

# THE COURIER

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*The longest running middle school newspaper in the United States!*

## Highlands Reacts to Internet Safety Presentation

Reaction by Abigail Tsuji

I was very surprised about the difference of how many girls are targeted on social media. In fact, 75% of girls are targeted, while just 25% of boys are. I was shocked that 99% of the time, men are the predators. I was also surprised about the concept of how many children commit suicide just because of cyber bullying. I can't imagine myself, or even a friend going through cyber bullying, having the fear of not going back to school. As a matter of fact, I think parents should monitor their children's social networking accounts and what they do online. At the same time, it's hard to, especially when kids want their own privacy and just to talk to friends.

Reaction by Tyana Thompson

Many things stood out to me in the cyberbullying assembly. One thing that surprised me the most was the tremendous number of people who were cyberbullied. There were people our age who weren't thinking about what they were posting online until after it affected them. Many bystanders just watched. Another thing that really surprised me was the enormous number of people who got raped, kidnapped, or insulted because of not being wise on the internet. It's a tragedy to all of the victims' parents, to see their kids go through that. Kids our age should really be thoughtful and wise about what they're posting online.

Reaction by Diego Lasso

What stands out to me is how easily kids get drawn in. The number of kids that die from cyberbullying is surprising. In addition, what stood out to me was how many kids are victims of this every year. The assembly did put a new idea in my head about social media. It's also frightening how many kids get abducted because of the mistakes they've made. It is sad because most of the kids that got abducted don't come home. I think the assembly has changed many people's minds about how to interact with other people. I would say that social media can be very positive, but in between the cracks are negative actions and it gets bigger every year.

Reaction by Caroline Schick

During the cyberbullying assembly, I was surprised at how trusting kids are with strangers they've met online. It was shocking to see how many kids have been abducted or murdered because they trusted someone. For example, one girl got into the car without even thinking about the consequences that could ensue. This illustrates how kids don't realize the danger of the Internet. Furthermore, it surprised me to see how trusting kids are.

## NY A.G. Schneiderman and Commissioner Elia Advise Schools on Protecting Immigrant Students

In light of recent federal immigration-related actions that have created fear and confusion in New York and across the country, Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman and State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia today reminded school districts of their duty to comply with existing state and federal laws that ensure the rights of immigrant children to attend New York's public schools without fear of reprisal.

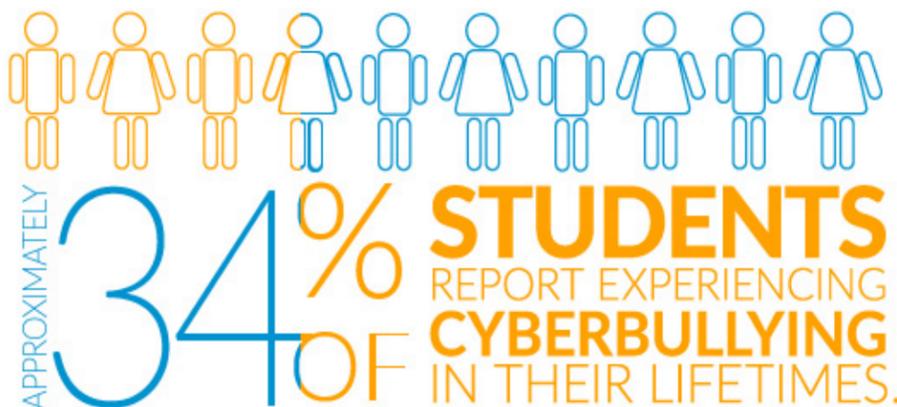
"Our schools must be places where all students can learn, free of fear or intimidation - no matter their immigration status. No family should have to worry that sending their child to school may result in deportation," said Attorney General Schneiderman. "That's why we'll ensure that all students remain protected under state and federal laws, no matter the draconian immigration policies that come out of Washington. I'm grateful to Commissioner Elia and SED for our continued partnership, ensuring that New York remains a leader in guaranteeing the rights of all students."

"Throughout our long history, New York State has been a refuge for people from other lands seeking a new and better life for themselves and their families," said State Education Commissioner MaryEllen Elia. "Home to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island,

New York has always welcomed immigrants. Indeed, our greatness as a state derives, in large part, from the contributions of immigrants. Our immigrant students have a right to a free education and they must not fear retribution for themselves or family members simply because they attend school. As education and law enforcement leaders, it is imperative that we protect all students as well as the information we have about them to the fullest extent possible under the law."

The guidance provides districts with relevant information pertaining to their duties under the law with respect to their students and the confidentiality of student records. Law enforcement officers may not remove a student from school property or interrogate a student without the consent of the student's parent or person in parental relation except in very rare instances, such as when a crime has been committed on school property.

In addition, the guidance reminds districts that under the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, parents must consent to disclosing personally identifiable student information, except in very limited situations that do not appear to cover requests from federal immigration officials to access personally identifiable student information.



*Images courtesy of Boys & Girls Clubs of America*

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# Millions Unite to March on Washington D.C.



Protesters march down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C. Image courtesy of CNN.com

By Anna O'Hanlon

What started as a post on social media by a grandmother from Hawaii showing she was upset after Hillary Clinton's loss, ended up as a huge protest with everyone of any age, and gender. On Saturday January 21, 2017 at 10 a.m. people started to gather at the intersection of Independence Ave and Third Street. People went to go and fight for Women's Rights that some may feel have been taken away from us by our new President. Many groups organized busses to go to D.C. and were able to participate in the march. However, many still were not able to make it to Washington D.C. Therefore, they organized something called "Sister Marches." Sister Marches are events inspired by the Women's March on Washington. More than two million people around the world protested the "first full day of President Trump's tenure that Saturday." There were 673 marches and 4,956,422 marchers. There was a large amount of marches outside of the United States as well. Many feel that Women's Rights are Human Rights and that they deserve the same respect and same care as any other human being is getting. Many of the members attending wanted to highlight other worrying topics as well, such as climate change, criminal justice reform and even running for public office to help spread awareness. Many of the men who attended the marches went with their wife and children. Some also said they tried to show support for Women's issues to Trump, which they feel he doesn't recognize or care about. Many people brought

signs to show how they feel about the election. Some of the signs were more serious and others had jokes about women, that referred to something they don't like about what Trump has done or says he will do. At around 5:00 the March on Washington was over.

On March 8, 2017 another march was planned. The organizers decided to call it A Day Without a Woman. They are doing it to recognize the impact that women of all backgrounds have and have added so much to our culture. Many people don't realize how much of an impact that other cultures have on us and part of this march is that they will be recognized for how much they actually do for us. They also want to recognize "vulnerability to discrimination, sexual harassment, and job insecurity." The organizers of this protest want to make sure to recognize that transgender and gender nonconforming people have helped us to break the many stereotypes. We should all believe in gender justice, and that is a part of this march. Even if you can not attend the march you can still be part of it. Many women took the day off from paid and or unpaid labor. Many others also avoided shopping for a day. Another major way people still contributed was by wearing red in solidarity.

These Marches will continue to go on for a while. Each march will be called something different and each march will have a different focus. Best of all though, each march will have a different outcome and will show President Trump how we feel about certain things he says and does.

# Celebrities We Lost in 2016

By Marina Rosenthal

1. David Bowie: Died January 10, 2016 (2 days after his 69<sup>th</sup> birthday). He was well known for his fashion, movie roles, and popular songs like "Fame" and "Space Oddity".
2. Alan Rickman: Died January 14 of cancer. He was best known for playing Snape in the Harry Potter movies.
3. Daniel Gerson: Died February 6, 2016 of brain cancer. He was known as being the co-writer of "Monsters Inc." and "Big Hero 6".
4. Nancy Reagan: Died March 6, 2016. She was known as the former First Lady of the U.S from 1981-1989.
5. Prince: Died April 21, 2016 and was best known as a music legend. He wrote and performed the songs "Purple Rain" and "When Doves Cry".

6. Muhammad Ali: Died June 3, 2016. He was well known as a talented heavyweight boxing champion, with a strong stance against the Vietnam War.
7. Carrie Fisher: Died December 27, 2016. She was best known as the actress who portrayed princess Leia in Star Wars.
8. Debbie Reynolds: Died December 28, 2016, a day after the death of her daughter, Carrie Fisher. She was a popular actress, singer, businesswoman and humanitarian.
9. Alan Thicke: Died December 13, 2016. He was best known for being a Canadian actor, singer, songwriter and talk show host. He made appearances on many current TV shows including "This is Us" and "Fuller House".
10. Gene Wilder: Died August 29, 2016. Best known for playing Willy Wonka in "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory".

# Super Bowl or Super Comeback?

By Louis Goldberg

Finally, after a full year of waiting, football fans got to enjoy yet another Super Bowl. The fifty-first, to be exact. Atlanta Falcons fans and New England Patriots fans got to watch their team play in what will be remembered as the greatest Super Bowl comeback of all time. But first, let's go back a little.

