

TEENS **in** PRINT BOSTON

BOSTON TEENS IN PRINT MAY/JUNE 2012™

“What would you do?”

Shoplifting test case reveals people's prejudices

A SPECIAL REPORT

By Alice Xiao, Geraldine Vittini,
Edalina Wang // Staff Writers and
Makiz Nasirahmad // Senior Editor

A young, Hispanic-looking girl strolled into a small corner store for the first time on a recent afternoon, wearing a hooded sweatshirt and carrying a bag slung over her shoulder.

The bodega, in a busy section of Jamaica Plain, caters to mostly local Hispanic adults and has a loyal clientele.

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AFH photo by Seijah Drake

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AFH photo by Bill Le



AFH photo by Lena Yee



AFH photo by Michelle Nguyen

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TEENS IN PRINT

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As the girl surveyed the aisles, in walked one of the regulars, a middle-aged Hispanic woman with brilliant red hair. When she saw the girl shove a pack of crackers into her bag, the woman loudly confronted the thief, upbraiding her over and over again about stealing.

"If she were black," the woman later disdainfully explained in an interview, "I would have gone straight to the manager [rather than approach her directly] because black people like fighting too much."

In this case, the assumed criminal was one of a group of female Teens in Print reporters and associates performing an experiment. This undertaking, conducted over several months, was meant to gauge bystanders' reactions to young people of different races – white, black, Asian and one appearing to be Hispanic – who pretended to be shoplifting.

With the red-haired lady leading the way, the results of this test at first glance revealed people's prejudices based only on race. But just as in the Trayvon Martin case that is unfolding before the nation – and in many other incidents – a deeper look shows a more complex set of factors colliding.

In the TiP experiment, the outcomes depended on the age, gender, and race of both the alleged thieves and bystanders, and also to what extent the shoplifters and even the observers were perceived as not being part of the usual customer base.

"The individual will make a judgment call on another person's morality based on their own prejudices," said Laura Hansen, an assistant professor of sociology at Western New England University. "People want to simplify their lives, so they jump to conclusions."

The idea for this project, a joint effort between Teens in Print and the New England Center for Investigative Reporting, was inspired by the television show "Primetime: What Would You Do?" The program attempts to capture people's reactions to fabricated scenarios involving crimes or ethical dilemmas.

For the Teens in Print setup, the owner of the bodega agreed to allow his store to be used as the staging ground. The names of the

customers – and the store – are being withheld because the circumstances surrounding the shoplifting were contrived.

Attracting the most attention from people in the bodega was a white teen who appeared to be shoplifting. Half of the six people who witnessed the purported crime either directly confronted the teen or notified the owner.

"This surprises me because white people have been seen as the 'innocent race,' " said Alison Davey, a sophomore at Boston Community Leadership Academy, who is white. "But that's wrong. We're just like everyone else."

Hansen offered another perspective: She said the white teen drew the most repercus-



sions because she stood out in an Hispanic neighborhood.

"You're planting lavender petunias," Hansen said. "All of a sudden, a white petunia pops up – that's an anomaly."

The two would-be shoplifters who attracted the least response were an Asian and an African-American. In a predominantly Hispanic community, they were less conspicuous than the white teen. Of the observers, only two out of five, or 40 percent, confronted these alleged thieves or alerted the store owner.

One elderly Hispanic man at the bodega

offered this stereotype when interviewed: "Orientals are the most educated people in the world. They never take anything that's not theirs."

As for the incident involving the black sham shoplifter, one Boston student interviewed said he expected a larger percentage of the bystanders to react strongly out of ignorance.

"I think there is a racial bias," said Jinwoo Choi, a senior at BCLA.

But Hansen has a theory for why so few people did intervene. She, too, believes that prejudice is at fault, expounding on the red-headed woman's rant.

"Fear," she said "was [likely] a factor based on stereotypes."

In the case of the TiP reporter who appeared to be Hispanic, three of the seven people, or 43 percent of those who noticed her pretending to steal from the store, confronted her directly or went to the owner. Many of those people, and other onlookers who reacted to the team of TiP reporters and associates, know the owner personally.

"Age, race, familiarity.... There are millions and millions of layers [that have an influence]," said Hansen. "Prejudice is an attitude, and it is very difficult to change an attitude."

During the trials, the two youngest people who witnessed the pseudo-shopliftings did not react at all. Both were teenagers. Their ages might have been the reason why they remained silent.

"Personally, if it was me," said Choi, who is 19, "I wouldn't say anything because it's not my business." ■

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. Also contributing to this report were Alexandra Burris, an NECIR intern, and Sarah Kuranda, an NECIR teaching assistant.

BSAC BUZZ

By Tucker S. Gaye // Senior Editor

The Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC) wants all teens to shout out: “NO MORE CUTS, NO MORE HIKES.”

The MBTA has dug itself into a huge mess, much like the Big Dig project, and they are making strategic changes to clean it up. A projected debt as high as \$185 million is forcing the MBTA management crew to raise fares by 23 percent overall. As usual, the majority of people who are going to be affected are low-income families, and students.

Public transit is subsidized to benefit a majority, reduce traffic, and provide affordable service. We as a community are intertwined economically with the MBTA. Local stores, recreation centers, government facilities, and schools and colleges rely on the MBTA to transport people and keep things flowing. This is not just the MBTA's problem. It's ours!

For teens, this can mean increased challenges getting to school, to work, to extracurricular activities -- and for staying out of trouble.

For more information about BSAC, Contact Maria I. Ortiz at mortiz@boston.k12.ma.us or at 617-635-8079 ext 104. And continue to watch our “We Are the Ones in the Classroom...Ask Us!” video. ■



AFH photo by Seijah Drake



They're jammin' in the name of the MBTA

By Odelyne Lamour // Staff Writer

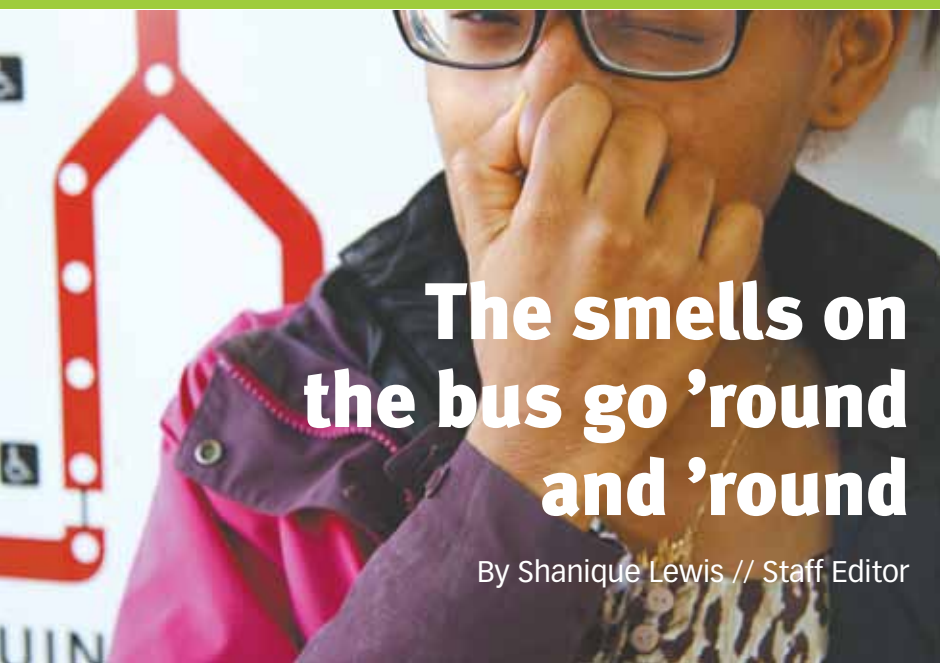
MBTA, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. Better known as the way most of us teens get to and from places. For example, the Green, Red, Blue, and Orange Lines. As well as the commuter rail and boats. But just because people use these modes of transportation doesn't mean everyone has to like them.

