







STOPHATE

AWARDS CEREMONY
PRESENTED BY MALTZ MUSEUM OF JEWISH HERITAGE













WELCOME

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.

This year marks the 14th 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 fourteen years, we have provided \$1.4 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 together we celebrate those differences. 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® YOUTH SPEAK OUT

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 were inspired by Cambodian-born American human-rights activist, author, and Cleveland resident Loung Ung who famously said, "Courage is when you dare to be yourself, in whatever ways you want to be—to not be afraid, to just do it."

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

Together with our partners Lake Erie Ink, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and Roots of American Music we offered FREE songwriting and essay writing workshops to schools and educators. These anti-bias learning tools taught history, literacy, and the arts for middle school, high school, and homeschool 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 Anshe Chesed Fairmount Temple Religious School, Beachwood High School, Charles F. Brush High School, Clark Elementary School, Cleveland Heights High School, Collinwood High School, East Tech High School, Garfield Heights High School, Garfield Middle School, Ginn Academy, Glenville High School, Harding Middle School, Hathaway Brown School, Hudson Middle School, Luis Muñoz Marin School, Mary M. Bethune, Massillon Junior High School, Max S. Hayes High School, Mayfield High School, MC2 STEM High School, Monticello Middle School, Mound STEM School, Newton D. Baker School of Arts, North Canton Middle School, Olmsted Falls High School, Ratner Montessori, Rhodes School of Environmental Studies, Shaw High School, St. Martin de Porres, St. Vincent–St. Mary High School, Twinsburg 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 Nicole Majercak of Beachwood High School and Vickie Orozco of Newton D. Baker School of Arts.



2022 Youth Sing Out Song Writing Contest Winners

Beachwood High School - First Place High School, "Speak Out" **Glenville High School** - Runner-up High School, "Skittles"

Garfield Middle School - First Place Middle School, "Tell Me (My Life Matters)" Clark Elementary School - Runner-up Middle School, "Revenge Is Not the Way"

2022 Youth Speak Out Grand Prize Scholarship Student Finalists

GRADE 12

Moira Ackerman, Hudson High School Raychelle Davis, Hudson High School Tiba Jraik, Rhodes College and Career Academy Maraja Moss, Jackson High School Jenan Qaraqish, Hudson High School Mykenna Roy, Mayfield High School

GRADE 11

Lizzy Huang, Shaker Heights High School Jacqueline Hudak, Lakewood High School Sanjana Katiyar, Strongsville High School Samah Khan, Beachwood High School

2022 Youth Speak Out Student Finalists

GRADF 10

Asia Howard, Twinsburg High School **Benjamin Ralph,** Walsh Jesuit High School

GRADE 9

Anah Khan, Beachwood High School **Michael McNally,** Mayfield High School

GRADE 8

Ida Chang, Beachwood Middle School Chelsea Gipson, Monticello Middle School

GRADE 7

Aanchal Nassar, Hathaway Brown

Jocelyn Sesnowitz, Joseph and Florence Mandel Jewish Day School

GRADF 6

Juliet Richards, Hudson Middle School **Mattia Sturman,** Rocky River Middle School

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

Moira Ackerman

12th Grade, Hudson High School

"You're such a downy!" My head whipped around so fast. Staring him down I said, "You know my sister has Down syndrome." The laughter stopped and his mouth shut.

People with disabilities are constantly harassed both to their faces and behind their backs. The bus at my school is just one of the places that I have witnessed having a disability made into an insult. The saddest part is sometimes a person who has a disability doesn't even know they are being bullied. They look up to their typical peers with such adoration, yet are treated with such disdain. My oldest sister would come home from school every day telling us stories of her "friends" at school. She would call them "my lunch squad boys" or "my super fan boys." She idolized these kids, and they probably were annoyed with her. I never got to see how they would talk about her when she wasn't around, but based on how the people in my school treat individuals with disabilities, I could only assume that they didn't love her as much as she did them.

It's not just the students though; the whole school treats people with disabilities with inferiority. All the special education classes for the disabled students are in the basement of the school—isolated from the hustle and bustle of the students through the halls. At the end of the day when I'd trudge down the staircase to pick up my sister to walk home, I would feel as if I had left the school entirely. It would be so quiet; just the faint instruction from teachers could be heard. The problem is that typical students don't usually interact with students with disabilities; they don't get the chance to see that these students have feelings and are very kind people who love everyone.

I have consistently tried to protect individuals with disabilities because it's in my genes. Whenever I hear a disrespectful comment about or directed at a person with a disability, I never fail to stick up for them. Since middle school, I started volunteering for programs for those with disabilities, such as Buddy Up Tennis, which teaches individuals with Down syndrome how to play. Additionally, my school has started to implement a more accepting environment by creating clubs within the school for students with disabilities that pair typically developing students with their peers, like Our Time to Shine. Through this program I have assisted students with disabilities in putting on a play and learn their lines. I've encouraged friends to join programs within our school, such as Sparkle cheerleading, for those with disabilities to cheer at sporting events. This summer, I will be doing a week-long camp for people with Down syndrome. The campers have the most fun because the volunteers care. The only way for this group to be treated with respect is for people to spend time and get to know these wonderful human beings. The best way to spread love is to get involved and be kind.

Moira Ackerman is a senior at Hudson High School, where she enjoys history and art and being a part of Our Time to Shine, a club for students with disabilities. She volunteers for Safety Town, Buddy Up Tennis, and community organizations for adults with disabilities. Moira's hobbies include basketball, reading, walking her dog, and playing Just Dance with her sister. She plans to major in architecture or urban planning—possibly at Ohio State University—and to travel the world to meet people from different cultures.

Raychelle Davis

12th Grade, Hudson High School

I stood in the bathroom in silent agony, my heart breaking into pieces. The N-word had been screamed in my presence, and I became the brunt of laughter. When attempting to leave, I discovered I was being kept inside of the bathroom. Being one of the 1% of Black students in my predominately white school, I felt alone. After I pushed my way out of the bathroom, the girls laughed even more, stumbling down the hall, bent over from the joke I must have missed. The joke was me.

I waited until they left to let my tears fall—this band-aid had been ripped off too many times. I went to the bathroom from my sophomore geometry class, where I was the only Black student, and I didn't want to return. I hated standing out. I was a stamp on a white envelope. After talking to the principal, I felt as though I'd been kicked in the gut. The office was a dreary place for me, and many staff members felt I "misunderstood" many things. The principal disregarded my claims, saying the offenders were "good kids."

When I arrived home, my twin confronted one of the girls on social media and told her to not have contact until she apologized. Her response? "Ok <n-word>, go get lynched in my plantation. What are you going to do about it <n-word>?" My siblings and I stood in disbelief. My older sister took a screenshot.

Later that evening, my older sister made a post. The school immediately sent out announcements. As soon as the media knew, the school took action. They scrambled to cover up details, but it was too late; many demanded change and would not allow injustice to continue.

Looking back, my suffering was not in vain. Students and staff were forced to face what goes on in our high school. My school set up seminars bringing awareness to the importance of acceptance, discussing how some actions were wrong and why, for example, many people laugh at racial jokes and say racist comments at school, while they are surrounded by people who have never experienced racial injustice or discrimination. This is common, so now I never leave a racial situation without questions and teachings: "What you said was offensive because.... That was hurtful because...." I am not here to put up with racism but to give everyone an opportunity to grow and have a second chance. Many times when people acknowledge they are wrong and receive forgiveness, they do everything they can to make

the situation better and continue forward. Knowledge and acknowledgement is healing. I certainly can't get that response every time, but even if people stay the way they are, others can affect their decisions. People do what others allow

them to do.

