

Learn how Dr. King's holiday took much toil plus reflect on today. Read pages 3, 4.



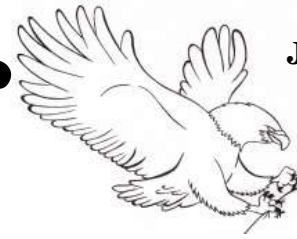
Teacher uses students' creativity to celebrate Black History Month. Read page 7.



Basketball legend's death, fires, virus start 2020 tragically. Read page 8.



# The Eagle Flyer



January/February 2020

Kennedy High School  
422 Highland Avenue  
Waterbury, Conn. 06708  
Volume XVII, Issue V

## Promoting awareness: Black History Month

By Chevelle Shepherd  
Correspondent

*Images show history*

"I want them to ask questions. I put the picture of the lynching and some kids felt uncomfortable. I want them to feel uncomfortable so they'll ask questions."

This was what Mrs. Ortiz, guidance counselor, said about what she wants students to walk away with when they see the bulletin board she created in front of the Guidance Office to commemorate Black History Month.

The board includes pictures of Jim Crow laws, pictures of segregated water fountains, and signs outside a store to illustrate they would not serve black customers.

Every year during February, the achievements of African Americans in the United States are celebrated. The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), known today as the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History (ASALH), first sponsored a National Negro History week in 1926, choosing the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas.

The event inspired schools and communities nationwide to organize local celebrations, and in the years to follow mayors of cities across the country begin issuing proclamations recognizing Negro History Week. In 1976, President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month.

Every year since 1976 each president assigns a theme. The 2020 theme is African Americans and the Vote, honoring the Nineteenth Amendment (1920) granting women the right to vote and the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) giving black men the right to vote, according to www.history.com.

Even though February is set aside for this specific reason, some believe the value for the month has declined.

"Every time I do a (bulletin) board, I want to get the kids to think. And learn something new about Black History Month, because unfortunately we don't learn our history in school," Ortiz said. "I think we don't do enough to celebrate to make kids and adults aware and I feel like by this month being assigned, that most people feel that it is enough and I don't feel like it is. Black History Month is the shortest month of the year and really, it should be 365 days of the year."

Photo by A. Cuevas/staff



**AWARENESS** The bulletin board outside of the Guidance Office, seen above, was created by guidance counselor Mrs. Ortiz, who said she hopes students will view images, ask questions and hopefully gain more awareness.



## Cyr honors family, city during event

By Dr. Cybart-Persenaire  
Faculty Adviser

*Wilby grad recalls motivation from city*

On a cold winter night standing by an unheated swimming pool, a long time Kennedy teacher and All-American diver evoked warm memories of the city YMCA, his parents' sacrifice, and his siblings, wife's and children's support during a stellar athletic career leading to Wilby's natatorium being named in his honor Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2020.

"I want to thank my Mom for driving me to practice every day, and especially for keeping my supper in the oven warm for me," Mr. Gilman 'Gil' Cyr, science department chair, told the crowd, which included his mother. "And my Dad, who is no longer with us, for his emotional and financial support throughout my career."

Cyr, a 1972 Wilby graduate and Naugatuck Valley League diving champion, was told he would receive a full scholarship, valued at \$200,000, to the University of Wisconsin only if he finished in the top twelve at the NCAA Championships in 1973. After eight rounds of dives, Cyr was 13th.

"13th place goes home with nothing," he said. "I realized my whole career, and life, came down to this one crucial dive. I began to reflect upon where I came from, and the great classmates I had at Wilby, who always encouraged me. I reflected on the many years my Mom transported me to practice, on the many Saturdays I devoted to diving; on all the many sacrifices I had made to get to this moment."

Cyr's final dive put him in 11th place, earning the scholarship, NCAA All-American title, and in his words, making him "a true son of Wilby and Waterbury," he said.

Cyr also thanked his wife of 34 years along with his four



**CHAMPION** (Top photo) All American diver Mr. Gil Cyr, Kennedy's science department chair, speaks at the podium during the Jan. 14, 2020 ceremony naming the Wilby H.S. pool in his honor. Behind him are, from left, Joe Parisi (Pres. Wilby Alumni), Larry Butler (State Rep.), Ron Napoli (State Rep.), Elizabeth Brown (Commissioner), Joe Bernal (acting principal Wilby), Chuck Pagano (Pres. BOE), and Alan Piccolo (Wilby athletic director).

Photos by AG Persenaire

children: Kaitlin, Tim, Patrick, and Peter; his two older brothers "who paved the way;" and his hometown.

"I also want to thank the City of Waterbury for providing me with a YMCA and Boy's Club, so that I was able to go somewhere in those critical hours after school," Cyr said. "(And) for providing me with a diving coach named Jim Garrett, who not only was a very gifted man, but one of the most generous and selfless people I have ever known."

Following the ceremony, guests were ushered upstairs to a decorated section of the Reggie O'Brien gymnasium where Wilby students served appetizers, salad, pasta, meatballs, desserts, and cake. Before the ceremony ended, however, Cyr reflected on what this dedication meant to him.

"This dedication is about showing and teaching our youth that goals and dreams can be attained in a healthy way," he said. "Dreams can come true when you work hard at something in an honorable way. It doesn't have to be about sports; it could be about painting, acting, music, being a parent, plumbing, education...where ever your passion lies."

## Enroll in community college for free: new program debuts in 2020

By Aaliah Martinez  
Correspondent

*First-year college students must complete FAFSA by July 15 to receive full tuition at any of 12 schools*

First-year college students get to enroll in any of the 12 Connecticut community colleges free of charge if they graduate high school, complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by July 15, 2020, attend full time, and maintain good academic grades beginning Fall 2020.

"The free college program was approved by the General Assembly earlier this year," and took effect January 2020, according to thehartfordcourant.com newspaper website.

This opportunity allows students of all ages to take advantage of community college, earn degrees and have all fees paid.

People who attend college normally fill out FAFSA and still have to pay any left over fees. With the new PACT initiative, all someone has to do is fill out FAFSA, and PACT will cover your college financial fees.

PACT stands for "Pledge to Advance Connecticut through a unified, consistent, community college system," according to the program website ct.edu/pact.

Community college enrollment rates have been falling. With PACT "it's expected to boost enrollment of the community colleges," according to CTPOST.com.

Will the program be able to sustain itself?

It depends on its financial state and how much money the state has to fund this.

Since this opportunity is only available to 'freshmen' or first-year students who have graduated high school, is it fair to students already enrolled in community college?

"I wouldn't say it's unfair, it is a shame (enrolled students) can't take advantage of it," said guidance counselor Mrs. Ortiz.

To be eligible for PACT funding, you must qualify for these five conditions, according to ct.edu/pact:

1. Be a Connecticut high school graduate (GED and home schooled students also qualify).

2. Be attending college for the first time.
3. Fill out FAFSA; accept all financial awards.
4. Attend community college full-time (12+ credits/semester).
5. Enroll, then remain in good academic standing.

If students are struggling to complete FAFSA, they can go to nearby Naugatuck Valley Community College (NVCC) and visit the school's financial aid office for free help.

"I recommend going to the school (for assistance)," said guidance counselor Mrs. Mulligan.

Students can also contact Mrs. Blayre Millo for FAFSA assistance at (203)-575-8079 or at bmillo@nvcc.commnet.edu.



**INTERNATIONAL DAY RETURNS**  
Representing Guyana (right) Friday, Dec. 20 for the 15th annual International Day in the Jack Taglia gym are from left, Joshua Saliva, Darshanie Maistry, Liomy Jimenez, and Juliet Padilla. Representing Italy (below) are from left, Elizabeth Dolloff, Nadia Evon and Kelsey Goldbach. Bottom far right photo shows most event participants.



**SCHOOL SPIRIT** Representing Mexico (above) Friday, Dec. 20, 2019 are from left, Brianna Gasior, Hailee Fontanez, Alejandra Ortiz, Liset Tepi, Michell Tapan, and Cindy Flores. Representing Peru (right) are, from left, Jahnay Rivers, Amaryllies Rivera, Justina Schofield, Angela Smith, Ymani Caban, Yvonne Gonzalez, and Tyshon Wilson.



## Enthusiasm evident in 15th year

By Josephine Perez  
Business Manager and Staff Writer

### International Day Dec. 20, 2019 yields many good memories

International Day has been annually anticipated since 2004 and celebrated its 15th year Friday Dec. 20, 2019 featuring a total of 24 tables set up with different cultural foods, desserts, objects, posters with pictures and facts from diverse countries. The event was celebrated with ethnic music, and started off with seniors who visited second period, juniors third period, sophomores fourth period, and freshmen sixth period.

The freshmen got to experience their very first International Day, and shared positive feedback on their first taste of this grand Kennedy event.

“The food, the fun, I love it!” said freshman Matteo Beaulieu.

