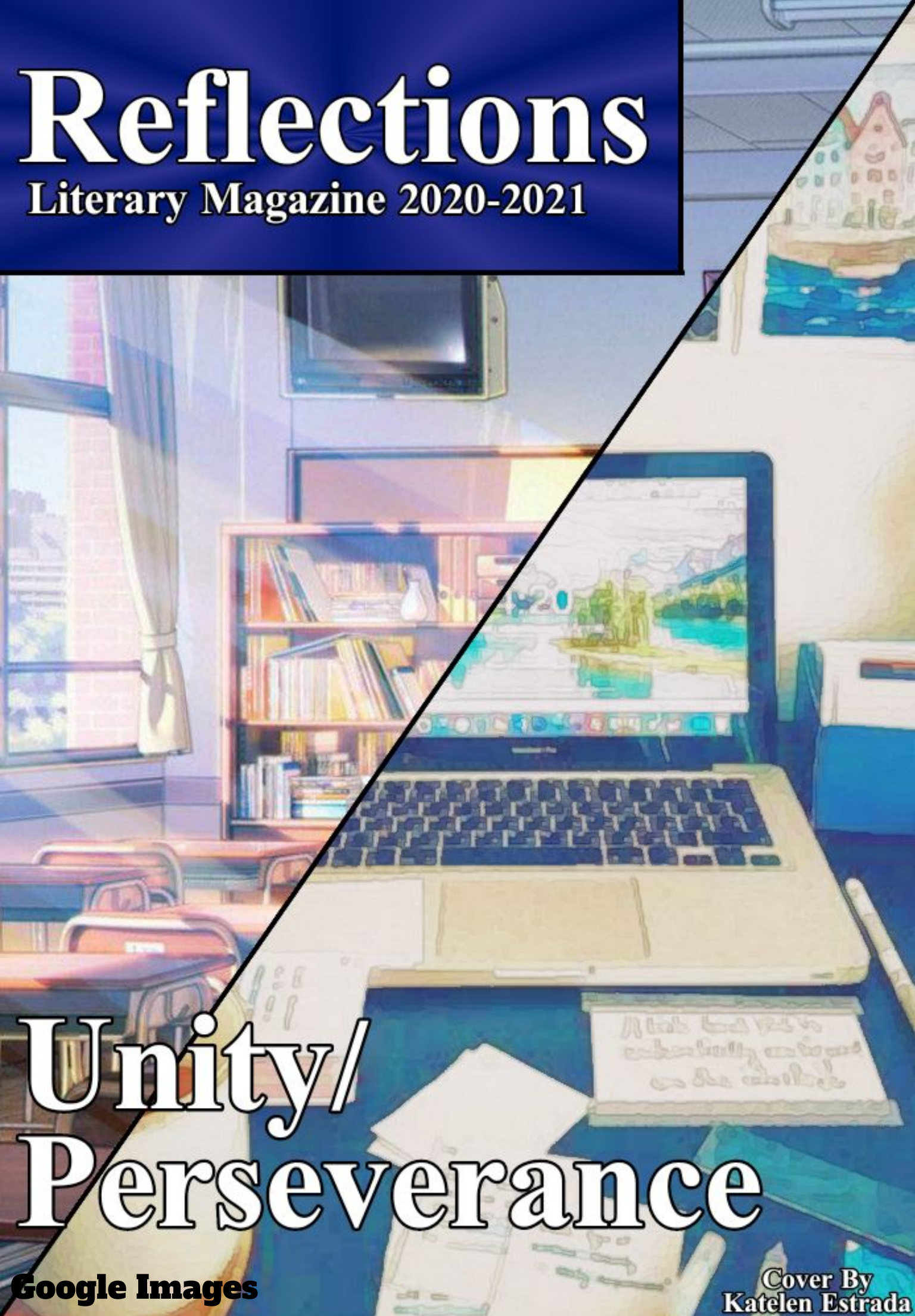
Reflections

Literary Magazine 2020-2021



Unity/ Perseverance

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Katelen Estrada

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Name: Rishi
Age: 13


ENJOY LIFE
Name: Rishi
Age: 13

RISHI SHAH

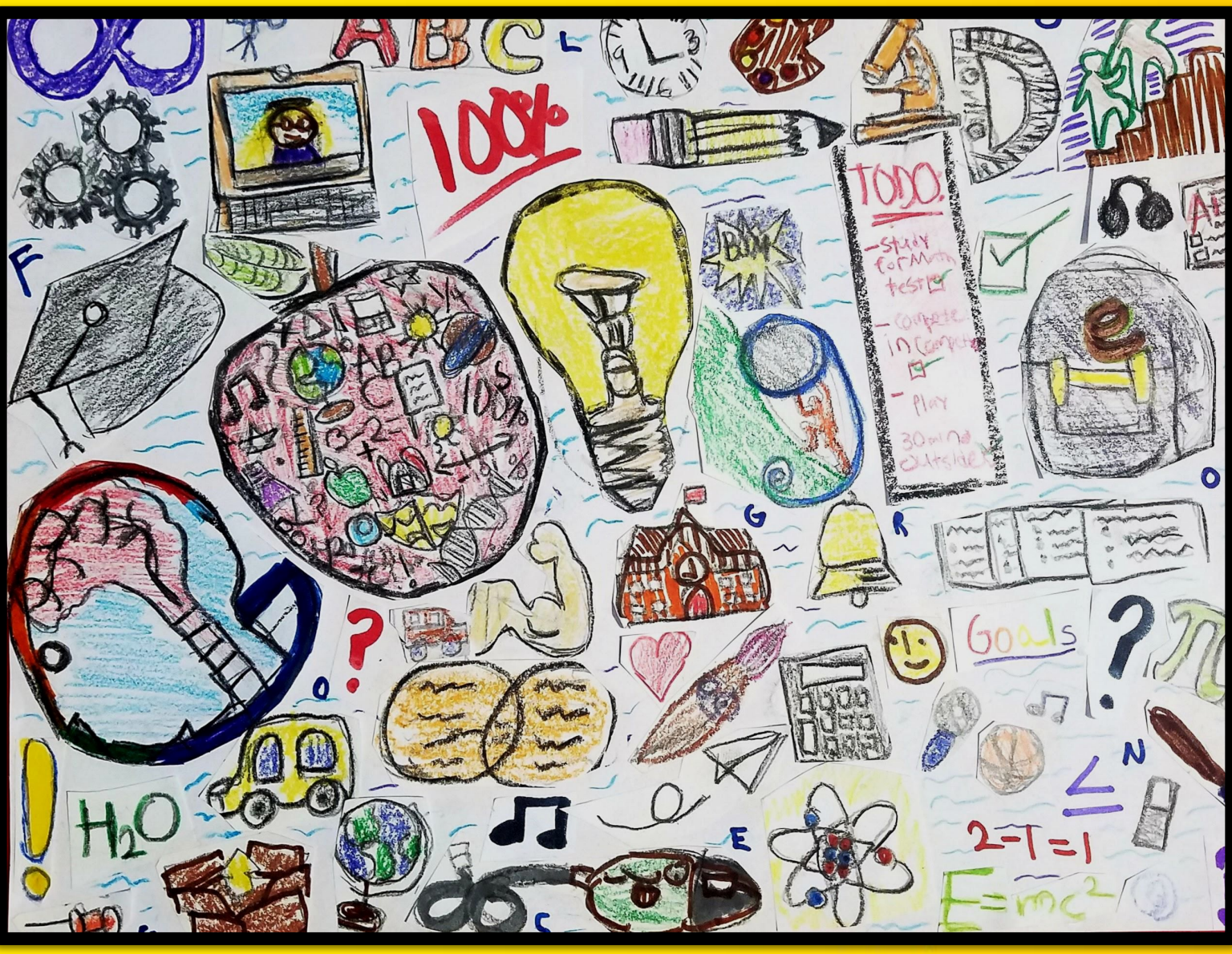


Rishi Shah

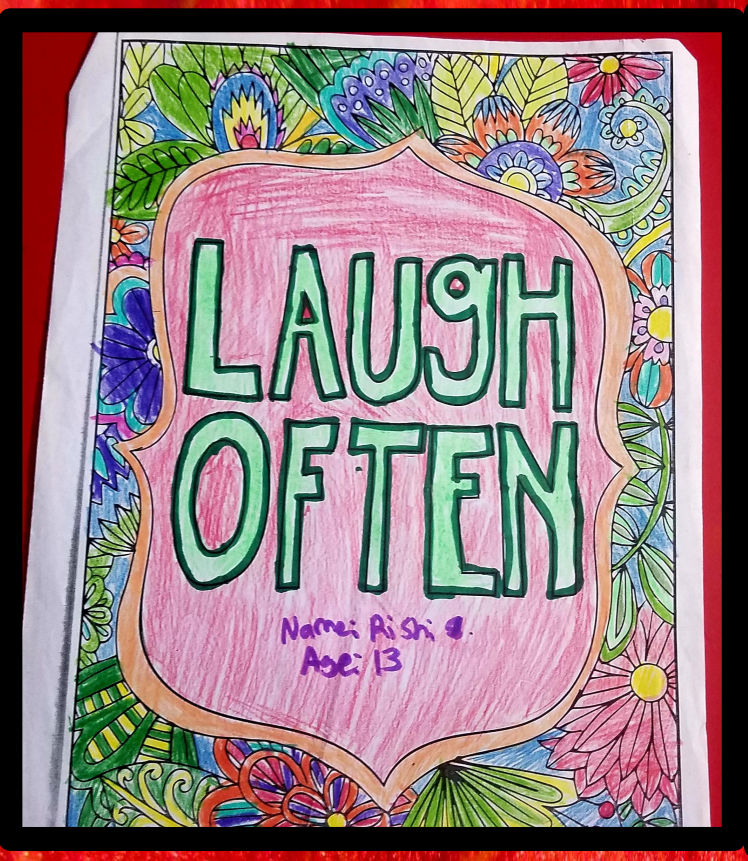

EARTH
WATER WHEEL
YOUR GUIDE TO HOME WATER CONSERVATION
WATER SAVING IDEAS
RECYCLE RIGHT
MIDDLESEX COUNTY • NJ
Do you know what goes IN your Recycling BIN?
DO Recycle
• Plastic Bottles
coded with #1 & #2 only
DON'T Put IN the Recycling BIN
• Plastic Bags
RECYCLE BEYOND the BAG

RISHI SHAH

Education Is Important



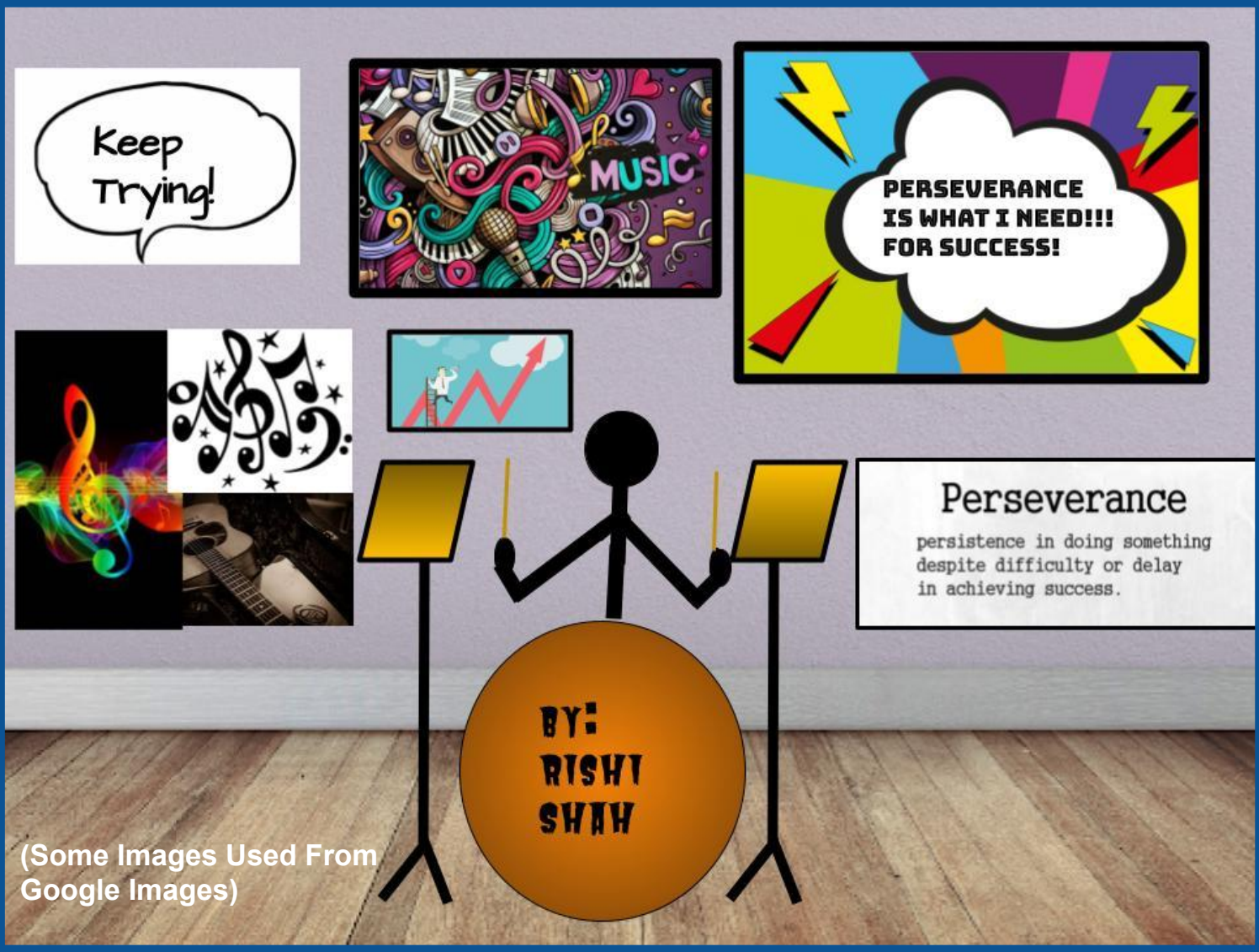
Rishi Shah


LAUGH
OFTEN
Name: Rishi
Age: 13


PEACE

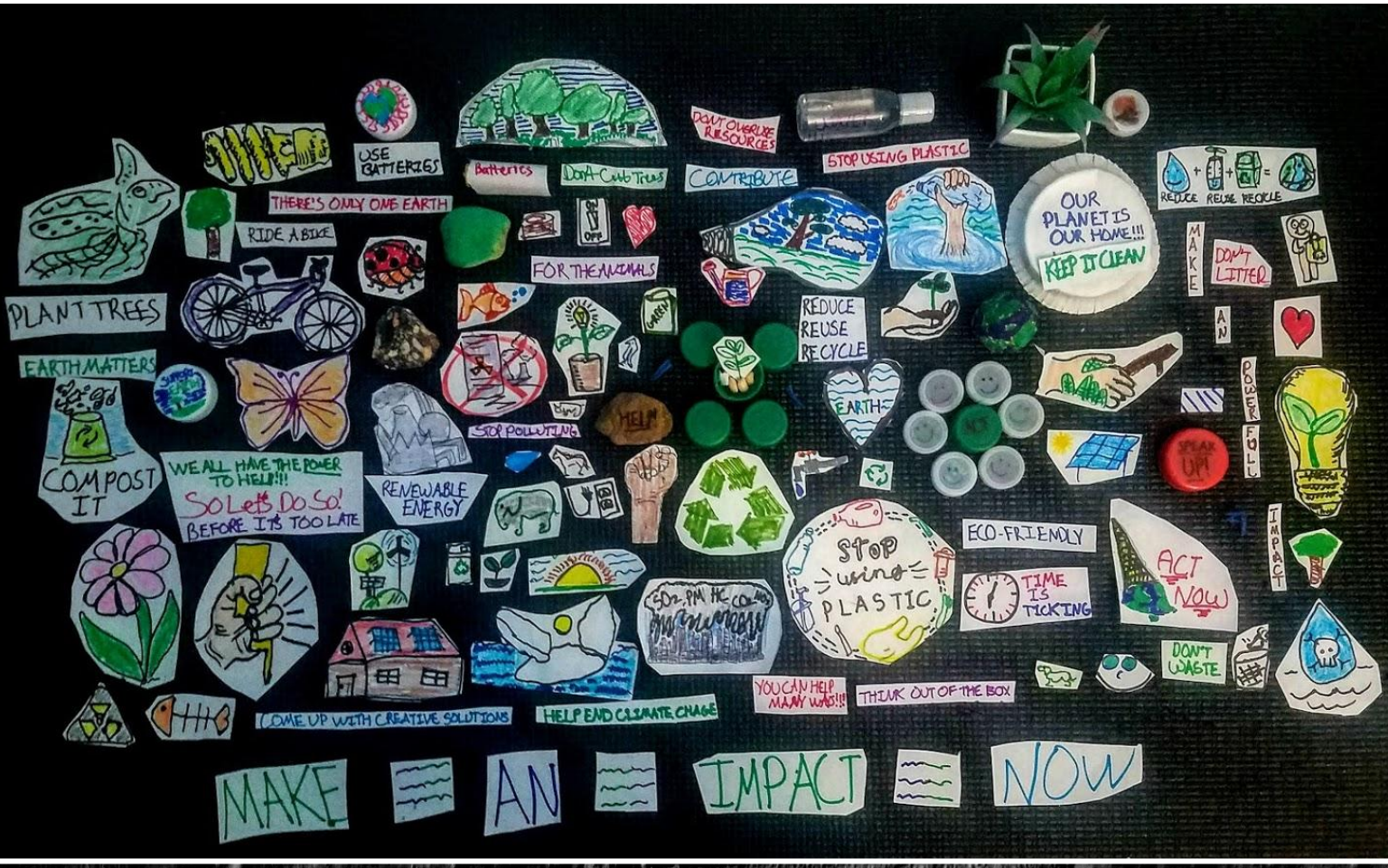

Love
Each
Other
Name: Rishi
AGE: 13

RISHI SHAH

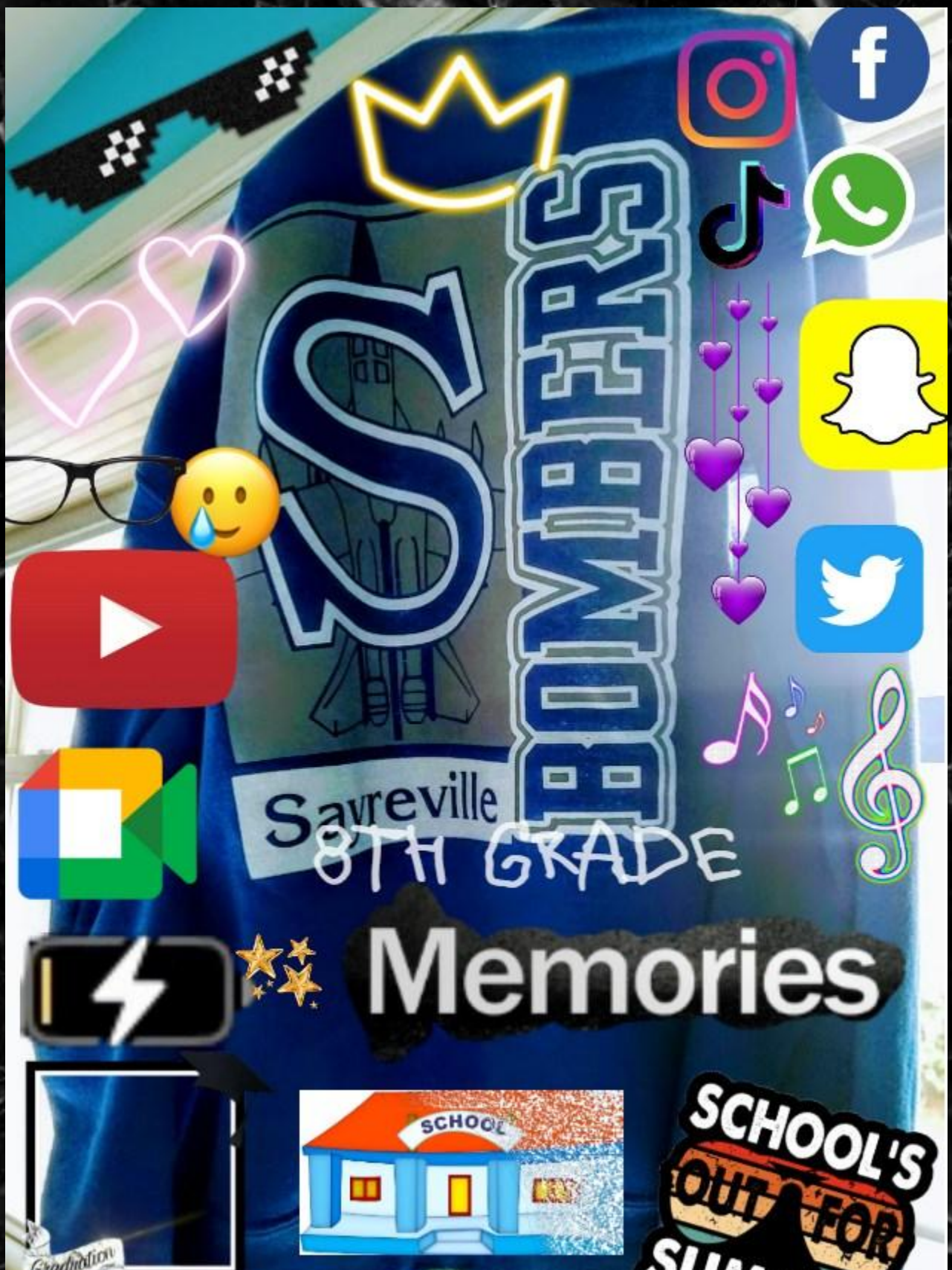

Keep Trying!
MUSIC
PERSEVERANCE IS WHAT I NEED!!! FOR SUCCESS!
Perseverance
persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success.
BY: RISHI SHAH
(Some Images Used From Google Images)

RISHI SHAH

Make An Impact Now!



