# STOPHATE AWARDS CEREMONY

PRESENTED BY MALTZ MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE





2019 YOUTH SPEAK OUT FINALISTS AND YOUTH SING OUT WINNERS



#### WELCOME

Dear Friends,

You are about to meet 25 exceptional young people. Their voices will be heard, and their message is destined to be shared. They are part of a legacy of student upstanders with vision and promise to *Stop the Hate.*®

This year marks the 11th anniversary of the *Stop the Hate*® program. In that time, we have heard from thousands of students using the power of words to reflect on and respond to intolerance and indifference. As a museum that stands firmly aligned with diversity and inclusion, we are proud to support students who use their voices for good.

In eleven years, we have provided \$1.1 million in college scholarships and anti-bias education grants, and we have engaged over 30,000 students across 12 Northeast Ohio counties to stand up and speak out against hate.

Still, after 11 years, the world needs this kind of program now more than ever. The time is now to support compassion and empathy – not only for others, but also for ourselves.

No single person on Earth is exactly the same as another. We are all different. And we all matter. To all the students who have participated in *Stop the Hate*®, this is only the beginning. Your voices can and will make a difference. Never stop fighting for what you believe. We can't wait to see what you'll do next!

Sincerely, TAMAR & MILTON MALTZ



#### ABOUT STOP THE HATE®

**Stop the Hate**° challenges young people to consider the impact of intolerance and the role of the individual in effecting change. The Maltz Museum initiative celebrates Northeast Ohio students committed to creating a more accepting, inclusive society.

This year, we honor the memory and spirit of Anne Frank, a young girl who famously wrote:

How lovely to think that no one need wait a moment, we can start now, start slowly changing the world! How lovely that everyone, great and small, can make their contribution toward introducing justice straight away.

Anne Frank was 13 years old when she was forced into hiding during the Holocaust. She hid in a tiny annex for two years with her mother, father, sister, and four other Dutch Jews fearing for their lives because of their religion. Despite the isolation and terrifying realities of her time, Anne remained optimistic about the power of every individual to change the world. Anne and her family were caught and murdered by the Nazis and she became one of the 1.5 million children who perished during the Holocaust. But her words live on to remind following generations that anyone, young or old, can positively change the world.

We asked these questions:

Over 75 years later, what can we learn from Anne's perspective on human nature and creating a more accepting and inclusive society? Is justice something that requires individuals to create or pursue? Can everyday, regular people change the world?

Think about your own life. Have you witnessed or experienced acts of injustice, racism, bigotry, or discrimination? How were you impacted by what you experienced, saw, or heard? What did you do, or what will you do, in response to these circumstances in order to create justice and positive change in your community?

Stop the Hate<sup>®</sup> is made possible with the generous support of:

Presenting Sponsor



Youth Sing Out Signature Sponsors









Youth Speak Out Signature Sponsors











Helen F. Stolier and Louis Stolier Family Foundation



#### 2019 Youth Sing Out Winners

Midview High School – Tie First Place High School, "New America"
Shaw High School – Tie First Place High School, "Win"
Garfield Middle School – Tie First Place Middle School, "Guns Down," & "Turn Around"
Dike School of the Arts – Runner-up Middle School, "Don't Let The Hate Control You"

#### 2019 Youth Speak Out Grand Prize Scholarship Student Finalists

#### **GRADE 12**

Heavenlee Alamo, James Ford Rhodes High School
Marcie Baker, West Geauga High School
Alan Goodloe, Hudson High School
Mackenzie Lee, Hawken School
Samuel Oguntoyinbo, Solon High School
Mathilde Tomter, Beaumont School
Emma Rae Witt, Berkshire High School

#### **GRADE 11**

Alexa Furukawa, Revere High School Priyanka Shrestha, Beachwood High School Kennon Walton, University School

#### 2019 Youth Speak Out Student Finalists

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Andrew OscarsonNathan TrostAbigail WilkovHudson High SchoolHudson High SchoolSolon High School

#### **GRADE 9**

Jenny FuIlana MillerMykenna RoyMayfield High SchoolMayfield High SchoolMayfield High School

#### **GRADE 8**

Gigi KonradGianna MillerAparna SrikanthRocky River Middle SchoolRocky River Middle SchoolSolon Middle School

#### **GRADE 7**

Kamryn von KunsayArianna PrestonVeronica SchwartzLearwood Middle SchoolBeachwood Middle SchoolBeachwood Middle School

#### **GRADE 6**

Gabi CensopranoElise FletcherMallory SchenkenbergerHudson Middle SchoolSt. Barnabas SchoolHudson Middle School

Please note: Students have changed names used within their essays to protect identities.

### Heavenlee Alamo

#### 12th Grade, James Ford Rhodes High School

"There's a special place in hell for those two dykes."

Imagine being in love for the first time in your life. Imagine just wanting to hold the hand of your significant other and shower them with affection. My girlfriend and I saw other couples at our school laughing and kissing at their lockers and we wanted this as well. So we went for it; we held hands and kissed in the hallway, but instead of "Aww!" and "Goals!" we heard words like "Lesbians," "Ew," and "Dyke." We saw our former friends staring at us and whispering to each other. Their harsh words hurt. People laughed in our faces and ostracized us. Nobody stuck up for us. We began to feel drained and disdained. We found ourselves feeling ashamed to even meet each other's gaze in school. We separated because we were not strong enough to fight the masses arrayed against us.

Waking up each morning and going to school started to feel like an impossible mission. The way I was being treated was unfair, but I felt powerless to change the situation. I started writing poetry to express my feelings. My creative writing became my salvation. Slowly, I reached the realization that writing could be an outlet for other abused souls. That's when I helped organize a poetry club that provided a safe space for my LGBTQ+ peers. We wrote and performed pieces about how to stand up against hate and how to revamp outmoded customs. We spread support

and love. It turned out that this was a big issue for many students in my school; no one had ever really addressed it, but as the club grew, so did the strength of our voices.

My current plan is to establish that organization in my new school. I have approached my English teacher to bring my plan to fruition; next semester we will begin. Our club will use the words to create a safe space for LGBTQ+ students. This is how I will advocate for positive change in my school and community. I will create an alliance between peers, no matter how they choose to identify, by providing an outlet and a safe environment for everyone. My biggest hope is that this program will leave a long-lasting legacy in my current school, but above all, that my whole generation will be able to rise above the hate in our society. While my former girlfriend and I no longer hold hands, the love we once held in our hearts inspired me to reach out to all. With understanding and the right words, we can become agents of positive change and vanquish hate.

### Heavenlee Mamo

Heavenlee Alamo is a senior at James Ford Rhodes High School, where she is active in drama club and book club. A voracious reader and writer, her plans for the future include studying writing and social work in college, mentoring young poets in her community, and becoming a grassroots organizer. She has dreams of one day becoming a published poet.



### Marcie Baker

#### 12th Grade, West Geauga High School

"Faggot." Even writing that word feels wrong to me. But it certainly doesn't feel wrong to the straight boy with shaggy blond hair sitting three seats down from me at lunch, who nonchalantly calls his friend sitting adjacent from him this daily. It certainly doesn't feel wrong to the young rebel who feels powerful carving a different, yet equally powerful, six letter word into the hard wooden desk I sit at every day in history class. And if the boy with the swastika tattooed in Sharpie on his forearm objected to being a walking form of 1940s Nazi propaganda, he wouldn't have rolled up his sleeves for us all to see.

Yet nobody seemed to see.

It was after an evening filled with frustration, as I played a basketball game with five or six white guys about a year older than me who had a bad habit of using the n-slur in every other sentence, that I realized that no one had ever stood up to their degrading word choice. Especially not a younger female. From that moment on, I vowed to teach others the impact their choice of vocabulary has on others. But this was not easy.

Even my otherwise morally responsible friends claim, "they are just words and drawings." And while they are little offenses, ones that I see and hear every day, normality is not a guide to morality. Correcting the small things, such as the misuse of such degrading vocabulary, is a small yet highly significant way anyone can make a difference. So despite initial ridiculing, I will no longer sit quietly listening to my white friends sing every word to a black artist's rap. I have found that repetition is key when correcting a person's vocabulary and, in a fashion quite similar to training a dog, I have successfully taught some of my peers that calling an

assignment or person retarded is not acceptable.

Words are powerful. They have endlessly destructive potential, so when they are thrown around with such ignorance it's up to those of us who use our voice to its constructive potential, to work to stop the damage. I have chosen to use my voice to speak up for what I believe in, whether registering voters, canvassing for the Betsy Rader campaign, participating in nationwide and local protests, or correcting how those around me speak in school. I strongly believe that in a time where even the smallest person has the technological potential to spread their voice to the entire world, those who choose not to speak up about what is important to them are as complicit as those ignorant enough to use the word "faggot" as an insult. If you just wait for someone else to correct an injustice, and I wait, and she waits as well, nothing will ever get corrected.

