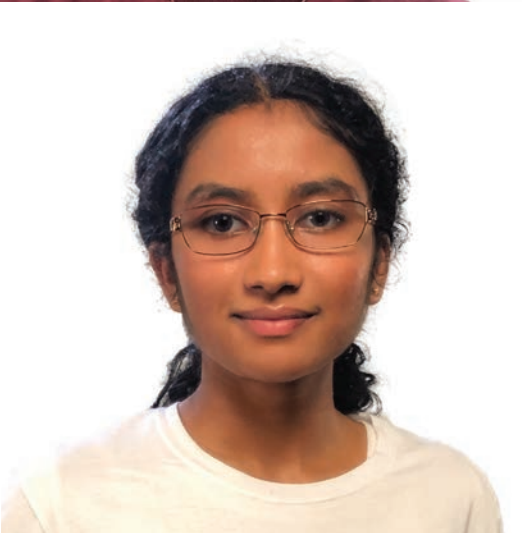




THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL  
**STOP**  **HATE**  
THE  
AWARDS CEREMONY  
PRESENTED BY MALTZ MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE



Dear Friends,

You are about to meet 20 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***<sup>®</sup>.

This year marks the 13th anniversary of the ***Stop the Hate***<sup>®</sup> 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 thirteen years, we have provided \$1.3 million in college scholarships and anti-bias education grants, and we have engaged over 40,000 students across 12 Northeast Ohio counties to stand up and speak out against hate.

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***<sup>®</sup>, 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 legendary civil rights leader and human rights advocate John Lewis who famously said in his autobiography *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*, *"I believe in freedom of speech, but I also believe that we have an obligation to condemn speech that is racist, bigoted, anti-Semitic, or hateful."*

**We asked students to think about their own lives. 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*® SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

### STOP THE HATE SCHOOLS OF THE YEAR

New this year, we created a digital *Stop the Hate* tour and partnered with Lake Erie Ink, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and Roots of American Music to launch FREE online songwriting and essay writing workshops. These anti-bias learning tools taught history, literacy, and the arts for middle school, high school, and home school groups. Every school that participated in a workshop was eligible to receive anti-bias education grant money from a pool of \$30,000 that is split evenly.

Congratulations to Andrew J. Rickoff Elementary School, Charles F. Brush High School, Citizens Leadership Academy, Cleveland Central Catholic High School, Cleveland Heights High School, Collinwood High School, East Tech High School, Garfield Middle School, Harding Middle School, Hathaway Brown, Hawken High School, International Newcomers Academy, James Ford Rhodes High, Joseph and Florence Mandel Jewish Day School, Lincoln-west Global Studies, Longfellow Middle School, Luis Munoz Marin School, Mary M. Bethune Elementary, Max S. Hayes High School, Mayfield High School, Midview High School, Midview Middle School, Monticello Middle School, Mound Elementary School, Newton D. Baker School of Arts, North Canton Middle School, St. Christopher Elementary School, St. Vincent-St. Mary High School, Wade Park School

### STOP THE HATE TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

In addition, with its partners the Maltz Museum named two Stop the Hate Teachers of the Year. Each received a \$1,000 cash prize in recognition of their personal commitment to anti-bias education.

Congratulations to Kari Beery, Mayfield High School and Tamara Blair, Newton D. Baker School of the Arts



## 2021 Youth Sing Out Song Writing Contest Winners

**Mayfield High School** – First Place High School, “Daybreak”  
**Max S. Hayes High School** – Tie Runner-up High School, “Our Pain”  
**Midview High School** – Tie Runner-up High School, “Love Wins”  
**Harding Middle School** – First Place Middle School, “Stand Up and Talk About It”  
**Garfield Middle School** – Runner-up Middle School, “Stand Up, Work Together, Cheer up”

## 2021 Youth Speak Out Grand Prize Scholarship Student Finalists

### GRADE 12

**Lillie Alsheikhtaha**, Charles F. Brush High School  
**Jessica Chang**, Hathaway Brown  
**Lauren Clar**, Beachwood High School  
**AJ Shorts**, Charles F. Brush High School  
**Kynneddy Smith**, Hawken School  
**Thomas Smyers**, Shaker Heights High School  
**Khadija Top**, Beaumont School

### GRADE 11

**Madaleine Carter**, Beaumont School  
**Lillian Irizarry**, Beaumont School  
**Bowen Zhang**, Beachwood High School

## 2020 Youth Speak Out Student Finalists

### GRADE 10

**Annel Hodges**, Cleveland Central Catholic High School  
**Elizabeth Huang**, Shaker Heights High School

### GRADE 9

**Margaret Anne Hustak**, Holy Name High School  
**Rafaela Nurieva**, Mayfield High School

### GRADE 8

**Shreya Chellu**, Beachwood Middle School  
**Sharbel Harb**, Brecksville-Broadview Heights Middle School

### GRADE 7

**Anthony Fitzgerald Jr.**, Saint Paschal Baylon School  
**Anshul Sharma**, Ballard Brady Middle School

### GRADE 6

**Calayla Holmes**, Homeschooled  
**Hayden Lipinski**, Hudson Middle School

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

# Lillie Alsheikhtaha

12th Grade, Charles F. Brush High School

As a child, my gender always surprised people. From head to toe, I never represented the female stereotype, suited with long hair and pink dresses. Instead, I preferred my short brown hair, hoodies, and old sneakers. Everywhere I went, I would hear “excuse me, sir” or “hello, young man.” These false assumptions made me believe that I was doing something wrong. I must be too masculine. I supposed that I should grow out my hair. I should ditch my legos for barbie dolls. Something about me was not right.

In fourth grade, I was gripped with anxiety as my class prepared to take the OAA. This test was the height of my distress until the teacher announced that the entire class had to go to the restroom before we began. Terror seized me. Weird looks and scorn from others trounced all of my other concerns. Only six girls were allowed in the bathroom, while the rest waited along the wall. Laughter and chatter fueled my fear as time progressively slowed down.

Once it was my turn, I hurried into the stall. As I left, a girl’s extended index finger blocked my path. She repeatedly yelled, “A boy is in the bathroom!” until all the girls came out of the stalls. The whole restroom flooded with girls as they collectively chanted the phrase, prompting me to run out. Alone, I sat against a bare wall. Acceptance was all I wanted. Rejection was all I felt.

Gender stereotypes are damaging. The emotional defeat I experienced was immeasurable. I felt hopeless as an excluded member of society. However, one girl emerged from the crowd, sat against the wall, and asked if I felt okay. Her concern introduced hope into a desperate situation. For once, I felt as though I did matter and could be respected. The worthlessness I felt quickly shifted into optimism, generating a plan for the future.

Issues regarding my gender are the core of my identity, facilitating my involvement within the LGBTQ+ community. Recognizing mental struggles that correlate with sexuality, I’m determined to promote self-love to combat scarring stereotypes. Recently, I spoke to a trusted teacher. We discussed the negative influences of intolerance and how education can ultimately restore balance. A few weeks later, she initiated a crowdfunding project named “Read the Rainbow.” Money collected was used to purchase classroom library books with LGBTQ+ main characters. One contributor commented, “I wish that I had a teacher in high school who wanted me to be able to see myself among the protagonists.”

Everyone has the potential to influence society. If one conversation could lead to the purchase of twenty-six books through 36 hours of donations, imagine if thousands of people had similar discussions. While education is the solution to intolerance, communication must precede it. This realization motivates me to advocate acceptance and self-exploration. Attempting to reach as many students and teachers as possible, I promote the importance of discussions, as they lead to reasoning and progress.

Lillie Alsheikhtaha is a senior at Charles F. Brush High School, where she has participated in the National Honor Society, the marching and pep bands, and environmental club. She enjoys drawing, painting, and creating plant-based recipes. She plans to attend Case Western Reserve University to study environmental science. In the future she hopes to apply her creativity and analytical skills to discover ways to rebalance nature.



# Madaleine Carter

12th Grade, Beaumont School

I was in seventh grade when my mom sent me to a Space Tech summer camp. As an icebreaker, the teacher told us to line up by name without verbal communication. If we succeeded, we got extra free time. Once time was up, I realized I was in the opposite place that I needed to be. Everyone else had lined up in order, but I was the odd one out. The silence was suffocating, all eyes were on me. My face took a deep shade of crimson and I was unable to speak. The teacher brushed it off, saying we'd have more opportunities next time. The other kids avoided me, and I sat alone on my phone. I tried to ignore it, said it was no big deal, and tried my best to follow instructions.

But then I was singled out again. Everyone finished writing their essays and had free time in the computer lab. I had been listening to music and was really excited, dancing in my seat and flapping my hands. "What are you doing?" someone asked. I turned and saw two kids behind me. "Oh, just listening to music. It's the theme song for a show I really like..." I half-stuttered, half-mumbled, my voice trailing off. "No, no. Like, what are you doing? With your hands?" the short one repeated. "Oh, I'm just, uh..." I struggled to form a response. They were staring at me again, the music faintly filling the void of silence. The two kids eventually left, but I could feel the occasional stare from a classmate.

I had recently come to understand that I have autism, or as I saw it: "Not everyone does what you do." Since I was successful in school, I concluded that autism only had positives. However, my experience at camp, with people I'd never met before, showed me how others see the trait. Looking back, the icebreaker affected me on a greater scale; I always had trouble speaking to others, thinking I had social anxiety. I found out later that autism is a condition which hinders my ability to communicate. I came out of that camp feeling discouraged, thinking every new person I'd meet would draw attention to my differences. It wasn't until freshman year of high school that I began to realize how little people noticed or cared. My first high school friend had no idea until I told her, only to discover that she also has autism.

