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ThreeSixty

Minnesota Teens Report Stories & Issues That Matter



Emerging Voices

ThreeSixty students report on community leaders changing narratives and tackling racism as a public health crisis.



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ThreeSixty Magazine will be published twice during the 2021 calendar year.

ThreeSixty Magazine is designed by Cindy Samargia Laun.

Email ThreeSixty@StThomas.edu with comments, letters and questions about participating in ThreeSixty Journalism.

ThreeSixty Journalism is a nonprofit program of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of St. Thomas.

Donations from individuals like you provide a significant amount of ThreeSixty's operating budget.

To learn more, visit threesixty.stthomas.edu.

ON THE COVER

Clockwise from top left: Reporter Kennedy Rance interviews Sam Simmons, with Star Tribune video journalist and ThreeSixty volunteer Mark Vancleave recording. ThreeSixty reporter Maneeya Leung with Sahan Journal founder Mukhtar Ibrahim. BLCK Press founder and Racial Reckoning: The Arc of Justice lead reporter Georgia Fort. KMOJ general manager Freddie Bell. Racial Reckoning: The Arc of Justice reporter Tiffany Bui.



ThreeSixty Journalism welcomed students back to campus after more than a year of virtual programming. Reporter Gloria Ngwa, Anna Brodin and Abigail Hatting are seen here this summer working hard on their News Reporter Academy stories.

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Health Equity Reported stories from ThreeSixty's News Reporter Academy two, which focused on racism as a public health crisis and was in partnership with Center for Prevention. Students' stories showcase some leading local voices on health equity in our community. *Pages 8 - 13*

College Essays from ThreeSixty's College Essay Boot Camps. *Pages 15 - 18*

Narrative Change Reported stories from ThreeSixty's News Reporter Academy one. The camp was in partnership with Minnesota Humanities Center and focused on changing racial narratives. *Pages 20 - 26*

Summer Camps 2021 recaps. *Pages 27 and 31*





Faaya Adem
The FAIR School,
Downtown Campus



Evan Blyden
St. Francis High School,
California



Allison Brodin
Mounds View High School



Anna Brodin
Mounds View High School



Megan Cornell
Benilde St. Margaret's



Daira Cruz Hernandez
Cristo Rey Jesuit High School

Contributors



Isaac-Santino Garcia
Cretin-Derham Hall



Abigail Hatting
Washburn High School



Maneeya Leung
Eden Prairie High School



Paul Malloy
Minnetonka High School



Gloria Ngwa
Washington Technology
Magnet Secondary School



Marcos Odegard
Nova Classical Academy



Ben O'Leary
Global Arts Plus Upper



Kennedy Rance
Patrick Henry High School



Ivan Rahouski
Eden Prairie High School



Michael Rosas Ceronio
Lakeville South High School



Caroline Siebels-Lindquist
Great River Montessori School



Nickel Tom
Insight Recovery School



Claire Van De Weghe
South High School



Han Vu-Tran
Mounds View High School



Ariana Yasmin
Spring Lake Park High School

Aravena Named 2021 ThreeSixty Scholar

THREESIXTY JOURNALISM RECENTLY awarded France Aravena the 2021 ThreeSixty Scholarship. Aravena receives a full-tuition, four-year scholarship to study journalism in the Department of Emerging Media at the University of St. Thomas College of Arts and Sciences, starting in fall 2021.

Each year, high school seniors who are graduates of a ThreeSixty summer journalism camp compete for the ThreeSixty scholar award valued at more than \$160,000 over four years.

“It’s a big honor. I’ve always looked up to the other ThreeSixty scholars,” Aravena said. “Now I can be one of them as well.”

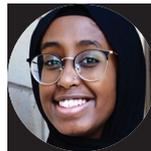
Aravena, a member of Wayzata High School’s 2021 class, joined ThreeSixty in the summer 2019 and has participated in News Reporter

Academy, Radio Camp, Digital Media Arts Camp and ThreeSixty’s school year News Team.

During summer 2021, Aravena participated in the Reaching Excellence in Academics and Leadership (REAL) Program, a selective, five-week academic and co-curricular orientation program for students who are members of groups traditionally underrepresented in higher education (including students of color, asylees, refugees, and permanent residents) that are newly committed to attending the University of St. Thomas.

For Aravena, the scholarship has a meaningful impact.

“It’s super amazing that I can continue exploring things and not have to worry so much about the huge financial burden of getting a



Safiya Mohamed
ThreeSixty alum
and St. Thomas
Dease Scholar

secondary education,” Aravena said.

“France is incredibly deserving of this award. As a changemaker and leader unafraid to challenge the status quo, France undoubtedly has a bright future ahead,” said ThreeSixty Associate Director Theresa Malloy.

Aravena’s ThreeSixty portfolio includes a piece on USA Gymnast Sunisa Lee, a social media story about Main Street Project, an op-ed on the importance of wearing a face mask and a personal essay asking why teens can’t vote until they’re 18 years old, and more.



France Aravena, 2021 ThreeSixty Scholar

ThreeSixty Scholar Updates

EACH YEAR, HIGH school students who are graduates of ThreeSixty programming compete for the ThreeSixty Scholarship — a full-tuition, four-year scholarship to study Emerging Media at the University of St. Thomas.



Josie Morss
2020 Scholar

Josie Morss is the 2020 ThreeSixty Scholar and an Emerging Media major at St. Thomas. During the 2020-21 school year, Morss worked as a reporter for TommieMedia, St. Thomas’ student-led news website. The ThreeSixty scholarship was a game changer for Morss. “ThreeSixty gave me a sense of purpose,” Morss said. “ThreeSixty completely changed my life.”



Kai Sanchez Avila
2019 Scholar

Kai Sanchez Avila is the 2019 ThreeSixty Scholar and an Emerging Media major at St. Thomas. For summer 2021, she was a reporting intern at Pioneer Press. In spring 2021, she began producing and hosting a podcast, “How WE View It,” which advocates for youth to voice their opinions regarding Minneapolis politics, current events and more. The podcast can be streamed on Spotify.



Zekriah Chaudhry
2018 Scholar

Zekriah Chaudhry is the 2018 ThreeSixty Scholar. He’s a journalism and political science double major at St. Thomas and continues his engagement with ThreeSixty as a volunteer writing coach and editor. Chaudhry has held reporting jobs with Tommie Media, Pioneer Press and MPLS/St. Paul Business Journal. During his sophomore year at St. Thomas, Chaudhry studied abroad in Rome, Italy. Chaudhry was a reporting intern for Star Tribune over the 2021 summer.



Samantha HoangLong
2017 Scholar

Samantha HoangLong is a news content editor at KMSP FOX 9 in the Twin Cities. The 2017 ThreeSixty Scholar, Hoanglong graduated from St. Thomas in 2020 with a B.A. in Communication and Journalism with minors in Sustainability and the Renaissance Program. HoangLong was a reporter for the groundbreaking Racial Reckoning Project: The Arc of Justice over the first half of 2021 and was a digital media intern at Star Tribune during the 2021 summer.



Danielle Wong
2016 Scholar

Danielle Wong is the 2016 ThreeSixty Scholar. She graduated from St. Thomas in May 2020 with a major in Communication and Journalism and a minor in Justice and Peace Studies. She is currently working in Washington, D.C. as the Multi-Media Strategic Communications Fellow for the national nonprofit Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC. During her time at St. Thomas, Wong interned at MPR News, studied abroad in Taiwan, wrote for MPR’s Call to Mind, and advocated for many equity and justice initiatives.

ThreeSixty Alums Power Breakthrough Project

Racial Reckoning project is changing the way stories are told and offering more opportunities for young women of color to take the lead.

THE JOURNALISM FIELD is struggling with a high turnover among people of color. Racial Reckoning: The Arc of Justice is working to change that.

The initiative was created by KMOJ, Minnesota Humanities Center and AMPERS in March 2021 to focus on the trials of Derek Chauvin and the three other former Minneapolis police officers charged in George Floyd's death.

The project is aired on KMOJ 89.9 FM, as well as 16 other radio stations in Minnesota. Racial Reckoning focuses on challenging stereotypes, correcting problematic narratives, and giving a voice to underrepresented people.

"Women of color are leading the editorial decision-making," Racial Reckoning managing news editor Marianne Combs said. "You're getting access to stories that would never have come up in mainstream newsrooms."

The reporting team is made up of all women of color, five of them being ThreeSixty alums: Samantha Hoanglong, Feven Gerezgiher, Hlee Lee, Chioma Uwagwu and Safiya Mohamed.

"I've definitely been relying on some of the skills I've learned at (ThreeSixty)," said Gerezgiher.

The University of Minnesota alum holds two degrees in Economics and Global Studies. After college, she worked for a couple of campaigns.

Gerezgiher reconnected with ThreeSixty during fall 2020 and expressed an interest in getting back into journalism. When the opportunity to join Racial Reckoning came in February, Gerezgiher knew it would be a good match.

"I am making an impact by reporting on our communities the



Safiya Mohamed
ThreeSixty alum
and St. Thomas
Dease Scholar

way we want to be reported on," Gerezgiher said.

She has reported on police reform in Minnesota, voting rights and how Juneteenth is celebrated in the Twin Cities.

Chioma Uwagwu, a University of St. Thomas alum and Racial Reckoning's social media and digital producer, said this project gives budding media professionals a chance to get their foot into the door.

"Everyone who's on the project has either just graduated or is still in college," Uwagwu said. "We're covering the stories in Minnesota from a different angle."

Uwagwu's role entails posting daily updates, managing Racial Reckoning's social media platforms, and giving the reporters story ideas and leads.

She has also produced a couple bylines, reporting on protest art, Indian residential schools, and childbirth disparities between women of color and white women.

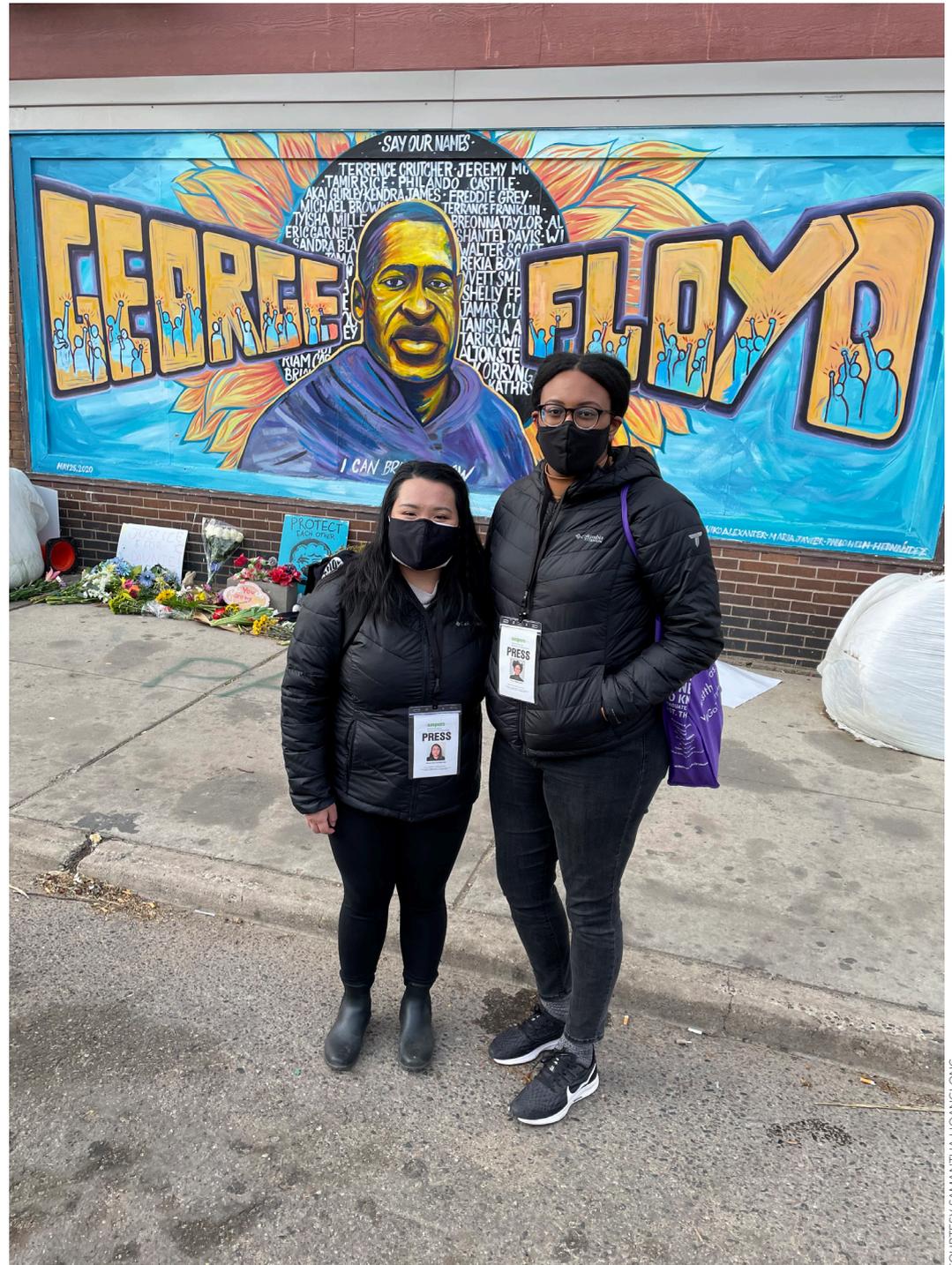
She said ThreeSixty "taught me that you don't have to do it by yourself. You have this community of people behind you to help you succeed, and that's so needed."