# Murie Baker

Marcie Baker is a senior at West Geauga High School, where she plays flute in both symphonic and marching bands and is a member of the track and gymnastics teams. She enjoys traveling and plans to study political science.



### Alexa Furukawa

#### 11th Grade, Revere High School

Laughter broke my skin like lashes from a whip and red hot blood flowed from my broken heart. I was dumbfounded by the words I prayed that I had not just heard. "Those small eyes must have kept Ling Ling from seeing the board." I turned around to see my classmate pulling his eyes toward his ears and some kids around him red faced from laughter. It was my freshman year of high school and I had asked my geometry teacher to turn the slideshow back one page. The teacher shot them a dirty look, turned the slide back and that day went on. What happened in that classroom was simply the root of my pain, it was the hurt I forced upon myself in my head that tore me apart. I am half Japanese and half white, but I look all Asian. Asians are expected to be docile, timid, and smart. That day in geometry I gave in to those stereotypes, stayed silent, and did not let the kids get a rise out of me. For what seemed to be an eternity after my experience I was self-conscious about my eyes and my actions and kept my head down to avoid attention. Every day I fought the mental battle of not being myself for fear of ridicule.

My turning point was on stage performing Japanese dance with a group called The Sho-Jo-Ji Japanese Dancers, who I have danced with for as long as I can remember. I realized the beauty of the red kimono covering my body and the elegance of the Japanese culture. I felt a spark inside me and knew it came from my grandparents who were stripped of everything and bused to internment camps because they looked like "the enemy." My grandparents left the camps and went on to raise successful children. Neither of them let the horrors they endured hurt for a second longer than necessary and they did not hold any grudges. They raised their children to see the good side of everyone and everything that happens and to keep Japanese tradition

alive. My dad passed those ideals down to me and he continues to celebrate Japanese customs with his family. My family is part of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) which hosts a picnic every summer where members and friends come together to share Japanese food and have a good time. Music is loud, dance is meaningful, and math is the last thing on our minds.

This spark helped me understand that every ethnicity is beautiful and that stereotypes do not define a culture. I try to light this spark in others by embracing my background and by inviting my peers to Asian festivals where I perform and where the bright colors, unique events, and bubbly attitude of the Asian children break through all the stereotypes. I share my experiences not with desire for blindness to ethnicity, but with a desire for a melting pot of ideas and appreciation.

Sho Atherone

Alexa Furukawa is a junior at Revere High School, where she is a member of National Honor Society, student council, and the volleyball and varsity track teams. Outside of school, she performs with the Sho-Jo-Ji Dancers. She plans to attend medical school and aims to have a positive impact on the lives of those around her.

# Alan Goodloe

#### 12th Grade, Hudson High School

"The final forming of a person's character lies in their own hands." - Anne Frank

"Go back to Africa," she snarled. The cold, guttural words echoed slowly from my teacher's mouth. She hurled the words at me like a bullet, piercing my ears, smothering the innocent light in my soul, and pulling tightly on my heart like the binding strings of a misused puppet. Standing there, a confused nine-year-old boy wondered, "Why would she say that? I was born here." Immediately, my parents' voices rang out:

"You will always have a strike against you because of how you look."

I knew nothing of pre-judgment. I was a young kid born to a middle class family, attending a private school, at the top of his class. It was inconsequential to me that my mother's skin was brown and my dad's was white. Hate was never present within my loving family. Yet after the incident, I could not help but feel the "different" mark emblazoned upon me. The light I possessed was slowly ensnared with self-pity, making me resentful of circumstances I had not influenced.

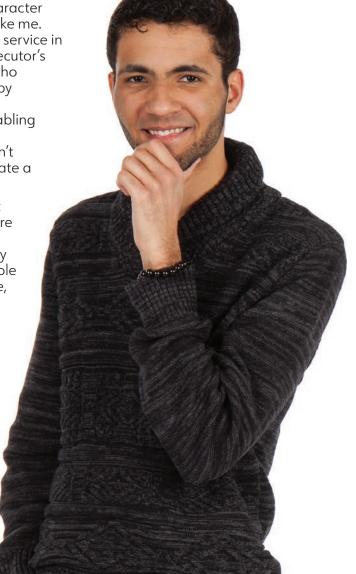
Though not the last, nor the worst incident I experienced, I look back at this pivotal moment, when I could have easily become every stereotype she thought I was. My parent's admonishments began to make sense and the rage that clouded my mind like the winter sky of Northeastern Ohio dissipated. Though I couldn't change this teacher's malformed judgment of me, I was going to control how she would see me now.

Soon after, that same teacher needed assistance. Without hesitation, I volunteered to become her student aid. I was going to show her who I really was. Forgiveness was not easy, but if people like Anne Frank could, then so could I. This moment inspired me to define my own character and positively influence the way the world sees a young man like me. Since then, I have created thousands of opportunities through service in churches, schools, homeless shelters, the Summit County Prosecutor's Office, and even burial of the homeless to show that people who look like me are more than the negative images perpetuated by the media and society. Currently, I am expanding my reach by working with my city's leaders to establish a center for kids enabling children opportunities to gain positive experiences from each other, regardless of how light or dark their skin is. If society won't change how they perpetuate negativity, then I will work to create a generation that won't stand for it.

Like Anne Frank, I believe people are inherently good, and that we all have unquenchable lights burning within. This light is more defining than any physical characteristic. If I change one mind or belief, or give one pause to reflect, then I have carried out my obligation to levy change. Just as Anne Frank, I chose to be a role model that combats all forms of intolerance with love, patience, tolerance, and respect for everyone's lifelight.

# alan Goodloe

Alan Goodloe is a senior at Hudson High School. He plays on the school's volleyball team, is captain of the robotics team, and is a member of the National Honor Society and student government. He plans to work in the field of nanotechnology, with the eventual goal of creating and leading his own company.



# Mackenzie Lee

#### 12th Grade, Hawken School

In sixth grade, I walked into my new school building excited to take advantage of the opportunity to attend such a prestigious school. I saw clean, carpeted floors, with inspirational words on the walls, and lockers that didn't need locks.

At my old school everyone looked like me; here there were only two other African-American girls in my grade. For the first time in my school life I was a minority. I initially looked to the other two girls for friendship, but I soon realized that would not be the case. One of the girls chose to ignore me, and the other chose to bully me.

I remember one day before the mandatory swimming class, I put a swim cap over my hair because it got tangled and hard to manage when wet. No other person was wearing a swim cap; this girl, who looked like me, pointed and started laughing. She asked why I was so weird to be wearing a swim cap, and said I looked ugly with it. As the new kid, I already felt uncomfortable, and she made sure I felt even more alone. That night, I told my mom to straighten my hair. But it didn't matter, because the torment didn't stop.

Every day at school some part of my racial identity was attacked. My bully told me my nose was too big, but her nose looked like mine. She told me my skin tone was ugly, but her skin tone was as dark as mine. And she told me that no one wanted to be my friend because I was black, but she was black, too. Since I had no friends, it was easy to believe the words she was saying.

Over the course of sixth grade I internalized resentment for my race, which was slowly reinforced until my junior year. I took a class examining identity and realized that while the bullying was damaging for me, it was most likely a reflection of what my attacker had felt about herself. Not only did my school fail to give me the resources to talk about the issues I had with my racial identity, but it had failed her as well.

Recognizing this void, I advocated for creating affinity groups in my school. The day I made my presentation to the administration I explained how many students, especially those who feel marginalized, struggle to come to terms with their identities and feel as though they don't have anyone with whom they can talk openly about their experiences. Today my school has eight affinity groups, one of which, the Black Student Union, I co-lead. Most importantly, I have made the effort to talk to each and every black underclassman to let them know that they are a vital part of the community, their experiences are valid, and the BSU is there for them – the words I needed to hear in sixth grade.

Machenzie Lee

Mackenzie Lee is a senior at Hawken School. She is the leader of the Black Student Union and the Multicultural Club, and she has served as captain of the volleyball team. She also volunteers with Alive on Purpose, a mental health organization that serves families in the Cleveland community. She plans to study business and sociology to aid companies in diversifying their marketing.

# Samuel Oguntoyinbo

#### 12th Grade, Solon High School

He thumbed through the wad of bills, mouthing the numbers almost silently, until he caught me staring at him. Starting again, he counted to four, out loud this time, slowly, deliberately, almost mockingly.

"Then add the one I paid you, and it makes five. And that's how you make change, boy."

I blinked twice, taken aback, and froze for a second as the pale customer sauntered off, proud of himself for having taught me a valuable "lesson."

