



BE AN ALLY



ISSUE N.1

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A close-up portrait of a young woman with long, dark brown hair, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a black turtleneck sweater under a light-colored jacket with a grey strap across her shoulder. The background shows a paved path, green trees, and a clear blue sky.

**Emma Pitts**  
**Editor-in-Chief**

# EDITOR'S LETTER

## VOICES

Welcome to the first issue of Beaconsfield High School's Magazine!

Beaconsfield High School's social justice magazine, *VOICES*, aims to bring to light the many injustices our students feel passionate about. The magazine was a student-led project, working in collaboration with our BHS student writers, artists and poets.

Some of our articles include interviews from students, faculty and relatives of our writers. Some recount personal stories and opinions relating to the article's subject matter.

Through voicing the many social issues faced by our student body and faculty, the VOICES magazine encourages a more open community, in which students feel comfortable to express their concerns and experiences openly with their peers and teachers.

The magazine covers subjects such as multiculturalism, racism, religious suppression and gender discrimination. While these topics may not cover every aspect of their subject matter, they aim to encourage students to dive deeper into understanding them, researching them and coming to their own conclusions.

Thank you for your patronage, enjoy our first issue!

Editor-and-Chief

EMMA PITTS

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# Simply **Surviving**

Emma Pitts

Coming from the south, the product of two worlds **colliding**

Colombian mother and great leader, always providing  
Communicative and ambitious, beautiful without even trying

Canadian dad and great mentor, always smiling  
Comedic and charming, encourages my thriving

Counting on my older sister, looking out for each other  
Chilling with my twin, a relationship like no other

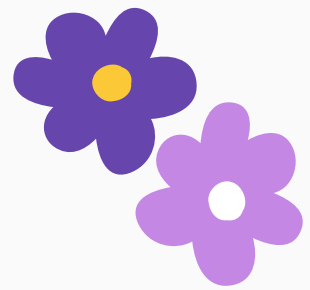
Childhood separation, spent praying and crying  
Crushed by her condition, grew up guilty but trying

Confronted by my past, why am I hiding  
Cornered by expectation, a close-minded confining

Challenged to define myself, to get up and start flying  
Cushioned between the south and north,

I'm a cultural lab rat, simply **surviving**.





## We Need More Books with Characters who are People of Colour and who are Diverse in Experiences



Diverse books allow us, as the students, to engage more in stories and feel more connected to the characters in them. These books would be a great way of having students more interested in books and a great way of promoting anti-racism and anti-homophobia in the school.



## What Does it Mean to be a Fair and Just School?

By Jordan Powell

Throughout your life, you have probably heard the words “fair” and “just” thrown around countless times. While this monotonous repetition may dilute their meaning, these words bear an immense weight of truth. Fairness and justness are significant concepts to understand, not only in school but also in life.

As a Grade 11 student, I have realized that school is more than studying and taking tests. School teaches us how to interact with others, building the critical social skills that guide us through life. Our school’s social environment is a window into the future. Venturing down long and crowded corridors and going to class, society’s future surrounds us.

### ***Why is this so important?***

At school, we all try to fit into a predefined mold of which societal role we must play. We are easily influenced by our surroundings, like social pressure, defined as “the combined pressures that are around you during everyday life such as Peer Pressure, Academic Pressures and Socioeconomic Pressure” (Margaret). As such, our school environment must be fair and just, in a bid to avoid subservience in the face of injustice. Not only does that ensure equity, but it will instil within us values conducive to speaking up in the face of injustice, should we encounter it in the future.

### ***What do fairness and justness look like in school?***

That is the question with countless answers based on subjective experiences. My view on fairness and justness is, of course, different from those of certain minority groups, as I am a white male. To account for this, I interviewed Beaconsfield High School students and staff, asking the big question...

# What does fairness and justness in school look like to YOU?



## According to a grade 8 student,

In school, 'justness' is when your debts are given appropriate consequences when you do not follow the rules in place. For example, if you violate the dress code, you have to put a uniform on. Fairness, however, is when people respect the rules instead of violating them for fun. We should have an assembly every so often to discuss how we should behave with respect, and how our actions have consequences.

## According to a grade 9 student,

Fairness and justness in school is when students who may look different are treated equally. It is when every single student gets an equal education, not particularly being favoured nor being discriminated against due to the colour of their skin, their religious faith, or any other differentiating factors. As a person of colour in a predominantly white school I am acutely aware of this.



In a fair and just school, all students would feel respected, validated and supported. It has become easier to address discrimination when it comes from another student; however, it is more challenging to address the circumstances in which adults in positions of authority demonstrate discriminatory and possibly racially motivated behaviours. We must do more to ensure that all students, including those from diverse backgrounds, feel comfortable and supported in addressing their concerns without fear of repercussions.



## **Joanne Francis states,**

*Cycle 1 VP of BHS*

In my opinion, fairness and justness in a school is the respect and acceptance of differences.

## **Guerlyne Mercier writes,**

*Grade 7 French teacher*

To me a fair and just school would be a place where you see and promote gender, ethnic and cultural diversity. Walking in the hallway I would see people (students, teachers, caretakers, administrators) that share similar backgrounds as myself. The curriculum taught would include and acknowledge the contribution of different communities (First Nation, Blacks, Women, LGBTQ in Canadian society. Feeling valued and accepted ultimately creates a sense of belonging. And this is what most of us are looking for.



## **According to another teacher,**

At BHS and elsewhere, no matter the individual's identity, I believe that we all should be treated with dignity, respect and kindness. In a perfect world, we would embrace our uniqueness and let it be. We would not focus negatively or needlessly on what makes us different from another. That being said, we do need to recognize and understand that we are not all cut from the same cloth. My identity, and all that it entails, is neither superior nor inferior to any other person that enters this building or lives in this province. It makes me who I am. The same is true for you. I feel like many others: there is room enough for all of us; there is **no** room for the thought that we all do not have a place nor a voice at BHS, and in our greater community.





**Robb Jutras writes,**  
*Grade 11 English Teacher*

Fairness and justness is...

When we see with our brain and not just our eyes.

When we listen with our heart and not just our ears.

When we speak with others and not just at them.

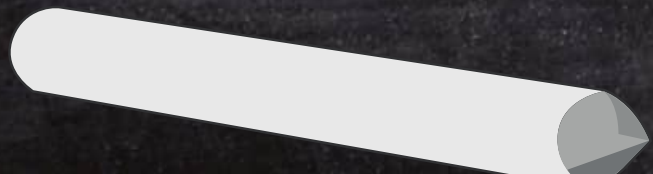
In doing so, we encourage a healthy exchange of ideas and we establish an environment in which we can truly learn from one another.

**Melinda Cochran writes,**  
*Grade 9 English teacher*

Communication is perhaps the most important aspect to creating change. Open communication is not always easy, but it is necessary. Without communication there is no room to grow, and develop social consciousness. We learn more as individuals when we can listen to another's point of view openly and willingly. Dialogue allows us to do this. Communication opens the window of another person's life, and allows us to see what we do not experience. A just and fair school is therefore a place where everyone has a voice, we speak to one another, and we all listen to one another. Through actively listening to each other we begin to understand truths. This is not always easy, sometimes it can be difficult to hear the truth, but without truth who are we as a humanity.

**Fairness and justness...**

are daunting words, but we should not be afraid or intimidated. Although we are making societal progress, BHS must still work to achieve equality. That is where you come in. Spread the word; convey what you have learned. Only once we understand what a fair and just school is can we transform our vision into reality.



**White Wedding by Kim Rivest**

**I hope for a world where you would not suffocate me**

**Not just me, but us**

**Yet, you can afford a world above the intoxicating clouds**

**Create your own air only you can taste**

**Close your eyes and dream of an unknown world**

**As you laugh like immortal beings**

**We'll wear white on your wedding day**

**Wishfully thinking**

**That one day we'll overshadow you**

# The Road to Acceptance

As I dressed, I couldn't help but look. The mirror had a slight glare and reflected the soft colors of my gray walls. The porcelain lamp, the posters on the walls of some music artist, and finally the disgusting part of all of it, me.