One issue that concerns me is that there are leftover wrappers, and half-spilled liquids, on buses and trains. The reason why our transportation isn't that clean is because of the people. If these were their own homes, folks wouldn't be throwing trash on the floor. One way we can fix this is by adding little compartments near the sides of all the vehicles where we could throw stuff away.

Another problem is over-packed buses. There are certain buses where it's so jammed, but people still try to squeeze themselves in like pickles in a jar. These people don't care as long as they get to their destinations.

Wait times=horrible. There are buses where the wait times are just unacceptable. I honestly think that after 25 minutes, it's a little too much. There are days when people almost wait an hour for a bus. And with the big T cutbacks, it may get even worse.

Teens need to get together and demand better service. In a union, we are stronger. ■



The smells on the bus go 'round and 'round

By Shanique Lewis // Staff Editor

Waiting in the morning for the bus can be tiring.

“The buses need to run on schedule,” says Natalie Silva, 16, from Boston Community Leadership Academy.

Then the bus arrives. You are relieved, hoping to sit down and relax your muscles until it's time to be on the go again. As you step on the bus to tap your card, the smell of dirty laundry and wet animals smacks you in the face.

Lashawn Rosa, a sophomore at BCLA, doesn't think it's only the bus that reeks; it's also the people on it.

“A little of both, because there could be that one person who doesn't believe in soap,” says Rosa. “A lady once came on the bus with a bag of fish and it

smelled horrible.”

Every day, the T's bus fleet of 1,070 vehicles gets swept, and the seats and poles are wiped down, according to Lydia Rivera, an MBTA spokeswoman. Once a month, the buses are cleaned more thoroughly – disinfected and deodorized, Rivera says.

Still, some teens say they are reluctant to take the T because of what they describe as a horrible stench that can accompany their rides.

Others just live with it.

“It stinks,” says Lucy Daveiga, 16, who attends BCLA, “but I have to deal with it until I leave, or the person that stinks leaves.” ■

AFH photo by Bill Le

Beyond skin deep

The recent "Dark Girls" documentary bares the uncomfortable colorism that raven-hued black women have faced inside and outside their own culture since the days of slavery. Here, TiP staffers Mussuba Samati and Shanae Saddler confront the current complexities of the complexion issue -- one in a narrative, the other in verse -- and of still being criticized by some for being too dark, and by others for being too light. ■

"You're too pretty to be dark skinned"

By Mussuba Samati // Staff Writer

I do not feel different because I am dark skinned. I feel unique, in a good way. I am an original and that's way better than being a copy.

Many dark-skinned girls tend to believe that they are less worthy than lighter females, but in reality we are all humans.

I am not cocky. I am a proud dark-skinned girl. I love my skin, regardless of what anyone thinks.

In elementary school, there were a few times when I would hate the shade of my skin. But that was partly because I didn't understand the true meaning behind my skin, and why it was beautiful.

Dark-skinned girls are stunning because our souls seem to be much closer to the source of being, rendering to us greater radiance, symmetry, and, above all, kinder hearts.

As an African, originally from Guinea-Bissau, I have been stereotyped so

many times because of my darker tone of skin. People I know and strangers on the streets would tell me: "You're too pretty to be dark skinned," "You're dark skinned, but at least you've got good hair," and "Don't stay out in the sun too long, you can't afford to get any darker."

These comments are extremely offensive, ignorant, and irritating. It is disgusting and disheartening when black people still devalue a color that everyone craves. Then, black women must get appreciation from others to feel attractive.

I am beautiful and my skin color has a lot to do with it. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. I learned from my mother: Be proud of your skin color, because no one else can make you believe you are beautiful if you don't. The confidence has to come from within.

Dark skin is beautiful. ■

My mocha skin

By Shanae Saddler // Staff Editor

There once was a man
Who said,
"I look to a day when people will not be
Judged by the
Color of their skin,
But by the content of their character."
Do you not realize you're beautiful?
They say beauty lies in the eye of the
Beholder
Not
The
Color of my skin
Not
The
Complexion of my skin
Judge me on my character
Do you not realize your insecurities?
I am
Mocha skinned
And I have heard
"You are not black."
But can you not judge me?
A judgment formed
My insecurities
Are beginning to grow
Who
Am
I?
You're darker of color
And make me feel
That it's okay
For you to step on me
Like a piece of rotten candy
Can you not hurt me?
You say you're darker toned
I'm white
Because I'm lighter
Why should I suffer?
There once was a man
MLK
He changed the way you judged me
Do I deserve this?
Don't put me down
While I put myself up
Don't put yourself down
While your insecurities put you lower
Grow up
Face the consequences
That
I am
BEAUTIFUL!
And I will not
Be judged
I am
Powerful
Not because of my complexion
But I am strong because of my character
There once was a man
Who said,
"I look to a day when people will not be
Judged by the color of their skin,
But by the content of their character."
And yet, today, people still judge. ■

AFH art by Marvin Bynoe



AFH photo by Lena Yee

Deal them out

Teens playing cards in school

By Marmarin Nasirahmad // Staff Editor

Seventeen-year-old Kenneth Castillo, who goes to Boston Community Leadership Academy, thinks that students should be allowed to play cards in school during their free time, like at lunch. "We don't have anything to do and students get bored," says Castillo.

But schools believe that card playing can lead to gambling, which can cause major problems. Several years ago, according to news accounts, a high school in suburban Chicago put a stop to card playing after

students were discovered to be exchanging money.

BCLA guidance counselor Ronald E. Johnson says school is a place for learning.

"It's not a casino," he says. "If students want to play cards, they've got the weekends."

Seventeen-year-old Oniel Bailey, from BCLA, thinks schools are overreacting to students playing a simple game.

"It's no big deal," he says. ■

HERE'S TO THOSE WHO

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Knowledge is a priceless asset that benefits us all. At Sovereign Bank, we believe in celebrating those people who devote their time and energy to cultivating young minds. That's why we are proud to support the work of WriteBoston and the outstanding teens published in Boston's Teens in Print newspaper.

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Students and teachers

A classroom alliance

By Alejandro Martinez // Senior Editor



AFH photo by Lena Yee

Salvadora McCaffrey, 16, from Jamaica Plain, believes our school systems have a long way to go.

"The American education is really slacking," says McCaffrey. "Too many kids are being cheated a real education."

Hundreds of high school students in Boston say they are dealing with ineffective teachers week in and week out.

But, some teens say, a bad teacher doesn't hold all the responsibility for the students' performances in class.

