



the magazine written by and for youth

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November 2001

A Wounded City

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Chris Pope / NYC

PLUS



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Artists' Spotlight



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a look inside

Dealing With Tragedy



Morgan Hansen

The morning of September 11, I looked out the window of my fifth-floor Greenwich Village apartment, two miles from the World Trade Center, and saw a huge cloud of smoke coming from one of the Towers.

I ran downstairs just in time to see it crumble. My hand flew to my mouth, and I whispered to myself, "Oh, God."

I stood in the street, my neighbors all around me, just watching the area that had been the Twin Towers, now completely covered in clouds of smoke and dust. Finally, I collected myself, went upstairs, and called everyone I knew to make sure they were all right.

Everybody deals with tragedy differently. I tried to help by going to hospitals to volunteer, but they had enough people. So I went to Tompkins Square Park, which smelled like dried roses and melting wax, and lit some candles.

Will life ever be the same? That's what Fan Yi Mok, who witnessed the attacks from Stuyvesant HS in Battery Park

City, wonders in her article, "Am I OK?," p. 4. Allajah Young, in "My Heart Fell," p. 3, wonders the same thing. For her, the attacks put everyday life into perspective. She worries more about the safety of her family and less about petty arguments.

Abanty Farzana is scared for her family as well, not only because of the terrorists, but because she and her family are Muslim ("Looking Over My Shoulder," p. 14). Because of the ignorance of some Americans, Muslim "looking" people have been attacked and mosques have been burned because the terrorists supposedly attacked in the name of Islam. (See also Anna Borshchevskaya's "A College Campus Looks at Islam," p. 5, and Abanty's "Muslim Youth Unfairly Targeted," p. 15.)

Abanty also talks about dealing with the tragedy by listening to music in "No Ordinary World," p. 16.

Another way that people seem to be comforted is by displaying the American flag in cars, store windows, etc. But the writer

of "No Flags for Me," p. 7, doesn't believe that the American flag represents for him, a Black male, what it does for other people. He talks about how his feelings about the flag changed after the Rodney King and Matthew Shepard cases.

I know where he's coming from because I'm not a flag-waver either; I can't forget that American settlers killed many of the people who had original claim to this land. And I'm angry with America for thinking it was invincible. Reading up on our history with Afghanistan, I learned we're partly responsible for the situation there. The CIA funded the Afghan opposition in the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989); some of whom became the Taliban, and allowed the heroin trade to fund their war.

And while the terrorists should be brought to justice, I don't believe war is needed. Neither does Lucas Hartstone-Rose ("War Is Not the Answer," p. 6). He worries that war will lead to an endless cycle of death and destruction.

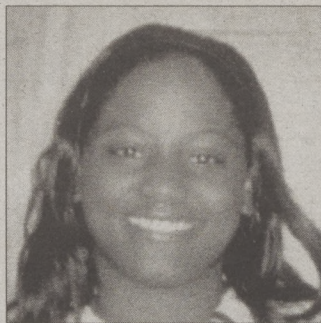
Me too. I don't want to see another 6,000 dead. Not even one.

—Morgan Hansen

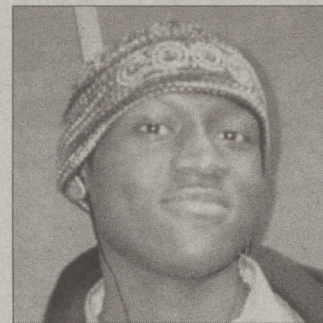
street connections

Do You Think America Has Really United?

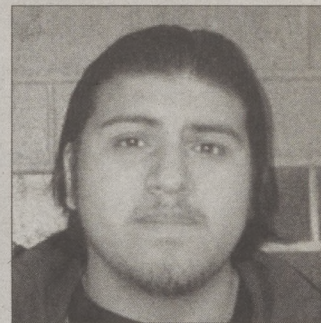
Interviews and photos by Abanty Farzana and Charise K. Smith



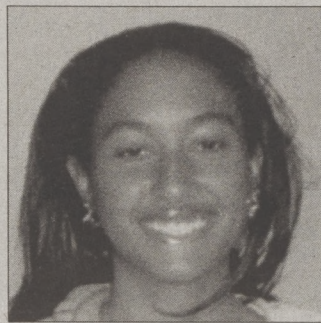
CRYSTAL FORDE, 17, Midwood HS: "I don't think that America has united. It looks that way because times are hard."



ZAID ROGERS, 20, Co-op Tech: "I think we're united in a lot of ways. There was too much violence in this country. Everybody came together and organized. I would call that being united."



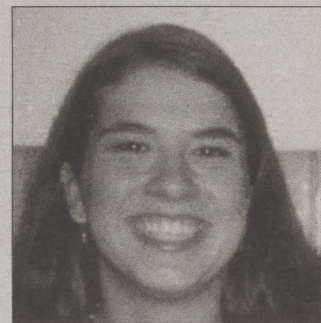
HENRY HERRERA, 20, St. Thomas: "Yes, we've become united after the tragedy that occurred September 11. What I don't like is America uniting in order to target people in the Middle East. They should target the terrorists."



TIFFANY GILLYARD, 16, Midwood HS: "I think America is united, but only temporarily. A calamity has brought Americans together, not their love for one another as a nation. As soon as realization about the World Trade Center attack passes, so will the buying of American flags."



MARIOT JOHNSON, 16, G.E.D.: "We are not united. There were memorial services and some famous politicians showed up at funerals, but that is the least that can be expected. When it comes to the point of showing understanding and tolerance, we are not united."



KATE VAYNSHTEYN, 16, Midwood HS: "It's not united, but people became more supportive of the U.S."

CONTEST

\$100 First Prize

NUMBER 143

SECOND PRIZE: \$50

THIRD PRIZE: \$25

What's the Hardest Thing You've Ever Had to Do? Explain.

Name _____
Address _____
Apt# _____ Zip _____
School _____ Age _____
Phone _____

Send your essays with this coupon to: *New Youth Connections*, 224 W. 29th St.—2nd Floor, New York, NY 10001. We must receive your entry by November 19, 2001. You must be 19 or younger to enter. Essays must be true—not fictional.

PS: Please print your first and last names and your address very clearly on your entry.

See page 25 for this month's contest winners and honorable mentions.

Also see pages 8-11, 27 for essays from our special contest on reactions to the World Trade Center Bombings.



'My Heart Fell'

The attacks made me rethink my priorities

By Allajah Young

Late to art class again, which wasn't seemly considering it was only the fourth day of school at Fashion Industries HS. I took my seat by the window, ate my breakfast, exchanged the normal prattle with my friends and thought to myself, "This is going to be my new routine."

But before I even finished my breakfast, it was clear that nothing would be routine anymore.

"How could a plane hit the World Trade Center? There isn't a cloud in the sky," said Mr. H, fixated on the skyline, aghast at the site like the rest of us. The damage to the towers was all too clear from our vantage point at W. 24th Street. We explained away the gaping eye near the top of the tower as a terrible mishap.

Not an Accident

It wasn't until word of a second plane hitting the other twin that our faces went from worried to fearful. This was no longer an accident. This was something planned.

As what we witnessed started feeling more real, I became more scared. Some people reacted by making immature comments like, "I hope they don't bomb TRL!" and "Oh no, now I can't shop at Century 21." Reality hadn't set in for them yet.

I needed to talk to someone, so I tried to find solace in my cell phone, but none of my calls to my mother's cell phone or my house went through.

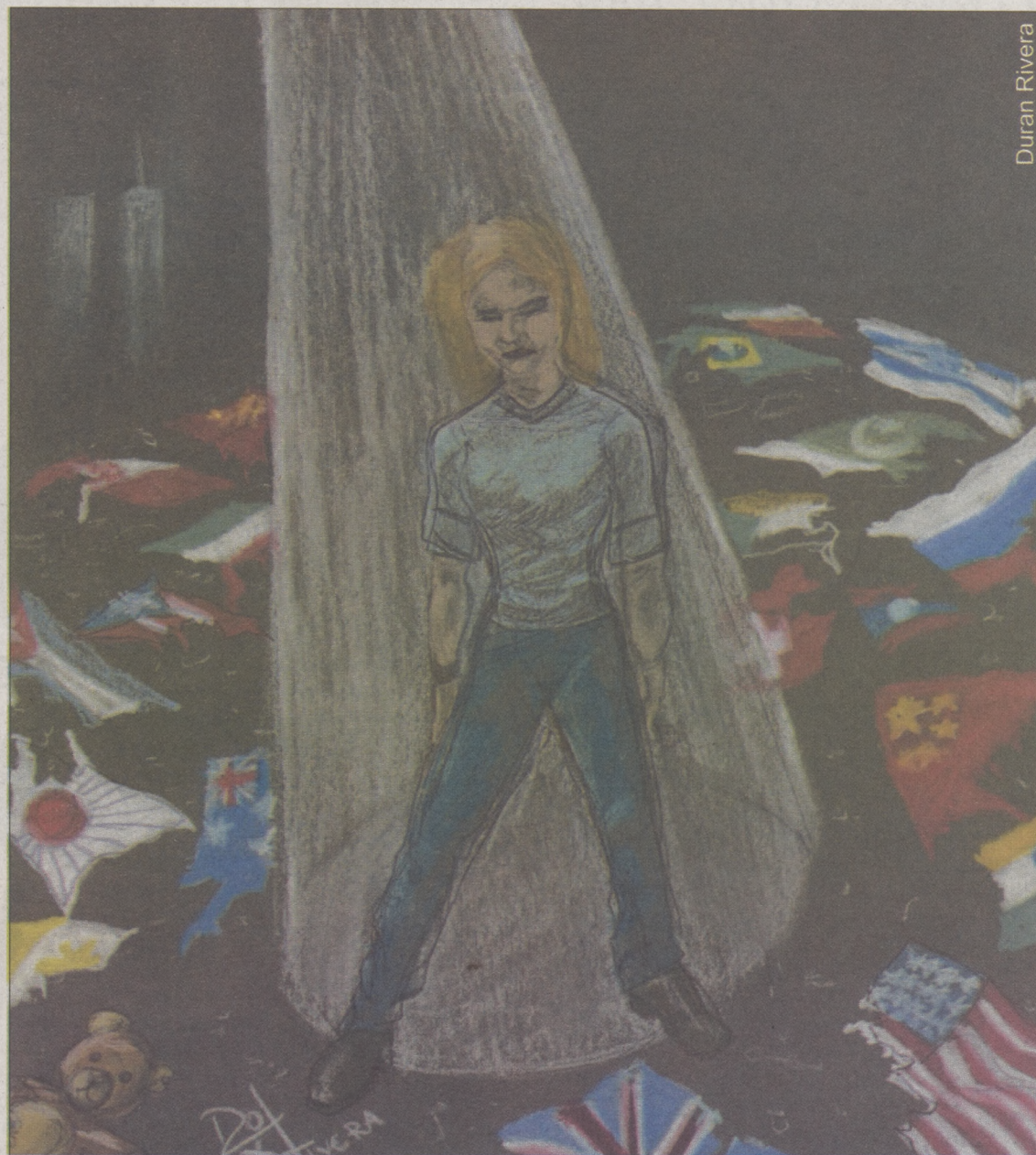
The Twins Collapse

The principal soon announced, "Two planes have crashed into the World Trade Center," which was only news to the classes whose windows don't face downtown. Then, one of the twins collapsed! The remaining twin burned during the rest of class.

Some retreated from the window but I was fixated. I looked down at my phone as I tried pointlessly to make another call. As I glanced up, my heart fell just as the twin did, forcefully and wretchedly down.

I couldn't stop the tears from welling in my eyes. Neither could many of my classmates. The bell rang and we all funneled into the hall. We'd just seen our world come to an end. What were we supposed to do now?

I wandered back into my art class and sat by the radio. Soon news of the Pentagon and



Duran Rivera

Pennsylvania crashes came through. I became so scared of what was going to happen next.

I decided to use the pay phones on the first floor of my school, but others had the same idea. I walked past the lengthy line into the auditorium where many students had taken refuge.

There were kids in circles praying, crying on their friends' shoulders, or weeping alone. Counselors ran back and forth armed with boxes of Kleenex, trying to console bewildered students. It felt unreal. My eyes had become a movie camera, focusing in and out on each lamentable set.

Family Reunions

Soon frantic parents started to show up in the auditorium, desperate to find their children. They greeted each other with a hug and a kiss and made their way out, relieved, with smiles on their faces.

Once we were released from school, my friends and I walked uptown. Some people sat by train stations impatiently waiting

for service to be restored. The streets were crowded like Six Flags on a Saturday, except no one was laughing or being loud. Conversations were held quietly. There was a heavy hush on the city.

We decided to sit in a McDonald's at Times Square for a while to rest. Everyone there was captivated by the TV, which replayed the attack over and over.

Feeling Withdrawn

My friends and I simply murmured how we couldn't believe what had happened, while keeping an unblinking eye on the TV. The day had taken a toll on me. I had a headache from the crying and worry. I felt withdrawn from people as I was trying to cope.

The trains had started to run again. But it took an hour for me to get to my aunt's house, which was only two stops from Times Square on the #2. I stayed at her place for a while and watched the endless replay the news had become before going home to the Bronx, which was another hour and a half trip.

When I got home, my little sister opened the door with a

bewildered look on her face. "Ma's been crying," she said, which was a very rare thing.

"I just can't believe it. All those people," my mother said, followed by a hefty sigh. "No school tomorrow. It'll be a while before things get back to normal."

Could We Ever Feel the Same?

I sat in the living room and tried to recall what normal was. Could the city ever feel the same without the World Trade Center and all the souls that made it alive? The more I thought about it, the sadder I became.

For a while it felt like the city was stuck like a bumper car in the corner of the track. It's been hard to get things started again. It'll be a long time before September 11th can be far from anyone's mind, particularly now that the U.S. has attacked Afghanistan.

Military conflict is alarming for many young people. War is unreal for my generation, something we only see in the movies and hear about in history class.

"Could you imagine all the boys we know going off to war, the ones in the train, the ones

who hang out on the corner?" asked my friend Jasmine three days after the attack, as we struggled over the possibilities of war and the draft.

The attacks have made things in my life like shopping, getting my hair done, working and even school seem insignificant. So I've started to re-prioritize my way of thinking, to cherish the time I have on earth. I've started to treasure the relationships with my family and friends more. I've tried to let go of petty arguments or grudges that I've had.

For example, before the attacks, when my mother asked me to do the dishes at 11 p.m. when she knows I have to get up at 6:30 in the morning, we'd argue back and forth till one of us gave in (usually her). Now, instead of arguing, I'll just do the dishes.

Checking in More

And I call my mother in the middle of the day much more than I used to, just to check in and see if everything's all right. I know she worries more now. I also call my house to check on my little brother and sister when I know my parents aren't there.

I've found myself needing to know where everyone is more. I think what made the attack so dramatic for everyone is that anyone from any walk of life could've been in the World Trade Center or the planes.

I realize now more than ever that tomorrow isn't guaranteed to anyone. What if I woke up tomorrow and there was no school or no Manhattan because of another elaborate attack? Or what if my father had to go to war?

Fear Looms

As farfetched as those thoughts once seemed, they've begun to seem more possible. But it's hard to expect the unexpected when, for my whole life, I've never had much to fear.

It's hard to get back to normal because of the dread hanging over everyone's head. Now when the trains slow to a halt between stations, people no longer catch an attitude. They stay quiet and hope that it's just a delay and not another attack.

Thankfully, though, my friends help keep me up and I no longer feel withdrawn from them. Although the attacks are never far out of our minds, they aren't the number one topic of conversation. It helps to act silly.

Although things are getting back to normal in some ways, the country lost a lot of its innocence and security. I hope America will be able to bounce back. ☒



Allajah Young

Am I OK?

The World Trade Center was central to my expanding world

By Fan Yi Mok

On the morning of the World Trade Center attacks, I had a lot on my mind. Riding the subway from Brooklyn to Stuyvesant HS, in Battery Park City, I debated my decision the night before to sleep instead of doing my homework. I'd been 20 minutes late to class the day before because I'd overslept.

I was also peeved at the woman sitting next to me, who hadn't said "Excuse me" when she squeezed her big butt into the little amount of space left on the bench.

I knew, though, that this school day would pass like all other school days had before it. I'd trudge through the day, bear the monotony of subway rides and anticipate the relief of home, only to fret over all the things I have to do once I'm there. This day would fade to become as indistinguishable as the rest.

First Thought: Lunch

It didn't happen exactly like that. "A small plane has hit the World Trade Center," a voice said over the loudspeaker during my 2nd-period music class. Stuyvesant's just a few blocks north of the World Trade Center, built on landfill created when the Twin Towers' foundation was dug out.

"Aw," I thought. "It's a good thing the World Trade Center was built for these kinds of things." And when we were told that we wouldn't be allowed out for lunch, I just thought, "It doesn't really matter to me since I rarely go out for lunch."

Seeing Is Believing

But *seeing* the huge gash cut into the side of the tower and puffs of white smoke cascading into the clear blue sky from the window of my next class was a different story.

"Oh my God! That's pretty bad," I said aloud.

"Yeah, it is," was the reply of a classmate who'd been watching it for a while.

The rest is pretty much history. We watched the events unfold on the classroom TV set and out the window until the power went out. Then most people moved away from the windows, though some stayed and gawked as the first tower collapsed. That's when I wondered what the point of shelter drills had been.

Evacuated

After following instructions to go to my seventh-floor homeroom (closer to danger, as I would later realize), I was evacuated along with the rest of the school at around 10:30.

A friend and I trekked uptown for an hour or so to the NYC office, where we could stay and have access to a phone. There really wasn't time to think about what had happened, but my initial reaction was to be angry with the U.S. for provoking the attack with its foreign



Gary Smith

policies and attitude.

I was also critical of my school's lack of instruction as to what to do after evacuating. "All those poor freshmen," I thought. Hours later, all this simmered down to a sick feeling in my stomach.

No School for a Week

There was a lot of time to think about it afterwards, though, since we had no school building to return to for the next week. Even before we were completely evacuated, Stuyvesant HS was being used in the rescue effort.

During that time, I tried to go out as often as possible, even though the air didn't smell too healthy in southern Brooklyn. There was something unsettling and depressing about staying home on a pleasant weekday, watching the never-ending reports on TV.

So I went over my friends' houses, enjoying the opportunity to play board games, study SAT words and bake cakes.

Constantly Aware

A psychologist would probably say that I was distracting myself, but I can honestly say that I was also constantly aware of what had happened.

I thought about that woman on the subway who'd annoyed me. Did she get off at Cortlandt Street, the stop right before mine, in the World Trade Center? Wow, she could be dead right now.

What about all those people I saw getting off there every day? They could've met a similar fate.

There was also the bigger question of "what exactly did happen?" that was constantly nagging at my brain. Something terrible. Something that would change us forever, was what they said on the news. Something that made people analyze every aspect of their lives connecting them with the event.

Business People Covered in Dust

I kept thinking that if people so indirectly affected by this are crying in the streets, lighting candles and preaching about humanity, then someone like me who was so close to the attack should be completely changed.

But was I?

Thinking about the woman on the subway, I realized that this experience humanized some people for me. I've never really liked business people, with their uppity attitude and nasty glares if you happen to be in their way as they're rushing for the train.

But after seeing some of them covered from head to foot in white dust and imagining them running for their lives, I had to feel for them.

Teachers Are Human, Too

My perception of teachers changed, too. During the attack, most teachers at my school kept a cool head and acted in a way that was extremely commendable. But then there was one who I heard "lost it" and another who ran around with an excited glint in his eye.

I'd always known that teachers were human, but seeing so many different reactions in a time of crisis made me sympathize with and respect some of them more.

Above all, though, the World Trade Center attack put a damper on my feeling of invulnerability. Before this, the city was my oyster. And the World Trade Center, so close to my school and so easy to get to by many subway lines, had special meaning for me.

Making the City My Own

Just two months earlier, I met my friend Jordan at the mall in the World Trade Center. Someone had just stolen money out of my wallet that day while I was sleeping on the train, so I was feeling very bitter, like I couldn't trust anything or anyone in this city.

