

The Twenty-Seventh “Celebration of Youth” Essay Contest

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PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE STUDENTS RECEIVING HONORABLE MENTION

Contest Theme: Write about a personal situation in your own life that you experience as unfair. Sharing your thoughts and feelings, show us why this experience is unfair. What qualities do you have to deal with this situation in a constructive way? In your eyes, is there a way to bring fairness to the situation?

ADEBAMBO ADENJI, a 4th grade student at Barnard Elementary, wrote in his essay “Never Give Up”: “I wanted to go outside... ..my mom said ‘No.’ She said, ‘Go clean your room and my room.’my sister asked my mom if she can go outside. My mom told her that she could. I was so upset and in my head I was saying, ‘That is so unfair...’ I cleaned the bathroom and I cleaned the living room. The whole house was clean., ...My phone started ringing...It was my dad and he said, ‘I am downstairs.’ ...he asked, ‘Who cleaned the house?’ I said proudly, ‘It was me.’ He called my sister from outside to go clean the garage. I was so excited because my dad exclaimed, ‘Go outside and play – you deserve it.’ “

JOIE BARNES is in the 7th grade at John Burroughs Education Campus. She expressed: “This is unfair because no girl should ever feel like her father doesn’t want her. No girl should feel that your life is better without your father. I am not supposed to feel unwanted. ...Being silent about my feelings isn’t the best thing to do. I know I should express my feeling to my father, but I don’t know how. ... I could change my feelings toward him if we talk it out. ... If we do talk, it may change how I feel about life in general.”

JORDAN DOMINICK BATTLE, an 8th grade student at John Burroughs, shared: “It’s very hard learning that I may die at a young age due to this disease, and I cry myself to sleep thinking about it...One quality I have that can help to deal with unfairness is courage. Courage helps me deal with Sickle Cell because, if it does happen again, I’ll be able to face it head on and not back down.”

SEAN BEAN is a 7th grade student at Columbia Heights Education Campus. He wrote: “I was furious to see that I had got in trouble for nothing and that she lied just to get me into trouble. I wanted to hit her. She’s my little sibling and I would get in trouble if I did, so... I decided to calm down and just let it go so nothing else would get me into trouble. ... So the moral of the story is if you just be patient and wait enough, karma will get that person...”

JASON GAO is in the fourth grade at Thomson Elementary. He wrote: “I believed the situation was unfair for several reasons. One part was that I had no power. My father made the decision for me. The other part was that the tutor was strict and made me cry. But, I persevered. ... I understood that my tutor got strict because he wanted me to work harder and learn more. ... But, I would have preferred that he had been nicer.”

ALIJAH GLADDEN is a 7th grade student at John Burroughs. Alijah expressed: “My father seems to have a favorite and its definitely not ME!! ... It’s unfairespecially when I am the one who makes good decisions... My brother ... is considered a juvenile delinquent. Sometimes, I want to tell him how I feel, but I don’t know how. My grandmother also realizes that my father treats me differently... She continues to tell me ... when we are older, I will be better off. I want to believe her, so... I am going to continue to be a good student and make good choices.”

DERANIQUE GRAYDON is a 9th grade student at Ballou High School. She shared: “I felt like I was in a horror movie, I got so many cuts and bruises that blood was on my arms, my legs, and under my breast. ... None of the chaos stopped there, there was still more drama and a lot more beat down. I never really got over the fact that my dad actually dragged me through the streets like an animal... ... I wouldn’t want that to happen to anyone else so what my mom did was take me to therapy. ...There is an old saying, give a girl the right shoes, and she will conquer the world. I never had any positive influences while growing up but I’ve learned to make mistakes and learn from them.”

KALI KOWAL is a 5th grade student at Key Elementary. She expressed: “My unfair experience is having a deaf sister, Grace. Since my sister is brilliant, even without Cis (cochlear implants), everyone expects a ton from me. Grace gets straight A’s, and always goes above and beyond in school, and in life. ...I’m not only scared to go to middle school because of the independence, I’m also afraid I’ll be looked down on by teachers because I might not be as brilliant as her.”