"[Students] should probably work especially diligent in that teacher's class," says McCaffrey.

Ana Mendez, 16, of Boston Latin School, believes that teens need to open the lines of communications.

"Students should talk to their teach-

ers about how they could improve a lesson or what would help the student learn better," says Mendez.

Still, teens point out, there are uncooperative teachers and those they feel give unnecessary work.

Maria Alejandra Restrepo, a senior at Boston Community Leadership Academy, feels the burden to make things better ultimately falls on the students.

"Students are responsible for their own education," says Restrepo. "A student should talk with the teacher, at least, and discuss why they feel the work is necessary for them."

Teens like to say, "The better the teacher, the better the education."

Still, many know that only when both student and teacher step up to do their parts can change be achieved. ■

BCLA: stay or go?

By Marmarin Nasirahmad // Staff Editor

Fifteen-year-old Jerson Familia, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, wants to continue attending his school even though it is moving to Hyde Park for next fall. Meanwhile, 16-year-old Raudy Perez says that he will be switching schools.

Stay or go? That's the question facing many students since BCLA announced this school year that it is moving to a bigger space, from its current Brighton home to the Hyde Park Education Complex.

Familia says that he feels too attached to his old school to leave.

"I've been going to this school for two years and it's going to be hard for me to move to a different school

and meet new people," Familia says.

Perez, though, believes that going to a larger building will take the "community" out of Boston Community Leadership Academy.

"I'm moving because BCLA is not going to be a community school anymore, because it's going to be more students," says Perez.

Ewing Diaz, 16, says he will continue to attend BCLA because it's closer to his home in Mattapan.

Familia says he has another reason why he will remain at the school.

"My girlfriend is going to BCLA," he says, "and I want to be with her 'til the end." ■

Dressed to excess

By Marmarin Nasirahmad // Staff Editor

Edwin Rivera, who goes to Boston Community Leadership Academy, thinks that schools should not care what students wear to class – as long as it's not out of control.

"Students have the right to wear what they want," says Rivera, 16, "but it should be appropriate because girls can't come to school half-naked and boys can't come with [totally] baggy pants."

Recently, several girls from BCLA arrived wearing short skirts, high heels, and tops with their bras sticking out. At least one ended up changing because school administrators thought that her outfit was more appropriate for a club than the classroom.

BCLA official Bryant Thirdgill thinks that students should come to school to learn and not dress like they're on a stage.

"They're not representing the way students dress for education, but for fashion," he says.

The school's dress code policy states: "BCLA students are expected to dress professionally at all times."

Rivera thinks it's okay for boys to wear their pants low as long as there's a T-shirt covering things.

"It's not comfortable for boys to put their pants all the way up," says Rivera.

Fifteen-year-old Rodney Perez, from BCLA, says he likes the clothes worn by students in his school.

"They're fresh, but sometimes girls show too much skin," says Perez.

Whether in school or out, teens say they like to wear what they want because it's a big part of who they are.

"Sometimes I judge people by the way they dress because the way you dress is part of you and your personality," says Perez, "and it also shows what you like and your taste." ■



AFH photo by Bill Le

Mad hatters

By Lizandro Nogueira // Staff Writer

Fifteen-year-old Reyna Joint says she hates it when administrators make her remove her hat in school.

"I love to wear hats whenever I want to match my outfit," says Joint, who goes to Brighton High School.

For teens, hats can be a fashion statement, a sign of loyalty to their team, a source of city pride – or even a remedy for a bad hair day.

The Brighton High rulebook says that students have to store their hats in lockers after entering the building. "Students who wear a hat or other headgear during the school day," the rules say, "will have to turn the item in to their teacher or an administra-

tor and the item will not be returned until 2:30 on the same day. Repeated violations will require a meeting with a parent or responsible family member."

Brighton High sophomore Kelvin Freire believes he knows why hats are banned in school.

"Hats are prohibited," he says, "because it's disrespectful to cover your head inside buildings."

Still, 17-year-old Jesus Soto, from Brighton High, dislikes being in school without his hat.

"When administrators tell me to take off my hat, I feel weird," says Soto. "I don't feel like I am myself; it doesn't feel the same." ■



Goodbye, grandpa

By Sandy Nguyen // Staff Writer

Grandpa. I didn't get a chance to say goodbye to him. But when I heard about it, I was sick. I hoped he was going to get better; I kept checking up on him by calling grandma. She told me that he didn't want to talk or eat.

I thought about when I was a little girl with him. I remember I was in a light purple dress, and we went to this pretty park in Jersey City where there were flowers everywhere. Then I forgot for a few days that he was sick, and I got busy with everything else, like school.

It was on a Saturday night, in January. I was about to go to a party. My mom called me downstairs. She told me that grandpa had passed away.

I ran up the stairs. I was like, "This can't be real." I called my grandma, quick, and she told me in a sad voice that grandpa had died.

I told my grandma that I had to go, and then I started to cry, and I couldn't stop. I cried myself to sleep. I was like, "Can this be a dream?"

Now I think summer is going to be different without my grandpa. He was funny and he knew how to fix things, like the motorcycle he kept out back.

He was there for me and my family. ■



Tips from TiP



Mussuba

Penda

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,

My mind is always thinking negative, and thinking about life. I know some people say, "Life is hard and all, and that's the way of life." But sometimes, people don't understand at all.

Every day, I'm suffering with depression and stress. I just don't know what to do to get rid of it all. Sometimes talking to my friends and counselor helps me get everything off my mind and feel a little better, but next thing you know, I go back to being depressed.

Sometimes I think, "Should I go or stay?" Meaning leaving the world....(I'm sure I won't hurt myself.)

I know life is hard, but depression is just hard to get over.

Sincerely,
A BPS ninth grader

Dear Anonymous,

Life is hard, no matter what happens. A lot of teens are going through the same issues that you're experiencing, but many manage to deal with them in a non-violent and effective way.

You should be around people who have positive mental attitudes. It could increase the desire of a person to live. Also, if things get really difficult, you should seek professional help.

Should you go or stay? STAY. You should understand that putting an end to your precious life is basically giving up on yourself and the people you care about the most: family and friends. Depression is hard to get over, but so are people getting over you being gone.

Love,
Mussuba and Penda



AFH photo by Chris Glover

WAR *is hell*

The Kony 2012 controversy continues

By Audrey Ngankam // Staff Writer

How can the world ignore Ugandan rebel leader Joseph Kony's horrible crimes? Now that the United States may get more involved, people are pretending as if they didn't know something was happening.

Statistics show that Kony kidnapped over 30,000 children. He turned the males into fighters by giving them guns and asking them to shoot their own parents so that they wouldn't have a place to go if they ever tried to escape. The females he turned into sex slaves.

Who just wakes up one morning and turns somebody's daughter into a sex slave? Some of them have become his wives, as well.

Those 30,000 or more children are 30,000 futures he has destroyed. These kids should be in school instead of Kony giving them guns to become soldiers. Some of the children that Kony kidnapped carry supplies until they are too weak to walk, at which time they're killed or simply left to die.

Kony and the Ugandan government occasionally issue public statements suggesting that peace negotiations would be welcome. This means they knew of Kony's crimes. How can they suggest negotiating with a criminal?

