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Illustration: Fleyer, Kasey Ebb ’18
I was a very shy child. I was most comfortable sitting in the back of a classroom, reading a favorite book. Reading was my way to escape the world. My librarian was a close friend and mentor who always had books for me. I would come home from school, ready to return to my book, but my parents would limit my reading and cut me off after three hours. Although reading initially was a way to isolate myself from others, eventually it became a tool that encouraged me to come out of my shell. Through my love of reading, I became a keen observer: first of fictional worlds and later of the real world.

As I grew more confident, I used my love of books to find friends and a sense of community. I joined the book club at school and other avid readers became my trusted peers. Books have given me a creative lens with which to view the world and a way to see things through new perspectives. I could use the understanding gained from a book to have better empathy with people and a deeper knowledge of the world.

Because of my life-long love of reading, I decided to investigate early childhood literacy education for my Humanities and Global Studies Capstone project. In addition to my work with a tutoring program at a school with students who are lower income, I have been thinking about how to share my passion for reading with our own community. I sent an e-mail to best-selling children’s author Rosemary Wells and shared my own love of her books. I also confessed that I was a shy child who found a home in books. Much to my surprise and excitement, she responded to me right away. Ms. Wells wrote, “all the smartest people are readers and most of them are very shy among boisterous other kids.” Our exchange led to an invitation to come to Bullis and conduct workshops and readings with our Lower School students!

I have grown from my early years as a timid and solitary reader to now a strong advocate for literacy and reading comprehension. I believe in a call to action: all children should be readers! As our Librarian, Ms. Clarke, has told me, it is important to “stay curious” and find new worlds through books. Readers should be celebrated, not stigmatized. Reading has made me who I am today: creative, funny, confident and dedicated to opening the world of literacy to others.
Dear White Privilege,

No offense, but until today I didn't know you existed. Quite honestly, you came as a slap in the face. That's not to say I didn't need that slap, but it was definitely a rude awakening. The sad thing is though, I will probably never fully understand you. There are burdens that I will never have to fully bear simply because of you, White Privilege. Maybe I was being ignorant, or simply naive, in believing that as a society we have progressed to a point where all humans can truly be seen as equal. We certainly have not. People may read this letter and think, “well I treat everyone equally, so what’s this all about?” That is exactly what I thought.

But to be quite honest, you are largely subconscious, particularly to people who are unaware. To people combatting you, however, you are quite a dominant presence. As a white female, I have never been worried that there won't be a teacher that looks like me in my school. As a white female, I have never been afraid to talk to police officers. As a white female, I have never worried about not getting a job for which I am qualified. As a white female, I have never struggled to find a band-aid that matches my skin color. As a white female, I have never worried about seeing someone on T.V. that looks like me. There is a whole world of subconscious stereotypes and attitudes that no one wants to address. These thoughtless stereotypes and attitudes are what create and reinforce you, White Privilege. Most of the things that I take for granted everyday are generally because of you. I can walk in public and not be worried for my safety. I can have my voice heard. My mom never had to warn me that people might treat me differently. Not once did I stop to think that maybe other people did not have this luxury. And this, White Privilege, is why you should be addressed more. Without conversation you will go unnoticed by much of our society.

And that's the point: if we don't talk about you, you hold the power.

Sincerely,
A Newly Aware White Female

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Craziness Coley Samuels ’21
What does it mean to “run like a girl?”
This phrase could be considered insulting or indicate weakness. But why do we have this connotation? Female athletes including myself face the challenge of dealing with the ignorance of these words everyday. Yes, I am a girl. Yes, I run. Yes, I like sports. Why is all of that so hard to believe? Growing up I was told I couldn’t play soccer with the boys in my neighborhood because I played “like a girl.” At least that’s what one boy would tell me. Then another would say “you’re too delicate,” or “we’re actually competitive.” This discouragement had me playing hopscotch and sitting on the playground at recess rather than playing capture the flag or soccer on the field. However, I don’t want any young girls at recess now to face that same stigma that they cannot play sports and join in any game. To me, “running like a girl” represents strength. “Running like a girl” means empowering yourself to participate in the sports you love. “Running like a girl” does NOT mean weakness. To me, throwing like a girl means throwing hard, fast, and accurately. Throwing like a girl does NOT mean dainty or soft. Being a girl who likes sports means watching games on Saturdays. Being a girl who likes sports does NOT mean I only like a sports team because of a team’s jersey colors.

