

CATCALLING ALL MEN: IT'S NOT A HOOT. IT'S HARASSMENT.

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AFH artwork (clockwise from top) by Angela Awuah, Luigi Delances, AFH, and Janna Mach.
AFH cover photo by Kiara Maher.

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CATCALLING ALL MEN: IT'S NOT A HOOT. IT'S HARASSMENT.

Ten hours, over 100 catcalls. That's what one woman dressed simply in jeans and a black T-shirt endured as she conducted a cultural experiment on the streets of New York City with a hidden

camera meant to capture the cascade of crude remarks slung her way as she walked around town. Greetings from the gutter included: "Nice," "Damn," "Hey, baby," "God bless you, Mami" and "Hey, look it there." In October, a video of the woman --

produced for use by the anti-street harassment group, Hollaback! -- blew up on the Internet.

As a form of both protest and empowerment, women worldwide have been sharing -- online and elsewhere -- their own tawdry tales of verbal

and other street abuse.

On the following pages, young women of Teens in Print add their voices to the chorus of those who have been subjected to mouthy assaults and other rude behavior dispatched from the sexist sidelines.

AFH PHOTO // KIARA MAHER

I was in Codman Square last week when an old man whistled at me and called me "baby." Maybe he was trying to show his friends how easy he could get girls. I kept on walking. Then he called me a "b----." Honestly, that really did not affect me because I know that I'm a good girl who wants to be successful in life. I know that I am educated and he was acting like that because he is not.

-- WILL-ANGEE RAYMOND // STAFF WRITER

I was on my way to school in September with headphones in my ears while reading a book to show people on the Red Line that I did not want to be bothered. A man approached and said, "Hi, gorgeous." I made an annoyed face. I told him to leave me alone. He then decided to put his phone in front of my face. As I tried to return to my music and book, he showed me a picture of his penis. "What the heck is wrong with you?" I asked. "Too much?" he replied. I was furious. I didn't want to cause a scene so I just said "You're crazy. Leave me alone." I walked away.

-- JENNIFER LE // SENIOR EDITOR

In the summer, I was dressed for a job interview downtown and I looked very professional with a button-up shirt and dress pants. A group of guys started to follow me, asking me where I was going and who I was seeing. I was honestly a little freaked out and ignored them. They continued to

follow me, telling me that I should give them a try. "How you not gonna talk to me?" one of them said. I told them to back off and leave me alone. I was scared for my life.

-- HARRIANNE ERRIE // STAFF WRITER

Several months ago, I was taking a friend home and I waited for her to get on the bus in Dorchester. When the bus came, I gave her a friendly goodbye peck on the cheek. Two old guys in a car saw this and one of them must have thought it was a real kiss. "I'll pay \$300 to see that again," he said.

-- FARMATA SAMATI // STAFF WRITER

"Aye, girl. Bring dat a-- over here."
--Hyde Park Avenue, December, 2014

Yes, indeed, I am a girl. Indeed, I have a butt. However, I will not, shall not, ever "bring dat a-- over here." I find it so disrespectful that men think it's OK to speak to me in any way they want. Would you want someone to speak to your mother, sister, or daughter that way?

-- ADAMAJAN BAH // STAFF EDITOR

It was about three months ago and I was walking near Ashmont with my best friend. We were about to go to this pizza store and there were, like, eight boys in front of the door. "Can you move out of the way?" I asked. They were like, "Oh, you guys are hot. Can we get your phone number?" I said no you may not. As we were about to go in, one of them said, "B----, you're ugly. Why are you here?" I felt bad for a few minutes but then I remembered that it doesn't matter what they call me because they don't know me.

-- CHERBY SINORA // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

One day, I was walking from Faneuil Hall to downtown all alone with music in my ears. I was walking really fast because I had somewhere to be. A man approached, called me beautiful, and asked if he could buy me a drink. I was about 16 at the time. I told the man that I was too young. He disregarded my age and continued asking questions. Not even two minutes later, another man came up to me and asked me if he could buy me a drink. "I'm too young," I said. He had the nerve to say, "You're not too young to date." I got annoyed and

walked across the street. It made me feel uncomfortable and scared because if he thought that way, he could have other plans in mind.

-- JENNIFER LE // SENIOR EDITOR

As I was walking in West Roxbury with my best friend this summer, a man in his 20s driving a black car slows down. He rolls down his window and yells: "Ayeo, dark skin!" We knew he was referring to me. I found it funny at the time because did he genuinely think I would consider even responding to a comment like that? It doesn't matter what the color of my skin is. I am a woman who has a name just like that man has a name.

-- HARRIANNE ERRIE // STAFF WRITER

About six months ago, I went to the corner store in Dorchester to buy my mother something. While I'm walking back home, a car beeps at me and a guy says, "Hey, sexy." I ignored it and continued to walk. A second car beeps and a guy says, "Hey, Mami." That got me upset because he was the second old person doing it to me on the same day but different minutes. Then a third car beeps. The guy inside didn't say anything. But when I turned around, I saw



AFH PHOTO // KIARA MAHER

him looking at me with his mouth wide open. I didn't know what was causing these people to do this to me but I didn't want to hear any more of it. I started speed-walking home.

-- FARMATA SAMATI // STAFF WRITER

"Damn, ma! You so fine."
-- Dorchester, November, 2014

See, now I can't run in my neighborhood. OMG! I'm training for a marathon and I need to get this run in and you're staring. Ugh. So annoying.

-- ADAMAJAN BAH // STAFF EDITOR

While walking with my boyfriend downtown several months ago, a man walked by us and said, "Look at this man

walking with a beautiful lady." My boyfriend laughed and said I'm so popular. I laughed but then the man said, "I hope she has my babies." I felt so awkward and grossed out.

-- JENNIFER LE // SENIOR EDITOR

"Aye, yo, shorty! Let me holla atchu real quick!"
-- Dudley Station, November, 2014

Wow. Really? Let you holla? Do you mean you want to talk to me? I'm not a mere object. Plus, does it look like I'm short? So don't call me shorty.

-- ADAMAJAN BAH // STAFF EDITOR

There was a time, several years ago, when I was going shopping with my mother and we were coming back home to Dorchester. On our way, we heard a guy asking if we were from Guinea-Bissau, which was weird because I am from Guinea-Bissau. Me and my mother looked at each other and then turned around to see who it was. I realized that he might have overheard us speaking in Portuguese Creole. He told us that he was Cape Verdean. He asked if he could get my number. I told him that I did not give my number to strangers. He kept asking. That's when things started to get aggravating, because he kept licking his lips while he was talking to me, which I found so disrespectful. He kept calling me "baby." As we sped up, he was like, "No, don't go. I still didn't get your number."

-- FARMATA SAMATI // STAFF WRITER

When I was in the fifth grade, me and my mom were walking through Boston Common. When we got to the sidewalk, we heard someone say: "Hey, you wanna a ride?" As respectful women, we just ignored him. "Shawty," he said to my mom, "I know you heard me talking to you, b----." I watched my mom's face explode with anger. I felt really bad after this because it disrespected and humiliated my mother. As I got older, I realized that incidents like this happen every day. I believe that all women deserve to walk down the street in peace.

-- ROSE KOUMBASSA // STAFF WRITER

CATCALL CALCULUS

A survey on street harassment in the city released in 2013 by the group Hollaback! Boston, which fights unwelcome words and actions in public places, found that:



87 PERCENT of female-identified respondents said they'd experienced street harassment.



72 PERCENT of all respondents said that afterward they were left feeling "disgusted."



11 PERCENT of all respondents said they experienced street harassment every day.

COMBATting CATCALLS

Women's advocates say that, depending on the severity, street harassment can lead to everything from stress and headaches to depression. The group Hollaback! says there is no one way to respond to these torments and that victims should only do what feels comfortable. Hollaback! offers a range of options:

- Do not engage;
- Keep moving;
- Say, "What you just said to me is offensive,"
- Seek help from bystanders;
- Contact the authorities;
- Pretend you are calling police.

STREET RHYMES FOR STREET CRIMES

Cat calls.
Is she a cat?
Not at all.
Don't call.