I have grown as an individual. My experiences in life have contributed to the person I am because, no matter what I do, I love being me and I'm happy to stand and make a difference.

Raychelle Davis is a senior at Hudson High
School. She volunteers with first graders at a
local elementary school and hopes to be a summer
camp counselor. She loves meeting new people, eating
oatmeal raisin and peanut butter cookies, visiting scenic
areas, and reading. Raychelle plans to attend Kent State
University to study linguistics and languages so she can become
an interpreter. She says, "When I moved to a predominantly
white school in 5th grade, a girl said hello and I felt a little more
comfortable. I want to be that person to say hello."

Lizzy Huang

11th Grade, Shaker Heights High School

My blood boiled as the news coverage of an Asian grandmother punched in the face in San Francisco replayed in my head like a broken record. My heart was downtrodden as I solemnly cataloged this event among one of many injustices committed against Asian Americans during the months of the pandemic. As I read constantly about the brutal murders of innocent Asian Americans scapegoated for the worldwide pandemic, the growing antagonistic feelings toward my community planted the seed of worthlessness into my heart. An integral part of my identity was repeatedly being assaulted, isolated, and caged all over the big screen TVs, in the country that I was supposed to feel free in. I was slowly starting to learn the true extent of inhumanity.

As an Asian American armed with just a violin and a passion for music during a time of worldwide hibernation, I decided to try to prove, with conviction and compassion, that instead of berating and belittling others just because of their ethnicity, it was time to show love and empathy towards each other. This pandemic was a ruthless beast larger than humanity, grasping at any hint of vitality regardless of race, culture, and background. So, with the help of my friends, I organized and virtually produced two covers of classical music pieces: "The Swan" by Camille Saint-Saens, and "Meditation" from Thais by Jules Massenet. I compiled all of our individual playing, overlaid it with media depicting acts of kindness during the pandemic, and dedicated it to the Covid-19 relief effort, sending it into local hospitals like the Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals, and broadcasting it in our school. I also collaborated with my two sisters and our friend to produce a holiday album and posted it on social media in order to spread warmth and positivity during the height of the pandemic.

As life is slowly returning back to normal, I am hoping to reach out and dedicate more of my efforts to subduing both outward violence and microaggressions toward my community by becoming more active online and using music to continue to bridge that divide between prejudice and harmony. Unfortunately, fighting racism is a never-ending battle; there is still so much work to be done. Recently, I was incredibly disheartened to hear of disgusting comments made toward my nineyear-old sister at her school, in a community that we trusted to be kind and loving to our children. One student had told her that they "hated Chinese people for the virus," and another was mocking karate and yelling "ching chong" to her face. How much longer must Asian Americans continue to endure this hatred? How much longer must we corrupt the minds of our innocent children who will learn to prey on others just because of the color of their skin? We all lived through the terrors of the pandemic where pain had come in all forms; it's only in these desperate times that we must learn to empower each other with empathy and compassion.

Lizzy Huang is a junior at Shaker Heights High School, where she serves as co-president of the Community Outreach for Devoted Artists chamber music club and volunteers with Look Up to Cleveland, a youth leadership organization. She plays violin in a pre-college music program at the Cleveland Institute of Music and is an avid horseback rider. Lizzy plans to attend college in a dual program for the humanities and music and to use her passion for music to bring people together.

Jacqueline Hudak

11th Grade, Lakewood High School

Fluorescent lights shone down on us, shadows of petrified girls cast on the gym floor. Sweat dripped from the forehead of every female athlete as we lined up on the baseline—it was a moment of uniting and separating fear. "If you are over 5'6" and under 150 lbs step forward; everyone else, look at the girls that I will pick for the varsity volleyball team." I was astonished. The newly hired volleyball coach had no idea that the players left on the baseline had more skill than half the people he called forward. Still, those unselected girls were so traumatized from the body-shaming they were reduced to that they never came back to another open gym, practice, or tryout. The recurring body-shaming of female athletes in sports leads to a lifetime of harmful self-deprecation. This cycle needs to be stopped for young girls to have self-confidence and to express gratitude.

That experience changed my life forever; it sparked my passion to advocate for body positivity and most importantly to educate young girls that they should feel nothing but love and gratitude for themselves. Love is the opposite of hate, and gratitude is the catalyst of change to stop that hate. My vocation is to help young girls to be thankful for all the different jobs their bodies do for them—for girls to be as kind to themselves as they are to others. After the discrimination I experienced, I took action to have the coach removed. We met with the principals, athletic director, parents, and traumatized athletes to have the coach step down. I participated in a town hall meeting, making myself vulnerable to the public, coach, and administration to tell my story—the story of every female athlete in the volleyball program. The story of how we were subjected to a value system based on the way we looked.

I've continued to promote self-acceptance and body positivity by being an active member in the Race and Diversity club at my school (a program that tackles multiple social issues schoolwide). I also plan to help with the local "Girls on the Run" program that introduces elementary-age girls to fitness in a supportive and welcoming environment. The program is led by an all-female staff and continues to help girls feel confident with themselves. I will not stop advocating for the importance of positivity, especially with young girls. My career goal is to be a doctor. I want to defy industry norms and demonstrate to other young girls that being confident and grateful can lead to great success. I know that there will always be those who try to put us down because of the way we look: race, gender, size, ethnicity, sexuality. Nevertheless, it's our job to break the glass ceiling. Discrimination has plagued society for hundreds of years and it comes from the disease of misinformation and a lack of education. It takes all of us uniting not in fear but in hope to stop the hate.

Jacqueline Hudak is a junior at Lakewood High School, where she plays varsity basketball and serves as student council vice president. She is also a member of Help to Others charity club, Race and Diversity Club, and Watters Science Seminar. Jacqueline plans to study biology in college and then to go on to medical school. She looks forward to meeting lots of different people through international travel.

Tiba Jraik

12th Grade, Rhodes College and Career Academy

Can you imagine getting punished for refusing to let your husband film the private moments of your marriage? For her refusal, my mother got an ashtray thrown in her face. There was nothing she could do about it because we were women in Iraq.

When I lived in Iraq, I thought abuse was normal. I witnessed and experienced Iraqi men normalizing abuse of their wives. The women were trapped and hopeless. Trust me; fighting back wasn't an option. School wasn't an option. Choosing your own husband wasn't an option. Sometimes, leaving the house wasn't even an option. This ideology drove my mother to the brink of suicide. Somehow she managed to survive for the sake of her children.

On the day my step-father put his hands on me, my mother snapped. She used a neighbor's cellphone to call the authorities. We were asked to give witness statements. I was nervous, but my mother's courage filled me; I put my fears aside and told them everything. This was my first strike against hate, but it wouldn't be my last.

We came to America. Here, life was both better and worse. I could go to school, but experienced bullying because of my ethnicity. People called me a terrorist; I couldn't respond because I wasn't fluent in English. Sometimes, they would even make bombing jokes. At other times, they'd mock my dark hair and skin. None of this fazed me much. After all, I had faced so much worse. I knew what it was like being a woman from a different country. I knew what it was like to be treated as a second-class citizen. I had been through enough to be grateful for the new avenues open to me.