I run like a girl and throw like a girl and I am proud of that. In 1973, when she beat Bobby Riggs in a tennis match, Billie Jean King proved girls can play just as well as boys. Since then, dramatic strides have been made in women’s athletics, from grade school to the Olympics. I think we should no longer let girls be put down by boys because of the way they play sports. Girls should feel empowered to play sports and not have to play down their skills because sports are not considered feminine.

As female athletes, we should own and love our skills and bodies. Girls, appreciate and love those muscles you have developed through participation in athletics.

Let’s all “run like girls!”

Madi Poulin ’18
I see on paper they are the same-
A jersey, a pair of shorts, a long pair of socks
Oh and the shin guards and cleats
That companies say are different,
But aren’t.

I know that the rules are the same-
Eleven on the field and a goalie
Making crafty passes to score a goal always feels holy.

But I hear differences.

A roaring crowd
A chime of enthusiastic voices
Clapping hands

A goal is scored and the crowd goes wild.

Yet I can also hear
A distinct set of parents, just three
A low murmur of voices
Random solo claps.

A goal is scored and one parent celebrates.

I see
A giant organism,
Comprised of hundreds of people
In the stands

Yet I can also see
A few individuals,
Sitting on a cold metal bench

Is this the same game?
Are they the same rules?
Is there any respect?

As a female athlete, I practice and play extremely hard, but do not attract crowds of spectators in the stands to feel support for the effort. I know I am not the only one who feels this way, so I wanted to write a poem that expressed the frustration that female athletes in our community feel but are struggling to put into words. I fully support the boys’ sports and appreciate how hard they work and train. I believe that both genders should have a reliable group of fans and should feel rewarded for their efforts. The word athlete should be used universally. There shouldn’t be a division between female athlete and male athlete. Being called an athlete is a special title, and it represents a sense of pride for yourself, your sport, and your school. As all athletes represent Bullis School, our community should support and recognize all athletes equally.

Sabrina Hosmer ’18
Dear young girl trying to find a place in STEM,

You will be stared at in class
You will hear whispers that you are not smart enough
You will push through the confusion
You will prove them wrong

Dear brave girl who raises her hand in science class,

You will give your answer
You will hear them gasp
You will raise your head high
You will not back down

Dear techy girl who creates the ultimate code,

You will be told you got help
You will hear “it’s faulty”
You will show them it works
You will walk away confident

Dear inventive girl who engineers the champion robot,

You will present your project
You will hear “she didn’t make that”
You will win the competition
You will be awarded the medal

Dear intelligent girl who solves the math problem right,

You will hear “she cheated”
You will hear “beginner’s luck”
You will ignore the hate
You will remain tough

Dear young girl trying to find a place in STEM,

You will believe you can accomplish anything
You will hear “she is an inspiration”
You will be confident
You will succeed beyond measure
When I was 6, my curly headed, mop-like hair made me stand out in the group of kindergarten girls with pin-straight ponytails and braids. No one in my kindergarten class looked like me: my Southeast Asian skin was tanner, my Mediterranean hair was darker and curlier, I spoke with an accent, and I wore brightly patterned dresses that stood out like a sore thumb in a crowd of toddlers. I never questioned it though. How could you notice yourself being the oddball when you’re too busy digging for bugs during recess or counting how many pebbles you can collect?

When I was 11, I started to notice my differences. As all the girls in my class started to be interested in wearing makeup and styling their hair, I began to see that the world of beauty was not modeled for a girl like me. I couldn't fit typical foundation shades, my hair took a lot more effort to style, and my clothes didn’t look like the ones being sold in Seventeen magazine. I stood out like a sore thumb, when all I wanted to do was what any other 11-year-old girl was doing. It was the first time in my life I felt insecure about myself. All throughout middle school, I tried to mask my uniqueness by wearing clothes that everyone else was wearing, putting on makeup that was a few shades too light for me, curling my lips in pictures to make them look thinner, and avoiding the sun during the summer so I wouldn't get too tan. I changed myself to fit society's accepted appearance.

When I was 15, I learned that there is beauty in uniqueness, beauty in culture, beauty in diversity. The best way to explain how I came to accept and celebrate my uniqueness and diversity is through two things: exposure and education. Whether through traveling the world or having a conversation with my neighbor, I learned that being what I thought was “normal” is impossible because in this world, being “normal” is being different. “Normal” is different cultures, different traditions, different beliefs, and different people. I learned the importance of accepting and celebrating diversity. I learned the importance of emphasizing the uniqueness that every culture and its people has to offer to our world.

