



Podium

Winter 2019-2020
HS Zine

You cannot be a writer unless you see yourself as one. Each high school program begins with an exploration of ourselves as writers, creators, and communicators. Some work is created by the individual, and some work is a collaborative effort.

Enjoy youth pieces from Podium's partner locations:

- Armstrong HS – A.C.E
- Thomas Jefferson HS
- The Boys and Girls Club of Metro Richmond (various locations)



PERSONAL REFLECTION

Future Me
Ashontay C.
Thomas Jefferson HS

Dear Future Me,

I hope you read this in a place that makes you feel safe and warm. I hope you are surrounded by people who embrace each and every one of your quirks you've spent years trying to hide. No matter where you are or who you're with, I hope you feel a little less lonely. Do you remember the girl who would just quit whenever she got overwhelmed with a new task? I sure do because that girl is feeling quite overwhelmed, at this very moment, while writing to you. Just know that whenever you are on this earth, I am proud of you, and I will try to be proud of the girl that's currently writing to you too.

Personal Identity

Kameron B.
Armstrong HS

Identities:

- Being from Baton Rouge
- My hair texture
- My music and artistic ability
- My Creole heritage
- My height

Dear Kameron,

Be proud of yourself.

You are beautiful even if you are short. You can do things taller people can't. You can fit into cabinets which means you are the best at hide-and-seek. You may get flack sometimes, but you are the best there ever was at hiding. You are amazing and will be even more in the future, so just keep pushing.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Identity Matters

Chris O.

Thomas Jefferson HS

Who I Was

I was a young lad, kind of bad, times were sad,
I did things I wish I never had, but that's life. This one had a knife
sliding across, splitting my melanin like Moses in the Red Sea.
There was pure hope in me, promises be but glass because they break so easily,
but I was just a boy figuring out his mentality.

Who I Am

I am a turnt lad. Michael bad,
I wipe the tears off my clock when times are sad,
I don't regret the post because I would not have
if I had not had the battle scar from my silver war.
It bothers me no more. I'm done being a whore.
I still lose my temper, but I get a thermometer to find it.
I am looking for a love so binding,
and if that don't work, we're not rewinding
my promises as stainless steel, because the shards can feel
painful when it breaks so easily,
I am working on myself emotionally.

Who I Want to Be

I want to be a mature lad, a wife and kids all bad,
but it's good we weren't be happy if times were not sad,
what I have is great, doesn't matter what I had.
I now share my knowledge of all the mileage I traveled,
tell the war stories and show the scars from my battles.
I want to be proficient in all arts, touch minds and touch hearts,
and who I was is where it starts.
My life was a race but I'll never forget my place.
I promise myself I will live up to this prophecy, happily, set humans free,
I'm done working, yet I'll never retire.
I have finished myself physically, mentally, and emotionally.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Personal Identity

India W.

Armstrong HS

Dear middle school self,
It's okay not to have
everything. It's okay to love your hair. It's okay to be smart.
IT IS OKAY!!

Identity Matters

Leila M.

Thomas Jefferson HS

Who I Was

It's rather odd, I tend to forget who I was. I was shy, yet rambunctious, similar to now. I wasn't creative as I was always stuck in reality. I never expressed my weirdness to the world. I dressed in bland colors and kept to myself.

Who I Am

I am shy in the most beautiful of ways. I may not always speak, but my clothes and posture spill my story regardless. My eccentric personality is displayed by bright colors and simple color combinations. I am rather passionate, although you may have to see my fiery glare to tell. I consider myself as a god of sorts, vanity unintended. By that, I simply mean that I control what I do, what I'm here to do, and how I will do it. I claim my success as well as my failures without chalking it up to a higher power. I refuse to lose myself in everyone else. I take care of all that I can, but I will never forget that this is MY world. I control it.

Who I Want to Be

I wish to be an astronaut, figuratively. I want to be surrounded by stars, whether they are famous or just amazing individuals. I want to see the world from a different angle. I want to be able to float through space and time and simply spectate.

FREE WRITES

Message to the Boomers

M.J.P.

Thomas Jefferson HS

This is for the boomers, Gen X, and the old millennials. The blamers and shamers. How can you blame us for problems you create? You shame people who work minimum wage jobs that are essential to your way of life. They earn the bare minimum and yet you expect them to put forth maximum effort.

You ask why your kids are having trouble in school but you refuse to put forth more money for school funding and staff wages. You sit on mountains of money, just sitting there and not stimulating the economy, and you complain about the employment rate and how there's too many homeless people.