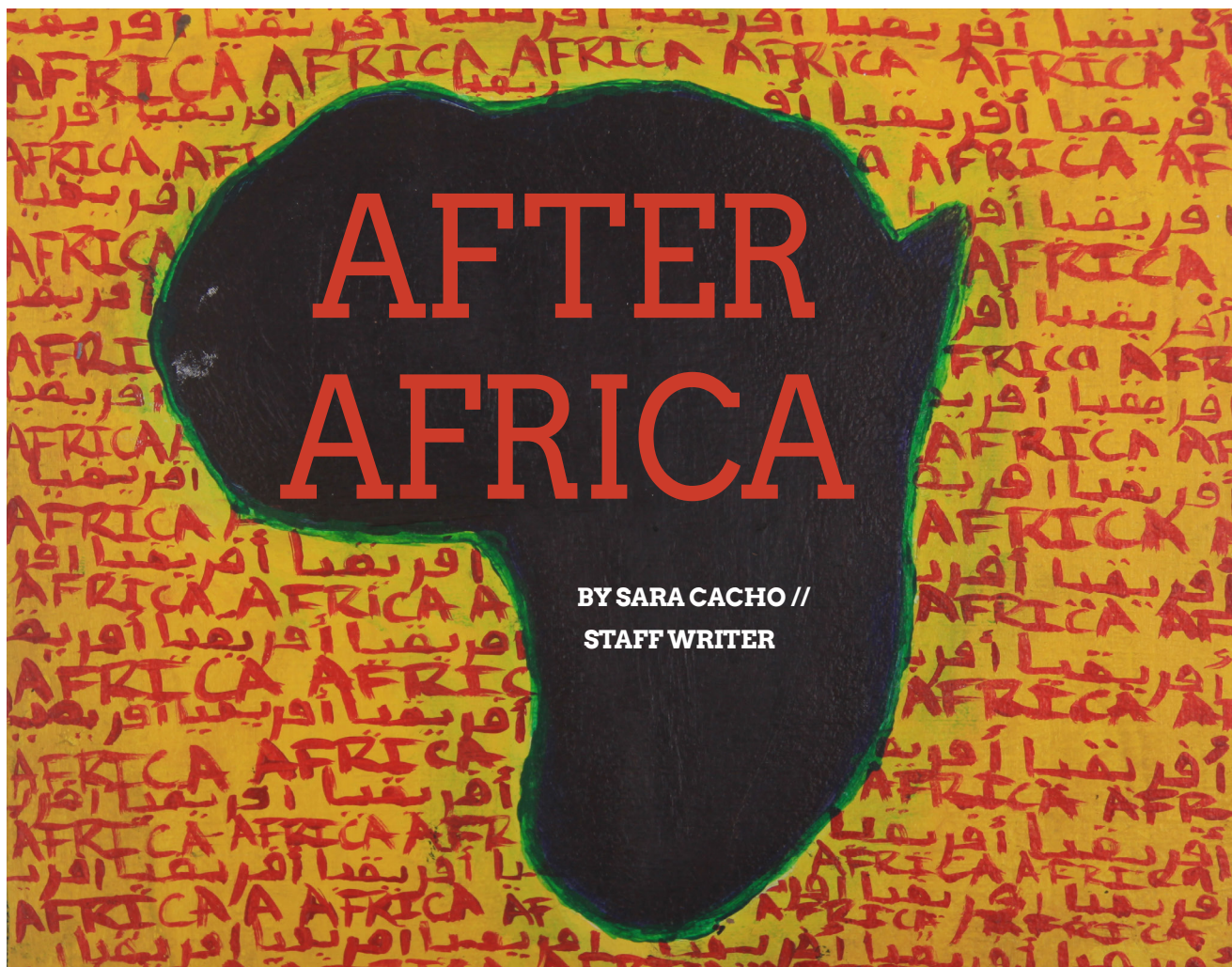
That little girl,
she loves the world.
She stands tall,
never to fall.

One. Two. Three.
"Hey, Mami"
right on cue
he says at you.

Four. Five. Six.
"Send some pics."
Makes me sick
that he thinks like this.

Seven. Eight. Nine.
"You so fine."
Then, ten.
Put the pigs in a pen.

-- NICOLE DUBOV // TVR STAFF WRITER



BY SARA CACHO //
STAFF WRITER

For many years, I imagined what it'd be like to be in Africa, and finally I was there to see it for myself last June as part of a unique field trip, of sorts.

For most, it was a way to help others, but for me

this meant something much deeper. I was in Malawi for a week to build on the most powerful weapon in the world -- education. I was there to help construct a school, a gem of opportunity for the community.

On this trip, I learned the importance of love. I mean, how can a person get so attached to people so fast? I felt so close to my host family and the village in general. I learned that people do not have to share the same blood to be family

-- you just have to have an open heart to let them in.

I got to see the world beyond my borders. I learned to appreciate every moment of my life and the lives of people around me. I realized that if you have love, it will come back to you.

AFH ART // GAIDA ALZABIER

BSAC BUZZ

BY SAMUEL DING //
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Throughout the summer, the Boston Student Advisory Council and its allies met with city councilors around the issue of climate change and asked the city to push government entities to divest from fossil fuel companies.

BSAC argued that if the global temperature keeps rising, certain diseases will be more prevalent, there will be more severe storms like Hurricane Sandy, and parts of the city will be under water due to the sea level rising.

At a City Council hearing in the fall, BSAC's Gloria Wornum, a senior at Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, spoke about how climate change threatens the future of young people.

Boston officials are now calling for the city and state to invest in environmental industries that benefit rather than harm communities.

While this is a victory, we will continue to advocate for a clean and sustainable future.

For more information about BSAC, check out the Boston Student Advisory Council Facebook page or email Maria Ortiz at mortiz@bostonpublicschools.org.

FUTURE FORECASTS TOO SUNNY?

BY ANNA QUAN // STAFF WRITER

Eric Wong, a senior at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, says he strives for high grades to appease his parents and make himself feel good.

However, sometimes the expectations his parents put on him can be a burden.

"You cannot please your parents all the time," says Wong, who believes that setting goals for yourself can be more rewarding than

trying to satisfy others.

Though parents may want the best for their children, they may be setting up their kids and themselves for disappointment by setting the bar too high.

"Often times, my parents have these high expectations for me because they were never given the opportunities that I have," says Glenda Ramirez, a senior at the O'Bryant.

Teens say it can be

exhausting because older generations often don't see the pressure they put on their kids.

"My parents want only the best for me and give me everything they did not have," says O'Bryant senior Wendy Zheng.

Zheng says that her parents' desires are even more evident now that she is applying to colleges, and she is nervous as her parents hold out hope for the "Harvard dream."



AFH ART // MALICK NIANE

COMBINATION NO. 8

BY MALCOLM OLIVER //
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Mother's grief --
will the disease
smother streets
before
brothers discover peace?
But
who am I
to speak?
That's just an utter stutter
from another beast.
If I stuttered
I m...m...meant it.
I
don't need help with this sentence.
World's backwards.
Life's dyslexic.
The city drools.
Saliva
forms kiddy pools
I'm too deep for.
Therefore
I'm in the deep end.
Peep sense
through impediments.
My speech sends
unique trends
to the street friends
to defend
until the peace ascends.

A SIMPLE MISUNDERSTANDING? NOT REALLY!

BY FARMATA SAMATI // STAFF WRITER

Yessica Guzman, 16, says her friends don't always understand why she's not in the mood to talk. "It's not personal," says Guzman, who goes to Boston Community Leadership Academy. "Some days I'm quieter than others, but that doesn't mean I'm not their friend." Being misunderstood by friends

or family -- or at least thinking that you are -- is a big part of the teen experience.

Joan Corporan, 17, from BCLA, says that one time he told a friend she was ugly. He was only joking, he says, but she took it seriously and didn't want to hear his excuse.

Aline Santos, 17, from BCLA, says that her mother has trouble

seeing why her daughter doesn't always check in and tell her that she's safe.

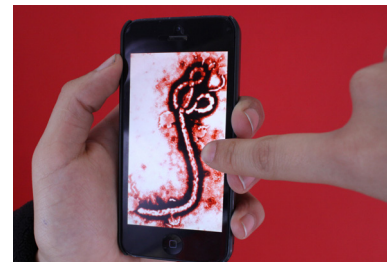
"It's not that I don't want to call her to let her know where I am at," says Santos, "but that I want more freedom and in my mindset if I call her to tell her where I'm at she wouldn't agree on letting me go where I want to go."

