

# **InLight**

**Diversity Magazine**

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**Identity and Influence: Who Are You?**

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**Bullis School**

**November 2018**

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# *Identity and Influence: Who Are You?*

## Letter From the Editors

### *Who are You?*

Bullis is comprised of students with many different backgrounds and upbringings. Together, we are one school with shared experiences and intertwined history. It is essential that we recognize and appreciate the personal lives of the students we attend school with every day. By sharing these experiences, our ambition is to bring the Bullis community closer together.

This issue of InLight highlights students with different identities and how those identities influence their interactions with the community. We are hoping that these articles will encourage other students to follow suit in sharing their own stories. If you receive nothing else from this magazine, take away the message that your own identity is unique and significant.

Thank you so much to all of the people who have supported us through the production of this issue of InLight. We are grateful to have the opportunity to share these student voices with the rest of the community. To the staff and contributors, thank you for all of your hard work. We appreciate Ms. Watkins for her support in production assistance. Last but not least, we would like to thank Dr. Romeyn for her assistance and encouragement, for we would not have been able to create this magazine without her.

It is important to remember that each article is written from the perspective of a single voice and as such does not represent the community as a whole. If you are interested in giving us feedback or working with us on the Spring issue, feel free to email [ava\\_caceres@bullis.org](mailto:ava_caceres@bullis.org) or [andrea\\_moore@bullis.org](mailto:andrea_moore@bullis.org). We would love to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Ava Caceres '19 and Andrea Moore '19

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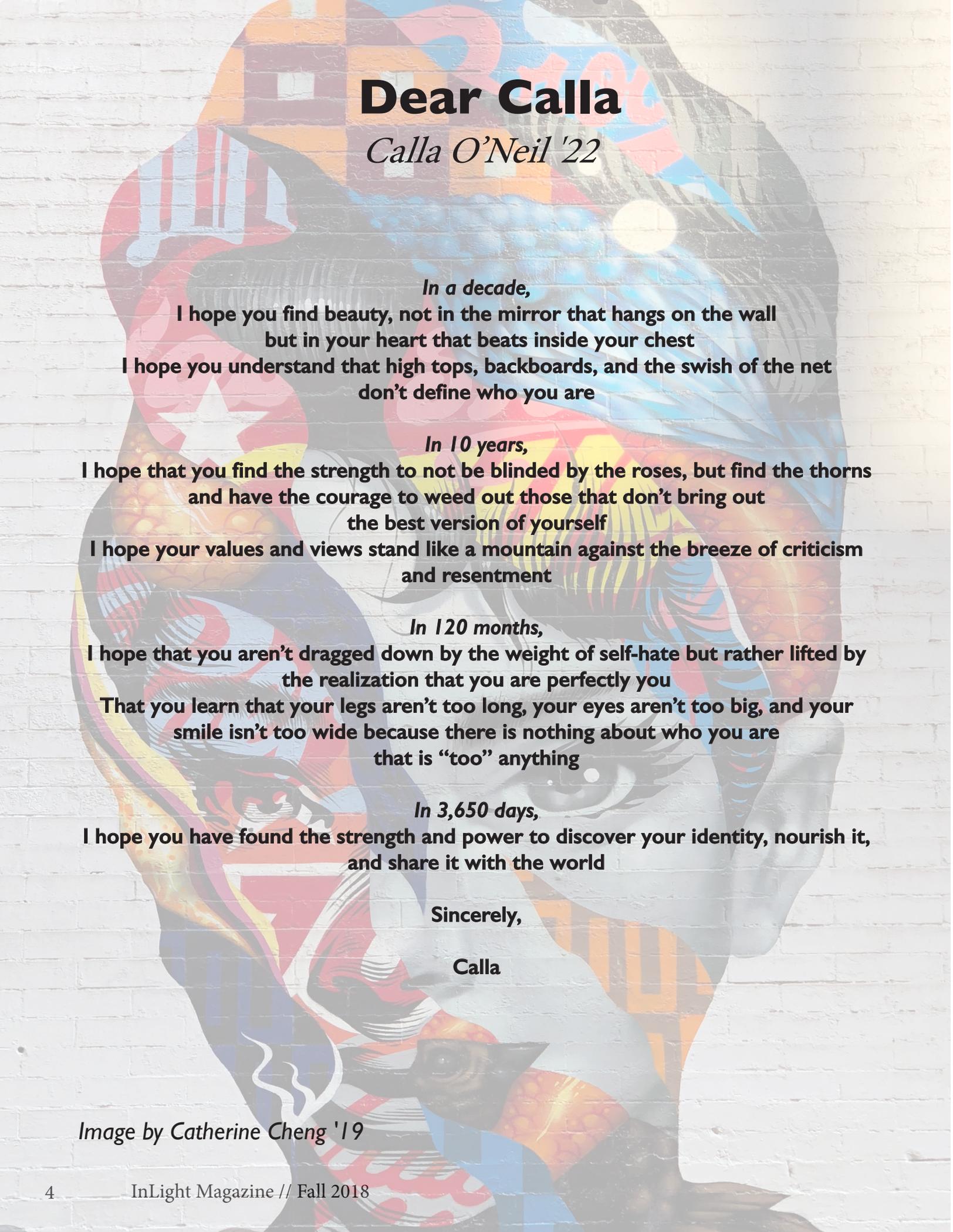
Calla O'Neil '21

