

# ONE WORLD HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMY



Published Student Essays on Social Justice  
FALL SEMESTER 2023





# THE ONE WORLD ACADEMY

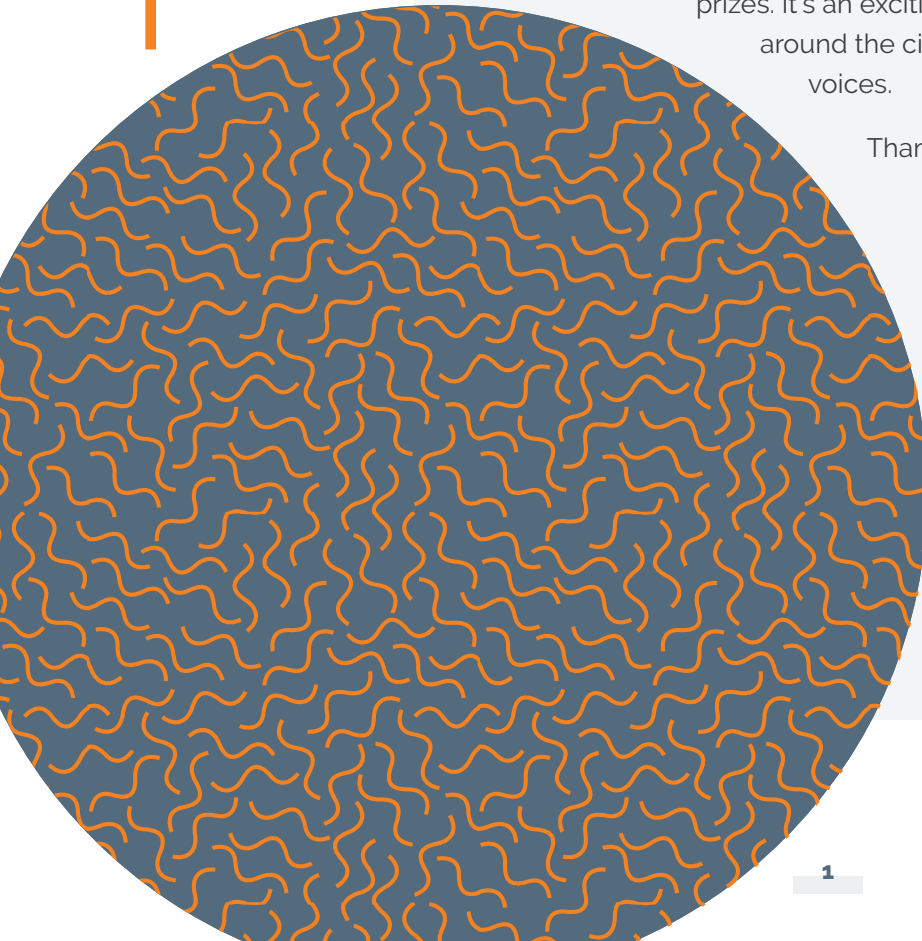
One World Education's mission is to transform students into writers with voice, knowledge, and purpose. Each year, the organization serves 5,000 middle school, high school, and adult learners at 20-25 Washington, DC schools through in-school and afterschool programs.

The writing you will read in this book originates in One World's afterschool program, the One World Academy, which helps students improve their research and writing skills so they are prepared for their most important academic transitions. The fall One World Academy focuses on preparing high school students for the demands of high school and the college application process.

Why is the One World Academy so important? Before the pandemic, only one-third of DC students graduated from high school prepared to write at the college level. Half of teachers report that they don't receive training to teach writing. In the One World Academy, students work with One World's highest-performing teachers in an afterschool experience that is relevant, supportive, and challenging.

The One World Academy culminates in a citywide event, the One World Challenge, where students showcase their writing, deliver speeches and poster presentations about their social justice topics, and answer questions from community members. Students compete for scholarships and academic prizes. It's an exciting moment when students and families from around the city come together and celebrate student voices.

Thank you for supporting our program.



# THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

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Students learn about social justice and select topics important to them.

Students learn critical research skills and conduct research on their topics.



Students write, revise, edit, and publish high-quality essays like the ones in this book.

Students present their arguments through speeches and posters at the One World Challenge for scholarships and prizes.



# HISTORICAL IMPACT

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**50,000**

Students Served



**Student Writing  
Scores Improve**

Increase over 8 weeks:

C Pre-Score (76 average)

B- Post- Score (79 average)



**78%**

of students report they can write an essay after finishing the One World Program.



**100%**

of teachers report One World brings rigor and relevance to their students.



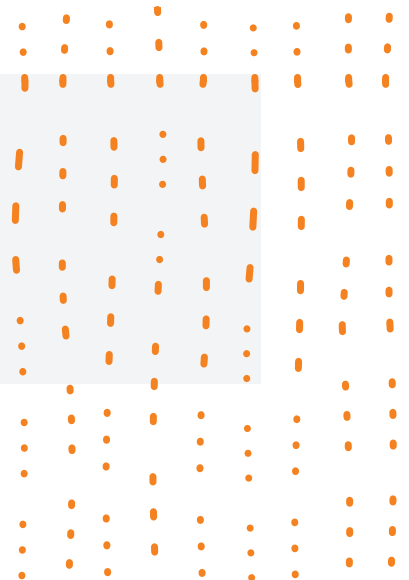
**81%**

of students showed statistically significant gains.



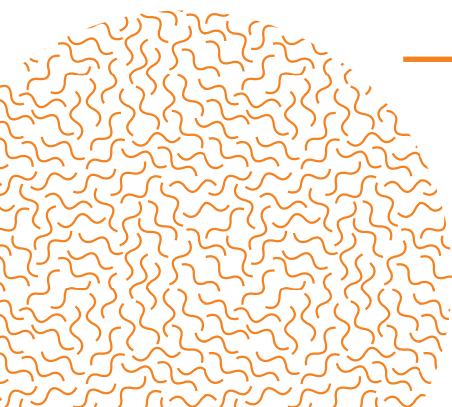
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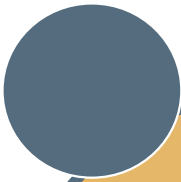
years Washington, DC's Largest Writing Program



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# Silence Is Never the Answer

By Maniya Smith

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A man who loved his kids always had a smile on his face. He even had his own dog-breeding business. From the outside looking in, you'd think he was living the perfect life. This man was my uncle, and sadly, he committed suicide on July 15, 2023. When I found out, all I could ask myself was, "Why?" because he was always happy when he came around. He always had a smile on his face. My mom told me that some people suffer in silence not to show weakness, and that got me thinking. How many people in our community are suffering in silence because they don't want to feel weak or vulnerable?

As I get older, I realize something. I realize that the color of my skin has a lot to do with how I think about myself and even how others think of me. Do you realize the toll that it takes on my mental health every day? I'm glad I have the resources around me to talk to someone about it, but what about the people who don't have those resources? Did you know that every day somewhere in the world, the mental health of an African American goes unnoticed and that every 4.5 hours, one African American commits suicide? This is unacceptable. We as a community need to stand up and create more safe organizations for the Black community where they can express themselves and live in their truth without judgment.

Black teens and adults are more prone to mental health issues such as depression than any other race. And even worse, the stigma against seeking help for these issues has caused a wedge in the Black community. According to The National

Alliance on Mental Illness, referring to a study from the Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, "Black adults in the U.S. are more likely than white adults to report persistent symptoms of emotional distress, such as sadness, hopelessness, and feeling like everything is an effort. Black adults living below the poverty line are more than twice as likely to report serious psychological distress than those with more financial security." Additionally, according to Children's Resource Group, "suicide was the second leading cause of death for African Americans ages 15–24 in 2017. The same report noted that African American females, grades 9–12, were 70% more likely to attempt suicide in 2017 compared to non-Hispanic White females of the same age." From my research, you can see that one of the main causes of psychological triggers in African Americans is poverty and financial status, no matter the age or status.

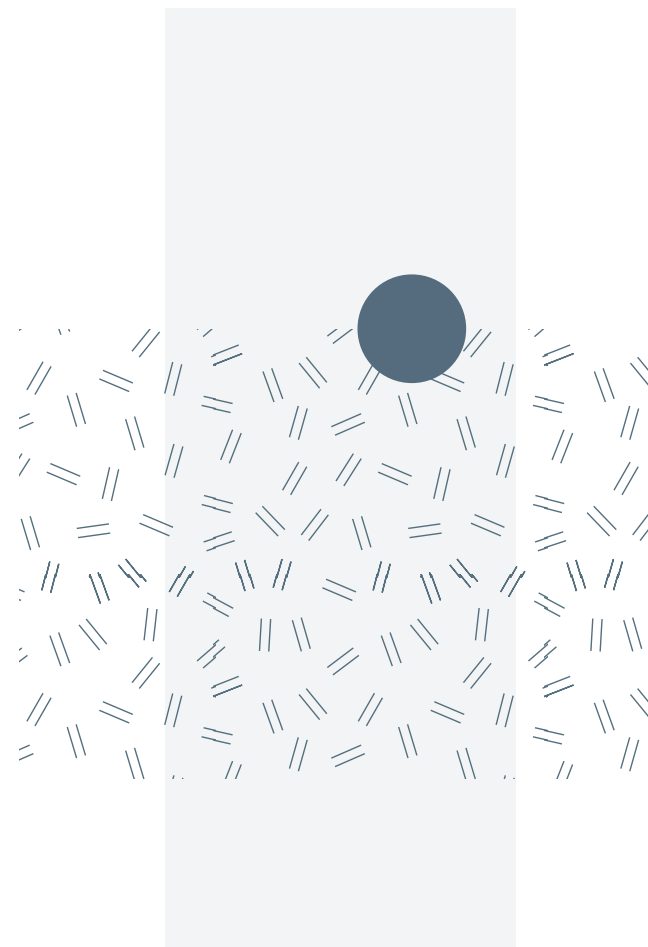
There are some ways we can attempt to lower these statistics. One way is by creating therapy programs designed by the people, for the people, so that we have spaces where people can relate and we won't feel judged. These programs should cost little to nothing, especially because most of the people struggling with mental illness are also struggling financially. According to The National Alliance on Mental Illness, members of the Black community face structural challenges accessing the care and treatment they need." They also stated, "Despite the needs, only one in three Black adults who need mental health care receive it. According to the American Psychiatric Association's Mental Health Facts for African Americans Guide,



they are also less likely to receive guideline-consistent care, [are] less frequently included in the research, and [are] more likely to use emergency rooms or primary care (rather than mental health specialists)." This supports the idea of creating mental health programs funded by the government for African American individuals and the importance of having programs like this.

