

24th Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative March



IGUALDAD, ٥اواسم, EGALITÉ:

Equality in every language

Monday, January 16, 2012

Celebrating
45
years

Educating leaders who change the world



A Brief History

The Martin Luther King, Jr. March is a tradition at Manhattan Country School that demonstrates the passion and leadership of its students. Since its founding in 1966, MCS has strived to fulfill Dr. King's dream of unity, peace and equality. In memory of Dr. King and his legacy, the eighth grade students are in charge of planning a march every year. The students are asked to ponder, "If Dr. King were alive today, what would he consider to be a social justice issue worth fighting for and raising awareness about?" Students engage in healthy debate, discussion and work toward group consensus on one theme for their march.

MLK March Themes Through the Years

2011: IGUALDAD, ةاواسم, EGALITÉ: Equality in every language

2011: "We Have Another Dream: Civil Rights in the 21st Century"

2010: "A Peace of the Dream: Living MLK's Dream in a Turbulent World"

2009: "Dear Barack: Letters to the Leader of Today From the Leaders of Tomorrow"

2008: "The Colors of Rainbows: Gay Rights and Civil Rights"

2007: "Walk the Talk of Peace"



IGUALDAD, ةاواسم, EGALITÉ: Equality in every language

Manhattan Country School is a co-ed independent school on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. One of the most diverse independent schools in New York, MCS celebrates diversity in terms of culture, race, socioeconomic status, religion and sexual orientation. The school was founded in 1966 based on the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and teaches students about and the importance of activism, sustainability, leadership, creativity and most important, equality. Every student at MCS is taught to be passionate about causes they care about. This year, for our annual MLK March, we have chosen to celebrate equality and the many forms it may come in.

The march will take place in Upper Manhattan. We will begin at the Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture and will end at Manhattan Country School, stopping at many significant landmarks and places along the way. Each eighth grader has composed a speech over the past few weeks, on a topic they feel passionate about, such as voting rights, the 99%, immigration rights, education rights, domestic and sexual violence, and suicide prevention. At each stop, two to four students will share their speeches. These speeches represent the eighth grade, their unique voices and civil rights issues most important to them in their last year at Manhattan Country School.

Dr. King deeply believed that everyone in the world should be treated equally. The eighth graders at MCS couldn't agree more. We chose to integrate the idea of equality into our speech topics of choice because people in the world are still not treated equally, and we want to make a difference. Like MLK once said, "An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity." We hope you can join us on this march and help us get one step closer to making a change in the world that we live in.

MLK March 2011 Route

- Stop 1** Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (515 Malcolm X Boulevard)
- Stop 2** St. Philip's Church, 204 West 134th Street (between 7th Avenue and Frederick Douglass Blvd.)
- Stop 3** Apollo Theater (253 West 125th Street)
- Stop 4** Swing Low: A Memorial to Harriet Tubman (St. Nicholas Avenue and 122nd Street)
- Stop 5** Mount Sinai Hospital (101st Street and Fifth Avenue)
- Stop 6** Ending Point: Manhattan Country School (7 East 96th Street, between Fifth and Madison Avenues)

Stop 1

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (515 Malcolm X Boulevard)

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a research unit of The New York Public Library, is one of the world's leading research facilities devoted to the preservation of materials on the global African and African diasporan experiences. A focal point of Harlem's cultural life, the Schomburg Center also functions as the national research library in the field, providing free access to its wide-ranging noncirculating collections. It also sponsors programs and events that illuminate and illustrate the richness of black history and culture.

Emma Morgan-Bennett



These days, education is everything. Without an education many opportunities are lost. The modern world knows that education equals success, yet we still deny so many their educations, and therefore we deny them opportunity as well.

Worldwide, 101 million children are not in school. In countries all over the world, young children are denied an education. They live in poverty and most likely will never get an opportunity to start a new life until they are educated. In Liberia, for example, 61% of children are not in school. Uneducated young girls especially are prone incurable diseases and suffer abuse. The United Nations declares that: "Universal education will speed progress towards all development." But the youth of today remain undereducated. These children suffer, not knowing how their lack of education will affect their future lives. Being uneducated increases the risks off contracting HIV or AIDS, transmitting malaria, suffering abuse and continuing to live in poverty. With only 27.6% of our world's population obtaining an education through college, how can we expect youth around the world to escape this trap?

For children in developing countries, education is especially necessary for survival. By learning to add and subtract, they can learn how to count money, a vital tool in owning a business. By learning how to read and write, they can start on the path toward becoming educated citizens. These basic educational necessities will pave a road to a good future. Yet education does not stop at numbers and letters. After receiving these lessons they must educate themselves in citizenship. We all must learn how to make our own judgments in order to pave a road for our future. Reading and mathematics are the start of an education, not the finish. An education is not completed until you have combined all you have learned and turned them into an ethical path.

The most important lesson I have learned is that education is not just learning about Mathematics, English, and History. Without turning numbers and letters into life lessons, they are just skills but they aren't tools. Education should combine every aspect of your knowledge and create an ethical compass. Through your education you must see the world and take action. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals."

Camrin Cohen



"Equality; the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities." You can't touch it, you can't see it, you can't hear, you can't taste it; you can only feel it. Inequality is the lacking of equality in terms of status, rights and opportunities. You can see it, you can hear it, you can taste it — or hunger for it — and you sure can feel it. You can act it out it, inflict it, start it, you can join it or you can end it. At Manhattan Country School, we are taught to be equal and to treat others the way you would like to be treated. We know, though, that this is not the same all over the world. We are constantly taught, here at MCS to be a successful person, but this means much more than making money from a job you enjoy. It means going out and facing what so many people fear. It means standing up for not only what you believe in, but also what is right.

The eighth graders of MCS, class of 2012, are a passionate group of people. We are not the stand-and-watch-by-the-sidelines type: we are the going out and achieving our goals kind of people. We fight for many goals: women's rights, gay rights, a fair governmental system, animal rights, immigration rights and so many other things, I couldn't count them if I tried. We don't just research the problems and think of ways to fix them. We go out and make it clear that we are the future. We are the generation that is next in line. We are the next presidents, the next celebrities, the next large corporation owners, the next small business owners and certainly the next activists. We are the game changers.

Occupy Wall Street is a movement started, led and continued by people that are angry with our conflicted government. They are sick of the fact that our government bailed out banks and big businesses as well as Wall Street

while 99% of the population is still suffering. When Occupy Wall Street went from being big, to being bigger, we didn't just watch it on the news. Instead, we went down to Wall Street and became reporters. We learned about what it meant to be the true activists of today, to be part of a movement, and to have a large group of people care so much about their rights, a group that stands up together as one to make a change. The Occupiers are a group of individuals who agree that something needs to be done to change the inequality in our economic system. They have shown this country and the rest of the world how there is power in numbers and how, when we set out to achieve a goal that will help our society, we can achieve it.

Today you will hear speeches made about environmental rights, gay rights, transgender rights, the fight to end domestic violence, and educational equality. We talk about these topics because we believe there is always a way to take action in order to right the wrong things others do and say and begin to understand and accept each other.

When I leave MCS, I will be a better individual. MCS has and still continues to teach me the importance of equality, compassion and activism. We will carry on these teachings to whatever high schools we go to next year, to the colleges we attend after that, and for the rest of our lives. We have learned about the mission of Manhattan Country School, and we will fulfill it by taking action and inform and influence others to take action.

Whether it's *l'égalité*, *jämlikhet*, *esitlik*, *iguldad*, or *equality*, we want justice all over the world.

Sofie Jackson



Here we are at the Schomburg Center, 135th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard. The Schomburg Center has dedicated its time to not only researching black culture, but also collecting, preserving, and documenting the study of the history and culture of people of African descent. Personally, when thinking of freedom, it is common to think of the African-American race, and how they won their freedom and equality in a time where they were thought of as not just unequal, but also less than that of the white race. They were, however, not the only ones to rise up and win their freedom. For example, in 1783 it was America that won their freedom by winning the Revolutionary War and breaking away from England. Also, by protesting, demonstrating and marching, it was women that won their right to vote in a world dominated by men. But the thing we forget today is that we cannot just simply thank these former heroes for winning our freedom for us and move along on our way. We must learn to hold onto and protect our freedom that was always ours to protect.