Patriots star Quarterback, Tom Brady served a four game suspension at the beginning of the season, due to a scandal from two years ago involving deflated footballs. Nobody knows what really happened two years ago, but it came to be known as "Deflategate", because of the Patriots use of deflated footballs in the 2015 AFC Championship game against the Indianapolis Colts. Brady would face later repercussions since he refused to share information when being interrogated by football's commissioner, Roger Goodell.

Only a couple of games after Brady served his punishment, his outstanding play would vault him into the MVP discussion, alongside other current stars of the game, such as Ezekiel Elliot, Dak Prescott, Matt Ryan, etc. Brady played amazing football throughout the season. Although he was placed in a good position due to the success of Patriots back-up QB, Jimmy Garoppolo, Brady would dominate from there, leading the team yet again to the playoffs. The team that the Patriots would face in the Super Bowl, the Falcons, also had a successful path to the "Big Game," destroying any team that came their way.

Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan had the best season of his life, as did many teammates such as star Falcons wide receiver, Julio Jones. All together, they would rack-up an insane amount of points, the most in the league actually, and would bring the Falcons to their second Super Bowl, and a chance to win their first.

Matt Ryan, who played outstandingly throughout the 2016-2017 season, won the NFL's MVP Award, and the NFL's Offensive Player of the Year Award. But his job wasn't done yet. On the night of February 4<sup>th</sup>, Matt Ryan would find himself with multiple awards and a whole lot of glory. But, he couldn't enjoy it one bit, because the next day, he had a Super Bowl to play. And he knew very well it would be the biggest and most important game of all his life.

OK, so now we're back where we started. Fans everywhere were getting ready for the big game. Fun fact: did you know that over ninety percent of the people who rooted for the Falcons in the Super Bowl weren't Falcons' fans, but people who just wanted to see the Patriots lose? Well, it is true. The fans of our country have now divided onto two sides. Patriots fans, and everyone else who hates beyond hates the Patriots. And at this point, you can't really blame them. Since Brady started getting hot fifteen years ago, the term "playoff-drought," hasn't exactly applied to Pats fans. Before this year's playoffs, Brady won four Super Bowls for the Patriots, and six AFC Championship games. But many believe the recent winning streaks were enhanced due to various cheating scandals. So, basically, fans have had enough of Brady and the Pats being crowned champions. Well, turns out, those fans would have to endure some more.

Once the game started, nervous tension would begin to build as the two best teams in the NFL began their epic showdown. Patriots fans came into the game without a doubt of loss in the air. Most considered the Falcons, despite their electrifying regular season performance, the

game's underdog.

But, soon fans would realize that that assumption was a big mistake. Before the Patriots knew it, they were losing twenty-one to nothing, the Pats having already suffered a fumble and a pick-six. They would finally squeeze in a field goal, but at half-time they were still in a major hole. Make that a twenty-one to three hole. Patriots fans were now more than ever looking forward to the half-time show and commercials. Some fans in attendance even left the stadium, such as Patriots Super fan and Hollywood celebrity actor, Mark Wahlberg. But, even though most fans gave up, the players did not.

Soon into the third quarter, even Brady was discouraged as the Pats trailed the Falcons twenty-eight to three. But then, that's when things really started to click for the Patriots. Before 2017, the largest Super Bowl comeback ever was only by a ten-point margin, which happened three times. Despite the considered small amount of point difference, anything more seemed almost impossible. But twenty-five points? A team losing that bad in the Super Bowl would need a miracle. The Patriots would find themselves in that position, and they indeed prayed for a miracle. And that miracle came.

Brady led the team to a quick touchdown, and despite a missed extra point field goal attempt by Patriots Kicker, Steven Gostkowski, the Pats would not be discouraged. An amazing effort by both the defense and the offense would give them a chance to go to the first ever Super Bowl Overtime in history. The Pats only down two, with a chance at a two-point conversion would have to play their hardest for the remainder of regulation time. The Patriots would just sneak by to get the conversion, and they were taking the game to overtime!

Twenty-five unanswered points. That is what the Pats scored before overtime. Nobody thought this was possible, with many Patriots fans turning off their TVs at around the third quarter. But to those fans who believed throughout the whole thing, congrats and good job. Because your team just pulled off one of the greatest comebacks in all of sports history. But the job wasn't done yet.

The coin flip would go the Patriots' way, and at that point, there was just no stopping that team, just as there was just no stopping Brady. He would lead the game-winning drive and would hand off the game winning touchdown to Running back, James White, who had a Super Bowl record, of fourteen catches. And just like that, the Patriots were all dancing and celebrating under Red, White, and Blue confetti.

Although some believe the Super Bowl MVP Award belonged to James White, it was given to Tom Brady for the fourth time, which is another one of Brady's many records. Brady would hoist the Lombardi trophy over his head, knowing it was going back home to New England. And at that moment, fans everywhere wondered...

Was that just a Super Bowl, or was it also a Super Comeback?

# When Should Children be Allowed to Stay Home Alone?

The law in New York says you have to be twelve or thirteen years old to stay home alone. Many people however think that you should have to be older than thirteen, or younger than twelve.

I personally think that it completely depends on how responsible or irresponsible you are. When I was about nine years old we got a dog and when my dad was out of the house, with my brother from time to time my mom would go out with my dog for fifteen minutes to half an hour. I think I was probably about twelve when I stayed home alone for the first time for a few hours. I think my younger sister was maybe ten or so when she was first left alone, because she had me and my older brother there to watch her. She is now eleven, and has stayed home alone for a few hours. I think that my parents have learned certain things from my brother and I, so they decided she could stay home at an earlier age than we did. I feel that every one is different and the way one acts at a certain age varies from child to child. If you are responsible at nine, then go ahead and stay

home alone at nine. If you aren't mature enough till fifteen, then don't stay home alone until you're fifteen. It all completely depends on the child and their maturity.

Mrs. Goudreau says that if you have an older sibling that is with you, you can be home alone at age eleven. If you are home alone by yourself, you should be twelve. However, if it is late at night, you need someone to watch you. Another adult that I interviewed said that her son was eleven when she first let him stay home alone but for a very short amount of time. Now, he is thirteen and he stays home alone for longer periods of time. He doesn't have any siblings though. I also asked my dad what he thought. He said that it all depends on a few factors. Those factors are that it depends for how long, and when, the child will be alone: night or day. The maturity of the child also matters. Generally, though he feels that you have to be at least twelve years old and very mature. His general opinion is that by fourteen, you should definitely be able to stay home alone. I also interviewed my mom, she said "that 'Fake News' is the new buzz word of the day. What exactly is fake news and why should it matter to a middle school student? Middle school students use the internet every day to research everything from where to buy shoes to completing homework assignments. Clicking on the wrong site can result in a costly mistake both in terms of money spent and grades received. What is a student to do? How can students tell what is real and what is 'fake?' Start by developing critical thinking skills. Question the results of a Google Search or a Wikipedia entry. Don't believe something just because it appears as an answer to a search box question. Try to determine the author of a web page or news article.

Think about this when looking at news:

- 1) Why was this article written? What is the author's purpose?

a parent needs to consider their specific child. They need to be responsible enough to not do something that will injure themselves or cause damage to the house and they need to know what to do in case of an emergency." She also thinks that during the day you can stay by yourself but at night it is better to have someone. "I feel you should be at least sixteen to stay home alone all night long." But she thought the sixteen-year-old would have to be very responsible.

A student that I interviewed thinks that it is okay to stay home alone between ten to thirteen. She feels that it depends on the kid because any age before ten they are still pretty young and still learning things so they might not know what to do in difficult situations. Overall, she feels that it depends on the parents and on the kid's behavior. Elleah Henry thinks that there are many factors that play into the decision of the age that you should be to stay home alone. Factors include maturity and the environment that you are in. Meaning, if you live in an apartment, or if you have

- 2) How do I feel when I read this article? Does the author use appropriate language or are there a lot of exclamation points or all caps?
- 3) Does the author provide evidence? Do the links in the article go back to researched publications?
- 4) Can I find another source that verifies the information in the article?

When doing scholarly research, it is always best to start with edited sources such as databases and encyclopedias. By developing good research habits, today's middle schoolers will become tomorrow's informed citizens.

a very trust worthy neighborhood watch, it is more safe for you to stay home alone. She was nine when she started to stayed home alone but she feels the ideal age to stay home alone should be ten. Emily Jones said, "It should be ten but it depends on the maturity of the child."

In general, it seems that most people agree that maturity plays the biggest role in determining how old a child should be when left alone. There is no "ideal age", but parents should make the decision based on their knowledge of their child.