But there, at the World Trade Center, Jordan instantly cheered me up by singing a spontaneous song about "living it up" in this "helluva town." It revived my feeling that little bad things can't throw me.

All my experiences there contributed to my sense of independence and confidence in this city. My memory is filled with images: shopping for ridiculous

A psychologist might say I was distracting myself when I played board games and baked cakes with my friends. But I was constantly aware of what happened.



Fan Yi Mok

I felt a creeping anxiety that I should be anticipating the worst, everything from the world ending to my own mental breakdown.

raccoon binoculars at the Store of Knowledge, balking at the prices at Godiva, friends showing me the free bread at the bakery. With each new discovery came a feeling of having conquered something and made it mine.

Nothing Feels Secure

With the destruction of the World Trade Center, that feeling has gone too. The place so central to my expanding world had been destroyed.

Perhaps it was with the intention of recapturing some of those feelings that I went to Grand Central Station recently. Like I've done before, I talked to my friends from opposite corners of the chamber in front of the Oyster Bar. I'd always had fun playing with the way sound travels with a curved ceiling.

But it just wasn't the same. I couldn't shake the awareness that this could all be taken away in an instant, that nothing was secure and certain.

Stuyvesant Goes to Tech

With that on my mind, I went back to classes nine days later, which were held at Brooklyn Technical HS. I rejoiced at this since my commute was a few minutes shorter and I prefer the landscape of Brooklyn to that of Manhattan (trees, houses and buildings with history as opposed to new, impersonal buildings and artificial parks).

Students from my school were given a schedule of 26-minute periods from 1:30-6:30 (with free lunch in between!). I felt that was appropriate since we'd just gone through a traumatic experience. Not only did we not have to wake up so early, but it would allow for people to gradually get back into the routine of things.

Overwhelmed

On the first day or so, getting back to some sort of a routine helped me get through my head that there was still a life to be lived. But then I started to realize all the things that lay ahead for me to do.

I had chapters of homework to catch up on, PSATs, SATs, SAT IIs and APs and colleges and extracurriculars to think about. I became overwhelmed. And on top of all that was the creeping anxiety that I should be anticipating the worst, everything from the world ending to my own mental breakdown.

I tried to put all the stuff about the attacks to the back of my mind, but that was nearly impossible. Every time I succeeded in getting myself into a quasi-work-focused state of mind, something dragged me back into feeling the full impact of what happened.

Visit From a Counselor

About two weeks after the attacks, a guidance counselor came into our social studies class to talk about the counseling services available to us.

He passed out sheets put together by the American Red Cross explaining some common reactions to disasters, such as grief, anger, shock and fear. He commended us on our calm dispositions and

told us we should pay attention to any changes in our regular behavior.

Is It Trauma, Or Is It Me?

Everything was done with good intentions I'm sure, but it made me more paranoid and anxious. I hadn't experienced some of the things on the list like flashbacks or survivor guilt, but I'd also heard that signs of trauma can appear a month later or even longer.

So now I worry that some time in the future, probably when I'm in the middle of taking my SATs, I'll have a panic attack or a flashback.

There were also reactions on the list that I had experienced, like the inability to think clearly and temporary memory loss. While I'm sure the attacks have contributed to my feeling of being overwhelmed, and these symptoms, I also wondered whether my less-than-perfect state was the result of "the effects of trauma" or just regular, stressed-out me.

We're Not Unfeeling

But what made me feel even worse was when my social studies teacher said she believed the reason we seemed so unaffected was because we'd become desensitized from movies and such.

Classmates with downcast eyes dropped their faces into their hands; reflective faces turned into those of indignation. The counselor looked uncomfortable. One student raised her hand to dispute this, but my teacher just said we took it the wrong way.

I felt hurt; we're still trying to figure out how we've been affected, and insensitive generalizations like that don't help. I'm sure there might be some people detached and desensitized, but it's important to watch what you say because a lot of us are not.

No Easy Return

Now that I'm back at Stuyvesant—we returned to our building on October 9—I feel like things are finally settling down. I'm actually relieved that I can refocus myself, even though I'm getting less sleep now that I can do my work. But I'd give up sleep for more peace of mind any day.

At Tech, it was too easy not to focus on school and dwell on what had happened because the situation was temporary, a constant reminder that things weren't stable.

Still, I was afraid that this "return to how things were" would be only an illusion or distraction, and these first few days have proved to me that this event can't be shaken off easily. I can see huge machines out the window. Strange men come into class to check the air. Sympathy banners hang throughout the school. Police check our IDs before we enter the building.

My friends agree that the impact of witnessing such an event at this close of a distance will stay with many of us for some time. Now I joke that it's not just whether I'll get into the college of my choice, it's also whether I'll live to attend it. ☒

A College Campus Looks at Islam



Gary Smith

By Anna Borshchevskaya

On the morning of September 11, my upstate campus was turned upside down. It felt as though all of SUNY Geneseo was huddled around the TV in the library café, watching in silence the never-ending replay of airplanes hitting the World Trade Center.

I'm from Queens, so I ran to the library's computers to e-mail my friends and family in the city. My frazzled thoughts were in a feverish hurricane.

As part of the steering committee for the International Relations Club at my school, I tried to come up with a coherent idea of what an appropriate response should be to this attack. I kept thinking, "Oh, God, please don't let there be panic. More innocent people will die."



Anna Borshchevskaya

Attacks Reported

But people still lashed out. The next day, there were reported attacks on Arabs throughout the country. [See "Looking Over My Shoulder" and "Muslim Youth Unfairly Targeted," pp. 14-15.]

My friends at the International Relations Club and I soon began talking about organizing a panel discussion about understanding the nature of Islam. About two weeks and a flood of e-mails and meetings later, over 300 people gathered in the Union Ballroom, one of the biggest auditoriums in my school.

There were three speakers: Dr. Mohammed Shafiq, the executive director of the Islamic Center in Rochester; William Gohlman, a professor of history at Geneseo with a specialty in Islamic History, and Rizwan "Rizzy" Qureshi, a Geneseo junior who's the first-generation American son of Pakistani immigrants. At 14, he visited refugee camps in Palestine.

A Religion of Peace

His family has also had to deal with bias attacks. His sister was verbally harassed not long after September 11. She was so scared that she stopped wearing her traditional veil.

Islam's relation to terrorism has been one of the main sound bites blaring all over the news. The major message of the panelists, however, was that Islam is a peaceful religion. There's nothing in the Quran, Islam's holy book, that condones suicide and murder.

But, as with other religions, Islam has different interpretations. Terrorists believe that the Quran commands them to kill Americans, much like Christian fanatics believe that blowing up abortion clinics is something that God commands them to do.

A Different 'Jihad'

Osama bin Laden has said he's waging a jihad upon the U.S. "Jihad" is usually translated as "holy war," but "jihad" also means to struggle for something you believe in. As Rizzy said, anything can be a personal struggle.

For example, for him, coming to speak at the panel was his own jihad. It had nothing to do with murdering thousands of innocent people.

There was also much talk about U.S. foreign policy. The panelists explained how the U.S. is often perceived in different parts of the world as a hypocritical, dominating force, imposing its Western values on other cultures. That seemed to be the dominant opinion among those who spoke from the audience as well.

Hope Lives

Helping to organize a conference where Islam could be discussed calmly and rationally made me feel hopeful, even now, that we've started to attack Afghanistan and run the risk of straining our ties with other Muslim countries.

The fact that we, students at a state university in the middle of nowhere, were able to organize a panel discussion about Islam, that we tried to educate people, and that so many people came, shows our hope—hope in human reason, in human capacity to understand each other, and to make a mental leap between how the world is, and how it could be. ☒

War Is Not the Answer

By Lucas
Hartstone-Rose

My school, City-As-School, is in downtown Manhattan. So when I heard that two planes had hit the World Trade Center, I immediately left school to see what happened, walking south a few blocks towards the towers.

Thousands of people were in the streets looking up at the buildings in total shock. Strangers were gathering, speculating on what was happening.

I saw huge, gaping holes in the two towers, oozing a massive cloud of smoke. The air smelled horrible and stung like tear gas. It seemed incredible, like the end of the world.

Scared for My Future

I couldn't stand looking at it anymore, especially when I heard people were jumping from their offices to their deaths, so I walked uptown to try to find some friends.

Within an hour after the towers were struck, and after witnessing one of the towers collapse, I heard a plane overhead. Feeling like that plane might also come crashing down, I ran and hid in a stairwell.

I was scared for my immediate safety, but I was also scared about the future. I had a strong feeling that the U.S. was going to go to war, as we did after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

I Wanted Revenge

After the devastating attacks of September 11, many Americans wanted revenge. Even I, who was taught not to hate, wanted to see people killed to avenge the murder of the thousands of people in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

I wanted to see any country, with any involvement, get pounded by bombs. I felt like beating up someone or breaking something. I wanted to join the military and go kill Osama bin Laden—the main suspect in the attack—myself.

But by the weekend after the attacks, after thinking about the situation more clearly, I remembered my rationale for opposing the death penalty and vengeance killings: As Gandhi said, "An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind."

Against the Death Penalty

It's a natural response to want to kill your attackers when you're attacked, but just because it's natural doesn't make it right.

Years ago when I figured out that I was opposed to the death penalty, I told myself that if my parents were ever killed I still wouldn't seek the death penalty. I'd work to keep my emotions from getting in the way of rational thought.

War and death will never turn back the clock to before September 11. Nothing will bring back the lives lost. Like the death penalty, if we kill killers out of vengeance, then we'll become killers ourselves.

Terrorists and the Taliban

And in this situation, there's another problem with striking back: the terrorists of September 11 don't represent any particular country. Instead, they're scattered throughout the world.

The Al Qaeda network, which is believed to be the terrorist organization behind the September 11 attacks, exists in small groups, or cells, working inside dozens of countries.

Many leaders of Al Qaeda, however, including Osama bin Laden, are based in Afghanistan, and the Taliban, which holds power in Afghanistan, have been protecting them. So Afghanistan is the main target of the U.S. reprisal.

We Need to Be Careful

On October 7, the U.S. and Britain began striking back at the Taliban, sending missiles and

It's natural to want to kill your attackers when attacked, but that doesn't make it right.

bombs into Afghanistan.

Now that our retaliation has begun, I hope that the U.S. is careful in any move we take, or else this war will result in the deaths of more innocent people, on both sides. If we carpet-bomb cities, we will needlessly kill thousands of Afghan civilians.

In the eyes of extremists, that would only justify killing American civilians, and could lead to additional terrorism in the U.S. Some in the Islamic world who see the attack on

Afghanistan as an attack on Islam may be more willing, not less, to engage in terrorist activities, and that would defeat our goal of ending terrorism.

Intelligence, Not 'Smart Bombs'

It is essential to have as many "friends" or allies as possible to defeat terrorism. We'll need to keep a broad international coalition that will support a "war against terrorism."

Intelligence that might prevent terrorist attacks is better than the "smart bombs" used to retaliate after an attack. If we antagonize Islamic countries, they won't want to give us any valuable intelligence about possible terrorists.

We must also be careful in our support of the Northern Alliance rebel army (also known as the United Front), which is currently fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The United Nations and the organization Human Rights Watch report that the Northern Alliance is guilty of human rights abuses such as killing civilians, burning houses, widespread looting and recruiting child soldiers. Strategically, we may need to support the

Northern Alliance, but we also have to put pressure on them to stop their abuses.

Help Palestinians More

I also believe that as part of the war against terrorism, the U.S. foreign policy needs to be significantly altered to change the conditions that foster terrorism. The U.S. needs to change its foreign policy not because that's what terrorists may request, but because it's the right thing to do.

For example, I believe we need to rethink U.S. support of the Israeli government. Our support of Israel in the Israel/Palestine conflict has been identified by many policy experts as one of the primary causes of Muslim animosity towards the U.S. The U.S. could do more to help establish a Palestinian state and stabilize the situation there.

End Embargo of Iraq

Another reason for the hatred of the U.S. government in the Islamic world is our country's bombing of Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War and the following embargo, which contributed to mass starvation in that country. The embargo prohibits any coun-

try from trading with Iraq or giving the country aid, including humanitarian aid like medicines and food.

The embargo has failed to loosen Saddam Hussein's grip on Iraq, but it harms the Iraqi people. Ending the embargo would allow Iraqis to obtain food from the outside world, which would save thousands or even millions from starvation.

Strategically, it might also make sense to have outside organizations and countries improving the lives of Iraqis so they'd be in a position to stand up to Saddam Hussein.

Do More to Fight Poverty

A larger problem is that throughout the world, the U.S. is perceived as having extreme wealth that it does not share. In a world where a billion people struggle to live on \$1 or less a day, the U.S. could and should do more to alleviate poverty.

People may be less likely to want to kill Americans if we show them that we care about the plight of the world's poor. We should spend as much on humanitarian aid as we do on the military.

As part of a humanitarian program, we should support public education in places like Pakistan, where many children have no choice but to go to fundamentalist schools that teach hatred.

Revenge Solves Nothing

I'm not alone in my belief that war is not the right response to the terrible attacks of September 11. People directly affected by the attack, like Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez, whose son Greg died in the World Trade Center, argue against fighting a war in the name of the loved ones they lost.

In a letter they wrote to *The New York Times* a few days after the attack, the Rodriguezes said they worried that, "Our government is heading in the direction of violent revenge, with the prospect of sons, daughters, parents, friends in distant lands dying, suffering, and nursing further grievances against us."

That response won't bring peace and justice to our world, they wrote. "It will not avenge our son's death."

Revenge will solve nothing. It will turn this world into an even darker place. I am sick of all this slaughter. Let's not kill the loved ones of families in other countries in the name of "justice." There is no justice with bombs and rockets. There is only death and destruction. ☒



Duran Rivera

The Flag's Not for Me

Elizabeth Deegan



By Anonymous

After the tragedies of September 11, there's been a sudden growth in patriotism. People have gone flag-happy, putting American flags on their windows and wearing them on their clothes.

I've never seen so many flags here. Before the attacks, finding a person with a flag in New York City was like searching for Waldo in a *Where's Waldo?* book. Now it's like every corner I turn in Manhattan, people are selling the flag or its red, white and blue byproducts.

Once Proud to Wear Flag

I'm not a flag waver, but I have to admit that at one point, way before the World Trade Center attack, I was proud to be an American. When I was around 4 or 5, my mother bought me a T-shirt of the flag.

The shoulder and breast pocket had this vibrant blue coloring with white stars over it, and red and white stripes streamed down the rest of the shirt. I loved to wear it, and felt so proud when I did. That flag shirt made me feel a little something extra, like I was part of something special.

But my pride for that star-spangled banner has become bruised as I've gotten older, and the attacks on America haven't changed how I feel. I don't feel right about wearing the flag because I wouldn't feel like I was being real with myself. To me, the flag is supposed to represent fairness and equality for everyone, regardless of your race, religion or social standing.

Unfair Persecution in U.S.

When people say the flag stands for "liberty and justice for all" during our pledge of allegiance, I question the use of the word "all," because it often doesn't include women or Blacks or other minori-

ties. So many people are treated unfairly in this country by the system or by other individuals.

I wouldn't feel right walking around with my head held high for the U.S. when I've seen TV reports of Arabic people in the U.S. being persecuted, even though they're supposed to be in a country where everyone's treated fairly.

When it was discovered that Timothy McVeigh was the main suspect of the Oklahoma City bombing, there were no reported incidents where White people were victimized because they were of the

Injustices Committed Upon Blacks

Then there are the wrongs that have historically been committed upon Blacks in this country. Blacks have had to deal with centuries of civil injustice spawned by slavery. And after years of segregation, sit-ins, marches, boycotts and being hosed down in the streets, we're still struggling.

I'm disgusted by the instances of racial profiling and police brutality that have been documented. When I saw the Rodney King beating, I was 6 and puzzled by what happened to him. I first thought that I was watching a clip from

brutality I knew about.

My mind was reduced to a ball of confusion, particularly after the outcome of the trial, in which all the officers got off scot-free because they said they believed their lives were on the line. Even though our legal system says that officers can gun an innocent man down and receive no punishment if they think they're in danger, I felt our court system offered no justice for Diallo and his family.

I can't help but think that we as Black men don't have the same rights as others. I'm saddened because sometimes it seems like you can't be Black and American at the same time, sort-of like Superman and Clark Kent; though they're the same person, they're viewed and treated as different entities by others.

Want True Freedom

So why should I stand for the American flag if it does not stand for me or my ideas of fairness for all? To wave the flag, I feel like I should be proud of all that it embodies and represents. While I know some say that minorities in this country are in a better place socially and economically than ever before, I can't wave the flag because we're still not receiving our fair share.

The American flag has been used as a mask to hide the true face of America, a face covered with blemishes of discrimination by the government and private citizens. We cannot fold over these pages of history where people are beaten or shot by individuals who're supposed to protect them. We should remedy these problems before we wave our flags and declare that we're in the land of the free.

The America I wish to live in is one where freedom and justice is *truly* for all. That's the America I want. That's the America I deserve! ☑

In America, it appears to me that if you're not part of the majority or 'in-crowd,' then you're open to discrimination and social brutality.

same racial group as McVeigh. But when the World Trade Center attack occurred, many Muslims, Arabs and people who looked like they might be persecuted because the terrorists were Muslim.

That's just unfair. It appears to me that if you're not part of the majority or the so-called "in-crowd," then you're open to discrimination and social brutality.

I look at recent history and see individual examples of bias and prejudice. I was revolted by the murder of Matthew Shepard, a young homosexual male in Wyoming, who was beaten to death in 1998 for being gay. Even though the men who committed the atrocity were imprisoned, it still doesn't change the fact that Shepard is dead because his attackers objected to his right to express himself.

the '60s during the civil rights movement, when African-Americans in the South were beaten by police.

But in actuality, I was watching a mob of Los Angeles police officers beating an unarmed Black suspect. Later, the four cops accused of beating King were acquitted of assault charges by a state jury, while only two of the four were found guilty by a federal jury for civil rights violations.

The Diallo Murder

Eight years later, in 1999, Amadou Diallo was murdered by police. That really opened my eyes to the real world of America, a world where a man was shot at 41 times too many in the entrance of his home because police *thought* he had a gun. When I heard what happened, I was shocked, despite previous instances of

The essays on the following pages were selected from more than 400 that were submitted. We asked teens to respond to the World Trade Center attacks. The five winning essays and excerpts from a score of "honorable mention" essays are printed here. We deeply appreciate the hundreds of thoughtful,

heartfelt essays and poems that teens submitted from every corner of New York City, and the support of teachers who helped teens write them. For reasons of space, we could not include more essays in NYC, but we have posted additional excerpts on our Website: www.youthcomm.org.

1ST PRIZE

We Need a Thoughtful Response

Vinh Bui, 15,
Christopher Columbus HS:

The World Trade Center attacks caused hatred in some and sorrow in others. Some think we should strike back with all the might America possesses, while others think we should take a more cautious approach. Some want more security to insure greater safety, while others fear that if we have too much security, it will interfere with our much-loved civil liberties.

I think the ones who planned the attack should be punished severely for their crime. It hurt to know that the actions of a few psychotic individuals killed thousands of innocents.

Some people wonder how we should strike back against an unclear enemy. The enemy we're facing is a formidable one whose primary weapon is not missiles or warplanes. Their primary weapon is the ability to brainwash people and turn them into killing machines.

There's the proposal to capture terrorist leader Osama bin Laden and bring him to justice. This seems like a reasonable goal, but history has proved that if you kill the leader, his ideas will live on. I don't fear one bin Laden; I fear many bin Ladens. We're having a horrible time tracking down one of him. Imagine if there were dozens of bin Ladens all over the world.

There are also major debates on America's military presence in Afghanistan; many people there don't welcome us. I think we should make it clear to people there that we're not there to interfere with their religion or invade their way of life.

There are several ways to do this. We can set up American-run television and broadcasting systems in the region to tell people our side of the story. We are spending millions of dollars in humanitarian aid to assist them and their country, but many people don't know this.

