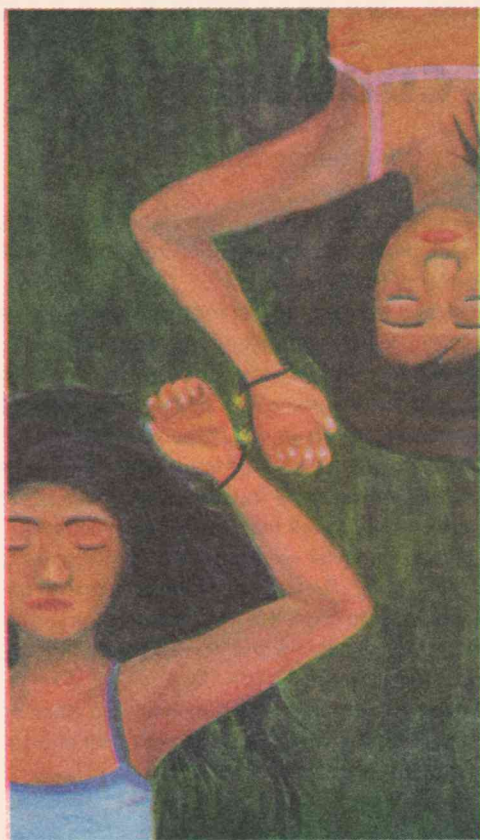
Our relationship is so strong that we don't let petty things break us apart. We always fix whatever it is that is trying to mess up our relationship. For example, if we are upset at one another because of what one of us said or did, we don't stay mad. We talk things through.

Other people who call each other best friends let stupid things control their relationship. For example, if two girls are so-called best friends they wouldn't let a boy ruin their relationship – but many “best friends” do.

If you're really best friends, nothing should break the link between you. You communicate with each other and are supportive.

Shanique and I met in the sixth grade and we automatically had a bond. We introduced ourselves, started a conversation, and every day our relationship got stronger. I never thought that she would become my best friend, but it happened and I'm glad I have her in my life. She cares for me and is more than a friend; she's a sister. We have a tight connection that I don't think anyone could break.

In elementary school, there was a girl I thought was my best friend, but she really wasn't. We used to call each other best friends and do things together, until a new girl came to the school. My friend decided to choose her over me. If she was really my best friend, she would have stood by my side. Shanique can have other friends and I will still be considered her best friend. Shanique is a true best friend. ■



▲ AFH art by Cindy Luo

To my mother

By Shanique Lewis // Staff Editor

On July ninth, a beautiful baby girl was born into the world. She was welcomed by this bright smile that lit up every corner of the room. She bonded with her mother right away. Every time her dad touched her she would cry. It's not because she didn't love him; it's just that she liked to get her hand caught in her mother's long, black, silky hair. From that day on, her relationship with her mother grew stronger.

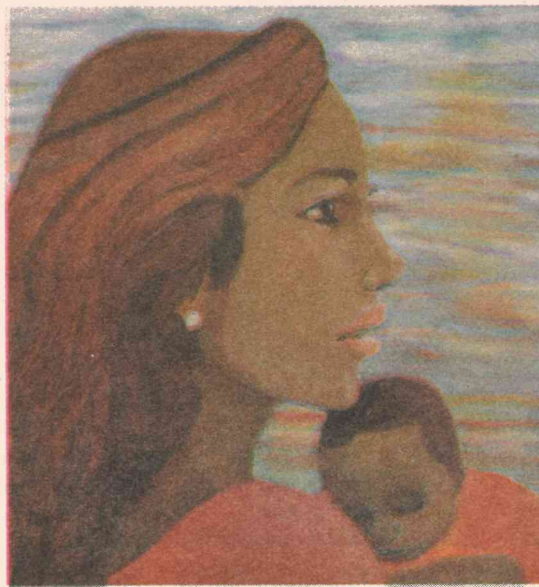
In today's world, many teens take advantage of their mothers. For example, I have a relative who doesn't get along with her mother at all. This behavior started when she was around 12 years old. She would constantly argue with her mom to the point that her mother would cry. But the eye-opener is the fact that my relative didn't care.

My mother is a role model, a beautiful red rose on a spring morning. From the day of my birth my mother has never told me that I was a mistake. Instead, she has said that I'm the best thing to ever happen to her. I wish I could prove to my mother how much I love her, but she has told me: “You loving me is more than enough.”

When it comes to my mother, I take things personally; I don't allow others to judge her or throw dirt on her name. I never swear at my mother because she doesn't use profanity against me. My mother respects me and I respect her, too. She appreciates me for who I am.

She helped me to become a strong, caring, and independent individual at heart.

Cherish your mother in every way that you can because one day you're going to need her and she won't be there. ■



▲ AFH art by Nancy Nyamuna

It never gets old

To Starbucks

By Juna Gjata // Contributing Writer

Oh Starbucks, oh Starbucks, how I love thee so,
For in the winter's bitter snow,
You fill me with such sweet cocoa,
Oh Starbucks, oh Starbucks, I love thee so.

And as the blooms spring from the ground,
And the springy breeze starts springing 'round,
I buy my coffee hazelnut ground,
And drink it greedily by the pound.

Then the stifling summer slowly sets in,
And I grudgingly indulge in a secret sin,
Because Frappuccinos I drink by the bin,
And hope my calorie counting will in the end win.

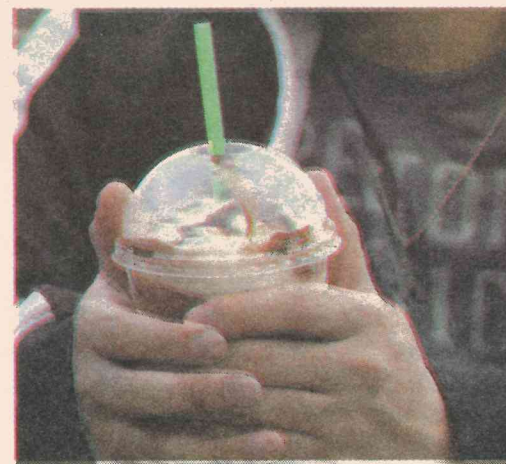
Then, the brilliant foliage is a sign,
Of my most favorite Starbucks time,
As I impatiently wait in line,
For that Pumpkin Spice or Chai of mine.

But, oh Starbucks, woe is me!
For I simply cannot afford thee,
You charge such a tremendous fee,
And my income is miniscule, you see.

I grapple in my wallet, crying,
Trying, “whying,” slowly dying,
But I simply cannot help but buying,
And seeing my bill, cannot help but sighing.

Oh frailty, frailty, thy name is cash,
For I never have a big enough stash,
And though I try not to be rash,
My desires with my bank account clash.

Your tempting, sweet, and delicious ways,
Will forever lace my lonely days,
But look, my mother goes and pays,
And so my consternation quickly fades. ■



▲ AFH photo by Carolyn Richalski

Tips from TiP



Mussuba

Penda

In our last issue, we ran a letter from a Brighton High sophomore who complained about constantly being bullied. Teens in Print staff writers Mussuba Samati and Penda Seck were so moved by the sad sentiment that they decided to launch an advice column. Here is the letter and their guidance.

If you have a problem and are seeking answers, please write to Tips from TiP c/o ric.kahn.jcs@cityofboston.gov. Please make sure your topics are appropriate for a teen newspaper, and indicate whether you want your name withheld. ■

Dear TiP,

Students keep picking on me in school. They like to bully me and push me around. They call me names like "loser," "ugly," and "nerd."

I did nothing for them to do this to me. I'm always sitting alone in the cafeteria, having no friends or anyone at all.

I have no one to talk to or to be a friend. I'm always lonely. I never had a girlfriend. The girl I like doesn't like me back.

Whenever a teacher tells me or students to be partners, the students don't want to be my partner. They don't even want to sit next to me.

The students are mean to me. They laugh at me for no reason whenever they see me. The students tell me that I shouldn't be here or I don't belong here. Why does being bullied and being lonely hurt so much?

Sincerely,

A Brighton High School sophomore

Dear Anonymous,

First of all, both of us just want you to know that you are worth more than your peers portray. Sometimes life is extremely difficult to deal with, but that's what keeps us going. We as teenagers believe that teens bully their peers mostly because they are insecure about themselves, or they find that you are a threat.

One way to deal with your problems is to be yourself and never let them batter your self-esteem. You are wanted and loved by many people, even the ones you may not know about. Like us; we care about what you have to say. We value your opinion. Remember, a lot of kids are going through the same thing.

You should be the one they look up to as a role model. Be kind to those people trying to make your life a living hell. Kill them with kindness.