Having ThreeSixty alumni on the team is an asset, according to Combs.

"When they walk into the door, they already have a good grounding in basic journalism skills," Combs said.

Combs hopes this project becomes a platform for young journalists to launch their careers.

"My dream for this project is that it's recognized as essential,"



The Racial Reckoning project sent ThreeSixty alums Samantha HoangLong (left) and Feven Gerezgiher (right) into the courtroom for Derek Chauvin's trial as well as into the community to document stories other news organizations were overlooking.

Combs said. "Whether it's the Racial Reckoning Project or whether it's in some other form, we continue to create opportunities for young journalists of color."

As for Uwagwu and Gerezgiher, both echoed similar sentiments of wanting more young people to continue the work of Racial Reckoning. "I hope we can continue bringing

in young reporters, because they are talented," Uwagwu said.

Listen to Racial Reckoning reports and learn more about the project at the program's [website](#).

Program Update

I STARTED WORKING for ThreeSixty Journalism in the middle of February 2021, uncertain if we were going to have classes online or in person. After College Essay Boot Camp, Radio Camp, News Reporter Academy and TV Camp, I can say most of our students are happy to be back to in-person programming. Getting to interact one on one with most of the students is a plus, especially if they are new to the program. I experienced firsthand that some of them were shy to say their name at first, but by the second day, they signed up for more camps.

I want all my students who took the program to understand we are here for them in the long run. We are not going to say goodbye after they finish summer camps. We're here during the school year and beyond. If they need extra help with their college essay, or more time on their News Reporter Academy stories, we



Dymanh Chhoun
ThreeSixty
Program
Manager

help them accomplish that.

Overall, we want to stay connected with each one of our students until they get their dream job, come back to volunteer for us and help us find more storytellers.

I think the future of the ThreeSixty Journalism program will see more BIPOC students wanting to be involved in telling news stories that matter to them.

I saw the power of each one of our students who took the program this year — that they didn't realize their voice mattered and that getting to record their story, write it or capture it on video it is just the start. Enjoy the students' stories in our fall magazine, also showcased on our [website](#).



In one week, students attending News Reporter Academy write a story ready for publication centered on social justice issues. They also find some time to smile once it's all done, as you can see here from the Academy one group on the steps of the University of St. Thomas O'Shaughnessy-Frey Library.



ThreeSixty reporter Michael Rosas Ceronio works side by side with Star Tribune news developer Michael Corey at News Reporter Academy one, which was held in partnership with the Minnesota Humanities Center.



Neal Justin, a Star Tribune columnist and longtime ThreeSixty supporter, clues students in on how to make a first impression that counts at News Reporter Academy.



ThreeSixty students worked one on one with TV Camp all-stars like FOX 9's Mary McGuire, seen here coaching reporter Gwynnevere Vang at the anchor desk at the University of St. Thomas TV Studio.



CHRISTINE NGUYEN

Michael Rosas Ceronio and Isaac-Santino Garcia are coached by longtime ThreeSixty volunteer and local legend Dave Nimmer during their interview with Nathalie Crowley, from Family Tree Clinic.



ThreeSixty advanced students assembled with the University of St. Thomas' Marketing, Insights and Communications team to build a storytelling campaign. The stories delved into diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives on campus in the Dougherty Family College and School of Engineering. This was part of a three-day Emerging Media Workshop.



Reporter Kennedy Rance is deep in conversation with her source, Sam Simmons, talking about generational trauma for her TV Camp story, produced in partnership with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. Star Tribune videographer Mark Vancleave offers volunteer support.

News Reporter Academy two focused on racism as a public health crisis and was in partnership with Center for Prevention. Students' stories showcase some leading local voices on health equity in our community.



Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin: Together We Grow

This AICHO program offers gardening and more to BIPOC youth.

IN DOWNTOWN DULUTH, an urban community garden managed by BIPOC youth is blooming upward. Giinawiind Giginitaawigi'gomin, or "Together We Grow," is a 16-month program for urban BIPOC middle and high school youth from Duluth and the surrounding areas created by the American Indian Community Housing Organization.

AICHO started when a group of Native community members met in a parking lot outside a social service agency and discussed the lack of resources, community spaces and services to meet the cultural needs of the Indigenous community. It provides an array of resources for the Indigenous community in Duluth.

The Together We Grow program originally was created to serve



Faaya Adem
Fair School
Downtown

families who lived in the 29 permanent supportive housing units under AICHO. Youth were encouraged to suggest items that they wanted to see grown in the garden. The garden quickly took off, leading to more spaces being built to accommodate the produce being grown.

Now the garden has expanded and other local BIPOC youth are also allowed to participate.

With nearly 65% of the Indigenous community in Duluth living below the poverty line, many of the families supported by AICHO lacked access to healthy and

nutritious food. The garden was created to help close the disparities seen throughout the city by using a unique way to educate and provide for the community.

"We started the gardening program in order to not just reintroduce or introduce our youth and our families to Indigenous good practices and healthy food, but to give them an opportunity and a say in what they were growing," said Daryl Olson, AICHO's director of programming.

The youth participating in the program acquire a wide variety of skills while working on the garden.

"Specifically exposing them to Indigenous food practices, gardening, farming, entrepreneurial skills and communication skills, and then it's also a way to connect them



Ode'imín, or heart-berry, is the Ojibwe word for strawberry.

COURTESY AICHO

with opportunities to earn money," Olson said.

After the produce from the garden is harvested, participants

learn to create their own products with them. These items are then sold at local farmers markets twice **GROW** continued on page 28

Housing for the Indigenous Community in Duluth

American Indian Community Housing Organization honors the resiliency of Native people.



In addition to housing resources, AICHO has a community garden, which helps teach young people gardening and entrepreneurial skills.

IN 1993 a small domestic violence program began responding to disparities that Indigenous people, specifically women and children, faced in Duluth. The American Indian Community Housing Organization was founded in a parking lot outside a social service agency by a group of women talking about the lack of resources and support available to the Indigenous community.

The organization eventually expanded into transitional, permanent supportive and scattered site housing.

"Our mission and vision is to honor the resiliency of Native American people, and we do that by strengthening communities and centering our Indigenous values in all of our work," said Daryl Olson,



Ariana Yasmin
Spring Lake Park
High School

AICHO's director of programming. "Every Native American deserves to live in a nonviolent and nonthreatening environment and has the right to be treated with dignity and respect."

The key to that is ensuring they have access to a home, food, health care and support services. AICHO makes sure to properly communicate with the Indigenous community to achieve this.

"We've tried to be very strategic in the development of our programming, and we're always looking to our community to direct us on what

are the needs now?"

One of the persisting issues for the Native American community in Duluth is finding housing. Olson believes that without providing adequate shelter, other needs can't be fulfilled.

"You can't look at addressing somebody's mental health or their chemical health or their spiritual well-being if you can't meet their basic needs."

AICHO currently runs a 10-bed domestic violence shelter called Dabinoo'Igan. However, it is only able to serve five households at a time due to lack of space and COVID-19.

But the housing program is not only for domestic violence victims. These shelters are available to **HOUSING** continued on page 28

Racism Is More Than Offensive Slurs

Racism is not only a behavior. It is a culture that has been built into society's structure.

THE NEW UNIVERSITY of Minnesota Center for Antiracism Research for Health Equity, funded by a \$5 million donation from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, focuses on research and education. It also serves as a resource on anti-racism to address long-standing health inequities.

“We want to bring a focus to the systemic issues and institutional issues that continue to have Black and brown people die at higher rates than non-Black people,” said Miamon Queegly, manager of community engaged research at the center.

Anti-racism research combats all forms of racism. Whether somebody makes a clearly racist



Evan Blyden
St. Francis
High School

comment or a system is discreetly racist, anti-racism combats all of that without discretion.

The work of the center is vital, as health data paints a stark picture of inequities across the nation. For example, Black women in the United States are three to four times more likely to die during or after childbirth than white women, regardless of income and education levels, according to the center. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic

has illuminated the persistence of deep racial disparities in infection, in health equity and in outcome, according to Brookings, with Black people having a higher rate of contraction and death.

Institutionalized racism also contributes to higher rates in Black and brown people of the most common chronic conditions suffered by Americans, including diabetes, heart disease and cardiovascular disease. Queegly emphasized that by focusing on this, the center can help reduce such widespread health inequities, providing solutions to reverse such worrying trends.

“How is the system causing these disparities to happen?” Queegly asked.

The center will address this question through education and training on structural racism and health inequities. It fosters authentic community engagement to address the root causes of racial health inequities and drive action; helps change the narrative about race and racism to one that does not hold up “whiteness” as the ideal standard for human beings; and serves as a trusted resource on issues related to racism and health equity.

Gains are already being made. This year, the Minnesota House of Representatives passed a bill driven by the center’s work. The bill will help pregnant women by giving them access to affordable

and quality care before and after pregnancy.

The people who work at the center strive to be leaders in anti-racist health research, but anti-racism research and disrupting the institutional and systemic causes of racial health inequities both in Minnesota and across the country are complex, Queegly said.

Ultimately, through its tools and research, the center will expand awareness about health disparities within Black and brown communities and build a curriculum for professors and physicians that will help them better understand marginalized groups and how to better care for them.

Why Anti-Racism Research Matters in Health Care

A big area of research is maternal and infant health.

“THE CENTER FOR Antiracism Research for Health Equity, founded by Dr. Rachel Hardeman, focuses on disrupting racist practice within public health, whether it’s barriers to accessing health or wealth,” said Miamon Queegly, a public health professional and manager of community engaged research and outreach at the University of Minnesota.

Antiracism research in the health field can save people’s lives and protect them from racism rooted within the health systems. That is why the work Queegly and Hardeman are doing is important and necessary, and why we should fuel these types of projects so that people of color are able to access a health care system that gives them the best care possible — without the concern that because of how they look that will not happen.

In her role, Queegly conducts research while simultaneously engaging the community around challenges and solutions they face. These communities are predominantly those who are negatively impacted by their socioeconomic status, often lacking resources such as transportation and access to



Daira Cruz Hernandez
Cristo Rey Jesuit
High School

education that might set them back from sharing their voice to have better care in the future, she said.

Centering the experiences and the voice of the community is core to the center’s work.

A big area of research is around maternal and infant health, including the health of women during pregnancy, giving birth, postpartum and the baby’s first year of life. This focus on Black mothers and families seeks to identify inequities based on their race so that the center can provide better levels of care.

The center is also working on policy changes to educate providers and professors, giving them the tools to have greater cultural competency, reduce discrimination and give overall better care to those families.

Queegly said providing an understanding of how the research being done will benefit the health of non-white people will help to

reduce health care discrimination caused by institutionalized racism.

She’s concerned about high maternal mortality rates in the U.S., especially in comparison to other developed countries. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Black, American Indian and Alaska Native women are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women.

There has been some progress. The Minnesota House of Representatives recently passed a bill that took into account Hardeman’s research focused on perinatal and postpartum care to provide them access to affordable health care before and after pregnancy, Queegly said.

For Queegly, the issue of health inequality is personal. When she was younger, she advocated for her father, an immigrant from Liberia who had underlying health conditions caused by “fleeing the war and other aspects of that was just stress, navigating the United States and Minnesota particularly,” she said.

Queegly’s work centers on future generations having health



Miamon Queegly

care professionals who are conscious of the diversities of communities to better provide better care for their patients as

part of those communities. The hope is that this will improve health outcomes for non-white populations.

CHRISTINE NGUYEN

County's Approach to Juvenile Justice Sets Precedent

Hennepin County believes supporting youth creates a healthy community.

WHIRLWINDS OF EMOTIONS, impulsivity and the teenage brain. How does all of this play into the juvenile justice system?

Adolescence is a time of change — going through puberty, making new friends and building neural pathways. Sometimes, all of these changing factors lead to young people making poor decisions and ending up in the juvenile justice system.