Since this is an enormous campaign, we must take the thoughts and feelings of Afghans into serious consideration, because a misunderstanding can lead to embarrassing consequences.

On the home front, ever since the attack, thousands of people started stocking up on food and buying extra water just in case of an emergency. I think that this is a wasted effort. The U.S. is a rich country; we have plenty of food to go around.

Some people won't fly again because they fear another hijacking. I think that the chance of another plane attack is unlikely because a good trick only works once. With all the extra security in airports, I don't think terrorists will aim for airlines this time; they're probably going to target something else.

Even though many people are overreacting, I do understand some precautions are better than none. Make no doubt about it: with the recent attack on our homeland, we need extra security to ensure our safety, but we should not overdo it to the point that our civil liberties and freedom as Americans are violated.

2ND PRIZE

Dad Ran for His Life

Angel Irizarry, 17, Edward R. Murrow HS

The attack on the World Trade Center deeply affected the life of my family. My dad, who works at One Liberty Plaza, was getting out of a subway station when the first tower was collapsing. He ran back into the train station, but the cops and another emergency person told him and other people to get out and run.

While he was running, two elderly women were being trampled by all the other people running. My dad helped them to their feet and ran with them, holding them by the arms. But then, someone bumped my dad and he let go of the women. He still doesn't know if they got out of the area in time.

Earlier that day, I was at Edward R. Murrow HS in my first class. We turned on the TV set, and were shocked to see one of the towers on fire. I thought that it was an accident. However, when I went to my second class, a teacher ran in and cried, "A second plane hit the other tower!"

I was scared for my father's safety. I knew that he had to be getting out of the train or be close to the station at that time. After class was over, everyone was making calls to make sure their loved ones were OK. My cell phone wasn't working and the lines to the pay phones were so long. So I decided to leave.

But the trains weren't running. So I walked for a while. I called my cousin to see if she heard anything from my parents. She said no and that one of the towers had just collapsed.

I hung up and went to my grandfather's job. When I got there, there were ash and pieces of paper on fire flying in the air. The smell was horrific.

About ten minutes later, my dad called me, crying. "I saw everything, people jumping out of the windows, concrete falling and landing on people," he said. "I tried to help them, but I couldn't."

"Who?" I asked. "Two elderly women," he said. "I held them up, but couldn't hold them long. There were so many people who died." He then told me to get home somehow, that he wanted me to be home.

My grandfather drove me home. When I got there, my father hugged me like he never did before. He was bringing pictures of my sister's sweet 16 to show to his fellow employees.

"I held onto these pictures so tight," he said. "If I was going to die, you, your mother, sister, and brothers were going to be with me." As the day went by, my sister and brother finally arrived home. We were all waiting in anticipation for my mother, who was on the train going towards Manhattan. She got home about five hours after the towers collapsed.

For the rest of that day, we saw the chilling footage of the events that took place in Manhattan. My dad is still traumatized by what he saw and how close he was to dying. But he is strong and will get through this, just like the other Americans who will survive this tragedy.

3RD PRIZE

A New Feeling of Patriotism

Justin Bernstein

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America..." Many people have stood up reluctantly to recite this pledge in a dull and quick manner just to get it done. This led me to believe there was a lack of devotion to this country.

That all changed on September 11, 2001, a date that will live in infamy. America's reaction to the terrorist attacks has had a significant effect on my feelings towards patriotism in this country.

I never thought that patriotism existed to the same extent here as it did in other nations. Sure, people go see fireworks on the 4th of July, or eat a big turkey dinner on Thanksgiving. But are these actions genuinely patriotic?

Because of the wrangling amongst different political parties, religions and races, it appeared as if Americans pledged loyalty to their small faction rather than the nation as a whole. As Americans, we tend to focus on our differences, magnifying them so much as to spark flames of hatred towards those expressing different

opinions.

I felt that Americans would continue alienating each other into smaller and smaller fractions. I began to wonder if I was patriotic, because I felt alienated.

My feelings on patriotism totally reversed after September 11. In the depressing aftermath, we felt lost and confused. But the attacks did something totally unexpected—rather than splitting Americans further apart, they brought us together.

I walked down the street by my apartment building the other day and American flags hung from the window of many apartments. They were attached to the doors of private houses. They hung from flagpoles next to businesses. They were taped on the antennas of cars.

The change wasn't only symbolic. Congress put aside its differences to quickly sign laws into action unanimously. Caucasians, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Arab-Americans, Christians, Jews and Muslims came together for vigils to say they were proud to be Americans. It felt good to know that America was able to pull together.

3RD PRIZE

Where's Our Intelligence?

Kimberly Bodden, Canarsie HS

I think the U.S. has to take some blame for what happened on September 11. Don't misunderstand me, what happened is terribly sad, but did those innocent people die because of our mistakes? Where was the CIA when this happened? How come we didn't know?

We've been given three chances and we should've learned from them: the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Africa, and last year's attack on the U.S.S. Cole.

Why is it now that the U.S. is finding all of these people all over the country and the world? How come they didn't know about them before?

Also, why is it that other countries have stricter security for airports? America has military knowledge, so what about using our intelligence to be prepared?

If other countries were as careless as America, then we might've seen the Eiffel Tower or the Tower of London bombed. It's only now, after a calamity, that the U.S. government is making security stricter.

I truly hope that America learns something from this. CIA, FBI, do not fall asleep again! We need to use our intelligence! If we truly believe in God, then we should use the brain that God put in our heads because, who knows, America's carelessness could cost us our lives.

3RD PRIZE

Punish the Terrorists, Not Those Who Look Like Them

Kwok Wan, Edward R. Murrow HS:

No one deserved the fate that befell the passengers of the hijacked planes or those in the World Trade Center on September 11. Even though I didn't lose anyone, I feel sadness and sympathy for those who did, anger over what happened, and fearful that more terrorist cells might exist in the U.S., but are dormant for now, waiting until we've let our guards down to strike again. This has been a wake-up call for me on how precious life is, and that it would be unwise if I didn't take advantage of it while I can.

One of the responses provoked by this tragic incident is the harassment of American Arabs and Muslims because the hijackers were of Middle Eastern descent. Al Qaeda is a vast network with people of all nationalities and it could've been another group of people who crashed planes into our buildings instead of those of Middle Eastern descent.

If the hijackers had been Asian instead of Middle Eastern, I would feel fearful because people would be more wary of my race. This is racial profiling, and I don't believe that it's morally right. Why should an entire group of people be punished for actions taken by individuals from their group? Placing the blame on American Arabs and Muslims only brings out the bad side of America and degrades our image as a tolerant country.

The people who really deserve to be punished are those involved in the Al Qaeda network, not innocent people who look like them. But things are still going to be hectic, with tightened security for everyone working towards getting back to normalcy. It takes time to heal such a wound, so people should still respect one another, regardless of their race, and work together to fight terrorism.

EXCERPTS:

I'm Angry

I'm angry because of all the lives we have lost, but most of all I'm angry because of the family member I have lost. Not a day goes by that I don't think about my aunt, who was a victim of the World Trade Center attack. She was in Building One on the 97th floor. My family and I were told that is where the bull's-eye was, and my aunt died instantly. Not only was my aunt a victim, but my mother and godmother were also employees of the World Trade Center. I feel the terrorists have attacked me on a personal note.

Nina Caceres, 17
Port Richmond HS

I Worked There

On September 11, thousands of people were killed, yet some got lucky and I was one of them. I was an employee at One World Trade Center and I worked on the 69th floor. I knew many people who worked in disbursements. My work experience there was a great one. The people there treated me with courtesy and respect. I left on Aug. 17. One of my co-workers, Cheryl, said, "You don't have to say good-bye to me, because I will see you right here next year."

Jarell Davis
Grace Dodge HS

Knew a Victim

My Father Cried

My father, Errol Anderson, is a New York City firefighter. I found out that he was at ground zero. He called me and my sister to say he was OK. When we arrived home at 7:15, we met my dad at the door. His fire van was covered with thick, white soot. Something wasn't right. He asked me to take his hand and help him down the steps. To my horror, my father could not see.

He had been down near the World Trade Center, helping a woman who was having a heart attack, when someone yelled to run. My father said he pulled the woman to her feet and started to run. He lost contact with her, tried to find her in the dark, but to no avail. My father had to literally run for his life. The soot and debris engulfed him from head to toe as it caught up to him. He thought he was going to die. As he told us his story of survival, the most painful part of it was his loss of sight due to the debris and glass chips that flew into his eyes.

We had to help my father back into the house so that we could help treat his burning eyes. I will never forget what happened next. It was the day my father cried. He cried out of the pain and terror he felt after almost losing his life. We all cried with him.

André Anderson
Ronald Edmonds Learning Center

Something Had Happened

My sister came rushing in the living room and told me to turn on the news. I couldn't believe it. I hoped my friend Kevin Jones and his brother David didn't get caught in that.

The next day, Kevin's mother knocked on my door, crying. Right then I knew that something had happened. When she told me Kevin and David were gone, I gave her a hug and started crying so hard, I couldn't stop.

Kevin's mother talked to my parents. She said how sweet Kevin and David were, that they would always be her babies, that they would always be best friends.

On September 14, my family and I went to the funeral. A lot of people were crying, but I just thought about all the good times we had with each other.

Keisha Williams

EXCERPTS:

Eyewitness or Close By



A Tiny Photograph

As I got home on September 11, my heart sank to the floor. I put on my television and there it was, mass destruction. I couldn't believe it, but the World Trade Center was gone. Immediately, I started crying.

I went into my backyard to see the skyline and strewn all over my backyard were burnt papers that had flown in from Manhattan. In my rose bushes was a tiny photograph of a small baby. So many things ran through my head at that moment. How could this happen? I picked up the papers and threw them out. When I threw them out, I tried to throw out my fears with them.

The next day I walked into the 99-cent store by my house and there they were: flags. I must have bought 10 flags. I hung them up in front of my house, in my school, anywhere I could put them. Seeing that flag gave comfort to me.

Now, when I go over the bridge to Manhattan and see the bright beams of light coming from the disaster site, I'm sad. However, I look down at my flag pin and the sadness goes away and a wave of patriotism comes through my body, and that's more important than anything during this dreadful time.

Nicole Russo, 17
Edward R. Murrow HS

A Sense of Agony

Through the windows of my 1st period classroom, I, along with my classmates and teacher, helplessly watched the second plane crash into the World Trade Center. Suddenly, everyone trembled in fear. Some students cried, some screamed out profanities. I was near the window with the others. I covered my mouth and started to wonder if this was all a terrible nightmare. A few minutes later, we were immediately evacuated.

I saw people with tears on their faces, confused and terrified. I saw people standing on long lines in front of public phones, with anxious looks on their faces, trying to reach their loved ones. By the time I got home, I saw a neighbor of mine, around my age, hugging his mother in tears. I soon realized that his father used to work in one of the Twin Towers. I walked into my building with a sense of agony and helplessness deep in my heart.

Xing Jie Chen, 17
Murry Bergtraum HS

A Family Apart

The attack seriously affected my life. My school, Murry Bergtraum HS, is on Pearl Street, near the World Trade Center site, and was closed for 10 days afterwards.

My mother was about to come to the U.S., but because of the attack, the hope of a family reunion becomes distant. I miss my mother. My father wanted to go back to visit my mom, but we were afraid to take the risk of taking a plane.

I am only an ordinary girl. I feel helpless.

Wen Ruan, 15
Murry Bergtraum HS

The Whole School Shook

When the second plane crashed into one of the Twin Towers, I was in my second period classroom. I could feel the whole school shaking. After that, my friend and I quickly walked out. I was thinking, "What if I died? I didn't get the chance to tell my mom, dad, Lisa and Nancy that I loved them." They've always been a pain in the neck, but I love them from the bottom of my heart.

As soon as I found a pay phone that was available, I called my parents. When I got home, my sister Nancy called and asked if I was OK? That phone call surprised me because Nancy is very independent. She never calls me, so when she called, it meant a lot.

After the attack, I realized how much I love my family and how much I care about them.

Jenny Lin, 16
Murry Bergtraum HS

Victims of Prejudice

I Avoid Eye Contact

September 17, 2001. It's my first day back to school after the attacks. I am dismissed from school, and as I walk out into the corridor I hear whispers of hatred among fellow students. They say, "Hang that terrorist, he's America's most wanted." Some try to follow me to my bus stop as I shrug the harassment off.

To think that it is simply my brown skin that causes people to point the finger of blame in my direction. An unjustified finger it is. Already aware of hate crimes throughout the nation, I avoid eye contact. For I know when our eyes meet the tension will climax, and I will fall victim because of a shameless atrocity committed in the name of my faith. I sense the jingoism flowing throughout the cities and suburbs of America. It is a time of fear.

The red, white and blue is causing my seclusion from society. It is a flag that many have grown to dread in a time of fear.

Asad Rizvi, 16
Port Richmond HS

Misplaced Blame is Unjust

Americans are frightened and angered. People have begun to act out. Some have become wrathful, and Arabs and Muslims have felt the brunt of these violent emotions.

Blaming a whole race for a few people's actions is wrong under any circumstances. Blaming those not involved in the terrorist attacks is unjust. Harming more innocent people will not bring loved ones back or help make this nation any safer. It is instead going to cause more problems. We need to unite.

Discrimination against Arabs and Muslims is similar to racial profiling. A crime is being used to stereotype a whole race. As such, we have our own beliefs and emotions. Not everyone is alike, and it's unfair to treat us as if we were.

Krystal Campbell

Stop Racial Profiling

After the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, I saw Arabs being threatened by their neighbors and, in some instances, by their friends of many years. I also saw a TV show about an Arab family that lives in a small town in New Jersey. This fourth-generation Arab family was afraid to come out the house to buy groceries or even to allow their children to play in their own backyard. After watching this, it made me feel that I would be suffering from the same thing if my so-called "race" had done something.

The actions of the town toward the Arab family made me ask questions about other terrorist attacks such as the Oklahoma bombing by Timothy McVeigh. After that happened, Americans did not go around threatening, attacking or killing other White Americans. So why should people go around and do those things now? We have to stop this racial profiling and think about what America really stands for.

Pradeep Kadimcherla, 17
Samuel Gompers HS

What Is The Best Response?

War Will Test Everybody's Patriotism

Will we go to war? Will we actually go and defend our country by killing, dying and causing more pain? How do you prepare for war? Do the armed forces teach you how to handle your emotions in a "safe" way? If I fought in a war, I don't know what I would do. Would I give into my anger of seeing my friends killed and the thought of the World Trade Center being destroyed? Or give into my fear and just curl up and die? Are we, as teens ready to fight in a war not knowing whether we'll make it back home alive or in a body bag? That is a difficult question to answer. You'll have to do a lot of soul searching in order to know if you're ready for something like that. War will test everybody's "patriotism."

Jonas Alcantara

Don't Let WW III Happen

In the face of a national tragedy like this one, we can all find ourselves tempted by blind reaction to get revenge. I fear that many of our citizens are screaming about how our military can make someone pay for this disaster. I am strongly opposed to this. As Mohandas Gandhi once wrote, "An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind." I ask that we not let World War III happen. It is very important that the United States look for a non-violent means of addressing this mindless act. Another issue that America needs to think about is our racism on a global level—racism toward Muslim and Arabic people. The United States has got to show respect toward people from the Middle East and other cultures in order to find a solution to a problem that has been building for many years.

Jermaine Adderley, 17
Benjamin Cardozo HS



I Have Been Violated

I have a friend who lives in Israel and for the first time he called me in Brooklyn and asked if I was OK. I usually call him when a bomb goes off in his neighborhood. He lives in a war zone and he is very used to having a lot of security everywhere he walks. He called and said, "It happened. How do you feel?" I said, "Like I am in Israel and I have just been violated."

Matthew Levine, 16
Edward R. Murrow HS

Emotional Reactions

I Feel Guilty

I will never forget that day at school. I witnessed teachers so frustrated and mad they couldn't teach, students crying because they were worried about family members who worked at the World Trade Center, administrators who were going crazy trying to keep the school as normal as possible, and I even saw some ignorant students who were happy about the attacks because they figured they would have a few days off from school.

No matter how much we try, things will never be "normal" again. I don't feel as safe as I once did living in America. This opened my eyes. I realized that anything can happen no matter where you are at. One of the worst things that happened since September 11 is that people, including myself, feel a little guilty about laughing and having fun. It's a shame when you have to feel guilty for enjoying life's simplest pleasures.

Jarrett Mathis, 15
John F. Kennedy HS

Hell on Earth

A week after the tragedy, I volunteered with the food service company I work for to cook for firefighters at Ground Zero. The food facility had been moved to the World's Fair Marina the day before I volunteered, so I didn't actually see the rubble. But I could see it in the eyes of the firefighters and hear it in their voices.

We arrived at the sight around 4 a.m., an hour before the shift was to arrive. We decided to cross the street to Shea Stadium and get cases of water. The entire stadium parking lot was filled with Gatorade, water and canned food. It was an awe-inspiring sight to see how generous Americans could be.

When we returned, 10 MTA buses piled in, packed with firefighters returning from Ground Zero after a 12-hour shift. When they came off the buses, it was like watching a sea of zombies come out of the grave. They said nothing except, "Thank you," with an odd humbleness. We felt it was the least we could do.

During a break, I had the honor to talk with a fireman for a little while. He said that it was worse than a war zone. It was like hell on earth and we better make sure this never happens again.

Tom DiSario
St. Mary's Children
& Family Services

I Flashed Back to 1993

On September 11, I was terrified when I heard what happened at the World Trade Center. I tried calling home to my mother and aunt, but the phones didn't work. I then had a flashback to when I was 7, in 1993, and the World Trade Center was first bombed. My mom was trapped in that explosion, and all I could remember was waiting for a phone call and hoping that my mother's name wouldn't come up on the people-who-are-dead list. I just wanted my mom and I knew I wouldn't be able to see her.

Dana Lewis
A. Philip Randolph HS

The Pain Is Too Immense

Ever since childhood, I've looked forward to taking the train with my parents to the ferry. Maybe it was the crisp air from the water that soothed my nerves, but it was definitely the tall buildings that made me adore Battery Park even more.

Now, at 17, the great tragedy of the attack still won't completely penetrate into my broken heart, for the pain of it is far too immense to endure. I refuse to accept it. I'm still the same little girl who gleefully watched the skyline from the big orange boat years

ago. The only difference is that I'm soon going to graduate from high school.

It was not until September 11 that I truly appreciated that the World Trade Center was visible from my classroom window. Unfortunately, I never saw the buildings up close, but one day I would have enjoyed going to the 110th floor to view the vast and fanciful landscape of New York harbor. This is simply one of those terrible situations that makes us recollect that something is cherished more fondly when it is no longer there.

Natalie Anne Herschkowitz

Losing My

By Anonymous

(All names have been changed.)

I've been a serious drug abuser for more than three years of my life. My drug use started freshman year as innocent curiosity. But now, I can't remember months of my life because, at one point, the drugs completely took over. I get sad thinking about it.

Before using drugs, I'd seen TV commercials saying, "Don't do dope!" or "This is your brain on drugs," while showing an egg frying. I said to myself I'd never take drugs because the frying egg commercial scared me. I thought that the heat generated from drugs could actually fry your brain.

There were also drug prevention programs at junior high school, like SPARK. (SPARK stands for Support, Prevention, Awareness, Responsibility and Knowledge.) Representatives talked to my health class about how drugs can mess you up.

Curious About How It Felt

I was amazed at the things they showed us, all those pipes and bottles and bags of assorted contraband. Even though drugs were scary, I still found myself wondering how it would feel to be on them.

By my freshman year in high school, I found out. Many kids at my school were doing drugs. The group I hung out with was especially into pot, LSD (acid) and Ecstasy. But they didn't pressure me into taking anything. My own curiosity got the better of me.

One day, I went with my friends to the field in back of my school. Somebody lit a joint. Everyone started taking puffs, but when it was my turn someone said, "Bob doesn't smoke."

I Tried a Joint

"I want to try," I said. So I took a few pulls off it. I waited to get high, as I watched my friends feel the joint's effects. They were red-eyed and slow-moving. They talked about bananas.

