

EEKNOW

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Youth Voice of the Central Valley

issue 02

BEHIND THE FACES OF FRESNO IDENTITY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

INSIDE:
The Truth About Emo
West Coast Call Out
Generational Curses
& More...

CONTENTS

IN THIS ISSUE

- 01....Stereotyping at School
- 02....A Sister's Sorrow
- 03....Truth About Emo
- 04....Bad Relationships
- 05....Schools Become Prisons
- 06....Stay Strong
- 07....Dear Mr. Trump
- 08....My Karate Family
- 09....Let's Fix Fax
- 10....Gwen Morris
- 11....Summer Schools
- 12....Dat to Dis
- 13....Generational Curses
- 14....Embarrassing Moments
- 15...."The kNOw"
- 16....Stand UP!
- 17....Westside Pharmacy
- 18....FresYES
- 19....Fresno Free Write
- 20-21..Fresno Free Write Pages
- 22....Riverside Park Curfew
- 23....Living in Bay Jungles

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Reader's Note

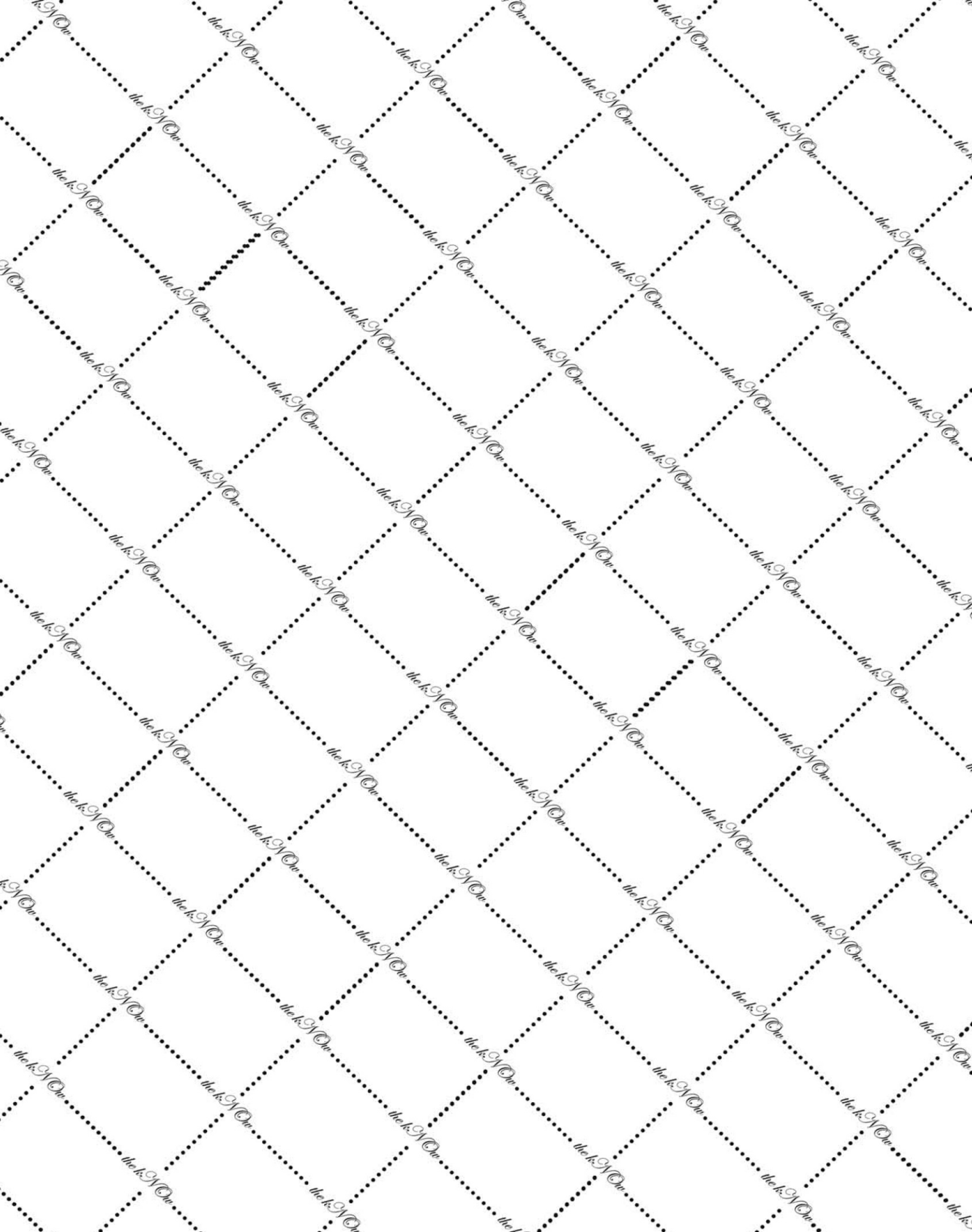
Just as our cover reveals, many young people are trying to identify who they are and where they fit in the mesh of our society. It's this universal question, "who am I?" that begs the notion "don't judge me." Or it's the sense that "I am an object of stereotype" just because of my appearance.

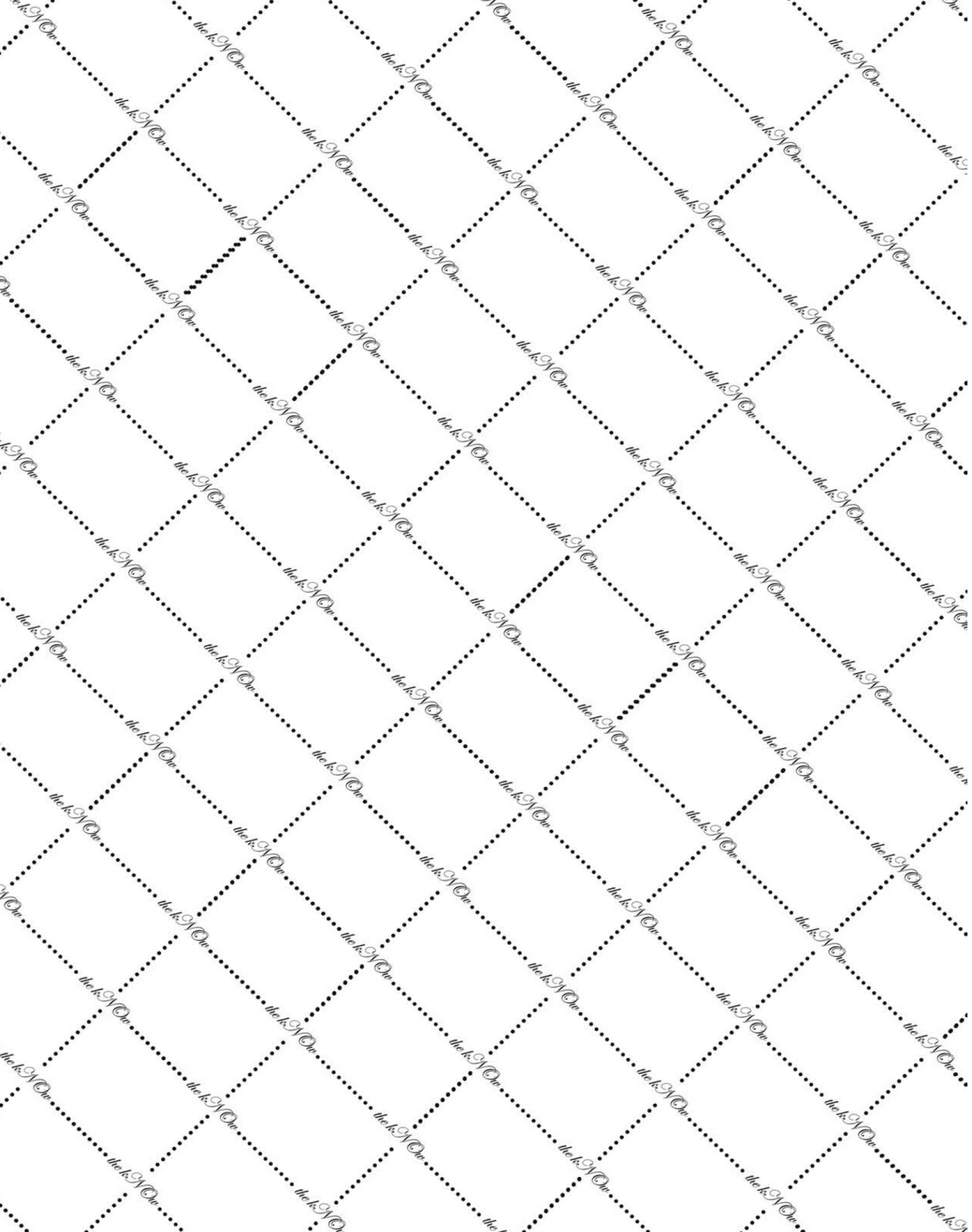
Many young people feel stereotyped, judged, misunderstood, so they become isolated from the community, and aren't seen for the energy and talents they bring. You'll get that feeling reading through many of the stories in this issue.

On page (06), Anna writes about being judged as a failure by own her family, while on page (04), Jaleesa writes about the myths of "emo" stereotypes. The "thug" stereotype becomes evident in three stories, one on page (23), the other on page (05), and the last one on page (01).

But other stories in this issue highlight the positive things that young people want to see or do for their community, such as Jesse's article commemorating a Black-owned pharmacy that has roots in West Fresno, page (17), or Marcus's profile of a community leader on page (10). These young people have experienced their share of difficulties and have empowered themselves to make change, such as Laquisha's piece about how to cope with family breakdown, page (13), or Violet's article on overcoming relationship abuse, page (04).

