

PP
AS

Voice: Magazine Edition

Celebrating diversity, promoting unity

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 And On And On

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Get Your Knee Off Our Necks

By: Nadia Avery

If the news is on all day in your household like it is in mine, the following things will most likely not be a surprise to you. A young African-American male shot and killed by two white men while jogging. A racial slur and profane word the last thing he heard as he took his final breaths. His name is Ahmaud Arbery. A young African-American woman shot eight times to death when police barged into her and her boyfriend's apartment in the middle of the night looking for suspects they believed were selling drugs. The suspect, meanwhile, was already in custody. Her name is Breonna Taylor. A middle aged African-American man face down on the ground crying for his mother as he pleads for air, the knee of a white cop pressing hard into his neck for eight minutes and forty-six seconds.

His name is George Floyd. I use the word 'is' and not 'was' because his and the others' memory must be kept alive. In decades to come, everyone should know what hate and injustice was inflicted upon these individuals. This should not be forgotten about next week, next month, or next year. Unfortunately, these incidents of police brutality are not new. We can go way back to the brutality of not only police but racist white individuals who believe themselves to be superior to blacks and people of color. We can go way back to 1955, when fourteen year old Emmett Till was

snatched from his home by two white men. He was tortured, beaten, and shot. They tied him to a cotton-gin fan and threw his lifeless body into a



George Floyd. Image by Ken Ellis, Houston Chronicle

river. Their reasoning for doing so? A white woman named Carolyn Bryant claimed that Emmett whistled at her and touched her inappropriately in a store. In 2017, that same woman Carolyn Bryant disputed the claims that Emmett Till ever whistled at her or harassed her. So, it is evident and clear. This was an act of pure hate and pure disregard for this young man's life.

In the following decade, we can see how this hatred towards black individuals became even more amplified. It began occurring in peaceful civil rights protests. Police officers beating down on black protestors with batons. Unleashing their attack dogs up-

on them. It occurred back then and it is occurring now, more than fifty years later. Rodney King, Treyvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Philando Castile, Freddie Grey, Sandra Bland, and many many more that are not known to the public because a cell phone or a camera did not capture the injustice.

In the words of civil rights heroine Fannie Lou Hamer, I am sick and tired of being sick and tired! I have never been one who would call myself an activist. I tend to keep my thoughts and ideas to myself, but that does not at all mean that I do not see what has been happening to my own people ever since we arrived in this country on slave ships against our will in August

of 1619.

It is not right, it is happening too often, and enough is enough. It is an understatement to say that I am beyond frustrated and disgusted to watch innocent beautiful black lives being taken by police and white individuals who are ignorant and can't seem to look beyond the bubble of privilege that they live in. So, to those in power who are privileged and ignorant, to those who swore to protect your community and are doing the very opposite of that, and to those who are not in power but continue to spread your ignorance and hate, as the Reverend Al Sharpton said at a memorial service for George Floyd, "Get your knee off our necks."

June 19, 1865

By: Dannilynn King

Juneteenth is one of the oldest national celebrations, which commemorates the ending of slavery in the United States. The Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Abraham Lincoln in January of 1862 and is also known as Proclamation 95. Proclamation 95 did not free enslaved African Americans right away because it only applied to the 11 Confederate states that were at war against the Union.

What makes the Emancipation Proclamation important is the fact that it represented a very significant change within the United States and really set the stage for passage of the 13th Amendment. The 13th Amendment was passed by Congress on January 31, 1865 and ratified in December, 1865. That was the final piece of legislation that abolished chattel slavery in the all of the United States.

Meanwhile, The Emancipation Proclamation was revealed to enslaved African-Americans in Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865, which officially declared them free of bondage. This was two months after the Civil war ended.

That is how the oldest African-American holiday, known as Juneteenth was created. Juneteenth

is short for June 19th. It is also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, and Emancipation Day. However, due to the recent protest

food is a major key factor in their celebrations. Some celebrate by traveling to Galveston, Texas, to honor and remember those who were formerly enslaved. Others celebrate by praying to and recognizing their ancestors. In some cities, there are even parades that you can attend to celebrate Juneteenth, but due to the COVID pandemic, many of the parades are canceled this year.

Since 1865, Juneteenth has been celebrated by African-Americans but was

not recognized as a federal or local holiday in many states and cities throughout the US. In New York, Juneteenth is not an official city or state holiday yet, but Governor Cuomo is planning to change that. On Wednesday, June 17, 2020, Governor Cuomo announced that he signed an executive order recognizing Juneteenth as a holiday for New York State employees. He also announced that Juneteenth will officially be recognized as a state holiday next year in 2021.

Even though it took 155 years since the creation of Juneteenth for the holiday to be recognized the way it deserves, I really believe that this is only the beginning. I am looking forward to more changes and feel that by acknowledging past mistakes and making positive changes, this country and the state of New York are on the right path.



Image source: The Center for Constitutional Rights

against police brutality and in support of the Black Lives Matter movement, police reform, and equality for the black community all over the country, more people have taken an interest in Juneteenth this year.

In 1872, a group of African-American ministers, church members, and businessmen in Huston, Texas, were able to raise the money to buy ten acres of land. This land is now known as Emancipation Park and is used to host the area's annual Juneteenth celebration. This is very important because from the late 1870s until the early 1950s, segregation was legal. Emancipation Park was the only city park that African Americans in that area had access to.

Juneteenth is celebrated in all types of ways. A lot of celebrations happen in families' backyards, where

The Glory and The Destruction

By: Shannon Harris

"Please don't let me die."

"I love you too."

"Officers, Why do you have your guns out?"

"I don't have a gun! Stop shooting!"

"What are you following me for?"

"I didn't even do nothing."

"I can't breathe."