But I felt nothing. I said, "That's it? That's what everyone makes a big deal about?" I thought that maybe smoking pot wouldn't affect me.

Days later, a student in school tried to sell me some LSD. It sounded very appealing to me because he said I'd slip into another dimension of sight and hearing. (Dude sounded like he was from the twilight zone.) But I turned him down because I wasn't sure about its negative effects.

But I didn't turn down pot. I thought weed was cool because a lot of people were doing it and I thought, "Hey, I didn't feel any different the first time. What should it matter?"

Got High Second Time

The second time I smoked weed, I was in my school's parking lot. I took the same amount of pulls I'd taken the first time.

But this time I got very high. I can't remember much past the first 15 minutes



Gary Smith/NYC

of being under the influence, but I do remember noticing things that I was oblivious to before, like the way the tiles in the school bathrooms were arranged—three gray tiles with a black tile in the middle.

I liked the feeling and smoked every day for three weeks straight. The bad thing was I felt tired and drained after the highs. And I began to miss out on parts of my life because I couldn't remember certain things while I was high.

Moved on to LSD

Then I decided to buy LSD from the same dealer in my school. I wanted to try something different since I was growing bored with getting high from marijuana.

Actually, I was pretty bored with most of my life. I was doing fine in school and had hobbies like chess and

soccer, but these things were just there to me. I was more excited by the new outlet drugs provided for me.

So when it came time to take acid, which was on a little square piece of paper, I said to myself, "It can't possibly be that bad." So I took it and went on the strangest journey of my life. Weird ideas ran through my head.

I thought about everything from deep meaningful questions like, "What do I want to do with my life?" to straight-up absurdities like, "What if I put a cat in a freezer?"

Fun Trip but Many Problems

As crazy as I felt under acid's influence, I wanted to do it again because I thought it was fun to go on that trip.

But I didn't realize how many problems I'd have to deal with because of my LSD use. At home, even when I wasn't on it, I had flashbacks, which meant that

I relived some of the craziness I experienced when I was tripping on acid. I also had random fits of panic and became very argumentative.

One time, I was doing my homework and then, in a second, I was consumed with fear because I couldn't figure out where the cat was. (I didn't have a cat.)

Another day I was making breakfast and caught a flashback. Two minutes later, my mom walked in on the conversation my toaster and I were having.

Mom Blamed It on Pot

The flashbacks were terrible. I hated not being in control when I was having a flashback, but I still liked to go on acid trips. To make matters worse, my mom started to wonder why I was acting so strangely. I don't think she knew I was taking acid. She blamed it all on pot.

She asked me at one point, "Bob, are you using marijuana?" in that classic

Life to Drugs

parent finger-wagging tone.

"Of course not," I replied, even though my eyes were red and sweat was trickling down the side of my head.

After a while, though, I stopped smoking pot. I found it boring compared to LSD, where there was always a different experience. I was taking acid several times a month.

Took Too Much

But one day, after taking acid at a party, I tripped out way too hard. Normally, I took a square piece no bigger than 1/4 of an inch all around. The person from whom I bought it didn't cut his sheet and just ripped an unmeasured piece off, so I ended up taking a lot more than I was used to.

I tripped so hard I couldn't talk straight. On the subway ride home, the horrible noise the train makes sounded like music to me. I came home at 3 in the morning hoping my mom wasn't waiting up. But she was.

My mother knew something was up. She asked me flat out what I'd taken. I admitted what I'd done.

She Wanted to Send Me Away

She seemed very calm on the surface but I knew she was distraught. She looked like she wanted to cry and the tone of her voice was high-pitched, which happens whenever she gets upset. I didn't want to see her like this because I love her.

She wanted to send me away to a rehab program upstate but I wasn't having it. I'd miss New York City too much. I pleaded with her for another alternative. I found an outpatient program in the city and she agreed to let me stay home if I checked myself into it.

I had to go to the program at least twice a week and take a drug test once a month. If the test came back positive, I would've been sent to a detention center by the program. So I stayed sober for almost a year.

Group Therapy

I participated in group sessions where we'd talk about how drugs negatively affected our lives. It was strange being the only kid in the group who'd done LSD. The other kids were there for smoking pot. The conversations were almost always about marijuana, which I'd stopped doing after I started tripping. So I kind of felt left out.

But one of my counselors could relate to my experiences. He told me that he used to drop so much acid in his day that when he caught flashbacks, he put

his hand through store windows.

And he took so many pills and drank so much that he found himself in strange positions and places in the morning. He also told the group that until we reached absolute rock bottom, we weren't ready to be rehabilitated.

Misunderstood My Counselor

Even though my counselor was probably trying to steer us away from making the same mistakes he had, I thought he was bragging to us, kind of like when kids say, "Yo, I was so f-cked up yesterday I thought I was a serial killer." So his stories rolled right off my back.

While I was in the program, the situation at home was tense. I had to be careful of everything I said and did so my mom wouldn't think I was doing drugs again. I wanted her to trust me.

I also kept to myself a lot. Part of the rehab regimen was that I couldn't talk to my old friends anymore because you're supposed to move on from the past. I missed them and felt bored.

Took More Drugs

After nine months, I was released from the program. I guess I hadn't hit my rock bottom yet because soon after my release, I started to sniff Special K, aka ketamine, which I bought from a school dealer. I also began popping prescription pills and drinking.

That was probably worse than what I was doing before because a lot of prescription medications aren't supposed to be mixed with alcohol. It could've been fatal.

I got so drunk sometimes that I passed out in the street, like my counselor had. There were times I woke up with ashes in my mouth and paint or bloodstains on my clothes. For around six months, this was my life.

Depressed About Girlfriend

I think I got into drugs again to escape the real world. I was having trouble with my girlfriend, Betty, and felt depressed about our relationship. She often lied to me about her whereabouts and cheated on me at least three times. I felt depressed and sad.

I found myself doing more and more drugs to escape emotional pain. But the mood swings and physical pain made me wonder whether it was worth it. I was getting intense stomachaches. After describing the pain to one of my female friends, she said, "It sounds a lot like when I get cramps."

Then, I ended up getting caught again. My mom was going through my

pants pocket and found my bottle of pills. There was no other way to explain it but the truth. Luckily, she didn't send me upstate.

Next Stop: Ecstasy

Being caught again calmed me down a lot and I remained sober for three months. But even the fear of getting sent away didn't stop me from trying yet another drug, Ecstasy. To me it was the ultimate high.

Starting the summer of 2000, I took E as often as I could. When I was high, I felt like I was walking on air, and my sensory perceptions increased tenfold. One trip consisted of me rubbing my body for an extended period of time.

But I was irritable and mean after my highs. I was hurting people around me, like my mom and new girlfriend,

So I decided to stop cold turkey. The next day, I got out of bed with a headache and dry mouth. For three days, I went into withdrawal, which is how your body reacts to being taken off drugs that it's been given regularly.

I had cold sweats, a fever and diarrhea. Even though I felt terrible, I still went to school because I didn't want to mess up again.

Need Something More Than Drugs

In the four months that I've stopped taking abusive substances, I've felt more determined to succeed. Once I hit rock bottom, all that I'd heard in the rehab program started to make sense. Instead of wanting to take drugs, I needed something more. I needed some type of control over my life again.

So I started to chase my former goals

I bent over in intense pain. My stomach felt like someone was violently twisting and pinching it. 'I have to stop doing drugs,' I thought.

Veronica. (I'd broken up with Betty.) When I was high, Veronica sometimes told me that I was acting like a d-ck. I used to fight with her over the smallest things.

I once asked her, "How was your day?"

"Ugh!" she said.

"What the hell type of answer is that?" I yelled. Then we started to fight.

Doubling Over

And my body felt even more wrecked. I used to get stomach cramps and chest pains that hurt so badly that I doubled over.

My life had become messy and painful. One evening, I was doing homework on the floor at the side of my bed and was hit with a really bad cramp that stayed with me for five minutes.

I closed my eyes and bent over in intense pain. My stomach felt like someone was violently twisting and pinching it from the inside. I thought, "I have to stop doing drugs."

Rock Bottom

The pain became my rock bottom. I realized that I had a major problem. I was tired of not being able to focus and of seeing my family upset. I was tired of the sleepless nights and not knowing where I was. And I couldn't endure the stomach cramps.

But most of all, I just didn't want to be a drug addict. I wanted to ask for help, but after disappointing my loved ones, I couldn't. I didn't want to hear "I told you so" or "Why didn't you listen?" I didn't want to go through the long, drawn-out emotional routine.

again. All I can say is I'm going to be famous.

And I stopped fighting with my family and girlfriend. I feel more at ease in the house, even though I still have to watch what I say because my parents might think I'm tripping out. They don't realize that I'm naturally crazy even when I'm not high.

Veronica also helps to keep me clean. She gets upset at the prospect of me doing drugs again; when I mention them she gives me a look. Plus, she doesn't put me through any strife, which means I'm not tempted to do drugs to escape emotional pain from my girlfriend.

Lost Memories

But I hate when someone tells me they know what I've gone through when they've never done drugs before. I look them dead in the face and tell them "No, you don't." And when I look at people who do drugs now, it turns my stomach because I do know what it's like. I feel sorry for them.

It's hard not being able to recall parts of my life because of drugs. Some of my memory's so cloudy. Every time I try to remember certain things and can't, I feel like crying.

Staying drug-free isn't easy since I still know of many places to get drugs. I'm not sure how I'm going to stay clean, so I take it one day at a time. I try to place myself in fewer situations where drugs are available.

And if someone offers me drugs, I find myself quickly saying, "No thanks," and head in the opposite direction. I think I got it down this time. ☒

I got so drunk sometimes that I passed out in the street. There were times I woke up with ashes in my mouth and bloodstains on my clothes.

Looking Over My Shoulder

As a Muslim, I'm worried about terrorists *and* bias attacks

By Abanty Farzana

Tuesday, September 11, 2001, seemed like any other day at Midwood HS until I sat down in my 4th period government class, around 9:15 a.m.

"Did you hear what happened?" asked my teacher. He was distraught, completely opposite from his usual outgoing, happy attitude. "Two planes just crashed into the World Trade Center," he said.

Shock. That's the only word to express how I felt. I just sat there in disbelief.

Suddenly one of my classmates walked in and announced, "Another plane crashed into the Pentagon. And the World Trade Center just collapsed." Like a stampede, all the people in the class ran up from their desks and crowded the windows to see what used to be our view of the Twin Towers.

Black Smoke Across the Sky

Those towers were the only part of the Manhattan skyline we could see because not even the buildings in Brooklyn could block them. But at that



Abanty Farzana

moment, the only thing we saw and smelled was black smoke across the sky. During the next period, the smoke became so strong, the fire drill lights started blinking.

I got out of school around 11 a.m. because of my internship, but I hurried home instead. I

looked around the house for my father, but he wasn't there. I was worried, because my father works on Water Street, not too far from the World Trade Center.

But because he works at night and rarely in the morning, I tried to reassure myself that he must be fine. I was still anxious about him though, probably because I was alone.

My Uncle Worked There

I called my mother to tell her that I was fine, only to find out that my uncle, Mohammad Islam, actually worked in one of the towers. Just before my heart started pounding, my mother spoke two words that I'll forever be grateful for: "He's fine." It was such a huge relief.

My father came home 15 minutes later, and soon we were bombarded with phone calls from relatives in California, Texas and other states, asking if we were all right.

Over the next couple of days, I felt like I was on an emotional roller coaster. At first, I was obviously in shock and disbelief. Later that day it was numbness, which soon turned into sadness.

Anger at the Terrorists

But the most powerful thing I felt, which came on Wednesday, was anger. I was furious at whoever was insane enough to kill so many innocent lives



Rosa Perin

People watch me when I take a book from my bag. I feel like saying, 'People, I'm not gonna take out a bomb, OK?'

and ruin so many others.

I soon learned the hijackers were believed to be Muslims. I didn't give them any sympathy for that, even though I'm Muslim myself. I think the terrorists learned some other book instead of the Islamic holy book, the Quran.

Nowhere in the Quran does it condone terrorism or killing people. Their actions were disrespectful to Allah (God) and to millions of Muslims around the world who are now being associated with these insane people.

Fear in My Brother's Eyes

Soon I found myself not only being afraid of another terrorist attack, but for my family's and my own safety in my neighborhood and school. The next day, I heard on the news about attacks in America against Arabs and Muslims.

It scared me to death, thinking that I'd have to go back to school the next day in a building where some might hate me and "my people." I worried we might have a Columbine-style shooting at my school and that I or other Muslim students would be targets.

But I wanted to be strong for my 10-year-old brother, who had so much fear in his eyes. "Are there people in my

school who hate Muslims too?" he asked. My parents and I just told him not to be scared and that nothing would happen to him.

'Kill Them All'

Our fear was not irrational, though. The day we went back to school, my government teacher told the class that a student in another class had said, "We should kill them all," when asked about his feelings towards Muslims. That made me feel completely unsafe.

My father tried to reassure me after school that I'd be fine since I don't wear a hijab (a head covering) and the traditional clothing. It didn't make me feel any better.

I was still scared, thinking that people needn't care about what I wore in order for them to dislike me. The color of my skin and the way I look would be enough for them to decide how they felt.

When school resumed after the attack, my brother's classmates asked him where he's from and what religion he believes in. It bothered him. He felt that they were implying that he was one of the "bad guys."

It upset me that my brother had to deal with this. Even though he's young,

he's not so young that he doesn't understand things.

And in some of my classes that week, students lashed out against Arabs and Muslims after seeing the footage of Palestinians rejoicing over the attacks. I overheard some classmates saying they believed that all Muslims were happy about it, that they'd do it again and that no one could be protected from them. They concluded that all Muslims believe in terrorism.

Too Shy to Speak Up

I don't think my classmates knew that I'm Muslim. Their comments bothered me, but I didn't want to have a confrontation in the middle of class.

I didn't speak up in part because I'm shy. It was only the second week of school and I didn't know many people in my class. I didn't want to start out being defensive. (Even when things are normal, I'm pretty quiet in class.)

Also, it was only a few people who had negative things to say, so I didn't let them bother me too much. I believe that most people aren't ignorant and they know better than to judge a whole group by some people's actions.

But some ignorant people are violent.

By this time, I was shot, worshipping, firebomb, the American c...

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Threatening

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By this time, I'd read about people who shot worshippers in a Texas mosque and a firebomb that was thrown at an Arab-American community center in Chicago.

At school, I kept hearing about attacks against students in other schools. Someone said that Arabic students at Lincoln HS were beaten up with baseball bats. My teacher had heard about two teachers in Connecticut who beat their Arabic students as well. I didn't know whether any of these stories were true, but they still frightened me.

I also heard stories about Arabs assaulted while walking in their neighborhoods. I began to worry about my parents. Both work very late and come home by themselves. "What if something happens to them on their way home?" I thought.

Threatening Phone Calls

Learning about threatening phone calls that my cousin Sabrina got only escalated my fear. She lives in Old Mill Basin in Brooklyn, not too far from my neighborhood. The caller had cursed at her and her mother and told them to leave the country.

I figured the caller must've looked at the White Pages, found the Arabic-sounding names and then called and harassed them. That possibility unnerved me because the phone book also gives the address of residents. I worried that igno-

rant people might show up on my front step.

Sabrina, 16, and another cousin of ours, Orin, 14, both of whom go to Midwood, were just as frightened as I was, if not more. Their parents didn't want to leave them home alone anymore, and to my surprise, they didn't want to be alone either. They'd always enjoyed their independence before and liked having time alone.

"I heard about young girls getting abused and that scares me," said Orin. "I'd rather be around adults and surrounded by people. Now my parents either take me with them when they go out or leave me at my cousin's house."

Walking While Brown

My older cousin, in Boston, said that things had changed for her too. She said she'd started to notice racial differences for the first time, like that she was the only non-Black person of color at work.

In her 23 years, it hadn't bothered her before, but in the days after September 11, she felt like she stood out. People stared at her when she walked down the street.

I know what she means. More than five weeks after the Twin Towers came down, I still feel uncomfortable in public. People on the subway or the bus generally never noticed me before September 11, 2001. Now I turn some people's heads.

They watch me when I take out a book from my bag. I feel like saying, "People, I'm not gonna take out a bomb, OK? There are insane people out there. I'm not one of them. I'm just as worried and nervous about another attack as you are!"

My Uncle's Attacked

Some of my fears were realized when my uncle Munir Hassain was attacked on October 5. He was outside the store where he works on Church Avenue in Brooklyn, when two guys came by asking if he had money.

He said no and they started pounding his head. They didn't have any weapons, but they were wearing big, sharp rings that cut his forehead and the back of his head.

After seeing him, his manager called the police. Paramedics came and bandaged his head. His face swelled up, and he suffered pain and bleeding for days after.

The police said that it wasn't a bias attack, but I find that hard to believe. Why would someone single him out on Church Avenue at 2:30 p.m. when there were so many different people shopping there?

People carrying shopping bags would've been better targets if the attackers just wanted money. Why pick a South Asian man in the middle of work? Now I think I'm angrier than I am afraid.

Lighting Candles Together

It's frustrating to be grieving for so many lost lives and to be looking over my shoulder at the same time.

I felt a little better when my friends, family and I lit candles at home on the Friday after the attack, to remember those who lost their lives.

I participated in the candle memorial because I love America. Even though I was born in Bangladesh, this is where I've grown up for the last 10 years. This is where my brother was born. This is where I have my memories of the happy times and the sad.

Can't Let Them Get to Me

At first, I felt that Americans were united against Muslims, but my opinion changed somewhat after seeing Islamic leaders help conduct memorial services at the National Cathedral and Yankee Stadium.

I know that there are people who still look suspiciously at people of Middle Eastern or South Asian descent, but I can't let every one of them get to me (even though they sometimes do). I have hope that the bias attacks will eventually stop, and that one day I won't have to fear for my family and myself. ☒

Muslim Youth Unfairly Targeted

By Abanty Farzana

As we move on from what seems like an unforgettable event, New York City's Arab and Muslim youth are still reeling in fear. Just as I feel uncomfortable and try to ignore sneers from strangers, so do other young people.

The key suspect in the terrorist attacks, whose picture is shown over and over again on the news and in magazines, is Osama bin Laden. He is a Muslim. The hijackers who crashed the planes into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania were Muslims as well.

Now, Muslims living in America have to deal with being thought of as terrorists. Islam is a religion of peace, but since the attacks, it's been seen as a religion of hate and anger to many people who don't know much about it.

People Are Ignorant

"School's difficult," said Selina Ali, 17, a Richmond Hill HS senior. "My teacher singled me out [as the only Muslim student in the class] and I got into an argument with another student. He said, 'Because of you Muslims, Americans are getting attacked.' A lot of people are ignorant and don't know that all Muslims aren't like that."

Young Muslims in America, many for the first time, find themselves explaining Islam and its message. They're just as angry at the terrorists as anyone else, but they're additionally upset by how the terrorists used their religion to justify their hateful actions.

"I think it's sick that the people who have murdered several thousands of people have done it in the name of Allah," said Neemarie Alam, 18, who

goes to Brooklyn College.

"The Quran urges Muslims to be just with all people," she said. "Allah commands justice, the doing of good and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition." I wish people understood that the men who did this used religion as a cover; this act had political reasons."

Expressing Sorrow and Fear

Organizations formed as outlets to the South Asian and Arab community, like South Asian Youth Action (SAYA), in Queens, and the Arab-American Family Support Center, in Brooklyn, have been overwhelmed with people calling to express sorrow, support and, most of all, fear.

"Young people are verbally attacked," said Annetta Seecharran, the executive director of SAYA. "There's fear among people for their lives and homeland. We're dealing with kids who are having more difficulty becoming part of American society. They've [also] dealt with discriminatory attacks from employers and teachers."

There've been more than 200 bias attacks against people thought to be Muslims reported throughout the nation since September 11. Individuals have been attacked as well as mosques and Muslim-owned stores and gas stations.

