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THE FEAR WITHIN

BY ROSA SANCHEZ // STAFF WRITER



When talking about fear, we tend to think of that which scares us. But how about those things that we don't understand, those emotions that are stronger than us or that our minds can't comprehend?

Everyone has his or her own idea of this angst. While searching for a sense of what teens worry about, 80 random students were surveyed.

Their top anxieties included losing those dear to them; not having a girlfriend or boyfriend; doing poorly in school; and the future unknown.

Nadine Barros, 16, from Dorchester, is a calm girl who can become nervous inside about losing her mother for, she says, her mother is like both a mother and a father.

In order to live every day, she tries to avoid thinking about a world in which her mother is gone.

After someone close to her was taken by violence, she says, the panic of possibly being without her mother, too, merged within her.

But she feels now that it is better to think positively and have hope in her heart.

"Don't let fear overcome you," Barros says, "because if you do, you will never be able to live your life."

Seventeen-year-old Denisha Rivera, from Mission Hill, also frets most of all about being without her mother. For she thinks of her mother as her best friend and is concerned because her mom has really bad asthma.

She believes that it is unavoidable not to be uneasy about this because, she says, her mother has always been there for her.

This kind of ache does not disappear, she says, so you just have to deal with it.

"Life is what you make it," Rivera says, "not what happens during it."

Osagu Odeh, 15, from South Boston, is troubled by the possibility of academic failure.

To avoid dwelling on it, she says, she studies hard.

Her burden will finally be gone, she says, when she becomes a success in life.

"Don't let fear conquer you," Odeh advises, "because you might lose battles but you can always end up winning the war."

Many say there are two basic ways to confront The Fear:

"Forget Everything and Run" or "Face Everything and Rise."

AFH PHOTO // CUONG HUYNH

DEALING WITH THE FEAR

BY EVENS LOUIS JEAN // STAFF WRITER

Seventeen-year-old Irlene Perrin, of Hyde Park, stresses about a terrorist attack that could hit Boston.

"We are such a major city," says Perrin.

To keep her mind free, Perrin says she focuses on her music, like that of J. Cole.

For many teens, fear is at its apex, fueled by screaming headlines and parental worries about the ever-present dangers of gang violence and terrorism.

For Paula Chavez, 18, of Brighton, it is the possibility of out-of-control gang activity that hits close to home.

"It can happen anytime, anywhere," says Chavez, who attempts to be safe by getting into her house at a reasonable hour.

Sixteen-year-old Amanda Leyton, of Roslindale, says she tries to stay carefree in the face of potential chaos.

"I'm not worried about terrorism or gang violence," Leyton says, "because it is not a constant threat in my community."

TEEN ANGST



TIP ARTWORK //
ANTIAH THORNTON

My drawing depicts the image of a teenage girl being held captive by her problems. Anxiety, anger, and depression are three main stresses that have manifested in her life, caused by school, insecurities, bullying, and a traumatic past. She wears a smile on her face to hide what she really feels inside. The chains are wrapped around her neck, choking and suffocating her and preventing her from telling the truth about what's really going on. All she does is smile and reassure the world that she is OK.

-- Antiah Thornton



TIP ARTWORK
// CHRISTINE
FREEMAN

Fear, angst, depression. These are just a few things that might be seen in different teens. This image mostly shows depression. It says: "I can do what I want, mom. You're not the boss of me." Or: "Nobody accepts me. Nobody understands." The covering of the eye is a common characteristic of the "emo" or "goth" style. It's a stereotypical look but, hey, it is what it is.

-- Christine Freeman

When I'm nervous, I feel as if the world's going to end. Everything is shaking and it becomes pretty hot. But the reality is that I'm the one shaking. I'm the only one feeling the heat. It may be that my nervousness has become an embarrassment, for my face has turned red. At the same time, my lips close; for some strange reason, my words won't come out. It's as if my lips have become a zipper that's shut and just won't open. Why? Maybe it's a disease -- that is how I feel.

-- Rosa Sanchez



TIP ARTWORK //
ROSA SANCHEZ

Angst, no matter the age, is not a good feeling. But when you're a teen, it seems to linger everywhere. It's always behind you, ready to strike as soon as your guard is down.

-- Melanie Baez



TIP ARTWORK //
MELANIE BAEZ

YES.

"OBAMA HAS MADE OUR LIVES BETTER"

BY ROSE KOUMBASSA // STAFF WRITER

Despite the fact that the 22nd Amendment declares that presidents can't have a third term, I believe that Barack Obama deserves one.

Obama has done a lot for the US: ended the official war in Iraq, expanded affordable health care, turned the economy around, fought for equal pay for women, and supported same-sex marriage.

Obama has made our lives better because he always thought of the people and how his decisions would affect us.

He warrants another term because we are at a time where we still need improvement and change.

The Republican candidates only care about themselves and rich people.

Hillary Clinton knows what Americans want to hear and feeds it to them. Bernie Sanders proposes romantic ideals without any details on how to accomplish them.

Obama should be president again because he is realistic with his proposals and actually gets things done.

ELECT BARACK
OBAMA PRESIDENT.
AGAIN?



AFH ART // MAX URENA

NO.

"IT'S TIME TO GIVE ANOTHER PERSON A CHANCE TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT OBAMA DID NOT"

BY JAMILLAT DOUMBIA // STAFF WRITER

Don't get me wrong. Barack Obama has done some good things for our country, such as creating ObamaCare, having our military take out Osama bin Laden, and helping protect the environment.

He has been an inspiration to many while serving two terms as America's first black president.

But I strongly feel that it's time to give another person a chance to accomplish what Obama did not.

Make no mistake -- this is no campaign for Bernie Sanders. But if you have seen him during the debates, you would know that he is very knowledgeable.

Yes, Obama may be inspirational, but during his presidency too many people remain out of work.

If Obama was, hypothetically, given a third term, then somebody who may be more qualified would not have the chance to come up with new strategies to fix what Obama could not.

BIDEN HIS TIME: JOE FOR PREZ!

BY ELEBETEL ASSEFA // STAFF WRITER

At presstime, the leading presidential candidate for the Republican Party is Donald Trump. On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton is ahead in the polls but Bernie Sanders is still around.

Forget all of them.

Though in October he declined the chance to run after two previous unsuccessful Democratic bids, Joe Biden is still the most outstanding and qualified person out there.

Clinton has been in the political spectrum for most of her life. And that is the problem. Clinton has had many opportunities to prove herself to the people but has failed to inspire. Issues of distrust and untruthfulness arise when she is mentioned. Being investigated over her sloppy use of emails while secretary of state doesn't help.

Sanders is charming and charismatic but has the opposite problem of that faced by Clinton. Although he has been in politics for many years, his name doesn't ring a bell to a large segment of voters. Is he a qualified leader then? Or is he just promising change that could never occur without compromises, which defeats the whole purpose of the so-called Sanders Revolution.

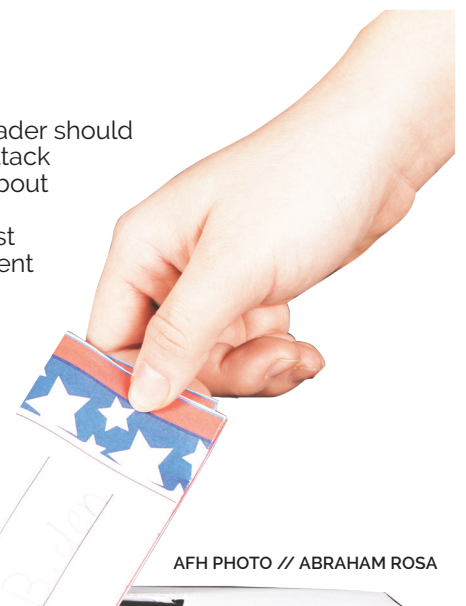
The 2016 presidential election is a turning point for the country. If a leader capable of guiding a whole nation morally and economically is not elected, the US might face serious consequences.

That's why Biden is the one.

He is the epitome of what a leader should be. He is trustworthy, does not attack minorities, and never dreamed about wanting to dominate the world.