You press your knee down on my neck

I can feel my words begin to crumble

Like the dirt that you bury me with

You carry the knife that will soon catch up to me

And bury my struggles

I am always on the run while you sit in your high chair

You have placed the poisoned apple in the bucket

And beat me down for eating it

I am hungry

I feel my stomach turning

Longing for the chains to unravel

We do not yell to scream but to make you feel

How you make us feel

The words spit out of my mouth like venom

NO JUSTICE NO PEACE

I hear the sound of handcuffs as I see my brother

Being dragged back to the cage we were once in

Your blue uniform looks a lot like the white hoods

I so vividly see in my mind

You say if I am in danger to call you but

What if you are the ones who put me there

I want to scream but

You replace my freedom with your hands

With one hand you shoot me until

I am no longer human

Only a pile of blood that you step over

With the other you grab the box filled with green

That silences me

I am no longer human

I have become a rat with a city full of snakes

Waiting to shut me up

Did slavery end or did you place it in a uniform

And call it protection

Five-Year Anniversary of the Charleston Massacre

June 17, 2015

Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church
Charleston, South Carolina

In Memoriam

Rev. DePayne Middleton-Doctor
Cynthia Graham Hurd
Susie J. Jackson
Ethel Lee Lance
Rev. Clementa C. Pinckney
Tywanza Kibwe Diop Sanders
Rev. Daniel Lee Simmons Sr.
Rev. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton
Myra Singleton Quarles Thompson

THE REAL WORLD

Reflections and self portrait by: Kai Blue

The world is hopping on one leg trying not to fall. As I understand and attempt to digest this nightmare, I try to not become insane. In the beginning, people saw Asian people wearing masks, and we laughed and made fun of their safety. But they knew something was going on. Then all of a sudden, people globally are wearing masks, and not laughing. My mom always told me "This too shall pass," but I have faith God has a learning experience for everyone. I believe God is teaching us to be grateful and to realize how blessed we are. I find this pandemic a way to reflect on our own well being.

However, people are only relying on technology now. People are in their own reality, and finding their own ways of understanding society. Social media appears to be the brain of the world. Anything that Instagram says, people are following or believing. I always try to avoid and not be brain-washed by other people's opinions. Sometimes I get confused because people have freedom of speech, but it is hard to figure out who has the power to say something and I don't know if what they are saying is right.

Education has dramatically changed. Everything is being taught and assigned virtually. At one point, I thought I was going to lose my mind due to the amount of work I received from my teachers, but I learned when I'm overwhelmed I look toward the Bible and ask God for peace and help. Now, more than ever, we need to keep learning. What happened in Minneapolis led to a great change in our world, and school should study and discuss racism in a way that creates change and even solves the problems.

This quarantine has affected me greatly. I faced many transitions through these past months. I had a schedule, things I used to do, but that had to



change quickly and I had to adapt. Our minds are focused and programmed to always want instead of understand. I learned that my desires weren't always important in the big picture when people were dying of Coronavirus. I had a couple of shows and creative projects I planned for this year, but I learned not to expect things, and just to go with the flow of life.

I feel it has been one thing after another these past few months. People have to realize that other lives matter. Whether it was the illness, or now the racism, I feel we all have the right to be equal. Discrimination, racism, and police brutality puts minorities such as myself at risk. I am concerned for our future. I just wonder if one day the world will truly open its eyes to real life.

Q & A with PPAS Student Jackson Thoby

By: Gregory Papadopoulos

Jackson wrote an inspiring poem in response to George Floyd's death and the police's inexcusable actions against people of color.

Q: How do you feel your poem portrays what's going on right now in the US considering racial injustice and police brutality?

A: I think what my poem portrays is the emotions of people of color during this time. I feel like my poem describes the pain we feel as a community during this time of multiple racial injustices happening all at once. It's scary and as a community I feel as though we are tired and drained emotionally and spiritually from the corruption of our government that has been happening for centuries and I tried to express that as best I can with this poem.

Q: How do you personally feel about the police's actions against people of color, not only within the past couple of years, but in the recent history of the US as a whole?

A: At first I just felt hurt, I felt as though I was trapped in a world that doesn't see me as human. It's hard knowing you have no control over your own life when simply walking the earth like others do. Now I feel enraged and craving for something to change because I can't raise kids in our world like this.

Q: Do you have any ideas as to what should be done about the current system we live in?

A: An idea I have is to reassess our budget. There is no reason our police force should have 6 BILLION dollars in the budget but teachers



have to pay for their own supplies at school. We need to realize that investing in things like youth, education, and homeless protection is investing in less crime rate in this country. This doesn't only affect people of color. The reason why so many kids white or black have less opportunity in the world is because of lack of education in schools. In PPAS we only have a few AP classes that we can take and it's not the faculty's fault, it's that cuts are being made left and right on education but why can't there be cuts made to the departments who kill people who merely fit a 'description?' Systematic racism is a lot to tackle but doing that is a start.

Q: Finally, please feel free to comment on anything else that you feel needs to be said.

A: I think the one thing that needs to be said is that if you are reading this please start thinking about your future and your kids' future and realize that in a second it can all be gone because the ones in power don't realize your life has value. Fight with us and start to make change in things that matter. My life matters just as much as the next person. Let us prove that by protesting, and signing petitions you see online and anything else. Use your art to spread awareness. Start to make change because if you don't make change for your world who will?

9 Minutes

By: Jackson Thoby

It took 9 minutes.
It took the time of me writing this
It took the time of creating a hashtag
It took the time of 2 hit songs made by us for us
It took the time of a nice stream of droplets
Falling down his skin again
It took the time of play time with the kids
It took the time of a person to lose a home
It took the time of a rebirth of another beautiful black bundle of joy
339 years of slavery
89 years of segregation
And 20 years of The Movement
And at approximately 8PM
Central Standard Time
It took 9 minutes
To put fear in my heart
Of a hateful boy in blue
I am tired of shedding the blood
For the red stripes
They so proudly own
I am drained of tears
I am tired of the silence of the privileged
For each beautiful chocolate flower that dies
From the acid of racism in our country
I shouldn't be living in fear
I shouldn't be living in anger
I should n' t worry for my life
I should n' t be living in a country I can't call my own
But I guess it only takes 9 minutes
To keep us in the palm of your oppression
But those 9 minutes will no longer be used to take a life
It will be used to make us to be the kings and queens we deserve to be
To start to use our pain and anger into your last straw
It will be what you call
Revolutionary.
And it will end when you give us back
9 minutes & much more.

Young Activists Raise Their Voices Against Racism

By Tanya Jaffe

Throughout the world, young activists have been speaking, marching and supporting the Black Lives Matter movement. They have gained strength by utilizing social media. Young people, who in recent years held walkouts to call for action against gun violence, are now joining together to protest police brutality and racism.