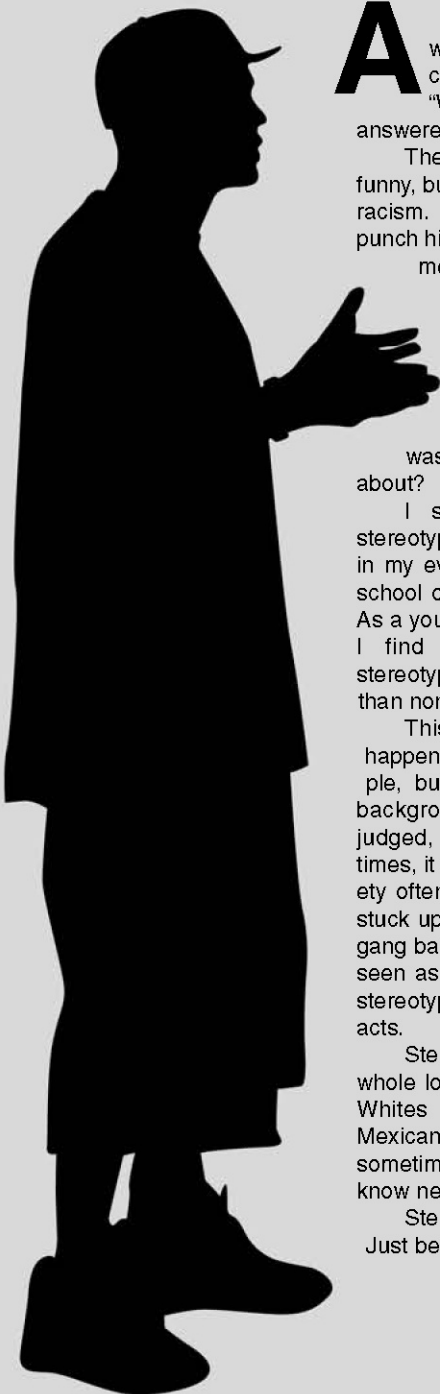
In their words, their stories, they begin to sculpt a sense of identity, a sense of belonging and desire to give back to their communities that hopefully will not continue to judge and take them for granted. **-Mai Der Vang**





I'm More than Baggy Pants and a Turf Hoodie Stereotyping at School

By David Villamarin



A while back, at school, I was late walking into class. The teacher looked at me and asked, "Why are you late?" Before I could reply, he answered, "Were you out hustling?"

The other kids in the class thought this was funny, but I felt like I was a victim of stereotype, even racism. I wanted to explode, throw a chair, and punch him in the face. But instead I ignored his comment and took my seat.

I began thinking and analyzing all of the different possibilities for why he said that. Was it my skin color, my baggy pants, my turf hoodie, or the swagger in my walk? Did these objects of my appearance automatically let him know who I was or what I was about?

I see and hear stereotyping very often in my everyday life—in school or out in public. As a young Black male, I find myself being stereotyped more times than none.

This doesn't just happen to Black people, but people of all backgrounds get judged, and most of times, it is because of their race. For example, society often labels White people as rich, snobby, and stuck up. Mexicans are often stereotyped as being gang bangers or beer drinkers, while the Asians are seen as smart, nerdy kids. Maybe society calls for stereotypes as a way to know how a culture is or acts.

Stereotyping is a reason why there aren't a whole lot of diverse friendships. In school, most all Whites hang with Whites, Blacks with Blacks, Mexicans with Mexicans, and etc. Stereotypes can sometimes hold you back from meeting or getting to know new people.

Stereotypes may also be based on personality. Just because a person looks like a nerd or strange

does not mean that is their personality. They might look totally different from you but they might also have a lot in common with you.

I once met this white kid who was listening to an iPod and nodding his head. He was dressed like a punk rocker. I asked what he was listening to and he said "Soulja Boy". Because of how he was dressed, I never would have imagined him listening to hip-hop music. I was in shock! And we started talking about different rap music and he was familiar with a lot of it, which surprised me.

The way a person dresses is also a main attraction to stereotypes because the first thing you look at when you see someone are his/her clothes or how s/he is dressed. The baggy pants and big shirts are

what some may call "thug attire" or tight pants and an unusual hairdo is what many may call "weird."

I am not racist, but I do sometimes stereotype people when I first see them. I think I tend to do this because of the unknown. I don't know the person, so instead of talking to the individual, I tell myself that the person is weird or

strange, whatever their appearance might say about who they are. Overall, I think the majority of people stereotype, just that we often don't know it.

Instead of just judging someone, go talk to them and get to know them. Hold a conversation with that person. Just because a person looks "gangsta" or weird or crazy does not mean they are. It is also helpful to have an open mind, expect the unexpected, like the old saying goes, "don't judge a book by its cover."

So next time, instead of stereotyping or judging, just say what's up.



A SISTER'S SORROW

Juvi, Gangs, and Abuse

By Chanda Clark

When I was seventeen years old, my younger siblings and I were taken and put into foster care. That same day, our parents warned the foster care officials that my fourteen year old sister would run away—that they were giving her exactly what she wanted.

Not even a week of being in foster care, my sister ran away. I looked for her because all three of us sisters had been through a lot. When we found her, she told us she joined a gang (the Bulldog gang). I asked her why she did that, and she told me it was for safety, respect, and so she wouldn't be alone.

When my sister told me she joined a gang, I thought I was going to have a heart attack! I freaked out because I know nothing good has ever come out of joining a gang.

Now, I am eighteen years old, and my sister is in juvi for some bad things I can't even say. I have seen and experienced what can happen to people and families when teens join gangs. It can bring a lot of sorrow—people die.

I recently watched a movie called *Freedom Writers*, and it made me think about all I had been through. The movie touched my heart because it showed a lot of the situations that are happening today in the lives of young people.

The movie was about youth in gangs, teens getting pregnant, abuse of all kinds, teen homelessness, and other issues. Nowadays, we see a lot of the same situations in our schools, but it didn't start there. I believe it started inside the homes.

A lot of the kids who are getting in trouble out in the world are the same kids who at home are getting abused or kicked out of their houses.

In *Freedom Writers*, a teacher named Mrs. Gruwell sticks up for students because everyone calls them the "reject" students. I have

learned that like in the movie, in every school, there are those few teachers who believe in you, and then there are teachers who put you down and don't have faith in you.

When I first started high school, I had two teachers that hardly ever encouraged me, but instead, they put me down. At first, I felt like they were right, but then I started working hard to prove them wrong because my parents encouraged me to succeed.

Gangs have been around for many years, and young people are joining gangs for many different reasons. They join for respect, love, to keep it in the family, out of fear of being alone, or to have a sense of belonging. Yet there are also teens that do not have a choice and are forced to join.

I noticed how in the movie, the gangs valued the idea of "protecting your own", which is true for many people. It means you might have to lie to protect your gang members, or put yourself on the line so that your gang comes first. If you don't protect your own, something horrible could happen to you, for example, you could get jumped or killed.

But in the movie, a young Latina girl learned that protecting your own does not mean sending an innocent man to jail. After telling the truth and turning in one of her own gang members, she found out that sticking up for your values and being honest is not always easy to do.

When I watched this movie, I thought about the similarities and differences of the situations in the movie and the ones we have in our schools today, along with some of the problems they did not mention. For example, they did not show issues about drug and alcohol abuse, or suicide.

Growing up, I noticed that any abuse, whether physical, mental, emotional, or sexual, often encourages teens to turn to gangs for respect, safety, and a sense of belonging.

If we had more teachers like Mrs. Gruwell, we might not have that many kids in gangs. She has patience and respects her students no matter what. She dedicates herself to giving her students a better education, and she never gives up on them.

If teachers want to get rid of gangs at schools, they should listen to us. I believe teens join gangs because they want somebody to listen to them and take their side for once. We, teens, are the future, so shouldn't we have the right to be heard?

We each have a different voice, but if nobody will give time to listen to our voices, then we will find someone who will listen, even if it is gang member.

Everyday is a brand new day, and with that, a new voice is born. So if we listen to each and everyone, then we could save some lives from the senseless violence that has taken so many people already.

RIISING TO THE TOP: THE IMPACT OF EMO CULTURE

It's a sight like no other – a youth walking down the street sporting skin-tight jeans and a fresh new pair of Vans. Hair is done absolutely perfect, with an array of colors streaked into it, hanging down over one eye. Make up is done in very minute detail, which includes newly painted nails and a flawless application of eyeliner. Studded belts and thick-rimmed glasses are a must, never leaving the house without them.

Sound familiar? Perhaps you've seen them on TV, singing in a new music video, or even in a magazine with their new, yet cliché haircut. It's even possible that you've seen them in your neighborhood, or even in your house. It may sound like something out of a horror movie, but it's not. I'm talking about Emo people – young men and women a part of a culture that is often misunderstood.

First, I would like to give a clear and simple definition of "Emo". Emo is short for "emotional", which describes the emotions, attitudes, and feelings of these individuals. They tend to be quiet, shy, and hyper-sensitive, portraying a very timid outlook on things.

Their fashion and way of dress can have an astounding range, but in the end, the way it comes together is quite concrete. Nearly everything they wear is in black, and what they wear is almost never baggy. Most can have quite a few piercings on their faces, and many may seem androgynous at first glance.

I do not identify myself as being Emo. I am a fan of the music and the fashion, but not the negative aspects associated with it. And although I know a lot about emo people, I don't have any direct relationships with them.

Just like any other subculture, Emo people are always scrutinized because of how they look and act. Their peers (mainly school-mates), parents, and authority figures accuse them of creating problems for themselves, just to have something to be sad about.

For some reason, people they enjoy being depressed, and they indulge in and glorify sadness. Also, they can be apathetic to anything otherwise (i.e. anything happy) presented to them. Other myths include that all Emos are gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and/or confused about their sexual orientation.

Being discriminated against in this fashion can affect a person for the rest of his/her life. It can lead that person to believe s/he isn't good enough for anyone or anything. Unfortunately, this sometime contributes to the rise in suicides in the gay/lesbian youth community.

Some youth take it lightly. They treat being Emo as a fashion statement. However, others may take it more seriously, such as treating it like a lifestyle. In extreme cases, some Emo openly express thoughts and feelings of suicide. A popular subject (and unfortunately, sometimes a pastime) is to cut one's wrists. They use it as a way to express their inner pain and distress.

I don't have a problem with Emo becoming a fashion. Rock and Hip Hop have established their own fashion and lifestyle, so I don't

see why Emo would have any negative impact on society as a whole. I think it's just a fad, and in time, it will come to pass.

But I can't apply everything I just said to all Emos. Many are just youth who like the style of fashion and/or the bands associated with them. However, if you or a friend is engaged in wrist-cutting (or any other type of self-injuring) or expressing thoughts of suicide, be sure to tell someone, preferably an adult, promptly.

Some may not completely understand the origins of the Emo culture. In around 1979, the Punk rock era was coming to an end. The trend that had started in England and came to the States was dying out, and youth needed a new way to express themselves. What was called Punk had transformed into a new style of music called Hardcore. Many youth flocked to it, but some kept following the "dead" Punk style. Many of those youth started adding their own elements to the fashion and music, and it became what we now call Emo.