EBOLA JOKES: NO JOKE

BY CAMERON TELEAU
// STAFF WRITER

On a recent day, two teens chuckle in the back corner of a classroom full of students. A young man of African descent walks by and sees what the two are so hysterical about: another Ebola joke on Instagram.

One way that some teens and others have learned to deal with their fears is through amusement. However, to other teens -- especially those with recent roots



AFH PHOTO // KIM HAN

in Africa -- the Ebola gags are not funny.

"I mean, they are ignorant," says Kadidiatou Bah, 16, from the Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers, whose family is from Guinea, "but it is what it is."

After the outbreak of Ebola, Augustine Ubah, 16, says some family members in Nigeria had

stopped getting education because they shut down schools to halt the spread.

"It is a little extreme that people over-exaggerate and think all Africans have Ebola," says Ubah, who attends Health Careers Academy and came to the US from Nigeria in 2012. "The fact that I don't have Ebola means the stereotypes don't affect me."

Teens say they understand why nervous youth may kid around about Ebola but feel that at some point, enough is enough.

Joseph Getachew, 16, from Hyde Park, whose father is from Ethiopia, says: "I think that the jokes are getting annoying."

STAND, FIGHT, CHANGE

BY FATUMA MOHAMED // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Eric Garner -- unarmed and choked to death. Michael Brown -- unarmed and shot to death. Trayvon Martin -- unarmed and shot to death. The list goes on.

These are not isolated incidents. It is important that we start talking about the brutality that is acted upon the black body and start changing the system together.

There is a skewed narrative when people speak of violence against black bodies, one that seeks to criminalize rather than show that we, too, are humans. We saw this with the Michael Brown case when it came out -- after he was gunned down -- that he was accused of stealing from a local store prior to being shot.

And then we found out that grand juries had failed to indict white police officers whose actions led to the deaths of African-American

men. This sparked demonstrations across the country, including Boston students who walked out of class in protest. One man traveled from Baltimore to Brooklyn to fatally ambush two New York police officers in retaliation for the killing of unarmed African American men, an act that was denounced by both black and white leaders.

While many tell themselves that racism is over, this is just not true. When we look at the inequalities that exist in schools mostly populated by black and Latino people, when we look at the federal prison population, we see that racism still exists in our society.

The issue is no longer about denying that fact but rather how we change ourselves and society so we do not have to march in protest against another injustice.

You are either part of the problem or part of the solution.

VOCABULARY TEST LEARNING THE BASICS

BY KELVIN CRISOSTOMO // STAFF WRITER



AFH PHOTO // JANNA MACH

Basic: forming a base; fundamental. That's the basic definition, at least before teens and others got ahead of it.

Now it's been twisted into a negative, denoting obvious or unsophisticated behavior or dress.

"If everyone wears the same thing they are called basic," says Markiyah Bullard, a senior at Boston Community Leadership Academy.

Like other words before it, "basic" has now joined the teen vocabulary as a variation of the norm -- in school and elsewhere. "Rash," for example, is no longer just a skin irritation but also the act

of aggressively putting someone down. Likewise, "salted" is not only seasoning you put on French fries but a feeling of being insulted, too.

BCLA senior Aline Santos says she used the word "basic" several times but then stopped.

She's not a person who hurts others, she says.

BCLA senior Jazzmen Howard says she once was called "basic" and began to question her style. Then she simply shrugged off what others had to say.

"At the end of the day," Howard says, "you should be comfortable with who you are."

VERITAS VERDICTS

BY ROSE KOUMBASSA // STAFF WRITER

Bintou Conte, a senior at Dorchester Academy, is very good at reflecting on her life and making changes.

"I was looking around for afterschool programs and came across the Urban Scholars," Conte says.

She says joining this group was her smartest decision ever because it supports high school students with things like college applications.

Teens are often criticized for making stupid choices, but sometimes they are good with their heads.

Kayin Walker, 13, from Mattapan, says that talking to his current girlfriend was a superb selection.

"She makes me happy and she is smart," Walker says. "I wake every morning feeling excited because I know my day will be filled with her."

Najma Abdirahman, 14, from Dorchester, considers her greatest call trying out for the school basketball team.

"I made it," she says.



AFH ARTWORK // STEVEN ST. LEGER

NO THANKS TO BEING SPANKED

BY MIESHA TAVARES // STAFF WRITER

Fifteen-year-old Kris Mark, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, says he believes that spanking a child is OK in certain circumstances.

"It depends on your child and how you raise them," says Mark. "They might take you as a joke, so you have to make sure that they are clear on your expectations, and what you want from them."

However, Mark says he doesn't agree with parents who hit children with objects that can hurt them.

"You don't want your child to be scared of you," he says.

Minnesota Vikings star running back Adrian Peterson has been in the headlines recently after it was reported that he had beaten his four-year-old son with a tree switch to discipline him.

Rishka Pizarro, 15, from BCLA, feels that even spanking goes too far.

"If you hit a kid, it makes the situation worse," Pizarro says. "You have many other things you can do -- even take away something they might like. If you keep hitting your kid, they will grow hatred towards you."

Ariana Bishop, 14, from BCLA, agrees.

"There is no reason to discipline kids through spanking. It's wrong,"

Bishop says. "The child might end up doing something worse from all the anger of getting beaten."

AFH PHOTO // JANNA MACH



THE FUTURE IS NOW: LISTEN TO THE JOB SQUAD

BY GARBENS ALEXIS // STAFF WRITER

Thirteen-year-old Keahja Pittman, from Dorchester, wants to be a detective for her career.

She's been influenced by all those investigating shows on TV.

"I love to solve mysteries and be the first one to find things out," Pittman says.

The future occupation decisions are really important for this generation. If teens decide to become positive things in life, the world will be a better place. But if they drop out of high school and don't focus on their educations, things will be worse off than today.

Prisca Pyrame, 15, from Jamaica Plain, wants to be a lawyer and possibly a judge.

"By becoming a lawyer," Pyrame says, "it makes me feel like I have power."

She says none of her friends or family are lawyers.

"This is why I want to be a lawyer," she says, "so I could do bigger things than my family members."

Meanwhile, Katherine Bernardez, 13, from Dorchester, is undecided. She is stuck between becoming a singer or a professional basketball player.

"Singing is a great talent for me, so is basketball," she says.

Her favorite singer is Beyoncé; in the WNBA, she favors Skylar Diggins.

She says: "Why not use my talents to their fullest when I'm older?"

"YOU'RE SO SWEET, YOU'RE GIVING ME A TOOTHACHE" -- AND OTHER CORNY PICKUP LINES

BY JAMILLAT DOUMBIA // STAFF WRITER

Jhadley Sanchez, a junior at Boston Community Leadership Academy, has had this corny come-on sent her way via text message: "Just because I'm guilty of stealing your heart doesn't mean you can lock me up."

Though the means of delivery have changed, the presence of cheesy,

attention-grabbing phrases has been passed down from generation to generation.

Epiphany Dunston, a junior at BCLA, has received this one: "Hey sexy, can I find you a Pepsi?"

Kevin Teixeira, 16, a junior at BCLA, has been known to employ this declaration, in jest: "I'm not a photographer, but I can picture you and I together."

WHAT MAKES YOU UNIQUE?

BY JASEIA MONTEIRO // STAFF WRITER

Angelique McAuliffe, a 13 year-old-from Dorchester, says that what has her feeling different is undeniably important to her.

"What makes me unique is my name," she says. "It's not a common name."

And people tell her that all the time, she says.

"It makes me feel special," McAuliffe says.

Although there is a lot of peer pressure to follow the crowd, many teens feel that being distinctive is their way of stepping out in the world and saying that it's OK not to be like everybody else.

Rosauri Laura, 14, from South Boston, says that the silly way she uses her voice --

going super high, for example -- sets her apart.

"Not many people I know are as weird as I am," she says.

Keahja Pittman, 13, from Dorchester, says that her particular heritage is a mystery to many.

"Everybody looks at me," Pittman says, "and never suspects that I'm from Portugal"

BUILDING A HOME

BY WIDENTZA PACOMBE // STAFF WRITER

Arlyn Santos, 14, from East Boston, believes that a house becomes a home when it is a place where you can show your inner beauty.

