Mayor Walsh on What Matters Most

By Ismael Aristilde and Esther Bobo

In November 2016, WRA sophomore, Ismael Aristilde, had the opportunity to interview Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh at a Mildred Ave Community Center event in Dorchester. Everyone can learn something from their conversation.

Ismael: What more can we as a community do to get our high school students ready for college?

Mayor Walsh: That’s a great question, one thing that we’re trying to do is to redesign our high schools...The seniors who come in will start by setting a strong example for us...For the kids who are focused on college, they can help by sharing their story of success with their school. We’re also working with many organizations to try and help young people with grants and making sure that we can help them to go on and be successful in college and to overcome that financial burden.

Ismael: What is your vision on a cutting edge, 21st century, modern high school?

Mayor Walsh: I think that in the ´70s or the ´80s in our city, a lot of money was cut out of sports programs and extracurricular activities. I think that a cutting-edge high school in the City of Boston should be a modern school, teaching STEM [Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math], teaching opportunities for the future, and helping young people when they graduate high school that they’re on a pathway to college or a pathway to a career. I think that is the most important thing, and I also think we have to look at some of the programs we have in our schools to make sure we bring some more arts and culture back into our schools to allow young people to express themselves in a positive manner. I also think we need to look at our sports programs, not just the people who make the team, but also intramurals to make sure we have a strong intramural program, so that people have the ability for physical fitness.

A Memory with the Mayor

By Junior Belneau

The Mayor of Boston, Martin J. Walsh, was born and raised in Dorchester by Irish immigrant parents.

When Mayor Walsh was a kid, he survived a serious case of Burkitt’s lymphoma, a type of cancer. On top of that, he was a victim of alcoholism as a young adult. But, Mayor Walsh was able to overcome his own addiction, which led to his lifelong commitment to the prevention and treatment of addiction.

As mayor, he has won national acknowledgement for engaging in youth development for the future of Boston. Even though Mayor Walsh dealt with many of the same challenges today’s youth in Boston are facing, he rose above it all to hold the mayor’s office. These challenges have helped Mayor Walsh excel at his role by giving back to the community and making it better in any way possible.

In the summer of 2014, I had the privilege of introducing Mayor Walsh at a State Street end-of-summer celebration, which marked the end of a summer-long State Street internship for Boston Public School High School students.

At this event, the mayor talked about keys to success. For example, I remember the mayor saying that the major keys to success are to present yourself well and always take advantage of every opportunity. Be ambitious.

All of the Boston Public School interns at State Street, including myself, were following the keys to success. We showed success by putting ourselves out there, choosing not to stay home, and getting busy with youth opportunity programs in and out of school, and especially over the summer.

How One Man Turned His Pain into Power

By Kamila Abdi with Esther Bobo and Nick Cetoute

had just finished reading his book, All Souls: A Family Story from Southie, in Dr. Jones’ Humanities 4 class.

MacDonald was born and raised in South Boston, and lived in the Boston Housing Authority development called Old Colony. He became an activist due to the unsafe environment in which he lived. He started Boston’s gun buy-back program, and also founded the South Boston Vigil Group, which allows families to talk about the people they have lost to gun violence. MacDonald experienced the death of three of his eight siblings. After he lost his siblings, he shut down for a long time. He learned how to find a way to deal with his loss only after seeking help from a counselor and talking about his feelings. MacDonald’s community activism helped other people recognize and deal with violence in Boston.

The focus of MacDonald’s talk was on how to deal with trauma. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, trauma is defined as a “very difficult or unpleasant experience that causes someone to have mental or emotional problems, usually for a long time.”

When asked about how schools should help students work through trauma, MacDonald talked about the Continued on Page 2
News

Michael Patrick MacDonald

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importance of having different outlets to express themselves, such as art and music. He acknowledged how trauma can cause people to lose focus and how schools have to support students who are experiencing trauma.