Like Parting the Red Sea

"I've always faced a certain level of discrimination; my scarf has always attracted looks at the beach," said Neemarie. "But after the attacks, it felt like the streets I always walk on were foreign. I plugged in my Nirvana to help me



ignore the glares and muttered curses," she said.

"I feel like Moses of the Red Sea; I clear a path as I walk. People go the other way when they see me coming," she said.

Selina, a member of SAYA, said that her cousin, who goes to a Muslim school, "took off her hijab [head scarf] because she was scared." Non-Muslim kids were throwing rocks at students leaving the school.

Removing Traditional Clothing

And at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, she said, "a guy pulled the hijab off my friend's head and yelled 'B-tch!' People assume that [these attacks] are all rumors and they don't know the depth of it."

"People being most affected are those who dress traditionally," said Sonali Matani, SAYA's program coordinator. So some Arabs and Muslims are wearing less of their cultural clothing. Like Selina's cousin, some women are taking off their hijabs and wearing casual outfits.

And since Sikhs are mistaken for Muslims, some Sikh men aren't wearing

their turbans anymore. Sikhism is a religion influenced by both Muslim and Hindu traditions and beliefs; most Sikhs are from the Punjab region of India.

Thinking About Safety

"South Asians need to change their identity because they feel insecure and unsafe," said Selina. "It's not about principles. We need to think about our safety."

Selina feels so strongly about Muslim discrimination that she's spoken out on the radio show "Democracy Now" and to *Spin* and *Source* magazines.

In response to teens' fears, SAYA has formed a "Peace and Unity Initiative" to hold education workshops. For more information, call 718-651-3484. You can also check out their website at www.saya.org.

The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee urges victims and witnesses of attacks against Arabs and Muslims in America to call the police immediately. People can also call the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights at 1-866-768-7227 for help. ☒

Rosa Perin

I'm a Downloading ...but I'm not ready



By Macario DeLaCruz

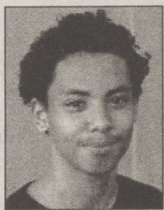
I'm a downloading demon. In the past six days, I've clocked 87 songs. And I wasn't using Napster.

The name Napster was once synonymous with MP3s and as Winnie, a fellow NYC writer, said: "Free. Music. Download."

But Napster had to shut down on July 2 to upgrade its filter. And when Napster comes back to life, which the company says will be

before the end of the year, it'll be a subscription-based service. Users will have to pay a small monthly fee to download songs.

Plus, the downloaded songs will only play in Napster, because the files will be converted to Napster's own format, .nap. That means you can't transfer the songs you download to a CD for mobile listening or back-up purposes.



Macario DeLaCruz

Inspired by the Jerky Boys

Ah, for the good old days. My first encounter

with Napster was in 1999. I was hanging with my friends when one of them, Richie, reenacted a Jerky Boys prank call about balloons. After we had caught our breath from laughing, we asked him where he heard this bit so we could listen to it, too. His response was Napster.

"Huh? Hamster?" I asked. "What's that?"

"No. Not Hamster, Napster," he replied. "It's this program that lets you download any song you want." He explained that all you have to do is type in the name of the artist and song, wait for results, and voila, you can listen

to it to your heart's content.

Songs at My Fingertips

When I went home that evening, I went to napster.com. It took me less than 15 minutes to download the peer-to-peer software application. For my first search, I typed in "Jerky Boys" in the "artist" field. Of the long list of files that came up, I didn't see any files with "balloons" in the name, but I downloaded some other Jerky Boys' prank calls.

Then I downloaded a few Tupac Shakur songs. I thought it was cool to have such a large

selection at my fingertips—literally.

But I stopped using Napster after that night. Part of it was that I had better things to do, like school and hanging out with friends. But I was also against piracy of any sort and the idea of getting all these songs for free bothered me somewhat.

Not Like Bootlegging

Still, I returned to Napster several months later. I couldn't resist my wanting to get Lenny Kravitz, Jimi Hendrix and unreleased Eminem songs all for the right price: nothing.

WTC—New York Teens Respond

No Longer an Ordinary World

After the attacks, lyrics take on new meaning

By Abanty Farzana

In the wake of the attacks, I've turned to music to comfort me. Sometimes it helps. Other times, when it doesn't relate to how I'm feeling, I turn it off. Loud dance and party music doesn't suit my emotions right now. I just want to listen to something soothing.

One song that's helped me get through the tough times is "My Religion," by Krystal Harris. I've loved the song since I've first heard it; only now, I can relate to all the words.

The chorus goes: "My religion doesn't hate/ It will never turn you away/ It always understands/ My religion won't condemn/ Always lends a healing hand/ It's love/ My religion's love."

I want to say those lyrics to the world so they'll get an understanding of what Islam, my religion, is about. Islam doesn't support killing people. It's a religion of love and peace. It doesn't forgive the killing of innocent people.

Harris' Voice Soothes

Obviously, the song doesn't specifically explain the rules of my religion, but it gives the listener an idea of what religion means to someone. Some of the lyrics I especially like are: "All it takes is to be willing/ To sacrifice for someone who is in need/ Then we can begin to heal again/ And love will sweep the land."

How true is that? Just lighting a

candle on the Friday after the attack and donating money made me heal quicker. I felt better doing something positive at a time when negative emotions consumed much of our thoughts.

"My Religion" is a pretty song, with Harris playing the piano, and drums backing her up. Even though it's a ballad, it's got a bit of an upbeat tempo, and features a cameo from Limp Biskit's DJ Lethal, who scratches during the interlude. The best part of the song, though, is Harris's soothing voice.

Healing 'Hands' On the Radio

I'm not the only one seeking comfort from music. Music has been key in the healing effort as Americans try to recover from the devastation. A lot of previously released songs have made it back on the airwaves.

The emotional lyrics of Jewel's song "Hands," and its message of hope and acceptance, made it a heavily requested song on Z-100. The first line of the song is "If I could tell the world one thing, it would be, we're all OK."

Some other popular requests that I'm glad to hear are Duran Duran's "Ordinary World" and "I'll Remember," by Madonna. I loved these songs before,



U2 calls for unity with "One."

but never really thought about the lyrics. Now the songs seem more profound.

Eerie Lyrics Have New Meaning

"Ordinary World" contains the lines, "Papers in the roadside tell of suffering and grief/ Fear today forgot tomorrow beside the news of holy war and holy need."

Those lyrics remind me of paper flying out of the towers and also of the many pictures posted of missing people. It's eerie that Duran Duran used those words to express the pain and suffering of love lost.

Another song I'd heard before, without paying close attention to the words, is "One" by U2. "One love/ One blood/ One life/ You got to do what you should/ One life/ With each other/ Sisters/ Brothers/ One life/ But we're not the same/ We get to/ Carry each other/ Carry each other."

Patriotic Songs on the Air

The lyrics express diversity, but more importantly, that we are all human and part of the same family. We need to carry each other through this. I agree with radio and video programmers, who started playing the song often after the attack, that it's been helpful to hear.

More unusual for the radio stations I listen to, like Z-100 and WPLJ, was their playing of patriotic songs like

country singer Lee Greenwood's "God Bless The USA" and Whitney Houston's rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner."

Houston's recording, from the 1991 Super Bowl during the Gulf War, has been re-released and the money raised from its sales will go to charities helping the victims of the attacks and their families.

Stars Launch Benefit Songs

New benefit songs are also in the works. Michael Jackson's heading up one project, and Latin music stars are doing their own song. And a benefit remake of Sister Sledge's "We Are Family" will feature, among others, Diana Ross, Sugar Ray, the New York Knicks and the New York police and fire departments.

Already getting airplay is a remake of Marvin Gaye's 1971 classic "What's Going On." Originally intended for AIDS victims in Africa, now 50% of the money raised from the song's sales will go to the United Way's September 11th Fund. The project, headed by Bono of U2 and Jermaine Dupri, also features Gwen Stefani, Justin Timberlake, Destiny's Child, Ja Rule and others.

To have so many artists on one song representing different genres, from pop to hip-hop to rock to rap, shows the diverse culture of America. Like the artists, all Americans should embrace our diversity. ☐



Kristal Harris has a soothing "Religion."

Demon... to pay for music swapping

I decided that it wasn't like I was a bootlegger, who makes copies of records or movies to sell for a profit. Bootleggers rip off artists and record companies because people buy their fake records instead of the legitimate ones, so the bootleggers get money instead of the record companies and artists.

My downloading songs from Napster was like borrowing a CD from a friend, and maybe taping a couple of songs. I don't see anything wrong with that.

Trying Before Buying

Soon, I was swept away in the river of Napster. Whenever I had free time, I'd download a song or two or three. I started to listen to genres and artists I'd never considered before.

My interest in No Doubt, KottonMouth Kings, Musiq Soulchild, Black Sabbath, Beck, Oasis, Crystal Method and many others increased or started because I was able to inexpensively and easily sample their music.

I see the free exchange of music as something very beneficial to the consumer. Trying out music before you buy it is like trying on a pair of sneakers before buying them. I don't want to pay \$13 to \$17 for a CD and an hour later find out that it doesn't fit my tastes.

Testing Napster's Filter

But the major record labels disagree with me. In December 1999, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) sued Napster for copyright infringement.

Napster users exchanging MP3 files was like stealing, said the RIAA, since people got the songs without paying the record companies, songwriters, music publishers and artists any money.

After a court ruling in March 2001, Napster was forced to install a filter to keep users from accessing copyrighted songs.

I tested the filter a few months later by running a search for Eminem without any specified song title. After about 15 seconds (longer than usual), a usual 300+ list returned. Most of the file names were slightly altered, though; users were playing with copyrighted songs' file names to get past the filter.

For example, I found Eminem's "Stan" under file names like Stan4.mp3, Stn.mp3



Elizabeth Deegan

and StanABC.mp3.

Napster's Cousins Spring Up

Rather than deal with the confusion of altered names, many music sharers turned to alternative applications and sites. Cousins of Napster, like Aimster, Kazaa, Rapigator, Gnutella and Bear Share, started to surface when Napster's legal battles intensified in February and March 2001.

At first, these peer-to-peer cousins had only a small fraction of Napster's more than 1,000,000 available songs. But as Napster's filter became better—or worse, depending on your position—its users started moving over to alternate sites.

Record Industry Wants Us to Pay

But the major record labels of the RIAA want to control the way people get music over the internet. They're hoping that free file-trading applications and sites will be replaced by fee-based services—the new-look Napster

and two new record-industry services, RealNetwork's MusicNet and Pressplay.

MusicNet is backed by AOL Time Warner, EMI Group and Bertelsmann's BMG. Pressplay is Sony and Vivendi Universal's online music service. Both services plan to make room for independent labels, but haven't yet planned to make room for their major label rivals.

Limited Selections

For example, if I was a Pressplay subscriber, I could get Destiny's Child and No Doubt songs because Destiny's Child is on the Sony label and No Doubt is on Interscope, a Universal label. But Madonna, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Missy Elliot are all under AOL Time Warner, so I'd have to be a MusicNet subscriber to get their songs.

On either service, the music you download will only be playable on the computer to which you downloaded the file; you can't transfer the music (yet) to any other devices or computers. And those files won't have high, CD-quality sound.

Why Pay to Play?

Pressplay and MusicNet use a technique called streaming; instead of saving the file to your hard drive, you run the file directly from the site. That means you have to be online to listen to it.

And with streaming, there's buffering to deal with. Buffering is when the song momentarily halts and waits for the data before it resumes streaming. The slower the connection, the more annoying buffering interruptions there are.

With all of these detractions, it amazes me that record companies believe these services will be widely used. It's hard to believe that the 70 million ex-Napster users are going to flock to a pay-to-download service as long as there are over a dozen other applications that allow you to share music files for free and without any label limitations.

Free Music Sharing Keeps Going

But if these corporations knock out the competition through legal suits, the future of music file-swapping on the Internet is gloomy. Not only will we not be able to sample well-known musicians' work, but our exposure to more obscure music

will be limited, too.

Ever hear of Domestic Oblivion? Probably not, but you might discover some tracks from their first album (which my dad co-produced) through WinMX or another free file-sharing application. And while Napster's free peer-to-peer cousins offer bootleg live recordings, unreleased compositions and freestyles, the music-label-based services won't.

So far, though, it seems that for every Napster that goes down, there'll be another application to take its place. At least for a short while, the free mainstream music-swapping business will be in business. And I'll be home—downloading to my heart's content. ☒

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Free Sites—for Now

By Macario DeLaCruz

After Napster installed its filter in March, I moved on to Aimster (www.aimster.com). I liked Aimster because it had video as well as music files. I was finally able to download *Daria* episodes. But its user base was much smaller than Napster's, so there were fewer files to choose from.

Aimster's Being Sued...

And Aimster also has legal troubles. It's been sued by the RIAA, music writers and publishers and six major film studios—Disney, Paramount, Sony, 20th Century Fox, Universal and MGM—because of the trading of copyrighted video files.

Another peer-to-peer application I like that's being sued by several music labels and film studios is Morpheus (at www.musiccity.com).

Morpheus allows you to trade music, video and image files. One cool feature that Morpheus has is a description

tag on each file that gives a little summary of the file, so you know what it's about before you download it.

...But WinMX Isn't—Yet

So far, Aimster and Morpheus are still alive—and file-swapping. If and when they're either transformed or shut down, it'll be another case of voices quieted in the shouting of the free music industry. But chances are another shout or two will come to take their places almost instantly, like my current favorite, WinMX (www.winmx.com).

WinMX is a true Napster clone in that it's easy to use and has a large variety of songs. Plus, it offers video and image files, and has the extremely cool ability to handle multiple simultaneous searches and to resume downloading files if they get interrupted.

As of this writing, WinMX hasn't come under fire from the major record labels—yet. ☒

Macy's Heartfelt, Freaky *Id*

By Allajah Young

Macy Gray continues to break away from mainstream music by creating her own groovy potpourri of rock, r&b and pop. Macy's voice is like the outside of a raspberry; it has a sweet and deep-red hue with hard little prickly things sticking out. Her voice and big-band, '70s style instrumentation give her a sound like no other artist.

Although many of her critics find her voice annoying, she has a wide and diverse fan base. People who listen to rock like her songs' edgy guitar riffs while r&b fans like her soulful melodies.

And pop fans can sing and bounce along to the catchy lyrics. Her varied fan base

makes it hard for radio programmers and journalists to classify her music.

An Interesting *Id*

Her sophomore album, *The Id*, is an exploration into the instinctive part of the psyche called, you guessed it, the id.



Allajah Young

Macy appears to have a very interesting id, especially with songs like "Give Me All Your Lovin' or I Will Kill You" and "Freak Like Me."

The album also gives us a peak into Macy's sensual side with "Sexual Revolution" and "My Nutmeg Phantasy."

Proving her id's not totally lustful, Macy writes heartfelt lyrics like "Sugar wishes don't change what is real or how it feels in the bad times," in "Sweet Baby," a song about

unconditional love. She also writes funny, true-to-life lines like in "Boo," where she asks her boyfriend, "Who are these bitches on my answering machine?"

Her Boo's Messed Up

"Boo," a tale of the contrasting personalities of her lover, is my favorite song on the album by far. He's loving, then abusive. Attentive, then neglectful. Despite the extremes, she still loves him, but lets him know she won't put up with his mess.

I believe that Macy wrote this based on something that really happened in her life because it's not a typical, sappy heartbreak song. I can picture some of her lyrics rolling off my

tongue if that type of situation arose with me.

But I don't know where she gets some of her other lyrics from.

Macy goes a little crazy with eclectic, riddle-like phrases like, "Hot like hot wings with hot chocolate in hell/ Cold like my isolation cell in the winter/ While kissing Mr. Freeze" in "Relating to a Psychopath," and "I tingle when I sing/ Bling bling ting ting ting" in "Oblivion."

But even when her lyrics are obscure, she sounds like she's genuinely feels what she's singing.

A Few Cameos

The album includes cameos from Slick Rick, Erykah Badu,

Macy's protégée Sunshine Anderson, Angie Stone and Mos Def. Apart from Slick Rick's rap in the remake of his old hit "Hey Young World," the cameos are all background vocals. All these familiar voices blending together with Macy's create an added plus.

The Id is a mix of different musical styles, life situations and feelings that we all sometimes hide. Macy's take on life gives her album a light but sincere sound that, much like Macy, is hard to classify. The sure thing about her sound is that it has strength in its peculiarity. ☒



Stripped-Down Stripes Prove Less Is More

By Morgan Hansen

Who said rock is dead? Probably not someone who's heard the White Stripes. With the release of their third album *White Blood Cells*, the White Stripes prove that statement wrong.

Lead singer Jack White croons out the mediocre lyrics of a garage band with the slightly strained voice of a pre-pubescent teenager and manages to pull it off. His efforts sound endearing and charming, as if he were one's own brother singing from the basement.

With standard rock riffs, Jack and ex-wife Meg White, who are appropriately named (neither look as if they've had any sun in the last 10 years) produce an album full of songs jumping from subject to subject. They range from elementary school students making new friends

("We're Going to Be Friends") to love ("Fell in Love With a Girl") to low-self esteem ("Offend in Every Way").

A Match for Teens

It's easy to identify with lyrics that match many teenagers' self-esteem problems: "I'm walking through the door/ But they're

expecting more/ Of an interesting man/ And sometimes I think I can/ But how much can I fake/ I'll speak until I break." (Hey, nobody ever said rock lyrics were always great poetry.)

Though the lyrics, with simple rhyming schemes, may not be much, they have a lot of meaning if one steps back and examines them a little closer.

Too Famous for a 'Little Room'

"Little Room," a one-verse song with Jack speak-singing to a background of mere drums banging out a steady rhythm, comes across as a commentary on becoming famous:

"Well you're in your little room/ And you're working on something good/ But if it's really good/ You're gonna need a bigger room/ And when you're in the bigger room/ You might not know what to do/ You might have to think of/ How you got started/ Sitting in your little room."



Morgan Hansen

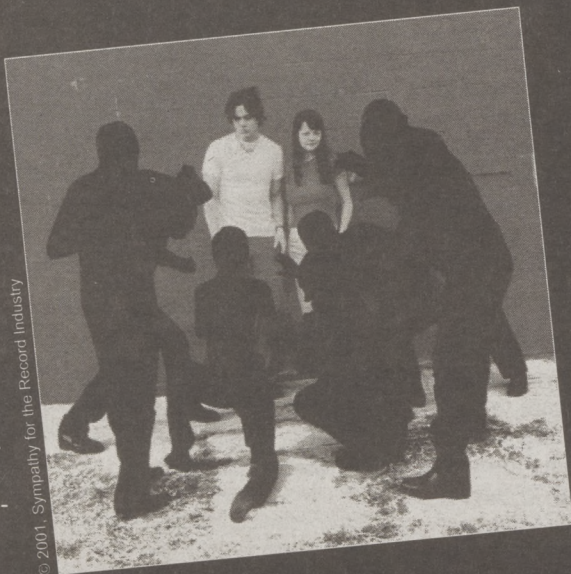
The song strikes me as saying that not everybody loves fame and fortune. Some people are more comfortable with a small, cozy apartment than a large mansion.

Hard Guitars, Pounded Drums

This album is a gem. Influences seem to range from the Buzzcocks to Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, and even to the knee-slapping, foot-tapping sounds of country on "Hotel Yorba."

The music is simple: a guitar Jack plays so hard that the strings sound about ready to snap, a piano thrown in at some points, a drum set that Meg pounds, sounding like a little girl with a spoon and her mother's pots and pans, and the moaning out of the vocals.

Less is more for the White Stripes, and it works extremely well for them. It only goes to show that you can make something out of nothing, and every once in a while, like on *White Blood Cells*, that something is great. ☒



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Tracing My Family Tree

By Hazak Brozgold

"This is a quest," my dad told me, "not only for me, but for you and your brother, for future generations."

He wasn't talking about the search for a cure for cancer or AIDS but about his genealogy research.

Genealogy is the tracing of family history. Lately, my dad's been spending a lot of his spare time trying to fill in the empty spaces on our family tree and re-establishing contacts with relatives we've lost touch with. This may seem simple, but genealogy research can be both exhilarating and extremely difficult.