Lexi Prahl Martin, a Transition Age Youth coordinator for Hennepin County, is working



Nickel Tom
Insight
Recovery School

to change the juvenile justice system. The county is pioneering an approach that includes making expungement easier, creating a transition-age probation unit and closing the County Home School, a long-term confinement center.

“We don’t need young people to be detained. Because of that we are

closing that facility. It’s life changing for the young person and for the community members that are around them,” Prahl Martin said about incarcerating young people.

Prahl Martin and other Transition Age Youth coordinators focus on the well-being of youth in the county. They work to keep young people in their homes, and if the conditions do not meet the young person’s needs, they try to network in the family to find a suitable home.

“We’re hoping to keep young

people closer to home and in situations that are more appropriate,” Prahl Martin said.

According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, adolescent brains are still developing, thus adolescents should be treated accordingly.

One of the plans the Transition Age team is working toward is a developmentally appropriate justice system, with “increased family engagement and greater attention to procedural fairness, including

interactions with police, legal representation for youth and reduced use of juvenile fines and fees.”

Hennepin County is following some of NASEM’s recommendations. Part of Prahl Martin’s focus in this area is the county’s Transition Age probation unit, which works to create an environment where young people can thrive and learn from their mistakes. Currently, Hennepin County District Court is working to make expungement, or the removal of **JUSTICE** continued on page 28

Vayong Moua Tackles Racial Inequity

Moua is the director of racial and health equity advocacy at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND public health have always been driving forces for Vayong Moua.

“My mom worked for 25 years at the Eau Claire public health department, and my dad worked at City Hall. I was forged out of civic engagement and public health,” he said.

Moua was born in Laos, but his family fled to Eau Claire, Wisconsin, as refugees when he was an infant because people were facing genocide in their home country. They became one of the



Gloria Ngwa
Washington Tech

first Hmong families in Wisconsin.

Moua is now the director of racial and health equity advocacy at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, one of the few people of color in the advocacy department. The basis of his work is “changing the way policy is designed, the way they’re decided

upon, to make sure that racial and health equity is built into how we even assess policies,” he said.

His work includes “leading campaigns and coalitions to advance racial and health equity and to change governance, not only issues,” he said.

His work also involves commercial tobacco control and food systems issues, increasing physical activity, racial equity, and establishing diversity in education and public places — approaches he **MOUA** continued on page 29



Vayong Moua

CHRISTINE NGUYEN

Moua: Racism Is a Public Health Crisis

Moua leads the fight for racial equity in health care.

VAYONG MOUA WEARS his heart on a T-shirt that reads, “Racism is a Public Health Crisis,” his confidence showing through his eccentric exterior.

For Moua, his T-shirt is more than a fashion statement. As a Hmong American refugee, he connects his life experiences and identity to his work at Blue Cross and Blue Shield, fighting to bring awareness to how social factors like race can affect the health system and working to legally classify racism as a public health crisis.



Caroline Siebels-Lindquist
Great River School

Moua was barely a year old when his parents fled Laos. He grew up surrounded by Hmong culture.

“It really has this deep imprint on my life,” Moua said.

His family settled in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where Moua started school. He attended English-learner courses in the

heat of the summer with his siblings and helped his parents learn English at home.

“I grew up teaching my parents English by watching ‘Sesame Street’ and translating insurance policies for them,” Moua said.

Years later, Moua attended St. Olaf, where he studied philosophy, anthropology and Asian studies, much to the surprise of his parents.

“We didn’t cross the Mekong River for you to think deeply about being unemployed,” they told him.

CRISIS continued on page 29

CLUES Provides Cultural Foods

The organization offers support and services to Minnesota's Latinos.

FOR JENNIFER PEÑA, love and connection come in the form of tamales.

“Food is the way that we love each other,” said Peña, an intern at Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio. “If anyone is sad, something has happened, or they are going through a rough time in their life, the first thing we do is cook.”

Food is important to Latino culture, but many members of St. Paul’s Latino community don’t have access to fresh produce. A program on St. Paul’s East Side provides a community garden full of fresh fruits and vegetables for the Latino community, something many otherwise wouldn’t have easy access to.

“(CLUES) found out that in St. Paul there is a big, huge food desert,” said Janelle Calvo-Nieto, food access coordinator at the nonprofit CLUES. “They figured out that people have to go far out to get



Allison Brodin
Mounds View
High School

groceries or even fresh produce.”

The community garden is behind the CLUES building that is shared with the Consulate of Mexico. The garden consists of 25 family-run garden plots, each providing fresh produce for members of St. Paul’s Latino community. The produce is needed to create important cultural foods.

“I believe cultural foods are important because they bring folks together, and especially because then you can cook cultural items like tamales,” Calvo-Nieto said. “They can make tamales with their kids and with their grandparents.”

Access to fresh produce is not only wanted, but it is needed for **FOODS** continued on page 28



Left to right, CLUES team members Reyna Lopez, Janelle Calvo-Nieto, Jennifer Peña, Abigail Hindson and Patricia Morales.

CHRISTINE NGUYEN

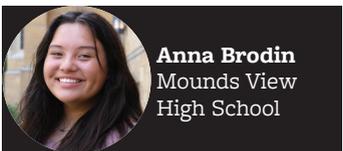
Twin Cities Nonprofit CLUES Helps Latinos Thrive

ON A LATE July weekend, the area outside Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio (Latino Communities United In Service) is bustling with activity, including food distribution and a vaccine clinic.

“It’s like a little health and wellness fair,” said Janelle Calvo-Nieto, food access coordinator for CLUES. “We are expecting 200 people to show up. We’re going to have fresh produce, fruits and meat, as well.”

CLUES is located on East Seventh Street in St. Paul. The nonprofit social services organization was founded in 1981 by and for Latinos to provide culturally and linguistically relevant services. Over the years, it has helped many Latino families in the Twin Cities by striving to build community connections and targeting resources to Latinos in need.

In Minnesota, 5.5% of the population is Latino, for a total population of 309,283 Latinos, according



Anna Brodin
Mounds View
High School

to CLUES. Of those Latinos living in Minnesota, 21% are living under the poverty level.

One of CLUES’ latest projects is a community garden that aims to give Latino families fresh produce. CLUES has many services available to Latinos in the area. As well as those services, it also has many activities and events planned for community members.

Patricia Morales, a volunteer and community member, said through a translator, “CLUES has helped me in many ways, especially economic ways. Like how food prices are going up, especially fresh produce.” Morales has also participated in computer classes through CLUES.

Reyna Lopez, a community member, started volunteering at CLUES in January.

“I met a lot of Latinos there, people from my country I have never met before and that is amazing,” she said.

Many people have had similar experiences through CLUES.

Jennifer Peña, an intern at CLUES, said that filling community needs is activism.

“This fake activism that goes around in the Twin Cities, a lot of the time people will be like, ‘Oh yeah, let’s go protest,’ and they use the protests as an excuse to think that’s what actual change is when actual change is laws and actually doing things that will better the community.”

Lopez said when she’s not in the Twin Cities she faces racism and microaggressions, which is why the community that CLUES is building **NONPROFIT** continued on page 28

CLUES Supports Latino Community

The nonprofit focuses on healthy cultural food in a community garden.

JENNIFER PEÑA, AN intern at the Latino nonprofit Comunidades Latinas Unidas en Servicio, used to grow food in a community garden on the East Side of St. Paul, an area predominantly made up of people of color, but then sold the produce to white neighborhoods.

“It just goes to show that most of the time, healthy food is catered to white and rich people. And a lot of BIPOC don’t live in high-income areas,” she said. “We don’t have access to good food.”

A nonprofit organization created by and for Latinos in the Twin Cities, CLUES was founded in 1981 with the goal of supporting Latino individuals and families by providing needed services. In addition to many programs, such as classes and food distribution sites, CLUES is actively



Abigail Hatting
Washburn
High School

enacting change through a newly established community garden. After a series of conversations in Ramsey County about health, wellness and access to food, the desire for a garden specifically catered to Latino families was brought up again and again, and so the project was born.

“One of the best ways to build power and build community is through green spaces and gardening, because everybody has some kind of connection to food, regardless of your background or cultural traditions,” says Abigail Hindson, **GARDEN** continued on page 30

The Future of Low-Income Housing

Lawrence: “We need to go in and listen.”

MINNEAPOLIS MAY HAVE the biggest racial home-ownership gap in the U.S., according to those doing housing equity work. But, two nonprofits are working toward bridging this divide and changing the way they deal with low-income people by asking them what they need.

Representatives from Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity and Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Cathy Lawrence and Ben Waltz, met with students on the University of St. Thomas campus to talk about their plans for the future of low-income housing. Lawrence is the leader of resource development at Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity. She said that her organization has historically worked with mostly East-African immigrant families.



Claire Van De Weghe
South High School

“Who we’ve left behind are what we refer to as foundational Black families,” Lawrence said. Foundational Black families are often people descended from African slaves. That group has been most heavily impacted by home ownership disparity. This not only affects day-to-day need for shelter, but health, rates of employment and much more.

Organizations like Habitat for Humanity and its partner Blue Cross Blue Shield have been working to supply housing for the families who

need it. After the murder of George Floyd last summer, they changed their strategy.

“We’ve got to stop going into communities and saying to you, ‘I can solve your problem.’ We need to go in and listen and say, ‘How can we partner with you, what would you like to see in your community, what kind of housing do you want,’” Lawrence said.

Habitat for Humanity and Blue Cross and Blue Shield want to make sure that low-income residents have all they need to be healthy, and homeownership is an important piece of that puzzle. According to recent health studies, nearly 80% of health should be cared for outside the clinic, including diet, exercise and general well-being.

Lawrence told a story about a single mother and her sons’ experiences with their housing: “All of them were on the inhalers because they suffered from asthma. ... She would tell stories about how she would have to take her sons from the apartment and go into urgent care or to the emergency room and get help.”

With dust and spores posing a huge risk to her family because of their asthma, being in a clean and stable home was vital to staying well. This family found relief in low-income housing units supplied to them by Habitat for Humanity.

“They were not in that home for long before their symptoms disappeared,” Lawrence said.

Through listening to perspectives

of the communities living in the low-income housing units, Habitat for Humanity is slowly growing stronger bonds with community leaders and helping trust grow.

Though Waltz, Lawrence and their respective organizations face an uphill battle, this new way of considering low-income housing work promises to yield much more connection and communication than could be previously established.

Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity Reinvents Affordable Housing

Habitat offers five new ways to buy a home.

IN THE TWIN CITIES, Habitat for Humanity has primarily constructed single-family homes for immigrant families — but after the murder of George Floyd, the organization has decided to radically redefine its approach to affordable housing.

In a conversation on the University of St. Thomas campus, Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity’s chief development officer, Cathy Lawrence, said the organization had critically overlooked a group that needed their help: what Lawrence called “foundational Black families,” or direct descendants of African slaves.

“There are generations of Black Americans who have never owned a home,” Lawrence said.

Part of working with these communities involves listening to the specific housing needs of each client. Previously, Habitat built single-family homes on empty lots dispersed throughout the Twin Cities. But now, there are five new ways that families can buy a house.

They can buy a newly



Megan Cornell
Benilde-St. Margaret's

constructed single-family home; buy a “next generation home” that was previously owned by another Habitat client; buy a starter home that was pre-purchased by Habitat; work with a real estate agent to buy their own house; or pick a house for Habitat to remodel. No matter what plan clients choose, Habitat will give them the “affordability gap” mortgage — mortgage payments set at 30% of their income.

As well as working with new clientele, Habitat is hoping to scale up its operations. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Habitat traditionally built around 50 homes a year. This year, it is planning to close on 120 mortgages.

“The plan is to scale (operations) about 20% or more a year; on top of that we’ll keep scaling, but the

primary focus is on racial equity,” Lawrence said.

Lawrence attributes these changes to a shift in the mentality of the nonprofit. Instead of acting as a savior, Habitat for Humanity aims to be a partner.

“We are going to call it out in our strategic plan that we are going to do our partnerships differently. We are going to do a lot of listening and then acting in partnership with the folks we serve,” Lawrence said.

This year, when the housing market boomed, Habitat acted quickly. Staff proactively bought starter homes across the metro area, knowing that prices could inflate. This flexibility allowed them to more specifically cater to their clients’ needs, especially clients who preferred to live in first- and second-ring suburbs, instead of in the inner city.

Habitat plans to continue building unique homes to service clients’ needs; Lawrence said the next plan “will be higher density housing. We



Cathy Lawrence and Ben Waltz

might build vertical condos ... some families may want their first house to be a condo because they prefer that style of living.”

Habitat hopes listening to these communities will allow them to better address the racial inequities in affordable housing. Providing

homes to foundational Black families will help give families generational wealth, security and community.

“We want to go from an organization that cares about equity to an equity organization,” Lawrence said. “We are really excited about that work.”

Respect and Equity

Family Tree Clinic serves the Twin Cities LGBTQ community.