I am African and I know that, in Africa, no matter how difficult life is, a normal human will not start kidnapping children. In Africa, we love and embrace children, not turn them into sex slaves and soldiers. This is not who we are. Why is Kony giving a bad message about Africa to the rest of the world?

We need to stop Kony. We need to act fast before it is too late. Like the famous video says, we should all make Kony famous and let justice take over. ■

AFH photo by Timmy Nguyen



Gunshots filled the air

By Mussuba Samati // Staff Writer

I don't remember much of it
 But I do remember the reflection of the moon on the surface
 Of the lake near my house in Guinea-Bissau, West Africa
 Clear as crystal, pure as the driven snow
 Then, suddenly, the lake perished
 And was brought to despair and darkness.
 I shivered.
 My teeth chattered. I was about three.
 Gunshots filled the air, blood as red as ketchup
 Camouflaged with the people on the cement,
 Infants lying on the stomachs of their dead mothers, sobbing.
 Everyone was fighting
 Their way through that terrifying situation.
 Boom, bang, explosions,
 Crack, pow, pow!
 I glanced around my surroundings: dead people, rocks being thrown,
 Babies being trampled and my mother holding onto my fragile hands,
 My brother with my uncle and mom carrying my baby sister.
 I was confused rather than frightened.
 Then I saw fear in the eyes of my extended family.
 That gave me fear.
 I don't remember much of it
 But I do remember the neighbors chanting, in Portuguese:
 "Whatever happens, we have to keep our children safe first."
 I do remember one of my neighbors being stepped on,
 I turned the opposite way to get someone to give her a helping hand
 As I tilted back to her direction, she was gone.
 Only her shoes remained.
 I put my little hands on my bare face and cried.
 This is a blurry childhood memory but it never seems to fade;
 Just like fashion fades but style is eternal.
 The horrific war faded but the memory is always there
 Just blurry.
 I do remember that it was a civil war in
 Guinea-Bissau. ■



Chris Brown's triumphant return

Many teens look past his attack on Rihanna

By Alicia Perez // Senior Editor

Just after midnight on February 8, 2009, R&B singers Chris Brown and Rihanna were driving around Los Angeles when the incident occurred that shocked not only the fans of the then-famous couple – but also the nation.

According to the police report, Rihanna and Brown engaged in an argument about a long text message that Rihanna found on Brown's cellphone. This ultimately led to Brown beating, punching, choking, and biting Rihanna into near unconsciousness, and threatening to kill her, the report said. Brown was charged with felony assault and making criminal threats.

In the aftermath, many radio stations stopped playing his songs. But after pleading guilty and being sentenced to one year of domestic violence counseling, and six months of community service, Brown made his comeback. He released "Deuces" in 2010, and it was immediately nominated for Best Rap/Sung Collaboration at the 53rd Grammy Awards and Best Collaboration at the 2011 BET Awards.

Brown won back his fame, and the hearts of his fans, many of whom have completely looked past his criminal conviction.

Raisa Manaj, a senior at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, says that while she feels bad for Rihanna, she doesn't think the incident represents the true

Chris Brown.

"It was wrong," says Manaj, "but he's still a good singer."

Many of Chris Brown's fans – dubbed "Team Breezy" – feel as if enough time has passed so that Brown should no longer be held accountable for his actions. Some even go as far as to say Rihanna deserved her ruthless beating.

Manaj's favorite song of Brown's is "I Can Transform Ya," which she says represents him perfectly.

"It's like poetry," says Manaj. "Look how he has transformed."

Evelyn O'Toole, also a senior at the O'Bryant, agrees with her classmate.

"That's his personal life, it doesn't matter," says O'Toole.

Still, there are some teens who cannot stand the sight of Brown.

"I don't like him because of what he did," says Amy Lyu, 18, of the O'Bryant. "It was really messed up."

Team Breezy implores the haters to move on and get over it – Brown expressed his remorse and did his time.

Aiding his comeback is the fact that he and Rihanna have since been together making music – and, according to the tabloids, maybe more. ■

Pressing the presidential issues

By Makiz Nasirahmad // Senior Editor

Simranjit Singh, 18, is sure about the most important topic that American citizens should look at while choosing a president.

"Military power is the one thing that the president has all the power over," says Singh, who goes to Boston Community Leadership Academy. "When it comes to electing a president, the economy falls under so many things. It just doesn't depend on the president. The president doesn't have all the control of healthcare, welfare, education."

However, Mark Reynolds, 17, thinks that the economy is a way bigger matter because it can affect things at home as well as cause a country to go to war.

"The war in Iraq can be debatable, whether it was started for taking natural resources so we can improve our country," says Reynolds, who attends BCLA.

As the presidential campaign heats up, some teens are also debating the issues.

Reynolds is paying close attention to the candidates' views.

"If the person is against unnecessary wars and spending, then I would vote for him," he says.

Zainab Hussein, 18, from BCLA, thinks that ever since 9/11, average Americans live in fear of being attacked. However, she says she does not like that the government pays too much attention to terrorism.

"Terrorism is a possibility while the failing of the economy is a fact," says Hussein, "so I think we should focus on fixing problems that are proven, not something that could happen." ■

AFH photo by Timmy Nguyen





AFH photo by Michelle Nguyen

On marriage

By Tawndalaya DaRoza // Contributing Writer

It all starts like this: You meet someone attractive, there is chemistry, and they possess everything you have been searching for in a person all your life. This human being sparks something deep within your soul, like stars on a midnight sky. No matter what you do you just cannot shake this person off you because it's as though you have been blown away by a hurricane in the middle of August. That's it. You cannot take it anymore. It's just too much. So, in come words like, "I cannot live, eat, sleep, or breathe without you." "There is no one else in this world I'd rather be with." "I'd die for you." Then, he or she pops the question.

Yup, set in stone, or shall I say, legal papers signed in front of a judge, a big propaganda wedding, and two overpriced material accessories that go on the fingers. Wow, so this is what the indescribably powerful emotion that holds the universe together in a mystical way transforms into, huh? Sadly, people worldwide believe this is the ultimate way to represent the undoubtedly spellbinding feeling they have for one another.

After no one hears any wedding bells, the bliss runs out, the ring is irrelevant, and the hype fades, something changes. It goes from, "We are destined to be together," to bum-rushing the same judge who legalized the treaty, in order to declare war.

I thought that when one finds a soul mate that the pair is together forever. What happened to that? If this flame is eternal, why does it burn out? It is true, good things do not last forever. Yet, maybe that good thing was just an illusion. If he or she was the one, you would still make two. Maybe we are just too human to understand the true meaning of unicorns, rainbows, and all the stars above.

Or maybe there are still couples out there who see beyond all of the artificial memorabilia because they exist united, regardless of whether they declared their union or not. They realize that the law, the ceremony, and the jewelry do not necessarily exemplify the cloned beating of their hearts. ■

AFH photo by Timmy Nguyen



The new hit single Tying the knot

By Dennis Membah // Staff Writer

These days, the big city magazines are filled with stories about the joys of being single. But many teens say they don't want to stay unmarried for the rest of their lives.

Sixteen-year-old Rachel Dunning is in favor of getting hitched.

"Someone that really cares about their [boyfriend or girlfriend] should get married," said Dunning, a student at Brighton High School. "It's a commitment not to cheat."