Even though the concept was generally the same, Emo in the 1980s was different than what we know today. The fashion was leaning more toward the "Prep" look and was not nearly as dark as what we see it as now. In recent times, Emo is laced with darker, more negative tones, and has a more morbid outlook on society.

When asked why people have such a negative reaction to the Emo culture, Michael, age 18 said, "I think it's because people only hear about how depressed they are and how they cut themselves and be negative towards life."

When asked on their overall opinion, Jimmy, a junior at McLane High School stated, "Emo people

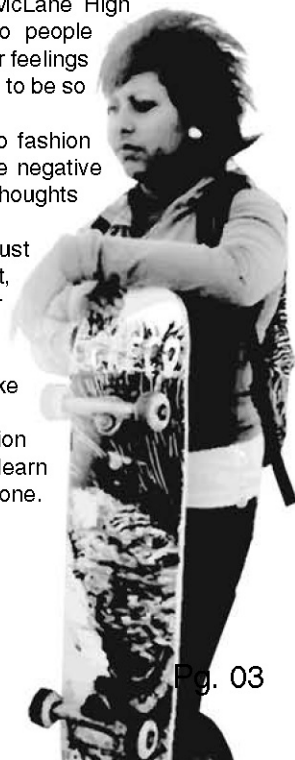
don't have anyone in the world to express their feelings and thoughts to. I think that's why they choose to be so negative."

In my personal opinion, I think the Emo fashion style is just like any other style. However, the negative behaviors, such as cutting and indulging in thoughts of suicide, I do not approve of.

Young people shouldn't be judged just because they look "dark" or "spooky". In fact, no one deserves to be misunderstood under those circumstances. Emo is a fashion and lifestyle that won't go away for a while, so people should just stop, think, and accept it like any other.

I hope I have provided enough information to help individuals divide lie from truth, and to learn the lesson of refraining from stereotyping anyone.

**JUST LIKE ANY
OTHER SUBCUL-
TURE EMO PEOPLE
ARE ALWAYS
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ACT.**



“Living Depressed Isn’t Healthy”

Getting Through a Bad Relationship

By Violet

Have you ever been in an abusive relationship, or maybe you know someone who has? How about just a bad relationship? Well I know someone. This person was me.

I am only 15 years old, and I already went through the drama, possessiveness, and abusiveness of a bad relationship. I have been fine for the past nine months but it wasn't always that way.

It all started at the end of my 8th grade year. Summer vacation was beginning, and this guy I had a crush on finally asked me out. I was so excited since I had a crush on him for a long time (like a year or two), and I was finally with him.

Our relationship started off on the right track like every relationship does. We would go to the movies almost every weekend, go to the mall, hang out during the week and go to the Fresno Fair when it was in town. It was going good for the first six months, until I started to get to know the “real” him.

The last two months of our relationship, he became possessive and a little bit jealous. He told me I could not talk to any other guy besides him because he thought I would cheat on him. He refused to let me go anywhere with my friends because he didn't trust me.

Next, we started to argue almost every single day on the phone and at school. It got to the point where he started pushing me around, hitting me while we were at school (and none of the Campus Security even noticed). He told me I was lucky enough to have him because no one else would want me.

Then he started “threatening” me. If I ever talked to another guy, he would break up with me. He even wanted to beat up one of my best friends, a guy, since he thought that I cheated on him with my best friend.

My friends noticed something was wrong. I was always crying. They wanted to beat him up, but I didn't want that to happen since I still cared about him, even if I didn't know why.

My parents also noticed something was wrong. I wasn't as happy as I usually was. Even my teachers noticed a change in my behavior and a drop in my grades, to the extent where they gathered with my parents for a meeting, to tell my parents they were concerned.

Winter break came and I was relieved. I thought by not seeing him, it would make everything better when we got back to school in January. But it only worsened. He broke up with me on Christmas Eve, and the next thing I know, he already had a new girlfriend that same day.

It pissed me off and I didn't know what to do. I locked myself in my room for the rest of the break. Eventually, he apologized, and I accepted his apology. We got back together, but it didn't last that long. After two weeks of the same old thing, we broke up for good

because I couldn't stand crying anymore.

If you are in a possessive or abusive relationship of any kind, end it before matters get out of hand. Living depressed isn't healthy. Crying all the time is not fun, trust me. And if you can't “get over” the person, don't be afraid to ask for help because you can't always do everything on your own. Everyone needs a little help sometimes, and the best help you can get is from your parents since they probably already been through a lot in their lives.

I've learned a lot from this experience, such as get to know the person really well before you actually get with him because you never know if he is going to be a real jerk. Also, don't let anyone control you, or put you down by telling you that you are not good enough or that no one will ever want you. There is always someone out there just waiting for the right moment to go up to you and ask you out. (Upon request of the writer, the author's name has been changed.)

Need more advice???

5 steps to dealing with a bad relationship

Step 1: Break up with the guy/girl before matters get out of control.

Step 2: Surround yourself with the people you love, friends, family, because sometimes it is hard to be by yourself after a bad breakup.

Step3: Hide everything s/he ever gave you because seeing it might make you cry.

Step 4: If you have a breakdown, talk to someone you trust and are comfortable with, maybe an adult.

Step 5: Take it slow if you are going to start a new relationship, get to know the person before you take any steps.

When the Punishment is Worse than the Crime How Fresno Schools Are Becoming Prison

By Kevis McGee



While I was attending Fresno High School, I witnessed a gruesome fight, first hand. Two Asian males were getting jumped by about 5 or 6 Black males. They were getting stomped to the ground while people cheered. I ran up to the fight to see for myself.

Finally, the Campus Assistance (CA) came and pushed the Black students back, giving the Asians time to run. It wasn't long before the others slipped away from the CA's grip and chased the Asians around the school. I don't know even why the fight started.

Gang violence, drama, and fighting have increased in schools during the past three years, and most schools have become stricter, operating almost like prisons. If you are a graduate of the school, and want to visit your old teachers, before, you could do so at any time of the day, morning, passing period, or at lunch. But now, you can only visit them after school. And now, CAs act almost like guards. They follow and watch you from a distance to make sure you go to class.

One time, my friend and I had to go to the office because we were wearing red shirts. My friend got accused of being "high" and was searched by school administrators, just because his eyes were red, even though he was just tired. I almost got searched too, but I had already left the office.

Strict rules often deal now with students' attire. Fresno High has banned the usage of more than 25% of red or blue attire, or even just having a red or blue t-shirt under your regular shirt. These colors are often seen as "gang-affiliated".

One of the incidents that sparked the creation of such strict rules was a riot that happened two years ago, supposedly between the Crips and Bulldogs. Everyone was fighting, close to 25-30 people it seemed to me! It started because one group confronted the other, and then suddenly, everyone was throwing fists. It felt like a movie, like the end of *The Outsiders*, for example, when a brawl takes place between the Greasers and the Socs (two rival gangs).

It's even starting to get strict at Cesar Chavez Adult School (night school). They told me I couldn't wear my dog tag because it was too thick, saying it could be used as a weapon. If that is the

case, they might as well ban all jewelry, because they can all be used as weapons. I felt like I was judged, as if they thought I was going to use it as a weapon. I also felt put down, but I listened to the principal anyway since I didn't want to get kicked out.

Also, three years ago there was a very big riot at Edison involving the Asians and Blacks also. But Edison isn't as strict as other schools. Maybe it is because a lot of smart and talented kids go there, because it is, in fact, one of the best schools in the Valley.

Despite the various stereotypes, Edison doesn't have much drama. And if there is drama, it's mostly females. Most of them fight over gossip, and what people say about them. There are some gangs at Edison, but they don't fight each other because they don't have beef with each other. In other words, these gangs are cool with each other.

know if riots were to happen at any of the Clovis schools, student's

freedom would be stripped. I know some people who attend Clovis schools, and they tell me the dress code is very strict, for example, anything can be considered a distraction, nose piercings, mohawks, or long hair on guys.

When I witness a fight, I feel excited but cautious. I don't want to get hit, but I am not afraid of going to see what is going on.

Surprisingly, I think fights do not affect school spirit because even though it might bring down the school's reputation, students still rep their schools at events. I don't think schools ever really lose their spirit no matter how many fights occur, the schools will still have their mascots, rallies, dances, and sports.

Fights happen, and it's hard to avoid them. But I believe fights can be prevented if students better knew that the consequences for their actions can be dire. For example, suspension, expulsion, maybe even jail time -- and nobody wants that.

SHAY S RONG

Keeping Your Head Up and Keeping the Negativity Down

By Anna Gil

Life always comes at us with some negativity but we learn to deal with it.

I have two brothers that didn't graduate from high school or make it to college. I am the youngest one in my family, the only girl, and the last to graduate and plan to go to college.

My parents give me a negative attitude and say, "You're not going to make it to college, you are going to be like your brothers and not graduate high school."

Sometimes I feel like people judge me because of how I look or act. Some teachers and adults have even told me I won't make it in life.

I am from a Mexican family. And often, many young Mexican girls around my age or around 13 and up end up getting pregnant and drop out of school to raise their child. Or they may go on home studies and graduate, but they don't go on to college. I know I'm not going to do that, but sometimes I feel like I am being judged that way by other people, especially by my family.

My parents think if I get a boyfriend, I might end up sleeping with him, getting pregnant, and then stop focusing on school. I told them I'm not going to do that! They say, "that's what you say right now but wait until you get older and hear what your friends are doing, then you will want to try it."

I get mad because my parents, especially my mom, think that whatever my friends do, I'm going to end up doing too. But just because my friends do one thing doesn't mean I'm going to end up doing that.

I remember when I told my parents that I like girls, that I was bisexual. They started saying I was confused. They said I was being influenced by my friends because most of them are either lesbians, gay, and/or bisexual.

But I know ever since I was 10 years old, I was attracted to females. Back then I didn't have many friends that were like that. My brothers and cousins even knew before I knew that I was bisexual!

Then my parents started to blame my confusion on the fact that I have all brothers; that I'm scared of being with a guy because my brothers will say something to me.

My parents often say I am too young and that I haven't "experienced life." That might be true, I am young, but that doesn't have anything to do with my bisexuality.

They say it is a sin, girls are supposed to like guys and guys are supposed to like girls.