## Fake or Real? Reader Beware!

**Can you tell the difference between real news and fake news? Turn to page 8 to see if you can spot the fake news story!**

## Missouri Cheese Caves

By Sydney Lonker

The Missouri Cheese Caves. Believe it or not, this is a real place, and what's more, they are literally caves filled with Kraft™ cheese. Deep under the city of Springfield, Missouri, a giant two million square foot refrigerator sits with walls lined with various cheeses. It isn't just this location that's filled with cheese, in fact, all across America, warehouses are packed with cheese. America has built up a glut of cheese so enormous that every person in the country would need to eat an additional three pounds this year to work it off. The question remains, though, why does America have so much cheese? Two years ago, prices were high and exports were booming. Coincidentally, grain crops were rather plentiful that year, so that pushed down the price of feed. However, the dollar's value began a steady increase in value, so one by one, foreign buyers backed out and supplies of cheese to build up quickly in the U.S., and in massive numbers. This kicks the price of cheese down low. We have so much cheese, that the USDA is stuffing as much as possible in the food we eat. For example,

the amount of cheese in nachos has doubled; they make sure you can fully coat every chip with cheese. Cheese is incorporated into so many snacks and desserts that we hardly even realize because cheese can literally be found crammed into loads of different foods. This proverbial dairy product is so cheap and common that artists are beginning to use it as sculpting material. Sarah Kaufmann has carved blocks of cheese over five feet tall into all sorts of creations. "If every pizza included one more ounce of cheese we would sell an additional 250 million pounds of cheese annually," boasted Thomas Gallagher, chief executive of Dairy Management. Currently, the Agriculture Department is buying the surplus milk for \$13.10 per hundred pounds. The seventeen foot mountains of cheese in the Missouri Cheese Caves, and simply the overall amount of it goes to show how cheese has really wedged its way into American culture.



## THE COURIER

White Plains Middle School

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# Highlands



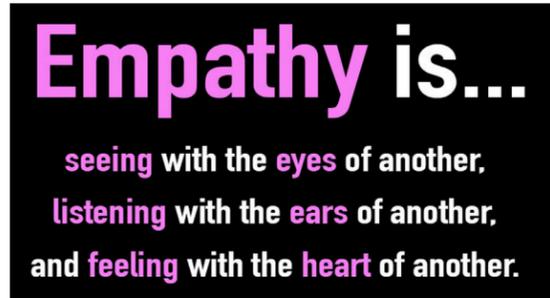
On Friday Dec. 16, 2016, the Select Choir and Jazz Band went out into White Plains to spread some Holiday Cheer on their annual Caroling Tour. Both the band and the choir performed their own songs and then came together to sing and play some holiday songs. They performed for our new Superintendent of schools at Ed House, some patients at NY Presbyterian Hospital, and then shoppers in the Galleria Mall. One highlight of the tour was meeting up with our Highlands SAIL students at the mall and inviting them to sing along! Several parents helped out throughout the day as well as three former Select Choir members who are now in high school. Ben Covello played piano for the choir, Alex Sanchez performed beat box, and Rena Zisser managed sound equipment. It was a fantastic day!

In January, Highlands celebrated No Name-Calling Week, which is celebrated nationwide to help make students aware of the hurtfulness of poorly chosen words. The S.O. students made a PPT which was shared school-wide to encourage POSITIVE words of the day for each day of the week. In addition, the week was kicked off with stickers for all. Below are the words of the day.

**Acceptance:**  
to give admittance or approval to (acceptance as one of the group)



**Empathy:**  
the ability to understand and share the feelings of another



**Open-minded:**  
willing to consider new ideas



**Equality:**  
the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities



**Congratulations to our Assistant Principal, Mr. Gleason and his wife, on the birth of their first child! Siena Dolores Gleason was born on February 13, and weighed 9 pounds, 12 ounces.**



This year we raised over \$6,000. The most impressive part of this year's Hoops for Heart fundraiser is that we had the most overall participants we've ever had. We had 276 8th graders and 204 7th graders for a total of 408 participants. Participating students were AMAZING! 2017 Hoops for Heart was a GREAT SUCCESS!



**Congratulations to our custodian Meuri Ferreras on the birth of his son Dylan! Dylan was born on February 24, and weighed 7 pounds, 8 ounces.**



# Happenings

## Highlands' Students Pay it Forward!

Team 8D students participated in their 3rd annual Milk Carton Fundraiser this year. Students raised over \$2000 for their selected foundation called, Candlelighters NYC. Candlelighters NYC is an organization dedicated to helping families get through the difficult times when a child is diagnosed with and being treated for cancer. Candlelighters helps families by providing things like family support, food, clothing, babysitting, and other necessities that may brighten the day of a child battling cancer. Barbara Zobian, the founder of Candlelighters NYC, personally visited our school on February 1, 2017, in order to express her deepest gratitude to the students of team 8D. She gave each student a gold-ribboned pin with the face of one of hundreds of children her foundation supports.



Highlands' students participated in a "pay it forward" fundraiser for the SPCA of Westchester. They were able to raise \$615 and donate a "goodie bed" to the organization.



## Highlands' Students travel to Billie Jean King National Tennis Center



Coach Brian Golden, Coach Trieste and Coach Adams accompanied 34 students on the trip that included a behind the scenes tour of the Arthur Ashe Tennis Stadium. We were greeted by our guides Marty and David as we entered through the VIP entrance and were escorted to the press room where we watched a video on last year's tournament action. We also watched a video on how to tryout to become a ball person at the tournament. (FYI: Mr. Spatafore was a ball boy back in the day at the US Open!) From there we toured the players' locker rooms-we saw Serena Williams' locker along with Roger Federer, just to name a few. From there we went out to center court (that is where the photo was taken) to feel the enormity of the stadium. The students were then treated to a one-hour tennis clinic put on by 5 teaching pros at the facility's indoor courts. They worked on volleys, forehands, backhands and even did some competitive drills. Some students brought their rackets while others used rackets provided by the pros. After all that work it was time for lunch and then the bus ride home. It was truly an awesome day. Most of the students who attended the trip have gotten involved in tennis this year by attending the free Friday night tennis clinics at Delfino Park. These clinics have been provided by the United States Tennis Association in a grant we were fortunate to be the recipients of.

# Retiree Spotlight

This winter, two of our beloved teachers: Ms. Alfonso (Spanish) and Ms. Ballasteros (Art) retired. We wish them both the best of luck on this new journey in their lives! Congratulations!

## Ms. Alfonso



*Please tell us about your background/education. Where did you go to college/high school?*

I arrived in White Plains, from Bogota, Colombia in 1972. I went to Post Road School, Eastview, and WPHS. I received my Bachelors at Pace University, and attended Graduate School at Long Island University, Dobbs-ferry Campus.

*How long have you been in education? Tell us about your role(s) in the district.*

As soon as I finished my undergraduate degree, I was hired as a Spanish, French and Italian teacher at the Community School (Rochambeau). I worked there for 25 years. I was split between New York Hospital and the Community School teaching Spanish for about 10 of the 25 years. Then I was asked to work at Highlands Middle School where I worked as a Spanish teacher for 7 years.

*Why did you get into this field?*

I enjoyed learning Foreign Languages during my school years. I wanted to share that joy and help students be able to communicate with people from diverse backgrounds and understand their culture.

*Where did you work before your career in White Plains?*

Before my career as a teacher, I worked at El Centro Hispano, an agency that helps the Hispanic Community in White Plains. I did translations. Some nights and summers I taught English as a Second Language to adults at Rochambeau. During summers, I worked at St. Vincent's Hospital as a Spanish teacher for students who were admitted to the Hospital. I was also a member of a Latin American dance group from age 17 to 27. We performed in Universities, group homes, nursing homes, community centers, festivals and any events around the tri-state area. We were even paid to perform at an international event in Miami, Florida.

*Did you always want to do this job? What would you be doing if you weren't doing this job?*

No. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do until my last two years of college. I would have been a missionary, helping people around the world...or perhaps a stand-up comedian.

*What is one of your favorite memories of your time here in White Plains?*

I have many great memories. Each year I had students that had unique personalities and always did or said something that cheered me up and reminded me of the joy of teaching. I even had students that were nice enough to laugh at my silly jokes.

*What will you miss about working here?*

The wonderful staff and my awesome students.

*What are your plans for your retirement?*

Turn off my 5 a.m. alarm and enjoy each day as if it were the last one.

*What message would you like to share with students and staff as you prepare to retire?*

Don't let any day go by without making at least one person smile, or doing something nice for someone and thanking God for all your blessings.

*Anything else to share?*

I feel privileged to have been part of the White Plains School District, first as a student and then as a Foreign Language teacher and having the honor to work with such dedicated, professional and wonderful colleagues. I will miss all of you and all my students from Period 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7...you know who you are! Los quiero mucho ☺

## Ms. Ballasteros



*Please tell us about your background/education. Where did you go to college/high school?*

I was born in Harlem and raised in the Northeast Bronx. I went to Evander Childs H.S. After high school I went to Marymount College in Tarrytown, NY. I went to Herbert Lehman for my Masters.

*How long have you been in education? Tell us about your role(s) in the district.*

I've been teaching 32.5 years. I started my career in the NYC Public Schools teaching art and then worked in WP Public Schools for 23.5 years. I have been a union rep, discipline committee member, cheerleading coach, art club advisor, dance club advisor, and assisted in scenery for the play.

*Why did you get into this field?*

I've loved art since I've been a little girl. My mother still has my pictures from 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and a "design page" for fashions when I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

*Where did you work before your career in White Plains?*

My career started at John Philip Sousa in the Bronx. I also taught at Eugene Maleska in the Bronx. Before that I was an assistant fashion designer at Movie Starr Lingerie.