Everyone knows that if you want to be good at something, you must work at it. For example, if you wanted to be a singer, if you worked hard enough, if you practiced and practiced and worked to be your best, then you could possibly achieve this goal. You see, first you have your people who might be just okay at singing, but work hard to maintain and actually improve on their vocal skills, and then you have the people who might just be naturally talented. Sometimes, these people never really learn to cherish the things that they're good at because they think they do not have to try any harder than they already have. I believe that the same rules apply when talking about freedom. There are different kinds of freedom; there is the kind that is handed to you at an early age due to your family's wealth, social status or even ethnicity. However, there is also forms of freedom that are not as easily obtained, the kind you must work for, or maybe even hope and pray for your whole life and never acquire. However, I believe that freedom is not only a reward, but a fragile gift that must be kept well polished, protected, and guarded no matter what kind of person you might be, whether that freedom is handed to you in a glass box or whether it is the kind that seems to only appear only in your dreams.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a man who had a dream that would not die. Martin Luther King had a dream that one day, all races were to be considered equal, with no stereotypes and no discrimination toward another. Is this what our world looks like today? Think back to today, to yesterday and the day before that and you will find that there have been and will always be the fear of being different, the fear of being made fun of and the fear of your freedom slipping through your hands and shattering its delicate glass features. This fear has been, and will always be here. But just imagine what our world might look like if this was not the case. It would have been worse. Without the fear of losing our freedom, we would have never obtained freedom in the first place. Imagine what the world would look like if as soon as Dr. King had, say, won the right for blacks to be served in the same restaurants as whites, he stopped his protests and most importantly, stopped his dreaming because he decided that his goal had been reached? Our world wouldn't look much different than it did some 50 years ago. To us, freedom would be just a fleeting moment as opposed to "free at last."

Throughout my many years at MCS, I have learned about segregation, racism and discrimination. But I have also had the privilege of lacking that dreadful moment when I might be discriminated against, or stereotyped because of the way that I look. I believe that I have been kept safe here; been kept away from negative energy such as this, and I think that that is what MCS is good at; preparing you for that moment of shock when it finally does happen to you, and teaching you how to handle it. I believe that there will come a day when I am discriminated against because of my sex. There will come a day when I am segregated or outcast from a certain group of people, a day when I am

stereotyped for the way that I dress or the way that I look. I believe that there will come a day when my friend might be going through the same, and I believe that there will come a day when I will help whoever it may be to stand up and protect that freedom that was always theirs to protect. But something that I have learned at MCS and through personal experiences in life, is that freedom is a precious thing and it is your job to hold onto and fight for it before it slips away. This is your time MCS and our moment to finally say, “free at last, free at last, thank God almighty, we are free at last!”

Stop 2

St. Philip’s Church (204 West 134th Street)

After worshipping for almost a century under the supervision of Trinity Church on Wall Street on Sunday afternoons, in 1809, these African American parishioners formed their own community of worship – the Free African Church of St. Philip. They laid the foundation of what became, in 1818, St. Philip’s Episcopal Church, the first African-American Episcopal parish in the City of New York. Throughout its history, St. Philip’s has been at the vanguard of religious and social activism. Beginning with the Rev. Peter Williams, Jr., a leading abolitionist and the church’s first rector, St. Philip’s played a key role in the debate on slavery and injustice. Later generations of clergy joined parishioners and prominent community leaders in the struggle to secure civil rights and economic justice for all people.

Kyle Ragland



Have you ever thought about changing something you didn’t think was right? Well, maybe you should! Until a couple of months ago, I never considered that I could do something that was important to other people, not just me. There are many people who have either dedicated or sacrificed their lives to make a difference for their communities and even the world. Could I do that one day?

Some heroes are willing to put their lives in danger for the sake of others or to make a change. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led marches, gave speeches, protested and preached about the injustices against black people in America in the middle of the last century. Even knowing that there were so-called “haters” who wanted to kill him for speaking out, he didn’t care. He continued to fight with nonviolent protests for the sake of others, even though his life was in danger, because as he famously said: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

The greatest heroes make a positive mark on the world, benefiting all people. For example, one of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s goals was to create greater equality between black and white people, but there was more to it than that. In fighting for equality for black people, it taught whites to be fair and better people, to stop treating others badly just because they were different. If I were to do something to make a mark on the world, it would be to bring hope to everybody. It wouldn’t promote war but peace; a world where there are many ways, not just one way. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said in his most famous speech, “I Have a Dream”: “Let us not wallow in the valley of despair... I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.’” I want everyone to have a dream and to work towards that dream by making positive change.

St. Philip’s Church first opened in 1809 in lower Manhattan, but moved to Harlem in 1911, reflecting the residential patterns of African-Americans. This church was one of the first to attract African-Americans to Harlem because they addressed the spiritual needs of its members and provided a variety of social programs. The goals of St. Philip’s Church are to provide major spiritual and civic support in the Harlem community. Ever since they opened, they have always been important in terms of religious and social activism. The church fought injustices through the services that they provide, even though some people did not agree with helping African-Americans in any way.

In a lot of ways, St. Philip’s Church is like a hero. It is heroic through the services it offers to the community. The clergy joined their members and community leaders in the struggle for civil rights and economic justice for all people; the church bought a cemetery for African-Americans; they started a program to provide insurance to sick New Yorkers; they started a club for teenage boys; they purchased apartment buildings so that African-American’s would have safe and fair housing situations. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” St. Philip’s Church doesn’t remain silent about things that matter. They are active in making the changes happen.

In order to be a hero you just have to think of a way to make a difference for someone other than yourself using something you are good at. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. motivated people with his messages and leadership. St. Philip’s

Church saw problems in the community and then offered ways to help fix them. What can we do to be somebody's hero? Do you have what it takes to be a hero? I believe that we all do.

William Wei



A former slave turned prosperous businessman, Elias Neau founded the St. Philip's Church in 1809 as a place of support and spiritual development for the community's African-American population. Throughout its history, St. Philip's has been vigorous in the struggle for civil rights and economic justice, serving children, teenagers, the elderly, the sick and the poor through a variety of programs. St. Philip's was founded in the first community of free African-American New York residents and now stands as a symbol of stability and a beacon of hope for the African-American community throughout the nation. But now, there are others in America looking for stability and hope: they are the undocumented students, who rightfully see this country as their home but are prosecuted as illegal immigrants.

Many children who have immigrated to this country, even the brightest, law-abiding citizens who grew up in the United States, are impeded from their studies and achievement, denied their rights or deported outright. They know no other home, and were brought to America by their parents who fled their homeland for its political, economic or criminal unrest. But the proposed DREAM Act provides opportunities and motivates these undocumented students to contribute to the country they grew up in and to realize their dreams. By serving in the military or pursuing higher education, these students are given legal status, benefiting America's security and economy greatly in the near future

America needs young people to fuel the country. They are crucial to economic growth, especially as only the brightest of applicants become DREAM Act beneficiaries. It makes better education and jobs available to recipients, who will create between \$1.4 to \$3.6 trillion more taxable income in a four decade period, according to a recent UCLA study. The legislation also encourages immigrant students to remain in school until graduation, reducing the dropout rate. A 2008 study from Arizona State University found that an individual with a bachelor's degree earns approximately \$750,000 more, or more than 60%, through his or her lifetime than an individual with only a high school diploma. Beneficiaries also will become legal workers, contrasted to currently undocumented students who are forced to work illegally as domestic servants, day laborers or employees of sweatshop factories.

There are currently 2.1 million undocumented students in this country prosecuted as illegal immigrants. But many of these children were brought to America before they were even able to speak. Many of these children have great potential of making America and the world a better place, and there should be no reason to abandon them to a future in shadow. Thank you

Stop 3

Apollo Theater (253 West 125th Street)

The world famous Apollo Theater is so much more than a historic landmark – it is a source of pride and a symbol of the brilliance of American artistic accomplishment. With its rich history and continued significance, the Apollo Theater, considered the bastion of African-American culture and achievement, is one of the most fascinating chronicles in American history.