In Nashville this month, six teenage girls organized a huge protest. The girls, all aged 14 to 16, met on Twitter to plan the protest. They organized the protest over an Instagram account called teens4equality, as well as posting flyers, and the news quickly

spread. When the day came, 15,000 protesters peacefully marched. The organizers had expected only 1,000. "It just felt like we had people on our side...I know that our voices were heard," Mikayla, one of the organizers, told Good Morning America. They are planning another protest on July 4. For Independence Day, they want to have people wear red, black and blue. This is a way to address what the girls see as America's broken systems, on the day America celebrates itself. At their next protest, they plan to have a voter-registration booth.

Nupol Kiazolu, the 19-year-old president of Black Lives Matter of

Greater New York, went to Minneapolis, Minn., to support the people protesting the killing of George Floyd at the hands of police, CNN reported. She was watching videos of protests, and decided she wasn't doing enough. "Kiazolu and nine other members of BLM Greater New York traveled to Minneapolis to 'stand in solidarity with the people of Minnesota,'" the network added.

After protesting in Minneapolis, Kiazolu traveled back to New York with other young activists to participate in The Freedom March NYC.



teens4equality in Nashville. Image: NY Times.

Being An Ally: Taking the First Step on the Path Towards Being an Anti-Racist

By: Mr. Devine

In the time it took me to sit down and thoughtfully compose this article, your instagram feed shifted away from posts of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and rebellion and your Twitter feed became less and less about the protests happening all over the United States and the world.

The work of being an ally is a lifetime marathon, not a sprint towards justice. Many of us are only just joining the work of being an anti-racist while there are people who have been dedicated to this work for longer than you have been alive. Being an ally requires commitment and so many of us are easily distracted. The work of being an anti-racist and committing oneself to the cause of justice is not work that we should shy away from, however, just because it is hard. Many of you are keenly aware of a poster I have by

my desk that says, "White Privilege doesn't mean your life hasn't been hard; it means the color of your skin isn't making your life harder" and I can think of no better way to use that privilege than to work to make sure that there is equity and justice for us all.

So how do we become an ally or further our work if we've already begun? Posting a black square to Instagram isn't enough. Retweeting a strongly-



Image: visionspringinc.com

worded quote isn't enough. Use the gift of the internet to seek out resources such as articles, books, and Ted Talks to hear views of Black scholars, artists, and leaders that you won't necessarily hear from your friends or your family. The true beauty of education is the way in which it can open your mind and change your way of thinking. DEFUND THE POLICE! You've seen it everywhere but what does that actually mean and look like? #BLACKLIVESMATTER! Yes, but how can I make my opinionated family members realize that their All Lives Matter reply is meaningless and wrong? Expand your mind by reading and listening to be able to explain why you're an ally, to explain why Black Lives Matter (as if you really need to even explain that, but sadly we do), and how allyship requires us all to be engaged in this work long after the protest marches have gone home.

A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step:

Explore your own implicit bias (the stereotypes you have learned that you may not even be aware of within you) and how it affects your beliefs and attitudes. Harvard University has a great website tool that can help you explore the negative prejudices that exist within us all: implicit.harvard.edu

READ A BOOK! Take a look at the MANY options that exist that can explain how our society's foundation is that of White Supremacy and how we can begin to dismantle that for a better, more just future. Start with "So You Want to Talk About Race" by Ijeoma Oluo or "White Fragility" by Robin DiAngelo or "How To Be An Anti-Racist" by Ibram X. Kendi. I have read and endorse all of these titles. Not used to reading a book without it being assigned? Consider this article my assignment to you.

Talk to your circle. If those of us that consider ourselves to be allies to the Black Lives Matter movement only speak to each other, what progress will be made? We need to be discussing all of these ideas with the people in our lives that we have a relationship with that need to hear this information. Don't worry about sharing something on your social media feed- chances are, everyone that follows you already agrees with you. And that's the problem. We need to talk about this with those that do not agree with us in order to open their hearts and minds. We may not convince everyone but staying silent will convince NO ONE. Read the books, listen to the speeches, watch the videos because you can not have the uncomfortable conversations without the knowledge and the facts to back up your opinions.

Finally, do not stay silent when you hear hurtful, ignorant, racist things being said or done. Many of us have seen the signs that say: "White Silence = Violence" but this does not just mean during a protest. It's wonderful that so many white and non-Black people are engaging in this conversation right now but when the protests are all over and the enthusiasm has subsided, it is important to continue to be that voice that stands up for what is right. Continue to post, continue to educate yourself, and continue to seek to enlarge your allyship circle. Make the ignorant commenter uncomfortable by calling them on their hurtful comment. Push back against the racist joke that people nervously laugh at in a group.

Stand up for equity and justice, my scholars, not because you want "likes on the 'gram" but because you've done the work and understand that you'll never fully understand the experiences of your Black friends and classmates. Your generation has already shown that you will no longer accept things the way they are so now, see this work to the finish line with the awareness that it will take longer to accomplish that goal than you're used to and that you will encounter push-back along the way. That's ok. As Alice Walker said, "Activism is my rent for living on the planet."

We've Had An Abolition Before

By: Ms. Davé

In the midst of a pandemic, there has been a surge in police violence against Black people. We know, however, this is not the first time America has struggled to meet the needs of its people. Activists, abolitionists, and the everyday American have taken to the streets to demand better treatment of Black people. As witnesses to and perhaps participants in this movement, how can we use history to inform our understanding of the current events?

We know that African people were enslaved for 400 years before the efforts of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Nat Turner, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Sojourner Truth, William Still and many more "abolished" slavery with the 13th amendment to the constitution. The amendment states that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, **except as a punishment** for crime....shall exist within the United States." This amendment did not abolish, instead it reformed. Prisoners, as stated in the US Constitution, are still enslaved people."