"Home is where you can feel comfortable to do whatever you want and act like yourself without being judged or having anyone against you," says Santos.

For Rosauri Lara, 14, from South Boston, a home is

somewhere that abuse does not occur.

"A home is supposed to be safe so that a kid would want to go there," Lara says.

Djibril Conte, 13, from Mattapan, describes a home this way: "A home is love, communication, connection, ups and downs, and family."

He adds: "A house is just a shelter because you don't get love out of a house but you get love out of a home."



AFH ART // JUANITA GRIM

FINDING YOUR MOJO THROUGH EMOJIS

BY MARCOS HERNANDEZ // STAFF WRITER

Sixteen-year-old Serina Watler, from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, says she uses the heart-eyes emoji often to help get messages across more easily than mere texts.

"If I didn't have emojis," she says, "I feel like texting would be more boring."

And more open to interpretation. A byproduct of the teen texting culture, these emoji character symbols convey the emotions of the message and prevent the kind of confusion that can accompany basic texting.

Seventeen-year-old Linh Vu, from the O'Bryant, says his most frequently used emojis consist of the subtle smiley face, the red heart, and the crying face with tears.

Kianna Young, 17, from the O'Bryant, says some prefer using emojis to traditional texting.

"It's easier to comprehend than words," says Young.



AFH PHOTO

TEENS in Print MEET THE STAFF

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

**Write for
Teens in Print!**

**CALL US:
617-541-2651**

SEND your news articles, feature pieces, opinion essays, poems, or editorial cartoons.

» EMAIL submissions to ric.kahn@boston.gov

Please provide your full name, grade, and school. You must attend one of the Boston secondary schools.

» Whatever you submit has to be YOUR OWN CREATION. We only print original work. You will not get it back, so please KEEP A COPY for yourself. Teens in Print reserves the right to EDIT your work for length, content, or appropriateness.

FEEDBACK!

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

» Let Teens in Print know what's on your mind by sending an email to TiP coordinator Ric Kahn at ric.kahn@boston.gov. Please include your full name, school, and grade and we may run your letter in an upcoming edition. Thank you.

» To join the Teens in Print staff, please express your interest in an email to the TiP coordinator at ric.kahn@boston.gov

ABOUT US

Boston Teens in Print is the only citywide newspaper written by and for Boston high school and middle school students. Launched by WriteBoston and The Boston Globe in 2004, and published five times a year, TiP is a platform for student journalists, essayists, poets, and artists.

It is delivered to Boston high schools, libraries, and community centers. But it is not just a newspaper — it is also, for urban teens, an afterschool program and summer journalism institute, both free. TiP gives a voice to Boston's youth, a voice that bellows from one end of the city to the other, across the boundaries of neighborhood, class, and ethnicity.



GARBENS ALEXIS

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: To control my anger.
Words of advice: "If you really want to be successful, do your best to achieve it."



MELANIE BAEZ

Peace or love? Peace.
One wish for 2015: Lose some weight.
Words of advice: "Don't be a salad, be the best dang broccoli you could ever be."



ADAMAJAN BAH

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: To enjoy my life as is.
Words of advice: "Enjoy the people you have around for they may not be there tomorrow."



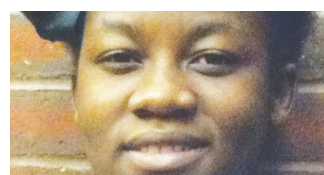
MARIAM BAH

Peace or love? Peace.
One wish for 2015: Get accepted to Columbia University.
Words of advice: "Your happiness lies within you — not in someone else's hands."



AICEYA BLACKWELL

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: More honor rolls.
Words of advice: "Certain signs lead you to certain directions."



GERALDINE BOGARD

Peace or love? Peace.
One wish for 2015: To bring union to those who are separated.
Words of advice: "Be resilient."



SCATH BOGARD

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: Happiness.
Words of advice: "Be courageous."



SARA CACHO

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: To graduate and go to my dream college.
Words of advice: "Always do what you think is right as long as you're not hurting anybody."



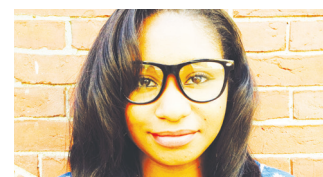
KELVIN CRISOSTOMO

Peace or love? Peace.
One wish for 2015: Graduate and get accepted to my top choices of colleges.
Words of advice: "Dreams don't work unless you do."



JAMILLAT DOUMBIA

Peace or love? Peace.
One wish for 2015: Leave the past behind so I can make more room for the future.
Words of advice: "If you are thinking about doing an inglorious action, stop and think about whether it's really worth the consequences."



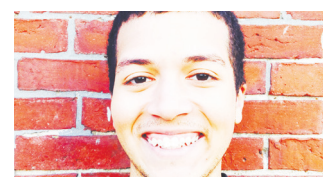
HARRIANNE ERRIE

Peace or love? Peace.
One wish for 2015: Get into college.
Words of advice: "Procrastination doesn't get you anywhere."



CHRISTINE FREEMAN

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: Fall for the right person.
Words of advice: "Just be yourself."



MARCOS HERNANDEZ

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: To continue my self-improvement.
Words of advice: "Do you and don't settle for less."



FARADIA JOLICOEUR

Peace or love? Peace.
One wish for 2015: No more violence.
Words of advice: "Don't change your personality just because someone doesn't like it."



ROSE KOUMBASSA

Peace or love? Peace.
One wish for 2015: Boston Celtics go to the playoffs.
Words of advice: "Always follow your heart."



JENNIFER LE

Peace or love? Peace and love.
One wish for 2015: For everybody's happiness.
Words of advice: "Don't let anyone tell you how to live your life."



JOHANNA LEDGISTER

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: No violence.
Words of advice: "Live life to the fullest."



CHRISTALINE LORJUSTE

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: To learn how to dance hip-hop better.
Words of advice: "Be nice to one another."



NAIKA F. MÉTELUS

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: Stay away from tomfoolery.
Words of advice: "Enjoy life. Be happy."



JASEIA MONTEIRO

Peace or love? Peace.
One wish for 2015: That black lives would matter.



WIDENTZA PACOMBE

Peace or love? Love for one another creates peace.
One wish for 2015: To become more successful.
Words of advice: "Be determined and follow the right path."



ANNA QUAN

Peace or love? Peace.
One wish for 2015: Continue to improve myself as a person.
Words of advice: "If you want something to happen, you have to do something about it."



WILL-ANGEE RAYMOND

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: To have my dream room.
Words of advice: "Be kind, be respectful."



FARMATA SAMATI

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: Graduate high school.
Words of advice: "Practice makes perfect."



JALENE SANCHEZ

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: To finish my year in high school.
Words of advice: "No matter what you're going through, don't let it bring you down."



MIESHA TAVARES

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: To be healthy.
Words of advice: "Be you, do you, and stay true to yourself."



CAMERON TELEAU

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: To finish my book.
Words of advice: "Eat carefully."



ANTIAH THORNTON

Peace or love? Love.
One wish for 2015: Lose weight.
Words of advice: "Life is a beautiful thing, so enjoy it while you have it."

To learn more, visit:
bostontip.com
writeboston.org

Next issue: March/April 2015

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



Giving girls a platform to be heard

The girls of Teen Voices Rising were asked what it is that compels them to be a part of this program.



TOMIKA ANDRIS:

I feel that every woman has a right to speak and write about an issue happening in her community, and I love that I can do that here.



MELANIE BAEZ:

I feel that every girl deserves to have her voice heard.



THATIANA BELLAMY:

It gives me a place where I can voice my opinions without fear of retaliation.



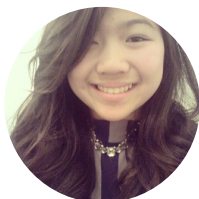
DANIELLE BROOKS:

It's a program where I can truly express who I am.



VA'DAYYA CHRISTMAS:

As sisterhood decreases in our society, I'm driven to meet new girls and learn about journeys that differ from mine.



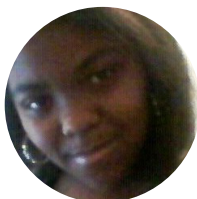
SELINA DAM:

I feel that through words I can bring strength.