Stefan Blair



Here we are, in Harlem, now a busy part of New York City. But hundreds of years ago, Harlem used to be a beautiful farming area, where people lived off of the land, and connected with nature, much like our MCS Farm. Many people know about the farm, where every class from the 7-8s and up goes to enjoy the beauties of nature. But now, unfortunately, the beauty is being taken away. At the farm, there are gardens that allow us to eat and grow our own food, cows that we can care for, and solar panels to provide us with electricity. We run the farm mainly off of the power of nature. Other places, however, are not so fortunate.

In Virginia, mountains are being destroyed for coal, in locations in New York, companies drill into the ground in order to find gas, and in many places in Canada and the Middle East, oil drilling is all too common. In fact, my family owns a country house about an hour away from the farm. Every now and again, we go into town for supplies, and everywhere I look, I see unhappy people who are protesting against the practice of hydraulic fracturing. Hydraulic fracturing is when people drill into the ground, and then pump water into the drill hole, fracturing any rocks that are

in the way. Gases beneath the earth are then released, and harvested to create energy. Unfortunately, much harm is done to the environment in the process. Many chemicals are added to the water before being pumped to the ground, so when it comes back up, it is dirtied. It is filtered, but it is impossible to completely clean the water. There are many activists who are working towards a greener future, such as J. Henry Fair, a photographer who actually visited the school last year to talk with us about coal mining. Robert D. Hunt, a green energy physicist has created a model of a plane that could, according to research and tests, fly without using fuel. And Magenn Power, a company that creates wind turbines, has discovered a model that can reach a height almost three times higher than the average wind turbine. In total, there are many people who are working towards a better future. We are MCS. Why shouldn't we help them out?

A regular air turbine produces enough energy to power about 1,000 households, about 4,700,000 kWh of electricity. There are approximately 100 million households in the United States. Therefore, we would only need about 100,000 wind turbines to power America. Yes, coal can produce more energy at a higher rate than a wind turbine, but with coal mining eroding away natural resources and places where many people live, it will be hard for future generations to survive. Wind turbines provide a clean, sustainable source of energy. If we can put aside our selfishness and sacrifice a small bit of energy so that others can live without the worries of having a mountain collapse on them, or their families dying from one of the many diseases caused by mining coal, we will have taken a great step towards a greener future. We can use less energy so others can live. We can switch from coal to green energy so that the green earth we live in can stay green. As Barack Obama says to this day, even when faced with the impossible: "Yes, we can."

Martin Luther King believed in equal rights for everyone. Unfortunately, most people mistakenly think that everyone currently has equal rights. But, many people who live nearby coal and oil plants don't have much of an option of where to work. Coal companies used to provide people with many jobs. In fact, the amount of jobs provided by coal companies has dropped by more than 75% since 1940. Coal company executives are replacing people with machines. Coal companies force people out of their houses, so they can find an extra ton of coal to add onto their million dollar salaries. The workers have horrible working conditions and have to fear every step they take at work. They could fall to their deaths, or get crushed by tons and tons of dirt. Green energy would not only allow the earth to stay clean, but would help create equal job opportunities for others. When mining coal, workers have horrible work conditions, but with green energy, workers would be able to enjoy a clean environment. Martin Luther King fought for everyone to have equal rights, and green energy would allow everyone to have equal job opportunities.

Overall, I feel that green energy is something we cannot live without. Either

way, we will eventually have to stop using coal, as we will run out. But upstate, many people are protesting, and are scared of drinking water because it could become very polluted through the process of hydraulic fracturing. Coal destroys the earth, and our society revolves around electricity, like a drug. With green energy, we could keep society evolving and stop polluting the earth. If we convert to green energy, we can heal the world, and create job equality for all.

Oni Fox



Picture this: A stage with a single spotlight, different people and different colors. Here on West 125th Street, The Apollo Theater was the one of the first theaters in New York City that allowed people of all races to perform. Sharing different genres of music such as swing, bebop, rhythm and blues, modern jazz, gospel, soul and funk. The Apollo was home to many artists ranging from Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday to Michael Jackson and James Brown. In 1983, the Apollo Theater was listed as a city landmark and also placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1933, Mayor Fiorello La Guardia rallied to shut down all burlesque clubs. Hurtig & Seamon's, a segregated burlesque club, was one of the many places shut down. In 1934 the building was reopened as the Apollo Theater, focusing on music and variety revues. Upon reopening, it began to market to the African-American community. According to Jonelle Procope, president and CEO of the Apollo Theater Foundation: "Since 1934, the Apollo has been a driving force in shaping America's musical and cultural landscape."

We know the Apollo today as America's musical heaven. The Apollo is a place where all people can come and show their talent and be themselves. It was for all people of all ages. Every Friday, the Apollo hosts a show called amateur night, encouraging anyone and everyone to come and show off their talents. When I was younger, my mom would take me to the Apollo Theater where we stand right now. I loved the fact the no matter my race, age or religion I could always dream of the day that I would be on that stage.

The Apollo was and is a place where people who believed and believe in equality for all would come together and see how they could make our future a better place. During the civil rights movement, it was home to

meetings on the fight for equal rights, with activists such as Rosa Parks in attendance. The Apollo Theater was one of the many places in Harlem that was very special to the African-American community. It was a place where people could be themselves. In 1963, when the community rioted against police brutality after the killing of an unarmed black teenager, the Apollo remained untouched even when buildings nearby were seriously damaged. Today the Apollo is a place where people of all genders, ages, and races come to hear some good old music.

Picture this: A stage with a single spotlight. But this time under the spotlight is equality, *igualdad*, *égalité*. Equality for all.

Stop 4

Swing Low: A Memorial to Harriet Tubman (St. Nicholas Avenue and 122nd Street)

This larger-than-life bronze sculpture depicts abolitionist organizer and Underground Railroad leader Harriet Tubman, and stands at the crossroads of St. Nicholas Avenue, West 122nd Street and Frederick Douglass Boulevard in Harlem. Douglass once said of Tubman that except for John Brown, he knew of “no one who has willingly encountered more perils and hardships to serve our enslaved people.” The memorial, commissioned through the Department of Cultural Affairs’ Percent for Art program, was created by African-American sculptor Alison Saar. The artist has depicted Tubman “not as the conductor of the Underground Railroad but as the train itself, an unstoppable locomotive,” the roots of slavery pulled up in her wake.

James Oliver



Standing before the Harriet Tubman memorial is a reminder to many of her bravery in freeing slaves. Harriet Tubman lived from 1822-1913. She was originally an African-American slave. However, after she freed herself from slavery she went back to the South to free and give guidance to other slaves on how to free themselves. Most slaves whom she freed later went to Canada. The journeys Harriet Tubman made were dangerous, and she put her own freedom at risk by helping others.

Today, I will be speaking about another dangerous journey, which many people embark on in the 21st Century. Unlike the slaves who ran away from America, I am speaking about those who, cross into the United States, seeking better lives. These people are illegal immigrants. They travel on dangerous journeys, crossing the border from Mexico to the United States. Despite the risk of death and the other dangers that illegal immigrants face, they go in hope of a better life. The people who lead the illegal immigrants are called “Coyotes.” Despite the Coyotes’ effort to get people inside the United States, their intentions are quite different from Harriet Tubman’s. They are driven by the idea of money. However, once these immigrants finally reach the United States, they cannot rest in peace. They live a life of secrecy.

Willing and knowing, these immigrants walk towards a world of better opportunities. However they also walk towards a world of restrictions. Most illegal immigrants take hard, low paying jobs in the United States. They suffer under strict laws, which they can’t vote against. There are various challenges and ways that illegal immigrants suffer. Some of these undocumented immigrants are children who arrive in the United States. These children, some taken by their family, others sent to friends or relatives, come to the United States illegally. These illegal immigrants are raised as Americans. Some forget their native tongues. Others maintain their languages and cultures. Either way, they have to live in fear of being deported to a place far away from their home, America.