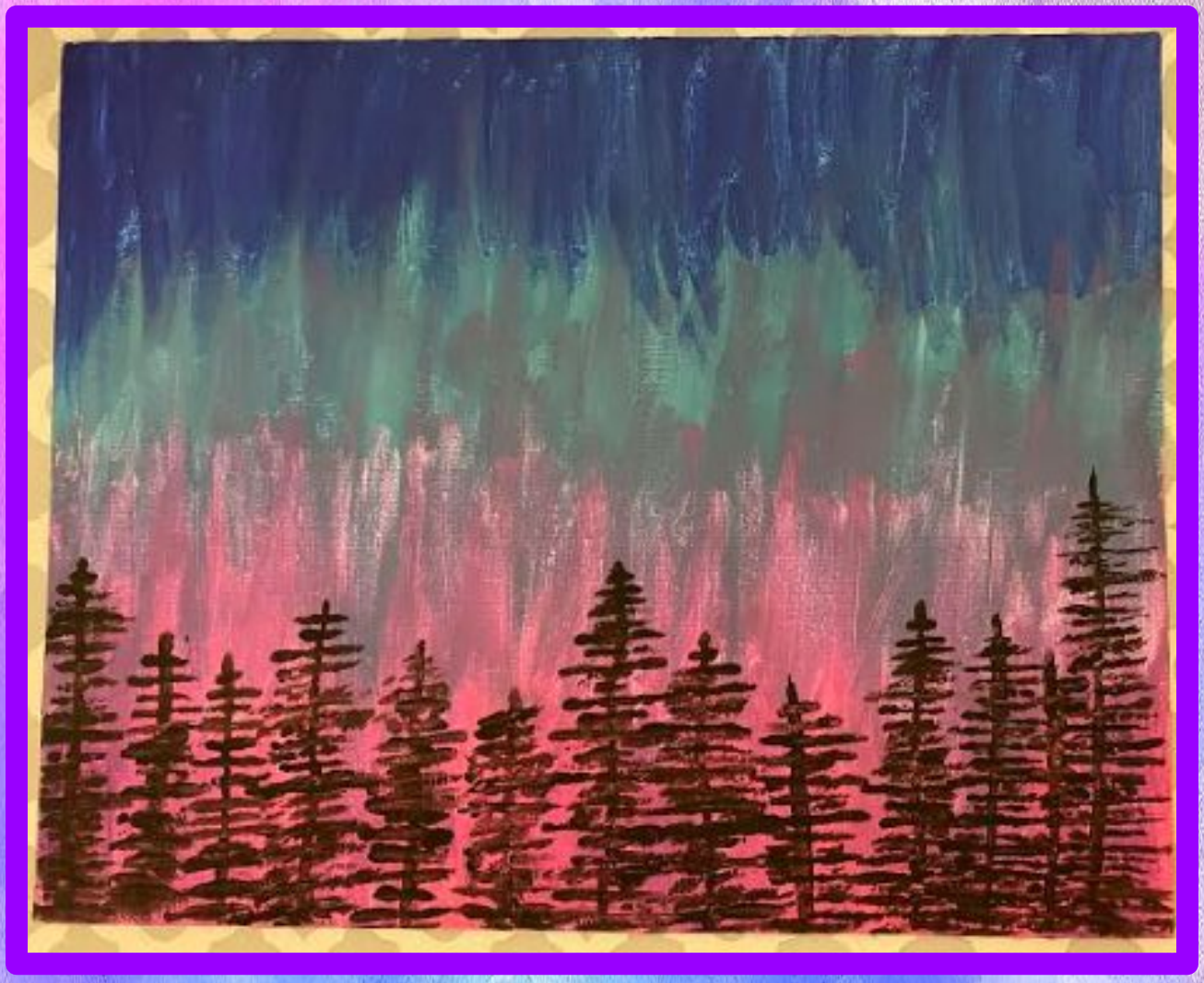
RISHI SHAH


BOMBERS
Savreville
8TH GRADE
Memories
SCHOOL
SCHOOL'S OUT FOR SUMMER
Graduation

RISHI SHAH



RISHI SHAH



Painted by:
Samia Naveed



-Alina Le

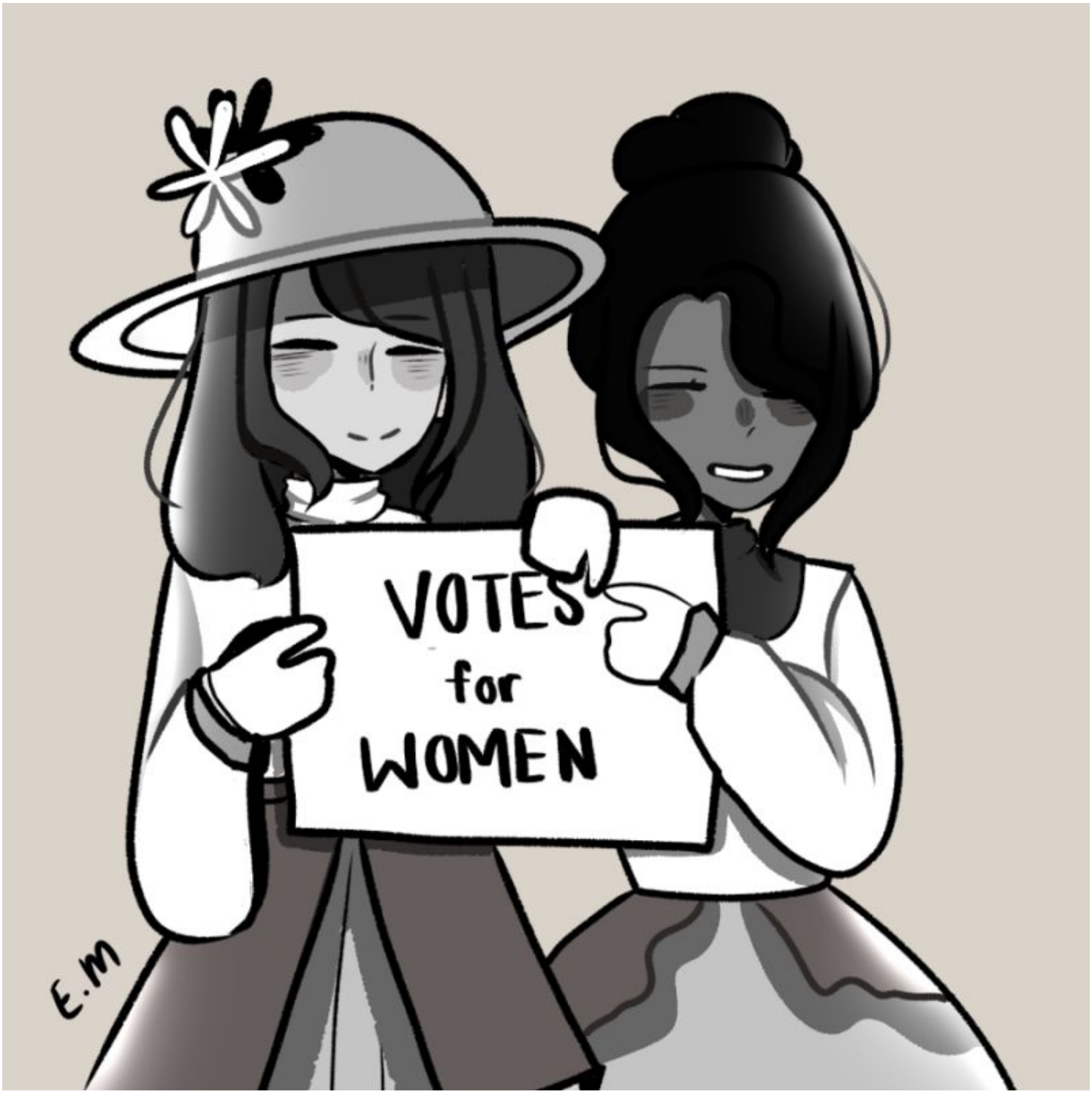
-Alina Le




-Alina Le



-Alina Le

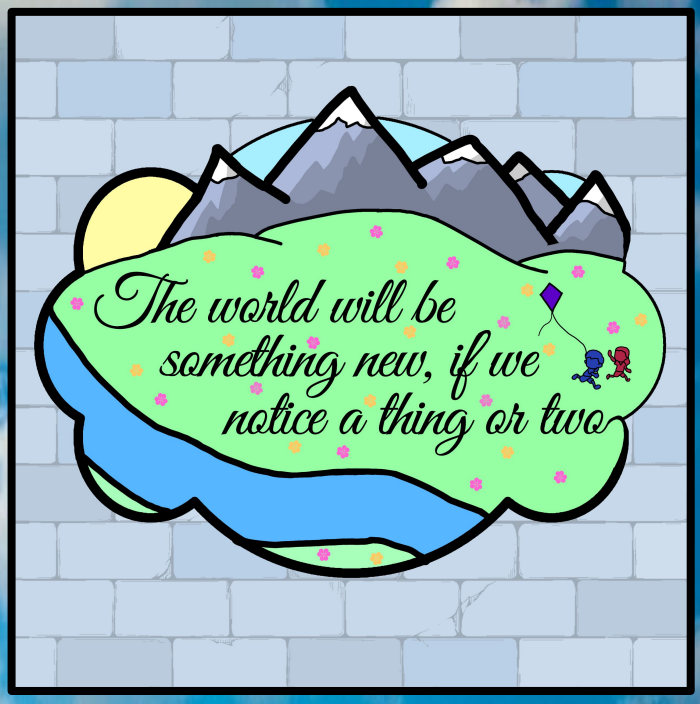


-Eshani Manjrekar



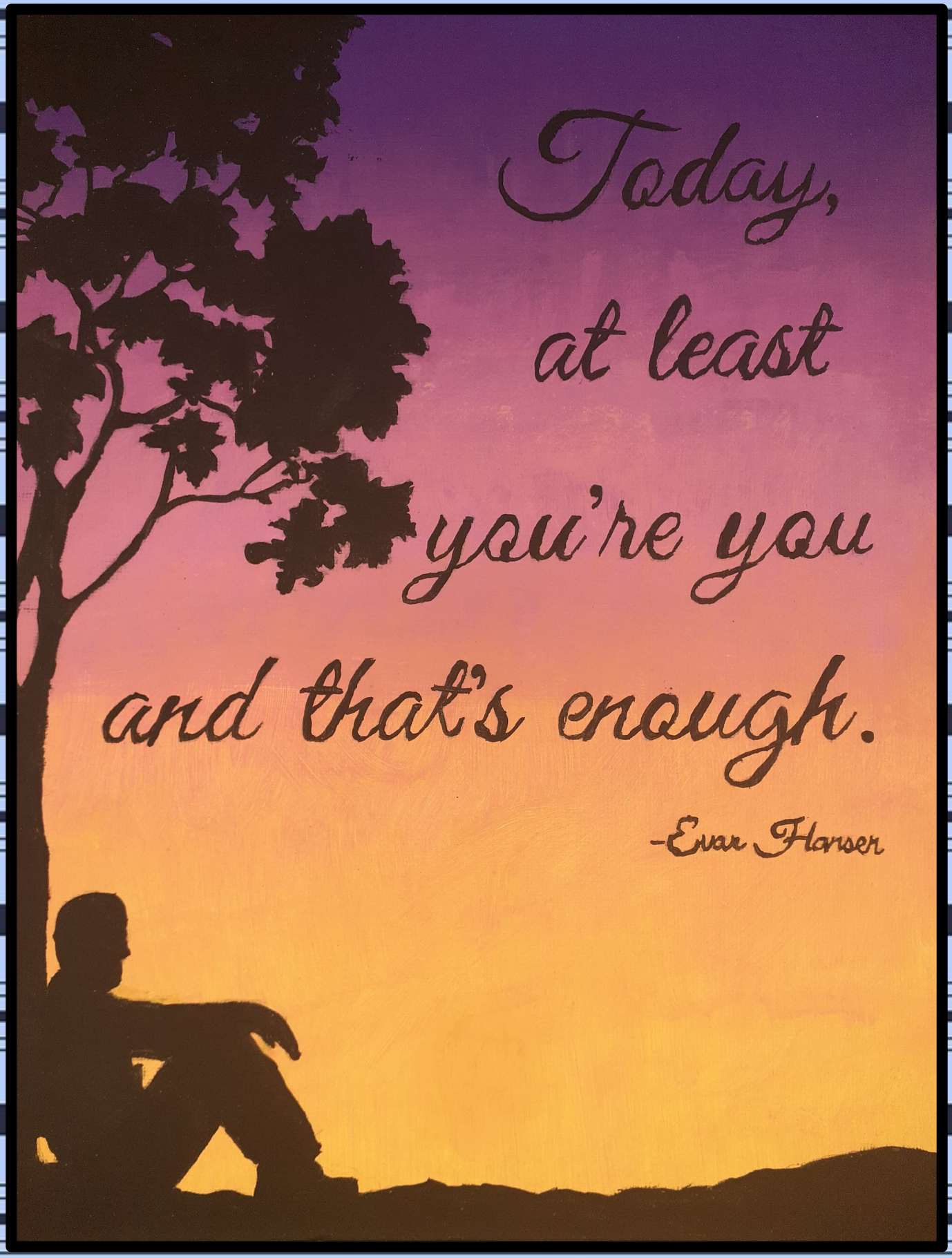
-Eshani Manjrekar







Katelen Estrada



Katelen Estrada



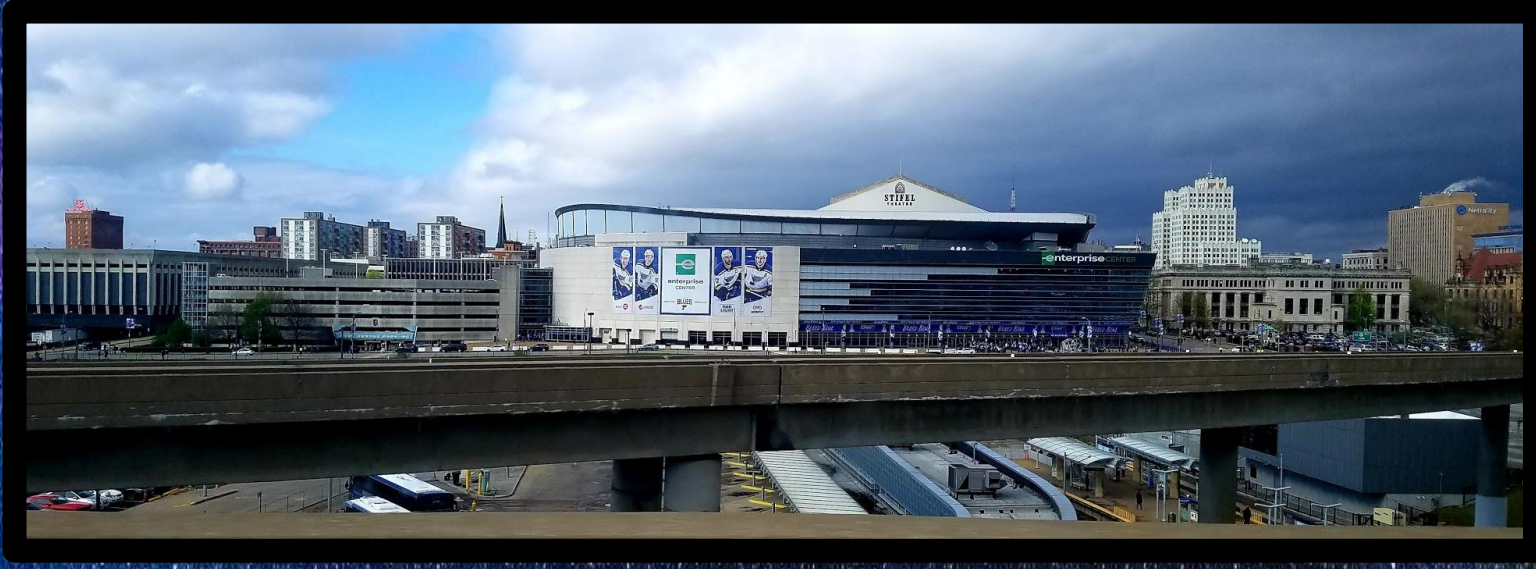
Photography

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RISHI SHAH



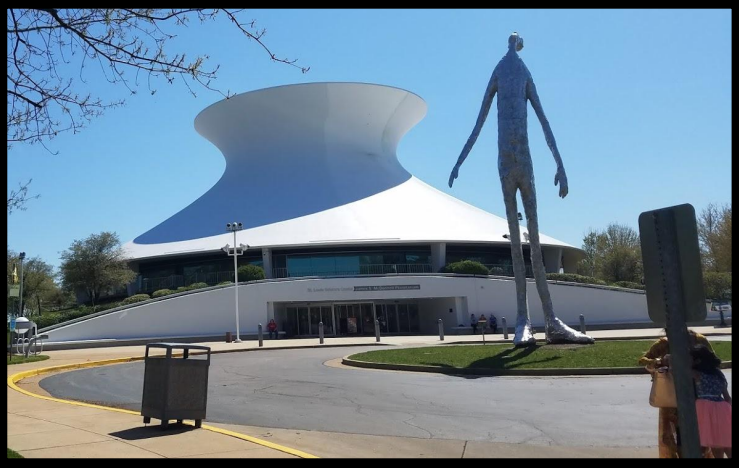
Rishi Shah















Rishi Shah



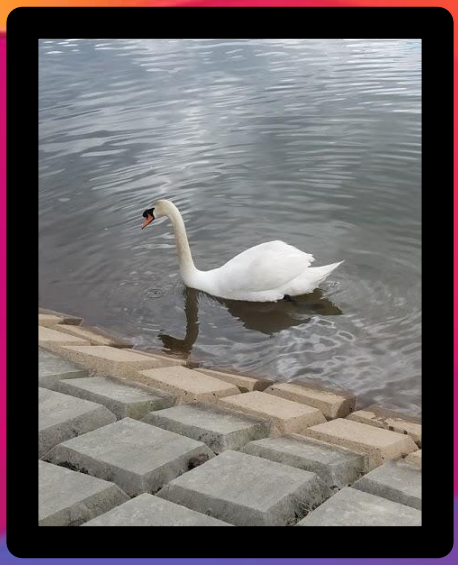




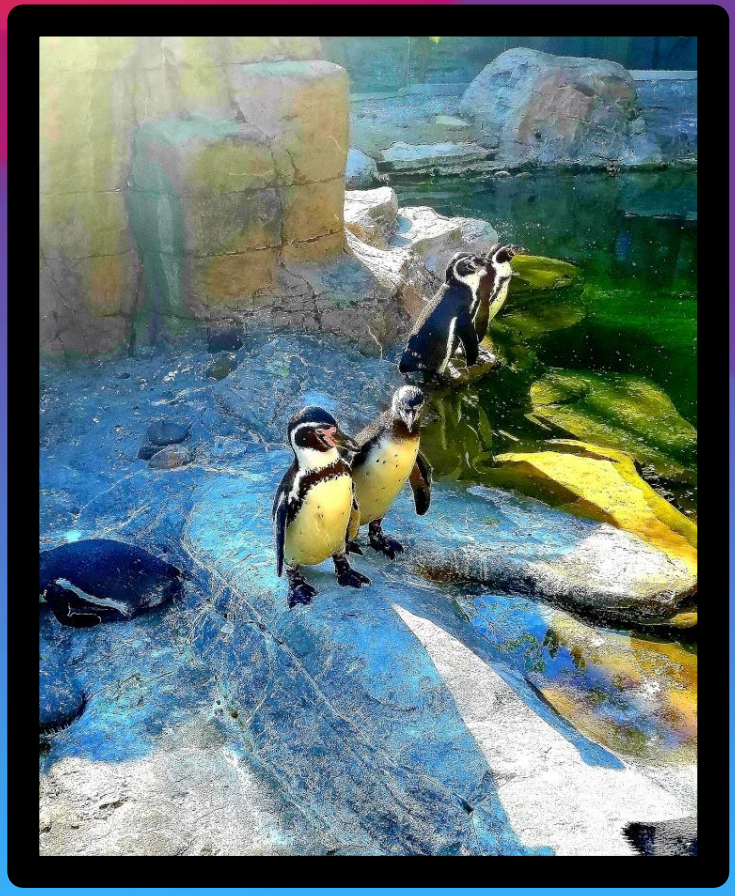
The ducks are working together in order to survive the freezing cold winter.
Wish Them Luck!