From the 1870's until 1965 we saw the era of segregation via the Black Codes and Jim Crow Laws. While Segregation was never mandated by law in the Northern

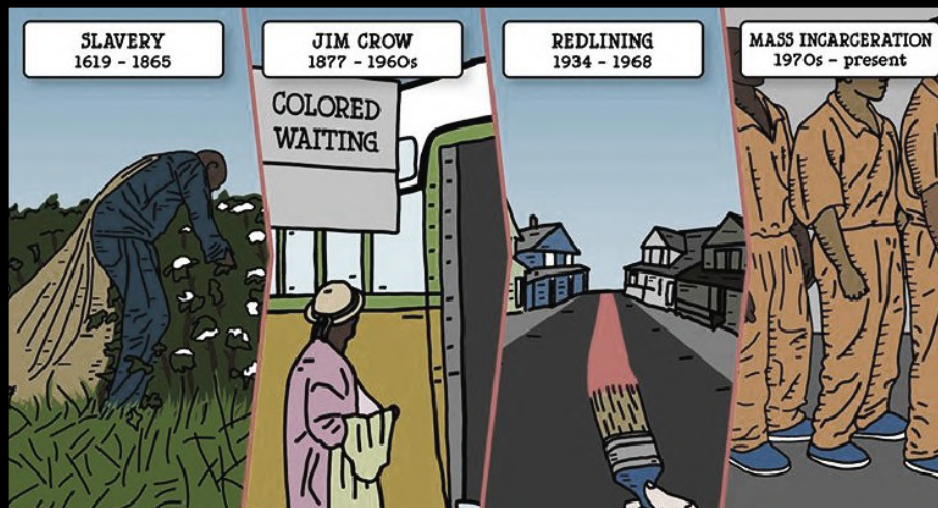
states, a clear system grew to segregate schools, housing, workplaces and more. The system of Red-Lining was just one of many policies that made it virtually impossible for Black folks to get access to basic resources or build wealth after having been enslaved for 400 years.

public places and banning employment discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The end of the Civil Rights Era, however, was the rise of Mass Incarceration.

According to the ACLU, since 1970 the "United States' incarcerated population has increased by 700%--2.3 million people in jail and prison, far outpacing population growth and crime." While Black folks make up only 13% of the population, they make up 40% of prisoners. Actions such as targeted policing (i.e. War on Drugs, School to Prison Pipeline,

Mandatory Minimum Sentences) and continued segregation of resources (i.e. lack of funding in schools, employment opportunities, public benefits, etc.,) make it possible to continue to incarcerate Black men 5 times more than white men, and Black women 2 times more than white women.

History has continued to repeat itself--as one racist policy is abolished, another is formed. What will this era be known for? How do we make change that focuses on the goal of equity and does not simply reform or recreate the same inequality?



From slavery to mass incarceration. Image @benandjerrys

In the 1950's the Civil Rights and Black Power movements highlighted the work Black American's had been doing to fight for their right to live. Inequality, segregation, vicious lynching, police brutality and other acts of heinous violence were the civil rights leaders' main focus. Ella Baker, Mary Mcleod Bethune, Malcolm X, Ida B. Wells, the Little Rock Nine and Black Panthers and many more led Black folks to organize boycotts, sit-ins, and protests to fight against systematic oppressions. After almost two decades, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, "ending" segregation in

Can I Get Off This Planet, Too?

By: Ms. Fife

Back on May 30th, while watching NASA/SpaceX launch American astronauts to the International Space Station, I felt jealous that they were getting to leave this planet. Minutes before the launch, I had been engrossed by another graphic act of racist violence that had been perpetrated by American police officers. Another American was violently and needlessly killed. And once again it was a black person. This time in Minneapolis. I never

thought there could be news right now that would actually overshadow the coronavirus pandemic. But America's unwillingness to deal with its racial history and current socioeconomic inequalities made that possible.

Today, Black Lives Matter protests are everywhere, and the coronavirus reveals on a daily basis the degree to which economic inequality translates into an increased number of deaths to those who are poor. The situation we find ourselves in made me think of 1968--for a history teacher, a natural act of connecting the past to the present, with the hope of creating a guide to the future.

In fact, a few weeks ago, I was trying to explain why 1968 was considered such a turning point to my 10th graders over Google Meets. We were studying the Vietnam War, which led to a discussion of the protests against the war. In the past, when I've taught this lesson, students struggle to grasp how scary the world felt in 1968. But this year was different. I didn't need to describe what a crazy year and time it was; students only needed to look at what was going on in their backyard and streets.



Image composite of: Police Spraying Protester: Junfu Han, Detroit Free Press
NASA/Space X Launch. Bill Ingalls, NASA

My mom was an activist in the 1960s and she used to talk about protesting, fighting for social justices, and hating Nixon. When I was in high school I told my mom I was envious of the fact that she got to live through the 1960s and protest so many important issues--issues that continue to impact us today. Until one day, she looked at me with a serious face and said it was not a fun time. She said it was a horrible time. She told me, with sadness in her voice that I rarely hear, that half of the boys in her high school class died in Vietnam.

I was a senior in college when 9/11 happened. Shortly thereafter, an American historian and social activist, Howard Zinn, visited our college to give a talk. He came to one of my history classes and asked us how we were feeling about the world. We all said we were angry that the U.S. was going to war in the Middle East, but we felt there was nothing we could do about it.

Zinn, an old man by then, thought for a minute and then told us something I never forgot. He told us he had fought in WWII against the Nazis for four years. There were times he thought the

Nazis would win. They didn't. He said he fought for the Civil Rights movement and watched his friend's head get bashed into the sidewalk. Years later he was there when the Civil Rights Act of 1965 passed. He said he fought against the Vietnam War for 10 years. Eventually, the U.S. ended the war, largely due to a lack of public support. Importantly, he told us that change never happened in a day. But in his lifetime, he had

seen many big changes because ordinary people, like him, fought for them.

It might look and feel a little like 1968, but it is not. Everything is scary right now and everything is uncertain, and we all want change. So if history is our guiding light, our choice is to keep fighting and protesting.

Fortunately, PPAS seniors have chosen to fight to create change this year. They researched and learned as much as they could about the root causes of issues they cared deeply about and thought of ways they could effect changes in policy. Then they actually took action to make change, even in the midst of a pandemic and heavy sadness for all that they were losing. From writing more equitable curriculums, to creating podcasts and movies and dances that share stories about injustices, to developing websites that can be used to bring attention to their cause, PPAS seniors made a choice to use their creativity and passions for change. Consequently, they have inspired me to fight for change too, and not sit around and wish I could escape to another planet.