I told my parents, "If being bisexual, lesbian, gay or transgender is a sin,

then why did God make us how we are?" Didn't he make us all how we are for a reason? How is it a sin if in the bible it says that God loves us, all the same, no matter what?

My aunt from out of state told me I am going to become like my brothers, drop out of high school and become no one in life. It makes me mad to hear this because she does not even know me. But I don't let it stop me from staying positive. I keep trying and so far, I am doing okay.

Last July, my aunt came to town, and I ended up having an argument with her. She told me I am going to end up married to some guy who is lazy and drinks all day. Also, she said I am going to end up moving back in with my parents because my husband will be lazy.

I was so angry! I told my aunt she doesn't know me, and that she should worry more about her kids then her sister's kids. I think if she does not pay attention to her kids then they will become what she is trying to say that I am.

Even though people give me a negative attitude, I try to move on and ignore what they say. I use the negativity as encouragement to prove them wrong.

I keep trying my best because I want to become someone in life. I want to graduate from high school, go to college, get a good job, and when I have children, I want to give them a good home and life.

No matter what tragedies happen in your life, if you lose someone you love, or people put you down, or you feel like no one cares or believes in you, or if you feel like you are being judged, still keep your head up!

In everyone's life, there is someone that cares and believes in you. You should not care what people think or say.

Try your best to focus on school and reach your goals because school is important to achieving success.

For me, getting involved in the community has helped give me something positive to do when there's drama in my family. You can join a sport(s) or after school activity to make new friends. Or you can volunteer somewhere. Doing these positive things will get you out of the house if you have drama with your family. Keep yourself busy, but remember to enjoy your high schools years before it is to late.

I don't let anyone look down on me so neither should you.

I get mad because my parents, especially my mom, think that whatever my friends do, I'm going to end up doing too.

Dear Mr. Trump, Do the Right Thing

By Jesse Andrews

FRESNO, Calif. – Celebrity billionaire Donald Trump has proposed backing the construction of Running Horse Golf Course in Southwest Fresno, promising the project would bring economic development to this area known for unemployment, crime, and poverty. Many people in the neighborhood fear the jobs and economic benefits of this establishment will not go to them, and they might even lose their homes. I have decided to address the issue and make it known to Mr. Trump how I feel.

Dear Mr. Donald Trump,

Imagine this: Seven-hundred-and-eighty luxurious homes, each fully equipped with beautiful back yard scenery. The astonishing sight of your first tee off on the gorgeous green designed by Jack Nicklaus, next to a luminous lake, as you prepare for the superb PGA Tour coming to Southwest Fresno next year. Oh, it is a dream-come-true, life-couldn't-get-any-better-than-this kind of thing.

As a 16-year-old 11th grader at Edison High and resident of Southwest Fresno, I like fairy tales, but only the kind that has a happy ending.

Your fairy tale has a lot of "probably" in its ending. As I rode my bike by the proposed site of Running Horse, for example, I did not see that there would be space for 780 homes, unless you are planning to take over more land in order to accomplish your plans.

Then it occurred to me you would have to destroy something to get these homes built. Our homes. Maybe even my home.

The homes where Big Mama made her delicious Jambalaya. The homes where MommaRay raised the neighborhood children. The homes that were passed down from generation to generation to generation of families so we could go to Papa Smith's house and be comforted when life was tearing us apart. Our homes.

You mean to tell me that you want to buy our homes? Where

will we stay? And if we refuse to go, you will just force us to leave? I don't think so.

Families have put in too much hard work and sweat to get their homes. You want 780 new high-priced homes. I don't even want to know how high the price is. Many of the neighborhood's families are living on low incomes, from paycheck to paycheck. The key word here, if you missed it, is "low."

The people of this community do not need high-priced homes, but low-priced homes. The Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development's CEO, Keith Kelly, made this clear when he told the Fresno Bee that the community "wants to make sure that they don't lose anything either, or lose as little as they possibly can."

I believe your project should increase economic development in our lower income neighborhood, but not by taking anything away from the citizens of this community.

I live in the community; no one needs to tell me what we need in this community but us.

We need more jobs here in Southwest Fresno, where the unemployment rate is extremely high, which means many people are poor. Fresno County's current unemployment rate is about 8%, which is much higher than California's average of 5.2%. Wow! Fresno needs to sit down somewhere with those numbers. Will your project create job opportunities to only have them filled with people from another city, town or state? Southwest Fresno citizens should receive priority for these jobs.

According to the LA Times, you have your "eye on improving a down-and-out area of Southwest Fresno for a mile on all sides of Running Horse." That's all good, but we don't need your eye, we need your heart to understand what we are going through, to feel what we feel.

Fresno Mayor Alan Autry told the LA Times: "The impact of this thing will be just enormous" – enormous enough to have you prosper off the profits and revenue that will be generated, or enormous enough to see one of the best communities in Fresno wither and die away?

Many people are saying that you are going to do the right thing; these are a few of the "right things" I suggest:

Establish a program that ensures that residents of this community have the opportunity to be employed first.

Have a one-on-one dialogue with the community, so we can understand each other.

Make sure that you mean what you say. If you want to help Southwest Fresno, make sure some of the profit goes to the community.

Find a better solution to accommodate the people of the community rather than removing them from it.

Please take this into consideration. I am simply saying we are willing to stand with you all the way, as long as we stand in unity and communicate about concerns. Will this fairy tale come true? Or will Southwest Fresno citizens be left without the opportunities? It's up to you.

The people of this community do not need high-priced homes, but low-priced homes.





Discipline. Loyalty. Fun.

Meet My Karate Family

By Arena Phaphilom

When I was in eighth grade, I remember coming home after school to do homework. It was the same routine; I really didn't have a lot to do. Occasionally I would hang out with my friends who lived nearby. I remember one afternoon, my friend "TT" told me about a karate class run by Mr. Santana at Computech Middle School. I was surprised! I attended Computech at the time, and I never knew about this, so I decided to check it out. I didn't expect karate to become such a big part of my life today, because now, it is.

As I walked in the door for my first karate class, I wasn't sure what to expect. Mr. Santana was somewhat intimidating, but then I was like, "Eh, whatever, he's your typical PE teacher."

I remember my first karate class was very uncomfortable, mainly because I was scared and nervous. I had to have my first lesson with Sensei Lee while the students who were there longer had Sensei Va. Sensei Lee, who's a third degree black belt, They had me learn blocks and stances, very repetitiously. The students, who had been there longer, knew what they were doing, so Sensei Va, who's a black belt, had them do many different blocks. Finally, we got to leave, and I was so happy. I returned to the next karate class, even though the first one

was very awkward.

In the very beginning, when I first joined karate, I was told karate took a lot of discipline. I thought it would be a piece of cake because I was pretty disciplined. To me, discipline means to have self-control. Without discipline, I think I would be crazy and hyper all the time. Our discipline started because everyone respects one another. Our discipline developed from all the drills we practiced, it developed because of every mistake we made, the students, and all the corrections made by our "senseis" or instructors. It all became so repetitive. We did push-ups for every mistake we made. We did push-ups for talking or laughing when we weren't supposed to. We did push-ups for not bowing, coming to class late, or coming to class without our belt or uniform.

Discipline isn't the only thing karate is about. It's also about loyalty. A perfect example of our loyalty for one another in karate would be the loyalty Sensei Lee has toward Shihan Santana.

Sensei Lee has been Shihan Santana's student for about twelve years now. Sensei Lee is now a third degree black belt. Shihan Santana is a seventh degree black belt and that's why he's received the title "shihan," which also means director.

Another example of our loyalty for one

another is how we treat each other like family.

My karate class is like a second family to me. We all trust each other to the point where we can leave our valuables lying around and know that it will still be there where we left it. We have become so close, that we can joke around with each other and hang out in our free time. There probably isn't another karate class in Fresno like ours.

I have many great memories from karate, such as going to the movies together, or our annual karate dinners. But my favorite memory of karate class would be the camping trip retreat we took last June. We spent three days at Shaver Lake, training, swimming, and in our free time, we played charades. It was great for our karate family and brought us closer together.

As I think back, I used to be nervous about attending karate classes, but now I try not to miss class at all. So if you're interested in becoming a part of our karate class, you should come check it out, like I did. On Thursdays at Computech, from 5:00 to 7:00 PM and on Saturdays from 9:00 to 11:00 AM. I am fortunate to have found karate. It has made a positive impact on my life, and I am always finding a new reason to come back to it.

LETS FIX FAX!!

WHY THE FRESNO BUS SYSTEM NEEDS IMPROVEMENT NOW!

By Jesse Andrews

It was 6:00pm. I had just got out of a meeting at Fresno State.

I stood outside, waiting patiently for the bus on a Saturday evening, sitting at the stop for bus 38 to come southbound. I prayed it was going to come down Cedar Avenue and stop right at Shaw. It's got to come, I kept saying to myself as I saw a bus go northbound.

I thought for sure it was going to come back my way. But it never did! I was out of luck and didn't know what to do. I was on Cedar and Shaw and the buses had stopped. I wanted to cry!

Being stranded is just one of the reasons why our FAX bus transportation system needs to be upgraded. And it may be one particular group of bus riders – young people – who could offer the best ways to make this happen.

For those who think that FAX is just like every other bus service, think again. I have been on transportation services in other cities where they have mini-televisions that have the map of the bus route, and after a few minutes of showing the route, they show commercials on how to prepare food or clips on celebrity gossip.

Although there are meetings to discuss FAX improvements, these meetings happen when students are in school. But just because we are excluded from the meetings does not mean we don't have ideas.