*Did you always want to*

**A good teacher can  
inspire hope  
ignite the  
imagination  
and instill a love of  
learning**  
-Brad Henry

*do this job? What would you be doing if you weren't doing this job?*

I have always loved art and if I weren't doing this job then it would definitely be an art/fashion related job.

*What is one of your favorite memories of your time here in White Plains?*

I enjoyed my time teaching art club when we ran an enterprise group where students produced original buttons that we sold in the café. At the end of the club sessions we had a party with the proceeds.

*What will you miss about working here?*

The people! Students and teachers...the relationships.

*What are your plans for your retirement?*

For now, I've been sleeping a lot but I intend to do part time work soon.

*What message would you like to share with students and staff as you prepare to retire?*

A quote I will always remember: Growth is painful, change is painful, but nothing is as painful as staying stuck somewhere you don't belong.

Thank you  
for your  
dedication  
and service!

# Teacher Spotlight

We welcomed two new teachers to Highlands this year: Ms. Bongo and Mr. Steckler. Ms. Bongo teaches Social Studies and Robotics, and Mr. Steckler teaches Math and Robotics.

## Ms. Bongo

By Emily Jones

**Tell us about your education. Where did you go to college and / or high school?**

I went to Pelham Memorial High School. Then I went to Iona College because my mother went there. My sister now goes there as well. I got my undergraduate degree in Adolescence Education 5<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, for the subject Social Studies. I am still currently at Iona College getting my Master's degree in Special Education and Literacy. I'm going to graduate in May!

**What job did you have before you became a teacher?**

While I was in college, I worked as a style coordinator at American Eagle in Eastchester. I loved working there because I got great discounts on clothes! I then went on to be a teacher to children who have severe behavioral and academic challenges.

**Why did you become a teacher?**

Ever since I can remember, I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher. After I would come home from kindergarten, I would teach my baby sister what I had learned from school that day. To me, teaching is my hobby and passion. I love creating fun and engaging lessons about topics in social studies.

**What do you like most about teaching?**

I LOVE my students. My students make teaching not feel like a job. I love learning about my students' lives outside of the classroom. As a teacher, I try to incorporate as many real life, current situations into my lessons to make history fun and relatable. Even if I am having a bad day, I can always count on my students to cheer me up and make me smile.

**What advice do you have for your students?**

**What message would you like your students to remember?**

Ever since I was a little girl my mom always told me one thing that has stuck with me. She would always tell me to remember that "tomorrow is a new day, so you can always start fresh". This means that if you had a really bad day, you can always get a do-over tomorrow. I want my students to know that we all have bad days and that instead of just dwelling on what happened, put it in perspective that tomorrow is a brand new day.

**What do you like to do in your free time?**

In my free time, I love to kick box. Kickboxing is my stress reliever. I have entered a kickboxing competition in June, so I am currently training with my trainer to prepare for it! I also love to go to the movies and when I go I always get fruit punch and a large popcorn!

**If you weren't a teacher, what would you be doing in your life instead?**

If I wasn't a teacher, I would become a detective who solves murders. I am extremely interested in crime shows. This



interest started because I took 3 classes on forensics in high school. However, I am very squeamish so I don't do well with blood.

**What is your favorite topic to teach in your subject area?**

I really like to talk about and teach the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration of Independence was written over 200 years ago and is the biggest break up letter of all time. I taught the Declaration of Independence by

creating a fake break up letter between two fake students, so I tricked my students into thinking it was real. The fake letter mirrored the real Declaration of Independence which made it really easy for my students to understand the main idea of the Declaration of Independence.

**Who is your favorite historical figure, and why?**

My favorite historical figure is Franklin D. Roosevelt. Franklin Roosevelt was the 32<sup>nd</sup> president of the United States. When he entered office, the U.S. was going through the Great Depression in which many people lost their jobs and homes. FDR created a plan that help rebuild the United States. I am inspired by Roosevelt because even though he contracted a disease called polio that left him paralyzed, he was able to accomplish so much.

**Who is your hero, and why?**

My grandfather is my hero. He was an immigrant from Italy and came to the United States when he was 15 years old. He didn't know an ounce of English which made school extremely difficult for him. He wasn't able to graduate high school because he was drafted into the military to fight in the Korean War. When he got back, he couldn't find a job, so he started up his own construction business. His construction business became one of the best in town. My grandpa is my hero because he didn't let his setbacks stop him from accomplishing his dreams.

**Tell us about the Robotics program.**

In robotics, students learn the history and influence of automation and robotics. Students then learn about mechanical systems, machine automation, and computer control systems. Students use the VEX Robotics to design, build, and program mechanisms. Students first learn all of the robotics pieces, the tools we use and the purpose of the pieces. Students then work with their groups to construct the mechanism. Then students will create a code that can allow the mechanisms to be automated. For example, on their mechanisms students can program their mechanism to have wheels moving or lights blinking.

## Mr. Steckler



By Marina Rosenthal

**At what age did you know for sure you wanted to be a teacher?**

As a kid, my mom was a teacher, and she always talked about work. The idea of being a teacher seemed so fun, and I always knew I wanted to be in that profession.

**What do you like most about teaching?**

I really love the "unpredictability" aspect of teaching. Each class, there are new personalities, and new perspectives that the students have. It's the human aspect that really makes teaching fun.

**How do you like Highlands so far?**

I love it! Highlands has so much school pride and spirit overall, which is so cool to see. Also, I really get the sense that teachers are genuinely interested in their student's success.

**What's your favorite inspirational quote?**

"FAIL stands for first attempt in learning". Perseverance is so important, and I truly believe it's key to fail again and again in life. That's the only way you will ever find success.

**What reading material would you recommend for students our age?**

I would highly recommend TIME magazine. It has so many issues, so you'll never run out of material, and it has so much information about society. It's important to connect what you learn at school to the world around you.

**What do you like to do in your free time?**

I play a lot of tennis, and I enjoy snowboarding. I especially love running, and run approximately 5 miles a day. I have also enjoyed cooking and learning new recipes.

**What's one tip you would like your students to remember?**

I recommend that everyone finds a passion. It doesn't necessarily have to be a sport, but it should be something you enjoy. If you're going to do something, do it big, and celebrate your mistakes.

**If you weren't a teacher, what would you be?**

I would have to do something that involves other people, and brings them joy. It would also have to require me to think constantly, and is very social. Maybe I would be a trainer.

**I heard you started a robotics club here at Highlands, can you tell us a bit about that?**

I started this club to relate math and science to life, and have students "see behind the technology". In the robotics club, students will program things entirely on their own, and learn how technology is created today. Robotics will give students a higher level of communication for everyday life.

**Lastly, do you have any study tips?**

While studying, walk around to exercise your body and mind at the same time. Also, make acronyms to attach learning to what you already know.



# Drug Awareness Week

Questions submitted by students, answered by Mrs. Geraghty. For more drug facts visit <https://www.drugabuse.gov/>

## If marijuana isn't good for you, why is there medical marijuana?

In New York State medical marijuana only contains the part of the plant that has some medical purpose called cannabinoids. The Food and Drug Administration has not recognized marijuana for medical purposes due to research that shows that marijuana can interfere with a developing brain. Therefore it is still harmful, especially for teens.

## Why do some people get addicted to drugs but not others?

There are many factors that play into addiction. If someone has a family history of drug or alcohol abuse they have a 40% chance of becoming addicted themselves. Also if someone starts using drugs or alcohol before the age of 15 they have a 30% chance of becoming addicted. It also depends on the substance someone is abusing as some substances such as nicotine and heroin are more addictive than others.

## Are E-Cigarettes and Vapes okay to use?

E-Cigarettes and vapes often contain nicotine, the addictive substance found in traditional cigarettes. Research shows that 31% of youth who start smoking vapes will graduate to traditional cigarettes within 6 months. Also, a good rule of thumb is that anything you are inhaling in your lungs probably isn't good for you unless it is a medical device!

# Spatafore Teaches Science Again!

By Nancy Orozco

Mr. Spatafore went to a class and taught some science again!!! Mr. Spatafore went to Mrs. O'Leary's class (Read180) and he taught us a little bit about the Winter Solstice. He demonstrated to us how the North pole axis tilts. He showed us how the light changes by shining and tilting a flashlight on the desk. The Winter Solstice occurs on December 21 of every year, which is the shortest day of the year. On this day (in New York) we have 9 hours of daylight and 15 hours of night.

As the Earth follows its orbit around the Sun, the polar hemisphere that faced away from the Sun, experiencing winter, will in half a year, face towards the Sun and experience summer. This is because the two hemispheres face opposite directions along Earth's axis, and so as one polar hemisphere experiences winter, the other experiences summer.

Facts about the Winter Solstice:  
North pole axis is tilted away from the sun.

Direct Ray hits Tropic of Capricorn (23.5°).

Sun is at lowest path of the year.

Sun rises and Sets farthest in the South.