I want to influence others with challenges and show them that they are loved, that it doesn't matter if they're obsessed with one obscure novel or that they gallop to release energy. I currently volunteer with an organization helping youth with disabilities. We discuss issues such as inclusion and civil rights through a book club. I want to inspire the youth in the club and others with disabilities. I want to show them that their differences aren't obstacles, but skills they can use to excel and succeed.



Madaleine Carter is a junior at Beaumont School, where she is an officer for the culinary club and a member of PRISM (for the LGBTQ community and its allies). She hopes to attend Mercyhurst University for its inclusive environment and degree in forensic science. She also hopes to use her art skills to be a textbook illustrator.

# Jessica Chang

12th Grade, Hathaway Brown

"HA-HA-HA." As a child, I often pretended that I had no middle name, because whenever people found out that it was "Ha," they would inevitably make the same joke, force the same fake laughter, and refuse to say it correctly, with just the one syllable. My middle name is my mother's surname, a tie to my Korean heritage—but in America, it's just a joke.

I learned from a young age that Americans like to laugh at funny things, but in this case funny doesn't mean "seeking or intending to amuse." It means "differing from the ordinary in a suspicious or eccentric way." There are many things about me that are funny in America. My name is funny. The way I speak is funny. The food that I eat smells funny. The music that I listen to is funny. Even my laughter is funny: "Your eyes get so funny and small when you laugh!" To this day, I double-check all photos of me smiling to make sure my eyes aren't narrowed too much.

Laughing can bring us together, but it can also divide us into those who are laughing and those being laughed at. Hate always starts small. It starts with jokes about "kung flu" or the subservient role of Asian women, comments that eventually lead to horrific crimes like the shooting in Atlanta. It's never "just" a joke. During the pandemic, over 3,800 anti-Asian hate crimes were committed. Victims, mostly Asian women, were harassed, slashed, burned, and shot dead. It's become painfully clear: we are the virus, and white supremacy is America's immune system, expelling our foreign bodies by any means possible, starting with racist jokes and ending with violence.

Today, I live a life of fear. If someone stares for too long at the grocery store, I start identifying the nearest exits. Fear has taught me, however, that I will only stop being afraid if I can take back the narrative. I used to burn with shame whenever my middle name was mentioned. Now, I put it on every form I fill out. I immersed myself in my culture and volunteered for groups like the Ohio Progressive Asian Women's Leadership, finding joy and empowerment in my heritage and work for the AAPI community.

My senior year, I started the MISO Project with a friend to raise awareness for North Korean defectors like my grandfather, raising \$500 for LiNK, a nonprofit that helps defectors resettle. In Korean, "MISO" means "smile." Because when we laugh at others, we dehumanize them, but when we strive to put a smile on their faces, we uplift each other. Throughout the project, we interviewed several experts and refugees for a short documentary. One memorable interviewee said that "North Korea is [more than] jokes about Kim Jong-Un. It is full of people just like you and I, [with] their own families and their own hopes." I understand what he meant. We are more than a punchline in the American story. We're the next chapter.



Jessica Chang is a senior at Hathaway Brown, where she participates in student government and the debate team. She enjoys writing, hiking, stand-up comedy, and learning about youth advocacy. In college, she plans to study computer science and philosophy and to be involved in her community.

# Lauren Clar

## 12th Grade, Beachwood High School

Everyone was trying to find their way among the crowd traversing the musty, cramped high-school hallway. We had to shoulder dive past oncoming students and swerve around others to just keep on moving. All of us had the potential to reach our final destination—it was just a matter of finding our way past the jumbled sea of students to get there.

I stumbled over my feet as my friend abruptly stopped to speak to someone passing by.

“Do you think I should take AP Physics next year?” she asked.

“Well, I wouldn’t recommend it. . . . Usually, only boys take AP Physics as underclassmen. . . . I highly advise you to take it the year after next as a junior. . . . You don’t want to be with all those boys, do you?”

I was astonished. My friend is one of the smartest people in my grade. Still, she was discouraged from pursuing her interest in physics because of her gender. The recurring dissuasion of girls from taking STEM classes leads to gender disparity in the STEM workforce. This cycle needs to be stopped to achieve the highest level of productivity, sustainability, and opportunity.

The conversation I witnessed sparked my passion to advocate for gender equality. Soon after the experience, I founded a chapter of an organization called Girls Learn International at my high school. As founder and leader of the chapter, I spearhead social action initiatives to promote gender equality. For example, I conducted an initiative where club members read books to preschoolers about women in STEM, such as Rosie Revere, Engineer.

This year, I was honored to be a delegate to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, where I learned about gender discrimination on a global scale. I am working internationally with women leaders from the commission on a video project about the state of gender inequality in STEM around the world.

I will not stop fighting for gender equality. My career goal is to work in the aerospace industry. I want to use my role as a woman in the STEM field to be a mentor and inspiration for young girls interested in STEM. Furthermore, I intend to open doors for other females by being a leader in the workplace and advocating for my female coworkers facing injustice.

It can be very tough to get past the crowd of stereotypes when there is so much stopping us in our tracks. I want to lead the way for future generations to overcome gender biases and reach their full potential. I will use my voice to speak up for discouraged women and girls and create a more encouraging future for all.



Lauren Clar is a senior at Beachwood High School. She has contributed to the Saltzman Youth Panel as a panelist and youth advisor. She enjoys spending time with family and friends, going on walks, and doing puzzles. She is interested in STEM, particularly outer space and rockets, and plans to attend The Ohio State University in the fall as an Eminence Fellow in the Honors Program.

# Lillian Irizarry

11th Grade, Beaumont School

"You'll be fine. Just get some sleep."

I sit on the edge of my bed, shaking. I try to calm myself down as tears stream down my face. I mumble to myself, "You're okay. You're okay." and rub my hands against my arms. My body attempts to gain control of my breathing as I desperately resist the urge to go into the kitchen and stab myself in the chest with a knife. I have been battling with depression and anxiety for years—many years were spent undiagnosed. For such a long time, I told myself that what I felt did not matter. Due to past traumas and being subtly bullied throughout middle school, I came to think of myself as worthless. When I was finally diagnosed, everything suddenly made sense. After months of therapy and getting the right medication, I was finally in a better place. I began to think back on how I treated myself and how others treated me.

"You should be careful what you eat. You'll gain a lot of weight."

I was extremely self-conscious about my weight. My appetite fluctuates frequently and at times I would go days without eating. I could not find the motivation to take care of myself because I thought that I did not deserve it.

"Why do you need an extension on this assignment?"

Last night I thought of overdosing, I think to myself. This was the most common issue I had. People could not seem to understand that I suffer from a genuine illness that affects every part of my life. I was accused of laziness when I would complain. I was labeled "antisocial" or "rude" because I could not hold a conversation with anyone. People understood when I said that I was tired or I had a headache. However, their leniency would disappear if I said I felt depressed. I came to notice this everywhere.

There is such a widespread reluctance to talk about mental illnesses and disorders. I want to change that. I want to be able to talk about how I am feeling without any shame. I want society to be more accommodating for people with mental illnesses. I want to break the stigma that plagues so many communities (especially people of color) that believes going to therapy is "weird" or a "waste of money."

I have become an outspoken advocate of bringing awareness to mental illnesses and disorders. I keep myself educated and correct people who use stereotypes. I am always open to discussion with other people, whether they want to have a conversation or just need someone to listen. While I am not the shining beacon of mental health, I still encourage others to engage in healthy behaviors. Every day, I try to let people around me know that their life has value with something as small as a compliment. Through doing this, I hope that I am able to spread love instead of hate.

Lillian Irizarry is a junior at Beaumont School, where she participates in pottery club and FAME (Females Achieving Minority Excellence), and where she is also an executive member of culinary club and entrepreneur club. She is the director of the youth choir at her church. She hopes to attend college at the University of Washington for the interdisciplinary study of human-computer interaction and to become a user-interface designer.



# AJ Shorts

## 12th Grade, Charles F. Brush High School

"Yes, Police, I'm here at Boulevard Park and I believe these two black men are selling drugs." Was that how the phone call about my father and me went? During the summertime I'm there five days of the week at the same time doing the same workout. But TODAY you believe I'm selling drugs. I was running hills and laps about an hour prior to the police showing up. When someone would walk past me, I'd wave and smile. Was it my smile that triggered them? Or was it the color of my skin?

That caller wanted the police to provide safety. SAFETY. If you're supposed to keep people safe, then why do you strike fear in the hearts of black kids and people of color? The fear I experienced when the police car pulled down the hill and parked is a fear that I had never felt before. Stories of cops using excessive force ran through my mind until I saw that he was black.

The officer walked towards us. "What's up y'all, what y'all doing today in the park?" We told him that we were working out and about to throw. The officer told us that a woman reported "two Black men selling drugs throughout the park." Throughout the park? The only time I was not on the hill was when I was running, but it was basically in the same area. The officer explained how these false calls continuously come in and he said, and I quote, "I always try to answer these calls, being one of the few black men on shift, because the other officers have certain feelings towards us (black men)."

We talked about sports, life, and my future. When he left, I wondered what would've happened if one of those other officers would've showed up. Would they even have talked to us? Or would they have checked my bag and patted me down? Would they have arrested me and claimed that I attacked them?