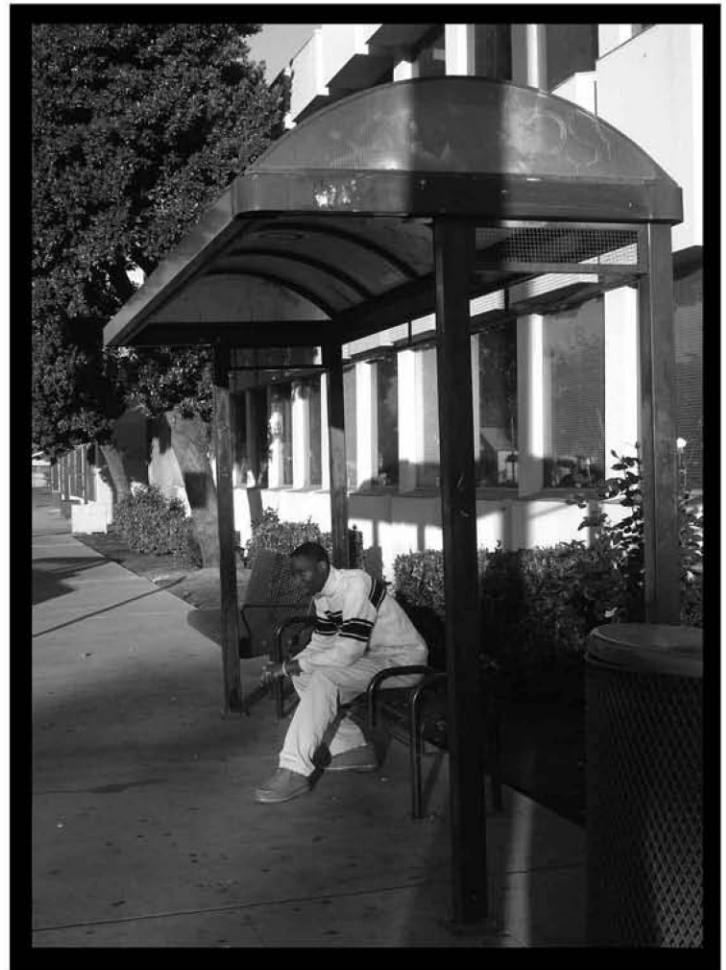
As a long time FAX bus rider, I have come up with a few suggestions:

- There needs to be a better way to make sure everyone is safe on the bus. I have been in incidents where a rider threatened to kill someone, and looked directly at me. She was talking about how she was going to personally kill some dude and that she was going to do some things to him that my little sanctified mind just can't write!
- The advertisements on the buses need to be interesting. The bus must not only appeal to the older people and business-like people, but also to the young people as well. For example, they could post ads about places where young people can get homework help, or places where we can hangout and stay safe.
- There should be student passes for those who commute every now and then. The monthly bus passes are fine, but we need all-day passes, so if you don't plan on riding the bus every day for that month, you could buy a three dollar all-day pass where you can ride any bus all day and get your errands done -- go to a friend's house every now and then, go to the movies, or go to the store and pick up a few items for school.
- The buses on weekends should run the same time as weekdays. If bus drivers don't want to work night shifts, FAX should offer them extra pay, or find bus drivers who would. It is not a great feeling to know you are stranded, wherever you are. Sometimes young people might be in the mood for a movie, or like I mentioned earlier, I got stranded after coming from a very important meeting. Young people might be in the mood to go

shopping at Fashion Fair or Riverpark, especially on weekends.

- When a bus gets to the end of the line and hits the freeway, it should come back that same route. It shocks me to see many people waiting at the bus stop for the bus to return down the route.
- Many young people dislike the foul odors and boredom on the bus. FAX should install Fabreez air fresheners or something. Let folks look out the window instead of seeing dots from the advertisements that are posted outside of many buses.

These are only a few things that one young person has mentioned about our city's public transportation situation. What if there were more than a hundred young people with suggestions? If we share our ideas and work together we can accomplish great things for Fresno.



Gwen Morris – Helping Fresno Youth Over come the Odds

BY MARCUS VEGA

During the summer I attended a youth leadership program at the African American Historical and Cultural Museum. I was a tutor for the youth involved in the program, children around the ages of ten and up.

While attending the program, I met Gwen Morris from One By One Leadership who helps organize the program. According to their mission statement, One By One Leadership is a "faith-based, non-profit organization whose mission is to engage people in urban leadership that results in the economic, educational and spiritual transformation of our community." They have programs that help youth come in contact with their incarcerated parents, church based activities, and the Police Activities League (PAL) where police officers organize sports and activities for youths living in high gang-activity areas. They also help young African Americans get into the college of their choice.

After completing the leadership program where I received a certificate for helping the youth and being involved with the youth in my community in a positive manner, I spoke with Mrs. Morris.

She gave me the okay and asked for a specific date in which we could engage in the interview. I told her I could meet her in her office. I grabbed a pen and paper and asked a few questions hoping to get answers that break down what it is she is doing, what she hopes to accomplish, and insight on who she is.

I will begin with Mrs. Morris' full name which is Gwendolyn Leona Barefield Robinson Morris. Gwen is an African America female. She was born in Fresno, CA in 1951, where she spent most of her early years in the corner house on Byrd and Bardell Street in southwest Fresno. She recalls childhood encounters with racism in many ways, yet she waves it off as ignorance of others. She is mixed race and grew living a simple farm life.

Mrs. Morris stands at 5' 7" or 5' 8" of light complexion. She is strong-willed and has an almost mother-like presence with her and a passion for life. Mrs. Morris is very optimistic about helping the African-American community, especially the youth, who she sees as having great potential. She wants to shape them into future lawyers and doctors.

Mrs. Morris carries herself as a proud Black woman, content with where she currently stands and extends a helping hand to anyone who is willing to grasp hers. That stood out in my head, that here is someone who is doing so much for the community yet she hasn't received much spotlight.

She didn't have much of a way to advertise and be heard by many as she deserves. So I wanted to help her extend her reach throughout Fresno, not just the Westside.

Mrs. Morris feels strongly about today's generation succeeding in reaching their goals, and supports religious ideals. She stated, "God prepares us" pertaining to the events that take place in our lives that shape us.

She says that every moment from birth to present, she has worked to get to her current standing. Mrs. Morris stated that some of her accomplishments include being a wife, a sister, a mother, daughter, and life in general.

I asked her if there were any struggles or obstacles keeping her from success. She responded, "yes, race, gender, among other things," referring to how people responded to her being

mixed race and also being a female and frequently doubted by her peers through her many occupations. Others wanted to see her fall flat on her face or refer to her as "white washed."

I questioned her about her previous occupations. She listed school teacher, police officer, private investigator, were among the jobs she enjoyed. She found herself in her current occupation through also working as a social worker in which she worked with youth living in inadequate conditions, drug problems, etc. Then responded, "if it's not something you enjoy doing, you shouldn't do it."

Afterwards I asked her what has brought her up to this point in her life. Gwen inhaled and stated, "issues of equity, a system of government that excludes bodies of people or caste system," referring to how in India, a caste system is in effect in which they have people labeled as "untouchables" similar to how the destitute and drug addicts of the US are shunned upon and turned down services because of some of their previous choices in life.

Mrs. Morris wants to give choices to people who feel they don't have choices or opportunities to advance and better themselves.

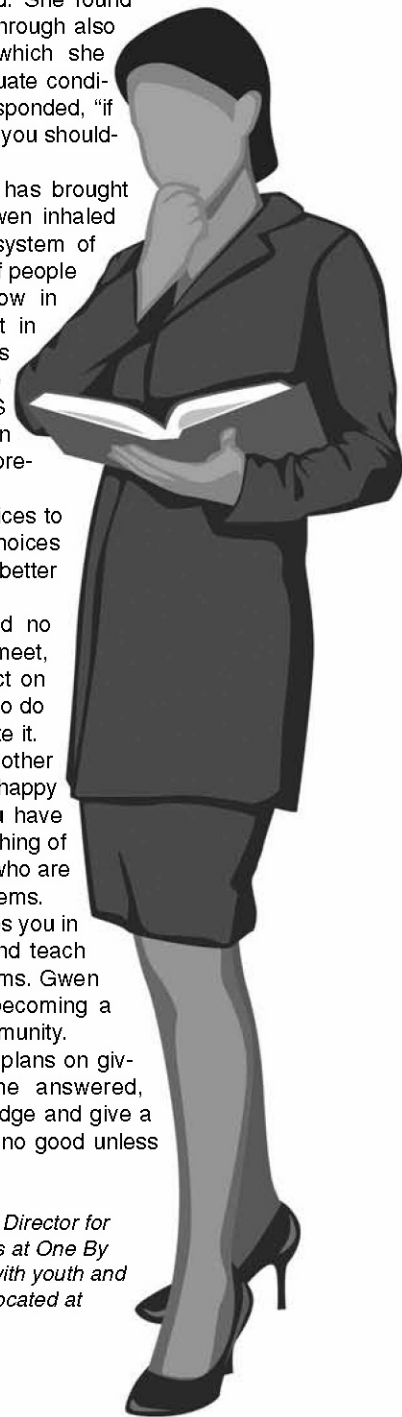
By talking with her, I learned no matter where you are or who you meet, you can have a tremendous impact on the lives of many or just a few. So go do something with your life, don't waste it.

She is an example for me and other youths, doing what makes you happy and productive throughout life, you have the chance to actually make something of yourself and lend a hand to those who are currently struggling with life's problems.

Keep doing what it is that drives you in life and your struggles will help and teach you to stay dedicated to your dreams. Gwen helped me realize my dream of becoming a doctor and to give back to my community.

I asked Mrs. Morris what she plans on giving back to her community. She answered, "opportunities, help to gain knowledge and give a helping hand...all that you have is no good unless you share it with someone."

Gwen Morris is currently the Senior Director for Community Programs and Initiatives at One By One Leadership where she works with youth and adults. One By One Leadership is located at 1727 L Street, Fresno, CA 93721.





SUMMER SCHOOL

How to Get Through Early Mornings,
Boring Classes and Fly Infested Rooms

By LaKenya Stamps



Now I can't believe I have to go to summer school! I have to take boring History at that! That means, talking about stuff that happened centuries ago. Those things don't matter any more. FYI...we are in the 21st century. No one cares about, "historical and economic issues in the Depression. Personally, I couldn't care less.

Then the teacher wants to talk about things being, "unconstitutional." No, that class is unconstitutional. Please don't make me spend half of my summer in a hot, sweaty, fly infested classroom for six hours, with a history geek! Oh no, I can't do it...I won't do it...Too bad I had to.

After saying all that to myself, I had to go any way. I had to take that class in order to take Biology, which I flunked the previous year.

As the first day came, and my alarm clock struck 6:00am, I got up as I did every morning for school. I told my aunt once again that what she was doing was wrong, and that she should reconsider her thoughts.

But, all she said was, "When you get there, and they say that you don't have to go to school...then that's when you don't have to go." Like someone was really going to do that. I wish!

