

TEENS **in** PRINT **BOSTON**

BOSTON TEENS IN PRINT SEPT/OCT 2016™



EXTRA!!! EXTRA!!! TEEN TOPS TICKET!!

A PRESIDENTIAL PLATFORM, BY AND FOR YOUTH

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TEENS in PRINT

SEPT-OCT 2016

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AFH artwork (clockwise from top) by AFH, Angela Awuah, Mary Nguyen, and Jacori Mikel
Cover artwork by Andrew Chauppetta

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ART/PHOTOGRAPHY

ARTISTS FOR HUMANITY

STAFF WRITERS

SAREDO ALI
KATHERINE BERNARDEZ
JOSH BRIMAGE
SADE BROOKS
RACHELLE BROWN-MITCHELL
ISABELLA CISNEROS
FILOMENA DASILVA
VLADIMIR DESROCHES
JOAN DOTRUONG
YVONNE A. DUNKLEY
CHRIS ENGLISH
KIMANI GRANDY
JOHANY HERASME
ROSE KOUMBASSA
SELENA LINDOR
VICTORIA LIVINGSTON
SOFIA MEADOWS-MURIEL
SERENITY MENDEZ
CLINTON NGUYEN
ANTHONY OKOYE
ANN MARIE PERI
ANNA PHAM
ROSA SANCHEZ
XAVIA SIMPSON
AYANAH STONE
JUSTICE TELAMIR
KELLY THAI
ANTIAH THORNTON
LEGACY THORNTON
LAURENT TOSSOUKPE
WOKIE TULOE
JENNIE VILSON
SARSKIYYA WALLACE

LAYOUT & DESIGN

JENNIFER PRANDATO

WRITEBOSTON

SARAH POULTER, DIRECTOR
RIC KAHN, TIP COORDINATOR
PERLA LARA, TIP ASSISTANT

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EXTRA!!! EXTRA!!! TEEN TOPS TICKET!!

A PRESIDENTIAL PLATFORM, BY AND FOR YOUTH

BY SADE BROOKS // STAFF WRITER

Say you were elected the first teenage president of the United States. What would be your top priority?

Sixteen-year-old Rayven Heath, from Dorchester, believes first and foremost that the brazen misuse of guns poses a colossal threat to America itself.

"As soon as I step into office," says Heath, "I'd institute a standardized state test where the person has to follow a specific protocol -- otherwise they face unfavorable consequences."

Heath wants intense, ongoing scrutiny of the potential gun owner, including questions about why the person needs the weapon, and training for that individual about when and when not to shoot.

Penalties ranging from gun-license revocation to prison would be levied on those -- both civilians and law enforcement -- who betray their stated intentions of firearms use, says

Heath.

Of course, as far as any teen actually topping the ticket, Article II, Section 1, of the US Constitution clearly states:

"No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President; neither shall any Person be eligible to that Office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty five Years, and been fourteen Years a Resident within the United States."

Putting constitutional constraints aside -- as some of the major party candidates have seemingly already done in their quests for the White House -- teens say that by raising serious concerns about the future of the country, many youth have displayed more maturity than at least several of the clownish, adult contenders.

For 19-year-old Abbie Williams, of Mattapan, job one would be to repair the shredded state of race relations

in America by putting those who feel left out and left behind on more equal footing with those who hold a superior power standing in society.

"Adults and children should see role models who have a high status, who have influential positions, and more importantly, these people should look like them," says Williams.

Part of that could be accomplished, teens say, through heavy educational investment.

Sixteen-year-old Maya Alaoeasheg, from the South End, feels that building high-quality schools would help level the field for kids from different backgrounds and give them the same opportunities to advance.

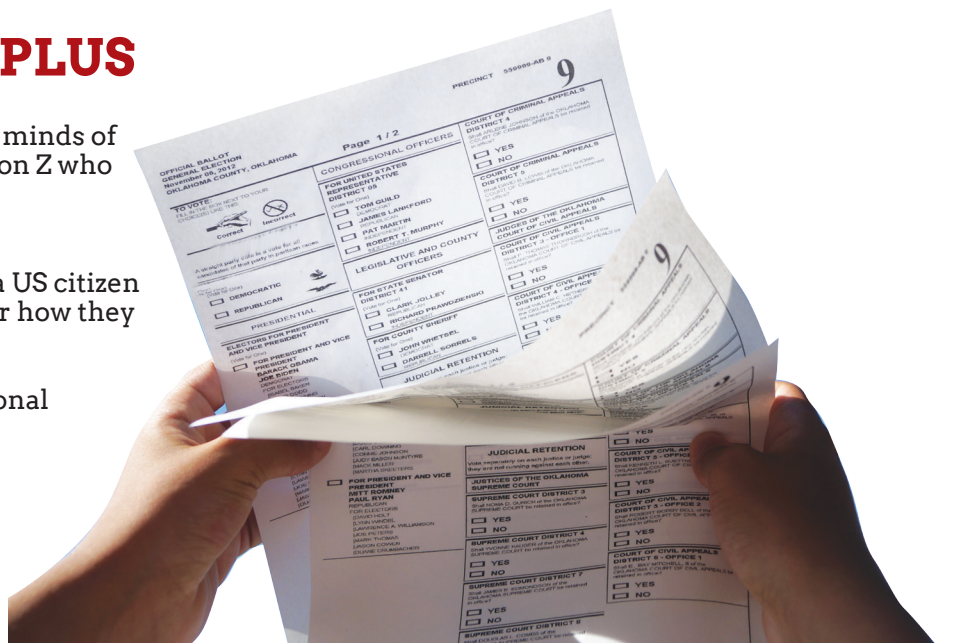
"America has numerous disadvantage gaps between the rich and the poor," she says. "In my opinion, the education gap is most detrimental. It's expanding and it does concern me. I would build the best high schools all over the country and have the best certified teachers enlightening future generations."

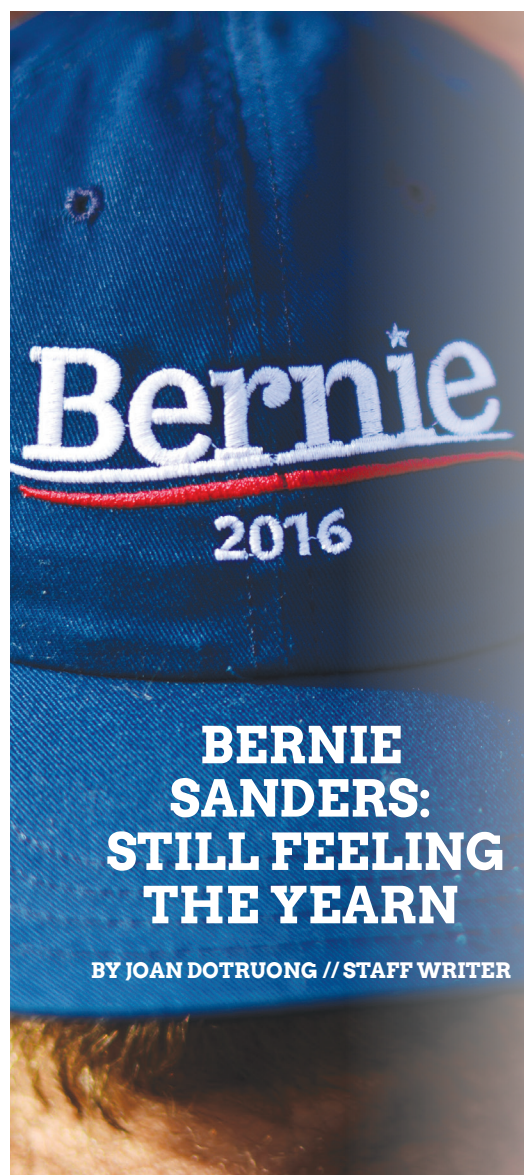
TEEN-PLATFORM PLUS

Here are other major issues on the minds of American teen members of Generation Z who were polled in 2014:

- Equality for all;
- Universal, free healthcare;
- The right of everyone to become a US citizen regardless of where they were born or how they came to the country;
- More college affordability;
- Being better educated about personal finances;
- Commanding their own futures.

Source: Northeastern University





BERNIE SANDERS: STILL FEELING THE YEARN

BY JOAN DOTRUONG // STAFF WRITER

In the run-up to the presidential election, we face a multitude of issues that are still being put aside and ignored. Budget cuts, wars, immigration, mass shootings, protests, LGBTQ rights, Black Lives Matter, and police brutality to name just some.

When my father came to the US after the Vietnam War, he pictured a world where my family could finally take advantage of the freedom that America promised, and live in peace. Yet to this day, my future is facing many risks to my well-being. It is facing the slurs of discrimination, not for who I am but for what I am -- a young, yellow, Asian female.

But will my future end up the same as it seems now?

If Donald Trump is elected, will I be deported because of my skin? Will I have to carry around a gun and fear for my safety? What about Hillary Clinton? Will our future be chaotic because she can't make up her damn mind? Will we be in another war because she wants to please the public?

It's sad to know that all these years after the civil rights movement began, our country is rapidly changing technologically -- but not socially. Our generation has the advantage of spreading our opinions on social media platforms, yet we use them to slam each other for how we look rather than educating one another.

It's sad to see that there are still people who judge and bully others for their appearance and for what they have down there.

It's sad to see that families are being torn apart because they're "illegal," when all they're trying to do is provide a better life for their children.

It's sad to know that in this year's presidential election, we are stumped by the potential of having either a racist president or a very confusing one.

But what is even more sad to know is that both Clinton and Trump never had to walk in our shoes. They've lived a privileged life, understanding that no matter what happens, they are safe from it.

If only I could vote, it would be for someone who can relate to the situations that we must deal with. Someone who is willing to solve our society's problems rather than putting up a wall to block them. Someone who is willing to tell the truth rather than utter political falsehoods.

That someone is Bernie Sanders, who, alas, is no longer a candidate.

Bernie grew up in a lower-middle-class family, in Brooklyn, that lived paycheck-to-paycheck. He's been a civil rights activist. He understands the problems of the many Americans still drowning in debt, from low-wage workers to college students.

Which is why I still yearn for the Bern.

AFH PHOTO // MARY NGUYEN

HILLARY'S WHAT? NOT THE FIRST FEMALE TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT

BY XAVIA SIMPSON // STAFF WRITER

The news media want everybody to think that Hillary Clinton is the first woman to ever run for president of the United States of America.

Except she isn't.

She was preceded by a host of others, according to womenshistory.about.com, including Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman elected to Congress, who unsuccessfully sought the presidency in 1972.

Eighteen-year-old Kamii Parker, from West Roxbury Academy, says she never learned about Chisholm in any history class and believes it is because society is controlled by men.

"Why would they tell us about women that used to dominate?" she says.

Especially a black woman.

They want teens to believe that US history is based only on white people, says Raquel Quinonez, 17, from Margarita Muñiz Academy.

"The government has a very messed-up system," she says.

Eighteen-year-old Roberto Braxton, who goes to school in Jamaica Plain, says he, too, has never heard of Shirley Chisholm, who last year was posthumously awarded the prestigious Presidential Medal of Freedom.

IN RACE FOR PRESIDENT, TEENS SAY, PERCEPTION ISN'T REALITY

BY CLINTON NGUYEN // STAFF WRITER

In the presidential race, says Rayven Frierson, a junior at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, forget the face.