Throughout my life, I've found myself in these unsettling situations, forced to determine whether a line was crossed, and often doomed to wonder whether it even matters. A crippling sense of powerlessness has washed over me time and time again, as I feel powerless to change who I am as a black man, powerless to speak to the ignorance of the bigoted, powerless to free myself from the suffocating presence of deep-seated prejudice. Like a virus injecting its noxious DNA into its host, prejudice often threatens to infect me with its self-destructive ideas. It tells me that I have simply drawn the genetic short straw and was cursed with blackness, an unfortunate quality that makes me something less than a human being.

I've always loved words; their power and nuance make them incredibly versatile tools of expression. Every word has different connotations, associations, "shades of meaning," when viewed from different perspectives, a complexity that can be as destructive as it is beautiful. Take the word "black," for example.

In a dictionary, it is simply the absence of visual light. In my mind, it is a part of my identity and that of my family. In a mind left vulnerable by ignorance and corrupted by hatred, however, it is a dirty word, representative of something lesser, something other, something that should be met with derision and repulsion, fear, and hate. These associations flash through a person's mind almost instantaneously, but they arise from a predetermined set of beliefs – the framework for what we call prejudice. This was what I had experienced at work, what I feel when I notice cautious eyes following me through a room, or when I hear someone speak slowly, as to a child, when addressing me.

These issues are almost endemic to the society we live in. However, that doesn't make speaking out futile or unnecessary. This fall, my school's Mock Trial team, a club I help lead, worked to raise money for the Ohio Innocence Project, an organization that provides legal representation for unjustly imprisoned individuals, a disproportionate number of whom are black. Through the fundraiser, I engaged in meaningful conversations about race with classmates and staff, finding that everyone had much more common ground than they expected. I believe that once we educate others and reinforce our shared humanity, we can do away with much of the ignorance, bigotry, and hatred that plague us as a society. While this is much easier said than done, the pursuit of this goal is well worth the work it entails.

Sognitayenta

Samuel Oguntoyinbo is a senior at Solon High School, where he is a member of the Academic College, Science Olympiad, and Mock Trial teams. An enthusiastic student of both biology and English, he intends to study neuroscience and comparative literature.

# Priyanka Shrestha

#### 11th Grade, Beachwood High School

"Ew, that's disgusting."

Those were the words that whiplashed my mouth shut when I shared with my first-grade class that in my house we ate with our hands. I sat the rest of the day in silence, my face crimson with shame, confusion, and embarrassment.

But those were just the first of the jagged words hurled towards me because of my culture. What is that red thing on your forehead? People gawked and pointed judgmentally when I came to school with tika on my forehead. I would never wear that to school, someone muttered under their breath when I wore traditional garments. They say words will never hurt you, but they do. The words I heard cut me so deep that I bled out everything I was. I began to show less of my heritage, stopped eating with my hands at home, and stopped mentioning Nepal in conversations.

At a Nepali gathering, I heard someone say, "I only want my children to learn English so that they will fit in here and not be ostracized." Watching that mom throw away all the language, tradition, and culture of her past for the sake of her kids feeling welcomed sparked something within me. That overheard conversation was the catalyst that broke the chains of prejudice and discrimination holding me back.

I realized that by trying to hide my culture, I was letting the people who judge me win. From that moment on, I have worn my culture with pride.

I began taking a more active role in my Nepali community, to inspire the kids in our community to always embrace their unique heritage. When an earthquake shattered Nepal in 2016, my friend and I organized a fundraiser to raise money for the victims. I joined my school's diversity initiative and have since attended meetings and seminars to educate myself about how to promote diversity in our world. When our school hosted a culture festival, my Indian friend and I started a Bollywood dance group composed of students of all races and backgrounds, to teach our members tradition through a universal language, music!

Every moment of discrimination is a moment to educate.

People judge because they are unaware and afraid of the unknown. Now, whenever someone makes fun of my culture, I stand up for myself and explain the meaning behind my tika, the reason why I choose to dress the way I do.

Yes, I am Nepali. Yes, we eat food with our hands. Yes, I will talk about my culture and heritage because I am proud of it.

To change the world, you do not need to reach every single person in all corners of the world. The world is just the sum of its parts, its people, and a change in one person's perspective is a change in everything. Seize every opportunity you have to teach someone something new, because the change starts with you.



Priyanka Shrestha is a junior at Beachwood High School. She is a member of Science Olympiad and Model UN, and she serves as class secretary on student council. In the future she aims to bring people together and improving their quality of life. She hopes to continue her writing and one day be a published author.

### **Mathilde Tomter**

#### 12th Grade, Beaumont School

The day that I was diagnosed with autism was the most confusing day of my life. I performed various tests and was asked unusual questions by strangers within an unfamiliar building. I distinctly recall the stagnant atmosphere, the peculiar way that everyone spoke to each other, to my parents, and especially to me. I felt incredibly out of place, not even knowing the reason that I was there in the first place. This feeling only grew when I saw that every office and meeting room was filled with children's toys and baby books. I was a thirteen-year-old, not a child. When spoken to, I felt estranged, observed, and like I was being forcefully placed into a category that I was not aware existed.

Because I had no real knowledge of what exactly autism was, I had no trouble accepting my diagnosis; "autism" was just a word, and I was still the same person, as far as I was concerned. This was not, I quickly discovered, how others perceived it. Teachers who were aware of my diagnosis began to treat me differently, and I noticed. I despised the condescending tones with which I was spoken to on a daily basis.

Most remarkably, my school's administration, once informed of my official diagnosis, vehemently and repeatedly refused me any accommodations for the sole reason that I was enrolled in multiple honors classes. They told me explicitly that I had to choose between "being smart" or "being disabled." I began to fear appearing different from other students, believing wholeheartedly that fitting in was the only viable way for me to be treated as a capable, free-thinking human being. This unfortunately meant that I was left with no academic support to teach me organization and self-advocacy, almost ensuring my failure in above-grade

level courses. It was made clear to me that if I required any academic support, I would be placed in the school's special education program.

On a daily basis, I work diligently to overcome the numerous difficulties that my diagnosis creates for me, and strive to not let it become my only defining characteristic. By pushing myself harder in all areas of my academics, I therefore prove wrong anyone who doubts my capabilities, academically or socially. Doing such, I fervently surpass and disprove any stereotype, patronization, or otherwise demeaning behavior directed toward myself or toward any other person with an autism spectrum disorder. Further, I am currently an executive board member on my school's Diversity and Inclusion Team, working with my peers to connect students of all minds, colors, religions, genders, and sexual orientations. We collectively aim to surpass stereotypes, empower diversity, and, ultimately, to stop the hate.

# Mathilde Yombe

Mathilde Tomter is a senior at Beaumont School, where she is involved in French Club, Future Teachers Club, and the Diversity and Inclusion Team. She is a passionate volunteer and plans to attend medical school, with the goal of finding new and innovative ways to help people.



### **Kennon Walton**

#### 11th Grade, University School

Disturbingly, I was never concerned with episodes of police brutality against fellow African-Americans growing up. Of course, I never doubted how heartbreaking and appalling these events were; they did, however, seem like situations that could never happen to me or anybody I knew. Much to the confusion of my brother and me, my mother would regularly lecture us on what to do if ever confronted by police, certainly due to the recent surge of recorded police violence and increased tensions. As I matured, though, I became aware of the experience of a particular person – my uncle – which truly opened my eyes to the grim realities of these incidents.

Minutes before lying in the backseat of a police car, unconscious, John Owens was frisked and choked by two local police officers for "seeming suspicious" outside of his neighborhood's mini-mart.

He died before reaching the hospital.

This pivotal moment, now known as "the Owens Incident," disturbed me. This generic title labels a man's heartbreaking transition from idolized army veteran to insignificant statistic occasionally appearing in back-page articles of local newspapers.

A relative's unjustified death gave me an irrational, albeit defendable fear of most law enforcement, fueled by my own experiences such as having my backpack searched in stores for "seeming suspicious," to being followed by police cars in unfamiliar neighborhoods. Initially, I assumed this experience was normal for people my age, but I was shocked to learn that these things never happened to my friends who were not Black or Latino.

In response to John's death and the acquittal of the officers involved, an infamous riot broke out in his city.

Although being a firm believer in protest, I could not help but regret that these riots occurred and the subsequent ones that occur today. Despite the guilt I felt due to my inability to sympathize with the rioters, I could not shake the belief that these protesters were doing much more harm than good: they were advancing an (already) unhealthy relationship between law enforcement and minority citizens.

In response to these feelings, I wanted to establish a solution that would not only protest brutality but develop better relationships between officers and those who fear them. What I came up with is not only wholly practical but also tragically overlooked: cordial communication.