I have learned how to love my Indonesian skin and Greek wavy hair. I have learned to love my “different.”

Athena Skoufias ’18
How has your Muslim identity shaped the way you see the world?

Perspective ONE

After the attacks on September 11, 2001, which devastated the American population, President George W. Bush founded the controversial Department of Homeland Security in 2002. The goal of Homeland Security is to prepare, prevent, and respond to domestic threats. While the goal has commendable intentions, if one considers the principles of the organization, there is a clear discrimination towards people who are considered “different” from the norm.

This discrimination is seen in airports, where TSA has the right to select anyone they view as suspicious or as a potential terrorist. Airport security is a subjective process rather than an objective process. This heightened level of scrutiny has most often been directed at Muslim Americans and people of Middle Eastern background. According to the Pew Research Center in 2007, 18% of Muslims claimed they were singled out or questioned at the airport. In 2007, the number of people who were singled out or questioned under the Jewish or Christian faith was under 10%. From 2007 to 2008, according to the Council of American-Islamic Relations, there was an increase of 340% in racial profiling of Islamic people in airports.

These numbers may only reflect a small percentage of the larger trend. From my personal experiences and observations, if one is darker-skinned or looks more Arab/Pakistani, then they are more likely to be stopped. For example, when I travel with both of my sisters, the one who has a stronger Middle Eastern appearance is investigated and questioned more than my other family members. Interestingly, my other sister and I are always ignored, since we do not look Arab. I came back to the United States from Lebanon in 2006, my family and I were there visiting when a war broke out. When we arrived at Miami International Airport, we were detained and placed in a special room. We were surrounded by people with guns and interrogated for hours about why we were in Lebanon, if we knew how to make bombs, and if we played a role in instigating the war in Lebanon. During this interrogation, I desperately had to go to the bathroom. I was six years old at the time. When my mom asked the interrogators if they would let me go to the bathroom, they declined. After begging for 30 minutes, the interrogators allowed me to use the restroom. However, the condition was that I had to be escorted into the bathroom with two men armed with big guns. When we finally were freed from the interrogation, after five hours, we realized the new realities of the TSA in a post-9/11 world.

Homeland Security needs to resolve this issue by establishing a process that does not unfairly target specific races or religions. While the connection between the September 11th attacks and certain Middle Eastern countries has been identified, this still does not give airport officials the right to subjugate people simply due to their religious affiliation. TSA needs to have a system where “random” sampling and questioning is actually legitimate. TSA cannot question someone because they look Indian, wear a Hijab, or “look” like a criminal. If there continues to be systematic discrimination in the United States of America, then there will continue to be discrimination against people at airports, for airport discrimination is simply a symptom of systematic discrimination.
Some people may go through their everyday lives with no interruption and interference and are largely unaware of how their race and religion might impact daily experiences. Some people may say that they are able to walk through airport security without any difficulty... but actually 14.2% of U.S. individuals are not. I am referring to the Muslim population in America. I remember once being pulled aside from the security line in Chicago Midway airport. Nothing differentiated me from anyone else in the line, and I was simply standing in line with my parents. I wasn’t showing any “suspicious signs,” and I wasn’t carrying any violent weapons. I felt demoralized. In another instance, I felt that my family was discriminated against in the Customs line. We had just come back from Italy, and similar to all American citizens we had to pass through the Customs line at Washington Dulles International Airport. I noticed that the security official was welcoming and nice to everyone in front of us. However, when we were called up to the Customs booth, the security officials’ attitude abruptly changed. He talked in a stern fashion, asking more questions than he had of any of the other families. He was rude to us. I could see the anger and frustration in my father’s face, but I saw him control himself.

I am a U.S. citizen, and both of my parents have lived in America for over 20 years. Why are we singled out? I am not saying that each and every Muslim in America suffers from discrimination in airports, yet I do know that some people in the Muslim community are greatly impacted by religious intolerance in airports. Airport discrimination is unfair, and the roots of the discrimination are clear. Specifically, my mother's maiden name is Rahman and every time we go to an airport, she is pulled aside. I was somewhat perplexed about why she was being pulled over, so I conducted some research on her name. I uncovered information about terrorists with the last name Rahman and learned there was one who was affiliated with an attempted World Trade Center bomb plot in 1993. Obviously, my mother is not related to this individual, so why should these security officials automatically assume that my mother has lineage to a terrorist? Do others who share surnames with criminals face similar targeting? Imagine growing up with the last name Dahmer, Manson or Capone. People may have the same last names as a notorious criminal, yet that doesn’t mean they commit crimes.