Nathalie Crowley

A 20-YEAR-OLD WALKED into the Family Tree Clinic in St. Paul, wanting to begin gender-affirming hormones. He was expecting to pay out of pocket, which can be anywhere from \$200 to \$400, depending on the person's income.

After the clinic looked into his background, it concluded he was eligible for medical assistance, meaning he wouldn't have to pay a dime.

"He broke down crying in my office, because he was so happy. It was life changing for him," said Nathalie Crowley, the clinic's associate executive director.

Crowley has been working with the LGBTQ+ movement for more than 25 years, including more than 10 years in health care. Crowley talks about her own experience beginning gender-affirming hormones and said that is the part of

CHRISTINE NGUYEN



Isaac-Santino Garcia
Cretin-Derham Hall

the reason she left Duluth for the Twin Cities.

In Duluth, Crowley said, there were not enough options for the LGBTQ+ community. She traveled back and forth for health and wellness care almost two years. Luckily, she had a job that allowed her to travel and pay her health care bills.

She's worked for Family Tree for five years and is proud of the options they offer for transgender people. This includes everything from birth control and rapid HIV testing to trans hormone care and sex education. The clinic now sees about 22,000 people in St. Paul

and expects to see about 30,000 when it moves to Minneapolis in October.

The clinic helps transgender people who are deaf, hard of hearing or blind and has clients ranging from age 6 to 80.

"The youngsters are accompanied by their guardian/parents," Crowley said, adding sometimes puberty blockers are used to delay the process until any changes will align with a youngster's new identity.

"Our staff are representative of the people we're serving," she said. "So we strive really hard to make sure we have LGBTQ+ people on our staff, that we have BIPOC books, and we have Spanish-speaking folks on our staff because these are the communities that we want."

RESPECT *continued on page 29*

Sanctuary for the LGBTQ+ Community

Family Tree Clinic supports gender-affirming health care for queer Minnesotans.

A 14-YEAR-OLD TEENAGER FROM Duluth walked into the Family Tree Clinic in St. Paul a few years ago, shy and sad, bewildered and bullied, looking to get hormone treatment. Today she's a confident young woman, certified as a nursing assistant, and is soon going to school to become a registered nurse.

That's just one of many stories that makes Nathalie Crowley smile. Crowley, associate executive director of Family Tree, is a transgender woman who's been connected with the clinic for five years and involved with the LGBTQ+ community for 25 years.

For now the clinic is located at 1619 Dayton Ave., but will move to a new location at 1919 Nicollet Ave. in Minneapolis in October. In the past, the clinic has served



Michael Rosas Ceronio
Lakeville South High School

22,000 people a year, ranging from all ages and coming from the seven states surrounding Minnesota. With the new clinic, she estimates 30,000 people will be visiting the clinic each year.

According to Crowley, the LGBTQ+ community lacked services, which were desperately needed in the Twin Cities, especially for transgender youth. The clinic is working to meet the needs of the community by education, HIV testing, birth control, gender-affirming hormone care and referring people to counseling.

SANCTUARY *continued on page 30*

Hennepin County Helps Young People

For those transitioning into adulthood, new resources are now available in Hennepin County.

UNLIKE MANY 17-YEAR-OLDS, Godwin Kasongoma, a senior at Columbia Heights High School, is not working the drive-thru window or in customer service this summer. Instead, Godwin works for the Hennepin County Transition Age Team.

The Transition Age Team is one of the many initiatives by Hennepin County that aims to improve the well-being of youth transitioning into adulthood. The team strategizes solutions to help youth aged 14 to 26 navigate homelessness, the foster care system, juvenile justice, parenthood and personal life.

Godwin is one of the eight youth interns and volunteers on the team. Step Up, a career resource program, connected Godwin to Hennepin County. As an intern, she gets to pay it forward. Godwin writes informative email blasts, which include resources and job openings, that



Maneeya Leung
Eden Prairie High School

reach youth through youth action boards. She wants to give other youth the same connection to new jobs.

"It's important because there's many opportunities out there," Godwin said about providing job resources to other teens. "It can excel you or be an ascending ladder to you."

"I'm very passionate about helping youth," Godwin said. She wants to go to law school for immigration law. She values the writing experience she's gained and the mentors she met during her internship.

Jobs are only one milestone of the journey to adulthood. Through Hennepin County, the Transition Age Team also worked

to extend opportunities for foster youth during the COVID-19 pandemic and give them cash stipends for immediate needs. The team also initiated outreach to young people to get them COVID-19 vaccines.

"It's about first chances and second chances," said Lexi Prah Martin, coordinator for the Transition Age Team about the team's goal. "How can we make sure that when you get into that first house and first apartment that you never have to experience an eviction?"

Another initiative at Hennepin County is to partner with mental health programs, such as Change to Chill, to get resources into more schools. Change to Chill, created by Allina Health, gives high school students strategies on improving their well-being. Through the program's resources, students learn to identify

HENNEPIN *continued on page 30*



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COLLEGE ESSAY BOOT CAMP

Kicking students' college essays into shape!

College Essay: Yes, I Am Ecuadorian.

“BUILD THE WALL, build the wall!” the boy cried out. I was on edge, sitting in my chair and loudly tapping my foot. My old, worn shirt was starting to constrict on my neck, and it felt like it was choking me. I pulled on the shirt countless times, but the air never reached the back of my lungs. It felt like the end of me. Everyone else in the room laughed while the teacher continued to write on the board, carrying on with the lesson of the day. In my mind, I said, “For God’s sake, you’re a history teacher!” I observed all of the other Hispanic people in the room. Their skin

Jeffrey Paredes
Cristo Rey Jesuit High School

started turning pale. My breathing was quick. My eyes were blurry. For the very first time, I didn’t feel safe at school.

A few days later my parents had a conversation with me; someone had told the school about the commotion, and they sent a message to all the students who felt uncomfortable. The entire conversation gave me a sense of impending doom.

I could feel each hard-pumping heartbeat of blood travel out of my chest, up through my neck, and down my arms and legs. I felt ashamed of my tan skin and my black hair. Confusion warped my mind. My parents tried to comfort and encourage me, but I felt lost and misplaced. “Jeffrey, I always want you to be proud of your heritage. I want you to remember that you come from an Ecuadorian family. Never be embarrassed by it,” my dad said.

The following week my family planned a gathering with delicious food and activities.

My style of Ecuadorian food is one of the few things in which I take pride. I walked into the kitchen, and I glanced over at my mom, who was rushing back

and forth from the counter to the stove, carefully placing each ingredient into the dark-ashed pans. I’d always loved the care and time she put into preparing every dish. The smell of each dish coming out of the steaming pans was delicious. The dimensionality of rice, chicken and mote melting on my tongue as I plucked some from the pan. To the left was my family’s carne asada, a dish that made memories come to life.

As I watched my family devour the food we’d prepared, I asked myself, “Is this who I want to be?”

I smiled as I walked across my aunt’s backyard. In the distance, I saw my cousins playing Ecuadorian Boli. They were laughing and enjoying themselves. They asked me to play and I did; the ball was served,

and I threw it to the other side; I felt alive and comfortable. After the game, we made our way back to the table next to the house on the concrete floor. Stories and jokes were told around the circle, memories of how far our family has come. It was a special moment for me to experience.

“Is this who I want to be?”

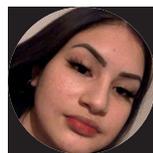
A whispered answer flew to my ears. I responded with a new confidence: “Yes, I am Ecuadorian.”

My eyes opened; I no longer felt ashamed of my heritage. I saw the happiness my culture brought to me, and I knew that I had found my place. I am a proud first-generation American, and I will forever be touched by my people and heritage. Yes, I am Ecuadorian.

College Essay: Quinceañera After All

I REMEMBER IT like it was yesterday; I remember the crying of my mom and my two siblings. We couldn’t believe that something like this could happen to us. It was a week before my 15th birthday; I was excited to turn 15 and have my quinceañera. My dad and I would practice our father-daughter dance almost every day. He would sing a song for me to show off his vocals on my special day.

Unfortunately, that wasn’t the case for me. The morning of Jan. 14, 2019, I was at school, going about my day as usual. I got a text from my mom that something just happened and that after school she needed



Marileisy Marquez Castrejon
Cristo Rey Jesuit High School

me to go straight home. My heart dropped because as I read that message I knew it had to be something really serious. I got home and, to my surprise, everyone was sitting down on the couch ready to give me the bad news.

“ICE has taken your dad,” my mom said.

My brother immediately burst into tears. I told him it would be OK.

“But I did it. I was the one who

opened the door to ICE. I didn’t know it was them; it’s all my fault,” he replied.

I ran to hug him. It wasn’t his fault; it wasn’t anybody’s fault. We had done nothing wrong for them to separate my family.

All I could think about was, “Why me? Don’t these things only happen to people on TV? Why us? What have we done that was so wrong for ICE to just take away someone who was so important to us?”

I contemplated still having my quinceañera, but why should I? Why should I celebrate something my dad was really looking forward to? Wouldn’t that kind of be betraying him to enjoy something that he could no longer enjoy as well? Plus, everyone was stressed enough; I shouldn’t be selfish and force a financial expense for a dumb

birthday party.

After a couple of months, I eventually got in contact with my dad again. He told me during a video call to not be sad, that he would be happy for me to have fun and have my party regardless of whether he’s there or not. We cried about not being there together. It was something we had talked about for years. But, we have promised to see each other on my 18th birthday, which is on Jan. 21, 2022.

“Espero que te la pases bien, mija,” my dad said as tears were accumulating in his eyes. “Te mando un gran abrazo y muchos besos para tu día especial.” All I could say was thank you, thank you for not forgetting about us, thank you for everything you have done, not just for me but for our family.

I ended up having the party a

couple of months later — May 11, 2019, to be exact. The traditional father-daughter dance turned into a mother-daughter dance. I thanked my dad specifically for making my party into a reality. He was so happy to see that in a recording I made that was later sent to him in Mexico.

The significance of that day still stays with me and empowers me every day. It shaped me to become resilient and self-reliant. It’s been hard, and still is, knowing that I won’t get to see him every day like I used to. It’s hard knowing he never got to sing his favorite song on my special day. It’s hard knowing that my family won’t be the same anymore. Despite all of this, I have learned that not only am I strong, but I’m capable of getting back up when life pushes me back down 10 more times.

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College Essay: Identity in Adoption

“WHERE ARE YOU FROM?” is a common icebreaker that I’ve struggled with my entire life. I was born in Huehuetenango, Guatemala, and was adopted and raised in Blaine, Minnesota. For some people this question is easier to answer than others. However, I am from two places and find difficulty in choosing a side. It wasn’t until ninth grade that I stopped thinking I had to choose between the United States and Guatemala.

Growing up I attempted to fit in with my classmates; I began rejecting learning Spanish, and started to stereotype the language and the people. In fourth grade my family sent me to a cultural immersion camp, La Semana, so I could



Kendall Shostak
Girls Inc. Eureka!

learn more about my culture and language. Despite going to the camp and being surrounded by people who wanted to learn about their culture, I continued to renounce my heritage and tried to assimilate with what I assumed Americans were supposed to be.

My perception of what an American girl was included activities like cheerleading, dancing and jumping rope. Since I never participated in those activities, it made me feel like I was an outsider

to my classmates. I believed there was something wrong with me and thought I wasn’t “American” enough. At school, I had trouble fitting in with most of my friends because I didn’t look like them. On the other hand, there were times when I felt like I didn’t belong among other Hispanic people, especially when I was with the group of kids at my church. They unintentionally made me feel embarrassed because I could not speak Spanish fluently and wasn’t able to comprehend people speaking it.

In school there were a few times when my friends would start speaking about their cultures and I wasn’t able to contribute since I was confused about my own cultural identity. One of my friends from Bulgaria made me feel jealous because she had the ability to learn her native language and dances. She even went on yearly visits to Bulgaria.

I haven’t returned to Guatemala since my adoption. However, looking back, going to La Semana and finding community with other adopted people makes me want to learn more about “home.” It also makes me wonder about things like my birth mother, birth family, or even what happened to my foster parent. Despite not wanting to immerse myself in Guatemalan tradition at the beginning, something started to bloom in me and spark my desire to let myself accept my heritage.

It is something I continue to struggle with. Recently, I have begun applying myself in Spanish class. Growing up, it was embarrassing to look Hispanic and not speak the language. The embarrassment from not speaking Spanish created more shame about my culture. A moment that was defining for me was when I looked around and saw

how many people also had multicultural backgrounds. I still have a long way to go, but I am beginning to see that I can be Guatemalan American and don’t have to choose one culture to live with.