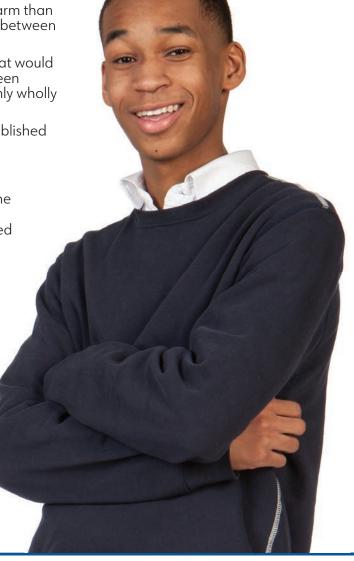
In John's neighborhood, I conferred with officers who then established meetings with members of the community where both sides could express their grievances. In turn, a supported system for communication became customary.

In my neighborhood, my peers and I have started to object to the behavior of our local officers attentively. Since we have started doing this, the number of times we have been unjustly confronted decreased significantly.

The "good" violence may create is only temporary, yet the evil it produces can be permanently detrimental. While violence only begets more violence, positivity engenders safety. Although communicating with law enforcement will not resurrect any innocent victims of police brutality, peaceful communication can potentially save the lives of thousands.

Kenner Valtor

Kennon Walton is a junior at University School, where he participates in cross-country and pole-vaulting, chamber orchestra, Mock Trial, Academic Challenge, the Pembroke Society, and the Aurelian Society. He plans to study medicine and political science, with the goal of becoming an orthopedic surgeon.



### Emma Rae Witt

#### 12th Grade, Berkshire High School

A new family moved into the neighborhood and it didn't take long for us to meet. There were four children in the family. Two of the boys were very young, in elementary school. The oldest boy was a year younger than me. The girl, the oldest of them all, was a year older than me and developmentally delayed. Their parents worked a lot so they were often left home alone. I got to know them quite well since we rode the school bus together. The daughter expressed being lonely and said that she had no friends. Her brother tried to include her as much as possible, but let's face it, girls need girlfriends.

Over time I started to witness how cruel kids were to her. They made fun of her just because she looked and acted different. She frequently cried when she didn't get invited to birthday parties. One time there were a couple of students calling her names and making fun of her on the bus. She tried to defend herself, but the more she yelled at them, the louder and more hateful they got. Her brother and I stuck up for her. We made it very clear that they were not going to treat her or anyone like that. I started to invite her over to my house. I have a small farm at home and she loved helping me with the barn chores. Somehow the work seemed less like work when we did it together. She loved those animals as much as I did. She relaxed around them and interacted with them. It was beautiful. I believe it's because animals don't judge us; they haven't been exposed to the cultural influences that we as humans experience. We didn't just work, though, we talked about school and boys and all the normal stuff girls talk about. She told me one day that I was her best friend.

She inspired me to become a student aid in the special needs class at school. I met so many interesting students. I felt good knowing that I was making a difference in their day. I then realized that I could set an example—maybe if other students took the time to look beyond the surface and get to know these special kids, they would become friends, too.

Getting to know her and sharing the experiences over the last couple of years has motivated me, too. I plan to attend The Ohio State University Agricultural Technical Institute where I will study Agribusiness and Animal Science, specializing in beef and swine. I hope to someday open a therapeutic farm where people with special needs can come and interact and care for the animals as well as work on the farm and take riding lessons.

My friend graduated last year and recently moved away. I have reflected on the couple of years we got to be friends and some would say I changed her life.

I'd say she changed mine.

# EMMARGE WITH

Emma Rae Witt is a senior at Berkshire High School.

A devoted student of agriculture, Emma is a member of the Ohio High School Rodeo team, 4H, and Junior Saddlehorses, and plans to attend the Ohio State Agricultural Technical Institute, with the goal of one day opening a therapeutic farm and equestrian center. In her free time she also volunteers at Menorah Park and with the VFW.



### **Andrew Oscarson**

#### 10th Grade, Hudson High School

I never expected to experience hate at a Catholic school, but I ended up witnessing it all. Unfortunately, a few kids at the previous school I went to felt that they were better than others. I viewed these kids as my friends, but I always tried to stand out and be different. I never believed in their harsh views on society, and their ideas began to spread. When I was at recess one day, all of my friends were bullying and throwing balls at another peer due to his weight. He held onto suffering like the weight of the world on his back. He could never let it go, and I could not wrap my head around the fact that he was happy at one point in his life. For about a year, his face was all wretched with despair from constant tears. It seemed as if the anguish snatched the school and made it a negative place. The cruelty began after one student was bullied, and it was like a chain reaction. I learned from this experience that hate is very negative on society, and that different people deserve to be treated fairly.

The boys were always shoving him to the ground, throwing balls at him, and laughing hysterically when they saw his body. His face was always bright red with misery. I decided to take action and prevent bullying. I stood up to help the boy, John, who began to feel terrible about himself. I knew that bullying was terrible in society, and that all people should be treated with respect. After seeing tears trickle down his face, I was driven to prevent negative actions around the school.

At recess one day, when all of my friends were picking on John, I walked over and confronted them for their dreadful actions. To their disbelief, I told them that all people should be different and unique. Their jaws dropped when they heard me; they were in total shock to see me standing up for John.

Eventually, John joined the friend group, something that I never anticipated happening. Even to this day, John and I are best friends. Some say that hate is used for people to make positive changes, however, it is never used in beneficial ways. People across the world despise others and are disrespectful to help them change for the better, but these actions only put others down.

Often times, people express hatred because they are feeling the same emotions. I have discovered that views can be changed in a society no matter how big they are. Also, I learned that you don't have to conform to negative thoughts about others; it is best to stick up for what is right in life. I want others to know that not all positive actions made to change the world deserve an award or recognition, but that it is important to do good no matter the circumstance.

# ardrew Cocarson

Andrew Oscarson is a 10th grader at Hudson High School, where he is a member of the football and lacrosse teams. An active volunteer, he has worked with the Salvation Army, the Akron-Canton Food Bank, the Northeast Ohio Golf Charities, and the Hudson Booster Club. He intends to study business or finance.



### Nathan Trost

#### 10th Grade, Hudson High School

Hate. Victimization. Depression. Suicide rates. Everything in the world today has increased exponentially. But I never expected to be affected by the negativity of the world, especially at such a young age.

Around the time I entered fifth grade, I was quite visibly overweight; it was also the time that the bullying started. They bullied me and harassed me because of my weight to the point where I started to starve myself so that I would lose weight. Pushing myself to borderline anorexia didn't stop the abuse and harassment though. In fact, it just gave them another reason to make me the laughing stock. All throughout middle school and through my freshman year of high school they continued to berate me.

Then, I spiraled into the deep, dark abyss that is depression. I felt as though I was alone in the world. Nobody would associate themselves with me anymore. Near the end of my freshman year, I started getting phone calls from restricted numbers telling me to kill myself and claiming that they were going to kill me if I didn't. I wish I could say that it never affected me. But it did. They had pushed me too far for too long and, sadly and regrettably, I made an attempt on my life.

Ever since I survived the failed suicide attempt, I have made it my life goal to never let anyone sit alone, be bullied or even think about suicide. In late April, I was talking at school and I heard someone say that she didn't want to do it anymore, that she wanted to end her life. I sat down with her and talked her down to the point where she was laughing with me. I gave her my number and my Snapchat. To this day,

she has texted me every time she has felt as if there was no hope left. And also to this day I have talked her out of committing suicide every time. She isn't the only one that I keep in contact with. I've been through it and couldn't bear to see anyone go through what I did.

The negativity of the world is starting to affect kids at younger and younger ages. I would like to ask of each and every one of you who are reading this: if you see something like this happening to anyone anywhere, take a second, go up to them, and ask them how they are with a smile. You have no idea how much that could affect their day. It could even save their life.

Nathan T.

Nathan Trost is a 10th grader at Hudson High School. He is an passionate musician, playing drums, bass, guitar, and piano, and he plans to study engineering in college with a minor in music.



# **Abigail Wilkov**

#### 10th Grade, Solon High School

October 27, 2018, began as a normal Saturday. I was doing my homework but stopped to fill out my camp application. The application asked, "what is something about yourself that you want to change?" I responded that I want to be better about speaking out against injustices. I didn't realize the irony of this for another couple of hours. Little did I know, as I was writing this, my people had become victims of hate.

Initially, I had no reaction to the shooting at Tree of Life Synagogue. It was "just another shooting." After hearing people around me talk about the events, I realized how infuriated I was. How can this be happening? I could not believe that Jews in the neighboring state were killed just for their religion.

That night I stayed up trying to process what happened and what my community could do to support those affected. I suggested to my rabbi that we write letters to the congregants in Pittsburgh.

The next day at temple, one girl got up to speak about what had happened. She was explaining how this specific event had hit close to home and how our temple community needed to do something. This made me exasperated because it felt like an empty promise. That was the moment I realized that many of my role models had also made many empty promises about taking action. I could not take it!