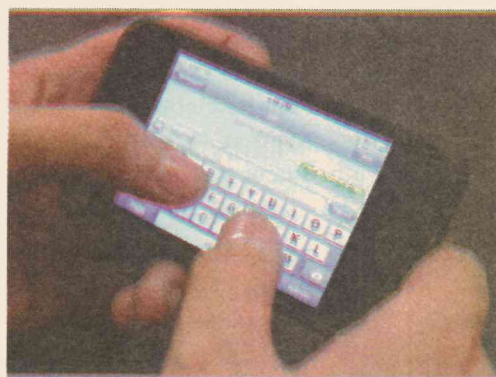
Best,

Mussuba and Penda

TECHNO BEAT

Autocorrect: pain or plus?

By Marmarin Nasirahmad
// Staff Editor



▲ AFH photo by Timmy Nguyen

Hadeel Reyad Aws, 13, who goes to the Ohrenberger School, is not a big fan of autocorrect.

"Autocorrect bothers me most of the times because I will write my sentences, and post them without looking, and sometimes people don't get what I'm trying to say," says Aws, "because autocorrect changes one word that I spelled wrong or something, and it will change it to some other word that makes my sentence sound stupid."

Autocorrect is that feature in phone or computer software that automatically corrects spelling errors but sometimes makes things worse.

Katerina Hitollari, 13, from the Washington Irving Middle School, says autocorrect bugs her but she still believes that companies should offer the feature.

"Some people don't know how to type correctly and have a lot of mistakes in their sentences," says Hitollari, "so it helps them...look smart, not stupid."

Ariana Simancas, 15, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, has a simple solution for those frustrated by autocorrect.

"If you are sure that you don't have any mistakes, and are confident that you won't make mistakes with your spellings," says Simancas, "then you can easily remove autocorrect from your iPhone or iPod." ■

Facing the facts: Video-chatting can be dangerous

By leisha Sampson // Staff Writer

Welcome to the new and growing nation of teens and video chat.

Yarasmary Rodriguez, a junior at Boston Community Leadership Academy, believes that video-chatting on the computer or smartphone is useful but also possibly harmful.

"Video chat is a good way to communicate with people, but it could also be dangerous if used inappropriately," says Rodriguez.

For years, incidents have appeared in the media about young people revealing too much about themselves online, and to some teens, video chat is just another way to increase that temptation.

Shanecqua McCall, a senior at BCLA, also sees both the positive and negative effects of a video conversation.

"We are able to gain a more emotional feel than we can in texting," says McCall, "but it encourages inappropriate behavior."

Although many teens view sites such as Skype and ooVoo as a fun new way to communicate, others are not so sure.

Jorge Sanchez, a junior at BCLA, says that in theory a video chat can bring long-distance friends eye-to-eye, but often it ends up being useless.

"I believe that it is pointless and awkward," says Sanchez, "because you are just staring at each other half the time." ■

**ASHLEY BARKER**

White or red pasta sauce? Alfredo.
 Night or day? Night.
 Sun or Moon? Moon.
 Favorite Phone? My laptop.

**LA'NEECE BYRD**

Favorite clothing brand? Aeropostale.
 Night or day? Day.
 Sun or moon? Sun.
 Favorite phone? Android.

**CAROLINE DEPINA**

Favorite clothing brand? Forever 21.
 Night or day? Night.
 Car or truck? Car.
 Sun or moon? Moon.

**GIVONA J. DIETZ**

White or red pasta sauce? Alfredo, baby.
 Night or day? Night.
 Sun or moon? Sun.
 Favorite phone? Android.

**TANIA DUNCAN**

White or red pasta sauce? Red.
 Night or day? Night.
 Sun or moon? Moon.
 Favorite phone? HTC.

**TUCKER S. GAYE**

White or red pasta sauce? White.
 Favorite clothing brand? Puma.
 Sun or moon? Sun.
 Favorite phone? BlackBerry 9930.

**ROBERT HINES**

Favorite clothing brand? Aeropostale.
 Night or day? Day.
 Sun or moon? Sun.
 Favorite phone? Android.

**JOSE IBARRA**

Favorite clothing brand? Aeropostale.
 Night or day? Night.
 Sun or moon? Sun.
 Favorite phone? iPhone.

**RALPH T. KARNUAH**

Favorite clothing brand? Converse (All Stars).
 Night or day? Light is better than dark.
 Car or truck? Car (Audi).
 Favorite phone? How would I know? I don't even have a phone.

**NENSER KRUE**

Favorite clothing brand? American Eagle.
 Night or day? Day.
 Car or truck? Car! Trucks r not sexy!
 Sun or moon? Moon: u can actually stare at it and see how pretty it is.

TEENS in PRINT**MEET THE S**

Boston **Teens in Print** unites the city's teens to create and communicate, and provide **positive change through writing**.

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, put your name, contributing writer, and a title or headline.

**ODELYNE LAMOUR**

White or red pasta sauce? Red.
 Favorite clothing brand? American Eagle.
 Night or day? Night.
 Favorite phone? BlackBerry.

**TAIKA LAMY**

White or red pasta sauce? Red.
 Favorite clothing brand? H&M.
 Night or day? Night.
 Sun or moon? Sun.

**JALAYAH LAWRENCE**

White or red pasta sauce? Red.
 Favorite clothing brand? Whatever I look nice in.
 Night or day? Night.
 Favorite phone? BlackBerry.

**SHANIQUE LEWIS**

White or red pasta sauce? Red.
 Night or day? Night, because I get to relax.
 Car or truck? I'm afraid of trucks.
 Sun or moon? Moon, because it's beautiful.

**ALEJANDRO MARTINEZ**

Favorite clothing brand? Whatever fits.
 Night or day? Afternoon.
 Car or truck? Segway.
 Sun or moon? Pluto.

FEEDBACK

Was it something we said? with which you agree – or not?

Let Teens in Print know what to ric.kahn.jcs@cityofboston.gov neighborhood, and your date just to verify your age at the time your letter in an upcoming edition.

To join the Teens in Print staff, please download the necessary paperwork.

bostontip.com writeboston.com

Next issue:

Send submissions to:
 Boston Teens in Print
 c/o WriteBoston
 7 Palmer Park
 Roxbury

Contact:
 WriteBoston

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ARIANA MARTINEZ

White or red pasta sauce? Alfredo.
Favorite clothing brand? Whatever looks nice.
Night or day? Night.
Car or truck? Truck.



ALICIA PEREZ

White or red pasta sauce? Applesauce.
Night or day? Evening.
Car or truck? Walking.
Sun or moon? The full moon is good for
waterbending.

DENNIS MEMBAH

White or red pasta sauce? I don't eat pasta.
Favorite clothing brand? Levi's.
Night or day? Day.
Favorite phone? iPhone 4GS.



BIANCA RICE

White or red pasta sauce? Red.
Favorite clothing brand? H&M.
Night or day? Night.
Favorite phone? HTC.

SHAMSI MOHAMED

Night or day? Day.
Car or truck? Honda.
Sun or moon? Sun.
Favorite phone? BlackBerry.



MELISSA RODRIGUEZ

White or red pasta sauce? White.
Favorite clothing brand? Anything that's black!
Night or day? Edward only comes out at night...
Favorite phone? iPhone all day!

MAKIZ NASIRAHMAD

White or red pasta sauce? My mom's
red sauce.
Favorite clothing brand? H&M.
Car or truck? Truck.
Sun or moon? Moon!



RODRIGO SAAVEDRA

White or red pasta sauce? Alfredo.
Car or truck? A Koenigsegg.
Sun or moon? Mohegan Sun.
Favorite phone? iPhone.

MARMARIN NASIRAHMAD

Favorite clothing brand? The North Face.
Night or day? Night.
Car or truck? Car.
Sun or moon? Moon.



SHANAE SADDLER

White or red pasta sauce? White.
Favorite clothing brand? Forever 21.
Car or truck? Truck.
Favorite phone? myTouch 4G.

PARNIAN NASIRAHMAD

White or red pasta sauce? Red.
Favorite clothing brand? I do not care about
the brands that much.
Night or day? Night, of course.
Sun or moon? Darkness.



MUSSUBA SAMATI

Favorite clothing brand? Tello's.
Night or day? Night.
Sun or moon? Moon.
Favorite phone? iPhone.

AUDREY NGANKAM

White or red pasta sauce? White.
Favorite clothing brand? H&M.
Sun or moon? Moon.
Favorite phone? iPhone 4.



IEISHA SAMPSON

White or red pasta sauce? How about cheese?
Favorite clothing brand? Whatever I look nice in.
Night or day? The freaks come out at night!
Sun or moon? Sun.

SANDY NGUYEN

White or red pasta sauce? Red.
Night or day? Night.
Car or truck? Car.
Sun or moon? Moon.