Terror shouldn't be anybody's reaction when a police car drives by, or an officer walks past, or even when hearing a siren. I will never forget that day when someone had enough hate to call the police on us for working out. I'll never forget when a person viewed me as a criminal or thug. I'll never forget the fear I felt when the officer approached. To think that woman doesn't know the outcome of her call or the hate and panic I felt or, more important, she doesn't know the REAL me, was crushing.

Participating in programs like Build the Bridge, where area high school football players discuss social justice can help close the gap. The open questions asked by the coach led to positive conversations. The dialogue opened the eyes of white players and coaches who never understood or considered what we endure. Maybe if more people learned to "build the bridge," innocent black men wouldn't have to fear the police. Maybe then we could stop the hate.

AJ Shorts is a senior at Brush High School, where he plays quarterback for the football team. He comes from a large family and loves spending time with friends and family, working out, playing football, and helping with youth sports teams. He hopes to attend Mount Union College in the fall and to become an educator and coach at an inner city high school.



# Kynneddy Smith

12th Grade, Hawken School

Finally! The call came giving me the opportunity to leave the house during two pandemics designed to keep the world separated. The day our Black Student Union decided to participate in the protest for George Floyd, coronavirus and racial tensions could have blocked me, but my excitement to see others and my need to protest for human rights was paramount. A small group of us gathered to create our uniquely creative protest signs. On the day of the protest, we held our signs proudly, high in a sea of other artistically crafted boards calling for justice. Our signs braved heights in unison and swayed to chants and songs of equality. While it seemed we were existing separately in the previous months, we were all together now.

The protest happened at the beginning of the summer. After social distancing again for several more weeks, I visited family out of town. What I experienced was beautifully disgusting. In my travel, I witnessed the graffiti walls of notable Black figures spray-painted with demeaning words and gestures. For the first time in my life, I saw a sign that in its own fashion said "Whites Only." It had caricature drawings of White, Asian, and Black faces, but the Asian and Black faces were crossed out. At a store, I witnessed a man dancing as if he was a gorilla and pointing in our direction. I had only seen these things on television.

I could have focused on the negative display of these experiences. Instead, as an artist, I needed to remind myself of the beauty of storytelling in these moments. Even when it comes from a place of hate, art is in them. Art portrays the beauty of life or a bitter reality. It records history, revolutions, rebellions, and sometimes is a means to escape and resolve them. There was art in the protest signs and art in my travel experiences. There is no history or culture without art.

To help create a legacy of changemakers, I joined Peace First and became a Peace First US Ambassador. This program supports young changemakers by helping them lead social change in their communities through the creation of projects that produce impactful solutions to injustice. I recruit youth changemakers and receive training, mentoring, and the opportunity for funding for my impact project, "Creative Justice."

Creative Justice is a program I created for youth artists in Northeast Ohio. Its purpose is to allow each artist to use their art genre to describe how the current state of racial affairs affects the way youth navigate the world today. Youth artists will participate in a series of virtual town halls with panelists who are artists, social justice advocates, politicians, and diversity professionals. After the town halls, each artist will receive a grant to produce a piece of art that depicts their view of social justice. Funding for these grants were received from Essence Communication Ventures. My goal is to host an artist showcase at a local museum in the summer of 2021.



Kynneddy Smith is a senior at Hawken School. She is a violinist and member of the Contemporary Youth Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra, and Kaboom Collective. At school, she is the string orchestra concertmaster, chair of the diversity council, and co-leader of the Black Student Union. She volunteers for numerous youth organizations in Cleveland and has founded a charitable organization called I Art Cleveland. She plans to attend Columbia University in the fall, majoring in computer science.

# Thomas Smyers

## 12th Grade, Shaker Heights High School

Fifty-six years ago, my grandpa marched for voting rights across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. Before my grandpa died unexpectedly, he planned to take me to Selma. He wanted to retrace his steps with me. It hurts that we will not take that walk together, but I take comfort in reflecting on what inspired my grandpa and the convictions we shared.

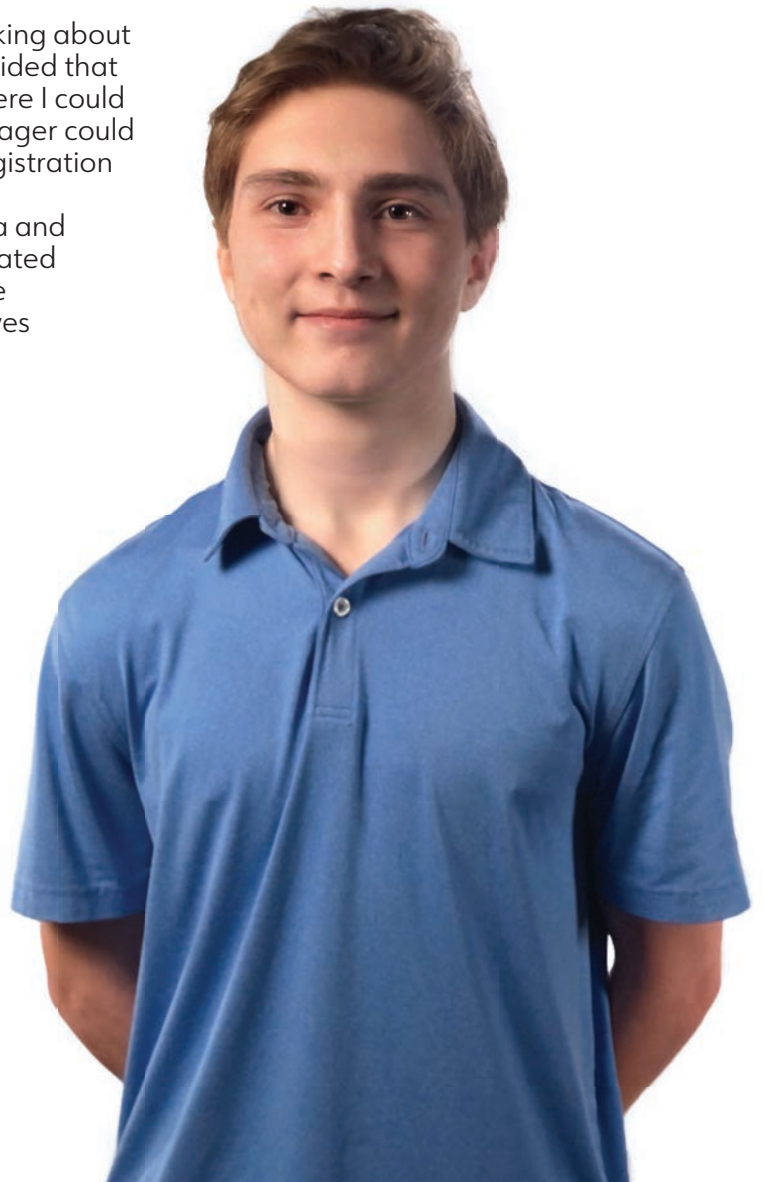
My grandpa believed that connection across difference is possible. An African American born in 1938, my grandpa married a woman of Polish descent in 1961, when interracial marriage was still illegal in 24 states. Even though he faced criticism, my grandpa followed his heart, and he helped racially integrate my hometown. Today, I have a close group of friends of different races, religions, and backgrounds, and cherish attending a diverse public high school in the town where my grandpa helped to make my experiences possible.

My grandpa understood that change does not just happen—it is forged by people who act with intention. With that understanding, the very first activity I joined in high school was the Student Group on Race Relations (SGORR). Through SGORR, I've coached fellow students to be upstanders, not bystanders, against bias, bigotry and bullying.

When George Floyd was killed last year, I thought about the lessons that I've learned from SGORR and heard a call to action. The action that affected me most deeply was participating in the Juneteenth March in Washington, D.C. With thousands of fellow Americans, I marched (wearing a mask) chanting "This is what democracy looks like!" Standing in the shadow of the MLK, Jr. Memorial, where the words, "Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope" are engraved, I felt connected to the hopefulness my grandpa felt as he marched years ago.

After returning from Washington, I spent some time thinking about how to advance racial justice in America. I ultimately decided that the best way was to support voting. I signed up everywhere I could find to volunteer, but it wasn't easy to find a place a teenager could plug in. Eventually, I found a way to volunteer at voter registration drives. I also helped organize the delivery of over 2,500 handwritten postcards to voters in Ohio, Georgia, Florida and Alaska. Wanting others to benefit from my legwork, I created the website [www.TeensGetOutTheVote.com](http://www.TeensGetOutTheVote.com). The website includes resources to help teens and the adults in their lives get out the vote and get out and volunteer.

At the end of the march 56 years ago, Dr. King famously said, "...the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." I like to think that even without retracing my grandpa's steps on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, I am walking in his footsteps and helping to bend the arc of this nation toward a more equitable and just future. My grandpa would be proud of me, but he would want me to keep going. Won't you join me on the journey?



Thomas Smyers is a senior at Shaker Heights High School, where he plays on the varsity soccer team, acts as squad leader in the marching band, and participates in the Student Group on Race Relations. He is the founder of [www.TeensGetOutTheVote.com](http://www.TeensGetOutTheVote.com). He will attend Harvard University in the fall and plans to study a variety of subjects, including economics, sociology, and African American studies.

# Khadija Top

12th Grade, Beaumont School

Despite only three weeks passing by since tryouts, scaling the friendship firewall wall has been getting easier by the day, as my teammate and I wax lyrical about our volleyball season. As we change courts, one of my teammates turns to me and, at my expense, lays her prejudice upon me, "You're pretty articulate for a black person." Instantaneously, I was a thousand yards away, and my expression made that evident as she began to blunder, "Come on, you know what I mean. Those other—" The firewall seemed much higher, and my feet much closer to the ground. I did not know who I was talking to anymore, yet her slight revealed plenty. I packed the thought into the back of my mind as my coach hollered at me to substitute the middle hitter.