Jalen Campbell, a sophomore from Brighton High, agrees. This way, he said, he would have someone to spend his life with.

He's not worried about getting annoyed by his mate.

"If you love the person, you wouldn't get tired of their habits," he said.

Having kids, he said, would help keep the marriage going.

"It makes the bond between you and your wife stronger," Campbell said.

Lilive Baez, a sophomore at Brighton High, feels that the single party life can be overrated.

"If I get married," said Baez, "it's because I love them – so I wouldn't get bored." ■



Heartbreak

By Chandlor Lyles // Contributing Writer

Heartbreak. What definitions does this word raise? When I was little, I thought heartbroken meant exactly what it stated. I imagined a heart inside the human body split into two pieces. I was young and naïve. However, by the time you finish reading this, you will wish you never experienced heartbreak. I will show you the pain, humiliation, and depression of this powerful word.

Imagine a woman sitting at a dinner table listening to her husband say, "Here's your ring back. I have a mistress and I want a divorce." Now I want you to imagine a 12-year-old kid who's an orphan and migrates from home to home each day. Now close your eyes and visualize a girl who is 15 and just got dumped by her boyfriend. Lastly, envision a boy who has lost his father to cancer. Every one of these things can cause heartbreak.

The importance of something plays a huge role in becoming heartbroken. It can be an item, an action, or a person that can cause heartbreaks. It could be as little as losing the childhood doll you loved so much. No one can really put a scale or limit to how much the human body feels or hurts. Also, no one knows how long heartbreaks can last. There isn't just one big powerful word that can sum up what heartbroken is or how it feels. However, I can tell you what heartbroken is not.

It is not a walk on the beach. People do not stand in line to receive heartbreaks. Rather, it is something people are scared of and never want to receive. It does not bring happiness or satisfaction. It makes life harder and this sometimes can result in suicide or death. The word heartbroken does not discriminate; it can affect anyone. It does not bring a smile to your face. It doesn't bring pleasure, but rather pain, suffering, and hurt. It is not a dream or a fantasy; it is a part of life and, unfortunately, everyone feels it. ■

AFH photo by Seijah Drake

Heartbreakers

By Caroline Depina // Staff Writer

Sixteen-year-old Angelica Ortiz really liked the guy. But she never had a chance to tell him before he moved away. She was left behind to deal with a broken heart.

"I was so upset because I wasn't able to tell him how I felt," says Ortiz, who goes to Boston Community Leadership Academy. "I started working on school to get my mind off of him....I was very lifeless. I didn't care about anything....Feeling this way is horrible, but it made me stronger in life."

Break-ups are universal, but for teens they can strike deep. Kenneth Verges, a senior at BCLA, says he felt the sting when a girl did not believe that he had strong feelings for her.

"It's painful," says Verges. "Life goes on, I guess....It's sad, almost depressing."

Eighteen-year-old Redouane Laalioui, from BCLA, says he was betrayed in romance by a girl who lied to him. But he does not dwell on it.

"It's hard to trust someone because you've been hurt before," he says. "I just think about it and let it go. I moved on. It feels OK, like I'm a free bird who can fly without worrying about anything." ■

checking into the heartbreak hotel



AFH photo by Bill Le

Hurting from a wrecked relationship? Here's one list of the top 12 R&B songs of all time that speak to a suffering soul:

- "Ex-Factor," Lauryn Hill
- "I Need You," Mayer Hawthorne
- "Irreplaceable," Beyonce
- "Used to Be My Girl," Brian McKnight
- "Un-Break My Heart," Toni Braxton
- "How It Was Supposed to Be," Ryan Leslie
- "Not Gon' Cry," Mary J. Blige
- "Can't Let Go," Anthony Hamilton
- "So Sick," Ne-Yo
- "Everybody Knows," John Legend
- "How Can You Mend a Broken Heart," Al Green
- "Tyrone," Erykah Badu

Source: About.com

Intolerance

By Mussuba Samati // Staff Writer



AFH photo

There's a saying, "Gay rights are human rights." I did not know it, but now I do. I strongly do not appreciate the way some people mistreat gay people.

As a heterosexual, I believe that people are born to be gay. The gay people I have been around — they didn't wake up one day and exclaim: "I want to be gay."

Why should innocent gay boys be tortured for being themselves? No one should be told who to be. The power to be who we want to be is in our own bare hands.

Many people say that being homosexual is a sin, according to God, in the Bible. But if God thought that homosexuality was a sin, He wouldn't have created it.

Gay teens have always been high on the list of at-risk groups targeted for bullying, harassment, intimidation, or worse. No one deserves to die because society doesn't accept his or her sexuality. Being young, gay, and struggling with their sexuality is no reason to serve a death sentence.

It's time to start teaching the ignorant people tolerance. Gay kids have the right to live, too. ■

Judgment

By Robert Hines // Staff Writer

Every day, a person is being treated like a nobody because of what he or she wants to be. They can be smart, gay, a dancer, a tomboy, but it can be one person who crushes their spirit.

Many teens believe having dreams is unimportant because someone is just going to stomp on what they're trying to become. Why can't we have dreams? It hurts to know somebody is willing to mess up someone's motivation.

Being judged for what you do makes it hard to achieve. Everyone should go for what they believe, but being judged puts a setback in a person's life.

Playing volleyball, some teammates got in my face. I felt it was because I'm gay. I thought of quitting.

I would get sad and angry, but friends told me to keep going, don't give up. Knowing someone is there for you can help you push the haters away.

People should worry about themselves so they can become successful in life. If we get judged, we have to find ways to believe we can make it and push the irrelevant people away. ■



AFH photo by Seijah Drake

Animal cruelty

By La`Neece Byrd // Staff Writer

Sixteen-year-old Jasmine Mason, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, is not an animal lover. But even she thinks abusing them is wrong.

“I wouldn’t hurt an animal because animals have feelings, too,” says Mason.

Abuse has been going on ever since humans interacted with animals. It is illegal to abuse or kill an animal. People are also animals, so some teens say it’s like people are abusing themselves.

Natalie Silva, 16, from BCLA, says she is scared of all animals but still believes it’s rude to be cruel to them.

“Animal abuse is wrong,” says Silva, “because it’s not fair to the animals because they can’t do anything back.”

Animals are an innocent form of nature. They have the same senses as humans. Animals just want love, shelter and food – all the things humans want. Just because they look different, teens say, doesn’t mean they should be treated poorly.

Fifteen-year-old Daniel Nkwah, from BCLA, has a pet dog and would not do anything to harm her.

Says Nkwah: “I love my dog.” ■



AFH photo by Michelle Nguyen

AFH photo by Andy Guan



Loyalty

By Lissette DeLeon // Contributing Writer

Loyalty? Wow. That still exists? I thought that loyalty was long gone. Way back when, loyalty was something that people took seriously. But now the word has changed.

When people say, “I am going to be loyal to you,” they really mean: “I am going to pretend to be your friend and stab you in the back when it is convenient for me.”

It has gotten to the point where people cannot even trust themselves.

Half the world is associated with people who are the total opposite of loyal. That leaves the ones who are sincere in the dust. When something goes wrong, someone always ends up saying, “Why can’t I find the right person?”