As time went on, I grew more comfortable speaking English. On the day I was able to speak up for another immigrant in my school, I knew I was an American woman: a woman of conviction who would stand up for others, a woman who would go to college. A woman who would study medicine to help other women in situations as my mother had faced.

We all owe our lives to our mothers. In my case, this is a double debt. My mother risked her life to get me out of Iraq; I owe it to her to help women in seemingly impossible situations. From her, I learned that having courage can change your future. From her, I learned how to strike back against hatred. In her name, I will continue to stop hate by making sure women get the help they need in their most extreme circumstances. My plan is to become a trauma nurse specializing in cases of rape and spousal abuse. It's a hard path for me to choose. I've battled my own darkness for years; I know I'll face triggering events in my future career. I know it's our duty to fight demons for others once we've conquered our own. It's a battle I believe I can win.

Tiba Jraik is a senior at the Rhodes College and Career Academy at James Ford Rhodes High School, where her favorite subject is journalism; her most recent newspaper article is about the crisis in Ukraine. She is currently planning a fundraiser to support Ukrainian refugees. Tiba plans to attend Kent State University to become a trauma nurse so she can advocate for women who have been abused.

Sanjana Katiyar

11th Grade, Strongsville High School

Why is something that 1.8 billion individuals around the world experience so stigmatized? Why must we create code words for something that is natural? Why is it shamed upon to discuss normal and healthy topics about our evolving bodies? These are questions I ask myself every day.

As a woman, I am ashamed by the way society has shaped the conversation around menstruation. The stigma continues to be infiltrated into innocent minds even in the 21st century. Even today, young women grow up thinking they have to conceal what their bodies are going through naturally, instead of embracing "it." The media has negatively influenced menstruators to refer to it as "shark week" or "that time of the month," rather than accepting it for what it is and not being afraid to call it a PERIOD!

Looking back to when I was educated about periods in school, boys and girls were separated. Why? Females are not the only individuals that should be knowledgeable about menstruation. Why discriminate against who is or isn't included in this conversation? Wouldn't having an open conversation cultivate a healthy attitude about menstruation and set an environment where other topics can be discussed openly and candidly? The simple act of sending girls to one room and boys to another is where the stigma of menstruation is seeded in children's minds. Doesn't sitting in a room full of same-gender kids already make it feel like a taboo topic?

Now as a high schooler, when I walk into my school bathroom my eyes are always drawn towards the silver, rectangular box hanging on the far end of the wall that has "25 cents" imprinted on it. Inside that box are menstrual products. What if you don't have a quarter? What if you feel too embarrassed

Wouldn't it be comforting to know that should you ever need a menstrual product it is readily available, not just in my school but everywhere? My passion for this social cause has led me to become the co-president of the Northeast Ohio PERIOD chapter, a youth-led menstrual movement. The three pillars of our chapter stand for advocacy, education, and service. Our goal is to reduce the stigma surrounding menstruation, advocate for a more thoughtful education process, and provide free menstrual products for our community. I organized a school-wide menstrual product drive which was an immense success. In total, we collected 881 menstrual products that were donated to a local women's shelter for

to ask for a product because of the way society has characterized periods?

from my school community. My next goal for the chapter is to provide free menstrual products at my school and eventually expand to other school districts. With continued education and open dialogue, my hope is to change the way periods are viewed by society and provide free access to these products. I plan to major in psychology and specialize in women's reproductive health during medical school.

Sanjana Katiyar is a junior at Strongsville High School, where she is a member of the National Honor Society, the Red Cross Club, student council, and the varsity tennis team. She has played the viola for seven years. Sanjana enjoys traveling, volunteering, and spending time with family. She plans to study psychology in college and to attend medical school to become an OB/GYN.



Samah Khan

11th Grade, Beachwood High School

"You, a neurosurgeon? I'd pull the plug before I'd let a girl operate on me".

The conversation fell silent as I looked over my shoulder to see the boy grinning to himself. Tears itched their way into my eyes as I pretended to ignore him, but I knew that this was the first of many deterrents I would face on my journey as a female entering a male-dominated workplace.

Daring to be oneself in an environment that sets standards based solely on gender is a formidable undertaking. Courage is birthed from confidence, but women are disallowed from taking pride in themselves for anything less than perfection. I have seen female classmates purposefully leaving assignments unfinished to avoid dealing with the prospect of producing something that isn't flawless. Working towards acceptance in surroundings that promote this kind of self-sabotage is nearing impossible with every passing day.

My parents have been nothing but nurturing towards my aspirations in life. But the looming inevitability of stepping out into the workforce alone was dawning on me. Soon, I'd climb up the corporate ladder only to be met with the glass ceiling streaked with the fingerprints of so many potential leaders.

But I was determined to change that. Today, I am one of several international ambassadors for a worldwide organization dedicated to the advancement of females in STEM fields. Representing Women in STEM by leading a group of students towards projects that make a change is extremely empowering, and we've only just begun. Our

local chapter is currently collaborating with the student government to create a gender-parity goal for the 2025-2026 academic year, where we anticipate seeing increased female involvement in male-dominated advanced STEM classes at my high school. Instilling young women with the confidence with which men have been inculcated since birth can have hugely advantageous results, which is why recruitment is so important to us.

Courage is something that I have worked towards and am still reaching for today. I am now spearheading multiple school-wide projects for raising awareness of gender disparity in STEM. In a further attempt to build a legacy, I am also currently executive president-elect of our student council for the next academic year. Yet even still, my mind echoes with the ever-present question, "Am I doing enough?" The answer, I learned, is simple. Worth cannot be singularly defined, not by gender, race, socioeconomic status, or anything, for that matter. Something that discrimination inadvertently helped me realize is that my abilities as a professional will never be reduced to my gender.

My career ambitions have shifted, naturally, with time and exploration of other interests, but not at all because of the disparaging remarks I received, and continue to receive, from ill-wishers. The road I construct for myself will never be a straight line, but I've come to terms with the turns. My devotion to medicine and dedication to female advancement are fused in perpetuity, a fusion from which no one could ever pull the plug.

Samah Khan is a junior at Beachwood High School. She participates in a variety of extracurricular activities, including Women in STEM. She plans to attend college and medical school and has a particular interest in neuroscience.

Maraja Moss

12th Grade, Jackson High School

When I was 12 years old, I was oblivious to how the outside world's problems still surfaced from the 16th century. One bus ride forever scarred my life. On the bus, I was talking to my friend about the upcoming football game and we were coordinating our outfits. Suddenly, I felt a thick rope around my neck slowly becoming tighter each second. I began gasping for air. The background noise was filled with laughter from my peers. In those seconds, I thought about how this moment could not be the end of my story. A tear slowly ran down my cheek. Finally, the rope loosened, and I was in disbelief. For the rest of the bus ride, I sat in silence. I immediately went home and told my dad, each sentence pausing, trying not to shed another tear. Towards the end of our conversation, I asked him "Why me?"

At a young age, I was forced to realize the world was cruel to an African-American girl in the 21st century. In the midst of my situation, I attempted to reach out. I reached out to the administrators who turned a blind eye to the situation. I reached out to my counselor who tried to sugarcoat the bus ride. Lastly, I reached out to the Ohio Civil Rights Department, which took six years to reach back out. I felt isolated. After this experience, I learned to process my confusion, loneliness, and hatred. After processing this experience, I wanted to ensure this did not happen to another African-American girl, boy, or anyone else. I wanted to "stop the hate" through activism.