His peers Kimberly Petrillo, Theresa Walters and Mia Epps shared the same enthusiasm regarding how they felt about their

first International Day.

“It’s interesting - a little hectic - but fun. However, I wish there were more food,” said Walters, and Epps agreed.

What were some highlights of the event?

“The food, dances and the different styles of clothing,” said Petrillo.

While freshmen are just getting started, the Class of 2020 is saying goodbye to their final International Day so bittersweet moments were shared by seniors who have cherished memories from previous years.

“I feel sad, it’s my senior year. I wish I’d participated more my previous years,” said Melany Junco, who represented Brazil.

Seniors Redjan Cipi and Erika Mecka, who represented Ireland and Albania, both agreed that their last International Day was “kind of sad, I’ll miss it in college

because we probably won’t have something like this,” said Cipi, while Mecka agreed.

Another student mentioned years of memories.

“I’m glad I was able to experience this my last three years; it was a good experience,” said Camila De La Cruz.

Senior Anna Alvarez said she believed Kennedy celebrated this with a bang as she was excited to see “a lot more people active this year with International Day.”

This year was the first year since the 2020 class has been at Kennedy that Student Council held a competition for the best setup, best food and best overall representatives.

As for Kennedy’s favorites, Guyana won best setup, while Jamaica won best food and best overall.

Photos by J. Perez /staff

## Administrators candid about cancelling Fall pep rally: safety matters

By Natalie Dames and Aaliyah Cuevas  
Staff Writer and Correspondent

Turning screams of school spirit and glory into an empty, deserted gym.

The decision to cancel the annual pep rally, held the half day before Thanksgiving and scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 27, 2019 was a safety decision in vice principal Mr. Gwiazdoski and principal Mr. Johnston’s eyes.

So why was it cancelled?  
“(Due to) yesterday and several events yesterday,” said Gwiazdoski, who was interviewed Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2019.

These events included several fights and three

food fights.

“It was cancelled because yesterday specifically many students were out of hand in the cafe throwing things in all three cafes and several fights,” Gwiazdoski said. “When we have situations like that it’s not a good thing to have something like (the pep rally).”

While the annual, traditional pep rally was cancelled, there were rumors swirling that other events such as the senior trips would also be cancelled but Johnston debunked those rumors.

“No, the senior trips are strictly rumors at this point. We are not looking to ruin the experience of students at Kennedy, that would be more of an individual punishment,” said Johnston

Former pep rally advisor and Spanish teacher Mrs. Gianelli agreed with the cancellation.

“It was the smartest decision because the school was essentially out of control,” she said.

So was this the last straw for teachers and administrators?

“There was no last straw. It wasn’t a matter of a few students but then you have 100 students crowding around videotaping (and) it is a major problem,” said Johnston

So how do students feel about this?

“Personally I didn’t really care. I don’t have school spirit; also, it was the right thing to do,” said senior Yuliana Vasquez.

At least one student athlete felt differently.

“I was a little upset because it’s my last year to play sports. I waited four years to run out (at the pep rally). It was my last year to say good bye to volleyball. It was ruined. Should have been a senior year thing only,” said senior Jalissa Robles. “It was kind of unfair but necessary because whose gonna control (a thousand) kids when they can’t control a few hundred from café?”

Johnston echoed Robles’s statements.

“I feel sorry for our sports teams,” he said.

Moral of the story, moving forward, as Johnston said:

“Let’s not make a mountain out of a molehill.”

## Fasting for social justice

Continued from page 8

practice of untouchability. His health took a turn for the worse. He was released from jail and diagnosed with appendicitis. Gandhi then embarked upon an all-India tour, collecting funds for the untouchability cause.

**07-13 August, 1934:** An irate reformer attacked an opponent of the Harijan upliftment movement with a lathi. Started fast to atone.  
**03-06 March, 1939:** For the breach of promise by the Rajkot ruler.  
**12-13 Nov. 1940:** Fasted for two days for minor thefts in the Ashram.  
**05-07 May 1941:** Because of communal riots in Bombay and Ahmedabad.

**29 June 1941:** For communal unity.

**10-03 March 1943:** In protest against Government’s propaganda that the responsibility of disturbances after Quit India resolution was that of Congress. Thereafter, in 1943, a year after the Quit India movement started, Gandhi undertook a 21-day fast. This was in response to the Viceroy’s insistence that the Indian National Congress was responsible for the disturbances of 1942 and that Gandhi

admit to it; in response, Gandhi fasted. Five years later, India became free of the British. The ensuing cholera outbreaks that erupted all over the country tested Gandhi’s cherished dream of Hindu-Muslim unity. He wasn’t in Delhi when the tri-color went up on the ramparts of the Red Fort. He was touring in Bengal trying to fight the raging fires. Ultimately, in Calcutta in September, Gandhi, who was now almost 78 years old, started his third fast unto death, declaring he’d eat only if the carnage stopped. The city was shocked and four days later, people from various parties handed Gandhi a signed declaration forsaking rioting and violence.

**15 August 1947:** Against partition of the country.

**01 to 03 Sept. 1947:** For communal harmony.

Three months later, in the coldness of January 1948, the Mahatma declared his fourth and last fast unto death. This one lasted six days and was broken after people promised they would not quarrel and kill. A few days later, Gandhi was killed. His four fasts unto death were all undertaken not against the government of the time but to persuade his own countrymen to adhere to social justice.

Dateline of the fasts unto death:

**In 1918:** For an increase in the wages of mill workers in Ahmedabad.

Lasted four days.

**In 1932:** For joint electorates for the entire Hindu populace rather than separate electorates for untouchables. Lasted six days.

**In 1947:** For communal harmony. Lasted four days.

**In 1948:** For communal harmony. Lasted six days.

In the words of Gandhi, “The light of the world will illuminate within you when you fast and purify yourself.”

The fasting tactics of Gandhi are still relevant. Anna Hazare started a hunger strike 5 April 2011 to exert pressure on the Indian government to enact a stringent anti-corruption law. The Lokpal Bill 2011 as envisaged in the Jan Lokpal Bill, for the institution of an ombudsman with the power to deal with corruption in public places. The fast led to nationwide protests in support. It ended 9 April, a day after the government accepted Hazare’s demands. The government issued a gazette notification on the formation of a joint committee, consisting of government and civil society representatives, to draft the legislation. Gandhi’s legacy is still immortal.

References:

1) M. K. Gandhi : Ethics of Fasting, Indian Printing Works, Lahore 1944. 2) Gokhale B.G: Indian Thought- Through The Ages. Asian Publishing House, Bombay 1961.



## How do you feel about Wilby's pool being named after Mr. Cyr?

By Jessinya Severino  
Features Editor



"That's pretty cool honestly. He even got a college scholarship from (his talent)."  
Jeremiah LeBraque, freshman, former swimmer



"I think it's awesome. It's such a huge honor."  
Mrs. Gervais, English teacher, former swimmer, Special Olympics swim coach



"He deserves it. He's a really cool teacher and he's dedicated to his passion."  
Brandon Walters, junior, swim team member, girls' swim team manager



"It's great they're naming the pool after Mr. Cyr. It's not only an honor to Mr. Cyr but it's an honor to the entire school. It's something to aspire to."  
Nathan Meglio, junior, a swim team captain



"I think it's a great honor."  
Mr. Poulter, guidance counselor, former swimmer, North End M.S./Wilby H.S. girls' swim coach



"I found that really good because we all know him. He deserves it too because he's been a teacher at Kennedy for so long, so he deserves this recognition."  
Yasin Azizoglu, senior, a swim team captain

## Student theatre prepares for 'horror' show: see Little Shop April 3-5

By Jessinya Severino  
Features Editor

*Seniors eager to perform in last show before they graduate*

"On this day we all need laughs."  
These words by Mr. Shelby Davis, Kennedy graduate and director of the musical Little Shop of Horrors, to be performed by the student theatre in the auditorium April 3 and 4 at 7 p.m. and April 5 at 2 p.m., hint at what audiences have in store for them. So what else is Little Shop of Horrors about?

"Little Shop of Horrors is about a mean florist and innocent people, with a naive worker who falls in love with a ditzzy girl, and he finds a wonderful plant that happens to like eating people and then everybody dies," said Ms. Pape, the choir teacher and music director, jokingly.

The musical has many songs that will keep people entertained. It contains all different types of characters as well.

"Seymour is an average kid who lives in a city called Skid Row, which is a poor city," said sophomore Jose Mateo, who plays the role of Seymour.

The students show their talents and determination in this musical at every practice, and some have an affinity for theater.

"I auditioned because I love theater and musicals, and I just love doing what I do on that stage," said Ahmad Tate, a sophomore, who is also helping choreograph, and plays a business man in the musical.

Student theatre has several seniors who will be graduating in June 2020, leaving the group and the stage soon.