"Our family origins have always been a great mystery," my father explained, catching my interest.

Want a More Exotic Background

People are always asking me where I'm from, because my name is kind of unusual. First they ask, "Where does your name come from?" When I tell them it's Hebrew, they say, "Oh, are you from Israel?"

I tell them I'm not. I'm Lithuanian Jewish and my family has been here for four generations. Lithuania is a small country bordering Poland.

I've always wanted to be able to say something more exotic about my background, like, "Funny you should ask: I'm part Dominican, part Danish, part Japanese, part Navajo, and part French."

And I've always wanted to have a relative I'd never met before who was mysterious and performed great feats, someone I could admire and wonder about.

Not the Only Brozgold

Thanks to my dad's research, my fantasies don't seem so absurd anymore. Our family history may actually be more interesting and complicated than we knew.

"When I was younger my dad would always say that we were the only Brozgold and I always found that impossible to believe," my dad said. "Now I know for sure it's not true."

My dad has been interested in genealogy for a long time, but only began to pursue this interest a few months ago. He does most of his research on the Internet, using search engines like Google.

He types in various spellings of our last name and gets a list of United States residents with similar names. He then calls or e-mails the people he finds, tells them about his quest and asks if they can give him any information.

Long-Lost Relatives

Almost as soon as he began his research, he started turning up results. He quickly found some people who may be related to us through a name search on Google. We share a nearly identical last name, and can trace our ancestors back to the same province, but we haven't been able to establish a blood tie yet.

I'm constantly being updated on my dad's discoveries. Sometimes I come home for dinner after hanging out with friends and find him waiting to tell me a new exciting fact he's uncovered, such as

a nephew we never knew about, or the port a relative's boat entered upon arrival in the U.S. at the turn of the century.

Or he'll show me a picture a relative sent him, like a long lost uncle who moved to China. "Hey!" he'll say. "Look at this! Can you see the resemblance?"

It Started With the Dog

When I asked my dad what prompted him to start pursuing his genealogy, he reminded me of the time, about a year ago, when our dog Blanche got sick. My father took her to the vet, where she was diagnosed with cancer.

"I was so upset because I thought: Oh, this poor dog, she doesn't even know where she came from," he recalled. "Which is so stupid because the dog doesn't care." But it made my dad realize that it was important to him to find out more about his own background.

My dad says he wants to claim his history. I shrug. Even though I'd like to have a more exciting story to tell about my ancestry, I have enough to worry about just starting my junior year of high school, planning out my future.



Hazak Brozgold

Finding My Tribe

Even so, I appreciate what my dad's doing, not only because I see how happy it makes him, but because I know that he's doing it for me as well as himself. As his research progresses, I understand more and more how important family is. Sometimes just knowing that there are people out there with the same blood as you can be comforting; it's like having a tribe.

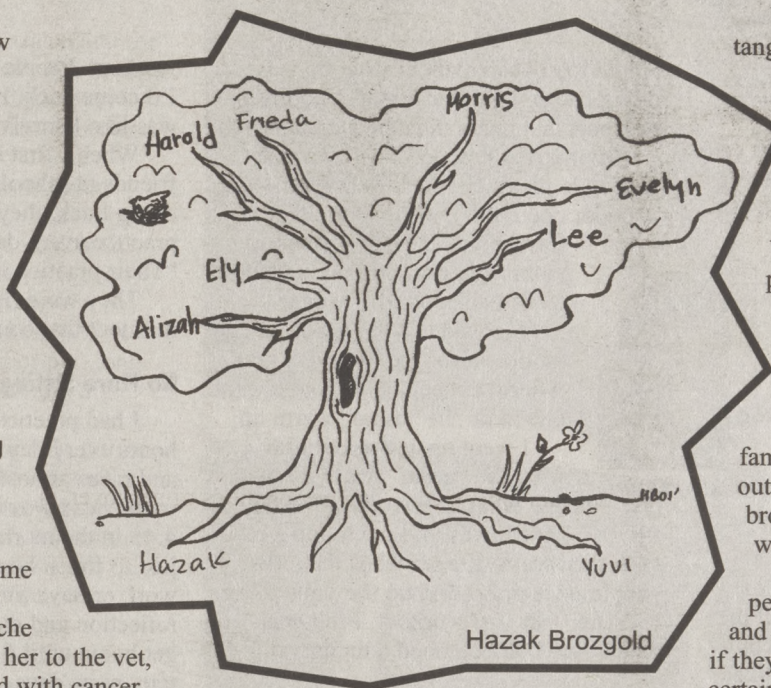
When I ask my dad how much he's found out, he replies, "Not much," but I think this is an understatement. For example, my father found out that we may have roots in Spain. He was completely wowed by this, and I was overjoyed. Finally, a little diversity in the family tree.

Lots of Different Spellings

The most important discovery so far, I feel, is the more concrete evidence of his research: actual people who may be related to us. Where our last name is Brozgold, theirs is Brozgol.

Alternative spellings of Jewish names are very common, because many Jews immigrating from European countries had their names misspelled when going through customs upon their arrival here.

And that's not all. Recently, when my dad attended high school graduation, he was surprised to hear a Brozgul called up to receive his diploma. My dad went up to him after the ceremony, met his parents and told them about his research. Now they're supplying each other with information about their ancestors.



Hazak Brozgold

tangible impact of slowly making the world smaller and somehow more welcoming.

Though no sure family connections have been established, my father already feels like he's "part of a clan," as he puts it. When he says that, I too feel the pull of chromosomes, however slight, and of blood ties which are impossible to shake.

Seeing My Dad's Dreams

Even if my dad can't trace our family tree back to its roots, and map out how our forefathers and mothers brought us into being, the whole thing will still have been worth the ride.

He's re-established contact with people he hasn't spoken to in years, and he's also met new people who, even if they don't turn out to be family, may certainly become good friends.

My dad's research has also allowed me to see him in a new light. I see his hopes and dreams, his desire to somehow bring everything together. He's going places, doing detective work, and discovering that Disney is right—it is a small world after all.

He has become, in my mind, a real patriarchal figure: the keeper of the family, the organizer of time. ☒

The Pull of Chromosomes

This chance meeting allowed me to see clearly, for the first time, the work my dad is doing. To me, research was something that had to do with numbers and science, two things I generally don't understand.

But my dad's research is so different from that—he's researching people, not equations or earthworms. And it has the



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On the Right

Joining the team was

By Sabine Maura

At the beginning of my freshman year at Bishop Loughlin HS, I was insanely shy and quiet. School was my whole life.

Then I joined the track team.

I've always been a very good student; my grades come first. I'm one of those people who can get an A on a paper and not be satisfied; I want to know what I could've done to get an A+. But even though I like to learn and take pride in doing well, I felt that something was missing in my life.

I decided I wanted to be part of a team. I'd heard that to be part of my school's track team, I just had to tell the head coach I wanted to join. That, combined with the fact that I'd always liked to run, made track seem like the sport for me.

But just thinking about talking to the coach gave me an overwhelming shy attack; it took me about a month to get up the courage to go down to his office. When I finally did meet Mr. Bowes, I knew I'd made the right decision.

Crazy About Track

He had this look on his face that made me see he was crazy about track. I could

tell he really cared about what he was doing and figured that a man who loves his sport that much must be a great coach.

On my first practice day, I was late getting to the track room. When I pushed the door open, there were 70 to 80 athletes in there. They seemed so comfortable around one another that I had another shy attack.

I looked at Mr. Bowes and he motioned for me to have a seat. After the meeting, he told everyone to do the "usual" warm up.

I went up and asked him what the "usual" warm up was and what he wanted me to do.

Mr. Bowes told me to jog a few laps, then watch the stretches that other people were doing and do the same thing.

After that first workout, I felt energized, like I had climbed a mountain.

My Sore Body

But when I got up the next morning, I was sore. Muscles that I previously hadn't acknowledged made themselves known. Walking up and down the stairs at school hurt.

When I got to practice that afternoon, one of the guys from the boys' team said, "You're going to be sore for a while." And then he said, "It's good you came back." As I soon found out, many people are ready to quit the team after one hard

workout. People had been wondering if I'd come back. I was glad that I had; it was like I survived an initiation.

When I first mentioned to my few friends at school that I was thinking about doing track, they'd said things like, "They practice every day for a long time," and, "Their practice is really hard."

They were right. Track was a big commitment that completely changed my life.

No More Sitting Around

I had practice for two-and-a-half hours every day after school and races almost every weekend. I was up at 4:45 in the morning just to finish homework or have time for reflection and didn't get home until 6 p.m. most days. I didn't know how my teammates made time for other extracurricular activities.

I could no longer spend two hours chatting on the phone or sitting around doing nothing. It was hard finding enough time to study and to meet my obligations to my family and close friends. But it was worth it.

The school year is divided into three

track seasons: cross-country, indoor and outdoor. When I joined the track team it was still cross-country season: instead of running on a track, we run on grass, dirt, gravel, cow paths, hills and bridges.

My First Meet

I remember my first cross-country meet like it was yesterday. I had to wake up really early and I was nervous. I'd been on the team for barely two weeks and didn't think I was ready to race yet.

My uncle Max drove me and my grandmother up to Van

Cortlandt Park in the Bronx from our home in

Brooklyn. The whole way up there, I had butterflies in my stomach.

It was a cold, foggy and damp day. My teammates and I had just finished our warm-ups and stretching when I heard them call for the freshman girls. That was my race.

When we got to the starting

line, we had to take off our sweats; underneath we were wearing our team uniform: yellow T-shirts and purple shorts. I was cold. We were all cold.

I heard one of the girls say that we



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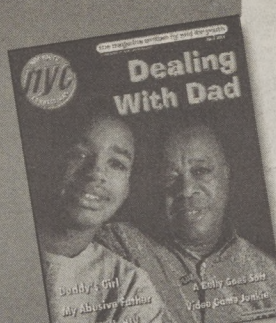
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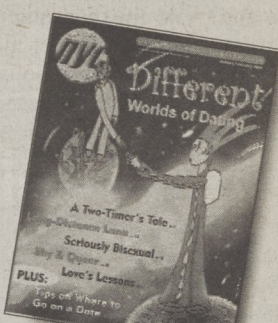
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Track

a smart move

needed to say a prayer, so we did. About seven of us Bishop Loughlin girls got in a huddle to say the "Our Father" together.

At the end, the girl who lead the prayer said special individual prayers for each of us. When she got to me she asked God to help me to not give up and not get lost, since it was my first time running there.

By then, it was time for all the freshman girls from my school and the many other Catholic schools we were competing against to take our starting positions. All of us lined up side by side behind the white line. We waited. I heard "Ready" and "Set." The starter shot the gun, and we were off.

In the Middle of the Pack

As I ran, I was nervous. I was somewhere in the middle of the pack and I wasn't sure if that was where I was supposed to be.

"You're gonna see some girls take off like bats outta hell," my coach had told me at the start of the race. "You don't. They're going to die out when they reach the cow path. That's when you little-by-little move up," he said. So I stayed where I was.

We were running on flat grass, so I figured that a mile and a half would be cake. It wasn't. By the time I hit the cow path I was still where I'd started in relation to the rest of the pack. I'd heard that there was only one big hill, so I figured that once I reached it, I'd pick up the pace and try to finish strong.

I hit the hill and ran hard. Then I caught a pain in my side which hurt bad.

Sharp Pain!

Well, I hit the hill and ran the hill hard. Then I caught a stitch (a sharp pain in my side) which hurt so bad that I had to slow down to just a bit faster than a jog. By this point the pack had dissolved. I saw a few girls running together here and there but I didn't know where I was in relation to the entire group.

I saw a bridge and remembered what everyone had told me: "Sabine, when you see the bridge, you gotta go, you gotta run hard, because the race is almost over." So I told myself, "Pain or no pain, I'm running hard."

After crossing the bridge, I still had to run down another small hill and then over about a half mile of flat gravel before reaching the finish. When I crossed the line I had a killer headache, my legs felt weird, and my arms were tight.

Felt Great to Do OK

But along with all of that, I still had this strange good feeling. I had accomplished something I didn't think I could and the pride I felt overpowered the aches and pains.

I hadn't even thought I was ready for my first race, but I'd not only run it, I did OK. I didn't finish last (in fact, quite a few girls came in behind me) or get lost or fall.

After cross-country comes indoor track, a very different sport. The indoor season lasts from late November until February. Indoor means relays, longer workouts and longer race days.

The third season is outdoor, which includes field events like shot-put, long jump, triple jump, pole vault and high jump.

I love outdoor track so much. For one thing, it's right at the end of the year, when most people get in that "zone." We really feel we're at our best. For another, I get to do more than just run.

The Discovery

I hadn't planned to do field events when I joined the team. But one day towards the end of freshman year, Mr. Darrell, the field coach, called me over after practice.

"Sabine," he said, "I want you to throw this softball to Frankie for me." Mr. Darrell threw me the ball.

I threw Frankie the ball and when he caught it, everyone just looked at me. "What?" I asked. "What did I do wrong?"

Mr. Darrell gave me this weird grin and asked, "How would you feel about throwing javelin? Because-I think you're going to start throwing this week, maybe next." Next thing I know, I'm throwing javelin.

I Was Slow

As much as I enjoy track and field, I can't say being on the team has been easy. When I first went out for track, I simply wasn't very good. I was one of the slow people on the team, especially in cross-country. I didn't have much endurance.

When some of the fast freshman girls were running the 400 in 64 or 65 seconds, I was running it in 75, a full 10 seconds behind. It doesn't sound like a lot, but in the world of track and field, a 10-second gap can be the difference between coming in first and coming in last.

Fortunately for me, there were other people on the team at my level (and they ended up becoming my closest friends).

Leader of the B-Girls

At practice, when I worked out with the A-team girls, I'd be hurting, just barely keeping up with them, and then someone would say something like, "OK, I guess we have to actually do the next one hard, before the coach starts giving us extra."

Trying to hide how out of breath I was, I'd say, "That was slow?" And one of the others would say something like, "It wasn't that slow—but it sure wasn't fast!"

Still, I'm happy to say that now, when I run with my current group—call us the B-girls—I'm often in the front.



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Worried About My Studies

The other hard thing about track is the amount of time that it takes and how that's affected my studies. It's hard to be on the team and also stay at the top of the honor roll.

I couldn't talk to anyone when I got stressed over an assignment or worried about my grades dropping because people who knew me would be like, "Sabine, shut up—you know you aced it."

My grades went down a little in freshman year, and it really bothered me because I'm such the classic over-achiever.

Then last year, my sophomore year, I had some serious problems with a couple of classes that brought down my whole average. I still made honors, but I was at the bottom of the group rather than at the top.

My Reputation, Tarnished!

I had people coming up to me saying, "What happened to you?" and "I can't believe that you're all the way at the bottom."

Still, I don't see track as the cause of my academic problems; I see it as the outlet that helped me get through a difficult time. I used running to get my mind off things that were bothering me, like a bad grade or an annoying comment.

And I learned to use some of the focus and determination that track helped me develop to bring my grades back up. I

I used running to get my mind off things that were bothering me, like a bad grade or an annoying comment.

finished the year fourth in my class.

Track has made me a more well-rounded person; it's given me experiences that no book could teach me. I feel the camaraderie that people on the same team have with each other. It's like having a second family. Even when people on the team can't stand each other, we still watch out for each other.

And I know what it's like to hear people cheer for me while I'm running and how it feels to run a victory lap after our team wins a championship.

If I hadn't joined the track team, I'd still be the shy girl with not many friends that I was in the beginning of freshman year. Track helped me to make friends and build my self-confidence, because now I know that there's more to me than just smarts.

It's taught me that perseverance brings results. All in all, being on the track team has been one of the best experiences of my life. ☑

Going for My License

By Sharon Feder

Ever since I was 10, I've imagined myself driving. I've had dreams of driving over a bridge, the windows down, the wind blowing my hair back, and me relaxed behind the wheel. To me driving symbolized freedom and peace: a way to escape my troubles.

As I got older, driving became less of a fantasy and more of a necessity. I live in a suburban-like part of the city where many people not only get their licenses when they turn 17, but their own cars as well. When I became a teenager myself, I understood why.

None of my friends live within walking distance and it's frustrating that it takes an hour and two buses to get to someone's house when I know it's a 10-minute drive. I can't rely on my parents to drive me around and I don't want to.

Unfortunately, getting a license to drive is not so easy.

A Car's Not a Go-Cart

My first experience behind the wheel came when I was 15. My mother asked me if I wanted to try driving in a deserted parking lot. So we changed places.

Once I was in the driver's seat, I realized that I didn't know what to do. I'd

raced go-carts in theme parks before, but my mom's car had no "red" or "green" pedals to show which was the accelerator and which was the brake. I had to ask her, "Which one's the go and which one's the stop?"

Once we got that straightened out, my mom told me to "gently" try driving. I slowly put my foot on the accelerator and felt it move with my foot. I moved my foot up and down, testing the accelerator, and then moved from the accelerator to the brake. Go, stop...go, stop. The car moved forward and back.



Sharon Feder

Getting a Learner's Permit

After 10 minutes, my mother made me get back in the passenger seat. She said she wouldn't drive with me again until I had taken a few driver's education lessons.

She seemed mad and I couldn't understand why. "How am I supposed to know how to drive if no one's ever showed me?" I thought.

That was it for me and driving until I got my learner's permit a few months after I turned 16. My mother took me to the Department of Motor Vehicles. I had to take a simple test, identifying road signs and answering basic questions like "What do you do when approaching a stop sign?" I passed without a problem.

My First Real Lesson

The next step was taking driver's ed. I signed up for a class at a local school. It met for an hour and a half every Sunday and was utterly boring. The teacher had us read from the book out loud and then asked us questions.

The topics ranged from the different parts of the car to road rage. The only thing that got me through the class was knowing that I'd get my actual driving lesson right afterwards.

I'd always pictured myself relaxed behind the wheel, but at my first lesson I was very nervous. Everyone in the car had a lot more experience than I did, and the two girls who went ahead of me drove perfectly. When my turn came, I was so scared that I'd do something wrong.

Too Much Talking

When I got in the driver's seat, Carmen, our instructor, showed me how to signal, adjust the mirrors, and start and stop the car. She was very helpful and made me feel calmer. I did better this time than I had with my mother. The ride was smoother; I didn't stop and go.

Still, I had a few problems. I wasn't alone in the car: the other students were talking in the back seat and Carmen was talking in the front seat. It was confusing. I was sitting there uptight, my eyes on the road, doubting every move I made.

At first I missed stop signs: I went right through them or just slowed down without actually stopping. I *knew* I was supposed to stop but somehow I just kept moving.

What Do I Do at a Yellow Light?

Once I got the hang of stop signs, I began to have problems with traffic lights. The light would be green as I approached a corner, but by the time I got up to it, it would turn yellow.

I never knew what to do. By the time I decided to stop, or go, or ask Carmen what to do, I'd already be in the intersection, about to run a red light.

Eventually I got the hang of it. Carmen taught me to look at the opposite walk way; if I saw a flashing "Don't Walk" sign, I knew my light would soon turn red, and that I needed to slow down.

With practice, I improved. By the time driver's ed was over, I was driving well, but still didn't feel ready to take the test. My parents hired Carmen to give me a few private lessons and that gave me the confidence I needed. Not only did I feel ready for the test, I thought I was a better driver than a lot of people I knew who had their licenses.

Confident for My First Test

The day of my test, Carmen picked me up. I was positive that I'd pass and thought that after the test I might drive to a friend's house to show off a little.

I got into the car and had one last lesson. It went very well, which I took as a good sign.

We got to the testing site and got in line. One of Carmen's other students was just ahead of me. He got into the car and pulled away without looking to the side to see that the path was clear or signaling that he was pulling out. Even I knew that was a big mistake.

"Wow," I thought. "I feel bad for him,

failing right away like that." But when he returned, he told me he had passed. I looked at the person who'd given him the test. "I want that woman," I said.

Then I saw a grumpy-looking man coming towards me. "Not that guy," I thought. "Get in the car," he said, very loudly with a thick accent.

'Start the Car!'