The whole ideology of airport discrimination is centered around false judgement and perception vs. reality. What exactly makes me so different than everyone else? After walking through the metal detector, why do I, out of all the people in line, get discriminated against. What distinguishes me from everyone else in the airport? Why is there bias against the religious affiliation that I practice? Discrimination on the basis of race and religion is immoral and senseless. There should be no more “will you step to the side please” or “random security checks” that are not random at all.
This past summer, a group of 15 teenagers and I traveled to the Dominican Republic to organize and lead a camp for local Dominican children and teach them English. Traveling and community service are two passions of mine, so this trip excited me in unimaginable ways.

I knew I wanted to spend my summer helping others and experiencing life outside of the world I live in day-to-day. Upon arrival in Santo Domingo, the culture piqued my interest and I was curious of what was to come. However, my eyes were not fully opened to the immense poverty and struggles of the locals until we arrived in the small town of Juan Dolio. Our tightly bonded group spent hours each night practicing our Spanish and planning our schedule for the next day, integrating English vocabulary into each rotation. This organization process required extensive brainstorming and creativity as we incorporated subjects such as science, English and math into our daily routines. As the bus filled with students pulled up to our compound the first Monday morning of camp, my stomach quickly knotted. Not only was I nervous about communicating in Spanish, but I wanted to provide these children with the most enriching experience possible, and make an impact on their lives. Around 20 excited children and teenagers piled out of the van with more energy than I thought possible. To my surprise, many of these students were older than I was, and yet had limited access to a thorough education. This angered me, but ultimately sparked my desire to bring everything I could to help these students for the week we had together.

While grateful to help those that we could, our group begged our trip leaders to go see where these students came from. We decided one morning to journey two hours to their villages where we helped repaint their homes. It was valuable to learn more about their home environment, but we were crushed by what little resources and access to necessities such as fresh water they had. This day was hands down my favorite part of the entire trip because by immersing myself into their culture and their homes, I felt most connected to them, with a stronger drive to help them achieve their dreams.

As the end of the week approached, our group discussed how much we had learned from all the students. To honor the hard work and achievements of all the campers, we handed out certificates during a special ceremony. While the certificates may seem like a small token, the smiles that lit up their faces when they were awarded recognition for their efforts in learning an entirely new language was indescribable. Our trip leaders later told us that these certificates are a large asset to them in being admitted to the best schools available in the area.

Learning in a community like Bullis, with supportive teachers and mentors, an abundance of resources, and widespread opportunities for our futures is something we all take for granted every day. This trip shaped me into an individual who looks at the bigger picture, and does not take for granted the amazing education with which I have been provided. I complain less about waking up early for school or having a long day because my experience in the Dominican Republic helped me to fully appreciate how lucky we all are to have a place like Bullis to learn and grow.

I hope my experience inspires others to help less fortunate people both in our area and internationally. By stepping out of our blessed and glamourous bubble, you will be astounded and amazed by how many people you can help and all the different types of people you can encounter. For those who have never seen the world outside of the one you see each and every day, I truly recommend an opportunity like this, because impoverished families and children need aid from people who have so much to provide.
The day was beautiful, the wind was blowing, and the sun was shining. I was in Israel with my father, and we went on a jeep ride to the Israeli-Syrian border. Our tour guide Amir drove us through the Golan Heights in his roofless jeep. Wind flowed through the car and I stood up to take in the breathtaking sites. Reaching the border, I gazed into Syria and took notice of the tall grasses and rolling hills; everything seemed so calm. Little did I know that I was staring directly into a crime scene.

That night, I returned to my hotel room and was startled when “Breaking News!” was flashing on the CNN Broadcast. The newscaster was reporting that President Bashar al-Assad of Syria had just used sarin gas on his own civilian citizens.