"What better way to go out than to be in this show with all of my favorite people," said Samantha Valle, a senior who plays Audrey. "I am looking forward to working hard to make this my best role ever."

Each cast member feels that each of their roles is what makes the musical.

"The ensemble is not named like the lead characters, but it is important as it (helps) to create a feel of a city, which is our setting," said Alura Levy, a senior who plays a customer in the musical.

Expect the best from the musical with all of the hard work the cast has been putting into it.

"I unwind my mind and I really use 'singing my heart out on stage' as a vice," said Christy St. Juste, who plays Crystal.

### Little Shop of Horrors Cast

**Seymour** Jose Mateo / Luis Quinones  
**Audrey** Samantha Valle  
**Mr. Mushnik** Imael Izquierdo  
**Orin Dentist** Luis Quinones / Bryan Acosta  
**Ronnette** Heidi Atuaful  
**Crystal** Christy St. Juste  
**Chiffon** Hailee Fontanez  
**Mr. Berstein/Wino #2** Ahmad Tate (Asst. Choreographer)  
**Skip Snip** Bryan Acosta / Jose Mateo  
**Mrs. Luce** Lilliana Kollar  
**Patricia Martin** Ariel Pierre  
**Voice of Audrey II** Thomas Bishop  
**Audrey II Puppeteer/Wino #1** Brendan Dodd  
**Derelects, Customers, Ensemble** Jeremiah Deaquino (Interviewer), Jessinya Loranitis (Customer #2)  
**Urchin Woman Group #2** Ariel Pierre - Alura Levy

## Recognizing Dr. King with his own holiday took very long, hard road

By Chevelle Shepherd and Dana Ridley  
Correspondents

*Democratic Congressman John Conyers would introduce bill for holiday year after year*

Imagine someone saying a day honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. costs too much money, or that he's not important enough? It's not fiction; it's fact.

In 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. Four days after the assassination, Congressman John Conyers introduced the idea of a federal holiday to honor King's life, but no action was taken.

When it was brought to the House, opponents argued that a paid holiday for federal employees would be too expensive and that a holiday to honor a private citizen would go against a longstanding tradition. At the time only two people had a national

holiday in the United States: George Washington and Christopher Columbus.

In 1983 Republican Senator Jesse Helms submitted a 300-page document that alleged King's associations with Communists. Along with Helms, Republican Senator John Porter East also led the opposition to the holiday and questioned if King was important enough to receive such an honor.

Even though there were people who opposed the idea, the Southern Christian Leadership Congress (SCLC), was able to present Congress with a petition with more than three million signatures in support of the holiday. Congress still took no action.

The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC)

collected six million signatures as well as President Jimmy Carter's endorsement. For 15 years the CBC, along with King's widow Coretta Scott King, continued to advocate and help Conyers introduce his bill for Dr. King's holiday year after year.

In 1980, musician Stevie Wonder wrote a song titled "Happy Birthday." The lyrics stated, "I just never understood How a man who died for good Could not have a day that would Be set aside for his recognition... And we all know everything That he stood for time will bring For in peace our hearts will sing Thanks to Martin Luther King."

It immediately became a hit. The success of the song brought the public's support

for the holiday, making a major difference.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed the holiday into law, and the first federal holiday was celebrated in 1986. It took years before the day was observed in every state.

Several southern states combined Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with holidays that uplift confederate leaders like Robert E. Lee, whose birthday is January 19. It was not until 2000 that every state in the Union finally observed the holiday. Now the day is officially a federal holiday held the third Monday in January. Most schools and businesses are closed, according to timeanddate.com.

Other sources: Erin Blakemore, www.history.com



## Staff Editorial

### Honor Black History, show appreciation to others this Leap Year

Roses are red, violets are blue, *The Eagle Flyer* has another issue for you!

With stores stocked with boxes of chocolates and Cupid's arrow flying around, Valentine's Day is sure to be full of love and gestures to express your feelings for that special someone, whether a significant other, family member or friend. One way to do something special not just Feb. 14 but every day of the year is to send a handmade card expressing kindness or appreciation. In Valentine's Day history there have been several techniques to create a special card for someone special. A few examples from the book *Hearts, Cupids and Red Roses* by Edna Barth include acrostic, where the first letter of the lines spelled out a person's name; cutout, creating a lace design; pinprick, making designs by pricking holes; and rebus, where drawn images take the place of words. Sometimes a little more effort impresses someone, showing how grateful you are to know him or her. Such cards wouldn't be complete without little greetings or verses within them.

Speaking of, Valentine's Day is not alone as Black History accompanies it in the eventful month of February. 2020's theme for Black History Month is "African Americans and the Vote," according to the Association for the Study of African American Life and History's website. This is the theme since "2020 also marks the sesquicentennial of the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) and the right of black men to the ballot after the Civil War."

This year, there will be an extra day to celebrate Black History Month as 2020 is a Leap Year, meaning February has 29 days instead of 28. Leap years occur, according to NBC News, since "in reality, the solar year is a messy 365.2422 days," not an exact 365 days, which results in having to make up a day every four years to account for the .25 we miss at the end of every 365-day year.

So, although one month of 2020 already zoomed past, be excited for the love and appreciation ahead in the month of February and all the good things awaiting us in the near future.

"Love has nothing to do with what you are expecting to get--only with what you are expecting to give--which is everything."

~Katharine Hepburn



### The Eagle Flyer

*The Eagle Flyer* is published monthly and distributed free of charge to Kennedy High School and the Greater Waterbury community. Our mission is to educate, enlighten and inform our school and community while developing journalism skills in editorial and business areas. *The Eagle Flyer* is a member of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association, the New England Scholastic Press Association and the Journalism Education Association.

School hours: 7:20 a.m. - 1:50 p.m.

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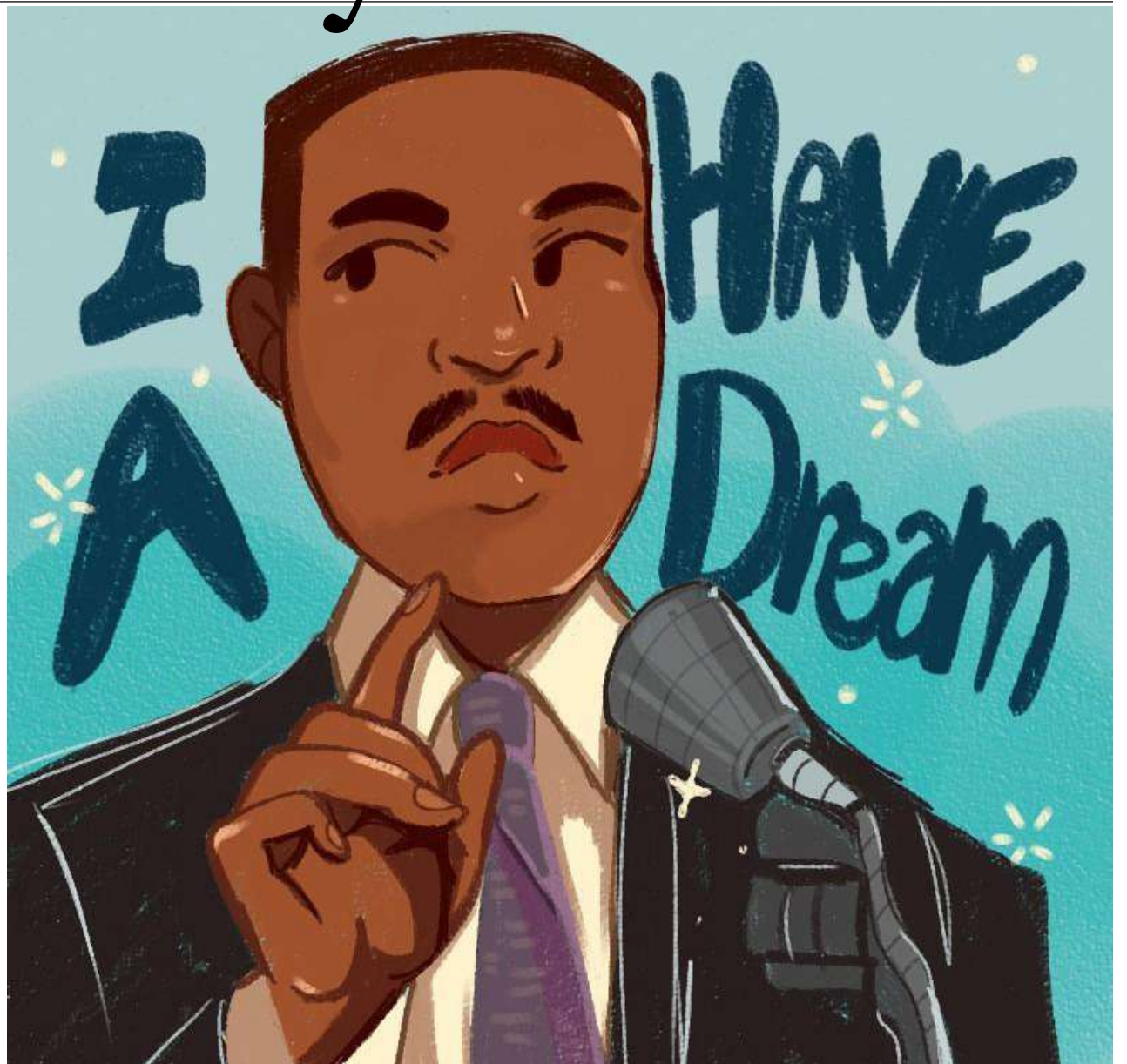
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## Navigating road to realizing King's dream