MacDonald spoke about his own tough childhood in Boston, sharing that he overcame his trauma by becoming a community activist and finding his voice. He believes that schools should guide students through trauma.

“The worst things that happen to us in the world can become our source of strength. Schools should be places where we can find that route,” he said.

Celebrating Black History

By Terence Oliver and Gloralfi Victorino

What happened on January 31, 1865? The Thirteenth Amendment was passed by Congress, abolishing slavery in the United States. One hundred and fifty-one years later, we use Black History Month to remember the important gifts and achievements of Black writers, leaders, politicians, CEO’s, scientists, artists, educators, and activists, among others. We celebrate Black History Month in the United States in the month of February, which can be felt nationally and worldwide as many cities across the world honor its importance.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is considered one of the most important voices out of all voices of the American Civil Rights movement, as he worked for equal rights for all, along with many other Civil Rights leaders. He was famous for using nonviolent resistance to overcome injustice. He never grew tired of trying over and over to end segregation laws.

Rosa Parks was a civil rights activist and started her work by simply standing up for her human rights and her beliefs. She refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on a Montgomery, Ala., bus.

Let’s also use February and the other months of the year to celebrate the achievements that have changed the African American experience and contributed to American history.

Continued on Page 3

Merci

by Nadine Thomas

Merci to the reveurs
For they see our world differently than what is seen
Merci to the ouvrier du batiment
For they build the reveurs dreams
Merci to the enseignante, the professeur, and the instituteur
For they inspire the reveurs to dream and the ouvrier du batiment to build
Merci to the ones who teach
Car ils font notre monde
For they make our world

Raider News

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Members of the Editorial Board made significant contributions to this issue by attending weekly meetings, contributing content ideas, and leading the direction of the paper.

Thank you to Ms. Grady, Dr. Jones, Coach O’Brien, Ms. Pierre, Ms. Timilty, Mr. Nozea, Ms. Diggs, Mr. Kemp, Ms. Harris, and Ms. Watson for help with this issue.

A very special thank you to Allison Traylor, Aneri Pat tani and Prasanna Rajasekaran, our sponsors from the Northeastern University Scholars Program. This paper would not be possible without their vision and support.

This is a Superstar Student.

This Superstar Student shows up to school by 7:20 a.m.
This Superstar Student attends each class every day.
This Superstar Student is a Rockstar.

Be a Superstar Student.

#WakeUp Westie

The worst things that happen to us in the world can become our source of strength. Schools should be places where we can find that route,” he said.

“People are suffering from family loss or close friends dying from shooting incidents or car accidents, and people don’t know how to deal with it,” he said.

Selena Maldonado, a senior, learned an important lesson from MacDonald’s visit to WRA: “He said that we can use our pain to build something good to help other people, instead of using drugs and alcohol to kill the pain and become numb.”

For MacDonald, trauma can be a source of power and strength. He hopes that we don’t hold our pain inside, but instead, find ways to talk about it.

“The best thing you can do is to try to help people transform their trauma into their voice, and to turn pain into power. The strongest people in the world are people who have turned pain into power. All the greats from history, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, they all turned their pain into power and helped people to do that as well,” he said.

Michael Patrick MacDonald

When asked why he would recommend All Souls to other students, senior Alexander Eduard answered, “We finally get a story set in our area. Even though it’s not a happy story, it still feels like home, and we can all relate to it. We get to know the actual truth about South Boston and not just the stories we hear about Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester.”

Senior Michael Stengel shared why he thinks the book is relevant.

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Black History Month

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year to learn about people in history who deserve recognition for their contributions to freedom and equality:
- Robert Smalls, who freed himself from slavery and convinced Abraham Lincoln to allow African American soldiers to fight on behalf of their country in the Civil War
- Noble Drew Ali, who was the founder of the Moorish Science Temple of America and promoted unity among all Black people
- Ella Baker, who worked for civil rights for 50 years, mentored Rosa Parks, and is known for saying, “strong people don’t need strong leaders”
- Fannie Lou Hamer, who is known for saying “I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired” and fighting for voting rights for Black people in the United States

Black History Month is a time to remember to learn new things, including how people journeyed to freedom and about heroes who paved the way for us. As a school, we celebrate Black History Month to honor the importance of Black history, as well as those people who struggled for our freedom.