As an activist for racial equality, I joined a women-led diversity group. I was relieved when I realized young women my age encountered these same cruel experiences. While I wouldn't wish this type of trauma upon anyone else,

finding a sense of community made me feel less isolated. Slowly, after each meeting, the feeling of isolation began to disappear. Reflecting on that one bus ride, I knew my school needed social justice reform. Within my school I founded a poetry club in hopes of providing an outlet that fostered creativity, allowing students like myself to process social injustices. Writing poems helped me expose the truth and taught me the importance of authenticity. Lastly, I founded a nonprofit organization sending inspirational letters and care packages to children in different communities, locally, nationally, and globally. These experiences not only showed me how to redirect my anger, but also how to grow from my atrocities.

Hate has penetrated our society for many years; however,

Hate has penetrated our society for many years; however, it is our response to hate that holds significant weight. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot

drive out hate; only love can do that."

Maraja Moss is a senior at Jackson High School, where she founded the Diversity and Poetry Club. She is a member of the National Honor Society, as well as honor societies for math, science, and Spanish. Maraja plans to study Spanish at the University of Pittsburgh and then to become a pediatric neurologist.

Jenan Qaraqish

12th Grade, Hudson High School

From the death of three Muslim students, to Trump's Travel Ban, to a Muslim family who got run over by a truck driver, to Macron's hateful speech, to, to, to. It would take years to go through every Islamophobic incident. From Ohio, to Illinois, to Nebraska, to Utah, to Texas, to New York. Even France, Canada, and India: Islamophobic incidents flood worldwide. The Muslim world watches with an aching, bleeding heart. And me? I feel despair, bitterness, and every other word for heartbroken.

Witnessing the world's malevolence toward Muslims, a threat strikes me as I leave my home; my mom's cautious voice rings in my ear. Negative thoughts live deep within my head. Wherever I go, I face stares that are filled with discontentment as if people want to say "you are a terrorist" or "oppressed." The staring chokes me. Then, I eavesdrop as my ears detect the vibrations of intimidating laughter. My hijab reveals my religion. When I wore the hijab, I was taught to be appreciative and proud; however, the painful, intolerable feelings lag behind.

The insecurity was not enough, and a firsthand account of an Islamophobic incident had to happen. My family and I were in the car when we saw an old man in his pickup approaching. I could see the disgust in his eyes, but I was used to this nonverbal cue. He turned slowly from the other side of the road, honked, and said, "Take off that hat [hijab] you...," and he roamed off, howling a dozen offensive and foul-mouthed words. I had an abrupt feeling of a knife stabbing my heart. Undoubtedly, I realized that the old man was suffering from bigotry.

From my bitter experience, I learned that all Muslims will face harassment, death, or prejudice until the ice is broken. I had a responsibility to educate others about the separation between religion and inhumanity.



Mykenna Roy

12th Grade, Mayfield High School

"Yes, I'm deaf, and so is my sister, my father, and my aunt, too. It runs in the family!"

Then my teacher told me: "How sad, I'm so sorry to hear that."

Sad? I never thought of our deafness as something sad. I grew up in a household where American Sign Language was used more often than spoken English. My hearing mother has a career as a sign language interpreter, and she absolutely loves her job. My family attends Deaf socials so we can meet other people with hearing loss, and I've never had a "sad" time. When I think of Deaf culture and what it means to have a hearing loss, I have always seen it as something beautiful and worth celebrating, but I learned that not everyone feels the same way.

I soon realized that this was also true for many other people out there with different kinds of disabilities. People tend to think that if someone has a disability, it's something sad and it requires fixing. This infuriated me, because I grew up surrounded by people with disabilities, both at home and at school, and we never treated each other any differently. Wheelchairs, prosthetic limbs, hearing aids—you name it; nothing ever slowed us down.

Then I asked myself, "How can I change the way people think?"

I wish there was a simple solution. Breaking down years of systemic oppression and stigmatization is no easy task. But it's not impossible. Change starts with just one person, and we must gather the courage to take the first step. For me, I started by creating simulations of certain disabilities so that other people could understand how it felt to

live with one. I showed my able-bodied peers what it meant to have a disability, and the adaptations that people use in their day-to-day lives—like me with my hearing aids.

I also spent 24 hours in a wheelchair so that I could personally understand the challenges that come with being unable to walk, and to advocate for changes and accommodations that could be made in my school. I even inspired my classmates to do the same thing so that we could better understand different people's perspectives and adapt to them together. We have made a difference in our community by bridging the gap between those with and without disabilities.

I believe that if we listen to and educate others on our unique life experiences, we can grow closer to understanding and empathizing with each other and making significant societal changes. I aim to pursue a career in the medical profession so I can work with kids like me—who have disabilities—and help them get a proper head start in life. I want people to be proud of who they are, and to have the courage to live authentically, because being different is nothing to be ashamed of or sad about. That's what I told my teacher back then, and that's what I'll continue to tell people now.

Mykenna Roy is a senior at Mayfield High School, where she serves as her class president and president of the National Honor Society. She is a member of the Science Olympiad, cross country, and track teams. In her free time she teaches jiu-jitsu to kids. Mykenna plans to attend college—possibly at Ohio State

University—and to become a doctor and advocate

for children with disabilities.



13

Asia Howard

10th Grade, Twinsburg High School

This is one of the few stories of racism that I have ever experienced. It happened when I was very young; I believe I was in the second grade. A childhood friend and I were bored on the playground and we saw some other girls playing house. They were pretending to be a family. All of those girls were white. My friend and I are Black and have a darker complexion. Even at a young age, kids segregate themselves into groups with other people that look like them. My friend and I wanted to go and play with those girls since it looked like they were having fun. We walked over with excitement and hope in our eyes and asked to play with them. They answered with a harsh and direct response that I have never forgotten. One of the little girls said cruelly, "No...you guys are Black." After they said that to us, we walked away angrily. Then, we knew some things about racism, but we did not fully understand. All I remember was that we talked about Martin Luther King Jr. for the rest of recess.

That event in my life contaminated my self image. I didn't think anything about me was beautiful and I wanted the physical characteristics of those girls that rejected me. I hated my name because it sounded different than "regular names" like Sarah or Rachel. I disliked my hair type. I had long hair too, but it was still different compared to the white girls' straight, easy-to-maintain hair. But as I got older, all of those feelings started to change. I learned to love

my hair type, my name, and the color of my skin. At one point I had tried to change everything about me so I could be a part of friend groups like them. Of course I didn't know then, but I know now that I was trying to fit their beauty standards. Their hostility towards my outward appearance changed my thinking, even though I'm sure those girls haven't even thought about what happened that day.

I know now that no kid is born with that type of thinking. It has to be planted. I told myself I wasn't going to harbor hatred or resentment towards those people. I need to show people who hurt others that we need to build each other up instead of tearing each other down. I still think about that experience and I am proud that I managed to grow mentally, even in a world that continuously bashes African Americans about the way they look. I learned to love how everyone is different. I promised myself that I will help other girls that have gone through similar situations to show them that they are beautiful and express to them how important it is to appreciate their differences. Especially since they don't know how it could possibly affect other people's lives or, in this case, other little girls on playgrounds.

Asia Howard is a 10th grader at Twinsburg High School. She is a member of Jehovah's Witnesses and would like to volunteer with its organization as a photographer. She enjoys learning about photography and American Sign Language and loves to hang out with family and friends. She plans to study photography at Cuyahoga Community College and to continue teaching others to listen to, learn from, and apply the scriptures.