By Hasim Veliju  
Correspondent

*Arbitrary definitions of race only slow process of unity*

### COMMENTARY

Above a crowd of 250,000 in the history-defining March on Washington in 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. finished his revered and everlasting "I Have A Dream" speech yearning for the day to proclaim to be "Free at last, free at last!" The same immortal contentions read above his gravestone, defining his legacy and role as an American civil rights champion. Though his words are forever ingrained in the American consciousness, one is left to wonder the contemporary validation of King's dream in a particularly divided and tumultuous era of racial rupture and political belligerency.

Following the American Civil War and the nationwide emancipation of slaves, the future of African-American rights were put to trial in the Reconstruction era from 1865-1877. The support for freed blacks and their roles in post-enslavement American society was discarded after early integration efforts. The southern slave aristocracy continued in the form of relentless racial discrimination and subjugation of the black population through Jim Crow Laws. A hundred years later, as American legislation wiped clean its oppressive Jim Crow regulations in the 1960s, socioeconomic factors plaguing black communities became the new racist scapegoat and afflictions in their population.

The Rodney King riots of 1992 demonstrated the depth of the wounds left behind by American racial injustice for centuries. Indeed, it was a display of uniform police brutality and unrestrained frustration towards continued oppression. Police brutality is an ongoing and vital point of contention in modern civil rights activism, ignited especially after the rise of the #BlackLivesMatter movement following the murder of black teenager Trayvon Martin in 2013. Imprisonment, poverty and police brutality endure in black populations, though increasingly contended by conservatives as race relations in the United States take the form of an exceedingly divided and politically charged environment. Social media has had the inadvertent consequence of transforming American domestic issues into reactionary positions. This conflict has been shown in other

recent riots and even police revenge murders taking place in Dallas in 2016.

The vitriol of the current era sees an increasingly partisan engagement in political alignments based on political alignment alone. Americans are told to neglect nuance and instead take positions on the virtue of simply belonging to predetermined sides of debate. The American populace is still conditioned to view race relations as nothing but black and white, in any respects. When Americans refuse to view race outside of the binary, any progress is halted as archaic definitions of race endure in the U.S. consciousness. The progress of civil rights is only regressed through this lack of authenticity and sectarian political artifice. Racial structures have been decided as pseudo-scientific ever since World War II, and to cling to these arbitrary definitions of race only slow the progress of actual unity. Attachments to constructs of whiteness or broad identification as a person of color inherently locks the discussion into the racist paradigm that people such as King worked tirelessly to criticize. Modern society's obsession with identity inevitably led to the intensification of racism as the entire foundational ideology of racism, inaugurated at the onset of modernity, continues to persist. In modern society, identity and race functions as capital.

The condition of minority groups has seen improvements in the current day compared with the segregated and despotic past, but progress still must be made and the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. realized. When Americans are insistent on thinking only in the predefined racist dichotomy of old, injustices encountered by African-American go unanswered by America and driven by identity politics rather than the honor of conviction. Racism cannot be stopped by reform, but rather systematic deconstruction given how deeply rooted it is in the foundation of America and the modern world. Only when people cease to define color as identity and embrace community and tradition as the African-American community has, can King's dream truly become a reality.

“ Only when people cease to define color as identity and embrace community and tradition as the African-American community has, can Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream truly become a reality. ”



# African American inventors impact world with creations

By Nirupama C. Nigam, Ph.D.  
Chemistry teacher

## COMMENTARY

African American History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as African American History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating African American history. This year marks two significant anniversaries impacting voting rights for African Americans.

In 1870, 150 years ago, the 15th Amendment was ratified: "The right of citizens...to vote shall not be denied or abridged...on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." 2020 is also the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment securing women's right to vote. With these momentous anniversaries in mind, the 2020 theme for African American History Month is "African Americans and the Vote," exploring 150 years (and more) of the struggle to ensure African Americans are able to fully participate in U.S. democracy. The theme is set each year by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH).

As the nation recognizes the achievements, contributions and historical journeys of African Americans, it is appropriate to highlight some of the African American inventors who changed the

**NOTEWORTHY** This bulletin board, designed by Mrs. Fann-Pierce and her seventh period class, features successful inventors.

world. Women of color are also highly successful achievers in spite of additional discrimination of gender bias.

Thomas L. Jennings (1791-1859) was the first African American person to receive a patent in the United States, paving the way for future inventors of color to gain exclusive rights to their inventions. Born in 1791, Jennings lived and worked in New York City as a tailor and dry cleaner. He invented an early method of dry cleaning called "dry scouring" and patented it in 1821. People objected to an African American receiving a patent.

At the time, U.S. patent laws said that the "(s)lavemaster is the owner of the fruits of the labor of the slave, both manual and intellectual," meaning slaves couldn't legally own their ideas or inventions, but nothing was stopping Jennings. He had a loophole. He was a free man. Several decades later, Congress extended patent rights to all African Americans, both slaves and free men. Jennings used the money from his invention to free the rest of his family and donate to non-discriminatory causes.

Alexander Miles (1830-1918), was living in Duluth, Minnesota when he designed an important safety feature for elevators: automatic doors. During the 19th century, passengers had to manually open and close doors to both the elevator and its shaft. If a rider forgot to close the shaft door, other people risked accidentally falling down the long, vertical hole. Miles's design, which he patented in 1887, allowed both of these doors to close at once, preventing unfortunate accidents. Today's elevators still employ a similar technology. Miles also patented an electric elevator Oct. 11, 1887. His innovation in the mechanism to open and close elevator doors greatly improved elevator safety. Miles is notable for being a black inventor and successful business person in 19th Century America. He founded The United Brotherhood as a life insurance company that would insure black people, who were often denied coverage at that time. Recessions took a toll on his investments; he and his family resettled in Seattle, Washington. At one time it was believed he was the wealthiest black person in the Pacific Northwest. He died in 1918 and was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2007.

In the 19th century, the average person couldn't afford shoes. This changed thanks to Jan Ernst Matzeliger (1852-1889), an immigrant from Dutch Guiana (modern Surinam) who worked as an apprentice in a Massachusetts shoe factory. Matzeliger invented an automated machine that attached a shoe's upper part to its sole. Once it was refined, the device could make 700 pairs of shoes each day; a far cry from the 50 per day the average worker once sewed by hand.



Photo by A. Cuevas/staff

Matzeliger's creation led to lower shoe prices, making shoes finally within financial reach for the average American.

Countless individuals owe their lives to Charles Richard Drew (1904-1950), the physician responsible for America's first major blood banks. Drew attended McGill University's Faculty of Medicine in Montreal, where he specialized in surgery. During a post-graduate internship and residency, the young doctor studied transfusion medicine and later, while studying at Columbia University, he refined key methods of collecting, processing and storing plasma. In 1940, World War II was in full swing in Europe, and Drew was put in charge of a project called "Blood for Britain." He helped collect thousands of pints of plasma from New York hospitals, and shipped them overseas to treat European soldiers. Drew is also responsible for introducing the use of "bloodmobiles," refrigerated trucks that served as collection centers and transport blood. The following year, Drew developed another blood bank for military personnel under the American Red Cross, an effort that grew into the American Red Cross Blood Donor Service. Drew spent the remainder of his life working as a surgeon and a professor, and in 1943, he became the first African American doctor to be chosen as an examiner for the American Board of Surgery.

Homeowners can rest a little easier, thanks to Marie Van Brittan Brown (1922-1999), a nurse and inventor who invented a precursor to the modern home TV security system. The crime rate was high in her New York City neighborhood. To feel safer, Brown and her husband developed a way for a motorized camera to peer through a set of peepholes and project images onto a TV monitor. The device also included a two-way microphone to speak with a person outside, and an emergency alarm button to notify the police. The Browns filed a patent for their closed-circuit TV security system in 1966, and it was approved Dec. 2, 1969.