WRA will be celebrating Black History Month both in and outside of the classroom. Pay special attention to classroom doors, which will illustrate different Black leaders who worked for equal rights in the United States.

In addition, our English class, along with 10th grade English classes at WRA, will join the 27th-Annual National African American Read-in during February, sponsored by the Black Caucus of the National Council of Teachers of English. This is a time when students across the country put their voices to works of Black writers. We will be reading authors like Zora Neale Huston and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and reflecting on what it means to take a stand for your beliefs.

Here are some more things we can do to celebrate Black History month in WRA:
- Read the poem “I, too, sing America” by Langston Hughes
- Listen to blues music over the intercom between classes
- Have all classes in the school read Martin Luther King, Jr.’s I Have a Dream speech at the same time
- Learn the songs of the Civil Rights movement, such as “This Little Light of Mine” and “Oh Freedom”
- Research the history of Hip-Hop music and have students share their favorite songs

Headmaster’s Corner

By Nicholas Cetoute, Marvens Isidore, and Messiah Sincere Murchison

Q: Can you explain the new attendance policy?

A: The new attendance policy is the same as the old attendance policy, but it is just being implemented the way it should have been. Before I talk to you about the attendance policy, let me tell you what the problem is. Students come to school late and they end up missing first period. Missing class can cause failing grades. I don’t want students to fail. But how do we change the behavior of students coming to school late? I would do anything to support our students, and this policy will help support our students. We will then create a support plan to help get you to school on time with counseling supports. Number one on the revised attendance policy is that if you arrive to school after 8 a.m. instead of 7:20 a.m., you will have to wait in a room in the front of the building instead of going to class. We will then call your parent/guardian and inform them that you’ve arrived at that time.

Another introduced attendance policy is called “buy-back,” and this will help students that miss time in the morning make time up in the afternoon to help at least “buy-back,” or make up for the time they missed. This intervention will also allow the student to get the work done that they need with support to make sure they pass.

Q: What are your thoughts on emotional support for street violence?

A: We’ve been suffering from street violence for awhile. The answer to the question is that this is a greater problem than the school. This problem is the City of Boston. I’ve reached out to Boston’s Streetworker Organization to bring Streetworkers into the building. This would provide us with services that can go from school to home.

Q: Can you talk about the budget cuts for next school year?

A: Budget cuts are system-wide, not just at our school. When you have a budget cut, you are now having to do more with less. We’ll have to make some changes, and we’re looking at the schedule for next year. But, the principal cannot change the schedule without the teacher support, and the teachers would have to vote on any changes proposed. When you have to make budgetary decisions, you must learn how to use your resources differently and to the best of your ability.

Translation on Page 5

The Bottom Line on Budget Cuts

By Nick Cetoute

Budget cuts are no joke. They will affect all of us - no matter which Boston Public School you attend. Mr. Weekes shared how elective classes, such as art, music, photography, and reading, help keep students motivated to stay in school. Mr. Weekes said that with budget cuts, elective classes could be first to go.

He does not have the final answer to the budget cut problem at this moment, but he is working 24/7 to find the answer.

But this is on us, too. This is our school and our City. We deserve more. So what can we do? Call the Mayor’s office to take a stand against budget cuts.

This is as simple as dialing 311, The Mayor’s 24-hour Constituent Call Line. What else can we do? Sign the move-on.org petition to stop budget cuts to Boston schools: http://tinyurl.com/zmt5evu
Student Athlete Spotlight:
Avelino Damoura

By Katelyn Welch

Senior Avelino Damoura is the captain and starting guard for our basketball team. He was born in Cape Verde and lived there until he was seven when he moved to Boston. He transferred to WRA last year.