Despite low wages, undocumented immigrants go through the risk of entering the United States because their wages at home were even smaller. Walmart is an oppressor of illegal immigrants. On October 25, 2003, there was a raid at 60 Walmart stores. Two hundred and fifty janitors were arrested. These 250 janitors were illegal immigrants. All of them worked every night cleaning Walmart. The only days off work they received were on Christmas and New Year’s Eve. Most illegal immigrants suffer from being overworked and underpaid. The way illegal immigrants are being treated today has more similarities to slavery than most people realize. Slavery was built on the essential idea of cheap labor, where workers were overworked and weren’t paid anything. Those who owned slaves made huge profits. Places like Walmart are based on ideas that aren’t so different. Like Walmart, many companies have found cheap labor by taking advantage of illegal immigrants, who deserve more rights and better wages for their efforts.

Illegal immigrants, however, don’t just take the second-hand jobs that most Americans refuse. There is a population of illegal immigrants who have been successful, graduating from colleges and getting high paying, interesting jobs. Jose Antonio Vargas is one of these undocumented immigrants who are leading a successful life. He is a New York Times reporter. He has written about himself, about his life as an undocumented immigrant. Mr. Vargas came to this country when he was three years old, but only discovered that he was considered an illegal immigrant at age 16. Mr. Vargas describes the pain and challenges of knowing that his home considers him illegal. Mr. Vargas, in hope of becoming a

legal immigrant, thought that if he worked hard enough then one day he would become a legal immigrant. However, today he is a successful reporter. He must not only face the pain of disappointment, but also the pain and worry that he has to lie, scared of his status as an illegal immigrant.

As Mr. Vargas wrote: "It means going about my day in fear of being found out. It means rarely trusting people, even those closest to me, with who I really am. It means keeping my family photos in a shoebox rather than displaying them on shelves in my home, so friends don't ask about them. It means reluctantly, even painfully, doing things I know are wrong and unlawful. And it has meant relying on a sort of 21st-Century underground railroad of supporters, people who took an interest in my future and took risks for me."

Mr. Vargas is not the only one who is undergoing this pain. Many of our friends could be illegal immigrants. It doesn't change who they are, but it changes everything about who they could be in the future. The proposed Dream Act however, enables children who are brought here at a young age and go on to complete college to obtain legal status. By obtaining legal status, some immigrants could have new possibilities to achieve. There is nothing to lose by passing The Dream Act. We only gain a new future of thinkers, who can go to school, graduate from college, and help build our future.

By passing the Dream Act, we would be following Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream. Martin Luther King fought for equality so that everyone would have a chance to achieve their potential, regardless of the color of their skin. As Martin Luther King said, "I look to a day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." As Martin Luther King believed this, I too believe this and that one should not be judged by their status legal or illegal.

Cara Jones



Harriet Tubman was a true believer in equality for all. By running away from her old life to start a new one, she was able to help others doing the same thing. She was willing to risk her life for what she believed in, and what she believed in was a day where slavery was no more, and black people and white people could live equally and in harmony. Today, she still serves as an important figure in the quest for equality. However, we have, once again, found ourselves having to fight for equality. Political and social inequality exists, whether we know it or not.

It was on December 4, 2011 when the Internet exploded with news about Russia's version of a migraine — Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is running for president again. Putin is a two-time former president, having run from 2000 to 2008. His approval rating in 2007 was 67 percent, meaning that he still had many against him. As of December 4, however, his approval rating was 48.5 percent. And yet, Putin seems to not care what the people say. When a parliamentary election took place, votes for Putin seemed to be inflated. Those who were against Putin believed that this was because of voting fraud. According to the Associated Press, "Prime Minister Vladimir Putin had wanted to see his United Russia party do well to pave the way for his return to the presidency, but few Russians seemed to care about the vote, with many saying they assumed the results would be manipulated anyway." Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke out on the issue, saying that, "the Russian people, like people everywhere, deserve the right to have their voices heard and their votes counted. That means they deserve free, fair, transparent elections and leaders who are accountable to them." Putin then retaliated against her, saying that she was the foreman in discreetly spending money to influence Russian politics because they wanted to weaken their rival nuclear power. A demonstration against him took place in the center of Moscow on December 10, which was the third in anti-Putin protests and the largest rally in Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union 20 years ago. And one of his representatives even said that Putin "respects the point of the view of the protesters." Do I believe that? I think not. Despite the public's dissatisfaction with the voting results, Putin refuses to hold a new vote because he believed that, "the results of the election undoubtedly reflect public opinion in the country." I believe that Vladimir Putin is being extremely unfair towards the majority of the Russian people that don't want him for president. I believe that even though the protests are illegally organized, the people still have the right to speak out and that Putin shouldn't refuse to comply with what the people want. After all, the role of the president is to be the representative of what the people want and to gratify their wishes, right? If Putin can't serve the role of a president, then why does he deserve to be president? He still didn't get the majority of the Russian people on his side, so why should he become president and face dissatisfaction throughout his entire presidency?

This is just one example of how unfair voting in politics can be and how desperate people are for power. Another example of voting inequality farther back in time is the introduction of Jim Crow laws. As a part of these laws, most blacks were denied the right to vote due to their race between 1890 and 1910. This applied to 10 of the 11 former Confederate states. They passed new constitutions and amendments that introduced the use of poll taxes and literacy tests. This resulted in the amount of people voting to drop drastically. By 1910, less than 0.5 percent of black men that qualified to vote were actually registered voters. If you could not vote, this also meant that you could not run for

any offices or serve on juries. They also could not vote for officials that properly represented them. I think that this is unfair, mainly because black people did not have the right to vote and decide who is running their country. The 17th Amendment to the United States Constitution states that senators must be elected by popular vote. If a majority of white people were in favor of a certain senator and black people, then the majority of the population, are opposed to them, does that person have every right to be elected because black people cannot register to vote?

Voting rights is a right, not a privilege, and something that should be guaranteed to you. Voting rights is a right in the same way as having a trial is a right. Years ago, the right to vote was taken away from people, and today it is being manipulated in such a way that makes people not want to vote. Now, we have another right being taken away. On December 30, 2011, Barack Obama signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act. This bill means that if you are accused of being a terrorist, despite whether or not there is significant evidence, you can be held in prison indefinitely without a trial. This bill is completely contradicting the Constitution and Bill of Rights. We are a country with a legal system famous for the term "innocent until proven guilty," but has it been changed to "innocent until suspected of being guilty?" On January 3rd, the Occupy Movement held a demonstration in front of the offices of Kirsten Gillibrand and Charles Schumer, two senators in New York that signed the National Defense Authorization Act. Hopefully, in combination with all of the controversy the bill has attracted online, that has shown President Obama that signing the NDAA was a wrong move. I think it's insane that just because you are accused of being something, you can lose all of your rights, including the right to be a part of your community.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools." If Putin, like the leaders in the U.S in the Jim Crow era, refuses to listen to what the people want and cannot "rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity," it is only a matter of time until Russia metaphorically goes down in flames, and if Obama does not veto the National Defense Authorization Act, the problem will only continue to grow greater until Americans bite the hand that has fed them. After all, the definition of terrorism is "using violence and/or intimidation in the pursuit of political aims." Technically speaking, would writing an article about how terrible the government is and trying to change peoples' opinions be considered terrorism? If so, and Obama were to arrest all those against him, we would be, ironically, repeating former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's "game" that a majority of Americans were so deeply against.

Mikah Daniels-Baumrin



Youth Immigration

"We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksand of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children." These words were spoken by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Before I begin I would like to ask you all to close your eyes and hold hands with the person next to you. ... What do you see in America's future? Martin Luther King wanted to demolish segregation. He fought and fought and never gave up. He wanted a better world for his children, for he knew that they would be the adults in the future. He knew that these children would eventually become our presidents, governors, and activists. Picture what Martin Luther King wanted you to see. He has composed this painting and yet it is waiting for someone to notice it ... waiting for someone to see the world that he pictured. What do you see? What do you think will become of our future? Remember, the children of the past are the adults of today. And the children of today will be the adults of the future. Open your eyes and let go of your hands. Martin Luther King knew that discrimination wouldn't end until people spoke out. Although discrimination has lessened over the years, there are still places in America where people have forgotten that everyone deserves equality.