"I don't care if a political candidate looks like Channing Tatum or Jessica Alba," says Frierson. "As long as they have the intent to benefit our country with the people in mind, I have no consideration towards their appearance."

Yet as far back as 2008, one study shows, appearance can count in political contests.

"Campaign managers seem to be ahead of the game in understanding that image really matters," one of the researchers, Joan Chiao, assistant professor of psychology at Northwestern University, was quoted as saying. "They know that, contrary to popular notions, people are not necessarily using deliberate and rational strategies in deciding who to vote for, especially when it comes to women."

Not so for Al Fox, a junior at the O'Bryant, who believes that competence is the key.

"That's like asking 'Would you want a trained professional who is mediocre-looking in comparison to a model?' to work on your teeth," Fox says.

Even as some teens do consider a candidate's exterior, many say that it's what's inside that's most important.

"Sure, looks matter to an extent," says McCain Boonma, a junior at the O'Bryant, "but it is the true intents that will carry the...nation's burdens."



AFH PHOTO // AIJANAH SANFORD

#BLACKLIVESMATTER VS. #ALLLIVESMATTER

BY XAVIA SIMPSON // STAFF WRITER

In the wake of police killings of unarmed black people, and retaliation against cops, the battle has been raging on social media:

#blacklivesmatter vs. #alllivesmatter.

#BLM supporters say that their movement is meant to convey the fact that blacks are facing intense mistreatment and mayhem from mainstream society -- not that people shouldn't care about everybody.

But #ALM backers say the message they are hearing is that *only* black lives matter.

"Obviously all lives matter, but not all lives are getting racially profiled and harassed by police officers," says Kamilla Mercado, 17, from Margarita Muñiz Academy.

Eighteen-year-old Aureli Reyes, who attends Margarita Muñiz, feels that #alllivesmatter was created by privileged white people.

"Everyone knows that all lives matter, but the problem here isn't with all lives, it's just black lives" says Reyes. "Nothing has happened to anyone else except for black lives."

Carlos Espinal, 18, who goes to school in Jamaica Plain, says people should be educated that #BLM began as a backlash against hatred directed at blacks, but he understands the origins of #ALM.

"Everyone wants to be heard," says Espinal, "no matter their skin color."



AFH ARTWORK // AIJANAH SANFORD

BY SARSKIYYA WALLACE // STAFF WRITER

Oil spills may seem like a faraway issue but teens know how the issue can hit home.

When oil contaminates the seas, and the marine life, it can also foul their food.

"I feel like they need to change the way they distribute the oil on the ships or find a way so that they don't spill it into the ocean," says Cynthia Rodriguez, 18, from Margarita Muñiz Academy.

About 20,000 oil spills are reported to the federal government each year, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

"I believe that they should...find other ways to store the oil," says Basia Brown, 17, from Margarita Muñiz.

Seventeen-year-old Jose Pinales, from Margarita Muñiz, says that wild animals living near the polluted water are also harmed by the spurted oil, so companies need to come up with better ways to transport and contain their product.

TEENS: NO HONOR IN "HONOR KILLINGS"

BY SOFIA MEADOWS-MURIEL // STAFF WRITER

Muslim teen Edil Mohamed says she was outraged to learn this summer about the fatal strangling of Pakistani social media star Qandeel Baloch at the hands of her brother, who was taunted by friends about her provocative poses and postings, according to news reports.

"We have been fighting for women's rights for more than 100 years," says Mohamed, a junior at Boston Latin School. "It's crazy that in 2016, women still don't have equal rights."

Over 500 people die in largely Muslim Pakistan annually in these so-called "honor-killings," according to aljazeera.com, and are mostly perpetrated by relatives who are embarrassed by behavior they consider shameful.

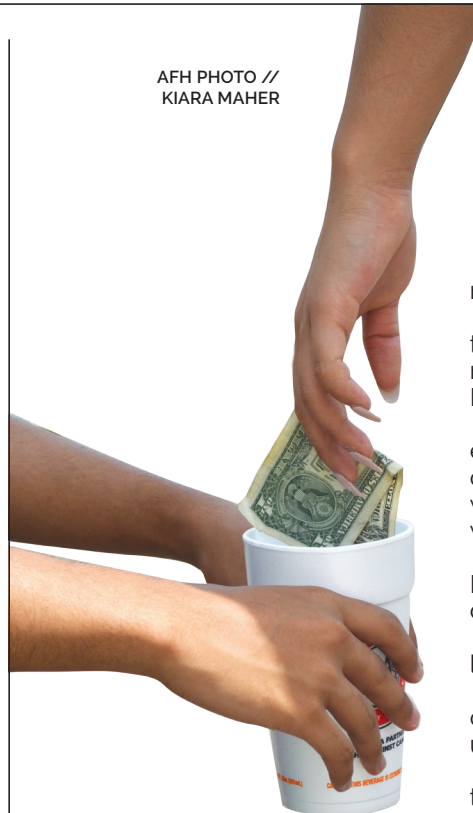
Activists denounce these acts as pure murder.

"They feel they could be happy because they regain their honor," says Djibril Conte, 15, from Mattapan. "At the same time, that's not OK."

Indeed, Baloch's brother told reporters after his arrest that he had no regrets about the slaying.

"I think that's really sad," says Feven Yohannes, a junior at Boston Latin School, "Her life was wrongfully taken from her."

AFH PHOTO // KIARA MAHER



HEY, BRUH, CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?

BY SARSKIYYA WALLACE // STAFF WRITER

Adriana Salas, 17, says she gives homeless people money all the time because they need it.

"I don't know how people can walk by someone that is unfortunate knowing they're down but they're not willing to help," says Salas, who attends Margarita Muñiz Academy.

As they go to and from school, many teens don't even notice the homeless men and women they cross paths with -- unless they're in the way. Others will dip into their pockets, but only if the cash goes where they want.

Seventeen-year-old Josiah Wade, from Margarita Muñiz, says he gives homeless people money depending on how he feels.

But he believes they should spend it on food, not liquor or drugs.

Marcelina Velez, 17, says she often gives what she can to homeless people and doesn't care what they use it on -- as long as they are happy.

"I can't walk by a homeless person without giving them money," says Velez, from Margarita Muñiz. "I feel like that's wrong. I feel really bad. I just like to help them out."

SUMMER SCHOOLED

BY JUSTICE TELAMIR // STAFF WRITER

Sixteen-year-old Randy Mejia set his goals for the summer: work on his basketball and acting skills.

"So I can make it on the varsity team and also try to...join the drama club," says Mejia, from Mattapan.

Although the bell doesn't officially ring in the school year until later, many teens know they had to get a head start during summertime.

Kimahri Testamark, 14, made plans to watch the presidential back-and-forths and take note.

"So I can join the debate club," says Testamark, who lives in Brighton.

Fifteen-year-old Kenny Adelu said he wanted to mix athletics and academics.

"I'm going to run every day so I can increase my distance...and join the track team," says Adelu, from Mattapan, "and also read four chapter books."

AFH PHOTO // JANNA MACH



WHAT'S UP THIS YEAR?

BY YVONNE A. DUNKLEY // STAFF WRITER

Not all goals for the school year revolve around just classwork.

For example, 17-year-old Simpson Lugay, of Dorchester, wants to get his driver's license. He says his experiences riding public transit haven't been so good.

"The kind of people that are on the bus late at night are creepy and I don't want to be around them," he says.

Meanwhile, 13-year-old Claudia Miranda, of Dorchester, hopes to win an achievement award at her afterschool program.

AFH ARTWORK // GABRIELA CARTAGENA



ARTS CLASH

BY ANTHONY OKOYE // STAFF WRITER

For 16-year-old Ambria Coakley, from Boston Latin Academy, dancing has always been a significant element of her life.

"I get to express myself without having to speak," says Coakley. "It's like my second language."

Like other teens, Coakley laments that while the role of academic success is given great urgency in school, there are fewer avenues for young people to display their artistic skills there.

"It's extremely limited, and is sad," Coakley says.

Mykala Robateau-Goods, 16, from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, says her school has some opportunities available, yet many seek to go outside the building to exhibit their talents.

"They are able to show off their work," she says.

Jacarrea Garraway, 18, from Dorchester, was involved in playwriting at Boston Latin Academy before she graduated.

She says public school kids aren't given enough boosting of their artistic prowess in school, and often have to explore their own undertakings.

"There wasn't exactly a big push on having student-written plays performed," says Garraway, adding that she is scheduled to attend college in New York to study film and television.

YOUR AVERAGE JOE AND JOELLE

BY LAURENT TOSSOUKPE // STAFF WRITER

The sixth period bell rings as students file into the study room at Boston Latin Academy.

Characteristically, Devon Harris walks in, headphones blasting. He begins thinking about what homework assignments he has to complete. His goal, he says, is to simply finish them off.

"I'm thinking, 'I've just got to pass and then I'll be good for the year,'" says Harris, 16.

At times during their academic lives, teens say they have to get by, in a way, by getting by.

"One-hundred percent? Not every day," says Joshua Lewis, 16, from BLA.

Sixteen-year-old Sherrice Marfo, from Hyde Park, says she is putting in the effort.

But she knows she has to do more, and lessen her distractions, to reach her goal of becoming a dermatologist.

"I have to better my GPA in order to get where I want to be," she says.

DRESS-CODE DISCRIMINATION

BY ANN MARIE PERI // STAFF WRITER

Eighteen-year-old Daniqua Douglas, from Dorchester Academy, knows that one sure sign school is in full swing across the country is the rampant dress-code discrimination in the hallways.

"It's unjust," says Douglas. "If a girl can walk around a school full of half-naked boys, then boys should definitely be able to control themselves if girls show a little bit, too."

Teens say males can walk around with baggy, saggy jeans.

Yet, in some schools, girls aren't allowed to wear leggings because it reveals too much shape. Some can't come to school in spaghetti-strapped tank tops. Or shorts that don't go down to their extended fingertips.

Mirenely Mejia, 16, from Roxbury, says she understands where some of the school officials are coming from.

"Sometimes the more we show," says Mejia "the more the boys are tempted."

But, teens say, sometimes the restrictions can be taken too far and the rationale too flimsy -- that boys will be distracted.

For instance, at one Kentucky high school, according to news accounts, a female student was reprimanded for wearing an outfit that exposed her -- gasp! -- collarbone.

But, some say, male self-control -- not female style -- should be the issue.

"We shouldn't be dressing a certain way," says Viena Arias, 17, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, "so that boys can know how to act."

ANSWERING THE BELL THE LONG-AWAITED RETURN TO SCHOOL

BY KELLY THAI // STAFF WRITER

Cindy Nguyen, a junior at Boston Latin Academy, is anxious to be in the midst of class friends again -- but not to feeling the get-out-of-bed doldrums.

"It seems like sometimes the summer vacation makes the beginning of the school year worse because you are still in the mindset of vacation and you're still lazy to do anything," she says.

The beginning of a new school year is similar to the arrival of a new calendar year -- a mix of dread and delight.

"I look forward to starting a new year," says Rachel Gies, a junior at Boston Latin School. "The workload is always very small. You usually just fill out forms and go over the syllabi from all your teachers."

Arianna Robbins, 15, from Jamaica Plain, explains the settling-in of the school year from both vantage points.

"I mainly look forward to learning something new," says Robbins, "however [not] the large homework load."