Opponents may argue that it is a waste of money or time for the government to support mental health programs that focus on Black Americans, and that it will not cure mental illness overnight. It should be taken into consideration that even though this approach would not cure mental illness in the Black community, it would lower suicide rates and lower cases of self-harm. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, "When a person is experiencing challenges with their mental health, it is essential for them to receive quality care as soon as the symptoms are recognized. It is equally important that the care they receive is provided by culturally competent health care professionals." This shows that these services and programs would benefit the community in significant ways, and employing people of the same backgrounds would make these programs a lot more comfortable and effective. It was recently announced that 413 million dollars is being put toward community mental health centers. Putting at least 30% of that towards Black organizations would decrease the chances of lives lost due to suicide in the Black community.

In closing, as a teenage girl in the Black community, I hope that we as a community can stand up and fight against this stigma of mental health and break these multi-generational beliefs that expressing yourself is a weakness. Expressing yourself only makes you stronger. I hope that we open our eyes to realize that the homeless Black lady on the street is not crazy but is crying out for help that she can't receive without paying almost one thousand dollars. We as a community need to press the government so that our community can get the help they need and deserve! ■





# All States Need Right-to-Repair Acts

By Christopher Carranza

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Did you know that it's impossible to replace displays and batteries in the iPhone 15 without losing features, all because of built-in software locks? Today, repairs of electronic devices are made artificially harder and more expensive by companies preventing the repair of devices by third parties. This is commonly done through proprietary screws to open the device, adhesives that make it impossible to remove components manually, and serialized software locks that prevent non-original components from functioning. For newer items such as iPhones and MacBooks, repair prices are almost as high as new devices themselves. By enforcing comprehensive 'right to repair' laws for consumer electronics, state lawmakers would endow repairmen and consumers with the ability to fix their devices more easily. In turn, this would lead to cost savings for consumers and a reduction in e-waste.

Ever since the pandemic, I have been immersed in technology, such as phones, consoles, PCs, and laptops. The virtual aspect of my education during the pandemic only made it more obvious how crucial technology is to people. During that time, technology was my form of socialization, education, and communication; it was my portal to the outside world. Since then, I have paid more attention and care to the health of the important electronic devices in our lives. I have done repairs and modifications to various electronics in my household. I've also experienced my share of tech problems, possible repairs, and how they were made unfeasible by marked-up expensive components and impossible-to-replace screens and batteries.

The irreparability of electronics makes consumers buy products more frequently. This increases the cost of owning electronics and encourages the disposal of electronics. The disposal of electronics is environmentally harmful due to disposed electronics leeching dangerous chemicals and rare minerals into the environment (Cooper). One key point provided by the news site WBUR is that Americans throw away nearly 151.8 million phones in a single year (Proctor). If you account for the average price of a smartphone being \$790, that is nearly 120 billion dollars total spent if every disposed of cell phone was replaced. This huge number of phones shows that there's a massive production of e-waste. Consumers are throwing away millions of old phones to buy new ones, costing exorbitant amounts of money, which wastes the many precious and volatile materials that go into the production of a phone. The difficulty in repairing phones encourages the trashing of broken electronics instead of repair. According to a survey by the tech news site SlashGear, "55.47% of people chose to upgrade their phones once every two to three years" (White). The article cites slowdowns and breakdowns of components such as batteries and screens as reasons for the replacement, all issues prompted by electronics' irreparability (White). In conclusion, the lack of repairability for crucial components such as batteries and screens for phones prompts the replacement and disposal of old phones, costing consumers more money in buying entirely new products and creating toxic environmental waste.

By enforcing comprehensive 'right to repair' laws for consumer electronics, state lawmakers would

endow repairmen and consumers with the ability to fix their devices easily, leading to cost savings for consumers and a reduction in e-waste. Wider adoption of right-to-repair legislation in multiple states would influence companies to universally create more repairable devices nationally due to a lack of widespread, thorough legislation. An article in The OC Register remarked, "If Californians used their smartphones for just one year longer on average, it would have the same benefits to climate as taking 75,800 cars off the road" (Miller). Right-to-repair legislation could facilitate the easy repairs of phones, allowing them to last longer to achieve those climate savings. In the same article, it was reported that "opting for repair over replacement could save California families \$4.3 billion per year ... That's an average of \$330 per family" (Miller). Right-to-repair legislation advocates for easier repairability of devices, allowing for hundreds of dollars to be saved in households. In addition to reducing harm to the environment, the right to repair saves people money by extending the lives of their electronic devices.

Some people may argue that the right to repair may hurt the Consumer Electronics Market by forcing companies to allow repairs and sell fewer products, hurting their bottom line and encouraging the use of older products that are less environmentally friendly (Harvard Business). However, what opponents of right-to-repair don't recognize is that comprehensive right-to-repair laws would invigorate parts and repair companies, negating any total economic loss from the legislation. While older devices tend to be less energy efficient, the use and repair of older devices have the environmental benefit of preventing further toxic e-waste (Cooper). Right-to-repair has both economic and environmental benefits that outweigh any potential drawbacks.

State legislators enacting right-to-repair laws would positively affect the environment and save money for consumers by allowing easier repair of tech devices. By advocating for the right to repair, you are also advocating for a sustainable future, one where technology can last affordably and is as easy on the environment as it is on our wallets. ■

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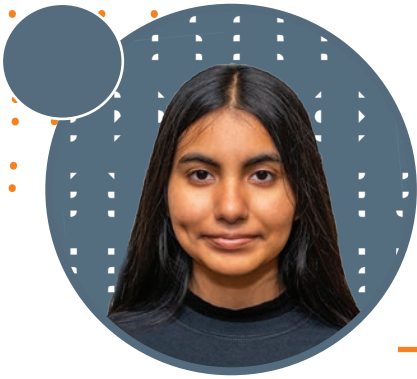
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# The Cut to SNAP Benefits: A Post-Pandemic Predicament

By Luisa Orellana-Castillo

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Food enriches cultures, brings people together, and, most importantly, gives us the strength to live, but what happens when food is financially unattainable? Each day, someone is struggling to make ends meet and goes hungry. Sometimes, programs and organizations may provide financial support, but it is scarcely enough to buy anything. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—also known as SNAP or food stamps—is a federal assistance program designed to help low-income Americans purchase food. The Federal Government increased SNAP benefits at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic but recently decreased them, leaving families like my own hungrier than ever. It is, therefore, in the best interest of the public and government to recognize the impact of the benefit reductions and ultimately restore or increase the assistance given to affected households.

Now, you may be wondering what SNAP benefits are and why their reductions are so harmful. According to the USDA, SNAP provides eligible low-income households with funds to purchase food through an Electronic Benefit or EBT card (“Supplemental”). During the pandemic, Congress responded to the associated economic hardships affecting families by establishing emergency allotments, which increased how much money households could spend on groceries (“Changes”). However, Congress recently passed a law to end emergency allotments, causing SNAP benefits to be reduced after February 2023 (“Changes”). As a result, every household’s monthly benefits were reduced by at least \$95.00 (Rosenbaum). The Uni-

versity of Pennsylvania found that SNAP recipients have experienced a 21% increase in food insufficiency, meaning more people suffer from poor-quality diets (HealthDay). Personally, the increased SNAP benefits saved my family during a time when my parents had trouble finding jobs. My siblings and I were constantly worrying about my parents because my father was going through Parkinson’s disease, which limited many of his activities. My mother was going through surgeries to get her kidney stones from malnutrition removed. Our main concerns were rent, medical bills, online classes, and, of course, whether we could afford food for the week. We felt powerless until our SNAP benefits increased. For some months, we felt a great sense of freedom. One of my core memories is finally seeing my parents being able to buy all the food we needed instead of making sacrifices for me and my siblings. Now, we, like many of my friends and neighbors’ families, are in a position where we can no longer afford enough food. Families like ours now need to choose between paying for food or paying bills.

The government must address the consequences of the reduced SNAP benefits. For the reasons explained before, it would be best if the government returned the benefit boosts to SNAP users. Another possible solution to this crisis could be to increase income support programs. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (“TANF”) help low-income families by offering cash to provide for a family’s basic needs (“Policy”). Under this program, the government gives grants to states,

which allow them to fund housing, medical care, and work-related programs ("Policy"). Thus, the government could increase the grants given to states, which would alleviate some of the other financial burdens experienced by families struggling to pay all their bills. Investing in these programs would also reduce the cause of many households' inability to buy food since they may increase employment. No matter what, the Federal Government should step in to solve the problems caused by post-pandemic food assistance reductions.

Some may argue that increasing assistance programs for food and other services will cause economic problems. For example, they may say that the government should not increase funding for SNAP and other assistance programs because they have to balance these responsibilities with the national budget and federal debt. According to the Tax Foundation, the Federal Government's debt is at \$33 trillion, which may make it necessary to control how much funding is given to assistance and spending programs as the debt rises ("How").