George Carruthers (born 1939) is an astrophysicist who spent much of his career working with the Space Science Division of the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) in Washington, D.C. He is most famous for creating the ultraviolet

camera/spectrograph, which NASA used when it launched Apollo 16 in 1972. It helped prove molecular hydrogen existed in interstellar space, and in 1974 space scientists used a new model version of the camera to observe Halley's Comet and other celestial phenomena on the first U.S. space station, Skylab. Carruthers was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2003.

Dr. Patricia Bath (born 1942) revolutionized the field of ophthalmology when she invented a device that refined laser cataract surgery, called the Laserphaco Probe. She patented the invention in 1988, and today she is recognized as the first female African American doctor to receive a medical patent. Bath is a trailblazer in other areas, also. She was the first African American to finish a residency in ophthalmology at New York University; the first woman to chair an ophthalmology residency program in the United States; and she co-founded the American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness. If that weren't enough, Bath's research on health disparities between African American patients and other patients gave birth to a new discipline, "community ophthalmology," in which volunteer eye workers offer primary care and treatment to underserved populations.

If you ever owned the original IBM personal computer, you can partially credit its existence to Mark E. Dean (born 1957). The computer scientist/engineer worked for IBM, where he led the team that designed the ISA bus, the hardware interface that allows multiple devices like printers, modems and keyboards to be plugged into a computer. This innovation helped pave the way for the personal computer's use in office and business settings. Dean also helped in developing the first color computer monitor, and in 1999 he led the team of programmers who created the world's first gigahertz chip. Today, he holds three of the company's original nine patents, and more than 20 overall. Dean was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 1997. He is a professor of computer science at the University of Tennessee.

These revered African American personalities became their own light to combat darkness of discrimination and they have become sources of inspiration for future generations.

## 8 names to know

**Thomas L. Jennings** (1791-1859): first African American to earn a patent

**Alexander Miles** (1830-1918): responsible for safe elevators

**Jan Ernst Matzeliger** (1852-1889): made shoes affordable

**Charles Richard Drew** (1904-1950): enabled blood mobiles, blood banks

**Marie Van Brittan Brown** (1922-1999): designed a TV security system

**George Carruthers** (born 1939): created ultraviolet camera

**Dr. Patricia Bath** (born 1942): refined laser cataract surgery

**Mark E. Dean** (born 1957): got personal computers into offices

# 2010s end with unprecedented film industry change

By Hasim Veliju  
Correspondent

## Big budget productions, franchises dominate while young filmmakers emerge

### COMMENTARY

As the 2010s wrap up for the film industry -- a decade characterized by a mainstream focus on franchise films with a blooming independent filmmaking scene -- film critics and scholars have been reviewing the greatest and most influential films released internationally in the past 10 years.

In mainstream cinema, the film industry became largely defined by a focus on big-budget productions of film franchises based on existing properties. The most apparent are comic book films, which dominated the box office after Disney's historic Marvel Cinematic Universe, a franchise consisting of 22 intertwined films featuring Marvel Comics characters, became the highest grossing film franchise of all time.

As of Dec. 6, 2019, *Avengers: Endgame* was the highest grossing film of all time, making more than \$2.8 billion worldwide according to [www.boxofficemojo.com](http://www.boxofficemojo.com), a site that tracks box office earnings.

The decade saw a resurgence in independent filmmaking, introducing a new generation of rising young film-

makers. Director Ari Aster is credited with helping to revitalize the horror genre after his two horror films *Hereditary* and *Midsommar* were massive successes with audiences and critics alike, with both films touching on serious themes of relationships and grief.

Director Damien Chazelle received widespread praise for his 2014 film *Whiplash*, depicting an abusive music teacher pushing a talented student to his limits. His next film, 2016's *La La Land*, went on to be nominated for a record 14 Academy Awards, with Chazelle becoming the youngest person to win Best Director at 32, according to [www.oscars.org](http://www.oscars.org), the Oscars official site.

Hollywood took a greater focus on representation and diversity in the industry after public outcry over the lack of non-white and female directors and actors. Jordan Peele's 2017 horror film *Get Out* was universally praised for its study of racism and existential adversity. Barry Jenkins became the first African-American to win Best Picture at the Oscars for his 2016 film

*Moonlight*.

Major film franchises like Star Wars and Marvel also took initiative in casting more ethnically diverse characters, and "(w)omen and people of color led movies in record numbers in 2018," according to [www.csmonitor.com](http://www.csmonitor.com), a progressive news outlet.

New styles of filmmaking emerged throughout the decade. Nicholas Winding Refn won Best Director at the Cannes Film Festival, one of the most prestigious in the world, for his 2011 film *Drive*. Its neon aesthetic and 1980s-inspired soundtrack overlaid on its meditative story about an L.A. criminal searching for an escape from his lifestyle helped inspire other filmmakers to adopt a 1980s visual design.

Several films of director Christopher Nolan such as the acclaimed *Interstellar* released in 2014 were noted for being filmed on IMAX cameras, rejecting the digital technology that are commonly used today. Other franchises received widespread success and popularity. Disney's series of live-action remakes of their classic films were box office successes, with *Aladdin*

and *The Lion King* being some of the biggest hits of 2019, according to [www.boxofficemojo.com](http://www.boxofficemojo.com).

Star Wars returned this decade, with Disney releasing a slew of new films in a new sequel trilogy beginning with 2015's *The Force Awakens* and a spinoff series starting with 2016's *Rogue One*, with the former "recapturing the pop energy of the original three films," and becoming the highest grossing U.S. film, according to [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com), a leading global news outlet.

Streaming services changed the way films are made and distributed, with 2018's *Roma* directed by Alfonso Cuarón being one of the first films on Netflix to win major awards internationally.

"As for the cinema, why go there when you can catch a brand-new big-budget Hollywood movie on TV or your phone instead," writes Nicholas Barber of [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com), a British news network.

Other films such as *Mad Max: Fury Road* in 2015 broke typical big-budget sequel conventions, mostly being

“As for the cinema, why go there when you can catch a brand-new big budget Hollywood movie on TV or your phone instead?”

**Nicholas Barber, writer of [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com), a British news network**

filmed with "daredevil, without-a-net practical effects and stunt work," according to [www.esquire.com](http://www.esquire.com), a site covering popular culture.

The 2010s have forever changed the industry and how it functions as a result of technological advancements and progressive efforts to diversify its annual output of content. The coming years can solidify the future of theater chains and how people interact with the mass media after a decade of unprecedented innovations, controversies and financial successes.

"The film industry has been shaken up more in the 2010s than in almost any other decade -- and the shockwaves haven't subsided," according to [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com).



# Visiting Dominican Republic inspires student to write family tribute

By Josephine Perez  
Business Manager and Staff Writer

*Cherishing true value of family sacrifices after seeing mother's childhood home*

COMMENTARY

The highlight of my year, my latest trip to the Dominican Republic, turns into my most memorable of them all: visiting the land my mother called home as a child, reminiscing on who I am because of everything my parents are.

Growing up, I never missed the latest toys to be released. I had every Barbie you could possibly think of, from the Barbie Dreamhouses, American Girl dolls that cost hundreds, to an electric car and scooter, Nintendos: a whole section of my house dedicated to just me and my imagination, sincerely from my parents.

I remember making Christmas lists as long as grocery lists and never not receiving what it was that I wanted. In my early childhood years, I remember feeling like the luckiest kid in the world because my parents rewarded my good behavior with loads of love and toys (I was really just that good).

Unfortunately, I know now that what they gave me as a young child, they never had the chance to experience themselves. Because of everything they never had, I like to think that everything they wished for themselves they gave

to me.

I had decided to take this trip to the Dominican Republic in summer 2019 to reward myself after a tough junior year of high school, to experience the resorts, beaches, and sun of the country, and visit our family home for the first time in a decade. My companion on this trip was my grandmother Gisella, also known as my Mami Viola.

We spent weeks traveling to the most delightful resorts with my aunt, uncle and cousins across the country. This is when I visited my mother's childhood home in Constanza, Dominican Republic (DR). It's one of the few places in the DR where the temperature reached its coolest, with its warm days and chilly nights. Everything was green, the air was crisp, and the town could be seen on the road that came down the mountain we had to drive up in order to drive down from.

Everybody knew each other; we ran into people my grandmother hadn't seen in decades just walking on the town's green. Meeting people my mom grew up with, felt like a piece of my heart was there with me. Seeing the yellow house

off the one busy road, the fence surrounding the property ... it was so Dominican, the details of the curved black metal shaped leaves and flowers on the fence reminded me of the candle holders my mother has in our own home.

Although I wasn't able to physically walk into the home, stopping by put a visual of the fireplace my mom, aunts and uncles always mentioned sitting around on the cold nights, the brick walls they described that made up the fireplace inside. I imagined the five sisters playing with the one Raggedy Anne doll my grandmother made them, reminding me my mom must've dreamed of the childhood that she gave me for herself.

This really made me step back and think to myself, "Wow. My mom really came from nothing and now I feel as though we have everything."