In Sunday School, I have been teaching my 5th grade students the difference between ohev shalom, loving

peace, and *rodef shalom*, pursuing peace. The main goal is to teach the children that pursuing peace is taking action and loving peace is hoping for it. We discuss how we should all strive to chase after peace instead of just admiring it. I felt like a hypocrite to not actually do what I am teaching others to do.

Just writing letters was not enough. I met with the youth advisor at temple to decide my plan of action. We decided on two ideas: to collect money for the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and to have a session with them to teach leaders in the community how to resist hate. The ADL is an organization that combats hate against all people in order to make the world a more understanding place. My congregation donated \$215 for the ADL to use to enhance their programs and continue to spread their positive messages.

This experience has made me more aware of the injustices in my world and taught me to speak up in times of ignorance. I saw hate everywhere but was unable to see it in my own community.

The main takeaway from my experience is don't be afraid to stand up for inequality in your own community. One way to prevent additional casualties is to educate people and politely point out their incorrect thinking. This will cause a chain reaction. Teaching one person will prevent them from continuing their flawed thinking and hopefully they will correct others too.

# Afigail Wilkov

Abigail Wilkov is a 10th grader at Solon High School, where she plays in the marching band and competes in diving. She plans to further her Jewish education and continue being involvement in her temple.



# Jenny Fu

#### 9th Grade, Mayfield High School

"Why is your brother like that? He's so weird, we should stay far away from him and just ditch."

Those were words that my so-called friends said to me in my younger years.

I never really understood why we had to be so different from everybody else. We were the children of Chinese immigrants, socializing and making new friends wasn't our forte and to top it off, my brother differed from the other kids. He had special needs as he was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. While the other children built forts out of sand and played pretend games, he was struggling to learn his ABCs and even more to express himself. Subsequently, I resented him for it. I resented my brother for setting me apart from others, for being cast out by fellow classmates, and for not being able to fully integrate into society and this new world.

Seventh grade, the year where everything changed for me. I had recently moved to a new school district, which meant that I could have a fresh start. There would be no reminders of my past actions, and I had the ability to create a new person for myself. This all amplified when I met her—one of my close friends. One day, while I was sitting on a stool in art class, doodling whatever my mind could express at the time, she spoke up. What she said would forever be engraved into the vault of my mind. "My mother and father are divorced. They live across the country from each other. I feel quite lonely sometimes and my mother is a jerk to me. But I do have one thing keeping me up, my brother. He's my rock, my best friend, the one person who I can trust in this world." That moment shattered the glass ceiling

for me. All those memories came rushing back to me. I immediately felt something settle in my stomach, almost a sense of guilt for how I treated my brother and never thinking about the consequences of my actions.

Fast forward to today. That event not only has inspired me to change the way in which I treat my brother but also to shine the light in a different perspective on how I view others of a similar ability. I have come to the conclusion that it's okay if one of your qualities sets you apart from others. I stand up for my brother whenever I can now, and try to get him out of uncomfortable situations or just stay by his side to tell him, "you're never alone." I am immensely fortunate to be gifted with platforms to share my thoughts and stand up for others of a certain caliber whenever I can. Though my actions may not be grand or revolutionary, I believe the smallest things in life go the longest way. I hope others can wake up, as did I, and realize what a wonderful person might be and view them always as humans.

June 6-

Jenny Fu is in 9th grade at Mayfield High School. Jenny has a passion for art, reading, marching band, and enjoys hearing others' stories through speech and debate. Her future career plans involve helping others.

### llana Miller

#### 9th Grade, Mayfield High School

On the afternoon of Saturday, October 27, 2018, my family and I went to visit my grandmother. Just like always, she asked about school and what clubs my brother and I had joined. Then, "did you hear about the shooting at the shul in Pittsburgh?"

Shock washed over me as I tried to grasp the words coming from my grandmother's mouth. My mom quickly changed the subject to avoid upsetting my younger brother. I then pushed the feeling away, not wanting to believe what I had just heard.

Growing up in a Jewish family, I learned about giving *tzedakah* (donations) and *gemilut chasadim* (acts of loving kindness) from a young age. These lessons in the importance of kindness made it difficult to understand why anyone would commit a crime so terrible. Once I grew older, I began to learn about the Holocaust in Sunday School. As a sixth grader, I struggled with the time period's horrible events but was comforted slightly by the knowledge that anti-semitism is no longer so prevalent. All this made it easy for me to be in denial of the news my grandmother had just revealed.

However, I later began reading more about the shooting, the 11 victims, and the killer's anti-Semitism leading up to his attack.

At religious school the next week, we had discussions about the shooting, leading me to think of how devastated I would be if my loved ones were ever in that situation. What if it had been the first graders I work with every week at our synagogue in a city just like Squirrel Hill? What if it had been my friends or family members? What if it had been my grandpa's cousin who was celebrating Shabbat only a street away from the Tree of Life synagogue at the same moment that the shooter interrupted its services? After our discussions, I realized anti-Semitism still needs to be addressed to create a more tolerant and accepting society.

About a week later, I began working towards this when I visited a church with my aunt to speak to eighth graders about Judaism. I was surprised by how little they knew about a religion that is such an important part of my life. This made it even more meaningful to have the opportunity to share with them and show them that a difference in religions need not divide us.

Since then, I've taken every opportunity to educate people about Judaism. I hope that, by me sharing about my religion, they will see there's no reason to be hateful towards others just because they're different. In order to become more tolerant myself, I also intend to learn about other religions and cultures so I can overcome internal prejudices I may unknowingly have.

Finally, I do my best to make the Sunday School class in which I volunteer a fun, safe, and accepting environment. I hope, through my actions, I can help provide the first-grade students with a space free of judgment and discrimination.

# Ilana Miller

Ilana Miller is in 9th grade at Mayfield High School, where she participates in theater, Student Council, Science Olympiad, Mock Trial, and Interact Club. She volunteers with her synagogue's Sunday school class and at Playhouse Square. She looks forward to a future helping others and working with children.



# Mykenna Roy

#### 9th Grade, Mayfield High School

Born deaf, I went to an elementary school that specialized in services for kids with a hearing loss or some type of disability. Lots of kids around me were experiencing the same thing I was, and we all understood each other. Kids with a wide range of physical and mental disabilities would play, laugh, argue, and learn with each other in that school. However, there was a separate part of that school where kids without disabilities would learn. Occasionally, some kids with disabilities could be mainstreamed, joining the "normal" kids in education. This was extremely beneficial for both sides of the school to learn about each other, but once I was mainstreamed, I was treated differently. Kids wouldn't sit next to me in class or play with me at recess because I talked a little strange or asked them to repeat their words more often. This made me feel alienated amongst everyone, and I didn't quite understand why. Why was I being discriminated against for something out of my control? For something I was born with? I definitely knew I wasn't the only person experiencing this. I also knew that the kids without disabilities would never fully understand me, or anyone else on the other side of the school, unless they experienced a disability themselves.

You can't just magically disable someone for a day, or... can you? In seventh grade, I had a teacher who challenged a group of us to create a project about something we were passionate about. There were almost no limitations on it, so this was a perfect opportunity to help my able-bodied peers understand what life with a disability was like. After a few months, when it was time to present our projects, I had created eight mini

simulations for eight different disabilities that some of my elementary school classmates had. That year, I had helped a number of my peers without disabilities try to understand the struggles that some people go through, every single day.

Eighth grade came around and that same teacher asked us to do another Passion Project, so I did it differently this time. I decided to confine myself to a wheelchair for a full 24 hours, so I could really get a feel for the everyday obstacles of the millions of people in wheelchairs. I documented the whole process and presented it to my peers, who couldn't imagine being unable to walk. Some students even decided to try it out themselves! Seeing people wanting to learn more about everyone's differences made me ecstatic.

Helping myself and others in my school learn about what it's like to live with a disability was my entire goal for those projects. I wanted to prevent further discrimination against disabilities by educating others about them. By helping someone walk around in someone else's shoes, you're strengthening the bridge between two groups of people and uniting them. You're celebrating diversity and promoting acceptance amongst everyone, which is what society today needs more of.

# Mykenna Roy

Mykenna Roy is in 9th grade at Mayfield High School. She is active in cross-country, track, and jiu jitsu, and she hopes to study medicine, with the goal of advocating for those with disabilities.



# Gigi Konrad

#### 8th Grade, Rocky River Middle School

"I keep my ideals, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart." – Anne Frank

Locked in the attic, Anne Frank developed a voice that touched the world and touches us today. Her voice permanently changed the human perception that people deserve a second chance and that we should speak up in times of crisis. From my own personal experience witnessing an act of discrimination, my life has been impacted.

In text, I witnessed my classmates thinking it's "funny" if they describe someone acting crazy as "looking autistic." Multiple videos of a girl dancing were sent in a group chat. Everyone thought it was necessary to describe her crazy dancing as "autistic." They were using a word that describes a social impairment to make fun of this girl. Then my classmates started making fun of a boy in our class who actually is autistic. Under no circumstance is that considered an acceptable thing to do, and I immediately thought this problem needed to be addressed.