The claim that assistance programs will only worsen the economy can be challenged by the economic growth observed when SNAP benefits increase. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), for every dollar that is added to SNAP benefits, the US GDP increases by \$1.50 in a weak economy ("Policy"). In addition, the CBPP found that SNAP benefit increases help boost economic activity and employment ("Policy"). This goes on to show that boosting benefits for SNAP can help the economy overall as well as low-income households.

Low-income Americans suffer greatly when faced with the challenges of securing necessities such as food. It is not rare for families to go hungry or starve as a result of the failures of the government. The SNAP benefit cut is a crisis brought about by the government's assumption that most households are financially stable enough not to need extra help. However, this is not the case because even more people are struggling with food insuffi-

ciency. While the current federal debt may cause the public and government to be hesitant about bringing back additional assistance to low-income households, increasing SNAP benefits has the potential to improve the economy. Without this extra assistance, families like mine will continue to spend every day anxiously wondering when our next good quality meal will be. So, will you all join me in encouraging Congress members to help us, or will we be left hungry? ■

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# Gun Violence in Minority Groups Across the United States

By Jorge A. Lopez Crispin

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Did you know that African-Americans are 12 times more likely to die by gun violence, and Latinos are twice as likely to be threatened by cops compared to white people? In the United States, various aspects of minority communities can make the neighborhood feel unsafe and gun violence more common, such as low surveillance, gang-related activities, and low funds to make the area clean. This problem is very important to me because my parents own a restaurant in DC that is on a dangerous block. One day, there was a drive-by right outside our restaurant, and I saw that there was a child injured and a man killed. This was very impactful, as it showed me how anyone's life can end just like that, which makes me feel more paranoid whenever I walk around the area. Communities of minorities in the United States, such as African-American and Latino communities, suffer from gun violence. Through gun violence, the victims become more afraid; therefore, the Federal Government should fund Neighborhood Watches in those communities rather than relying on volunteers just trying to keep their neighborhoods safe.

According to the Giffords Law Center, "Black Americans die from gun violence at nearly 2.4 times the rate of white Americans. On average, more than 12,400 Black people die from gun violence each year, with 15,548 such deaths in 2021 alone—the highest number on record." This suggests that African Americans, a minority group, face a great issue with gun violence. It also indicates that African Americans need a solution for the high amounts of gun-related homicides. According to American Progress, "From 2009 to 2018, the rate of gun-relat-

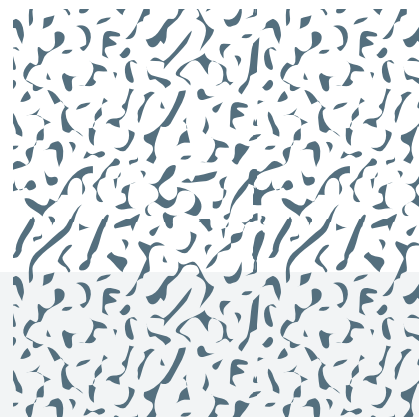
ed assaults against Black and Hispanic Americans was 208.9 and 128.7, respectively, per 100,000, compared with 90.5 per 100,000 for white Americans." Therefore, gun violence is more present in minority groups compared to white communities, which is why minorities are the ones who suffer the most from gun violence. The way to solve that is to educate and enhance civilian supervision over the neighborhood to ensure the safety of all who reside there.

I believe that to solve the issue, the Federal Government should fund Neighborhood Watches so that they ensure everyone's safety in a peaceful manner. The article "U.S. Justice Department: Does Neighborhood Watch Reduce Crime?" says, "On average, there was a 16% decrease in crime in Neighborhood Watch communities when compared with control areas." This shows that Neighborhood Watches can improve the safety of neighborhoods, such as those in minority groups, and that, with extra funding from the government, the crime rate would decrease even more. A 2021 New York Times Article shows the solution's effectiveness: "We found that after both the greening and trash clean-up interventions, gun violence went down significantly. The steepest drop in crime, up to 29 percent, was in the several blocks surrounding vacant lots in neighborhoods whose residents live below the poverty line." It stands to reason that Neighborhood Watches should receive more funding to clean up the neighborhoods to keep them safe.

Some people may think extra funding for Neighborhood Watches could potentially give the

members too much authority and possibly lead to more crime among neighbors. However, those opponents might not recognize that Neighborhood Watches, such as the Guardian Angels, have decreased crime by teaching self-defense and introducing youth to help keep the neighborhood safe (University of Pennsylvania Law School). This shows ways the Federal Government could fund educational programs to teach younger generations to keep the neighborhood clear of gangs, crimes, and bullying.

It should be clear that minority communities in the United States suffer from gun violence in the way that they become afraid and emotionally traumatized; therefore, the Federal Government needs to fund Neighborhood Watches to eradicate crime and supervise the area to improve safety. The reason for more funding is that Neighborhood Watches could help keep the area cleaner, as well as reduce crime because of improved surveillance around the neighborhood. I strongly encourage the Federal Government to fund Neighborhood Watches through tax money and connect them with the local police to ensure maximum efficiency. ■





# Student Debt and Scholarships

By Bitanya Fikremariam

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**R**aise your hand if you have \$40,000 to spare. College tuition is very expensive and is going to keep getting higher. Growing up, I have seen my mom working hard because she had to pay off her student loans since she didn't get much money in scholarships. To alleviate the cost of tuition, the Federal Government should add more funding to financial aid and make scholarships more accessible.

College tuition prices at the moment are high, and they will continue to rise. They are the reason some students leave college with debt. An article on CNN states, "College is really expensive. The average tuition at US private colleges grew by about 4% last year to just under \$40,000 per year, according to data collected by US News & World Report." In other words, college tuition is expensive! It means some people might leave college with debt. State scholarships are also not very accessible and are very time-consuming to apply for. Therefore, tuition is not affordable for some students in the United States. If more funding were added to financial aid and scholarships were made more accessible, this wouldn't be as much of a problem for most students.

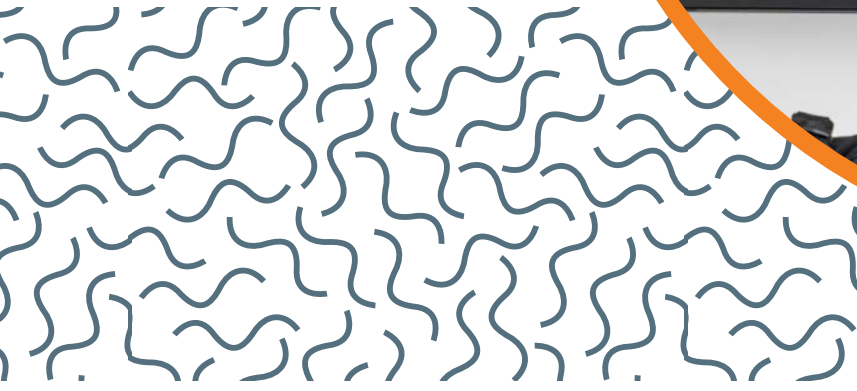
The Federal Government should add more funding to federal student aid and make scholarships more accessible. As we can see from the research foundation MDRC, "Making additional financial aid contingent upon certain behaviors can lead to 'an increased effort toward studies, a reduced level of financial stress, and an increased confidence on the part of students in their ability to succeed.'" This

suggests that when students have some sort of financial aid, they aim more for success and succeed better in school. There are many benefits from financial aid, and if more funding were added to financial aid by the Federal Government, students in the United States would work hard and succeed in class.

Some might say financial aid is ineffective and won't help students grow academically. Christendom College claims, "There is no evidence to suggest that the billions of dollars of federal student aid given each year have increased the quality of education, enhanced economic growth, or resulted in greater income equality." However, financial aid has helped students leave school with little to no debt. According to Lake Forest College, "College financial aid helps students and their families by covering higher education expenses such as tuition and fees, room and board, books and other coursework supplies, and transportation." So, some might think that financial aid wouldn't be beneficial to students or does not change the outcome of their education, but it has helped many students by allowing them to get through college stress-free.

In conclusion, college can be very expensive. College tuition is already pricey, and it's still continuing to go up. Having scholarships is proven to improve student performance and effort towards studies. This is why the Federal Government should add more money to financial aid and make scholarships more accessible so students can leave college with little to no debt. ■







# The School-To-Prison-Pipeline

By Aliyah Ibikunle

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The school-to-prison pipeline refers to the policies and practices that perpetuate the unjust criminalization of students, particularly those from marginalized communities. This pipeline is fueled by harsh disciplinary policies, zero-tolerance approaches, and the over-policing of schools. Teachers need to step up, as they play a crucial role in creating a fair and inclusive learning environment where all students are treated equitably. If schools implement restorative justice practices, revise discipline policies, increase mental health and social services, and come together to eradicate these issues, we can diminish them and begin to move forward as a society.

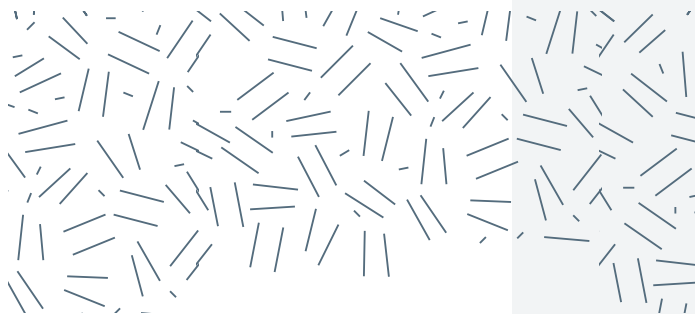
In order to ensure the eradication of the school-to-prison pipeline, it's requisite to understand its harmfulness when it comes to marginalized communities and how its inception gradually leads to generational curses. As the ACLU puts it, youths are being "funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal legal systems over minor infractions," all because of zero-tolerance policies. Schools have embedded themselves in fabrications that entail "getting them ready for college" and "ensuring no tolerance on misdemeanors" when really all it's doing is imposing severe punishments that set them up for failure. Under these policies, students have been suspended for chewing gum, talking back, or even expelled for bringing nail clippers or scissors. Such unnecessary reactions have only resulted in Black students having suspension rates of more than 30% when about 15% of K-12 public school students are Black (USA Facts, 2023).