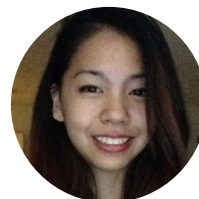
NICOLE DUBOV:

I am determined to defy stereotypes.



CHRISTINE FREEMAN:

It gives me a place to share personal stories that I've hidden within myself for so long.



JANICE HE:

It motivates me to know the power of literature and the sense that my writing can reach out to every corner of the world.



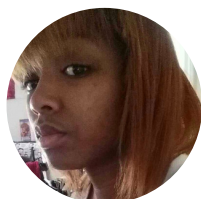
JAMIE JASMIN:

It allows me to have a voice and use my writing to encourage other girls to be confident.



NATASHA MINOTT:

When life gets difficult, I have this program to guide and support me.



ROCHELLE PINET:

It's a comfortable environment to talk to other girls about my opinions, my needs, and my hopes.



VANESSA PIERRE:

I am able to connect and feel comfortable with the girls in this program without the fear of being judged.



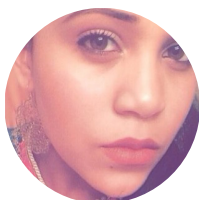
KERRINE PREVIL:

As a teen, I think it is important to be educated about the problems in my society while creating solutions to make changes.



STEPHANIE ROCHA:

This program has inspired me to connect with others.



ROSSY SANTANA:

I'm fond of our empowering conversations and open-minded discussions.



NAOMI SHAW:

It has helped me relate to other students my age and become comfortable in sharing my thoughts and opinions.



DAISHA SIMPSON:

I want to bond with young girls like me, encourage others, and help better those in my community while discovering new things about myself.



KATHIANA VILSON:

I want to learn about the world I live in so I can protect and educate myself.



LISA VO:

I have truths to express to our society.

To be a part of TVR, please email coordinator Prema Bangera at Prema.Bangera@boston.gov

BRAINWASH ME, BRAINWASH ME NOT

Since birth, girls are bombarded with subliminal messages from the media, from the community, and from family members about how they should look, how to speak, how to feel, what to wear, and who to be. While these messages might sometimes seem innocent, they have effectively brainwashed women into falling into a lattice of lies -- causing them to lose a sense of self. Teen Voices Rising participants explored the effects of societal messages and wrote about what it would mean to unlearn them.

ASSIMILATION: NO LONGER MYSELF

BY KERRINE PREVIL // TVR
STAFF WRITER



AFH ART // CHRISTIANA BLACK

The burning deep inside
going on and on like a flame.
Regret. Regret. Regret.
On and on controlling your mind.
You're not pretty enough.
Your hair is not good enough.
Enough is enough.
When will the judgment end?
When will the stereotypes end?
And then I wonder:
Will I ever be good enough
for you?
For society?
I opened the box
and pulled out the chemicals.
Time to put an end to this.
I'm over it --
these expectations,
the feeling of being judged
when I walk down the street.
The next day I was
pretty enough,
good enough.
Everyone viewed me differently.
"You finally let go of that nappy
hair," a girl said.
"Sit with us at lunch," another
said.
I was finally accepted for letting
go of my true culture.
Curly to straight and now
everybody loved me.
Regret. Regret. Regret.
I no longer felt like myself.
I no longer knew who I really
was.
I questioned my true identity
every day.
I missed it.
So what if you didn't like me?
I liked myself!
Regret. Regret. Regret.
I miss who I used to be.

HELLO, SOCIETY

BY ROSSY SANTANA // TVR
STAFF WRITER

If it wasn't for you, she wouldn't
spend hours in front of the mirror,
striving for the flawless skin she
sees in magazines.
She wouldn't wear heavy makeup
in the rushed mornings,
knowing that you will only focus on
her external beauty.
She wouldn't spend endless hours
trying out modest attire,
brainwashed about her fabric
being her identity.
The unfair spoons she is daily
measured with
have placed her in a state
of pessimism.
"Who am
I?" she repeatedly whispers at
eventide.
While exerting to please you,
she lost herself along the way.

LET ME

BY JANICE HE // TVR STAFF WRITER

I should have long silky hair
with milky, smooth skin wrapped around
a petite body
topped with a perfectly symmetrical face
and masked with a shy, sweet
personality.
At least, that is what they said.
So here I am, straightening and dying my
hair to keep up,
trying so hard to have that one specific
type of body,
slapping on pounds of makeup every
day,
refraining myself from speaking too
loudly or too openly.
Because that is what I am told.
That is how I should present myself.
That is the only way I can find a husband.
But what if I stopped listening?
How would I look and act like?
Would I scream my voice until every
corner of the world hears me?
Or keep quiet like an obedient young
woman should?

How can I become "normal" if normal is
changing every single day?
So do not tell me I should be this or that.
Do not tell me I am "asking for it," when I
haven't said a word.
And don't you dare tell me that I should
"follow my heart"
when you've already decided my fate
before my very existence --
that my favorite color was pink,
that I should look this certain way
to marry this certain type of man
to live this certain way of life.
You created my destiny
when you told me that being female
means being weak,
emotional, and having limitations.
Stop speaking at me
and stop speaking for me.
For the first time, let me speak for myself.
Let me change the world
without having to change myself.
You just have to let me.

QUESTIONS CHANGE THE WORLD

BY NATASHA MINOTT // TVR STAFF WRITER

Every day the girl wakes up scared.
Scared that her boyfriend would abuse her.
Scared that her sister would get caught up in a gang.
Scared that when she went to school, she would be made
fun of.
Scared that her life would end at any given point.

Every day she asks herself, "Why?"
Why is there violence in this world?
Is it because of the rap songs they listen to?
Is it the gangs?
Stress?
Drugs?
Insecurity?
What makes them act this way?

Every day she says to herself, "What if?"
What if she could change this world?
End the violence,
or save some of the dying people?
She knew it wouldn't hurt to try
by speaking up about it.
Stop it when it happens.
Set an example.
Take a risk just to try,
so people see
she's a strong-minded individual
who cares about the people around her
and can change this world.



AFH ART // ALEJANDRA SPRUILL



LETTERS TO YOUNGER GIRLS

Teen Voices Rising investigates the struggles of younger girls to stay strong in a community in which they have been belittled, stereotyped, sexualized, and ignored. As TVR participants recognized that these hurtful messages have been imbedded in them at a young age, they wrote letters to younger girls, younger sisters, or younger versions of themselves in hopes of warning girls about these harsh realities, and offering them advice and encouragement. Our writers wanted to remind girls of their individual and collective strength.

DEAR YOU (DEAR ME)

BY NAOMI SHAW // TVR STAFF WRITER

Dear Younger Me,

You are me -- but not really. We're almost two different people, in fact. You -- young and unaware -- are happy. I am all of those things, too, but in a different way. Your happiness is constant. I am now forced to look for mine, and it is exhausting.

You take a lot for granted now -- attention, an audience -- and that's perfectly fine. In fact, keep doing it. You have absolutely no idea what it's like to be ignored, or to have your thoughts belittled for anything other than being a kid. I mean, you don't talk much now but imagine how bad I am with conversations (very).

When you get "old" ("old" is in quotation marks because I'm not really old -- I still can't drive), things will change. You'll struggle to find an audience because people will be less likely to listen to you, and you'll be less likely to speak.

Practice beginning conversations. Ending them. Responding to getting cut off mid-sentence. Repressing the urge to cut other people off mid-sentence. Do it while there are a million and one adults and children willing to listen to whatever you say. Now there aren't, and it stinks.

I, still young and unaware, am not able to take attention and an audience for granted because I rarely have them. That's both my fault and not. So, I'll give you a final word of advice (more likely to be followed than the plethora of "practices") -- cope with your loss of an audience with humor whenever possible. Make fun of your parents, your classmates, and, most importantly, yourself. One day, if you start to get your audience back, they might appreciate it.

Best,

Naomi

WAYS OF PERFECTION

BY CHRISTINE FREEMAN // TVR STAFF WRITER

Dear Young Girls,

I just want to talk a little about what girls like you and I go through, like bullying and harassment. I want to tell you that there will be times when you fall or reach a low point in your life. You might be criticized about what you wear, your skin color, how your hair looks, or even how you smell.