In the time he has been a Raider, Avelino has achieved membership in the National Honor Society, The Principal’s Honor Roll with straight A’s, and is managing three AP classes this year. He hopes to score a prestigious student athlete scholarship after graduating high school to attend a post-graduate year of school at an independent school. He then plans to go to college.

Avelino is passionate about basketball, and he has been selected for numerous basketball camps, such as the Bird Street Community Center in Dorchester and playing AAU basketball for the Warriors last summer.

Outside of basketball, he enjoys reading and spending time with family and friends. Avelino is very strong spiritually and attends church every week.

Dr. Jones, Avelino’s senior Humanities teacher has taught Avelino for two years and has a lot to say about this Westie MVP.

“He has been a great addition to my classes. He has great attendance and truly cares about his academics. He often asks for feedback on his papers and makes the appropriate changes without ever complaining. He always strives to do better and is very helpful to his classmates...It really has been a great experience watching him grow academically,” she said.

Avelino demonstrates the perfect example of a well disciplined, focused, independent, perseverant, humble, and kind student with outstanding leadership skills and excellent attendance. Avelino does not give up easily. He says that he is motivated by “the feeling of just knowing that you can overcome something.”

Avelino shared more about himself in an interview this past December.

Q: Can you talk about a time when you overcame a struggle?

A: My sophomore year, I struggled to balance basketball and academics, and I focused more on basketball. During my junior year, I did better in school but basketball wasn’t going so well. Although, having good academics kept me up.

Q: What’s your advice to younger students struggling at home or because of a language barrier?

A: Try your best in school because school is going to keep you up. Try to not let what happens at home affect you at school because it will affect your future. Be yourself and don’t follow the crowd. People will like you as you are and who you will become.

Q: Can you talk about a time you failed? How did you overcome that failure?

A: I was a bad test taker, and I learned better habits. Like if a teacher told you there is a test on Friday, start studying on Monday [before the test]. I learned how to prepare for it.

Q: What are you grateful for?

A: I’m grateful for my mother. She pushes me to be the person I am today. She sacrificed friends and family so that I could have a life in America. She motivates me, and works everyday to provide for me and my brother.

Stop, Drop & Roll

By Jenese Love with Nasir Rivera and Abygail Rudder

Here’s a run-down of the Westie Raiders’ basketball season so far. Raider superstars Avelino Damoura and Montez Lacombe are quick to steal the floor. They are known sharpshooters on the Westie court. Cedrick Charles, a persistence point guard, is rocking the paint. Mekhi Cohen, the Raiders’ superstar closer, steps out to the court in the fourth quarter to the cheers in the crowd. Mekhi said he likes to shoot threes and wants to work on his form.

As for the Junior Varsity team, this season is their first year together, and they already have a relationship that allows them to play hard and work with each other to get better.

Coach Somers said his main focus is on the team building fundamentals and working with each other to gain points. Coach Somers has been coaching the basketball team for 22 years.

Somers believes in the benefits of sports, saying, “Sports can help keep students in school.”

All home games on the Westie Court are now free for WRA and USA students. If you come to Westie games and show pride, Westie might just go harder than they already are, knowing you’re cheering them on.
**Esquina del Director**

Traducido por Emarie Pantojas

P: ¿Puede explicar la nueva política de asistencia?

R: La nueva política de asistencia es la misma que la poliza de asistencia de antigua, pero sólo se a revisado. Antes de hablar con usted acerca de la poliza de asistencia, déjame decir cuál es el problema. Los niños llegan tarde a la escuela y terminan perdiendo primer periodo. Falta de clase puede causar malas calificaciones. No quiero que los estudiantes falten. Pero ¿cómo podemos cambiar el comportamiento de los estudiantes que llegan a la escuela tarde? Haría cualquier cosa para apoyar a nuestros estudiantes, y esta poliza ayudará a apoyar a nuestros estudiantes.