There are those who harbor the belief that just because they're being suspended doesn't mean they're being set up for failure. That's erroneous. Suspended and expelled students are usually disregarded when it comes to ensuring they're getting adequate education, which causes an increase in a student's criminal justice system involvement and reduced educational attainment. Students are being labeled as "troublemakers," which then results in a self-fulfilling prophecy. That description is being held up over students' heads, and they begin to live up to these lowered expectations. Restorative justice practices are an alternative to traditional disciplinary actions. They implement practices that focus on repairing harm, resolving conflicts, and restoring relationships that emphasize that dialogue, empathy, and understanding foster a more positive school environment. Students engaging in mental health circles, promoting diversity, and having a reward system help foster a healthy school environment.

Some might even say suspending children is healthy as it removes "toxicity" from the learning environment. This is erroneous. Children who are being suspended are still children at the end of the day. There needs to be a better system for consequences and levels of those consequences. It's completely unfair to let children miss days of education over a simple mistake, and according to OSSE.dc.gov, "Attendance is an important life skill that will help your child graduate from college and keep a job." Missing days of school causes them to be behind in their education, which then affects them in the long run.

The school-to-prison pipeline is also a source of generational curses. There are a plethora of Black children whose loquaciousness is being mistaken as hyperactivity or delinquency instead of recognizing the child's skillfulness and eagerness to learn. According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of the fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare. These inequities compound over the years when Black children and adults are in school. Some of these inequities act as deceptive yet pervasive cultural messaging that African-American students are incapable of learning. The Wisconsin-based MacIver Institution for Public Policy suggests that critical race theory, in any form, goes far beyond self-inspection or the implementation of a new plan to ensure that no child is left behind; however, none of this is true. A significant amount of children are left behind as, according to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 85% of all juvenile court systems are functionally low literate. These statistics show a pipeline through which inadequate education leads to prison.

The School-to-Prison pipeline represents a grave injustice within our education system, incarceration, and perpetuating cycles of disadvantages. By advocating for policy reforms, implementing restorative justice practices, and providing mental health support, society can work together to dismantle this destructive pipeline. It is only through concerted efforts and a commitment to equality and justice that we can break the chains of the School-to-Prison pipeline and create a brighter future for all our children. ■





# Fear of Falling Short in an Immigrant Household

By Stephanie Gonzalez

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**A**rthi Muthukumar once wrote, "No matter how hard I work, the pressure of being successful by my parents' standards is never going to disappear." Arthi Muthukumar is just one example of a kid who is afraid of letting her immigrant parents down. During Muthukumar's high school life, she developed stress, anxiety, and panic attacks because of the academic standards her dad set for her. He believed that success was the ticket to happiness, and although she is a major in Molecular Neurobio, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Cultural Anthropology, she still feels like she could fail her parents anytime. Many kids of immigrant parents develop stress and anxiety due to the fear of academic failure. Schools should create workshops for parents so they can have a better understanding of the work their child does, which could lead to more attainable standards.

Do you know what academic performance is like for kids with immigrant parents? According to the Institute for Family Studies, 51% of students with immigrant parents earn A grades, which is a higher percentage than the 48% of students with US-born parents. Although that percentage is higher for kids with immigrant parents, they actually have to go through more in order to maintain these grades. The article "Children of Immigrants and Their Mental Health Needs" by ThinkGlobalHealth points out that kids with immigrant parents have higher chances of developing stress and anxiety compared to those with US-born parents. This is because they feel the pressure to elevate their families to better living conditions. In the process of doing this, many of them overwork themselves, which,

of course, affects them mentally. This indicates that immigrant parents play a huge part in their kids' mental health. They raise their standards so high because they don't know what students' work is like in school. They think their kid has it easy since they think all we do is sit around in chairs all day on our computers while they work their butts off at work, when in reality, it isn't like that at all.

I am a daughter of immigrant parents, so I can tell you about the times when I've cried in my bathroom, feeling like I'm not doing enough, and not achieving my parents' expectations. They've never put pressure on me to do my best or speak about my grades, but I always feel like I am under pressure. They always tell me, "Focus on your studies; you don't want to end up with a job like mine." This may seem like just a simple statement, but it holds a deeper meaning. When parents say this, it's them indirectly saying, go to college, get a good degree, get a job that pays good money so you can help us in the future, and we'll know that all our sacrifices won't be in vain. Obviously, they won't say it, but it's how they feel. I personally always see my mom tired after work, and she still has the energy to cook and clean for us. This is why I intend to do my best in school and get into a good college to show her that everything she has done for us was worth it.

In order to help kids with immigrant parents reduce anxiety and stress, schools should create workshops for parents to help them understand their students' schoolwork. The article "School Stress: 10 Ways Parents Can Help Kids Manage Stress"

provides us with many ways parents can understand their kids' education. One way is recognizing that not every child learns the same way; some children get their work done without taking breaks, while others feel overwhelmed by the amount of work and need to take breaks every once in a while. Research shows that kids who take breaks once in a while are more likely to have long-term academic engagement and overall well-being. Therefore, this solution can lead to the parents lowering their expectations for their kids, which will result in decreasing the chances of their child developing stress and anxiety.

Many people think, "Wouldn't it be easier just to tell your parents how you feel instead of dealing with all this?" Well, only if it were that easy. The article "To Be the Child of an Immigrant" discusses how kids don't open up to their parents because they feel guilty. Immigrant parents usually migrate to the United States to give their children a better life. To them, it doesn't matter if they have to work long shifts or give up their hopes and dreams just to spend the rest of their lives doing the best they can to provide for their kids because they want to see us succeed in life, not suffer the way they did. Knowing this, it would be much easier for schools to schedule meetings to talk to the parents about this since it's harder to open up to them about how we feel when they've sacrificed so much for us.

In order to prevent children of immigrant parents from developing anxiety about falling short academically, it would be a good idea if schools create workshops for the parents to get an understanding of the work their student does and lower their expectations a little. If you're dealing with the pressure of not meeting your parents' expectations, just know that you're not alone, and don't overwork yourself because of this. We're only human; we aren't meant to be perfect. ■

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# The Mental State of Modern Teens

By Madison Jackson

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When I was younger, I always wondered why people struggle with mental health despite there being so many available resources. I'm growing up in a time where people are pretty open. They'll talk to others about a mental illness they have struggled with, casually mention seeing a therapist, or say they had a mental breakdown (a Menty B, as my math teacher likes to call them). However, I was shocked to learn that it isn't easy to get treatment: 20% of teenagers have had or will have a serious mental illness, and usually, they don't know how to ask for help. In addition, parents heavily influence the beliefs and feelings of their children. Stigmas around mental health, like you're just "dramatic" or "lazy," prevent teens from receiving the services they need to deal with mental illnesses. Therefore, parents should educate themselves on mental health using resources such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Even social media platforms are a good way of being educated. Parents should be a person their child relies on, not avoids. In order to do that, they need the knowledge and empathy they would gain by being well-informed on the topic of mental health.

Mental health stigmas make it difficult for a teen to recover from depression or anxiety. This causes an abundance of unhappiness and a decrease in productivity. It makes it harder for teens to succeed when faced with unsupportive parents. According to the DCist, "Mental health issues in young people are often overlooked... 41% of youth experiencing major depression do not receive the mental services they need" (Robinson). DC is actually doing

better than other states; the national average is 61%. That is too high of a number. Depression and anxiety can cause family conflicts, drug abuse problems, missed school, and so much more. You don't want to be the reason a teen chooses to silently endure pain instead of reaching out. If you think this problem has nothing to do with you, you're wrong. The mental state of teens affects not only them but the entire world too. Everyone always says kids are the future, but what happens when you don't take care of the future? According to PMC, "poor mental health was estimated to cost the world economy approximately \$2.5 trillion per year...and reduced productivity, with a cost projected to rise to \$6 trillion by 2030" (Saha). Poor mental health has cost the world trillions, and it's only expected to get worse. This means that people should encourage parents to stay educated so they can take care of their kids. If you are a parent, you should do your best to be reliable and easy to approach. You don't have to be your kid's friend, but you do have a good caretaker.

Being educated is very important if you want to be a part of the solution, especially if you have a kid struggling with mental health. According to an article by Step Up for Mental Health, "Family members are perhaps the most influential people in our lives... We look to them for guidance and reassurance, especially as children; our parents teach us everything they know" (Etcheson). If parents teach you everything you know and they don't know about mental health, how are you supposed to know what to do? Parents being informed means they can better help their kids. NAMI states, "When taught well,

it helps cultivate awareness and empathy. It gives people an understanding of what may be happening inside themselves or friends or family members" ("Community Voices"). This suggests when people are well versed on the topic of mental health, it benefits them and the people around them. Although parents are very influential, they're not the only option. Teachers, coaches, and other families can all support teens. Education on mental health makes it so that teens can more easily receive help and be better off in the future. The help could be getting a therapist, joining a support group, or even just taking a mental health day. Contributing doesn't always have to be a grand gesture; even little things can improve mental health.