I tried to fix it though.

I put on mascara.

Put mousse in my hair and curled it.

Tried to dress better, no more sweats and a t-shirt.

I didn't do this for someone else. After all, my boyfriend lives in Florida which is over two thousand kilometres away. No no no, I'm doing this for myself.

For one wish,

I wanted to be pretty.

I looked to the mirror and my reflection spoke to me.

*"Hm, are you sure you look good?"*

"Yes, I feel good right now, really I am!" I respond

*"No sweetie, look at you... You don't look good at all."*

"O-oh..."

I got out of my room and snuck into the bathroom. That's where it was.

A treasure:

The scale.

I got on and hoped and prayed that that tiny little red needle would go down. This morning though, there was no difference. I was sad at seeing that, but I was also so angry. At things I couldn't control.

Jealousy.

I envy people who can eat whatever the hell they want and still look good. Those who can fill their bodies with all the junk they desire, yet still look amazing.

Nothing ever wrong with them.

Yet somehow, there's always something wrong with me.

Why do I have to be this way?

I go downstairs and open up the fridge to pack my lunch. I look around and catch my distorted reflection in the plastic. It speaks again,

*"Just don't. You don't need it."*

"What do you mean?" I respond.

*"Food. A couple hours won't do too much damage, right? And at school, you could run and-"*

"But I don't like running."

*"You do want to be pretty though... Right?"*

I looked down at the bag of carrots that sat in my hands. It weighed a ton. I slowly put it back and got out my lunch bag and stuffed it with paper to make it look full. I then went off to school.

Days passed, not eating and constantly running. I felt so sick everyday that my body sometimes just refused to move. But it was all worth it for that euphoria I felt every time that little red needle went down one notch. I knew that what I was doing was wrong, but it felt so right.

But the voice persisted.

*"Hmm only down ten pounds?... That's pathetic."*

"But it has only been a couple days?"

*"...So?"*

I continued. I ate less and less every day. I tried not to even eat at all, but my parents would tell me to and I'd listen. I was so hungry. I brought water to school almost everyday.

The internet said it would help me lose weight.

It didn't.

My weight became stagnant after I lost fourteen pounds. It had been a week. And it stayed there for another week. The voice screamed at me telling me to stop entirely. Saying how I was ugly.

I compare myself to other people a lot. It's something that my parents taught me to do, as they always compared me to my sister, and vice versa. My friend Angelica was the usual person I compared myself to.

She was perfect.

She was pretty.

She had *everything*.

The voice made comments every time I was around her, comparing my body to hers. She made me look like trash in comparison. The voice loved her, and hated me.

I was imperfect.

I was ugly.

I had *nothing*.

The voice started to drive me mad. I strayed away from every reflective surface I saw. I struggled to not look at myself in the mirror in the morning. To check the scales. It started to become all too much, but still... The voice persisted.

*"You ugly insignificant brat! You are nothing unless your stomach is empty and you run!"*

And so I did.

And I nearly fell to the floor.

I started floating away from my surroundings. Trees and clouds drifting off into oblivion.

I knew then, I needed help.

I came back into the school and looked for one of my best friends, Annie. I searched the library with no luck, but as I turned to leave I saw someone else I trusted, George.

I had already spoken with him about serious topics as he had already helped me through a tough day when I could no longer put up with my abusive mother who had been particularly cruel to my sister and me.

I went up to him.

“Hey Chloe, you good or what?”

“No...Um.. George...”

“You ok?”

“Remember what I mentioned a little while ago.. About not eating?”

“Oh shit.”

“I’m not ok George. I need help.”

“Do you want to go to the office?”

I looked and saw someone there. A teacher. She was always so kind to the students. She was like a mother to all of us.

Something I knew I needed at that moment.

I couldn’t go to my mother... When I was a kid she explained to me what anorexia was. She told me I could never ever develop anorexia. Also... she was always judging me, about my looks.

A part of me knew...

That voice was me as much as it was her.

“Can we go to Ms. Thornridge?”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. I need help.”

I walked over to the library desk and there sat Ms. Thornridge along with Ms. Waller. I spoke my voice quiet I explained that I needed to talk and Ms. Thornridge brought me into a private room and sat me down.

“What’s wrong dear?”

“I think I might have anorexia...”

“A-are you sur-”

“I lost fourteen pounds in two weeks!” I blurted, squeezing my eyes shut.

When I opened them she looked terrified.

She took me down to the main office immediately and brought me to the vice principal and explained the situation. The vice principal then sprung into action and went to get the schools guidance counsellor that I saw sometimes to help with my personal problems. Ms. Thornridge then looked over to me and kneeled in front of me.

“I’m going to go now and have my lunch, they are going to take care of you here. You will be safe.”

“O-ok” I mumbled.

She suddenly enveloped me in a hug and it felt so good. Better than the euphoria of that little red needle going down another notch.

It felt warm.

A mother’s hug.

I suddenly couldn’t take it anymore and I sobbed.

I cried into her shoulder length platinum blond hair.

I couldn’t stop.

She shushed me and told me that I was strong and that I did everything right in coming to her. I just needed some help and I was brave to come and get it before things got any worse.

I continued though.

I sobbed and I sobbed.

I repeated ‘sorry’ over and over again.

Ms. Thornridge calmed me down and gave my hand a squeeze before leaving and then I went to the guidance counsellor and explained everything.

She said things I already knew.

This was very unhealthy.

I needed to stop torturing my body.

And that this wasn’t sustainable.

I realized then and there that I already did one thing right on the road to recovery, but I needed to do something else.

No one could help me if I couldn’t help myself.

A day later I wandered to the break room of my part time job and saw something that sparked my interest.

A chocolate bar.

I spoke with my boyfriend and he convinced me to get it.

And I did.

I brought it to a private area and I opened it and took a bite, and it was amazing. *The voice was there though*, trying to drag me down, trying to get me to do anything to stop it.

But for once, I didn’t listen to it.

I turned to the mirror and I saw myself.

I saw me there, eating something sweet, and feeling ok with myself.

I knew it would be awhile before it really happened, but in that moment I felt a little bit of acceptance for myself.

All my flaws.

And it felt good.

**We Need More Books With  
Characters who are people of  
COLOUR and also characters who  
are diverse in experiences.**



We should have books with people of colour and or characters who are diverse in experience because it shows us students the different perspectives of life. As well, it will also allow us to connect to the characters and the author who could be from the same background as the characters.

# A Colombian-Canadian Culture Comparison

Emma Pitts

With a large wave of immigrants having come to Canada within the past century, people around the world have been united! Canada is a multicultural melting pot, showing the world that a country's population can come in all shapes, sizes and shades. With 21% of the country's population being immigrants, this increase in cultural diversity has formed a new Canadian culture.

I'm the daughter of a Colombian immigrant mother and Canadian father. Growing up as a multiethnic Canadian, I was surrounded by many worlds. Through being exposed to many cultures, diversity was my "normal."

However, I wondered about what my mother's experience getting used to Canadian culture was like...

So I asked her.

1991 was the year my mother first came to Canada under the English as a Second Language exchange program. After studying in Toronto for 5 months, she came to Montreal.

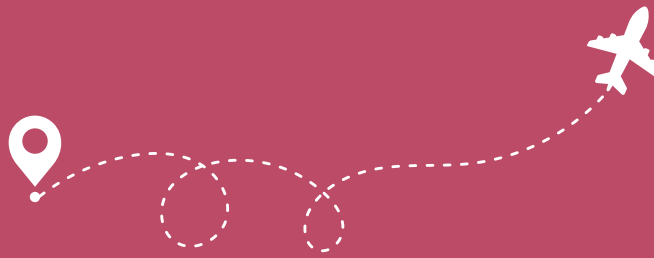
**She was not entirely met with open arms.**

When my mother first moved to Canada she felt very alone. According to her, Canadians were different from Colombians in that they generally kept to themselves and their own communities. She found it difficult to reach out to other people, since many were hesitant to learn about her culture and practices.