Throughout the tournament I engaged in a struggle to suppress her biting words from reaching the forefront of my mind, refusing to let them throw me off my game. When the moon swept across the night sky, up went my white flag. The phrase descended on my mind, "How could she say that?" I began cycling through the depictions of black people and the idea of black people being unintelligent, irresponsible, and lazy throughout the centuries. This caused my head to ache as if my brain were being twisted into a pretzel. I couldn't stop asking myself, "Do they value me at all? How could someone hold such bias against me?" In a sick twist of fate, my question would be answered shortly thereafter. An argument broke out between two girls on another team, and in retaliation one of them insulted the other with a racial slur. The offender faced no repercussions from her teammates, her coach, or the club; to no avail, a band-aid solution was offered, and they swept the incident under the rug. We all heard the slur, but the silence from my white teammates and coaches was deafening. Being the only black girl on my team, I endured the pain of the disrespect alone. Alienated and alone in my conviction, loneliness and isolation permeated my mind and spirit, as I felt devalued, unworthy, and bothersome.

From that moment on, I dedicated myself to eradicating the dehumanizing imagery of black people in our society, and to improving the material conditions of people of color and working-class people everywhere. As of 2017 I have taken part in numerous groups to teach others and have been taught about structural racism in the media, and in our justice and healthcare systems. I have also partaken in mutual aids and have protested the senseless violence on black and brown bodies. I will hold my public officials accountable, and demand that they give the people they serve working solutions. With the support of working-class people and revolutionaries such as Angela Davis and Stokely Carmichael, I am empowered as I strive to make racism, in the words of Angela Davis, a mere memory of a nightmare.



Khadija Top is a senior at Beaumont School, where she is on the board of both the entrepreneur club and the pottery club. She participates in antiracist activism by protesting and educating others. She will be studying computer science at Pace University in the fall and plans to research racial bias in health care algorithms.

# Bowen Zhang

11th Grade, Beachwood High School

"Ew, I don't want to play with her". The small boy on the playground swing made a disgusted face at my sister and crossed his arms in defiance. "Her ears are weird."

I was taken aback, but I carefully explained to him that Khloe was born premature, which meant her ear didn't develop properly so she wears a hearing aid. I told him that once he gets to know Khloe, she is actually super outgoing and has an extremely bubbly and goofy personality!

My sister is my best friend, and it is indescribably hard to witness these insensitive comments and appalled stares directed at someone that I love so much. I found myself asking the same question over and over again: How could anyone judge my sister without even getting to know her?

However, after reflecting on my own experiences, I realized that once I also felt hate towards Khloe. When I first met her at the NICU, my emotions were mixed; I was excited to see her, but I also had a lingering thought in my head. Why couldn't I have a sister who was normal?

As I grew older, I recognized that my own prejudices against Khloe stemmed from ignorance. This ignorance allows hate free rein, to denounce others for their appearance, race, or religion that reveal nothing about who they are. It allows hate to seep into our blood, to run through our veins until it blinds us with preconceived notions.

Ignorance allows people to treat another human being like a worthless other.

I know that it is our responsibility to fight hate and ignorance. The first step change is recognizing the existence of our own implicit biases. The second is educating others about the hate that you see to combat ignorance and show compassion for others.

Last fall, I started a design club at my school that uses art to give back. One project that I led was making cards for hospitalized kids and their families at Ronald McDonald House. I also volunteer there to help with graphic designs for fundraising events the Cleveland Clinic and Rainbow Hospitals to support families that have gone through similar experiences as mine. This year, I created a small art business focused on empowering voices that I care about, and I'm in the process of selling designs and donating the profits to AAPI organizations and the Graham's Foundation, nonprofit that supports families with preemies. My dream is to become a biomedical engineer so I can develop inventions that could help other kids like my sister.

I use my passion for art to advocate for what care about. And I challenge you to use what you love to speak up about the hate that you see. Together with our shared compassion, love, and humanity, I know we can make a difference and stop the hate.



Bowen Zhang is a junior at Beachwood High School, where she participates in Destination Imagination, Science Olympiad, Cross Country, and Art Club. In college, she plans to study biomedical engineering on the premed track. In the future, she hopes to do a lot of traveling.

# Annel Hodges

10th Grade, Cleveland Central Catholic High School

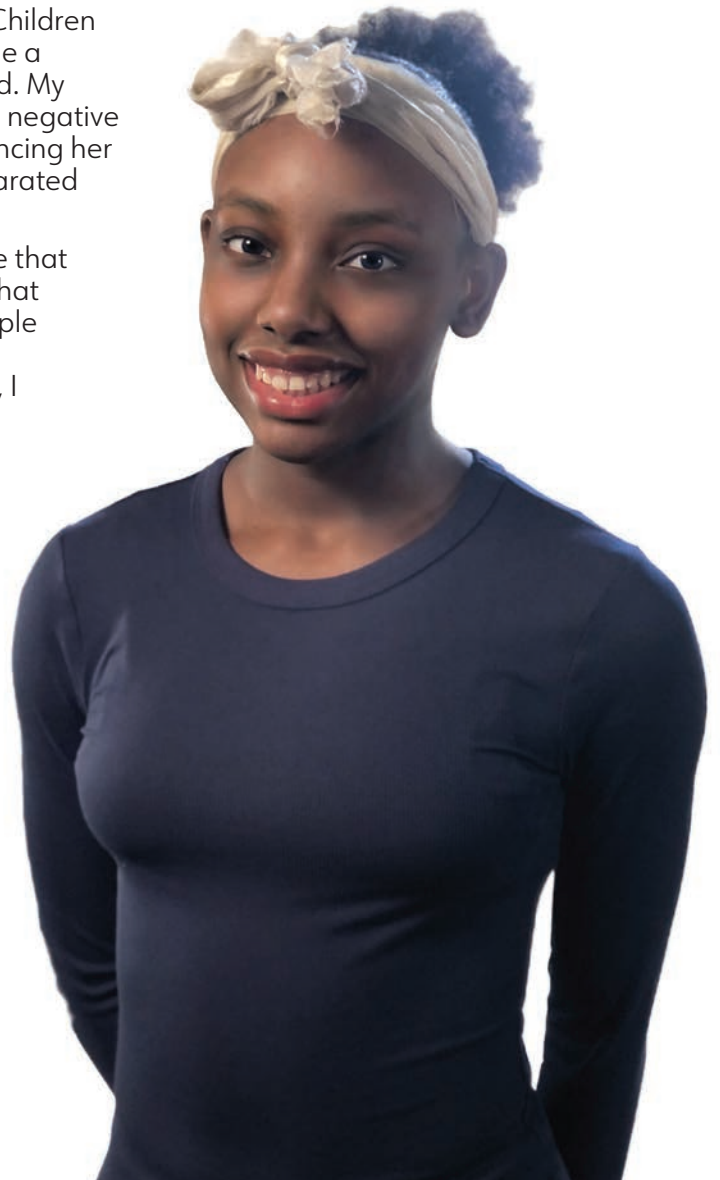
Considering what my mother went through, no one would ever believe what she ended up being. At the age of thirteen, my mother was admitted to the hospital for seven days due to abuse. She was kidnapped at the age of ten by her biological father. She was also forced to live with him for three years. While living with her father, my mother found out that her father was a child molester and a child rapist. She had two step sisters and a stepmother living in the house with her.

When my mother was a teenager, deodorant came in a spray can. She and her step sister were playing with deodorant and her baby sister walked into the cloud while she was spraying the deodorant in the air. My grandfather was so angry because my mother had sprayed his favorite daughter in the eye with the deodorant. My mom said that my grandfather picked her up and threw her body down on the floor very hard. Then he ripped the extension cord out of the wall and he began to hit my mother with it. She told me that when you are hit with an extension cord it feels like someone cutting you with a knife and feels like fire. My mother's father also favored my mother's baby sister a lot more than he did my mother because her skin color was lighter than my mom's.

I was told that she laid in that hospital bed and made a promise to herself that no one would ever hurt her like that again. My mother started hating everyone around her because of how she was treated by her father. She was arrested and locked up twice for attempted murder. Most people that do not know my mother think that she is a bad person. But she is a strong woman, with a horrible past life.

The way that I am trying to change how she feels is by praying for her, and for her healing to take place. My idea for making sure that no other parent deals with this is by starting a therapy group called "Children Helping Their Mothers Heal." The therapy sessions will include a motivational speaker and the best life coaches that I can find. My mother's actions were completely wrong and affected me in negative ways. What I learned from my mother's actions and experiencing her not being home with me is that I do not ever want to be separated from my children if God blesses me with children.

Today, my mother is an ordained minister and has taught me that John 13:34-35 says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." After watching what my mother has been through, I desire to lead my life with love.



Annel Hodges is a 10th grader at Cleveland Central Catholic High School. She enjoys cleaning and learning about the things she loves. She would love to travel to Cuba or the Bahamas. In the future, she plans to become an R.N.