# Can you tell the difference between real news and fake news?



The Wall Street Journal

Mar 9 at 9:45am

U.S. infrastructure has barely maintained a below-standard grade of "D+" over the last four years, and the American Society of Civil Engineers wants infrastructure investment to increase from the current level of about 2.5% of U.S. gross domestic product to 3.5% by 2025.



U.S. Infrastructure Gets 'D+' Grade from Civil Engineers  
In its "Infrastructure..."

wsj.com

Turn to page 12 for the answer!



Make America Great

Aug 26, 2016 at 10:19pm

It's been confirmed that an Oregon elementary school principal has banned her students from reciting The Pledge of Allegiance throughout the 2017 school year.

Do you think that principals should be empowered to make this decision?

Oregon Elementary School First To Ban Pledge Of Allegiance  
makeamericagreattoday.com

# More Highlands Happenings

Mr. Hauser's students recently completed this Living Spaces project in Technology Class.

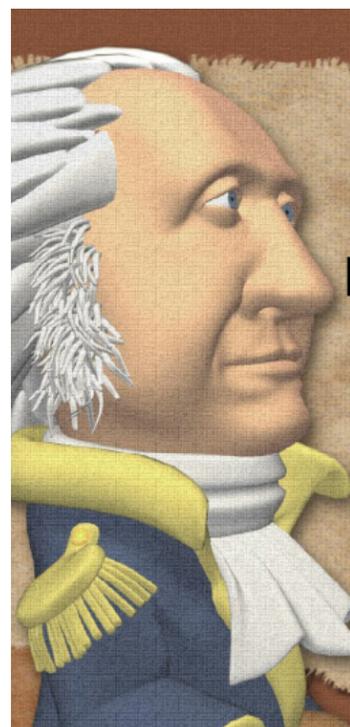
Don't forget to make your payment for the Washington D.C. trip!

## LIVING SPACES

Students design and then create a one bedroom apartment within a given shape. Once complete, students work in a table group to design and build an apartment building with common features.

Students develop:

- Measurement skills
- Thinking to Scale
- Collaborative planning skills (wants vs. needs)
- Technical cutting skills

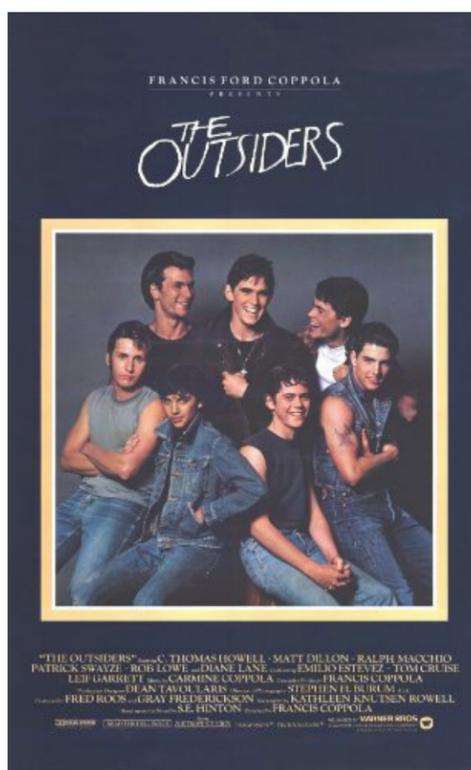
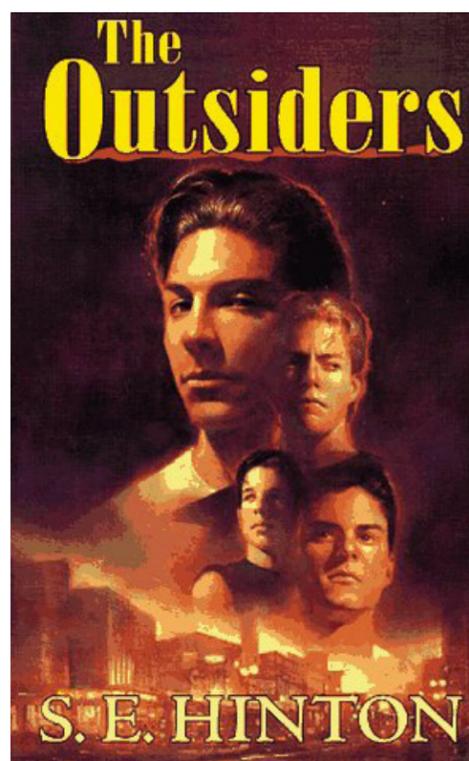
**8<sup>th</sup> Grade Trip  
Washington, D.C.  
May 11<sup>th</sup> - May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

**Payment schedule:**

- \$105 on or before December 1<sup>st</sup>
- \$105 on or before February 1<sup>st</sup>
- \$105 on or before March 21<sup>st</sup>
- OR 1 payment of \$315.00**

# Reviews

## The Outsiders



By Nancy Orozco

This book is very famous and its movie version has won some awards, including Best Young Motion Picture Actor in a Feature Film. The movie was also nominated for Best Young Supporting Actress in a Motion Picture, and Best Family Feature Motion Picture. The genre of this book is Young Adult Fiction (Realistic Fiction) and it was written by S.E. Hinton. This book was published on April 24, 1967.

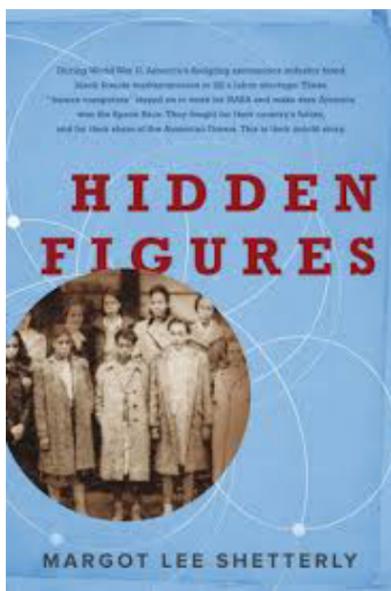
Here is an interesting fact about how the movie version of *The Outsiders* was made. A group of students read and loved the novel so much that they wanted to see a movie made of this book. So they sent a note to a Hollywood director to ask if he could make a movie of that book and he did. The actors who participated in this movie were C. Thomas Howell (playing Ponyboy Curtis), Patrick Swayze (playing Darrel Curtis), Rob Lowe (playing Sodapop Curtis), Matt Dillon (playing Dallas Winston), Ralph Macchio (playing Johnny Cade), Emilio Estevez (playing Two-Bit Mathews), Tom Cruise (playing Steve Randle), Glenn Whithow (playing Tim Shepard), Diane Lane (playing Sherri Valance (Cherry)), Michelle Meyrink (playing Marcia), Darren Dalton (playing Randy Anderson), and Leif Garrett (playing Bob Sheldon).

This book is about the Greasers and the Socs (Socials) which are gangs of teenage boys. The Curtis brothers have their gang with more of their Greaser friends. The

Curtis brothers' parents were in a car crash and they died, so they are alone. Darrel is the oldest so he is responsible for his two other younger brothers. The gangs live on opposite sides, because the Greasers are poor and the Socs are wealthy. They have "a Rumble" (a fight) because one of the Greasers killed a Soc and they wanted to fight and see who was stronger. The Greasers also fight for their territory because the Socs annoy them and they make problems because of their differences. The Greaser always are united and they support each other when they need help to deal with others in case of a fight.

This book is so interesting because it shows that if you are poor or rich you are the same people no matter where you come from or in what society you are. You are equal to everyone else. This book tells adventures about the Greasers and the Socs the adventures are so cool and fun and some are really sad because some protagonists died. I really enjoyed reading this book because it is really interesting and unique to read. I also saw the movie of *The Outsiders*. It was great but in my opinion the book is more detailed and tells everything about what happens and makes you feel like you are a protagonist in the book.

## Book Recommendation



**If you liked the movie, try the book! This is the amazing true story of four female mathematicians at NASA who helped achieve some of the greatest moments in the US Space program.**

## Hidden Figures



By Elleah Henry

*Hidden figures* is a drama/comedy film telling the inspirational, untold story of three exceptionally brilliant African American women who experienced an exhilarating and difficult journey while working at Nasa. The movie is based on the book written by Margot Lee Shetterfly. The movie was released on Christmas day 2016. The movie stars Taraji P. Jensen (Katherine Johnson), Octavia Spencer (Dorothy Vaughn), Janelle Monet (Mary Jackson), Kirsten Dunst (Vivian Michael) and Jim Parsons (Paul Stafford). The movie was directed by Theodore Melfi. It received several awards including outstanding motion picture, outstanding by a cast in a motion, excellence in production design, outstanding performance by a cast in a motion picture and best cast. The intended audience are young girls who may not have a lot of

guidance to strive in the world and be encouraged to turn their dreams into reality despite their challenges.

The movie tells the untold true story of three exceptional African American women who didn't get the credit they deserved while working the difficult halls of Nasa (which explains the title of the story). Each faced many challenges on their journey to being recognized more than computers. The story focuses on the launch of astronaut John Glenn into orbit in 1961. Their contribution as some of "the brains" in the operation resulted in an outstanding achievement that restored the nation's confidence, changed the race to space and shocked the whole world.

