

Aly Dorner

Arizola, Grade 4, Ms. Palmer

You are outside on the community basket ball court when some one comes up behind you and starts yelling at you and calling you names. A crowd is starting to form, and then he starts punching you and kicking you. Everyone is cheering. "Loser, fight back, Stacker!" You are crying and whimpering with pain. That is racism and it needs to stop.

Racism is terrible. Sometimes people aren't treated fairly because of their skin color and they get beat up and get called names. And some people don't even get jobs because their skin type. A long time ago racism was worse, African Americans weren't allowed in restaurants and they had to use a different drinking fountain. They had to sit on the back of the bus, and sometimes they couldn't go to school at all because of their skin color. But nowadays things are better, but sometimes African Americans are still treated unfairly. Treat everyone the way you want to be treated.

If people aren't safe, that ruins a perfect community. A perfect community is where people are safe and happy. They are treated fairly and no one gets hurt. But racism keeps my dreams from happening. The way we can help stop it is to treat everyone fairly and keep everyone safe.

Laura Litchfield

Central High School, 10th grade

Dear Unit 7 School District,

I am writing on behalf of my experiences in your schools. I would like to talk of some racial issues that I endured during my seven years of attending your schools. I am writing this letter because previous attempts to explain and express myself seemed to go unnoticed.

Elementary school was a definite struggle for me. I was insecure and not sure of my identity. I had some learning challenges and since I am half black that was double trouble for me. Also, my classes and the staff were all white, with the exception of my 5th grade class. Even before I knew it, I was breaking barriers. My way of overpowering not so obvious racial issues was to act out in class. When I felt embarrassed, angry, or just confused, I hid under my desk or did some random actions that would send teachers up the wall. One time I was sent to the office and I wouldn't talk. I was also sent to the conference room and went under the table. My Mom was often called in to deal with me.

Instead of asking why, I'm going to tell you how I felt from the bottom of my heart. Now that I look back I can say that I was hurt. Hurt by the hidden racism that I been unnoticed for so long. Hurt that my racial identity wasn't recognized and affirmed. Hurt that learning about black history or why it's so important to learn about cultures other than white

wasn't emphasized. Hurt that I had to constantly wonder about racial issues. Hurt that you worked into my head that race doesn't need to matter. But, I can't go back in time. That's why I have a dream.

I have a dream that ALL schools can be racially accepting and understanding. I have a dream that schools are fun and safe learning environments for all students no matter what age, color, or how fast they can solve math problems.

I can't make you change. I can only tell you how I felt and what can be done to help. Here are some ideas:

1. Hire people of color.
2. Bring guest speakers in to classes who can teach about different cultures and backgrounds.
3. Be sure to have more than white people put up on the walls.
4. Do more with Black History Month and more throughout all of American history. There is no law saying that black history month actually expires after a month. Feel free to catch up with the rest of society.
5. Have clubs that help students learn more about different cultures.
6. Listen to what students of color have to say. Build relationships with all students.
7. Recognize what racism is. Understand white privilege.
8. Know that racism is wrong. Know how racism hurts. And get over it. And, I think ALL of these ideas would help ALL of your students.



Winning art entry by Shruti Topudurti, Grade 9, University High School, Ms. Suslick

Destiny Burden, Grade 5, BTW, Ms. Middleton

THE ENVIRONMENT

The environment is the community of the world.

Sarah Stelzer, Grade 4, Leal, M? Huff

DIGITAL DIVIDE

In the long run, being on the wrong side of the digital divide can affect a person's future.

John Seyler, Grade 11, UHS, Mrs. Hogan-Chan

No student should have a learning disadvantage because of minimal access to technology.

Blakd Donaldson, Grade 11, UHS Mr.s Hogan-Chan



Tracy Thy Tran, Jreun
Elementary School, N

hangs above my middle school, and also, my community.

Omeed Miraftab-Salo

Grade 5, Booker T. Washington Elementary, Mrs. Mayer

Thousands of people are hurt and exploited because of a system of classifying people into unfair racial categories. This system unjustly regards of European descent as "better," than blacks and Latinos everyday. Sadly, this happens in every community and is affecting ours too. I believe our community can become one of the few who are fighting against it.

Step 1, as the public we need to raise awareness about racism. Everyday many people are hurt and abused simply because of their race. Their lives are deeply affected by this whether it's in school, work, or in their neighborhood. Our residents need to talk and alert people to the fact that this is happening in our society. Many people don't know that there still is prejudice in their district!

Step 2, as a group we can speak out. If people don't know how this is wrong, they can't react to it. . . . This year I went to Detroit, Michigan to the 2nd annual U.S. Social Forum. It showed me how much we can achieve by coming together to fight. One of the workshops in the Social Forum took some

Kathy Liu

Senior at [unclear] High School, [unclear] State

Over the past few months, I have been thinking about the impact that our environment has on our lives. It is not just about the weather, but about the quality of life that we experience every day. From the air we breathe to the water we drink, the environment is all around us, and it is all part of the same system. We need to take care of our environment if we want to have a better future for ourselves and for the generations to come.

One of the most important things we can do to protect our environment is to reduce, reuse, and recycle. This means using less of what we don't need, reusing what we can, and recycling what we can't reuse. It is a simple idea, but it can make a big difference. We can also conserve energy and water, and use public transportation or carpooling to reduce our carbon footprint.