# Elizabeth Huang

10th Grade, Shaker Heights High School

Growing up, I was always one of few Asian students at my public school, but because of the way I was raised, I always thought that I wasn't different from anybody else. However, in the fifth grade, for the first time, someone who I thought was a friend sneered the words "ching chong ching chong" to my face. My ten-year old self had no idea what the negative connotations of such a phrase were, and when I saw other people laughing at me, I laughed with them. In a desperate attempt to fit in, I was willing to serve them my dignity on a silver platter to satisfy their egregious appetites. I remember being red with embarrassment and uncertainty; where was the humor in this blatantly snide remark? For a scrawny ten-year-old trying to find my place in a culture different from what I was used to, such a bewildering experience was enough to mold my outlook on life for years to come.

I remember allowing this to happen, day after day. I would walk proudly into school, welcome snarky remarks from anyone bold enough to preach the status quo, and at the end of the day I would be slightly more conformist than the day before. However, deep down, I always knew that those comments should've been unacceptable. I was disrespecting my heritage; I was burning my parents' legacy and parading its ashes on a stake. I couldn't grasp the concept that my culture was something to be proud of, because I had faced the belittling of my heritage from the town I called home.

Only when I reached my high school years did I allow the phoenix to rise again. In retrospect, I can't really blame my fifth-grade peers for sending me into the impending years of self-loathing, as much as I would like to; I'm almost certain they did not fully understand the weight those words held. I can only thank them for setting me on a journey to combat discrimination. I have found friends who respect me, allowing me to respect myself and my heritage. I have immersed myself in Asian culture on our annual trips to China to visit relatives. I learned one of the most famous Chinese violin concertos, "Butterfly Lovers," and showcased it any chance I could get. I attended Asian festivals, performing at one and writing an essay for another.

Through all this, I learned to accept my birthright and spread awareness of my culture. I have learned that it is always important to be the magnified voice of others when they have none, to be the shoulder for others to cry on. I have finally grasped, and am always working to inform others, that it is never acceptable to discriminate against others because of their complexions, their backgrounds, or the way they choose to live their lives. We are all concurrently trekking through this world together; why make it even harder for others to survive?



Elizabeth Huang is a 10th grader at Shaker Heights High School. She is a violinist in the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra and in the Young Artists' Program at the Cleveland Institute of Music. At school, she is in the creative writing club, literary magazine club, and tutoring club. In the future, she plans to study violin and creative writing or psychology and to keep growing as a musician and writer.

# Margaret Anne Hustak

9th Grade, Holy Name High School

Who you love shouldn't define who you are as a person. You don't need to explain yourself. You are who you are, nothing can change that. If someone doesn't accept you for who you are, why should you accept them into your life? It's not a choice. It's not an illness. A person in the LGBTQ+ community is as equal as a straight person. Love is love.

Growing up I would go to visit my great uncle Jerry and Jim. Uncle Jerry was one of the most generous, loving, kind, and caring people I have ever met. I never knew he was gay until I was eight years old. When I found out, I was shocked because growing up I had heard people in my community talk about the LGBTQ+ community, and normally it wasn't a good thing. Uncle Jerry and his partner Jim lived in Cincinnati, so we visited them every Christmas. That Christmas when we went to see them, I told him that I loved him and Jim so much. I never looked at him differently because to me there wasn't anything different about him. He was still the same person I loved and cared for last Christmas.

In late 2016 Uncle Jerry began to get sick and Jim had started to develop Alzheimer's. Uncle Jerry's heart began to fail, and on February 24, 2017 he passed away. I remember waking up in the middle of the night hearing my mom crying, and I knew he had passed. He and my granddad, Bill, weren't just brothers, they were best friends too. My mom told me that he wanted to have the funeral at his church, but one of the priests didn't feel comfortable doing it for him because of his sexuality. When my mom told me this I felt so hurt and upset. He was/is one of my role models, and hearing that made me so upset. He was a wealthy man but gave so much of it away to charity and those in need. Later, we found out that they had received threats in their mailbox saying very inconsiderate and insulting things because they were gay. I'm sure they had experienced a lot of discrimination in their life, but to me they were just Uncle Jerry and Jim, two funny, generous, caring, kind, and loving men whom to this day I respect a great deal.

We are all equal no matter who we choose to love. I plan to educate myself more and others about the LGBTQ+ community because they are equal and valid, same as you and me. I believe all high schools should provide a class for any parents that have a child that is a part of the community so they can better understand that they are the same child they've always loved. It's not a choice; who would choose to be discriminated against? Everyone deserves love, and who cares about the gender they get that love from. Accept others, because life's too long to hate people.



Margaret Anne Hustak is a 9th grader at Holy Name High School. She loves travel, painting portraits and album covers, riding her bike, French club, and volleyball. She visits and helps care for her grandparents. In the future, she would like to work as a criminal investigator, a child life advocate, or an art therapist.

# Rafaela Nurieva

9th Grade, Mayfield High School

It was just another normal day. I was in my bed, scrolling through my phone, waiting for the fatigue to kick in, despite the bright light shining on my face. I decided to go on snapchat and then go to sleep immediately after. I clicked onto one of my oldest friends' stories, expecting to see a picture of her or a funny text message. Instead, what I saw was blatant hatred. Unjustifiable hatred. Hatred, just because of her sexuality. Despite its effect on me, and more importantly my friend, I wasn't surprised.

The internet is filled with people who believe that this behaviour is fine, they believe that there are actual excuses, actual reasons for homophobia. Not only that, but they think that they can say whatever they want because they can hide their entire identity over the internet. What the person said was not something that pertained to me, but it is still shocking to see blatant resentment towards someone's identity. Then again, it was just another normal day.

Since this event, although it only lasted a moment, I've made sure to be more mindful. Previously, I was often ignorant and uneducated about matters of the LGBTQ+ community. Now, I know that I should listen to their concerns and respect all of their community, no matter if I understand it or not. It's important to respect everyone and listen to what they tell you if you're confused, rather than hating on them.

What I saw on my friend's snapchat story reinforced to me that those who are different from the "norm" will always get treated differently by many who fit that norm. When people use someone's sexuality in an attempt to offend them, it's harmful not only to the person that they decided to single out, but also to their entire community. Thinking about your actions or choice of words when speaking on matters affecting these communities is something that anyone can do in order to be a better person.

Even though I truly haven't done too much to help make direct change, I have spread awareness as much as I could and given my support to anyone struggling with their identity. Many of my friends are LGBTQ+, and having them as my friends has helped me understand so many things that I previously questioned. I have also previously donated to The Trevor Project, an LGBTQ+ charity that focuses on suicide prevention. I didn't donate for praise, or to be noticed as an ally. I donated so that I could do something, even if it was small, that might inspire change in the world, even though I am one person out of many who want to help. It is and should be completely normal to help out those who feel like they are treated worse because of something out of their control.



Rafaela Nurieva is in 9th grade at Mayfield High School, where she is a member of student council. She enjoys playing volleyball, drawing, and going out with friends. In the future, she hopes to go into the medical field, perhaps in a psychiatry specialty.

# Shreya Chellu

8th Grade, Beachwood Middle School

Every year at the end of fall, I eagerly await the festival of lights—Diwali. At this time of year, we visit the temple, eat rasmalai, gulab jamun, and payasam, all while wearing new traditional clothes. However, my all-time favorite activity is the lighting of the firecrackers. Be it the momentary flashes of snappers or the sustained sparkles of flowerpots, these firecrackers evoke a wave of joy as I watch the vibrant colors created by the flickering fire.

This year, as we made our way to the temple, I knew things would be different given the current pandemic. We arrived well ahead of our appointment and, to bide time, my dad and I decided to take a walk along a nearby trail. As the cars flew past us in a hurried frenzy, I could still make out each driver's reaction when they saw me walking in my churidar. And they were all the same: contemptuous chuckles and quizzical glares.

This wasn't the first time people stared at me for my traditional Indian clothes. When my family and I would go shopping or get takeout after visiting the temple, we would often find ourselves the center of attention. But, even now, seeing just a millisecond of their laughter still confuses me. We now have mehndi artists at community celebrations, Indian restaurants in every major city, and even a biracial vice president. Our culture is highlighted across the country, yet this unaccepting attitude still prevails in all corners. Why do people have to stare at us for wearing our traditional clothes? What's there to even laugh about? It's not wrong to follow our culture. Later in the evening when my family and I were lighting firecrackers, I could not shake off these thoughts. Each time the sparklers created an array of beautiful designs, the glimmering sparks seemed to rearrange themselves into an image of mocking laughter.

I remember visiting Disney World's Epcot last year, where I was amazed at the many different cultures promoted through the multitude of rides, souvenirs, and restaurants. Similarly, our school hosts a day-long fair where people from our community get together and express their cultures through music, games, and food. This is why I participate in Model United Nations, where we debate the pressing issues of the world from different cultural perspectives, and Peer Leadership, where we promote positivity and inclusivity throughout the school. Moreover, I want to start a multiculturalism club where students can share their customs and celebrate a festival from each culture to promote its awareness.

Now, if people were to judge me for what I'm wearing, I'm not afraid to stand up for my culture. There'll always be people who laugh. There'll always be people who scorn you for what you wear and eat, but the most important thing I've found is to hold pride in and cherish my beliefs. To me, it is absolutely awe-inspiring to see the singularity of each ethnicity because that is what makes each of us beautiful.



Shreya Chellu is an 8th grader at Beachwood Middle School, where she participates in Model United Nations, Power of the Pen, Science Olympiad, and Destination Imagination. She also enjoys practicing her violin and playing tennis. In her free time, she is usually sketching, reading, or catching up on ornithology. She loves English and history and plans to use her skills to advocate for important issues.