I was shocked. In the days and years that followed, I could not help but think about that day and how just miles from where we were, 1300 Syrians had been gassed by their own President. Although I may not have physically been able to see the horrors within Syria, I learned that they existed and decided that I must dig deeper and open my eyes wider to the world around me. Thinking about the 1,300 people who were gassed in Syria, I realize that they were ordinary individuals. They all had their own unique life story, just like all of us, but now their stories may never be heard.

After my experience at the border, I now strive to get to know people better and hear their stories. As a school community, I think it is important to get to know each other on a deeper level and share our stories. This year on our experiential trip to Calleva, the senior class sat around a campfire and shared memories and stories. The stories my peers shared were very personal and I learned facts about their lives that I had never heard before. This opportunity as a class to stand and share stories in a safe environment was very meaningful.

This year in American Government class, when we enter the classroom we do not immediately sit and start class. We stand and speak to our classmates and ask them about their days. Similarly, in Food-Science, we begin class on Monday mornings by talking about our weekend, sporting events, and anything else we want to share. These moments are so important to get to know each other better because there is always a deeper level to every appearance. While we may all look the same in our Bullis plaid skirt or uniform, we all bring our own different backgrounds and experiences. I hope we can continue as a school to create more time to come together and share our uniqueness that might not always be seen at first glance.

Jessica Ravitch ’18
Here are some tips on how to be a helpful Ally:

**Education, education, and education**

Before you start participating in protests, leading campaigns, and holding conversations about a certain issue, I think it’s important for us to know what’s happening in these communities. One way to learn about the issues affecting minority communities is through research. It can be tricky to find credible sources, but one way to work around false information is to use government sites and research from different organizations and universities around the world. Another way to learn about the cause you want to stand up against is by talking to people about their experiences with this issue. I think that by hearing a personal experience, you have a good understanding of the issue you’re looking at, how it can affect someone, and, maybe, how you can support that person.

**Acknowledge your privilege**

For those of you who may not be familiar, “privilege” is the idea that certain rights or advantages are available to some, while others are not granted these same rights and advantages. An example of white privilege, the privilege that some white people have over others, is being able to use hotel-provided hair care products and trust that they will work for the texture of their hair. I think it is important that all allies are aware of how their privilege shapes the way they interact in the world and how they are treated differently than others who don’t have that same privilege. A personal example is, as a straight, cis-gender\(^1\) woman, I have always seen people of my gender\(^2\) and sexual orientation\(^3\) represented in the media. When acknowledging this privilege, I have to take into account that I have never doubted if someone like me could be the lead actress on a T.V. show because this specific identity is represented in the media, while transgender\(^4\) or non-binary\(^5\) people are largely underrepresented.

**Listen to understand, not to respond**

I believe that before we start speaking up against injustices, we must be able to listen to those who are affected by them. While most of us may think that we are good listeners, I challenge you to rethink this idea. Listening with the intention of responding and listening with the intention of understanding are two different types of listening. When we listen to respond, we tend to not hear what the other person is saying because we are thinking about what we’re going to say. You can see someone listening to respond when they raise their hand before the speaker has finished their point. In contrast, listening to understand is when we listen to the other person speaking and try to empathize with what they are sharing and recognize their point of view, whether we agree with it or not.

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\(^{1}\) **Cis-gender**: Gender identity aligns with the sex one was assigned at birth.  
\(^{2}\) **Gender**: A term that refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men.  
\(^{3}\) **Sexual Orientation**: The organization of a person’s sexual desire and emotional attachment with a reference to the sex and gender of their desired partner, whether the person’s primary attraction is to the opposite sex (heterosexuality), the same sex (homosexuality), or both sexes (bisexuality).  
\(^{4}\) **Transgender**: A person whose gender identity differs from the cultural expectations of the sex they were assigned at birth.  
\(^{5}\) **Non-binary**: A term for people who don’t identify as strictly male/female or woman/man.
January 13th, 2014. That was the day. I was in eighth grade, sitting in Ms. Orr’s health class when she asked “What would it be like if there was a classmate in this room who was gay?” As she asked this question, I turned red and looking down at my feet. That was me. I was that kid, and had known it for about 8 months. I was that kid and I hated being that kid. I remember hearing people's responses to her question and thinking about how they would be so accepting and not judgemental, and all I could believe is how these responses wouldn't be true for me. I felt like an outsider, and I felt alone.

