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# CRIMES OF JUSTICE



youth ages

I4-I9

**Summer 2024 High School Zine**

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**“Be yourself. Above all, let who you are, what you are, and what you believe shine through every sentence you write, every piece you finish.”**

**- John Jakes**

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

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**Enjoy youth pieces from Podium partners at:**

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**Armstrong High School  
Richmond High School for the Arts  
Oak Avenue Complex  
Partnership for the Future  
Podium's Teen Professional Conference & Writing Mentorship Project**

# Writing Mentorship Project Internship Reflections

## The Importance of Youth Program Quality Standards

Aniya S.

### Partnership for the Future

During my freshman year of high school, I had a PE class that, for some reason, was always stirring up drama. It was almost unbelievable that a bunch of 13- to 14-year-olds had so much beef with each other, but I digress. While arguments happened every day about who likes who or whether someone committed a “foul” during basketball, most of them never got physical in the classroom. Until one day . . .

Rumors spread around about this one kid being involved in gang activities and getting jumped because he was a snitch. A bunch of stuff was shared that basically made him the most unliked person in the freshmen class.

One day, during health class, a group of boys and one girl decided to start messing with him. At that time, I was across the room talking with my friends, so I wasn't paying attention to the group around him. It wasn't until I felt my voice get too loud that I stopped talking. I noticed that the kid and the girl were starting to quietly go back and forth. I don't know why he chose her, considering she wasn't a small girl and was known for fighting, but he did.

The next moment felt like it happened in slow motion. She said something, and then he threw his computer straight at her. Also, I forgot to mention this happened in the second class of the day, so it was still like 11:00 in the morning.

After that, she jumped at him and started to swing. He swung back at her, and another boy jumped in to swing on him. My shock stopped me from really reacting at the time. I silently watched as my PE teacher tried to stop the fighting by throwing the other boy that jumped in. The teacher flipped that boy to the ground . . . twice. That video spread around very quickly with both students and parents.

The next time we had that class, we spent 30 minutes being punished by the teacher. He gave us laps for the rest of the year, depending on how many views the video got. The people who were directly involved got double that number. I somewhat understand because the fight should've never happened. At the same time, he said that the students on the other side of the room should've stopped the group from messing with the kid, even though he, as the teacher and adult, should've been paying attention.

He got mad at us because he got in trouble. It made me think about how this teacher was barely keeping us safe from each other. It made me think about how he didn't care about teaching us how to do CPR, or any of the things I should have learned at that age in health class. I don't even know how to use an EpiPen, and I have allergies. Quality standards are important.

# Addressing Social Issues

## **Gender Equality is a Human Fight NOT a Female Fight**

**Anijah S.C.**

**Oak Avenue Complex**

My pin tells you about the equality that women should have. The meaning behind gender equality is a human fight NOT a female fight is that women shouldn't have to fight gender stereotypes alone or at all because it's not fair. Women put their all into a place that doesn't care about them or care to respect them.

## **Create a Cleaner Community**

**Davell W., Sariya W., Justin D., and Kelcy H.**

**Oak Avenue Complex**

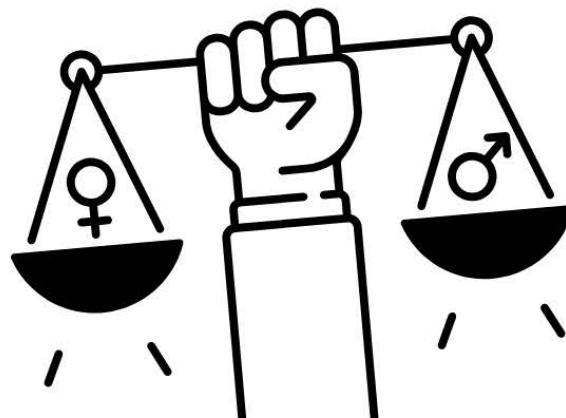
There are a lot of issues regarding pollution in our community. We believe that having more garbage cans will reduce the trash on the street. We also believe that all places should offer recycling as an option. Additionally, we think factories should use more environmentally friendly supplies and look into more sustainable energy options. We believe these ideas, if used, would create a cleaner and healthier community.