RISHI SHAH





Rishi Shah





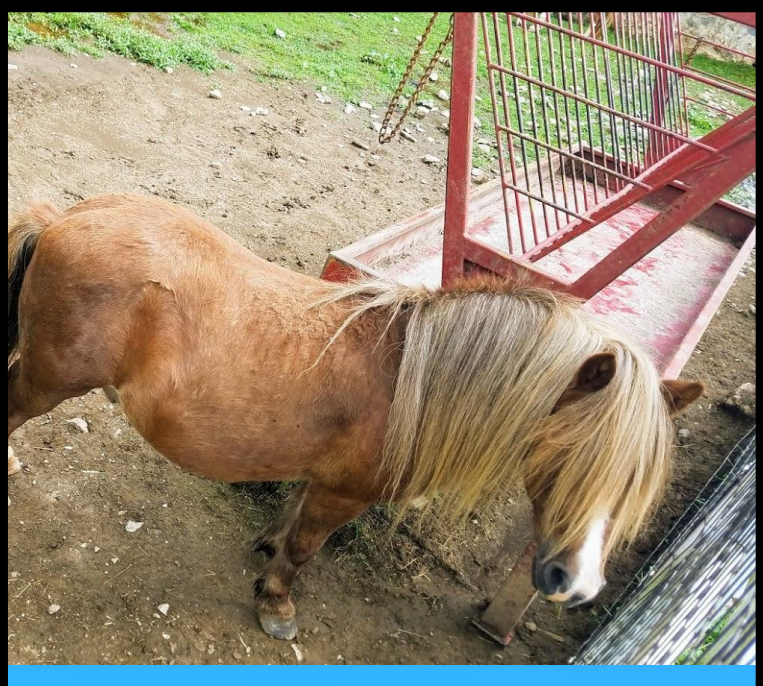




Rishi Shah



RISHI SHAH







Rishi Shah







RISHI SHAH



Middle School Track Team

RISHI SHAH

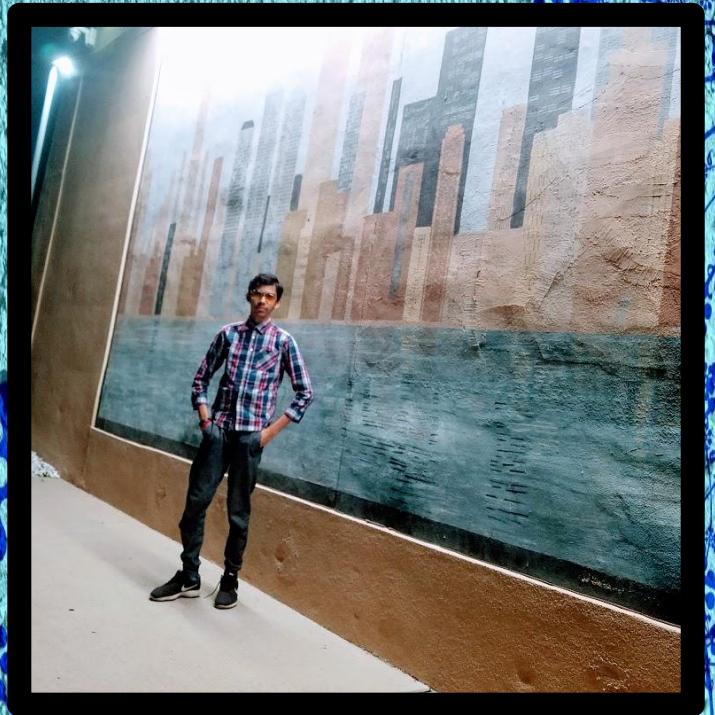
Wednesday









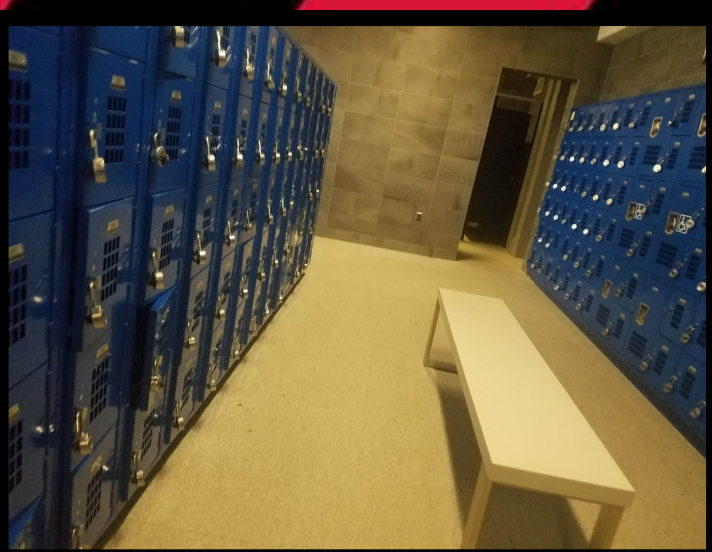


Rishi Shah









RISHI SHAH



RISHI SHAH





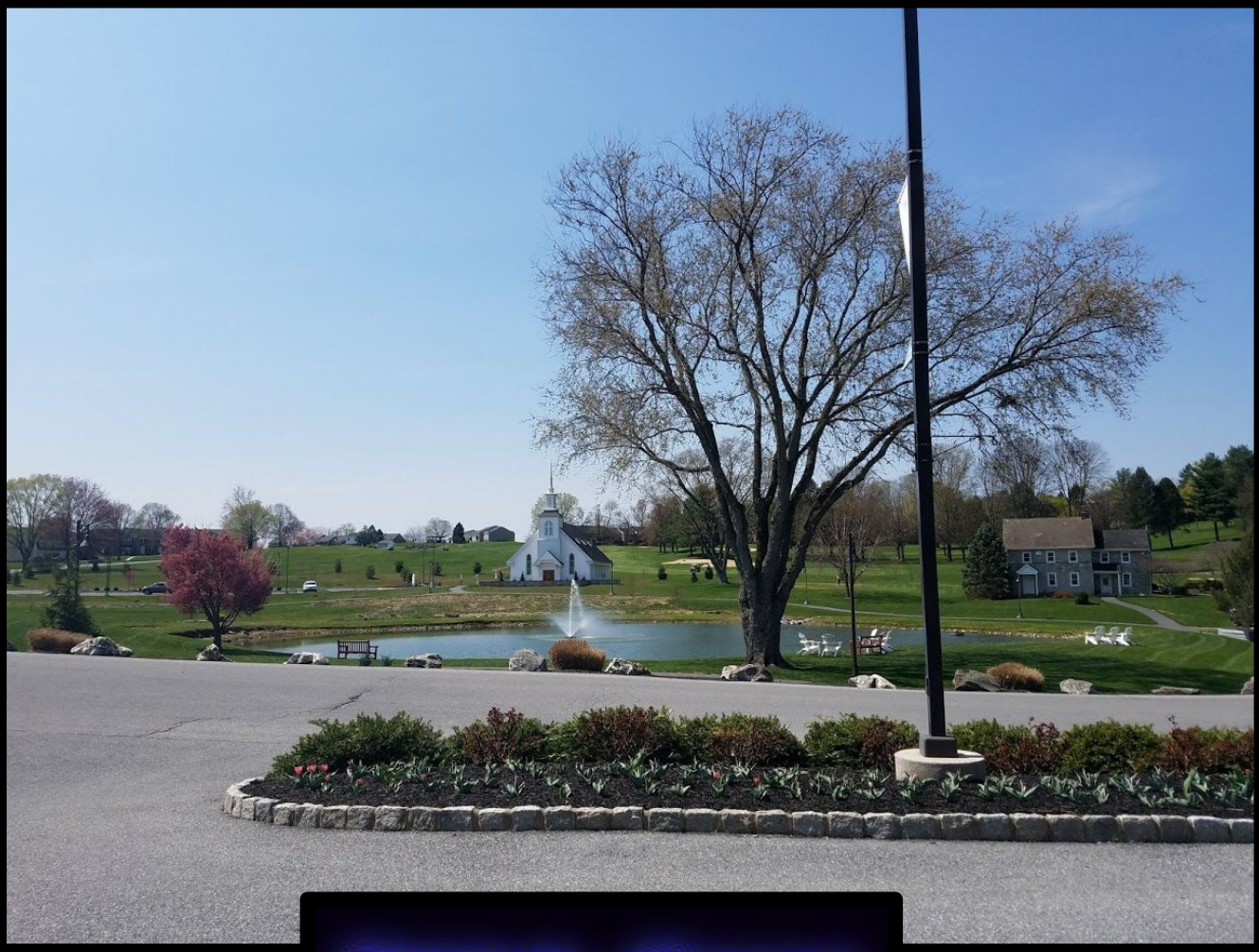






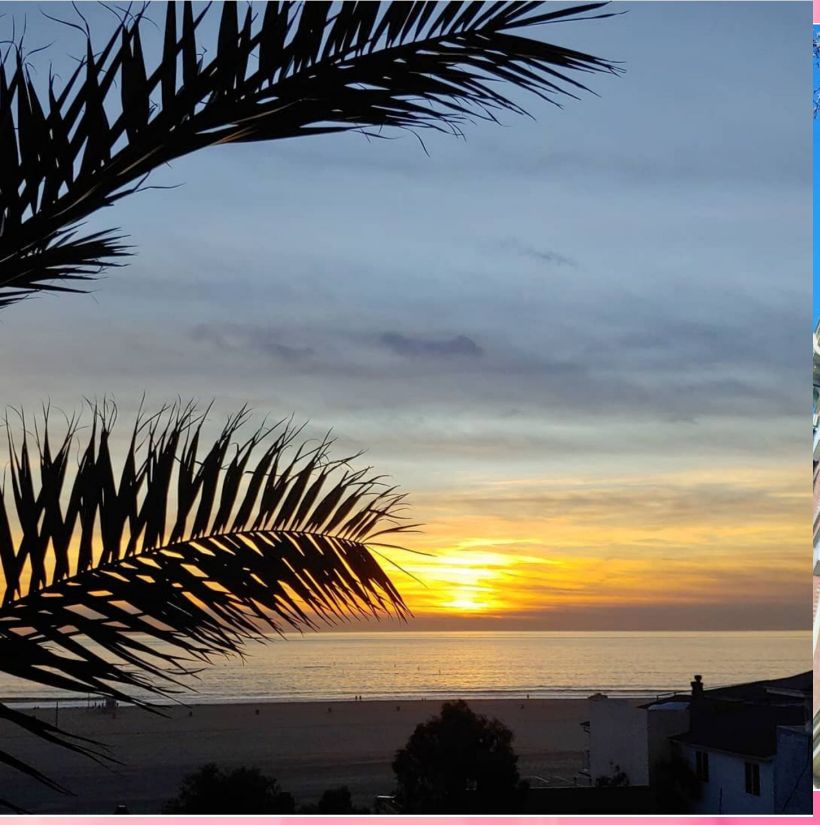
8th Grade Graduation !!! You passed by the year finally, Hope you have fun next year, at the High School!

Rishi Shah



RISHI SHAH







This is a quote on a napkin holder in a pizzeria. -->





Angelica Oriol



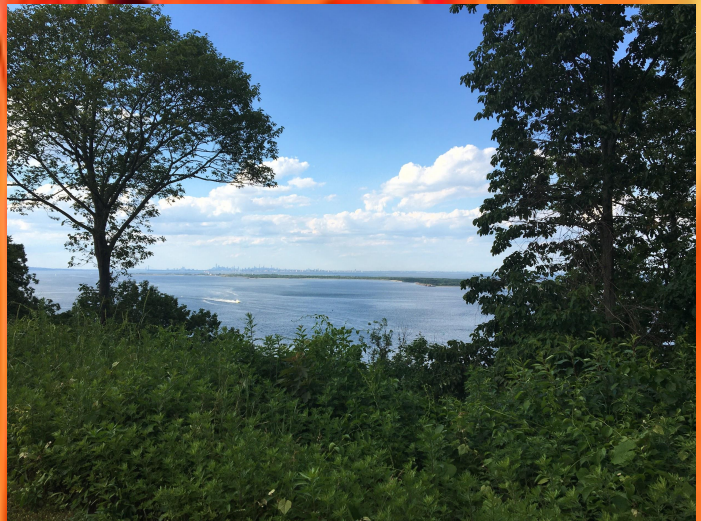


-Angelica Oriol



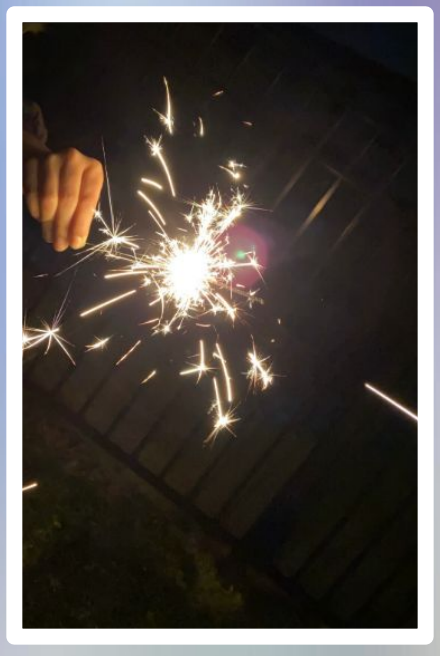






Kayla Tierney



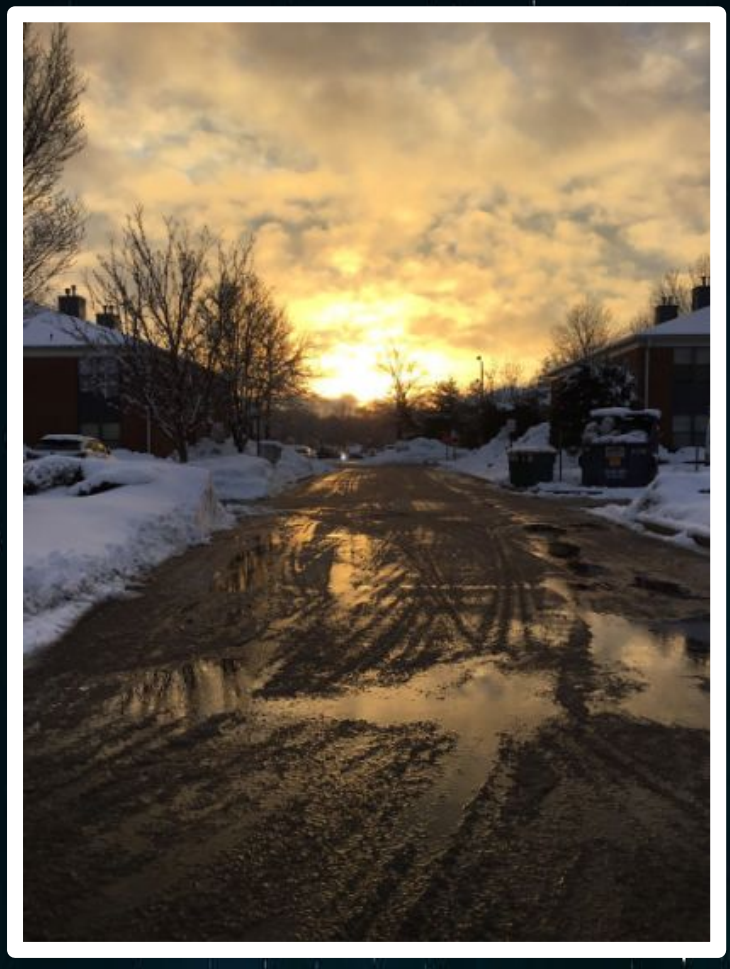


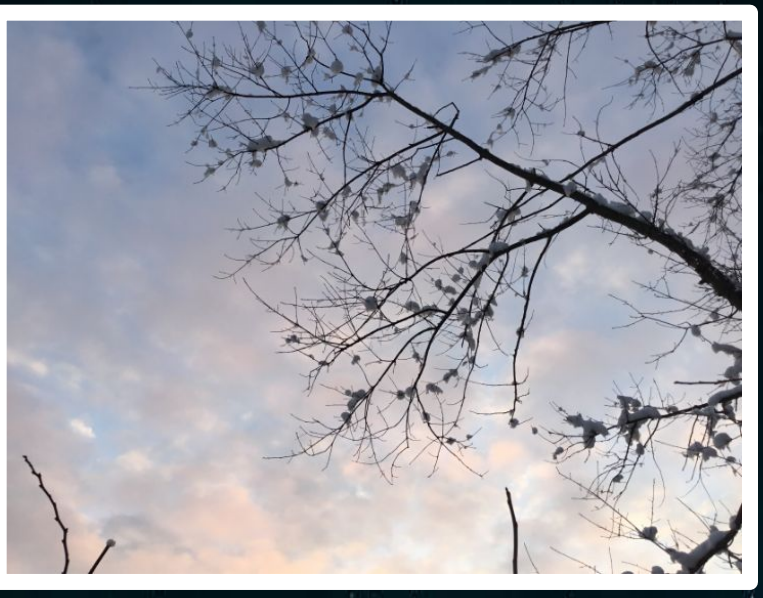


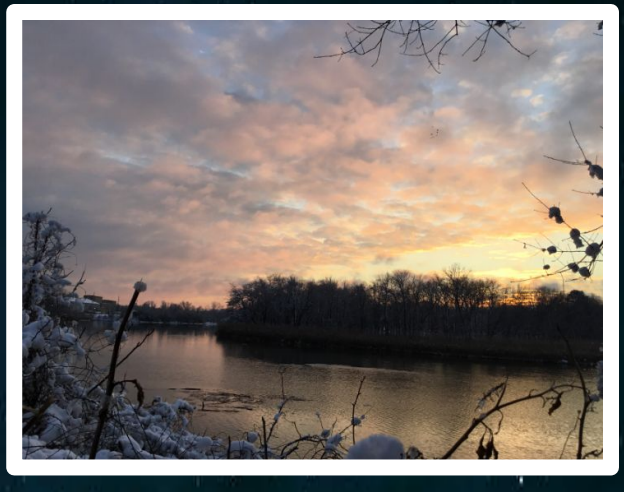
Samia Naveed













- Samia Naveed

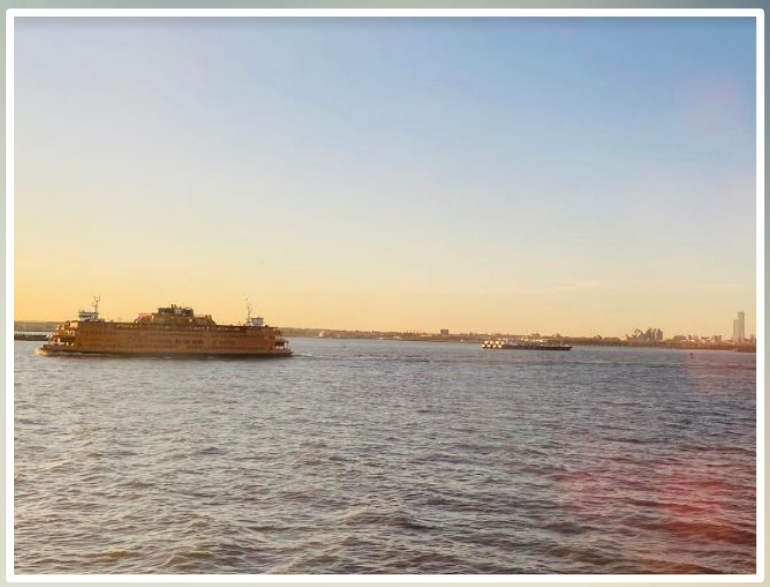


These were the homes of immigrants in New York. They had to persevere through the process of coming through a new country. Conditions were awful, and they had to adjust to a brand new culture.

Marissa Mandola







Samia Naveed

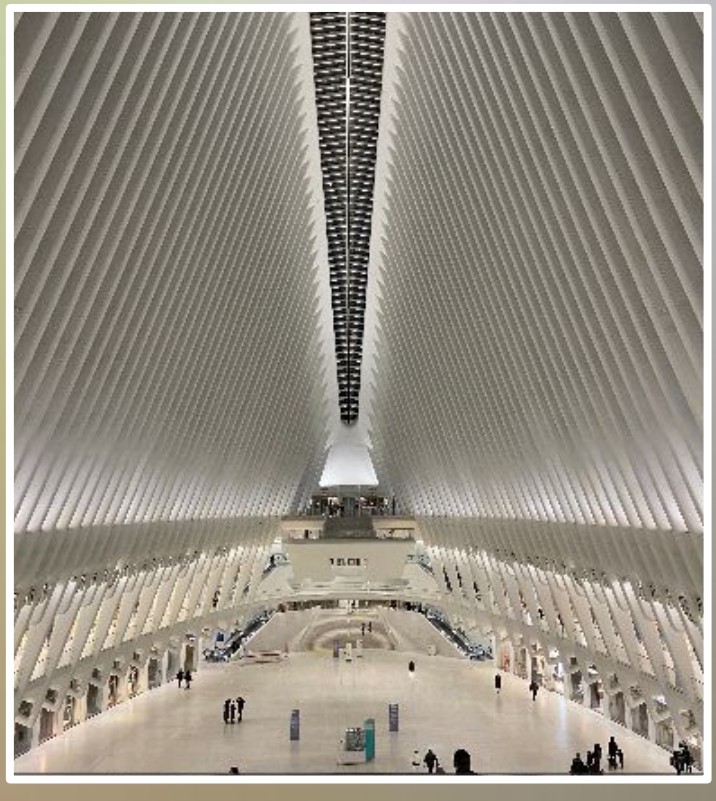






Samia Naveed







Poems & Songs

RISHI SHAH

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Learn Too...
Rishi Shah
Perceive
considEr
Recognize
Share
be pEaceful
Value
Emphasize
taRget
Act
Notice
Change
sEt goals

A SOCIETY

If you either agree or disagree
If you like cats or dogs
If you are clean or dirty
If you have courage or cowardice
If you are good or bad
If you use Google or Microsoft
If you are weak or strong
If you Like Adidas or Nike
If you are rich or poor
If you like chocolate or vanilla
If you like Red or Blue
If you are Smart or stupid
If you are small or big
If you are beautiful or ugly
If you are from the north or south
If you feel hot or cold
If you are an ally or an enemy
If you are tall or short
If you are busy or Idle
If you are cautious or careless
No matter what we think ,
believe or are
 we are an Society
A Society where all are include!




Home
Life Cultural Cozy Safety
Residence Future Family
History Love Relaxing Emotional
Shelter Comfortable Adore
Welcome
Home

RISHI SHAH

THE POWER OF A MEDAL



A medal has no value if you just bought it
But if you earned it,
With hard work,
Working for hours and hours,
Believing In the Impossible,
With the determination
Achieving whatever your goal may be,
If that's the case
A medal can't be valued by price
But rather a form of recognition
That one can never forget.

As a medal has the power,
To influence the world around us
To inspire the world
To boost ones self-confidence to extraordinary levels
To impacts the world in a positive way
A medal has the power,
To make us feel proud and delighted
The power to make the impossible, possible
and believe hard work and determination,
You can do anything!

Rishi Shah

Unified Neighborly Impactful Togetherness Friendly

Rishi Shah

THE POWER OF UNITY

The Power of Unity
Is like no other
It is where all are included
Where deeds matter
Not color or nationality
While If we stay separated
We will be small
And not be heard
Once we Unite,
By being side to side supporting each other
When in need
We all are here to do
What's right
As one whole
With such force
That no opponent
Could last!



Earth!' said I, 'thing of terrestrial.'

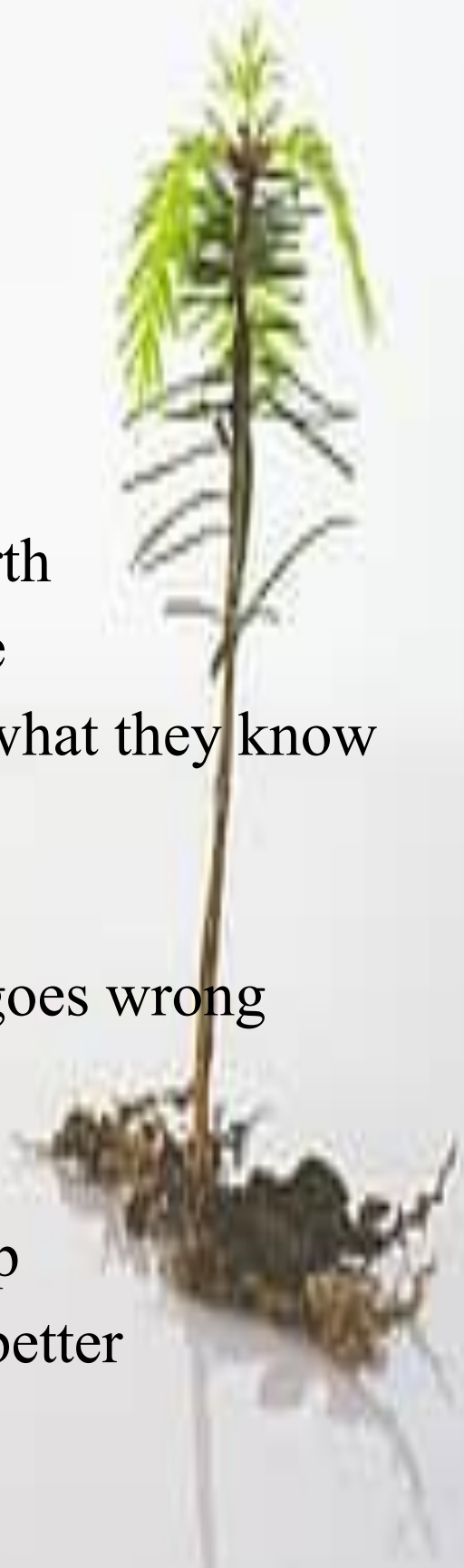
'Earth!' said I, 'thing of terrestrial.'
My passion is to lead this planet
Deep from that darkness sodding
From the underground rumbling
Away from the midnight loneliness
I awoke and remembered a tree
In a kingdom full of lands and resources
From which I marveled the scenery of
my beautiful home….
Earth!

RISHI SHAH

Rishi Shah

I am Mother Earth

I am Mother Earth
I wonder about you and them
I hear your problems
I see the mistakes
I want to solve them
I am Mother Earth
I pretend not to be real
I feel the pain you make
I touch beyond you into the earth
I worry for you and your future
I cry when I see people doing what they know is wrong
I am Mother Earth
I understand when something goes wrong
I say we act now
I dream to be a better planet
I try to encourage others to help
I hope one day things will get better
I am Mother Earth



Earth

Earth
Nature, beauty
Environment, home, Globe
Absolutely the best
Planet,
Earth

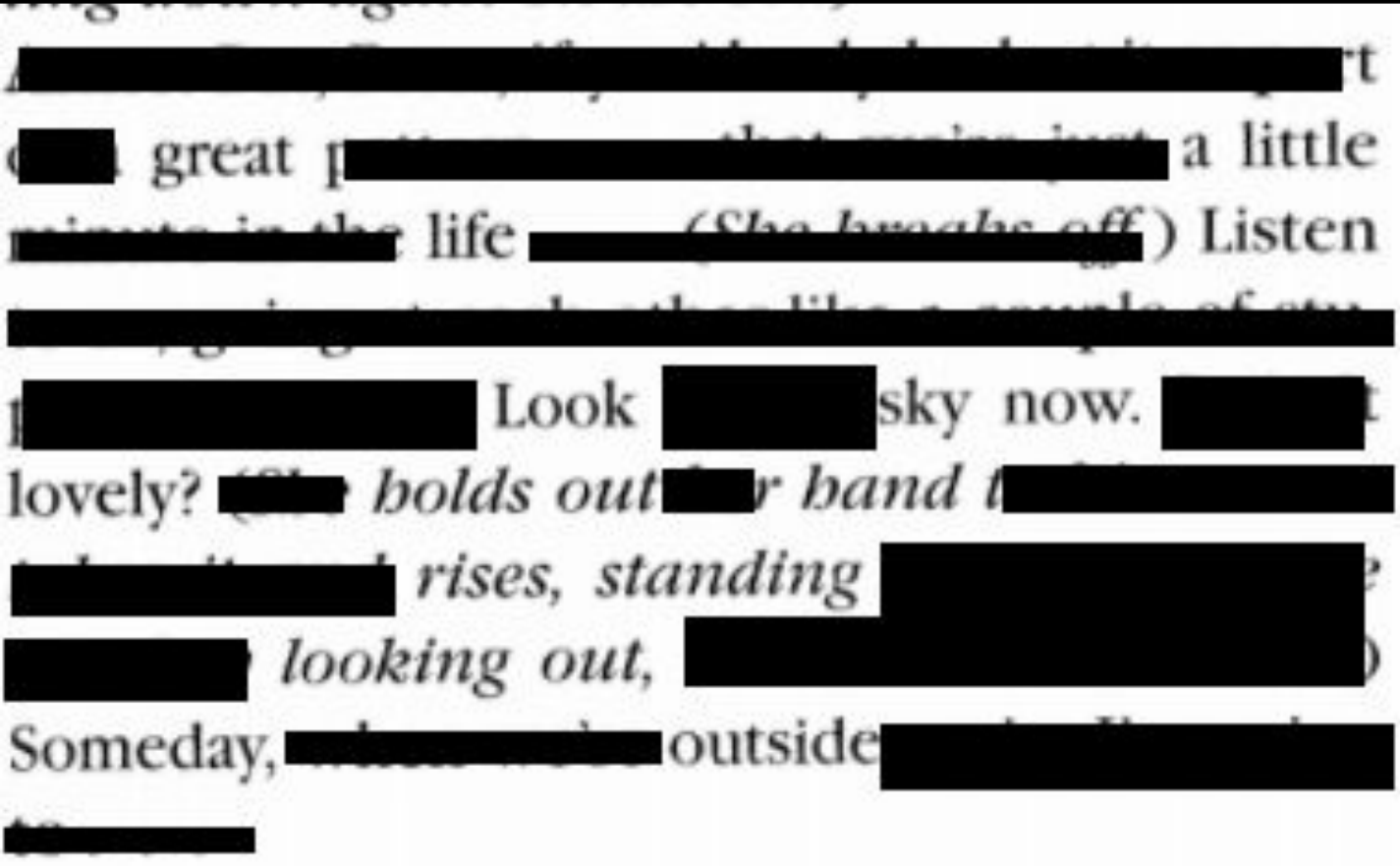


RISHI SHAH

Sun: pitiless, godly, handy, powerful, fiery, sat, direct, hidden, morning, good, tropical,wonder.

RISHI SHAH

Blackout Poetry



Rishi Shah

Haiku Poetry

dawn arrives
roosters start crowing
we all started working

ANIMALS NO MATTER HOW BIG OR SMALL

Animals no matter how big or small,

Don’t deserve to be our slave at all.

We can’t just take them away from their home and families

And make them work till their ends

What if they were us?



They have lives too, just like us.

They might not be able to talk like us.

Though they have feelings just like us.

Let’s unite to make an end to such a crime!

Enjoying time with each other
Family friends
Uniting in the community
Supporting each other
Believing we are more alike than unalike
Getting together
Spreading positivity
Believing we are all equal
Honoring Sayreville's beauty
Make our community a better place
Helping each other out
Doing your part
Believing diversity is a good thing
Know we all deserve Peace in our lives,
Appreciate and love each other,
Even those who we don't get along with
Remembering the past,
So we don't make the same mistakes again,
In the future
Trusting one another,
This may be hard,
but is something,
Our society needs!
Understanding one another
Speaking up to help one other out
Coming together as one,
Both mentally and physically!
Believing we are linked together
And we the people,
have the power to make an impact,
To make the world a better place for all!