When I was in middle school, I was picked on and teased because my hair was curly and nappy. Everyone else had a perm. After being frustrated by their constant name-calling, I cut my own hair and messed it up for good. My hair was very long at the time. Now it is short and different lengths. When I think about what happened, it hurts every time.

One thing I want all girls out there to remember is to never let anyone take advantage of you no matter if you are shy, silly, loud -- anything. Just know that you are perfect to you and that is all that matters.

With love,

Christine



AFH PHOTO // ABRAHAM ROSA

NO NEED TO PLEASE

BY LISA VO // TVR STAFF WRITER

Dear Younger Girl,

You're in a society where you're being put down by boys or other girls. I know how you feel -- you wish you were prettier, more popular. You want to fit in and not be ashamed of how people view you. You want to be special, too.

I remember how nervous I was when I went to a new school for fifth grade. When I saw people doing their own thing and playing with everyone else, I felt kind of lonely because I didn't know anybody. I heard girls boast about expensive clothing brands and boys talk about curvy females, but I didn't match their expectations. I felt alone. Eventually, though, I made friends by just being me.

After that, I realized that if people love who you are then they won't judge you.

Staying strong is something us girls lack. We tend to think the society is evil because nowadays people will try to break you with their negativity. One thing you should always know is what you value because what you give out is what you're going to get. Love what you have because others might want it, and that's something special.

Demand respect. You can empower others to gain the same confidence and abilities as you. You are you -- you make the society.

Time for a change.

My best in building courage,

Lisa

DADDY'S LITTLE GIRL

BY DAISA SIMPSON // TVR STAFF WRITER

Dear Little Girl,

It's OK, little one -- I see the tears falling down your young, innocent face.

You lock yourself in your room when your daddy raises his voice.

You peek out and see your daddy's hands raise as your mommy screams, "Please stop!"

The red substance now drips from the side of your mother's face.

You run up to him and begin to punch him repulsively.

His face enraged, he throws you to the ground and your soft skin encounters a sharp pain.

You try to scream, but nothing comes from your mouth.

The lock on your room door turns again and the tears continue to fall from your eyes.

You have no one to tell, but it's okay -- I hear you, little one.

I don't want you to grow up thinking you can't love any man because the one man you did love betrayed you in each and every way.

Every man is not the same.

With love,

Daisa



AFH ART // SAMANTHA SHAVE

FUTURE PREPARATIONS

BY KATHIANA VILSON // TVR STAFF WRITER

Dear Little Sis,

Brace yourself for the future. Despite what everyone says, it does not get better. Now, I hope this isn't making you feel hopeless, because you should be full of hope. You get to learn from my mistakes so that you won't have to make them.

One thing to keep in mind is confidence. I struggled with this when I was your age.

When I got to seventh grade, I couldn't stand my hair. Mom would do these big, ugly, beaded, doo-doo braids and you know how much we hated those. That's why I begged mom for a perm. The summer just before eighth grade, I got it. I was so happy. My hair was soft and thick and straight. And, ooh, did the guys notice.

Then, in ninth grade, I had my first

heartbreak. Remember how the guy I was dating was attracted to my best friend and she liked him back?

Looking at it now, it all had to do with my broken confidence. I didn't see myself as I should have. I changed myself so that I could look like everyone else, or look like what people wanted me to.

After constantly reliving the situation every single day in my head, I woke up one day and realized: I was only 15 then. Who cares? This is the time for me to have fun and be carefree.

As long as you are confident in yourself and stand your ground, you'll be okay. You are here to better yourself. So why not start with this letter?

Love,

Kat

LEAN ON ME

BY STEPHANIE ROCHA // TVR STAFF WRITER

Dear Little Sister,

Life seems simple for you right now. You're always playing and joking around and not aware of what's out there in the real world. But as you get older, life gets tougher.

I want you to have someone to talk to when you're depressed because once you do, you will let your pain go and move on from the situation instead of holding on to grudges.

In these short years, I've been through a lot. When I was in middle school, I was beaten, banged into lockers, and called all types of names. The other kids were mad just by how I looked and because of my multi-racial background. One day, when everyone found out about my deepest weakness, they used it against me. It got to the point where I finally stood up for myself.

I want you not to blame yourself because people judge and will try to put you down. But that's their own insecurities. So don't beat yourself up for it. Keep your head up and keep on going.

Love,

Stephanie

MISINFORMATION:
KNOW YOUR PROS
AND CONS

BY ROCHELLE PINET // TVR STAFF WRITER

To My Little Sister,

Sister Sister, I will give you pros and cons because, yes, you will grow.

But I want you to live slow because you're more than just a show.

Sister Sister, learn from my pros and cons because that's what I've been told.

But it was our mother who sold us the misinformation because that's what she was told.

Sister Sister, don't believe everything you hear -- all those pros or cons -- because when you believe everything that's being sold, you get lost.

But know that sold doesn't have to mean by money because it's also by thoughts, and others can manipulate you for their wants.

Sister Sister, don't live off of them -- they're simply not facts, neither pros nor cons, because what people think may not be what you want to hear.

But you have to have it in you to know that, because you are no one but yourself and others don't need your explanation.

Sister Sister, once you speak your mind, you will then just have to repeat it with determination.

xoxo,

Rochelle

EMBRACE THE LEADER IN YOU

BY JAMIE JASMIN // TVR STAFF WRITER

Dear Imaginary Little Sis,

I'm writing to not only warn you about the complications you may encounter in the future but to also make you a stronger person. Though life seems hard now, trust me, it gets worse. Despite all the pressures you may face, there is hope that you can overcome these struggles.

Growing up, my parents taught me I could be anything I desired, whether it be a nurse or the CEO of my own company. Although I received all the encouragement a person could ask for at home, it was the outside world that diminished my confidence.

When I would tell my teachers that I wanted to be president or to own my own business, I was met with awkward stares and answers like: "Oh sweetheart, that's a man's

job. How about nursing?"

I'm not saying that nursing isn't a respectable job, but I just don't understand why girls are raised to think that they are unfit to take leadership roles and should instead pursue those that consist of caretaking.

I know that you may not feel you have the voice to speak against these stereotypes, but I just want you to know that your future should depend solely on your wishes and not on what society believes you should be.

If there ever comes a day when you feel like giving in to pressures placed by society, remember that you are strong and you can be a leader.

Love,

Jamie

STRENGTH IN YOUR OWN SKIN

BY MELANIE BAEZ // TVR STAFF WRITER

Dear Little Sister,

I'm writing this letter in hopes that you will see this when you're older or that you will just stumble upon this. Not only is this for you, but to all the young girls who need a big sister out there.

To all young girls who think you are not good enough: You don't have to be, for anyone else at least.

The most important thing that you will ever need is to be comfortable in your own skin. Don't conform to society's definition of beautiful. Wear what you like, what

you think feels good. Be yourself, because, girl, your personality is the best part about you. Lastly, don't let negative people affect your positive attitude. Shine through.

If people want to be mean because you are not afraid of labels and rock whatever you wear with pride, then that's their problem. Keep moving forward, little sister.

Much love,

Melanie

AFH PHOTO // LANVY TRAN

MEMORIES & MEMENTOS

HABOBY

BY FATIMA IBRAHIM // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I miss my little nephew. I miss his smile; his small, soft hands; his wide eyes.

He is my brother's son. He was born in Kenya in the summer of 2011. We all call him Haboby, which means lovely in Arabic.

He was so close to me and my sisters because he was with us since the day he was born. He never lived with his parents.

There was a day I was crying because I was frustrated. Haboby came and hugged me. He put his little head on my shoulder and said: "Stop. Don't cry."

In 2013, my father told us that we couldn't take Haboby along to America because he is only a nephew.

The day we were leaving, everyone was busy except Haboby. He was crying and looking around. He was trying to tell us not to go. I kissed him on his cheek and left the house.

I miss him every day.

THE CROSS

BY ADILSON PINA // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I remember the first time I went to church in Cape Verde. I was 10.

I woke up with the bright sun shining on my eyes and the noisy "cock-a-doodle-do!"

When I entered the church, I was nervous. It had a big cross on top, a lot of seats, and a priest wearing white cloth. There was a group of people singing about Christ.