**There were more boundaries she had yet to face: Some that surpassed cultural differences.**

Growing up in a country as racially diverse as Colombia, my mother rarely encountered racism. But things were different when she moved to Canada. One day, she and her friend of colour went shopping for some clothes when they were waved away by the doorman. The man had the gall to tell them they weren't allowed in because they didn't look like they had the money for it. In contrast, my mother told me that Colombians treated foreigners with respect to give their country a good representation.

**Throughout these various encounters, my mom saw Canadian culture under a new light.**



After living in Canada for more than 30 years, my mother noticed two prominent Québec cultures: Anglophone and Francophone. Although she could relate to and got along with both, my mother's experience with people was a mixed bag.

Having arrived in Montreal, my mother searched for work. With an advanced education and the ability to speak four languages, you'd think it'd make her the prime candidate for almost any job, right? Well, that wasn't my mother's experience. She recounted an occasion where, while looking for work, her interviewer dismissed her for not being "French enough." To her, it felt like it was more than a linguistic obstacle, rather an unbreakable cultural barrier: She would always be an outsider.

**Nevertheless, she made efforts to relate to the community by finding common ground.**

Within her first few months of living in Montreal, my mother got involved with the church, gaining a mutuality with her fellow churchgoers. She was soon employed, finding work at the Academie Linguistique Internationale. Through reaching out to the community, my mother better integrated herself into Canadian society.

**She quickly made friends with all sorts of people, eventually meeting my father.**

Although her friends and community offered her comfort and a place to belong, my father showed her a new side to Canadian culture, one she had longed for. With my dad, my mom didn't have to accommodate. She was free to be herself as my father took genuine interest in her Colombian customs. That's something my mother has always loved about him. My dad's always been an authentic and open person, lighting up any room he walks into.

Having made connections, my mother had found her place in Canadian society. One where she is free to educate herself about other cultures and, in turn, spread her own knowledge and experiences to those who are willing to listen.

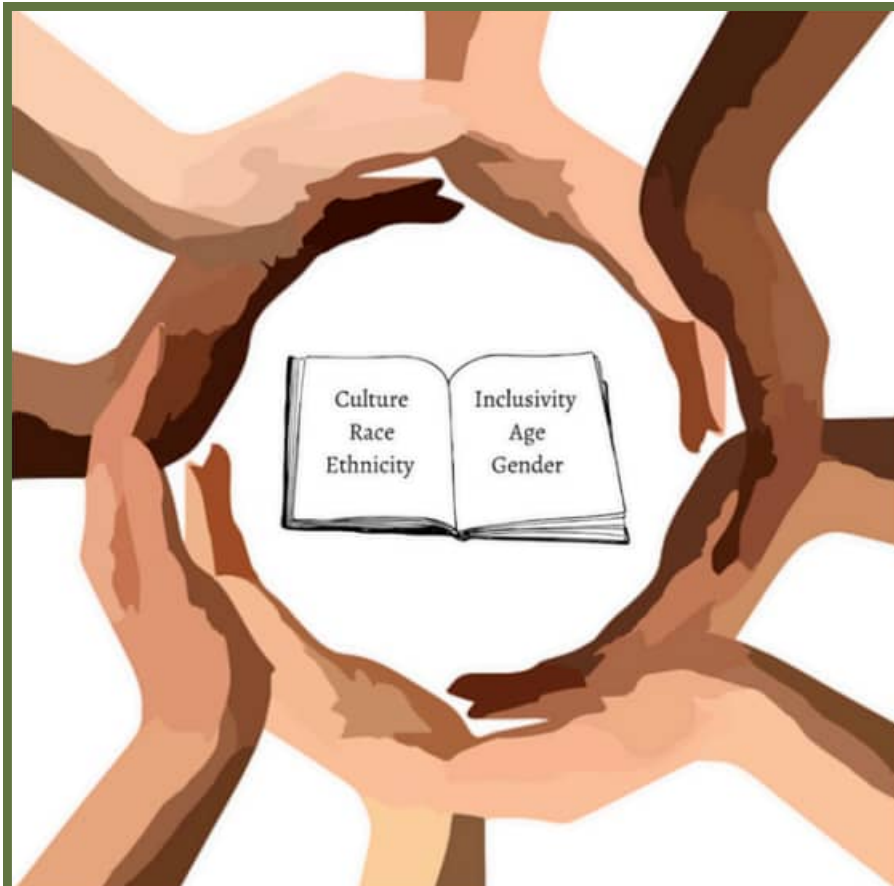
That's the beauty about Canada. We have been given the opportunity to expand our horizons through cultural exploration. It's only through taking advantage of this chance that we can set a precedent for the rest of the world.

**When we put prejudice aside, we find we have more in common than expected.**

# Julian Cicchetti

We Need More Books With Characters Who Are People Of Colour And Also Characters Who Are Diverse In Experiences.

Allowing students to explore more diverse backgrounds and characters can allow for new topics to be touched upon and encourage more relatable stories. Many authors push themselves up onto the moral high ground and promote their stories which contain the same generic characters and plots. The majority of the existing diverse stories are overshadowed and hidden by those above. Reading more diverse books in school provides educational and useful information in the world we live in which is covered in diversity and people with different stories who would like to share them.



# *Social Justice*



Schools should have more books that talk about the experiences of people of color and diverse backgrounds because it promotes inclusivity, cultural understanding, and empathy among students. By reading stories from different perspectives, students can enrich their understanding of the world and get a deeper appreciation for different cultures.





# The Misogyny of Fan Culture

*By Isabella McCarron - Student Writer at Beaconsfield High School.*

IMAGINE: THE UNCONTROLLABLE ROAR OF A CROWD PACKED INTO A STADIUM LIKE SARDINES, CHANTING, SINGING, AND SCREAMING FOR THE PEOPLE THEY HAVE CONGREGATED TO PERFORM THEIR TALENTS. WOULD YOUR PERCEPTION OF THIS CHANGE IF I TOLD YOU THAT THIS WAS A BTS CONCERT? WHAT IF IT WAS A WORLD CUP MATCH?

MOST PEOPLE ALREADY HAVE AN IDEA OF WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE EACH GROUP'S FANS ARE LIKE: SPORTS TEAM FANS ARE PASSIONATE MEN CHEERING FOR A GROUP OF MEN PLAYING A RESPECTABLE GAME, BRINGING PRIDE TO THEIR COUNTRY. MEANWHILE, BOY BAND FANS ARE CRAZY AND IMMATURE GIRLS THERE TO GAPE AT THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF A GROUP OF MEN SINGING AND DANCING FOR THEM.

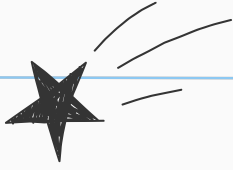
WHEN PUT IN SIMPLER TERMS, THERE IS NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MEN ON A SPORTS TEAM AND THE MEN IN A BOY BAND. BOTH TRAIN FOR YEARS HONING THEIR SKILLS AND TRYING TO GET ONTO A TEAM. BOTH CONTINUE WORKING HARD EVEN AFTER TO ASSURE THEY CAN PERFORM THEIR BEST. BOTH ARE FOLLOWING THEIR DREAMS, WHICH IN TURN BRINGS THEIR FANS JOY.

THE REAL DIFFERENCE IS HOW THEIR AUDIENCE IS VIEWED. THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF CELEBRITY CULTURE, MOST NOTABLY DURING THE RISE OF ELVIS PRESLEY AND THE BEATLES, AND EVEN WITH PRESENT-DAY CELEBRITIES LIKE JUSTIN BIEBER, BTS, AND ONE DIRECTION, THE PASSION OF YOUNG WOMEN HAS BEEN TREATED LIKE UNREASONABLE HYSTERIA BY MAINSTREAM SOCIETY.

THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT ALL OF THE ACTIONS OF THE WOMEN WHO ADORE THEIR IDOLS ARE JUSTIFIABLE, BUT IT IS INTERESTING TO SEE THE DOUBLE STANDARDS BETWEEN HOW PEOPLE TREAT WOMEN'S INTEREST IN THEIR ICONS AND HOW MEN ARE TREATED WHEN THEY ACT SIMILARLY.

DURING THE EURO 2020 FINALS AT WEMBLEY STADIUM, SPORTS FANS TOPPLED BARRIERS AND BREACHED TURNSTILES TO GET IN WITHOUT A TICKET. AFTER THE GAME ENDED UNFAVOURABLY FOR THE ENGLISH TEAM, RIOTS BROKE OUT ON THE STREET AND FANS OF THE ENGLISH TEAM BEGAN VERBALLY HARASSING PLAYERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA.





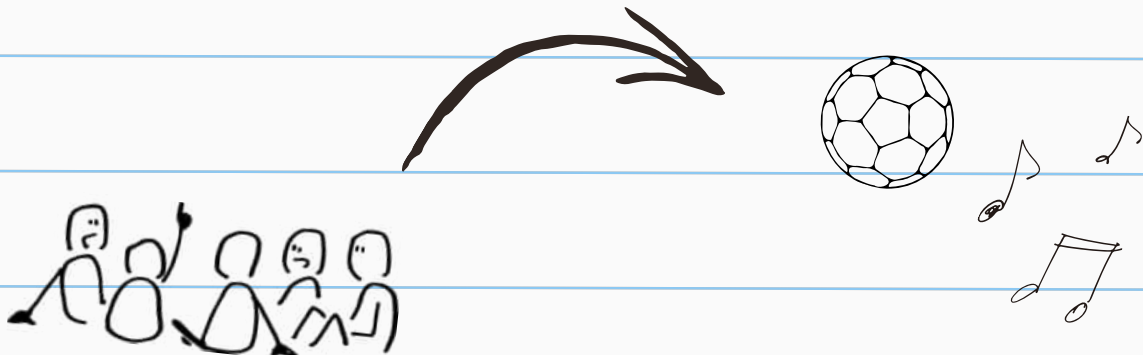
IN CONTRAST, AFTER BTS' TWO CONCERTS IN WEMBLEY STADIUM IN 2019, FANS LEFT THE VENUE PEACEFULLY AND SANG TOGETHER AS THEY MADE THEIR WAY HOME. NO FIGHTS OR RIOTS BROKE OUT. JUST IMAGINE, 90 000 PEOPLE IN A STADIUM SUPPORTING A GROUP AND THEY STILL MANAGED TO ACT LIKE CIVIL HUMANS.

WOMEN ARE NEVER HELD TO THE SAME STANDARDS AS MEN WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR INTERESTS. THEY ARE SEEN AS IMMATURE POSERS WHO CAN ONLY BE INTERESTED IN STEREOTYPICALLY FEMININE THINGS LIKE THEIR APPEARANCE BECAUSE THERE'S NO WAY A WOMAN COULD BE INTERESTED IN A BAND BECAUSE OF THEIR MUSIC.

THIS GOES WAY BACK TO THE ONGOING BELIEF THAT WOMEN ARE IRRATIONAL AND EMOTIONAL, WHILE MEN ARE LEVEL-HEADED AND STRONG. THIS HAS BEEN DISPROVED COUNTLESS TIMES, ESPECIALLY IN FANDOM CULTURE.

ANYONE WHO IS A PART OF A FANDOM, NO MATTER THEIR GENDER IDENTITY CAN SHOW THEIR ENTHUSIASM ABOUT THEIR INTEREST. BUT WHY ARE WOMEN DISCOUNTED AND INVALIDATED WHEN PASSIONATE ABOUT SOMETHING? THE ANSWER IS SIMPLE: MISOGYNY. MISOGYNY IS THE DISLIKE, CONTEMPT, OR PREJUDICE AGAINST WOMEN. IN THIS CASE, IT'S PREJUDICE AGAINST THINGS WOMEN ENJOY.

THIS DOESN'T MEAN THAT SPORTS FANS SHOULD BE TREATED WITH THE SAME DISRESPECT FANGIRLS HAVE FACED FOR DECADES. IT MEANS THAT EVERYONE'S INTERESTS SHOULD BE RESPECTED WITHOUT SHAMING OR ACTING AS IF ONE FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT IS SUPERIOR TO ANOTHER.





## We Need More Books with Characters who are People of Colour and also Characters who are Diverse in Experiences

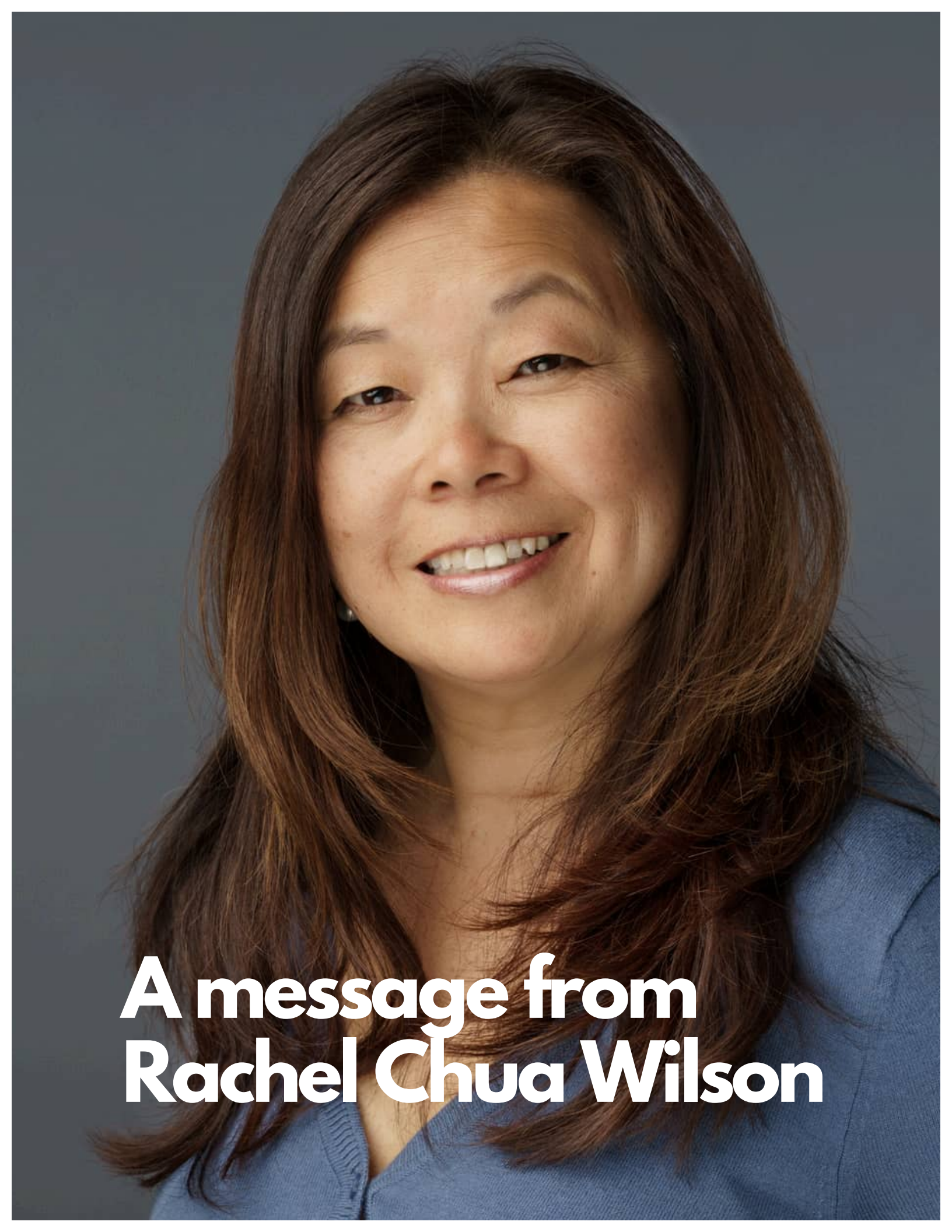
Reading books can make kids more empathetic and more caring people in life. Students can be reminded of the similarities and differences in human experiences by reading about other cultures and identities. Children will be able to look beyond their own personal experiences and physical appearance when they read novels with diverse characters. For the people of colour, they will be able to relate to the diverse characters.