This boy happens to be one of my favorite friends. His impaired social communication and interaction makes no difference to me or anyone else who sees him as he truly is: his radiant cheerfulness reflects onto other students every day and makes them smile. We are fortunate to know someone like him.

I addressed the problem and exclaimed how they need to think about how other people will respond to this, especially the boy himself whose condition was being described in such a negative way. I believe all people need to learn how to speak up, otherwise the situation needing to be addressed will only be exacerbated.

If people across the world take common situations like this and apply them to their own life, it will pay off in the end. One individual can simply make a change and spread awareness to stopping hate everywhere. As shown in my personal experience it's possible to be "funny" without putting other people down in the process.

Anne Frank's life situation easily connects to being hopeful and giving people the second chance of forgiveness. Her diary spoke against the wrong of discrimination of her religion in the horrific Holocaust. When facing an injustice as little as mine or as severe as Anne Frank's, any complication deserves to have a better outcome that genuinely leaves everyone satisfied and hopeful.

# Gigi Konrud

Gigi Konrad is an 8th grader at Rocky River Middle School. She performs as a competitive dancer and hopes to become a veterinarian, with the aim of one day owning her own business.



### Gianna Miller

#### 8th Grade, Rocky River Middle School

I was a second grader stuck in a smoke-filled car. Police knocked on the driver's window in the parking lot of my school. The driver was my mom, who was higher than I had ever seen her before. The police decided she was putting herself and others in danger. I was humiliated because all of my friends and peers were watching. That was when I began to be bullied because my mom was an addict.

Classmates looked at me differently but it soon progressed worse. Starting in second grade, every Tuesday, I would sleep over at my mom's house. On Wednesdays, I would show up at school with greasy hair, dirty clothes on, smelling like cigarette smoke, and as embarrassed as ever. People began walking away from me and not wanting to talk to me, but instead, talking about me. One girl I rode the bus with told me I smelled bad and that it was bad that my family was different. There were times my mom got arrested on my school campus, with many of my classmates watching. Some things this girl would say to me were, "kill yourself," and, "you don't deserve to be alive." I was also told by my mom that I would never be good enough and that I would never go anywhere with my life. All of the hurtful comments I was getting from my classmates and my mom made me not want to ride the school bus, go to school, or see my mom.

I didn't do anything to make them stop, but I continued to be myself. I can draw inspiration from another girl who was "locked" in a perilous situation of no creation of her own: Anne Frank. Anne Frank always stayed true to

herself and upheld her ideals, even while she was hiding during Nazi Germany. Her diary helped her see the beauty in things that were not so beautiful. Similarly, I joined the swim team as an escape, and at the time, it took my mind off of my classmates and my mom. I made so many friends and loved what I was doing so much that all of my problems became endurable. Anne Frank and I both had hardships; hers worse than mine. But we both got through them with tools we loved and appreciated.

In the future, I will be a friend to someone in a similar situation. Everyone can help each other out by being a friend, something that Anne Frank and I both needed in our times of peril. Margaret Mead once said, "never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has." I can begin that small group and lead others to reach out to help those who need it.

# gianna Miller

Giana Miller is an 8th grader at Rocky River Middle School. She is passionate about math, swimming, and travel, and hopes to eventually visit Malta. Gianna plans on pursuing a career as a neurosurgeon.



# Aparna Srikanth

#### 8th Grade, Solon Middle School

I didn't really know her that well. She seemed shy and extremely secluded, but she was cognizant. Which is why I was slightly startled when she aimlessly started talking to me one day in class. Her accent was homespun and endearing. I liked her, she was vivacious and pleasantly forward. We became surprisingly good friends. She told me about where she came from and how much she loved our school. She didn't have as many friends, considering how gregarious she was. I realized why, when I heard how people seemed to be talking about her. I heard some of my friends saying how she could've brought the "bubonic plague" from India. People drew swastikas in her books and called them Nazi symbols. People called her names, excluded her, claimed she was deviant.

"Deviant." I never understood what that meant. People rely on that word to mean something negative. But in reality, what would we be without deviance? I looked at her and saw something similar to what I saw in the mirror. The same dark hair, the darker hue of skin. Did people think I was deviant too?

Society has exercised this outdated theory that "normal" is superior to aberrance. But this idealism seems to be based on looks alone. Hair, eye, and skin color. When did these elements become so crucial to how we are perceived as humans? We were not born with these unjustified insecurities, they were built by the blatant discrimination that even people like my friend can't seem to escape.

Instead of characterizing people by their actions and persona, we categorize them by their exterior. Unfortunately, this has now become a part of the sleep that precedes the American dream,

and people cannot seem to wake up. This idea of hate and deviance is no excuse for not realizing that, as humans, we all bleed the same color. I helped my friend realize, that without diversity, our world can never truly progress. It will stay the same, mundane and vapid. Being different and changing ourselves in some ways can change the world.

More than just standing up for her, I felt an obligation to do more. I found myself utilizing the one silent form of rebellion that I could afford. I wrote. Through Power of the Pen in my school and other outlets of deliverance, I wrote articles, stories, descriptions, and even about how I felt. I shared them with my family, my peers, and my teachers. I wanted everyone to understand how much we can change by simply being accepting and allowing ourselves to learn before we assume. Picking each other apart is no way to mend our insecurities. I attempted to create dialogue with my peers about stories of discrimination or hate in the news. Albeit trifling, I saw that these small acts of defiance helped change the perspective of some people and helped to Stop the Hate. No amount of melanin, even in the brightest Technicolor, should ever be classified as deviant.

# Aparum Subanto

Aparna Srikanth is an 8th grader at Solon Middle School, where she participates in many of her school's clubs. She enjoys writing and reading, studying math and science, and performing classical Indian dance. She hopes to combine all of her passions in her future career.



# Kamryn von Kunsay

#### 7th Grade, Learwood Middle School

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter." - Martin Luther King Jr.

People tend to believe that when they see things that are happening that aren't right, they don't need to get involved because it's not their problem. If they were in a similar situation, they would want some help. Sometimes by just simply saying "hello" in the hallway, or standing up for someone or something you believe in, it is making a difference.

My younger brother has autism. When I was younger, I remember being at the high school with my mom and brother. I remember that my brother got stuck at the very top of the bleachers in the football stadium. A group of teenagers were down below and thought they were being funny and were encouraging my brother to jump down. If he would have jumped down, he could have died. I was scared and did not know what to do. At the time, I was too young to fully understand his autism. A part of me knew I should be saying something to them and helping my brother, but the other part of me was very scared to do so and felt intimidated. My mother stepped in, and although she was upset, she politely explained to them that he had autism and takes things very literally. He has trouble comprehending when people are joking or talking sarcastically. I truly believe that by that minute or two she took to explain this to them, she had changed their way of thinking and acting. Hopefully this impacted their decisions in the future.

Ever since that day, I've decided to take action, not only for my brother, but for everyone. I now understand that

I have a personal responsibility of standing up for everyone, even if they don't have a disability. You never know how doing this one action can positively change the future. I want to inspire people all around to stand up and speak out, just like how my mom inspired me. I think being an advocate for those individuals that are unable to stand up for themselves would be more of a common practice in today's culture. I think the fear of what others think prohibits our ability to stand up without being ridiculed.

This experience has changed my thought process when coming in contact with new people. My hope is that people hear this, and realize that you don't always know what people are dealing with. It is not always possible to notice that someone has a disability through their looks and appearance. It is impossible to know what they are dealing with at home. It is never okay to bully or tease someone for the way they look or talk, or for their culture and religion. Some of the things are out of their control. I wish more people realized that the diversity in this world is what makes us unique and strong.

# Kamryn von Kunsay

Kamryn von Kunsay is in 7th grade at Learwood Middle School. She participates in volleyball and swim team, and she enjoys volunteering at the local pet shelter. She intends to pursue a career in science.



# **Arianna Preston**

#### 7th Grade, Beachwood Middle School

"I'll never like someone like her," he told his friend as he pointed across the table at me. "Her puffy mixed hair, the way her skin looks. I wouldn't ever date someone like her." The kids at my table went silent. It took me a few seconds to realize what he had meant. My mom is white and my father is black. My hair is different from most people's hair. It's wavy, curly, but straight at the same time. My skin, it's dark and light. I knew that it was different, though I thought it was beautiful. Different is good, right? I guess not. I started crying lightly and the teacher came over to me. She must have heard him and immediately sent him out of the classroom to talk with the guidance counselor. I told her that I was fine and it was ok because he did not mean to hurt me, but it wasn't. The day went on the same as always for me except for the emptiness and confusion I was feeling.