Benjamin Ralph

10th Grade, Walsh Jesuit High School

Mental health is an issue that is all too often forgotten and dismissed in the current day and age. Society treats mental illness as if it is something that makes a person weak or that a person can just get over. This, however, is not the case. Mental illness is, in fact, just that, an illness. Like other illnesses, it needs to be treated. Recently, I have had some experiences that have caused me to feel vehemently that treatment for mental illnesses needs to become more readily available so that people with mental illnesses will not be marginalized for something they cannot control.

Several months ago, I started volunteering at the Peter Maurin Center in Akron. While volunteering I began to notice something interesting. Almost every time I was there, there was someone who displayed symptoms of some sort of serious mental disorder. Once there was a lady who sat alone the whole time talking to herself, and she would seemingly randomly have outbursts in which she would start screaming at someone who was not there. Another time, there was a veteran there who became frightened every time there was a loud noise. My classmates who I was volunteering with reacted to these people by calling them "crazy" or "psychotic," and tried to stay as far away from them as possible.

I was horrified with my classmates' reactions to people with mental illnesses because these people cannot change the fact that they are mentally ill, it is an immutable characteristic. Judging someone or making fun of someone for being mentally ill is in essence the same as judging someone because of their race or religion. Their reactions caused me to realize what an inherent bias our society has against people with mental illnesses. This bias and the

resulting discrimination are the result of widespread misinformation and misunderstandings about mental illnesses within society. Many people believe that mental illnesses are not "real" illnesses, and that they are something that people can simply get over by themselves given enough time. Some people also believe that getting help from a professional makes a person weak. This thinking, however, is false and incredibly harmful, as it causes people struggling from mental illnesses to not want to, or be afraid to, get help.

Unfortunately, due to these societal stigmas, mental illness has become an untreated epidemic within our society. The only way to stop this is for people to become more informed about mental illness, allowing those who need it to get help and treatment for their mental illness and others to get help for those who do not know how. Therefore, in the future, I plan to better educate others about mental illness by setting up a school assembly where mental health professionals will inform my peers about mental illness. I also would like to organize a club in which mental illness will be discussed and others' opinions and ideas on how to address the mental illness epidemic can be heard.

Benjamin Ralph is a 10th grader at Walsh Jesuit High School, where he plays in the concert and marching bands. He enjoys mathematics, skiing, and karate. Benjamin plans to study mathematics in college and would like to start a math club at his school.

Anah Khan

9th Grade, Beachwood High School

"What about you? What's your favorite holiday?" my teacher asked. I thought for a minute, and then replied, "Eid." She frowned. "I'm sorry, what is it you do during Eid?" I gulped. Here went nothing.

"Well, you dress up in traditional clothing and then meet with relatives. You celebrate and spend time with loved ones, and an animal is sacrificed, too." A girl behind me whispered, "Oh my goodness. The poor animal." Gasps of disapproval spread around the classroom, and I felt my face heat up.

"Alright, it's her culture. We have to respect that." my teacher warned, and continued on with class.

I kept my head down and focused on the worksheet in front of me, the words blurring into swirls of black as I teared up. I hadn't told them that Eid was a time of family, prayers, charity, and celebration. I hadn't even told them about the incredible smells wafting through any village, and how the chilly wind tickled your neck as sandals met crunchy gravel. I had left out everything positive about Eid and had left them with the same negative perspective of Muslims that persists in the minds of many.

Islam had been underrepresented and misunderstood once again, and I felt it was all my fault.

I've always felt the burden of being the only Muslim in my grade and the need to represent my religion accurately to an entire high school. America is oblivious to the Muslim reality, viewing them as veiled terrorists, hiding a bomb under their niqab. Because of this, I'm forced to picture every step I take being processed in a discriminatory manner by fellow students, and end up taking a step back.

The reality of Islamophobia is simple. Hate crimes committed against Muslims are exponentially more violent than what Muslims themselves stand for. Peace is preached through every religion, from the Quran, which states that aggression towards others is considered a sin, to the Bible, which asks humans to sit under their own vine and fig tree.

Rather than hesitating before acting, I've learned to spread awareness to those who need it. So far, I've practiced this by representing a variety of nations and their perspectives in Model United Nations, by being an active participant of Amnesty International, and even standing up for women's rights by being a member of Women In STEM.

As I progress through my high school career, I hope that these organizations will assist in giving me the voice I need to protect not only my religion and culture but others' too. Indeed, what makes humans unique from any other form of life is their ability to form and share opinions, and it is our responsibility to protect that skill. By advocating for peace and order between all faiths, we can move forward as a united and peaceful people in order to effectively stop the hate.

Anah Khan is a 9th grader at Beachwood High School, where she participates in Model UN, Women in STEM, Introspect, Computer Science Club, and the school newspaper. In her free time she enjoys drawing and spending time with her family. In the future Anah plans to pursue a career in medicine and to use her leadership skills to uphold minority rights.



Michael McNally

9th Grade, Mayfield High School

My first encounter with prejudice was several years ago while sitting in the waiting room for my sister's speech therapy session when I overheard a Jewish man conversing with my mother say, "Don't go back to France, the Muslims are there." I had visited Paris and was so impressed with the beauty of the city that I was surprised that someone of Jewish heritage would say Muslims inhabiting Paris could ruin it.

But, hate is an equalizer: Everyone is subject to it whether they know it or not. Whether they were the hater or the hated, or maybe they just use it as a verb: I hate, I hate, I hate. I have visited all three of those realms; however, I have never acted upon any of those ensnaring emotions. So what is the antidote to a feeling of dislike, hostility, or hate?

Antisemitism has impacted my life to such an extent that it determined the country in which I call home. Much of my family's history is lost to me; this void is not my choice but caused by the discrimination and genocide that occurred during World War II and afterward. My grandfather, a Jewish man, couldn't escape discrimination in Poland. At every stage in his life, he was denied success. The most egregious example of discrimination was when he was a teacher and had all of his students taken from him, twenty-five years after WWII ended. When he married my grandmother, a Roman Catholic, her family did not accept their marriage. When my mother was born, she was called a "dirty mutt." The hate, hate they had to endure in their home country became too much. They were forced to leave. My grandfather, grandmother, and mother became internally displaced persons in 1971. Suddenly, they were refugees with a one-way ticket out of Poland and less than \$10 dollars in their pocket. I was further taken

aback when I recently learned about the vandalization of my great-grandfather's gravesite at a Jewish Cemetery in Cleveland. How could people feel such hatred towards dead people they didn't know so long after the events of WWII? After the harrowing events of WWII, after so much hatred and suffering, discrimination still prevailed.

Two organizations, the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), helped our family overcome the trials of refugee life. They sponsored and paid for our family to come to Cleveland, Ohio. They provided our family with a small, furnished apartment, employment for my grandfather, money, and people to connect with. My mother annually donates to these organizations, and I will continue the tradition.

Antisemitism and hatred continue to run rampant all over the world! By understanding and sharing the feelings of others and engaging in acts of kindness, we combat the hate, hate, hate. We must unite to combat hate so that it does not equalize us; rather, it becomes the thing we all condemn.

Michael McNall is a 9th grader at Mayfield High School, where he participates in the Cincinnati Math Bowl, the American Math Competition, and the U.S. Biology Olympiad. He also plays on the school soccer and tennis teams. In his free time Michael enjoys coding and collecting Star Wars Legos. In the future he plans to become an engineer and play tennis for recreation.