When I got to school, I found my schedule and headed to my class, walking on the amphitheater, across the wet grass, and into the classroom door. There I sat, in the back of the class, closest to the door, just in case, I reconsidered my thoughts and wanted to go home.

As the teacher with a beer belly came from around the corner of the desks, he handed out his "Master Plan" for the six weeks that we were going to be in his class.

Next, we got started on the assignment from the first chapter of the old rusty textbook. It looked as if it had been through both World War I and II!

I sat behind a nappy-headed boy who needed a hair cut. I guess you could call him the "class clown", the way everyone laughed at his comical comments. He was actually pretty funny.

There were people in my class I had seen around school. But, I never thought I would have a class with them.

After three hours of being in class, I was so tired of writing notes from the textbook. I was exhausted by 10:00. I made it outside to see my friend Patrice. She told me about her class, as I told her about mine. We went to lunch and ate dry tuna sandwiches.

Then, before we knew it, it was time to go back to the candy wrapper floor, with the different shades of gum under the desk.

Three more hours," I thought to myself. As my classmates entered the classroom, they were talking loudly.

Then, class started again, and we were to finish our notes. But while we did that, the whole class got into a conversation

about random topics I thought would never matter, such as dying hair and ear piercing, to the difference between a vegetarian and a vegan, to talking about different styles of music from punk rock to Christian.

Then some of us came with up with a creative idea to complete all the hard work we had to do. We split up the work in fourths between four of us. With time to spare, we cracked jokes. I was starting to get use to this class. The teacher became pretty cool. He let us out fifteen minutes before the bell rang.

As I walked home, I thought about my day. I guess summer school wasn't so bad after all. I wouldn't mind going back for the rest of the six weeks, just as long as they didn't expand the time.

When I made it across the street, up the slightly dried grass, and finally to the wooden brown door at my home, I was greeted by my little cousin.

She thought it was hilarious to see me suffer earlier that morning. But she was amazed to see a smile on my face. She asked sarcastically, "So how was your first day of school?" Before I could

answer her back with the same attitude, my aunt came around the corner with the same question.

As simply as I could, I answered, "It was actually okay." My aunt smiled and said, "See, I knew you could do it."

I realized students and parents' perspective on

summer school is often misunderstood. Yes, some students go because they have to. Others go to take future classes in advance.

In my case it was both. I failed Biology and since I couldn't take it in summer school, I had to take a class that was assigned for next year. That way, I would have space in my schedule to retake Biology.

But summer school was not always as easy as the first day. As the weeks went on, I had work on top of work. I just kept going and did not give up. I kept thinking to myself, I did not want to go to night school the following year.

In summer school, you never know who you are going to meet. I know that from my own experience, because there were a few kids in my class I thought I would never talk to. I ended up sharing things with them I wouldn't share with my close friends. Even the kid that needed a haircut turned out to be a cool person.

Now, I'm all done with summer school. I learned to reconsider summer school and to push forward, even though I thought it was going to be hard. Because the candy wrapper floor, with the hot, funky, fly infested room and the geeky teacher may be worth the while.



FROM "DAT" TO "DIS" HIP HOP FASHION BY PATRICE WORD

Hip hop has always had its own unique sense of style and taste in clothes. If you look at how hip hop MCs used to dress and how our modern day rapper dresses, you can see the difference. Think about it, Slick Rick and Soulja Boy (wow, what a comparison), or how about this one, LL Cool J and LL Cool J. Now you say a wait a minute, this is the same person. They are, but he sure doesn't dress the same. Think about how "LL" first dressed back in the old days and how he dresses now.

First, I want to give you a written picture of an ideal MC from back in the old days. Let's start from the head and work our way down. He had to have the all black fresh Kangaroo hat with the small white Kangaroo logo on the front of it. It fit just right and flowed down just enough to cover his eyebrows.

Hanging from his neck was a thick all-gold rope that showed he could afford to flash a little. With the matching all black Adidas jump suit that had the three stripes down the sides. Let's not forget about his ring that covered all four fingers and spelled out his MC name. Sounds fresh.

Now let's describe a rapper in the modern day. He got the fresh fade with the fattest diamond stud in his right ear. A long silver chain leads down to a medallion that in some way symbolizes him, almost but not quite covering up his all white XXL "t".

Going down more, he's got the dark monkey jeans that hang off his waist so that the designs on his pocket are not covered by his "t". He just has to have the all white Air Force 1's that look like they never come face to face with the ground. That's the ideal rapper today.

As for women who are part of hip hop culture, we all are very independent in our styles and the things we choose to wear, such as tight-fitting clothes or the new South Pole jumpsuit. Our style changes as the hip hop era changes. For example, one thing that

was in style were the real thick gold earrings that just look heavy. Now we have all kinds of different jewelry to choose from, such as hoops, or shells, all of which come in different colors. Every woman will wear what she wants to wear, what makes her look good or what she feels most comfortable wearing, but as the hip hop era changes, so does her style.

I have also noticed women really don't have a general advantage in terms of style. When you see the modern hip hop woman in a magazine, they all dress in different styles. Also if you look back at the hip hop influenced women, they don't have just one style, they dress their own way.

Hip hop has come a long way, but continues to be strong. That's where its beauty lies. No matter what day and age we are in, hip hop fashion often comes back stronger than before. And each time, I'm more and more impressed with the results.

Hip hop has come a long way, but continues to be strong. That's where its beauty lies.

Obstacles curse awkward mistake separation Embarrassed low self-esteem drifting away Embarrassed low self-esteem drifting away **GENERATIONAL CURSES** BY LAQUISHA LOCKE self-esteem drifting away Obstacles curse awkward mistake separation

I don't know if it is just me, but I've been noticing a trend in my family. A negative trend, in my opinion.

I have family all over this country; some I have met and most I have not. Those I have met, I have only seen once, and I can truthfully say that we have not talked or visited since then.

Almost two years ago, on Thanksgiving, all my family members from Fresno were expected to meet up with family members from other cities at my great-great-grandmother's home in Bakersfield, CA to have a huge dinner.

I was excited about seeing my other family members, to have an awesome time together. We had not seen each other in about three years.

My family and I had planned this huge reunion because my great-great-grandmother had been ill. Our goal was to gather the entire extended family since we did not know if that would be her last holiday.

We worked up our appetites preparing the food and ourselves for the big dinner. Then my family of 10 and I from Fresno sat around waiting for everyone to show up. Unfortunately, no family members from other cities showed up. Even though the food was excellent, it did not make up for their absence. We were disappointed. I felt like my other family members did not care to see us, as if we were not important.

I now realize that family separation is one of the many "generational curses" in my family.

A generational curse is something devastating that happens through the generations of a family. These "curses" do not have to start with our grandparents. They could start with our parents. And many people may not recognize them for what they are and how they survive. They may not even notice or pay attention to the things that repeat in their family from generation to generation because it becomes so common.

Will this "curse" continue to go on and on, or will I take control and break it?

You might not think that family separation is an issue, but I do, because it brings down our family morale.

Even my relatives who live here in town do not come together for family gatherings or dinners. We have dinners on holidays but when we are sitting at the table, we hardly know what to talk about. The only times we get together are for selling BBQ or for church gatherings, which are not often.

We do not have nice and meaningful conversations with one another, which often end up in gossip, sometimes about other family members. I feel like they try to find fault in me, as if they hope I

make a mistake and fail so they can justify their lifestyles. It feels awkward.

I do not understand how it is possible to have an awkward conversation with family members! We should be able to goof around, and be ourselves without feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed.

All of this makes me feel like the love is drifting away.

I feel fortunate that I recognize this curse in my family. By being aware of its oppressive cycle, I have the power to break it. I do not have to make the same mistakes or go through the same problems

that my family is enduring now and in the past. I believe each generation should improve through the years.

Does your family have a generational curse, and if so, what is it? It

could be alcoholism, drugs, high school/college drop out, divorce, low self-esteem, being on welfare, or even being unable to keep a steady job. Knowing your family's curse(s) will give you the power you need to break it.

Step one, notice it, and accept that it exists. Step two, talk to other family members and get their opinions. Step three, do some research about your family history. Step four, call a family meeting. Whatever you do, keep bringing it up until you get to the point where other family members are at least talking about it.

Once you do that, take a stand with me.

I choose to break this curse of family separation. I am going to start calling my family, and I will begin with those living in town. We will start making plans.

I will start traditions, for example, every second Sunday, we will have a family dinner at my grandmother's home. On the first Saturday of every month, we will have a family outing whether it is to the park, movies, restaurant, as long as we are together.

The traditions I am starting will continue in the future, when I have my own kids. Because I believe the value of family will keep us together so we can overcome any obstacles, even if we live far apart.

EMBARRASSING MOMENTS

BY LAKENYA STAMPS
& PATRICE WORD

Can you believe it? Did you ever think it would happen to you? Are you embarrassed? Of course you are! That was humiliating. Don't worry about it though, you'll get over it and think back one day and laugh about it. You ask, "what is it?" It is your most embarrassing moment! In exchange for these candid stories, all moments are anonymous.

Should Have Checked Twice

"It was my freshman year of high school so I was excited. I got up and put on my clothes and rushed out in a hurry. So I walked in the classroom and walked to a seat. All of a sudden, people were laughing. I came to find out one of my bras was stuck to the shirt I was wearing. Maybe next time I'll look at my clothes before I put them on."

Warning: Tooth Under Construction

"I was in the fifth grade at the time and for some reason, I had a disagreement with another kid my age. So after school, we decided to fight which was not a good choice. So we were outside fighting, and he decided to pick me up and drop me face first on the ground, which chipped my front tooth. So I went right home so my mom could take me to get it fixed. But we had a problem and they couldn't do it that day. So I had to go to school just the way I was. I'm in class the next day, and the teacher asked me a question, and I opened my mouth to speak and everyone started laughing. And that was my most embarrassing moment ever!"

A Gift From A Friend

"It was eighth grade and I was coming from a science class. I chatted with a guy who I would later find out was not my friend. Then I chatted with another guy, and he told me I had been walking around with a tampon that was colored red on my back the whole time! Now, I am not friends with the first guy I talked to because he didn't tell me I had it stuck on me!"

Don't Forget To Look Down

"My boyfriend and I were walking to a local store and we were arguing at the same time, so all my attention was on him at the time. Until all of a sudden, I found my right leg stuck in a hole. It was up to my knee! I was so embarrassed because I fell right in front of my boyfriend. So I hurried and tried to get my leg out and my sandal ended up falling in the hole. My boyfriend had to get on the ground and fish around for my shoe at the bottom of the hole."