I wholeheartedly recommend this movie for you to watch. This movie inspired me as an African American girl to slay in everything I do and to not be afraid to be the first to achieve something extraordinary, regardless of my race. Go watch it!

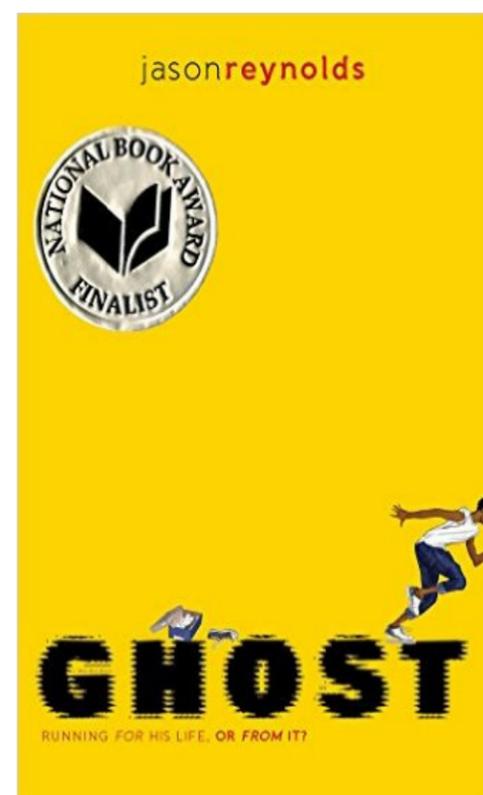
## A Suggestion from the Roaring Readers Book Club: Ghost

*Ghost* is not a horror story, just a kid's name. Castle Cranshaw calls himself *Ghost* because of the way people look at him. After a terrible experience with an abusive father he finds himself running to escape the troubles of his life. It wasn't this trauma alone that inspired him to become a runner. It wasn't until he watched tryouts for an elite track team that he decided to become a runner.

With the rest of the 'newbies' on the team he finally thinks this might be a place where he belongs. The team coach sees potential in *Ghost* and *Ghost* starts to see potential in himself.

The author, Jason Reynolds, gives *Ghost* a very real voice. His experiences are relatable. This is just the beginning. Reynolds has promised more books in a series that looks at each of the team members.

You should read this book if you want to learn something about someone who may not be like you but still has middle school problems. Track and track teams are not usually popular sports topics for books, but this book may actually make you want to feel the 'thrill of victory'.

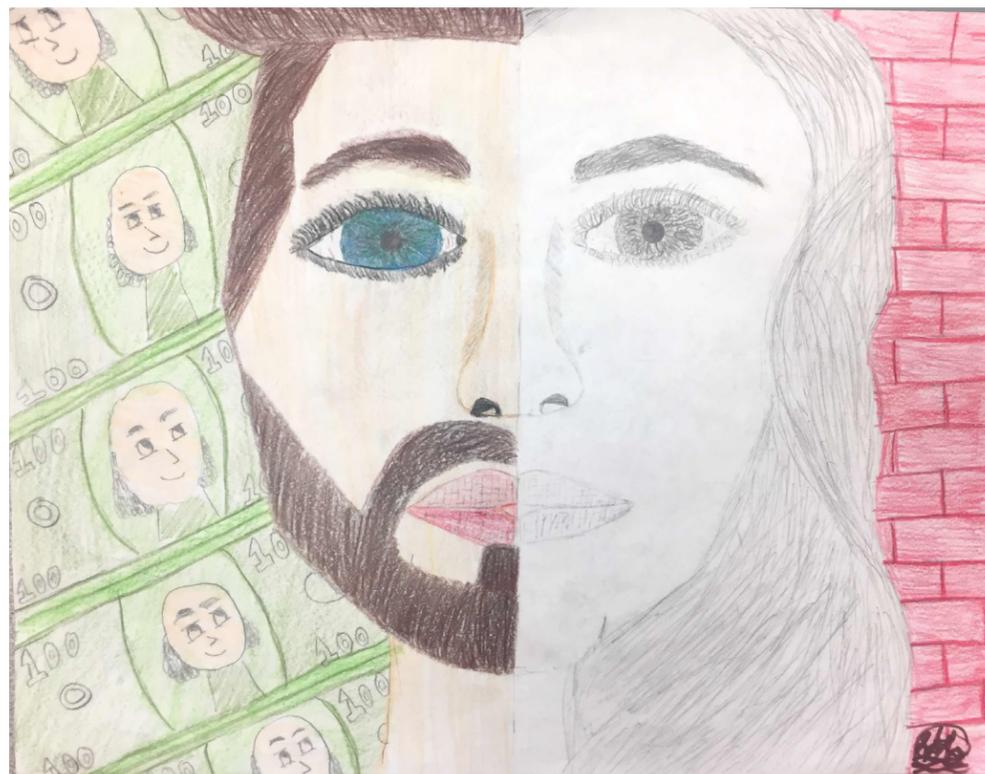


# Spotlight on

By Emily Jones

Social commentary is the act of explaining the behavior of actions and society. Critical Literacy classes recently wrapped up their social commentary units with a project that asked students to create their own examples of social commentary. But before assigned the project, they read "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut and then they had the opportunity to choose another story to read. The students had a week to complete the project. I had the chance to interview Chantal Castillo about her experience about the project. I asked Chantal, what did you learn about social commentary? She answered, "What I learned about social commentary is that it impacts our society based on the opinion of others." I also asked her to tell me about her project and she responded, "I chose to do my project on respect and love for all because I felt bad for the people that aren't allowed into America that are 'different'." I also interviewed Josh Benitez and I asked

him the same questions as Chantal. His response to the first question is " I learned a lot about social commentary in my Critical Literacy class. Some things I learned about social commentary is that when people judge things like government, stereotypes, or other issues in society with their own opinion, it's very similar to what is occurring today with our new president. Another thing I learned is that there isn't just one form of social commentary, it can come in many forms such as texts, artwork or sculptures." His response to the second question was, "My social commentary project informs people about global warming. I did this by making the world as a melting snow cone. My project shows people that we are destroying our world one day at a time. If we just didn't use as much combustibles, we could have a great and healthy world. If we don't, animals could lose their habitats and die and we could lose oxygen." To conclude, students now have a better understanding of what social commentary is.

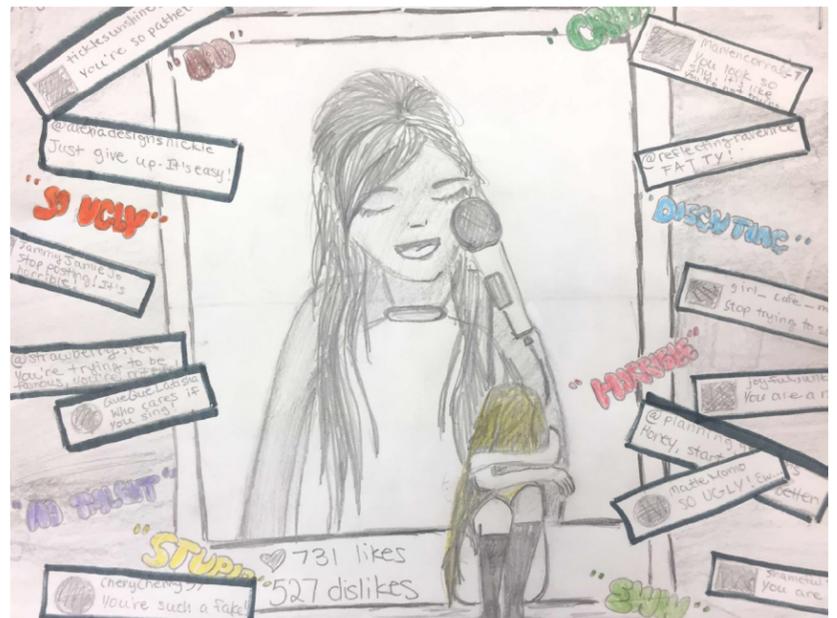


**Women's Equality by Melissa Soto**

This visual shows that women don't really get as many rights as men. For example, in jobs, men get paid more than women even when they're committing the same time and effort into the task. I decided to keep the woman in black and white to demonstrate the impact these disadvantages have on her life. The brick wall in the background shows how women could feel, like they can't advance and are always put below others because of their gender. This is unfair and women should have equal rights.