Let’s not even get started on the word loyalty when it comes to relationships. There should be a relationship status on Facebook that says: “In a relationship with Bob, but messing around with Jerry, and secretly seeing Jack.”

Disloyalty is a stab in the back, breaking someone’s heart, suffering for the mistakes of others, and learning how to not trust people.

Loyalty needs to go back to when it used to mean: “Be there no matter what, get each other out of trouble, respect each others’ relationships, and mend those with broken hearts.”

If people realized what they are doing to this word, they would turn it all back. This is a small word, but it has such a strong meaning to it, and a long history behind it. ■

Music

By Joyanne Brome // Contributing Writer

Music is a secret getaway to somewhere you would rather be. Music is a peace offering, a romance, a personality, a popularity contest – and much more.

Music is not danger itself but can deal with dangerous issues. Music is an expression of many different expressions. It is a voice that never stops singing. Music is eternity.

Think of all the times that music has saved your life. The time you were so angry, but stopped and listened to music that lifted your mood. The time you were ignoring people trying to get aggressive with you because you really couldn’t hear them with your music on.

Music will always be there for you when no one else will. Music is not something that will disappoint you. It does not lie or manipulate. When you are tired or lazy, music will be the thing to get you moving.

Music is a part of who you are – so how you define yourself is also how you define music. ■



AFH photo by Carolyn Rochalski

Backpack fever

By Shamsi Mohamed // Staff Writer

When teens shop for a new backpack, they consider a number of things. “I look for durability, enough room to put stuff, and the strength of the bag,” says Stephani Olagboye, 18, from Boston Community Leadership Academy. She prefers North Face bags; others like adidas.

A random survey at BCLA for Teens in Print found that 87 students carry a North Face backpack compared to only six with adidas.

Syed Hayat, 20, from BCLA, is not fond of either.

“I don’t like something a lot of people have,” says Hayat.

North Face backpacks can be bought online for \$60. The adidas ones run more like \$35.

Abdul Suleiman, a 12th grader at BCLA, goes back and forth between backpacks like apacs and Puma.

Says Suleiman: “I change every month.” ■



AFH photo by Michelle Nguyen

Book bag blues

Here's how to avoid the inevitable backpack breakdown:

- Look for a bag that not only has space for tons of books but also has pockets for accessories.
- Check the straps to make sure they are strong.
- Zippers should be made of quality material so they don't rust away.
- Try to get a bag with a leather bottom so it will last for more than one school year.

Source: teenbackpacks.org

AFH photo



Phone smarts

By leisha Sampson // Staff Writer

They have outsmarted us, literally. It's too late to turn back now. Millions of dollars are being dedicated to them a month. No one would have ever thought that it would've come to this, but we have lost. Now these smartphones want more from us.

“I love it,” Gabriel Perez, a senior at Boston Community Leadership Academy, says about his iPhone and how it helps him stay connected. “I would never go anywhere without it.”

Although some teens don't think of them as a must-have, many others are addicted to their smartphones. Because billions of people all over the world own a smartphone – 1.08 billion, according to go-gulf.com, a web technology site – cellphone carriers are now selling even better models with ridiculous prices and bills that run into the hundreds of dollars.

Tyrone Williams, a senior at English High School, says it's not hard to resist temptation.

“I don't need my phone,” says Williams. “It isn't a necessity to my life.”

Still, many teens wonder: Why can't we shake the feeling of wanting to have the next best thing?

“I know that smartphones are very expensive, but I have been dying for one,” says Naomi Edouard, a senior at BCLA. “I should be getting one soon.”

Teens have already made smartphones a part of their everyday lives as they have done with other devices.

They are intelligent, they are sleek, they are conquerors.

Smartphones. ■

Phone facts

- There are 5 billion mobile phone users in the world, meaning about 80 percent of the globe's population has one.

- There are 91.4 million smartphones in the US.

- Broken down by gender, 53 percent of smartphone users are men and 47 percent are women.

- Of iPhone users, 43 percent are younger than 34 years of age.

Source: go-gulf.com



AFH photo by Seijah Drake

Branded

Playing the name game with famous footwear

By Lucelina Sousa // Staff Writer

Nowadays, everything seems to be about swag. A big part of that is if you wear brand-name shoes, which are expensive, including Uggs, Toms, and Jordans.

One reason that teens like to wear well-known shoes is that they want to make themselves look good in front of people, not only to impress others but it also makes them feel better about themselves.

"I like brand-name shoes because they show that I have taste in quality shoes," says Jazmin Alicea, a senior at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, who counts over 30 shoes in her possession, most of them big names.

Jonathan Martinez, a sophomore at Boston Community Leadership Academy, says he started wearing recognized shoes in the seventh grade after he saw his peers flashing that kind of footwear, like Nikes and Jordans, which can go for more than \$100.

"I wanted to hop on that wave," says Martinez.

Daniel Nkwah, 15, says he started wearing brand-name shoes last summer due to the pull of Jordans, and now says he has 22 pairs of them.

"My cousin introduced me to the sneaker game," says Nkwah, who attends BCLA.

Martinez and Nkwah both say they get money for top-of-the-line shoes from their parents – even though those parents are always asking them to buy cheaper ones.

Senior editor Alicia Perez contributed to this report. ■

AFH photo



Plug snugly

By Nenser Krua // Staff Writer

Patrick Elvin, a senior at Boston Latin School, has had his plugs for about two years.

"I originally got them because in Africa they mean royalty," he says, "but now they're just a trend."

Plugs – large-diameter jewelry worn on the ear – are in vogue now, with some teens going as far as getting fake ones that don't stretch out the lobe.

Elvin first discovered plugs after noticing them on "American Idol" alum Adam Lambert.

Kenia Grubbs, 16, after seeing plugs on Tumblr, decided they fit her style well and wanted some, too.

"Earrings are boring and everyone has them," says Grubbs, who goes to BLS.

When people see her plugs, Grubbs says, they have strange reactions.

"They make funny faces," says Grubbs.

Looking at plugs, they seem to sting, but Grubbs thinks it all depends on your tolerance. Elvin says they don't hurt unless they're done wrong.

Still, Michelle Li, 17, wants no part of them.

"They look painful," says Li, who attends BLS.

Grubbs says her dad thinks plugs are nasty and her mom does, too. But in the end, she says, they don't really care because it's her ears. ■

“The Hunger Games”: the next chapter?

By Jalayah Lawrence // Staff Writer



AFH photo by Seijah Drake

Dear Peeta,
It's me, Katniss, and I know we don't talk much anymore seeing as how the Hunger Games are over. Now that we are back at District 12, we have headed in different ways. I just wanted to explain to you a little about what happened. You know we were never able to talk in the Hunger Games because they could see whatever we did, and our conversations were not private, so this is why I'm writing this letter.

I just wanted to apologize to you and say I am sorry because I knew how you had felt about me, your love for me. I did not feel the same way about you. It was more about what other people expected, needing to see us together. My feelings were there, but I guess I was not certain of them. Being a 16-year-old girl, I had to think about what was best for me. Now that we have moved away from the games, I am in touch with my feelings. I know what I want: I want you, Peeta. Now that I am back at District 12, and able to think, I know I am ready to be with you. When we were together all the time, living together in the tree house and in the cave, we were so close. I didn't know if I would want you when there was distance between us.