Reflections

By: Frances Jarvela

Struggles at Home

We sometimes fight and don't get along but we love each other probably because we are stuck with each other.
We have dinner together and talk and have fun.
Then we argue about doing the dishes and fight about doing chores.
We get angry when we can't watch T.V. and we say we don't have school even though it is Tuesday night.
Lucy makes macaroons but she won't let me have any, just like she won't let me do anything. She is so annoying.

Too Quiet

When I go to bed at night I don't hear the cars anymore or the honking of cruise ships leaving Chelsea Piers.
The only thing I can hear is the T.V. downstairs and my loud fan.
The city feels like an empty abandoned house.
Last night I looked out my window to see if any cars would come down my block or 8th Avenue.
I saw nothing except police cars going up and down every block.
The only lights I saw were in houses and not in the stores.
I was super scared to see that my city was a ghost town.
The future generations that might have to face this need to know how serious being healthy and taking care of the ones who can't take care of themselves is.
It means don't leave your house. I hope this virus will stop soon so we can go on with our lives although that may take a while.
As a 14 year old living in the middle and busiest part of NYC, it is empty.
NYC is known as the city that never sleeps, it's sleeping right now.



Photo by: Emeline Q.

Memoir in Quarantine

By: Alyssa Sosa

My name is Alyssa Sosa, I am currently a freshman in high school, but I will very soon become a sophomore. I had just recently turned 15, I was born May 18th. So far, high school is going well, but unfortunately the normalized version of high school was cut short due to Covid-19.

I have to be honest, it has been really stressful to live like this. Being stuck at home for months seemed fun at first, but now I wish life was the same again. I miss my family, my friends, and I miss the little things. The little things I miss are seeing the city lights of Manhattan on my way home from school, the crowds of people just trying to get to where they need to be, and the ambiance of the streets. I miss a them lot. I never really liked the crowds, or the many chaotic things that happen on the streets, but once that's all gone I just wish that I could see it all again. I wish that I could see those amazing subway performers and the cashier at the local corner store.

Writing this helps me remember all the things I had before this whole pandemic happened.

On the bright side, I am safe and protected, However, this pandemic has just taken a huge toll on my mental health, and I try my very best to think positively even though it is very hard to just say "It will be



okay." I don't know what's in store after this, but I've had this feeling of wanting to escape. Maybe one day things will go back to normal, but it's hard to just think that and be satisfied.

I have grown impatient and I just want this to end. It's gotten so overwhelming and difficult, to a point where I keep breaking down over and over out of nowhere. I could be happy, but then suddenly I'd be hit with a huge wave of sadness and anxiety. It's been like that for weeks now, which sucks. Every time it happens I want to lock myself away from everyone else because how am I supposed to explain a random break-

down that makes no sense? I am always left speechless, and I never know how to explain it.

I've been thinking about my future lately. I think about where I will be after I graduate. I see myself going straight to California for college and living my life freely. I see myself being productive with any job that can support me. Once I am financially and emotionally stable, I see that I will take bigger steps into building my career. I want to be an actor or a singer! I know that it will take a lot to make it, which is why I want to have the best training as soon as possible. On stage I never get shy, but I will admit I get a little nervous sometimes!

I find the future really important, and sadly where we are now is creating many delays in our futures. We're all affected by Covid-19 in some way. So many major events have been delayed and canceled because of this: birthdays, weddings, graduations, shows, gatherings, meetings, and more. Many of us have lost so much in just a short matter of time. Each of us has our own story. Some of us may not have a lot right now, but we have each other, which is why we should continue to keep in touch, talk things out, and continue to support each other.

Everyone is in need of something, and I believe if we just work together we can get through this.

Schools Opening in September? Not so Fast

By: Ellis Rubin

Amid recent national protests over the murder of George Floyd and police brutality at large, the coronavirus--which recently passed the 100,000 death toll - has become an afterthought, but one that we will have to soon revisit. When Mayor DeBlasio shut down all New York City schools on March 15th, he presciently acknowledged that they might not reopen for the rest of the academic year despite his hopes to the contrary. Now, as we near the last day of remote classes on June 22nd, the mayor and education officials must consider whether they will welcome students back in September. And if so, how?

An email sent out this week from the office of NYC school chancellor Richard Carranza to school administrators offered ideas the city had under consideration. These included a phased reopening and blended learning. Carranza noted that, "We are wholeheartedly working towards a September start date while working closely with DOHMH to monitor health indicators to ensure that it is safe to return to school buildings and offices."

For now, the degree to which students would be attending school in-

person has not been clarified, though it can be assumed they wouldn't return at full capacity. Notably, Carranza did not address how he would deal with teachers who refused to come to school or parents who refused to send their kids there. In a national USA Today/Ipsos poll conducted last month, one in five teachers said they are unlikely to return to reopened classrooms this fall. For parents, it's even worse. An Echelon Insights poll also conducted last month reports that 67% of parents support

keeping schools closed until they're certain there's no health risk. These percentages may be even higher in New York, which was struck particularly hard by COVID-19.

There are other causes for concern. For one, we don't know all the possible long-term effects of COVID-19, which started spreading only last year. Furthermore, PMIS, the inflammatory disease affecting young children that may be related to coronavirus, remains largely a mystery. In a school like PPAS that shares space with an elementary school, this should be especially unsettling.

Whether the city will force students and teachers to go back to school despite objections is, like spreading virus particles, up in the air. After all, until a vaccine is created and distributed, there's no way to guarantee the safety of students, teachers or staff. There's the troubling international example of South Korea, which shut down its schools days after reopening them because of a spike in cases. If the city is truly committed to mitigating a second wave of coronavirus during flu season, which the director of the CDC warned may be "even more difficult," it shouldn't force anyone to return to a school building.