SAYREVILLE

Our town is **S**tunning
And truly **A**mazing
One reason why is since we believe in unit**Y**
Our town is **R**esilient
Enhanc**E**d in all perspectives
Our town is **V**aliant and strong,
when we are together
We are an **I**nspiration to many
As we are **L**ovely to all
And delightfu**L** in many ways
This is all because our town car**E**'s and knows,
how to sticks out to each other,
And is ready to face all on its way
From hurricanes to pandemics,
Sayreville has faced it all,
And survived
With its support and contributions,
From people like you!
Thank You All!

Rishi Shah

Humanity

We all wish
to live in a world
Where we could find
Peace and Love
Calmness and Tranquility
Goodwill and Harmony
Security and Sanitary
Hope and Faith
Support and Courage
Technology and Assatinace
Goals and Perseverance
The Best of people
The Truth
Curiosity
Helpful Rules
Selfishness
Generosity
Equality for all
Positivity
Balance
Happiness
Hopes for the Good
The Past and Present
And best of all Humanity !

RISHI SHAH

SAYREVILLE

Our town is Stunning
And truly Amazing
One reason why is since we believe in unitY
Our town is Resilient than our rivals
EnhancEd in all perspectives
Our town is Valiant and strong,
when we are together
We are an Inspiration to many
As we are Lovely to all
And delightfuL in many ways
This is all because our town carE's and knows
how to sticks out to each other,
And is ready to face all on its way
From hurricanes to pandemics,
Sayreville has faced it all,
And survived it,
With its support and contributions,
From people like you!
Thank You All!

Rishi Shah

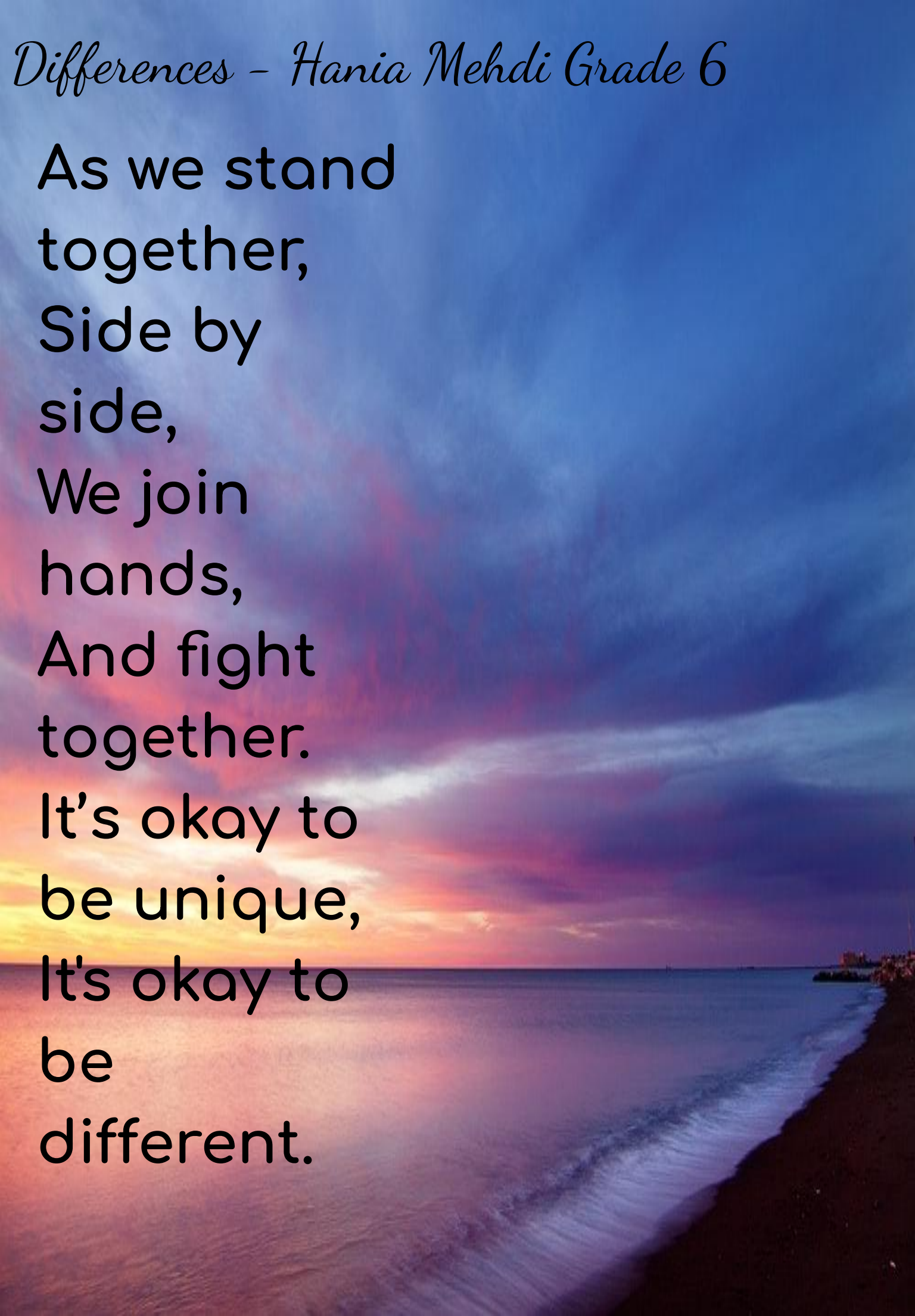
Home

Nowadays home has been our safety place.
The place where the world turns to normal again.
Outside is really fun, but some troubles will surely come.
I look outside thinking, when will this ever end?
Can it be now..... I beg.
Life is full of mysteries you never know what will happen next.
People might tell you to be patient and calm down but I feel like we had enough of that.
Even acting might be even worse.
I know I am not the only one,even babies don't like it.
I know we have been in a very stuff time but i bet that a day is going to come and all of us are going to forget this. -Andrea Kumah

My Big Round Earth.

oh what a beautiful earth.
I always wonder how you can rotate by yourself and not even fall.
When I am walking I don't even feel that I am going round in circles every day.
You alway make my path straight.
Even though sometimes we make you dirty by polluting you.
You still let us live on you.
So on this day I want to celebrate you and clean you up. And also say THANK YOU!!!!!!!!! -Andrea Kumah

Differences - Hania Mehdi Grade 6



As we stand
together,
Side by
side,
We join
hands,
And fight
together.
It's okay to
be unique,
It's okay to
be
different.

Reality
Poem By: Angelica Oriol

We, as humans, must learn to listen to each other.
We, as humans, must work together like dolphins in a pod.
We must learn things from different perspectives.
Right now, imagine yourself as a bee, buzzing in the blue sky. The world is ginormous to bees, but we never think about looking at our precious and delicate Earth in the way that bees do.
Now imagine that you are a tree, hanging off a cliff.
You are grasping at the edge of the cliff, with no other trees around you to help you out.
This is exactly what our daily lives are like.
There are many people around us, but we don't work together.
Sometimes it's that we are too stubborn to ask for help.
Sometimes it's that we are too afraid to ask.
But most of the time, it is because we don't know what would happen if we do ask for help, since we've never tried it before.
Life is full of mistakes, but you'll never know until you try.

Earth Day Poem

By Angelica Oriol

We must protect our delicate earth, by all means
We all must do our job and be green
Humans hate looking at a dirty and filthy scene,
But that's what our Earth looks like now

Hope Poem

By Angelica Oriol

Hope is our fuel for life
If we don't hope for the better, we are dead to the world
Think negative, and you will never see happiness in your future
Think positive, and you will soar in the sky with joy



Poem By:
Angelica Oriol



Poem By:
Angelica Oriol

Together

By: Angelica Oriol

It doesn't matter what others think
Together, we form a wall that no evil can pass through
Together we are united as one
We hope for the best in our futures
And a new world has just begun

Sometimes, life can be scary
But we must work through it together
Look at the sun, not the shadows
Sometimes we might associate our feelings with the weather

Please don't give up on me,
We're almost to the end
Don't get all grumpy and stormy
Our feelings can be hard to comprehend
But we will get through this, I can promise you that
Don't forget, we're all in this together.
Now, go help out a friend!

Family

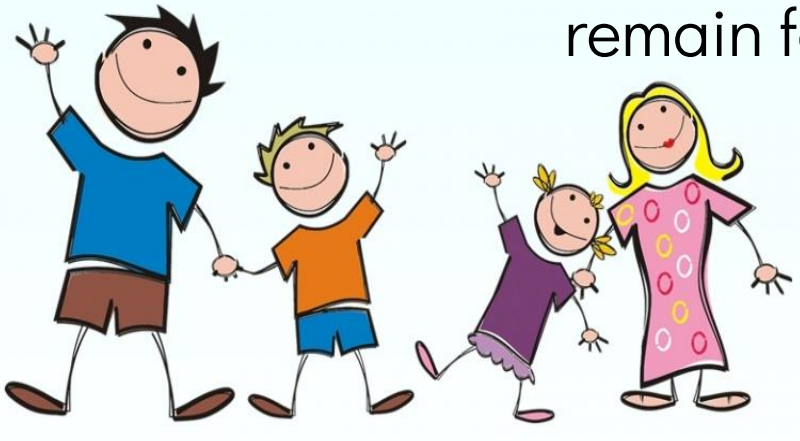
By: Samia Naveed

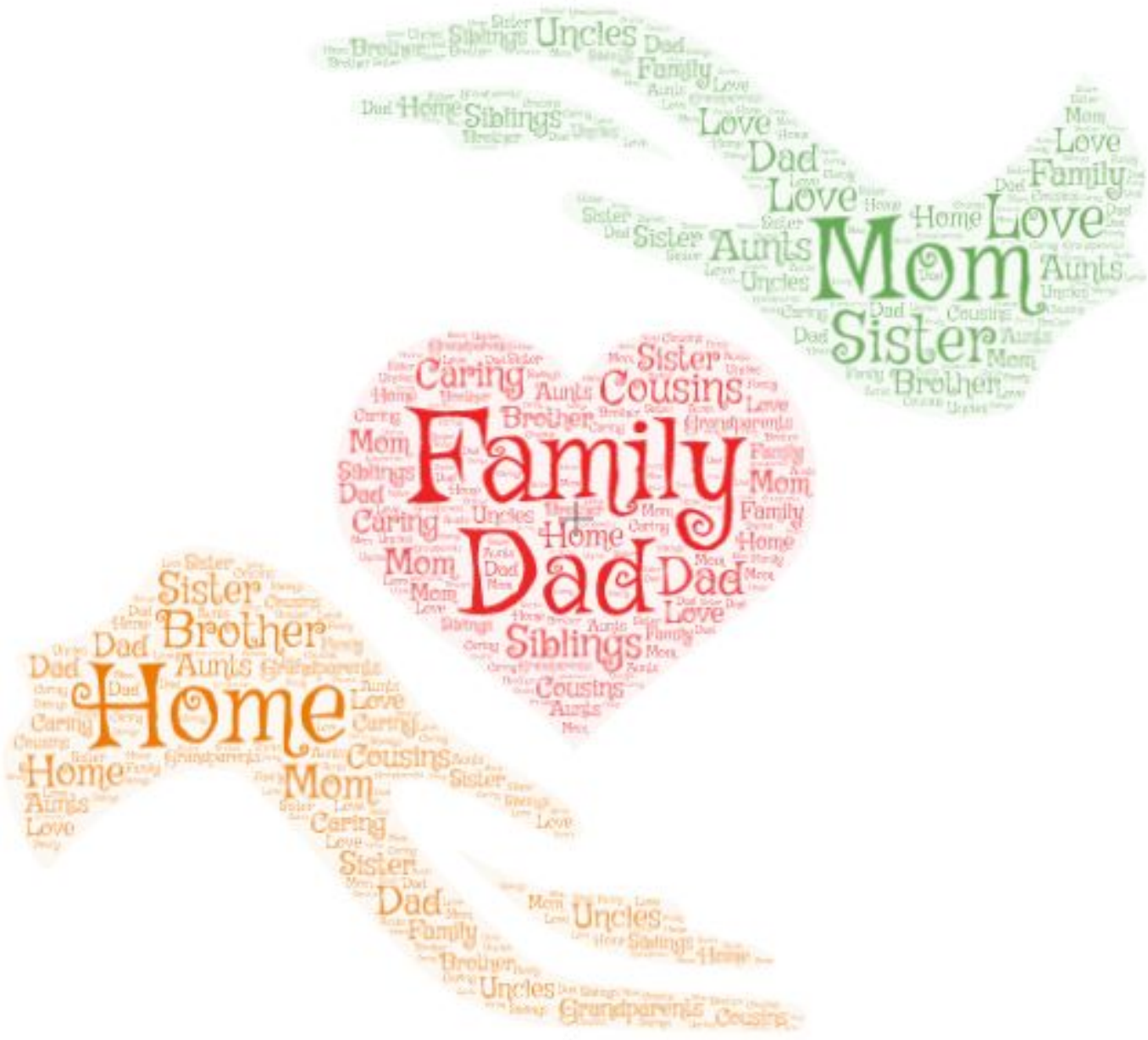
Family is something you can never let go
Having a family to me has many meanings
Families love should last forever

There always there for you when your in trouble

Families are people who care about you
Our family is a circle of love and strength

My family will always remain who they are in my heart and soul,
My family is more important than my friends,
Family will always come first,
Family is family,
No matter what they did they'll always remain family.





Poem by : Samia Naveed



Poem by : Samia Naveed

"Found"

By Katelen Estrada

What do you do when your day is rough,
When every task to be done seems so tough?
Is there anyone around that can, maybe, lend you a hand?
Or maybe someone to listen to you and understand.
But if you reach out your hand, and there's no one around,
Maybe there's another solution that can be found.
Maybe try having an optimistic outlook, or looking at things another way.
Try perseverance, sticking it out 'till it works out, someday.
It takes some patience, and it will probably take some time,
But you should have the courage to take that uphill climb.
Do whatever it takes to achieve your goal,
And you'll find that your life is suddenly in more control.
I promise, the results will surprise you, no doubt,
So come on, face your hardships and stick them out!

“Push On”

By Katelen Estrada

When you feel the stress is coming, see the tiredness in your eyes,
There’s so much work to do, it piles to the skies.
What to do when you feel so low and helpless, in a way?
Keep on pushing through ‘till you reach a brand new day.

Push on through the countless sums of tries.
Push on, for tomorrow, the bold, bright sun will rise.
I know, it may be tough sometimes,
But I tell you, (with my rhymes)
It’s worth it to push on.

When the world has weighed you down, you seemed you’ve reached your peak,
And there’s nothing that may help you now, or sometimes it just hurts to speak,
I know you’re still you in there, through all the tumult that’s been done,
Know; you’ve beat your past and now you’ve finally won.

What you do now is you take a breath, smile, then you’ll say;
“Keep on pushing through ‘till you reach a brand new day.”

You should push on,
Keep on pushing through ‘till you’ve reached a brand new day!

A Poem To Unite

By Katelen Estrada

**Inspired by the song "A Song Of Peace"*

If I could write a powerful poem
That everyone could read,
I would write of trust and peace
and love,
A poem we all can heed.

And when everyone reads my
powerful poem,
Division and hate will no longer
bite.
If I could write a powerful poem,
I'd write a poem to unite.

A poem for everyone.
A poem filled with delight.
A poem that brings us together,
All the world.
A poem to unite.

Light

When the light is shining bright outside. But inside you darkness is having such a good time. You don't know what to do. Whether to yell at it or just open the door?
Close your eyes, think about your light. Know that you are the brightest thing on earth. And remember to tell that darkness to come out .Because..... you are about to rule.-Andrea kumah

Life

L-Love.



I-Interesting.



F-Friendship.



E-Equality.



-Andrea Kumah



-Andrea Kumah



Perseverance By Sienna Smith and Yvette Kwasikumah

People can't tell you what to do

Every effort counts

Remember the goal

Stand strong

Enough patience and you will find you way

Vast possibilities to reach

Extraordinary things will happen

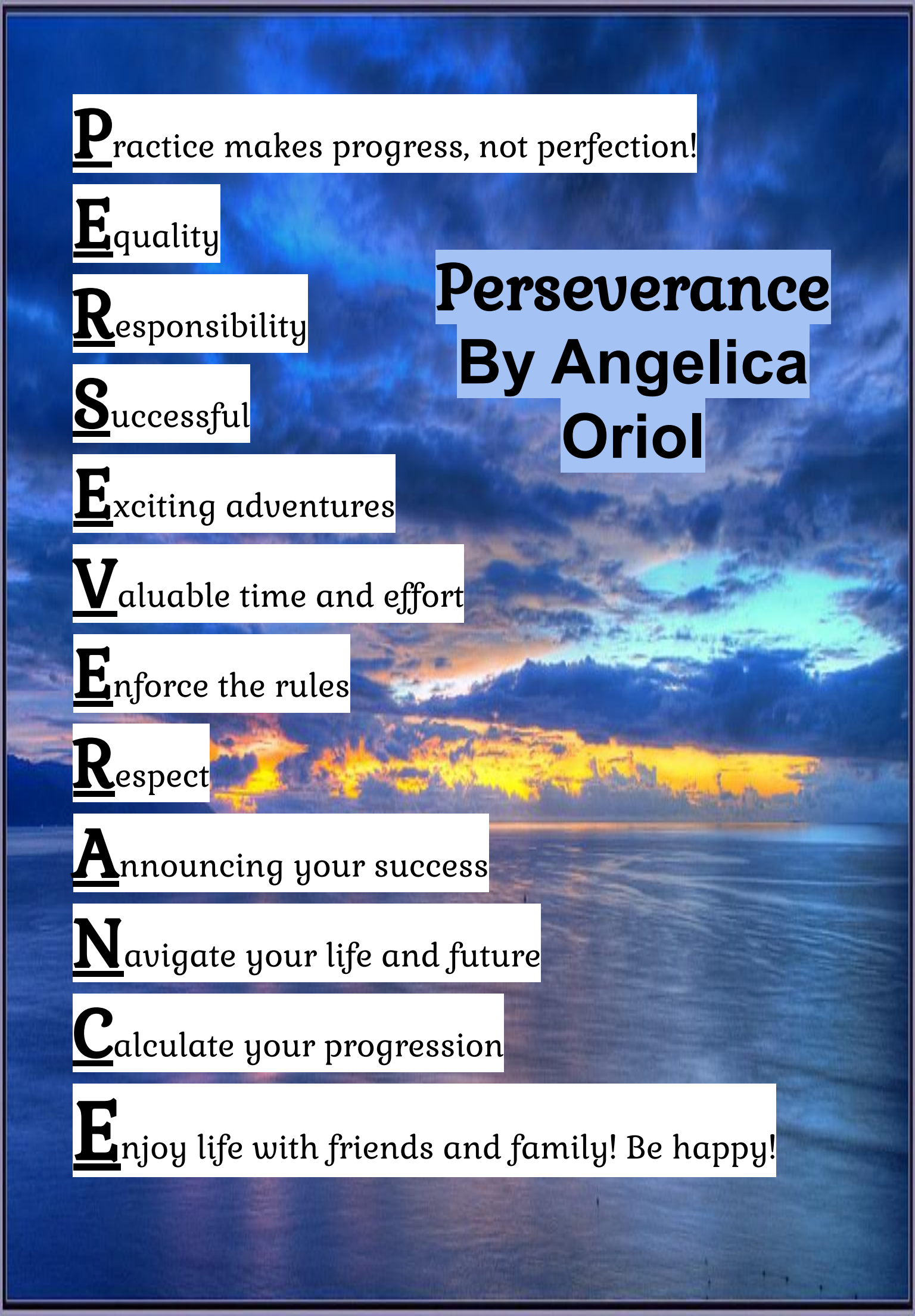
Reassurance will come when you need it

Amazing rewards

Nothing will get in your way

Clear a path for yourself

Even at the hardest times


Practice makes progress, not perfection!
Equality
Responsibility
Successful
Exciting adventures
Valuable time and effort
Enforce the rules
Respect
Announcing your success
Navigate your life and future
Calculate your progression
Enjoy life with friends and family! Be happy!
Perseverance
By Angelica Oriol

Unity

By Angelica Oriol

United

Never separate

Interesting decisions

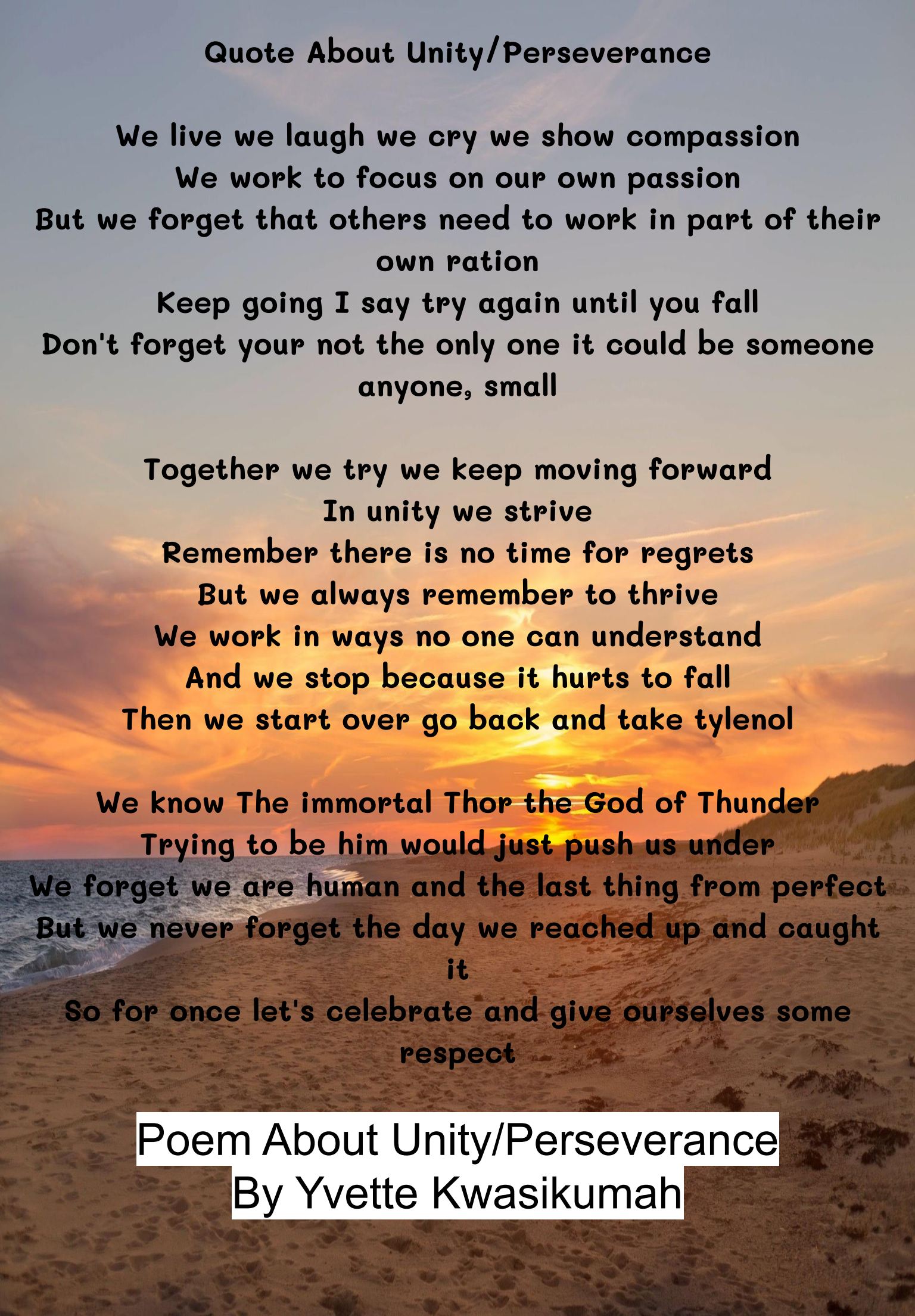
Together

YOU decide which path you will take!

A New Day Poem
By Angelica Oriol

Every day is the same, one after the other
It isn't easy, being trapped inside
When we wake up in the morning, it's the same thing again, just another day of boredom
Spring is here, but this Winter has been scary
These days have been grey
It's been terrifying
Awful,
It's been a horror movie, one could even say

But tomorrow is a new day,
And we must hope for the better,
We will conquer it in a new way,
And we'll be happy forever
Even though these days have been grey,
Tomorrow the Sun will shine



Quote About Unity/Perseverance

We live we laugh we cry we show compassion
We work to focus on our own passion
But we forget that others need to work in part of their own ration
Keep going I say try again until you fall
Don't forget your not the only one it could be someone anyone, small

Together we try we keep moving forward
In unity we strive
Remember there is no time for regrets
But we always remember to thrive
We work in ways no one can understand
And we stop because it hurts to fall
Then we start over go back and take tylenol

We know The immortal Thor the God of Thunder
Trying to be him would just push us under
We forget we are human and the last thing from perfect
But we never forget the day we reached up and caught it
So for once let's celebrate and give ourselves some respect

Poem About Unity/Perseverance
By Yvette Kwasikumah

Spiral Staircase

I cannot escape.