What do you think your rage will solve? Your complaining doesn't solve anything. If you dislike the homeless rate, donate to shelters and advocate for expanding welfare, healthcare, and foster services. Don't just gossip and chatter. Be the change you want to see.

Let's Go Back

Ashontay C.

Thomas Jefferson HS

I wanna go back to when we first met. Back to when we would hang out at the swamp where no one else could see us. But everything came to an end, and we had to make a stop. We built bridges but had to set it ablaze. The flames left a mark on my lips. The last place you ever touched me. The bridges started to collapse and we were running out of time. I hated how indecisive I was. I couldn't pick between contentment with loneliness or resentment with happiness. Though I speak to you now with my shattered heart, I can say that the bridges finally burned into ashes that will forever blow towards you.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

FREE WRITES

"UNO" Players

Bre'Shon D.

Thomas Jefferson HS

Hello people or everyday society. I am here today to talk about a game. This game ruins even the deepest of friendships. This game I am telling you about is the game called UNO. UNO is a game where you try to win, but this generation breeds a bunch of cheaters. Cheaters I say! I am talking about the ones who place a plus 4 on a plus 2. The ones who hide the best cards under their legs. The ones who try their best to look at your cards. The ones who stack the deck to their advantage. The ones who don't know the basic rules about blank cards. These cheaters must go. They shouldn't be allowed to play a card game ever. Read the rules and try again, but this time, I will be there with my rulebook, ready to smite them with the blackest of hands.

School Improvements

Chris O.

Thomas Jefferson HS

We need to improve curriculum in schools. We are taught about fighting before war is even in our vocabulary. We are taught to find our insecurities before we can solve for x. It's always the ones who don't give an F that get an F. We are taught his stories and don't know our own. We forget our books but won't forget our phone. We don't see what we're shown, and by the time we get it right instead of wrong, it's time to move on. In English we're taught to write but not to spell. We're stuck, and instead of listening to the teacher, we just listen for the bell.

Tired

Anthony A.

Thomas Jefferson HS

Young people, I've had enough! I'm tired, exhausted, drained, disheartened, and depressed. For years, I've put up with you all. For years, I've watched you breathe. For years, I've watched you blink. For years, I've experienced your existence. I'm done.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

FREE WRITES

Baking

Shavon B.
Armstrong HS

Baking is my favorite thing in the world, it makes me so happy. I enjoy it. If I eat too many sweets, I hurl. Sweets remind me of happier times. Baking is my sanctuary, and I love dairy whip cream. It's a dream. Sweet things brighten my life. The oven is very bright and hot.

Death by Conformity

Kamari B.
Thomas Jefferson HS

There never used to be a time when I was afraid to express myself. Whether it be verbally, through clothing, etc. But that has changed. Now, I bite my tongue more often. I keep quiet. It is my belief that attending high school has diluted my personality and dissolved my creative mind. It's kind of sad really, but that's what happens when you create limits and don't encourage growth.

Half-full, Half-empty

Kashief A.
Thomas Jefferson HS

Half-full, half empty. Optimism, pessimism. Two sides of the same over exaggerated, emotional coin. For years, there has been a labeling of people by the half-minded opinions and tones of voice of others. Toxic environments and emotions being blamed on people who try to be realistic. People labelled as immature and childish for having hope. We must put an end to premature first impressions and allow for the inclusion of every member of our respective communities to preserve the dreams of our youth, rather than blaming the children for a lack of inspiration.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

FREE WRITES

Humans Can Fly, They Just Forgot The Secret Dance That Lets Them Levitate...

Arzjon C. and Ian W.

Armstrong HS

Thousands of years ago, a very complex dance was created that required a certain bone structure to master. The people who were able to master the dance formed a secret society, or a cult, and plotted to take over the world. Countries created alliances to take down these people all they could. Governments ordered their societies to erase all evidence, so the dance could not be discovered again.

Fluoride in our water keeps people from thinking about such insane ideas.

Depression

Zolet M.

Thomas Jefferson HS

Depression in our generation
Is a whole joke.
Everybody has depression and anxiety.
I mean seriously.
Everyday I see a post about it.
How are you actually sad?
How can you be able to say you
Don't love life when you wake up
Everyday and see the sun?
What I am saying is, happiness
Is out there, so go for it.



HS WINTER ZINE 2020

FREE WRITES

Classroom Jungle

Leila M.

Thomas Jefferson HS

Climate change is a real thing.
Tears of the leaves don't drip the same,
Creatures lack growth as it's too warm for a
mane,
Centuries have passed,
No air the same,
There's an infinite moisture in the ground, and
No nutrient is the same.

Damp and brown,
The mud is fed to poor creatures,
Food; nonetheless,
Rain slaps, unlike this rare combination,
Blander than a broken moon.

