YWCA Bergen County

VOICES

A Literary Journal for Youth

No Hate, No Fear.

A publication of YWCA Bergen County in commemoration of the 2019 Stand Against Racism

#OnAMission #StandAgainstRacism
STOP RACISM

Photos by: Aaron Melendez
Bergenfield High School
Confronting Hate

Human against human conflicts.
That’s what led us to civil war.
It is tearing our society apart
And shaking us to our core.

Why must we hate on other opinions
When we have just as much to say?
There is a law such as “freedom of speech”
However, we disregard it anyway.

Hate hurts.
It pains, it destroys, and it rips us to shreds.
What other people have to say
Is constantly getting to our heads.

But instead of having this point of view,
Do not be afraid.
Speak out, say what you believe in, show your strength
And the hate will begin to fade.

You will never hurt me
You will never bring me down
Your cruel words shape me into a stronger person
You can never take away my crown

The crown that sits atop my head
Not visible to the human eye.
It represents me and who I am
Letting all the hate pass by.

If someone does not like you for who you are
Why should you care?
You are amazing in every way,
They’ll realize you’re special and rare.

You will never hurt me
You will never get the best of me
Your hate makes me strong
I am now the person I was made to be.

By: Christina Vitale
Park Ridge Middle School
Photos by: Shamar Binns
Bergenfield High School

"Just because I'm
It doesn't mean I'm not part of your world."

"Just because I'm
Honduran doesn't mean I
like rice and beans."

"Just because I'm
I'm a part of a
greater whole."
Photos by: Shamar Binns
Bergenfield High School

1. "Just because I’m Cuban doesn’t mean I’m communist."
2. "Just because I’m Guyanese and brown doesn’t mean I’m Indian."
3. "Just because I’m Argentinean doesn’t mean I want to be an Engineer."

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Why Us?

Sometimes I ask myself, “why?”
What did we do to deserve this?
What do they want from us?
What did we do to them?
Why are they doing this?

It never quite made sense to me
Hitler and the Nazis, who look around
and see
All of these innocent people
Who were now forced to flee.

I look outside my window,
My only source of hope
That freedom still exists out there
I never will say “nope.”

This has been going on for too long
Every day I think it’s over
I say a prayer, but it doesn’t work
I think I need a four-leaf clover

I can’t take this pain anymore
I miss my freedom more than you know
I haven’t gone outside in weeks
I want to say to my friends, “hello.”

As I watch all of these people die
I wonder how much longer I have to live
How much longer can I stay in hiding
Before my life, I have to give.

Sometimes I think it might be better to die
Then I wouldn’t have to live in fear
Knowing these people hate me
And they have for many years.

Sometimes I ask myself, “why?”
I want answers
I want to know the truth
What did we do to deserve this?
Why are they killing innocent adults and youth?

Now that this is “over”
And we can move on again
We must reflect on this experience
The loss of a lot of men.

Although the war is over
I never will forget
All the pain, tragedy, and sorrow
And the years of tears and sweat.

As a society
We must take a stand
To end war and racism
Together hand in hand.

By Olivia Walder
Park Ridge Middle School
Just because I'm Ecuadorian doesn't mean I'm indigenous.

Just because I'm Cuban does not mean I talk loud.

Just because I'm Asian doesn't mean I get straight A's.

Photos by: Shamar Binns
Bergenfield High School
Essential Qualities of a Leader

An accepting leader
Unbiased, fair, non-discriminating
Of people of all cultures, religions, looks, ethnicities, origins, and more
Treating others the way they would want to be treated.

An understanding leader
Always thoughtful and considerate
Seeing all sides of every story
Never swayed by their personal views.

A clever leader
Intelligent; a problem-solver
Knowing how to tackle each issue
As well as overcoming and learning from them.

A responsible leader
Controlling and keeping their team organized and in order
Has a strong voice and directs them to the right path
Hard-working them, pushing them to the best they can be, yet always supportive and kind.

A brave leader
Not afraid to stand tall and use their voice to make a difference
Like Martin Luther King Jr, standing strong against racism and fighting for equal rights
Like George Washington, a strong general, leading his country to victory
Like Juror Eight in Twelve Angry Men, standing alone against the other jurors and the bias, fighting for what he knew was true

Someone who isn’t afraid to do what’s right
Standing high against threats.
They will fight against racism
Protecting the people affected by it
And prove once and for all that no one deserves to be treated like an outcast

But above all,
A leader is someone you can trust
You put your faith in them and they don’t disappoint
Somebody you can depend on to do the right thing
Confronting the hate and accepting of all types of people
Using their power for only good
Doing their best to make the world a better place.