# Sharbel Harb

## 8th Grade, Brecksville-Broadview Heights Middle School

The FBI has investigated 800 incidents since 9/11 against individuals perceived to be of Middle Eastern origin. Many people of Middle Eastern descent throughout the USA are dealing with discrimination. It's time to stop the hate against people that look like me.

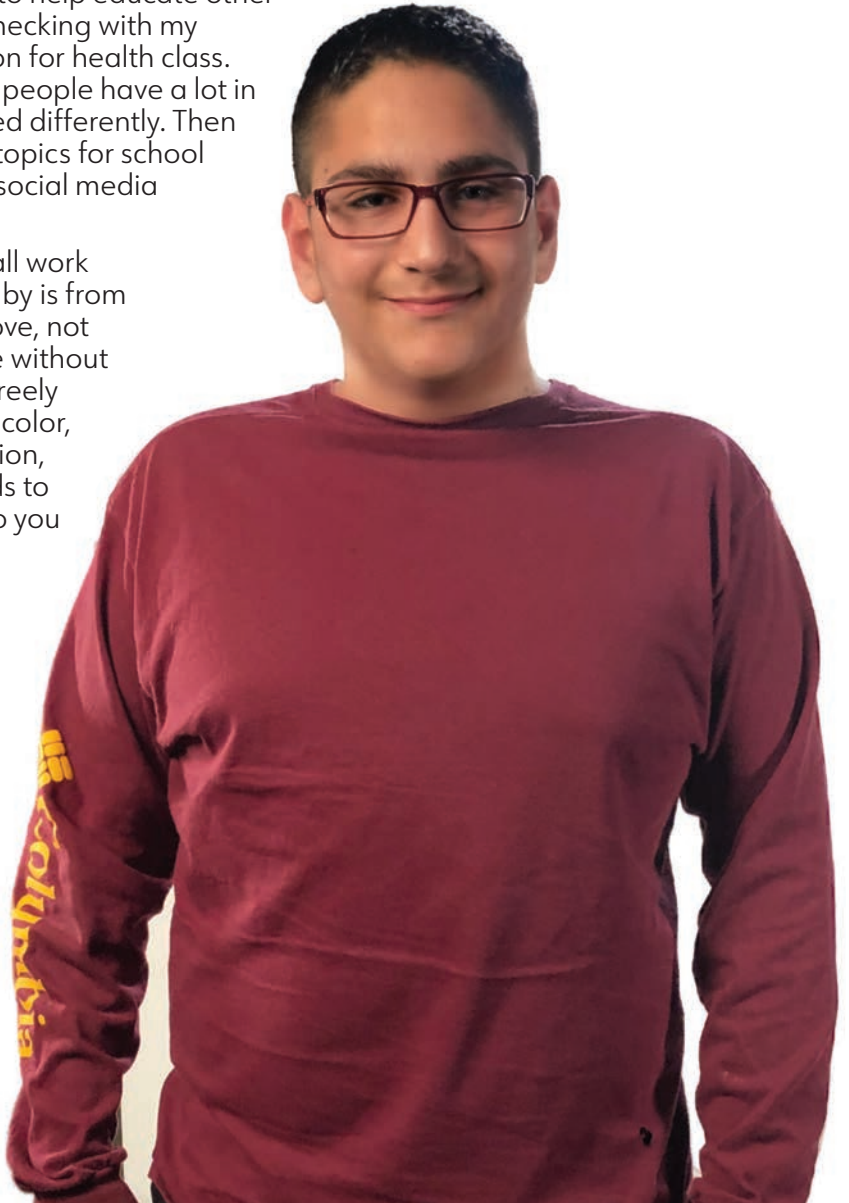
One of my most upsetting times was in sixth grade at school with my so-called "friends". I told people I was Lebanese, and then people started calling me a terrorist, saying I was going to bomb the school. People started calling me lesbian because Lebanese and lesbian sound familiar, so they started to tease and ridicule me. I believe this happened because post-9/11 hate towards Middle Easterners has grown tremendously.

At first, I ignored it, but then it just got too much. I started to yell and told them to, "Leave me alone!" I met anger with anger, and it didn't work. They just laughed at me as I walked off angrily. I could see them mimicking bomb explosions, and when I touched my face it was hot; I was boiling from the built-up anger. I felt mad and offended because people that had been nice to me for years were suddenly bullies. I was treated differently just because of my cultural beliefs and my background. This was discrimination just because I am Middle Eastern.

Adults have told me I need to just ignore them and go about my day because it doesn't matter what other people think. I don't think adults understand the pressure when an entire group of students turns against you. It eventually becomes too overwhelming, and ignoring it won't solve the problem. I want to teach people to stand up for themselves the right way, using education and kindness.

Instead of fighting with bullies, I will create a plan to help educate other students and help others deal with bullies. After checking with my teachers my plan would be to create a presentation for health class. The presentation would show that Middle Eastern people have a lot in common with them and don't deserve to be treated differently. Then I will meet with the school board to discuss future topics for school rallies addressing discrimination. I will also create social media accounts to speak out against discrimination.

The fight will be hard and will take time, but if we all work together we can do it. A beautiful quote I now live by is from the actor Zendaya: "Let's practice motivation and love, not discrimination and hate." I call for a brighter future without discrimination and hate. Let's all live happily and freely together. Why hate on somebody because of skin color, gender identity, weight, wealth, appearance, religion, cultural background, and so much more. This needs to change and it starts with all of us. Be proud of who you are, educate others, and help me stop the hate.



Sharbel Harb is an 8th grader at Brecksville-Broadview Heights Middle School, where he participates in band and his favorite subject is U.S. History. He also enjoys playing basketball. In the future, he plans to go to law school.

# Anthony Fitzgerald Jr.

7th Grade, Saint Paschal Baylon School

The n-word slid off of his tongue and hit me like glass and shattered. My face burned with the sharpness of his words stabbing me. It was painful and I had no way to recover. My friends stood nearby but I felt the embarrassment first, then started wondering if others would use this hateful word towards me too. The teachers heard his words, and they let me be sliced by this hate over and over again. They took no action. He received no consequence. The consequence was mine alone. Recess is supposed to be a time when you have fun, play, and talk with friends while taking a break. On that day, recess changed for me and I became afraid that this experience would happen again.

The tragedy replayed in my brain. Even when I was in the halls or at lunch, I could feel that I was traumatized. I felt upset and ashamed. First I wondered, "How could someone say that to me?" Then I sank into the question, "How could my teachers let that happen to me?" Why is the color of my skin causing him to attack me? Why is the color of my skin not enough to protect me? They received no punishment. The punishment was mine alone. I no longer felt welcomed at school. I no longer felt protected the way students should feel at school. I just lost hope that that school could be a safe place for me.

When my parents learned of the incident, they talked to me and helped me discover my power as an activist. I used the hurt of my incident to speak to teachers at a conference in California. I used my voice to make sure that teachers knew the cost of standing by and not stepping in. I learned that my voice has power. Now, since I am at a different school I invite change by being willing to discuss racism, injustice, and bigotry. What we talk about, we can stop. I put a smile on my face and live with positivity because I am more than the negative experiences of my past. I share my pain so that the hate will not be repeated. I share my pain so that others who experience the same will know that they are not alone. I stand against hate!



Anthony Fitzgerald, Jr., is a 7th grader at Saint Paschal Baylon Catholic School. He loves participating in musical theater productions, singing, playing the piano, and being part of youth group at church. In the future, he plans to act in Broadway productions while fighting for justice in any way that he can.