My mom asked me to go to the church school. I didn't know what it was, so I said yes. A priest gave everyone a cross necklace and told us to wear it everywhere we went, for it symbolized: "Jesus is with you and will protect you from the devil."

I showed my mother.

"Beautiful," she said.

Now I'm in the US and I wear the cross necklace every Sunday at church.

THE PHOTOGRAPH

BY ANDREA TAYLOR // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

When I open my photograph book, I can see my past life in front of me. Like a soldier going to war, I witness all of the good and bad. But out of 100 pictures or so, only one can remind me of the most important experience of my life. It is the only one that makes my skin tingle and my heart make a very big sound.

When I pick up the photo, I grab it softly from underneath without ruining it. I feel so happy when I touch it.

I'm just a boy in the picture -- around five years old -- not very strong or firm, but with a basketball in my hands and ready to play.

It was around 5:30 pm on that court in Italy and I wanted to impress the people with the cool moves I could make. I would put the ball in the middle of my legs, around my legs, or inside the net. But no one cared because I was too small.

I started playing alone. After five minutes, I said, "I give up." I thought no one cared about me.

Suddenly, an unusual person came to me with a big smile. Looking at him was like eyeing a skyscraper.

He picked me up with the ball in my hands, and helped me put it inside the net. I felt amazing, like Michael Jordan.

I learned later that this man was named Bill. He became a friend and told me a secret. "Do not let anyone push you down. Be stronger."

THE SCAR

BY BETIEL BRHANE // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Six years ago, in Khartoum, Sudan, a 10-year-old girl named Betiel lived with her family. Her parents are from Eritrea. They migrated to Sudan and lived as refugees. Although life was difficult, they gave her everything she needed.

One day, Betiel's mother asked her to go to the store with her sister.

"Why me all the time?" Betiel asked.

As she walked, her feet were making angry sounds. Her hands were going every which way like a person playing drums. Betiel walked quietly and madly until they reached the store.

At the door of the store, Betiel heard someone say in Arabic: "Useless Eritrean."

She turned her head around to see and recognized one of the girls. It was her next door neighbor.

"Are you talking to me?" Betiel said.

"You useless Eritrean," came the answer.

Betiel felt her heart beating fast. She turned and grabbed her neighbor by the shirt, took a deep breath, and then let go.

She continued walking toward the store.

"If you don't stop," she was told by her neighbor, who was now wielding a broken soda bottle, "I will cut your hand."

As the end of the sentence hung in the air, Betiel felt the glass pierce her left hand as blood spurted out.

Betiel stood in the middle of the street like a lonely sunflower. Her injured hand did not hurt -- or so it seemed. What really hurt was discovering the bad side of the world.



THE LECTERN

BY MARZANA KHATUN //
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

When you stand behind the lectern to give a speech for the first time, it will seem like a different world, where you are one person and the rest are strangers. Your hand will be shaking to hold the lectern. Everyone will be looking at you. Your lips will move, but your voice won't come out.

That's how I felt.

I am from Bangladesh. I have been in America for three years. When I first came here, it was a big challenge for me to learn English. In class, I felt so lonely.

There was a speech about President Obama that I had to give in front of the class last year. The week before, I couldn't sleep.

During the speech, as I stood behind the lectern, my heart was beating as fast as the second hand of a clock. My teacher told me: "Believe in yourself. You can do it, Marzana."

Now, when I pass by the lectern in school, I don't feel anxious like before. It has become a symbol that my confidence is increasing.

THE MEDAL

BY VANIZA DEBARROS //
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

When you walk in my home you can see my medal on the wall. It is for achieving high honors in school.

It is so beautiful.

This reminds me of school in Cape Verde when I received a similar medal.

But then I had to stop school there for three years. My family could not afford school and transportation costs anymore.

Now I'm in school in the US trying to make my life better. If you don't have a high school certificate or college degree, how can you get a good job? I want to be a math teacher and have a good future.

THE CATALOGUE

BY JESSICA DA CRUZ //
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Open the kitchen cabinet in my house back in Cape Verde and what would you find? Nothing. It was empty. No food.

I was living with my mother, two brothers, and one sister. That day two years ago we didn't eat.

My mother came to the US with us in 2013 because she wanted to change her children's futures. When I came from Cape Verde, I brought some of my favorite objects. My most memorable one was O Catálogo das Crianças.

It is a small catalogue of baby clothes. Inside, you can find pictures of babies, small dresses, and little shoes.

O Catálogo das Crianças makes me remember the last money my mother had to buy a baby cereal called Nestlé.

I found the catalogue inside the Nestlé box.

O Catálogo das Crianças is a symbol of the challenges that I faced back in my country. It is very fragile and I try to be careful not to rip the paper.

THE MATH BOOK

BY DAN HUYNH //
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

To be a good student is not easy in Vietnam. I was tired of studying because of 13 subjects a week. After a long time in school, students then went to study centers with exhausted bodies and fatiguing faces. They often got home no earlier than 9 pm.

In September of 2013, my parents had a serious discussion with their children about moving to the US. At the end of the conversation, they asked all of us: "Do you want to go or not? You must know that you will face many difficulties. If you choose to live there, promise that you will not lose your future."

After I came to Boston, I borrowed a math book and read it in my free time. Those math books are always big and heavy, with more than 700 pages. I needed to use two hands to carry them.

Finally, after a few months, I felt more confident with math. Before that I would see a math book and stare at it.

Math is everywhere in your life. You go out and buy something, you need math. Knowing math makes my grade higher and I'm more confident about my knowledge.

I can go to a good university in the future -- to become a doctor of animals -- if I have good grades in math.



SCENE & HEARD



AFH ART // DAJA TAYLOR

CHAOS IN KENYA

BY JAMAL MOHAMED // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

A gun fired, disturbing the night's silence. All of my family stood on the porch in our village, Kakuma, in Kenya. There was no moon; we couldn't see anything. We wondered who was shooting. I was six years old and scared. There was screaming coming from a nearby house. I asked myself: "Is it safe if we step out? Are they still here? What did they do out there?"

My three siblings and I lay down under my mom. Then she ran toward our neighbor's house, leaving us behind -- watching and wondering. When she got there, she saw a man on the ground, his blood running down the road. Someone called the ambulance and they came and took the dead body. The police followed. Our bodies were frozen and another gun shot went off. A tear ran down my face. Our life was this tiny cell. We were living in a war.

Days became weeks, weeks became months, and months became years. Ten years passed. Finally, we got a visa to go to America.

It was my first time riding an airplane and I had many questions. "Is the airplane going to look like a bus? Are they going to tie us up with rope so that we won't fall out?"

As I looked down, I saw mountains, trees, and lakes far away from the clouds. I thought: "My freedom starts here."

DANGER ZONE

BY ANGEL ARIAS // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Santa Cruz is known as one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in Bani, Dominican Republic, and it's where I grew up. There are a lot of gangsters selling drugs on the corner. If they can't sell drugs, they rob you, and if you don't give them what they want, they kill you.

Many of the teenagers I grew up with are selling drugs

and stealing. At the end of the day, they end up in jail or dead. The reason they do that is because of the economy -- they're just trying to survive no matter what.

I wanted to leave Santa Cruz and show all the people from my neighborhood that it is not necessary to sell drugs and rob to have money. Here, in America, to have what you want you only need to work hard for it.

DESERT ESCAPE

BY SOFIA MUKHTAR // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I spent most of my life in Sudan living in fear of the police because I was not a legal citizen. My friends decided it was time to escape to a better place with education and a safe home. To do that, we had to travel through the dangerous Sahara desert.

We left with about 100 people, all in one truck. We were piled on top of each other from early morning to night fall. The sweaty people smelled like a dumpster filled with garbage. But it was too late to turn back.

We ended up getting stuck in the desert. The truck dropped us off and we had to wait

for another one to take us the rest of the way. We only had one bottle of water to share with seven to 10 people. We didn't eat food for about a week. I was so hungry that I would lose my balance and almost fall over.

There was a young man with us who was not moving. I grabbed his hand. I didn't know that he was dead. I had never seen a dead person, and this was scary. I kept thinking: "Maybe I could die tomorrow."

But I kept going. My trip to a better life took me to Libya, Egypt, and then here. When it was finally over, I felt proud of myself. I had made it to the United States.