Ida Chang

8th Grade, Beachwood Middle School

"Those Asian kids stink!" he said, piercing that hateful comment to my sister and me as he snickered with his friends. My sister and I were playing around in front of the grocery store, waiting for our parents. Suddenly, a group of teenagers glanced at us and impulsively blurted out that hurtful comment. My sister didn't know the meaning of the malignant sentence they said to us at that time, but she could clearly feel the hateful emotions that were being expressed.

At that moment, I became numb and a feeling of sadness came over me. I felt numb because I had never experienced racial discrimination this directly, and I felt sadness due to the fact that such pure and innocent kids like my little sister could hear such hateful comments strictly based on appearance and race. How can people be so cruel toward the same human beings living in the same land they live in? How can one spew such hurtful comments when they do not know that person?

My family and I came to the United States from South Korea a year ago. While the COVID-19 cases were rising, prejudice and hatred toward Asians and Asian Americans were also headed in that direction. Whenever my family went to the store, we could feel glares and stares. Also, the news about increasing hostility and even violence toward Asians and Asian Americans has been constantly seen and heard. During that period, constant questions appeared in my head: "Why do people hate others so much? What made them so mad and hysterical? What can I do to solve this situation?" I thought about those questions a lot, but, as a middle schooler, I couldn't think of any good answers.

However, now I can answer the question. And I believe, together, hatred and discrimination can disappear. Of course, I cannot control people's minds to get rid of prejudice; nobody can do that. But everyone can spread positivity around their community. For example, when I see kids sitting alone during class, I sit with them and talk. It might be awkward to talk with new people because I don't know anything about them. However, you can't know anyone until you try. In other words, there are a lot of things we can learn and understand from each others' different environments and viewpoints.

Also, when the holiday season arrives, my friends and I gather around the table and share each other's knowledge about the different holidays and seasons we have. I shared information about Seollal* with my friends and learned about Hanukkah and Ramadan. Sometimes we join each others' holidays and celebrate together. Thus, we can spread the idea of kindness and diversity by treating each other respectfully and interacting with people from different cultures.

Still, there are many social conflicts and acts of discrimination that seem to be hard to solve. However, we know many small actions can gradually impact the community, and everything can start from us. Together, we can stop the hate.

*New Year's Day in South Korea

Ida Chang is an 8th grader at Beachwood Middle School, where she is a member of the Science Olympiad team and the girls' tennis team. She loves reading fantasy and realistic fiction, expressing herself through writing, and drawing illustrations of the stories she reads. As a new international student, Ida has experienced challenges with communication and adjusting to cultural differences. She plans to write a book encouraging students who are having a hard time in school.



Chelsea Gipson

8th Grade, Monticello Middle School

I walked into my ELA classroom. The period had not begun yet so people were still getting settled and two students were talking at the front of the room. One of them wasn't in our ELA class.

Then another student, sitting at his desk, shouted out at her, "Get out, you monkey!"

After he said that silence fell across the classroom. "What did you say?" came from a classmate sitting near him, but the boy didn't repeat what he said to her.

I stopped in my tracks as I was headed to the door. "Repeat what you said," I said instantly.

"I didn't say anything."

"You did. What did you say?"

"I didn't say anything."

"You did! I heard you, you can't say that." I then told him why it was wrong and told him repeatedly he's not allowed to say that.

My teacher told me to take a seat. My assigned seat was in front of him so I moved to the back table to be away from him. Then my teacher called the counselor to sort things out.

I met with the counselor in the hall and began to tell her what he did and my reaction to it. She too looked surprised about the situation and was shocked. She let me return to class then asked for the boy to see her in the hall. He told her he knew what he did was wrong, understood why I was angered, and apologized. He told her everything she wanted to hear.

This experience impacted me because it made me realize how common and usual racism can be. I was angered by the situation. It truly shocked me. I do not know how the girl was impacted. I never asked her about the situation afterward.

From this experience, I learned that standing up instead of letting things go unnoticed is a great thing. This act of racism was wrong because a Black person was called a monkey, and in the past Black people were compared to monkeys as if they were animals.

In response to these circumstances and in order to create justice and a positive change in my school community, I told the counselor what happened so she could resolve the situation as needed. I also corrected the boy on his wrongdoings. Telling the counselor could prevent future altercations from happening. Doing what I did can lead to change for him as a person. I educated others about why calling Black people a "monkey" is wrong.

Chelsea Gipson is an 8th grader at Monticello Middle School, where she is a member of the National Junior Honor Society, Power of the Pen, Minority Student Achievement Network, and the basketball team. She is also a member of an AAU D-Up club basketball team. Chelsea plans to continue writing and speaking out against injustice.



Aanchal Nassar

7th Grade, Hathaway Brown

Because I am a young Black girl living in Ohio, most would think that I have experienced at least one form of hate growing up. However, I attend a school with multiple races. Always a mix between Black, white, Hispanic, Asian, and more. For this reason, people tend to think that I don't know how to truly act "Black." From my family to my friends, I don't act "Black" because I don't fit into their definition of what that means. However, my first experience with not feeling "Black enough" was during second grade.

It was mid-evening on a chilly weekend and my mom had invited our family over for dinner. I could smell the aroma of the food my mom had just taken out of the oven and placed on the dining table. I could hear the laughter of my family members and soft music playing in the background adding flavor to our pot of togetherness. One would think that this night would go perfectly, however that was not the case. My great-aunt walked over to me. I haven't known her for that long, yet I chose to respect her. She swayed her hips, taunting her eyes towards me as if she had a question. "What school do you attend, Sweetie Pie?"

"My new school," I said with confidence.

She retorted, "Oh you go to that white school with all 'em white people, that must be why you talk like them."

I didn't know what to say. However, I just responded, "Haha yeah, I like it there." My aunt walked away, leaving me with questions. Lots of questions. I was only eight years old at the time; how was I supposed to know that my aunt had just performed an act of racism? At the time, I thought my new school was a great school for me. I belonged there.

All the questions I had were flowing through my head. For example, "How do I talk like a white person?" or "How is my school known for being a white school when there is so much more to it?" Lastly, "Why did my own aunt make me feel like I didn't belong, whether it's being Black or not being Black enough?" At this moment, I didn't stand up for myself or my school. I didn't correct her on her facts about my school or how I am enough in general. If I could go back in time and fix this moment, I would. I would stick up for my eight-year-old self and make sure she felt like she was enough. I have realized that being a Black girl going to a private school is not as easy as one would think it would be. After all, this experience has shown that in life there might be times where I am in a situation like this and may need to stand up for myself. In total, I have learned that when I stand up for myself I can feel "ENOUGH."

Aanchal Nassar is a 7th grader at Hathaway Brown, where she has played on the volleyball, swimming, and track teams. She is secretary of the student council and a member of Gold Key, which supports new students looking to attend Hathaway Brown. Aanchal plans to become a lawyer so she can work for justice. In the meantime, she would like to work in an ice cream parlor, write a book about what it's like to grow up in Cleveland, and travel to Bora Bora.

Jocelyn Sesnowitz

7th Grade, Joseph and Florence Mandel Jewish Day School

During fifth grade I went to Wisconsin for treatment. There was once a girl (we will call her Jamie) who was germaphobic. I understood her because when I was in first grade I was also germaphobic. Sometimes I couldn't even go to school, so I really understood what she was going through.

One day I was having free time and Jamie was doing her exposures (exposures are when you have to face your fears and try to overcome them). Some of the other people were talking to each other and I overheard them saying that what she was doing was gross.