## **Gun Violence**

**Howard J., Abigale S., Aadyn K., Khayevion R., and Ryan W.**

**Oak Avenue Complex**

There is a gun violence issue in our community. We believe that the age to own a gun should be 25. Kids should not have guns. There should be better regulations, such as not allowing magazines for guns. We also believe that before you buy a gun, you should be required to have gun training.



## Women's Rights

Chandra Jones, Darrell A. Bigelow Jr., and Blair Bass

Oak Avenue Complex



### What are Women's Rights?

- Women should be respected about their choices for their well-being. Women should be allowed to choose their personal life choices. Rights that promote a position of legal and social equality of women and men should be enforced.

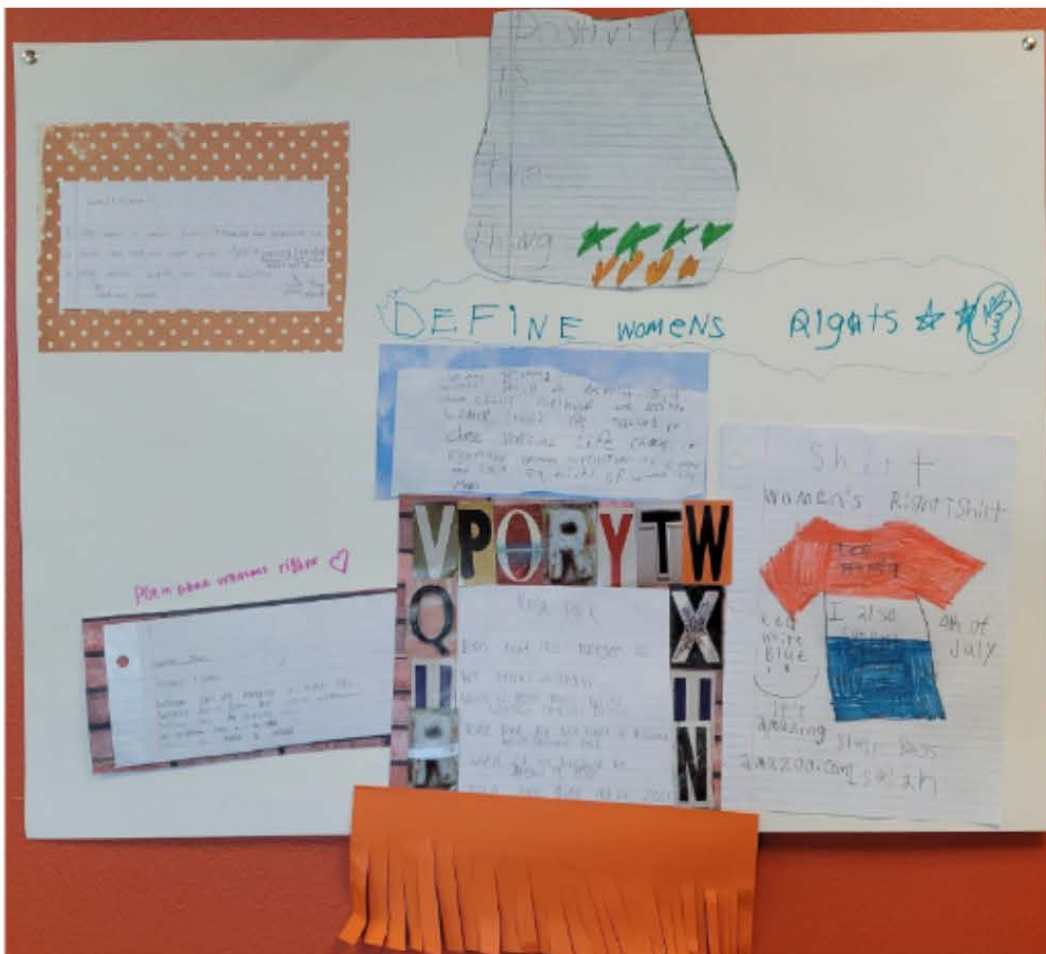
### Steps to Promote Women's Rights:

- Step 1: Stop women to women violence by enforcing more prevention laws.
- Step 2: Make sure men are treating women right by enforcing laws that don't let men hit women.
- Step 3: Give women more supplies for their children by creating and increasing resources.