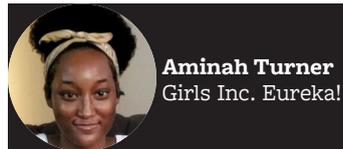
I know I want to go into a social science field in college, specifically anthropology. My own experience with accepting my background and traditions would help me with analyzing past human culture and help me have an easier time with acceptance of their cultures. College will help me understand how I fit in the world while learning more about different cultures. It would help me form an idea on what I want to do with my future as I am exposed to new topics and ideas. College would be a rewarding experience since my birth mother gave me up so I could have opportunities she never had, including college.

College Essay: I’m a Playwright

I WAS IN the sixth grade at Fair Middle School when I started to be a playwright. My dad has his master’s degree in film. He inspired me to write because he always talked about writing plays in college. We have always had similar interests.

When I started middle school, my parents enrolled me at Pillsbury House, which is an after-school program that provides theatre activities and is located in South Minneapolis. I attended this creative place from sixth grade to eighth grade before moving to North Minneapolis.

Pillsbury House is where I could write plays and act them out as well. My experience at Pillsbury was fun because I made a lot of friends who



Aminah Turner
Girls Inc. Eureka!

had the same interests as me. I went to some writing camps, including one in Red Wing, Minnesota, back in seventh grade. I also did different improv activities, so when we were going to act out the play, we were playing out different character actions or telling stories. I only did improv up until eighth grade.

Those experiences helped me develop an interest in writing plays. After I performed my first play at Pillsbury in sixth grade, a fantasy,

my dad told me, “I’m proud of you, Aminah.” Then I learned that I can achieve anything I put my mind to because I have potential. Playwriting for me gives me the courage to express and be myself. I enjoy expressing humor and that’s how I get to be myself without being judged. My first play gave me the idea to be an actor or film director. I have always loved watching Black sitcoms, and I like to read. I like seeing Black success. These sitcoms also talk about historically Black colleges and universities and racism. That inspires me to go to an HBCU so I can get the experience of being at this type of college. Black comedy sitcoms have attracted me because I like the way they express themselves and I like growing up seeing people like me who are funny. Because of all this, I would like to be part of the Black comedy sitcom industry and

to pursue this as a career.

The concept of playwriting gives me ingenuity because I can become innovative. For example, I came up with the idea to do my first play relating to fantasy. This is innovative because nobody thought of this idea before. The play was about Star, a narwhal, and a unicorn named Rainbow. I played the unicorn, and another student played the narwhal. They go on an adventure to Cookie Land and overcome some obstacles on the way. One of the obstacles was going over a very long, dangerous bridge. They almost fell off the bridge, and that would be really bad because they would be severely injured. In the end, they got past their obstacles while making many jokes to get through it. The main idea of the story was to always find some way to smile through all the negative things that come your way,

which can include dealing with fake friends, arguments with others and trying but failing.

What caused me to write this story was a fascination in fantasy and adventure. As I watched my words come to life when writing plays, there was anxiousness because I wouldn’t know if people would understand my humor, and I have a fear of messing up. But I persevered because I have strength to continue on and also because I feel like different is OK. What caused me to persevere is myself because I really want to strive for success and my plays have the message of striving for success. If you really want something, including fame to some extent, wealth, money, good grades, happiness, etc., you have to work hard. I know I will use the determination I have to achieve all of these things and more.

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College Essay: Path to Recovery

I REMEMBER WHEN my friend handed me the oblong, white pill with little red specks. I knew what it was, but I thought I was different from my family. I soon realized that I was exactly the same. At 13, I knew the difference between the Vicodin in my hand and the Oxycontin I was dependent on. Both were prescription opioids (stolen from my father) meant to stop physical pain. With my underdeveloped prefrontal cortex, and the descriptions from those I had met in the hospital, I knew this would help my emotional distress, as well. As soon as the drug reached my brain, the hamster wheel slowed. And then, it stopped.

Hi, my name is Nickel, and I'm an



Nickel Tom
Insight Recovery School

addict. The word addict is a loaded term. Most will think of people on the streets shooting up – not a high schooler, let alone an eighth grader. Or they think of the 12-step recovery program known as Alcoholics Anonymous. Stale coffee, chain smokers and, of course, the iconic introductions. Stereotype? Sure. But still mostly true. Alcoholics Anonymous is far more than a fellowship of old men drinking bad coffee. It gives people hope. I am

one of those people. We are people within the grasp of a deadly disease that, if not arrested, will send us to institutions, jails or our graves. There is no cure for this disease, but treatments used in 12-step programs can rein it in, and recovery is then possible.

May 3, 2020. I am in my bathtub (fully clothed) and praying to anything, to anyone to cure me of this disease. I know I am sick, I see the red flags. Rock bottom has its claws in my neck.

May 3, 2021. Bagel time! It is my one-year celebration of sobriety. My friends and I sit around eating bagels and drinking (good) coffee. We pass around my 12 sobriety coins, the weight in my hands seemingly lifting the weight off my shoulders. Chattering and chipper, we tell stories about the scars on our bodies and hearts.

That night, I went to the aforementioned Alcoholics Anonymous. My acceptance speech was long and dreary. I ranted on about how I felt I was constantly racing against the clock.

Something changed that night. We'll call him Bart for anonymity's sake. Bart listened intently to my ramblings, and when it came time, he said something I still think about. He told me time was my greatest ally. It seemed so wrong to me. Why would I want to be allies or even friendly with this thing that consistently mocked me from one step ahead? Cynical and pessimistic, I didn't believe Bart or anybody wanted the best for me. But having someone not only hear me, but see me, made me feel less alone.

When I decide on my own course, I end up where I was three years ago. But when I keep an open mind,

listen and allow my higher power to guide me, I can admit to my powerlessness. I can move toward controlling what I can and leaving what I cannot. Freedom springs from this choice. Recovery is not only the accumulation of days sober, but the spiritual and emotional progress we make in those days. I can waste time on booze and oblong pills, or I can use it to better myself and help those who are at a crossroad on the yellow brick road, thinking it is their only path to happiness. That's the deception of addiction. Once the curtain is pulled back, you see the true motivation this disease has for you. Only through the tenacity, camaraderie and inner serenity I have found through recovery have I been able to return to Kansas, Toto in tow, ready to do the hard work of staying sober and paving a new path to the future I have reclaimed.

College Essay: Rising to Find Myself

THE ONLY THING standing between me and dual citizenship was a short elevator ride up a Chicago skyscraper.

I nervously tapped my foot on the polished floor, waiting for the elevator doors to open. The high ceiling of the lobby was intimidating, and I nervously locked eyes with my mother. This was a moment full of meaning, a day I had anticipated for years.

My heart raced as the elevator light illuminated and the doors rolled open. My finger pressed the button for the 19th floor. The doors slid shut and the elevator began to glide upward.

My entire life has been a struggle for belonging. Ever since I was a toddler, I have had to navigate two languages, two religious traditions and two very different cultures. I've had my American citizenship since



Evan Odegard
Nova Classical Academy

birth, but my connection to Costa Rica, my mother's home country, had never been represented on paper. An early afternoon appointment at the Costa Rican consulate in Chicago was about to change that.

Second floor. The automated intercom voice announced the elevator's first stop. I tried to remember what life was like at the age of 2, but all I could gather were second-hand memories based on old photos and my parents' stories. They say that navigating cultural differences was natural for me as a toddler – I would know which people to speak to in which language, when to abide

by certain cultural norms. My early childhood was full of reminders of my mixed heritage: macaroni stirred with seasoned beans, conversations riddled with Spanish and English, Costa Rican holidays celebrated among falling autumn leaves. I was immersed in an environment that attested to who I was, where cultural exchange was the norm, where I never had to doubt that I belonged.

Fifth floor. The elevator creaked to its next stop. At the age of 5, I started kindergarten, walking every day to an elementary school with a very low Latino population. There I found that one half of my identity was embraced and cherished, while the other half was seen as strange and foreign. Our class learned to sing "Yankee Doodle" but not the "Himno Nacional," school lunches came with pizza and chips but no tamales or gallo pinto. Half of me felt out of place. I learned that I was different, or rather that I was half different.

As the elevator propelled upward, I remembered how over the years I learned to code switch, to display parts of my identity in certain situations and drop them when they were inconvenient. I dreaded that narrow liminal space of being both, where by embracing my full identity I would run the risk of losing touch with both sides of my background.

Fourteenth floor. When I was 14, my strategy of fitting in stopped working. Going to school in Costa Rica for the first time, I sat in a homogenous classroom where I was the exception. I tried everything I could to escape standing out – speaking exclusively in Spanish, packing classic Costa Rican snacks – but I was always still the American: the boy with imperfect grammar and the point person for questions about Donald Trump and "Stranger Things." But my classmates' attention was not negative; they spoke to me with intrigue and curiosity. They listened to my stories with captivated interest. They had questions.

I realized that my background, those parts of my identity that would be inconvenient if my goal was to fit in, equipped me with answers.

Seventeenth floor. The robotic intercom voice drew me back into the moment as the elevator churned to one more stop. The consulate was two floors away. Here, at 17 years old, I was ready to acknowledge the wholeness of my identity as a product of two cultures. I had left behind my fear of not blending in. I would no longer be Costa Rican in some situations and American in others; I would be both, honestly and boldly, even if it set me apart.

Nineteenth floor. I walked into the hallway with confidence in my step. It was time for me to embrace liminality, to encapsulate the beautiful complexities of my identity with the brush of a pen. From that moment on, I have carried two nationalities on my shoulders, proudly displaying each as an integral part of who I am.

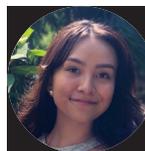
COLLEGE ESSAY BOOT CAMP

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College Essay: Dreams of Being a Doctor

“Dios mío, no puede ser (God, this can’t be),” said my mom, sobbing. Memories of all the moments I lived with my mom flashed through my head as my heart beat faster than a hummingbird’s wings, fearing those memories of my mother would be all I had.

I was 11 years old. My sister and I had just finished our homework and my mom had just got home from work. She had checked the mailbox, and I was preparing to translate all those complicated words to my mom. English isn’t her first language. I opened the first letter, a hospital letter, and the



Ingrid Vidal Vazquez
Cristo Rey Jesuit High School

first thing that caught my eye was, “IMPORTANT MESSAGE, READ IMMEDIATELY.” My heart felt a cold wave hit. My mom had stage 3 cancer. I froze.

“¿Qué dice la carta? (What does it say?)” my mom asked impatiently.

“No se como decirle. (I don’t know how to tell you.)” I was 11 years old, trying to find the right

words to explain to my mom what was going on inside of her body. My heart and mind knew, but I couldn’t accept it. My heart crumpled up like a piece of paper about to be tossed into the trash. I hugged my mom; I wanted to wake up from what I wished was a nightmare.

I knew there was no cure for cancer, but I also knew miracles exist. I wished one could come my way. After some stressful days and appointments, the doctors had told us only a miracle could save my mom. They were going to do as much as they could. I realized I had to prepare myself and my younger sister, and support and help my mom as much as I could. With work, treatment and not feeling well, she was stressed. I knew I had to step up.

Being a middle schooler, having a younger sister to look out for and finding out my mom could be taken away any day was hard. By the age of 12, I dropped my after-school activities, took care of my sister, cleaned the house, helped my sister with her homework and, of course, went to school. I was challenged to work harder and become more independent.

My mom is my hero and role model. It was just the three of us, so I had to grow up fast, take care of myself and my family. Most importantly, I had to make mom feel like she had someone by her side. Ultimately, this situation taught me how to value every second of life.

My mom always tells me to push forward, stay strong and become

someone who can make a change in this world. I dream bigger now and am focused on becoming a doctor. I know I have to work hard and get good grades to be the person I want to be; my mom and our courageous experience inspire me every day.

I hope someday I will be able to show my mom how thankful I am for every sacrifice she’s made. Miraculously, she’s better now, and she will see me graduate high school, go to college and pursue my dreams. I will make her proud. The skills, compassion and example she’s brought to my life help me now; they will make me a better student at the University of Minnesota; and someday they’ll help me be a caring, capable doctor.

College Essay: I Will Not Stop

“LAS COSAS QUE empiezan nunca paran.” The things that start never end. The spring day that took it all away; the existence of them was all that I had left, and it was gone, tarnished. This immense revelation was phrased as Muhammad Ali’s old saying, “Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee.” You came quick, leaving me with traces.

On March 13, 2020, humanity was tested yet again. I am currently going through these tests. The cloth that separated me from the rest was something noticeable to all. Eyes of this world, full of faces that turned to just eyes, the eyes



Daniel Navarro
Cristo Rey Jesuit High School

that stare at you for having a full face. I found myself left talking to just eyes, no mouth and no nose, just staring, glaring at all you had left of your face. It was a precaution because everyone had to take caution, of me, of you, and just simply everybody.

My name is Daniel, and this is my story about how I faced change during the pandemic.