My father greeted me at home with empathy showing on his face. He must have gotten a call from the school. He told me not to pay attention to the boy, but I knew I would always remember this incident. After all, words can hurt. We had a long talk about my identity and who I was. I thought about how I can never do my hair with my friends because it is too knotty and how whenever we are at the store people have to ask me if I am with my mom because we do not look alike.

My friends and family got my spirits up and supported me. I was hurt although I learned from this that things are going to happen, people are going to hate me and others simply because of how we look. Maybe that boy doesn't like me because of who I am, but he does not matter. Yes, I am black and white. Yes, I have puffy dark hair. Yes, I'm still proud of who I am.

I am different, but different is good.

That was the last time I experienced something like that, though others have to experience this every day. No one should feel ashamed of who they are. No one should feel alone. I stand up for others and myself. If I see someone getting bullied or tormented, I intervene and try to help. I strive to make them feel wanted and happy. I want people to love each other for who they are, not loathe them because of their skin or race. Our world will turn into a twisted hateful place if we continue to discriminate. As Martin Luther King said, "we MUST live together as brothers or perish together as fools." We have to live as brothers and sisters no matter what race. We need to band together to "stop the hate."

# avianna Prestan

Arianna Preston is in 7th grade at Beachwood Middle School, where she enjoys playing basketball, percussion, and reading. She plans on a career in marketing and advertising, and she hopes to travel the world.



### Veronica Schwartz

#### 7th Grade, Beachwood Middle School

It was like a game of hide-and-seek, except with life-threatening consequences. It was the early 20th century and my 6-year-old great-grandmother was hiding in the basement of her own house. Scared. Silent. Terrified. The Russian army was searching house by house for Jews. To kill them. Although she was frightened for her life with her heart beating out of her chest, she couldn't make a sound.

Eventually, she survived and started a new life with her family in America, but things weren't any easier for her once she'd arrived. Living in Camden, New Jersey, they had few possessions and little money. She had to help support her family by scrubbing floors.

But things got even worse. She barely knew the language. People called her a Greenhorn, a cruel name for an immigrant. One day, she waited in line to get a drink of water. When it was her turn, the person behind her pushed her head down, causing her to lose her two front teeth.

When I was a little kid and my mom would tell me stories about her, I just couldn't see why people abused her so much. Weren't we taught to love and respect one another? Why did people have to be so mean to her? While I was being taught to respect other people, the racing thought haunted me of people physically hurting her, simply because of who she was.

Since this was over a century ago, you may not think that immigration is still a big issue in our world. But there are headlines about this topic almost every day. My great-grandmother went through so much, not only because she was Jewish, but because she was an immigrant. It saddens me to know that only a few generations ago, my family had to suffer because other people just couldn't accept them for the hardships they undeniably had to go through as Jewish immigrants. I've learned that I should show respect to everyone by doing good deeds and accepting every person no matter their attributes. Although I may not be able to communicate with everyone, it's my responsibility to hold the door or play a game with them. If they're sitting alone at lunch, I'll go sit with them to make them feel welcome and as if they belong. Although it may sound cliché, one act of kindness can easily change the world, or at least someone's first day in a new place. If I ever have a family, I'll keep her story alive through generations so they can know that we were once immigrants too.

I want people to stop discriminating against immigrants because they appear different than us. If you start to accept them and include them, people will want to follow you. They'll understand that everyone was created equal with the same opportunity in life and, for once, we can all stop the hate.

Veronica Schoots

Veronica Schwartz is in 7th grade at Beachwood Middle School. Veronica is an active member of the Shaker Figure Skating Club and volunteers at Canine Lifeline, an animal rescue agency. She plans to become a surgeon and hopes to continue her volunteer work with dogs.

# Gabi Censoprano

#### 6th Grade, Hudson Middle School

This could happen anywhere, but here? My tiny town, my neighborhood? We were the closest bunch of kids. Best friends, family. Years of memories. We had parties, sleepovers, and late-night capture-the-flag games. There were about 13 of us, all ages, ranging from second grade to eighth grade. In our petite, sleepy town in Upstate New York, a little way down our block was my best friend, Kate. Next door to Kate was a good friend of mine, named Abby, who was one of the sweetest girls on the block.

Abby happened to have a rather severe speech difficulty, which made her hard to understand, even though I could understand her pretty well. She was two years older compared to most people in the grade. She and Kate were in my grade and my closest friends on the block. All of us showed understanding and kindness to Abby and treated her just like we would treat anyone else on our block, with pure kindness. That perfect feeling changed in fourth grade, with one boy, and one bus ride.

It was an average Monday morning. I got on the bus and saw a boy in the seat next to me who I recognized. His name was Luke and he lived a few blocks away from me. Abby was sitting behind me and Luke was laughing at her. I did the thing that most people would do. I told him to stop. It happened again the next morning, and so on. He would mock her and tease her to the point that she'd get extremely embarrassed and upset. That started to turn into a few people teasing her and it escalated from there. I was shocked at what I was seeing, even one of the girls on our block started to want to leave Abby out of our games. This was bullying and it needed to stop.

I thought and thought, and I wanted to see a change. Luke bullying Abby, classmates talking behind her back, and my own neighbor wanting to leave her out in games—I was done with this. I told my mom, my bus driver, whoever I could to make these kids leave her alone. What I did made most kids stop, but I wasn't able to truly put an end to it. This taught me to treat everyone equally, kindly, and show empathy especially to those with special needs. I love Abby from the bottom of my heart and hated what I was seeing those kids do. I wanted Abby to feel like she fit in, as she should. Her speech difficulty doesn't define her. We are all unique in our own ways.

Our differences should always be accepted. They are what make us unique. Why should we be judged for something, especially if we cannot change it?

"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences." - Audre Lorde (1934-1992)

# Holi Consoprano

Gabi Censoprano is a 6th grader at Hudson Middle School. She enjoys writing, singing, dancing, and acting, and she participates in field hockey and Girl Scouts. She intends to become a pediatric dentist.



# Elise Fletcher

#### 6th Grade, St. Barnabas School

Retarded is a word I constantly hear among my peers. That word hurts my heart, for I believe you should "raise your word, not your voice. It is rain that grows flowers not thunder" (Rumi).

It is bitter how people treat each other and especially how people treat people with special needs. I watch on the news and in public places how people with special needs are mistreated and it makes me so disconsolate.

Our own president even mocked a reporter with special needs, and it is disturbing how people in public stare at people with special needs as if they live in a zoo and don't get to know them. People with special needs tend to be one of the main targets for bullying because they are different. Incidents like this break my heart and make me want to advocate for change.

My mom works for a nonprofit organization for individuals with special needs, allowing these individuals to have access to recreation, art, and musical opportunities. I love to help her with the events, activities, and parties the nonprofit plans.

When I volunteer with her I have so much fun with both the kids and adults. I realize they are just like you and me. They want to have fun, laugh, and be accepted for who they are.

From planning events such as family activities, pool parties, plays, musical and art expression classes, to teaching swim lessons, it makes me so happy that organizations, like the one my mom volunteers for, allow people with special needs to have the fun and access to all different opportunities.

I want to continue to make the change in people's perceptions that individuals with special needs are just like you and me.

Currently, I correct people when they use harmful words, I include my friends when volunteering with the organization, and I spread the word about the organization. Doing these simple acts impacts the way people see people with special needs. If everyone would see people the way I do, we would be one step closer to acceptance.

# Elise Flether

Elise Fletcher is a 6th grader at St. Barnabas School. She is an avid athlete, participating in cheerleading, basketball, and soccer, and she is a member of Mythology Club, Academic Challenge, and volunteers with Works of Mercy. She plans to continue serving her community in her future career.



# Mallory Schenkenberger

#### 6th Grade, Hudson Middle School

My family and I have traveled to different states, countries, and continents. When we travel, we explore the unique cultures and landscapes that these places have to offer. Although when you go to other places around the earth, it doesn't necessarily mean the local people will like all religions, genders, or races. When I was on vacation a few summers ago this happened to some of my closest friends and it turned an enjoyable vacation into an uncomfortable situation.

It all started on our first day in Makarska, Croatia, where our friends from England, friends from South Africa, and my family from America met for the week. After unpacking our suitcases, we went for a walk to dinner. As we began to walk, I could feel that something wasn't right. I sensed eyes glaring at me and people whispering. I wondered if it was because I sounded or dressed differently. I soon realized that it wasn't me at all. The more stares and points we got it became obvious the people were talking about my friends, whose skin was a different color.

When we sat down for dinner, I tried to put myself in the Croatian's shoes, asking myself why they didn't want the family from South Africa there. Why were they treating them differently from everyone else? It didn't make sense. I wondered how my friends were feeling. Did they feel different like they didn't belong? I simply had no idea. The funny thing is, since my friends from South Africa lived through apartheid, I wondered if they even noticed the glares or felt the cold shoulder from strangers because maybe they were used to it. The hateful glares were shocking to me, though, because I've never experienced racism before.