Some people believe that mental health issues don't matter as much as physical issues. However, what they don't realize is that mental health issues are just as serious as any physical ailment. The Mayo Clinic states, "Mental illness is a leading cause of disability. Untreated mental illness can cause severe emotional, behavioral and physical health problems" ("Mental Illness"). Untreated mental illnesses can disrupt a person's daily life. It can affect their ability to learn, physical state, and overall attitude. People have a harder time believing what they can't see even though it very much exists. Any mental disorder is just as serious as a broken arm, diabetes, or cancer. People empathize with physical illnesses, which is interesting considering you can't look at someone and tell they have diabetes or cancer, but they still consider it real. Mental illnesses need to be treated with the same importance as physical illnesses.

Considering everything mentioned, mental health is a serious issue that is often overlooked. It not only causes problems for the teens suffering from it, but it also impacts people who are referred to as mentally healthy. By being educated on it, you become a person that is reliable and empathetic. When parents become properly educated, it allows their kids to receive any help they require. Therefore, you should try your best to stay educated and be a dependable person for teens struggling with

poor mental health. ■

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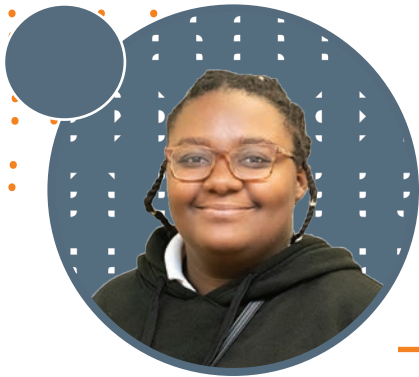
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# Unanswered Questions

By Makayla Humphrey

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**H**ow many of you have lost someone due to gun violence? How many of you know someone who has lost someone to gun violence? If this is you, I want to know, have you ever felt angry? Have you ever wondered how people could do this? Gun violence is something that plagues this world. It causes people to feel unsafe and wonder if this could be them or someone they care about next. I'm writing about gun violence because gun violence in Washington, DC, leads to many unnecessary deaths, causing many people in this city to lose family members and friends. Therefore, Congress should pass legislation that requires daily transaction reports of gun sales so that gun sales can be tracked within the community to make sure they aren't being stolen and used in crimes.

I remember the day clearly. It was almost 11:30 p.m., and I heard the noise of my mom asking what happened on the phone. I ran out of my room and asked her what happened. She told me that my father was hurt and then rushed out of the house. Later on, she came back and told me he was dead from a gunshot wound. I was numb. My mind was racing with all types of questions. Why? Was he at the wrong place at the wrong time? But most of all, I wonder how the man who shot my father got that gun. Were they that accessible? I asked myself. These questions were in my head all night long. For days, the same questions came to my mind, but a new one came, too. Was my father scared before he died? Then suddenly, I was filled to the brim with rage and sadness, because no matter how many questions I had, it still wouldn't bring him back. I'm writing about this topic because I've grieved

because of gun violence. I've felt the pain of losing someone who wasn't supposed to be lost in the first place. I want to prevent others from having to feel the pain I've experienced or ask the questions I've had to ask because of this issue.

According to [everytownresearch.org](http://everytownresearch.org), 155 people die in an average year due to guns in Washington, DC. The District has also been ranked to have the highest rate of gun violence in the country. The Metropolitan Police Department's crime data shows that the police in DC recovered 2,310 unknown guns in 2021 and 3,152 unknown guns in 2022. Clearly, a significant number of unknown firearms were in poor hands, resulting in crimes being committed. [Euronews.com](http://Euronews.com) also reports that one in five Americans know someone who has died from gun violence. This emphasizes that many adults have lost family members, but it also doesn't account for the kids who have lost family members, too. Both suffer the pain of losing loved ones because of gun violence. To summarize my point, unknown guns in unqualified hands lead to offenses, some resulting in death, which leaves loved ones, both adults and children, to grieve for the victims.

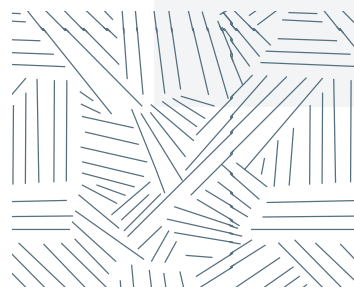
One way in particular that gun violence in Washington, DC, can be solved is through Congress. Congress can pass legislation that requires gun sales to be monitored, which means that both the seller and buyer would have to report about the exchange. As stated in "Background Checks on All Gun Sales," monitoring gun sales helps reduce gun violence, meaning lower gun homicide rates and low gun trafficking rates. More specifically, accord-

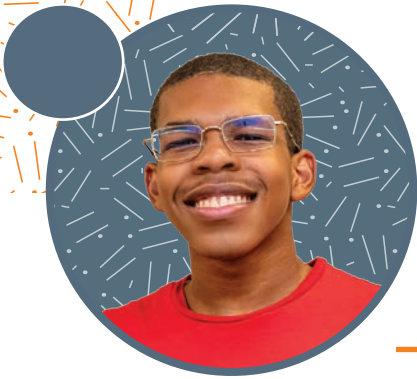


ing to Giffords.org, "Firearm sales and background check records can be used by law enforcement in a number of ways to solve gun crimes and identify gun sellers and purchasers who are violating state and federal gun laws" ("Maintaining Records of Gun Sales"). This indicates that tracking gun dealings allows the police to find people who have committed gun violence and the people who have had a part in getting them the guns. The legislation I'm talking about will allow the police to trace guns that aren't where they're supposed to be before they are used to commit homicide. To conclude, Congress should pass legislation that allows the police to track missing guns before they are used to commit a crime.

Opponents of this idea may argue that more gun laws will not stop criminals from stealing guns that aren't traced. What this opinion fails to consider is that while the legislation wouldn't stop criminals from stealing guns, it would help us keep track of the guns that are missing. It would also help us investigate where and when the guns went missing so we could possibly find out where they were. The article says, "Tracing is a system of tracking the movement of a firearm from its manufacture ... to identify an unlicensed purchaser" (ATF). As you can see, guns can be traced, and this legislation is necessary because we can find the guns that were stolen without them being a part of a crime.

In closing, gun violence is a problem that causes numerous deaths, affecting not only me but my family and friends as well, leaving people behind to grieve. If Congress passed the legislation, then the police would be able to help track all the guns that have been lost, stolen, or misplaced to get them off the street, resulting in fewer crimes. If guns are so accessible and any grown adult can have access to them, then imagine how easy it is for a teenager to get it from someone who got it from someone to commit a crime. Another life lost from gun violence and a life lost to committing a crime when all could be prevented or at most have a fighting chance to decrease the crime rates at least. We may not be able to stop all gun violence crimes, but as they say, at least one chance counts. ■





# The Breakdown of Stigmas in the Black Community

By Melvin T. Douglas

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**H**ave any of you ever gone through a rough part of your life and felt like you couldn't ask for help? Well, I've been through rough patches in my life. In the 6th grade, I was bullied, but I felt like I couldn't tell the people I loved most in the world about it, not even my own mother. The problem isn't exclusive to me: To start with, African Americans have struggled for decades with their mental health due to systemic racism and generational trauma. What makes it worse is the pressure in our own communities to act like everything is alright, and not be seen as weak or a burden. This stigma in turn means that many people in Black communities are reluctant to seek and utilize support. Therefore, as a community, Black people should come together by going to their local community centers, places of worship, and especially schools to educate others on the benefits and impact of these resources.

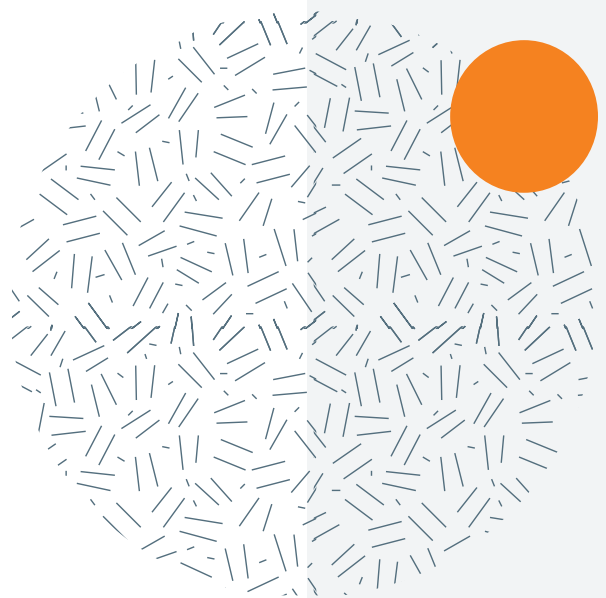
A chief element of the problem is the ridicule that Black people face against their mental illnesses in their own community. As we see, the statistics from the DC Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) state that only one-quarter of African Americans seek mental health care compared to 40% of white people who do. Those statistics could be for a number of reasons, but the DBH thinks the reasons are misinformation, lack of culturally competent health professionals, and the heavy reliance on faith and family support. This evidence just proves how Black people as a community need each other to support them through their illness, not ridicule and judge. Another example of African-Americans being uncomfortable discussing mental health came from a

study at McLean Hospital. how nearly 65% of African American youth report traumatic experiences and how Black patients were 33% less likely to engage in patient-centered communications. What stands out to me is how specifically one comes to outwardly talk about their problems and how African Americans were less likely. The reason for that is the stigmas that are spread through my community that people shouldn't be talking about these types of issues or seen as taboo when they do.