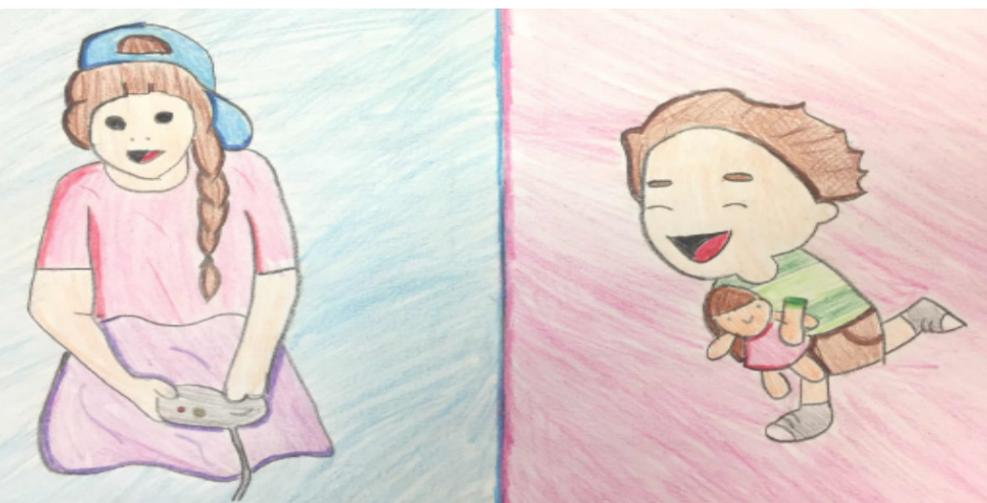


**Girls' Rights by Zen Taborda**

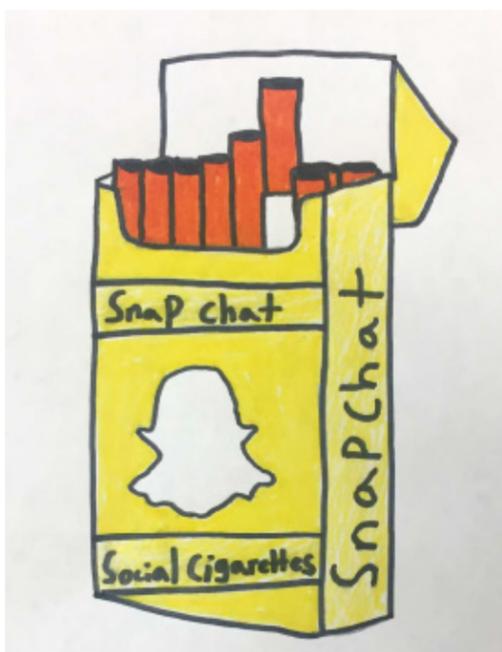


**Labels & Judgments by Abigail Tsuji**

The message that is being shown is that people give others labels without understanding their full story or what that person is dealing with. People make unreasonable judgements. People don't realize that saying mean things to someone can really affect that person. You never know how sensitive they can be, or how they will handle the situation. This piece of commentary is meant for the world, because anyone can create rude labels, intentionally or not, and not think of the consequences.



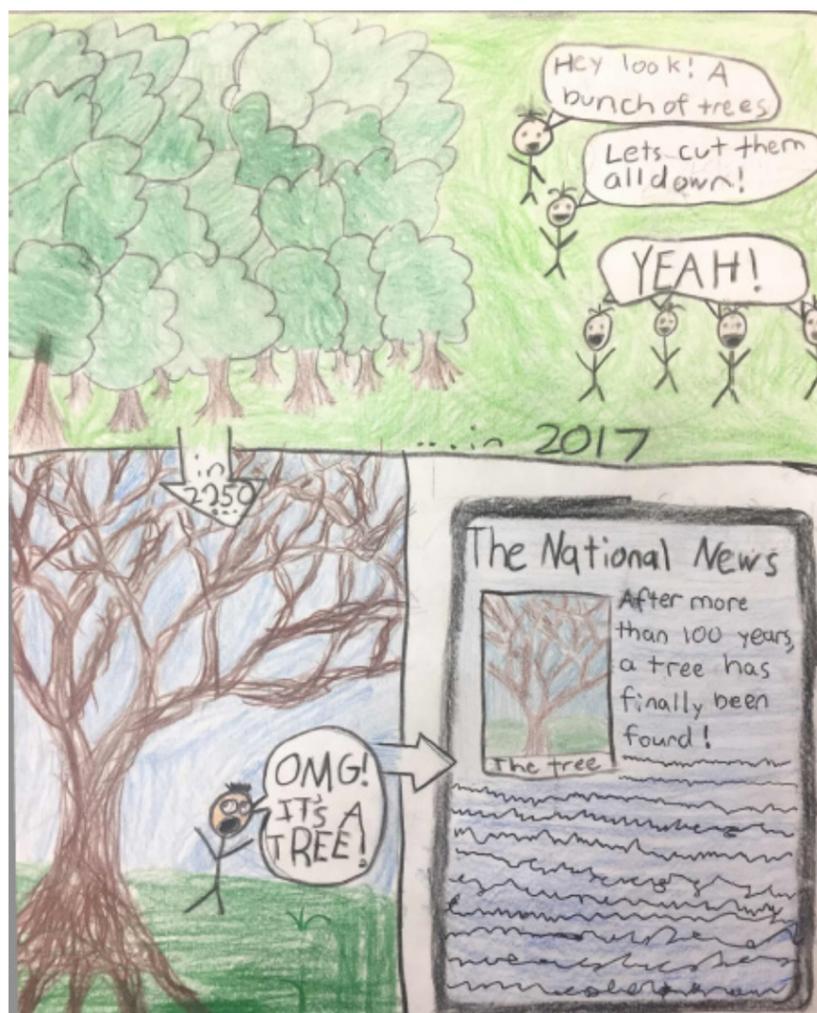
**Gender Stereotypes by Sandy Martinez**



**Social Media Addiction by Brendan Berger**

As my social commentary example I chose to draw a picture that shows social media is an addiction just like cigarettes. This social commentary claim is telling people that they are spending too much time on social media and it is becoming an addiction. I decided to make this my social commentary claim because people won't interact face to face anymore because they are addicted to social media. I worry that in the future people will only be talking through their phones. Also they will lose the ability to talk. As you can see this is why people need to stop spending so much time on social media.

# Social Commentary



**The Last Tree by Abraham Caceres**

This image expresses my opinion about deforestation. The social commentary claim that it is making is that deforestation is bad for the environment and will eventually wipe out all trees. I chose this because in many parts of the world people are destroying the homes of animals. I decided that I would raise awareness for this cause. One example of this is that in the Amazon, 17% of its rainforests have been destroyed in the last 50 years. This is really bad because 80% of the world's documented species live in rainforests. I hope this image makes people think about what deforestation can lead to in the future.

She sang her song, she sang it proud  
 who would've guessed that they'd turn her down  
 oh she wasn't surprised, since this happens every time  
 when she's a shade darker, than the others...  
 They don't even hear, they don't even try  
 they just look at her skin and always deny they don't stereotype  
 can't let them see her cry...  
 Oh they're always gonna choose the one with the fairer skin  
 she's a honey-colored girl who talks white  
 but he said don't be afraid to show your true self  
 then who am I, if I'm not what they expect me to be...  
 A shade darker... a shade darker... than the others... than the others...  
 they don't even hear, they don't even try  
 they just look at *me* skin and always deny they don't stereotype  
 can't let them see *me* cry...  
 Oh they're always gonna choose the one with the fairer skin  
*I'm* a honey-colored girl who talks white  
 but he said don't be afraid to show your true self  
 then who am I?  
 Who am I?  
 Who am I?  
 If I'm not what they expect me to be...

**A Shade Darker (an original song) by Zaida Polanco**

I created this song to spread awareness of the constant struggle people go through to try to achieve their goals and follow their dreams in life, but their skin color and physical appearance is preventing them from doing so. Over time, we've created a certain stereotype and/or expectation for people based on the way they look. This is limiting their chances to widen that variety of opportunities given to them in their lives. I myself suffered from being stereotyped as conveyed through this song. I had a chance to show my talent to the world but my acting coach stopped me from reaching my goal and instead wanted me to play a character according to my skin color. He wanted me to show my Dominican "sassiness" during an important performance and said not be afraid to show them who "I really am". But that's NOT me. I then realized that there are always going to be people in this world who judge others based on their skin color; preventing them from going after their goals. But you know what world?! Times have changed, and we're not going to stand by and let you stereotype us anymore!