In Alabama and Arizona, kids can only learn about the "American" ethnicity. The children, who immigrated to America for a better life, who have lived in America all their lives, are deprived from their learning in the state of Arizona. They will not be able to learn about any other country except the United States. There are many children who have lived in America since they were very young. It is in fact, in the U.S., immigrants have equal learning rights as nonimmigrant students do. However in Arizona it is illegal to learn about any other ethnicity. This is called the HB 2281 law, and it is focused on the discrimination against Hispanic immigrants.

Then there's the other case where immigrants have come to America for a better education. They have the potential to go to the best schools in America and be qualified to be leaders, to have a voice in something they want to do. They all deserve a job that lets them be heard. However, in cases where these are undocumented immigrants, they cannot take

their glorious opportunity. They could've lived in America their whole life, but because they do not have their papers, they cannot live their dream. This is how the DREAM Act started. The DREAM Act proposed to let undocumented students become citizens of America if they've completed their college education. However the DREAM Act has not passed yet in Arizona. California has proposed to pass this law, but many people strongly disagree with this idea and have even threatened their government. Did you know that more than three million students in the U.S. graduate high school each year? Did you also know that 65,000 of them will not be able to have that chance because they are undocumented? And yet, masses of them have lived in America ever since they were babies. They probably remember as much of their life in America as we do. But they still don't have the same amount of equality as we do.

Isn't it sad to know that people come to America to have a better life, but that their lives can be taken away much more easily than creating them? Martin Luther King wanted to stop segregation, and wanted his children to live in a world where no matter how you looked or what your skin color was, you would always be welcomed. However, even today, his dream has struggled to come true. But realize that his dream still can come true, and it will. Because no one wants to be deprived of their education because of their ethnicity. Everyone should have equal rights — no one should be left out because of their race. Children deserve an education system where their minds will be open to learn ethnicities all around the world.

Equality, *byd, gleichheit, równo, l'égalité, igualdad* equality. Let all children today fight for equality so it will be here in the future.

Kai Williams



Throughout my life, I've heard the phrase "silence is golden" hundreds of times. Silence can be glorious, a state of rest, peace and happiness. There are times when no words must be spoken to convey a message, when the world is illuminated by quiet. But other times silence can be a toxin, seeping into minds and souls, murdering its victim on the inside.

Rae Ann Spence, an eighth-grader, suffered from the thick and pungent silence that is an inevitable part of fear. She didn't speak to a soul about the torment her boyfriend was putting her through, until he punched her repeatedly in the middle of class, and her mother took Rae Ann far away from her dangerous boyfriend, a boy who would kill his next girlfriend in the hallway of their school.

If there are any who question Rae Ann's sense, any who wonder why she did not speak up, place yourself in her shoes. She was a young girl, who learned from the belief that our society, a society obsessed with body image and dependence, forces upon all of her gender and age. That one day she'd meet a boy who'd love her unconditionally, that she'd love him back in all possible ways, forgive his missteps, and change him forever. Nearly 1 in 5 teenage girls who has been in a relationship said a boyfriend threatened violence or self-harm if presented with a breakup. Often, victims of domestic violence push themselves into a fevered doubt, where they spin excuses for their abusers. "He or she loves me" "I deserved it" and "He or She didn't mean it" are a few excuses victims create to convince themselves that what is happening is okay. But they are wrong. Because love cannot possibly constitute bruises, cuts, scrapes. Love is not violence. And mostly, love is not keeping silent to protect your abuser.

Based on reports from 10 different countries, between 55 and 95 percent of women who had been physically abused by their partners have never contacted non-governmental organizations, shelters, or the police for help. One of the scariest aspects of domestic violence is the fact that we have stigmatized it to a point where disgrace has driven its victims into a corner. Something must be done to show victims that they should never be ashamed for getting hurt.

We are gathered around a statue of a woman whose courage and strength was so vast that it led people to see, to touch, to feel the light of freedom, a brilliant beam of light. I remember when I was five and first learned about Harriet Tubman's Underground Railroad. For quite a while, I believed that the railroad we sang songs about was literal, that this woman had actually built a train and drove it far from the plantations that were festering over the wounds of slavery. Although the thought of an actual train seems silly now, my five-year-old image has some ring of truth to it. Harriet Tubman was a leader on her railroad of courage, looking forward to her destination: freedom. And while she was never a domestic rights activist, she is a beacon for all who are slaves to their partners, slaves to an abusive relationship. Tubman said long ago, "If I could have convinced more slaves that they were slaves, I could have freed thousands more." Horrifically, slavery is continued everyday with each punch or shove from a boyfriend or girlfriend, husband or wife to their partners.

It is my greatest hope that one day, those who lie battered on the floor will be free of their tormentors, that they will raise their voices and that they will live, without fear or shame, out loud.

Stop 5

Mount Sinai Hospital (101st Street and Fifth Avenue)

The Mount Sinai Medical Center has come a long way since its founding in New York in 1852. Today, Mount Sinai Hospital is a 1,171-bed facility with nearly 2,200 attending physicians, 700 residents and fellows, and 1,800 registered nurses. Each year, the Hospital oversees approximately: 50,000 patients receiving inpatient care, 450,000 outpatient visits, and 80,000 emergency room visits.

Rebecca Luna-Leibowits



You all notice her. She stands alone, waiting for the next comment to come. People gawk at her obvious difference. The difference that silences a room when she walks in. People pretend to like her and to be nice to her. But really, they just feel sorry. Sorry she has no real friends who support her. She tries not to notice the constant stares that are directed towards her. She smiles ever so slightly to cover the sadness she feels inside. You aren't close with her, but you see her everyday. She's in the same classes as you, but you never talk. She always sits right next to you, and you call her your "friend" when really you know nothing about her. You still gossip and laugh about her behind her back. You make fun of the fact that she is nothing like you. She may dress differently than others. She may decide to wear a bit more makeup than everyone else. You only notice these things about her when really she could share your sense of humor or have the same favorite books. You wouldn't know any of this because you only focus on the fact that she appears different.

What you don't know is that everyday she cries herself to sleep because no one ever tries to understand her. She hates herself for being different and hurts herself multiple times to take her anger out. She thinks about changing the way she expresses herself in order to have friends, but is that really necessary? Should she have to change everything she believes in just so she can fit the image of this perfect teenage girl that society has created? The answer is no. She still fights everyday to gain the respect she looks for. She's everywhere. She could be your closest friend. She could be your cousin, your sister or she could be some girl who passes you on the street. Think for a moment and you will realize, she could even be you. When you look in the mirror you see the girl staring back at you. So don't hate and judge other people when you're the victim as well, but instead listen to that girl and support her throughout her struggles.

Many teenagers are faced with the fear of being bullied at school every day. People are bullied for their physical and emotional differences. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide is the most common death among the younger generation resulting in an average of 4,400 deaths per year. Also according to the website bullyingstatistics.org, about 14% of high school students think about killing themselves and seven percent attempt to do so. ABC News reported that an estimated 160,000 students stay home from school in fear of being bullied. According to Family First Aid, it is a fact that boys are more likely to use physical violence when bullying others and girls are more likely to spread rumors and gossip about that one specific person. But both are harmful when directed towards the victim and both can cause much damage. Being bullied causes the student to feel the need to defend him or herself constantly and forces them to feel tense and withdraw from the crowds. Bullying cannot only lead to suicide. There have also been cases when the victim was bullied for so long that they feel the need to protect themselves by bringing weapons to school.

Even though bullying is commonly inflicted on almost every child in the U.S., there are certain groups of students that are bullied more than others, such as those who choose to be different than the stereotypical "normal" student. LGBTQ students in particular are targeted more because of their sexual or gender identity. According to the website bullyingstatistics.org, 9 out of 10 LGBTQ students have been bullied about sexual identity within the past year. Sadly, there are many stories reported about teens that nowhere else to turn for help and safety and had to find their own possible way out of being bullied: death.

On September 22, 2010 at approximately 8:42 p.m., 18-year-old Tyler Clementi changed his Facebook status to "Jumping off the gw the bridge, sorry." Tyler was an openly gay college student, but was tragically pushed to the edge of his comfort zone when his college roommate posted a private video of him in a sexual encounter with another man. His story will never be forgotten and sadly this isn't the only student suicide story. There are many others.

Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City is a place that is open for young people who are feeling overwhelmed with being bullied at school or just everyday stress. The Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center provides services for teens, such as sexual decision-making skills, family counseling; individual, group, or family psychotherapy, psychological testing and diagnostic, drug and alcohol abuse prevention, violence therapy, and treatment for survivors of sexual abuse. Mount Sinai is a place where you can feel supported and find help. Many students turn to these types of programs, but it's not enough to lower teen bullying and suicide rates. Although places like Mount Sinai are out there to support young people,

the first step we need to take is to help stop the bullying before it starts. A child will always remember the pain that he or she has gone through when being made fun of for being themselves. All humans must be taught that difference shouldn't be looked down upon, but supported and respected. Individuals should be praised for having the guts to go out into the world and be proud of who they are, despite those who speak out against them and attempt to push them back in hiding who they truly are. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said "our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." I applaud those who choose to take a stand among the rest of the crowd, and you should, too.

Rebecca Thaler



Here we stand, at Mount Sinai Hospital, a place of healing and rest, a place that saves lives and watches them go. When picturing a hospital, I think of a kid who broke his leg or a baby being born or a surgery taking place. What I don't think of is how the leg got broken or how the person died. Domestic violence, often a cause of these injuries, is unfortunately a huge part of relationships around the world. It's unthinkable that at least one woman in every three internationally has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Somehow people get it into their minds that another person's life is their own and they can control it, often through violence.

A woman wrote to a website providing support for victims of domestic violence: "My name is Linda and I started having a bad life at 18. I met what I thought was a wonderful man. He was one of my bosses from work. He was so kind to me at first. We would spend lovely times together just having fun. After we were dating for about two and a half months I found out I was pregnant and I wanted no more children. I already had a son and I was too young for him but another would have been havoc. So I told Joe that I wanted to terminate the pregnancy and that is when it all started. He kept me home and fired me from my job. For the first time he hit me right across the face because I said I was leaving him. He acted like it was nothing and I knew it was wrong but I did as I was told. The hitting became beatings almost every day. Even though I was pregnant, he did not care. He said, 'If you were a good girl I wouldn't have to discipline you so much.' I hated hearing that. The black eyes and busted lips and bruised body were all I knew and he was taking my heart, too. Two years later, I became pregnant again. I hated my life and I wanted it to end but I had children whom I loved and I couldn't leave them. I tried to get help from my dad but he said that I made my bed, now lay in it! My mom couldn't even help me. She could barely take care of herself. So as my pregnancy progressed he was a little nicer to me. We had twins now. That was the worse news to me. I kept thinking how am I going to leave with four kids."

Linda's story is unfortunately too common. One in four women in the U.S., 25%, has experienced domestic violence in her lifetime. The hospitals and battered women shelters, prisons and morgues are a testament to women who don't have the strength, the resources or the support to leave abusive situations. As a society, if we accept or close our eyes to the abuse, we are just as culpable. On average, more than three women and one man are murdered by their intimate partners in this country every day.

Right here in New York, considered among the most influential cities in the world, Mount Sinai Hospital has a special program for domestic violence, which is, unfortunately, greatly utilized by residents of this city. The Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program (SAVI) provides free services that address the needs of survivors, especially women and girls, with limited resources or limited access to them.

As we stand here today, commemorating the inspirational life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, we embrace the notion that all people have a right to be treated with respect, which is a fundamental human right. MLK once said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." I believe that the quieter and quieter you become about domestic violence the more it becomes accepted. I am here to say that domestic violence cannot and will not be tolerated.

H.G. Foulke-Hill



"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.' " This nation still does not live up to its word. Not all people are equal as of today. I speak to you today about transgender identity and how the world should view us as equal individuals. I am a transgender person myself. Transgender is a word that describes a person who is born as one gender but feels like the other. Some transgender people change their biological gender identity to match the way they feel about themselves. The reason I am drawing your attention to this issue is because I strongly believe in the equal recognition of transgender people. As Martin Luther King says, "An individual hasn't started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity." He explains how one person can't accept others until they accept the person they are. After we have accepted ourselves we can learn to accept others. We have to realize the differences between people and that no person will ever be the person you are.

Here we are at the Mount Sinai Hospital, a place of care and cordiality. This is a place where people are always ready to listen at the Adolescent Health Center. There are individual and group therapy sessions for LGBTQ adolescents. At Mount

Sinai you are accepted and they are always ready to hear a person out. There is a transgender program, which involves medical and mental health professionals to support transgendered New Yorkers.

There has been a law recently passed in Russia, which prohibits the gay and transsexual community. The Russian atmosphere is very homophobic. The Russians treat their LGBT community with very little respect. The mayor of Moscow used filthy words to describe gay people such as “satanic” and “western weapons of mass destruction.” The bill quickly caused a response from LGBT activists. Thousands of people all around the signed an online petition against the new law. Since this was so recent there is no sign of the bill being overthrown anytime soon.

We march for equality because we believe in the parity of others. Sadly, not everyone believes the same. Inequality can be induced by anything, a person, an action, a law, or a rule. Unfortunately there are plenty of others who face much worse; they are bullied, harassed and sometimes even killed. The national suicide rate is 3 per 100,000 people and the transgender/transsexual suicide rate is 31% of that group. Fifth percent of transgender or transsexual people will have attempted suicide at least once before the age of 20. Let’s not forget that transgender people are not only ending their own lives, but others end their lives, too. Brandon Teena who was once known as Teena Brandon was a female-to-male transgender teenager. He was raised by his mother in Lincoln, Nebraska along with his two older siblings. In 1993 he moved into his friend Lisa Lambert’s home in Richardson, Nebraska where he identified as male. He began associating with ex-convicts John L. Lotter and Thomas Nissen. During a Christmas Eve party Lotter and Nissen took advantage of Brandon, and raped him in a meatpacking district they had forcefully driven him to. Brandon later escaped them both but was soon found again hiding under Lambert’s bed. Lambert, her roommate and Brandon were all shot to death by the two men. He died at the age of 21.

This is probably one of the most memorable stories having to do with transgender people. It shows his weaknesses but also his strengths. This event certainly got our attention, but it should most definitely not be the solution to raise awareness. I raise awareness today as I speak. We shouldn’t have to get people’s attention with violence. It would be better if people just knew from the beginning that there is no reason to discriminate, but that’s not how the world works or has ever worked. But the world has always worked to make change and that is just what I am doing today. Making a difference by expressing my opinion on a subject that means very much to me. Every transgender person should be thought of as equal and treated as equal human beings. MLK’s thoughts on discrimination were very strong. Because he disagreed with racism with much of his heart he worked to end it. I know I am not the only one out there speaking of this topic but that just makes me one more person helping to make a change.

Cara Eagan



Igualdad. Barazi, Berdintasuna, Equality in every language. Everyone. Everywhere. Everyone deserves equality no matter your race, religion, gender identity or anything in-between. Equality is an important part of MCS. Our beliefs and our mission. One person who lived this legacy of equality was Harvey Milk.

“I cannot prevent anyone from getting angry, or mad, or frustrated. I can only hope that they’ll turn that anger and frustration and madness into something positive, so that two, three, four, five hundred will step forward, so the gay doctors will come out, the gay lawyers, the gay judges, gay bankers, gay architects ... I hope that every professional gay will say ‘enough,’ come forward and tell everybody, wear a sign, let the world know. Maybe that will help.” These are words spoken by Harvey Milk. Harvey Milk was a gay activist who was not afraid to come out and I say I am who I am and if you’re not okay with it, that’s your problem. That is why I feel so strongly about him. He represents not only my life, but also the lives of at least the other eight million people in the USA and the other millions of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender all around the world.