Everything she never had growing up, stability in all aspects of our lives, then I started to think of my father, visiting Cuba and seeing his own childhood home a few years back. I thought, "Two people, from two different countries and cultures, built themselves



**MAKING MEMORIES** The Olivero family in Constanza, Dominican Republic. Starting from the top are Joverly Veras, Jisell Jimenez, Wendy Olivero, Alvaro Olivero, Gisella Olivero, Jordyn Polanco, Roberto Olivero, Jonathan Cabrera, Richard Veras, Nilda Olivero, Jhonny Polanco, Maria Olivero, Alba Olivero, Gisella Olivero, Rocio Olivero, Robert Olivero, Nisbeth Caceres, Johana Olivero, Zendaya Olivero, Ronald Olivero, Josephine Perez (the author), Stephany Polanco, and Rosalva Olivero. Below are two photos taken from a villa that overlooks the town in Constanza, Dominican Republic. Photo by J. Perez/staff

up from nothing, brought together to bring me into this world and I have everything handed to me. My true power is how I decide to go about it."

Throughout this time period, I heard all kinds of stories about the nine Olivero siblings, stories that make sense of the people they are

today. I write this as a tribute to my strong family, to show the appreciation of the greatest gift ever given, the power I hold within myself because of who they are that has shaped me into who I am today and who I am working on becoming.

Photos by J. Perez/staff



## End drama, release energy

By Vivian Bunker  
Commentary Editor

COMMENTARY

A new year means a fresh start, which is exactly what Kennedy needs. We are all aware of what occurred the week of the pep rally which sadly caused its cancellation. If we are going to turn the 2019-2020 school year around something needs to change! If reckless behavior is kept up, other events can be cancelled like prom and class field trips. Uncontrolled behavior of a few students can ruin it for everyone so, everyone needs to take advantage of a new year. For those who get involved in fights or drama, try to remove yourself from toxic environments. If a situation is difficult seek out staff, counselors or teachers, who could help settle the situation.

According to healthline.com, a website dedicated to accurately discussing medical knowledge and giving out advice, "anger is a strong emotion. If left unchecked, it can lead to unhappiness or ... can also cause you to act unreasonably or aggressively." If verbal release isn't enough to ease the current stress, anger and tension in your life, take up a hobby or habit that will. Some examples include exercise, yoga or meditation, or journaling.

The Mayo Clinic Organization claims "physical activity can help reduce stress that can cause you to become angry. If you feel your anger escalating, go for a brisk walk or run, or spend some time doing other enjoyable physical activities." Maybe joining a winter or upcoming spring sport here at Kennedy will do the trick. There is basketball, indoor track, swimming, cheerleading, and more. Maybe watching current holiday Hallmark movies eases your mind and soul--do whatever creates a more positive and clear mindset for you!

Even if stress and frustration haven't taken a toll on you recently, and you just have a little extra free time, consider a new hobby or project. It is never too late to make a difference. Being involved in drama isn't necessary to change your habits for the better. Everyone can help create a happy and fun new year by spreading positivity and kindness; even a simple smile can make someone's day!

If all the negative energy was turned into energy put toward school events and student affairs, school could truly be transformed! So the goal for Kennedy in 2020: less fights and drama, more spirit and fun.

There is no better way to start off a new year than goals and resolutions. According to thrive global.com, a website dedicated to being an influence that could end the epidemic of stress and burnout, "when you create goals, it's crucial to stick to them so you see results and become the best version of yourself." In order to truly maintain and eventually achieve your goals they advise to start small, be intentional, set a deadline, and reward yourself along the way. If true change is desired, discipline and good habits have to be pursued.

Whatever it is you may be pursuing in 2020, let's make 2020 a year to remember (in a good way), not only for Kennedy, but also for everyone and anyone you may encounter. A year seems like such a long time, but here we are again at the beginning of a new one.

*Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right. ~Oprah Winfrey*  
*Be at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let every new year find you a better man. ~Benjamin Franklin*



# “Somebody ought to do something”

By Kimberly Rothen  
Math teacher

## Inaction prompts creative projects for Black History Month

COMMENTARY

Last year, in 2019, a few of my freshmen girls told me how disappointed they were that none of their teachers were “doing anything” for Black History Month, so I told them I understood their point and that I would find something to do.

Unfortunately, it was already mid-February, but I searched and found a project created for Black History Month that provided pages with a famous person’s name and image, and then gave them space to list three facts about that person. I assigned each student in my freshman class a person, but several asked if they could do more than one. I laminated each of the biographies and hung them on the wall outside of my classroom. It was beautiful, and made the students and me proud of our display.

This year, in 2020, I wanted to find a project for not only my freshmen, but for my other classes as well, to celebrate Black History Month. I found some collaborative poster projects that looked like fun.

I’ve always told my students to go ahead and ask a question about what I’m teaching because if they have a question, it is guaranteed that several others in the class have the same question and will benefit by their asking. I had to believe the same thing was happening with the request from several students last year. They probably represented a number of other students who didn’t speak up.

I searched on the Teacher Pay Teachers website and found there is an artist who sells all types of collaborative posters under the name “Art with Jenny K.” I purchased two items and printed them out right before midterms. The posters are made up of up to 36 different pieces. Each student colors a small section, and when pieced together, they create a fabulous (and very large) poster.

As students finished their midterms, I asked them to consider coloring a square for me so we could create something special. Many students were

happy to color a square. I was able to piece them together and add name labels to the first poster by the end of midterm week. I then assigned the quilt project to my freshmen class. Each person was to color, cut out and assemble their assigned person (there were 30 famous people included as part of the project.) Again this year, I had a few students who were so enthusiastic they chose more than one person to work on. My freshman class’s work became the quilt poster also hanging in the Math hallway.

The artist who created the posters I’d used sent an email saying she had been flooded with requests for a collaborative poster commemorating Kobe Bryant. She’d responded to the requests and one was now available at a discount on her website.

My Algebra II classes said they’d love to color a square, so I purchased that as well. After their quiz this past week in early February, many colored a square and I pieced it together Friday after school. Since the Math hallway was already getting full, I asked principal Mr Johnston if there was another place where I could hang the Kobe Bryant poster and he suggested I hang

it by the entrance to the new wing. I think it looks great. You’ll have to take a walk over that way to see it.

What I like best about the posters is that we were all working together to create something larger than something we could do individually. Some of my students who do not typically participate in class activities were active in creating something with their peers, and I hope it gave them a sense of belonging. In addition to this, we are celebrating excellence. Not just any excellence, but excellence of black Americans. Our students are reminded that many people who look like them have paved the way for them, too, to strive for excellence. It’s a beautiful thing.

Now my students have challenged me to find something to do next year to celebrate Hispanic Heritage month, and I have found another collaborative poster by this same artist that will be perfect. You’ll have to stop by at the beginning of next school year to see our creation.

This all started with one student voicing a concern. My initial thought was “SOMEBODY ought to do something about this.” I have to laugh at my response. I’ve found over



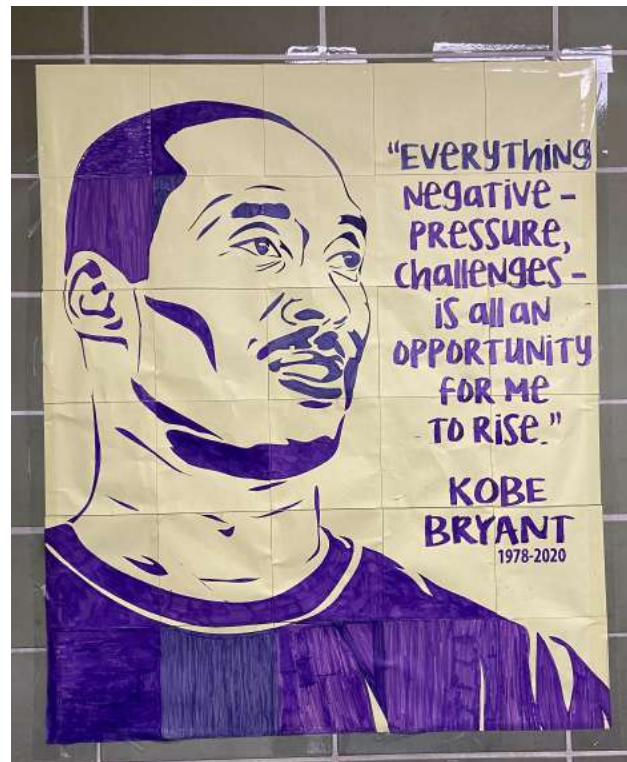
**QUILTING HISTORY** These mini biographies of historical African American figures were designed and pieced together by Mrs. Rothen’s math classes. The quilt is across from room 234.

Photo by A. Cuevas/staff

the years that if there was something I felt strongly enough about to feel that somebody should do something, then that somebody was probably me. I’ve still got a lot of growing and learning to do, but I’m glad that a student spoke up last year and helped me to look at my behavior and decide that I could do better in this area.