Now, my hopes are that you still feel the same love and closeness to me, even though we have not been together for a long time. Please let me know if you are willing to be with me.

Love,
Katniss
xoxoxo ■

Whitney: RIP

By Taika Lamy // Staff Writer

On February 11, 2012, people around the world mourned the loss of a diva, a woman with a powerful voice and a gentle heart, Whitney Elizabeth Houston. Whitney was striving to make it back to the music industry, but she was not able to finish what she still had to accomplish.

I was first introduced to Whitney in her movie, “The Bodyguard.” I had never heard her songs before. The melody of her voice was powerful. Right there and then, I fell in love with her music.

“I Will Always Love You” was my favorite. I loved it even more because of my older sister, Marvelyne. She had sung it at a wedding. To me, it was exactly the same as Whitney. I had always seen my sister as a mini-Whitney.

As I grew older, and Whitney's personal life began to crash and interfere with her music, the less interested I became. The news about her drug problem was heartbreaking. Who knew that one of my favorite singers, and a person I looked up to, had such an addiction?

My love for Whitney as a singer was still there, but not my love for the person. Many people make mistakes, celebrities as well. Throughout her life, Whitney had gone through ups and downs. I just know now she is at peace and in a better place. She may have left behind her fans, her daughter, family and friends, but she left fulfilling many of her dreams.

Whitney is now with the King of Pop, Michael Jackson. Together, they are singing their hearts out. ■



AFH photo by Bill Le

Whitney: ripped

By Shanae Saddler // Staff Editor

Why do they care so much about a drug addict? Whitney Houston – the woman that so many said had warmed people's hearts with her voice – did nothing like that for me.

The first time I heard her sing, she struck neither my heart nor my mind. Everyone thought her songs were so beautiful. I really just thought she was a normal African-American woman trying to make it in the music industry. Nothing special. I prefer Mariah Carey.

When I heard she was dead, I was like, “Oh my God. Another person from the music industry dying from drugs.” Hearing the story about her drug death made me realize that stars are really pathetic. They waste their lives thinking that they are some kind of superior people to the world because they have money.

No, Whitney was an addict who needed help, but it was too late for her to care about even herself. ■



AFH photo by Michelle Nguyen

Sports on the brain

By Ralph T. Karnuah // Staff Writer

Jeff Georges, 16, of Brighton High School, believes that professional sports affect his school life.

“Sometimes,” he says, “I stay up until midnight watching a Celtics game.”

For many teens, rooting for professional sports teams is an intense experience that can distract them from their academic performances – especially a defeat on the biggest stage of them all.

“When the Patriots lost the Super Bowl,” says Georges, “I didn’t do any schoolwork the next day.”

However, Mitchka Herard, 15, of Brighton High, says she doesn’t allow her teams’ poor performances to slow down her education.

“I just let out my anger and frustration after school,” she says.

Jalen Campbell, 16, of Brighton High, feels the same way.

“When the Red Sox win, it’s just another reason to put a smile on my face,” he says, “but when they lose, I put my feelings behind me and focus on school.” ■

AFH photo by Chris Glover



Teamwork

By Rooby Fortulien // Contributing Writer

When I was in Haiti, and I was about 15 years old, I lived with my dad and cousin. I always woke up at 6:00 am to go to school early to play soccer. It was a lot of fun for me to play every morning, even though the ball I used wasn’t a real one. It was a soccer ball I had made out of rags and tape. I didn’t have the money to get a ball.

My school director didn’t think sports were necessary for the school. So I started my own team, and we practiced over and over. We played matches against the other grades. The director even attended a game. However, she still didn’t want to make promises about initiating sports at the school.

One day, I got together a group of students and met with the director to advocate for our cause. She started to recognize that it was not fair to the students to have a school without sports. After some days, she started looking for a coach.

Finally, the director found one. After only a week or so, we entered our first competition. The class chipped-in for real soccer balls. We lost early in the game because the players’ hearts were pounding – we weren’t in good enough physical condition to compete. We trained non-stop, and soon the director and the coach started to have faith in us because we won almost all of our games.

I thought a lot about the needs of our whole team. I asked the coach to have a game between our school and a rival one to raise funds to build a soccer field. We sold tickets, and made enough money to build it. I was amazed to see all the students come together as a team to support their school.

The coach made me captain of the team because I had gotten the whole school interested in sports. Sports had helped our community develop discipline, teamwork, and school pride.

When I got my visa letter and found out that I was going to the US, the director, the coach, and the students told me they’d miss me because I had done good things for the school. They gave me a medal.

When I see this medal hanging in my room, I remember how important it is to be a leader, share your ideas, and build a team. ■

SNARK ATTACK

Let’s face it, baby doll: You’re not all that

By Sasha Ndam // Contributing Writer

Please buy My Baby – a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, pink-skinned doll that your black baby girl will absolutely love! This My Baby doll will help your little girl know who she will want to be when she grows up.

Are you tired of trying to find a black-skinned baby doll for your child, only to discover that the manufacturer had made about one-tenth the number of black dolls as white ones?

Let’s face it: It’s so hard to find a baby doll that looks like your girl, so why go through all the hassle. My Baby has it all: naturally good hair (in other words, straight hair); bright blue eyes; and a very popular skin color. (Don’t worry – you can always buy our skin-lightening cream if you and your baby want to appear the same as the doll.)

My Baby comes with a house that has five floors, a playground, and a swimming pool – all the elements of your average dream home.

If you purchase My Baby within five days, we will send you two delicious cake mixes. We have an angel food vanilla cake and a devil’s food chocolate one.

So, please hurry and purchase your My Baby doll before they are all gone. The price: an everlasting token of internal racism. ■



AFH photo by Mary Nguyen

Be yourself

By Ashley Barker // Senior Editor

A lot of people will tell you that high school is the best years of your life, and as cliché as it may sound, it's true. High school is that time in your life when you make your friends, you lose them, and you discover yourself.

I learned this at my high school. I was all about my grades the first two years and I missed out on a lot. But then I got to my junior and senior years and everything fell into place.

The last two years were the ones that I can say I grew a lot, as a student and as a person, and I realized that high school isn't what you thought it to be freshman year. I know I didn't. The best advice I can honestly give you is: "Be you!"

You'll probably hear it a lot, but it's so true. The happiest you'll be in high school is when you are yourself, whether you're the geek, the musician, the jock, or the chill kid. Don't allow people to try and change you because by the time you reach your senior year, you'll stop caring about how people see you. It's your last year of high school and all the things that happened, whether it's drama or not, will be so irrelevant. You'll probably be friends with people whom you didn't like, or never knew, because it's when you really grow up.

I'm not trying to lecture, but live high school like it could end any day. You might say you hate it, but it'll be the time in your life when you create all those memories to look back on. ■

Hey: Don't be a jerk

By Jocelyn Santos // Staff Writer

To all the underclassmen,

Ever since I got into high school, I looked forward to one thing: graduation. It caused me to miss out on a lot, but also to make some dumb decisions when I got tired of school. My advice to you would be to stay focused, work really hard to maintain your grades, and never skip (the problem I had, lol).

It's true that all those things are good advice, but I feel like they're repetitive, and soon enough, if you haven't already, you'll start blocking them out. But today, I just want to share one piece of knowledge with you: Live in the moment, but don't forget about your future.