Many kids who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender are usually bullied in school until the point where kids leave school or commit suicide. This is what these four boys faced. September 9 2010: Billy Lucas, age 15, of Greensburg, Indiana, hanged himself from the rafters of his family’s barn. September 19 2010 : Seth Walsh, 13, of Tehachapi, California, hanged himself from a tree in his yard. September 22 2010: Tyler Clementi, 18, a Rutgers University freshman, jumped off the George Washington Bridge in New York City. September 23, 2010: Asher Brown, 13, of Houston, Texas, shot himself in the head. These four young men didn’t know each other, but they did have something in common. They’d been bullied at school, and one by one, they all apparently came to the same conclusion: If you’re LGBT or thought to be LGBT, life just isn’t worth living. Kids are bullied to point where life is hopeless. That’s how I felt at one point. In sixth grade I was bullied to the point where I was not sure if I could even walk into the middle school ever again. I know how it feels to be picked on because you might not fit in or as I say because you’re special. No matter what kids say it will always bring you down no matter how stupid they sound. Just know that you’re not alone. I know what it’s like and that’s why it’s my personal goal to fight for this to the end. The world must know that bullying and discrimination against LGBT is not okay. Action must be taken, the voices must be heard.

Here today we stand only seven blocks away from the Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center at the Mount Sinai Center. This hospital is one place in the city that supports to the LGBT community, by offering free therapy, and doctors’ visits to any adolescent regardless of their sexuality and gender identity. Many people in this economy cannot

afford therapy and that's why the Adolescent Health Center is so amazing. They truly want everyone to have equal opportunities.

Did you know that in more than 40 countries around the world it is illegal to be openly gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender? One place in the world where you can be killed for being "out" is in Uganda. One Ugandan gay rights activist named Kasha Nabagesera keeps fighting for freedom no matter how many times she is beat up or what has been taken away from her. Nabagesera says "I've lived my life fighting for openly gay rights in Uganda, and I've had to pay a price from that. I have been evicted from house to house, my office has been evicted, I can no longer live on the streets openly; I've been attacked." No matter what brings her down she keeps going. She will not stop because no matter how many times she gets attacked she knows another kid will not have to hide the fact from everyone that they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

LGBT discrimination is a crisis that our world is facing that must be fixed. Everyone must know what it feels like to be accepted for you who you are and what you represent. I want everyone to feel how I feel towards MCS. I want them to experience what equality is really about. What equality really means. I want everyone to be surrounded by equality.

Stop 6

Manhattan Country School (7 East 96th Street)

In 1966, Manhattan Country School founders Gus and Marty Trowbridge set out to create an independent school where equality, social justice, a diverse community with no racial majority, and the inspiration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. would form the basis for children's education. More than four decades later, that dream has become a vibrant reality for nearly 200 students every year. Today, MCS is recognized as a model of both progressive education and socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic diversity. Graduates leave not only with a first class academic education and preparation for a wide range of the nation's top high schools and colleges but also with a deep understanding of our multicultural world. The MCS Farm serves as the 180-acre country campus of Manhattan Country School in New York City. The farm program engages students with the natural processes that support life and provides an unparalleled experience of community.

Bradley Borgida



Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision was that all men and women of any race, religion, or creed are created equal and should have equal rights. I believe that this should also include men and women of any sexual orientation. You see, I have two dads. Between having two dads and being a student at Manhattan Country School for nine years, I have learned the importance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights. Manhattan Country School is a very diverse and accepting community. Anyone, regardless of his or her race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and background is considered an equal and valuable member of the community. As students at MCS, we appreciate the rights of all people and we learn about the importance of advocating for equality.

Currently, the gay rights movement is fighting for the right for members of the same sex to marry. Marriage is one of the most important events that can happen in a person's life. Marriage provides certain legal rights, privileges and benefits to married couples. Lesbian and gay people are allowed to legally marry in six states, including New York, but in all other states, their marriage is not even recognized by other states or the federal government.

As the son of gay parents, I worry about my parents in a similar way that other kids worry about theirs, but I have additional worries. When something happens to a parent of another kid, they worry if their parent will be alright. If something were to happen to one of my parents, I would not only worry about their well-being, I would also worry that one parent would not be allowed to make medical decisions if the other parent were unconscious and unable to make decisions for themselves.

When in an intensive care unit, hospitals only allow visitation rights for family members. In states where gay marriage is not legal, they are unable to visit each other in emergencies, as they are not legally family. If one of them is terminally ill, the other cannot even say good-bye to their partner.

The reason a state does not have to recognize gay marriage performed in another state is because of the Defense of Marriage Act. The Defense of Marriage Act is a law that states that the federal government defines marriage between a man and a woman. It also says that one state does not have to recognize another state's laws regarding gay marriage. Congress passed the law in 1996 by a wide margin and it is still in effect to this day. The Defense of Marriage Act is wrong and has many harmful consequences.

A married couple is entitled to certain rights and benefits that gay couples do not have access to. The cost of health insurance is lower for married couples. Only 18% of health insurance companies in the United States offer domestic partner benefits. For married couples, when one spouse dies, the other automatically inherits their assets. If a couple is not married, and a partner dies, in order to inherit their assets, it must be willed to them. These assets are taxed at a much higher rate than for married couples.

When a couple share a life together, they want to make sure their loved one is provided for. When an elderly married couple starts to collect Social Security, and one of them dies, the other receives survivor benefits. Survivor benefits are when someone continues to receive their dead spouse's benefits along with their own. Because of The Defense of Marriage Act, gay couples whose marriages are recognized by the state they live in are not entitled to receive these benefits.

Like Martin Luther King, Jr., I too have a dream. I dream that one day, my parents and other lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender couples will be able to be married, their marriage will be legal in every state, and they will have the same equal rights as any other married couple. I ask you, please contact your local representatives and help get the Defense of Marriage Act repealed and help make my dream a reality for all couples and families like mine. THANK YOU!

Khalil Addams-Pilgrim



I am going to put you into a new position, one that you probably have never experienced before. Imagine, you are re-born and straight away ripped right from your mother's side. For the next month or so you are fed blood, dirt and chemicals. As soon as you are not a baby anymore you are castrated and forced into a crowd of others of your species and for the rest of your life tortured as chemicals are injected into your body daily. You beg for mercy but your moos, oinks, or neighs are not understood. I won't go into the full detail, but that is about half of what factory farm animals go through every day. Animals, in the modern world, are treated horribly, and we, the humans, think that it is all right.

As actor, director, and activist Jacques Deval puts it: "God loved the birds and invented trees. Man loved the birds and invented cages." Many humans don't often think about the rights and feelings of animals. Humans act as if they love something, and just because they pretend to love it, they are, in their opinion, allowed to mistreat it. A philosopher Charles R. Magel says: "Ask the experimenters why they experiment on animals, and the answer is: 'Because the animals are like us.' Ask the experimenters why it's morally okay to experiment on animals, and the answer is: 'Because the animals are not like us.'" People want to experiment on the animals because they believe that they have things in common with the animals and they think that makes it okay. And it is also immoral that people don't feel guilty if they mistreat these animals just because of the difference between them and us. Just because they don't think or do the same things that we do does not mean that they deserve less than us. It may actually mean that they deserve more. Some people are not compassionate for the animals and believe that they are inferior. If they were told by another human to treat one of their own well they would listen, but not with animals. And I am sure that the animals speak in their own language about how horrible those factory farmers are.

Have you ever heard the theory that "in 2022 22% of all species will be extinct"? Amazing right, but it is horrible; all of the people driving the species toward extinction don't even realize how much they are risking with the lives of other animals. There are people who do not notice that eating a tasty and juicy hamburger might lead to the last hamburger in the world. And fur coats, they look pretty cool, right? Sure – on the animals. Did you know that you paid \$5,000 for that fur coat and it took 18 red foxes all which were killed for a fox fur coat or 55 minks for a mink fur coat?

Rachel Carson was a writer and an activist for animal and ecological rights. She believed that people often had too much cowardice to admit to their mistakes. Carson once said: "We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost's familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork in the road – the one 'less traveled by' – offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth." This is, theoretically talking about how we are taking the "easy" way to disaster, but we can still go back and take the way that leads to a successful world. While fighting for our own civil rights, we need to speak for animals in need of rights, too.

There are so many easy ways to help fight factory farming and fight for animal rights. Here are the ten top ways:

1. As a consumer, you have the power to let your money talk to those selling foods that were produced in an inhumane way.
2. Get to know what you are eating from hamburgers to salad, from your favorite places like McDonalds or the local farmers market.
3. As said before, MONEY TALKS. Encourage local food suppliers to sell humanely farmed meats.