### Stanza About Women Rights:

A woman can do anything a man can do.

Women don't get the same treatment as men, oh yes, it's true.



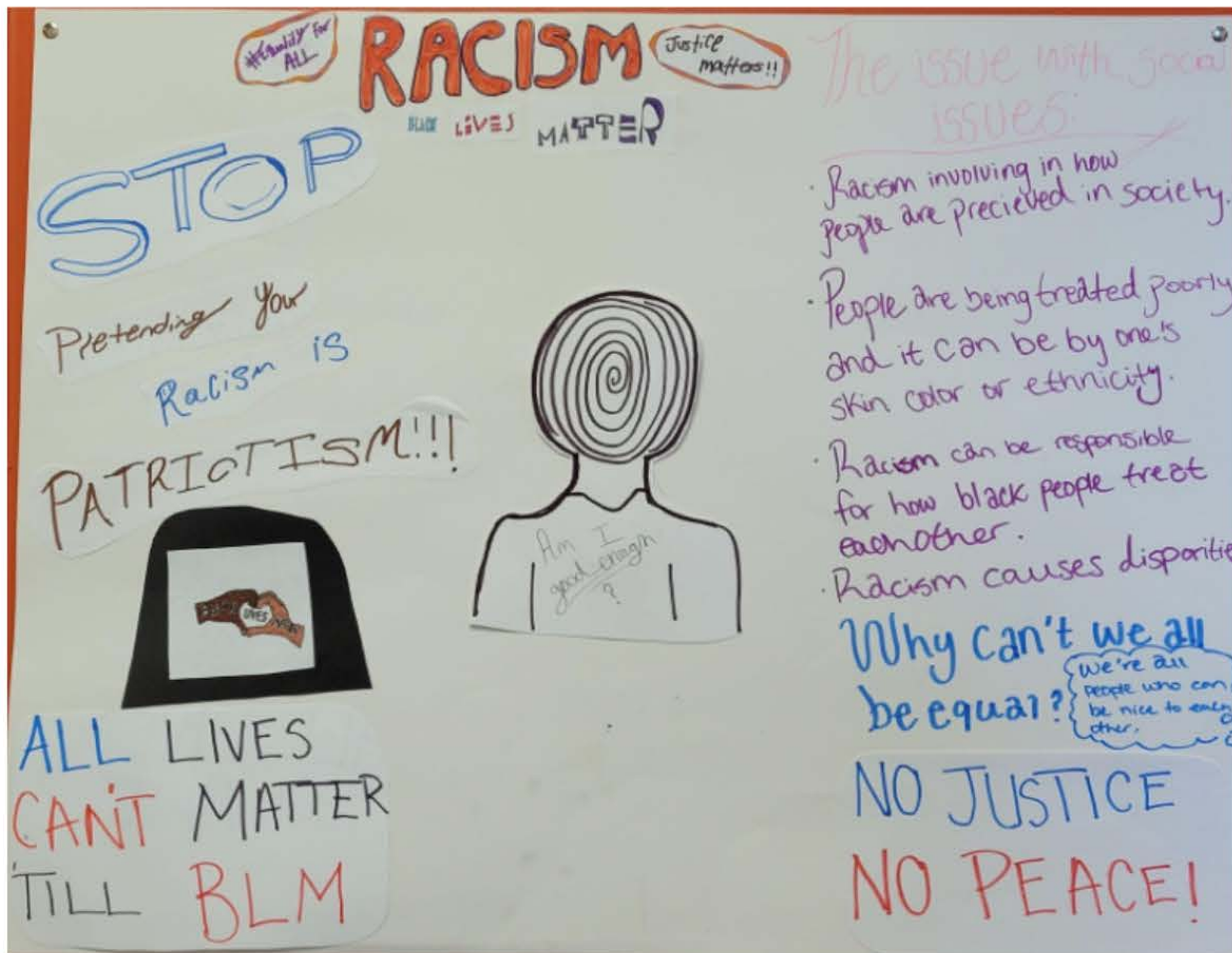


## Addressing Racism

Camryn C., Almira M., Gary B., Deshaun K., Anijah S.C., and Gregory M.  
Oak Avenue Complex

Racism involves how people are perceived in society. People are being treated poorly, and it can be because of one's skin color or ethnicity. Racism can be responsible for how Black people treat each other, and it causes disparities.