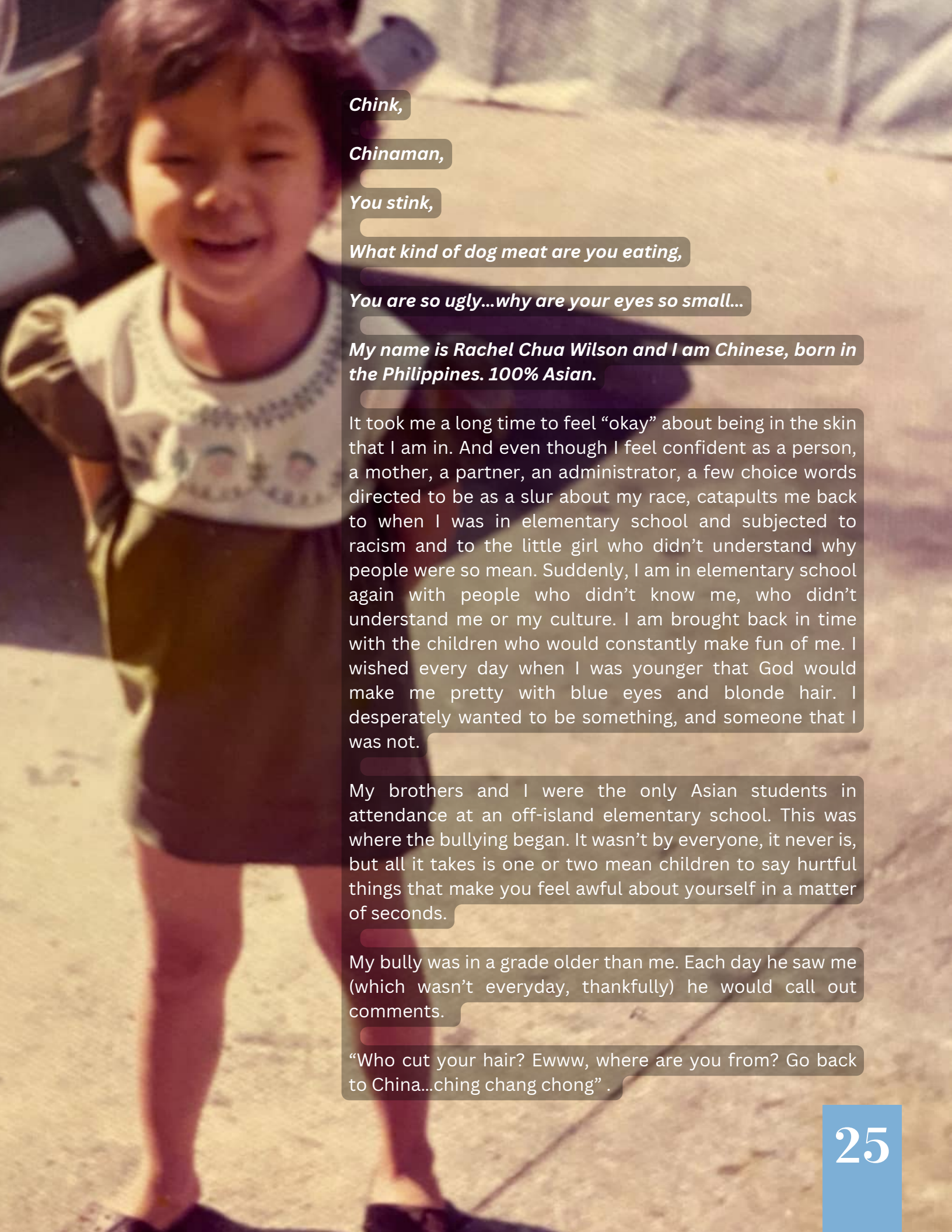
# We Need More Books with Characters who are People of Colour and also Characters who are Diverse in Experiences

The question of if there should be more diversity with the books we read in school should not even be a question asked; we **need** more diverse books. It benefits students by opening their minds to others' experiences from different cultures or backgrounds and the injustices they go through or their practices. If we had more books with people of colour and more diverse characters, those people could hopefully feel less alone in their different situations and lives. They can hopefully feel more seen as well as when reading the piece of literature. Schools say they welcome any student no matter where they come from, so what's stopping them from adding more books with people of colour and diversity in the school curriculum?



A portrait of Rachel Chua Wilson, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a blue V-neck top. The background is a solid, muted blue-grey color.

**A message from  
Rachel Chua Wilson**



*Chink,*

*Chinaman,*

*You stink,*

*What kind of dog meat are you eating,*

*You are so ugly...why are your eyes so small...*

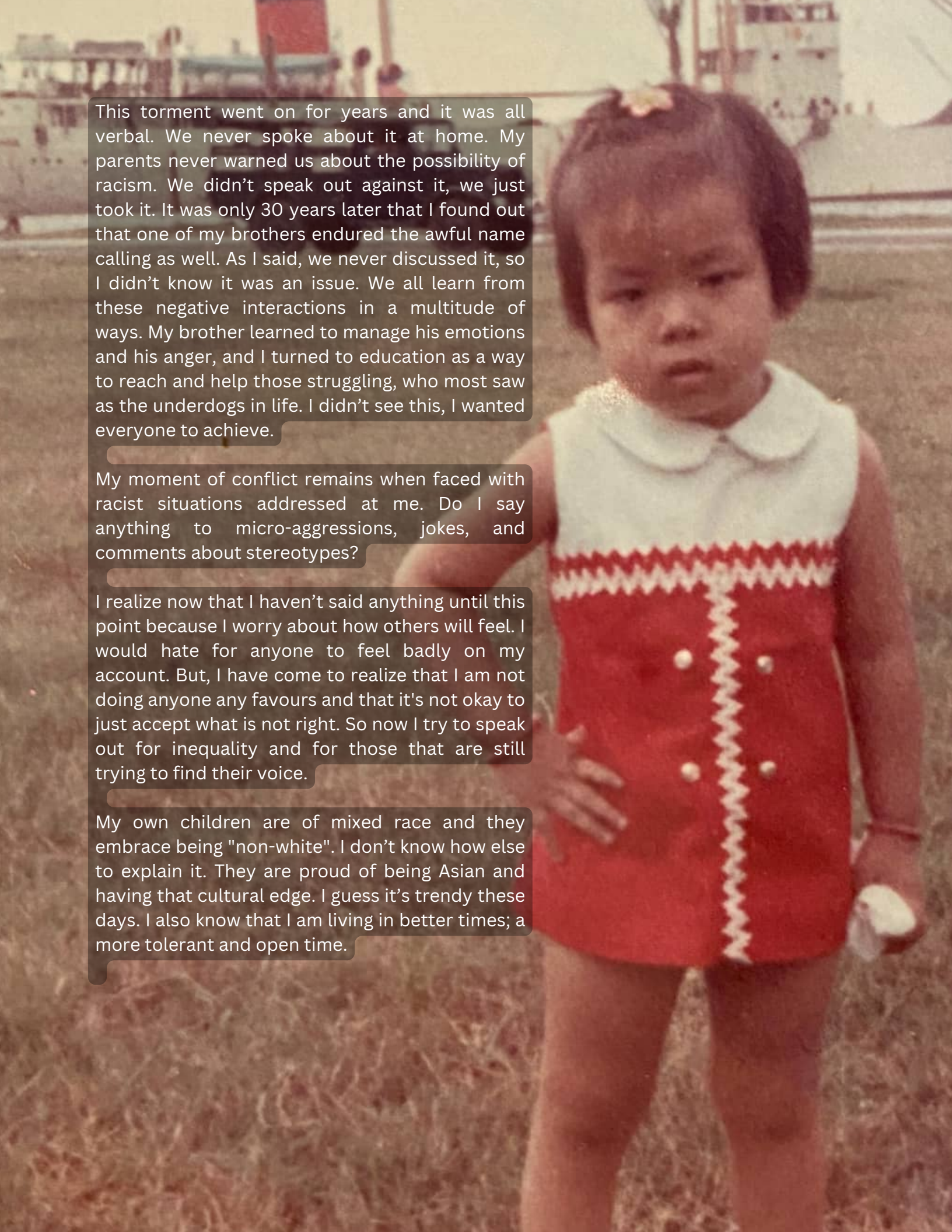
*My name is Rachel Chua Wilson and I am Chinese, born in the Philippines. 100% Asian.*