The more I try to drown out the noise, the louder it becomes

They are hungry for my failures.

They feed of my errors.

They are the voices in my head.

The ones in which I must spend all of eternity,

who will be there to criticize every move, thought, and comment I make.

I live in not one world but two,

the world

Known to man and the one that's in my head.

Perhaps this is a good thing.

Everything happens for a reason.

Maybe if I suffer, I'm saving someone else from going through all of this.

From feeling all of the agony and sorrow I live with,

but don't want it.

I don't want to live life like this, constantly overthinking and tearing myself down.

I should be able to live a carefree life. I should've been the one who gets to be a cheerful person.

So I screamed to let it all out. All that anger bottled up inside.

And for a split second, it worked, I felt new.

I felt as if a weight had been lifted off my shoulders, but only for a split second.

It all then slowly come back, and little by little, I felt worse that I did before.

So I was stuck in a sycle. The more I let out, the worse it became, like a spiral staircase, with no end.

Stories & Plays



Table of Contents

Rishi Shah

An Experience Of A Lifetime

It all started on March 12th 2020, a sunny Thursday afternoon. I had just got back from work and I was looking forward to a wonderful Friday the next morning. I lived in a single story apartment right off Main Street in NYC. The 24th floor was jaw dropping with itś wonderful view over the city. I gazed upon it and all itś wonderful sights, thinking about the day I had. I lived by myself and it was really hard sometimes. I just felt that I was alone in my life, with no one to help me. Some days I would cry by myself in the room thinking about what my life would be with people in it. But I managed my thoughts and worked hard towards my goals. I was a virologist studying at the NY State University earning my Masters Degree in Virology. But in my freetime, I would work in the lab with professional virologists. It was interesting watching them do their job. They made it look so easy, but in reality it was much harder.

I slouched on the couch and watched the local news. There was something about a new virus that started in China, but was spreading all over Europe and Asia. I laughed, thinking that this was all a hoax and that there would never be an outbreak here in the U.S.

Just then my phone rang, I got up and answered it. It was my boss, and I could hear his voice trembling with fear. My boss was someone who would not normally cry, he was very strict and he wanted everyone to respect him. I was terrified with a million thoughts flooding my brain.

“Hey John, It is me, your boss. I was calling to inform you that one of our virologists has tested positive for what we think is the new virus spreading.” My world came crashing down on me, and I thought about what I had seen on the news. “The C.D.C. recommends that you get tested as well, and that you quarantine for fifteen days in your apartment.”I broke into tears and I did not know what to do with these terrible news.

He hung up right after those words, leaving me hanging with so many questions, I could not even begin to ask. I called my doctor and told him about what had happened, he too was trembling with fear. He told me that he would send a nurse to do my test and the results would be out in less than twenty four hours. He hung up too, right after he was done speaking. I sat on the couch and cried, not knowing what to do with my world. I was terrified, thinking I had a disease in which there was no cure for it. I pondered and pondered, about many things until the doorbell rang.

Hesitantly, I got up to open it, my hands shaking as I turned the doorknob. There was a nurse accompanied by tall men wearing hazmat suits. This looked terrifying, and added to my questions. Without saying a word, they barged their way through the door, not caring about a single thing in the world. One of the last of the three men, pulled me by the arm and led me to the couch. It was only then that the nurse started talking. I could not remember much of the words that she was saying, but it was something along the lines of asking me if I had any symptoms or allergies.I denied both of those questions, and then she proceeded to open her medical bag. She pulled out a q-tip and a tube where she would put my sample in. She took the q-tip and then she stuck it so far into my nose, that I thought it went into my brain. The experience was not very pleasant. After I was done The sample was taken away from my viewing.

Con’t --->

“Thanks,” I said. But there was no answer. The four personnel group walked out of the apartment closing the door behind them. I could not believe that this was happening, but I had hoped that the test would bring good news. It was probably about seven in the evening when the team had left with my sample. I decided it was time to get some rest, so I went into my room and layed on my bed. It felt like hours before I got the urge to sleep. I slowly drifted away from reality, closing my eyes slowly before I fell asleep. The team had left with my sample. I decided it was time to get some rest, so I went into my room and layed on my bed. It felt like hours before I got the urge to sleep. I slowly drifted away from reality, closing my eyes slowly before I fell asleep.

It was about four in the morning when my phone rang, I woke up startled. I knew what the phone call was about. Terrified, I took the call, “This is an automated voice message informing you that you have tested negative for the Covid-19 viral infection.” With the biggest sigh of relief, I hung up and sat there on my bed feeling relieved as ever. I then quickly fell asleep, but this time it was a sleep free of worry.

I woke up it was eight in the morning; about four hours later. Taking a walk was the first thing on my mind, just to smell some fresh air. I took a sweatshirt and put it on, along with my sneakers. Opening the door, I saw that there was a letter on the ground titled, *United States Department of Virology*. I opened the note and it read, “In the light of the new virus quickly spreading, we have invited you to accompany us to a trip in which the destination is Wuhan, China. The purpose of this trip is to explore the starting location of this new virus, and explore the symptoms that come with it.”

A ticket was included in the letter for American Airlines. There was an urge not to go, due to the dangerous nature of this trip. I decided that I could not pass up an offer like this. The trip was taking place in two days, so I had to start packing. I disregarded my walk, and went to my room. I took out my bags, and then my clothes and necessities. Packing everything in one bag was not a good idea. The bag looked like it was bulging, that it was going to explode any second. Apart from that, the bag was way too heavy. I took a smaller bag and transferred some of the stuff into it. I then zipped both bags up and put them next to the front door. Only then could I take a walk, knowing that everything was prepared. I opened the front door of the apartment, and walked down the hallway to the elevator.

Con’t --->

The elevator took me twenty four floors down to the lobby of the building. Mike was there of course, he was the receptionist and a great guy. I waved to him before I walked out of the building. A gush of cool air blew into my face, as the leaves grew unsteady, rustling with the wind. I started walking down the sidewalk waving to the people returning and leaving their homes. I walked to the end of the street, and then walked to the opposite end, passing my apartment building. When I was done, I felt better than ever. When I got back to my apartment, It was already ten. I ordered a sandwich from Subway, which was one of my favorite places to eat.

Ten minutes later, the doorbell rang and I hurried to get it. A short man opened it carrying my sandwich. I paid him exactly $8.50 before I started eating. My favorite sandwich from Subway was a wonderful cheesesteak, with barbecue sauce, and some provolone cheese. I liked the bread toasted lightly, golden brown and soft on the inside. I took a whiff of the sandwich getting some wonderful roasted meat, and that tangy barbecue sauce seemed to tickle my nose. The first bite was the best bite in my opinion. I enjoyed the urge to eat, combined with a tasty meal I was waiting for. The tangy, sweet barbecue sauce was heavenly, and the meat was beautiful, wonderfully seasoned, and made with love. I gobbled the sandwich down within five minutes. *Wow, just wow*.

Licking my lips, I went to my couch to watch a movie. I was craving a horror movie, one not too scary and not too simple. I decided to watch *The Joker* that day; it seemed like the best choice. I started to watch the movie, very excitedly. At the end of the movie, I was quite tired for some reason. I took a rest for about three hours.

When I woke up it was four in the afternoon. I was feeling hungry, so I decided to make instant noodles. You can't blame me, I was lazy and that was a yummy quick meal. I popped the pack of noodles into the microwave with some water. In three minutes the microwave rang letting me know my meal was done. I picked up a pair of chopsticks and then took my noodles out of the microwave, carrying it to the couch. The plate was hot, so I decided to wait a bit before digging in. After ten minutes, I decided to take a bite. Although this sold for about 50 cents at the convenience store, it tasted like it came from a five star restaurant. I slurped the soft noodles inhaling the fragrance, and tasting the artificial flavors packed into the food. The plate was empty in ten minutes flat, even the soup. I took the plate and dropped it into the sink. I felt satisfied with my day and decided to watch the news.

Con’t --->

Skipping the channels, I stopped at channel fifty four. It was NBC news speaking about the virus. It turns out that there were fifty cases of this virus in the United States already. I was terrified hearing the news, and realized that I was lucky I was not number fifty one. I stayed up until ten at night. I was getting tired, so I turned off the TV and went to my room. I fell right asleep thinking about the trip I had tomorrow. My flight was at eight in the morning, so I needed to get some rest. I set my alarm to six in the morning, just in case The alarm clock did not wake me up. I fell right asleep, closing my eyes slowly until they were shut.

I woke up to the sound of the alarm clock ringing in my ears. It was a relief that I woke up only five minutes after the alarm clock started ringing. I put a suit on, and some fancy pants to match with it. I went to the bathroom and brushed my hair as well as my teeth. When I made sure I was squeaky clean, I went to the door. Picking up my two bags, I opened the door with my feet, using the same technique when I came to close it. I walked to the elevator, taking it to the lobby. I waved to Mike before heading out the front doors of the building. I drive a Honda Civic which I got a couple of years ago. It is not a bad car, but maybe I should get a new one soon.

I drove half an hour to the airport, which was massive. It was the size of my apartment building, Tripled! It was massive, with maybe twenty terminals. I was scheduled for American Airlines flight two hundred and eighty, which was located in terminal seven. The time was about seven in the morning when I arrived at the airport. I walked towards Terminal 7 which was about half a mile away from the airport entrance. I gripped my bags tightly and walked until Terminal 7 was in my view. Security checked my bags and let me into the terminal. I was greeted by two nice flight attendants who checked my ticket before letting me board the aircraft.

The plane was big and there were two rows of seats on either side of the aircraft. I took my seat in business class and waited for takeoff. When it was time to take off, the pilot came on the intercom and reminded us to keep our seatbelts on. I did as the pilot said, and braced for our journey to Wuhan. The plane sped on the runway, before the nose of the aircraft tilted upwards. The plane climbed to itś cruising altitude at about thirty thousand feet. The flight attendant came with a cart of snacks and offered me drinks and chips. I took one of each and enjoyed them.

Con’t --->

The flight lasted for about eight hours before we landed in Wuhan. For the first time, I saw masks on people. Everyone looked miserable and sad. The masks hid the expressions of the people, which were crucial when it comes to body language. We were handed a mask on the aircraft before we exited. At first, the mask was not comfortable, but I got used to it. My boss was there waiting for me by the exit of the airport. He took me outside and briefed me about the trip, and what we were going to do. We took a trip to Wuhan Hospital, and we were not permitted to go there unless we were wearing hazmat suits.

They handed us the hazmat suits at the entrance of the hospital. I sweated a bit in it, but thankfully, they had the air conditioner cranked up. I walked in with my boss, followed by a team of researchers. Our first patient was experiencing a cough along with a fever and shortness of breath. We were able to conclude that this was a respiratory disease based on that. We then moved on to the second patient, who was a kid. He came in with nasal congestion and a cough. His mother also informed us that he had a light fever last night as well. He was experiencing less severe symptoms than people of older age. We noted that along with the fact that the disease also affects all ages. We then headed to Wuhan Lab with samples of the virus.

The first step in making a vaccine or even a cure, was to decode the RNA of the virus. Our team got to work on that as soon as possible. It took us a couple of days to decode the RNA, but as soon as we did, we published it to other labs across the world. Our team got to work on the vaccine and cure. We invested a lot of money and time on that, with many different trials taking place across the world. Our first vaccine was promising, but it turned out that it was not powerful enough to build immunity.

In April, we got news that the pandemic was in itś worst back in the United States. This motivated us to keep trying and to keep working towards a cure for this disease. I remember at one point in my journey, more than half of our team had gotten sick. I had stayed free of this virus however, which I thought was pretty lucky. In about October, we got news that a company called Pfizer, had come up with a promising and effective vaccine. The trials proved that this vaccine was also safe.

We flew back to the United States to view this vaccine, and its effectiveness as well as itś safety. We took our bags and headed for Wuhan Airport. It had been about eight months in China, and I was glad to go home. The flight took about the same amount of time back to the United States, but there was a one hour delay. When I was back in the country, we took a trip to Pfizer headquarters in NYC. The building was in my home state, so after it was really easy to head back home. We studied the vaccine, before we gave permission to roll it out to the public. We were going to give it to healthcare workers first. So they started shipping it to all fifty states, including Hawaii and Alaska. Watching the trucks roll out of the building carrying the vaccine was promising. We had spent nine months in horror, not able to see our loved ones, or go out for fun. But this was hope, the hope we were waiting for.

Thinking about the people receiving this vaccine, and how many lives it would save made me emotional. But I was proud to be a part of this hope, this cure, this new start, and this new chapter in everybodyś life.

Con’t --->

Climate Change Opinion Piece-By David Le

Some say climate change is just some hoax. Some say climate change is fake news. All we know is, climate change is real and it should be acknowledged. If you think I'm being radical or a hypocrite, then well be it. Some people in this world are climate change deniers. Climate change is the greatest crisis humans are currently facing. This piece about climate change is based on scientific evidence and facts and not lies about climate change. People should be aware that the Earth's days are limited if nothing is done about the issue. People who protest climate change should not be arrested or violently dispersed. Those people are marching, speaking, and addressing a cause that is real. People who are arrested are being silenced and having their voices silenced. I respect others opinions that are different from mine as everybody's voices should be heard, no matter if they are for or against the issue of climate change. Sure, some of us who disagree on this issue might argue. Having voices on both sides is an important part of arguments. Unity is one thing that can bring people together about one important issue.

Let me start by saying, a definition of climate change is "a long-term change in the earth's climate, especially a change due to an increase in the average atmospheric temperature". Climate change affects people in many ways. Climate change will force people to abandon their lives, households, and businesses on coasts as sea levels rise due to climate change. A one degree rise in the average temperature doesn't seem much of a big deal right? That's a big deal as the polar ice caps will melt, sea levels are going to rise, and land will become uninhabitable due to seawater cover. The main reason for climate change is greenhouse gases, these are gases that absorb heat in the atmosphere. It is good as Earth needs Greenhouse Gases but too much is no good because this leads to global warming. It is no fun to live in an apocalypse wasteland. Around 600 million people don't have access to clean drinking water, and climate change, specifically global warming, will make groundwater have more bacteria and diseases, and more people will be affected by global warming contaminating groundwater. Climate change will make some diseases like malaria more rampant. Forests shall burn as wildfires will get worse, especially California, where there's wildfires every year. Animals will be displaced when their habitats in forests and grasslands are cleared of the nature that Earth has given. Motor vehicles like cars, buses, and trucks do pollute the planet and are part of man made causes of climate change. From 1993 to 2019, polar ice sheets in Greenland lost about an average of 279 million tons of ice melting each year. Along with this and other sea ice melting around the world, this leads to a sea level rise of 3.3 millimeters a year. That will get worse as global warming increases at a rate that is troubling if nothing is done.

Climate Change Op-Ed (continued)

But what do the climate deniers say? The opposing side of the argument is that the experts of climate change are “fake”. The evidence for climate change is cherry picked. This means the evidence is not the full entire evidence and the evidence that is bad against the experts is not included as the deniers say. The climate deniers say that carbon dioxide is not increasing. The warming wasn’t caused by man made effects and it was natural. It is important to see that some people don’t see eye to eye with others. In some issues, they can be controversial along political party lines. In some people's eyes and minds, climate change is all just a hoax. This is no hoax. I believe that this is the greatest crisis the next generation of children are facing.

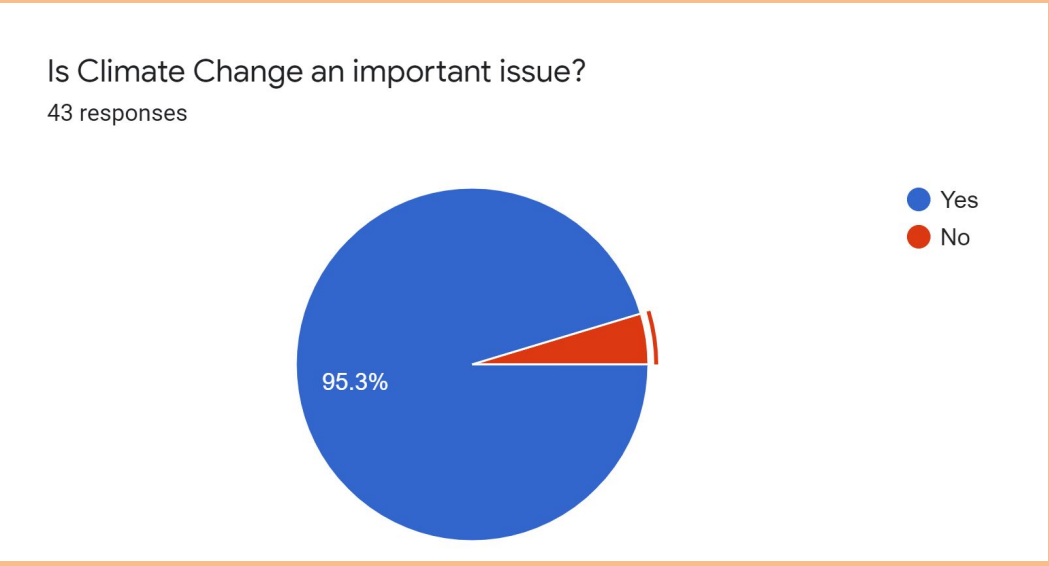


The absolute mess of climate change has been left to us. We the people of the next generation of the United States of America and around the world shall suffer at the hands of mother nature unless this issue is tackled. The children of us, they will be left with a messed up world. Solutions to this gigantic problem can be sustainability. Be more cleaner and greener by having electric cars and more solar panels. I hope that people will become more aware of this issue to the common person. People should be fearful for the future generations of people to walk this planet.

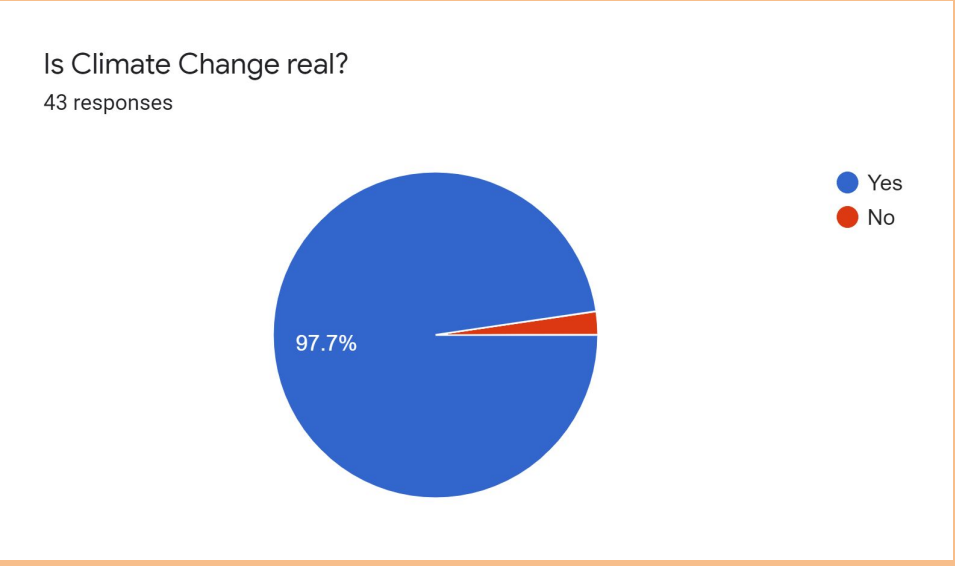


Results of a Climate Change Survey

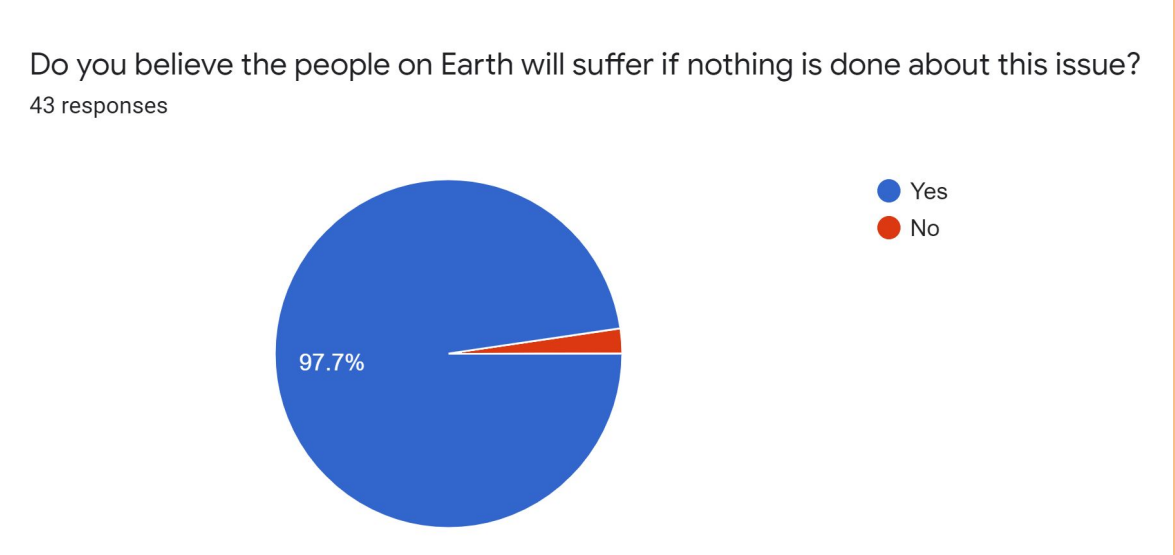
The results from the survey are in. Out of the 43 people who responded, most said that Climate Change is an important issue.



Out of 43 people who responded, most say that climate change is real.

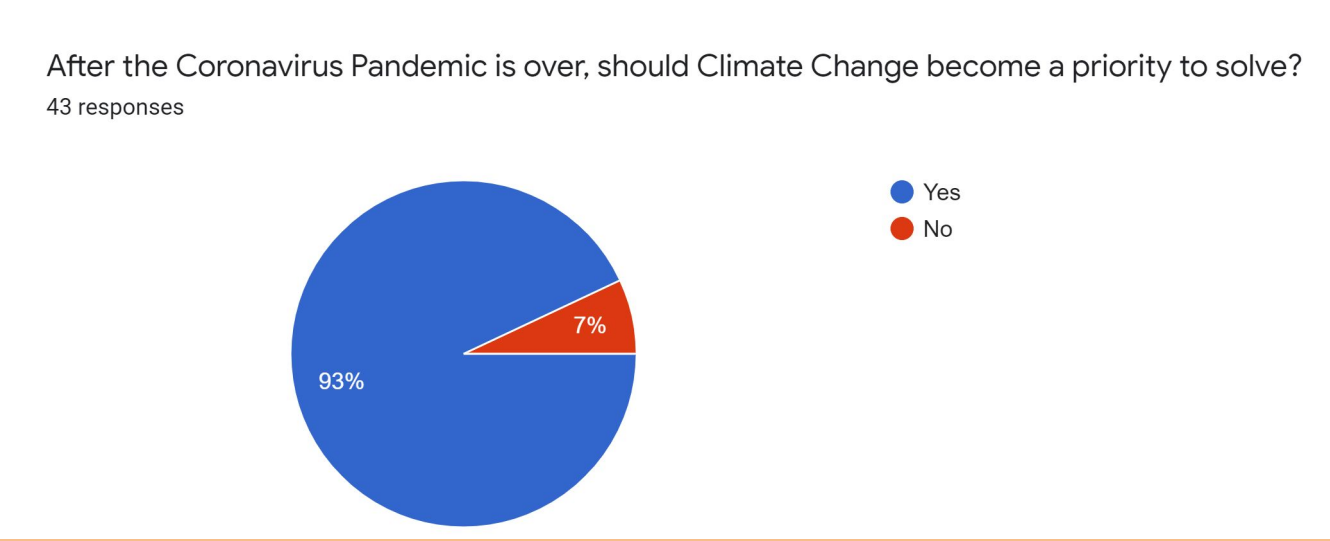


Out of 43 people who responded, most say that Earth will suffer if nothing is done about climate change.