Why can't we all be equal? We're all people who can be nicer to each other.





## Global Warming

Davell W., Sariya W., Justin D., and Kelcy H.  
Oak Avenue Complex

### What is Global Warming?

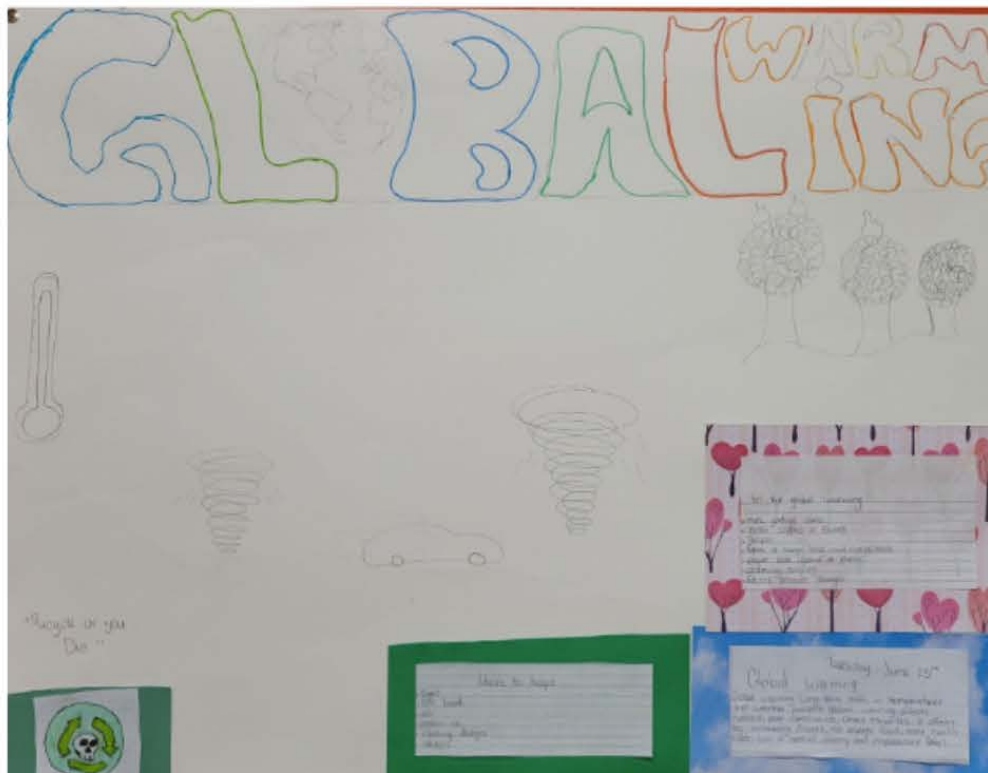
- Global warming is the long-term shift in temperatures and weather patterns. Global warming affects all humans, and in particular poor communities and ethnic minorities. It also affects the earth by increasing droughts, health risks, poverty, displacement, and by decreasing the amount of food, types of species, etc.