Once I was in the car I decided to relieve the tension. "Just a bit nervous," I joked. He was not amused and made no effort to respond to me. He looked down at his paper and half-yelled, "How old are you?"

"Sixteen," I answered. He asked two more times, and two more times I answered.

Once that was settled, he yelled, "Start the car!" I tried to, but something was wrong. He calmly took his eyes off his papers, turned to me and asked, "Are you sure it's on?"

Once I got the car started, he told me to pull away. I checked my mirrors, signaled, looked to the left and slowly made my way out. "Make right," he said.

I signaled right and made what I thought was a perfect turn. He began to move his head left and right as if he were saying no. He soon added a clicking noise to the head shaking. I was too scared to say a word.

He Yelled and Clicked at Me

"You're going too fast," he said. I was going 23 miles per hour; I slowed down to 21.

I made two more right turns and then he instructed me to park. Parking is easy and I'm good at it, but I used five motions instead of three. He continued shaking his head and making noises.

"K-turn," he demanded. A K-turn is a broken U-turn; you use it to change the direction you're driving in. I did it per-

At the testing site, I saw a grumpy-looking man coming towards me. 'Get in the car,' he said very loudly.

fectly and continued. "Click...click...click...click," went my tester. I was getting aggravated.

I'd been doing fine, but when I was about to make my final left turn I made a mistake. We were on a very narrow two-way street, at a four-way stop. I had the right of way but instead of going, I waited for a bus to go by. The instructor started screaming at me, "Go, go!"

A Big Failure

I made another right turn and he told me to pull over. But he didn't like the way I did it so he took control of the steering wheel and did it himself. "I'm sorry. I cannot pass you," he said.

He gave me my printout. The way the

A cat has nine lives . . .



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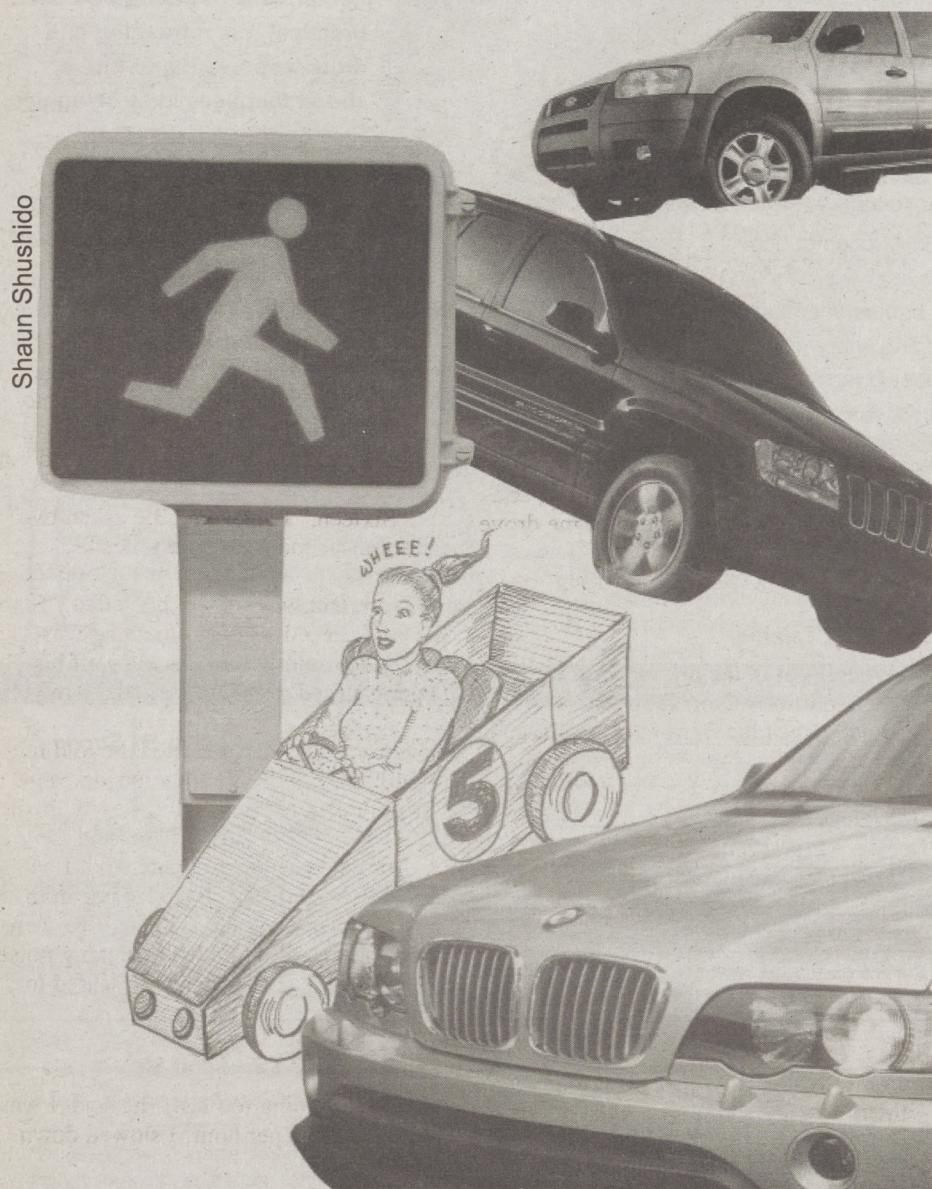
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Drove Me to Tears



scoring works is that they give you points for every mistake you make. He'd given me 80 points. Passing is 30 or less.

He gave me citations for things I was sure I hadn't done. I ran out of the car on the verge of tears and told Carmen, who was shocked since I'd been driving so well.

I was more upset by the test itself than the fact that I wouldn't be able to start driving. I couldn't believe how mean that man was.

Lost My Confidence

For months after the test, my parents offered to drive with me, but I didn't want to. Every time I tried to picture myself behind the wheel, that horrible DMV man was next to me. I could see him shaking his head and going, "Click, click."

He'd completely undermined my confidence. I no longer saw myself as a good driver; in my mind, I was horrible.

It was four months before I was able to get behind the wheel again. When I did, it was with a new instructor, Shelly. He was a sweet old man. While I was driving he told me about his children and grandchildren and said what a good driver I was. I felt comfortable driving with him and confident that with his help I'd pass my next road test.

I Get Glasses

Meanwhile, I got glasses. They're for distance, and I'm supposed to wear them when I go to the movies or to see the blackboard in school. My eye doctor suggested that when I started driving, I wear them too.

I wondered if I should wear my glasses for my second road test. I can see without them, just not as well. My mother warned me that if I wore them, it would go on my license, and that if I was caught driving without them I could get a ticket.

Not wearing my glasses didn't seem like a big deal because they mostly just magnified the letters on signs and made colors a little bit brighter. I hadn't worn them when I practiced and it wasn't a problem, so I decided that I wouldn't wear them for the test.

Shaking All Over

On the day of my second road test, I told myself that I wouldn't be nervous, but I was. When I got into the car with Shelly for my final lesson, I drove terribly. He lectured me about the road test being nothing to worry about and told me to get myself together.

I started driving better, but I couldn't park correctly. I kept turning too much or not turning enough and either ending up too far away from the curb or on the curb. I was terrified.

When we got to the test site, Shelly gave me a pep talk. Then he went outside to smoke and talk to a friend. My mind raced back to the test; my hands and legs started shaking. I was a nervous wreck. I pictured my legs not being steady enough to control the accelerator or the brake.

Breathe In, Breathe Out

How could I take the test in this state? Out of nowhere it hit me: Breathe. I started to practice the breathing I'd learned in my yoga classes.

In...one...two...three...four, hold; one...two...three...four. I did the breathing exercises over and over again for half an hour. When I was done, I felt calm, relaxed and ready.

About 40 minutes after my scheduled test time, a woman came up to my car. I was really happy to have a woman test me after my experience with that horrible man. She told me to adjust everything I needed to, said hi, and asked how I was. She seemed very nice, which made me feel more relaxed.

I started the car and drove away. She gave me directions: "Right...left...K-turn...parallel park." I did everything perfectly. I looked at her; she was smiling. I knew I was doing well and was positive that I would pass.

Oooops!

When we were almost back at the testing center, I stopped at a stop sign. I did everything right. I stopped, waited three seconds, then inched forward to see if the road was clear. I didn't see any cars so I began to turn.

But the road wasn't clear. A car was coming that I hadn't seen. The tester took control of the car and pressed on her brake.

I was upset. As I was making the turn I had a bad feeling but I didn't pay attention. After my near-miss, I felt like I'd sabotaged myself by going ahead and turning anyway. I returned to the test site, unsure of whether I had passed. I had driven very well—until I almost got into an accident.

I didn't see any cars so I began to turn. But a car was coming that I hadn't seen. The tester took control of the car and pressed on her brakes.

I pulled over and the instructor went over her printout. She told me that I was a very good driver and said that I did very well. I was so happy. I thought to myself, "Yeah, I passed!"

I Failed Again

Then, she told me that what I'd done was very dangerous and could've caused an accident. I didn't know what to think so I said, "I'm sorry, it's just not clear to me; did I pass or fail?"

"You failed," she answered. She explained that my last move was an automatic fail. She got out of the car and I remained in the driver's seat, staring at the printout. "I was so close," I thought.

Shelly came back and I switched to the passenger's seat. I told him what had happened. He felt pretty bad, but told me not to worry, that it was just a test and I could take it again. But that didn't make me feel better. I started crying.

Upset With Myself

I was upset with myself for turning when I had even the smallest feeling that I should wait and look again. If I'd listened to myself, if I'd followed my instincts, I would've passed.

I also thought I'd made a mistake by not wearing my glasses. If I'd worn them, maybe I would have seen the other car.

Shelly immediately rummaged through the car looking for tissues. He got one for me and I clutched it tightly.

Mom's Accident Makes Things Clear

When my mother picked me up, I found out that she'd been in an accident herself that afternoon. She was waiting at a light with two cars behind her, when a third car rammed into them from behind and forced all the cars into each other. My mom was fine but two people in the other cars were badly injured.

My mom kept telling me how bad the accident was and how happy she was that I wasn't with her when it happened. That was the first time I realized how dangerous driving could be.

The fact that I'd almost caused an accident myself hadn't seemed real because, thanks to dual steering, my tester had been able to prevent it. But my mother's accident put things in perspective; failing the driving test was a lot less serious than having my head cracked open.

When we got home, I immediately made an appointment for my next road test. My newfound understanding of how dangerous driving is scared me, but I still wanted to drive.

Freedom's Got Risks

What I imagined driving to be like when I was 10 wasn't totally wrong: with driving comes a type of freedom, a freedom that I want. I feel in control when I

drive, like I'm completely independent, able to take myself where I want to go, when I want to go there.

If the risk of having an accident is something that comes with that freedom, I'll have to deal with it. In the future, I know I'll be more careful behind the wheel and I'll never drive without wearing my glasses. ☑

Editor's Note: A month after finishing this article, Sharon took her road test for the third time and passed.

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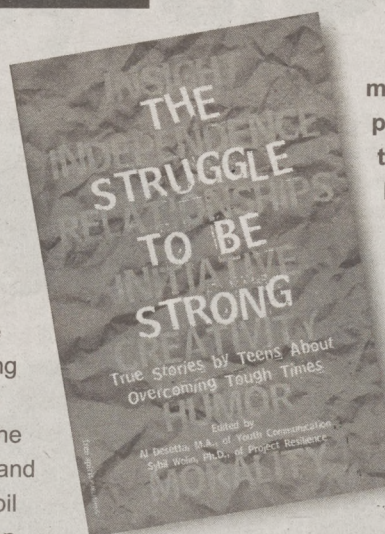
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N E U N R S H O P P I N G I N
D S S G O W H A P P Y G N C Y

There is a secret message in this wordsearch. To find it, first circle all of the letters individually for the "Clues." "Clues" may go in any direction—even backwards. Then read the message contained in the uncircled letters. (Hint: write out the uncircled letters in one long row and then look for words.)

Send us the message at NYC, 224 W. 29th St.—2nd floor, New York, NY 10001, by November 19, 2001, along with a short letter, and we will print your name in the next issue. You should include your school if you are in school.

CLUES

Anniversary	Kissing
Babies	Kittens
Birthdays	Laughing
Cake	Love
Candy	Magic
Carnival	Movies
Celebration	Music
Chilling	Partying
Dancing	Playing
Dinner	Presents
Family	Prom Night
Flowers	Puppy
Friends	Rejoice
Games	Relaxing
Glee	Rides
Graduation	Shopping
Happy	Silly
Holidays	Snow
Hugging	Summer
Ice Cream	Sunny
Joy	Swimming
Jumping	Vacation

Sept./Oct.'s Secret Message

Excuse me waiter but there's a fly in my soup. Yes, Madame. And it looks like its doing the backstroke.

Wordsearch Winners

Felix Lugo IV, Paddy Forlani.

contest winners

If You Could Have Any Super Power, What Would it Be and Why?

Contest Winners

The Magical Touch

1st Prize

Sheneka Lewis, 15

Hostos Lincoln Academy:

If I could have any super power, it would be the Magical Touch. I choose this because I would be able to help people who are sad, sick or dead.

The Magical Touch could help people who are sad become happy again. By this I mean they would not forget what was bothering them, but they would be able to laugh once again. My Magical Touch would also be able to help people who are sick without a cure. I would help people with cancer, AIDS, etc.

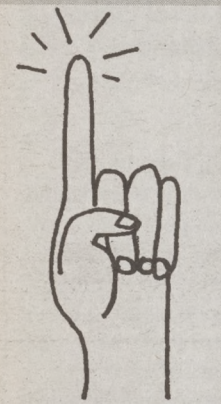
The Magical Touch could also bring back life, but not all life. I couldn't bring back the life of someone who died years ago or more than 30 min-

utes ago. Bringing back someone who died years ago would not be a good thing. They might be so old that they're not used to the government we have. If I were to bring back Tupac, a rapper, his family would not be the same as it was before he died. A lot of things have changed since his death.

I also couldn't bring back the life of someone who died from a natural death. I think when a person dies naturally, God is calling them, so I would not be able to bring them back.

I'd only bring back the lives of people who died by accident. Accidental deaths, such as taking a gunshot for someone else, would cause a family more pain and suffering than if it was a natural death.

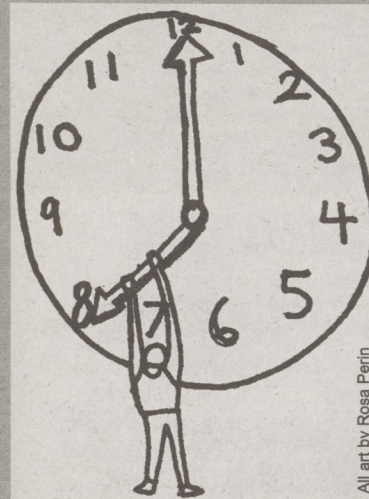
I don't want to be known just for my hand. I want to be known for helping people and their family and friends. The Magical Touch is a super power that can be used for anything, but I want to use it for the good and not the bad. Who knows, maybe my Magical Touch will bring world peace! ☒



2nd Prize

Emmanuel Ansong, 14
Hostos Lincoln Academy:

My mother says, on a daily basis, that there are not enough hours in a day to do everything she has planned. She occasionally gives me brief lectures on how I should "prioritize" my activities, as not to waste time. In fact, it could even be said that time is our most valuable resource. If one had access to unlimited amounts of mankind's most valuable resource, then the possibilities would be endless. Therefore, I've decided to wield the awesome power of time.



All art by Rosa Perin

However, even the most valuable resource in the wrong hands would be a plague on mankind. I certainly don't have any desire to stop time and rob banks or commit murders expertly just to get back to my 6th period class. But, while I have no evil intentions, no one could blame me if I stopped time for an hour or five to get some extra sleep, or to finish my chemistry lab report in time to hand it in. Or maybe even buy a lottery ticket after numbers have been drawn, then reverse time a day to win millions.

But certainly you don't expect me to use my super power for frivolous purposes only? Of course not. I also plan on doing my fair share of heroic deeds, when I ascend to time-warping greatness. With complete control of time, I could prevent the murders of great people, save victims of car crashes, and even better, prevent forest fires!

On a more serious note, something I've also been considering about my prospective power is that I'd possibly be able to prevent the World Trade Center attack. Even with the knowledge of the possible ramifications of manipulating time in such a way, it is a very comforting thought, being able to prevent the suffering of friends and family members.

Even if I were to go to some cosmic superheroes' jail for breaking the laws of time flow, I would sleep soundly behind my radioactive bars knowing that the last good deed I did prevented the loss of thousands of lives.

The manipulation of mankind's most valuable resource might be a very dangerous thing. The temporal paradoxes that could result might even throw us back to before the ice age. Even with the knowledge of these possible effects, or perhaps because of them, I still choose time manipulation to be my power. ☒

The Invisible Girl

3rd Prize

Sara Soto, 16
Graphic Arts HS:

If I could have a super power, I'd be invisible. That way, when I have a crush on a guy, I could follow him around and see what he likes.

First I'd follow him to his hang-out spots and listen to what he and his friends talk about. If I'm lucky, maybe I'll hear him talk to his friends about me.

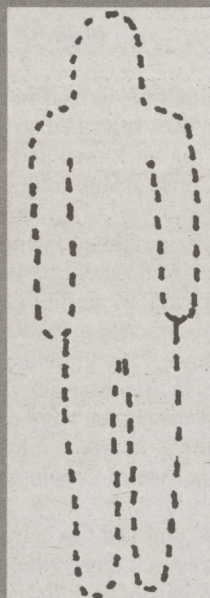
Then I'd go to his house to see what kind of person he is. I'd go in his room and see if it's dirty or clean. I would check to see if he wears boxers or briefs. Then I'd

see what kind of music he listens to and what kinds of food he likes to eat. I'd also look in his closet to see if all his clothes are name brand.

After I'm done learning almost everything about him, I would follow him when he's out with a girl and see how he treats her.

After finding out everything about my crush, maybe I'd have a good chance with him.

So that's the main reason why I would like to be invisible. Maybe I could start my own business for teenage girls with crushes and do the same for them. ☒



Runners Up

Seeing the Future and Super Strength

Elvis A. Nimako, 16
Truman HS:

I'm going to base my answer(s) on "The Attacks on America." The pain, losses of life and the situation from which men and women ran for their lives, left me with two wishes.

My first wish is for God to give me the power of having premonitions about tomorrow, next week, next month, next year and even further in the future. If I knew about what would happen, these attacks on America could've been prevented. Even though some people might have thought I'm crazy or mentally ill, I could've contacted someone such as the President or the U.S. Navy or Army.

In contacting any one of them, the lives of those lost in the World Trade Center attacks could've been saved. All flights could've been canceled,

leaving the attackers with no choice but a second plan, which, if I had the power of seeing approaching danger, I could also have thwarted.

My second wish is to have the strength of 100 men to help the firefighters and police. As I look at them put their lives on the line to help save others, it makes me sad. If I had the strength of 100 men, I could be at Ground Zero, giving them more time to rest while I help move big debris from the area, speeding up the clean-up process.

In doing this, the terrorist groups, or any country that wants the U.S. to come down, will realize and learn that no matter what they throw at the U.S., we will recover fast and become much stronger than before. God Bless America and yes, "United We Stand!" ☒

A Touch of Love

Alexis Castro, 16
Repertory Company HS:

If I could have any super power, the power would be the "love touch." I'd just touch people and they'd get filled with love and peace and caring for one another, no matter what their color, race, religion or beliefs.

There is so much war and hatred in this world. People are killing each other.

War, hatred, grief and jealousy begins in the heart. If I had the "love touch," the heart and people of love and peace would have new ideas for a better life.