The solution is to create a stronger community, an actual safe space where people feel comfortable to talk about their issues freely in their own local community. In 2022, "Erasing Mental Health Stigma in the Black Community" notes that there are four main ways to help break down the stigmas against mental health and seek it. One of the four ways is to remain open when talking about your issues and hearing that other people who are going through the same thing are bringing everybody together. The second way is to believe people when they speak out against their illness; for example, telling them to "fix their attitude" doesn't help them recover. Once again, McLean Hospital is a great source of information, even outlining a possible solution. McLean suggests that mental health professionals should "acknowledge racism's harmful effects and when possible, they should attend training provided by professional organizations so they can learn about conscious and unconscious biases." This just goes to show how deeply rooted the mental problems Black people face that therapists need to take a whole other level of training to be able to properly help them.

My topic doesn't exactly have an obvious opposing force. However, the stigmas that are in the Black communities are one of the main reasons. However, some of the main reasons are the stigmas within black communities. A lot of these deeply rooted assumptions about people are based in the idea they don't need help. Even people they consider like family and their friends stop them from seeking help, maybe without even knowing it. These assumptions about people with mental illnesses, especially the ones given within the Black community, inhibit people from actually getting better and just dragging them down deeper and creating worse illnesses. Some of these problems could have been treated if people didn't feel ashamed or weak for just seeking help. Therapy and breaking down these stigmas so deeply rooted in the Black community is absolutely necessary to make sure Black people have an equal chance, like any other race, to achieve proper mental health.

It should be clear that mental illness in Black communities creates challenges because it is so stigmatized that people in the community are against addressing it and seeking help. So, as a community, Black people should and need to come together by going to their local community centers, places of worship, and especially schools to educate others on the benefits of talking about their issues. Then, to reiterate, the reason why we need to do this is that we can't just let Black people fall into these depressive episodes and just live with these traumatic experiences that aren't human. We need to show compassion and acceptance to others, not to get anything out of it but to be a decent human being doing what is right in the world. Even if you think it's something small, by listening to somebody having a bad day. ■





# The Fight for DC Statehood

By Phoebe Luecke

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**Y**ou know those nightmares when you wake up and can't speak? Or when you're running from a clown and can't scream? These dreams are terrible, and you wake up and have never been so happy to hear your own voice. This is a nightmare that DC has been living in since its birth.

Washington, DC, is not a state. It is a city and a district, with its own government and system of education, police department, and infrastructure. However, according to Federalist 43, DC is "exclusively ruled by Congress" (Library of Congress). This means that Congress can overrule, change, or input any bills, policies, or wishes upon and for the District. However, the 700,000 residents of DC have little voice in the Congress that rules over them. In turn, this means that DC has less of a voice and representation in the United States. The DC representative, Eleanor Holmes Norton, does not even have equal voting rights in Congress, even though DC residents serve in the military, pay extremely high federal taxes, and vote for president, which are all characteristics of a state. DC residents, therefore, have no voice in federal matters, yet we are the nation's capital, where these matters are decided upon. To address this, Congress should take Eleanor Holmes Norton's bill for the Douglas Commonwealth and vote for DC to become the 51st state so DC residents can gain representation equal to that of other Americans.

To appreciate this solution, we have to first understand the problem. At present, the District is completely capable of running an efficient city, yet the city's government is still under Congress, even

more so than other states. As *The Economist* (2018) states, "The Federal Government continues to have authority over the city's budget, inviting all manner of meddling from legislators who have sought to change everything from the city's drug policies to the way its taxis set their fares." This can cause serious detriments to the District's health care system, economy, and general confidence in the local government. It also means that Congress sometimes diverts its valuable time from big national issues to petty things such as local taxi fares. Other states do not often have the problem of being overruled by a higher power and have a degree of financial and political freedom from Congress.

Alongside DC having less autonomy, we also have a lesser representation. Public Integrity digs deeper into the lack of representation in Congress, stating, "Despite paying federal taxes and having a population size larger than Wyoming and Vermont, D.C. elects a single delegate to the U.S. House... who is able to vote in committee and introduce legislation, but does not have the power to vote on any bills" (Starshak). Additionally, as DC Mayor Muriel Bowser has said, "DC as a whole pays more federal income tax than 22 other states, but has no say over how those tax dollars are spent" (Bowser). As a citizen of the United States and a resident of DC, I feel very unpatriotic, as the capital of our nation is currently being oppressed and taxed without representation, which is the basis of the argument that founded our country. To make a long story short, DC lacks fundamental American rights in so many ways. The biggest one is taxation without representation. This is a problem that

needs to be fixed for the 700,000 people who live without representation.

I have lived in DC my whole life. I know the mall, the tourists, the traffic and how it gets humid in the summer. I remember trying to learn even more about my city at a very young age, how it was more than a city, less than a state, and somehow somewhere in between. It didn't make sense: a District that is ruled by Congress has its own government and has more people than other states? These arguments bombarding my mind seemed to make so much more sense than the word "district." I've learned to love the word district but also find myself longing for so much more, smiling at the 51st state signs on yards, fighting for statehood, and advocating whenever I can. The District has its faults, and under the rule of Congress, it can be very hard to address them: in 1998, for example, Congress banned DC's clean needle exchange in the city, hoping it would discourage drug use; however, it only resulted in more HIV cases and cost the city millions in health care bills. Gaining Statehood for DC would remove the residents of DC from under the thumb of Congress and prevent problems like this from happening again.

The people of DC are fighting for equal representation through gaining statehood, an irreversible action that would provide DC with two voting senators as well as voting representatives in the House of Representatives. This lack of representation should and can be fixed with statehood. Democracy Docket explains a leading solution presented in Congresswoman Norton's bill: "DC has regular land and then federal land. They have different rules and are governed by different jurisdictions. Congresswoman Norton's bill, HR 51, would use these existing lines to carve out a new federal enclave — one much smaller than the entire District but that houses Congress, the Capitol, and other key downtown federal buildings and excludes the majority of residential areas in the city" (Docket).

This solution would give the people of DC the representation they are fighting for, get DC out of

Congress's control, keep the federal land under federal jurisdiction, and give DC the autonomy and representation we want. According to Democracy Docket, statehood in DC "would help right the partisan skew of a Senate where the Democrats consistently suffer from severe malapportionment of seats. And it would save our capital city from being subjected to the whims of congressional representatives from far-off states who assert their conservative policies over the will of the District's voters." (Docket) This solution correlates with and solves problems that DC is currently facing regarding representation and equal rights while also providing an accurate representation of our country in Congress, adding more voices that were previously not heard to the many who are helping our country benefit our nation. Congresswoman Norton's statehood bill provides the residents of the District with the statehood they are fighting for, as well as keeping a federally controlled seat of government.

Opponents of DC statehood argue that DC cannot be a state due to the imbalance in Congress that would result from the reps DC would get if we became a state. What this opinion fails to consider is the fact that Congress should be an accurate representation of our country— some might say a window into our country, not just a mirror to a select few. Seeing as "Congress enacts laws that influence the daily lives of all Americans and is intended to serve as the voice of the people" (US Capitol Visitor's Center), Congress should be representing everyone in the country, including DC, as their decisions that we currently have very little say in, affect our daily lives even more so as we physically house the capitol. As you can see, the opponent's argument is not valid; even if the Democrats outweigh the Republicans in the House, Congress should still, in fact, be an accurate representation of the United States.

In closing, DC's lack of representation has created more challenges than benefits for the US. Eleanor Holmes Norton's bill for the Douglas Commonwealth should be accepted by Congress so that the residents of DC get the equal representation

that they deserve. Congress would be an accurate window into the people of the United States of America, and DC would be free from all manner of meddling from Congress within local affairs. This dream I have is one that showcases that one day, the city I love and know, the 700,000 I am in community with, will have equal representation. ■

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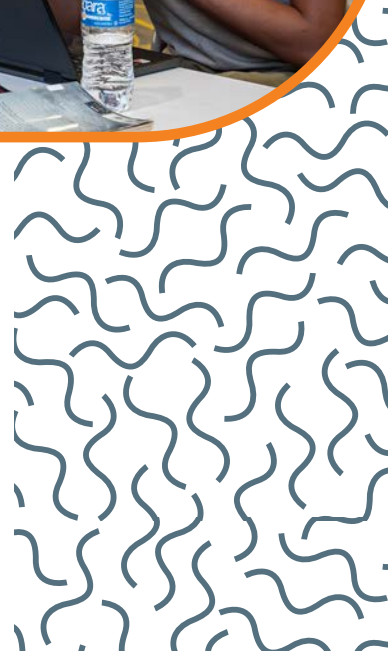
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# Rights of Immigrants: From an Immigrant

By Kelly Ajanel Tzoc

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Every time my parents talk about emigrating from Central America, they say, “We were idiots. We didn’t know anything back then, and we didn’t have support.” They’ve worked multiple jobs to provide for me, but it often makes me sad, because I can rarely spend quality time with them like other kids do. This sadness and loneliness is something I share with hundreds of other immigrant children. Yes, my parents’ hard work might pay off in the end, but at what cost, working multiple jobs and paying taxes for years, but still can’t access health care. It’s not much that they’re asking for. Heck, they aren’t asking anymore, because they’ve lost hope and faith. So US lawmakers should enact legislation that all immigrants can obtain citizenship and access basic human rights, regardless of how they entered the country.

Immigrants face many challenges whenever they ask for health care, economic, and political rights, which affects the life ahead for them and their families. According to Healthcare.gov, “Many qualified non-citizens (such as ...green card holders)...must wait five years after receiving ‘qualified’ immigration status before they can get Medicaid and CHIP [Children’s Health Insurance] coverage.” From this, we can see that even if these immigrants meet all the requirements (working, paying taxes, and obeying the law), they still can’t access their rights because of the challenging system in place. Struggling to obtain healthcare impacts many families significantly because when they need medical attention, they often can’t get government assistance for it. It also impacts them economically because hospital bills are high, and some of these families are

earning minimum wage, which barely helps them provide for their families.