### Steps to Reduce Global Warming:

- Step 1: Have more garbage cans.
- Step 2: Have better supplies in factories.
- Step 3: Recycle more.
- Step 4: Use better forms of energy, such as solar, wind, and water.
- Step 5: Use paper items instead of plastic.
- Step 6: Enforce recycling.
- Step 7: Change factory policies.

### Help Spread Awareness by Creating:

- Signs, billboards, ads, posters, clothing designs, and stickers



## Gun Violence

Kakara B., Ryan W., Khayevion R., Howard J., Aadyn K., and Shanye J.  
Oak Avenue Complex

### What is Gun Violence?

- Gun violence is when violence is committed with the use of a firearm.
- The communities most impacted are Black people, indigenous people, and Latinx people. The age group that is most impacted are 15- to 34-year-olds.
- The different types of gun violence are suicides, intentional homicides, domestic violence, robbery, and assault.

### Steps to Reduce Gun Violence:

- Step 1: Age restrictions.
- Step 2: Stricter control over the types of guns able to be purchased.
- Step 3: Have better background checks and safety tests when buying guns.
- Step 4: Ban guns from certain places.
- Step 5: Have harsher consequences for misuse.

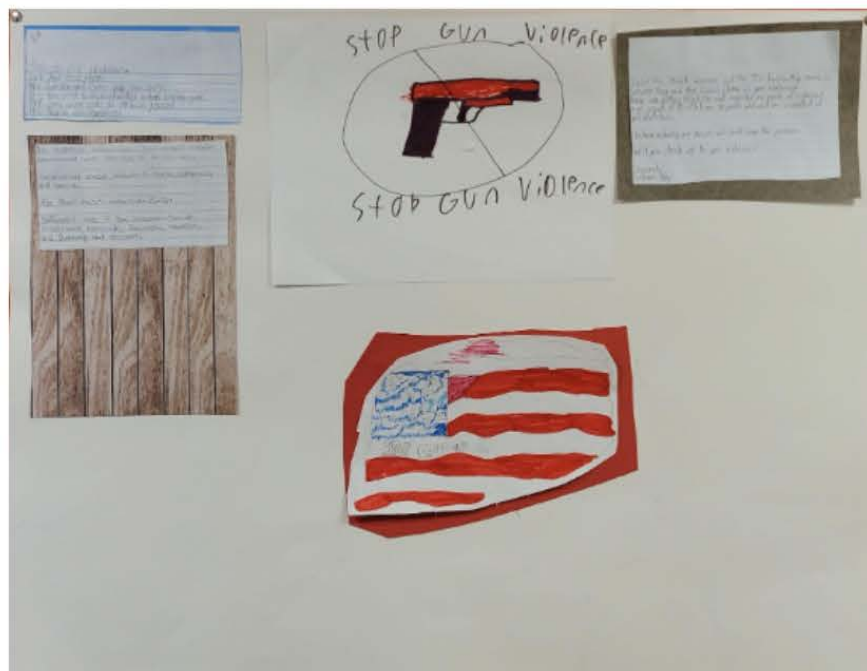
### Letter to a Government Official:

Dear Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine,

My name is Sakara Bey, and the issue I want to address is gun violence. People are getting killed, and the people most impacted are people of color in the age group 15 to 34. I am 16 years old, and I am impacted by gun violence. I believe reducing gun access will help solve this problem. Will you stand up beside me against gun violence?

Sincerely,

Kakara B.