Númerouno en la poliza de asistencia revisada es que si llega a la escuela después de las 8:00 am en lugar de las 7:20 am, tendrá que esperar en una habitación en la parte frontal del edificio en lugar de ir a clase. A continuación, se llama a tu padre / tutor y se les informará que usted ha llegado en ese momento. Por último, vamos a crear un plan de apoyo para ayudarle a llegar a la escuela a tiempo. Otra revisión de la poliza de asistencia se llama “recompra”, y esto va a ayudar a los estudiantes que faltan tiempo en la mañana. Hacer el tiempo en la tarde para ayudar al menos “recompra”, o compensar por el tiempo perdido. Esta intervención también permitirá al estudiante a hacer el trabajo que necesitan apoyo para asegurarse de que pasan.

P: ¿Cuáles son tus apoyo emocional a la violencia callejera?

R: Hemos estado sufriendo de violencia en las calles por un tiempo. La respuesta a la pregunta es que este es un problema mayor; no se trata sólo de nosotros. Éste problema es de la ciudad de Boston. He llegado a la Organización Streetworker de Boston para traer Streetworker en el edificio. O yo o alguno de mi personal puede hablar con cualquier estudiante en cualquier momento.

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**Corner direktè lekòl la**

*Translated by Winda Durand with Esther Bobo and Nick Cetoute*

Kesyon.: Êsko ou ka eksplikè nouvél lwa prezans lan?

Mesyè Weekes: Nouvel lwa prezans lan se menm jan ak ancièn lwa prezans lan ki simpenmen revize. Mwen anvan m ‘pale ak ou sou polité tik la prezans, kite m’ di ou sa pwoblem lan ye. Timoun vini lekòl an reta e sa fe yo manke premye peryòd class yo. Man, keklas kòp lòt kalòz etudian-an pa revize yon plan na se pale ak lenpòt elèv nan lekòl la ale. Desyèm lòt revizyon nan lwa prezans lan rele “Re-achtè,” sa a pral ede élèv ki an reta an maten rete an apremidi nan lekòl la pou fe devouo yo te pe-di-yo. Konsa yo “Re-achtè,” tan an yo te rate ya. Entévansyon sa a pral pèmèt tout élèv complete travay yo ak sipò necese pou asire ke yo pase klas yo.

Kesyon.: Ki sipò emosyonèl ki geyen kont vylons nàn lòt ri?

Mesyè Weekes Repon: Lari an? Nou gen lòt konte ki nap soufri de vylons lari. Repons kesyon an se ke sa a se yon pi gwò pwoblem; e sa pe sèlman nou mem ki gen Pwobèm sa a se tout vil Boston an. Mwen te rive jwenn sout nan Streetworker Òganizasyon Boston an yo pote streetworkers nan biling LAN. Swa tèt mwen oswa nòpèt ak demisyon nan anplwaye mwen ka pale ak nòpèt élèv nan nòpèt ki lè.

Kesyon.: Êsko ou ka pale sou koupe yo bidjè pou ane lekòl aprè a?

Mesyè Weekes: Koupé bidjè yo tout sitiom lan, pa sèlman nan lekòl nou an. Lè ou gen yon koupe bidjè, ou yo krouny a se gen fé plis ak mwen. Nou pral gen fé kèk chanjian, epin nou ap chèche a orè a pou ane kap vini an. Men, Direktè lekòl la pa ka chanje orè a sa yo pa sipò nan pwofesè, ak pwofesè yo ta gen yo vote sou chanjian pwopozè ... nèpèt Lè ou gen pou pran desizyon pou bidjè ou dwe aprann kouman yo sèvi ak resous ou nan pi byen nan kapasite li yo.