JOCELYN SANTOS

White or red pasta sauce? Alfredo.
Night or day? Night!!!
Car or truck? I'd love a truck, but I roll
w/a minivan!
Favorite phone? BlackBerry ALL DAY!

LIZANDRO NOGUEIRA

White or red pasta sauce? Red.
Favorite clothing brand? Levi's.
Night or day? Day.
Sun or moon? Sun.



PENDA SECK

Favorite clothing brand? H&M.
Night or day? Night.
Sun or moon? Moon.
Favorite phone? iPhone 4.

CHAHANA PATEL

White or red pasta sauce? Red.
Favorite clothing brand? Anything I like.
Night or day? Night.
Favorite phone? BlackBerry.



DARIEN VAZQUEZ

White or red pasta sauce? White.
Favorite clothing brand? H&M.
Sun or moon? Moon.
Favorite phone? myTouch.

BSAC BUZZ

By Tucker S. Gaye // Senior Editor

This school year has had its ups and downs: school relocations, busing problems, educational reforms. And there are still concerns at the Boston Student Advisory Council about the constructive feedback initiative.

As of now, too few schools have distributed the constructive feedback survey sheets in classes. There are too many students and teachers missing out on giving and getting feedback. These surveys are to be filled out anonymously by students. They serve as constructive criticism, because it's the teachers and students in the classrooms.

A few minutes of filling out the surveys can mean an opportunity to improve, not only educational performances, but the relationships between students and teachers.

For teachers, the surveys can serve as microscopes that magnify what they need to improve on.

This is also an opportunity for teachers to hear from their students about what is working well.

BSAC asks that every BPS high school please get these sheets filled out right away!

For more information, watch our "We Are the Ones in the Classroom – Ask Us!" video on YouTube. Or contact Maria I. Ortiz at mortiz@boston.k12.ma.us or at 617-635-8079 ext 104. ■

Staying or leaving for college Home away from home

By Alicia Perez // Senior Editor

For a student like Amy Lyu, a senior at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, going away to college after spending her entire life in greater Boston is finally a chance to escape what she considers a dead city.

"I'm tired of Boston," said Lyu, who applied to eight out-of-state schools. "I don't like staying in one place for too long."

As seniors start receiving letters from colleges they've applied to, they are facing one of the biggest decisions in their young lives: to stay in their hometown for at least four more years or to move out.

Although Boston is a vibrant, diverse city, teens say it can get a little old for people who were raised here.

Sayyida Jean-Charles, another senior at the O'Bryant, agrees with her classmate.

"I just really want to experience a different place because I lived in Boston for 18 years," says Jean-Charles.

Many teens feel that an added benefit of departing for school is being let loose from the ties of their parents – if they are allowed to.

Lyu says that is not an issue in her family.

"They don't care," she says. "They're like, 'Go do what you want.'"

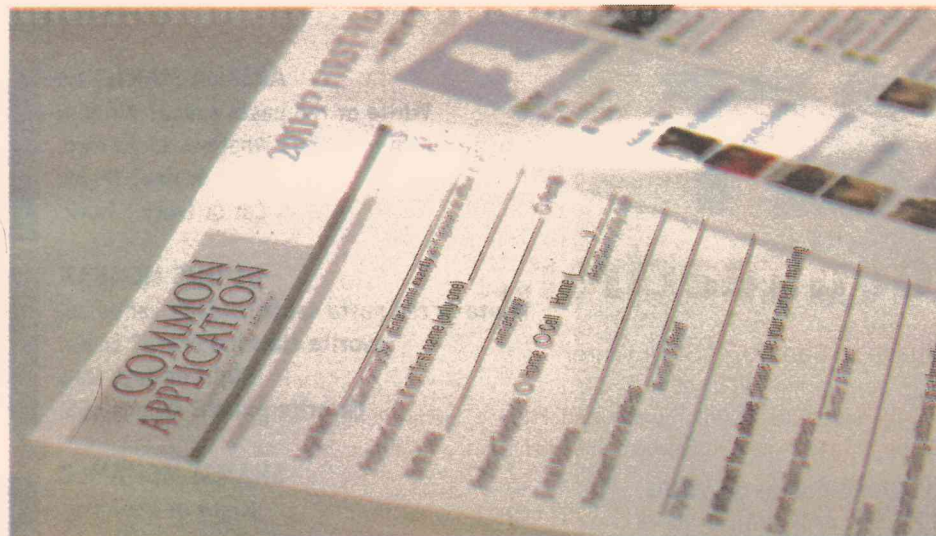
For Jean-Charles, however, there is a little more conflict.

"My mom doesn't want me to go," says Jean-Charles. "She wants me to stay close to home."

Though deciding what school to attend in the fall is ultimately her choice, Jean-Charles says she feels obliged to take her mother's feelings into consideration.

Cassandra Leveille, a senior at the O'Bryant, says that she's fine with staying in town and being close to her family during her college years.

"I actually like Boston," says Leveille. "I'm used to the environment." ■



▲ AFH photo by Seijah Drake

Facebook follow-ups Colleges snoop and dog teens

By Marmarin Nasirahmad // Staff Editor

Amanda Pichardo, 17, who goes to Brighton High School, doesn't like the fact that some college administrators are now checking out students' Facebook pages to see if the teens are worthy of admission.

"I feel like that's a violation of privacy," says Pichardo. "I don't think anyone checks their Facebook, so why should they do it to us?"

Some teens are trying to avoid this college scrutiny by using fake names on Facebook. Others feel that teens shouldn't have to do that.

"I don't like it because Facebook is to express yourself in some way with your friends," says Leidy Garay, 17, from Boston International High School, "and on Facebook you don't have to be professional."

Still, Garay understands why schools do it.

"Colleges are being really smart because they want to get to know the person who they are going to accept to their college," she says.

Kofi Asare, a senior at Boston Community Leadership Academy, knows the motivation of colleges, but feels they should focus on a teen's academic life.

"Facebook is something that you do out of school, and that's your private life, so colleges shouldn't care what we put on Facebook," says Asare. "They should care and pay attention more on how we are doing in school."

After all, says Pichardo, it's not fair that this generation of teens has to pay for the sins of others.

"There's a whole bunch of potheads and drunks in colleges already admitted by them," says Pichardo. ■



▲ AFH photo by Andy Guan

Good teacher...

By Mussuba Samati // Staff Writer

As a student at Boston Community Leadership Academy, Redeat Abate, 17, believes that a bad teacher is someone who comes to class cranky and gives tests on things that were never taught to students.

"How do you expect us to pass if we don't know the objective?" she asks.

On the flip side, Abate says that one of the best teachers she had always put on a happy face for her students.

"She was young, pretty, and cracked jokes even though we know she was in a bad mood," says Abate. "She never let that affect her teaching – that's cool."

What makes a good teacher?

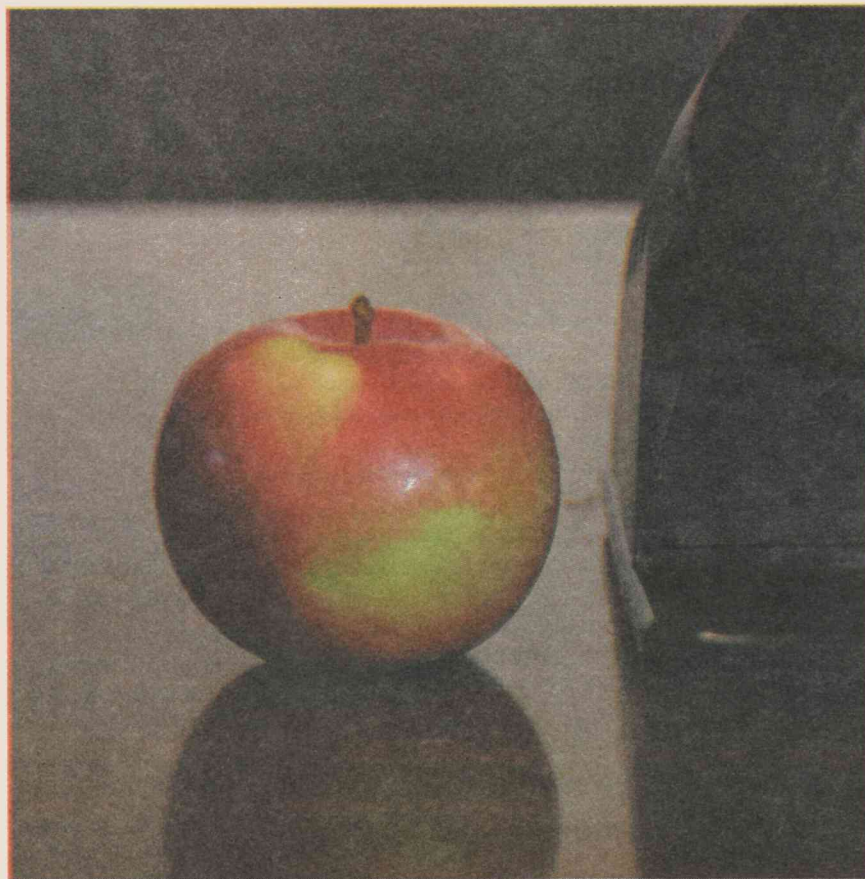
Students say it's someone who wouldn't give unnecessary homework; is laid-back yet always maintains control of the classroom; and is enthusiastic but at the same time informative and has the respect of students.