A HIGH SCHOOL SURVIVAL GUIDE

BY JUSTICE TELAMIR // STAFF WRITER

High school can be one of the most challenging times for teens. And it's not like they give you a survival guide in your agenda book.

So, teens are pretty much on their own.

Sixteen-year-old Randy Mejia, from Mattapan, says it's important to find a group that will have your back.

"Friends that will not switch up," says Mejia.

Kimahri Testamark, 14, from Brighton, says teens should stay focused and not be distracted by nonsense.

"You have to take notes in class and not involve yourself in drama," says Testamark.

For Marvin Simon, 14, it's prime to be involved and not procrastinate.

"Get all the credit you need to pass every class," says Simon, who goes to school in East Boston. "If you're confused, ask your teachers for help."

THE STUDENT-ATHLETE STRUGGLE

BY ANTHONY OKOYE // STAFF WRITER

As most students head home after the end of a long school day, student-athletes head to their respective arenas to start their day of practice.

For James Kamara, 16, playing basketball and being a full-time student are two roles he tries to juggle. Having to be at practice every day for hours after class already wears him out, he says, only to come home and face a pile of more classwork.

"It's hard," says Kamara, who attends Boston Latin Academy. "All I want to do is relax."

Such is the strenuous life of the student-athlete, which is not all fun-and-games.

Sixteen-year-old Chibuzo Udokporo, who plays football at BLA, believes he's come up with a plan to stabilize sleep, sports, and schoolwork.

"I balance them by making a schedule so I can have all parts of my day planned out," he says. "This allows me to be more organized and less stressed."

Eain Coakley, 18, is a former BLA football player now at Morehouse College who says he learned an important lesson in high school about how to achieve this harmony.

"I always appreciated the game of football, but I also understood that there was an aspect of school that I need to take into consideration," says Coakley, from Roslindale. "In order for me to be successful in life, I needed to be both good at football but also a great student-athlete."

READING FOR PLEASURE, OR PAIN?

BY ANTIAH THORNTON // STAFF WRITER

Joanne Leu, 16, a sophomore at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, enjoyed reading for pleasure a lot when she was younger. Her parents used to take her to the library often.

"But now I stopped," she says. "I'm too busy with school reading."

When teachers assign heavy readings, they can help educate students and create a community within a classroom.

But the strategy can also backfire, as teens find little time to experience the unpressured joy of getting lost in the pages of their own choosings.

When it's standard texts, teens say, the passages can get tedious.

"I do not like the books assigned for school," says Ava Quinlan, 15, from the O'Bryant. "They don't interest or engage students."

Nardos Gosaye, 16, a junior at the O'Bryant, enjoys reading fantasy graphic novels and fiction.

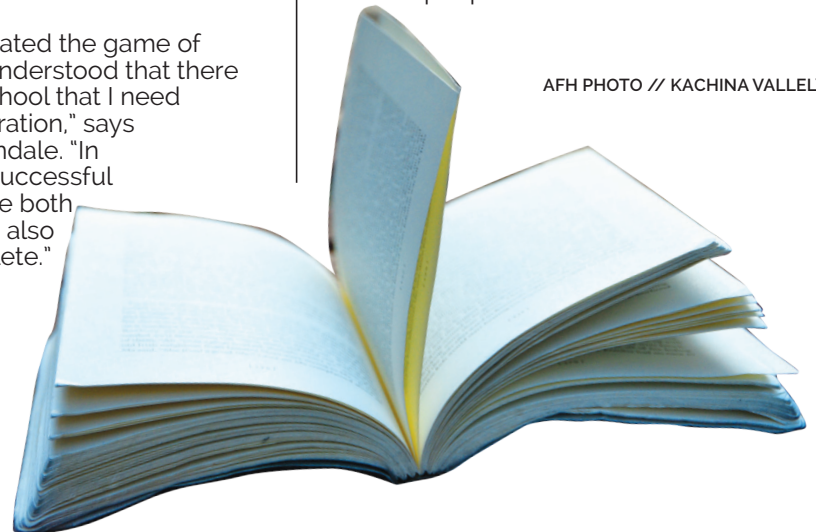
The non-stop, non-fiction?

Not so much.

"It's a waste of my time," she says.

"Instead of reading a graphic novel, I'm stuck reading a boring book about politics and real people stuff."

AFH PHOTO // KACHINA VALLELY



OH, SWEET AFRICA

BY SAREDO ALI // STAFF WRITER

Africa, Africa, Africa. Oh, sweet Africa. A continent with more than 50 countries -- and many more misconceptions.

Often, the perception of a land with so many different cultures, languages, and religions can be imbecilic. Many people envision a homogenous place, at times thinking Africa is just a country.

This viewpoint can have detrimental effects.

Africa is rich in resources and accomplishments, yet the media tends to convey a sense of perpetual poverty and pity. There are those nonstop TV ads, for example, showing African kids drinking dirty water and asking people to donate.

A lack of education sustains this one-sided narrative. Many schools in the US lack intelligent African studies courses, so misinformation is rampant. Schools need to teach students about Africa when they are younger so people will have a bigger understanding of the world, and this trend of sad stereotyping can be reversed.

Perhaps, then, much of the negativity surrounding Africa will be replaced by a fuller understanding of a proud and unique continent.

CRIME SEEN PUNISHMENT OR REHABILITATION?

BY SAREDO ALI // STAFF WRITER

Prison is a scary reality that many people brush aside as not their problem. But it is very much everybody's concern.

The current criminal justice system is awful and outdated. Prison is not a place to go, make amends for mistakes, and come out a better person. Rather, it is a spot to rot and have your mind -- and often your body -- broken down.

When people are sent to prison, they are not dispatched with the intent of making them change their criminal behavior by providing resources to help them craft a better future.

Even taking into account that certain crimes are worse than others, there can be rehabilitation for most people in prison because if empathy is shown to criminals there might be a drastic change in their outlook on their transgressions.

The biggest part of rehabilitation is the need for the perpetrators to ask for forgiveness and to atone. If people in prison deeply regret their wrongdoing and are willing to do many good deeds in the world to repay for the harm they've created, they should be given a chance.

Placing human beings in a cell the size of a bathroom and expecting a miraculous makeover is never going to happen if the problems in front of them are neglected.

HIGH NOON TIME FOR DRUG TESTING

BY AYANAH STONE // STAFF WRITER

I think there should be drug testing in Boston high schools because I hate seeing students coming to class wasted and acting like fools. Schools can find out which students are using drugs and also give them a reason to quit or resist peer pressure to even start.

Some students believe that drug testing shouldn't be allowed because they don't want to feel that their schools are being turned into police zones. Also, they think it invades their privacy.

But what about my privacy? Don't I have the right to study in peace and not have class be disturbed by druggies?

If parents don't want their kids subjected to drug exams, they should just make sure their teens are clean.

Having school officials drug-test every two weeks wouldn't be too disruptive and it would enhance the learning environment.

According to The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, by 2008 some 16 percent of all school districts in the US had instituted some form of drug testing.

Boston should join them.

OFF-CENTER STAGE WHEN PERSONALITIES MISUSE THEIR PLATFORMS

BY VICTORIA LIVINGSTON // STAFF WRITER

Back in June, actor Jesse Williams won BET's Humanitarian Award and gave a powerful speech addressing the issues of police brutality, cultural appropriation, and simply the unfair treatment of black people. He received very supportive responses from people everywhere. However, there were some who had interesting criticism for Mr. Williams.

Daytime talk show host, Wendy Williams, commented that, "National speeches like this will always rub people up the wrong way, just like, you know, white people might be offended because Spelman College is, you know, a historically black college for women."

In saying this, she is promoting the idea that racism is not an issue and that people of color, or more specifically women of color, are supposed to appreciate the limited opportunity they have in a country that fails to acknowledge their struggle.

As a woman of color in an industry that is largely filled with people unlike her, Williams might be expected to understand the impact of what she said. But she continued: "What if it was the National Organization for White People only? There's the NAACP."

Only later did Williams apologize for these statements, saying, "I was wrong."

Meanwhile, Stacey Dash, famous for co-starring in the hit '90s film "Clueless," also decided to put in her two cents. On her blog, she called Williams "a HOLLYWOOD plantation slave!" and said the Black Lives Matter movement has "planted the seed of segregation and no longer want to live in 'perfect harmony,' like the old song wished."

When a black woman speaks like this, it only validates the continuation of prejudice in our society.

We should applaud all those women of color, from Lupita Nyong'o to Zendaya, who use their platforms to create positivity and shed light on troubling issues in our society.

I find it heartbreaking to see people who have the potential to do so much good with their positions fail so miserably.

BY CLINTON NGUYEN // STAFF WRITER

Even as many young immigrants strive to master English, they are facing pressure at home not to abandon their native tongues.

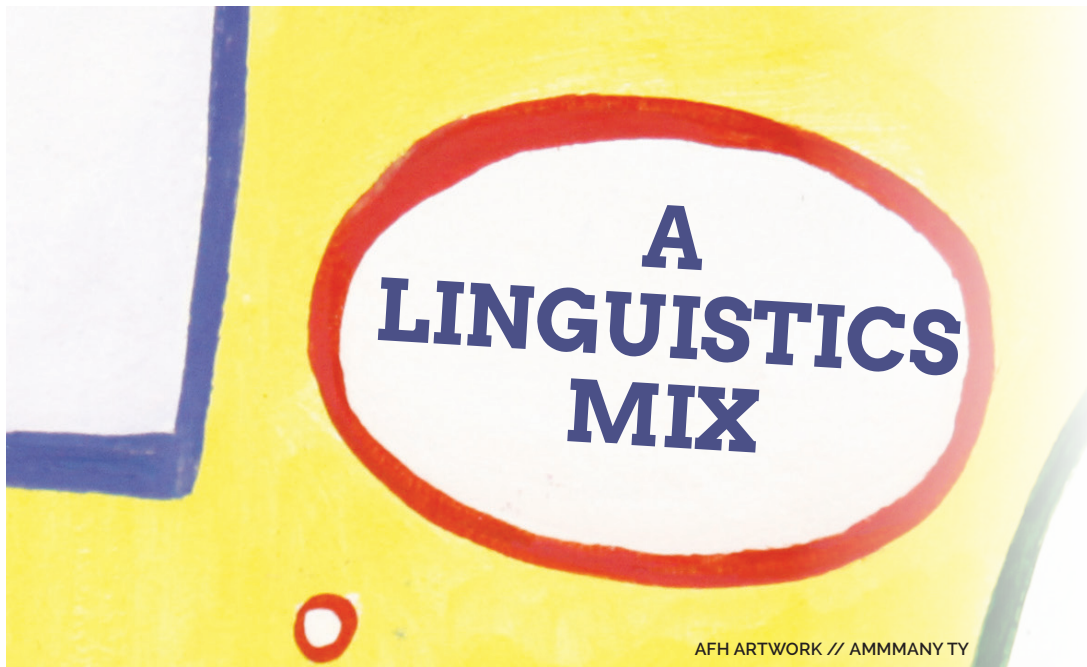
"My dad wants me to remember my roots and language is a pivotal part of that," says Elebetel Assefa, a junior at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, who came to the US from Ethiopia in 2012.

Staying bilingual allows these teens to continue communicating with members of their community.