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**We All Wear a Mask**

by Zahara Hreibi

We all as one wear a mask
It hides our sadness and brightens our eyes
This debt we pay to human guile
With broken and damaged hearts we smile
We hide each tear and make each glow
Yet, we still are depressed
and nothing is fixed
It’s meant only for my eyes to see it speak
my unknown history but I have to choose it carefully,
to cover the face that was given to me
revealing all the pain that was hidden.
Features

Recycling in BPS: What We Can Do

By Lequan Davis & Marie Tunis

Did you know it’s the law to recycle in Massachusetts? But unfortunately, not everyone gets a chance to recycle. In previous years in our school, West Roxbury Academy, you may have noticed that on a certain day every week, some of our special needs students and their teachers go around the school collecting paper for recycling. You may have wondered about recycling in Boston Public Schools (BPS) over these years, and this article may answer your questions.

On Friday, Dec. 4, 2015, we interviewed Phoebe Beierle, the Sustainability Manager for BPS. She has worked for BPS for four and a half years – three of those years as a Green Schools Fellow with the Center for Green Schools at the US Green Building Council. In 2014, her position became permanent with Boston Public Schools.

The program Ms. Beierle runs started in 2011 and is only for BPS schools. It is called Single Stream by some, and Zero Sort by others. Their mottos are “Recycle at school like you do at home” and “Recycle more. Trash less.” When Single Stream first started, the diversion rate was about 7 percent, but as the years went by, that rate increased. Last year the diversion rate was close to 18 percent, triple the original amount of recycling done in BPS.

Ms. Beierle explained to us that the biggest challenge her team comes across is the fact that the schools do great at recycling one year and then the opposite the next year, especially if a Green Team staff person leaves. Also, the program does not have enough money to buy the more durable recycling bins and other equipment needed to help them achieve their goals.

The initial investment to get 130 schools recycling single stream cost about $50,000 dollars, mostly for the wheeled blue carts that you see around school. There are about four to five recycling carts in each school. The ratio of carts to students is 1:100, or 1 cart per 100 students. The recycled materials get picked up by the City’s recycling haulers (Capitol Waste and Sunrise Scavengers) once or twice a week. They then get transported to Charlestown to a warehouse, and get dumped on a huge floor to get sorted by people and machines. Eventually, the materials are turned into new items such as bottles and decking for floors.

Currently, there is an energy saving competition called The Energy Conservation Challenge that started in December and runs through February, 2016. Twenty schools are participating so far. Westie could be the competition’s 21st school to save energy if we just unplug electronics and turn off all of the lights at the end of the day.

Ms. Beierle stated that she loves her job and has a passion for the environment. Recycling is pretty cool to do and it’s very easy. It is one of the best ways to help the environment and to stop climate change. If our school starts taking recycling and energy saving seriously, we will be making a huge difference in the world. Look for ways that you can help us by joining the Westie Green Team and read more about recycling in our schools at www.bostongreenschools.org. Join the Westie Green Team on Fridays during Advisory in Ms. Grady’s room, 222.

Surveys show recycling trends of students at WRA. Surveys collected by Lequan Davis and Marie Tunis in December 2015.

Need Homework Help?

By Derek Bertucci

Founded in 2006 by Salman Khan, Khan Academy is an online, nonprofit educational system. Khan Academy offers educational videos in a YouTube-like format in classes such as math, science, computer programing, history, art, economics, and more.

How did Khan Academy originate? Salman Khan started tutoring his cousin, Nade, in math. He soon started putting his videos on YouTube. Over time, Sal’s videos became quite popular–popular enough so that he would begin consulting with his wife about quitting his job and making educational, online videos as a profession.

According to Sal, his ambition was to “accelerate learning for students of all ages...to share our content with whoever may find it useful.” Khan’s videos span worldwide and are being used to educate students from Boston to China and Africa. Using Khan Academy, students can study for their SATs and PSATs. There is a new SAT test starting in March of this year and Khan Academy is a great place to practice those new questions online.