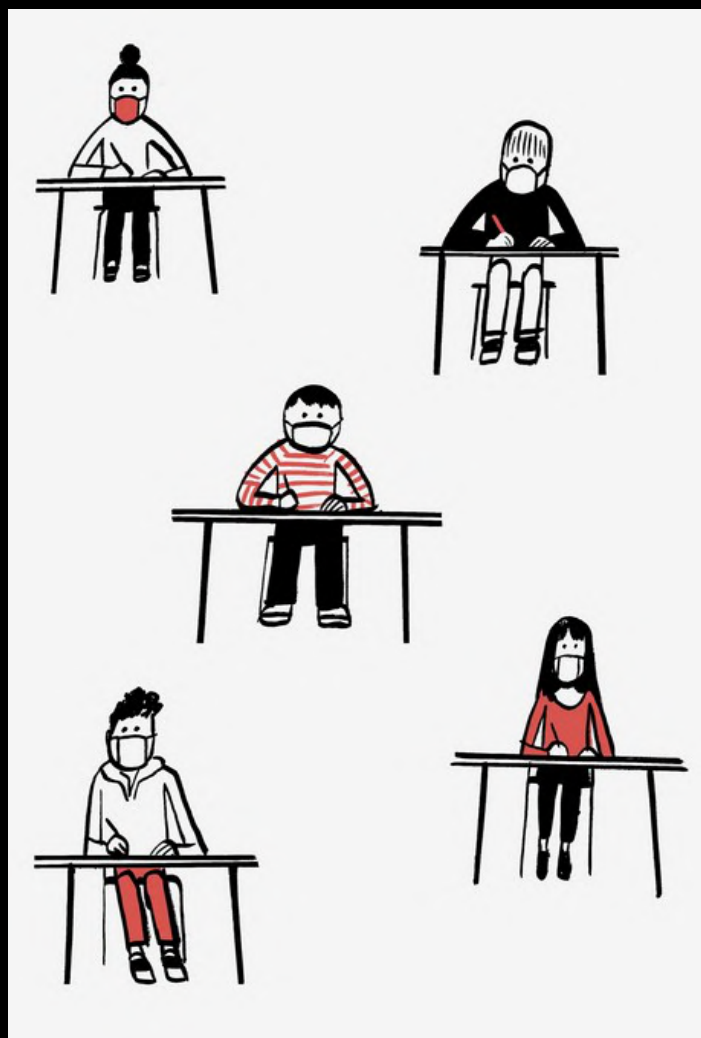


Illustration: João Fazenda, The New Yorker

The Last Day

By: Lya Trinidad

The bus arrived, I managed to pull out my MetroCard in time, I said "Hello" to the bus driver because my mother taught me some manners. I then sat in the front where



Image: Shutterstock

people with disabilities sit, but I didn't think anyone would even mind. Sitting there on the bus, I watched as the stores went by. I began to become paranoid, the fact that anyone could have the virus really took a hold on me. All over the world, people have been dying due to the virus and it's frustrating to know that there is no cure. I thought about all those people in the front lines--How are they coping with the fact that they can't

come in contact with their families? I looked around the bus and realized everyone was looking at me. Maybe it was because I was the youngest on the bus.

Suddenly, a lady in her 30's to '50s with a shirt with the name of a zoo on it got on the bus and sat on the other side in front of me. Her face looked familiar but I couldn't quite figure it who it was. She noticed me staring at her and smiled so I smiled back. I pressed the button indicating that I was going to get off then pulled out my hand sanitizer. The woman in front of me watched me and said, "It's good that you're taking care of yourself."

I said, "Yeah, it is."

"You know what I do for my kids, I put a washcloth in a baggie filled with alcohol and send them to school with it," the lady had said. "I have seen you around here before...how is your mother?"

I was surprised by the fact that she had

known my mother. I had said she's fine and then proceeded to get out my phone and my keys. The woman was still staring at me.

"It's good to know that kids like you are taking care of themselves."

I kept replying with "mmh" and head nods because I wasn't entirely sure why this woman was talking to me.

Then reaching my stop and I had waved bye to the woman, and said "Have a Good day" to the driver. I hopped off the bus, which had some steep stairs and ran across the street. As I walked to my building I realized I had never gotten the woman's name. I went inside. Thank god there was no one in the lobby because I really wasn't in the mood. I realized I didn't put my mask on knowing that my dad would kill me if I had shown up unprotected. I opened the door and finally made it home after this long day outside.

Put em' up, Coronavirus

By: Samuel Salama

I'm sure you're all wondering how a vivacious, intellectually curious person such as myself is handling the wrecking ball more commonly referred to as "Coronavirus." How does a very energetic honor student handle going from having a very successful educational experience--attending school, performing, and hanging out with friends, to being confined to a house, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for ten weeks thus far? Just the thought of being locked up and isolated from the world for one thousand, five hundred hours so far is enough to make anyone stir crazy! Yet, surprisingly, being the eternal optimist I am, I have found ways to make these long unbearable hours, bearable--even enjoyable--at times.

In the beginning, I was bored out of my mind. I was often sad and lonely, especially when I realized that I wouldn't see my friends in the morning so that I could tell them about what happened since I last spoke to them a few hours ago. Sure, sure, there's always the telephone, and of course I spend many hours on it, but let's face it, speaking with someone on the phone is

just not the same as seeing them in front of your face. Seeing their expression when you tell them a joke, or something that is bothering you just doesn't translate.

After moping around and then cursing coronavirus, the Mayor, and the Governor for cancelling school and destroying my social life, I decided that I had to adjust how I viewed this situation. Yeah, yeah, I could mope around and stay depressed and angry, but that wasn't really working out too well. So, I decided to come up with a new plan.

I decided it would be a much better idea for me to make the most out of the situation. After all, my mother always says, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." I realized that even though I couldn't see my friends everyday, I had my siblings, who are my built in support system. I also realized something very important. I may never get a chance to spend time with my family like this again. My oldest brother will be starting medical school in a few weeks, God knows when I will get to see him again. My sister is a 19-year old college sophomore. Between school, her in-



ternship and friends, well, I hardly got time with her. I realized how much I missed all the times we used to hang out and cook and bake together as we sang songs and goofed around the kitchen. My other older brother is a high school junior and will be leaving next year for college. If I didn't take advantage of the precious gift of time that I had been given, I would regret it for the rest of my life.

This marked my awakening, my rebirth, to no longer shun the isolation, because I wasn't isolated at all. I was surrounded by people I loved and who loved me. It was up to me to make the most of every second.