"It creates a bonding relationship with people who share the same language as me," 16-year-old Ibrahim Yousof, who goes to school in Roxbury, says of his Somali exchanges.

Karen Situ, a junior at the O'Bryant, says she still feels more comfortable speaking Mandarin to her Chinese friends as she tries to improve her English.

"I think it's because I have an accent," she says, "and it is not good enough."



HOMEROOM HOMIES

BY ANTHONY OKOYE // STAFF WRITER

Anthony Carr, 16, understands the value of having friends at school. They can help keep him on track to crack the books, he says, and also do the right thing.

"They assist you in doing work when you're confused or don't understand," says Carr, from Boston Latin Academy, "and also motivate you to make good decisions at school."

In a teen's life, there are neighborhood friends; friends from back in the day; and those friends you see all the time at school.

Yekalo Tesfazion, a junior at BLA, sees the importance of school relationships beyond the basic social aspect and as a way to build future business networks.

"School relationships are important," says Tesfazion, "because they help with employment opportunities and with connecting with people."

For Edil Mohamed, a junior at Boston Latin School, school friendships help her get through those inevitably tough high school moments.

"Your friends at school, especially the ones that are very close to you," she says, "will always have your back and be there for you, especially during hard times."



AFH PHOTO // CUONG HUYNH

SIBLING STATUS

BY ANTIAH THORNTON // STAFF WRITER

Miguel Marte, 16, cringes when asked about a brother at home.

Marte definitely feels a sense of sibling hierarchy as he says he finds himself looking after his older brother, who is 17, making sure he gets up in the morning for school and knowing where he is all the time.

"He's the middle child but he never takes responsibility for anything," says Marte, from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science. "He's older than me yet I have to be the one to watch over him."

In a stereotypical household, one would expect the oldest sibling to be the most responsible, the middle child to be mostly ignored, and the youngest one to be babied to death.

But these days, with scattered work and school schedules, and differing degrees of youth maturity, nothing is typical.

"I have mixed feelings about siblings and being the youngest," says Joanne Leu, 16, from the O'Bryant.

She doesn't have many responsibilities, she says, but then her parents can also be overprotective.

McCain Boonma, 16, from the O'Bryant, is an only child, so he doesn't have to deal with brother-sister status.

"I don't envy anyone with siblings," he says. "I like not having to share anything."

Except those days when he'd liked to share a conversation.

"Being an only child can get a little lonely," says Boonma, "especially not having anyone to talk to."

DAUGHTER DO'S AND DON'TS

BY ROSE KOUMBASSA // STAFF WRITER

Mariam Camara, 15, from Dorchester, is the only girl out of all her siblings -- a fact she feels all the time.

"I see a huge difference between how my parents treat my brothers vs. how they treat me," says Camara. "Even though I am the oldest, my brothers still get more freedom than I do. I have a curfew and my brother, who is one year younger than me, can come home any time."

Being a daughter in any household can have its stresses. But being a daughter of African parents, teens say, can be filled with high expectations and low levels of leeway.

"When I started middle school," says Odia Bah, 17, from South Boston, "my mom gave me and my brothers 'the birds and the bees' talk. It wasn't until after this event that I realized my parents treated my brothers differently from me. My mom told my brothers they could date as long the girl of their choice is respectful. She told me that I wasn't able to date until I graduated college."

Fifteen-year-old Mariatou Camara, who goes to school in Dorchester, says many of the household duties fall to her.

"In my culture," she says, "it was always said that a girl should be brought up...to one day take the mother's place."

HONDURAS, MY HONDURAS

BY KATHERINE BERNARDEZ // STAFF WRITER

When I get off the plane from Miami, I see the colorful parrots. The vibrant blue waters are crowded with people. I smell the soup that the elders are making.

I'm back in Honduras, a place my family and I call home.

Honduras is located in Central America, between Guatemala and Nicaragua. My mother, father, brother, and most of my aunts and uncles were born in my favorite city, La Ceiba, a port on the northern coast.

The city was named after a giant ceiba tree. The tree was so tall that the first settlers believed it was a ladder God used to visit earth from heaven.

The city developed in 1872, and the population increased due to the abundance of work harvesting bananas.

Today, La Ceiba is the third largest city in Honduras. La Ceiba holds some of the best restaurants in the land and I love the dishes there.

My favorite foods are baleadas, flour tortillas filled with fried beans, sour cream, and white cheese. Avocados and eggs are optional. You can eat baleadas for breakfast or dinner.

I also like pasteles, pastries filled with ground beef and rice or potatoes.

The drink I enjoy most is called horchata. To make horchata, you put rice in water and let it soak overnight. Then, you blend the soaked rice with peanuts; add cinnamon, sugar, and lime; and mix it. This drink is usually made for birthday parties or cookouts in the summer.

In two days, September 15, it will be Independence Day in Honduras, so I thought it was a good time to share a bit of information about my country.

THE PUZZLER

BY ROSA SANCHEZ // STAFF WRITER

Mathematical puzzles challenge your intellect and can make your brain stronger.

They may seem simple but often force you to think outside the box and beyond.

They help you in the real world because they give you the chance to develop the skill of thinking under pressure.

My brother, Luis M. Sanchez, a high school senior, may be a puzzle-solving prodigy.

He refers to these mind-twisters as IQ-level tests, though he does them for fun.

"In answering a sort of enigmatic problem," he says, "I get an understanding of the complexity of life and, with it, a great sense of self-completion."

This summer, for example, he solved a complex puzzle without even looking at the instructions, which weren't needed because he figured things out correctly using his own methodology.



AFH ARTWORK // GABRIELA CARTAGENA

CURLY CUES

BY JOHANY HERASME // STAFF WRITER

Straight hair and expensive clothes are the norm at my school. When I first arrived, my hair was curly and my style was unique. Being different did not faze me.

But being different eventually got to me. I started buying the pricey brands that everyone wore, without even liking them all that much.

These clothes put a strain on my parents' income, but they felt like a necessity to fit in. However, I was not only sacrificing my family's money. I was also sacrificing my own identity.

My natural curls also became a rare sight. Every week, I would go to the salon and spend \$40 on straightening my hair. I was certain I never wanted to see my frizz again.

My dad knew a hairdresser in New York that would do the longer-lasting treatment for a good price, and I pleaded with him and my mother to take me as soon as possible. They finally gave in.

By the end of the day, I had gained a new 'do -- but also lost a defining piece that had been with me for 13 years.

Eventually, chemically altering my hair took a toll. My once healthy locks were now brittle and beaten. I knew I had to stop.

Now, after two summers, my hair is growing back to normal.

I regret rejecting my spontaneous look to begin with.

I finally realized that people like or don't like me for me -- and not for my clothes or hair.

ALL THE HYPE FOR DRAKE IS MAD FAKE

BY LAURENT TOSSOUKPE // STAFF WRITER

After Drake's "Views" shattered first-week album-stream records following its April release, listeners flooded social media with praise, some saying it was the greatest thing to bless people's ears since Michael's "Thriller."

When I finally had the chance to hear it, I was blown away -- by its mediocrity.

Sure, there were songs I liked, but also others I equally disliked.

And yet, many in this generation are so in love with Drake.

His role in the teen TV drama series "Degrassi" helped introduce him to young audiences.

And the angsty messages in his songs surely tug at teens' heartstrings. Others, meanwhile, are impressed with his ability to both rap and sing.

Now, I'm not knocking his talent for producing good music. But other artists, including The Weeknd, Chris Brown, Kendrick Lamar, and J. Cole, have better flows than Drake.

What may set Drake apart from his peers is his ability to take all the things he's good at, put them together, and create nice songs.

But are nice songs enough to shower him with all this hype?

BALD IS BEAUTIFUL

BY SOFIA MEADOWS-MURIEL // STAFF WRITER

Imagine a girl whose hair cascaded down her back now dealing with her curls falling against the cold floor -- never to grow back again.

In 2012, my beautiful sister Paola developed a disease called alopecia, which occurs when your immune system mistakenly attacks your hair follicles.

After having undergone many treatments, the medicine ended up being too strong and led to an itchy, red break-out all over her head.

I got used to seeing my parents cry -- not because her locks weren't coming back, but out of fear of how society would treat a young girl with no hair, eyebrows, or eyelashes.

Kids did make fun of her, saying, "You have no edges."

Yet even when my sister got a curly, brown wig, she still felt the sting. Some classmates would question why she was wearing the weave, while others thought it was comical to pull the wig off her head.

People associate baldness with being unattractive. If they didn't, there wouldn't be so many hair-regrowing products on the market, including those ridiculous spray-ons.

To combat this bald-shaming, there is a movement commemorating today -- September 13 -- as National Bald is Beautiful Day.

During this time, everyone should take a moment to appreciate the boundless beauty all around them.



TIP PHOTO

MILO & ME

BY SADE BROOKS // STAFF WRITER

I really wanted this new makeup kit at Sephora. There was this cute dress I'd seen online at Fashion Nova. I could have purchased shoes or gotten a facial or a pedicure.

But instead, I decided to use part of my first summer paycheck to buy a three-month-old puppy. My friend named him Milo.

The moment I saw him, I thought he was the most adorable Havanese Poodle in the world. It may have been his hoppy run that sold me. Or maybe it was his short-cut tail that wagged back and forth. Or his soft paws and hazel green eyes. Whatever the reason, I became overjoyed when I saw him.

We took him home and that is when we truly started to see his personality. Milo is comical and thinks he is bigger than his miniature size. His favorite defense mechanism is to throw himself around and growl. It's more amusing than intimidating.

However, his looks aren't everything. Milo's a puppy so I have to stay alert and responsible. He likes to put miscellaneous items in his mouth, so I have to be watchful and make sure he doesn't harm himself. He is being trained, so he still makes messes around the house that I have to scold him for. Fortunately, doggy treats exist and, with the promise of being rewarded, he is becoming obedient.

The saying "a dog is a woman's best friend" couldn't be more true. Over time, materialistic things lose their worth. But with Milo, his love for me is unconditional and that is something that I will always value.

His loyalty is unwavering. When people go to pet him, he retreats towards me and then sits. He follows me everywhere, sometimes to be nosy, but mostly because he always wants to keep me within eyesight. Milo recognizes when I am sad, and will lick my hand to comfort me. When I'm happy, he gets super-excited and jumps at me.

At the end of a long day, I can't wait to get home to see him. He usually runs and scratches at the door as soon as he hears the key.

FALLACIES ABOUT FEMINISM

BY ISABELLA CISNEROS // STAFF WRITER

It wasn't until last year, when my peers chose to focus on my underarms, that I devoted a second of thought to it.

"She needs to shave her armpits."

Both girls and guys labeled me as this super feminist -- a pejorative term that brought to mind "Social Justice Warriors" and "Feminazis."

In this the age of the Internet, where social media and instant gratification pair together to create a fast way to access all kinds of information, these platforms allow anyone a voice and an audience.

As we scroll, we often see dramatizations and inaccurate posts that try and sway us this way or that with pseudo facts. We con ourselves out of critical thinking when we blindly accept these as truths.

My choice, purely based on comfort, was now associated with what many people misunderstood of feminism -- someone driven only by agenda and not by personal preference.

I am, in fact, a feminist. But what reasonable 21st century female wouldn't be?

I simply believe that men and women should have equal rights.

HIJAB: FOR GLAM OR GOD?