One teacher at BCLA describes the qualities of a good educator as: going above the lesson plans and being there for students; sharing personal experiences so teens can relate; and being someone who is not easily offended, cutting off communication.

Lucelina Sousa, a sophomore at BCLA, says one key to good teaching is making learning fun.

She says she cannot see herself becoming a teacher because she lacks an important element.

Patience. ■



▲ AFH photo by Kim Huynh

...Bad teacher

By Shanique Lewis // Staff Editor

"Shut your mouth and sit down" is a phrase that some teachers use to get a student's attention. These words boil a hole through a student's skin, which causes him or her to react in a disrespectful manner.

Not only is it rude for a teacher to tell a student to "shut up," teens say, it is also unprofessional. Some students would take it as a chance to argue with their teachers, which leads them to getting kicked out of class.

"I mean, no teacher has the right to disrespect a student," said Ney-Ney Jones, 19, from Dorchester. "But at the same time, they are doing their jobs. Sometimes they use words to get a reaction from the students, which is them abusing their powers. A teacher can get someone's attention in a more civilized and respectful way."

Most of the time when students get kicked out of class, the blame falls on them. However, teens say a teacher is supposed to be nice and calm, not loud and vulgar.

"I don't think it is fair that teachers could disrespect students but if a student disrespects a teacher, he or she would get a big consequence and most teachers get away with it," said Natalie Silva, 16, from Boston Community Leadership Academy.

When a teacher and student get into an argument, teens say, the teacher should be the one to let it go.

"As a teacher, you should always carry yourself as the adult," said Emanuela Alves, who teaches chorus at BCLA. "Even though some kids can manipulate teachers into a back and forth, teachers have to understand that they are dealing with children who don't always understand boundaries. So it's up to teachers to model boundaries." ■



▲ AFH photo by Kim Huynh

College qualifications SAT vs. GPA

By Jose Ibarra // Staff Writer

Boston Community Leadership Academy senior Tayyaba Nizam understands the importance of SATs, and realizes it is more than a test.

"It [is] a paper that high-rated colleges preferred and looked at the most," she says.

Eneda Golemi, a senior at BCLA, says she did a lot of SAT prep, from reading test books to taking part in programs.

Which may be why she says: "I prefer GPA."

Rodrigo Huertas, a junior at BCLA, believes that both GPA and SAT are equally important factors that help you progress into a post-secondary school.

While trying to keep his GPA high, he says he's also doing SAT work by studying online, answering practice questions, and asking Math and English teachers for little tips.

Students know that doing badly on either front can prevent them from getting into their dream colleges. ■

SAT vs. GPA, part two

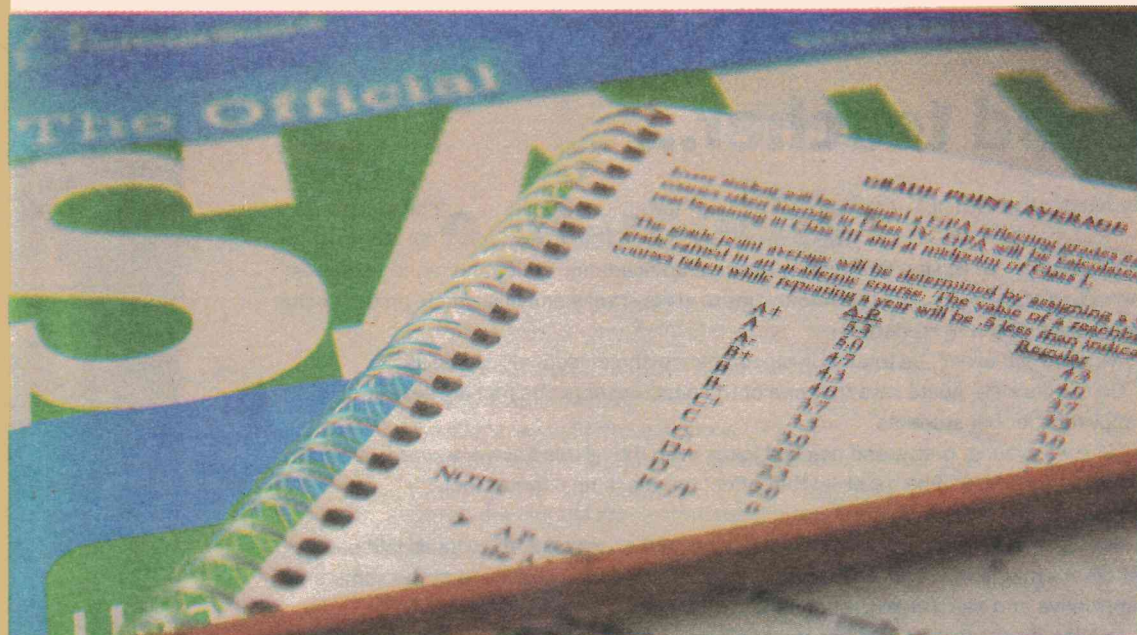
On an online message board called "America's Debate: SAT or GPA?" here's how others broke down the issue:

"My goodness," one person wrote. "There is no doubt that [by] keeping these SAT tests alive, major money is being made. Private SAT tutors get in excess of \$100 per session. Learning centers' biggest clients are in SAT prep, so yes, this is big business to which nervous parents of college-bound students are the cash cows."

"The work that a student put into his or her four years should be the best indicator of that student's potential."

Another person had this point of view: "I like standardized tests. Shrug. I have a prejudice towards them since I always did well on them. I know I would outperform people with superior GPAs to myself. I figured these sorts of tests may do a good job of measuring information retention and problem solving."

"Those who use cramming as a study method may get higher GPAs than those who learn for the long term. GPAs are more likely to be affected by favoritism from teachers." ■



▲ AFH photo by Michelle Nguyen

The call

By Jalayah Lawrence // Staff Writer

Back in sixth grade, I used to dread the call home. In those days, the call home might have been for any number of reasons: walking out of class, throwing staplers, telling teachers they needed a weight-loss program. That call home meant that I was going to lose control of some possession, typically my cellphone, for a 48-hour period. This was rather pointless when my mom realized that she would be unable to reach me after school.

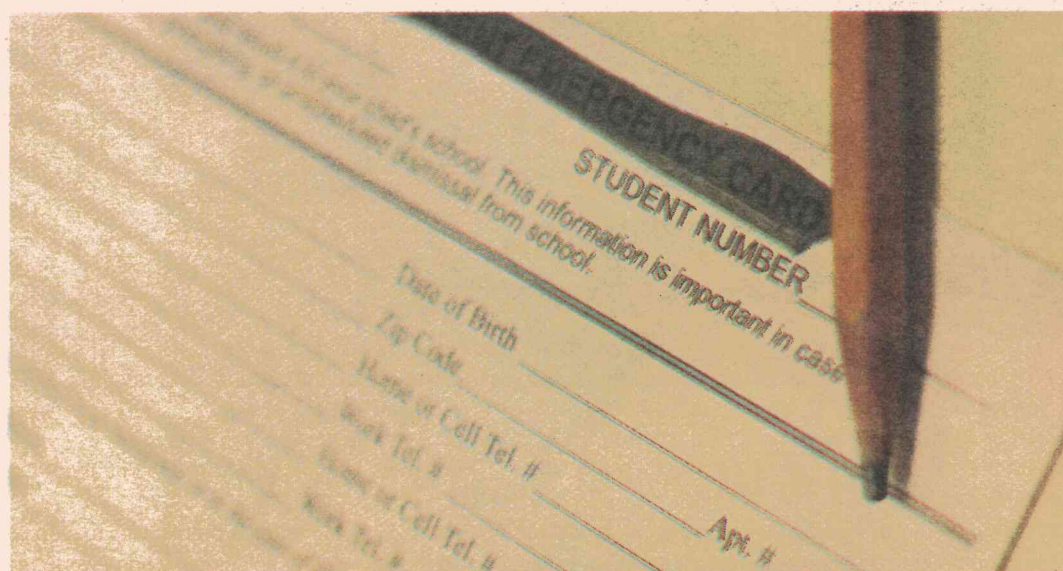
I longed for ninth grade, thinking that I would get more freedom. I thought that my increased maturity level would mean that the school would no longer need to call home. I was going to be focused on my academics, and I would see things differently. Though there was improvement, I continued to torture my ELA teacher.