DANCE NO MORE

BY ENRIQUE ANTONIO NOVA // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The day we left our country, she stopped dancing. I did not know what goodbye meant until July, 2009, when my family and I left the Dominican Republic for the United States.

A part of me was content to move -- to have more opportunities. The feeling of living in a city, walking through the streets with hundreds of people all rushing to get to school or work, running up and down stairs trying not to miss the train, was something I always wanted. But another part of me resisted. I would no longer dance with my grandmother in our quiet town of Bani, where music can be heard sparsely from kitchens around the streets.

These dances were the best way for Mama to leave her problems aside. She had dropped out of school in the third grade and dedicated her life to taking care of her ailing mother and the rest of the family.

Whenever Mama cooked, she danced. These dances began spontaneously to the

rhythm of her pots colliding, the music booming on the kitchen radio as she pretended to be a musician adding her own flavor. She would move her hips side to side, push everyone out of her way, or grab their hand for a dance.

She would interrupt my homework, and I would dance with her until she was tired, or until the smoke in the kitchen alerted her that the food was burning. Then, she would spin around, flip her dress, and dance her way back to her cooking.

But all of this ended that one day in July, 2009, when Mama stayed behind because her visa to the United States was not granted. The day we left, I gave Mama a last hug; tears slid down her wrinkled face as she lowered the volume on the radio.

Once I become a professional, I will go back to the Dominican Republic, reunite with Mama, and we will dance, just like old times, worrying only about our steps, making sure we have not lost the rhythm.



AFH PHOTO // KIARA MAHER

THE GATES OF HELL

BY ASHLY TORRES // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

On a hot Sunday night in the summer of 2011, I was staying at my best friend's house in Playita, San Juan, Puerto Rico – a hard neighborhood where violence, drugs, and gangsters have control. My mom called to let me know that my father was coming to pick me up. As always, I didn't know how to open the gate between the porch and the street. The gate was old and covered in rust. I had to wait for my friend or her mom to open it since it was so tricky. In the exact moment that they were trying to open the gate, we heard shots fired in the street. We dropped to the floor just like swimmers diving into water. Then, something came to my head that said, "Papi."

He'd been shot. My mind went blank. My whole body shook, just like on a cold

winter night.

If it wasn't for the gate, I could be dead. My dad had been shot in the shoulder, but if he had moved his head just a little, he could have died. He is OK now.

All my thoughts and choices changed in a second. Before this, my family had planned to move to America for my brother's health care. I had wanted to stay in Puerto Rico because it was my life -- my grandmother, my dad, and my best friends were there. My grandmother and I used to share the bed. She stroked my hair before sleep and talked about her religion.

After that moment, I put my future and safety first.

Scared and desperate, I wanted to leave Puerto Rico to start a new life here. I want to be able to open the new, shiny gate of opportunity and go to college - not the rusty, old gate that leads to nowhere.

A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

BY ERIKA NUNEZ // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I'm not sure exactly why, but when I was nine years old I started spending time in the kitchen -- mesmerized by my mom's cooking.

One day, my mom got sick and we were alone with no one to make food for my siblings and uncle. It was time for me to prepare my first dish.

I was so small, I had to take a chair to reach the stove. My mom was lying down on the sofa, telling me all the ingredients. I remember my uncle telling me that my moro -- a mixture of rice and beans -- was better than my mom's. I knew I could be good at cooking.

About a year later, I had to separate from my mom

because she was coming to the US from the Dominican Republic. She would not be there to continue teaching me.

I gained experience by helping my cousin, Yomaira. I had to make dinner every day because Yomaira attended college. People were impressed because they couldn't believe that such a little girl was such a woman in the kitchen.

Now, in the US, I do not want to see my mother get home from a long day of work and be obligated to cook dinner when I am capable of doing it. I am always in the kitchen trying to be creative.

Cooking is like love -- it should be larger than what you think you need.

LIKE A VIOLENT VIDEO GAME -- ONLY REAL

BY MARIA ARISTY // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

It was not one of those nights of slight breezes and cups of hot chocolate between family. Instead, it was a dark and eerie night. It was not one of those nights of sharing tales in the yard. No, it was a night full of intrigue.

On November 7, 2010, at 9:13, I witnessed a real-life 3D version of a PlayStation war game. Action. Danger. Fear. Cars spinning out, screeching loudly. Then, shocked neighbors running in slow motion -- as if it was their last chance in the game. Not a minute later, bullets hailed down. The Dominican sky lit up like

fireworks on New Year's Eve. Hearts raced with the rhythm of the shots.

"Oh great power of God, don't forsake us," my mother cried out. I was only 13, with two pigtails, biting my nails down to the cuticles. Even though my heart wanted to escape from my body, I tried not to let it show.

The chaotic scene was unfolding at a mansion surrounded by bulletproof walls and barbed wired. It was only two houses away from mine. It was owned by a mysterious man known only as Isidro. He always tried to hide his face. No wonder. He was the biggest drug trafficker in Bani, my

hometown. A rival had come to fight Isidro over money.

It lasted 30 minutes until the police stopped them. When my family and I tried to stand up, our legs didn't work.

A month later, we moved to the United States. Six weeks after that, there was another big shooting in my hometown. It has become a habit.

I owe it to my town to make something of myself here so that one day I can rescue those that have had to remain in the game. I plan on bringing those pleasant and peaceful nights back to my family and friends.

THE SKY: MY SECRET ESCAPE

BY JOHENNY DEL JESUS // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Every afternoon, when it was time for me to go to school, I always saw my friends with their mothers and I thought: "Why isn't my mom by my side?"

Being the only child in the neighborhood without a mom made me feel like my life was as empty as a desert.

My mom had decided to travel out of the

Dominican Republic so I could have a better future. She left me with my aunt. I lived in a vibrant neighborhood full of humble people.

Since nobody knew how miserable and abandoned I felt, I had my secret spot, my own strategy to get through my pain. I would go to the street, sit on the sidewalk, and look to the sky. The sky was my only escape. I thought

that every time I saw an airplane my mom was in there, so I smiled and calmed a little thinking that she was around, watching me like an angel.

When I was 12, I thought the pain would end when my dad brought me to America. But I again felt alone.

Still, I know how to survive. I will always have my secret spot in the sky.



STOCK PHOTO



AFH PHOTO // JANNA MACH

JOGGERS: LIKE YOGA PANTS FOR MEN

BY JOHANNA LEDGISTER // STAFF WRITER

Kayin Walker, 13, says joggers stand out to him because of the way they are shaped -- skinny at the bottom and wide and roomy in the leg area.

"They are stylish," says Walker, from Mattapan.

Indeed. Sometimes referred to as yoga pants for men, joggers are the latest thing in active wear.

One of the main benefits of the tapered style is that they show off your latest pair of expensive sneakers or shoes instead of hiding them like old-school sweats.

Malik Rise, 14, says he likes joggers because they are so comfortable.

"They feel and fit like pajamas," says Rise, from Roxbury.

Women wear them, too. "They're cute," says Angelique McAuliffe, 13, who lives in Dorchester.

FANNING THE FLAMES OF LOYALTY

BY MARCOS HERNANDEZ // STAFF WRITER

Arnold Castaneda, 17, from Boston Latin Academy, says he feels frustrated since he is part of "The Walking Dead" TV series fandom but can't find others at his school who share the same interest.

Fandoms are defined as being fans of something, but they are more than that. Whether it be music, television programs, or sporting events, audiences play a significant role through their participation.

Fandoms exist both online -- communicating through forums and discussion boards -- and in real life, as more outspoken fans sometimes organize "meet-ups" through social media, and bond through their love of

the topic at hand.

Samantha Shave, 16, from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, knows what it takes to be a true fan.

"Being a fan," says Shave, "means consistently knowing what's happening and admiring the work put into whatever the subject is."

For Veronica Boggie, a junior at the O'Bryant, TV shows have become the new reading-for-fun.

She keeps up with several programs with popular followings, such as "Dr. Who" and "Sherlock," but knows where to draw the line.

"Fans make the show," says Boggie, "but at the end of the day, it's the creation of the writers and it belongs to them."

COMIC CORNER



BY MELANIE BAEZ // STAFF WRITER