In high school, you're bound to make mistakes. It's life. Don't dwell on what you can't change. Have fun, make new friends wherever you go. Take a job opportunity anywhere that seems interesting. Get into your community and do something. Go to school and join a club.

Do it all!

Not only the goody two-shoes things. You're going to go to parties, and at times be put into sticky situations. In those instances, don't think about what your popularity in school will be; think about how it will make you look 5, 10, 20 years down the road.

You can have a blast and still be a good student. Have lots of friends, and don't be a jerk. High school is just a pit stop on the road of life. It's not where your life begins, nor is it where it ends.

– Jocelyn Santos ■

SENIOR

Procrastination stagnation

By Rodrigo Saavedra // Staff Writer

Now that I'm almost in college, there are certain things that I would have liked to have known about my last year in high school.

Aside from all the official papers, essays, and exams that you need to complete, the most important element that you'll require is to have a strategy. This means making sure to do all the necessary work as it comes, so you don't get overloaded with approaching deadlines. It really makes senior year a lot more manageable.

The second most important thing is to start thinking about an idea that you can write about for your college essay. This essay is where you are able to really stand out to universities as an individual – and not as a GPA and a set of scores.

It should be about an experience that has shaped who you are in a way that defines your strengths and positive qualities. If you have faced a struggle, share it because it will set you apart from other applicants. ■

Peace and love

By Makiz Nasirahmad // Senior Editor

Here in the United States, we are fortunate enough to have the rights of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Whether everyone agrees that it's always practiced or not, it's still better than in most other countries.

So take advantage of it! Express yourself and show people different angles to things, because every mind is unique. I want to encourage everyone to always seek knowledge, know about both sides of arguments, and never follow anything blindly.

For juniors who are going to apply to colleges next year, I wish you all good luck and I hope you get into your first-choice schools. However, sometimes we don't always get things that we so passionately want. So if you don't get into your top-choice schools, don't be discouraged because it is not the end. There is always a way for you to be successful as long as you are motivated and driven by your dreams.

You can always attend another good college, and after a year of hard work you can transfer to your dream school. I know this because I've been through it. Sometimes it's hard to stay positive and always smile, but you should just keep reminding yourself what life is really about, and what the meaning of your life is.

Be positive, original, believe in yourself, and spread love as much as possible, because love is what can save the world from itself.

Peace! ■

AFH photo by Rayshana Jenkins

SAT prep

By Parnian Nasirahmad // Staff Writer

Yay!!! Finally I am done with high school.

The advice that I would give to high school teenagers today would be to study for the SATs whenever you have free time. If you memorize 10 SAT vocabulary words every week, I promise you will do well on the writing and reading sections. I do think that the SATs are a useless test because they don't show a person's knowledge, but the colleges take them very seriously.

Apart from that, do not get suspended for stupid stuff that you will regret later. Keep up your grades and GPAs because the colleges and scholarships will look at them.

If you are a student who started very badly in your freshman and sophomore years, try to focus when you're a junior, the most difficult year of high school.

In addition, participate in community service even if your school does not require it, because it is a good thing to do. ■

Do it for you

By Melissa Rodriguez // Senior Editor

Going into my senior year, I was receiving countless pieces of advice from millions of different people, all with varying opinions and things to say. The crazy part about it was that in my case, most of them were wrong. They said that senior year was going to be the easiest year in my high school career and that I was going to have the most fun. On the contrary, senior year turned out to be the hardest, most stressful year of my life, but I wouldn't take it back for the world.

My advice to all you kids still in high school is this: Don't expect things from your final year based on the experiences of others. Make out of this year all that you can and do everything that you want to do – not your family, not your friends, but yourself. Because at the end of the day, the only one who is going to stay up late at night finishing applications and essays, and taking 20 exams in one day, is going to be you, and maybe some amazing friends that you may have, like I did.

Even though senior year wasn't my easiest or most enjoyable, I survived it, and so will you. Don't get caught up in all the hullabaloo of college life and free cruising, but enjoy it as much as you can because this is the last year until your real life begins. ■

The equation of life

By Tucker S. Gaye // Senior Editor

High school years are the days of creating an identity.

It's a time for building a network of support, and staying motivated, while knowing you are the target in the center of spheres of influence.

Have a dream, and map it out daily. You are what you're yet to discover.

Strongly believe that everybody has a yellow brick road. Whether it's homework, a project, or an essay, it's just a matter of taking it a step at a time. Cramping up is every procrastinator's pain.

It's not a time to know all the answers to life, but rather to learn, and to be able to envision that which is yet unanswered. It's up to you to put in the work.

Enjoy your high school experience and stay proactive. All the extra drama is not worth it. Don't let anybody get the best of you. You are a lot greater than you think.

Have the confidence that you are a factor in this equation of life. It's about finding a resolution to any problem that comes your way. ■

Ain't no stopping us now

By Alejandro Martinez // Senior Editor

Senior year comes fast, but feels like it will never end. If I had to give anyone advice, it's to expect to feel accomplished. You should also strive to believe you've become a better person. Because out of all the history lessons, all the math equations, and all the books read, I value the experience more than anything – from people I've become friends with, to the personalities that I've learned to work with, to the realization of my strengths and weaknesses, to the growth of my personality.

I wouldn't say to make good decisions or bad decisions, but to make smart decisions. Making smart decisions and being honest will give you a better feeling at the end of all your hard work, and best prepare you for your education and life afterwards.

Another little bit of advice: Save up now! For my school at least, there was little to no information on how much money you will be spending senior year. With things like college applications, paraphernalia from school, and the prom, hundreds of dollars may be needed. It's better you know now before it's too late.

Good luck to everyone, and remember that if you maintain a good work ethic, and a positive attitude, nothing's going to stop you. ■

Movin' on

By Alicia Perez // Senior Editor

As a graduating senior, I will be saying good-bye to many things in the next few months – to my school, my teachers, my classmates, and to Teens in Print. I cannot leave without sharing some heartfelt advice.

Firstly: Don't be an idiot. I don't believe people are naturally dimwits. Sure, not every average Joe has a complete understanding of Newton's Laws, or knows who wrote the Constitution. But I believe every person has some inherent intelligence. Use it. If you act like a moron, people will treat you like a moron. Then you won't get anywhere.

Secondly: Life is really, really hard. To quote a toddler who was wise beyond his years, "Life is so hard, Tommy. Sometimes, I think it's the hardest thing there is." You're not going to get everything you want on the first try. Or the second try. Or the third try. But keep at it. There is no greater feeling in the world than succeeding at something you've been miserably failing at for years!

Lastly: Leave wherever you were raised. If you were born and raised in Boston, then for the love of everything that is good and holy, get out of Boston. I don't think it's healthy for people to stay in the same place for their entire lives. At some point, insanity must set in.

If college is your only way out of Boston, then work hard in school and get the grades you need to go. Broaden your horizons, experience the world, move out of your parents' house. Boston will still be here when you get back, I promise.

I can't fear my future simply because I will miss the things I've grown comfortable with. To grow as a person, you must leave your safe zone and enter the unknown. The best part of growing up is taking everything you've learned in your short life and venturing into the dark abyss that is your future. ■

AFH photo by Rayshana Jenkins



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