Diary of a Life in Quarantine (Excerpt)

By: Omeirys Romero

MONDAY, MAY 25, 2020

Dearest Destiny,

I am so mad right now! Well not really, but at the same time I am--sorry it's complicated. If you don't already know, my birthday is coming up soon. On June 10, 2020, I will be turning fifteen. Now usually I would be excited to be getting older because then I will get treated a bit more like an adult since nobody takes me seriously. The older I get the more I will be able to go out and hang out with my friends. However, this year I'm just not feeling it.

My mom wants to have a little virtual party for me since I'm turning fifteen, even though I have told her a thousand million times I don't want to have a virtual party, but she doesn't want to listen to me. She is spending all this money on party supplies for the party instead of using that money for something useful.

For the pictures I am thinking of wearing this really pretty dress that I have always had in my house but I've never worn before. I can't think of a better way to use that dress than as my fifteenth birthday dress for the pictures. Just imagine it! A long light teal dress with silver, light and dark blue stones screaming the colors of the sea. The dress has some see through parts. I'm going to wear heels that you will never believe I know how to walk in and a stunning hairstyle and make up that you can never take your eyes off of. Getting dressed up is the only part of this entire little party that I'm really excited about doing.

To be honest I never thought I would be spending my birthday in quarantine. I thought it would be over by now, but our world can only do so much. Well that's all I have to say -- peace until another day.

Yours, Omeirys

---END---



New York City Begins Reopening

Story and photo by: Zayda Bleecker-Adams



On June 8th, 2020, New York City finally met the statistical requirements to begin phase one of its prospective reopening. It is certain to be a long and arduous road, disheartening at times, but the city that turned the tide away from being the epicenter of the virus will assuredly endure. So, what does phase one entail?

According to the New York State Government's website, "construction, agriculture, retail (limited to curbside or in-store pickup or drop off), manufacturing, and wholesale trade" have been allowed to proceed. While many may not notice drastic differences in their everyday lives on account of these services, with some 400,000 jobs returning, this is no small feat. The mandate requiring New Yorkers to don masks when unable to maintain a consistent minimum of six feet from others remains in effect, and is even more crucial as stores and more confined areas begin to operate once again. Masks, in conjunction with other safety precautions such as plexiglass between employees and customers, floors marked

with social distancing guides, a continued push for hand washing/sanitizing, and limited occupancy for in-store pickup seem to be necessities for the foreseeable future.

The MTA has continued its 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. closure to disinfect all trains while it implements many of the aforementioned safety measures, among others, as it welcomes back passengers for nonessential travel. Besides the newly returning employees, however, there is hardly anywhere to travel to. Such journeys will be more useful and frequent in subsequent phases. Phase two, which is scheduled for approximately two weeks after the initial reopening, will feature the return of offices, outdoor dining, places of worship, professional businesses, salons, barbershops, and car dealerships (all with limited capacity, of course).

Phase three will see the return of the hospitality industry—limited capacity indoor service in restaurants, and fully-functioning hotels, as opposed to the limited services hotels currently offer as "essential businesses."

Finally, the much longed-for phase four will bring back our cherished institutions: schools, performing arts venues, movie theaters, and museums. The implementation of these phases will be gradual (we can expect to see phase three taking effect sometime in late July or early August), and is entirely dependent upon the resulting statistical metrics—cases, deaths, hospitalizations, etc. Thus, it is absolutely imperative that New Yorkers adhere to protocol, limit gatherings, and continue to closely monitor themselves for potential covid symptoms and act accordingly. Many would do well to remember that this pandemic is not over.

Let us rejoice in the gains we've made, let us patronize the returning businesses that need our contributions more than ever, let us slowly retake to the beloved streets of our great city, and let us tread carefully. With the terrible financial strain that has been placed on businesses and individuals alike, a return to normalcy is a distant goal. Yet, it is attainable, and it will be reached with good decision-making.

Farewell to PPAS

By: Tobi Lee

As the year comes to an end, I can't help but look back and feel as though I just entered PPAS, as an eager and curious freshman, only a few weeks ago. To remember the past four years is similar to jumping into a time machine, and I am sure that when all is safe to return back to the school building, it will be a time capsule, jumping into a moment frozen in time.

This senior year of high school for my classmates and me took a large U-turn that we did not expect. I am sure this holds true for many of the students, faculty, and staff at PPAS. For the graduating class, many upcoming activities such as senior trip, prom, and graduation, were either cancelled or readjusted to be online via Zoom. All students had to adjust to a second semester of online-distance learning, and were confronted daily with the topic of mental health, productivity, and the definition of normalcy. Many teachers spent hours shifting their curriculums to suit the needs of quarantine learning and sought to understand their students' situations. Despite all this change, the resilience of the community at PPAS has shown itself as we complete this school year of 2020.

First, my experience studying and being present at PPAS has never ceased to offer me both opportunity and surprises. I have never been in a school so invested in their community, with willingness and drive to serve our own students and staff, and in addition, proclaim their voices into the outside world of society. Assemblies that challenged my thinking and caused me to consciously reflect--these will forever resonate with me. The power of words and the impact of the performing arts have broken barriers I never thought could be broken. The passion that students have for their work in the arts has been motivating and placed me in positions of awe or even being star-struck. It has offered me the opportunity to evolve my mindset and connect with others whom I have

never spoken to. It allowed me to see the world with more vibrancy and its awaiting possibility. Even after this interval of COVID-19, the potential, talent, and passion of the students will never cease. I also have been submerged in the limitless energy that PPAS students bring to the table, which took me by surprise when first arriving at PPAS. After adjusting to the random dance-offs on any occasion, cheering at assemblies until the walls shook and losing our voices, and heart-attack-level bursting into classrooms for drama play promotions, I learned to appreciate the creativity and drive students have uniquely at PPAS.

Second, school is and will always be school. That isn't a bad thing. In fact, I have enjoyed learning from academic classes, performing art classes, and the implicit lessons I have learned throughout my studying expeditions (I'd like to think they were adventurous). Reminiscing on the past year, I recall lunch conversations in Mr. Gatton's classroom, learning about sports, science, things I never researched on my own. Not only did I gain insight on new topics, but I learned about my friends and their interests.