BY SAREDO ALI // STAFF WRITER

When people ask why I wear a hijab, I usually respond: "It is my religious choice and obligation as a Muslim woman."

My whole childhood, I had been getting headscarves from the Somali grandma down the street at a modest cost.

Now, a designer like Dolce & Gabbana is offering hijabs with price tags so extravagant that it hurts the naked eye to even look at them.

Online, some of these high-fashion hijabs are going for over \$500 -- for a piece that is supposed to project modesty.

By contrast, a hijab can be had from Uniqlo for \$9.90.

Islam emphasizes that devotees be humble about their wealth and to live with just enough money for what they need. Being rich is not something that is valued as much as good intentions.

These chic hijabs not only attract undue attention. They also feed into the consumerist society that favors outer appearance over inner beauty.

When hijabs go so glam, they lose their authenticity and core meaning as a sign of simplicity.



AFH PHOTO // JANNA MACH

**SAREDO ALI**

Favorite mode of transportation? Trains.
Burrito or burger? Burrito.
What's worth protesting for or against? For Free Palestine.

**KATHERINE BERNARDEZ**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For #blacklivesmatter.

**JOSH BRIMAGE**

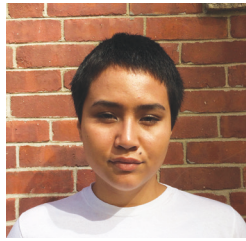
Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For Black Lives Matter.

**SADE BROOKS**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Burrito.
What's worth protesting for or against? Against racism.

**RACHELLE BROWN-MITCHELL**

Favorite mode of transportation? Uber.
Burrito or burger? Burrito.
What's worth protesting for or against? For human rights.

**ISABELLA CISNEROS**

Favorite mode of transportation? Bike.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? Against injustice.

**FILOMENA DASILVA**

Favorite mode of transportation? Airplanes.
Burrito or burger? Burgers.
What's worth protesting for or against? For women's rights.

**VLADIMIR DESROCHES**

Favorite mode of transportation? Trains.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For All Lives Matter. We all deserve a chance to live.

**JOAN DOTRUONG**

Favorite mode of transportation? Train.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For women's rights around the world.

**YVONNE A. DUNKLEY**

Favorite mode of transportation? My feet.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For the Black Lives Matter movement. We are being treated like our lives aren't worth anything. This is a serious issue that goes way beyond police brutality.

**CHRIS ENGLISH**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? Against gentrification.

**KIMANI GRANDY**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Burrito.
What's worth protesting for or against? For sustainability.

**JOHANY HERASME**

Favorite mode of transportation? Walking.
Burrito or burger? French fries.
What's worth protesting for or against? For your dreams.

**ROSE KOUMBASSA**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For Black Lives Matter.

**SELENA LINDOR**

Favorite mode of transportation? Train.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For Black Lives Matter.

**VICTORIA LIVINGSTON**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? Against injustice.

TEENS IN PRINT MEET THE STAFF

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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 Program Director Carla Gualdron at carla.gualdron@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 Program Director at carla.gualdron@boston.gov

Boston Teens in Print is the only citywide newspaper written by and for high school and middle school students from Boston. 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.

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December/
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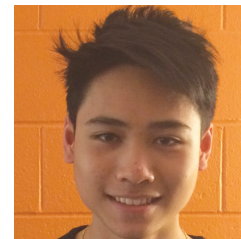
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c/o WriteBoston
2300 Washington Street,
Floor 6
Roxbury, MA 02119

**SOFIA MEADOWS-MURIEL**

Favorite mode of transportation? Uber.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For equal rights.

**SERENITY MENDEZ**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Hot dog.
What's worth protesting for or against? For equal rights.

**CLINTON NGUYEN**

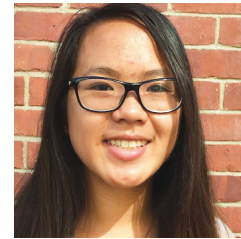
Favorite mode of transportation? Boat.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For your civil rights.

**ANTHONY OKOYE**

Favorite mode of transportation? Feet.
Burrito or burger? Chicken.
What's worth protesting for or against? For life.

**ANN MARIE PERI**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Burrito.
What's worth protesting for or against? For Black Lives Matter.

**ANNA PHAM**

Favorite mode of transportation? Train.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For LGBTQ+ rights.

**ROSA SANCHEZ**

Favorite mode of transportation? Walking.
Burrito or burger? Burrito.
What's worth protesting for or against? Against domestic abuse.

**XAVIA SIMPSON**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For #blacklivesmatter.

**AYANAH STONE**

Favorite mode of transportation? Bus.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For Black Lives Matter.

**JUSTICE TELAMIR**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Burrito.
What's worth protesting for or against? Against police brutality.

**KELLY THAI**

Favorite mode of transportation? Bicycle.
Burrito or burger? Burrito.
What's worth protesting for or against? Against racism.

**ANTIAH THORNTON**

Favorite mode of transportation? Train.
Burrito or burger? Burrito.
What's worth protesting for or against? Against Trump. He's a doltish man.

**LEGACY THORNTON**

Favorite mode of transportation? Motorcycle.
Burrito or burger? Taco.
What's worth protesting for or against? For Black Lives Matter. Against Donald Trump.

**LAURENT TOSSOUKPE**

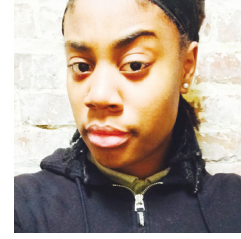
Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Fries.
What's worth protesting for or against? For money.

**WOKIE TULOE**

Favorite mode of transportation? Bus.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For Black Lives Matter.

**JENNIE VILSON**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Burger.
What's worth protesting for or against? For Black Lives Matter.

**SARSKIYYA WALLACE**

Favorite mode of transportation? Car.
Burrito or burger? Orange chicken.
What's worth protesting for or against? For Black Lives Matter.



AFH PHOTO // VANESSA VO

MEN'S FASHION: A SCARCITY OF STYLE

BY LEGACY THORNTON // STAFF WRITER

Edward Prudent believes that fashion should be a place for men -- and not just women.

"I love to express myself through clothes, so with these many limitations in the fashion industry it really becomes a struggle for me to be an individual in what I wear," says Prudent, a junior at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, who says he gets stuck wearing the same-old, same-old basic jeans, T-shirts, and sneakers.

Teens say that many trendy stores in Boston have whole spaces dedicated to women's clothing, with the men's section stuck in a corner.

Dangardy Leriche, a junior at the O'Bryant, says he has to go out of his way to find stylish joggers and slim-fit jeans.

"I'm forced to go to exclusive stores or websites just to find a specific piece of clothing," he says.

James Dumas, 18, from Dorchester, says guys shouldn't have to worry about peers criticizing them for losing their street cred just because they want to dress with style.

"Many men," he says, "just want to look clean."

WEALTH DOESN'T INSULATE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

BY JOAN DOTRUONG // STAFF WRITER

He has money and is comfortable. He can get whatever he wants.

The only problem, he says, is that he's a minority in a majority world.

Jake Azzi, a 15-year-old Lebanese-American from West Roxbury, says he has faced much racial discrimination despite his wealth and social-economic status.

"When they see me, they would ask where my camel was," Azzi says of the bullying that he has dealt with.

Similar to the saying "Love has no price," neither does prejudice.

Macy Tsang, a 15-year-old of Chinese descent from West Roxbury, considers herself to be of middle-class status.

She recalls how a casual walk through the streets of the South End six months ago was interrupted by a lightening strike of racial attacks coming from a school bus.

"Some young kids opened the window and started yelling at me 'ching-chong,'" says Tsang, still shaken by the taunting.

Tsang says that wealth cannot guarantee happiness.

"Money's useless," she sighs.

Hoang Nguyen, a 16-year-old Vietnamese-American from Brighton, says his upper-middle upbringing did not shield him from the youth in elementary school who called him "lemonhead" to insult his physical appearance as an Asian kid with small eyes.

However, Nguyen is still hopeful that one day everyone will come to terms with the distinctions that abound.

"Nature makes us all different," he says, "but I prefer for our society to accept us as we are."

THE EVERYDAY STRUGGLES OF TEENAGERS

BY SOFIA MEADOWS-MURIEL // STAFF WRITER

The alarm goes off at 5 a.m. Armir Berberi gets out of bed and dresses for a 20-minute run. After the workout, it takes more than half an hour to arrive at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, where Berberi is a junior. Then it's a full schedule of classes and soccer, and the hassles that can arise at home.

Sometimes, Berberi says, the familiar pressures can all pile up.

No matter their race, gender, or sexual preference, teenagers face a host of everyday obstacles, whether they're about time-management or relationships, future plans, or the latest outbreak of acne.

Somehow, school always seems to be lurking in the background, to one degree or another.

Mai Tran, a senior at the Josiah Quincy Upper School, seems to be set as she enters senior year, already familiar with the SATs and college prep.

Still, even Tran admits that she will be anxious as soon as college acceptances -- and rejections -- start rolling in.

Meanwhile, 18-year-old Daniel Sanchez, from Dorchester, projects satisfied indifference with his current state.

The only thing on his mind these days, he says, is being behind the wheel of a car.

He says he's never sweat the school experience too much.

"I'm not really that stressed about life like that," Sanchez says. "I'm just living."

BOXED IN: THE DANGERS OF PUTTING LABELS ON PEOPLE

BY FILOMENA DASILVA // STAFF WRITER

Sixteen-year-old Mohamed Moallim, from Brighton High School, covers one side of his eyes as he demonstrates his understanding of labels: "As a Muslim, I get called names just because of my religion. I get called an ISIS person, or people say I hold explosives. I face a lot because of my label."

Labels are often based on a single fact and not a full picture. In the fear of the unknown, people use labels based on religion, sexuality, skin color, gender, income, and more to try to fit everyone into a certain box.

But as they trap someone in stereotypes, labels often prevent others from seeing the complex whole and can limit a victim's own sense of being.

A 16-year-old Dorchester girl recently came out to her family and friends but says she still feels uneasy being called lesbian or gay.

"Labels might cause people to feel uncomfortable with themselves," says the teen, whose name is being withheld to protect her privacy.

Mathias Riddock, 16, from Dorchester, says that even positive labels can be restricting, negating one's entire identity.

"They only see me as that smart kid, and refuse to realize that there's more to me than just that," says Riddock, a good artist and beat-boxer. "All the pressure the label puts on makes everyone look at you differently."

Humans are like puzzles, made up of many unique pieces. As with puzzles, it is hard to comprehend a finished portrait based on a single component. Instead of envisioning all the various parts, those who judge often fill-up the missing spots with prejudices of their own.

OBSESSIONS

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY

BY ROSA SANCHEZ // STAFF WRITER

McCain Boonma, 16, from West Roxbury, has a fixation. He loves his girlfriend and wishes to spend every minute with her. He says that thinking about another person constantly might seem like an obsession but it also indicates a strong sense of caring.

Boonma says that obsessions can have a good and a bad side. If just being near your obsession makes you happy, and talking to them changes your mood for the better, then it's a positive thing. But if you get too crazy or annoying, he says, then you have to draw the line.

Some people might not like the extra attention, he says.

"Stop what you are doing and take a deep breath," Boonma says, "then think about your actions and how they appear to that person. Turn it down to a level in which they feel comfortable."