Results of a Climate Change Survey

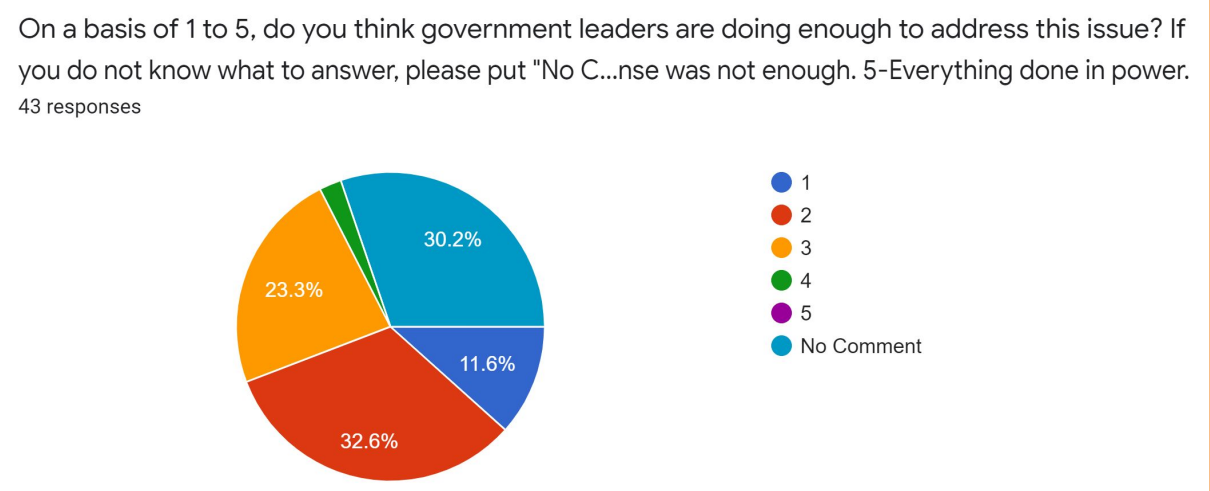
Out of the 43 people who responded, most say that after the Coronavirus Pandemic is over, Climate change should be a priority to solve



We asked people to answer, “How do you think Climate Change will affect Earth?” We got a variety of answers. Here are some responses.

- **I am afraid for my children and their children. I think that the irratic weather that we are experiencing will increase in severity, causing catastrophic problems.**
- **I think climate change will affect earth by increasing heat, Droughts and multiple fires**
- **Crops can spoil, animals can die, life would basically be unbearable because of the extreme heat.**
- **I think we don't do something about it immediately we will pay. It will end up destroying Earth and killing all species alive on Earth.**
- **animals that live in cold climates like the Artic will lose their habitat and ways of catching food, which will lead to their population to decrease.**
- **Climate Change is already affecting the earth. In Antartica the weather has never been this high and in places where the climate is usually warm it is now snowing there fox example in texas.**

The last question asked our respondents about how the government has responded to Climate Change. The results are mostly divided from 1 to 5. There was a no comment option so a respondent won’t have to choose a response. 13 people responded “No Comment. 5 People responded “1”, 14 people responded “2”, 10 people responded “3”, 1 person responded “4”. No one responded “5”.



Asian American Hate Must Stop NOW! Opinion Piece By David Le

Let me start off by saying. I am absolutely disgusted and outraged by hate attacks on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. This should be condemned and it is not okay in this world. People should unite for a cause they believe in for the general good. It is not okay for one ethnicity, creed, religion, language, or appearances to be attacked because of paranoia. I believe that people should put aside what they believe in, how they think the way forward, or other issues to say that it is not okay for one group to be discriminated against. The hate in this country is unacceptable. The hate some people face is absolutely unspoken that one could imagine. Asians are not a virus. The virus is the racism hate that is put against Asians. Some people in this world fuel the hate and paranoia about Asians, using derogatory terms about the coronavirus, stating that the name was the “china virus”. They reasoned that the virus had come from China. Another racist term was the “ ‘k’ flu”. I will let you guess what that means, just think of kung fu, and you'll get the connection, and many other names to name COVID-19. These terms are racist, unacceptable, and this is pouring fuel on the already raging fire of Asian American hate. Think about if your ethnicity, religion, or race was targeted. People in the Asian American community are now on edge because of these hatred filled, untargeted and random attacks on Asians just living their lives.

These attacks have made me feel on edge. I have a fear whenever going to the store where there is an Asian community, just going for a walk, or doing other errands or activities that require going to a place or business. That feeling knowing that the last thing you see your house, family and friends is uncomfortable even to think about it. The fact that going to an Asian American company owned supermarket and having to fear that mental terrorists would carry an AR-15 or powerful firearms into a store and start firing at random people for no reason and have bombs to do harm to innocent people living life. People should be aware of the world around them and not be naive. Drowning out and canceling out the news about Asian American hate and just being complicit and ignorant.

Stop Asian Hate Op-Ed (continued)

This is a systematic problem since Asians first arrived in the United States. With the facemasks now, not saying it's bad but it is good to wear a mask, the people who target Asians in this bad world, they won't care if you're Asian, Chinese, Flilipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Japanese, Korean, etc. They will attack you because they are under this theory that people from Asia have the virus. Here's a fact according to CNN , in 2020, ***hate crimes overall went down 7%. But hate crimes against Asian Americans have gone up 149% in 2020.*** Another thing is that ***hate crimes against Asian Americans in New York City have gone up 533%.*** This is true. Some attackers who vandalize proudly owned Asian American business because of some issues like mask mandates in the business, or just simply because of the attacker's hatred. Some businesses had slogans like "Go back 2 China", " 'k' flu"(again, I will let you guess what that means) painted on them, and other racist things against Asian Americans. People are spit on, which is an increased risk nowadays with COVID-19 and absolutely downright disgusting.

With this hate, there will be a source where the racist rhetoric has spoken from. That is the last administration. The last administration promoted racist rhetoric in front of cameras, which would make Asian hate crimes worse since people would watch the last administration officials say racist things and be inspired by this. Some politicians promote these hateful and racist rhetoric by saying it in front of cameras in front of people watching who would be inspired to do hateful things. People should take a stand and say, "Racism has no place in the world". Peaceful protests are a way to raise awareness about these systematic issues in society.

Overall, the thing is, hate exists in this world. Hate exists to minority communities like African Americans and Asian Americans. There will be people out there to do harm, and they were influenced by the last administration and the last administration's racist rhetoric directed at Asian Americans. I urge people to take a stand against systemic racism in this country. **Racism is absolutely not okay.**

Why The U.S. Needs Gun Reform Opinion Piece By David Le

The United States has seen a wave of mass shootings that has killed many people. Congress must act and pass a bill to have limits on firearms. In March and April, there have been at least 50 mass shootings and counting. CNN has defined mass shooting as 4 or more casualties meaning at least 4 people killed or wounded altogether, not including the person with the firearm who might have killed themselves. (CNN Article, Mid April). Gun violence is now an epidemic. I understand the right to firearms. But there should be restrictions to prevent loss of life. These people killed in mass shootings are people with feelings, lives, and emotions. People who are innocent like those people killed in the Atlanta area spa shootings were just living life. One couple killed were just getting relaxation and time together at one of the spas. The second amendment states that people have the right to bear firearms, but I think there should be restrictions on what firearms, types, and any attachments. I see that there are some people that want more firearms stating the second amendment but too much guns in America will lead to disastrous consequences for people.

The second amendment today is highly controversial. This has to do with politicians in Congress. Some want more restrictions, while others want more freedoms and liberties for owning firearms. Proposals and actions are being taken to ban firearms and attachments like assault weapons, arm braces, and high capacity magazines. The high capacity magazines can deal a lot of damage as the firearm would not need to be reloaded by the person for a long time as the rounds will slowly run out. This would be bad as if a person committed an act of shooting a person could bring a lot of these magazines and fire for a long time before reloading. Assault weapons could be used to kill many people in a short amount of time as some of this type are automatic, meaning the perpetrator could press the trigger and the bullets would keep coming out. Gun violence in America is very high, and I fear myself when going to a place like the grocery store or school when things were normal, and nowadays with the pandemic. In the weekend of Friday May 7h, to Sunday May 9th at night, there were 9 mass shootings in the United States.

Gun Reform Op-Ed Continued

I do wonder if some people in Congress haven't learned the lessons from Sandy Hook (2012), Las Vegas (2017), El Paso (2019), Marjory Stoneman Douglas High (2018), Boulder (2021), as well as many countless others. People must go protest peacefully for reforms, because gun violence could take your life next if nothing is done. Background checks should be more in depth and more checks should be done in order for a person to obtain a firearm. Mental illness checks should also be done in order for a person to obtain a gun as people who are mentally ill could have firearms to do mass shootings and blame it on illness.

What are ghost guns? This is a term for firearms where the parts of the firearm are bought online or parts are bought separately and self assembled by the buyer. The thing about this type of firearm is that there is no serial number to trace the firearm back to the person who owns it. This type of firearm also does not need the retailer selling the parts for the firearm to perform background checks so a person like a convicted felon cannot possess a weapon. Criminals and other people who should not own a firearm could use ghost guns as a way to bypass the regulations in buying a gun. In my opinion, ghost guns could have serial numbers for the purposes of tracking and tracing the owner and background checks should be mandatory for retailers who sell weapon parts for a person to assemble the firearm.

What other things can the U.S. do to prevent mass shootings? In Australia, after a mass shooting in 1996, they had gun reform measures to prevent mass shootings. It is important to note that in the Australian constitution, one of your rights does not say that you have the right to own a firearm. What Australia did was that they had a gun buyback program. The government would go around and collect rifle type firearms from people and pay them as part of the buyback program. This is what the U.S should do when assault type firearms are banned to keep things fair for gun owners. Overall, gun reform is way overdue and is urgently needed in America for the interest of public safety.

Be sure to Read the upcoming Children's book on Dr. Fauci this Late June

BY: Rishi Shah

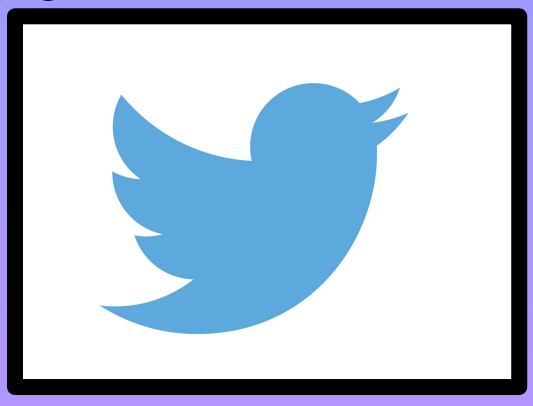
Did you know there is a children's book being published on, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the current director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases as well as the chief medical advisor under seven presidents, being titled "Dr. Fauci: How a Boy from Brooklyn Became America's Doctor," that is set to reach the bookstores by June 29. Kate Messner, the author, talks about how she made the story by interviewing Dr. Fauci at various times. The picture book biography talks about the story of Fauci's many struggles of Fauci and of the many big public health problems faced in the United States and beyond. The 48-page hardcover book also holds Fauci's story about his life and career and how he becomes the nation's figure fighting Covid! This picture book is now available to preorder, as the book is set to be released in late June.

"Before he was Dr. Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Anthony Fauci was a curious boy in Brooklyn, delivering prescriptions from his father's pharmacy on his blue Schwinn bicycle," the blurb reads. "His father and immigrant grandfather taught Anthony to ask questions, consider all the data, and never give up – and Anthony's ability to stay curious and to communicate with people would serve him his entire life," The author writes.

You can Preorder this book now at:
https://bookshop.org/books/dr-fauci-how-a-boy-from-brooklyn-became-america-s-doctor/9781665902434

SOCIAL NETWORKING BENEFITS AND DANGERS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING

By: Rishi Shah











Introduction: WHAT IS SOCIAL NETWORKING?

Social Networking is a way users communicate and interact digitally using the internet, by posting comments, messages, pictures, sharing additional information, ideas, interests, and much more!

Examples:

A few social networking apps /websites used today include Snapchat, Instagram,
Youtube, TikTok, WhatsApp, Facebook, Discord,
Twitter, WeChat, Hangouts, Tumblr,
Twitch, Vimeo, Skype, and LinkedIn!

Benefits: SOCIAL NETWORKING

There are many benefits when it comes to Social Networking! In fact, it was one of the only things people used to only wanted to start doing during the start of the Pandemic in 2020.

Social networking helps us, humans, in many ways here are a few:

1) It helps to maintaining, forming and growing connections with friends and families
2) Social Networking helps us by staying informed about what's happening around the world.
3) It helps us connect with other people all around the world!

4) It's fast, reliable, and you can connect to anyone from even your smartwatch!
5) You can connect anytime because this network never sleeps!
6) It's also a great opportunity for businesses to grow!
7) You can get the latest news and information than anywhere else!

Dangers: SOCIAL NETWORKING

You should know everything has a dark and dangerous side and when it comes to Social Networking there's a huge Yes! Here are a few negatives to Social Networking :

1. When you are Social Networking you are losing real face to face contact with real friends and family.
2. You might be sharing too much information which big companies like Facebook, tend to share and sell making all sorts of problems
3. People might be Cyberbullying you by sending you hurtful comments, posting untrue things, and things of that sort. This can lead you to stress, anxiety, and possibly depression.
4. Social media might actually promote antisocial human behavior.
5. It keeps you distracted, as you tend to check on messages and social media posts when you receive them all throughout the day.
6. It changes your habits and disturbs your sleep negatively.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Social Networking has many benefits and dangers you should be aware of when you are using it. Don't be distracted, check only 1-2 times a day, share less information, don't check before and during sleeping. You should know if you have fallen into one of the dangers of Networking and what to do if so.

Sources:

Written by : Rishi Shah

With some help from https://www.lifewire.com/advantages-and-disadvantages-of-social-networking-3486020

Are Entrepreneurs Actually More Helpful Than Our Government?

By: Rishi Shah

Now in an era during the tech revelation, entrepreneurs such as Elon Musk are making us reconsider whether entrepreneurs might be the ones more helpful than our government. As of now from the various pieces of evidence and trends out there, it seems as entrepreneurs are expanding their boundaries to producing objects the world thought no one can do as well as innovating, and even changing our world, positivity, and far faster than any rival including our own government-run operations. I can assure you the future seems, as the consumer's needs and uses start to rise, more businesses succeeding in getting stronger and more powerful, which results in these companies being able to afford than we can't even imagine are even possible!

To start off, I would agree with the statement that our community might actually be better served with a larger involvement from entrepreneurs unless if these entrepreneurs are doing what is the best for all, are fair to others, can be trustable, and look for others besides themselves. The reason I wanted to point this out is if untrustable businesses have all the power and money, only God knows what they might be doing behind our back like selling away our privacy and information to hackers, harming our environment, or even spreading lies to make their products sell. An article by Suranga Seneviratne written on 11/25/2019 points, ***"As survey results pile, it's becoming clear Australians are sceptical about how their online data is tracked and used...Lately, a common pattern has emerged every time malpractice is exposed...When it comes to personal data, it's extremely difficult to identify unlawful collections among legitimate collections, because multiple factors need to be considered, including the context in which the data is collected, the methodology used to obtain user consent, and country-specific laws… Also, it's almost impossible to know if user data is being misused within company bounds or in business-to-business interactions...Earlier this year, both Amazon and Apple were reported to be using human annotators to listen to personal conversations, recorded via their respective digital assistants Alexa and Siri."***

An article by TY HAQQI written on 12/19/2021 pinpoints that, “The world has probably never been as competitive as it is right now. Every day, businesses startup and every day, businesses fold-over. One way companies gain an advantage over their competitors, and also their consumers is by lying, which is why you’ll often see companies lying to public, often by employing misleading advertisements.” Additionally, an article written by Kieran Cooke on 2/8/2018 asserts, ***“Trusting big business to lead sustainability efforts, says Dauvergne, is like trusting arsonists to be our firefighters...One should not be fooled: when all is said and done, what companies like Walmart, Coca-Cola and BP are doing in the name of sustainability is aiming to advance the prosperity of business, not the integrity of ecosystems or the quality of future life."*** From all the three quotes provided, there is one similarity, that is all these types of companies are taking advantage of ways to grow themselves not thinking about how negatively it can impact us, our lives, and our environment. As the first article says, how many tech companies are tracking as well as misusing our data and privacy. We are all thrilled and have been shown the pros of new products or ideas to persuade us to buy them so the entrepreneurs can become richer. However, we tend to not be aware of the product’s cons and negative side effects, like strong search engines like google, for example, they help us learn things and spread things as fast as a wildfire helping people same time and get what they need, however, these search engines are also responsible tracking what we search and do on the web after that its uncertain how many places entrepreneurs may be selling our sensitive and private data. This can also be connected to when voice-controlled digital assistants hit and took over the market a few years ago which for the first time brought hands-free operation that listened and followed our commands to make life much easier. But there’s a dark side to this revolutionary product that the rich entrepreneurs and companies do for their advantages is they listen to other’s private conversations and recorded them as this was caught doing with Siri and Alexa.

The second statement concludes how major businesses and entrepreneurs lie to us the public to gain more power and defeat their rivals which for a matter of fact I know should not be acceptable. Following, the final quotation reveals that when some entrepreneurs announce that their maintaining sustainability of the earth their actually enhancing the sustainability of their businesses to grow furthermore.

Moreover, from my research entrepreneurship is growing faster than ever, ***"Becoming a global rising trend, not just because it fosters individual economic development, it also presents real business opportunity for all,"*** https://businessfightspoverty.org/entrepreneurs-are-changing-the-world/ ***a***nd also has many positives to us and our environment if it's used in the right hands. Today entrepreneurs are transforming our communities through innovation making it more reliable for all. These people tend to face their challenges as well as come up with solutions to our daily and big term problems,***" We are the movers, the shakers, the rainmakers. The opposite of "victims," entrepreneurs learn to rise above challenges of every kind... Entrepreneurs rise above by creating their own solutions."***

In conclusion, as the future seems to serve society better served with greater involvement from entrepreneurs and I believe entrepreneurs are the ones paying to do things to reach their full potential, but overall most of the money that comes is from the consumers who buy their products and invest in them. Furthermore, I also believe not only entrepreneurs benefit from their achievements like for example what Elon Musk did with SpaceX but also their investors, the supporters, the economy, as well as the general public!

Do Teens Respond To WorldWide Issues?

Rishi Shah

As many of us have seen there are several worldwide problems that are being fought by teenagers today. Such as bullying, women's education, and child labor. These problems are occurring daily around the world which is up to several brave teenagers to act for change from these issues worldwide! This article will present to you three problems we teens face and how we responded to them.

To begin, Teens not only face bullying in your local school but actually worldwide. And according to research by DoSomething. Org, 2 out of 3 teens are said to be literally or physically harassed each year. Some kids and teens even have to switch schools because of problems relating to bullying. This is what had happened to nineteen years old Emily-Anne Rigal, now the founder and director of WeStopHate, which is a nonprofit organization devoted to building self-esteem in teens. In an interview, she stated, *"It helps prevent teens from committing suicide, and changes the way they see the world...With the 'Bully Button,' I hope to make cyberbullying more conscious in the minds of users."*

Another trending obstacle many teens face is women's education. Around the world, there are still a few fools who believe women should not be educated but should relatively only be kept as housewives, which as a matter of fact we know is not right at all! This is what Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for female education who became the youngest Nobel Laureate had experienced when she was targeted and shot because she was giving her voice about girls' rights to education in her Swat Valley, Pakistan. Malala Yousafzai stated, " I am excited that today I have achieved my dream of going back to school. I want all girls in the world to have this basic opportunity". It is Astonishing how teens can impact and remove their struggles!

Subsequently, child labor is also a big issue for both kids and teens face worldwide from the farms of Brazil to the villages of India. I personally believe child labor is like modern-day society's slavery which many innocent children and teens have to deal with. When Craig Kielburger was 12 years old he was shocked to read a short story about a 12-year-old child slave who had been killed because he stood up for human rights. This is where Craig has convinced himself and his classmates to help stop this issue with the use of WE Charity whose mission was to free children and their families from poverty and exploitation. But that's not all that Craig did to help stop child labor and their families facing poverty as Craig and his brother invented, "The Children's WE Villages, an innovative, holistic approach to development that provides access to five key pillars—education, water, health, food, and opportunity—and empowers a community to lift itself out of poverty," according to https://www.we.org/en-US/about-we/we-charity/our-story . Years after Craig and his brother's hard work, we can definitely tell it had paid off, as their work helped and continues to help hundreds of kids and families!

These were a couple of worldwide problems that not only we teenagers faced but responded well that the whole world could hear and praise!

Perfect By:Hannah Bigata

DING my alarm clock rang. I tapped the “stop” button, and jumped out of bed. I did my usual morning routine, and got dressed for school. I made sure my books were in order from where I go to class first, and last. Then, I made my way downstairs to eat breakfast.

I was always told to always answer directly. Never talk back. Never spit while talking. Make a joke. Sit correctly. Everything has to be perfect. If it’s not, I would be punished. That’s how I was raised.

After breakfast, I loaded my dishes in the dishwasher, and kissed my Mother goodbye. I went into my car, and headed on my way to Justine’s house.

I parked into her driveway, and honked the car.

“Justine,” I yelled, “I’m here!” She hung her purse on her shoulder. Her curly, brown hair swung in the wind. Her brown skin gleamed in the sunlight. “Hey!” she exclaimed.

“Heyy!” I replied, as she was getting into the car.

I always pick her up in the morning for school. After all, she’s only three blocks away. My parents approve of her since she’s their friend’s daughter. I was kind of forced to be her friend, but she’s awesome.

“I literally had to do a seven paged assignment,” she said rolling her eyes.

“I swear, Ms. Mcadams is so strict,” I snarled.

Justine was the best. She’s the only one who I could be normal around. Her parents weren’t as strict as mine, but she seemed to understand so well.

We talked and talked until we ended up in the Estenville High School parking lot. I saw my boyfriend, Rodger, waving at the front of the school. You’d probably think I met him myself, but we were set up by our parents.

I know what you’re thinking.

Why would you let them control your love life? Well, if I questioned their plan for my life, I’d surely get slapped.

“Hey Ember!” he shouted across the property.

No one really questioned him, since he was a highschool jock. More like a highschool jerk. I’d seen him bullying kids in the halls. He was the type of kid that would punch a kid for being in his way, then kiss his mother, get good grades, serve his family dinner, just to look good in front of his parents. I don’t know what everyone sees in him.

I saw him smiling with his brown hair, and brown eyes as I approached the building. “Hey!” I smiled.

“What’s up?” he asked.

“Nothing much,” I replied. “Just school stuff,” I grinned.

“Oh, hey Justine,” he awkwardly greeted.

Con’t --->

“Hi,” she responded plainly.

We nonchalantly walked into the school together, and headed to our lockers.

“Well, I’ll see you later!” Rodger said.

Justine and I got our stuff, and headed to our first period class.

I walked into class C-16, on my way to my seat next to Justine. The aroma of expensive Chanel, and Dior perfume filled up the room. I took out my folder, and notebook, and opened my notebook to a clear page. I write,

Do now:

Based on the lesson from yesterday, explain in your own words, one vocabulary word.

Perfunctory:

Perfunctory means to do something with little effort.

Our teacher, Mr. Dona cleared his throat, “Alright guys, put your do now papers in the box.”

We all got up to hand it in.

“Thank you, class.” Mr. Dona said. “So, today we’re learning about-”

He got cut off by a knock at the door. A guy peeked his head. He had sparkling dark brown eyes. He had black, curly hair, tan skin, and monolid eyes.

“Oh,” Mr. Dona started, “this is our new student, Julian Rimposa. Come in!”

He swiftly walked towards the front of the class and smirked. We made a second of eye contact, until I broke it. Justine knew that face, and I saw her laugh in the corner of my eye.

“He’s gonna be joining our class this year. You could go over to the seat, right next to Ember.” He pointed to the seat right next to me.

All eyes were on him, yet he seemed so unbothered. He walked towards me, and sat down.

He looked at me and said, “I’m Julian,” he said with a smile.

While trying to keep my cool, I said elegantly, “I’m Ember, nice to meet you.” I kept myself together.

“Alright so before we get started, Julian, do you want to introduce yourself?” Mr. Dona asks.

“Yeah, sure,” he said, standing up. “Well, my name’s Julian Rimposa. I was born in Lafferay, then moved to Wilemp when I was five. I was there for eleven years, until I moved here.” He continued, “I play football, and my favorite food is sushi. I also liked watching Harry Potter." Then, he sat back down.

Con’t --->

“Nice to meet you Julian! Just take out a notebook, and follow along,” Mr. Dona instructed.

He took out a black notebook, and turned to the first page. I heard giggling next to me. I turned to see Justine teasing me.

“Oooo!” she joked.

“What?” I laughed.

I turned to focus on my teacher’s lesson and listened. From now, there were no distractions allowed. The voice of my Dad rang in the back of my head. *Only hear your teacher’s voice. No one else’s. Everything the teacher says is important.* His voice was like lightning striking, Once it left its spot, it made a mark on you.

“Hey,” Julian started.

I suddenly zoned out from what the teacher was saying.

“What?” I replied, annoyed, forgetting my manners.

“Jeez, sorry,” he said.

“Oh, I was really focused on what he’s saying,” I added.

“It’s fine. I just wanted to say that I like your style,” he complimented.