It took me a long time to feel “okay” about being in the skin that I am in. And even though I feel confident as a person, a mother, a partner, an administrator, a few choice words directed to be as a slur about my race, catapults me back to when I was in elementary school and subjected to racism and to the little girl who didn’t understand why people were so mean. Suddenly, I am in elementary school again with people who didn’t know me, who didn’t understand me or my culture. I am brought back in time with the children who would constantly make fun of me. I wished every day when I was younger that God would make me pretty with blue eyes and blonde hair. I desperately wanted to be something, and someone that I was not.

My brothers and I were the only Asian students in attendance at an off-island elementary school. This was where the bullying began. It wasn’t by everyone, it never is, but all it takes is one or two mean children to say hurtful things that make you feel awful about yourself in a matter of seconds.

My bully was in a grade older than me. Each day he saw me (which wasn’t everyday, thankfully) he would call out comments.

“Who cut your hair? Ewww, where are you from? Go back to China...ching chang chong” .



This torment went on for years and it was all verbal. We never spoke about it at home. My parents never warned us about the possibility of racism. We didn't speak out against it, we just took it. It was only 30 years later that I found out that one of my brothers endured the awful name calling as well. As I said, we never discussed it, so I didn't know it was an issue. We all learn from these negative interactions in a multitude of ways. My brother learned to manage his emotions and his anger, and I turned to education as a way to reach and help those struggling, who most saw as the underdogs in life. I didn't see this, I wanted everyone to achieve.

My moment of conflict remains when faced with racist situations addressed at me. Do I say anything to micro-aggressions, jokes, and comments about stereotypes?

I realize now that I haven't said anything until this point because I worry about how others will feel. I would hate for anyone to feel badly on my account. But, I have come to realize that I am not doing anyone any favours and that it's not okay to just accept what is not right. So now I try to speak out for inequality and for those that are still trying to find their voice.

My own children are of mixed race and they embrace being "non-white". I don't know how else to explain it. They are proud of being Asian and having that cultural edge. I guess it's trendy these days. I also know that I am living in better times; a more tolerant and open time.



I also wonder how my husband and his family accepted me so freely and openly. They lived in a small farming community, called Huntingdon, but the idea of a mixed race marriage was never an issue. I still pinch myself that I, an immigrant from the Philippines, of Chinese descent, who used to watch white, blonde soldiers walk by our development in Manila with awe married someone similar.

I am still amazed that I can share my experiences and my thoughts in a group with all of you, and help lead a community to be anti-racist. I do this because we are what our future citizens need. I am so proud of the students of Beaconsfield High School, and their teacher/staff mentors who allow them to continue the fight for equality through the publication of VOICES magazine and through their engagement in such committees as Equity, Diversity, Dignity and Inclusion, and Sexuality and Gender Alliance.

Lastly, I am happy that I have all of you: my family, my friends, my colleagues and my students, who I can freely share my fears with and know that you will support me regardless of race, religion, sexuality, gender and through any challenges. I thank all of you who have taken the time to read my thoughts, and I thank those who will find their voice to share with others. If I can do it...so can you.



# We Need More Books with Characters who are People of Colour and also Characters who are Diverse in Experiences

Some books that *must* be in schools:

How The World is Passed  
by Clint Smith

The Rib King  
By Ladee Hubbard

Hair Love  
by Matthew A. Cherry

A Good Kind of Trouble  
By Lisa Moore Ramée



An artistic illustration of an open book with aged, yellowed pages. A blue cornflower with a green stem and leaves is placed on the left page. A yellow pencil with a pink eraser and a small smiley face is positioned at the bottom right. The entire scene is set against a dark, textured wooden background. A faint, large watermark '© 2011' is visible across the center of the book's pages.

Mad Woman  
by Kim Rivest

For one day  
Could you lend me your face  
So I can get your applause  
And be more than a mad woman  
Praised for my relaxed beauty  
I'd no longer be unrefined  
I'd be a boy genius  
Instead of a mad woman

## Why There Should Be More Books Written by People Who Have Characters of Colour/Different Ethnicities in the Curriculum



There should be more books that are written by authors of different ethnic backgrounds and races in the English curriculum because if every book read in class is from the same perspective then many students can start to feel invalidated and alienated when their point of view is never the one being represented. If there were a variety of books with different perspectives being represented, students in minority groups would feel a lot less alone.

# Justice for All, Law Class

By Salma Wahbeh

In Ms. Cochrane's Grade 11 law class on February 16, 2023, we had the opportunity to listen and discuss important issues and interesting topics with Mr. Daniel T. Roach. He used his experience in the Equal Justice Initiative Group and his years of talking about the novel *Just Mercy* to clarify and expand on many of the students' questions. Here is some of the things that were talked about that day:



Mr. Roach started off by discussing how The American justice system has been racially biased particularly against Black Americans for centuries and how that often results in wrongful convictions and incarcerations. He also highlighted the impactful consequences that these injustices had on individuals who have been wrongfully convicted and subsequently released back into society. These consequences included the loss of trust in the justice system, feelings of alienation from society, financial burdens as well as feelings of isolation. Being unfairly targeted by the system that is put in place to protect you in the first place is not something that can be overcome lightly. It's a traumatizing experience for many and it will take years to be able to get over the far-reaching effects of it.

Mr. Roach also talked us through one of Bryan Stevenson's cases, in which a man of colour was wrongfully convicted for the murder of a white woman. A certain light was shed on all the horrible things people in power can get away with because they are never held accountable. Because of the freedom and decision making that certain people in the justice system unrightfully claim, this leads to mass incarcerations, underrepresentation and disproportionately targeting certain people.

Additionally, our guest speaker introduced us to cases that the class was not familiar with, to show us that racial bias is not just a one-time event, but a recurring one. This case was about a 13 year old boy who was forced to spend 18 years in a tiny isolation cell. Ian Manuel was coerced by older juveniles into taking the fall and the court did not hesitate or do any research before convicting him.

The Equal Justice Initiative took on Mr. Manuel's case and managed to get him released in 2016. He wrote poetry that clarified the truth that takes place when you are an individual of colour dealing with the justice system. This goes to show that people who get wrongfully convicted are real people with real voices and real lives on the line. Why did the legal system decide that these souls are worth any less? That is a question that society struggles to answer to this day.



All in all, we had a very interesting meeting with Mr. Daniel T Roach. He answered all of our questions and explained that racial inequality in the criminal justice system has a very profound impact on people who are wrongfully convicted. The importance of addressing these systemic issues is the only way to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and justly. It is only through change and education that we can hope to mitigate the devastating effects of the miscarriage of justice.