Everything felt so difficult at first, learning new words and phrases. It just seemed so arduous, trying to get comfortable with a lifestyle forced upon you. I never speculated that staying at home could be such a challenge. I was content, though. I had the privilege to still receive an education from home, but I felt so cemented in my placement. I had this emotion of not wanting to change. Everything was abnormal; I was feeling figmental about all of this, as if it was not real.

My peers and educators were taken away from me. Everything turned to code, leaving me staring at this monitor for hours. I often reminisce about the time I had with people; high school simply turned into just a laptop and me. My will was left challenged, broken, and

decided even more than it was previously. Problems never ended; they were just left stacked like a game of Jenga.

My mother once told me after my cousin passed away, “Las cosas que empiezan nunca paran,” meaning the things that start never end.

This was her way of telling me that nothing truly ends. It showed me that although it felt like all my motivation and drive to do anything was just gonna come to an end, my dreams, goals and ambition would still continue, and a pandemic would not put that to a halt. I wanted to learn from those words, so I could still keep on moving onward. Through the challenges and difficulties I have faced and will soon face in the future, I will keep on going. For I have no end in the

things I will accomplish. I want to make inventions that hold the same meaning as me, something that has no end and is remembered. Unique. I would love to do this by becoming an engineer or to be involved in a career that is able to face challenges and accomplish development to our forever changing world.

With this, I was able to learn how to adapt to my situation and overcome challenges that came along with it. I will be able to carve myself a bright future and give those behind me hope for what is yet to come. With my ability to become a leader, I can cause this change I hope for. I can utilize my skills of being open and being able to take risks to aid me in my future. “Porque yo nunca voy a parar.” For I will not stop.

MPRnews

IN FOCUS

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BIPOC Minnesotans experience inequities in our most important systems and infrastructures, from education to housing to health care. Over the next year, MPR News is hosting a series of conversations with community leaders on race, identity, social justice and how Minnesota communities can make progress toward equity.

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ThreeSixty Journalism
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News Reporter Academy one kicked off ThreeSixty's on-campus summer programming. The camp was in partnership with Minnesota Humanities Center and focused on changing racial narratives.



Minnesota
Humanities
Center

Power of Documenting

Georgia Fort tells stories through a different lens at BLCK Press and Racial Reckoning.

AS A BLACK woman in the TV news industry, Georgia Fort has experienced discrimination firsthand. She has felt alienated for her hair, speech, mannerisms and more.

For example, Fort described the hours she had to spend straightening — and ultimately damaging — her natural hair.

“When you get a contract in TV news, you have to agree that they basically control your image. So when I was hired as a TV journalist, I was hired with straight hair,” she said. “Historically speaking, news anchors have been required to have one image and to maintain that image. And if you change that image, you have to have permission.”

She left one TV station due to what she described as discrimination when it denied her maternity leave. With almost 15 years of broadcast experience and two Emmy nominations, she was offered jobs elsewhere in the country, but she struggled to find a job in Minnesota. Meanwhile, she saw a TV station hire a white college student with much less experience as a weekend producer.

That is why founding BLCK Press and being a lead reporter



Faaya Adem
Fair School
Downtown

for Racial Reckoning: The Arc of Justice is important to her. BLCK Press is an online site that publishes news and other content about the Black experience in America. Racial Reckoning is a journalism initiative created by AMPERS, KMOJ and the Minnesota Humanities Center to enlist journalists from BIPOC communities to cover the court trials for Derek Chauvin and the other former police officers involved in George Floyd's murder, in addition to other issues.

“For me, Racial Reckoning is very personal because it's not just about what we've seen unfold in the criminal justice system. The disparities in Minnesota are ... it's hard to even describe,” Fort said.

Racial Reckoning does not have hard deadlines, nor does it rush to be the first to report on an issue. That is because it is prioritizing accurate, factual reporting.

“Not to say other news organizations don't have that, but I think when your project is titled ‘Racial

Reckoning,’ you're making editorial decisions from a different lens,” Fort said.

During Chauvin's trial, weekly recaps were made in Hmong, Somali and Spanish to reach communities underrepresented by mainstream media.

Fort is also mentoring the up-and-coming BIPOC journalists who are working for Racial Reckoning. She says mentoring and influencing the next generation of journalists is the most fulfilling part of her work. But she notes that even as more BIPOC journalists are being hired, newsrooms are struggling to retain them.

“You can recruit all you want, you can make great hires, you could find the best of the best of the best journalists of color to fill your newsroom, but if you don't address the culture in your newsroom, you will fail to retain them,” she said, adding that addressing culture outside the newsroom matters, as well.

“What happens when they go to the grocery store? What happens when they go to church, what happens when they're driving, while still just being Black? What happens when they're going for a jog? What happens when they're just living



Georgia Fort

their life in Minnesota, while being Black, or any other ethnic background?” she said.

Fort, Racial Reckoning and similar groups are hoping mainstream media in Minnesota will hire from this cultivated group of journalists instead of outsourcing from other areas of the country. People from local communities can provide important nuances and context for complex stories, along with local connections, she said.

“You lose that when you're outsourcing people who are not from this community,” she said.

Fort also thinks citizen

journalism plays an important role in media coverage. Especially for TV, a growing amount of video comes from citizens choosing to film what they see — notably Darnella Frazier's video of Floyd's murder, a citizen video that spread around the world and helped hold the parties involved accountable.

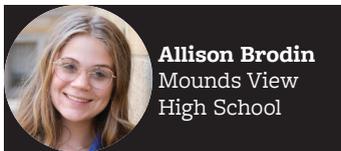
“The power of documenting media is a powerful tool,” she said. “Whether it's used correctly or incorrectly, it is a powerful tool. It can be used to cause harm, and it can be used to cause accountability or used to create positive change. It's a powerful tool.”

Alumni Update: Activist and Journalist

ThreeSixty alum Feven Gerezgiher centers her work on the power of community.

ON APRIL 20, 2021, cheers erupted from George Floyd Square as a guilty verdict in former police officer Derek Chauvin's trial was announced. The square was full of relief and joy. In the crowd was Feven Gerezgiher, a young reporter for Racial Reckoning.

Racial Reckoning is an independent community journalism initiative, founded in March 2021,



Allison Brodin
Mounds View
High School

focusing on BIPOC voices and stories. It was created to cover the trials of the former Minneapolis police officers who were involved in the murder of George Floyd.

Its website includes daily updates, weekly community recaps and podcasts centered around racial justice.

Gerezgiher spent time volunteering in East Africa, where she tutored, taught English and helped with afterschool programming. While in East Africa, she enjoyed learning more about her culture and her history, as well as spending time with her extended family. She was

enthusiastic about absorbing her Eritrean culture.

Gerezgiher speaks fondly of her parents' home country of Eritrea, which was granted independence from Ethiopia in 1991 after many years of struggle. Gerezgiher partially attributes the success of the country's revolution to the way that “there's always been a spirit of, ‘How can we make our community better?’”

That spirit of helping your community is what Gerezgiher's passion stems from. She practices her activism in the Twin Cities by attending many protests and working to enact change on various fronts.

One of those fronts was as field director for a local city council member's campaign in 2017. She was proud to work for a grassroots **ACTIVIST** continued on page 30

Local Pioneers

Mukhtar Ibrahim and his team at Sahan Journal focus on the immigrant experience in Minnesota.

“SAHAN,” SAID SAHAN Journal founder Mukhtar Ibrahim, is a “beautiful Somali word which means pioneer.” He explained that when faced with a drought, the ancient nomadic villagers of East Africa would search for greener pastures by sending out the sahan: “The most trusted figures in the community doing the scouting and coming back with reliable information.”

Sahan Journal is a Minnesota news outlet focused on immigrant communities and communities of color. When Ibrahim started Sahan Journal in 2019, he became a pioneer himself, venturing into the uncharted lands of starting a publication from scratch.

“The first six months I was like, ‘What am I doing?’”

A former reporter for the Star Tribune and Minnesota Public Radio, Ibrahim would email story ideas about immigrant communities and communities of color to an editor, which weren’t utilized. He would open the paper and not find



Maneeya Leung
Eden Prairie
High School

stories he could relate to.

“You question being there in that newsroom that doesn’t really value stories about your community,” he said. “So, you either put your head down, do your work, meet the deadlines and go home disappointed, or you take the risk and do something that will address the need.”

Celebrating the journal’s two-year anniversary, Ibrahim now has a better idea of what he is doing and says that the risk paid off. He runs a full-time staff of 10 people.

Race quotas, insufficient staff diversity and story restrictions that hinder mainstream newsrooms are no longer a problem for Ibrahim in Sahan Journal’s newsroom. “We don’t say, ‘We had this community yesterday. We don’t have to cover it today,’” Ibrahim said. “People continue to dream big and write all the

stories that they want to pursue.”

The stories keep coming. Readers see stories relevant to their lives, and in return they call and email ideas for more. “They see their communities being valued,” Ibrahim said.

Ibrahim said Sahan Journal sets the agenda by showing “there are stories besides tragedies and breaking news” about people of color that can be shared.

Whether sharing successes or exposing injustices, the Sahan Journal is rooted in providing trusted services to its communities. In 2020, a new responsibility arose: keeping the community safe.

COVID-19 hit communities of color hard, and from the early stages of the pandemic, Ibrahim and his team went to work publishing COVID-19 guidelines in languages like Hmong and Somali.

Essentials were the minimum for Ibrahim. He wanted to take a “holistic approach” that showed the full impact of COVID-19 on communities, whether tragic or inspiring. For example, partnering with the

University of Minnesota journalism program, Sahan Journal published a series of obituaries for people of color and immigrants.

“Coronavirus killed a lot of people from our communities,” Ibrahim said.

Sahan Journal also published features of community members helping out in health care. As the vaccinations rolled out, Sahan Journal launched a vaccination FAQ series featuring trusted leaders of the community. Staff wanted to give “the microphone to the community and let them address issues in their own voices,” Ibrahim said.

COVID-19 continues to shape the newsroom, having uncovered inequities in health systems, housing, insurance and education. Ibrahim plans to expand Sahan Journal’s coverage across Minnesota to represent more communities. Ibrahim will continue to build on his vision to become a sahan for communities across Minnesota.

He also encourages others to follow his lead and break away from



EVAN FROST

Mukhtar Ibrahim

mainstream media.

“If you are a person of color in the newsroom, you face a lot of challenges, and you cannot do anything about it because you are within the system. So as soon as you step out of the system, you can dream big and pursue things that you care about.”

Same Story, Different Lens

Freddie Bell is not just the voice for KMOJ; he’s the voice for the local BIPOC community.

FREDDIE BELL HAS a voice made for radio, but he didn’t always plan on becoming a broadcaster. That changed when he was in college at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. One night he got lost on campus and found himself at the bottom of a staircase.

He glimpsed into a glass room full of vinyl records and microphones and asked a nearby student, “Do they have a campus radio station?” The student gave him a look that said, “Of course.” In Bell’s words, “My career changed radically at that point.”

Decades later, he is still going strong in the radio broadcasting business.

“Now it’s me standing at the bottom of the staircase helping others who are trying to get into our business,” he said.

Bell has been involved at KMOJ,



Paul Malloy
Minnetonka
High School

a small community-owned station, since 2014 and has served as general manager since 2016.

In 2020 Bell was named Broadcaster of the Year by the Association of Minnesota Public Educational Radio Stations, an award he accepted with humility.

“To get an award for this job seems weird,” Bell said. “I just want to do my work, communicate effectively and help people.”

As Bell sees it, he has three duties: protect the station’s license, train broadcasters and give the community information they can use to make rational decisions.

In 2021 Bell and KMOJ partnered with AMPERS, the Minnesota Humanities Center and other groups and foundations to create Racial Reckoning: The Arc of Justice. It is a news podcast aimed at changing problematic racial narratives in mainstream news and helping the local community form educated opinions.

For Bell, the need to tell these stories to the community started with Jamar Clark’s death at the hands of Minneapolis police officers in 2015.

“That story was one that impacted the people in the core area where the station was physically situated,” Bell said. “I felt, in my opinion, that it was important to tell that story ... until they reached a logical conclusion.”

Bell felt it was his duty to keep the community informed during

tumultuous times.

“We’re not a newsroom, we’re not an insert,” he said. “To not tell these stories ... was a miss for a community radio station that aims to give people information to make decisions.”

Bell said it’s important for the community to be able to relate to the person telling the stories.

“I think it is important to have young journalists from our BIPOC community tell stories that impact us. Even though it may be word for word the same as our white counterparts ... I’m hearing it through a different lens.”

Bell added, “I’ve got some good friends in the broadcast business ... a lot of them don’t look like me, don’t have the kind of experiences I had.”

Bell thinks the community has responded well to Racial Reckoning. “They don’t care about the name

of the project,” he said. “They care about the information we’re sharing. That’s the goal.”