“Thanks, yours is alright,” I joked.

“Wow. I compliment you, and you say that my style is ‘alright’?” he laughed.

“I said what I said,” I grinned, refocusing on the lesson.

Mr. Dona went on about the lesson, and talked about a new project we were working on.

He finished explaining, then told us about a new project we were working on. It was a three group project, so I turned to Justine.

“You already know that we’re gonna be partners,” she laughed.

“Yeah, but who’s gonna be the third one?” I asked. Then it hit both of us at the same time.

“Should I go ask Julian?” I said, knowing her answer. She nodded her head, and I turned to Julian.

“Hey new kid,” I started, “wanna be mine and Justine’s partner?”

“Uh, sure,” he said. “Stand up.”

Justine, and I got up, puzzled, and moved to the side. He moved our desks together.

“Ok, let's get started,” he started, as he sat down on his seat.

Justine and I sat down. “Alright so I’ll write down the facts. Justine, you design it, and you. You outline, and stuff,” I said.

“Okay Boss,” he replied.

Con’t --->

“Excuse me?” I asked. “Who’s boss?”

“Well, you’re being bossy, so,” he exaggerated.

I rolled my eyes, and started writing down facts. *The 1700’s. Group: Ember, Justine, and Julian, Fact 1;* As I was writing, I noticed Julian with his jaw dropped. “What now?” I asked.

“You are like a boss. You sit down like a president, you cross your legs, you have nice handwriting?” he explained. “Loosen up.”

Justine and I made eye contact. She gave the look that said, *You better say something back, or I will.* “Excuse me?” I said looking at him, angered. “You know, I think it’s really funny that you’re noticing every little thing I’m doing. So how about you loosen up Mr. Judgy.”

Mr. Dona got up from his chair, and approached our table. “Is everything alright here?” he questioned.

“Yes,” Justine started, “everything is fine. Just some technical difficulties, *haha*.”

Mr. Dona studied our expressions, and walked back to his seat. *DINGG.* As the bell rang, I cleaned up our table, and packed my stuff up. Justine placed our project on the back table, and got up to leave with me. Julian rearranged our desks, and picked his stuff up.

As he passed me saying, “Great job Ms. Bossy,” and paced to his next class.

The school day passed by, and he was in four of my classes! Science, Language arts, Gym, and Art. He decided to annoy me for the rest of the day. It was alright though, he kept me company. As I was wrapping up the school day, Rodger came up to me.

“Hey!” he said.

“Hi!” I replied. “How was your day?”

“Not the point,” he started, giving me furious eyes. “Why were you with that new kid most of the time? At lunch you mostly talked to him. Who is he anyway?”

“Um, jeez. He’s only my friend. I met him in Language Arts class, and talked to him from there. It was nothing much,” I said, gathering up all the stuff in my locker.

“Well, I don’t like it,” he whined.

“Aww, is someone jealous?” I kidded.

“This isn’t funny! Why are you being so weird?” he asked, starting to get pushy.

“I’m actually not. You’re the one who came up to me,” I said, slamming my locker door, and locking it.

“What is up with you?!” he yelled, while I’m zooming away.

I went outside from the school, and saw Justine waiting for me next to the car. She noticed the frustrated look on my face, and immediately asked what’s up.

Con’t --->

“Rodger literally yelled at me in front of everyone. He was mad at me for talking to Julian.” I sighed.

“Well, you were looking at him really weirdly. You never looked at Rodger that way,” Justine replied.

I pulled out of their parking lot, and made my way to Justine’s house.

“Not really. He’s nice and all, but I literally just met him. Rodger’s making a big deal out of something so small.” I said. “Plus,” I added, “Rodger always over-exaggerates everything. I’m fine!”

“Whatever floats your boat,” she concluded.

The care ride was full of small talk, but I finally ended up at her house. As I pulled out of her driveway I yelled, “See you later!” She waved me goodbye.

I drove to my house thinking. *Was I actually being weird today?* I didn’t think so, but Justine knew me so well. The fact that she didn’t even recognize my facial expression, said a lot. But it didn't really matter. I parked in my driveway, and saw my Mother waiting for me in front of the door.

Memories flooded back in my head, remembering the last time my mother waited for me in front of the door. That day, I got a 90% on a test. I remember getting punished. I remember getting hit. I remembered every single thing she had done to me that day, for getting a silly 90 on that test.

I gulped, as I approached the house. I walked towards her, and she grabbed my arm as hard as could be. Her sharp nails dug into my skin as I gnashed my teeth. She opened the door and led me into the kitchen.

“What were you thinking?! Are you already questioning mine and your father’s plans for you? Ember, let us not forget what happened the last time you disobeyed us,” she groaned. “This is your last warning Ember you hear me,” she said one inch away from my face. “Your last warning.”

She let go of my arm, leaving me on the floor, frightened. *What have I even done?*

I went upstairs, starting my homework, upset. I had good grades, I did everything they wanted, and I get this? I could not comprehend what just happened. I couldn't question their doings, but I needed to figure out what I have done wrong.

While doing my homework, I got a text message from Rodger that said, “Don’t talk to Julian again. I just texted your Mom about it, I hope you learned from it.”

This was the reason why Mother is so mad at me? I did absolutely nothing wrong!

Con’t --->

I slammed my phone onto my desk and laid down on my bed, thinking how weird today was. Although, I was not too surprised about Rodger's doings. My Mother must have told them about her and my Father's parenting, and Rodger's parents must have told him. Rodger was always a control freak, but that didn't give him the right to ruin everything for me.

The rest of the day, it was extreme tormenting from my parents. I was not too surprised though. But, I had to ignore Julian at all costs. The next day was going to be a normal day. Just a normal day.

The next morning, and the days after that, I ignored Julian. If he had a question, I'd just tell him plainly. If he started a conversation, I would ignore him. Wasn't easy, but it beat the fact that my parents would give me a difficult time. Justine made it all better, too.

Another day came, and Julian went up to me for the first time. I saw him in the corner of my eye, and used my locker door to block my face.

"Why do you keep ignoring me?" he asked, leaning on the locker beside me.

"I'm not," I replied, turning my head away from him.

"Yes you are. What happened to you? Did I do something wrong?" he questioned.

I sighed, and surprisingly told him everything.

"No wonder you're all tight." he laughed.

I looked at him. "Tight?" I asked. "What do you mean tight?"

He looked at me with a surprised look. "You got a lot to learn," he said, taking my hand. I picked up my backpack and locked my locker.

"Where are we going?" I grinned.

"Everyday after school, I go to this skate park. It's like," he went on, "my safe place."

I went with him, forgetting the fact that I had to be home. He took me to this abandoned skating park, with artwork on every crevice. I looked at the setting amazed. I never knew this town had such runned down places. I just assumed they were all taken down. He noticed the amazed expression on my face and smiled.

"Cool right?" he said, knowing my answer.

"It's amazing! I've never seen such cool artwork." I replied.

He looked at me and laughed.

"What?" I asked.

"It's called graffiti. You really don't go out don't you?" he said. He reached for his bag, and took out a skateboard. He placed it on the ground and started doing fascinating tricks. He even did what looked like the skateboard flipped. I looked at him elated, and he skated back to me. He steps on the top of the skateboard and catches it with his hand.

Con't --->

“You wanna try?” He snarled. My eyes widened and looked at him as if he had three heads.

“I don’t even know how to do that,” I laughed. Before he said anything, my phone rang. It was a call from Justine.

I answered the phone, walking away from Julian. “Hey!” I said.

“Where are you?! I’ve been waiting in front of your car for about 30 minutes. Are you ok?” she asked worriedly.

“Oh my goodness I lost track of time!” I noticed. “I’m so sorry, I’ll be there in a minute. I’m heading back right now.” I climbed up the ladder to go back behind the school.

“Sorry Julian,” I started, “I really have to go! This was really fun, but I’ll see you tomorrow.”

From behind me I heard Julian say, “Alright, it’s fine. See you tomorrow!”

I ran to the school parking lot, and saw Justine snarling.

“Hey I’m really sorry,” I said getting into the car with Justine, “I was with Julian.”

She buckled up as I started the car.

“What happened?” she asked.

I told her everything as we headed to her house.

“Not to burst your bubble, but your Mom and Dad are gonna go ballistic on you. Do you want me to cover up for you?” she questioned.

“Yes please, I really need the help.” I answered her with hope.

I parked in the driveway and saw my mother and father waiting for me on the porch. Father never left work early, so I knew this was really bad. I picked up my bag and looked at Justine worried. We walked in front of the house, and my father took me inside while my mother handled Justine.

“Why?” my father asked furiously. “Why would you go with that other boy, huh?!”

“I’m really sorry, I-” I replied when my Mother cuts me off, and slaps me on the cheek.

“I warned you last time, yet you didn’t listen to us! We’ve also noticed your terrible behavior at school!” Mother yelled, throwing a paper at me. It showed that I got a 90 on my recent tests.

“What is wrong with you?! I want you to go upstairs, and start doing chores!” Father commanded as he pushed me up the stairs.

Rodger must’ve noticed Julian taking me behind the school. I couldn’t believe he would do this to me again! The rest of the day, all I did was make the house as spotless as it could be. My phone was taken away, and I wasn’t allowed to go out anymore. They told me that for the next two months, I’d be studying in my room all day, non-stop.

Con’t --->

After cleaning, I took a shower and went asleep. I couldn't imagine the months ahead. All I could do was rest.

A normal day at school came, and everyone was rushing to the E-wing hallway. The whole grade was there. Justine and I saw the rush in the hallway after me telling her what happened yesterday.

"Do you know what the fuss is about?" Justine asked me.

I shook my head, and we followed the crowd of people. Everyone got their phone out, and started recording. I heard a groan, and saw Julian and Rodger punching each other. Justine and I scooched ourselves into the crowd. Julian was on top of Rodger, punching his face. I stand there shocked, not believing my eyes. As I froze there in disbelief, I hear everyone chanting, and shouting. Everything was moving so slowly, and I started getting a little dizzy. Everything gets blurry, and I collapse to the floor.

I woke up in the nurse's office with a headache. I turn my head to see that I'm laying on the nurse's office bed. Justine is there in front of my face, worried. I sat up and looked around. I saw Julian sitting on a chair, holding an ice pack to his eye.

"What happened?" I said, looking around with confusion.

"You passed out, but you'll be able to leave right after your head feels better." the nurse, Mrs. Reagan, assures me with a warm smile.

I turned to Justine and Julian and remembered what happened before I passed out.

"W-why were you fighting Rodger? What's going on?" I questioned.

"Rodger swung at me first, and mentioned staying away from you. I tried to stop him, but he punched me in the eye. I think you know what happened next." Julian replied, scratching his head.

"We missed the first period, so we're gonna have to finish the project later." Justine said.

I couldn't comprehend what had happened. It happened in a split second, and it was all unbelievable.

Mrs. Reagan handed me an ice pack. "Put it on your head, dear." she says, going back to get me water.

"Are you ok?" Julian asked.

"Yeah, I'm fine," I replied looking at him.

His eye was so purple, and swollen. Justine studied his eye as well. How could Rodger do such a thing? Mrs. Reagan handed me cold water in a styrofoam cup. I drank the water, and came to a realization.

"Mrs. Reagan," I started, "what did my parents say?"

Con't --->

“Oh nothing, I just told them you passed out, but they didn’t worry as much.” she replied smiling.

I couldn’t believe my parents didn’t even care. I made a mistake, but I am still their child. I looked at Justine, and I took the ice pack off my head.

“I’m good now.” I said to Mrs. Reagan, getting off the bed.

“Alright dear, just come back here if you’re feeling a little drowsy, ok?” she replied.

I nodded my head, and went out.

The rest of the day was so awkward. People kept looking at me, and gave me dirty looks. My mother and father were definitely going to extend my punishment. Not only did I have to have the best grades, but my reputation mattered as well. My grades were dropping, my reputation was down, and I didn’t know what to do now. I didn’t want to talk to Rodger, since that made everything one million times worse than it already is. I don’t really know what else to do. I’ll just go along with my day.

After school, Julian came up to me at my locker.

“Hey,” he began.

“Hi,” I replied, hoping he would say something to brighten my day.

“I know today was literally the worst day possible, so I decided to plan a day where we could spend some time together. Justine could come too if you want. We’ll get some food, go to that skating park we went to yesterday,” he burst out, “and finish our project.”

Knowing for a fact that it could never happen, I said, “Sorry but-”

He interrupted me, “I know you’re grounded or whatever, but have a little fun! Sneak out.” He winked.

Was this boy okay? “I’m literally going to be grounded for another three months, so slow down mister,” I replied, smirking.

“Oh come on now. Justine could cover up for you! She could somehow persuade your parents. Didn’t you tell me they listen to her a lot?” he added.

I thought about it. Maybe I *did* need to loosen up. I had been taking my parent’s psycho plan for me for a long time now. It was time for me to have fun for once.

I looked at him and smiled.

“Sure. I’ll meet you there at 4 o’clock today, in the Burstue cafe right across Lemery Lane.” I gathered my stuff into my bag, and locked my locker. I walked away and heard him jumping up and down like a child saying *“YES!”*

I walked out of school, and saw Justine in front of the school building. I was guessing she saw Julian and I talking. The school building had clear glass windows, so it was clear that she noticed.

Con’t --->

“What was that about?” Justine asked, grinning with an evil smile.

“He asked me if we wanted to go to that abandoned skatepark I was talking to you about. You’re coming, to,” I smiled back.

“Ooh!” she exclaimed, “sure I’ll come with.”

We talked about our day on the car ride home, and I dropped her off as usual. I told her my plan to sneak out, but she didn’t want to cover up for me. That was fine with me, since she had always covered up for me. I did all my chores, and turned off our security cameras. At 3:50 p.m I went out of my bedroom window to our driveway. My mother was in her office, which was downstairs. She wasn't able to hear me.

The sneaking out plan was successful. I picked up Justine, and we all went to the skatepark. We had a blast, then went to Julian’s house to finish our project.

“Ok, so I finished designing our project. I’m gonna go down for a snack. Do you guys want anything?” Justine asked, getting up from Julian’s bed.

“I’m good.” I said.

“Same.” Julian replied, outlining the letters on our project.

Justine headed out of the room and we finished up the project. It was completely silent, until Julian broke the silence.

“Are you okay with your parents controlling your life?” he started. “I mean they control and plan everything for your life. Don’t you want to pursue your own dreams?”

“Well,” I began, “I’ve always wanted to be a fashion designer, but my parents want me to be a lawyer. Ever since I was three they’ve been talking about *their* plan for me. So I never really questioned them.”

“Or,” he replied, “You *couldn’t* really question them.”

I gave him a puzzled look, but I knew exactly what he meant. What was he trying to say? “Well, yeah. I can’t question them,” I frowned.

“So you’re unhappy?” he asked me.

“Yeah,” I said awkwardly, “but it’s not like I could do anything about it.”

“That’s my point,” he added.

I looked at him confused.

“This may sound crazy, but would you want to run away with me? My parents are never home, and they don’t even care about me, nor my opinion. It’s no problem for me to run away, but do you want to come?” he asked me normally, ignoring the fact that he had just said something crazy.

“Absolutely not!” I said getting up from his bed. “That is the craziest idea I’ve ever heard of. It’s completely absurd, and I don’t even know how we're gonna plan this in the first place!”

Con’t --->

“I knew you were going to say that, but I have it all planned! We’ll leave Friday of next week. We have a week to plan and pack what we need, and I already have a place for us to go!” he exclaimed, getting up.

This was so crazy, but it’s all I’ve ever wanted. I wanted to escape this perfect town, perfect life, perfect plan, perfect everything since I was twelve. I would never think it would all happen in the matter of a week, but this was my only chance. If I didn’t take this opportunity, who knows how long I’d be putting up with my mother and father’s controlling plan? I sighed, but I had made my decision on it.

“Yes,” I replied, “I’m coming with you,” I smiled. “This is really crazy, but I’ve been wanting this for such a long time now. This is my only possible chance, so I’m coming.”

“Wow,” he replied, shocked, “I didn’t know you’d say yes. But throughout this week, you have to be as normal, and innocent as possible. We can’t have anyone thinking we’re up to something, got it?” he asked me.

“Okay, I got it,” I said, going back on his bed.

Justine came back into the room with a sandwich and chips in her hands. A bottle of water was under her arm.

“I was gone for like ten minutes, and you guys were one step away from finishing,” Justine laughed.

Julian and I looked at eachother, until Julian got up. “I’m gonna go use the bathroom.” he replied.

As he left the room, Justine sat down on his spot. She placed her food on his bed and opened her chip bag.

“What was that about?” she asked me, smiling.

I couldn’t lie to my best friend, so I told her our whole plan. As I told her, she got angrier and angrier. She was crushing the chips inside the bag and looked at me with disgust.

“So you’re just gonna leave this whole town?” she asked. “What about school, what about me, what about your parents?” she raged.

“Justine, I’ve been wanting this for so long now. My parents are control freaks, and you know that! If you want to come with us, feel free.” I replied.

Justine got up and headed to the door. Then she turned back to me.

“How selfish could you be? I’ve been comforting, and helping you for years, and now you’re just going to leave everything behind?” she answered, furious. “I’m NOT coming with you guys! If you want to ruin your life, then go ahead. Ever since you’ve met Julian, you’ve completely changed.”

“I’ve been there for you too, my life is just so much harder. I’ve been telling you how much I hate living in this town. This isn’t my fault! Julian is literally the only one who understands me!” I shouted.

“Fine,” she began, “but don’t be coming back to me when this plan doesn’t work.” she said, heading out of Julian’s room, slamming the door behind her.

Con’t --->

Julian saw her zooming and his eyes widened. “What was that about?” he asked.

“Nothing,” I replied heading out.

“Where are you going?” he questioned me.

“I’m going home. I’ll see you on Monday, we’ll discuss it from there,” I replied.

I drove back home without Justine. I managed to get back in the house, since they knew I was going to be in my room for the rest of the day. Justine didn’t even know what she’s talking about. I didn’t care what she thought, I was going anyway.

The following days were normal. I went to school, and went back home to do chores. But this time, I had to pack some stuff I needed for when we ran away. Julian had his own car, and a hotel for us to sleep at. He had everything planned. Now all we had to do was go.

The week passed by, and it’s already Friday. After school, I got all my stuff ready. I took all my belongings, and left them on my bed. I took the majority of my clothes, all my savings money, and extra things that I wanted. For the last time, I looked around my house. I took my last look at my childhood home. I grew up there, yet it was filled with many bad memories, and barely any good memories. The next thing I knew, it’s 6 p.m. I jumped out of my window, and saw Julian there, waiting for me in his car. I got in, and put my bags in the backseat. I saw that he had many bags as well. I turned towards him, in disbelief.

“Are you all ready?” he asked me.

“Yes I am.” I replied, giving him the look of assurance.

He smiled, and backed up from my parking lot.

“Goodbye home,” I whispered under my breath.

While we’re driving, I started a conversation. “So,” I begin, “where are we going?”

“We’re going to this old town called Rucklake. It’s a really far away town, and miles away from Estenville. They’ll never catch us.” he assured me.

“Wait,” I stared, “my parents could track me on my phone!”

“I thought of that too, so we’re gonna break our phones,” he said.

“I am NOT breaking my phone,” I replied.

“It’ll be fine! I brought two extra phones for us to use.” Julian grinned.

“How could you say that so normally?” I asked, mad at him.

“My Dad owns a phone company. You can just download all your stuff and copy down your contacts and put them in.” I reminded myself that Julian is crazy rich, so this wouldn’t be a problem for him.

I crossed my arms, regretting my decisions. I felt Julian’s eyes on me.

“Oh come on now,” he said, “have a little fun! Stick your head out the window.”

I looked at him confused as he put down my window.

“Go on,” he laughed.

Con’t -->

I stuck my head out, and felt the fresh breeze. The stars were shining brighter than ever, and I sighed in relief. I finally felt okay.

I put my head back inside the car and laughed. Julian stopped the car, and handed me a brand new phone.

“Put all your contacts in, and give me your phone,” he said.

I put all my contacts in the phone, without questioning him. He did the same with his, and I put my phone in front of him on the dashboard.

“Thank you good ma’am,” he said with a British accent.

“Well you’re welcome my good sir,” I replied with the same British accent.

Once he finished with his, we went out of the car and we smashed our phones against the cold, hard ground without a doubt in our minds. The shattered glass pieces filled the road, and Julian pushed the glass pieces to the woods right next to us. It was so dark, and the trees next to us danced with the wind. I shivered, and I got back in the car. So did Julian.

He started the car again, and he drove. I laid my head against the cold glass window. I let the car rock me until I fell asleep.

When I woke up, it was about twelve in the morning. We were on a different road this time, and Julian was driving on the highway. The bright lights blinded my eyes.

“How many more miles?” I asked Julian with a tired voice.

“Two hundred seventy more miles until we’re at Rucklake. For now, we’re going to a hotel for us to stay at for tonight.” he smiled.

My stomach growled, and I put my hands over my stomach.

“We’re only four minutes away from the hotel, so don’t worry. They have good room service there.” Julian replied, yawning.

“I can’t believe we just did that!” I said excitedly. “This is all I ever wanted. I’ve dreamed for this moment since forever.”

I put my head against the window again, and watched the scenery.

We arrived at the hotel, and Julian got our bags. As we walked in the hotel, I noticed how fancy it was.

“Wow.” I said.

Julian went to the front; it seemed as though he made a reservation beforehand. He walked towards me.

“Our room is upstairs,” he said excitedly. We went into the elevator, and it took us up to the 4th floor. *DING!* The elevator rang. We walked out, and Julian pointed to our room, Room 49. He put the hotel card inside the scanner, and opened the door. “After you,” he smiled, mimicking a butler.

Con’t --->

I smiled and walked inside the room. There was a diamond chandelier that lit up the whole room. My jaw dropped, and I looked around. “This is absolutely breathtaking!” I exclaimed, not believing my eyes.

As I looked around, I saw my reflection in the massive mirror. My brown straight hair had frizzed at the top. My green eyes looked at myself, and my porcelain skin had marks from the seatbelt in the car. I turned away, and saw that the room he booked had two beds, a closet, a kitchen, and a bathroom.

Julian jumped on a bed and sighed. “Wow,” he laughed, “we really did that.”

“Yeah,” I replied, “I can’t believe this!”

“You’re hungry, right?” he asked me.

“Yes! Can we please get food?” I whined like a child.

“Yeah just press that button and room service will come and ask you what you want,” he told me.

He pointed to a clean, brown button, and I pressed it. *Doodle-ooo!* the button goes, and a man comes to our room to get out orders. The man handed me a menu, and it was filled with crazy delicacies. I ordered a filet mignon with corn and broccoli, while Julian ordered a steak. The food came in the matter of two minutes. I sat down enjoying my food, feeling like a grown up. I ate there, still in disbelief. I could have done this forever.

When we finished, we got ready for bed, and the soft bed warmed me to sleep. I smiled just thinking of the crazy adventures ahead of us.

We woke up, and went on another road trip. I wore some white camo leggings with a warm blue sweater. I relaxed and let Julian drive. We talked for hours, and I went on my phone taking crazy pictures.

I snacked and slept for the rest of the time we had in the car. I’ve never felt so free in my entire life.

I felt great, until I thought about what’s going on back home. Justine was probably telling my parents everything. My parents were probably going crazy. The thought of everything put me back to sleep. The next thing I knew, we arrived at the hotel. It was much bigger, and much nicer than the other hotel. It completely shocked me.

“Nice right?” Julian added, amazed.

The hotel had white clean sheets, two king beds, one massive sofa, a nice kitchen, a dining room, a walk in closet, and a big bathroom filled with fancy soaps. We did the same thing we did; we did at the other hotel. We ordered food, and went to bed.

The next morning, I didn’t know what to do. There were so many possibilities, so I asked Julian what we could do today in Rucklake.

“So what are we even planning to do?” I asked him excitedly.

Con’t --->

Okay, so that's part of the surprise. What I suggest is to wear a bathing suit, and bring extra clothes," he winked. "Also this." he says as he threw a towel at me.

"So I'm guessing we're going swimming?" I laughed.

"There's more to that actually." he snarled.

"Nooo," I whined, "I hate surprises, just tell me what you're talking about!"

"Nope, it's a surprise." he grinned.

I put on a nice pink bathing suit, and threw some shorts and a shirt on top. I packed some dry clothes like he said, and went up to him.

"Okay, I'm ready," I said and looked at him. He wore some white swimming trunks, and a black shirt on top.

"Okay so after we eat breakfast, we're gonna go to the mall, and then we're gonna go ahead to the surprise!" he exclaimed.

"Wow, I wonder what we're doing for the surprise," I replied sarcastically, pointing to his swimming trunks.

He laughed, and we went to the car. I got inside, and couldn't stop thinking about what they were doing back at Estenville.