Miguel Medina, 16, from Mattapan, loves sports cars. He spends a good amount of his time searching for them everywhere on the street. He also goes on his phone and looks up sports cars, dreaming that one day he'll own one.

He believes that it's OK to want to see sports cars and thinks that being obsessed isn't that bad because it gives you something to look forward to.

Unless, of course, you just want more and more and more.

"When your behavior is inappropriate," he says, "then it's time to stop."

Nardos Gosaye, a junior from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, believes that to cure an obsession, people should be shown the ugly side of the activity.

If they only have space in their brains to think of their fascinations, then it's out of hand and help is required.

For example, says Gosaye: "When someone stalks another human being beyond the boundaries."



AMERICANIZED ETHNIC FOOD: LOST IN TRANSLATION

BY JOAN DOTRUONG // STAFF WRITER

AFH PHOTO // VANESSA VO

Lost, homesick, confused.

That's how Jing Luo felt when she immigrated to America at the ripe old age of five.

Baffled by a new culture, Luo didn't know whether to accept it or not.

Fast-forward 10 years. Jing now goes by the American name Kelly and is a regular teen, living in Brighton.

However, she feels disconnected from her Chinese birthplace.

Surrounded by a diverse community, Luo would often find herself lost for words when friends asked her about Chinese-American dishes that aren't even close to being authentic Chinese. She recalls one incident when her workplace brought out Crab Rangoon, an Americanized-Chinese offering that is not native to China.

She believes that Americanized concoctions misrepresent her culture.

"If you talk to someone who's not Chinese about ethnic Chinese food, they would usually talk more about fried rice, noodles," she says. "But our staple is mostly rice with different appetizers to add on."

As immigrants to the US, and even others with deep roots here, are tossed into the melting pot of assimilation, so, too, is their original cuisine.

Seventeen-year-old Cheyenne Isaac, from Dorchester, is part Native American. She describes the differences between the homogenized and pure versions of clam chowder.

"The [Native American] clam chowder is not as thick and it's completely different from the American experience," she says. "We actually go in the ocean and get clams from the ocean, shuck them, cut them open, and then you have to clean and throw in your corn, your potatoes, and it's a different experience than just buying it."

Based on the happenings at his Vietnamese family's Asian restaurant, Hoang Nguyen, 16, says he understands the reasoning behind the mixing of menu delights.

"It's not always perfect," says Nguyen, from Brighton. "We've been bringing in Vietnamese, Chinese, and Thai dishes so that everyone would have a variety of cultures."

BEAUTY SHOULDN'T EQUAL PAIN

BY JENNIE VILSON // STAFF WRITER

In Beyoncé's song "Pretty Hurts, there's a line that says: "Perfection is the disease of a nation."

Zanyah Dorfeuille, 16, from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, says teens should heed the power of self-appreciation, not social-media pressure.

"Don't spend hundreds and thousands on make-up, acrylics, weaves, if you aren't comfortable with your natural being," she says.

Ruth Jackson, 16, from Roslindale, says she is swayed in her practices by her African culture.

"Coming from a Nigerian heritage," she says, "I've always braided my hair or styled it with a weave -- even till this day."

Janelle Letts, 15, from Hyde Park, believes that teens should be satisfied with their own beauty and not endure the pain of eyebrow waxing, for instance, to satisfy others.

"You should love yourself, regardless," she says.

THE SO-CALLED SAVAGE LIFE

BY CHRIS ENGLISH // STAFF WRITER

Of course, it's Rihanna who delivers the line: "Didn't they tell you that I was a savage?" in the song "Needed Me."

According to urbandictionary.com: "A savage is someone who does not care about the consequences of his or her actions."

One 16-year-old, from English High School, says he supports himself by stealing what he can, from putting food in his stomach to clothes on his back.

He boasts about his boosting, the criminals' term for shoplifting.

"I would care about it for the moment and then continue," says the teen, whose name is being withheld so he could speak freely.

Many teens reject this so-called savage life.

Yekalo Tesfazion, a junior from Boston Latin Academy, says it's not the right thing to do.

"It could lead you into trouble, too," Tesfazion says.

Derrick Desanges, 16, from BLA, stresses the value of thinking long-term instead of living in the moment.

"Being mature instead of a savage," he says, "provides more opportunities."



TRACKING THE GENDER-ROLE GAP

BY KATHERINE BERNARDEZ // STAFF WRITER

Clyde Glover Jr., 15, from Dorchester, explains his take on gender roles.

"Sports for women are volleyball, cheerleading, and tennis," he says. "Sports for men are basketball, football, and soccer."

Constraints on genders are being shattered every day, in every which way. Still, some youth -- both male and female -- continue to offer conventional models of men and women.

"Running like a girl means not running with as much power as a boy," says Trinay Moore, 17, from Roxbury.

Kaylee Andrade, 15, from Dorchester, believes, however, that females can participate in a wide range of activities.

"Women can play any sport," she says. "A girl who plays basketball is someone I like. She's proving society wrong."

AFH PHOTO // ABRAHAM ROSA

GENDER-NEUTRAL BATHROOMS IN SCHOOLS?

A BIT OF A BACKLASH

BY AYANAH STONE // STAFF WRITER

Eighteen-year-old Devine Johnson, of Dorchester, believes that gender-neutral bathrooms should be in public schools.

"If you're transgender," Johnson says, "then you wouldn't have to worry about which bathroom to go in."

More than 150 colleges across the country have such facilities, according to news accounts.

Although enforcement of a new federal guideline may be uncertain due to a court ruling issued at presstime, the Obama administration in May directed school districts not to discriminate against transgender students.

"Schools should have gender-neutral bathrooms because it's legalized," says Jeremy Williams, 16, from Dorchester.

But Aryana Madison, 15, from Dorchester, says some teens might not feel right using gender-neutral bathrooms that are not single-use.

"Boys and girls shouldn't share the same bathrooms," Madison says, "because girls need more privacy and they won't be comfortable around boys."

GENDER-BLENDING, BUT STILL OFFENDING

BY CLINTON NGUYEN // STAFF WRITER

Mildred Cancinos, a junior at the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, thinks it's OK for both genders to wear makeup.

After all, men and cosmetics date back to Asia in 3,000 BC, when guys stained their fingernails as a sign of status, according to charlottetilbury.com.

And Keith Richards and Johnny Depp are among the males known to dab-on a dash of eyeliner -- or "guyliner" as it's known in the celebrity trade.

And, according to Uyen Chu, a junior at the O'Bryant, wearing cosmetics is a form of communication more than just prettying-up.

"I feel like makeup is meant to express yourself and have fun experimentations with different looks," says Chu.

And yet, despite these gender-blending times, distinctions are still being drawn by mainstream society.

"I don't understand why in recent years it's been taboo for men to do so," says Cancinos, noting that the practice of them donning makeup is not fully accepted.

Kathy Tran, a junior at the O'Bryant, says that gender contrasts have been going on a long time.

"I don't mind the terms masculine and feminine and there being a difference with it," says Tran. "It's the sexism and the inequality that makes me mad."

PERSEVERANCE UNDER PRESSURE

BY VLADIMIR DESROCHES // STAFF WRITER

Perseverance.

For 17-year-old Aminata Sheriff, from TechBoston Academy, the word brings to mind the days when she first came to America from Africa, and she felt she was behind in her studies.

Now, she says, she does well in school.

"Nothing in life comes easily," she says. "You should never stop fighting for what you want."

Fifteen-year-old Bethsaida Laurie, from Mattapan, recalls struggling with English when she arrived from Haiti.

But the difficulties with language did not prod her into silence. Instead, she says, she kept going until she felt at ease with English.

"Perseverance," says Laurie, "is the amount of courage and effort you put in through hard situations to overcome them."

Grit, is how 19-year-old Greg Quan, of Mattapan, defines perseverance.

To him, that meant composing page after page after page of essays before he could graduate from high school.

TEEN T

OH, THOSE PRECIOUS PASSES



BY LAURENT TOSSOUKPE // STAFF WRITER

At Forest Hills station, 16-year-old Joshua Lewis stands waiting for the 32 bus, grateful he was able to obtain a July T pass. Wanting to enjoy his summer outside the house, Lewis forked over \$84.50 for the monthly.

"I love my bus pass," says Lewis, 16, from Boston Latin Academy. "It takes me everywhere I need to go."

Tap, tap, tap.

It's part of a student's daily routine, the key to getting around the city.

The journey is made easier during the academic year, when schools can supply free M7 passes.

Teens are pushing to make that benefit a year-round thing.

"If I don't have my M7, I feel insecure," says Devon Harris, 16, from BLA. "It's hard to go around places."

Sixteen-year-old Sherrice Marfo, from Hyde Park, is most grateful for her M7.

"Every single day," says Marfo, "I appreciate it very much."

AFH PHOTO // AIJANAH SANFORD

WIRELESS EARBUDS: LISTEN, HEAR

BY ANNA PHAM // STAFF WRITER

A new piece of technology has come out: wireless earbuds.

This may end the distracting but time-saving habit practiced by many teens of having one earbud in and the other dangling from its wire.

Brianna Sapienza, a freshman at Boston Latin School, says she doesn't like when people are talking to her while listening to music, though she admits having done this on rare occasions, like when a conversation is getting uncomfortable.

"When people do that to me, I feel like they aren't really listening to me, but they're listening to the music," she says. "It's obnoxious."

On the other hand, Rosemary Gould says she doesn't mind when other people pull that move, as long as they don't ignore her.

Gould, a freshman at BLS, says she'll listen to music via earbud as background noise to a conversation that's casual.

"If you're just talking to your friend on the bus, then it's OK," says Gould, "but if you're talking to your mom or an authoritative figure, then that's disrespectful."

Andrew Murphy, a sophomore at BLS, thinks that having both earbuds active while talking to friends is rude, but just having one in is OK -- because, at least, it shows that you're somewhat listening to them.

THE FUTURE IS NOW

BY JOHANY HERASME // STAFF WRITER

For some, basketball doesn't end after gym class; singing doesn't stop outside the shower.

They are talents that have earned teens opportunities they have sought since, well, forever.

For them, the future is now.

Felicia Cabral, 16, from Dorchester, has been singing and acting as long as she can remember. Her parents support and acknowledge her skill, she says, but don't believe that should be her only career choice.

However, Cabral says she can't imagine herself doing anything else for the rest of her life.

"I'd like to be able to support myself doing what I love," she says.

Toni Geisel, 15, from South Boston, has been playing hoops since she was four.

Because she loves it, Geisel doesn't find practices a burden.

Yet all the questions can become heavy -- like where she wants to go to college for basketball.

"I'm living in the moment," she says.

Then there's the 15-year-old from Roslindale. She doesn't do any extracurriculars. She thinks that college is a waste of time. She is a self-described nihilist who believes that worrying about the future is meaningless -- as is life itself.

WHEN TALENT TRANSCENDS TRADITION

BY JOSH BRIMAGE // STAFF WRITER

When a nine-year-old Lorena Ramirez told her parents she wanted to be a chef when she grew up, she says, they immediately told her to pick something else -- one with a chance to make more money.

Now, eight years later, the Colombian-American from East Boston says her young dream is dead.

She now aims to become a traveling businesswoman, she says, earning an annual salary of \$50,000.

"I had a realization of 'real' careers that make 'real' money," says Ramirez, acknowledging that her parents' feelings played a role in her decision.