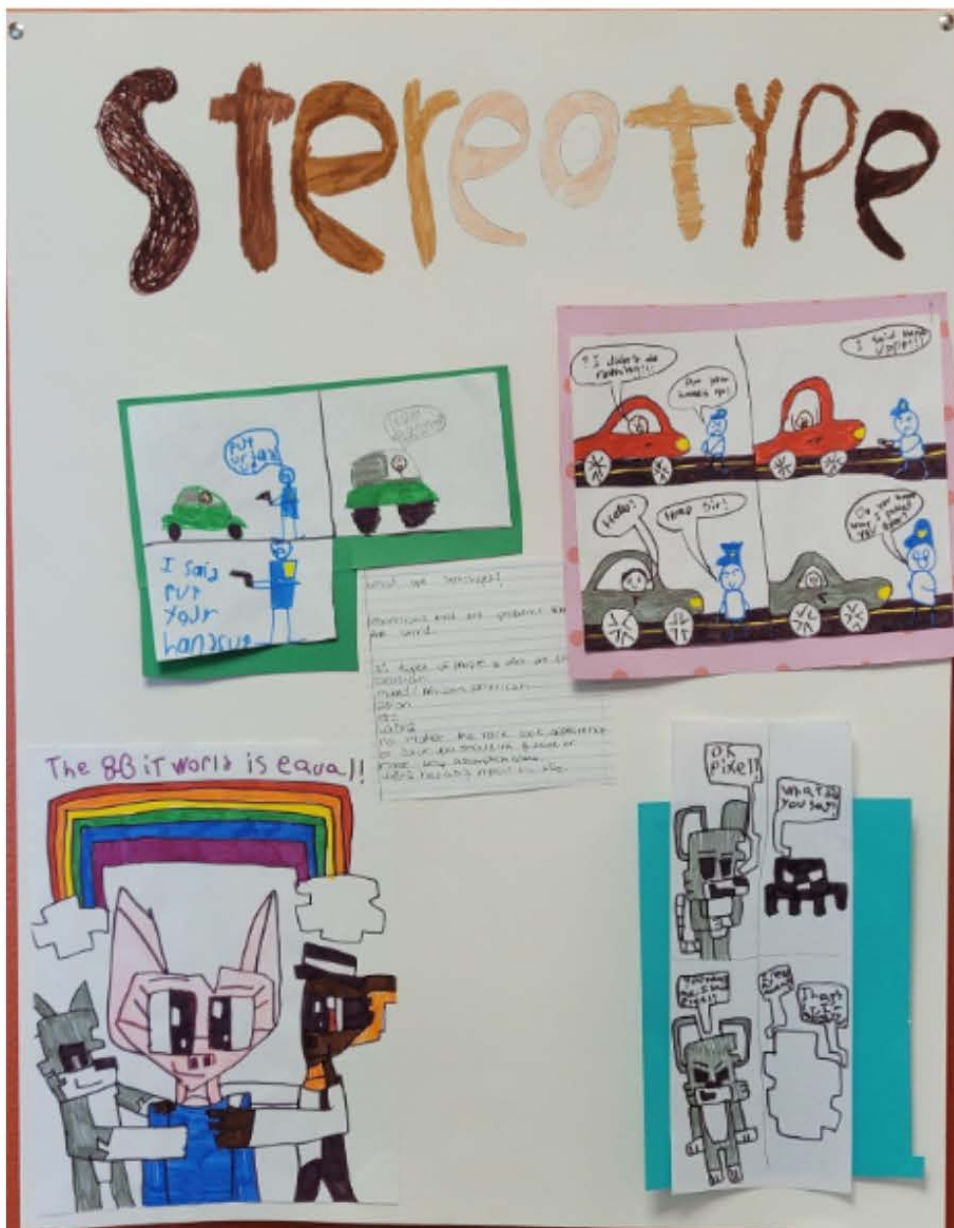




## What Are Stereotypes?

Maddie J., Raymond D., Sierra M., Jefferey M., Marcel S., and Ari J.  
Oak Avenue Complex

Stereotypes are assumptions made about someone. That's a problem that affects the world. All types of people are affected. For example: caucasians, mixed people, African Americans, Asians, LGBTQ+ people, etc. No matter someone's race, appearance, or color, you shouldn't judge or make any assumption about someone else.



# Letters to Self, Others, & the Future



**Future Letter**  
**Aditya N.**  
**Partnership For the Future**

I hope this letter finds you in a good position. I am you, but I am 16 years old, and I want to be an engineer. I do not know who you are, but I do know one thing for sure: You have knowledge to share, and whether or not you are in the position to share the knowledge and solve problems, know that you have worth. Continue to prosper and have a good rest of your life.