Painting by [unclear], [unclear] High School, [unclear] State

Cynthia Nyanika

Senior at [unclear] High School, [unclear] State

As a senior, I have many responsibilities and I am proud to take on these challenges.

One of my responsibilities is to help my classmates with their homework. I enjoy helping them because it allows me to review the material myself and I can help them understand it better. I also like to help them with their projects and assignments. I know that I am helping them to succeed and that is a great feeling.

Another responsibility I have is to be a good role model for my younger siblings. I want to show them that I can be a responsible and successful person. I want to help them to reach their goals and to become the best that they can be.

I also have to take care of my own responsibilities. I have to go to school every day and do my homework. I have to work every day after school and on weekends. I have to take care of my family and my friends. I have to be a good person and to do the right thing. I know that I am responsible for my own actions and for the actions of those around me.

I am proud of all that I have accomplished and I am excited for the future. I know that I will continue to grow and to learn from my experiences. I will continue to help others and to be a good person. I will continue to be a senior at [unclear] High School and I will continue to be a student at [unclear] State.

Curia Diney

Senior at [unclear] High School, [unclear] State

I am a senior at [unclear] High School and I am proud to be a member of the [unclear] team. I have been on the team for [unclear] years and I have learned a lot from my coaches and my teammates. I have learned how to work hard and to be a team player. I have learned how to overcome adversity and to never give up. I have learned how to be a leader and to inspire others. I have learned how to be a professional and to take care of my responsibilities. I have learned how to be a good person and to do the right thing.

I am excited to be a senior and to represent my school and my state. I am excited to be a member of the [unclear] team and to compete at the [unclear] level. I am excited to be a leader and to inspire others. I am excited to be a professional and to take care of my responsibilities. I am excited to be a good person and to do the right thing.

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of the racist all-white neighborhoods in the city and rented out houses. Then, they gave them to mixed and black families. Two months later, many people's views in that neighborhood changed for the good. This method not only costs next-to nothing. But also, it is a lot more efficient in getting large groups of people to come together and fight injustice compared to other ways.

Step 3, help and encourage those who are guilty to stop. Instead, forgive them and help them to cease to continue doing it. We must not shout and accuse them of prejudice, and simply acknowledge it and go on. Also, we must HELP them change their selves for the better. It is our job to encourage and change and support people who are making this change of character.

Elena Newmark

Grade 10, Urbana High School, Ms. Dahlke

Since I was little, I have loved food; I have also been lucky enough to be able to eat amazing food. I have been blessed to have access to the Urbana Farmer's Market, and the wonderful community of farmers and vegetables that come together every Saturday morning. But...



to all help to build a safer, more
compassionate neighborhood.

Cynthia Nyemitei

Grade 10, Centennial High School, Mr. Maroon

I dream of a society where teenage pregnancy and single parenthood isn't a norm.

Teenage pregnancy has become a major problem in our society. It is very important to recognize the factors influencing teen pregnancies. Family structure plays a very important role in an adolescent's life. Most teenagers live under unstable family situations which may at times lead to lack of love and affection, causing teens to seek for external love and warmth.

Another factor is coming from a broken home. Teenagers who come from broken families often feel rejected. They get torn between going back and forth to please one parent or the other.

Sexual abuse and rape could also be a possible factor influencing teen pregnancies. Teenagers, especially females who fall victim to sexual abuse feel worthless and have low self esteem. They begin to have a different mindset of sexual behavior, which makes them oblivious to the dangers of having unprotected sex with various partners. Adolescents who were born to teen mothers are more likely to have a baby in their teens. It is very difficult to break the cycle of teen pregnancy in a particular family.

I have a dream, a dream of a society where teen pregnancy is very rare. This dream of mine cannot be realized without each and everyone's dedication. Please help me pass this message on to a friend. If you are a mother how much does your daughter know you care? If you are a father how much love do you show your daughter? Does she know how much you care about her future? Maybe yes, but what if NO! Then she probably might be on the journey of becoming a statistic.

Curtis Chung

Grade 5, Willey Elementary School

A problem of my community is air pollution. A few years back, my hometown in Southern Vietnam was severely polluted. The ground was covered in a thick layer of smog. People wore crude masks to cope with the smell and the water in little streams could easily be mistaken as being polluted. In a horrific experience, I studied about it. Sometimes you may read or hear that there's a lot of pollution you don't see.

Toxic waste is a huge factor in air pollution. One way to dispose of toxic waste is to put it in a container and have it buried. If the containers would leak, the toxic waste would pollute the ground water. People in the community had to move away.

Air pollution: Most living things need oxygen contained in the air. The air you breathe can have harmful pollutants.

You could probably prevent air pollution by going on the bus or not using a car.

Water pollution: You might think you have plenty of water, right? Go to the tap and turn on the water. The rest is contaminated. Only less than 1% is available. That's not clean. Dumping waste into clean water can be polluted by chemicals, soil, industrial waste and sewage.

My dream is to have a clean community. I want to ride my bike to your next destination, have a clean environment, and don't throw stuff in a nearby stream. It makes a huge difference.

Aly Dorner

Barkstall, Grade 4, Ms. Palmer

You are outside on the community basket ball court when some one comes up behind you and starts yelling at you and calling you names. A crowd is starting to form, and then he starts punching you and kicking you. Everyone is cheering, "Loser, fight back, Blackie!" You are crying and whimpering with pain. That is racism and it needs to stop.

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Laura Litchfield

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Winning art entry by Shruai Ripudari, Grade 9 High School, Ms. Sauter

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