In some communities, teens say, there's been a tradition of parents -- who remember their own hardships -- pushing young people toward professions they view as stable and financially sound.

That may be changing.

Seventeen-year-old Jacky Cen, from Charlestown, was born in China and came to the US when he was three.

Now that he's a teen, he's feeling the heat -- though not from his parents.

"I'm Asian," Cen says. "I'm expected [by others] to be a doctor or a lawyer."

Cen, however, says he wants to be a major entrepreneur in the makeup industry. His parents support him, he says.

Mikayla Willingham, 17, from Dorchester, says that her parents always engaged her in activities that let her explore her talents.

They enrolled her in dance classes, got her toy dinosaurs when she expressed an interest in paleontology, and now back her desire to become a newscaster, she says.

She knows that she's a fortunate one.

"[My parents] are accepting of what I want to do," Willingham says, "as long as I'm happy and can support myself."



AFH PHOTO // VANESSA VO

THE FAÇADE OF "REALITY TV"

BY WOKIE TULOE // STAFF WRITER

"Reality TV."
Really?

"I think reality TV shows are somewhat scripted because in order to entertain people it has to... have a plot, conflict," says Amy Rodriguez, 16, from Charlestown High School, naming "Keeping Up with the Kardashians" as just one example.

Many teens say they can see right through the façade of nonstop friend-then-foe-then-friend series like "Bad Girls Club."

"The way most of the characters act is really fake," says Marilexy Rios, 16, from Charlestown High, "because they'll be friends today and the next day they'll be fighting over something dumb."

Some teens say they don't care whether the action is authentic or made-up.

"I was watching 'Basketball Wives LA' and my brother walked in," says Christelle Courtois, 16, from Excel High School, "and he asked me, 'Why are you always watching this fake reality TV show?' I didn't answer him, but in my head I knew he was right because most of the things they do are fake."

IS THE ZODIAC WHACK?

BY CHRIS ENGLISH // STAFF WRITER

Sixteen-year-old Joshua Lewis, from Boston Latin Academy, says that the traits attributed to him from his zodiac sign are in sync with his personality, including being energetic, as he does not rely on sugar or special drinks to keep him active.

And he says he has yet to come across another Sagittarius that doesn't share those same characteristics.

Still, he says he is not convinced that the interpretations of zodiac signs -- based on the intersection of birthdays and astrological activity and dating back to ancient Egypt -- are valid.

"They say things that are too general, vague stuff that applies to everybody," Lewis says. "I don't believe in it, but I accept the match."

According to onlinestartarregistry.com: "Zodiac signs can be used for everything from letting us tap into our personality and special talents related to our signs to helping us know how our day will go."

Some teens are so into the zodiac -- often used interchangeably with the term horoscope -- that they will switch-up their style to coincide with it.

"About 85 percent of people I know try to live up to it," says Azana Williams, 16, who goes to BLA.

Stephanie Ortega, 16, from BLA -- known for sometimes being loud -- says that's one of the qualities assigned to Libras.

She doesn't need to fake it, like some may do.

"That would mean everyone," she says, "would be living up to an expectation."

GLEANNING MEANINGS FROM SCREENINGS

BY SAREDO ALI // STAFF WRITER

Kathryn Capo, a junior at Boston Latin Academy, used to envision herself being a part of "The Powerpuff Girls," which debuted in 1998.

"There weren't many [TV] shows at that time that were portraying girls as being superheroes," she says.

But, for Capo, it was more than just a young dream that took hold. Capo says she drew a lingering lesson from the powerful female stars of the animated series.

"They inspired me to become a woman who doesn't need approval of other people -- especially men," she says.

Many young people are tempted to base their aspirations or behaviors on TV shows and movies -- wanting to become a doctor after binge-watching "Grey's Anatomy," for example.

Some of these media projections are simply far-fetched, but others can offer valuable guidance.

"A TV show or movie that can show a person making a mistake and fixing it or a person changing something for the better," says Kaylee McKinnon, a junior at BLA, "can have an effect on someone's [better] decision-making."

Entertainment that touches teens emotionally can manipulate, for sure, but also motivate.

"Especially when we see something on screen and think, 'Wow, that can happen to me,'" says Kiara Yancey, a junior at BLA, "or 'This has already happened to me.'"



AFH PHOTO // AIJANA SANFORD

IF AGE IS JUST A NUMBER, THEN MATURITY IS A BETTER MEASURE

BY RACHELLE BROWN-MITCHELL // STAFF WRITER

To 15-year-old Maria Andrade, maturity more than age is what matters in the long run.

"Maturity demonstrates that you are responsible and capable," says Andrade, who attends the Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers.

Society seems intent on assigning a number to every possible thing. But, teens say, maturity is a better way to determine whether they are ready to deal with things or not.

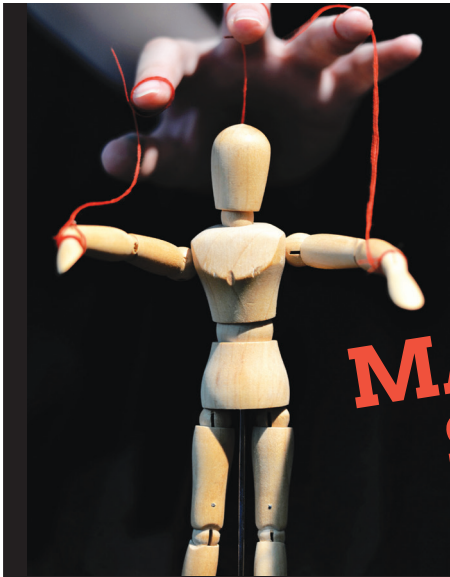
"Being mature is when someone has been through life," says Mikeria Marshall, 15, from Roxbury. "When someone reaches maturity, they know how to handle challenges that life throws at them."

Medgene Joseph, 15, says that age can mean zero.

"Maturity is definitely more relevant to me," says Joseph, who goes to school in Dorchester.

She offers a dating scenario to back her argument: "If you're 16 and dating someone who is 18 and childish, then what's the point? But if you are 17 and dating a sophisticated 15-year-old, then that might go somewhere."

Or, as Andrade says: "Age...is just a number that sticks with you forever."



MANIPULATION SITUATIONS

BY VLADIMIR DESROCHES // STAFF WRITER

Jerry Laplant, a senior at TechBoston Academy, tells the story of how his manager tried to manipulate him at work.

In the start of June 2016, he says, he told her that he needed time to study for final exams. She responded, he says, by keeping him on the schedule every day -- and double shifts on weekends.

She knew he needed the job.

"I hate when people try to control you," Laplant says.

Seventeen-year-old Saphina Maxis, from Mattapan, knows the meaning of manipulation: "Influence in an unfair manner."

When her father first came to the US, she says, he didn't have a place to live so he stayed with his sister. She was strict: No cooking without her permission -- even if he was hungry. He couldn't use the laundry.

He was sad until the day came when he could finally move out.

Sherley Valeus, a senior at Boston International High School, says she had a friend who tried to play her.

She wanted Valeus to steal money from her own family and built up sympathy by saying that no one cared about the friend.

Valeus says she felt bad but did not want to be a thief.

"The thing about [some] friends," Valeus says now, "is that...you always need to be careful around them."

AFH PHOTO

TRENDING NOW

BY KELLY THAI // STAFF WRITER

For Melinda Rosa, shopping is like a hobby.

"It makes me feel good when I buy new things," says Rosa, 16, from Dorchester. "The only downside about shopping is when I overdo it and spend a lot."

Many teens try to stay trendy, purchasing the latest fashions and technology.

It helps them fit in. And it can give them a sense of independence.

"I started buying stuff on my own when I was 14," says Linh Phan, a junior at Boston Latin Academy. "It was when I was buying my family Christmas gifts."

The expectation of getting a paycheck and treating yourself is a positive feeling, teens say.

"I started buying my own stuff when I first got a job," says Rosa.

Rayven Frierson, a junior from the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, says that more than the next big thing, she considers appearance and affordability in her clothing purchases.

"A trend may be valuable to others since they feel like it's the hottest thing on earth," she says. "I do not really think about trends. I just think about what shirt and pants would look good together."

HAPPY FEAT

BY JENNIE VILSON // STAFF WRITER

Amiya Stephney knows how to be simply happy.

"Some things that makes me happy, for example, are the little things from a friend or family member," says the 16-year-old, from Hyde Park.

For many teens, finding happiness can be a frustrating pursuit. Others, though, feel that they've hit upon the answer.

"Opportunity makes me happy," says Kaishaun Bleach, 17, from Dorchester. "Life has so much to offer"

Lynelle Clervil, 17, from Dorchester, says that breaking into laughter brings her joy.

She believes that everyone deserves to smile consistently.

"Without happiness," she says, "someone would just grow bitter and miserable."

THE ROMANTICS

BY ROSA SANCHEZ // STAFF WRITER

Miguel Marte, 16, and Rachelle Bodden, 16, are what you would call a fairy-tale couple. For they are always lovey-dovey and have been dating for, at the most recent count, nine months and three days.

They know almost everything about each other and have even considered a future together 10 years from now. They both believe in real love and say that they have faced some difficulties but have always overcome them.

"Love can be defined in so many ways and found in many places," says Bodden, "but it just takes that one person to feel complete."

Many say that romance is dead. Not so!

Kiara Jimenez, 16, from Dorchester, believes in the existence of love even if it can't be scientifically proven.

Love is trusting, she says, but also feeling safe with that special person.

Jimenez is currently dating a boy named JR. It's almost their 10-month anniversary, but they can already see themselves in several years with a dog and two kids -- a boy and a girl.

Jimenez says there's no hurry.

"At the end of it all," she says, "the person you really need will come when you least expect it."

Isaiah Smith, 17, from Roxbury, isn't wasting his time trying to find his partner yet. He believes in love and the feeling of caring, wanting, and appreciating another person.

But after being in an unrequited relationship last year, he says, he decided to think more seriously about his future and the fact that school needs him to be in control of his emotions.

"Remember who you choose," says Smith, "because the wrong love is [an] unhealthy one."



AFH ARTWORK // CASEY HUDSON

RELATIONSHIPS: TO GOOD HEALTH

BY ANN MARIE PERI // STAFF WRITER

Viena Arias, 17, from Boston Community Leadership Academy, explains her formula for a healthy relationship.

"When you both respect and value each other enough to put the other person before yourself," she says, "and you're always trying to make sure that the other person is safe and comfortable in the relationship."

Jessica Sanchez, 16, from Boston Latin School, would add these ingredients to the mix:

"Support. Knowing how to fix problems without arguing."

For 17-year-old Derrick Obanor, from Dorchester, a solid partnership can withstand major disruptions, including constant instigating on social-media.

"Even if they have their ups and downs" he says, "they are still able to find a solution to making the relationship better."

THE QUEST FOR CULTURE

BY VICTORIA LIVINGSTON // STAFF WRITER

Living in East Boston, a neighborhood filled with friends who share similar experiences, allows Jennifer Castillo's background to be in the forefront of her life.

"Relating to other people makes it fun to embrace my culture," says Castillo, 16, who notes that being Salvadoran, she primarily speaks Spanish at home.

Many young people say they feel the strain of adapting to America without disregarding their roots. Nonetheless, teens raised with their cultures embedded into their everyday routines say they are confident in knowing who they are.