By: Kalyani Halsband
Park Ridge Middle School
Photos by:
Shamar Binns
Bergenfield High School

Just because I’m Filipino doesn’t mean I want to be a doctor.

Just cause I’m Indian does not mean I will get an arranged marriage!

STAND AGAINST RACISM
“The Racist Shooting”

Dozens died that day. 
Because of hate.

Hate in form of racism. 
Caused so much pain.

A place of worship. 
Where dozens come together. 
Was the next target of violence.

Epic heroism. 
Saved the day.

Seeking justice. 
Is the only way. 
To bring closure to the families. 
Of this tragic day.

Will there be more? 
We can only prepare for the worst.

By: Matthew Zegla
Park Ridge Middle School
Photo by: Michael Gonzalez
Bergenfield High School
Classroom conundrum

They yell and shout
Like apes in a cage
They always get away
You remain the same
The battering bias
I can’t open my moth
why do you dislike me?
pin me with shame
all the same I still get blamed
Hold me below
why

By: Noah Noble
Park Ridge Middle School
March for Our Lives

Word, Sentences, Phrases.

Beautiful moments like a peacock spreading its wings.

About an event that spreads like an uncontrollable wildfire.

That keeps spreading until everything is engulfed.

But we are strong.

We will overcome all fears, and be brave.

We will come through as the fire crackles

And take a stand.

By: Brian Friedlander
Park Ridge Middle School
Photos by: Michael Gonzalez
Bergenfield High School
Photo by: Michael Gonzalez
Bergenfield High School
Dented Diamonds

How can we escape?
Take the weight off
And the hate

Pulled us to the ground
Hatred spreads through
People gossiping and tearing friendships down

How could these lies be greater than us?
Why don’t we reach out?
Instead of closing ourselves off

We are all diamonds
Shiny and strong
Beautiful and lovely

But as meanness spreads
We are dented, hurt and broken
We are not shiny nor strong or beautiful

We are miserable
Scared of society
And lonely

We have to stop this
We can’t let the hatred
Dictate our lives

We must be better than this
Stop spreading the constant hate
And start lifting people up

Hold someone’s hand
And pull them off the ground
And help

For we all are diamonds
We just need a little help
To be as beautiful as we used to be

By: Sunjukta Vaidhyananthan
Park Ridge Middle School
Photo by: Michael Gonzalez
Bergenfield High School
Photo by: Michael Gonzalez
Bergenfield High School
The lives of people in Berlin were different
West Germans lived in prosperity
East Germans lived in suffering
East Germans moved
That made the East German government angry
The government put up a wall
No one could leave
If you tried
You died
Then someone allowed people to cross
People cried tears of joy
Everyone started to tear down the wall
People got to see their friends and family again.

By: Scott Riccio
Park Ridge Middle School
Photo by: Matt Gallardo
Bergenfield High School
Photos by: Melissa Castano
Bergenfield High School
In Amsterdam in 1944,  
The Germans came knocking on young Anne’s door.  
What led to this moment?  
What did she do?  
What could possibly lead to a horrible fate so soon?  
She hid in the annex for so long,  
She couldn’t even go outside prolonged.  
Sometimes people she didn’t know came to her door,  
But she knew she wouldn’t see them anymore.  
She kept her cool, and that’s what saved her,  
Or a cruel fate would be coming less later.  
Maturity is something some people have,  
And Anne was one of these few.  
If she didn’t, she wouldn’t  
Be able to live her life anew.  
Anne was a leader among her family and peers,  
Maybe because she held her family dear.

By: Colin McGuire  
Park Ridge Middle School
Photo by: Brandon Lee
Bergenfield High School
Leadership Poem

1. He leads above everyone else
2. Never afraid to stand up for the rights of African-Americans
3. He decided what he wanted
4. He didn’t control, but he always assisted
5. There was always someone who didn’t listen
6. He ignored them and keep doing his thing.
7. Then, and only then he was a good leader
8. You must always be filled with patience and compassion
9. And never give up on what you believe in
10. If you give up, there would be no point in you trying to lead
11. Continuing to never give up, will always result in success
12. Even if you don’t think you’re successful at the time.