## Leading by Example

By Jordan Powell

*Tracey, barely 17 years old, sits idly in her class, basking in an air of uncertainty. As her eyes pan about the room, she begins to take in her surroundings. Through all the whispers, chuckles, and cries, rows upon rows of students meet her eye. Carla, only slightly older, can be seen two desks away, wearing her hijab. Mark, jumping in glee after receiving his test score, tightly clutches his kippah. At the front of the class, Tracey spots her teacher, Mr. Smith, a frail man, with blue eyes, brown hair, and wearing a rather remarkable, golden cross. Education was a career path Tracey had not quite considered before, but now, grasping the cross that hangs from around her neck, the possibility feels all the more real.*

Whether we like it or not, we are influenced by various external factors. Some can change the course of your day, while others can alter the course of your life. Young people are particularly malleable, almost like sponges: absorbing mounds of information on a regular basis. Suffice to say, it is imperative that their school environment exposes them to healthy habits, social skills, and role models. Unfortunately, in Quebec, students are put at a disadvantage. This does not stem from the education system itself, rather, a law implemented by the provincial government.

June 16th, 2019, Bill 21, otherwise known as, “An Act respecting the laicity of the State” was passed by the National Assembly (“Bill 21 (an Act Respecting the Laicity of the State)”). This was done in a bid towards secularisation: the removal of religion from the government, continuing the efforts that started during the Quiet Revolution. Bill 21 prohibits civil service employees in a position of authority from wearing religious symbols. In particular, this affects government workers, such as teachers, lawyers, and police officers, who started working after June 16th, 2019 (“Bill 21 (an Act Respecting the Laicity of the State)”).



**Why  
does this  
MATTER?**



Bill 21 is a blatant infringement on our right to freedom of expression, and religion. Henceforth, those who wear religious symbols, such as hijabs, turbans, and yarmulkes (kippahs), are deterred from working in the government ("Bill 21"). This has detrimental consequences. According to a survey conducted by CBC, "Quebec Muslims feel less accepted, less safe and less hopeful under [the] new law" ("News Research"). Children, still growing up, and maturing in our education system are also impacted.

## How?

Going through those teenage years where you must ultimately decide what you want to do for the rest of your life is stressful. Any encouragement, experience, or inspiration can be a big help during this period of uncertainty. Some might relate to a famous chef, and take up a career in cooking. Others may see a climate activist on TV, and think to themselves, 'I can do that too!' Unfortunately, due to Bill 21, religious students will no longer be exposed to teachers who openly share their beliefs. By extension, they will never have a role model to follow in this setting, and receive no encouragement to pursue a certain career path. This also applies to aspiring lawyers, judges, and many other government jobs. As a matter of fact, according to a study published by College Student Journal, "It seems that a supportive, high-quality role model relationship can benefit both male and female [] students as they make career decisions" (Perrone). In this light, Bill 21 is impeding individuals from following their dreams, and living a fulfilling life.



## What can we do to help?



Bill 21 has received plenty of criticism for its discriminatory nature since its passing in 2018. As it stands, Bill 21 is being appealed in court. Furthermore, the Quebec Government's use of the notwithstanding clause, which allows the government to pass laws infringing upon the Charter, is also being challenged ("The notwithstanding Clause"). While it may seem we are mere spectators on the sidelines, our combined voices can cause a ripple effect. We must raise awareness, and educate others on the inequities this legislation promotes. If nothing changes, dreams will be shattered: we will see a lot less diversity in our government.

# A FIGHT FOR UNITY

**Aidan Choi**

*Student Writer at Beaconsfield High School.*

Racism has been around for a very long time. It affects many people in our society. Not only have my parents and grandparents faced it, but I have as well. Racism is a present problem in society. While we may know of its historical and ongoing existence, we rarely do anything about it.

**People of different races should not be treated differently or feel bad for existing.**

Back in my parents' day, there were hardly any Asian kids in Montréal. Growing up, they were constantly put down by others. Even today, my mom faces racism as she represents a demographic that society deems the most defenceless: Facing both anti-Asian racism and gender-based discrimination.

**Racism frustrates me.**

Whenever I see a member of my family, or anyone for that matter, enduring racism, I want to stand up for them. On one occasion, I was out in public with my mom when a man berated us with racist and rude remarks; I wanted to punch that guy in the face.

Another time, we were driving on a small road, which was partly obstructed by a parked car. My mom was driving and saw somebody quickly approaching us, so she went behind the aforementioned car, waiting for him to pass us. He did not, so my mom decided to drive ahead. As soon as my mom passed the stationed car, the other driver drove just about an inch away from us. That's when I realized something was wrong with him. He could have passed us when we pulled over. Instead, he decided to nearly cause a car crash. While passing us, he said something to my mom that made my blood boil. I wanted to jump out of my window and tackle him.

**I have met so many racist old White men. I cannot help but think... 'why?'**

I also hate it when people ask me if I'm related to or know some random Asian person. I was once asked if some Asian dude passing us on the street was my dad. I just stared at her, confused as to why she had asked. She said it was because he "looked like me..." he really didn't. I told her that she shouldn't assume that any random Asian guy was my dad. I was very mad.

**Unfortunately, this was not the first time this has happened.**

Racism against Asian people has increased over the past three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. People blame Asians because the first COVID-19 outbreak was detected in China. Since other races believe all Asians look alike, we were all blamed for "starting" the pandemic. People committed acts of violence towards Asians, even though we didn't cause the virus ourselves. Some people refused to even look my parents in the eyes because they hated and faulted us. On the news, I saw a White man spitting on an Asian store window and a Black person pushed an elderly Asian woman off the sidewalk. People need to realise that those who are living here did not have anything to do with the virus. In light of the increase in racially motivated attacks, an anti-Asian racism day was created, making me really happy.



After researching the commonalities of old white men making racist remarks, I stumbled upon the concept of White Fragility. According to Oxford Languages, White Fragility is defined as, "Discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice." It's for these reasons that it's difficult for White people to confront racism. Ironically, although White people are uncomfortable talking about racism, they make up a large demographic of vocally racist individuals in the West. Racism still lurks within our younger communities, in some cases it's an unintentional remark, while in others it's overt. Nevertheless, racism is less prominent among youths, as blatant racism is no longer socially acceptable.

At the same time, I still hear people make fun of my Chinese culture and ancestry. People often mock the Mandarin language, which makes me really uncomfortable and upset. I'm proud of where my mom and her family come from, and I don't like when people make fun of that. As well, people also make up Mandarin words that do not exist, mocking the language. That deeply hurts me, almost like somebody punched me in the gut. In reality, however, when people my age say these things, they often don't understand the damage their words have on other people, particularly those of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

The QR code above shows Asian celebrities talking about Asian hate crimes,

“An elderly Thai immigrant dies after being shoved to the ground. A Filipino-American is slashed in the face with a box cutter. A Chinese woman is slapped and then set on fire. Eight people are killed in a shooting rampage across three Asian spas in one night.”

These are just a few examples of recent violent attacks against Asian Americans, part of the surge in racially aggravated assaults since the start of the pandemic. From being spat on and verbally harassed to incidents of physical assault, there have been thousands of reported cases in recent months with no outrage or reaction from the public. Asian advocates and activists say these hate crimes are often linked to rhetoric that blames Asian people for the spread of COVID-19. This is all because people don't understand that Asian people are different from each other and live their own lives. It does not help when influential and misleading people like Donald Trump call COVID-19 the “chinese virus”.

**When these people use their voice without having a shred of research or evidence on the topics at hand, the voiceless are left vulnerable.**

Here are a few more resources that detail Asian hate crimes, and examples of such crimes.