In Slow Motion

"It was my first day of college, and I knew I was dressed to impress. So I was walking out of the library and in my own little world. So as I am walking down some stairs, all of a sudden I fell in front of everyone. But it was a regular fall, kind of in slow motion, as if I had planned the whole thing out! Next time, I'll say I did, and maybe I won't be as embarrassed as I was!"

Hey Baby

"One day, my friend and I were out walking around. We noticed these guys were a few feet ahead of us, and they gave off the impression that they were up to no good. So when we reached where they were at, one of them said, "Hey baby, you look good, can I have your number?" And I turned around with a really bad attitude and said, "I'm underage," and I kept on walking. Then I heard him reply, "I was talking to your friend anyway!" I felt my whole face turn bright red! Wow! Maybe next time I'll think twice before I respond."



The west wide of Fresno is where I have always been. I was born in the West, raised in the west, and still live in the west.

Before, I lived a boring and plain life! I would go to school, come back home, babysit, do homework, clean, and then talk on the phone with my boyfriend before I go to sleep.

But I have always wanted to be part of something, or be committed to something. I tried clubs at school, but I did not like them. I felt like they were not right for me.

One night, I was sitting on the couch, waiting for my boyfriend to call. My brother then threw me the phone. I thought it was my boyfriend, but a lady asked for me. She told me her name was "Mai Der" and she told me about The Know.

At first, I thought it was a joke or some trick advertisement, but then she told me she got my phone number from my English teacher. Mai Der told me about how The Know takes part in the community, and how fun it is.

At first I was somewhat scared and unsure, but then I told myself to try it out anyways.

At the first meeting, everyone was welcoming and nice. I was surprised they did not treat me like I was a stranger or an outcast. I didn't feel like a stranger, even though all these people were new to me. I participated in the activities, listened and watched others, and got to know them.

The first meeting I went to was fun since we celebrated Mai Der's birthday. Not just that, but De-Bug, a really cool group from San Jose, was there to talk to us about knowing our rights when it comes to police harassment, and other issues that teens are facing nowadays. We acted out scenes about past experiences with the

police. I noticed they were sharing some good information with us, about how to protect our rights, and that we do have the ability to get involved in our community.

They treated me as if I was "in the know" as long as they have been. This made me feel accepted and happy.

I went to bed that night thinking how lucky I was to be part of The Know. I thought to myself how lucky I am to have received that phone call. Seeing this was a chance for me to belong to something.

We need more positive things for teens to do and safe places for them to go. There should be more safe parks in the west side

where teens can hang out at instead of doing nothing. And just more programs and activities so they can involved in things!

The Know is an awesome opportunity and I'm so glad I took it! It's the best thing I've ever gotten myself into. The Know not only makes my life more interesting, but it gave me the opportunity to get my voice out there.

Knowing I'm part of something like The Know helps me block out the gunshots at night and sirens of police cars. Living on the west side is dangerous, but I'm used to it now. There are arrests in my neighborhood at least once every two weeks, sometimes more.

I never thought I would ever get into a good program without having to travel all the way to Clovis, or somewhere else. The Know comes to the west side, which makes it easier for me to stay involved. By getting involved with them, I have gotten more comfortable with my surroundings.

I was born in the west, raised in the west, and still in the west. The only difference now is that I'm part of The Know.

The Know not only makes my life more interesting, but it gave me the opportunity to get my voice out there.

Stand Up!

A WAKE UP CALL TO CALI HIP HOP

By Ariel Layfield

Man, every time the beat drop, I'm snappin' ma fingaz to some ATL song. If I pop lock an' drop it one more time I'm going to go crazy!

Right now, the only thing to rock yo' hips to is that South music. Don't get me wrong, I do like to party like a rockstar and all, but it's big things poppin' in Cali too, so I'm just suggesting that the South take a break and walk it out for a minute.

I remember it like it was yesterday. My brother and I were just chillin' at his house listening to some Soulja Boy, and at that moment the light bulb in my head turned on.

As the South is dominating hip hop, California rap is being swept off the music charts.

Think about it. What artist do we have on the rap scene reppin' Cali right now? Hmm... Lets think together. Ooh! Snoop Dogg? Ah No! He so tired and over, I don't even think the Crips want to claim him anymore. Oh, Ice Cube? Naw, he busy tryin' to convince people to go watch his new sequel to the movie Are We There Yet? Which should have been named Is It Over Yet? 'Cause I know that's what I was thinking when I saw the first one but uhm.... Lets see, there's Too Short. He still puts songs out, but then again he is getting Too Old to be rapping still.

Snoop Dogg is known as one of the pioneers of Gangsta Rap, so I can understand why he would feel pressured to come out with nothing but hits, which he does, but you can only rap for so long before your lyrics just don't stick to people like they used to. The Game is a talented rapper. He got flow and it don't need to stop, but he isn't rapping right now.

E-40's latest album, My Ghetto Report Card, is one of the best albums he's had in a while. I mean it has bangin beats and killer punch lines, it's good enough to play the CD straight through. But I noticed the only songs he made videos for were Tell Me When to Go and You and That, both of which got air time on BET and MTV. It seemed like after that he just stopped. I wanna know why he stopped, especially since he was reppin' Cali to the fullest.

So now, I've brought it to your attention that most of the Cali rappers we have don't rap as much as they used to, and I've come up with a solution to unfold this California Hip Hop mystery.

Since well known California rappers, such as Snoop Dogg, Too Short, The Game, Dr. Dre, E-40 and Ice Cube aren't reppin' Cali right now, they should scout and recruit new artists from Cali that can put us back on the map. P. Diddy tries to make a band all the time, so why can't we?

Dr. Dre really should be doing some P. Diddy type stuff like searching all across California to form a rap group. He's been over with his rap game, it would be good for him to branch off and start doing that type of business.

Now, Too Short is just starting to do what needs to happen. He is trying to get his scout on. He even signed a group. I'm sure you've heard of them, The Pack. They came on the scene with a song called Vans which was a hit. They recently released a new song with a video for 106 and Park (the most watched countdown show on BET) to play, called "I'm Shinin' " which is a great song too. It has potential to be #1 on the Top Ten show. But the catch is, you have to vote—you know that thing you do to make your opinion count?

And that brings us to the other important group in the solution: us. Listeners need to support Cali rappers. If we want even one artist from Cali to be put on the map, the first thing we have to do is participate in the little things, like voting for the Pack on 106 and Park.

Once a group becomes a hit on that show, they could be asked to perform and then after that who knows, they could be on more video shows, performing at award shows and even better, headlining a concert with today's top artist in a city near you! For the Cali rappers out there tryin' to make it, keep on doin' it, 559 rappers like The HandiBois, Young Draft, Section 8, Graffik, J Diggs, and many more.

Cali, we all need to add our flavor into the pot we call hip hop, because right now the South is throwing too much salt in this hip hop stew.



WESTSIDE PHARMACY

WHERE COMMUNITY HELPS COMMUNITY

BY JESSE ANDREWS

Escape to a place you trust. Put your mind at ease from everyday problems for five minutes. When you walk through the light glass doors, into this quiet, clean, pharmacy, you are greeted not only with a "may I help you?" but also by a huge soda machine to the right, stored with enticing drinks. Behind the counter, an array of snacks, from sweet rolls to candy, wait patiently for the hungry customer. White shelves sit parallel to each other, filled with what seems like an endless supply of medicine bottles and boxes.

This is a calm pharmacy, yet fast at work, with phone calls about prescriptions, the folding sounds of paper bags, and the giggly neighborhood kids or high school students who want to satisfy an afternoon hunger with tantalizing sweets.

Rite Aid, Walgreen's, Longs, Wal-Mart, and many hospital pharmacies might have it all, but they have nothing on the service and history that Westside Pharmacy has to share.

Established on October 26, 1969, Westside Pharmacy has served and continues to serve many Southwest Fresno residents since its doors opened.

It sits on the first floor of a beige two-story building at the corner of Fresno and Collins streets, in front of a small parking lot. The building is also home to community based organizations and health agencies. Yet the pharmacy is a Fresno treasure that many people have yet to discover since a lot of residents do not even know it is there.

Back in 1969, when there were few opportunities for Black professionals, six African American doctors from the East Coast came together with the idea to create pharmacies in the Fresno area.

That vision gave birth to Westside Pharmacy, which is continued today by the life long work of Willie J. Whisenhunt and his staff. Mr. Whisenhunt, who knew these doctors, currently manages the pharmacy.

Back then, "the office space for black-owned businesses was not available," Mr. Whisenhunt shared, as he peered through his silver rimmed glasses, dressed relaxed in blue jeans and a tucked white-collar shirt. "These ambitious doctors saw a need to provide pharmaceutical services to Southwest Fresno residents, so they took the initiative to buy offices to turn into pharmacies."

Back then, one of their biggest struggles was that many patients did not have money to pay for their prescriptions because prices were generally high. But Westside Pharmacy made a commitment to offer medicine at an affordable price for its patients. Finally, a pharmacy that caters to the needs of the people, they won't stick you because of the prices.

Whisenhunt continues to have a heart for the people of this community. He wants people to be able to live affordably. Once, I saw a man walk into the pharmacy who needed his medication to be refilled. Mr. Whisenhunt offered the man the medication he had left and told him he was low on supply. Instead of paying full price, the man could pay a low price for the medication.



Today, one of the biggest challenges that Whisenhunt faces is "old age." He believes the "new medical system is not like it used to be."

Big competitors are telling little pharmacies what to do, how to do it, and when. I believe big pharmacies hinder service because many of them focus on profit rather than on the people.

Yet just in the service, affordability and sense of community that Westside Pharmacy provides, I realize how it has brought positive change to Southwest Fresno. They are a community pharmacy; they make you feel like you are part of the community.

For someone who is not originally from Fresno, like myself, I felt like I was part of something wonderful when I got to know Westside Pharmacy better. I felt like family. People talk to each other and are friendly. Whenever my nine-year-old brother goes into the pharmacy, they always compliment him and say "he's a good kid with a bright future."

Other people realize the pharmacy's cultural influence. "Westside Pharmacy is a black-owned business and that's why I support it," explains Shaion Shaw, when I politely inter-

rupted her conversation with her friends while in the pharmacy. "It has been here a long time and I have been coming here for about 7 years now."