Even more, he has had the best training for the job as vice president of the United States since his election with Barack Obama in 2008.

Eight years of being a second in command, what more can we ask for in a candidate? Run for president, Joe Biden, and save us the troubles.



AFH PHOTO // ABRAHAM ROSA

DEAR DONALD,

**"IF I WERE YOU,
DONALD, I WOULD
DROP THE BALL ON
THIS ONE"**

Dear Mr. Trump:

My name is Christopher Damas. I am 13 and I was born in America. I'm writing to you, Mr. Trump, because I believe that your plan of taking away birthright citizenship is flawed and it's going to have the opposite effect of what you want.

Birthright citizenship is when you are born in America so you become an automatic citizen.

Birthright citizenship shouldn't be repealed for the children of undocumented immigrants; that's going to add more financial problems and retaliation since the children won't leave because this is the 14th Amendment to the Constitution and you can't just get rid of it.

It would make it harder on the immigrant's life -- like it's not already been hard being an immigrant. It will put more stress and worry on immigrants, causing them to get fed up and fight for what's right.

If I were you, Donald, I would drop the ball on this one because it's not going to work.

So, if you care about the people and becoming president, just leave this one alone.

Sincerely,
Christopher Damas

**"THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN
WOULD BE STATELESS"**

Dear Mr. Trump:

You say you want to stop illegal immigration but repealing the citizenship of a child is not going to help you. It will create more undocumented immigrants.

Thousands of children would be stateless.

As a young teen myself, I can imagine what the kids' situations are. I am 13 years old. Revoking their citizenship means they wouldn't get the same education as me.

They would have limited access to health care and even a place to live. If you take away everything from them then the only way they could survive is living on the streets.

You are setting up failure for the US.

People come here for the American Dream but if you revoke children's citizenship it would turn into an American Nightmare.

The last thing we need is to see children and their families suffering.

You should immediately consider choosing a different plan, Mr. Trump., because this one is going to fail.

Sincerely,
Jodiah Toney

DEAR TRUMP,

I have the right
to live in America.

AFH PHOTO // MARY NGUYEN

"IT IS VERY CRUCIAL TO THE ECONOMY TO KEEP THE 14TH AMENDMENT"

Dear Mr. Trump:

I would like to introduce you to myself before I counter your arguments.

Unlike some of the teens that disagree with you and hate the living soul out of you, I just dislike your statements.

My name is David Nguyen. I live in Boston. My parents migrated to America from Vietnam -- and, no, they are not illegal. They came here with papers.

If they didn't, they would have been caught by now.

It is very crucial to the economy to keep the 14th Amendment.

If it is abolished, we would lose tons of money and also develop hated relationships with other countries.

Sincerely,
David Nguyen

"IT WOULD TEAR OUR COUNTRY APART"

Dear Mr. Trump:

My name is Justina Riopelle. I believe that undocumented immigrants have done a lot of positive things in our country. There might have been some negative actions but not all of them are bad people.

The children don't deserve to be punished for the actions that their parents took to have them in this country.

If they took away their citizenship, they wouldn't belong to anywhere. They wouldn't have a birth certificate or anything to prove that they are valuable people or even that they exist. This would cause major immigration problems for the future.

We have to remember that these people are coming to the US for a better life. If they are stateless, then they are going to have a difficult time getting their lives together because you need documentation to get housing or a job. If we don't give them documents then we are just adding more fuel to the fire.

Repealing birthright citizenship would tear our country apart and cause many more problems in the end. I don't understand how you could make things so miserable for these people.

You should reconsider your ideas and think about how you are ruining things for future generations.

We are a country of immigrants and if you were to take away all of the immigrants then you would be taking away our entire country.

Sincerely,
Justina Riopelle



AFH PHOTO // LANVY TRAN

"I AM A BIRTHRIGHT CITIZEN"

Dear Mr. Trump:

My name is Nazik Mohamed. I am 13 years old. I was born in Boston, Massachusetts. The 14th Amendment applies to me because I am a birthright citizen.

Repealing the birthright citizenship for undocumented immigrants is a big issue to me because I think that every human being born on US soil should have the same rights as the other citizens.

The 14th Amendment protects US citizenship for the peace of this country. Repealing it would just create more problems and chaos, such as stateless children and inequality.

This plan of yours is going to do nothing but create a humanitarian crisis. You will be ripping children from their families.

You can't disrespect a child who has the same characteristics as any other citizen.

Although you want to repeal this law, you can't just change it up like that; if you do, I guarantee that most citizens in the US are not going to take any laws seriously, thinking that it doesn't matter anymore.

Sincerely,
Nazik Mohamed

"YOU'RE JUST ANOTHER SIMPLE-MINDED REPUBLICAN"

Dear Mr. Trump:

My name is Nammy Nguyen. I am from Boston, Massachusetts. I come from a neighborhood of many immigrants. This is why I feel strongly about everything I say to you.

I understand that you want to get rid of the 14th Amendment. This messes with the United States and its citizens, but you don't care, do you? You're just another simple-minded Republican.

This repeal would only help Trump, not America. So many stateless people will be in a hole.

There is no reason to punish a group of people because the top class is having a little trouble while the bottom is having a bad week yearly.

Keeping the 14th Amendment is a better idea than deporting immigrants, because they are the backbone of America.

They do what you won't do.

Sincerely,
Nammy Nguyen

AFH ART // JANELIN PINEYRO

BSAC BUZZ

BY KENNY FENG // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Say that one day you're just walking down the street when all of a sudden you are halted by a police officer.

"How was your day?" he asks, continues with the questions, and then lets you on your way.

Seems harmless enough, right? Maybe not.

The cop may still miscast you as a potential wrongdoer based on how you dress, where you hang out, or other information.

"Boston Youth: Knowing Rights, Staying Safe" was the theme when some 40 young people from the city participated in a training presented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Massachusetts and the Criminal Justice Institute of Harvard Law School.

At the November event held in Jamaica Plain, the ACLU distributed Know Your Rights cards that gave instructions on what to say if confronted by police:

"Officer, am I free to go?"

"Officer, I do not consent to any searches."

"Officer, I am remaining silent until I speak with a lawyer or my parent/guardian."

BSAC helped recruit youth for the event; the majority of attendees were young people of color.

According to recent data released by the Boston Police Department, 58.5 percent of officers' Field Interrogation and Observation encounters in the community involved black individuals, who only make up about 24 percent of the city's population.

The Department cautioned that the raw FIO numbers don't account for contextual information like neighborhoods or crime hotspots.

BSAC is hoping to incorporate what we learned about police practices into our Boston Student Rights app.

If you would like to help promote change in your school or community, BSAC holds steering committee meetings on Mondays from 3:30-5:30 pm. Contact Arthur Collins at acollins3@bostonpublicschools.org if you're interested.

NO MORE GRADES? NO WAY!

BY ANTIAH THORNTON // STAFF WRITER

Many teenagers complain about how unfair classroom grades are and how they wish they would disappear.

But that seems to be mostly in theory only.

"Students should be graded," says Jhada Pope, 17, from Dorchester Academy. "Otherwise, how are we going to know if we're improving or not? We do work and tests to see what we need help on."

Wanjing Li, 17, from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, makes a similar argument.

"If the teacher stops grading us," she says, "then what will be the standard for going to college?"

However, 15-year-old Joanne Leu, from the O'Bryant, feels that the traditional A-F system should be scrapped.

"Teachers should stop grading students -- at least not based on their academics," says Leu. "Students should be graded on the effort they put into understanding the subject rather than whether or not they actually understand it."



AFH PHOTO // AIJANAH SANFORD

STUDENT STRESS LEVELS ON HIGH

BY VICTORIA LIVINGSTON // STAFF WRITER

As the second term came to a close, Boston Latin School sophomore Bianca Pierre was feeling extremely stressed.

"I've had tests and projects all week and I've gotten no sleep," she says.

Teens worry about a variety of things -- family issues, afterschool responsibilities, peer relationships, for example -- but for many school may be the most important factor.

Needing to get good grades plus the constant and cumulative amount of work given becomes overwhelming. Expectations from teachers and parents only increases the pressure.