4. Go online, watch videos, and read articles, think about what the animals go through, because there is a lot to know about how animals are treated in factory farms.
5. Support your local farmers market and eat locally.
6. Join Humane Farming organizations and spread information. Maybe you can support Organizations like the Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary and help the Animals through a generous donation.
7. Be hands on, grow and eat from your own garden, and maybe try to go vegetarian if you haven't already.
8. Talk to farmers at your local farmers' market, and see what they think.
9. Take action in your community; inform your neighbors about what they eat, and tell them where to get more information. And last but definitely not least,
10. Support Manhattan Country School and our sustainable farm that educates young people about the connection between civil and animal rights: compassion and respect.

Because we, in MCS, are working all the time on how we can treat every person and every species as well as we would treat ourselves with respect, and without noticing we have probably done many of the things that I just listed above. We are working on treating animals humanely through the Manhattan Country School Farm, which is home for our animals, their babies, and the plants that feed both animals and students. The animals are treated well, and, when they become unhealthy and need to be sent to the slaughterhouse, our farm animals are slaughtered in the most humane way possible. And some of us at the farm do eat meat, but like Native Americans and other indigenous cultures, we do so with respect. Ed Fersch, one of the farmers at the MCS Farm, talks about how we try hard to make sure that our animals have painless experiences through the slaughtering process. He says "After it changed hands, our livestock hauler told us that he felt that the animals were not treated properly while they were being led into the holding pens. We went on his experience and found a different place to process our meat."... "Our thinking has always been that we have to convince the animals that they want to go in the direction we want. We try to make the movement as natural as possible for them." This is showing how important it is for us to know that our animals are living a very nice, natural and free-range life. We need to act. If you are omnivorous try as best you can to choose food that is free-range, organic, hormone free and humanely bred. Go tell your neighbors and friends to research more about factory farming and the kinds of rights animals do not get, and start to act. We owe the animals that favor.

Altana Elings-Haynie



"I am thankful for MCS because the teachers treat you like people," a six-year-old me said when asked what I was thankful for. Of course, I have grown up quite a bit since I was six. I have been here since the 4-5s and my ten years at Manhattan Country School have changed my life in so many ways. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said: "Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education." Well, that is what MCS has given me. I've learned the basics: English, math, science, history, and a second language – Spanish. However, the most important thing MCS has given me, and that I will carry with me for the rest of my life, is how to be a good citizen of the world. How to listen to others and still have a strong voice on issues you care about. How to live out my dreams, just as MLK said in his "I Have a Dream" speech. I have learned about equality. No one person is better than any other. As much as MCS has taught everyone who enters the building about equality, I have also learned to seek out places where that same equality is lacking.

I have found this in education in America. Equality allows everyone to have the same chance to receive a great education. If we don't have education, what do we have? Nothing. A new American dream cannot be built if we don't have the tools to do it. How can we expect to nurture a new generation of learners, and thinkers and creators, if we cannot educate them? Since when is it okay to let a child's education depend on where they live, unless they cannot afford the steep prices of private school? As education reform activist Michelle Rhee said, "The reality in Washington D.C. is if you live in Tenleytown versus if you live in Anacostia, you get two wildly different educational experiences. It's the biggest social injustice imaginable. What we are allowing to happen in this day and age, we are still allowing the color of a child's skin and the zip code they live in to dictate their educational outcome, and therefore their life outcome. ... We are robbing them every single day of their futures. And everybody in this country should be infuriated by that."

The public education system in America is built for the masses, not the student. The government does not think about the individual needs of students, but rather how to achieve good test scores for the entire state. Every child learns in his or her own way, and yet their abilities are crammed into narrow boxes showing how others believe they should act and think. According to a top adviser to the U.S. Senate committee that has jurisdiction over public education:

“There’s something crystal clear about a number.” Well, I don’t believe that is the case when it comes to an individual human being’s ways of learning and discovering.

There is also the issue of diversity in many schools in America and all over the world. True diversity is exemplified by variety of all different kinds of people. Not only in terms of race but also socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, and even personality. Diversity is many different kind of people coming together and not becoming lost in a sea of similarities, but rather celebrating our differences and what makes us each unique. During the high school application process I have come across many schools that say they are diverse, and yet only have 10% students of color. It is not OK when a school claims to be living MLK’s dream, and the student body is 95% children of color and 5% white children. According to Jonathan Kozol, author of the 1991 bestseller *Savage Inequalities*, “In the typically colossal high schools of the Bronx, for instance, more than 90% of students (in most cases, more than 95%) are black or Hispanic.” In contrast, according to an article in the *New York Times*, just 7% of the students admitted into the top eight public high schools were black. Of the 5,261 eighth grade students admitted to these schools in 2010, 7% were black and 8% were Hispanic, the rest being White and Asian. As Kozol states: “equity in education represents a formidable threat to the values held by many affluent Americans. It will be resisted just as bitterly as school desegregation.” Children “are favored by the accident of birth” and despite a lot of pious rhetoric about equality of opportunity ... most parents want their children to have a more than equal chance of success.”

At Manhattan Country School, as of 2009-2010, there were 194 children enrolled. Ninety five of those students were boys while 99 were girls. The student body is 45% White, 24% African American, 12% Asian/Asian American, and 19% Latino. Seventy percent of MCS’ students pay tuition on a sliding scale, while similar New York City independent schools have 21% of students on financial aid, and national independent schools have a mere 19%. Once during a high school interview, the interviewer asked me about my school’s diversity. She said, “I know you’re diverse in terms of race – that easy – but how is the school diverse in terms of socioeconomic status? That’s the hard part.”

That is what many schools face in today’s world. Public schools are made for the 99%. Yet in some schools children become cattle; herded together and expected to fill their brains with facts. The material taught in these classrooms is not meant to make children think about and question what is being presented. Children are expected to memorize, memorize, memorize, so they can spit the facts back out on a test. This is not the way children should be educated! Adults tell us “the sky’s the limit” and yet in some schools, children are being set up to crash and burn. A student at Fremont High School in California told author Jonathan Kozol how she wanted to go to college and to take Advanced Placement classes, but instead is being forced to take sewing and hairdressing. This was the case with other students as well, and they were frustrated at being denied a chance to get the education they and their parents wanted. Many people cannot afford to send their children to private school, and if they can, must make several sacrifices in other areas of their life to do so. What other option is there?

No parent wants their child to get an incomplete education, but they have run out of solutions. Either you have enough money and send your child to private school or you don’t.

Finland seems to have found a solution. As I read in an article about Finnish education featured in *The Atlantic*: “Decades ago, when the Finnish school system was badly in need of reform, the goal of the program that Finland instituted, resulting in so much success today, was never excellence. It was equity.” They have the right idea. There are almost no private schools in Finland and the government funds those that exist. Every one receives a public education, whether it is kindergarten or graduate school. There are also no standardized tests in Finland, except the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Finnish education doesn’t care about who is the best performer, but rather that everyone has an equal chance to get a good education and be the best they can be. Everyone is left standing on equal ground, similar to Manhattan Country School. One of the biggest shocks was that students in Finland do as well in PISA testing as countries such as Singapore and Korea. While others were spending long hours cramming for tests and memorizing facts, Finland was making sure there was equal ground to stand on. This is not to say that one country is better than any other, but one country achieved very high standards on the principle of equity alone. As Pasi Sahlberg stated during his visit to New York: “when President Kennedy was making his appeal for advancing American science and technology by putting a man on the moon by the end of the 1960s, many said it couldn’t be done ...” “But he had a dream. Just like Martin Luther King a few years later had a dream. Those dreams came true. Finland’s dream was that we want to have a good public education for every child regardless of where they go to school or what kind of families they come from, and many even in Finland said it couldn’t be done.”

My grandpa Elings wasn’t even given the opportunity to finish high school. He told my mom, who always tells me, “if you get a good education, no one can take that away from you.” A good education makes all the difference in a person’s life. And yet what of the United States government that spends billions of dollars on the public school system and cannot look past standardized test scores? At Manhattan Country School, we don’t always know how lucky we are. Sliding-scale tuition puts each and every one of us on equal ground. Equality is key in life. That is why I am fighting for those who aren’t equal in terms of education.

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