Whisenhunt not only knows his medicine, but he knows his community. Her says. "We as a group can be more together with unity if we work together as a community."



Fresno Youth Empowerment Studio "FresYES"



By Jennifer Gaxiola, FresYES All-Star, Roosevelt High School

If you are looking for a way to meet students who share the love of movie-making and digital storytelling, then FresYES is the place to be. What is FresYES- you may be wondering? It is the Fresno Youth Empowerment Studio, designed for students who want to make a difference in the world and who want to have their voices heard.

The diversity of cultures is very important in FresYES and media is a way to connect, not only with your culture but the cultures of the people around you. Here, you may learn about your past and you get the opportunity to meet and make videos about outstanding

Here, you may learn about your past and you get the opportunity to meet and make videos about outstanding community leaders.

community leaders.

FresYES has made great improvements and a great impact, since it began four years ago, with digital videos about veterans. It

all started with just a few students with the same objective and it has attracted many students from around Fresno County and other regions. Since then youth have produced over 200 videos about veterans, Hmong elders and Latino leaders. FresYES is sponsored by the Center for Multicultural Cooperation, with our Studio in the Veterans Memorial Building in downtown Fresno. Sponsors include Fresno Parks and Recreation Department, Fresno Unified School District, California Council for the Humanities and Comcast.

FresYES has given many students opportunities to get marvelous leadership training and we participate in the annual Youth Summit at CSU Fresno, along with many retreats. Just recently, the FresYES All-Stars went to the wonderful city of San Francisco, where we met other youth producers from Los Angeles, Mt. Shasta, Lodi, Oakland, San Francisco and more cities that were involved in media projects. We have gone to the Cesar Chavez Center in La Paz, Santa Cruz, San Jose and Washington DC to have our voices heard and to spread the many great things we are accomplishing. See our website www.cmcweb.org. If you are interested in learning to make videos and joining FresYES, contact us by email, info@cmcweb.org.

FRESNO FREE WRITE

very week Fresno writers come together to write about their community. It takes brainstorming, research and edits. Every now and then, you gotta change it up, and let writers be writers. Below are quick responses to questions. Know writers come off the top of the head, and the answers turn out to be consistently honest and revealing.

My Muse: Why I Write

Anna, 16

Everything that happens in my life is my muse. Things that surround me help and motivate me to write or do things in my life. A muse can be a feeling, person, or object. It can be different things but is something that motivates you to do something and finish it. That's what a muse means to me, a motivation that doesn't let you stop until you achieve your goal. Your motivation can be the same thing or it can change. In my life, my muse always changes but it mostly relates to my other muses. The topic is mostly the same. My topic at the moment is school and my muses are different people. My brother Eusebio is one of my muses, he pushes me to finish and achieve my goals. My friends are my other muses, they help me through my problems and help me achieve. My main muse is God above. He throws good and bad things in my life to show me that no matter what happens I can achieve anything I want to achieve. So my muse is different things in life that God brings to us. So everyone has a muse even if they don't know it. A muse is mostly a feeling that comes from the heart, a feeling that helps you move on and achieve your goal, and lets you write about your life.

Jaleesa, 18

He is my inspiration, my love and lover alike. He has filled the void of my past. Even when he isn't with me, he's there, behind me in mind and spirit. When I doubt myself, he encourages me. When I am being arrogant, I'm gently reminded to calm myself. In my writing it shows, rather, he shows himself, pushing me to finish each and every sentence. In reality, he is always at my side, helping me through each and every difficult day. He is my friend, my lover, and most importantly, my muse—the one thing that keeps me inspired to fulfill my dreams.

Laqusha, 19

My reason for being, my everything. All my hope is in him. He is my inspiration for living, loving, caring, and writing. He lifts me up when I'm down, holds me close when I'm lonely. He is everything I need and everything I desire. He loves me for who I am and he doesn't love me less because of my downfalls or my flaws. He inspires me to be me. When I'm with him, I don't have to deny my individuality, because of him I sing much louder, breathe much slower, laugh much harder, and run much further. Because of him in my moments that should be sad, I have joy. He never lets me down. He gets me happy for no reason. He gives me insight; he doesn't let me be deceived by anyone or anything. He helps me to discern good and bad friends, right and wrong decisions.

Life's Encouragement

Marcus, 17

There are so many ways to encourage someone yet the same applies with the opposite. To tell a person they can accomplish something while saying they can't, won't, or wouldn't be able to. That

is only a mental block set up by yourself as the next person attempts to crush your hopes and dreams along with their own, trying to keep you from overcoming obstacles and succeeding in life, only to trip over the hurdles of life whether you are on a teeter totter financially or trying to get a fifty cent 32 oz. soda. People never want to see you advance them so just keep your expectations high.

Patrice, 16

I assure everyone, whether they know it or not, has made an impact on someone's life. Whether you are walking down the street and smile to the person walking towards you. You may have made their day. To me the smallest things in life mean the most to me, like for example, instead of a gift for my birthday, I'll be happy with a card. There is something with words. A person can tell me something that takes only one minute to say but it may stick to me for the rest of my life. Good or bad. And I'm sure I have told someone something that stuck with them for a while and I may not have noticed it. Good or bad. So maybe someone should take that one minute out of their day and say something nice to someone, even if you're just walking down the street, smile at someone. Because it may just change their day, or maybe even their life.

Chanda

All throughout my life, I have had both discouragement and encouragement from elementary and middle school teachers. They told me that I was never going to be anything or anyone important. I also had to deal with racism from teachers, principals and some family. I have had some discouragement from my uncles, grandparents, and aunts. They have told me that I would never make it into college or make it through high school. I started to believe them until I talked to my mom. She told me that I am special and that I can do anything I set my mind to. She has also told me I will and have to set a good example for my younger siblings. After all the discouragement and encouragement I started to work hard to succeed to prove to everyone that tried to discourage me. I worked so hard that I am now a freshman at Fresno City College and I am going to an audition for modeling this Sunday. Everybody has that something that will discourage them or even encourage them from being something all throughout their lives. It all depends on how you take it all in and what you decide to do with it. If you decide to listen to the discouragement then you aren't going to do well. But if you ignore it and just listen to the encouragement then you will succeed. You cannot help those who don't want to be helped and you can't judge a book/person by its cover. I have learned how to look at myself in a little bit more positive way.



FRESNO FREE WRITE

Submit your writing to the Know, and you may get on siliconvalleydebug.com, the Know blog, or maybe the next issue! Just write in the space below and submit it to:

*In the Know Coordinator Mai Der Vang
West Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development
302 Fresno Street suite 212
Fresno, CA 93706*

Write us your answer the question/subject (Make sure to include your name and age):

Why I write

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Life's Encouragement:

Community Challenges the Riverpark Curfew

By Laqusha Locke // Jesse Andrews



During the past few months, The Know participated in several community meetings held by local groups, such as the Rios Co, to talk about ideas for addressing the Riverpark Shopping Center Curfew issue.

The curfew was established this past summer because of the numerous complaints about teenage loitering around the stores. The curfew shook up many people, especially young people. It was based on a "Six/18" policy that would require, kids and teens, under 18 years of age, to be chaperoned and in the presence of an adult (parent or guardian 21 or over) after 6 PM on Fridays and Saturdays. The rule applied to the plaza space which is the main hangout area outside and around Edwards Theater and some nearby stores.

A number of youth felt like they were being discriminated against and that their civil rights were violated. "This is not constitutional," a quote that was repetitiously stated by young people. Many youth were very upset, so they fought back by protesting, and attending community meetings to voice their oppositions about the

curfew. Adults and some storeowners also had their point of view, which was that many teens were irresponsible and did not know how to behave themselves in group settings. For example, groups of teens would block traffic around the plaza.

During the meetings, the community came together to talk and see if there were other ways to address the issue rather than use the curfew policy. The meetings helped create public discussions, forums where adults and youth can share their respective opinions, ideas and perspectives.

Many ideas formed, such as that we need to balance fun and civic engagement by providing constructive activities/opportunities for youth to interact. Another recommendation was to work with youth to find solutions to the issue that have arisen from this process. In addition, the idea to have a youth fair, to inform youth about different organizations/opportunities here in town, was suggested.

But to specifically address the curfew issue, many people felt we need to create more enticing and safe places for youth to hang out.

WHAT THE OUTSIDE NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT THE INSIDE WORLD LIVING IN BAY JUNGLES

By Josh Garrard

Broken bottles everyone, dirt all over the ground, no grass anywhere. It's the Bay Area and Marin City jungles, my inside world.

We run from the outside world -- those people who live outside the hood, outside this life -- because it does not accept many of us who are from the hood.

Because the outside world doesn't always accept us, many of us stay stuck in the hood, with no direction. Our direction is in the hood.

Some people do not understand why we do what we do. But for me, I believe it is because we are hurt—hurt by our broken families, growing up watching people die getting shot, or watching people sell drugs and learning how to do it.

So what options do we have? It feels like the outside world offers none.

Some people don't want help, some people do. Where I'm from, you "gotta git it" how you live, which means doing whatever you need to do to git yo' money or to git yo' respect. The streets will sometimes do that to you, have you growin up on what you see, and most of the time, that is negativity.

It's hard for people to understand the street life because they don't live in the hood like we do, so many of them think we all need to be in prison, especially the police. They harass us all the time, and there is nothing we can do.

For a person you see everyday on da block, you can have a

conversation all day because street life is what you both know. You feel comfortable with that person.

I feel I have to tell people about the way we live because if we don't, then we will be ignored and stereotyped.

I'm not saying we need to get attention by getting arrested or doing other bad things. But we need to speak out in a positive way

and be heard. I would rather be heard then seen. Being seen does nothing for us but make us feel watched. That means sneaking away from the outside world, doing things that profile us as criminals, things that get us in trouble.

Being heard means to speak out in a positive manner, and letting the outside world know who we are. We are the same people as those on the outside. Being heard means to speak out to the outside and for them to take into consideration our words and accept us.

I'm still stuck in the inside world, and looking for a way out. The Bay Area and Marin city are all part of my inside world. Where is my way out?

Originally from Marin City, Josh currently lives in Fresno.

Some people do not understand why we do what we do. But for me, I believe it is because we are hurt—hurt by our broken families, growing up watching people die getting shot, or watching people sell drugs and learning how to do it.