APRECIA LANE attends Bruce Monroe Elementary at Park View and is in the 5th grade. She shares: “Earlier, when I was younger, I did lie sometimes, but I no longer lie. I tell the truth, even when it is hard to do so. But since my mother knows that I used to lie, she thinks I probably still do lie. ... I have to be extra good to make my mother trust me. .. It hurts when someone you love does not trust you. I ...will work hard to mend this.”

TEODORA MIRIC is in the 4th grade at Thomson Elementary. She wrote: “One of the unfair events that happened in my life was when my parents got divorced. ...I live one half of the week with my mom, and the other half of the week with my dad. ... My parents do not agree all the time... My parents only talk by email. There is sometimes a problem because a lot of things get misunderstood. I cannot fix these things but I am forced to tolerate this... When I’m upset, I sit alone and try to calm myself down.”

ANGELICA NARTE is a 7th grade student at Columbia Heights Education Campus. On her first day of school in First Grade, knowing no English, she remembers: “The teacher politely pulled me on stage and said ‘introduce yourself.’ I didn’t know what to do or say so I stood in front of the students with fear. Tears were ready to run down so I ran to an empty table and put my head down. I heard laughing in the background. This moment was unfair because they were laughing at me for not knowing their language and how I can’t speak the language they spoke fluently. ... a ELA teacher named Mr. Donathon ...taught me and my brother to speak English.”

JAIDA NUTALL is a fifth grade student at DC Prep Edgewood Middle Campus. She studies dance. She shared: “On the day before the show ...the teacher told me to get off the stage. I ...began crying off stage. Not because I was mad at the teacher, but because she knew I was one of the youngest on the floor **and I knew** that I was doing my best. This was unfair because I had been asked to help the company by participating in the dance. ... I didn’t give up on my

team or on the teacher. ... my determination, perseverance, and strong-will will help me learn from this situation.”

GLORIA ONUOHA, a 9th grade student at McKinley Technology HS, expressed: “Seeing the people who loved my grandmother as much as I did, broke me. I wondered how God could be so cruel, to take someone that many people loved? ...hearing all the wonderful things she has done in her life inspired me. It made me want to do better in life. ... it was a lesson to live life and to leave a mark on others the way others leave a mark on you.”

ATALANTA RITTER is a 9th grade student at School Without Walls HS. She questioned: “What does it mean to be a woman in our modern-day society? How does it affect me? ...there are clear barriers in expectations... And ultimately, what I want more than anything is to be respected and treated fairly, just like any other person, and be able to live a full, successful life. I’ll go get my degree in genetics and become a full-fledged scientist.”

DANNY RIVERA attends Barnard Elementary. He is in the 4th grade and he wrote: “I know a lot about unfairness. ...one day when I was in Social Studies class, I started looking at the clock and counting down to recess. When it was time for recess, I bumped into a fifth grader and he started making fun of me. ... The next day I had butterflies in my stomach, the bully saw me and pushed me to the ground. I got up and started talking smack about him, then, in a split of a second I knew I needed to eat my words.”

JAMAL TERRY is a 4th grade student at Thomson Elementary. He shared: “I knew I really wanted to go outside to play, but I believed that if Thomas saw me, he would not play with me. Why did I care so much? I could stay inside, or what? I calmed down and realized that it doesn’t matter what he thinks. What matters is what I think. ... So as a result, I became more independent and confident. I knew I could go outside and play even if he doesn’t like me.”

UGO ULU is in the 5th grade at DC Edgewood Middle Campus and loves to dance. She wrote: “I popped my knee in dance class. ... After six hours in the emergency room,...I received the worse news ever. I had sprained my knee.... This meant that all dance practices since September 2014 up until then no longer mattered... and dancing is my LIFE. ... From this experience I learned that not everything will go your way even though you think it should.”

DRE’AN WHITING is a 5th grade student at Simon Elementary. He wrote: “...my grandmother died. I was crying and sad because she loved me and cared for me. We played card games and we always like to cook and sing together. ...Wherever she went, I was right beside her...The quality I have is that I am grateful. I am grateful for everything she did for me. ...I am grateful I have these memories.”

Jessica, please say at the end, CONGRATULATON TO THE 2015 Honorable Mentions of the 27th “Celebration of Youth” essay contest.