KiAnna Dorsey '19

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# Dear Calla

*Calla O'Neil '22*

*In a decade,*

**I hope you find beauty, not in the mirror that hangs on the wall  
but in your heart that beats inside your chest  
I hope you understand that high tops, backboards, and the swish of the net  
don't define who you are**

*In 10 years,*

**I hope that you find the strength to not be blinded by the roses, but find the thorns  
and have the courage to weed out those that don't bring out  
the best version of yourself  
I hope your values and views stand like a mountain against the breeze of criticism  
and resentment**

*In 120 months,*

**I hope that you aren't dragged down by the weight of self-hate but rather lifted by  
the realization that you are perfectly you  
That you learn that your legs aren't too long, your eyes aren't too big, and your  
smile isn't too wide because there is nothing about who you are  
that is "too" anything**

*In 3,650 days,*

**I hope you have found the strength and power to discover your identity, nourish it,  
and share it with the world**

**Sincerely,**

**Calla**

*Image by Catherine Cheng '19*



# Flawed Yet Beautiful

*Julia Evans '22*

Bumps. Bruises. Marks. We all have them and they shape how we see ourselves. Body confidence. Everyone struggles with it at one point in their lives. Some more than others. I know I struggle with it.

Hi, my name is Julia. I'm a ninth grader at Bullis and I deal with body confidence issues. This comes from my height, weight, and specifically, my stretch marks. I hate my stretch marks. They make me feel worthless and ugly. I started to get stretch marks which are streaks or stripes on the skin when I started to go through puberty. I grew more than I gained weight making me slightly disproportionate. After I grew to be about 5'10, my stretch marks appeared. They reside between my thighs, my upper legs, and on my stomach. I noticed them just a few months ago and when I first saw them, I thought they were just marks left from my jeans or a tight shirt. To my surprise, they never went away and I started to worry. I asked my mom, and she explained what stretch marks were. I felt disgusted because she explained they are caused by quick weight gain. I have never felt fat or overweight but once in a while, I'll see a perfectly toned model in a magazine, and feel chubby and large. However, when I started to get stretch marks I questioned the beauty of my own body.

Sometimes I wish I could be shorter, skinnier, and free of marks or blemishes, but another part of me sees a confident young girl who is beautiful just the way she is. Yes, I have my bad days just like everyone but then I remember, I'm here for a reason and I look like this for a reason. I'm smart, athletic and beautiful. My height helps me block spikes in volleyball and my weight helps me to be strong. I carried another 9th grader in a piggyback race and easily pick up the children I babysit. My stretch marks are just as normal as the hair on my head, my fingers, and toes; they make me human. Confidence can take a while to master, but once I got a grip on who I was, I realized there was nothing I could not do. Yes, I am flawed, but I am beautiful.