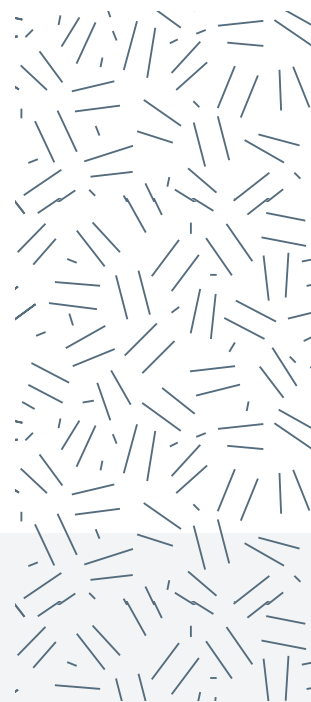
Luckily, helpful organizations have been created to help immigrants with their rights and citizenship. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) promotes the protection of the human rights of all migrants, regardless of their legal status. According to the National Immigrant Justice Center (NIJC) “The administration can and should: 1) develop and support robust communication and planning between federal, state and local governments, and civil society, so that those arriving migrants in need of additional support can be matched with a destination with capacity to provide services.” These organizations tend to help out immigrants in vulnerable situations where many use their status to hurt and take advantage of them. NIJC helps place immigrants in locations where there is support available to help them. While OHCHR helps protect immigrant’s human rights, and themselves, since they are again, in a vulnerable state. These are very helpful to the many immigrants entering the country because it focuses on one thing, in helping immigrants with this change, instead of judging them and hurting them.

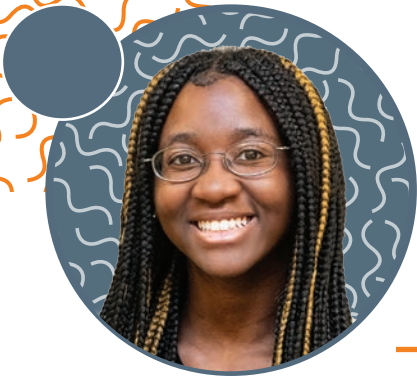
Some Americans think that immigrants don’t deserve to be given citizenship, rights, or even entry to the country because they assume the government will be put into debt and that will increase the budget deficit. The CATO Institute, for example, states, “Immigrants consume more in government benefits than they generate in tax revenue.” How-



ever, their assumption is wrong, because immigrants don't increase the budget deficit or put the government into debt; they actually help keep the economy strong. The article "The 14 Most Common Arguments Against Immigration and Why They're Wrong" declares, "Immigrants grow the economy considerably and increase tax revenue ... meaning they give an immediate fiscal boost." This is a further reason that immigrants should have the benefits of citizenship, no matter their legal status.

Clearly, US lawmakers should enable all immigrants to obtain citizenship and basic human rights, regardless of how they entered the country. These immigrants aren't doing it for themselves; they're doing it for their family. They wish to give their family a better life but cannot do so when they are not treated as citizens or don't have rights. Just imagine it's you or your family having to go through pain and suffering for a better life, but you can't access all your rights because of your legal status. You don't want that for your family, nor for the millions of immigrants out there. So, instead of supporting these politicians who don't want to help out, support the organizations and programs led by individuals who want to help out and make change! Help out our people so that we can all be happy. ■





# Sexual Harassment Must End, Once and For All

By Vivien Birch

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**H**ave you ever been in a setting without pepper spray on you? How about a pocket knife? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt unsafe in a learning environment due to sexual innuendos? We live in a world where thousands of women must carry self-defense weapons in case a man tries to harm them. Yet, every person should have the right to go to work without fear, discomfort, or humiliation. We deserve it, and we deserve it now. Sexual harassment in learning and working environments is a pervasive problem that requires immediate attention and action to ensure all individuals' safety, dignity, and well-being. We, as people, can take a stand against this abuse in many ways. Having Congress implement and establish a two-strike system, as well as regular sexual harassment prevention training for all organizations and communities, will ensure that people in learning environments are more educated on sexual harassment, how to prevent it, and the consequences if they do engage in it.

Experiencing sexual harassment can cause psychological effects, which can lead to trauma and lifetime outcomes. Victims can suffer from anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, lowered self-esteem, and sexual dysfunction (Consequences of Sexual Harassment). Not only can this impact their social life, but their learning life. Victims of sexual harassment may lack the motivation to go to school, may drop a class, or might even quit their jobs. Failure to address or proactively prevent sexual harassment carries significant ramifications, leaving a lasting impact on the lives of those who have endured the harassment.

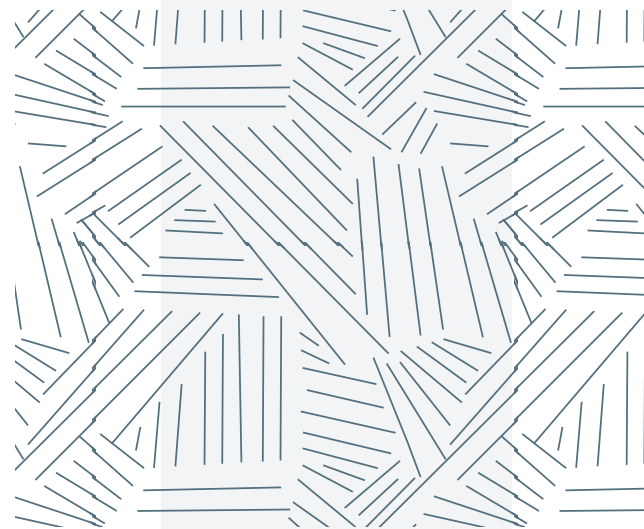
We must do more to advocate against sexual harassment, clarify why it's illegal, and how it damages individuals and the organizations. Having Congress implement and establish a two-strike system, as well as sexual harassment prevention training for all organizations and communities, is the first step. The objective of sexual harassment training is to enhance awareness and improve the ability to identify sexual harassment in the workplace. It also serves to educate employees about the company's policies and procedures for addressing any instances of misconduct with a sexual nature. Additionally, Congress can implement a two-strike rule against all organizations and communities. This system aims to bring the consequences of actions to life. Upon the first reported incident of sexual harassment, the accused would be put on probation. The victim and the accused will receive support throughout this process to ensure a just resolution. However, in the event of a second verified offense, the accused will face significant repercussions, including suspension or termination, depending on the severity. The two-strike approach and prevention classes emphasize education and the opportunity for individuals to learn from their mistakes and hold them accountable for their actions.

There are a lot of arguments, specifically regarding the victim, that call sexual harassment into question. However, one thing to be emphasized is the "Why did it take so long to report it?" argument. This argument is a common discrediting tactic, where people ask why there was a delay in reporting such a crime. However, when most people experience sexual harassment, they have a fright or flight response.

("These Arguments Are Often Used Against Victims of Workplace Harassment") Victims have experienced shame, disgust, and confusion. Additionally, people may feel so disoriented by the harassment that they do not have the strength to talk about the incident until they have processed it. Furthermore, victims can develop PTSD, depression, or other mental effects that can prevent them from speaking out. These adverse psychological effects of abuse are detrimental, and nobody wants to experience these types of feelings.

As a high-school student on her way to college, it is sickening to say that women between 18-24 who are in college are three times more likely to be sexually assaulted. Additionally, women under 18 and not in college are four times more likely to be sexually assaulted, and 66% of females who get sexually assaulted are ages 12-17 (Victims of Sexual Violence: Statistics). Reading these statistics, writing this essay, and reading individuals' stories about how they have endured such hardships remind me of the importance of addressing this issue head-on. I should not have to fear for my rights and body at such an age when I should focus on my education. I should not have to walk the halls in fear of the statistics. I should not worry about whether I will be the next victim at 15. Reading people's stories about how sexual harassment and abuse have destroyed their lives makes me thankful that I have parents and an educational system who care for my well-being and safety. However, not everyone has that, so we need to speak now. This call to action resonates with my most sincere sense of empathy and justice, motivating me to advocate for a workplace where everyone can thrive free from the shadows of harassment.

There is always a time to use your voice. I am using mine now to speak out about the effects of sexual harassment and why it needs to end. In a world that demands justice, equality, and dignity for all, the two-strike system and prevention classes stand as a robust solution for combating sexual harassment in the workplace. This approach is a compelling step towards achieving these ideals within the professional sphere. ■





# Stop the LGBTQ+ Bullying at School

By Allen Guzman

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According to StopBullying.gov, “more LGBTQ+ students (14%) than straight students (7%) reported not going to school because of safety concerns.” One of my closest friends in middle school told me about their experience when it came to bullying. They shared how it affected their mental health and how they had to resort to telling me about their issues instead of a trusted adult. Their experience shows how LGBTQ+ youth often experience bullying in schools, which can damage their mental and emotional well-being. This issue can be resolved by implementing and enforcing anti-bullying policies and making support groups that could serve as a safe place.