Sincerely,

You

**Future Letter**  
**Kamora R.**  
**Partnership For the Future**

Please understand that throughout our life, I am sure we will endure so much pain. Understand that life will not be as you wish 100% of the time, and that is okay. I am proud of us. We will continue to go through things together and fail, but no matter what, and especially if no one has told you by the day you read this, "I love you, you are enough, and you can do it." This letter may be short, but you will get over it since I have written a million letters to you before.

Love,

You

**Time Passes**  
**Maya S.**  
**Armstrong HS**



Dear Dad,

Today is Jhimmy's birthday. My big boy is twelve years old now, and I just realized that time passes so fast. Jhimmy has been begging to come to Michigan, your home, my home, so here we are riding Maximo. I am sure you remember him.

Also, today marks one year since your death, and all I can say is that we miss you. I don't know where you are, but I'm pretty sure that you are watching us. You'll love to know that Jhimmy wants to be just like you, the best horse rider ever.

**Happy**  
**Johniqua N.**  
**Armstrong HS**

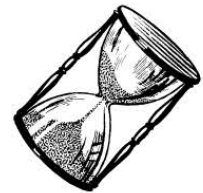
Dear Mom,

I am very happy about taking my horse to meet new kids and letting them ride her. I teach kids how to ride horses and properly care for them. During this, the kids get to feed my horse, brush her mane, and change the horse's shoe.

They also get horse care packages to take home. As taken in the photo, you can see me smiling, happy and proud of what I do. Kids look up to me and admire what I do.

Love,

Your Happy Kid



**Future Letter**  
**Dylan M.**  
**Partnership For the Future**

Do you still want to be an engineer? Are you one? Is your current career the one I am considering now? How many books did you write? Did you pursue coding more? How much of this lesson today is still relevant down the road? Do you miss who you were? Which college are you attending?

Sincerely,

You



## **Rose in a Field of Tulips**

**Shyla S.**

**Richmond High School for the Arts**

I never knew that the young Black girl I would grow into was someone who the world used to think could not exist. That it was impossible, seeing a Black woman succeed. I would have never guessed that the rose in a field of tulips would accept that she is different. She realizes that her voice carries the sound of power and grace, where she is able to let her chocolate skin be kissed by the sun.

While looking around, I see people who have felt the impact of my own words, and how they have helped them just as much as my poems have helped me overcome. I am reborn. More mature and one with nature, as I now know the meaning of letting go. The past has helped make me into the woman people see today, and the woman I see every time I look at my own reflection.

## **Future Letter**

**Destiny M.**

**Partnership For the Future**

“Always leave space for yourself.” I have heard that quote from many today, in the past, and probably will again in the future. Keep your creative and adventurous mind. You can always find a way through hard times and tough patches. Give to yourself. Back then, you were quiet and cautious and not so you. Now, you’re better.

You’ve found yourself and started to learn more and more, so give it time and play the long game. Be empathic and follow the Lord. He will always be with you, and if you sin again, remember Proverbs 24:16. Keep praying and reading your bible. Keep learning and never stop. No one can bring you down. You are you; never stop being you. God is proud of you, and Jesus is proud of you, so be proud of yourself. Find the self-love you need, and then own it.

## **My Dream Job**

**Daniel M.**

**Teen Professional Conference**

I want to be the President of the United States. I want to help people, and I will start my path towards becoming president by majoring in political science in college.

# Writing Mentorship Project Internship Reflections

## Why Mentoring Is Difficult

Aniya S.

### Partnership for the Future

Throughout the seventeen years of my life, I have had countless teachers. I have met many adults within roles of authority, and yet I can count the number of mentors I have had on one hand. I am grateful that I was not in need of many, because the ones that I have are some of the wisest people I have met. Wise enough to make me realize the reason I can count all my mentors on just one hand. Not because I am “emotionally mature for my age” or because I am “wise beyond my years.” It is because mentoring is difficult, and being in the role of either a mentor or a mentee is tough.