BLS sophomore Umaiya Eman participates in a play after school, which adds to her time crunch.

"I have rehearsals for about three hours on Mondays and Wednesdays," she says.

Although some high school seniors have been struck by senioritis, many others are still feeling the heat.

Amari Harrison, a senior at Boston Latin Academy, is currently involved with choosing colleges, applying for scholarships, and maintaining her academics all at the same time.

"It's not really a matter of how much work I have, but it's a matter of how much sleep I lose," says Harrison, who clocks in at five hours vs. the scientist-recommended eight hours of ZZZs.

Some teens want to talk to people they trust to ease the burden but that, too, often feels out of reach.

"I don't even have time," says Eman, "because I have a lot of work."

PERFECT STUDENT, PERFECT TEACHER

BY ELEBETEL ASSEFA // STAFF WRITER

Talia Clark, a Physics and AP Seminar teacher at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, says her image of the perfect student changes every day.

However, a quality that she looks for is this: "One that doesn't shut down when faced with challenges."

The concept of prototypical student and model teacher differs depending on where you stand in the classroom, and can make for an interesting mix.

For Rayven Frierson, a sophomore at the O'Bryant, her hope is for: "An unexpected teacher that doesn't teach the same every day and who mixes it up a little."

Some teachers say they are not looking for utter brilliance or across-the-board A's in a student, but, for example, someone who: "Is hardworking, curious, open to criticism, and has strong attendance records," says Jim Munsey, a Geometry and Algebra teacher at the O'Bryant.

His weaker students, he says, don't possess the motivation to build a better future for themselves.

"They lack from seeing a connection between the choices they make and the consequences they have," says Munsey.

But some students say there are teachers who don't really drive them to succeed.

"Both teachers and students have a shared responsibility in the classroom," says Kiana Mclean, 15, from the O'Bryant. "The teacher should put forth more effort while the students should respect and listen."

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL SHOULD BE...



AFH PHOTO // CUONG HUYNH

"LIKE A HOLY PLACE"

BY ALI SATTAR // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

School is like a holy place, because there we learn a lot of important life principles such as respect, honesty, and how to be successful. Being successful does not mean money only; it is when you achieve your goals in life.

To have an effective school, there should be academic attainment and preparing students for college and career and showing them that remaining standing through struggles will eventually lead to happiness.

Schools need to plant confidence and boost students; give them the "I can do it" feeling instead of giving up.

In life, you will never reach the light if you don't believe in yourself because dreams don't work unless you do.

"ABOUT SOCIAL CHANGE"

BY CELESTINA VAZ ANTUNES // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The purpose of schooling should be about social change.

Schools should teach students how to be members of a community; how to give back what they learn and use it to make a difference in the world.

I want to show people from my country, Cape Verde, that education is essential and that it is not just to be able to get a job or make money.

It's about learning and making a change.

John Dewey was an education reformer.

"The purpose of education," according to those quoting Dewey's philosophy, "should not revolve around the acquisition of a predetermined set of skills, but rather the realization of one's full potential and the ability to use those skills for the greater good in society."

This means that schools should prepare students for the future.

If parents send their children to school every day, it's because they want something new for them; they want them to learn and have a better life.

And while many parents think about their kids getting a job, it's also about being a good example to society and making it a better place.

For this to happen, schools will have to be about social change.

"TO HELP THE ECONOMY GROW"

BY MELANIE MORA // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

If we picture school, we just see a place where kids go to learn how to write and read. They study math, science, and history.

Most of the students go because it's an obligation, because their parents say they must.

American schools should prepare students to be successful in the careers they choose after graduation so they can help the country grow economically.

Why are there homeless people, families not eating every night, and immigrants being denied a better opportunity? Can education be a solution?

Poverty is the main reason why the world is not progressing and keeps failing at the same problems. Some people decide to get into drugs, prostitution, and follow other malicious paths.

When I was in Ecuador, I didn't have money to buy food. I missed a lot of school days so I could go to the streets to sell oranges and bracelets to support my family.

Many of my friends didn't want to be seen in the streets selling things for low money. Some decided to steal from people. Others entered gangs to sell drugs with the illusion of becoming rich.

I want schools to have classes where they can teach students about businesses that help the economy grow for their own benefit and for other generations' benefit, too. Those students who like to put their hands into their work or use their imaginations to create unique stuff should also be encouraged. There should be internships where students can get real-life experience.

If we don't want our next generation to enter the world of drugs and crime, we should give our children insightful education so they can be successful and pass on their wealth -- not just money wealth but the wealth of knowledge.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL SHOULD BE...

TO LEARN HOW TO BE A MEMBER OF SOCIETY

BY ESTEFANY RAMOS // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

School is for learning how to be a member of society.

Besides skills, people need to cultivate qualities towards making the world a better place. The point is that school is not just to learn about academic attainment but about how to create human bonds.

Socializing is a key part of maintaining harmony. If people don't have common sense about how to contribute to society, violence and corruption will, little by little, steal the order that lets things keep going.

If you lived in a world where people attack each other, it would decay the quality of education because people would get the wrong message.

Fear can't be the reason that a person can't go to school.

Peace should be what leads people to live a life in which everyone works as a strong community so society can progress.



TO HELP US PREVENT POVERTY

BY ROOBY DENAUD // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The best school system to prepare students to fit into society is one that focuses on academic attainment and teaches about democracy and our economy.

This helps students to stand-up for what they believe in. They should be educated about politics. They need to understand what is going on in the world. They need to be independent so they don't require people to talk for them. They can say what they feel and defend themselves. The new generation should be able to think critically to make accurate decisions.

If students learn about democracy in school, there won't be that much violence as they will think twice before making a decision. They will see that they are important to society.

Students also need the necessary skills to get a decent job and make money for their families. It helps the country's economy for them to become productive members of the workforce.

If we are not educated, we will be in poverty.

"WHERE INDIVIDUALS LEARN ABOUT WHO THEY ARE"

BY P. VANESSA SYLVESTRE // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In today's society, we often underestimate the power of schooling. It seems to have one focus -- college.

It is like a race -- may the fastest win! But, in reality, it is not quite equal.

Some people, because of their prestigious economic status, have access to better quality education, have a head start. As a result, some make it to the end of the line while many others give up due to obstacles they encounter.

Schooling can have different purposes, from training leaders to challenge the status quo, to socialization, where students learn how to live in a community.

But overall, school should be where individuals learn about who they are, discover their identities.

Schools need to embrace all individuals. To tap into their inner resources and personalize learning for them.

If schooling is not able to connect with everyone, regardless of their background or status, then the pursuit of education will only be appealing for some.

"LIKE A COMMUNITY"

BY JOSEPH PIARD // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

If students are taught that they have a voice and that it matters, then they will take action to be heard.

Back in my native country of Haiti, children were dropping out because of economic necessity. They had to find a way to get money instead of going to school. The purpose of school there was to earn a fair salary.

Coming to the US made me realize that education is not the same in every country. Here, you are more independent in choosing what you want to be.

In the public schools there are more resources than in Haiti: free food and no cost to attend. Many also give students paper and pencils and books to borrow from the library.

In Haiti, sometimes parents go hungry so they can buy school supplies for their kids.

And that is why many of us are here today.

Still, school should not be about sitting and being given information. The school is like a community, so students should have an opportunity not to just follow rules, but also to make decisions.

We have to educate ourselves enough to contribute to making social change. For example, we have to know how to vote, who to vote for and why, how to interpret the news that we hear, and how to negotiate with leaders or even become leaders.

There are issues that many students care about, such as safety in their neighborhoods, opportunities in education, and poverty. The lessons in school should relate more to these.

This would make students more engaged in their school work, especially if they feel they can make an impact.

TO FIGHT DISCRIMINATION

BY TARANNUM RAHMAN // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Why do schools exist? Why do we complain every morning about how we are not ready to start the day yet many of us still make sure we are not late for our first class?

Although our world seems to acknowledge that school is a vital part of our lives, it has not settled on the idea about exactly how.

For me, the purpose of school should be to create social change that will end many societal conflicts and lead our world toward the direction of world peace.

Previously, school simply meant pleasing my parents and securing my future. It was always about my own individual gain, never about the whole community.