# Every Day is a Good Day With Music

*Quentin Brown '19*

Music is one of the greatest things I get to experience on a daily basis. For me, music is an essential part of every day. If it's not to my taste or it's not playing, then I'll feel as if something's missing. Everything in my life has been affected by music. How I speak, how I walk, how I think, and who I'm friends with. Music is how I found my best friends, who all value a good song just as much as I do. We often deliberate over artists like Lil Yachty, The Weeknd, Juice WRLD, and Smokepurpp. We discuss when their albums are dropping and whether or not they'll actually be worth listening to. My friends and I let each other know when we like certain songs, and keep each other updated on the newest releases and happenings in the industry.

For us possession of the aux cord is a responsibility not taken lightly. If you're caught disrespecting the tunes, you'll quickly be removed and shamed for your transgressions. Songs hold enormous power over my experience and the impressions I walk away with. I simply can't hand the aux over to just anybody, you have to earn your spot on the aux. There's a certain level of trust that's required for me to hand it over, after all I am putting my experience in the hands of whoever is in control of the cord.

I remember back during sophomore year, Jesiah, Diego, and I would ride around looking for a party to go to. Every time we were in the car we'd make sure to play Given Law by Lil Nei, it was almost like our theme song. When it came on you could feel the mood change and the energy rise, as we started to rap along and dance like fools. There we made a connection that has strengthened our bond as friends. Music has allowed me to find and befriend people I would have never otherwise talked to. Without music, my life would lack color.

*Image by Catherine Cheng '19*

# American Born Chinese

Catherine Cheng '19

Never thinking about it before,  
How my identity and ethnicity might  
connect.  
Nothing really caused that open door.

I say I'm American,  
But they want to know  
the country of my origin.

I say America,  
But they shake their head,  
What answer are they looking for? Asia?

I try to ignore their ignorance,  
Because at the end of the day,  
It's how I interpret my inheritance.

But for those who may be confused,  
Let me tell you a bit about myself, and  
maybe,  
You'll have a change in attitude.

I am an American citizen,  
Born in the Garden State.  
But with Chinese roots,  
An **ABC** to abbreviate.

I am a Native English speaker,  
With Mandarin as my second language.  
But I understand FuZhounese\*,  
Which I use to my advantage.

I embrace the color red,  
That shines on both flags.  
A color so vibrant,  
It empowers me, I can't brag.

I eat mooncakes in the Mid-Autumn Festival,  
But turkey on Thanksgiving.  
Traditions I will always hold dearly,  
Ever since my upbringing.

I have moved from place to place,  
Homes that I left in tears.  
Hillsborough, Shanghai and Potomac,  
Places I still love, even after all these years.

What is my identity you ask now?  
I am an Asian American,  
*And I am proud.*

FuZhounese= Chinese dialect from my parents hometown  
Garden State=New Jersey



Art by Alexis Leder '19

# Twins in

**“How does being a twin influence who**

## Caceres Twins '19

Ava- My whole life I've had somebody by my side. I've never gone 24 hours without talking to my brother- that may sound exhausting, frustrating, or strange, but to me, my brother is the support I'll always have at the end of the day. Without him, I never would've learned how to create such an honest and communicative foundation in my relationships. He is the most valuable, endearing, and relatable friend I have.



Caleb- It still amazes me to this day how we say the same things at the same time or do an action at the same time. Even though we are very different, we are in sync with each other and understand each other.

## Moore Twins '20

Dylan- You know when people say “you're your own worst critic.” Yeah, they're lying. My twin sister is my worst critic. Don't worry, she's also my best friend. She pushes me beyond my limits & has high expectations for me. Many people assume that twins are always competitive; we aren't (usually). We build each other up, not the reverse. When I'm with her I feel comfortable because I know that with the struggles I'm going through, I'm going through them with her.



Joelle- My twin is my number one supporter and my biggest influencer. There's something about having a special connection because I feel everything he feels, just ten times harder. He pushes me to be not only the best version of myself but the most authentic. There is never a competition between us; there is only support. We ask each other how we will succeed, and then help each other to succeed. There is not a minute that goes by that I am not grateful for him.