Some of her exposures were that she had to shorten her shower time and that sometimes she couldn't even wash her hands after going to the bathroom. The kids were saying that she was dirty and disgusting and that she didn't clean herself. She was a really close friend of mine, and one of the nicest people there, and I was debating whether or not I should tell her.

It was really hard for me to hear people say such unkind things, especially when they had issues as well. They should have understood that she had a lot of trouble because they were going through some of the same things. Imagine someone talking about you behind your back and knowing that these are the people who are supposed to understand you.

In the end, I didn't do anything. I still regret sitting there and listening to it and not defending her. They were older

than me and weren't the nicest to a lot of people. I'd already gotten in fights with them, and I was worried that it would be a big scene and things would get worse. Knowing what I know now, and even if people were talking about someone who wasn't my friend, I would stand up and tell them that they were being rude and disrespectful. Everyone has their own problems and would feel bad if people were talking about them behind their backs.

Jamie and I are still friends to this day and keep in contact. We ask each other how we're doing and check in on each other. I never told her about the mean kids because I knew it would hurt her, so she'll never know how much she impacted the person I am. Her kindness and the meanness of others have made it so that I always stick up for people and myself when people are being unkind.

I will always help my friends and other people and make sure they're okay. I always tell people when they aren't being very nice. I think it's important to consider how people would be feeling if they knew people were talking about them (or even if they were there). You never know what's really going on in someone's life (maybe they're having a bad day, and you just made it worse). Being kind to others is so important.

Jocelyn Sesnowitz is a 7th grader at Joseph and Florence Mandel Jewish Day School. She has two cats and loves anything to do with animals. She also loves music, and she plays drums and sings in a band. She is passionate about art and travel. In the future Jocelyn plans to go to college and to use her interests in art, music, and drama to help other people.

Juliet Richards

6th Grade, Hudson Middle School

"You don't belong here!" he said angrily.

"You have black skin!" he said again, pushing the other boy.

I was young when this happened, in kindergarten, about age six or maybe seven. I was walking to the bathroom when I saw it. One boy was white, the other was African American. They were both in about fourth or fifth grade. My school was kindergarten up to fifth grade. The white boy was saying mean, hurtful, and racist things to the Black boy. I could hear the words, like sticks and stones, hurting the Black boy. I heard other classes and kids talking. It was too overwhelming.

I walked close to the cold, beige wall, confused about why he was saying these mean things. I was sad for the Black boy and scared. Very scared.

"What if he did that to me?"

"Would a teacher notice?"

"What would I do?"

"Why was he doing this?" I thought.

I touched the wall. It was cold, cold like the white boy's heart, cold like those mean words. By now, I was speed-walking to the bathroom. I wasn't walking with any friends or teachers, I couldn't tell anyone what was happening. Nobody else saw this; I didn't understand.

This event made me unhappy, outraged, and scared. Now that I'm older, I realize what happened and why. I learned not to bully people with different colored skin and that it isn't okay to bully people with different colored skin. I want more people to realize stuff like this happens, and it can happen anywhere, in a town, city, state, or continent. It can happen online too. It isn't just racism and bullying that happen; it's bias, discrimination, and other things too. I want to help make a difference. I want everybody to help make a difference.

If anything like this ever happens again, I'll say something. I'll speak up and I will help the kid, tell a teacher, a friend, a parent or trusted adult. If this doesn't matter to others, it should. I can take a simple act of kindness to help the victim of whichever type of hate they feel, and so can you; sit with them at lunch, become their friend, just simply say hello. People can stop this hate, racism, bias or discrimination. People just like you can make a difference and speak up, just like I will if I ever see this again. I learned that all kinds of hate happen around the world. I learned people can help stop this, but some people choose not to. I understand they might be scared or nervous and that's okay. But one thing I know is you can stop the hate.

Juliet Richards is a 6th grader at Hudson Middle School, where she enjoys reading, writing, and science. In her free time she loves to ride her bike, hike, and spend time with her family. Juliet plans to attend college and then to study to become a veterinarian.

Mattia Sturman

6th Grade, Rocky River Middle School

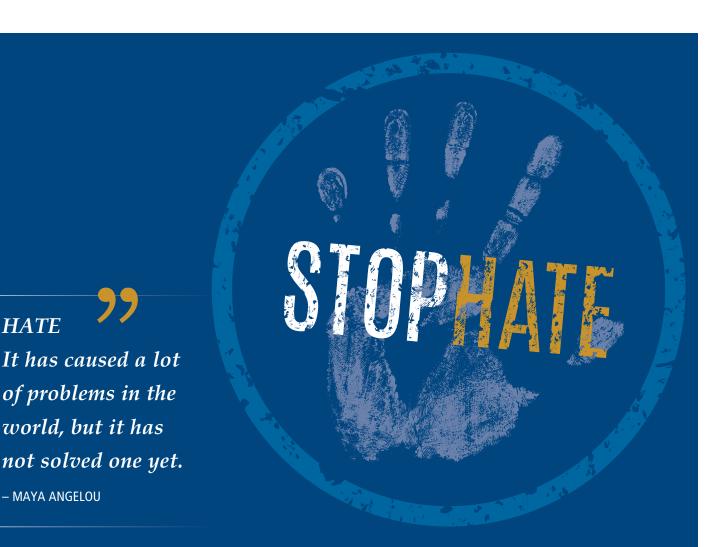
Shaming people for being overweight happens all the time and I usually always just ignore it, that is until it happened to my best friend. Not too long ago my friend Evan experienced this type of bullying. Every Friday, my friends and I go to Friday Night Skate. One night, we were skating around when we all stopped near the wall of the rink to chat. Out of nowhere, a boy who none of us knew and who appeared to be a few years older, came up to us and suddenly shouted "Hey biggie!" at Evan and then just kept skating on as if nothing had happened.

I was so angry at the boy that I skated up really fast next to him and yelled "Hey mom jeans! I'm sure you have a ton of friends!" You see, arguments are my strong suit because I like to stand up for what I believe. I'm sure I could have reacted better, but all I could do at that moment was say what was on my mind. While saying that did turn me into a bit of a bully in this scenario, I still said what I felt I had to. I don't like any kind of bullying, but I especially don't like it when it involves people I care about.

Right after this, my friends caught up to me and we all talked about what had just happened. Maggie and Christine are my two friends who were also there to see everything. So along with Evan, the four of us decided to go up to a guard working at the ice rink to tell him what was going on. The boy who said those rude comments to Evan also stepped in next to us while we talked. We explained what happened to the guard, but of course, being a high schooler, he didn't seem to care at all. In a rude tone he told us "I don't really see the problem.... I mean I could give him a slap on the wrist if you want." He then softly tapped the rude boy's wrist and left as if this was the solution.

A bit of time passed, and the boy skated through again, but this time he shouted "MUFFIN!" at Evan for no reason. This time, to our surprise, another guard, who also appeared to be in high school, heard and got involved. She seemed to know the boy, yelling at him, telling him he couldn't do that and letting him know how inappropriate he had been. Luckily, after this the boy apologized and stopped bothering us. My friend Evan told us he didn't really care and that all this didn't bother him in the slightest, but he hasn't come to another Friday Night Skate since the incident. With this happening to one of our best friends, it made Maggie, Christine, and me way more aware of when people are body shaming others. It's horrible what Evan went through, and no one should ever have that happen just because their scale shows a higher number. People need to be aware of this and how it affects not just who they say it to but also to all the people around them.