People might think it's dumb to have that kind of power. People might even say it's better to make money. I don't think so. Money, we have. We need peace, love and most of all, to care for each other, no matter what. ☒

HONORABLE MENTION

Arneeka Paulson, David Martinez, Felix Lugo IV, Charles Kim, SeJin Lim, Katrina Green, Margaret Slys, Perla Martinez, David Beltran, Lu Qi Chen, Shirley Li, Shakima L. Lourick, Karen Hernandez, Edosa Egharevba, David Forman, Jeanette Torres, Woojin Park, Min Ting Yao, Tatyana Cabrera, Luis Reyes, Keema Archibald, Tashina Blythe, Duyen Nguyen, Christina Espejo, Diana Flor, Jizzelle Baldwin, Taisha Rodriguez, Chao Hong Cen, Ann Kim, Tanya White, Jose Alejandro Valencia, Meggan Lugo, Claudio Rios, Osa Egharevba, Jamaine McClain, Steven Lee, Elizabeth Fraticelli, Frank Torres, Ricky Brown, Francis Ellis.

Coney Island Memories

By Vicky Zajac

When I was younger, I thought Coney Island was the coolest place because of its amusement parks.

Since it's only a five-minute walk from my home, I'd go there two to three times a week in the summer with my family and friends. Coney Island had practically everything I liked: roller coasters, spinning rides, a big Ferris wheel, video games, great food and a beach.

There are two amusement parks in Coney Island: Astroland and Deno's Park. The parks have some similar rides, but Astro-land's famous for the Cyclone roller coaster while Deno's is known for the 150-foot-tall Wonder Wheel.

On a typical trip to Coney Island, I'd meet up with my friends and ride the Cyclone, my favorite ride. It's a wooden roller coaster that's been there since 1927.



those sections on my way home.

But back in the '30s and '40s, Coney Island was different.

"Coney Island was very safe. People weren't worried about walking the boardwalk late at night as opposed to today," said my grandma, Evelyn Jaffe, who's 81.



Vicky Zajac

She lives near

Coney Island and used to go to its amusement parks decades ago.

"It was a great gathering of all different communities. Coney Island was always packed with people from all over the world," she said.

Clean Beaches

"The beaches were clean and nobody used the ocean as a garbage like the way they do today," said Connie Kaufman, a 70-year-old woman who moved to Coney Island 20 years ago. "It seems like now, everything is ruined."

She also attended Coney Island's amusement parks frequently as a child. She said the beach was safer because there were ropes to hold onto in the water if you couldn't swim.

I'd never thought about the



Coney Island has served as an amusement area for more than a century.

footage of Coney Island in the '30s and '40s. It looked so beautiful and big back then and made today's Coney Island look bad by comparison.

In that era, Coney Island had two major amusement parks: Steeplechase Park and Luna Park. "My favorite park was Steeplechase," my grandma said, remembering its different shows. "Some of the shows were called 'freak shows' in which all different types of weird people would perform."

"I also enjoyed the baby parade in which there would be decorated carriages with babies in costumes," she said.

A Dragon Coaster

"In the evening on the boardwalk, there was a nightclub atmosphere where we'd go ballroom dancing," my grandma said.

Ms. Kaufman remembers the roller coaster Dragon Gorge. "That was one of my favorites," she said. "I also enjoyed the water flume along with the swinging rides and bumper cars."

But Coney Island's parks hit some rough times in the mid-'60s. On August 28, 1963, a fire broke out in a pizzeria east of Steeplechase Park. Six amusement venues, including the Ravenhall and Washington Baths, were burned.

Plagued by Misfortune

Then Steeplechase Park closed down in 1964.

Ms. Kaufman knew it would never be the same after that. "I felt terrible when the amusement

Nearly two decades later, on July 29, 1995, 14 people riding the Hell Hole, a rotor ride, were injured and hospitalized. The ride was permanently closed after that.

By this point, Coney Island parks held a bad reputation. A man who's worked in Coney Island for 15 years who asked not to be named said, "This sh-t is going to die. Can't you see it dying now? I hate what is happening to this place."

Better Options

Even though I used to be very excited about Coney Island when I was younger, it's not my first choice when it comes to amusement parks. Now if my friends and I want to go to a huge amusement park, we choose Six Flags or Hershey Park over Coney Island because they have more of a variety of rides.

Plus, their roller coasters are more advanced and modern than the ones in Coney Island.

Each time I go to Coney Island, I think about all the stories people have told me about the old parks. It sucks that I can't experience how Coney Island was back then.

Still, when I go to Astroland or Deno's, I make the best of it. Rides like the Cyclone and Pirate Ship may not be around in 15 years, so I'm taking advantage of them now. ☒

An Adventurous Ride

While I'm slowly going up the steep hill, I get to see the beautiful sights of Coney Island and the beach. The water looks crystal blue from high up, and the sky blends in with the ocean. At night, all the rides are lit up and the park sparkles.

Then, when I hit the first drop, I feel like I'm going to fly out of the car because the fall's so steep. The roller coaster rattles and shakes, making sharp turns, which makes me think I'm going to fall out. But I enjoy the ride's roughness. It's an adventure!

After getting off the Cyclone, I ride the bumper cars, get on the Pirate Ship and then head to Nathan's for a hot dog.

Dirty Fun

Even though both amusement parks look nice at night, they look polluted in the day. People are slobbs. There's leftover food, plastic bags and admission tickets on the floor. Sometimes, after I get off a ride, I have dirt on my clothes and skin from the filthy seats.

The boardwalk's littered with garbage and there's graffiti all over the walls. When I told NYC writer Naomi that I go to Coney Island beach, she gave me a disgusted look and said "Ewww, that's a dirty beach!"

She's right because the water looks moldy green and there are usually soda cans, bags, shoes and other nasty stuff floating in it. It's so gross.

I've also heard that some areas around the amusement parks are dangerous at night, but I've never had to pass through



history of Coney Island and how it might've changed over the years. But one day, I was watching TV and flipping through the channels when I saw Coney Island on channel 13. I couldn't believe that some of the rides had existed for almost 100 years.

The program showed old



Speak Out

By Vicky Zajac

What do you do when you go to Coney Island? What do you think of its amusement parks?



Malvina Yutchman,

18: "It's a good family trip for the day. But it would be better if it were cleaner and safer. There aren't enough police for all the action that happens around here."



Allison Smikun,

18: "Coney Island sucks! The place is filthy and the rides are always breaking down. It's also dangerous because you can't walk around at night because it isn't safe."



Lana Voinova,

17: "I go because it's fun to hang around. It is very traditional and it didn't change the ways in which people have fun. Though, it lost most of the magic from the old times by all these dangerous rides."



Kareem Glover,

22: "When I go to Coney Island, I just play video games. I would never ride those death rides. I'd never want to be in an accident when the Cyclone is on the 10 o'clock news. I can't come to a place where ambulances are reserved."

Oleg Mironop, 18: "I go there for the rides. But it used to be much better when there were more people."

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WTC Contest: Honorable Mention

Abe Abuhamdeh, Oluseyi Akingbade, Bobby Akumah, Kelvin Alejo, Tecia Alexander, Usman Ali Shah, Rochelle Allen, Russell Alvarado, Edwin Alvarado, Arkeidehia Alves, Maria Andujar, Andy Antoine, Pamela Grace Appleton, Asantewaa Asamoah, Jessica Asante, Rahilia Baig, Hyaekyong Bang, Corey Baptiste, Yamilka Baret, Priscilla Bejarán, Arsenio Benjamin, Stacy Benoît, Ou Bin Bin, Marisol Bishop, Kimberly Bradley, Renescia Brady, Christine Brocato, Liguaya C. Brown, Timothy Brown, Winston Brown, Kimone Brown, Abner Bruno, Shaquanna Brunson, Andell Calixte, Shanda Campbell, Tiffany Campbell, Rodney Candelaria, Melissa Caraballo, Stephanie Gaby Castillo, Jessica Castro, Clara Chan, Jason Chan, Wei Wei Chen, Sadia Choudhury, Erick Clements, Mey Colon, Veronica Concepcion, Crystallee Constant, Katherine Cordova, Kathyusca Cordova, Jose Cruz, Zash-Yari Cruz, Alex Cruz, Nkosi Cunningham, Keith Daniels, Pauline David, Teofilo David, Sergio DeCaro, Eric DeJesus, Sharlena Delaney, Feydle DelaRosa, Melissa Delgado, Victoria DeLuise, John P. Dessereau, Bernice Diaz, Elizabeth Diaz, Carlos Diaz, Alicia Dillon, Abena Donkor, Kimberly Dotel, Dwayne Douglas, Orlando Douglas, Iyana Drysdale, Jackson Dumont, Olubunmi Durojaiye, Jelean Durrant, George Echevarria, Marcos Eldeeb, Wendy Eng, Adrian Escobar, Damien Escobar, Fredery Espinal, Valeria Espinoza, Amal Fadl, Taylor Falco, Stephanie Febus, Nina Felder, Belsaleen Feliciano, Yesania Fernandez, Tiffany Fontana, Kadian Forrest, Naqeeba Fowler, Tanisha Fray, LaToya Evon Fulton, Frances Ann Garcia, Brendine Gelin, Stephan George, Rostislav Gerbiliski, Billy Gomez, Michelle Gomez, Abneries Gonzalez, Francine Gooden, Shaniece Graham, Morae Hamilton, Shaquana Hardmon, Jamella Henry, Troy Hillard, Dominique Hookes, Sheronda Hooper, Alla Iksel, Rassias Irving, Elman Isakov, Kalamesha Jackson, Freddie Jackson, Stacian Jeffery, Kimberly Jenkins, Lushene Jenkins, Francesca Jeudy, Crystal Johnson, Melissa Johnson, Rahmeek Johnson, Muta Jones, Tiffany Jones, Shakira Jones, Randy Raynell Jones, Emmanuel Joseph, Jeffrey Joseph, Devon Josephs, Molamed Kamara, Alie Kamara, Rochelle Karam, Tahsin Kazi, Tyrique Key, Athrath Khan, Jane Khodos, Kristina Khurshudian, James King, Matthew Klein, Kyla Krug-Meadows, Jane Kuznetsova, Melissa Laboy, Melody Lane, Kathleen Lapaix, Cephas Laryea, Roman Laut, Ian Levenstein, Wolde Lewis, Gregory Litinsky, Luis Lizardo, Shelley Loo, Ying Lin Louie, Ivan Luciano, Stephanie Lyne, Lauren Maisel, Magaly Malavé, William Mark, Nichole Marquez, Crista Martinez, William Martinez, Michael Martinez, Jasmine Martinez, Eileen Marzano, Lequinn Mason, Amanda Massab, Jayomi Maysonet, Prince McFarlane, Gary McIntosh, Andrew McLaulane, Tyeshia McMillan, Lila McMorris, Jeanette Medina, Octavia Millan, Angela Millan, Jenna Misell, Latasha Mitchell, Tefta Miti, Lewanda Modeste, Joseph Mohamed, Annerys Morales, Morales Morales, Renia Morant, Tivona Mullins, Sherill Murray, Faykeita Natal, Alexandre Néhémie, Karisma Nelson, Chui Yee Ng, Grecia Nunez, Kassiya Nure, Ilona Ocher, Fernando Pagan, Christopher Pang, Addison Parker, Emalov Paul, Krystina M. Pedrosio, Giselle Peguero, Lee Pender, Lizbeth Peralta, Yelena Perevozskina, Andrea Perez, Elizabeth Perez, Monica Perez, Madelyn Perla, Madge Philanthrope, Daniel Phillip, Kamisha Pinckney, Dardane Prelvukaj, Roberto R., Marianna Raykhman, Heidi Ripas, Andrew Rippel, Tamara Rivas, Julio Rivera, Andrew Rivera, Valerie Rivera, Geraldo Rivera, Shivevor Rochard, Barbara Rodriguez, Eric Rodriguez, Patricia Rodriguez, Donald Roman, Hyasmine Romelus, Ana Rosa, Maritza Ruan, Rose Salabarra, Dawn Salesa, Francisco Santos, Nicole Marie Santos, Reagan Santos, Seetanglie Seenauth, Abilene Selvon, Denes Serrano, Muhammad Shahid, Danielle Simon, Christopher Singh, Jennifer Singh, Andre Smith, Mikhail Sosonkin, Marli Soto, Mary Spetsieris, Shanequa Steele, Shanequa Steele, Shakeem Stewart, Shirmaira Suarez, Catherine Subervi, Meg Sullivan, Nazia Tabassum, Yoshinao Takei, Mariela Tavaréz, Francisco Tavera, Kescha Thomas, Jennifer Tirado, Stephanie L. Tirado, Natalya Titova, Renata Tokman, Bluejeanne Afton Toledo, Valerie Tollens, Carolyn Torres, Mark Torres, Alex Tovstolug, Joyce Tsang, Alham Usman, Noshewan Usman, Joel Vargas, Nancy Vargas, Angel Vasquez, Sophia Velez, Jessica Voquer, Fred Wagenhauser, Kevin Weng, AnnaMae West, Gabrielle Williams, Julius Williams, Tamarah Williams, Nephritiria Williams, Antoine Wilson, Christine Wong, Michelle Woolery, Ting Fang Wu, Christina Zayas, Dana Zhing, Adina Zilberman.

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Emotional Reactions

(continued from page 11)

My Family is Still Here

It was such a nice, sunny day and then boom, it happened—the World Trade Center collapsed.

It seemed like a dream, a nightmare. One of those nightmares that causes you to wake up with your heart beating quickly and tears rolling down your cheeks. One of those nightmares that you think would never happen in reality. But it wasn't a nightmare. It happened very close to home, very close to what we had thought was safe and secure.

As a result, some of my views changed. That Monday before the incident, I was worrying about the college application process and the SATs. Now I realize that even though school goals are important, so is spending time with my family and friends. About two weeks after that Tuesday, I spent a day with my family at the Museum of Natural History and, as simple a trip that might have been, it meant a lot to me that my family is still here and we are spending time together.

Lisa Chow, 17
Edward R. Murrow HS

Why?

It always comes down to why. Why would someone do that? Why are they capable of such hatred? There are never any answers. The newscasters try to explain that they are misinformed or fanatics, but that's not a good enough answer. Can you ever really explain why groups of men would be willing to end their lives by crashing airplanes into buildings?

First one hit, and they told us it was an accident. Then the other hit, and it was an attack. Classes stopped, teachers were just as lost as students, none of us knew where we were anymore. We no longer had answers, we all had questions. Who was alive? Are we going to go home? Is there a home to go to?

My friend was crying. I was afraid to ask why. Her uncle went in with the fire department, to try and save people. This was before the collapse. No one had heard from him since. Who could explain why to her? Who would want to try? No one knew what to say. There wasn't anything you could say.

We didn't go home that night. We stayed with friends who lived by the school. No one wanted to go home. We watched it on TV all night. We saw the images played over and over again, and we cried. We were scared, and no one had answers. No one will ever have an answer. My friend's uncle never came home.

Jessie Smith
Bronx HS of Science

My Window to Jamaica

By Shalene Wilson

I love the cafeteria at Kingsborough Community College. It showed me something about America and New Yorkers while giving me the space to reminisce about Jamaica.

I started as a freshman at Kingsborough in the fall of 1999, when I was 18. I spent the first semester focusing on my classes without making any friends. By my second semester, I figured it was time to rectify that situation.

In school in Jamaica, I always sat in the cafeteria with my friends. So I thought the Kingsborough cafeteria would be a great spot to meet people.

Chewing on 'Hello'

But I wasn't very successful. I said "Hello" to students who were passing by. Some said, "Hey," but kept walking. Others looked at me with their eyes turned up in scorn and their faces wrinkled as though they smelled crap, or as if I was mentally disturbed.

Then I started to say hello to people who sat next to me to eat. But they answered in an unpleasant tone of voice that said more than hello. It seemed like they were chewing on the word "hello" between their teeth.

Often I imagined a student asking, "Do I know you?" Softly I'd reply, "I would like you to." It was so hard to make friends that I began to think there was something wrong with me.

No Friends in High School

I hadn't made friends in high school either. I came to New York from Jamaica when I was 16 and started at George Wingate HS in Brooklyn in the 10th grade. I talked to some students but didn't have any friends.

At first it didn't bother me that I had no friends because my sister Tamekia, who's a year younger than me, was around. We went to and from school together.

But that ended after my sister made friends. I felt abandoned. And since I was the older one, I felt like I couldn't go whining like a baby to my younger sister asking her to walk home with me.

So I hid my sad feelings of being alone and acted as though I loved the idea of coming from and going to school by myself. But the more I hid my feelings, the lonelier I felt.

Tired of Being Alone

By my second semester at Kingsborough, I was tired of not having friends or someone to talk to besides my mother. Those were some of the worst days of my life. I began to think it was a bad idea to come to America.

Even though I had a hard time meeting people there, the cafeteria was the only place I could go to ease the loneliness I felt. There were many interesting sights in Kingsborough's cafeteria. The entertainment was too



Martha Riley Willis

great to go unnoticed.

I found myself looking at students with one side of their heads shaved off and the other side left long, dyed in bright reds or blues. To top that off, they wore earrings so long that they were attached to other body parts.

Must Get Education

Sitting in the cafeteria watching other students, I had to remind myself that my mother brought her kids to New York to get a better education so we could find ourselves respectable jobs.

So I told myself that I would stay friendless if that was what it took for me to go to college in New York. I'd learn to enjoy the boring times in between classes. If no one wanted to talk to me, I'd sit by myself.

So I found an isolated spot in the cafeteria where I could view the ocean through windows as big as doors. Kingsborough sits at the end of Oriental Boulevard in the Manhattan Beach part of

Brooklyn. The school is almost like a little island.

Jamaican Oasis

During the winter, I sometimes sat in the cafeteria in my coat. Once, I felt so warm that, as I was dozing off while the sun set, I mistook the scenery for Jamaica.

There are tables and chairs outside, but in the winter no one sits there except for the chirping birds. I imagined them as a choir.

Past the tables is a road. A little further is sand, then the ocean. At around 3:50 p.m., from my spot, I could see the ocean's color become a light orange-blue because of how the water reflected the evening's sunset. This was as close to Jamaica as Kingsborough got.

My former school back in Jamaica,

From my spot, I saw
the ocean's color
become a light orange-
blue because of how
the water reflected
the sunset. This was
as close to Jamaica
as
my school got.

Mt. Alvernia HS, was a short walk from Fletcher's Beach. I used to walk there every day after school. I especially enjoyed Fletcher's Beach in the evenings as the sun went down.

I liked the feel of the fresh sea breeze on my face and the way the sunset turned the sky the color of a raging fire.

And I loved the almond trees. I used to sit under the almond trees for more than an hour, just staring at the sky while I ate ripe almonds that had fallen down. And from the trees, I also heard the chirping doctor birds, which are beautiful hummingbirds found only in Jamaica.

In Touch With Nature

I felt in touch with nature. I had a similar feeling when I looked outside from my favorite spot in the Kingsborough cafeteria.

And since my spot was in the back of the school, hardly anyone passed by to disturb my serenity. Whenever I sat there, I considered it my home. I blocked out everything around me that I did not want to see or hear.

Whenever I had breaks between classes, I would hurry to my "Jamaica." I didn't want anyone else to take my spot.

In My Spot

But one day, walking toward my spot, I saw a group of students gathered there. I was mad. I sat nearby, trying to hear what they were talking about.

To my surprise, they were discussing Darwin's theory of evolution. I soon realized it was a class, so I moved a little further away. I thought that they'd soon leave.

Unfortunately, they stayed there until my break was up. By this time, I was so angry. I'd planned on spending that time in my spot to write a poem for my school's newspaper. I got up and hissed through my teeth so loudly, I'm sure the whole class heard.

When I turned around to have one last look at my spot for the day, I saw the students staring at me. "What's her problem?" one said. Thankfully, I was able to return to my "Jamaica" the next day.

Appreciating Time Alone

I never made any friends in the cafeteria. I eventually gave up on that search. But I did have many acquaintances from my classes.

Being by myself helped me get a lot of work done and let me think about anything I pleased. I eventually started to appreciate time spent alone.

I completed my journalism studies at Kingsborough in August. I miss the school, especially my favorite spot.

I'm taking a semester off before starting at a senior college. I want to go to Jamaica to relax and write a book of poems, but don't want to travel so soon after the hijackings. So I've started to write my poems here. I'm busy enjoying myself and writing. Maybe I won't be missing my spot much longer. ☑



Shalene Wilson