# the Spotlight

you are as a person and your experiences?”

## Ashfar Twins '19

Kiarash- Being a twin is an experience like no other that is very exclusive. To be able to share experiences and make memories with your best friend is one of the best parts of being a twin.



Kianoush- I love being a twin! It has influenced my life in many ways and has helped me experience things other people don't. Being a twin is having a best friend by your side all the time. Always having someone to talk to, play video games and sports with, and there is still something for you to do together at the end of the day. Being a twin is an incredible adventure. I love my brother, and I love being a twin!

## Taylor Twins '20

Ashleigh- I struggled to differentiate myself from my twin; constantly being compared and seen as the same. People believe that your twin should be your best friend because they've been with you through everything, for me, that's not the whole truth. My sister is a great friend and I love her, but there have been hard times that have separated us and made it hard to be near one another. Having a twin has taught me to own who I am and stand out, to be able to be my own person and not get muddled in a crowd.



Sarah- I have always had someone beside me my entire life whether I wanted them there or not. When I was young, my sister and I were very close. Around the time I turned 15, we drifted away and it allowed me to figure out who I am as a person. When you have a twin, it is hard to figure out who you just are because you are known together. I regret fighting with my sister but it allowed me to figure out who I am which has helped us become closer individuals.

# Bullis Roundtable:

**Colorism:** Prejudice or bias towards individuals possessing a certain skin tone, usually occurring in the same racial/ ethnic group

## How prevalent do you think colorism is?

**Sierra:** *On a 1-10 scale, it's a 9.*

**Lauryn:** *I think it comes up every day and it goes both ways, whether you're light-skin or dark-skin. I've seen people who would say stuff like "light skins are better" and others who'll say "oh, you're light-skinned, so you can't relate or don't know".*

**Joelle:** *I think it's also internal. Many people probably don't realize they're adding to colorism by making generalizations about people they don't know.*

## Where do you think this comes from?

**Lauryn:** *I think it comes from our history as a race. People thinking light skins are better, because they were able to fit in more with the white race and so it was easier for them. But then at some point people began to have like, harsh feelings towards light skins...so then it became "if you're dark skinned you're better, if you're light skinned you shouldn't be included with the black race".*

**Sierra:** *It's really just reminding me of slavery because house slaves and the field slaves had a lot do with colorism. It's been around for generations.*

**Joelle:** *It's also in other cultures. There's a thing called whitewashing and there's products out in the Middle East and Southeast Asia that you can get to whiten your skin.*

## Have you experienced Colorism?

**Lauryn:** *When I was younger, people would like, say stuff to me about my skin color. For a long time, I really did wish I was darker-skinned so I could fit in because I never felt like I fit in with my own race even though I'm fully black.*

**Andrea:** *This isn't personal, but being younger, kids would fight and if a darker person was involved, their skin color was the butt of the joke "Oh, you're charcoal. Oh, you're dark." Nobody really thought of it that deep at the time but that can actually get to a person because they can't help what color they are.*

# Colorism

**Joelle:** *It's ironic how people have always been picked on for their blackness but now people are pushing spray tans.*

**Lauryn:** *And at the same time skin lightening creams are being pushed for people of color and people are on the opposite spectrum trying to be more dark, I feel like nobody's accepting of their color.*

**Anonymous:** *Sometimes white people get spray tans and say "Omg! We're the same color" It's uncomfortable because it's like wanting to be black, but not wanting what comes with being black.*

## Do you think light skin African Americans have a different "black experience" than dark skins?

**Sierra:** *Its the same challenges but to different degrees, as black people we all face the same challenges but if you see a light skin person it's just "Oh, Ok," but if you see a dark skin person you think "oh that's probably a thug."*