But education is not just for one to capture it inside. One needs to share it with the rest of society for our communities to grow.

Back in my home country, Bangladesh, there's severe poverty. You won't go a day without witnessing people starving, suffering in front of your eyes. But it doesn't just end there. Wrongdoings such as child laboring and corruption exist, too.

The people who didn't participate in these crimes grew up in the same neighborhood, mixed with similar people as the ones who did.

I always assumed it was just their personalities. But as I studied it longer, I realized that there was one exceptional thing about these people -- they were educated.

They were taught in schools the risk of marrying off young girls or sending children to work.

A common belief about the mission of schools here is that they should prepare students and the country to be financially stable. To ensure that they are capable enough to compete with other strong countries like China and Japan.

Yet this shows school as part of a system that produces people who will only make the US more affluent.

It doesn't demonstrate the true value of education, which is to promote the idea of taking action against injustice, inequality, and discrimination.

"THE GUIDANCE TO HUMAN LIFE"

BY OLECIA REIS // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Every single one of us understands that we should have education but many of us don't know the mission of school.

Why do we go there every day? Why do we take many different subjects?

Before, I used to think that the purpose of school was only based on academic achievement, where we are only evaluated on our thinking, writing, and reading skills. Everything I learned in school was tested.

In my home country of Cape Verde, we would be tested in all subjects every week. The teacher would only be your friend if you had good grades.

Here in the United States, we have tests and quizzes that are supposed to make our grades higher. However, I noticed that schools have more to offer than just academic skills.

We go to school to develop our knowledge but to have a profession and make money for our needs, as well.

I also believe that every human being needs to have the ability to be the author of his or her own life. Schools are the guidance to human life; they assist us with the capacity to know what is right and what is wrong.

School should be focused in the intelligence of the students, to make sure they learn how to read and write. But also to help students find themselves, their abilities, their creativities.

Find out who they are.

A PLACE TO GIVE US THE TOOLS THAT ALLOW US TO THRIVE ON WHATEVER PATH WE CHOOSE

BY MINERVA VOLMAR // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

At a young age, one is unable to know the reason why one is going to school. Our modern society is based on the ideology that one can become successful or important by attending higher education.

But what about one's feelings?

Not all of us are designed to fall under the pressure of what society has established for several generations. I believe that we should pursue our desires, our passions. Not everyone is meant to be an intellectual, or be a follower, either.

Education should give us the tools that will allow us to thrive on whatever path we choose. Educators should accept us as unique individuals, with our own strengths and weaknesses, and not force us to be conventional.

In many cultures, parents believe that after high school graduation one should go to college to become a lawyer, a doctor, or an engineer. But are these the only fields one is able to pursue? I have always had the desire to be an entrepreneur, having my own business.

Personal growth allows students to explore beyond their circles and not conform to what society believes.

THE VIDEO GAME AS ART FORM



AFH PHOTO

BY BRENDAN WILLIAMSON // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Everybody knows the warnings about video games being bad for you. Something along the lines of, "They'll rot your brain" or maybe the classic, "You'll go blind if you sit too close to the TV."

But many people believe that video games are actually good for you. In fact, they are the greatest art form of the twenty-first century.

They're a creative medium that lets designers express themselves and players see those viewpoints.

They're good for the body as well as the soul, increasing hand-eye coordination and the brain's processing speed.

Of course, as with anything, you have to be careful not to overdo it.

Putting all your time into gaming and neglecting your academics is not a good look.

Video games are great but people do need to limit their time exposed to them.

BRAINWASHED BY TV

BY CHABELLIE CRUZ // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Many feel that television can actually put some knowledge in people.

In reality, however, TV makes you ignorant and unhealthy because there is very little real material being taught and most of the shows are just for entertainment. Not to mention the commercials, which are meant to persuade people to buy products.

TV can actually brainwash kids and adults.

The temptation to watch television is especially harmful for children because they are not strengthening their minds, and when the learning material gets difficult they will be quick to give up.

Sure, some argue that there are children's series that introduce them to reading by teaching sounds of letters and how to spell out words. But an episode or two of "Super Why!" will not increase knowledge. It's all about time and practice.

Even workout shows shortchange you because you often have to buy the materials they are presenting. The gym is the best place to exercise.

To make things worse, many people eat junk food while sitting in front of the tube and then doze off – more habits that are bad for you.

I suggest that adults with children limit their TV time and have them play outdoors or pick up a book, instead. This will help their minds and bodies grow and lead to successful adult lives.

BEATING DOWN ATTEMPTS TO BEAT OLD AGE

BY ROYAL JONES // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Should scientists try to beat old age so we can live longer?

Most Americans would probably feel that this is a great idea. However, if they were to think a bit more about it, they'd realize who is actually at fault for our life expectancy being at risk: scientists.

They fill our foods with chemicals. Their medicines make our bodies adapt to its effects and when they wear off we are back to our true state.

We don't know how to live naturally anymore.

Americans wonder why other countries have longer life expectancies -- their food processing is much less prevalent than ours.

Another problem is the amount of food eaten by consumers. We complain about weight and health issues but are blind to how much we intake.

At some point, our bodies just aren't capable of digesting certain foods. These products break down our bones and cells, causing us to die more quickly than we should.

Many of us no longer know how to use natural resources to survive, so our dependence upon processed food becomes problematic. We often have no idea what we are putting into our bodies.

Scientists should not try to beat old age but should just back off.



AFH PHOTO // DOMINIQUE CAVE

HOW SCHOOL DOES PREPARE US FOR THE REAL WORLD

BY DELPIERO BEAUMONT // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Many students say that school does not prepare us for the real world because it doesn't teach, for example, financial literacy and how to handle our money.

But school instills in us time management and broadens our horizons to new experiences, different languages, and diverse people.

School helps us figure out our life's dreams and career goals. If we want to become a doctor, lawyer, teacher, or police officer, the first step begins with education.

It is the foundation of our future.

Only then can we go out and contribute to the world.

WHY COLLEGE ATHLETES SHOULD BE PAID

BY TODD FIELDS // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

College athletics have gained immense popularity across the United States. Intercollegiate sports have brought in a surplus of revenue to many of their universities as well as increasing the schools' reputations.

Yet with these large sums of money, no college athletes are allowed to be legally compensated for their work. Thus, many amateur athletes have no incentive to stay in college and finish their degrees, as many cannot afford to pay for the increasingly expensive college experience.

If you were a college athlete, your daily schedule would consist of waking up early and going to practice. After that, you have to go to all your classes.

Then, if you are failing a few courses because you are juggling your sports and academics, you have a tutoring session. Lastly, to finish your day off, you have more practice.

You only have a couple of hours to study and sleep before you repeat the cycle.

Meanwhile, there is little time to find or work a job.

For those not on scholarship, this can lead to an increasing amount of debt.

Some say that student athletes shouldn't be paid because it would interfere with the main focus of college: education. They believe the money will distract them and take over their lives. Soon enough, and if you're good enough, they say, you may have a professional career that offers you big bucks.

But pros get paid to make fame and money for the team while college athletes do the same for free. Why can't they get compensated for their services?

PROTECTING OUR PRIVACY RIGHTS

BY ANLLINELIS DIAZ // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Many say that our privacy is being endangered by the government -- but that it's necessary to protect our security.

However, the government should understand that there are some confidential matters that people deal with. They should be allowed to have personal lives and post freely on social media.

The government needs to have boundaries. Some monitoring is understandable, given the threat of terrorist attacks, identity theft, and ensuring the public's safety.

However, agencies don't need to supervise all Internet activities.

Having a private life means you want to keep important files and images a secret without government interference -- as long as you also respect the rights of others.

There are things the government should know and not know. For example, it would be OK to see if you are paying your taxes. But it would be an invasion of privacy to go through text messages you sent a lover.

No individual wants others snooping around personal documents.

Not knowing who is collecting information about you can be scary. People wouldn't be their true selves if they knew that every move they made online is being watched.

A lot of people seek comfort on social media because it takes their minds off things and makes it easy to express emotions.

If it were to be monitored without restrictions, many wouldn't have the same freedom or pleasure about posting.