The taste of your mannerisms exude "dis"
My soggy mind cannot dissect.
Intriguing, one shares the mind of an insect.
A soak in this creek may help
Fix your distasteful perspective.

In this damp eden,
We critters rebuke classism,
A true dissociation,
For a snake will always slide with a worm.

All are unwell in this meek, wet wood,
Destroyed by creation.
Ignored for industrialization.
Health depletes without further ado.
International health care removes a
lawsuit
Not just for the Jungle
But the concrete forest next door.
Hypothetically, unreachable,
But disease loves all.

The invisible virus loves all without
Lack of inspiration.
Not hard to cater to you,
The amazon is leaky.
Art dries it up.
The jungle without a cage,
A beautiful club.

DEBATES AND NEWS

Pro - Dress code

Ka'mariya T., Kameron B., and Jaquan W.
Armstrong HS

Why Have Dress Codes:

- Kids are inappropriate, take advantage, and have no respect for themselves.
- A lot of people already don't go by the dress codes.
- Clothes can ruin relationships.
- What you wear can give people a certain image of yourself.
- School is not a fashion show, so you can still come to school with good clothes without disobeying the dress code.
- If we can control ourselves, we wouldn't have a dress code. We shouldn't be allowed to make the dress code.

Cross-Examination Questions:

What does working more have to do with clothes?

What does how we dress have to do with the first amendment that was fought for and not given?

Concluding Statement:

With dress codes, people wear crop tops and short-shorts, and if those are passable for a teenager growing up, they're getting used to it. For safety, students need more guidelines. Our hormones are growing, and to respect everyone, we need guidelines.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

DEBATES AND NEWS

Against - Dress Code

Sydni C., Jenny L., Mario T., and Jamari T.

Armstrong HS

Why we Shouldn't Have Dress Codes:

- 1st amendment rights: Freedom of speech and freedom of expression
- When you feel comfortable, students are more successful and work is more successful
- Dressing can make you stand out and feel special
- Financial reasons
- Women are more restricted because dress codes favor men. Men get 'distracted', but it's their fault. They should be able to control themselves .
- Parents don't care, so why should the school?
- They will take clothes overboard where it interferes with relationships and results in OSS

Cross-Examination Questions:

What are the limitations of 'overboard'?

But isn't that a school problem?

Concluding Statement:

People did fight for clothing. Women dressed up and were called flappers. Maybe some can't afford the price. If teachers were to look at the students a certain way, you think they would go to jail. In the roaring 20's, women dressed up for their right to dress the way they want. We're just trying to do the same thing.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

DEBATES AND NEWS

Schools Lunches

Shacorie J.

Armstrong HS

School lunch can be so much better than what it is right now. I understand people want us to be healthy, but it has to be kept to a certain extent. People will eat the food, then go home and right to being unhealthy. It makes no sense to me. Some people throw the food away, and that wastes money. Money that can actually help the school in many other ways. Some food items we can have and still be healthy are subs, veggie pizzas, and frozen yogurt.

What would you like to see on the news?

Chandrea H.

Armstrong HS

I think people should watch the news less because watching the news too much makes you worried about the outside world. Parents are so scared to let their kids do "kid things" because the news shows them things that make them too scared to let you leave your house and fear for your life.

What would you like to see on the news?

U'gene R.

Armstrong HS

I would like to see no more murders. I like to see more good things than bad people keep bringing around.

POETRY

I'm So Prada You

BD.

Henrico HS

Funny, like all the things you shouldn't laugh at.

LOud like a car with no brakes.

Giving like a grandma who just heard yeen ate all day. Impulsive like the way you
wanna punch someone and you just do it;

kind like the softest butterfly, sweet like the freshest honey.

This is who I AM. This is who I will continue to be. I am the one you go to for
comfort, for laughter, for upbringing;

you will either LOVE ME

OR HATE me, there's no inbetween. For I be the splinter in your finger and the
love in our heart. Funny, like all the things you shouldn't laugh at.

LOud like a car with no
brakes.

Giving like a grandma who just heard yeen ate all day. Impulsive like the way you
wanna punch someone and you just do it; kind like the softest butterfly, sweet like
the freshest honey.

BOLD.

VIBEFUL.

This is who I AM. This is who I will continue to be. I am the one you go to for
comfort, for laughter,

for upbringing; you will either LOVE ME OR HATE me, there's no inbetween. For
I be the splinter in your finger and the love in our heart.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

POETRY

School Lunch

Adrian W.

Armstrong HS

School lunch is trash.
The food is wack.
We need more juice
And more snacks.