## Have you ever experienced bias based on your color?

**Sydnae:** *People expect me to be really loud and really outgoing, but that's just not me.*

**Sierra:** *Even though I'm good at athletics, people expect me to be good at sports before I even tell them.*

**KiAnna:** *People ask me all the time if I play basketball because I'm tall and black, and then they ask do you run track? And I used to say no I play lacrosse, and they'd be confused because lacrosse is not a "black sport."*

*Adding the fact that I'm also into theatre is just a recipe for confusion from people outside my race.*

## How do you feel about representation of black women?

**KiAnna:** *I think Hollywood, in terms of black representation starting in the 90's would always, even in the sitcoms, portray a dark skin male with a light skin woman. The main character would always be light skin and the side kick/butt of the joke would be the dark-skin girl. The standard I have seen growing up is that darker skin isn't as superior.*

**Joelle:** *I think now the media is also just trying to portray black people for diversity purposes, but they don't consider the different colors within black people so they just go with the lighter tones.*

## Why do people indulge so heavily in skin lightening creams?

**Sierra:** *They see fairer skin tones as being gorgeous, pretty, as idealistic and it builds up insecurities to the point where they feel skin lightening creams will make them feel pretty.*

**Andrea:** *People see the models in the magazines and billboards and they want to achieve this unrealistic beauty they see all the time. They don't see themselves represented in such a "beautiful way."*

**KiAnna:** *It also comes up in the natural hair movement. In terms of "successful" natural hair and natural influencers, the ones with the most followers are the ones with looser curl patterns as opposed to the girl with the kinkier pattern. You want to say that it's not intentional, but when you're looking for styles for your hair type and all you come across are these girls, you automatically think that that's superior or better. "Why isn't my hair also promoted?"*

**Lauryn:** *People are trying to go natural but there are rules: "If you want to go natural it has to look like this."*

**Andrea:** *The whole movement is about embracing your natural self, but then you're telling people they shouldn't embrace themselves because their natural isn't as acceptable as someone else's.*

## The full unedited roundtable recording is available here:

<https://youtu.be/6TgXlluWPjE>

*Andrea Moore '19, Lauryn Harris '19, Sierra Leonard '19, Joelle Moore '20, Sydnae Becton '19, KiAnna Dorsey '19*

# A Bond Made by Bread

## Banana Bread

1 1/2 C sugar  
1 stick butter  
2 eggs, well beaten  
2 bananas, mashed  
4 Tbsp sour cream  
1 tsp baking soda  
1 tsp vanilla  
1 1/2 C flour  
chocolate chips (optional)

*Katelyn Foreman '19*

Preheat oven to 350.

Beat sugar and butter; add eggs and vanilla, add bananas and mix. Add sour cream and baking soda (mix). Add flour, mix well. Add chocolate chips (optional). Pour into greased loaf pan. Bake at 350 for 45-50 minutes. Test center with a toothpick.



The aroma of my mom's special chocolate chip banana bread wafting up the stairs on a Sunday morning always pulls me from my bed and right into the kitchen. Those ingredients have fueled conversations with her about school, dance, and friends, strengthening our irreplaceable bond. While it may be a simple dish like scrambled eggs or grilled cheese, it is not about the complexity of what is made, but the memories that stem from the experience. The kitchen reminds me of the relationships I have with my mom and family members, which is why it's so special to me. I know that wherever life takes me, there will always be a loaf of chocolate chip banana bread sent from that kitchen to my doorstep, bringing a little piece of home.

# Veteran's Poem

Mark Schlager '19

Dear Veteran,

*Thank you for your service  
You answered the call  
A hopeless pit of despair  
You shall not fall  
You are tenacious, and you are brave  
You fought for us  
When many wouldn't do the same  
Coming home is difficult  
It's hard to assimilate  
22 a day  
Is an unacceptable number  
So many of our brave men and women  
Come home and suffer  
But you matter  
To her, to him, to me  
Because of your sacrifices  
This country is free*



For my Humanities and Global Studies Capstone I am investigating the plight and treatment of veterans in the United States. I am hoping my project will spread awareness of such an important and heartbreaking issue that is often ignored. While my family does not have a long-standing tradition of serving in the military, my grandfather and my brother heard the call. My grandfather bravely served in World War II, and my brother is sacrificing his summer to attend the Marine Corps Officer Candidate School. I have tremendous respect for these two individuals and the entire military in general. Those who choose to sacrifice their civilian lives to serve and defend the people and values of the United States are perhaps some of this country's most admirable people, and they should not have to fear a life of mental illness or homelessness after leaving service. This year, I hope to raise awareness in our own community and initiate some community service projects that will demonstrate our respect for veterans.