INVEST IN SCHOOLS, DIVEST IN GANGS

BY ISAAC SKELLY // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Although gang violence is a huge concern in inner-city communities, the focus should not be to put large numbers of people in prison but on creating more opportunities for kids.

There are way too many gangs in America to solve the issue with tons of arrests. A lot of their members started off as kids who grew up in poverty and saw no way out but to join money-making gangs that serve as surrogate families.

The only solution is to stop the problem at the source.

Everyone knows education is the key to success. Parents spend tens of thousands of dollars sending their kids to private schools and rigorous colleges. But what if money is scarce?

Many parents from inner-city neighborhoods rely on financial aid and bank loans when it comes to paying for their child's college education. But this is far from a guarantee that their child will be able to get as good an education as a rich kid because many are stuck in subpar public school systems.

Kids can be influenced by their surroundings. If gang

violence is going to be stopped, public schools need to step up.

Even if they are facing budget problems, these school districts need to spend more on kids and less on administrators. They have to hire teachers who really want to influence young lives. They need to create more clubs and programs for troubled students.

Schools have to make students feel like they have their back. Many have failed and so students turn to gangs for support.

A lot of schools look old and boring as soon as you walk through the door. Renovation can lead to gang prevention.

Creating sparkling, safe places can show the children that there is hope for their neighborhood — and for them.

Gang violence can be stopped; often, we've just been looking for solutions in the wrong places.



IN PRAISE OF FOOTBALL

BY DUBEM OKAFOR // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Playing sports is a vital part of our society. Media has generally made us believe that popularity equals football.

However, football is also one of the leading causes of major head injuries, and this is why more and more parents are deciding that they don't want their kids to play it.

Children should play football because, for the most part, it allows them to develop mentally and physically.

I do not agree with this jock culture mentality that football shuts the mind off from academics and art. Rather, it helps youth find and cultivate a sense of direction.

High school football players all want to be in the NFL. They worship their favorite teams and players and even coaches. They want to play the game like them.

They strive for the top spot.

Football players have the drive to pursue all facets of the sport: blocking, running, throwing, catching, defending, and tackling. All of these things are for the win of the game.

And this same drive and goal-oriented thinking is great for high school, overall.

Football players have this direction instilled in them though discipline. Your average teen is someone who can show dislike for authority; rebellion; and narcissism.

On the football field, every teammate -- from lineman to quarterback -- is needed to execute every play.

Football is the very definition of a team sport. It teaches young people to think outside of themselves and to better the people around them.

It's true that football players, no matter the position, are at risk of being injured.

But there is perhaps a benefit to being so close to danger: the player learns a lesson in mortality and of being careful -- skills needed to help keep the new generation alive and thriving.

Despite being depicted as negative to a child's well-being, football actually grows the child.

AFH PHOTO // MARY NYGUEN

THE ILLUSION OF RACE

BY SOFIA MEADOWS-MURIEL AND SARSKIYYA WALLACE // STAFF WRITERS

Race is an illusion. God created the human race, but people created racism.

Racism is something that was made up by people and passed down from generation to generation. They were taught that one race was better than the other.

Thomas Jefferson was a former president who helped put the phrase "All men are created equal" into the Declaration of Independence. But he also was a slaveholder and, historical evidence suggests, kept one as his mistress and even fathered children with her.

As years go by and progress all around us is proclaimed, racism remains -- be it in sports, entertainment, and schools.

Even at the oldest school in the nation, the city's prestigious Boston Latin School.

At BLS, students organized, met with community leaders, and took to Twitter using the hashtag #BlackAtBLS to express their outrage over the longstanding racial hostility many said they experienced there.

Some examples:

"When your teacher calls you the name of three different black girls in the grade cause y'all 'look exactly alike.'"

" 'So do you live in the bad part of Dorchester or the really bad part of Dorchester.' "

" 'You speak so white.' I'm sorry. I didn't realize intelligence and eloquence was only associated with white people."

In response to being given evidence of alleged racist actions, and statements made on social media, the Boston Public Schools promised and conducted an investigation.

The probe found the most offensive messages on social media were not written by BLS students and only faulted the school's administration for its handling of one incident -- in which a non-black male student in 2014 called a black female student a racial slur and threatened her with a reference to lynching, according to BPS.

Students and community leaders of color labeled the inquiry too narrow, disappointing, and more of the same old, same old. They vowed to continue to fight for racial justice. At presstime, some were seeking removal of the headmaster who, nevertheless, vowed to stay on and make things right.

Meanwhile, early this month, United States Attorney Carmen M. Ortiz announced that her office is investigating allegations of civil rights violations at BLS.

Sofia Meadows-Muriel is a student of color at Boston Latin School.

TECHNOLOGY BUILDING BONDS, NOT BREAKING THEM

BY VEDLY ETIENNE // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

These days, many say that technology makes us feel lonely. We interact with our phones more than we do with one another.

But, in fact, technology helps us stay connected.

Wherever I am, I can stay up on the news and be in contact with friends and family via Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, or texting.

Just the other day, I was on FaceTime with one of my cousins who lives in New York. I can't see him every day, so FaceTime helps me catch up with him. We tell each other jokes and afterwards we ask each other how our days went.

If it wasn't for technology, I wouldn't be as close to my cousin as I am.

Of course, because we are always on our phones, some can feel isolated and wish for more personal interaction.

In the end, though, if we learn how to put our phones down from time to time and relate directly with one another, technology can help us bond.



DESIGNER BABIES: CUSTOMIZED KIDS ARE NOT FOR EVERYONE

BY ANILDA RODRIGUES // STAFF WRITER

Designer babies may be on their way, but many teens are not all in.

Sixteen-year-old Dahlia Elamin, 16, says she would favor genetic engineering to prevent diseases but never for the purpose of beauty, such as choosing eye color or hair texture.

"God wants [him or her] to look like that," says Elamin, from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science.

Michelle Cho, 16, from the O'Bryant, supports using the advanced technology to help couples have children.

"You don't know how many people can't even have babies," says Cho.

Sixteen-year-old Eduardo Prudent, from the O'Bryant, would back the idea of being able to pick a baby's physical appearance but not much more.

"I think it's going too far," says Prudent, "when people choose intelligence and others such as good athletic ability."

In the end, Nardos Gosaye, 16, from the O'Bryant, believes that genetic manipulating might produce yet another unfair economic disparity for society to deal with.

"The rich can afford the cost of treatment," Gosaye says, "but the poor can't."

AFH ART // JENNIFER THAI

SELF-DOUBT ABOUT IT

BY PRINCELL FELIZ FRANCO // STAFF WRITER

Sixteen-year-old Gabriela Araujo reflects on her life as a student at one of the top high schools in the city.

"At times I doubt my intelligence because I didn't do my best so I know I'm not prepared," says Araujo, who goes to the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science.

Laying on your bed feeling you have an inferior mindset because you can't write a decent essay after the third try, looking in the mirror washing every corner of your face but seeing no improvement in the reflection, filling out college applications wondering what the future holds for a person like you.

Self-doubt comes in every form and can correlate to all aspects of life.

Kiara Batista, 15, from the O'Bryant, confronts her many battles with self-doubt.

"In squash matches and school and even at home and with people I talk to and with people I like," says Batista.

Batista believes that this feeling is directly connected to a lack of confidence. As our fear of performing or looking the part increases, for example, so does the worry within.

Batista hopes to one day extinguish her misgivings and replace them with more certainty.

"Maybe someday as I get better at things and as I get older," Batista says, "because I know I need it to be a lawyer -- which is actually the only thing I'm confident about."

As some struggle to beat their hesitations, others embrace themselves fully.

Seventeen-year-old Jamilex Peña Mondesi, from the O'Bryant, says she feels absolutely satisfied with who she is.

"I think I'm very cute, I'm smart," she says, "I'm confident."

FACE IT: DO YOU KNOW ME -- OR YOURSELF?

BY ROSA SANCHEZ // STAFF WRITER

Viewing yourself is difficult, since it's not easy to find the words to describe who you really are. However, it is not as hard as knowing how to judge others.