Bell is not doing this project for the recognition. Instead, he is doing it for the greater good of the community. Moving forward, Bell has many aspirations for Racial Reckoning.

“I want to see it continue in perpetuity for as long as our radio station is able to operate,” he said. “I am hoping that we can continue to be the platform for aspiring journalists ... to get the training they need.”

Bell’s next project aims to get young students involved in broadcasting and Racial Reckoning. This project has given Bell and his team at KMOJ the platform to tell the stories that impact the local community – the same stories through a different lens.

Creating Safe Space for LGBTQ Youth

Elliott Tuck takes to the airwaves with “Sound Generation” show to build a community platform.

ELLIOTT TUCK LOVES getting social media messages from his listeners. His most notable message came from a 12-year-old.

“I think a 12-year-old just DM’d me on Instagram saying how much she enjoyed the show,” Tuck said.

Tuck is the co-host of “Sound Generation” on Listen Up! Youth Radio in Minneapolis. The 19-year-old got into the world of radio when he volunteered with Campfire Minnesota, an organization helping kids in poverty get into summer programs and become active in their communities. He then began his radio show, which gives people in the LGBTQ community a platform to voice, advocate and educate.

“I would say me and my co-host are super passionate about it, because it’s more talked about now,” Tuck said. “We try to bring that into light as much as we can, because it’s part of our activism as queer people.”

As a Black queer man in the media industry, Tuck isn’t



Gloria Ngwa
Washington Tech

discriminatory about whom he invites onto the show. He is open minded and willing to start up a conversation with people who don’t necessarily agree with him.

“You can have a disagreement with somebody and still respect them,” he said. “We can have appropriate conversations and be cordial with each other without trying to rip each other’s throats out.”

Tuck is passionate about LGBTQ activism, pride and drag – all topics he covers on his show.

“We don’t classify activism as ‘you have to have it on a label and have it as an official thing and work for a corporation,’” Tuck said. “If you are actively using your social media platform to speak out against anything, we want to hear you, we want to talk to you.”

While famous people who are part of the LGBTQ community, such as actors Laverne Cox and Mj Rodriguez, are changing traditional media perceptions, adolescents and young adults act as tomorrow’s leaders by advocating for important issues like the LGBTQ community, Black Lives Matter and Stop Asian Hate. Youths are now taking that step in storytelling, and are the ones crafting and delivering that in the media. Tuck is not excluded from that list of youth advocates.

“I think we tend to turn to our elders or adults for leadership, but we never realized, especially with electronics and stuff, that ... younger people who use their platforms, like articles they read on their (Instagram story),” he said. “I would say the youth in general tend to stay pretty educated with everything that’s going on around us. So, I think out of anybody who tells us stories, it should be the youth. Because I feel like there’s



Elliott Tuck

some learning that the older generations need to do.”

As the show gains a following, listeners and fans will definitely have something to take away from Tuck’s inspiring stories and discussions. And that’s his mission.

“When I am putting the computer away, when I’m looking at the

script and unplugging the mic, I’m thinking to myself, ‘How did I help somebody who is exactly like me?’” he said. “How did I make them feel seen? And how did I help make a change to those who aren’t seen?”

“At the end of the day, that’s what I think about, because representation really does matter.”

Elliott Tuck, Drag Queen DJ

The makeup artist and drag queen highlights diverse voices on his radio show “Sound Generation.”

AS A QUEER person, Elliott Tuck struggled with being his true self while trying to manage expectations from society and his family.

He has shared some of his experience on his radio show, “Sound Generation,” broadcast on Listen Up! Youth Radio at KRSM, which seeks to help people who may be struggling with their sexuality or embracing their place in the world.

“I think people are afraid of what people think and are too concerned about society’s standards,” he said, adding that his grandmother once told him what people say about you is “none of your business.”

“When you first hear it, you’re like, it should be my business. But when you analyze it, it’s essentially saying, ‘So what if people say



Ben O’Leary
Global Arts
Plus Upper

something about you? Why is that bothering you? Why should that let your self-esteem and confidence down?” he said.

Tuck started learning about makeup and became an aesthetician, which means he is licensed to provide cosmetic skin care treatments and services.

Tuck’s interests also include radio. He was part of Campfire Minnesota, a nonprofit that helps young people become active in their communities. While he was attending the camp, a producer

from Listen Up! named Emily Krumberger approached him and offered him his own show, and the rest is history.

Tuck uses his show to discuss LGBTQ topics, Black culture and other important subjects with his co-host, Gigi. Tuck likes to invite guests who have different opinions.

In addition to his radio show, he is a makeup artist and drag queen. He first got makeup inspiration from cartoons; he wanted to look like cartoon characters drawn by artists.

“I like things like ‘Steven Universe.’ That was a really big influence on me,” Tuck said. “I really liked things like ‘The Pink Panther,’ ‘Looney Tunes,’ ‘Tom and Jerry,’ just really goofy and interesting things like that.”

Although Tuck tries to live his best life, there are some in his family who disagree with his lifestyle. Tuck’s uncle is homophobic and hasn’t tried to understand Tuck’s community.

As for Tuck’s other family members, they run the spectrum of support. His mother didn’t approve at first, but is now one of his greatest allies. His father always knew Tuck was queer; it was a matter of him just coming out. As for Tuck’s grandparents, they don’t agree with his decisions, but they do respect him.

“I try to be pretty patient with people,” Tuck said. “I understand that people lived in a different time where that wasn’t acceptable, and it’s hard for them to comprehend that it’s OK and it should be normalized.”

Ultimately, Tuck wants to live in a world where we stop judging people based on their appearance and instead understand their heart and character.

“Innocent people get hurt and attacked and antagonized just for their appearance,” Tuck said. “If I were to leave this earth with one thing, it would be to get to know somebody. I’ll allow that perspective to be something that should be applied in having conversations with others, because we are so quick to be grounded in our own ways.”

You can listen to Tuck’s radio show, “Sound Generation,” on 98.9 FM KRSM. You can also listen to it on MixCloud if you miss the live show. Tuck’s Instagram accounts are @galaxy_nebula_universe and @sound_generation_krsm.

It's All About Perspective

How uplifting narratives can heal suffering in communities.

FOR 47 YEARS, Insight News has been a trailblazer for diverse media groups. Founded in 1974, the Black-owned news group has been providing its community with stories they can relate to. These are stories Batala McFarlane, the publisher of Insight News, thinks are extremely important.

McFarlane grew up with news all around her. As the daughter of Al McFarlane, Insight News' founder, she often found herself at the office on 18th and Bryant Avenue North in Minneapolis. McFarlane would eventually take on a pivotal role at the family business, working as a publisher, a producer and sometimes even cleaning behind the toilet.

"When you or your family owns a business, you do whatever it takes to keep the business operating," McFarlane said.

As well as working hard to keep her family business afloat, McFarlane makes sure she can put out important stories for her community.



Marcos Odegard
Nova Classical Academy

"There's (an) opportunity for us to tell our own stories," she said. "Because if you allow other people to tell your story, they'll create the narrative for you."

The free newspaper offers positive and uplifting stories – a stark contrast to how McFarlane feels her community is portrayed by the mainstream media.

"People who are not familiar with the Northside and the South Side and the East Side may just walk away thinking it's just a place you don't want to go," she said. "It's a place that's defined by a deficit; it's a place of poverty, of death, of illness."

She strongly disagrees with this perception. Rather, McFarlane wants to share real-life success stories because, according to her, "when you see yourself in that light,

then you're inclined to sit a little straighter and understand that you come from people who are contributing to community."

But sometimes it is hard to highlight these stories with so much negative news overshadowing them.

The death of George Floyd changed a lot for Insight News.

"What has changed is that people believe us now," McFarlane said. "And what I mean by that is that those of us in these spaces have been telling the stories of the movement, of the activists, of the disparities forever."

Instead of dwelling on such a dark time for her community, McFarlane says Insight News keeps a forward mindset.

It ties back to the original vision of Insight News: positive narratives can be shared to inspire those in a misrepresented community. Its goal is to find the solution and not to focus on the problem.

McFarlane firmly believes it's all about perspective and your outlook on these problems.



Batala McFarlane

"I think that's the way we should look at it. It's more than a moment, and what we do with this energy that we're in — this desire to acknowledge, to listen, to collaborate, to work together to build a greater society."

But how can this be done?

How do we channel that energy? She believes the way we can do this is to share our stories.

"I think that now's the time, right?" she said. "Because, again, too often we've been told that our stories didn't matter. But they do, they really, really do."

Bridging Health and Racial Disparities

Batala McFarlane shines light on Black communities in North Minneapolis.

BATALA MCFARLANE GREW up so closely to Insight News she calls it her "twin sister." The Black-owned family news business began in 1974, the year she was born.

McFarlane started attending meetings with her father when she was 3 years old and co-produces their radio show, "Conversations with Al McFarlane."

Insight News began in North Minneapolis, in the basement she grew up in, and has remained just as close-knit as ever. Being in proximity with her dad, the two have maintained a close relationship while forging a powerful work dynamic.

"It's an honor to work with him. We disagree a lot, but that's OK," McFarlane said. "It's just to continue the legacy, the institution my



Michael Rosas Ceronio
Lakeville South High School

father has built."

Their mission is to "inform, instruct and inspire, and to provide a vehicle through which we can tell our stories."

"It's always been just to be a place of voice for those people who are, who have been and too often (are) pushed to the margins," McFarlane said.

For McFarlane, it's important to create narratives that are more than the typical rags to riches story. Striving for more exposure, she believes highlighting the issue isn't enough and thinks putting a

spotlight on the solution is just as important.

"A colleague says don't fall in love with the problem. Do acknowledge that it's there, but what's the solution?" McFarlane said.

McFarlane hasn't just amplified community voices but has also brought about change in community health. Around eight years ago, McFarlane launched the Insight-2-Health fitness challenge with the goal of improving health outcomes in people who are most impacted by health disparities. People participated in 10 weeks of rigorous workouts and received lifestyle and nutrition coaching.

"People need to see folks who look like them, who are taking control of their lives, who are not

becoming the perceived family history of high blood pressure or heart disease," McFarlane said.

It's important to McFarlane to show that research is being led by Black people in clinical data so they can trust the information they are getting. Achieving improvement in heart health is no easy task.

The initiative has expanded into launching the Insight Health Equity Action Lab, or iHEAL, which is dedicated to journalism about data and health equity. McFarlane knows iHEAL is a long-term initiative, and she has found the perfect partners in Dr. Courtney Jordan Baechler, a cardiologist, and her colleagues at the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation.

Looking to the future, McFarlane thinks people are now attentive to Black people's stories about disparities that have been neglected for so long. McFarlane wants to take advantage of this opportunity by taking Insight News a step further.

McFarlane is rethinking their partnerships and the possibility of working with competitors to make connections that attract young readers. McFarlane thinks the next generation holds all the answers to recurring problems happening both locally and globally.

"It's more than a moment. What do we do with this energy that we're in? (How do we use) this desire to listen, to collaborate, to work together to build a greater society?"

Bearing Witness Through Racial Reckoning

Tiffany Bui tells the true stories of people of color at Racial Reckoning: The Arc of Justice.



EVAN FROST

Tiffany Bui

AS A VIETNAMESE American raised in Minnesota, Tiffany Bui felt her cultural identity was left out of the media entirely.

“I come from a different background, in which people live (differently), eat different foods and speak a different language,” she said.

This difference has led Bui to become more empathetic to those denied entry into majority white spaces. Bui understands what it’s like to be dismissed and misrepresented.

Bui, a University of Minnesota student, has worked in journalism for four years. Bui spent her time in newsrooms as an intern, as well as a managing editor, confronting the lack of diversity in her workplace and in the stories her colleagues reported.

Now she is a radio reporter at Racial Reckoning: The Arc of



Kennedy Rance
Patrick Henry
High School

Justice. According to its website, Racial Reckoning is a journalism initiative covering the court trials of the former Minneapolis police officers who were charged in connection with the murder of George Floyd, as well as the community’s response and the changes needed to create a more just society.

At Racial Reckoning, Bui does not have to push for a wide range of perspectives — her story assignments align with her purpose to highlight diverse narratives.

“There’s no way to tell the truth fully and accurately without including the voice of people of color,” Bui said.

During the last year, Bui has reported on the Derek Chauvin trial and social unrest, all amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of her most recent reporting focused on the death of Leneal Frazier, Darnella Frazier’s uncle. Darnella Frazier is the teen who recorded Floyd’s death on her cell phone.

While pursuing a robbery suspect in July, a Minneapolis police officer crashed into Leneal Frazier’s car at an intersection, killing him.

While covering Frazier’s death, Bui didn’t pull out her microphone to record or videotape the family. Instead, she listened to Frazier’s cousin as he mourned and spoke to broadcasters.