# Home Away From Home

*Emma Bookoff '19*

So this one time at camp, during morning assembly, the camp director said that at 8:00 pm that night all of the power will go out on campus. I was confused and slightly frightened. Camp is tucked away into the middle of nowhere, Pennsylvania, and unlike a modern city, when the power goes out... it's DARK. Even though my friends and I were all mature, we were frightened out of our minds for what was to come 10 hours later.

We went through our day like usual, going to Arts and Crafts and making bracelets, going to cooking and making food, and going to tennis and getting a nice tan. In between all of these activities, I sat with my bunkmates, and to combat our fear we decided to have a “no lights” party. Teenage girls, getting out our neon-colored disco flashlights, preparing our favorite foods, and surprisingly, cleaning as much as we could in order to prevent injuries from stray items on the ground.

Then dinner and evening activity rolled around. Our activity was to go to the cooking center to cook our own dinner and dessert as a group. We had to rush through making our food to beat the clock. We went so fast that I cut myself with a knife during preparation and the chicken was not fully cooked, still raw in the middle. It was fun but we ended the activity right at 7:50 pm. Since the cooking center was on the other side of campus, we had to sprint all the way back to our bunks in 10 minutes before it got dark.

Finally, we made it back to our bunk and the festivities were about to begin. We stood together, counted down the seconds until the power outage, and then threw the best party I would ever go to. We ate, and danced, and kept the whole girls side awake. Everyone was jealous of us. Yes, we may have gotten yelled at a couple of times to be quiet, but that did not matter. I was spending time with my 10 best friends and there was nothing you could do to stop me.

This is just one example of the many moments over my 9-year career at camp that have made me obsessed with my home away from home. This is my dreamland and nothing can compare because camp has made me into the person I am today. I would not be as outgoing, as much of a risk taker, or as confident without my Starlight family. On my first drive up to camp as a frightened 9-year-old, I did not realize how impactful this place would be. I have made connections that will last a lifetime. I live for the sunsets and starry nights that I get to see for a mere 50 days per year.

# Seeds of Peace

Over the summer, I participated in a program named Seeds of Peace. At Seeds of Peace or “Seeds,” Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians, Americans, and Egyptians spend three weeks in close quarters enjoying a summer camp experience on a beautiful lake in Maine. Alongside color wars, watersports, dancing, and singing, the groups engage in intense and hopefully meaningful dialogues about peace in the Middle East, led by alumni facilitators.

The program never attempted to force the “correct” view of the conflict nor did they allow us to ignore it. They simply let us have a conversation with people that in many cases we were taught to hate. I learned rather quickly that the conflict was a major part of nearly everyone’s identity. It shaped the way that almost all of my new friends viewed the world and interacted with each other. Simply put, prior to coming to camp their opinions on current issues were central to their identity and generally shaped who they were and likely who they would be.

Many of the “Seeds” came into the program not looking to engage in meaningful dialogue, instead, they entered the program to spread their own beliefs. In fact, the biases that people came in with against members of the “other side” were one of the biggest setbacks that we faced during dialogue sessions. The biases were intensified based on recent news in the Middle East. Arguments were posed such as “How could you trust an Israeli when they stole our land?” or “How could you reason with a Palestinian when they want my people dead?”

Unlike my peers at “Seeds,” I tried to remain impartial and open-minded regarding the conflict. While my own background had exposed me to both sides of the complicated arguments, the situation in the Middle East was not personal to me. I grew up in a very diverse American household and had been exposed to a global perspective at a young age. My father is a Muslim from Morocco and my mother is a Jew from Jersey. Being part of these two very different worlds is one of the factors that helped shape my identity – often involving brutal honesty balanced with empathy and tolerance.