**Poverty by Kelly Bravo**

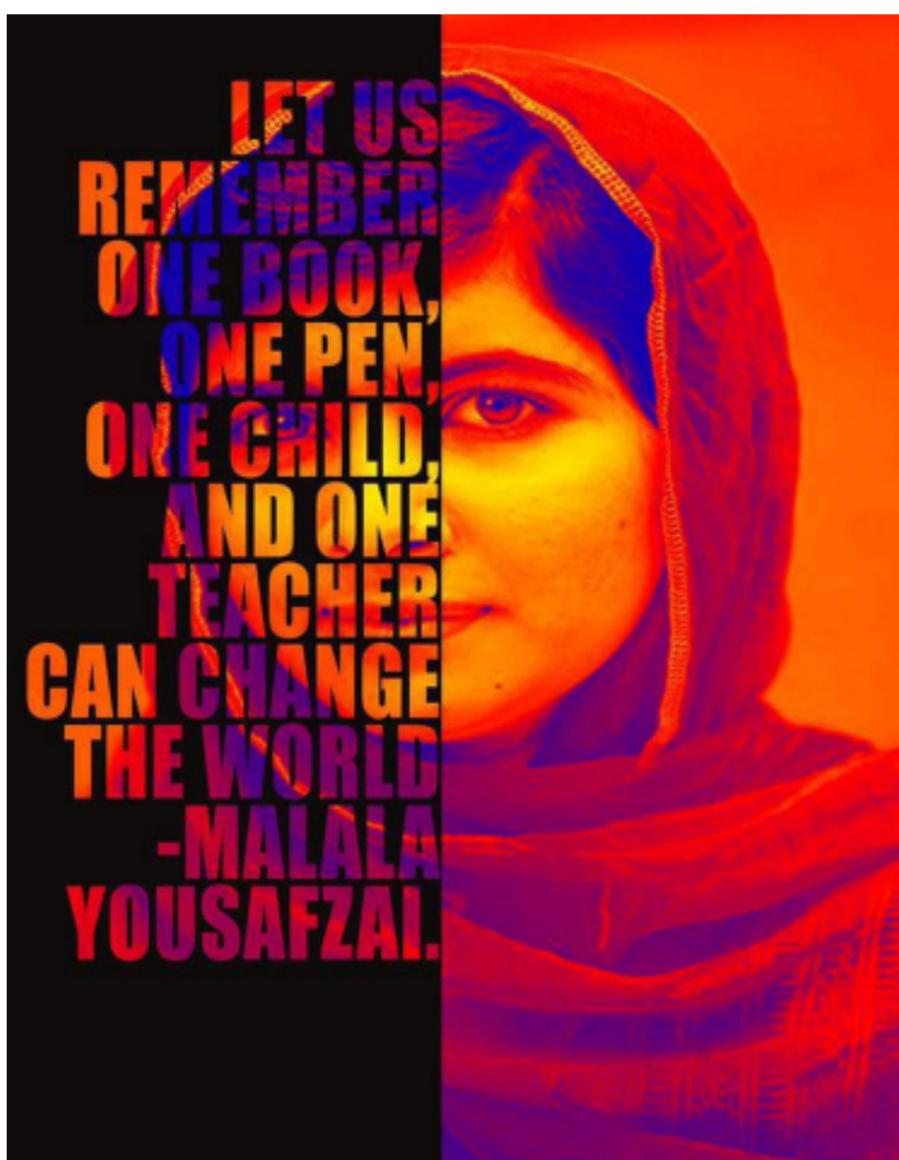
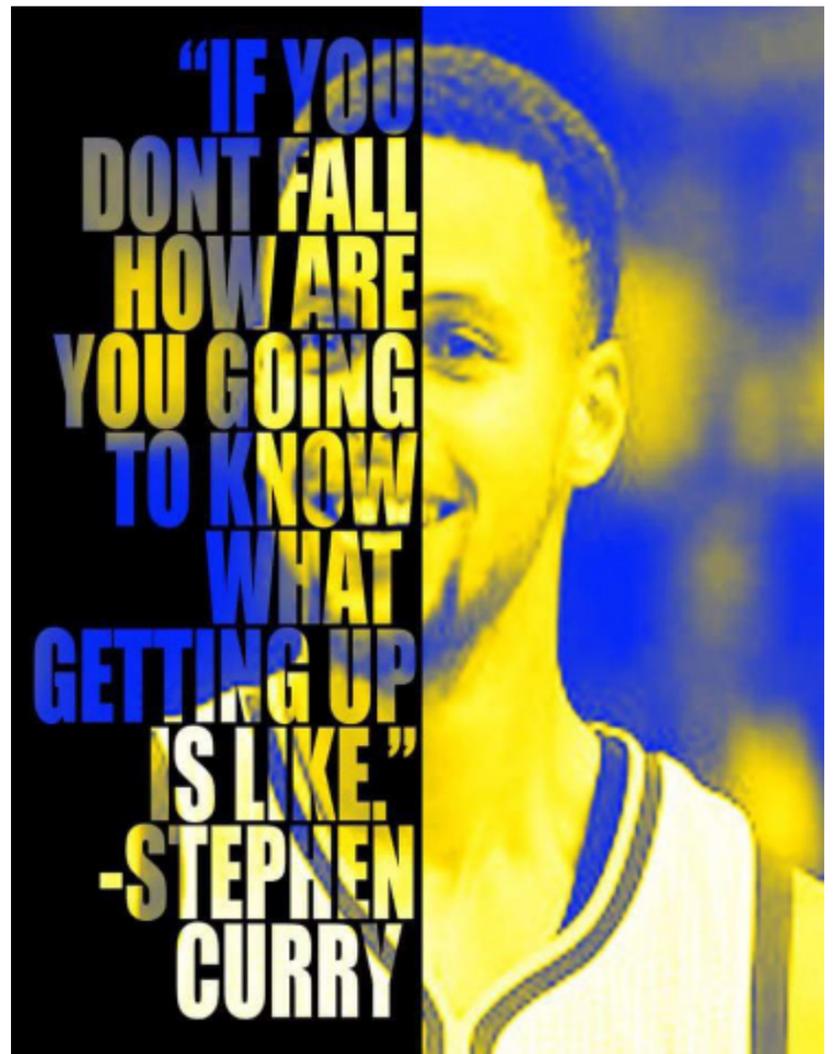
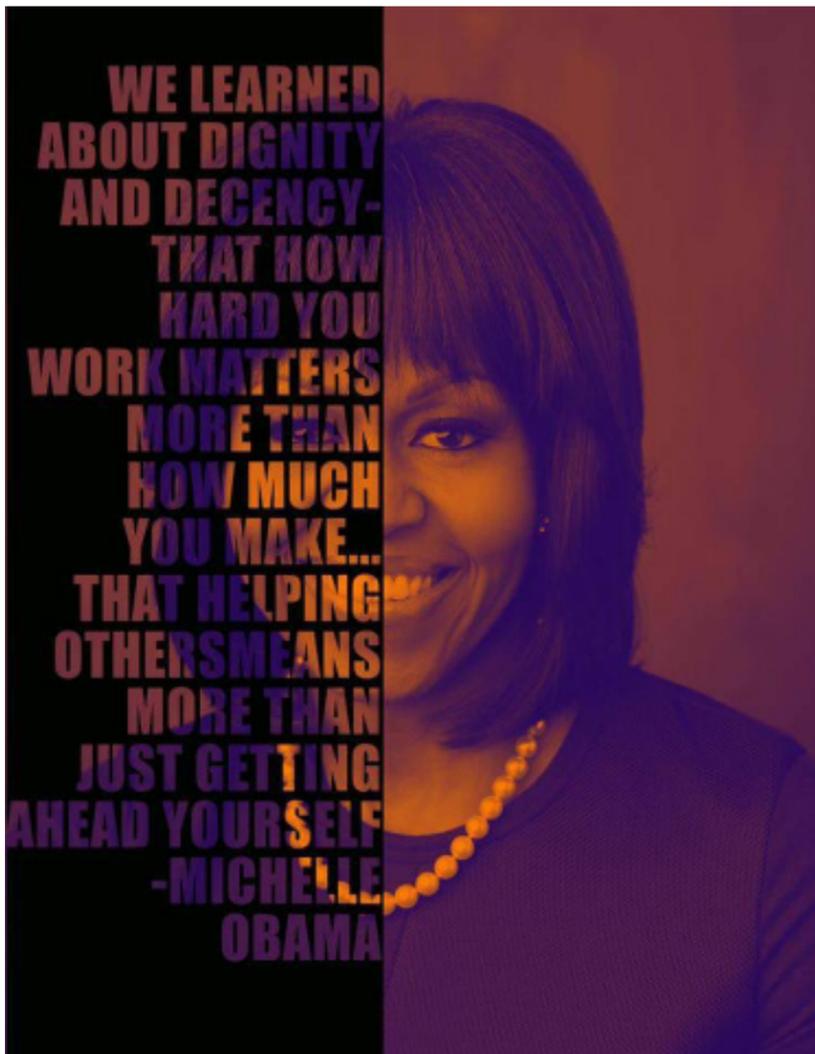
As my example of social commentary, I drew a picture that shows how people choose to ignore people in need. The social commentary claim is that people don't do enough to help people in poverty. I decided to convey this message because I have seen it on the streets of New York City. People just walk by these people in need. Some of the people in need have a family or a pet. I'm scared that there are going to be more people on the street in the future. People are not going to have jobs, so they'll end up on the streets. My message to you is to help these people out, don't be selfish. One penny can make a difference.



**Beauty Standards by Letisha Baker**

The social commentary in this drawing is how society judges us based on looks; but then when we alter our looks to live up to their expectations they still have something to say. In society, especially on social media, we receive mean comments or people telling us how to look or live our lives. Though, the ironic part is when we do change they still judge us. This drawing is meant to show how wrong this is and how we should all accept one another. We are not better or less than anyone else; we are all equal and should be treated equally.

# Digital Art Projects by Mr. Wintersteen's Students



Answer: The story about the Pledge of Allegiance was proven as fake news by Snopes.com. Reader beware!