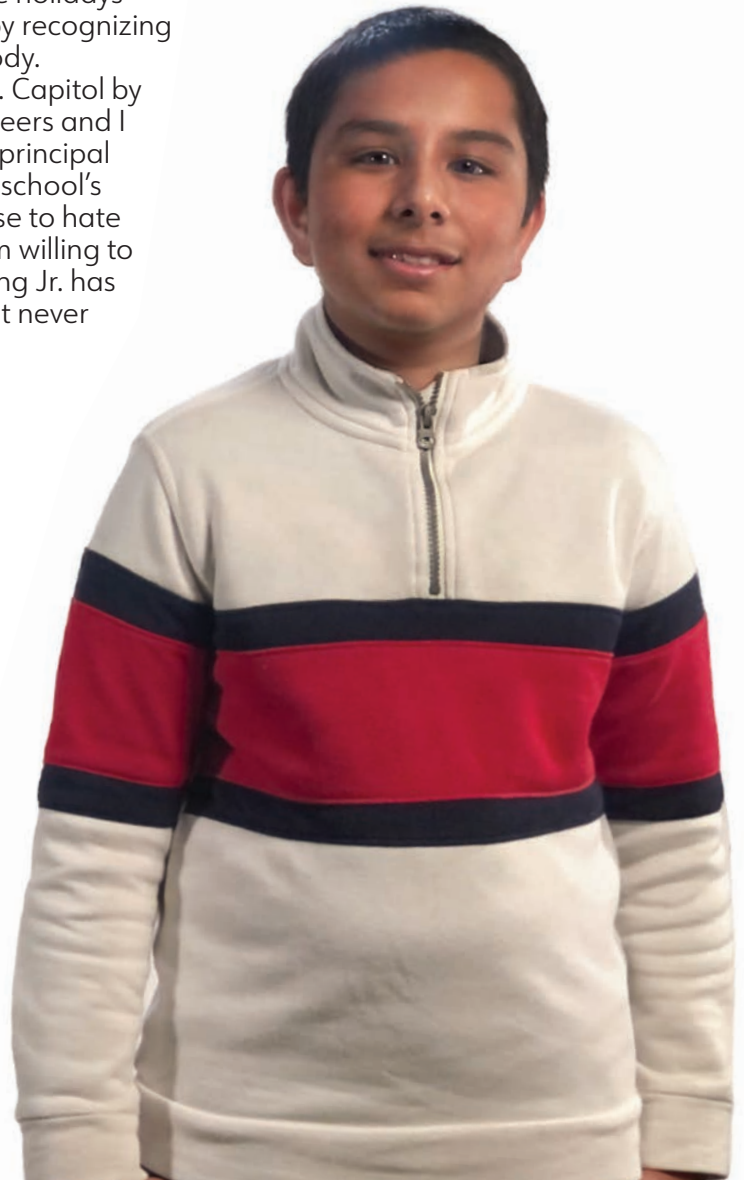
# Anshul Sharma

7th Grade, Ballard Brady Middle School

"Be quiet, you smelly Indian." These were the words that changed my world-view. While playing Wii bowling in our third-grade gym class, my classmates and I were playfully laughing as the boy who was next to play the game was having a difficult time getting the remote started. After his turn was over, he uttered those words to single me out. Those hateful words were hurled at me—simply to humiliate me—for who I was. After that incident, I was sent to the principal's office for laughing. It was my first time in the principal's office and I was hysterical. Why did the teacher not say anything to the boy who was so hateful towards me? My 8-year-old self could not comprehend the reason that I was the one getting in trouble. It took several emails to the principal, gym teacher, and everyone else involved to acknowledge that it wasn't my fault. I would remember those words for the coming years along with all they meant and the painful memory they brought. Over the years, I have kept the memory tucked deep down, hoping I would never have to visit it again. Subsequently, more hateful experiences occurred—from a classmate casually stating that my mother would be deported for being a terrorist, to an African American family friend being afraid to check on our house when we were out of the country, out of fear that she may be falsely accused of breaking in.

I thought back to these moments, and all the pain that came with them as I watched the news in the summer of 2020. Mass protests had been sparking out over the unjust police brutality and unfair treatment of African Americans. I felt rising emotions and a sense of pride for all fellow citizens who were trying to have their voices heard. I knew then that I should use all possible avenues to actively educate people about diversity and help stop hate in my community. This year during my participation in Youth in Government (YIG), a program run by the YMCA, I proposed and passed a bill about recognizing diverse religious and ethnic holidays in school. Even though YIG may not be the government, I educated my peers that the holidays celebrated in school haven't changed in years, and that by recognizing other holidays, we can acknowledge a diverse student body.

Additionally, after the January 6th insurrection at the U.S. Capitol by many antisemitic and white nationalists, I knew that my peers and I were scared. Soon thereafter, I proposed and helped my principal arrange a lesson about inclusion and diversity during our school's homeroom time. I've now realized that people may choose to hate someone for infinite reasons, but I remain hopeful and am willing to do whatever it takes to stop the hate. As Martin Luther King Jr. has rightfully said, "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope."



Anshul Sharma is a 7th grader at Ballard Brady Middle School, where he enjoys math, science, Power of the Pen team, book club, and robotics club. He also loves tennis, swimming, piano, playing the viola, and baking. In the future, he hopes to continue his hobby of writing dystopian novels, to advance his baking skills into a side business, and to take a vegetarian food tasting tour of the world.

# Calayla Holmes

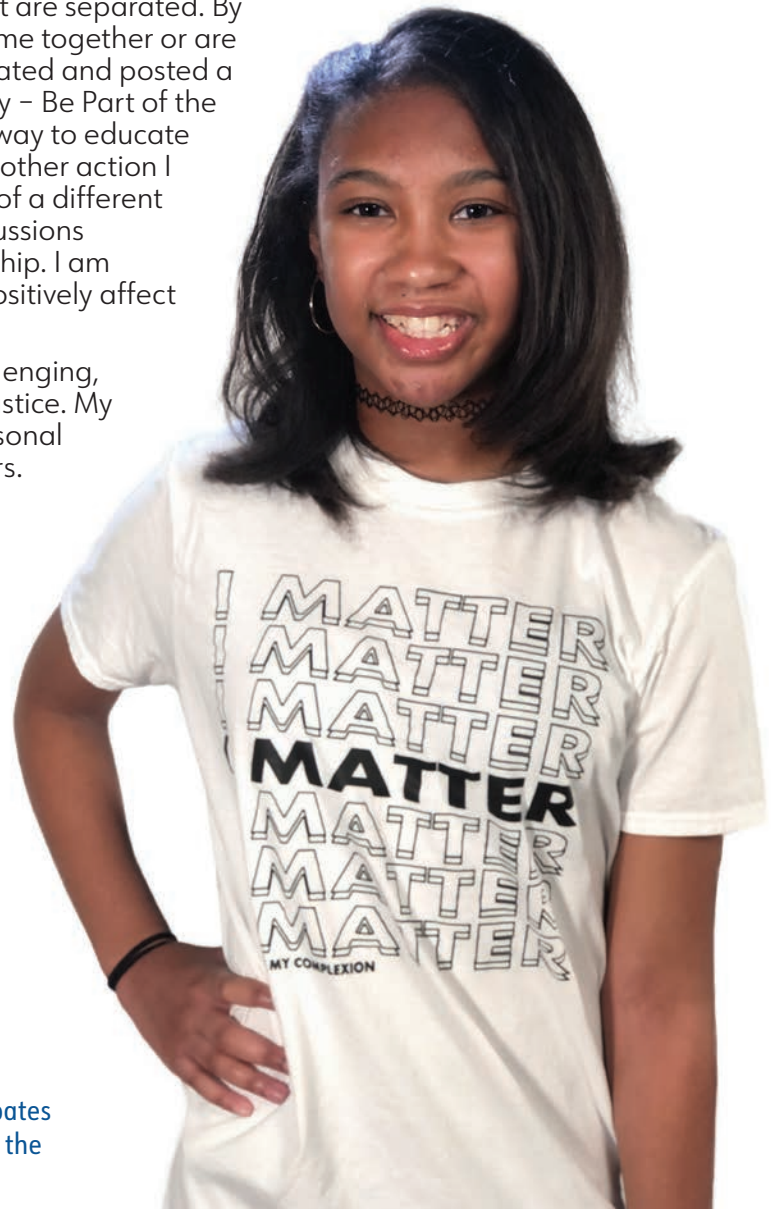
## 6th Grade, Homeschooled

It was late spring in 2020, which was a dark and uncertain time. The coronavirus pandemic was spreading quickly. The news channels were on constantly in my home. Among the commotion, one thing during this time changed my perspective entirely. One day when my grandfather came to visit, I heard him talking to my parents in our kitchen. As I was listening to their conversation, I heard their voices start to elevate. The conversation became more passionate with each word. Later that night, I inquired about the conversation. My parents told me it was about the George Floyd tragedy. After that tragedy, there were many more. Many protests were being shown on the news. These events raised my awareness of racial injustice.

"One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." "For all?" I have been saying these words in the Pledge of Allegiance since I have been attending school. Every tragedy I have witnessed or heard about during this time has proved to me that the Pledge of Allegiance may not apply to me or people who look like me. It pains me to know that senseless crimes against people of color are being tolerated and committed by those who have taken an oath to serve and protect, in addition to some fellow U.S. citizens. The George Floyd tragedy makes me think about my father and younger brother's well-being. I contemplate how they must consider many decisions they make, so that they are not perceived as a threat to society. For instance, a package was mistakenly delivered to my house, and my father had to think through whether it would be safe to take the package to the correct house because we live in a predominantly Caucasian neighborhood.

Upon reflection, our country's racial climate reminds me of the scientific term "suspension," which means two materials or groups that are separated. By comparison, a "solution" is two material groups that come together or are unified. In response to current events, last summer I created and posted a YouTube video on racial diversity named Racial Diversity - Be Part of the "Solution" using this analogy. This video was a positive way to educate people on a chronic issue, using science to illustrate. Another action I have taken is participating in a book club with a friend of a different race. The books selected help us to have insightful discussions regarding race-related topics and build a closer friendship. I am hopeful my friend and I can expand our book club to positively affect other kids our age.

While these events have been uncomfortable and challenging, they have helped me become more aware of racial injustice. My heightened awareness has led to opportunities for personal growth, and the ability to share my learnings with others.



Calayla Holmes is a homeschooled 6th grader whose favorite subject is English. She takes vocal lessons, dances, and participates in youth group and volunteers in Kids Ministry at her church. In the future, she aspires to be a news anchor or singer/composer.

# Hayden Lipinski

6th Grade, Hudson Middle School

My cousin is African American. To me, he's just like me and my brothers. We play games and play sports together; we love going to the beach and vacationing with our family. However, I realized a few years ago, there are some people in this world who will be unkind to my cousin and other African Americans just because they have different skin.

I was pretty young the first time I heard someone say something racist. My cousin had just gotten out of the bathtub and his hair was all wet and curly when a neighbor at our hotel said, "Gross, don't touch his wet hair. Black people have greasy, nasty hair." I was confused at the time because I liked the guy who said that horrible statement. He was always really funny and kind to me. I didn't understand how he could be nice to me, but then say something so mean about a young kid he didn't even know. Of course, I was really young myself when this happened so I didn't know what to do. I do remember watching adults respond to him in a firm way. They made it clear that racist comments would never be tolerated in our family. Besides the bathtub incident, I've also seen my cousin treated poorly by kids and adults who don't know him, but for some reason have the nerve to treat him differently because he has darker skin.