Throughout my life, I’ve been told, that I had to “pick a side.” It’s been implied or even said directly, often to my mom, that I couldn’t be half and half; I couldn’t both embrace my colorful Moroccan heritage while at the same time be part of my mother’s loud, close-knit New Jersey family.



## Sammy Houdaigui '21

Some people just have a hard time accepting that I am a first generation son of a Moroccan Berber and also a member of a Jewish family who attends services on the high holidays, while still respecting the lessons of the Quran. Even around my extended family, I sometimes sense the divide. They don't hate me or the part of me that is different, they just want me to identify the same way they do. It's clearly hard for them to understand my patchworked identity.

Fortunately, the Middle East conflict doesn't affect my parents relationship and until my older sister started studying the area we never really discussed it. My parents always taught me there were three sides to any story and made sure we watched the news reported from outside of America. They tried their best to educate me and prepared me to grow as a "Seed."

At "Seeds," as the divide between the Israelis and Palestinians became even more clear, the American participants were encouraged to pick a side. "Moroccan? You're over here. American Jew? You're here." When my dialogue group was told to split into a one-sided uni-national group, I was torn by my friends and became so upset that I threw my chair in a moment of frustration. Then I paused, thought for a second, and decided that I would split my time between the Israeli group and the Arabic speaking group, learning whatever I could, and most importantly, laughing as much as possible.

Throughout the rest of the program, it became more and more clear to me that there was no need to suppress any part of who I was just to please others. I realized, rather, that my mixed upbringing was actually an asset. By understanding both sides of the conflict, I could help bridge the divide. Throughout the next few dialogues, my peers and I learned that the things that divide us... the things that make people hate one another, if viewed in a different light, are actually the things that can stitch us together if there's an interest to make it work.

"Seeds of Peace" is wise to offer young people an opportunity to explore their identities within a dialogue forum. Seeds helped me to be more confident with my own identity. I've learned that in order to have a more peaceful world you must not only embrace where you come from but also find similarities with the people that seem most different from you. You'll be surprised at what will happen when you do.



# Finding Identity: **Online**

*Shannon Dunwell '20*

The internet has become a 'monkey see monkey do' environment, whether it comes to politics, fashion, trends or music. It is harmless when people wear the newest styles or do the latest dance challenge but, when it comes to opinions, one should stop to consider their values. On social media, users tend to follow opinions with little to no question about the reasoning, logic, or motives behind what is being said. Rarely does one ever stop to think about the reasons for their behavior and the groups that they affiliate with.

I used to find myself scrolling through my feed, absorbing what was fed to me. However, I was not thinking. It was not until I consistently found myself reading through close minded arguments in comments sections that I realized something. Many people spew statements that they heard elsewhere, but do not know why they believe the phrases or if they make sense. Then, they would refuse to consider the points made by the other person. The ideas that were being thrown to me sounded nice, but what did they mean?

These types of arguments are how the media succeeds in dividing people into boxes. When someone tries to be in more than one box, they risk the possibility of being ridiculed and attacked by complete strangers. The victims often retreat and feel the need to hide their opinions from those who blindly follow ideas and then refuse to listen to or consider differing ones.

When simply scrolling through our feed, users are casually fed biased media. It becomes normal to see copy-paste people with copy-paste ideas. The internet causes individuals to change themselves to be who society tells them to be. However, the only reason that one should change the foundations of who they are is to take steps to become a better version of themselves. Having fun and keeping up with the media is not bad but when someone changes their values to match media, it is important that they understand why they are making that decision.

Nowadays, I still find myself reading through close minded arguments in the comment sections. Except I now find myself reading the comments that I do not necessarily agree with and attempting to view the argument from their side. By thinking this way, whether or not my opinions have changed, they have become more rounded and

less dismissive. It is okay to allow others to shape you but it becomes a problem when you stop realizing they are. Do you know why you believe what you do and did you stop to consider believing something else?





Photo Illustration by Danielle Robinson 19