Mentorship is when someone guides and supports another individual through growth. Usually, the mentor will be someone with more experience passing on knowledge and helping their mentee move towards a goal. The mentor takes leadership over the mentee to effectively achieve the chosen goal. This leadership, the ability to direct people, is not the only skill a mentor needs to know. Because how does one lead without empowering the person they are supposed to guide forward?

Empowerment is the feeling that you can do anything that you can put your mind towards. It is confidence that continues to push you forward to your goals. It is knowing that whatever you are doing or trying to achieve is important and it matters. When it comes to mentorship, it becomes even more difficult to keep a mentee moving towards a goal. That is because the mentor must make the mentee comfortable enough to push through failure. Learning requires failure. Improvement grows from defeat. Being better does not just simply happen. A flower that wilts in the winter can always bloom in the spring, but if the flower always feels like it is winter, it will never bloom. That is why mentorship is so important because for some, it is hard to stand back up after being knocked down.

As a peer-mentor to others, I am confident in my skill to empower others through failure. I do not expect someone to instantly be amazing at a skill I am supposed to help them with, and I understand the insecurities in trying to learn how to do better. It is easy for people to compare themselves to others. I have seen many of my friends compare themselves, and I say the same thing every time. Do not use other’s achievements to undermine your own. Simone Biles can do gymnastics much better than Archimedes, but she did not create math like he did. Simone Biles doing record-breaking jumps and changing history within the Olympics does not mean Archimedes & achievements are any less amazing. Having someone be better than you at a skill you are learning does not mean they can do everything that you do.

I will admit, it took years for me to understand and even longer for me to realize that my friends needed to hear it too. Multiple times, I have pushed my friends to continue towards their goals by being realistic with them. Because sure, that person is amazing, but they are not you.

# Short Fiction

## Blue Sunny Sky

Alphonse B.

Richmond High School for the Arts

Walking to the bank to get a loan for my restaurant, I arrive and step inside. It's cold but refreshing. I tell the lady behind the desk that I'm here for an interview and ask when I can see the manager. He comes out a door with his hair slicked back, wearing a black and white suit. He holds his hand out like he's ready to swallow mine in his Rolex.

I shake his hand, and he says, "Welcome to the bank. I hear you have an interview today?" He takes me to the back. We started talking about whether this loan would be worth it, when I can pay it back, and when he can go to the restaurant.

He gives me the loan, shakes my hand, and says, "I hope your business goes well, and I'll be there on opening night."

I walk out of the bank with a smile and a tear running down my face. "Now, I can finally build my restaurant, and I think this, today, is the turning point of my life."

## Tattoo

Jamesha H.

Richmond High School for the Arts

Hi, my name is Tom.

I'm here to give you a tattoo.

As you know, I do tattoos.

I like to cause people pain.

I love the faces they make

When it starts to hurt.

It puts a smile on my face.



## Winning

Jamal S.

Richmond High School for the Arts

My team is down 4 with 1:39 seconds left in the 4th quarter. At the 25-yard line, 1st down and 10 quarterback in shotgun throws it to the XWR for a 75-yard touchdown on the first play. I'm happy that we won the Super Bowl.



**Dear Diary**  
**Dominique S.**  
**Richmond School of the Arts**

The year is 1925, and today we are going to a Christmas party. I'm so happy that we are going out because I can see my boyfriend, Matt. He's so nice and cute, but his father doesn't like me because I'm Black and rich. All I want to do is be with Matt, and no one knows.

**Mary McLeod Bethune Will Make a Way**  
**Chrisopher S.**  
**Richmond School of the Arts**

The color of my skin shouldn't decide  
if I'm educated.

I will make a way to make a way  
for people like me

To become great in the world.

Learning is the greatest strength we humans have,  
and I will make it so we have it.



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mind the toll of cleaning  
the area over again. He  
just went whistling. V  
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