One assignment included writing an original poem, and when I felt the teacher wasn't helping me enough, my newly mature actions included advocating for myself with the principal.

This forced me to look at myself, my role as a student, and, consequently, I improved.

The stuff that I did to my teachers was wrong, and even getting boring to me. Now, I don't give my teachers advice about their weight, and other disrespecting comments. I connect my actions to my mom, and imagine how she would react if someone were to treat her that way.

I continue to work on being more independent, and showing better self-control. As a result, the dreaded call is no longer there. ■



▲ AFH photo by Sejjah Drake

Hip to the lips

By Marmarin Nasirahmad // Staff Editor

For many teens these days, lips have become a part of the body that they notice first and find attractive.

"Probably because that's what they look at when they are being spoken to," says Amarielis Morales, 16, who goes to Boston Community Leadership Academy.

Teens like different features of lips, including shape, size, and texture.

"If they are chapped and crusty, they are not soft," says 15-year-old Jessica Landaverde, from BCLA. "If they look pretty pink and normal, they're soft."

Morales says unmoistened lips are a turn-off.

"If the lips are dry they look like broken glass," says Morales, "and if they are soft they look like a baby's cute little [behind]."

Lucelina Sousa, 15, from BCLA, says she prefers small lips.

"I feel like big lips will bite my lips off," she says.

Morales says she favors one particular set of lips.

"I like my boyfriend's lips," says Morales, "because they have the shape of a heart and I feel like I'm kissing his heart." ■



▲ AFH collage by Seijah Drake

A cultural disconnection

By Alejandro Martinez // Senior Editor

Nisa Thompson, 18, from Boston Latin School, is aware that her cultural background includes Armenian and Guyanese influences.

Yet, Thompson says, "I don't speak a word of Armenian, I am not a member of the Armenian Orthodox Church, I haven't been to Armenia or Guyana, and I don't feel a strong sense of pride to those countries, either."

She adds: "And I'm perfectly fine with that."

While many teens are immersed in their historic cultures, others are more distanced.

Gloribel Rivas, 16, from East Boston, admits to a feeling of isolation when she talks about being exposed to the American culture and how the transition and contrast is tough.

"It never occurred to me that there was a different American culture outside of my neighborhood, considering that it's predominately Central American," says Rivas, who is Salvadoran.

Family is one theme that arises when you look at who is connected to their culture and who isn't.

Ajay Ahluwalia, a senior at Boston Latin School, says that he celebrates the Indian culture of his ancestors through his relatives.

"It is important to be connected with your culture in some way, because that is the root of your being," says Ahluwalia.

Thompson says she does not feel a huge void by not being absorbed with her culture.

"My philosophy is this: If you've got a strong bond with your culture, that's wonderful. But if you don't, that's fine, too." ■



▲ AFH photo by Seijah Drake

Run, Temple Run

By Marmarin Nasirahmad // Staff Editor

Last year, it was all about Angry Birds. Now it's Temple Run, proclaimed by gaming publications as the top free app from Apple's mobile operating system, with more than 20 million downloads.

It seems like every teenager has it on an iPod or iPhone.

"It's way better than Angry Birds," says 18-year-old Christopher James, who goes to Boston Community Leadership Academy. "It has more excitement than Angry Birds, and it triggers you to think fast, whereas in Angry Birds you can take all the time in the world before you do something."

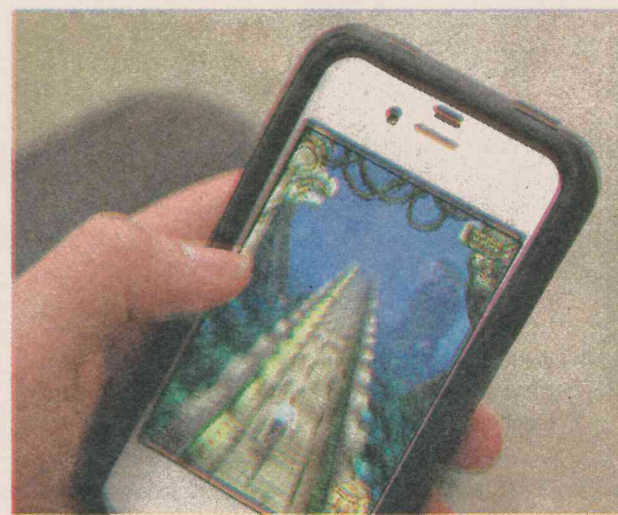
Temple Run involves a player dashing through a temple while avoiding obstacles, collecting coins, and being chased by evil monkeys. Teens say it can really get addicting because you're always trying to better your best total.

"I think the most fun part of Temple Run is your score," says Jerson Familia, 15, who goes to BCLA, "because your score can be really high, and you can beat your friends' scores, and it's like a competition."

Many teens say they discovered the game through chatter on Facebook. Familia says he found out about it after a visit to an Apple store.

Now, some teens say Temple Run has become so distracting that they've had to force themselves to stop playing.

"I spent hours playing Temple Run and it got really addicting and mostly I wasn't finishing my homework," says 15-year-old Genesis Diaz, from BCLA, "so I had to delete it from my iPhone because my grades were going down." ■



▲ AFH photo by Bill Le

Pretty boys

By Brianna Gray // Contributing Writer

Every girl wants to be with the popular guy. The guy who has the moves and the swagger you can die for. The one who dresses very nicely and has a certain way about him that you can't resist.

It kills you that he is so difficult to get. This type of guy is called a pretty boy.

"A person who has their own style and has everything fresh – such as the clothes and jewelry they have," says 18-year-old Ashley Robles, from West Roxbury Academy.

A lot of girls can't help it when it comes to a pretty boy. They automatically get attracted. They think it is a thing called love when really it is a fashion accessory.

"You have arm candy because you are seen with a pretty boy and people would treat you differently," says Allyson Gerace, 17, from East Boston High School.

Being with pretty boys has other benefits, too.

"They buy you nice things and they treat you as a woman and then they could give you advice on taking care of yourself," says Robles.

Then again, being with such a pretty boy could boomerang.

"[Pretty] boys don't want to be faithful," says 17-year-old Kata Nyei, from West Roxbury Academy. ■



▲ AFH photo by Bill Le



▲ AFH photo by Lena Yee

Behind the mask of makeup

By Brianna Gray // Contributing Writer

It's very normal for teenage girls to be wearing makeup. Putting on your eyeliner and mascara every day to make sure it matches your outfit. Seeing your favorite all-time idols wearing it, and running to the mirror to try it on so you can show your friends next week.

You start to feel like a superstar and use it as a way to express yourself. It's cool – until you see it as a way to hide. Then it can become a problem.

Eighteen-year-old Viana Vargas, from West Roxbury Academy, says she goes without.

"I don't wear makeup because it gives you pimples and it ruins your skin," says Vargas.

Many teens say that makeup gives them a hint of fashion sense and boosts up their swag.

"Makes me feel better about myself," says Michelle Walsh, 18, from West Roxbury Academy.

For some teens, the cover-up can become an obsession.

"Girls wear makeup because it makes them look older, because guys are attracted to older girls," says Vargas. "Makes them want to be like them and do everything they do."

Shantell McIntosh, 18, from West Roxbury Academy, does not feel there is a deeper meaning behind her makeup.

"I feel like it is made for us to use," says McIntosh.

Walsh says a teen girl should not think that she is concealing her true self behind her blush.

"The makeup doesn't matter," Walsh says, "because it does not define who she is." ■



▲ AFH photo by Seijah Drake

Stars in their eyes

By Brianna Gray // Contributing Writer

Everybody wants to be a celebrity. Watching the lights flash and having everybody talk about you. Having the paparazzi always on you as if they were ticks and you were the dog.

It's easy for teens to fall under their spells.

"Every celebrity influences a certain somebody's life," says 18-year-old Akeem Borneo, from Urban Science Academy. "It changes someone's opinion about someone."

Being the biggest role model out there is a serious job.

"People admire celebrities too much because of social media," says 16-year-old Salah Yusuf, from West Roxbury Academy. "It affects teens passionately because it makes them want to imitate them."

Some celebrities will do anything for the attention. The same thing can happen with the teens who want to be just like them.

"I see certain celebrities as an act just because it is a way to make money and it's what teens like," says Nathan Wright, 15, from USA.

Like celebrities, some teens become blinded by the bling.