Since that day, my confidence in myself has grown, but there have also been some rough moments. When I came out, many straight guys starting looking at me differently. When I decided that I wanted to get nails, not only did I receive looks, but I also got a fair share of ignorant comments. Being called a half-boy and half-girl was not exactly reassuring, but there were also TONS of positive remarks. At the Senior Calleva Trip, I talked about getting nails, and I remember being applauded, and people hollering for me. It was an amazing feeling, to know that what I was doing was okay, and that it wasn’t wrong.

One of the most positive comments I ever received was from our very own Mrs. Sturges, Associate Director of Admissions at Bullis. I gave a tour in the beginning of the school year, when I first got my nails, and I remember walking out of the tour heading back to study hall, and Mrs. Sturges asked me to step into her office. I was afraid she was going to respond negatively, because that is what I was used to hearing. However, her response was a happy shock. She told me that if anyone ever made an inappropriate comment, I should go talk to her immediately, and even though I had nails, it would not affect my participation in the Ambassador program. When I walked out of her office, I felt accepted and confident about living my truth.

As a community, I feel that we need to work on dialogue. Communication provides and encourages ALLIES, which can make the greatest difference in a safe space. When I was coming out, open support from the community and acknowledgment that it was okay to be gay would have encouraged me and made me feel as though I belonged. A safe space leads to communication and greater understanding. If there is no safe space for conversations like these, comfort and acceptance is compromised. I want people to know that they have a voice. Being a member of the LGBTQ+ community is not different. It is not something to be ashamed of, and most importantly, it is not wrong.

Ben Vardi ’18
While I was driving my brother to school this morning, the song “Pursuit of Happiness” came on. “I love this song!” I remarked to my brother. As the song continued, the lyrics sent a sinking feeling down my spine. “Two AM, summer night, I don’t care / Hand on the wheel / Driving drunk I’m doing my thang...” I turned down the volume aggressively and screeched out a word that’s not suitable for the purposes of this article. His ‘thang’ is driving drunk? How is that okay? I was left speechless as the realization occurred to me. I, the girl so focused on the teenage drunk driving issue, had fallen victim to the drunk driving culture. How many times had I screamed out these lyrics and not noticed the impact of them? Drinking and driving is so ingrained in our society that we are almost desensitized to the issue. It was only a couple years ago when Calvin Li and Alexander Murk of Wootton High School were killed in a drunk driving accident where their friend, Sam Ellis, was responsible. This tragedy not only rocked the Wootton community, but all of Montgomery County. One of my best friends is currently a senior at Wootton, and I vividly remember her despair at losing members of their community. They not only lost Alex and Calvin in the worst way, they lost Sam to the prison system. They lost Sam to the drunk driving epidemic. After this incident, I heard my peers say things like “that’s awful” and “that’s so sad, he was really in the wrong,” along with “he ruined his life.” They are exactly right. However, these same peers making these remarks are the ones who go out and drive drunk on Friday nights after football games. They are the same kids who dash home ‘tipsy’ on a Saturday night. They are the same kids who have never been caught. It’s extremely hypocritical. I hear these conversations firsthand and want to turn around and say, “Really? You’re the one to judge?” However, I don’t. I often wonder if I’ll be seen as a hypocrite. I also wonder if people are willing to hear about teen drinking and driving from a teenager. Does that make what I’m saying more impactful or less? Showing your condolences and offering support to a community will always be the right reaction, but your actions after the fact are what matter the most. Chastising people for driving drunk, and then going out and doing it yourself is counterintuitive and mind-boggling.

Make a change. Don’t drink. Take an Uber. Don’t drive. Call a cab. Do anything. **Just don’t drive.** Just because you did it once does not mean you or others will be fine the next time. Do not ruin your life because of one bad decision.
I live in one house, with only one brother, and two parents. We all have the same last name, and sure, we look alike. But behind what is only visible, there is so much more. For example, I have nine brothers and sisters, and none of them are full siblings.

I was born an only child. Biologically, I still am. When I was three, my parents got divorced. They both remarried about 4 years later, and I had two new parents. My step dad, Jack, already had FOUR kids from two previous marriages, and my Dad’s new wife had TWO kids from one previous marriage. Fast forward to 2007 and I have SIX siblings. Around this time is when I had to explain my family tree using pretzels or candy or whatever was in front of me at the moment, much to the interest of therapists and parent coordinators ¹… but very few others. Okay, we’ve made it to six, stick with me.