The same would go for every academic class I have taken--a mix of gaining scholarly knowledge and being surrounded by a myriad of emotions, faces, and personalities. Moments of "eureka" followed by "ohhh" or cackling laughter will forever pervade my collection of cherished high school memories. The teachers I have had, especially during this life-altering senior year, have helped me succeed in academic learning by offering their time and energy. Just as important, their casual lunch sessions, open classroom doors, and math jokes have kept me sane throughout moments of stress and growth. I am



Tobi is a writer for the PPAS Voice and PPAS Class of 2020 Valedictorian.

grateful for their presence in my life, as it has shaped who I am, how I act, and the way I think.

Lastly, I am thankful for spending my years at PPAS and would not have traded it for the world. I hope that the friendships and relationships made will continue after this goodbye. I hope the skills and knowledge I have gained will translate into equipping for the future. I hope the countless mistakes and embarrassing high school moments will become stepping stones to improvement and towards personal growth and change for our community. I hope that my fellow classmates, as the graduating class of 2020, acknowledge their progress and success as a result of late nights of rehearsing, hours of investing into their academic endeavors, and pure endurance, encouragement, and drive. I hope they will look forward with excitement to jump into the unknown. I hope students that I may not have encountered personally feel welcomed and supported by the PPAS community which has so much to offer for the many years to come.

Photography: Self Portrait

By: Isabella Vargas



PPAS Photography Club Spring Virtual Exhibit will be available on Monday, 6/22

“Essential” PPAS Student: Mikiko Robinson

By: Ms. Pourghasemi



Three months ago, our PPAS community, along with students throughout New York City were suddenly thrown into remote learning and tasked with the abrupt request to stay indoors. While most of us who typically commuted to work or school were redirected to take care of business from home, or suddenly unemployed, we relied upon and worried about the essential workers who were still expected to venture out of doors.

Some of these essential workers have been our very own PPAS students. Though academic and extracurricular life had changed for them, their responsibilities to a job

has not. These essential workers can mostly be found in the senior class, but there is also a junior or two who has been called upon to fill an essential position.

Senior Mikiko Robinson has been working at a veterinary clinic in Staten Island for almost a year, mostly serving as a vet technician. Since last summer, she has been gaining more experience in the veterinary field, and despite new protocols and precautions, the need for her to be present has only become more imperative especially when the veterinary hospital became an unexpected overnight service after another hospital had to close due to

COVID, and this doubled the number of patients. Mikiko is expected to be all over the hospital. Sometimes she is directly helping the doctor with surgery - monitoring a patient who is under anesthesia. Sometimes she will jump on a call with the clients and gather the patient's history before the appointment takes place. At this point she is also allowed to give medications, under the supervision of a senior technician.

During stay at home orders, Mikiko didn't even give it a second thought that she wouldn't go to work. Her parents have been very supportive and bring her to and from the hospital so she can avoid public transportation. She has to wear more PPE now, and the clinic meets patients at their cars to keep more people out of the building. She often works late at night and is conscientious to discard her scrubs as soon as she gets home. She acknowledged that she could have some exposure to COVID, but she wasn't worried and noted "we are protected as much as we can and I'm doing everything I can for my patients, and there is limited contact with clients."

Throughout my interview with Mikiko, it was clear that taking care of patients was the priority. And what makes the rest of us so lucky, especially pet owners, is to have someone so committed to their work like Mikiko who shared without hesitation that she "would do anything for my job... and no matter how hectic or stressful it has been, I wouldn't change it for anything."

Guadalupe's Chocoflan Recipe

By: Aaliyah Alcibar



The past months have been filled with a lot of hard moments. It is very hard to focus on celebrating the accomplishments of this year's senior class with the current state of our world and without an in-person ceremony. This year, celebrate the class of 2020 by baking your favorite dessert. I encourage you to enjoy your favorite recipe or try out my favorite cake: chocoflan. I dedicate this recipe to the wonderful teachers I have had during my time at PPAS and to the graduating class of 2020.¹

Time: 45 minute baking time and overnight refrigeration

Ingredients:

1. 1 cup of sugar
2. Water (3 Tbs)
3. Lime (A few drops)
4. Cooking Spray
5. 7 eggs
6. Condensed milk
7. Evaporated milk
8. Cream cheese
9. Vanilla extract
10. Chocolate cake mix
11. Baking powder
12. Oil or butter
13. Milk (Option)

Utensils:

1. Bundt Cake Pan (highly recommended)
2. Aluminum Foil

Steps

Preheat oven to 370

1. Spray Bundt pan with cooking spray.
2. Heat up a small pot on medium heat. Pour 1 cup of sugar, 3 spoonfuls of water, and a few drops of lime. When it turns to liquid and is lightly browned you will pour it into the prepared Bundt cake with caution (do not burn yourself - it will be extremely hot).

3. Flan mix: Blend together 4 eggs, 1 can of condensed milk, 1 can of evaporated milk, 4 tablespoons of cream cheese, and 1 tablespoon of vanilla extract. Let it rest in the blender.

4. Cake mix: In a separate container mix chocolate cake mix, 3 eggs, 1 teaspoon baking powder, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of oil or butter, and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of milk or water or follow directions on the box.

5. Pour half of this mix into the cake pan where you poured the sugar. Hold a spoon on top of the cake pan and slowly pour the flan mix on top to let it fall slowly onto the cake pan.

Putting it together

1. Pour water into a container big enough to hold the cake pan. Cover this with a piece of aluminum foil covered in cooking spray.

2. Bake for 45 minutes. Check by gently inserting a knife into the cake, if it comes out clean it is finished baking.

3. Refrigerate (preferably overnight), Invert onto a cake platter - careful not to spill the caramel sauce .

Enjoy!

¹There are plenty of recipes for chocoflan online that also include how to add toppings to the cake. This is an authentic Mexican recipe from my grandmother so the steps will vary from recipes online.

From Aaliyah Alcibar

CONGRATULATIONS



PPAS

CLASS OF 2020

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the class of 2020 seniors who contributed to the PPAS Voice this year:

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Zayda Bleeker Adams — Co-Editor in Chief, 2018-2020

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Allison Lee, Writer
Tobi Lee, Writer

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Ms. Miller
Ms. Jillian Moss
Ms. Mussman
Mr. Parente
Ms. Pourghasemi
Mr. Ryan
Ms. Sale
Mr. Vassallo

Welcome to anyone who would like to join our team next year.
Email theppasvoice@ppashare.org