"Teens look up to them because we see them as the amount of money they make," says Hernan Melo, 17, from West Roxbury Academy.

At the same time, other teens like to criticize the stars and applaud their downfalls.

"They are normal people," says Borneo, "and you can't judge them because you wouldn't like it if it was you." ■

In the matter of Leroy Jethro Gibbs, et al

Crime show careers

By Makiz Nasirahmad // Senior Editor

Iris Cruzado-Rivera loves watching "NCIS" because the show is so informational.

"You are educated on serious situations that you may see or hear," says Cruzado-Rivera, 18, who attends Brighton High School.

With TV crime shows like "NCIS," "CSI," "Bones" and "Law & Order" saturating the airwaves 24/7, many teens have become inspired by the characters and plot lines.

Of "NCIS," Cruzado-Rivera says: "It influences me to not only be a naval investigator but any type of investigator because they show you the things they feel and how you need to deal with it even though you may have a different opinion on the investigation."

Naomi Edouard, 18, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, is a fan of "Law & Order."

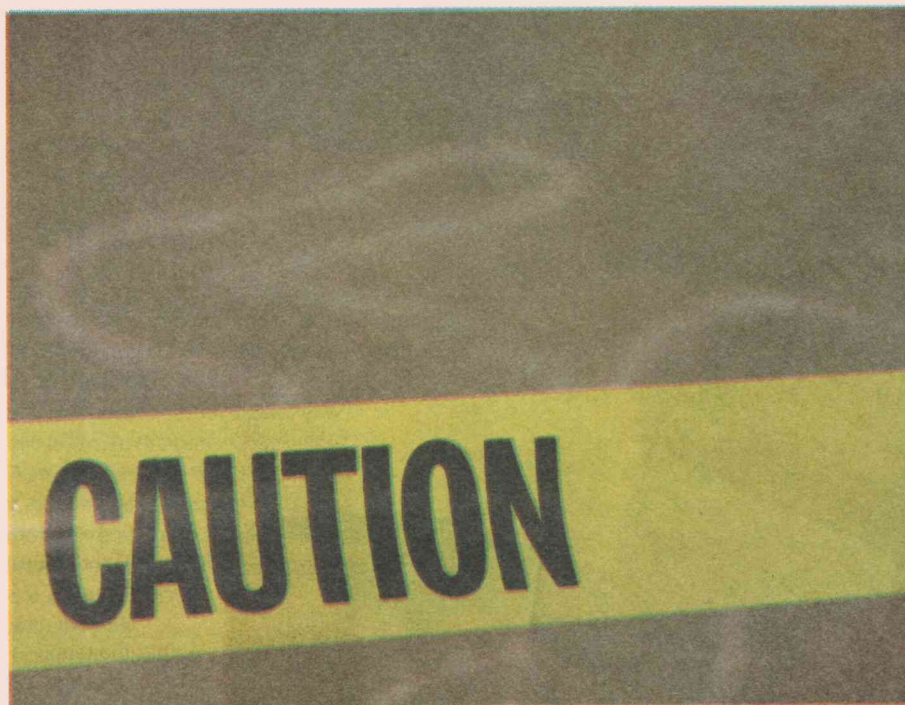
"I like when they were on a mission to discover the solution to problems and who was responsible for the crimes that were done," says Edouard.

Still, she says the show has not swayed her career path.

"It doesn't influence me," Edouard says, "because I'm already strong about what I want to become, which is a sociologist."

Kaila Piazza, 18, from BCLA, is one who watches "CSI" only for the pure entertainment value.

"It doesn't make me want to be a forensic scientist," says Piazza. "I watch the show because I just like it." ■



▲ AFH photo by Sydney Mahoney

Need an ear?



▲ AFH photo by Timmy Nguyen

Talk to others

By Marmarin Nasirahmad // Staff Editor

Parent. Teacher. Friend. Sibling. Psychologist. Whom do you talk to when you have to let it all out?

"I talk to my mother about my problems because...she is always there for me," says 19-year-old Maverick Mallari, who goes to Boston Community Leadership Academy.

Some teens say they only talk to their parents about school stuff.

"I don't talk to my parents about my girl problems or anything," says Mallari, "because I feel shy, and I feel like I can talk to my friends about that because we're the same age and we understand each others' problems better, and they can help me solve it."

Redeat Abate, 17, from BCLA, says she feels comfortable confiding in her parents.

"I talk to my parents about anything, especially to my mother, because if I tell her about my boyfriend problems or anything, I feel like she will understand me because she was once a teenager, and she has been through that," says Abate.

Abate says she understands why some teens might feel more relaxed talking to a professional.

"Sometimes it's better talking to a psychologist about your problems because they are strangers to you, and not your relatives or friends, and they would just listen to you and won't judge you or tell anything to anyone," she says.

Fitaw Beyene, 16, from BCLA, has a bond with her sister.

"I like talking to my sister because she is almost the same age as me and she makes it easy for me to talk to her," says Beyene, "because there is some stuff that I don't want to tell my mother because I don't want to disappoint her. I'm trying to make my mother happy, and by telling my problems, I won't make her happy." ■



▲ AFH photo by Bill Le

Talk to yourself

By Jose Ibarra // Staff Writer

When people talk to themselves, it creates a pleasurable sense of another's presence. Although talking to one's self may be a satisfying habit, it still attracts unsatisfying comments. Matiwas Kidané, 18, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, doesn't see the need for teens to talk to themselves.

"Why talk to yourself when you could text your brother or your best friend and tell them your problems?" says Kidané.

But Bonnie Ramos, 16, from BCLA, says she has no problem talking to herself.

"I don't care what others think," says Ramos. "When I talk to myself, it makes me feel as if I'm talking to a person who won't lie and tell others my secrets."

Micaella Mallari, a junior from BCLA, says teens should not rush to judge others.

"When an individual talks with themselves, they are considered weird," she says, "but the fact that it gives you the satisfaction of expressing your feelings to a trustworthy person makes it unweird.

And although some may say it's weird, they know they've done it once or twice in their life." ■



▲ AFH photo by Bill Le

Bad love

By Tania Duncan // Staff Writer

Fifteen-year-old Akira Austin has been in a bad relationship. She says her partner wasn't faithful and didn't tell her much about anything. According to her, faith is everything, and without it, a relationship won't go too far.

Teens believe bad relationships happen when people try to make commitments for all the wrong reasons. The main ingredients to a healthy relationship, they say, are trust, communication, and commitment.

"What got me through that rough patch in life was my mental advice," says Austin, who attends Boston Community Leadership Academy. "God sends someone for everyone, and when the time will come, you'll find them."

Carolina Forti, 16, believes that trust is utmost.

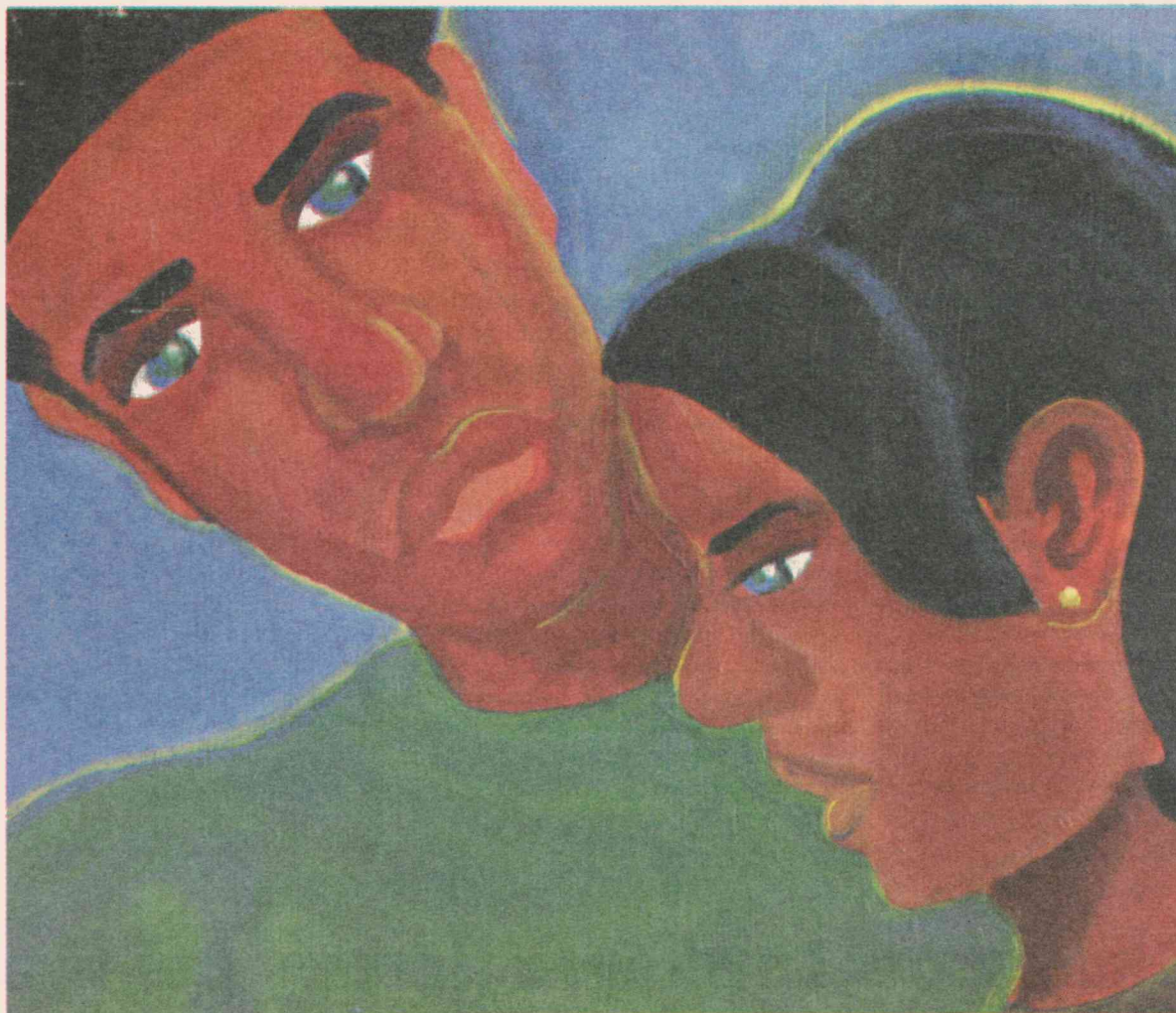
"Trust is something that can be hard to gain but easy to lose," says Forti, who goes to BCLA.