"What do you think they're doing right now?" I asked Julian, looking at the blue sky.

"Hey," he started, "don't think about that. Let's just enjoy ourselves! We're here!" he yelled, blasting music. He put down the window again, and let the breeze cool the car. We sang our hearts out as the wind blew my hair. The sun gleamed on my skin and I felt the comforting heat. It felt like summer. We arrived at the mall, and we went shopping. I needed more bathing suits, and we needed appropriate clothes for Rucklake's weather.

I went to my favorite store, and got shorts, bathing suits, and dresses. I found a tight dress, and begged for Julian to try it on.

"Come on! Have fun! Loosen up!" I laughed mimicking him.

"Fine," he sighed.

I clapped my hands together and he went into the changing room.

"You know, this is really tight Ember!" he shouted laughing.

"Just come out!" I said.

He slowly opened the door, and started making poses.

"Oh my gosh!" I said, bursting out laughing.

I felt vibrations from my phone, but I ignored it. There was no way I'm letting anyone ruin my day. He changed out of the dress, and ended up buying it for me.

At the mall, we went to the food court. "Hey you want some pretzels?" Julian asked me.

"Oh," I frowned, "I'm not allowed to eat those things."

Con't --->

“Are you allergic or something?” he questioned with curiosity.

“No, I'm not allowed-” I replied, getting interrupted.

“Your parents seriously controlled your eating habits too?” he laughed, ordering corndog pretzels, and buttered pretzels.

He paid, and the woman handed him his food. He handed me a piece of the corn dog pretzel. I kept insisting, and insisting, until I finally gave in. As I took a bite, my mouth watered. I’ve never eaten something so good like this. My eyes showed off my reaction.

“Good right?” Julian asked.

I took the whole cup and we headed out of the mall. I ate all of the corn dog pretzels on my way out, and got inside the car.

“Alright,” Julian began, “we’re going to the surprise,” he said, putting on his seatbelt.

I looked at my phone, and saw that it was 4 o’ clock p.m. I turned on the radio, and blasted the music again. We sang along, until our throats hurt. Julian drove for about ten minutes. He turned to this dark area in the woods. He parked in an empty parking lot. The tree’s leaves covered the bright sun. There were little peaks of sunlight, but the leaves almost completely covered it. We got out of the car, and Julian brought the bag where our towels, and extra clothes were.

“Where are we?” I questioned.

“Just follow me,” he replied.

It was extremely breezy under the trees. I got goosebumps and felt this chill of excitement. We walked up this mountain, and I started sweating.

“Are we there yet?” I asked, feeling extremely exhausted.

“Actually,” he exclaimed, “we are!”

We made one last turn, and the trees weren’t covering us anymore. We were on top of this tall cliff. The sun’s rays hit me, and I smiled.

“This is such a breathtaking view!” I said.

“I know right! Watch this,” he replied. “*Echo*!” he shouted, and his yell echoed throughout the entire sky.

I looked down and saw the river under me. My eyes widen, and I gasped.

“Are we gonna go cliff diving?!” I exclaimed, ready to take off my clothes, and jump into the water.

“That was the surprise,” he smiled.

I wasted no time and took off my clothes. My bathing suit looked amazing in the sun. I backed up, and took a deep breath. I ran, and jumped off the cliff.

Con’t --->

“WOOOH!” I yelled. The rush of wind breezed through my face, and I hit the water. It was the clearest water I’ve ever seen. “That was amazing!” I shouted. I signaled for him to come down and jump. Without hesitation he took off and jumped off.

“WOOOOOOH!” he shouted. He landed on the water, nine feet away from me. The refreshness of the water made the heat from the sun disappear.

“That was awesome!” Julian said swimming towards me.

“Yes!!” I replied. Something hit me. “Hey,” I started.

“What?” he answered.

“Why’d you take me here anyway?” I asked him. He was my close friend, but what did I do to deserve this?

“Well you told me about all the things you were upset about. Your Mom and Dad were so tough on you, and I just decided to do this.” he laughed.

“Oh,” I said, “thank you.”

“You’re welcome. After all, I had fun too,” he replied.

There was an awkward moment of silence, until I splashed him with water. He started laughing and we splashed each other until we saw who made the bigger splash. We hung out there for hours, and we lost track of time.

“This was really fun, but I think we should go now. I’m getting hungry,” I suggested.

“Yeah you’re right. Let’s go,” he agreed.

We swam towards a massive rock and we made our way up to the top again to get our stuff. We dried up and put on some new dry clothes. Julian and I went back to the car, and I slept until we arrived at the hotel. We decided to eat some classic pizza, then take a shower. The rest of the night we watched some movies, and went to bed. I couldn’t imagine what the next things we were going to do tomorrow. After all, this was only the beginning.

When I was going to bed, I decided to wear some extra lotion. The sun really burned my skin, so some extra lotion wouldn’t hurt.

As I was rummaging through my bag, I came across a doll my Mother bought me when I was just a little girl. I remembered cuddling with it all night since I needed to sleep in my own room, instead of my Father’s and Mother’s. I remember me singing to my mother with the doll in my hands, my father picking me up with the doll in my hands. This little doll rushed me with memories I had forgotten about. A teardrop fell from my eye, but I put the doll back inside my bag. I had to enjoy myself. That was a long time ago anyways, right?

Con’t --->

The next morning, we decided to stock up on some snacks.

“Hey so I was thinking maybe we could go to the grocery store to get some snacks?” I asked Julian.

“Yeah, sure. I’ll go get ready,” he said heading to the closet.

I wash my face, and dress up for the day to come. Today, I decided to wear some biker shorts with a graphic t-shirt. We both finished, and headed to the car. I got on my phone, and did some Tik Toks. It only took us three minutes to get there. He dropped me off at the store, and let me get what we wanted.

I headed to the snacks aisle, and got some cookies, chips, and some drinks.

“Okay so I’m gonna get this, and this,” I said, talking to myself. I felt a person towering over me, and I turned around. Rodger was there, right in front of my face.

So many thoughts rushed in my mind. How did he even get here? How did he know where I was? What is he even doing here? I dropped all the stuff from my hands in shock.

“You really thought you could run away Ember?” Rodger said with a mischievous smile.

I stood there frightened.

MASTERING THE ELEMENTS

My name is Elizabeth King and it had been nearly a year since I had run away. It wasn't exactly easy leaving my small village while having the Royal Guard on my back. You see, I can do magic. Sounds great in theory but all it means is that either the commission wants to imprison you, or have you work for them. It's basically the same thing. At first it may sound fine working for them, catching bandits and dark wizards and stuff, but it's not. You have to wear the same ugly clothing that provides zero protection, follow weird rules and basically give up on sleeping. Plus, the pay is horrible! I have a rare type of magic called- you know what? Why should I tell you? You probably work for the guard! Oh, you don't? Well I'm still not telling you!

Anyways I was walking through the forest to see if I could find anything to eat. The good thing about the forest is that the Guard doesn't have too many camps here, they prefer the shores, so I don't have to worry about being seen. The bad part is that this is where bandits loved to set up their camps for the same reason. Because I'm neutral, guess what? I'm a target for both. I had just found a blueberry bush when I hear,
"Aw look, a weak little girl, give me all your money and I won't hurt you."
At first I thought they were talking to me, but then I saw a girl, probably around 12, on the ground. She had pitch black hair and freckles. She yelled,
"Sand smoke bomb!" and I couldn't see anything.

I saw her sneak around a tree while the bandit was distracted. I knew her little spell wouldn't work for much longer so I reached for my quiver and grabbed a smoke arrow I had "borrowed" from a mercenary ship. I shot the tree and ran to the girl.
"Hey! Leave me alone! You are <u>not</u> stealing my money! Do you have any idea how long it took me to steal- I mean- work for all this?" she cried
"I'm not going to steal from you. I bought us just a little more time, now come with me, I have a hideout around here."
"Why should I trust you?"
"He could wake up any minute. You coming or not?"

She followed me to an old cave, my hideout and sat down on the cold floor.
"I'm going to get a fire going. Can you go find some rocks and sticks?" I asked "I'll make us something to eat."
"How do you know I'm not going to run away?"
"It would be smarter to stay here if you don't want to starve and freeze. There's a bandit camp right around here so be careful."
"Alright…" she said, "But how do I know you won't poison me?" she raised her eyebrows thinking how smug she was.
"Would you just go?"

Con't --->

After a few minutes she had returned with the materials.
“What’s your name?” I asked
“Isis Brooks.”
“I’m guessing you can do sand magic...are you from the desert area?” I popped a few berries in my mouth.
“Yup. I can only do really basic spells right now but I want to be the greatest sand wizard of all time! Maybe even the one in the legend.”
“What legend?”
“You never heard it? It’s almost as old as the first wizards. Each of the 10 elements have wizards tied to them right?”
“Yeah.”

“The top wizards from each district formed a group that brought peace to the districts. You know Storm Hill? A dragon lived there and had been terrorizing the villages. The sky wizard tried to reason with it, but ended up making it more mad. The 10 wizards fought until the dragon was defeated, restoring peace and whatever. They said that one day a new team of top wizards would need to form to defeat the dragon once it finishes healing.”

“Cool.” I said dreamily. I was drifting off to sleep. “Night.”
That night I had the weirdest dream. I was wearing armoured wizard robes, Isis was there, but so was a boy I couldn’t recognize. He looked about my age, thirteen. I could tell he was a handful.
“Bella would you watch where you point that? The dragon is up there!” He pointed to a blue, oversized lizard with wings. It breathed fire.
“AH!” He screamed as his green cape caught fire.
“Get up you big baby,” said a girl with reddish brown hair “Stop, drop and roll remember?”
“Easy for you to say, you're not on FIRE!”
“I do fire magic you dum-dum. How many times do you think I’ve set myself on fire?”
“Oh...right.” He rolled on the ground like a fish out of water. After he got up he checked the damage to his cape. “Yikes.” Then he finally noticed me. “Hey! Rainbow, are you gonna help or just stand there?” The dragon turned to me and delivered a fire blast so hot, the fire was blue, I screamed.

I woke up in a cold sweat. Isis was snoring next to me, she was sound asleep. I lightly hopped over her. I grabbed my water canister and drank a little. I could tell something was wrong, that, or my anxiety was just freaking out over the dream. I saw shapes outside, my heart started pounding.

“Geez watch the hair! It takes me five minutes to tame it every morning!” a middle school age boy said.
“Kid would you just be quiet? You're making this harder for both of us.” I heard
“Why are we here anyway?”
“Before you tried to steal my dagger, I was already looking for someone, and if you don’t want to be turned in, you’re gonna help me.”
“Who is it anyway?”
“Some kid, Elizabeth King. She ran away. My sister was good friends with her brother.”
“Why’s she wanted?”
“She stole some things. Plus, she has *that* type of magic.” I assumed she pointed to the sun.
“You mean- no. There hasn’t been someone who could do that in over 100 years.”
“Now you see why she’s wanted?”

Con’t -->

I had to think of something, and fast. I suppose now would be a great time to tell you what kind of magic I can do, since I'm about to do a spell. I have light magic. Not as in being good or bad but as in, you know, light. I can make rainbow type spells (Rainbow explosion is one of my favorites.), change the color of things, make illusions and even make light so bright, it's deadly if you look at it. Or at least I can do that stuff once I'm properly trained.

"Psst, Isis!" I whispered, shaking her until she looked like she was going to rip my head off, chew it and tear it to shreds.
"WHAT?"
"SHHH"
"Bounty hunter. Outside. We gotta leave. Cover your eyes in a few seconds!"
"Why?"
"Just do it already." It takes five seconds to prepare the spell. Five seconds that I didn't have.
"Isis stall for me. Blind them or something. I need 3 seconds."
"Alright...I've been working on this one… SANDSTONE CINDER BLOCK!"
Outside giant rocks started falling from the sky and breaking on impact. I knew it worked when I heard,
"OW!"

I had finally charged up the spell enough. I drew a rainbow on a sheet of papyrus Isis had in her bag, walked outside and put the drawing directly under the sun.
"RAINBOW OBSTRUCTION!" It was a pretty basic spell but the bounty hunter was blinded. The boy he had with him on the other hand, knew what was coming.
"I'm not as stupid as I look," he smiled and turned to the bounty hunter, "Ivy intergrowth!"
Vines started wrapping around the bounty hunter, until he was stuck. I stared at him blankly. For a thirteen year old wizard, that was some pretty advanced stuff.
"Hi…," I stammered over my words. I was too in shock to say anything, "W-who are you? Where did you learn advanced magic like that?"
"There's a school in my hometown for magic users. Though I'm not exactly sure they could teach you anything. No one has had light magic in a century. Anyway I'm Mason Oliver, nice to meet you."
"Nice to meet you too. I'm Elizabeth King. I normally go by Eliza though."
"Hey I don't think I asked your name," Isis said, "It's pretty though. I think my father was friends with a King."
"Popular last name." I murmured under my breath "We need to get out of here."
"I think I see a town!" He shouted, squinting and read "Casterville. let's try to get something better to eat than unwashed berries."
"Fat chance unless we got any money."
"Lucky for you, I didn't run away. I still have an allowance."

As we walked into town, I saw someone I never thought I would ever see again in my life. My mother.
"Hey guys I think I see a tavern. Maybe they have some root beer-" Isis couldn't finish her sentence because someone interrupted her.

Con't --->

“Elizabeth? Honey I’ve been worried sick! Where have you been for the last year? Come inside I’ll make you something to eat. Your new...friends can come to.” she looked disgusted at the sight of Mason. I couldn’t blame her. Even though I haven’t taken a shower in a week, Isis and I looked cleaner than him. He had mud stuck in his hair, his lip was bleeding, and he had a black eye. I wondered what happened to him.
“I’ll make cookies. You guys can get cleaned up. Elizabeth will show you where the washroom is. Some of you really need it.” She gave Mason a death glare. I think he noticed because he winced a bit.

We all got cleaned up and my mom made us some leftovers. Isis elbowed me and whispered,
“Hey why’d you run away? This place is awesome!” She pointed to the leftover spaghetti as she said so.
“My...brother. He was in the Guard and he went missing. I wanted to go look for him but my mom said no. After about a month I couldn’t take it anymore and I left to go and find him.”
“I’m sure we’ll find him” She smiled softly. Mason wasn’t paying attention, he was too busy talking to my little brother about the latest card game. Did I mention that my brother is 7? Anyway while those two dweebs were in the corner playing some wizard card game my mom started bombarding me with questions and cursing at me for running away. Isis gave me a look of a mix between “I’m sorry” and “Yikes.” I knew I had to get out of there, and fast before my dad came home.

“Hey mom,” I asked, batting my eyelashes like a cartoon character, “Can you go get my- er- necklace? You know the sunstone and ammolite one? Please?”
“Didn’t you take it with you?” she said giving me one of her signature mom glares.
“No I didn’t.”
“Alright fine. Stay here.” As she walked to my room to go get the necklace I grabbed Isis and Mason by the wrists.
“Let go of me! I have legs you know.”
“Shhhhhh. Do you want to get us caught?”
“Caught doing **what?**”
“This.” I broke down the door my mom locked and we ran until we couldn’t anymore.
We stopped to get some rest in a nearby forest.

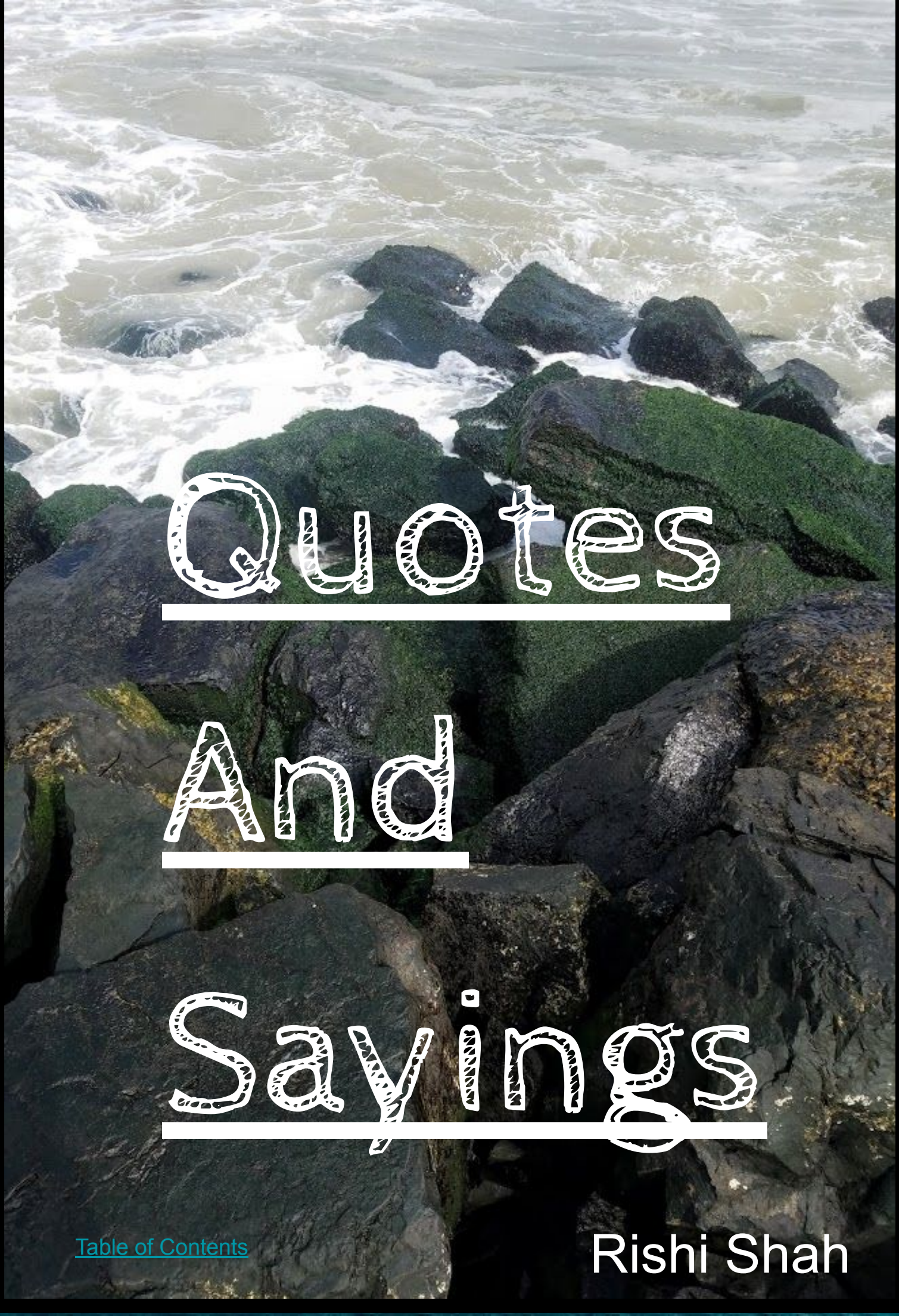
“Wanna see what I got?” I said rummaging through my bag.
“You stole from your mother?” Isis asked
“We were never that close anyway. Besides if we’re going to- actually...what are we gonna do?”
“Well let’s see, three runaway magic kids all hiding from the Guard, that can’t do more than make a rainbow and get sand in people’s eyes. Yeah I’m not liking our odds at anything.” Mason concluded scratching his head.
“Yikes” Isis said, pulling at the collar of her white button down shirt.
I stared at them blankly. I pulled a scroll out of my bag.

“Oh great. You snatched a piece of paper. Now we can become poets.” Mason said, rolling his eyes “At least we will inspire people with our words.” he said pretending to write in mid air.

Con’t --->

“No, you idiot it’s the news. At least we should know what’s going on right now.” I uncurled the paper and read aloud,
“13 year old boy goes missing, last seen wandering the forests 10 miles south of Casterville.” I glared at Mason, I kept reading “12 year old girl disappears, last seen at the gates of the desert area.” I paused for a second, “Isis that’s you right?” she nodded, I kept reading “13 year old girl, missing for one year last seen-” I didn’t get to finish. There was a huge gust of heat towards us. We looked into the sky, and there was the Storm Hill dragon.





Quotes And Sayings

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- “ If we work together things will get completed much faster”
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- “ Be what you want… when you want….where you want… Because You have the right too!” - Rishi Shah

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  -Rishi Shah

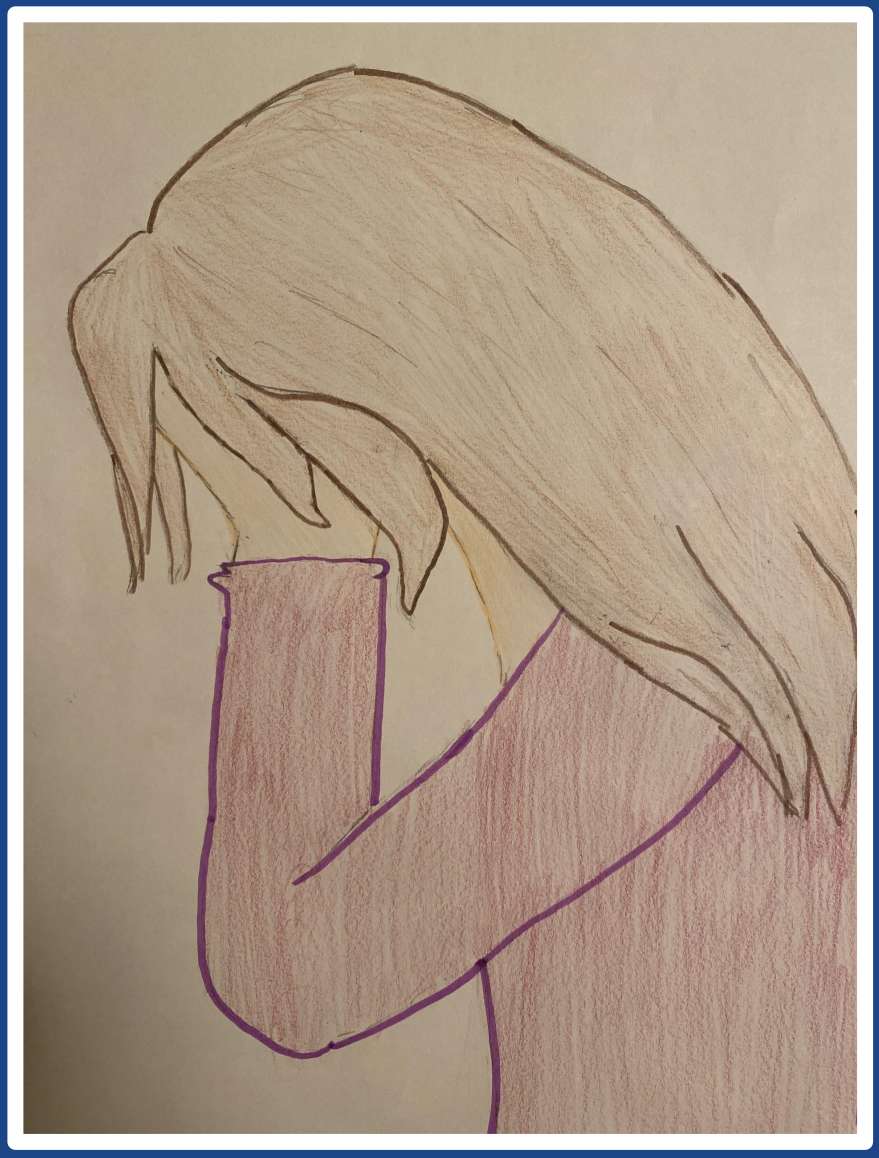
“Perseverance is a key factor to achieve your success” -Rishi Shah

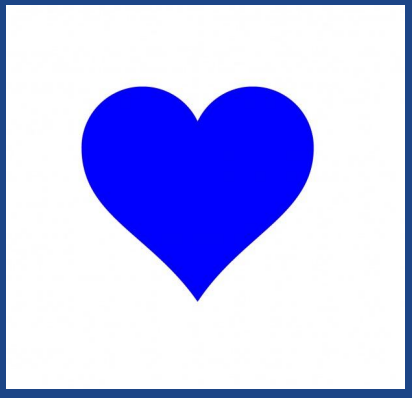


Rishi Shah

It doesn't matter what other people think about you. What do YOU think about yourself?

-Hania Mehdi





Hania Mehdi-6th Grade

Speak if you have a voice!!

-Andrea Kumah

There
is a difference
between giving up
& knowing when
you have had
enough



(Google Image)

- Samia Naveed

"Nothing and no one should keep YOU from doing what you LOVE."

-Angelica Oriol

"If you don't like to play sports, then don't play sports. If you aren't a fan of math, then that's okay. Everyone is different, no one is the same. We all have one thing in common, however, and that's that sometimes we feel like giving up. But we should keep on persevering through life and work together."

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REFLECTIONS

S.M.S

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