Juniors, this would be a perfect time to visit the Khan Academy website to study for the new SAT. Visit the website at: https://www.khanacademy.org/Khan and click on “start learning now.” Khan Academy’s SAT prep offers four official practice exams from The College Board, the creator of the SAT and PSAT. Personally, I believe Khan Academy is an excellent tool to support your academics. Khan Academy presents an organized way to learn things through easy-to-understand videos that help you “get” new material. The site is also very useful as your own personal tutor. I appreciate how the site provides new ways to analyze and understand problems in many different subjects.

Not only does the site provide educational help, it also offers advice and assistance on applying to college and expanding your educational career. Check out the video in which Sal Khan shares his personal experience with applying to college and getting financial aid.

Overall, Khan Academy is a first-rate educational tool. Google “Khan Academy” today!
Brave Girls

By Erica Harris

People don’t want to see women doing things they don’t think women should do. “A woman shouldn’t do this or that...” and “This is not a woman’s job!” are words we often hear when we see a woman doing things a man is most likely to do.

At the Massachusetts Conference for Women, held in December 2015 at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, women shared with the audience their experiences of living as successful and powerful women and the challenges they went through.

Shree Bose, Marquesha Babers, and Erin Schrode are three activists who talked about their problems and what they did to change gender equality and discrimination.

“Girls have a voice too,” Marquesha Babers said. She talked about how she made her first change for girls at the age of 17 in high school through the art of poetry. She tells a story of how there was a poetry group at her school that she wanted to join, but sadly it was only for the young male voices. Questioning why, Marquesha wrote a poem anyway and asked if she could perform it. She put a female voice out there to represent herself and other women. Marquesha took advantage of an opportunity to travel and share her gift. Although Marquesha struggled, she did not allow her struggles - being black in the lower/middle class - get in her way, and now she is a well-known poet.

Shree Bose talked about the experience of participating in a science fair despite being told that “Girls are supposed to be bad at science; science is supposed to be for guys.” Shree attended a tech conference, where only 20 percent of the conference-goers were women. Only 20 percent? That’s just like going to a school with predominantly one race/ethnicity and being the only person who looks different because of your skin color. With only two out of every ten people in the room being women, Shree wondered if she belonged there.

At the tech conference, she carried around her invention, but people mistook her invention for a box of cookies. She noticed that when she walked with the man next to her, that people never hesitated to ask her male partner what his new invention was.

Erin Schrode thought it was a bad idea for our government to be built by men. So she built an organization just for young women to make our world more environmentally friendly. She helped these young women open “green” businesses like she did with her mother.

From 1848 to today, the Women’s Rights Movement continues. Women helped win World War I during 1914-1918, were given the right to vote in the 1920s, and were recruited into jobs vacated by men who had gone to fight in subsequent wars.

We live under stereotypes where women are supposed to be housewives, not play football or any other sports, or do down-and-dirty jobs that men do because we’re “not as strong as men.” We’re supposed to be paid less, not allowed to speak out, never be in charge, act soft, raise kids, etc.

No! Listening to these life stories made me realize that women must stay true to our voices and speak up on things we should speak up on...no matter if you’re expressing yourself, or trying to solve problems. You can be like the chemist, Jacqueline K. Barton, who proved that DNA conducts electric current but not as well when it’s tight organization is disrupted by damage from certain chemicals or mutations. Or you can create a new idea like Maria Telkes, who invented a solar house.

We sell ourselves short when we hold back. After this conference, I’ve learned that I should not doubt myself because I am only adding on to the million people who are doubting me already. Giving in to the doubters - and even being a doubter myself - will make it impossible for me to succeed. The world needs us!

459 Families Eat Tonight

By Igli Ajdini

On Jan. 13, 2016, my Humanities 4 class and our teacher, Dr. Jones, went to the American Red Food Bank in Boston to help families in need. It was the first time that I did such a thing.