Chocolate

Chris O.

Thomas Jefferson HS

We need to fix this, Chocolate we've been distant,
and I know you feel it, and it's killing me. That I can't see how it'll be,
those lines aren't straight in our infinity.
I miss the kiss before you go to class, your lips have good chemistry
with my faces. Biology, though we never plan it, I still enjoy your geology.
I miss the text with pure emotion. I love you more, your affection
hugs my skin and moisturizes my soul like an expensive lotion.
The good morning chocolate, good morning daddy
makes my heart sway a hyper motion, so lets put reconciliation to motion.
I miss the holding, the understanding, the showing,
the talking, and how our hearts stayed flowing together.
We're damn near grown. It doesn't matter who's right or wrong
with a relationship comes change, that's how you extend through and long
for a bond of love. We write these lyrics in this love song.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

POETRY

Young Black Man

C.B.

Henrico HS

Young black man like the dirt beneath
the soil

Young black man you can't do this

Young black man you can't do that

Young black man you can be below
down in the cracks

Young black man no matter what you
do

Young black man they will only see the
bad in you

Young black man work hard

Young black man keep trying

Young black man keep striving

but it is as it is as it is

Rosalie

Henrico HS

I began to writhe against
the touch of these
hands I did not know
as Brand turned to Knife.

(is this on purpose?)

A disembodied whisper of
it is as it is as it is.

Why am i in line,
and who is in front,
and why is my forehead
Bleeding?

(is there an echo?)

I grabbed the hand that
reached for me,
traveled up its arm
to a blood-stained face
and found that
the World is made of
scar tissue,
but it is as it is as it is.

YOUTH OF THE YEAR SPEECHES

What Matters to Me?

Josette H.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Richmond - Petersburg

Finding one self's interest can be a very interesting journey. I've always been interested in making the world a better place and being fair to everyone. I stand for equality, love, and education. Some people would like to consider me as a triple-minority, an African-American female who is part of the LGBTQ+, and one day I hope that people who are similar will not be singled out for being themselves. Also, a big problem is youth homelessness in the community. Many people in my community are struggling, and they need proper materials to survive, and equality so they would not be left out. Many people are treated unfairly and are not given an equal opportunity to showcase their strengths. Some people are automatically turned away because of race, living predicament, sexuality, and how they may look. Laws may have been passed to "prevent" these things but sometimes, it doesn't prevent discrimination. One of the most challenging obstacles someone has to go through is homelessness. I am proud to say that I am part of a youth action board that focuses on helping people with housing instability. We collect necessities such as toiletries and canned food to donate to our local homeless shelters. Many people who are homeless are part of the LGBTQ+ community and are struggling to be accepted and be in peace. The largest group of youth experiencing homelessness is the LGBTQ+, roughly 40%. We as a people need to put our differences aside, treat each other with respect, and help each other out. The way we treat people and how they treat us can really take a toll on their mental state, and can affect the open opportunities they may have. In addition to my last statement, bullying is a huge issue in America. I have suffered from bullying for over ten years and it is very painful and stressful. One day, I hope for everyone to be treated with kindness, and for bullying to just be an obstacle of the past. So many suicides could have been avoided if everyone was just kinder to each other. Over 14% of high school students have considered suicide and almost seven percent have attempted it. Bully victims are more likely to commit suicide than non-victims.

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HS WINTER ZINE 2020

YOUTH OF THE YEAR SPEECHES

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The youth LGBTQ+ population has the highest rates of depression, suicide, and bullying in school. This has been an ongoing problem for years, and no one has really tried to help, other than trying to push expensive counseling on them, making teens feel like they have no control, or that they may be “sick” or “crazy.” From my personal experiences, I have been creating a plan of action for over a year. I would like to create a group for youth, and for all genders, to come together weekly, or as often as needed. We can have group therapy sessions, and if there are times we may not have a meeting, we can have a group chat where everyone is welcome. If they feel like they have hit rock-bottom, they will be able to contact the group or me at any time, and we can help them through the tough times. Also, since everything is confidential and there are “No parents allowed”, they can have their freedom and talk about anything on their mind. I would have definitely loved this type of group when I had thoughts of suicide, so it would be a no-brainer to share this with youth of this day and age. Finally, being a “triple-minority” has taught me to embrace who I am and that nobody can change who I am. Being depressed because of bullying and not being accepted has taught me that it does not matter what anyone else thinks. At the end of the day, you have to be there for yourself. Working on bullying and establishing this group can benefit others by helping them gain the confidence they need to succeed. Self-love is the best love, and you have to love yourself before anyone else.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

YOUTH OF THE YEAR SPEECHES

Overcoming Obstacles

Nadia H.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Richmond - MLK Jr. MS

Overcoming life obstacles is not an easy task. An obstacle that I have overcome is making it to my junior year of high school. This was an obstacle for me because I struggled in some of my classes to get where I am now. For my first two years in high school, things were more complicated, and I felt like I was not going to make it. I was not comprehending the lessons being taught to me. I was extremely frustrated and gave up on myself. Instead of me doubting myself, I should have been pushing myself even harder, so I did not have to go through the emotions that I went through.