For 16-year-old Selina Li, of South Boston, it took a while.

"I wanted to be accepted and normal but now that I'm older I can understand how to embrace who I am and create my own identity and not let society define who I am," says Li, who is Chinese-American.

Fifteen-year-old Imani Mulrain, of Dorchester, says it's sometimes hard to seize both her Dominican and Trinidadian sides.

"I don't know Spanish so it's kind of embarrassing to be with my other Hispanic friends," she says.

Meanwhile, Mulrain says that she stays in tune with her Trinidadian heritage by playing the steel pans.

"My entire family is from Trinidad and I am the only one born in America," she says. "and so I try to do stuff that makes me feel connected to my family."

BYSTANDING FOR NOTHING

BY SELINA LINDOR // STAFF WRITER

Sixteen-year-old Gaelle Hercules, from TechBoston Academy, says that she knew what to do when someone stole her friend's phone during the school year and she had an idea who the culprit was.

"I spoke up and helped my friend get her phone back," she says.

They say that there are leaders and there are followers.

For teens, the truth often comes to light when trouble strikes: Do you intervene to help solve things or just stand on the sidelines?

Jonathan Villace, 18, who goes to school in Dorchester, says he's happy to pitch in.

"It benefits me at the end," he says.

Aminata Sheriff, 17, from TechBoston Academy, says she stepped forward after learning that something bad had gone down even though there was later blowback directed her way.

"I didn't care about the consequences," she says.

TEENAGE LULLABIES

BY WOKIE TULOE // STAFF WRITER

Sixteen-year-old Clarens Seignon, from Charlestown High School, has a tried-and-true way to drift off into dreams after a long day.

"I listen to music while sleeping because it helps me relax," says Seignon, noting that his snoozy genres range from reggae to classical.

Teens are notorious for not getting enough sleep. Many turn to songs to help them slip into slumber.

"I listen to gospel and soul music," says Chandler Venable, 16, from Charlestown High. "It helps me ease off after a long day and makes me calm."

For 16-year-old Skyla Tracy, of Charlestown High, it's sadder tunes -- like "Break of Dawn" by Nelson Freitas -- that hold the key to flowing into zzzs.

"It helps me fall asleep faster," says Tracy, "and it also helps clear my mind of things, like school work."



AFH PHOTO // AIJANAH SANFORD

BOARD GAMES: A PERSONALITY TEST

BY YVONNE A. DUNKLEY // STAFF WRITER

She is 15 and introduced her love of the board game Monopoly this way: "My name is Angalique and I have a problem spending."

Angalique Lawrence, from South Boston, says that saving money is hard for her, so playing Monopoly is a great way to sharpen her financial skills.

Who knew that the board games that teens started playing with their families in elementary school could relate to their current lives? Pondering which board game is your favorite could tell you something about your personality that you might not have considered.

Sixteen-year-old Infiniti McCain, from West Roxbury Academy, is into the board game Sorry!

She enjoys seeing people sent back while she goes forward.

"Everything is a competition to me," she says.

Sixteen-year-old Kiara Batista, who attends the John D. O'Bryant School of Math & Science, says that she is partial to Monopoly. She says that it helps her learn more about buying property and investing.

"This," she says, "will help me with my future."

PRETTY IN PINK

BY FILOMENA DASILVA // STAFF WRITER

Filled with extreme passion, 16-year-old Jocelina Depina speaks about her fondness for the color pink.

"Pink represents the power within every woman," says Depina, from New Mission High School.

They say that pink attains an aura of intensive love from the color red set off by a sense of purity and openness from the color white.

Although lots of men wear pink, for many the color symbolizes the potential in every woman and brings out her capacity to rise above.

However, Gabriela Pires, 15, from New Mission, puts on a facial expression of great disgust as she says:

"The color just doesn't fit me as a person."

Pires feels as if her strong personality is not a match to that hue. To her, pink represents being girly and she sees it as a sign of weakness.

As 17-year-old Tatiana Lopes walks down the street recently, she is captivated by a shimmering pink rose.

"There's just something about the color that fascinates me," says Lopes, from New Mission. "It's bright and has a certain sparkle."

Lopes is drawn to pink, she says, because it appeals to her eyes and she is able to connect with it -- as do many others.

She says: "It contributes in building up a delightful sense of happiness."



AFH ARTWORK // KIARA FUENTES

BY ANNA PHAM // STAFF WRITER

Show choir is a performing ensemble of students who sing and dance, both of which I love. For the past six years, I've been working on my triple threat: singing, dancing, and acting. So when I saw the poster for "Pizazz" show choir auditions, I instantly knew I wanted to be part of the group.

On the day of the audition, I was nervous but also excited. There were some people I had met before in the school's spring musical. They reassured me that as long as I smiled, I would be fine.

The vocal audition didn't faze me because I'd had lessons for two years plus experience singing in my church choir and neighborhood theatre group.

On the other hand, I was absolutely terrified during the dance portion. During the group audition, I completely forgot the ending. However, I took the advice I had been given by my friends and put on the brightest smile I could. It was this strategy, in addition to the vocal tryout, that got me into show choir.

Joining show choir was one of the best things I did in my freshman year of high school.

It helped shape me into more of a leader. In the second half of the year, I taught myself the music on my own time and then helped others during rehearsals. I also urged the importance of a mezzo-soprano section, which is often overlooked.

I opened up and made many new friends, too.

Everyone there feels like family and has their own pizazz that they bring to the group.

I admit that I am an introvert and enjoy being by myself, in the quiet. But there's something about being on a stage that helps me step up and let my voice be heard.

BACK OFF, BASHERS!

NEW "GHOSTBUSTERS" MOVIE NO WORSE THAN THE FIRST

BY SERENITY MENDEZ // STAFF WRITER

Instead of a team of ghost-catching funny men fighting against paranormal activity in New York City, this summer's remake of the 1984 original features a team of ghost-catching funny women.

As soon as the reboot appeared, there was intense backlash on social media -- mainly from men. Early reviews showed the average rating from men was a 3.5 out of 10 while women graded it a 7.5 out of 10, according to usatoday.com.

The movie's trailer had started an instant outburst by males, revealing the double standard of female-led movies.

In fact, both films share the same concepts. If the first one received better reviews, many women are now concluding that it can only be due to gender bias.

While the new "Ghostbusters" is not a classic piece of art by any means, neither was the first.

A mediocre movie is a mediocre movie whether it is led by women or men.

STAGE MIGHT THE IMPACT OF "HAMILTON," THE MUSICAL

BY ANNA PHAM // STAFF WRITER

"Oh, Alexander Hamilton
"When America sings for you
"Will they know what you overcame?
"Will they know you rewrote the game?
"The world will never be the same, oh"

Jennifer Browne, a senior at Boston Latin School, says that she's not really a fan of rap music but she likes the "Hamilton" soundtrack.

"'Hamilton' brings a different sort of life to that style of music by using it to explain [through music]: American history, Colonial American history," says Browne. "It makes history come alive in its own new way that's more relatable to the people of our generation."

Long-considered the domain of older audiences, musical theatre has become

very popular recently -- among all age groups -- since the hip-hop hit musical "Hamilton" debuted on Broadway in August of 2015.

The story about Alexander Hamilton's life as one of America's founding fathers will be touring nationally in 2017-2018 and is expected to make its way to Boston.

The play's impact is being felt not only on stage but also in the classroom.

Mary Whelan, a freshman at BLS, says that her US history teacher incorporated "Hamilton" into a few of her lessons.

"She showed us more of the educational songs about the battles and stuff," Whelan says.

Erica Jurus, a junior at BLS, says "Hamilton" has brought people together in a variety of venues.

"We have a Facebook group for Broadway," Jurus says, "and there are a lot of 'Hamilton' fans on there."

RAPPER CLARK D: "I IMAGINE MYSELF BEING AN INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR"

BY SOFIA MEADOWS-MURIEL // STAFF WRITER

The crowd rose from its seats this spring as the beat dropped and Clark D burst on stage.

Clark "Clark D" Lacossade is a 17-year-old rapper from Boston Latin Academy who traces his budding career back to several years ago when his ELA teacher assigned a creative assignment involving complex sentences.

Clark D produced a poem and recited it to a composed beat.

"I felt like a king," he says.

Now he's hitting major venues like the Middle East Downstairs.

Inspired by J. Cole, Drake, Kendrick Lamar, and others, Clark D says he tries to set himself apart by rapping, producing, and engineering his own music while writing lyrics that express the drive and determination to become successful.

In 10 years, he says, "I imagine myself being an international superstar, entrepreneur, humanitarian...[and], most of all, very happy."

KD: TAKIN' IT EASY

BY ROSE KOUMBASSA // STAFF WRITER

When Kevin Durant jumped to the Golden State Warriors from the Oklahoma City Thunder this summer, he sent a bad message to young people.

Had he come to Boston, it would have been a tough trip to a title, but KD could have put real meaning behind his star-player status by carrying the young Celtics on his back to a championship.

Instead, KD is now seen as a ring-chasing slacker who took the easy way out by joining a team already stacked with talent.

As teens, we often want to take the shortcuts to success -- only to find out later that we would earned so much more knowledge and gratification by putting in the extra work.

The adults around us -- whether in our real lives or just in our hoop dreams -- are supposed to set an example for doing things right.

In this case, KD the superstar sharpshooter clearly missed the mark.

TRAMPOLINE YES, CHEERLEADING NO? THE MEANING OF SPORT

BY LEGACY THORNTON // STAFF WRITER

Football. Baseball. Basketball. Hockey. Soccer. Golf. Tennis.

What comes next on the list of enterprises accepted as sports?

It depends on your definition of sport: "An athletic activity requiring skill or physical prowess and often of a competitive nature."

Yet even that statement is wide open to interpretation.

Take competitive cheerleading, for example. As one proponent wrote on debate.org: "The athletic ability combined with teamwork that is required more than qualifies cheerleading to be defined as a sport."

Not so fast, wrote a naysayer on the site: "All they do is jump around for 2.5 minutes. Seriously? Is that what qualifies as a sport these days?"

Well, if the trampoline and canoe, and badminton and handball, are recognized as Olympic sports, surely these should be considered sports, too, along with competitive cheerleading, of course:

- Ultimate frisbee;
- Paintball;
- Quidditch;
- Kickball;
- Bowling;
- Darts;
- Pool;
- Speed eating;
- Squash;
- Rock climbing;
- Dodgeball;
- Hunting.

GYM CLASS ZEROES

BY RACHELLE BROWN-MITCHELL // STAFF WRITER

Kaylee Bonilla, 15, from East Boston, thinks that learning how to stay fit is an important part of the school day.

"Gym offers so much for students, such as a healthy-maintained lifestyle," Bonilla says.

Phys-ed classes have long been a staple of the traditional American school system.

But over time, teens say, some programs have not remained as muscular as they could be.

And for many, that's just fine.

"Physical education doesn't teach the reading, and writing skills we need," says Jovana Michel, a sophomore at New Mission High School. "It doesn't teach basic math skills that we will need in the long run."

Others feel, though, that their gym instruction comes on too strong.

"I am told when to work out and how many hours I have to work out," says Shameka Joseph, a senior who goes to school in Dorchester. "You should be able to choose and be productive at the same time without feeling forced."



AFH PHOTO // HANH NGUYEN

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