The wonderful vacation kept getting worse each day. When we all went out to dinner, Croatian families switched their seats to move away from where we were sitting. When we went to shops, people moved away from where we were standing in the aisles. Even on the beach, people placed their towels away from us because we were sitting with them.

I was too scared to act out about how they were treating my friends because I was young, didn't speak the native language, and was visiting their county. If I had been brave enough, I would've explained to the Croatians how they missed out on making a new friend. Our South African friends are like family to me and it was so wrong that they were being treated like they were from another planet just because of their skin color. If the Croatians would've taken a second to say hello or just be friendly, they would've seen what I see in them. A family of love. My friends accepted me, just like I did with them, because we found joy in what we had in common. If the world stopped seeing differences and started appreciating the similarities, there would be a lot less hate in the world today.

Malloy Schin

Mallory Schenkenberger is a 6th grader at Hudson Middle School, where she is active in student council, lacrosse, and basketball. She enjoys playing the violin, writing, traveling, and helping her community through volunteering. She plans to pursue a career in architecture.





HATE
It has caused a lot of problems in the world, but it has not solved one yet.

- MAYA ANGELOU

Dworken & Bernstein is proud to congratulate these impassioned upstanders for making a difference and inspiring others to take action.



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#### **ABOUT STOP THE HATE® YOUTH SING OUT**

#### **Voices United for Social Change**

More than 1,000 students from 16 schools worked collaboratively within their classes to pen and perform songs for *Stop the Hate® Youth Sing Out*, is an artsintegrated learning initiative that asks students to share their thoughts on discrimination after visiting the Maltz Museum. The annual program sharpens written and oral language skills while fostering a deeper understanding of historic human rights events. Students compete to win anti-bias education grants for their schools. Congratulations to all of the participants for using your voices for good!

Youth Sing Out is presented in partnership with Roots of American Music and the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.



Antoinette Brown's Period 9 Class, Shaw High School







We are pleased to support

# Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage's Stop the Hate Essay Contest and Awards Ceremony

**Greg Cowan** 

Principal

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#### 2019 STOP THE HATE® YOUTH SING OUT WINNERS

#### "New America"

Justin Caithaml's Period 4 & 5 Choir Class, Midview High School TIE - FIRST PLACE HIGH SCHOOL

What's close at hand is only ours Step up, speak out, you can't take us down There's no reason to keep on waiting Start the conversation now

Make our voices heard, make them hear our words You better listen up

We're the kids of the New America (x2)

With our rights, there's no doubt Don't shoot our opinions down There's problems that we all can see, but we will figure them out

Make our voices heard, make them hear our words C'mon and join the crowd

We're the kids of the New America (x2)

Keep an open mind, always try to be kind No need to hide Be yourself with pride You only get to be great once in this life

You seem stuck in a place only in your old way You'll have to pick up the pace What was taught isn't true today You're gonna hear what I have to say

We're the kids of the New America (x4)

Justin Caithaml's Period 4 & 5 Choir Class, Midview High School



#### "Win"

Antoinette Brown's Period 9 Class, Shaw High School TIE - FIRST PLACE HIGH SCHOOL

#### Chorus:

We just want to be great No role models to lead us Where should we go What should we do Just wanna win We just tryna win

Stop the hate, I'm tryna make it I'm not basic, everybody wanna stay patient
Complacent, a rooster at dawn see I'm awakened, I'm like a gun shot coming out the casing
Seeing movies of kids in EC
No credit roll, constantly moving in repeat
Release the lion of Judah speaking within me
Your fight is not with them, Jesus is the remedy

#### Chorus

Standing tall like the terminator
Live for my family it makes it better
Had to learn lessons that came like the weather
It's always been love that's kept me together
I stay prayed up God keep me forever.
Some people gotta get gone, binds served
People in my pockets but I'd rather spend it on want, my life,
I'm the master.

#### Chorus

Welcome to my life

Where all people do is lie and children pretend to smile We act like we happy, but deep down we're hiding all the pain and sadness.

Why do you continue to hate but get mad when we retaliate. The hate you give somehow comes back around to you When do you plan on giving in? Haven't you had enough? We all can win We all can be great But just remember you can win when you stop the hate.

#### 2019 STOP THE HATE® YOUTH SING OUT WINNERS

#### "Guns Down"

Lisa Richards' 7th Grade Choir, Garfield Middle School TIE - FIRST PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL

#### Chorus:

Something happens and you don't know what to do Feeling angry, need someone to talk to You're not alone, I'm standing right here Don't be, controlled by your fear

Guns down, Guns down We don't need them around We don't want to hear the sound We gotta stop! And put our guns down

We should feel safe, to go to church, and pray Places we go to everyday Hurtful people out on the street Look for warnings in what others tweet

#### Chorus

That could have been me standing there We need more than thoughts and prayers

People die. It's no longer pretend Scars are there of our families and friends There are laws we need to amend Bring justice to those who cannot defend

#### Chorus

We gotta stop And put our guns down (3x)

Lisa Richards' 7th Grade Choir, Garfield Middle School



#### "Turn Around"

Lisa Richards' 6th Grade Choir, Garfield Middle School TIE - FIRST PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL

#### Chorus:

Look at everything you have done You have to know you're not the only one Think of things that give you joy We have to stand up. be strong, then turn around

Turn around, let our world bring you to the light (2x)

It's a decision to do the right thing You can be someone to look up to Helping people who are in need You can start over, and turn around (part 2)

#### Chorus

If you feel like you don't have a voice You need to know that you have a choice Sometimes we need to talk our feelings out We have to stand up for others, and turn around

#### Chorus

Look at everything you have done You have to know you're not the only one Think of things that give you joy We have to stand up. Be strong Then turn around

Turn around, let our world bring you to the light (x4)
Turn around

Lisa Richards' 6th Grade Choir, Garfield Middle School



#### 2019 STOP THE HATE® YOUTH SING OUT WINNERS

#### "Don't Let The Hate Control You"

Michelle Kester's 7th Grade Class, Dike School of the Arts RUNNER-UP MIDDLE SCHOOL

Don't let the hate control you, you know where you're going Don't let nobody stop you, just keep on going. (x2)

Stop the hate and appreciate what you got, and Don't tell nobody if they hot or not, Cause you don't know what's going on in their life, So stop the wrong and figure out what's right. So don't try to be perfect of someone else, And show you're worth it for yourself.

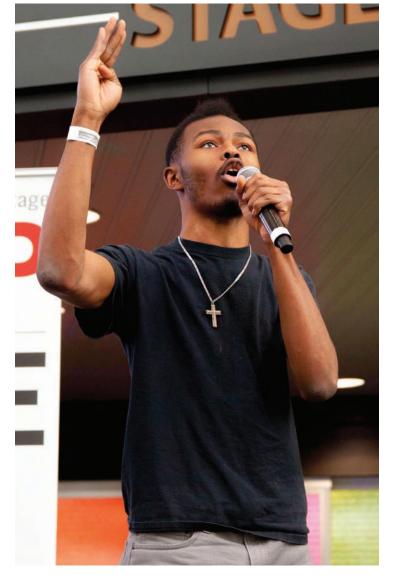
Don't let nobody judge you, you know that you're worth it. You know you're brilliant and talented, don't have to be perfect (x2)

Stop the hate, put the guns down, it ain't worth it 2 times for the people who ain't deserve it, Life is a dream, but you can make it clean. One word, one dollar that's all you need. We going to grow up and be some legends Turn around, look back. Yea, we made it!

You got brains and skills, work toward your goals You know where you're going, don't be controlled. (2x)

Don't let the hate control you! (x4)

Stop the hate!



Antoinette Brown's Period 9 Class, Shaw High School

Justin Caithaml's Period 4 & 5 Choir Class, Midview High School





Michelle Kester's 7th Grade Class, Dike School of the Arts

#### 2019 STOP THE HATE® YOUTH SPEAK OUT ESSAY READERS

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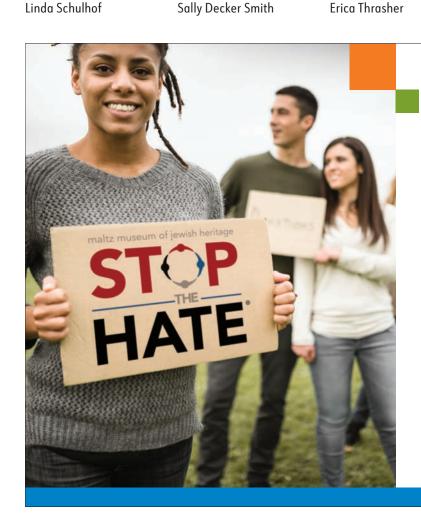
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