So listen carefully, for it doesn't matter as much which words you use as how it is that you see yourself and those around you -- despite what others may think.

You'll read how different teenagers perceive themselves, what they think others observe in them, and perhaps the proper way to analyze people.

First is Natalie Nguyen, 15, from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science. She says that she considers herself a creative person, while others may see her as simply bubbly.

She agrees with the famous quote -- "Don't

judge a book by its cover" -- because she feels appearances are too risky.

She also says that people tend to change their behaviors to fit into society.

"All you can do is be yourself," says Nguyen, "and not worry about others."

Next is Omarlyn Martinez, 16, from the O'Bryant. He sums himself up as an independent young man and feels that others probably agree that he is a hard worker because, though he may struggle, he will later rise.

Martinez says that behavior is a good indicator of people's character but that intersecting with them is a more useful way to know them.

He says: "Learn before making assumptions or judging."

Last is Legacy Thornton, 15, from Dorchester, who paints herself as smart and athletic.

She thinks others regard her as positive, welcoming, and even studious.

She believes that you can't come to concrete conclusions about others by their conduct alone but that you can make inferences based on how they act.

Getting to know other people, she says, is the best way of actually discovering who they really are. However, she says, people may behave differently depending on what's expected of them.

"Always stay true to who you are," she says, "because if you keep on shifting faces, you're became fake."



AFH COLLAGE

NO.

IT'S JUST A WAY TO SELL
PRODUCTS

BY SADRACK MARSEILLE // CONTRIBUTING
WRITER

There are some who think sexist ads are offensive. They think businesses are using women to make a profit.

But if a company is trying to hawk something, it's for its own good. It is not trying to make people mad -- only sell products and optimize the bottom line.

Even though many believe these types of advertisements are aggravating and annoying to see on the bus or train, I feel it's just an approach to selling merchandise.

A company's ads don't have the obligation to please everyone.

It's your choice.

YES.

ALL WOMEN ARE
BEAUTIFUL

BY CANDY KARNUAH // CONTRIBUTING
WRITER

Everywhere you go today you will see ads that show women as objects. These can make women question their beauty.

The focus and attention should be on the product, not the person in the picture.

People need to find a way to stay healthy. However, showing them near-naked women is not going to engage them to eat better or exercise. It is only going to make them feel depressed.

These ads try to prove that there is only one way a woman can be attractive and that is by starving herself so that she can be skinny.

But women should feel confident about their bodies without an ad telling them how they should try to fit the company's definition of perfect.

All women are beautiful and special.

NO.

JUST BE HAPPY WITH
YOURSELF

BY JOSSARA DIAS // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Fat or thin -- doesn't matter how you are, just that you are happy with yourself. So why worry about advertisements?

Imagine with all the problems in society, people are worried about ads objectifying women.

Princess: You are beautiful. Don't let a simple photo on a piece of paper change your mind.

There's no need to ban the ads. Everybody has to have their own confidence and choose what or what not to follow.

Is it better to see a legal ad and use the product than try illegal stuff that can kill you?

And just imagine if those ads stop. How will the financial conditions of the country be?

People will do strikes because they won't have work. More struggle will come, profits will decrease, and tension will expand.

NO.

IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, CLOSE YOUR EYES

BY THI LE // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Often, we don't like the content or form of the advertisements that surround us. But we can't deny that they are an indispensable part of our society.

We should not ban sexist ads in public places because everything always has positives and negatives. Nothing is perfect.

This is the 21st century. Women are smart, talented, and independent. They know what they want. They know what to do.

These advertisements don't say that everyone has to look like the model.

It is the advertiser's responsibility to promote things to consumers in what they feel is the best way.

Some ads may help us find services or products but we don't like them because of the way they show us.

If you don't like that advertising, it's easy to solve.

Close your eyes.

NO.

NOT EVERYONE CAN BE HAPPY ABOUT EVERYTHING

BY AMADOU BARRY // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Sexist ads should not be banned because it's just people trying to do business to have a good life.

Companies are not trying to offend people. They are finding a way to make money.

They can't satisfy everyone.

Many Americans are big and some are trying to cash in on that by selling weight-loss products.

Although I concede that it makes some women feel bad, I maintain that not everyone can be happy about everything.

And it's optional.

Women should not complain because it's just business.

YES.

THEY MAKE WOMEN FEEL UNCONFIDENT

BY BETTY ALEMAYEHU // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Imagine you are heavy and it is summertime. You are going to the beach and on your way you see an advertisement that asks: "Are you beach-body ready?"

How would you feel? Would you turn around and go back home?

Ads like these make women feel unconfident and not proud of themselves and should be banned from public places.

Some may be made to feel that they need to look like the woman in the ad to go to the beach.

Advertisers care about people's attention so they also should care what consequences they are causing in public life.

Women should be able to use trains and buses without feeling ashamed of their bodies.

Young women can be brainwashed by sexist ads.

If they stop focusing on their talents and instead obsess about their body shapes, boys will take over education and women will not be equal to men.

NO.

COMPANIES WILL LOSE PROFITS

BY ABEBECH BEKELE // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

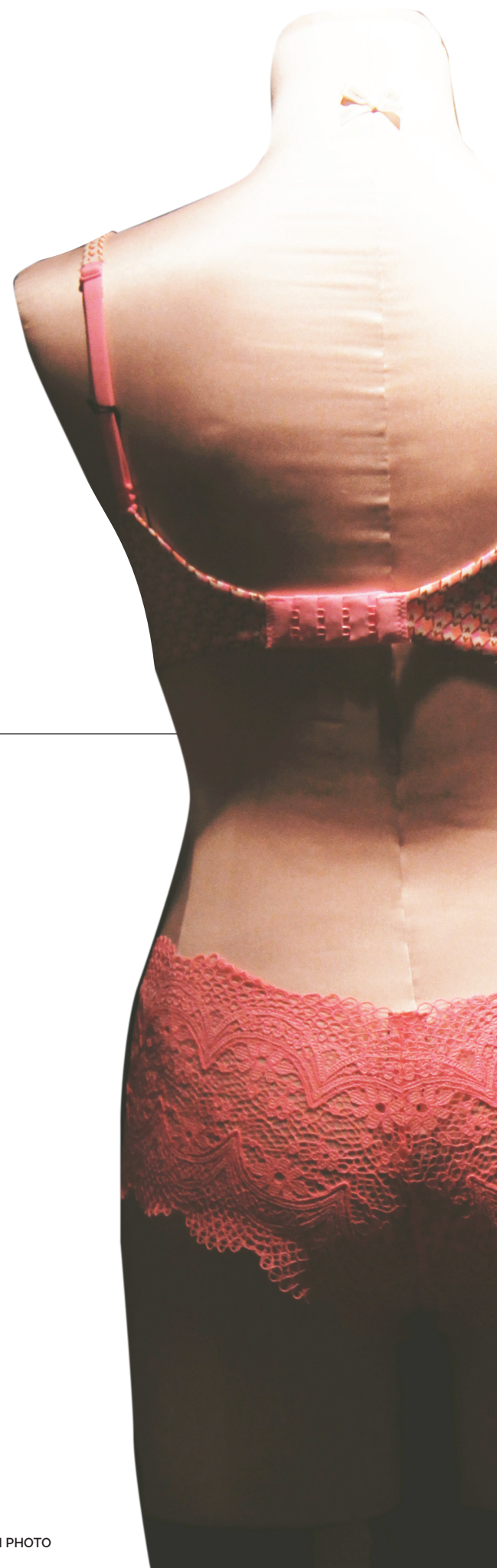
Sexist ads shouldn't be banned because they are making a lot of profits for distinct companies.

If they are prohibited, businesses will lose their profits, people won't get what they want to buy or do, and perhaps they will not know whether the enterprise is selling new merchandise.

If a company is trying to push weight-loss products, of course it will have a thin model in its ads. I don't think they are saying that everyone has to look like her. Nobody is forcing women to change themselves from who they are.

The firms are just trying to advertise useful things.

These ads should be allowed because they are aiding both companies and everyday people.