Fortunately, there was a lot of material readily available for me to use to easily make a change. Stop by and see our fabulous creations and be inspired! Maybe 20 years from now one of our students will be included in a poster hanging on the school walls. I sure hope so!

Photos by A. Cuevas/staff



**LEGACY** This Kobe Bryant poster, in front of the new wing, was also collaboratively created by Mrs. Rothen’s math classes.



**WALL OF FAME** Math teacher Mrs. Rothen was inspired by freshmen students one year ago to research activities for Black History Month, so again this year, she and her classes created collaborative posters honoring African Americans and their achievements.

## Allied Health offers vast opportunities

By Kaelyn Wright  
Staff Writer

### St. Mary’s Hospital embraces Kennedy students

COMMENTARY

In today’s society there is a vast and rapidly growing demand for experts in medicine. To assist this demand, there are specific programs offered by the Waterbury public school district, and one of the most common programs is known as Allied Health.

Allied Health is a two-year sequential program designed to give high school students an introduction to the health care field. Students join this program their junior year following an application process. As a first-year student, it can be difficult to adjust but students involved said they enjoy it.

Despite the challenges, “all you have to do is study and it will be easier,” said junior Tisha Sam.

Students spend three weeks learning at St. Mary’s Hospital in Waterbury, then three weeks studying back at school, and this learning style appeals to some.

“The (Allied Health) classes weren’t as big and it was more one on one with the students,” said senior Joshua Saliva, who said he enjoys the learning style.

When it comes to the students, “St. Mary embraces our students,” said Ms. Micelli, a registered nurse and program instructor who works with Mrs. Costa,

the other program instructor and nurse.

These instructors play a huge role in the students’ lives and future regarding their education. Not only does this program help with students’ future careers, it gives them more hands-on medical experience while they’re still young. The senior curriculum also provides college credit.

Even though this program might be challenging, students “can utilize it as a stepping stone for something bigger,” Micelli said.

Will you use this great opportunity if you’re interested?

## Winter sports play on

Continued from page 8

get good at swimming again and to be with friends,” said Aldin Sabovic, a junior.

“I was encouraged by my friend Brandon (Walters, a junior) but my motivation was to improve my fitness,” said Kevin Demiraj, a junior.

Once you join the team, support is present.

“I enjoy the team a lot because we are all supportive of each other during practices and during swim meets,” said Balikian.

### Girls’ basketball gains new coach

New year, new coach?

With 2020 comes the remaining part of winter sports but the girls’ varsity basketball team was in for a surprise in late fall 2019: they were starting the season with a brand

new coach, and players’ reactions have been positive.

“This year we have a new coach and lost two others. Our previous coach was Mrs. Jennifer Deeley (now a vice principal at WAMS) and Nidare, and our new coach is the gym teacher Ms. Burke. I’m sure our team can get used to the coaching style,” said Javilet Soto, a senior.

What effect will this change have on the team and their performance?

“It will affect the team in a positive way. Burke knows what’s right and pushes us to get better,” said Victoria Soto, a senior, who also spoke from a personal standpoint. “I think it will definitely affect my performance in a positive way because she’s pushing us as a team to do what we have to do. She’s helping us grow.”

What about other changes in the team?

“The changes in the team were that we are understanding our players better... we will have a good season this year,” said Jazmine Hernandez, a junior.

## Guidance Corner

By Dr. Mikael  
Guidance Counselor

In this issue, Waterbury Superintendent Dr. Ruffin gave her permission for this message from her newsletter to be reprinted.

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT Dr. Verna Ruffin:

Dear Parents, Families and Staff,

I hope you are settling into 2020 well. We expect an exciting and productive year ahead. In a continued effort to strengthen communication, I will publish a quarterly newsletter with valuable information, District happenings and notable achievements.

As we strive together to educate and prepare our students for graduation and beyond, I remain committed to engaging in thoughtful and inclusive dialogue.

We have made progress over the last several months with input from teachers, administrators, parents, the community, and Board of Education. **The Portrait of a Graduate** was produced collectively and our work continues through engaging in a strategic planning process. We have met with the Strategic Planning Steering committee and will now establish sub-committees based upon our direction and needs.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Verna D. Ruffin



### Boys' basketball awaits senior night

By Vivian Bunker  
Commentary Editor

The boys' basketball team is hoping their season doesn't end with their senior night, as they still have the opportunity to qualify for States if they win their game against Torrington Friday, Feb 21, 2020.

"We need one more win to qualify for States," said Synciere Dozier, a sophomore varsity player. "I believe we'll get that win on senior night."

Regardless of the outcome, the season was memorable for some players.

"My season was fun and I got to enjoy playing basketball with all my friends," said Aaron Brioso, a senior

varsity player. "Winning or losing, they still made my basketball season the best it could be."

Sometimes individual accomplishments can fulfill a season, too.

"I dunked on someone this season," said JaQuane Jones, a senior varsity player.

Players who aren't graduating know what to focus on for next year.

"Next season I think we should prepare for things earlier and get our chemistry up," said Dozier.

But for the Class of 2020, Friday night may be their last game.

"Senior night is about to be a movie," said Brioso. "It's going to be a great time to remember."

### Brites, Capozzi break indoor track records

The indoor track and field season is soon coming to a close, with a couple athletes qualifying for State Opens, but otherwise new members are encouraged to join outdoor track which will hold its first practice March 21, 2020.

"Anyone can join the team," said Mr. Nick O'Brien, indoor and outdoor track coach. "I want anyone and everyone."

As for the past indoor season: "We had a lot of good individual performances," said O'Brien.

Some individuals made it to States. "(Chris) Byrd threw 41ft and made States," said O'Brien. "Alex (Brites) broke the record with a 4:35 mile and Christina (Capozzi) broke the school record with 7.42 in the 55 meter dash."

While some individuals thrived, team accomplishment took a toll due to their small size.

"At the end of the season we had around 12 people," said O'Brien.

With outdoor approaching, attendance and acquiring more athletes is key, especially after losing many athletes

from last year's graduating class.

"It's going to be hard to beat last outdoor season as a team," said O'Brien. "For us to be better than we were last season, we need people to show up."

As Tim Notke once said, "hard work beats talent, when talent doesn't work hard."

"I'll take participation over talent," said O'Brien. "Participation is hard to come by nowadays."

Participation will be critical if the team aspires to achieve their goal.

"As a team I want us to win NVLs," said O'Brien.

The coach isn't the only one eager for success this upcoming season.

"I'm looking forward to outdoor," said Brites, a senior. "I have to break more records."

Brites isn't the only person hungry for records.

"This is my last high school outdoor season ever," said Capozzi, a senior. "It needs to be unforgettable, which is why I encourage everyone to join the team. Trust me, it'll be worth it."

### Swim team recruits while having fun

By Jazmin Estrella  
Sports Editor and Artistic Director

Diving head first into another frigid month. February is here... which means more swimming for the boys.

While students, staff, friends, and family look forward to rooting for the swimmer they know, what do the individual members look forward to?

"For this swim season I'm looking to cut my time for the 100 breaststroke as well as my time on the freestyle," said captain Yasin Azizoglu, a senior. "I also want to push myself to exercise so I can have a stronger and more fit body. I am also looking forward to the fun swim meets and fun away bus rides as

well as NVLs and States because it will be my last year of experiencing this sport in high school. I want to make every day worth it."

In a sense, swimmers all want the same: improved times and enjoyment.

"I hope personally that everyone improves and that we all are able to decrease in time and win some meets but I'm also hoping just to have fun with the team while making exciting memories," said Lucas Balikian, a sophomore.

Team veterans were successful in recruiting new members, here's how:

"I joined because I was on the team in middle school and back then I was good. So this year I decided to join to

See WINTER SPORTS, page 7

## Politics transcend health: fasting for social justice

By Nirupama C. Nigam, Ph.D.  
Chemistry teacher

### Helping 'untouchables' motivated Gandhi

COMMENTARY

People of all classes were drawn to Mahatma Gandhi and instinctively felt him to be a leader of deeply spiritual and moral perceptions, which he sought to realize through the pursuit of Truth. More than 54 years of Gandhi's public life were lived as an open book. All through his life he remained a seeker after Truth.

His spiritual politics renewed an ancient religious tradition of fast into a tool against all kinds of discrimination. The tradition of fasting is as old as human civilizations. It has been resorted to for self-purification or for some noble goal. Buddha and Jesus fasted to see God in persona. Lord Ram fasted for the sea to give way for his army of monkeys. In Gandhi's fast he followed these great examples to fight against discrimination. As a self-taught naturopath, he set these rules for fasts: \*Conserve energy both physical and mental from the very beginning. \*One must cease to think of food whilst one is fasting. \*Drink as much cold water as one can, with or without soda and salt, but in small quantities at a time (water should be boiled, strained and cooled). \*Do not be afraid of salt and soda, because most waters contain both these salts in a free state. \*Have a warm sponge daily. \*Sleep as much as possible in the open air. \*Bathe in the morning sun. A sun and air bath is a great purifier as a water bath. \*Think of anything else but the fast. \*No matter from what motive one is fasting, during this precious time, think of the Maker, and of One's relation to Him and His other creation, and one will make discoveries one may not have even dreamed of.