Civil rights leaders have had the courage to fight for people to be treated fairly. One leader, John Lewis, once said: "When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, you have to speak up. You have to say something; you have to do something." Lewis also said that we need to get in "good trouble," which means it's okay to get into trouble when we are doing the right thing.

I've learned that you should always be kind to everyone because it doesn't matter what color skin they have, it matters what's on the inside. I've also learned to stick up for my cousin and others if they are being treated poorly. Sometimes you have to do things that make you feel uncomfortable, but when it's speaking out against hate, it's always the right thing to do.



Hayden Lipinski is a 6th grader at Hudson Middle School. He enjoys playing baseball, basketball, and football, and likes being outside with his friends, his dogs, and his fishing pole. His favorite travel destination is the Outer Banks, where he goes every year with his family. He hopes to continue playing sports in college and professionally and plans to get a degree in sports management.

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 role models for making a difference and inspiring others to be vigilant."*

— Irving Rosner, partner

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



## Thank you to this year's teaching artists from Roots of American Music



Ray Flanagan



Sam Hooper



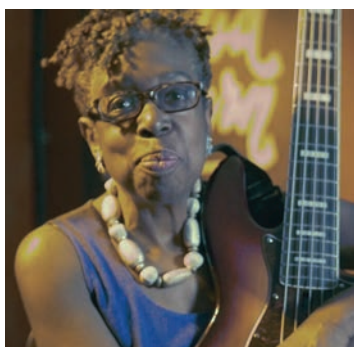
Kyle Kidd



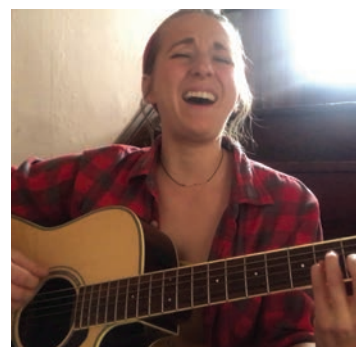
Brent Kirby



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# 2020 STOP THE HATE® YOUTH SING OUT WINNERS

## "Daybreak"

Kari Beery's 8th Period Class,  
Mayfield High School  
FIRST PLACE HIGH SCHOOL

Shackled by the chains of systems put into place.  
Masked by the voices trying to explain their pain.  
How long can it take for you to hear our cries?  
Can't you see our pain when we shout and when we die?

America one day you'll truly be  
Home of the brave and land of the free.  
For now we will fight for equality  
And stand in solidarity

Chorus:  
There's a light at the end of the tunnel  
And there will be an end to all of our struggles  
When the whole world's drowning in troubles.  
We're the final piece to the puzzle  
When dusk turns to dawn  
We'll all break into song  
When we all can live free, with equality.

Brick by brick each house I pass,  
Has bumpy roads, and dying grass  
While houses of gold a mile away  
Point fingers and say "We're here to stay"

We're out in the streets shouting  
"I can't breathe,"  
Hoping to make change and to find relief

*Chorus*

The world is bettered when we come together  
To amplify the voices that are beaten down and weathered  
When the oppressive night leaves us unable to wake  
We can listen for the voices of daybreak

*Chorus*

## "Our Pain"

Laverne McLain's 4th Period Class,  
Max S. Hayes High School  
TIE - RUNNER-UP HIGH SCHOOL

A modern lynching  
Knee upon the neck  
Pleading and defenseless  
We all saw his death  
Crimes of the past  
Our history is stained  
For my parent's parents  
Know I harbor shame

Chorus:  
I just want to say to all of you  
Though we might have had a bad exchange or two  
There is one thing that is never gonna change  
I still love... every one of you

End injustice  
All across this land  
Cease Judging others  
Try to understand  
We know that hate is taught  
Will there ever be regret?  
For the lives that we have lost  
We never will forget

*Chorus*

End the cycle  
Stop trying to explain  
It is disappointing  
Disgusting I must say  
Let's all embrace  
What is deeper than the skin  
Deeper than division  
The heart that sings within

*Chorus*

# 2020 STOP THE HATE® YOUTH SING OUT WINNERS

## "Love Wins"

Bill Lawton & Cassie Lundgard's 6th Period Class,  
Midview High School  
TIE - RUNNER-UP HIGH SCHOOL

If you want to be heard, you have to speak loudly  
Raise up your flag, and wave it proudly  
A common cause, we're all working for  
It's best to leave judgement at the door

A hope for change, and compromise  
A time to look each other in the eyes  
you see yourself staring right back at you  
Seek to understand what others have been through

Chorus:

Love wins, it's a brand new morning  
Love wins, It will keep us marching  
Love wins, we're stronger together  
In the end, love wins

Born to love made to hate  
It's time to write our own new fate  
We learn from our parents to talk one way  
Think for yourselves and together we'll stay

They fought for us and we do the same  
Let's all join the movement, it isn't a game  
Words that you say, things that you do  
Led with pure intention, we're here for you

Chorus

Hate's destructive it cannot last  
Judging those on race, it's in the past  
What are we doing if nothing will change  
We have a choice, time to use our voice

People getting killed for the way they look  
It's gone on too long, let's close that book  
You're more than the color that's on your skin  
What matters is your character, lift up your chin

We don't look the same but I don't care  
We'll fight together to make things fair  
Justice for all that were taken from this earth  
Your spirit lives on, our nation's rebirth

Chorus

Mayfield High School



Max S. Hayes High School



Midview High School



# 2020 STOP THE HATE® YOUTH SING OUT WINNERS

## “Stand Up and Talk About It”

Andrea Soncina’s 7th Grade Class,  
Harding Middle School  
FIRST PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Chorus:  
Stand up and talk about it  
It’ll never go away if we just ignore it  
We need to come together  
Make a better world that’ll last forever

Hate is like a parasite  
If you let it keep alive  
It spreads around  
From anyone who harbors it  
When that big cloud of hatred  
Rains down on us  
Let the light of love shine

*Chorus*

Some beliefs you heard  
Growing up  
May need to change  
To make room at the table  
When that sorrow and pain  
Control your life  
You’re missing out on half of the battle

*Chorus*

What happens if it goes too far  
Away from the truth

*Chorus*

Harding Middle School



## “Stand Up, Work Together, Cheer Up”

Andrea Soncina’s 8th Grade Class,  
Garfield Middle School  
RUNNER-UP MIDDLE SCHOOL

Chorus:  
Stand up, work together, cheer up  
It’s time to work for peace  
if we tell somebody till everyone knows  
Make hate in the world decrease

If you see someone in pain, or under attack  
You can let them know, you have their back  
when the world is unfair, you can raise your voice  
And remind them that you have a choice

*Chorus*

When we join forces and cooperate  
We can make the world strong and safe  
I’ll be your friend and you can be mine  
We’re better together, every time

*Chorus*

Keep a smile on your face, with the  
Courage to be brave  
We’re gonna win this race  
No matter what they say

*Chorus 2x*

Garfield Middle School



# 2021 *STOP THE HATE*® SONG WRITING & ESSAY READERS

We are grateful to the 383 volunteers who generously donated their time to blind-score this year's essays and songs.

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“There’s nothing more important than standing together against hate. When you take one voice and add it to other voices, together your voice is much stronger.”

*-Erika B. Rudin-Luria*

The Jewish Federation of Cleveland  
congratulates these future leaders for their  
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Mazel Tov!



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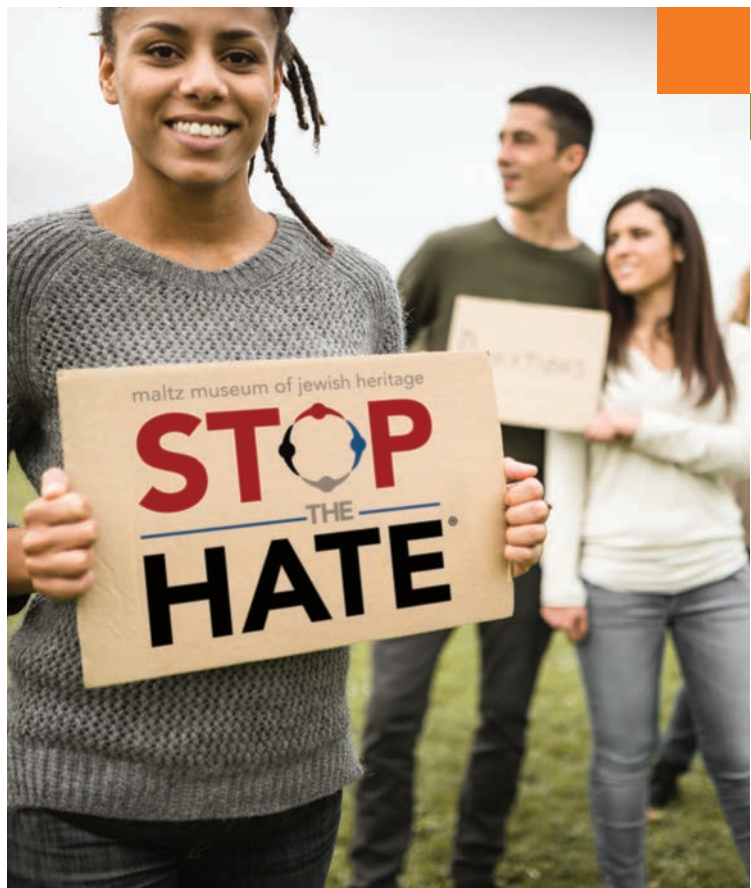
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