AFH PHOTO

PARENTAL DISCIPLINE A CULTURAL GUIDE

BY CLINTON NGUYEN //
STAFF WRITER

Coming from an Asian background, seventeen-year-old Wanjing Li says her parents have a yin-and-yang brand of discipline.

"Annoy me, followed by some words of encouragement to ensure I do better," says Li, from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science.

When it comes to parenting strategies, the melting pot of ethnic backgrounds factors in heavily.

Some publically humiliate their children while others pat them on the back.

Being deeply in touch with her East African roots, Nardos Gosaye, 16, says her family tries to honor its heritage.

"The parenting tactics I feel are best are the ways my mother did," says Gosaye, who attends the O'Bryant. "I'm old fashioned and there's no problem with that."

Growing up in a Hispanic household, 15-year-old Darlene Franco says her parents are in touch with their kids' cravings.

"They would send me to my room," says Franco, from the O'Bryant, "and take away my phone for two whole hours."

AFH PHOTO // KIM HAN

FOR THESE TEENS, IT'S ALWAYS OPPOSITE DAY

BY YVONNE A. DUNKLEY // STAFF WRITER

Sixteen-year-old Pascale Desir, from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, prefers, um, broccoli over ice cream.

"I just think it's similar in taste to milk," Desir says of the cold confection favored by most young people, "and I hate milk."

It's normal for teens to be different from each other because they all have their own stories that they live in.

Many teens, for example, look for the simplest routine possible.

However, for 15-year-old Jamaleek Bush, from the O'Bryant, shower time can get complicated.

Bush says it does not feel right to touch clothing that may get wet from the steam -- but she also doesn't like to undress in her own room -- so she ends up walking her stuff back and forth between the bathroom and bedroom.

Meanwhile, while many teens find subtitles annoying and distracting, Judsine Blaisdell, 16, believes they are an added attraction.

"I like reading and watching because I get to hear what the characters say," says Blaisdell, from the O'Bryant, "and if I don't catch something, the subtitles will."

BOY VS. GIRL FRIENDSHIPS

BY ABILENE WILLIAMS // CONTRIBUTING
WRITER

Are boy friendships as strong as girl friendships?

Friendships are made of such things as trust, honesty, loyalty, and connection.

On websites, many female posters believe that while male friendships can have less drama, girl friendships stand the test of time because there is more of an emotional connection.

Girls can argue and hold grudges forever; guys tend to fight and then move on.

One reason that girl friendships are thought of as more resilient than those between boys is that society creates the image that guys are supposed to keep it cool, laid back, and nonchalant.

Girls, meanwhile, are characterized as over-animated -- constantly involved in petty tiffs.

But consider the notion that boy friendships are actually more solid because men know when to be the bigger person.

They can put aside their pride to perhaps mend a broken friendship.

MY SWEET 16

BY JENNIFER POLANCO // CONTRIBUTING WRITER



I always dreamed about my Sweet 16 but I never told anyone. A time later, I heard a sound in my pocket. Somebody is calling me? Hoo...yes. It was my Aunt Grecia. She told me that my mother had decided to celebrate my Sweet 16 and Aunt Grecia would help.

At the beginning, it was a little bit difficult because we only had eight months in the US after coming from the Dominican Republic. It was hard for us to find a dress.

"Your mom didn't give me much money so we need to look for a good price," Aunt Grecia told me.

"It's OK," I told her. "I know that we don't have much money."

Some hours later we found a beautiful pink dress with good value.

Two days later, I got up very excited to start practicing dance with my cousins. But we were disagreeing with the type of music and the steps. They were arguing and this made me feel mad.

"Do you think that this is helping me?" I asked.

I told my mom what happened.

"You will not have a dance," she said.

I was sad and crying in my room.

Then my grandmother talked with my mom.

"You can keep going with your dance," my grandmother said.

"Really?" I said. "Thanks, grandma!"

Finally, my Sweet 16 arrived, in December. We gathered in a hall in Hyde Park.

We danced merengue and bachata and pasada. I enjoyed this moment.

I only wish that my dad was able to come. But he was back in DR, for family reasons.

If he'd been there, we would have swayed to a slow waltz, him in a black suit and pink tie to match my dress.

AFH PHOTO // KIARA MAHER

SOCCER SUCCESS

BY JOYLTON TAVARES // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I could almost smell the grass in the air. It was two years ago, my first time going to play on a school soccer team.

The day before, we were told there would be a tryout. We had to run laps and do drills, like dribbling the ball around cones. We also had a small match.

I was feeling confident.

I was so excited for the bell to ring and hoped more than anything that my name would be on the official list of players being posted.

I wanted to be the last one to see the paper because I was nervous.

Did I make it? What if my brother goes to the team and I don't?

Finally, when I saw the list, I got scared because I saw my brother's name and didn't see mine. But my name

was at the end of the roster.

Yes!

"So, you guys got in," the coach told us. "Congratulations!"

At our second game, I scored three goals. I was so proud of myself. A few months passed. In the last game of the season, we were against a team that was really good. If we won, we would get a trophy.

Even though I was tired, I kept remembering what the coach said: "Don't give up on the ball."

I could feel my heart beating faster and faster. Our teamwork paid off because we won the game and got the trophy.

Looking back, the thing I learned was that when you want something, you always need to persevere.

This will help you overcome your challenges.



AFH PHOTO // KIM HAN

THE DAY MY COUSIN DIED

BY MILENA ANDRADE // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

"Is he dead?" I asked my dad. "Is that true? Are you telling me that I am never going to see him again?"

"Yes," my dad said.

"No, no, stop lying," I cried.

This was six months ago.

My cousin was riding his motorcycle in downtown Boston and a car hit him from the back.

He was only 29.

We were close. He was like an older brother to me.

At his mother's house, we were all crying.

I did not want to seem rude, like I didn't care, but his mother told us: "No more crying, please."

She said he was in a better place.

I learned that day to be careful; I learned that life matters.



AFH PHOTO // JANNA MACH

THE ATTACK

BY YORSALEM BRHANE // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

All of sudden, we were in trouble. "Run, everyone," one of my sisters yelled. I'd been with my two sisters walking home from school that day in Sudan, back in 2011. Outside, it was so hot. All of a sudden, five older boys were sprinting towards us. We could sense what would happen next.

So we started going in different directions. My sisters went off to a friend's house. I headed home. I ran as fast as I could, but I struggled. I felt the wind hit my face. "I must stay strong," I repeated to myself. I was so scared. One of the boys caught me. He wouldn't let

go. I looked at the boy and there he was, his hands holding my waist. Tears ran down my face. I screamed, but nothing changed. So I hit him in the stomach with my purse. I broke free. The world showed me one thing that day: As humans, we have to stay tough.

I WAS AFRAID THE PLANE WOULD FALL

BY MOHAMMED SATTAR // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Hot. Stuffy, silent room. No, this can't be happening! Were we receiving a call from immigration? Are we leaving? Or are we being held back? The room fell solemn. America! Then all I could hear was the sound of cheering. We spent the rest of the time getting our bags together and saying goodbyes. "I want you to be successful and have a great life and get educated," my grandmother told me as she took my hand. At the airport, it was the first time I had seen an airplane. It was huge. I looked at my mom. She was really happy and praying. We boarded the plane and I couldn't sleep. I was afraid the plane would fall. The moment that I first stepped in the US, it felt like a really different place. There was an amazing, fresh smell like nothing I had encountered in Jordan. There were bright colors and mostly calm surroundings. Whoever said that America is the land of freedom, I immediately agreed.

THE GROUND STARTED SHAKING

BY SHERLANDY PARDIEU // CONTRIBUTING WRITER

"Oh my God," I thought. "Is this really happening?" The ground had started shaking. The earthquake catastrophe of January 12, 2010, was upon us. "Sherlandy, come over here!" my older sister screamed. People were yelling and scrambling for cover. I was in tears. My family ended up being safe. But when I went outside on the street, I saw blood and dead bodies and people stuck under the concrete of houses. "What can I do to help them out?" I said to myself. "Where will these people live?" I found my sister sitting by herself in the

middle of the yard. I went toward her and sat. "Hey sis. Are you okay?" I asked. "Yeah. I'm fine," she answered. "Get on your knees and let's pray." She said: "It is always the right thing to do when you are in danger. Ask God for help." The night went by so slowly, leaving you afraid to just close your eyes. Everyone would sleep outside. The houses were no longer solid; one little touch could knock them down. We all lay in the yard. As I looked up at the dark, gray sky, I felt the cold air blowing in my face. It smelled as if there might not be another tomorrow.