I overcame this obstacle by pushing myself to do better and trying instead of giving up on myself. Now, I am putting in the effort, so I can graduate and have a great career. I am so proud of myself because now I know I am going to make it. I have a great support system to help me focus on the things that I need to focus on and on the things that impact my future. I am thankful that I have the support I have because without that support, I would not have made it.

The people in my support group include my mom, my dad, Mrs. Jade, Ms. Ponton, Mr. V, Derrick, Keniyah, Da'marcus, Mr. Craig, and Mr. E. They help me by having talks with me to see where my head is and to see how I'm feeling. They push me to do better, to try my best, and they give me great advice about anything. They help me get through things that I'm going through, and they deal with my off days. I appreciate them for being there for me and helping me out.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

YOUTH OF THE YEAR SPEECHES

My Passion

Kenneth B.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Richmond - Fairfield

Technology has become an important factor in everyday life, but the reason it matters to me is because it is my future. We use it to research cures, improve transportation, and to make life easier. Overall, technology makes living in the modern world more convenient. Almost everyone in the world has reaped the benefits of technology since the early 1900's. With the invention of modern day computers and other devices, we are able to interpret the past, fly through the skies, and dive into the deepest parts of the ocean. Technology has even made an effort to keep us entertained with game systems, such as the Xbox and PlayStation. With the advancements of technology, advances in the medical field have also happened. We developed probiotics, modified procedures, and are able to practice artificial organ transplants. Thanks to modern medical devices, we can treat diseases like cancer and HIV rigorously. We have also been able to decrease our mortality rate significantly compared to before these advances in medicine were made. When I graduate college, I want to become an engineer. I'm not exactly sure what I want to do but, I want to make the next best thing. I could make a hover car, a new phone company, or a hi-tech space shuttle. The possibilities are endless.

HS WINTER ZINE 2020

YOUTH OF THE YEAR SPEECHES

Bright's Delights

Bright K.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Richmond - Southside

Good evening. I am the future founder of Bright's Delights, a restaurant founded upon love, family, and determination. And my life is like baking a cake. The first step of baking a cake is gathering your ingredients together. For me, I lacked an important ingredient in my life which was my father. Since he wasn't around, I grew up in a single parent home with my mother and little sister. At a very young age, I learned how to be responsible and manage myself and my sister. I had an encouraging mom who never gave up on us and teachers that actually cared about my future. At the Southside Club, the staff saw that I had potential. They saw how I led others in the club, and most importantly, that I had friends who supported me and cared about me. These were the perfect ingredients I had to add to my life. After mixing the ingredients, you have the baking process before the cake is complete. During my life process, I went through many struggles. One of them was my weight. Due to my father's absence, I felt like I wasn't loved enough and I didn't gain enough attention, so I turned to food to fill that void. This led me to have low self esteem and later on, I would please people just to get their attention. Eventually, I overcame these obstacles and instead used them to my advantage. One of my favorite lyrics from J.Cole's song "Love Yours" is, "there's beauty in the struggle, ugliness in the success." Even though we go through our own personal issues, there is always something beautiful that will emerge from it. There's a failure to any success. Hearing these words motivate me to keep going no matter the situation. Now that the cake is finished, it is ready to be decorated. Although I went through many challenges, it strengthened me as a person. There are 6 ways to describe me that each start with the first letter of my name.

B- I am brilliant in my communication with others and in my academics.

R- I am ready for any challenges that might come my way.

I - I am independent. My intuition allows me to be capable of working on my own and leading others.

G- Genuine- I am genuine; a person of action and emotion.

H- Humble- I humble myself, taking in and adapting to constructive criticism.

T- True- I am true to myself as well as others.

These attributes that I possess will help me succeed through life as I reach my goal of having my own restaurant. I am thankful for the people who have molded and shaped me into the person that I am today. I want others to realize that challenges are not weaknesses; instead, they make you stronger. My name is Bright Kadege, and this is my story.



In Power of the Pen...

**each of us has a
creative voice!**

HAPPY READING!

**Connect with us:
@PodiumRVA**