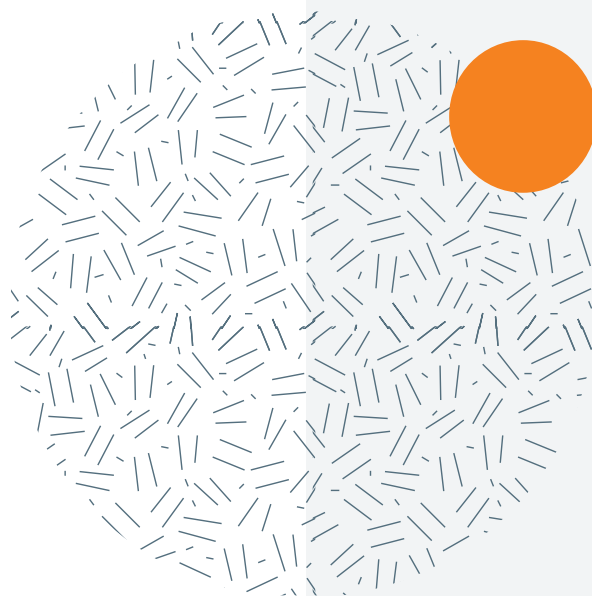
The bullying LGBTQ+ students experience can have a negative impact on their mental well-being. The Trevor Project, an organization that helps LGBTQ+ youth with crisis interventions and suicide prevention, provides data about kids who get bullied in person in high school, middle school, and within the transgender, nonbinary, and cisgender community. In middle school, where the average age of students is 11–13, 42% of LGBTQ+ students get bullied regularly. In high school, where the age range is 14–18, 30% report being bullied. For transgender and nonbinary people, the rate is 39%, and for cisgender LGBTQ+ students, it's 28%. This paints a bigger picture to help understand how LGBTQ+ kids get bullied in different schools and at different ages. The data informs the public about how bullying can affect the student's mental health, and it helps emphasize that bullying needs to stop and make schools a safe and happy place for all students.

Implementing and enforcing anti-bullying policies and making support groups can help and support LGBTQ+ kids. According to “Supportive Spaces Help LGBTQ+ Youth Thrive in School and Beyond,” by Laura Allen, “Student-led clubs and advocacy efforts also have been shown to improve mental health in LGBTQ+ students. Staff training and anti-bullying policies, too, can help these students feel safer at school. Together, these things can improve students' grades and reduce their risk of depression or suicide.” This suggests that there can be a positive outcome when implementing anti-bullying policies. Enforcing anti-bullying policies overall improves LGBTQ+ students' mental and emotional well-being.

Although many want to implement new anti-bullying policies, some argue that these newly enforced policies at school will not be effective. In the One-World article, “Anti-Bullying Programs: Do they Help or Hurt?” Lucy Lawrence states, “In the study of 7,000 students ages 12 to 18 who completed a survey in the 2005-06 school year, researchers found that a higher percentage of students who attended schools with anti-bullying programs had reported experiencing bullying than in schools without programs.” This shows that sometimes anti-bullying policies might not work as well as we thought. Even though schools have these programs, more students say they still end up getting bullied. It makes it seem like these programs didn't do anything to help stop bullying but instead made it worse. It could suggest that some anti-bullying policies might not be effective in keeping students safe from bullying, which can again lead to mental ill-

nesses. However, this is wrong, according to an article from NEAToday, "Anti-Bullying School Policies Continue to Fail LGBT Students." The article claims, "The effectiveness of anti-bullying policies also depends on LGBT students being aware that specific protections even exist. The Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) found that many of these students did not know what protections were available to them, making them less likely to report incidents." It is not the newly enforced policies that are causing the students to get bullied. It's the fact that they don't know there's help for them.

LGBTQ+ youth frequently face bullying in schools, causing harm to their emotional and mental health. To address this problem, it is important to establish and enforce anti-bullying policies and create safe spaces like support groups to provide a better environment for LGBTQ+ students. When an LGBTQ+ student gets bullied, it can hurt their feelings and make them feel sad or alone. This feeling of sadness can overwhelm a student, resulting in hurting themselves or becoming mentally sick. Therefore, it's very important that the school board makes some changes, or else this issue can blow up in their faces and be a bigger problem than it already is. If schools do not make these changes, it can increase the rate of bullying and suicide, so it's important to let students know there are support groups that can offer help and let them know they are not alone. ■





# Effects of Parental Pressure on Students

By Guadalupe Lopez

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In the relentless pursuit of perfection and parental approval, many students find themselves entangled in a web of parental pressure. In this essay, we will further explore the harm parental pressure can do to a child's mental and emotional well-being. Parental pressure is very common around the world. It involves the expectations, guidance, and sometimes demands that parents place on their children to achieve certain goals, standards, or outcomes. I'm writing this essay in hope that other students like me don't feel alone in this situation and in hope that their parents are able to understand how parental pressure affects their children and how they can support them. Parental pressure creates challenges, causing students to feel very pressured and depressed; therefore, parental organizations and school counselors should offer helpful programs and resources to parents to help them understand and support their kids better.

Parental pressure causes students to feel stressed out and less confident. According to the American Psychological Association, "Young people internalize [parents'] expectations and depend on them for their self-esteem. And when they fail to meet them, as they invariably will, they'll be critical of themselves for not matching up. To compensate, they strive to be perfect." This proves that parental pressure can have many negative effects, like seeking validation, insecurities, and low self-esteem. Those negative effects could result in students wanting to give up on school and suffering from depression and anxiety during college and life beyond that if this problem

isn't resolved. According to Bay Atlantic University, "Fear of failure stops students from taking up new projects or completing the ones at hand. In the hope of getting your validation for bringing home good grades, they will consider or even commit cheating to receive good compliments and rewards." This shows that parental pressure can cause students to make poor decisions, such as academic cheating.

Mental health organizations and school counselors should provide parents with information sessions, counseling sessions, or resources for them to understand and support their kids better. According to The Center for Relationship Health, "Addressing parental pressure is a complex issue that requires collaboration among various organizations, including those focused on family well-being, education, mental health, and child advocacy." This suggests that collaboration between these organizations, as well as the involvement of parents, teachers, and communities is essential to creating a comprehensive approach to addressing parental pressure. Parental pressure is a varied issue that requires a holistic response involving educational, mental health, and advocacy organizations working together to promote healthier parenting practices and protect the well-being of children.

Some may argue that parental pressure is beneficial because it can lead to improved academic performance, achievements, and personal growth. They might say that parental pressure can also be a source of motivation rather than a cause of

stress and anxiety. According to the Department of Education, for example, "Parental pressure on children to excel academically is helpful in motivating them to study."

However, what they don't recognize is that when parents set high expectations for their children, those expectations may be unrealistic, and this can have a range of negative consequences on teenagers, such as a strained relationship between parents and teenagers. They may struggle with decision-making in adult life because they relied on their parent's expectations most of the time. According to Bay Atlantic University, "Although the pressure is mainly based on good intentions, sometimes parents can go beyond what's acceptable for students. As a student, your child will constantly look for your validation. Even a slightly disappointed expression can send them into a bad mental state; they will start questioning their capabilities, slowly leading to fear, anxiety, and other mental illnesses." This proves that although parental pressure can be a source of motivation, parents could push their children too hard, which can negatively impact students.

My own experiences with parental pressure have shaped my perspective on the importance of open communication and mutual understanding in families. In my junior year, I often felt like I had to be this perfect student while also being pressured to join a sport. I always tried to live up to those expectations, fearing that I might seem like a failure or not good enough. For example, my parents would praise an achieving student and athlete, and I would wonder if they wished they had someone like that as a daughter.

In conclusion, the impact of parental pressure on children and adolescents is a complex and significant issue that can have both positive and negative consequences. While some degree of parental guidance and encouragement is essential for a child's development, excessive pressure and unrealistic expectations can be damaging to their mental and emotional well-being. It's crucial

to remember that, while well-intentioned, parental pressure can have significant long-term effects on children. By implementing these solutions, parents can create a nurturing, supportive, and loving environment that allows their children to flourish and develop into well-rounded individuals without the burden of excessive expectations. ■



# End Gun Violence Now

By Eric (EJ) James

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**D**id you know that in Washington, DC, just this year, over 200 people have passed away due to gun violence? The problem with gun violence has been going on for far too long, and I believe that we, as the families of victims and as people, should come together and put a stop to gun violence. Due to gun violence, people in the District are dying at young ages; additionally, families are experiencing loss and despair, which in turn causes generational trauma. Therefore, Congress should ban weapons in the United States that have the highest weapon kill rate and should enact an Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO).

First, Congress should ban weapons in the United States that have the highest weapon kill rate. Currently, ABC News reports that there are about "20 million assault rifles in the United States." An assault rifle can fire "30 or even 100" bullets "that can eviscerate multiple people in seconds" (Kirkpatrick, Mirza, and Canales). Assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons fire at rapid speeds and allow the shooter to kill many people in seconds. Too many lives can be ended in an instant with these types of guns; therefore, these types of weapons should be banned.

Secondly, Congress should enact an ERPO. According to Johns Hopkins University, an ERPO is when law officers or family members "may petition the court to temporarily restrict a person's access to firearms when they are at elevated risk of harming themselves or others" (JHU.edu). This is very helpful because it can reduce the amount of killings drastically. Add evidence of mental

health issues with gun violence. With the help of the government, as well as family members of potential perpetrators, we can begin to prevent gun violence and save lives.

Some people argue that owning a gun is their second amendment right; however, what they don't really realize is that owning a handgun for personal protection is different than owning semi-automatic weapons and military-grade style weapons. We must continue to address the issue of gun violence because each and every life lost matters.

Gun violence is a pervasive problem, not only in DC but in America. By banning weapons with high kill rates and by enacting ERPOs, our nation can begin to heal from the traumas that plague our communities. ■

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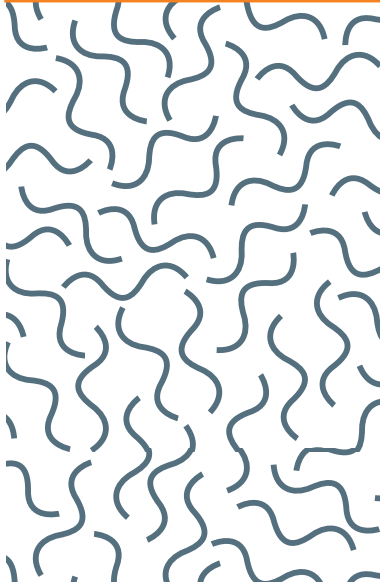




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