Jasmine Rosa, 16, has also been in a bad relationship; all communication was lost and the feelings were gone. She believes this can cause post-traumatic stress and damage people.

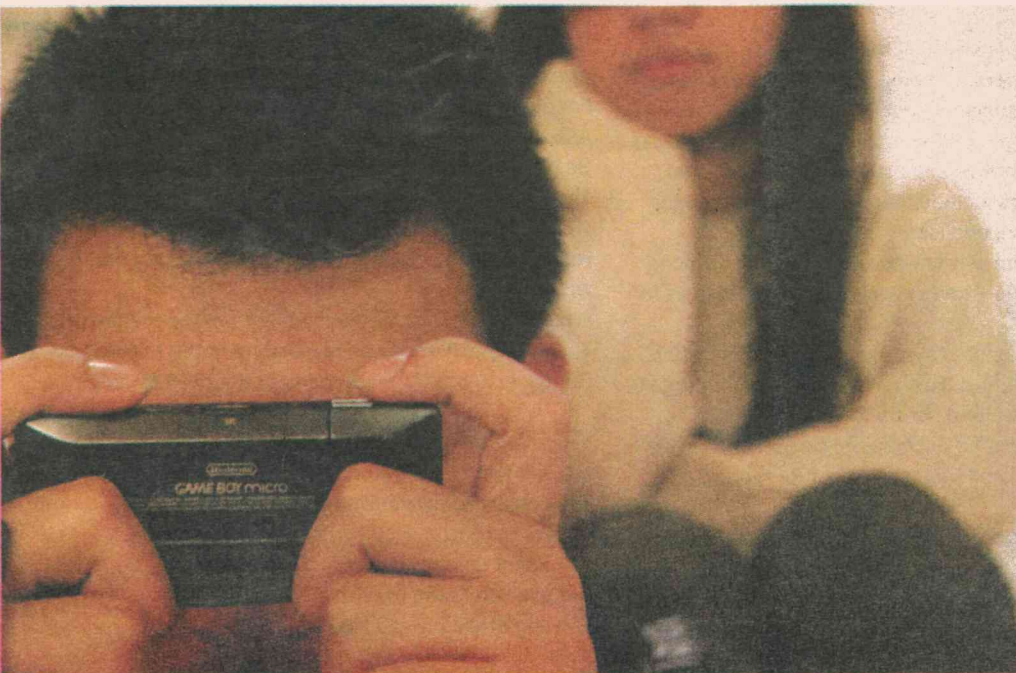
According to Rosa, a bad relationship isn't a real relationship. When true sharing vanishes, she says, everything it was thought to be about is not the case.

"Communication is key," says Rosa, from BCLA.

Teens say that you should never make someone a priority if the other person treats you as an option. View bad relationships as a lesson for your future, they say. Live, learn, and life goes on. ■



▲ AFH art by Cassandra Lattimore



▲ AFH photo by Seijah Drake

Hang time

By Chahana Patel // Staff Writer

Boys are all about MW3 and the scores of Celtics games. Girls tend to talk about gossip, fashion, hair, and crushes.

Sometimes, the two genders mingle as hangout partners.

Victor Lugo, a sophomore from Boston Community Leadership Academy, says he would hang out with either; it's 50/50 for him.

Jorgji Nikopulli, a junior from BCLA, loves to play video games and says she prefers hanging out with guys over girls.

When she is with boys, she says, she can be herself and have nothing to worry about. She has more fun with boys.

The hangout rules often depend on the situation: when talking about their personal lives, teens tend to stay with their own sex; if it's just to have fun, a mixed crowd adds variation.

Maria Francisco, 15, from Another Course to College, makes the equation simple.

She says she'll chill with anyone who has a good personality and a sense of humor. ■

The flip-flop on hip-hop

By Makiz Nasirahmad // Senior Editor

Seventeen-year-old Oniel Bailey Jr., of Roxbury, says he knows the true meaning behind the hip-hop movement.

"The real purpose was to get people aware of the things that happened in neighborhoods that people never saw unless you lived there," says Bailey, who started rapping at a young age.

Many teenagers today feel that, to some extent, hip-hop has lost its way.

"Now," says Bailey, "rapping is about what you got and what you are."

Still, that hasn't stopped many teens from expressing themselves through the art of rap.

Kenyon Lodge, 18, says he tends to rap about girls.

"I'd rather talk about something that I go through," says Lodge, who goes to Boston Community Leadership Academy.

Moe Smith, 18, says he likes to share his experiences through rap.

"I don't make up stuff, I speak the truth," says Smith, who attends BCLA.

Even as some believe that royal rapper Jay-Z has strayed too far from his hard-life street roots now that he's a superstar, Bailey feels that Beyonce's husband is still keeping it real.

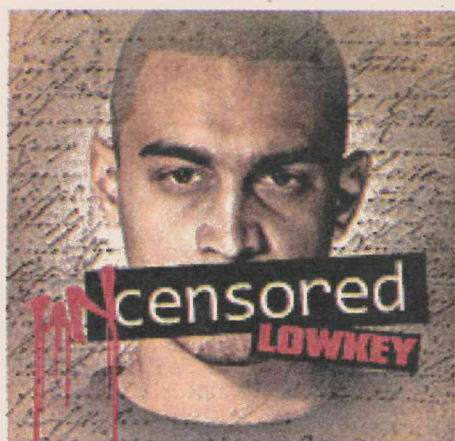
"I think Jay-Z speaks the truth," says Bailey, "and I think so because, when you have been rapping as long as he has and made as much money as he had, your lifestyle is going to be drastically about new things and a rich lifestyle." ■



▲ AFH collage by Kim Huynh

The rapper Lowkey: a fiercely political poet

By Makiz Nasirahmad // Senior Editor



▲ Photo courtesy of Lowkey's website

In most of his lyrics, he encourages people to change the world and not to sell themselves out for money.

His real name is Kareem Dennis, but on stage they call him Lowkey.

However, Lowkey is anything but.

Unlike many rappers who sing about babes and bling, Lowkey is a fiercely political poet in the vein of Tupac and Public Enemy. Born in London to an English father and an Iraqi mother, his controversial platform is international.

His musical topics include respecting women, freeing Palestine, and US imperialism.

That is one reason why Lowkey, 25, is popular among foreign-born students – and criticized by conservatives for being too radical.

Fans say that his originality and self-respect are what attract them. Many of his listeners say they find courage to be who they really are and not try to fit in.

In most of his lyrics, he encourages people to change the world and not to sell themselves out for money.

These lines from his song "My Soul" typify his philosophy:

They can't use my music to advertise for Coca Cola
They can't use my music to advertise for Motorola

They can't use my music to advertise for anything
The truth, I guess that's the reason the industry won't let me in

Refuse to be a product or brand, I'm human
Refuse to contribute to the gangster illusion
Whether I'm Number One, Number Two, or Number Three
I'm unique and there will never be another me
And there will never be another you
Be proud of who you are, don't copy what the others do
They are not superior, you are not inferior
When we realize that is gonna be hysteria
Not commercial, always controversial what my pen has written

When they listen many have risen from the mental prison
That's why you don't see my face upon the television
But every time I try to sleep I hear the devil singing

You might take my life,
But you can't take my soul!
You can't take my soul!