When we first arrived, we were separated into two groups. One group went in the back and helped package the food and put the items into their locations. The other group was in the front, assisting families and carrying food to their cars or outside to bag it. The people who came for the food were a diverse group. Most of them were immigrants and had difficulty speaking English. The food was separated based on their family household.

At the end of the day, we helped 459 families get food. Just hearing the number of all those families made me happy. I have always wanted to help people and make a change in someone’s life. I guess I did that on that day. I helped those families get food and not go home hungry. If you want to see a change in our society, start by doing it yourself.

Black History Month: A Time to Step Up

By Traevon McFarlane

As people of color, we have struggled hard in our mission for more equality and rights. Even today, we face injustices. Legends like Malcolm X paved the way for us, slaved for us, so we can be on more equal grounds with more equal opportunities today. As you can see, we are still facing unjust situations and circumstances. Remember Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, and Tamir Rice. These are prime examples proving that we need to step it up as a people. Let’s consider Malcolm X’s call to action for February, but also each month of the year. “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”
Opinion

How Much Would You Pay for a Plastic Bag?

By Carlos Barbosa

Countless plastic bags are used every day, creating vast amounts of waste. Most plastics are made from petroleum gases or natural gases, non-renewable resources that can harm the ecosystem. Based on the information I know about climate change and how plastic bags affect climate change, I believe that the United States should initiate legislation to impose tax on plastic bags in order to reduce use.

If legislation is initiated to impose tax on plastic bags, then the usage of plastic bags would decrease. According to Wikipedia’s page on plastic bags, in 2002 the Republic of Ireland introduced a 15-cent tax on every shopping plastic bag. This charge led to a 95 percent decrease in the usage of plastic bags, and the money gathered from the 15-cent tax was used for environmental initiatives. I believe that if the U.S follows these same procedures, we too can decrease the usage of plastic bags and raise money for environmental causes.

Wikipedia also states that supermarkets in Germany charge between 5 and 10-cents per single-use bags. Most shops offer cloth bags or sturdier, woven plastic bags, encouraging shoppers to reuse them. Most people in Germany would reuse the single-use bags for collecting deposit bottles or use them as bin liners. If the United States imposes a tax on plastic bags, then we would be on the same track as Germany. This track would decrease the amount of carbon dioxide emitted into our atmosphere.

On the BBC News Online article, “Why can’t we recycle all this plastic?,” the author Megan Lane cites the negative environmental damage in packaging. Every time food is packaged or groceries get bagged up, environmentally harmful polystyrene is used to create these bags. A U.S. tax on plastic bags usage would reduce this effect by cutting the number of plastic bags we use.

People don’t want to spend money on plastic bags every time they go shopping. Normally, when we go to a supermarket, the clerk would ask the customer, “Would you like a bag?” If the tax is imposed on plastic bags, then more people would think twice about spending money on plastic bags. Let’s think twice about answering “Yes” to that question, and certainly about double bagging groceries.

Quotable Quotes

How do you spend Valentine’s Day?

By Ronaldo Cameron and Nicholas Cetoute

“I will be going to church, and I will spend the rest of the time with my loved one and friends. I plan on eating plenty of chocolate, and I just want to relax and enjoy. It is the day of loving, giving, and sharing.”
- Ms. Harris, Coordinator of Rutgers Student Center

“This Valentine’s day I will be watching romantic movies by myself, drinking hot chocolate, getting donuts from Dunkin’ Donuts, and Facetiming Esther.”
- Kamila, Grade 10

“I will be buying something for my girlfriend.”
- Darius, Grade 11

“This Valentine’s day, I will be on the beach in South Carolina with my hubbie!”
- Ms. Pierre, Spanish Teacher

“The past few years...in my room watching movies and eating, but this year I’ll probably have a Valentine.”
- Flurencia, Grade 12