My Dad and his wife then had a daughter in 2010. That makes SEVEN. About two years later, when I was twelve, my Mom and Jack had a son. His name is Storm, and let’s just say it’s quite a fitting name. Ok, that’s EIGHT. We’re almost there. About a year ago, one of my older sisters and her fiancée joined Ancestry.com. It is a very, very long story, and although by now I know it word for word, I will spare you. Four months later, my sister popped up on someone’s page as a relative. It was Jack’s long lost daughter. He grew up in Brooklyn in the 60s, and his girlfriend got pregnant when they were teenagers. The child was put up for adoption. Her name is Kathy. She is married with two 15-year old twins and lives in New Jersey. That makes NINE siblings. We finally made it… Although at this point I’m sure there could be a tenth somewhere down the road.

Kathy and her family joined us for Thanksgiving this year. My youngest sibling, Storm (age 5) and my oldest, Kathy (Age 51) were sitting next to each other at the table. The odd part is that Storm is the uncle to Kathy’s children who are ten years older than him. And I am their aunt. As I’m typing this it does sound strange, but even looking at us all together on Thanksgiving, it was not the slightest bit strange. It was us, and it was awesome.

The story of Kathy is only one piece of the pie, 1/9th to be exact. I like to say that I have a family of strangers, because I met every one of them before they became family. After all, it started out with me, a mom and a dad. Now here we are. I’m an aunt with siblings that are 46 years apart. There is something really special about learning to love your family, and with a family the size of mine, I have done a lot of learning. But most importantly, I have learned that truly anyone can have the place in your heart of a family member. My best friends aren’t friends, they’re sisters. It’s just the way things work, and I could not be happier. I am so glad I did not stay an only child.

It has, and probably always will be a rocky road. While this story is pretty great, there are certainly plenty that make even the Gallaghers in Shameless seem bland (even in season 4). But I am who I am because of it all. I tell you this story, not only because it’s incredible, but also because there is no way you could have deciphered it by looking at my household, where I live with just my little brother, my Mom, and Jack. And since I changed my last name to Jack’s last spring, you’d really have to do some digging.

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.” - Harper Lee, To Kill A Mockingbird.

¹ Parent Coordinators are often assigned to high-conflict child custody and visitation cases. They are usually either licensed professionals in a mental health field, or attorneys.

Background: Variegated Vision, Hannah Hoverman ’21
Welcome to Bullis’ first issue of *Insight! Insight* is a student-led diversity magazine that encourages dialogue, explores different cultures, lifts student voices, and interrogates injustices. This magazine was founded at Sidwell Friends School by Max and Sam Strickberger as a forum devoted to diversity and the exploration of different cultures and experiences.

We are proud to introduce *Insight* to the Bullis community this year! We hope that this magazine will help us celebrate the diversity witnessed in our student body. By narrating their own stories, we hope that Bullis students will be able to find commonalities with one another and build a strong sense of empathy towards each other that will strengthen our community and the way we view diversity.

The theme for this issue is “Making the Invisible Visible” and we had members of our Humanities and Global Studies Capstone class contribute articles. We asked our classmates to write about topics or experiences they believed should be talked about more at Bullis or in their larger communities. By sharing these stories, we hope to inspire conversations and improve our community. We selected artwork for this issue from various art classes and chose pieces we thought would supplement the articles and fit the theme.

There are so many people that helped to make this first issue possible. We would like to thank Dr. Romeyn for her unwavering support and dedication to helping us see this through! Thank you as well to Mr. Whitford, Mr. Bailey and Ms. Orr for allowing us to pursue our passion for change through this magazine. Thank you to Ms. Zimmerman and Ms. Watkins for their advice, helpful edits, and for assisting us in the logistical aspects of our magazine. And of course, thank you to our HGS Capstone classmates and all the artists who contributed work to this publication!

Finally, it is essential to note that each article is written from the perspective of one person and may not represent the viewpoint of an entire community. We plan to do a second issue of Bullis’ *Insight* in the spring. If you are interested in contributing, joining the editorial staff, have any questions, or want to send us feedback, please email sydney_smith@bullis.org // jocelyn_quinn@bullis.org.

We would love to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Jocelyn Quinn and Sydney Smith ’18

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**Sydney Smith ’18**
Editor-In-Chief
Communications Director

**Joce Quinn ’18**
Editor-In-Chief
Layout Editor

Cultural Affairs Editor: Will Evans ’18
Art Director: Ben Vardi ’18