Mattia Sturman is a 6th grader at Rocky River Middle School, where she enjoys language arts, writing stories, and anything that requires creativity. She loves singing and theater. In college Mattia would like study art or graphic design, and she may possibly go on to law school. She hopes to go to Italy some day because her family is part Italian and because it is a beautiful place she would love to see in person.



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More than 1,000 students from 12 schools worked collaboratively within their classes to pen and perform songs for *Stop the Hate® Youth Sing Out*, an arts-integrated learning initiative that asks students to share their thoughts on discrimination after take a virtual "Stop the Hate" Maltz Museum tour and a virtual "Power of Music and Protest" Rock & Roll Hall of Fame tour. 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!

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2022 STOP THE HATE® YOUTH SING OUT WINNERS

"Speak Out"

Nicole Majercak's 1st Period Class, Beachwood High School FIRST PLACE HIGH SCHOOL

Chorus:

Speak out

Speak now

Speak the truths

Speak so we can start anew

Chorus

We are all born and created equal, But that's not how we treat other people

A hate that we had hoped died

Rose back up and brought tears to our eyes

Hate paraded and chanted and thrust at a child

Hate fueled and scattered and growing wild

Some words can't be unheard as we grieve

Some words can't be unlearned as we speak

How, how can we all heal?

How can they see what's real?

Chorus x2

Reality altered by illusion

Influences leading to confusion

Being gay isn't a choice or a sin

We aren't on display when we show our skin

Accept us this way

Accept us this way

No matter what you say, the closet is dim

We're breaking out and you can't shove us back in

Chorus x2

Hate is passed on,

it can be contagious

If we want to make it stop,

we need to make some changes

And when speaking's not enough

We must all make a change

In our own selves and actions

Every second of the day

When they won't listen, maybe

They can learn from what they see

So we'll act how we preach

and live what we teach

We'll ask questions, and learn, and grow

We can challenge the status quo

Chorus x2

"Skittles"

Sarah Hodge's Civics 2.0 Class, Glenville High School **RUNNER-UP HIGH SCHOOL**

I'm so hungry I could kill

I'm so hungry I can't feel

Irritated and angry, I just can't deal

We all need food, the children need a meal

It's the principle, principal

Cut away the peel

Start with people

Provide the children with their needs

If you care about the garden

better take care of your seeds

The children should be able just learn and chill,

But the abyss of my stomach is making me ill

Hunger and violence connected at the core

Here in Glenville

There are no grocery stores

Expiration dates past, moldy green meat

Seems like the food is being picked up off the street

All I got is skittles, but I need better vittles

If we want to calm the anger, we need to solve this riddle?

Start with people

Provide the children with their needs

If you care about the garden

You better take care of the seeds

Without access to food.

can a community heal?

Can a child learn

Without fruit to unpeel

To step across the stage

Break out of this cage

Open up the pantry

The dawn of a new age

Start with people

Provide the children with their needs

If you care about the garden

You better take care of the seeds

2022 STOP THE HATE® YOUTH SING OUT WINNERS



Beachwood High School
FIRST PLACE HIGH SCHOOL
Recipient of a \$3,500 Anti-Bias Education Grant
Congratulations to Nicole Majercak's 1st Period Class

Glenville High School RUNNER-UP HIGH SCHOOL Recipient of a \$2,000 Anti-Bias Education Grant Congratulations to Sarah Hodge's Civics 2.0 Class





Garfield Middle School
FIRST PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL
Recipient of a \$3,500 Anti-Bias Education Grant
Congratulations to Lisa Blasko's 7th Grade Class

Clark Elementary School
RUNNER-UP MIDDLE SCHOOL
Recipient of a \$2,000 Anti-Bias Education Grant
Congratulations to Mollie Lockwood's 6th Grade Class



2022 STOP THE HATE® YOUTH SING OUT WINNERS

"Tell Me (My Life Matters)"

Lisa Blasko's 7th Grade Class, Garfield Middle School FIRST PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Spine chilling, uneasy
The twinkling eyes of an innocent
Child dressed in a white robe

Do you think they knew what the costume meant?

The hate grew

More children joined too

An army of saints in their costumes of hate

It was the only life they ever knew

Freedom equality
Shout it out loud

We can make a difference

Together we vow

We want to spread a little kindness with you

We want to spread more of kindness with you

Remove your costume of hate

Let your heart be full of love

Don't discriminate, celebrate all we are of

We all are human

I need to know my life matters to you

Tell me Black Lives Matter say it again

Spine-tingling, heart threatening

Putting other people down Projecting hate, take a look to yourself

Dig a little deeper in the ground

We are all different in our own special way

We all have sorrow and sacred days

We all make a joyful sound

Freedom equality

Shout it out loud

We can make a difference

Together we vow

We want to spread a little kindness with you

We want to spread a lot kindness with you

Remove your costume of hate

Let your heart be full of love

Don't discriminate, celebrate all we are of

We all are human

I need to know my life matters to you

Tell me Black Lives Matter say it again

"Revenge Is Not the Way"

Mollie Lockwood's 6th Grade Class, Clark Elementary School RUNNER-UP MIDDLE SCHOOL

Chorus:

Revenge is not the way Hate doesn't get you anywhere If you show love everyday Nothing else can compare

Chorus

We learned in the Second World War that Many Jews were tortured and killed In the end, the Nazis failed After so much blood was spilled

Jesse Owens ran and won his race Even Germany had to cheer Leaving Nazis in the dust He helped the world conquer fear

Chorus x2

If you have a problem talk it out Don't accuse without evidence Stand up for yourself and your friends Avoid ignorance

You got to think before you act Fighting is not the way Don't blame others for your mistakes Look forward to a better day

Chorus x2

Oh

revenge is not the way Oh

Revenge is not the way

2022 STOP THE HATE® SONG WRITING & ESSAY READERS

We are grateful to the 408 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."

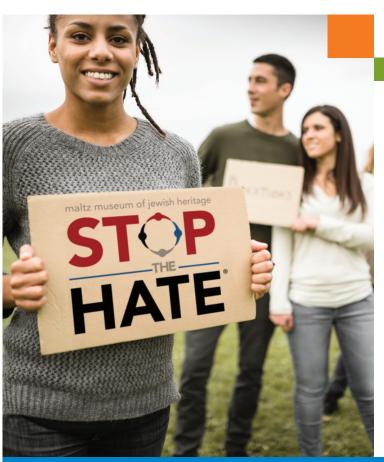
-Erika B. Rudin-Luria

The Jewish Federation of Cleveland congratulates these future leaders for their inspiring efforts to stand against hate. Mazel Tov!



J. David Heller, board chair Erika B. Rudin-Luria, president





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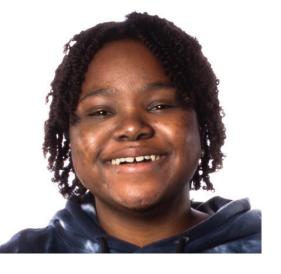
A stage for stories of struggle, courage, and creativity; a forum for difficult conversations about discrimination and intolerance; and a platform for youth to share their vision for a brighter future, The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage brings history to life, issues to light, and people together.

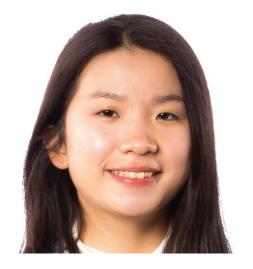
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