THE DAY I WENT TO PRISON

BY FATIMA DOUMBIA // STAFF WRITER

When I thought murderer, I thought monster. No human with a heart could ever take the life of another. I never considered the family that they may or may not have had. I never reflected on whether their first monster may have been circumstance.

Then, on a Friday in early January, I visited MCI-Norfolk prison.

When I first walked in, the smell of metal lingered in the air. The lobby reeked of sin and regret, and felt like years had passed in merely a minute. When, finally, we were allowed to go through security, it was, for lack of better words, an experience that strips you. The rules are simple: no earrings, bracelets, jewelry of any kind, hair accessories, or visible piercings.

In short: LEAVE YOUR IDENTITY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR!

I was there with my civics and community engagement class to learn more about the realities of incarceration.

We walked through cold air and empty promises on our way to the lock-up. In the courtyard, prisoners were playing basketball, lifting weights, even praying -- for freedom, I suppose. I saw shadows of men; ghosts of life passed on -- almost certain never to return.

I met five men, all in for murder or manslaughter. They told no tales of mental illness, nor of ever having previously killed. What they all had in common was one moment that ruined the rest of their lives -- and those of many others.

They all passionately spoke of their first monsters, the moment that guaranteed these particular men a life behind bars: birth into poverty, into a world where, for them, nobody would ever see past that.

They told stories of stabbings and shootings and drugs and greed; and also of love and heartbreak and life and reality.

Prison saved their lives, they said, because none of them would have left that truth if they hadn't gotten arrested.

One man had a son. From afar, he didn't seem cold or at a loss of heart; he was a father. His son was born when he was sentenced, a stretch that included his boy's inevitable resentment of him.

What I learned that day is that these criminals are only products of where they came from, and, in many cases, victims of circumstance.

In essence, we all are. The problem arose when these men let their victimization define and control their outcomes.

They are only human, whether or not we choose to see them as such -- and I understand how the survivors of their killing acts probably won't.

The thing that separates us is that they've manifested their anger at the hands they were dealt through taking the life of another. One different episode or detail or crisis could have left us trading places.

They are not the monsters under the bed at night, these five men I talked to. They are just like you and me.



AFH PHOTO //PING Z

AWKWARD MOMENTS

BY YVONNE A. DUNKLEY // STAFF WRITER

It's so awkward when you and someone you know make eye contact and you are forced to say hello to them -- and they don't respond.

Like, thanks for the opportunity for me to say hi to myself.

It's also uncomfortable when you are literally five seconds away from a door that someone is walking through -- and they don't hold it for you.

Apparently, me and the door have this really awesome relationship where it wants to see my face up-close every day.

And how does it feel when you are at the MBTA station and the bus jerks forward so you move with it, too, and may even bump into people along the way?

You can't hold still, so you mutter, "Sorry, my bad," and then search for shelter in the nearest cocoon.

MY PHONE HATES ME

BY ROSA SANCHEZ // STAFF WRITER

I love my phone. But it doesn't love me back. In fact, I think it hates me.

I try to text and it'll just turn off. After I get it back on, it doesn't really work properly. By properly, I mean at all: It won't let me use any of my apps, nor text, nor call.

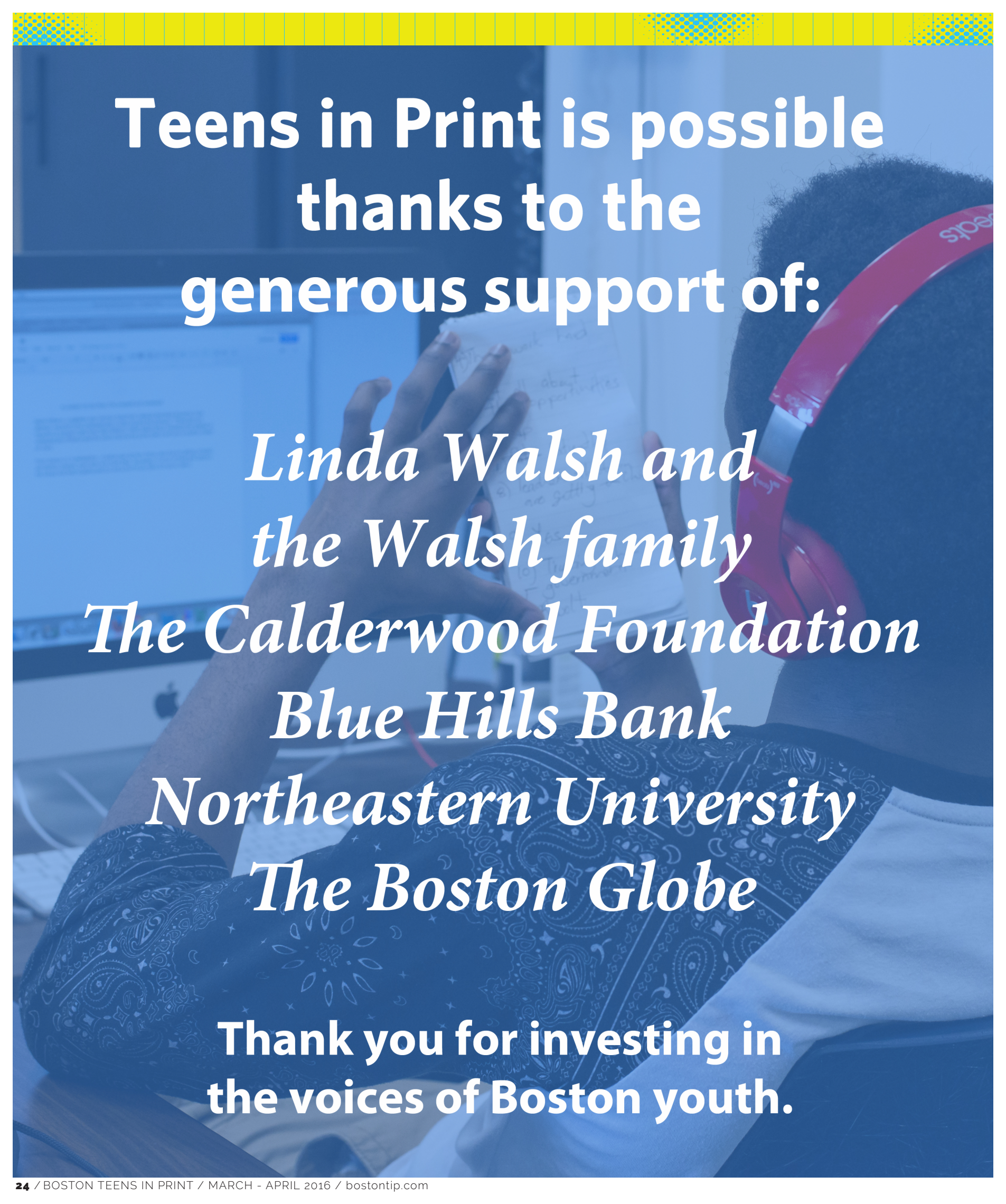
It's as if my phone has become a teenager going through puberty. It'll just disobey me in every way.

For example, when I try to search something on the Internet, it'll say no Internet available. Then, the moment I give up trying, it seems to have found the right connection. Only to get lost again.

Or, it will call someone without my permission. Sometimes I'm able to listen to the other person speaking but they can't hear me.

It's always a dilemma to decide when to use my phone. If it's in a good mood, it'll let me watch my anime, do my homework, and even text. Other times, without warning, my phone will decide to shut down and take a nap.

But even so, unconditionally I love my phone, this old LG with the cracked screen. Without it, I would be much lonelier.

A person is shown from the chest up, wearing large red headphones. They are holding a piece of paper with handwritten notes in their right hand. The background is a blurred office or classroom setting. The entire image has a blue overlay.

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