As a whole, people need to be more mindful when talking to those of different backgrounds. They need to be critical and open to new ideas when it comes to how they view others, rather than blindly following the authority and non-founded rhetoric from public figures like Donald Trump. People should educate themselves, and refrain from acting violently towards anybody, no matter their race or ethnicity. The mistreatment you give can be what your friend receives, what your sister receives. Treat each other with compassion and kindness, and be mindful.

**We need to work together to create a world in which we are all given equal opportunities, and are treated with the respect we deserve.**

Students in today's day in age are exposed to many different types of books immersing us in different cultures. But is it enough? By having diverse books in schools all around the world we are setting the younger generations up to be more accepting and aware of the world we live in. It gives students a chance to connect to others and feel represented in literature. Diversity in literature also helps teens to be more compassionate and inclusive, making other people feel more comfortable in different environments. Therefore it is important to have different literary pieces written from authors of different backgrounds to give us a better understanding of the world.



# AUTISM

What is Autism?

**AUTISM IS NOT  
A CURSE**

**EVERYBODY WHO HAS IT IS THE SAME**

**WHAT AUTISM IS**

**A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE**

**NO PERSON WITH AUTISM IS EVER THE SAME**



**Autism is not one thing, it is a spectrum. Meet one autistic person you meet ONE autistic person. We are all special in our own ways. And with the proper support we can all succeed.**

**We need to raise awareness.**

**We need more books about autism.**

Addison Amelia Martin

*Student writer at Beaconsfield High School*



What does freedom of speech mean? Why is it important? What are the limits to freedom of speech? These are the most common questions that people ask when “freedom of speech” is googled. According to Google (2022), “Freedom of speech is a principle that supports the freedom of an individual or a community to articulate their opinions and ideas without fear of retaliation, censorship, or legal sanction.” Although we all possess this fundamental freedom, it is not properly enforced. In actuality, not every community is protected, as the pleas from minority groups are often left on deaf ears.

**December 15th, 1791,**

***The day freedom of speech was established in the United States of America***

According to the American constitution,

**Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.**

However, if we look back through history, we find that this is often not the case. In the time where slavery was legal and practised in the United States, enslaved people did not have any constitutional rights. During which, they were legally subjected to torture and stripped of their basic human rights. If enslaved people were to speak up against their oppressors, they would be subjected to physical abuse, without consequence. Considering the law didn't protect them, it is clear to see how not everyone is correctly afforded their human rights, including their freedom of speech.

Although this is just one of the many examples throughout history where freedom of speech was not afforded to all, this is sadly a reality that many people currently live through. Without thinking about it, this freedom is really a privilege that we often take for granted.



For those lucky enough to have it, the freedom of speech will always be our responsibility and decision. We make choices everyday on what we say: How we speak to teachers, your parents, relatives and how you speak to strangers. Although we exercise our free speech daily, we don't realise how much impact our words bear. Think about how many times you've looked back on a situation in life and wished you hadn't said what you said, or spoke to someone in that tone.

While researching for this article, I found a very interesting article in The New Yorker titled **"How the First Amendment Applies to Trump's Presidency."** The article covers the legal culpability of a person who knowingly defames a public figure,

**...even if a citizen stated or a newspaper published criticism about a public official that was incorrect, that mistake could be punished as libel only if the critic knew or suspected that the criticism was false. In 1967, the Court applied this rule to public figures as well.**

The very fact that you could face legal repercussions if caught speaking wrongly of someone shows the power we hold behind each word we say. Thus, it becomes apparent why we should be mindful of our words; One wrong sentence and our social lives are done for.

Now, I know the readers of this article are most likely thinking the same thing as me: How has Trump not been to court after spreading countless false lies and claims every single day? Well, the article goes on to say,

**While his [Trump's] claims about the size of his inaugural crowd and voter fraud are clearly wrong, they are, arguably, opinions, and hyperbolic, and they do not disparage anyone directly. Even if we are convinced that they are lies and regard them as damaging—if we believe, as the Times columnist David Leonhardt wrote: Trump 'lies in ways that no American politician ever has before'—... our society is better off permitting some lying than censoring all of it.**

This is where our choice of words comes into play. Trump is free to lie and hyperbolize because his words are merely considered his opinion, as stated in the article, and could not be considered defamation. However most people, including myself, would debate the legality of his remarks. While this article is not about Trump, he just so happens to be a very good example of freedom of speech. Just by the way he worded things, he managed to not get into legal trouble, which goes on to say just by your choices you could be facing a court case or being president (hypothetically, of course.)

Although I've warned you of the dangers of using freedom of speech many times now, it can also be used for good. Since there is no censorship over freedom of speech, with certain exceptions, it can also be used for very good things. For instance, it's thanks to free speech that Martin Luther King Jr. gave one of the most prolific speeches of all time on August 28th 1963, called **"I Have a Dream"**.

In King's speech, he expressed his aspirations and hopes for future generations of children, especially children of colour, who faced discrimination due to the racist and intolerant climate in which they lived. He dreamed that future children would no longer face the racial injustices of his time. He hoped that children of colour would be afforded the same opportunities and privileges as the white kids. Moving millions of people across the world, King's choice of words made such an immense impact, making him known as one of the most influential people of his time. This is why I believe that speech is one of the most powerful tools we have. It's an unmatched power that is hard to silence.

Personally, I do not believe that we should have censorship over free speech. I choose to believe the good in others and hopefully by possessing the power to freely express oneself, people will choose to say the right things. I believe that we deserve the choice to voice our opinions and express how we feel. Communication unites and fuels our society. If we couldn't vocalise our opinions, our nation would be lost due to the absence of opinions.

To give my final views on this topic, I hope my article gave you a better understanding and clearer view on freedom of speech. Better understanding why it is crucial to wield such a freedom is especially important considering the amount of political, environmental and racial issues we currently face. **If we didn't have the freedom to debate and discuss our views and opinions, we wouldn't be able to progress as a society.** While we may have our differences and there are still many unresolved issues we have to face throughout the next decades, if we continue to speak up and utilise our freedom to project our ideas to others to help our world, I have a feeling that we will come out the other side unscathed.



**League of Her Own by Kim Rivest**

**I've crossed over to the wrong side**

**I was born a travesty**

**A tragedy in your claws**

**My only worth to you will remain**

**When I can please your dangerous eyes**

**You do not care how much I've cried**

**You're just trying to get me on your side**

# Why There Should Be More Books Written by People of and That Have Characters of Colour/Different Ethnicities in the Curriculum



There should be more books that are written by authors of different ethnic backgrounds and races in the English curriculum because, if every book read in class is from the same perspective, then many students can start to feel unvalidated and alienated when their point of view is never the one being represented. If there were a variety of books with different perspectives being represented, students in minority groups would feel a lot less alone.

# A Message from the Supervising teacher

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Voices is a collection of writing from students and staff at Beaconsfield High School. It is an expression of a community who believe in equality and fairness for all.

The student leaders of this magazine have worked tirelessly to bring this magazine to fruition. Being an ally is something they believe in and also encourage others to be. Jordan Powell, Kim Rivest, Isabella Mc Carron and Joey Millar have contributed their hard work to bring this magazine to its full publication. They are leaders in our community who are graduating this year and I am sure will go on to do great things.

Emma Pitts as the Editor-in-Chief, has gone over and beyond in her work to make sure this magazine represents our community. She has spent hours of her own time, in school and outside of school, working on the first BHS magazine. It has been an honor to work alongside her as her supervising teacher. She is a 200 percenter, who will also, I am sure blaze a trail in leadership when she graduates this year as well. She has been the driving force behind the publication. Her belief in justice for all is sincere and deeply felt.

As a final word to our community, it has been an incredible journey with the students and I hope this fosters and grows a sense that being an ally is not only important but imperative for change in all aspects of society and education.

Sincerely,  
Melinda Cochrane  
English Teacher/Law Teacher  
Beaconsfield High School.

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# Magazine Team



Left to right: Emma Pitts, Jordan Powell, Kimberly Rivest

Missing from Photo:  
Joey Millar, Isabella Mc Carron