In Gandhi's life as a leader he fasted more than 15 times for various causes. Here is a list of some occasions:

**1913 (Phoenix):** Penitential fast for a week for moral lapses of two inmates at the settlement: Two people at his Phoenix farm had had a 'moral fall,' he was told, one of them being his son. Gandhi was jolted into declaring that he must atone for the sins of his Ashram's inmates and proceeded to fast for an entire week; thereafter, for the next 20 weeks, he ate only once a day. His experiment must have given him an idea of how much his body could

endure because later that year, to mourn the striking indentured laborers killed by the South African police, Gandhi declared he'd eat only once a day for a while. He also asked the other Ashram inmates to follow his example. **1914 (Phoenix):** 14-day fast for similar reason.

**01 June 1915:** Fasted for a day on detecting untruth among Ashram boys. **11 Sept. 1915:** Gave up evening meal due to some Ashrama inmates' objection to the admission of an untouchable or a Harijan in the Ashram.

**15 March 1918:** For a rise in the wages of mill workers of Ahmedabad. Gandhi had settled in Ahmedabad, had established a commune on the banks of Sabarmati, and was active in the Indian National Congress. In March, the workers in the textile mills of Ahmedabad asked their masters for a 35 percent increase in wages. The owners offered 20 percent. Gandhi, an independent outsider, advised the workers to go on a strike. It was the first strike in Ahmedabad's textile history; the mill owners retaliated by declaring a lock-out. After a two-week impasse, the lockout was raised and workers were told they could come back to work if they took a 20 percent raise. Many returned.

It was then that Gandhi stood in front of those workers who remained striking and said, "Hereby I renounce food till such time as you get a 35 percent raise." Those who had broken ranks returned; those who had remained striking were bolstered. Four days later, workers got a 35 percent increase and Gandhi broke his fast.

**06 April 1919:** First day of Satyagraha fight.

**13 April 1919:** Began fast for 72 hours for Jallianwala Bagh massacre at Amritsar and disturbances at Bombay and Ahmedabad. He undertook another, a year later, as atonement for the furious protests against the Rowlatt Act. Not only did he go on a 72-hour fast, he also asked his countrymen to follow suit for at least 24 hours. It was 14 April 1919; four days later, Gandhi withdrew the Satyagraha that he called against the Rowlatt Act. The country had to wait another three

years before it saw Gandhi fast again.

**19-21 Nov. 1921:** Fasted owing to disturbances at Bombay

**28 Nov. 1921:** Took vow to fast for 24 hours every Monday until freedom to nation was won and continued it from that day.

**12-16 Feb. 1922:** Owing to the massacre at Chauri Chaura.

**17 Sept. to 7 Oct. 1924:** For communal unity.

**22-24 June 1928:** Owing to moral lapse of an Ashram inmate.

**20-25 Sept. 1932:** In protest against the decision to set up separate electorate for the Harijans. In January 1932, a few days after he returned from England from the Round Table Conference, Gandhi was arrested and sent to jail. It was from the jail in September that he announced the second of his fasts unto death. He wouldn't eat, he said, as a protest against the separate electorates that were reserved for untouchables in the legislature. The last time that he had undertaken a fast unto death, it was for the striking mill workers at Ahmedabad for whom he had won their desired pay hike. This time, it was for nobody and everybody: he wanted the 'untouchable' candidates to be elected by a general, and not a separate electorate. On the sixth day, Gandhi and Ambedkar agreed upon the Poona Pact and the fast ended. Gandhi got his joint electorate, the untouchables got double the number of seats reserved for them in the legislature and, more importantly, a separate electorate in a modified form of primary elections.

**03 Dec. 1932:** In protest against the government not allowing a fellow prisoner to do scavenging work.

**08-29 May 1932:** For self-purification and of his colleagues.

**16-22 August 1933:** In protest against the government's decision not to grant all the facilities for Harijan work which he was having previously in jail. A large section of people felt cheated, the budding social reforms hit a roadblock of indignation, and a year later, Gandhi undertook a 21-day fast as a means of self-purification -- he was, admittedly, distressed over the continuing

See FASTING, page 2

### Memorial tribute set for Feb. 24 at Staples Center

## January witnesses military strikes, wildfires, coronavirus, Kobe's death

By Hasim Veliju  
Correspondent

### NEWS COMMENTARY

After the end of January and the first month of a new era, many reflected on the month's intensity and the tumult kickstarting the new decade, with some in the United States and worldwide expressing dissatisfaction with the month's top trends and developments at the start of 2020.

"The new year started and reality hit hard. The aura of excitement and expectations was quickly shattered," according to Jack Kelly of www.forbes.com, a news outlet that covers business and finance. "It's become an internet meme that January was the longest year ever. We anticipated the start of 2020 with high hopes and dreams."

Photo by A. Cuevas/staff

**LEGEND** This close up of a Kobe Bryant poster created by Math



teacher Mrs. Rothen's classes graces the new wing. A memorial service for him and the eight victims of the crash will be Feb. 24, 2020 at the Staples Center.

The year began with concerns of warfare between the United States and Iran after President Trump ordered a military strike in Iraq that killed Qasim Soleimani, Iran's top ranking and highly venerated military general who saw oversaw operations in Syria and Iraq.

"Trump signed off on the operation to kill Soleimani after Iranian-backed militia members responded to the U.S. strikes by storming the U.S. Embassy compound in Baghdad," according to www.nbcnews.com, a leading news outlet. "Trump appeared to back off further military conflict."

Iran and America exchanged military strikes for the first time since the souring of the countries' relations in 1979 after the Iranian Revolution. President Trump threatened severe military action if Iran were to strike U.S. soil, prompting international protests over a possible war with Iran in the vein of the Iraq War. On social media, memes and hysteria around a possible World War III immediately went viral.

"As the U.S. and Iranian governments strode towards what seemed like inevitable conflict over the past week, ordinary Iranians and Americans turned to memes to cope with the uncertainty," according to www.cnn.com, a leading international news outlet.

Concerns over the environment and climate change increased tremendously in the month after Australia became largely engulfed in flames due to wildfires, burning more than 42,000,000

acres of land and killing an unprecedented one billion animals. Emotional reactions erupted on social media, and more than \$500 million in donations were raised by civilians around the world to help with the effects of the fires.

"Scientists have long warned that a hotter, drier climate will contribute to fires becoming more frequent and more intense. Many parts of Australia have been in drought conditions, some for years, which has made it easier for the fires to spread and grow," according to www.bbc.com, a major news outlet based in Britain.

The sudden outbreak of the coronavirus shocked the world after the disease appeared in the marketplaces of Wuhan, China in late December 2019, with the disease being declared an international health emergency and growing at an accelerated rate, as of Feb. 10, 2020. Tens of millions of people are currently on lockdown in China to avoid the virus from spreading further both on the mainland and internationally.

"China's National Health Commission said there were 2,015 confirmed new cases on the mainland and 97 additional deaths related to the new, deadly strain of coronavirus," according to www.cnn.com, a leading news outlet. "Total confirmed cases reached 44,653."

The coronavirus has no vaccine yet and doctors are working tirelessly around the world to quarantine victims and keep the disease from causing a greater international crisis. The World Health Organization declared the coronavirus a

global health emergency Jan. 20, 2020.

"It is just a matter of time before the virus spreads widely internationally, which means nations so far only lightly hit should prepare for its eventual arrival in force and what may seem like the worst flu season in modern times," said epidemiologist Marc Lipsitch, according to the *Harvard Gazette*, the university's official paper.

January ended with the devastating and sudden death of former NBA superstar and global sports icon Kobe Bryant, sending shockwaves around the world. Bryant was tragically killed along with his 13-year-old daughter Gianna Bryant and seven others after their private helicopter malfunctioned and crashed near Calabasas, California. The world mourned for Bryant and honored his legacy as one of the greatest competitors in sports history and a role model for both athletics and his revered status as a compassionate family man.

"The city of Los Angeles will hold a memorial for all nine of the Calabasas helicopter crash victims at (the) Staples Center Feb. 24," according to www.silverandscreenroll.com, a website that covers basketball.

All of these events and more have resulted in a bitter beginning of the new decade for many people, indicating that the tensions and social anxieties of the 2010s are likely to continue and even compound into the 2020s. They require greater resilience and solidarity from people in order to progress in these often chaotic times.