By: Paul Belasic
Park Ridge Middle School
Photo by: Ivanna Jacome
Bergenfield High School
Photo by: Keno Lugo
Bergenfield High School
Photo by: Daniela Corrales Velez
Bergenfield High School
This story is not one of my own.
Rather, it is a one shared by many others in a small town
People speaking the same language as myself
Maybe even the same personality as myself
But our beliefs are different, and I respect that.
Until someone came in to ruin the people with different beliefs than his own.
Tap, Tap, Tap,
Why is this person here?
Crack, Crack, Bang.
This person is an enemy.
The volume of the scene raises as the gunfire continues
This person parades in and people praise for help
Help! Help! Help!
People are falling; almost like a movie came to life.
Bullets falling like rain
All streamed live for people to see
And using popular internet slang
To wrongly accuse someone else.
It’s strange, really, how someone would end another’s life
just because they disliked another’s belief.
The aftermath saw people fire words back and forth,
And the world is seeming to become a more upsetting place,
We realize that the people who respect different beliefs
are the world’s true heroes.
Our beliefs are different,
But it is not an excuse to end another’s life.
Our beliefs are different,
But we share an emotion of sadness,
As fifty people fall into a different place.
Our beliefs are different,
Yet our emotions are the same.

By: Hallie Vierung
Park Ridge Middle School
Dejected

Another school day’s starting
The bell rings like an alarm
Realizing the reality of
Another day.

Walking down the hallway
Heavy head held down
Studying shoes and side details
Silently alone.

Hoping and praying
To blend into the background
For loneliness to last
And for words to bounce off
bruised skin of a different tone.

You simply don’t
Understand it.
Why a religion or race
Should make you less

Opening your locker
Papers falling out
Harsh words
Scribbled on a sheet.

“You’re an alien to this town”
“go back to your country”
“You’re not welcome here”
The crumpled papers falling to
the floor in sync with tears.

Not a single person stops
To ask if you’re okay.
Scared of being in contact
With someone different.

Racist remarks reach towards your eyes
Jumping off the lined paper
Growing eight feet tall
becoming monsters dragging you down
the rest of the day.

What to do
To deserve this type of loathing
Is nothing at all
But stand out.

Being yourself
Being a mere different skin color
In a world of
Unaccepting glances.

The hardship of
Embracing yourself
When not even another
Person can.

By: Sienna Prisco
Park Ridge Middle School
Photo by: Fernando Mesa
Bergenfield High School
Photo by: Jacob Vasquez
Bergenfield High School
Our Emotions Are The Same

This story is not one of my own. Rather, it is a one shared by many others in a small town. People speaking the same language as myself. Maybe even the same personality as myself. But our beliefs are different, and I respect that. Until someone came in to ruin the people with different beliefs than his own.

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STOP RACISM
Photo by: Cayla Lacap
Bergenfield High School

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Bergen County
It’s Not A Race.

Photo by: Anthony Lindis
Bergenfield High School

VOICES
A Literary Journal for Youth

eliminating racism empowering women
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RACISM RESTRAINS

Photos by: Ayanna Pagaduan
Bergenfield High School
NOT A CULTURE VULTURE

Photo by: Akilah Jones
Bergenfield High School

Regardless of my appearance, I am Asian.

Photo by: Anthony Agudelo
Bergenfield High School

eliminating racism empowering women

ywca Bergen County
Photo by: Ayanna Pagaduan
Bergenfield High School

RACISM INCriminates
The Fear that my Family is Next

Crazily crying in a crowded room.
I, Anne Frank, cannot believe this is happening.
I hide in the limited-spaced Secret Annex and wonder,
“What did the Jews ever do?”

I hear news about what’s happening outside.
My poor friends are being taken...
only for their religion.

Could this be true?
I guess I’ll never know.
My poor friends...my poor, poor friends...

Here I am, a 15-year-old girl, and this is my reality?
I hate this constant worry of fear that my family is next.
It’s so unfair.

Well...at least I have my diary, Kitty.
In times like these, Kitty is truly my therapy.
There is no ounce of liberty in the Secret Annex.
Not only do I have to live in fear,
but I have to live in discomfort.

We’ve been lucky to have days upon days
without being taken, but I was just startled from
a loud knock at the door...

By: Daniel Simpson
Park Ridge Middle School
Photo by: Anthony Agueldo
Bergenfield High School
Together

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By: Kiara Webber
Hackensack High School
Photo by: Amun Mahmood & Gian Carlo ParraSanchez
Bergenfield High School