You might take my freedom,
But you can't take my soul!
You can't take my soul! ■

Cheerleading is a sport, yo!

By Robert Hines // Staff Writer

Cheerleading is a combination of dance and gymnastics. Can I ask this: Is gymnastics considered a sport?

Some people believe cheerleading is just an activity where girls wear tight uniforms and yell at football games. But being a cheerleader requires a lot of work, just like being a football or basketball player. And all over the world, boys are becoming cheerleaders, and it is a fun experience.

At my school, we hold cheerleading tryouts as with any sport. We go to competitions and face other schools and practice 24/7 to be the best team out there.

During practice, we work hard on stunts, emotions, and cheers. We use our physical ability, lifting our fellow cheerleaders. We rely on strength, courage, and perseverance. Just like every other sports team, we are a family that can have fun and talk to one other.

When we hit competitions, we want to be on our A game, and strive to win first place. Seeing all the other cheerleaders gets us nervous, but we keep our heads up and go for what's ours.

We're not just an activity. By giving 100 percent, we feel as if we are like other sports teams. We bring a lot to the game – ourselves and our pride. ■



▲ AFH photo by Kim Huyn

Sneakerheads can't kick the habit

By Odelyne Lamour // Staff Writer

Last December, the hottest sneaker of the season was released. Not just any retro Jordans that come out, like, every other year, but the Air Jordan 11 Concord. The sneakers that everyone says will make history. But these sneakers have already made history more negatively than what everyone expected.

Thousands of people nationwide were in line, waiting. Waiting just to get their pair of Concords. Just like Black Friday all over again. Pushing, shoving, breaking down doors – just for a pair of shoes. All this drama just for shoes that, some teens say, will get played out in a month or two just like all the rest of the Jordans.

Twenty or 30 years later, teens say, you won't even care about these sneakers. Or how much they meant to you back then. Sneakers aren't going to make you be successful in life or help pay any bills, they say. You can live without them.

"I think it's all just ignorance," says Annisa Benjamin, 16, from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science. "Uh, because it's just a pair of sneakers. All this extra stuff like waiting in line in the cold and trampling people. Just all this chaos isn't needed."

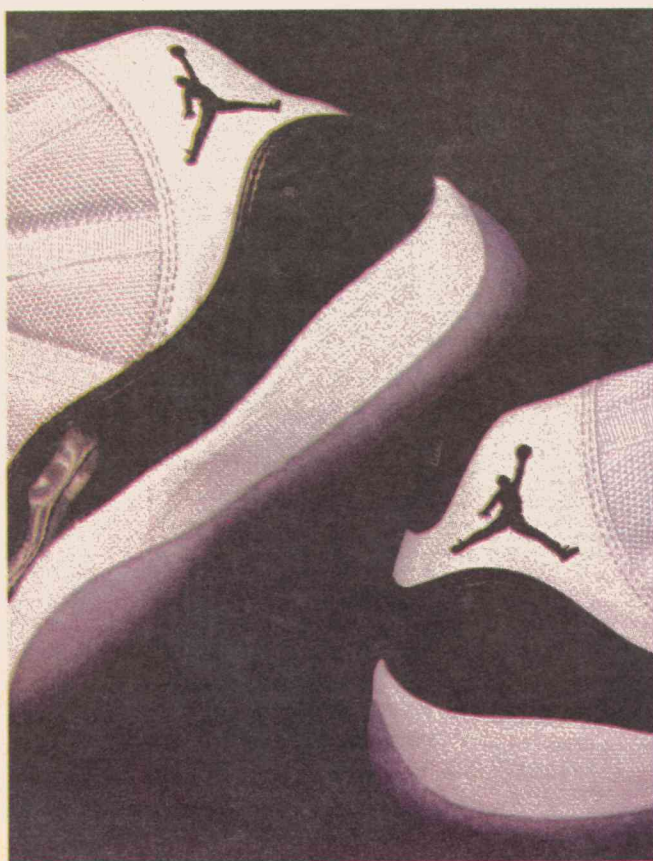
Some people were paying hundreds of dollars more than the \$180 retail price to get them online after they sold out in stores.

"Everybody's being such a hype beast over these sneakers when they know nothing about sneakers," says Jonathan Martinez, 16, from Boston Community Leadership Academy. "They only want them 'cuz their friends do."

Brandon Orteiz, 14, from BCLA, waited in line six hours for these sneakers – only to be disappointed.

"I was very furious when I heard the announcement: 'No more men's sizes,'" he says. "Like I waited in line for nothing."

Until, maybe, the next big sneaker comes along. ■



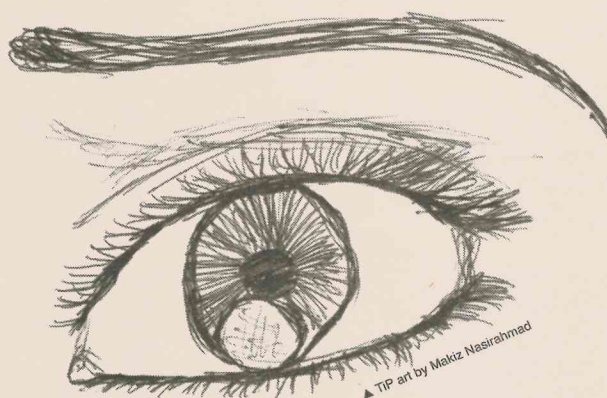
▲ AFH photo by Christopher Glover



Betrayal

By Audrey Ngankam

Today will be my last and today will be my first
 The last time I get walked on by you
 The first time I've moved so far from you
 You said you regret ever doing me wrong
 The last time I will wait for you to arrive
 The first time you said it was a mistake
 But you kept on telling me lies
 Why? Are you truly my friend?
 As you claim to be?
 Why would you always be the center of my problems?
 One thing I have learned about you is that you are just a pretender
 I trusted you
 I always shared everything with you
 You are not a friend, but instead you are a dilemma in my life
 You are a drama queen
 Sometimes in life we give up what we
 Love the most
 Just to be in peace
 Thank you for betraying me, and I hope you succeed.



Unexpected

By Taika Lamy

Our love was like a song, meaningful and full of connection
 Being around him gave me a sense of protection
 Just looking at him
 Oh how I loved his courageous ways
 And could not stop thinking about him for days
 The way his hands compressed mine
 Made it seem like everything was going to be fine

Suddenly, our memories were cut short
 Without his full support
 I never thought that big arguments between us would occur
 I never thought that the words "I hate you" would escape either
 I never thought that losing you meant I would lose a part of me
 Sleepless nights turned into sleepless mornings

But the memories with you will never fade
 As I go on, day by day
 Long, lonely, lazy seconds turned into minutes
 Minutes into hours
 Hours into days
 Days into weeks
 Then quickly into years of sadness
 Too many memories are lost and I'm almost into tears
 I just never thought it would happen to us

We both moved on, on to a bigger life
 Sadly, I was looking down in a hole
 Little white and red roses will not awaken you
 But death has taken you
 I'm sorry, I'm sorry was repeated but you couldn't hear me
 The regret I've gained inside, I pray you can forgive me
 Our world is unknown
 And things happen unexpectedly

Gay? Game? Love? Phase?

By Robert Hines

I wonder if being gay is just a game!
 You wonder if it's just a phase!
 I wonder if a relationship lasts long,
 You wonder if you'll get a grandchild.
 I wonder, "Will I ever find love?"
 You wonder what's wrong with me.
 I wonder, "Should I just go play around or
 Find someone for me?"
 You wonder why I cry.
 I wonder if you're still thinking about what I love,
 You wonder about your feelings.
 I wonder about my feelings,
 I wonder about the hurt and why I cried because
 I broke your dreams,
 I wonder if you took my apologies and my heart.
 You wonder if it's just a phase!
 Will you ever accept me?
 This is my dream, my life.
 I love you, too, but I love me, too.
 I wonder if being gay is just a game!
 You wonder if it's just a phase!



Holding down my future

By Shanae Saddler

No more looking back
 I'm looking forward
 Too caught up with myself
 I feel as if my dreams are crushed
 Under my ego
 Too much pride
 That hatred rises

Too many deaths
 Makes my emotions drown in sorrow
 Fighting the past, present, and holding
 Down my future
 Can't say I'm planning to succeed
 In a perfect faded dream
 I just wanna become something I want
 And not who they claim me to be!