In those moments, Bui felt his pain didn’t need to be documented. He needed to be seen and felt.

“As a journalist, you’re there to bear witness and tell the story,” she said.

“I never learned what to do when there is grief unfolding in real time.”

As Bui covers these stories, she said she’s empathetic to the raw emotions of the families and communities she’s reporting on — a skill she’s developed on her own.

Due to Bui’s lack of representation growing up, she strives to highlight voices of color daily. To Bui, narratives of people of color go far beyond being a part of a singular news story. “Diverse narratives,” she said, “are a fundamental part of journalism.”

When asked what she wants listeners of Racial Reckoning to get out of its stories, Bui said, “I hope the stories are more relatable and applicable to their lives ... and those (stories) are told in ways that are more humanizing than they would usually see in mainstream media.”

‘Readers Are Leaders’

Planting People Growing Justice increases literacy and nurtures leadership.

AS A STUDENT at Hamline University, Dr. Artika Tyner was determined to be a high school English teacher.

“I think for me the biggest inspiration was related to literacy,” Tyner said. “Even when I was doing student teaching, seeing that the basic phonics and some of the building blocks of reading were missing for far too many children.”

Ultimately Tyner became an attorney and a clinical professor. Now she’s the director for the Center on Race, Leadership and Social Justice at the University of St. Thomas. In 2014 she founded Planting People Growing Justice.

“Planting People Growing Justice is a nonprofit organization that focuses on promoting literacy and diversity in books with an ultimate goal of inspiring leadership and social change,” Tyner said.

The organization publishes and



Ivan Rahouski
Eden Prairie
High School

distributes books from authors of color to teach the importance of social change through education, training and community outreach. The hope is that kids will be more interested in reading when they see themselves in the story.

Tyner’s goal for Planting People Growing Justice is to continue to get books into children’s hands. To date, Planting People Growing Justice has donated 7,000 books to schools, and Tyner hopes they can get books into every school and inspire students to be leaders.

One of the first stories published by Planting People Growing Justice was Tyner’s own book “Justice

Makes a Difference.” The story is about Justice, a young girl who, through her love of books and conversations with her grandma, learns about important men and women who changed the world, like Ella Baker and Ida B. Wells. Tyner was inspired to write the book because in her childhood there were few stories written from the perspective of African American children.

“The win would be seeing the ‘Justice’ books in all schools and libraries, to see Justice as a household name,” Tyner said. “When you see the red cape, you know that you can soar to new heights and you can be impactful.”

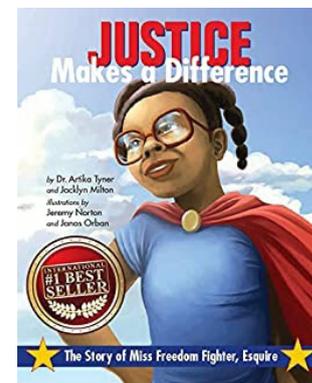
Tyner also hopes “Justice Makes a Difference” will lead to readers exploring their cultural roots, as she did during trips to Ghana. Her first trip to Ghana was in 2019, when Ghanaian President Nana

Akufo-Addo sent an invite to the world in a United Nations address. The year 2019 marked the “Year of Return,” the 400-year anniversary of the first Africans being taken to America and becoming slaves. Akufo-Addo hoped the invitation would allow people to “honor humanities” and “reclaim (their) history.”

In Ghana, Tyner got a rich experience of cultural legacy and identity, which inspires her work. She believes reading inspires children to be involved in their communities and recognize their roots.

“If we study our history, it takes people to get involved to create infinite possibilities,” Tyner said.

Tyner takes pride in an email she received from a parent who bought “Justice Makes a Difference” for their child. The child told her father, “Daddy, that’s me,” when she read it. That’s exactly the impact Tyner



COURTESY ARTIKA TYNER

Dr. Artika Tyner wrote a book titled, “Justice Makes a Difference.”

hopes to have with “Justice Makes a Difference” and Planting People Growing Justice.

Tyner added, “I wrote ‘Justice’ for every Black girl, Black boy, every child of color, to have that mirror to see themselves more clearly.”

Leah Lemm Helps Indigenous Voices Shine

Her podcast, “Native Lights,” highlights Indigenous stories.

A SEEDLING, HAVING been wafted along by the wind, fell to the ground. Roots dug deep into the soft, dark soil. It started to grow. The roots grew hungry for more. They grew farther down to support the growing stem. Leaves sprouted in the sunlight. Buds sprinkled the tips of the branches, promising future blooms.

Leah Lemm, a podcast host and member of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe, describes time within her community as a growing plant.

“We’re at the bud. You can’t ignore the stem, or the roots, or the dirt, or the planets, or the water that goes into it. These are all on a continuum,” she said.

Although she could split Native stories into past and present, she intertwines them.

“I don’t see us being separate from our past. We are looking toward our next generations,” she said.

Lemm is sharing stories using modern technology, but the



Nickel Tom
Insight Recovery
School

tradition of storytelling stays true. Telling stories of the past, and the present, honors her ancestors. She acknowledges her tribe’s past and has her eyes on the future.

“Native Lights: Where Indigenous Voices Shine” is one of Lemm’s multiple podcast projects. She created it for Native people, wanting a space where they could share their stories, humor and hope.

“I feel like there was definitely a time when I would have needed this podcast. ... There are times when we can feel driftless,” she said. “But it is a way to share how we’ve worked through challenges and have found purpose or have worked towards finding purpose.”

Being driftless is a familiar topic for Native people, especially the

young. Lemm wants them to find others who are working through that feeling of being driftless and persevering until they find their purpose.

“Native Lights” “focuses on how Native people around Minnesota use their gifts to share with their communities. ... We’re given these gifts by the Creator, so we need to use them to help our communities.”

Featuring Native people who are actively working toward their goals and creating a path for those who come after them is a stark contrast from the types of stories mainstream media tends to report. If topics of addiction, violence and erasure of Native American culture do come up, Lemm ensures they do not overshadow the positive work being done. Lemm said as important as these topics are, she does not want to dwell on them.

She quotes her father: “If you can do something about it, you can’t complain about it.”

“When I was asked to work with

‘Minnesota Native News,’ I was like ‘No, I don’t know what I’m doing.’ ... But I knew it was a step in the right direction. So, if I could do it, then that’s what I needed to do,” Lemm said.

Lemm described them as marching orders; looking at it as “work to do” rather than an insurmountable wall is essential to being a story sharer, a term Lemm uses to describe herself.

Culture, connection and community are the words to describe Lemm. She embraces her culture, despite the erasure it has faced through imperialism. Her connection and community outreach are inspiring. She has created an experience using modern technology with contemporary issues, but the story sharing tradition stays the same. It is also vital to keep the Native way of life around.

The flowers have bloomed and their pollen has spread throughout the land. Lemm has come to a



Leah Lemm

crucial understanding of time and her culture. We are all intertwined and continue to grow together. One generation’s flowers will be used to create a new family. Culture, connection and community have grown, and it is thanks to Lemm and her supporters that we have a revitalized and blossoming Native community in Minnesota.

Interested in Lemm’s work? Visit her [website](#).

Listen Up! Youth Radio Amplifies Diverse Youth Voices

Mia Lambert works with Listen Up! to spotlight the stories of diverse youth.

DIVERSITY, OR THE lack of it in mainstream public media, has been an ongoing issue, especially in broadcast radio and journalism spaces. However, there are groups working to change that. Listen Up! Youth Radio is an organization that presents young people from underrepresented groups with the platform and the tools to get into broadcasting.

According to a 2018 survey done by the Radio Television Digital News Association, only 11.3% of radio newsroom staff are people of color. According to a 2019 report by Nielsen holdings, radio is the predominant way that Black Americans consume media. Black and Hispanic Americans make up one-third of the radio audience in America, but only 416 commercial radio stations are minority-owned, compared to the 10,076 white-owned stations.

Even though there are many minorities who listen to radio,



Han Vu-Tran
Mounds View
High School

station leadership and staff are not representative of the people listening.

Giving young people the ability to express themselves through Listen Up!, especially if they are from underrepresented groups, can help pave the way to diversifying the radio newsrooms. Supported by the Minnesota Humanities Center, St. Paul Foundation and Youthprise, youth ages 14 to 24 have the opportunity to host a live weekly radio talk show and join the other programs Listen Up! offers. Listen Up! also works with elementary school kids.

Mia Lambert, 16, joined Listen Up! as a broadcaster three years ago, when the organization was

created. Lambert is now a youth board member, as well.

Initiatives such as Listen Up! allow people to hear the stories of minority youth that often are not taught in classrooms.

“Being able to learn the history of a certain people allows you to understand it and maybe even connect with that,” Lambert said.

The limited history of people of color has been a tool to portray minorities in a certain way in the classroom.

“I feel by not having that well-rounded history ... the stereotype and the aspects that you’ve been taught about these kinds of people and the history that you learned have all snowballed into a whole prejudice,” Lambert said.

Listen Up! hopes to reach more people in Minnesota in the coming years to help unteach prejudices.

“I think that would be really great because our mission, our goal, is

to give access to young people to journalism, to radio or just to telling their story in general,” Lambert said.

That access could be vital to ensure that future radio newsrooms are more reflective of their listeners.

“I think by allowing students to have access to journalism and radio—younger instead of older—it allows them to gain these kinds of skills that are needed to get into those newsrooms,” Lambert said.

Coming into professional newsrooms can be challenging.

“I tell other young people, ‘Don’t lose faith in yourself,’ because sometimes it’s really hard telling your story in journalism or radio, because there are different obstacles you face, whether it’s racism, or not being able to feel like you’re totally included in the story because of your race, your identity, your age. It’s important that you know you’ve got this. There are people out there who want to hear your



Mia Lambert

story and who will support you. And even if there is not, you always have yourself,” Lambert said.

Marianne Combs Continues Telling Stories

Her role as a managing editor for Racial Reckoning keeps storytelling at the center.

VETERAN RADIO JOURNALIST

Marianne Combs noticed a lack of inclusivity for people of color in newsrooms. And the data backs her observations: According to a 2020 study by The Radio Television Digital News Foundation, 15.4% of those employed in local radio newsrooms are people of color.

Combs, who worked at Minnesota Public Radio for 23 years before resigning in September 2020, believes the solution starts with newsrooms doing more training and



Ariana Yasmin
Spring Lake Park
High School

supporting young reporters. She wants to be part of that.

And that's exactly what she's doing working with AMPERS, KMOJ and the Minnesota Humanities Center. Combs is a leader in the groundbreaking project Racial Reckoning: The Arc of Justice,

which is centered around supporting and training young reporters.

When Combs was approached about being part of project, an independent community journalism initiative, she was told they "wanted to create this space for young women of color to learn how to do journalism," Combs said.

Racial Reckoning started as a short-term project, created for the purpose of covering the court trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who was

eventually convicted of murdering George Floyd, as well as the trials of the three other officers involved in Floyd's death. Combs did her part in helping.

"I started training these young women, or women of color, to do their own radio stories and produce their own stories," she said.

However, incidents of other injustices against people of color continued to transpire, such as the case of Daunte Wright, who was shot by a Brooklyn Center police

officer during a traffic stop. What was intended to be an eight-month project just keeps growing.

While working with the project, Combs wanted to use the skills she learned in mainstream media to mentor people of color.

Although she's their managing news editor, she doesn't assign stories. She says she trusts their expertise about what needs to be covered. She gives them the knowledge and resources to tell their own **STORIES** *continued on page 29*

Q&A with Advocate Laichia Vang

"To be radical, to be part of social change, is to start with yourself."

MEET LAICHIA VANG, a senior at Roseville Area High School who loves to improve her community. "If you don't try, then you will get nothing done, so why not?" she asks.

Vang fights for justice and equity in her roles as the co-chair of the Youth Executive Board, a facilitator at Becoming Organizers, Becoming Advocates and a representative on the Minnesota Youth Council.

She fights for a better education for other students and wants to break stigmas, such as Asian hate, for herself. Her other causes include racial justice, educational equity, mental and sexual health, and LGBTQ rights.

Q: *You're passionate about education and closing the opportunity gap. What inspires you to advocate for this cause?*

A: I never saw myself in education. Nobody who looked like me, except a brief paragraph or two about my people. The silence among our educational curriculum is profound. A lack of diverse narratives or representation tells me that the experiences, stories, and legacies of people in my community are not important and that our presence has never made a contribution.

It tells me that if my people are not important, then who I am, my background, my ancestry does not matter, therefore, my identity is

ThreeSixty Journalism

worthless and quite even a burden. As a child, having to internalize this message was bound to affect my ability to accept my racial and ethnic heritage.

I grew up ashamed to be Hmong. I grew up conforming my name to make it easier for white people to pronounce. I grew up seeking white validation and to minimize my presence to not be a burden.

Now, I advocate for change in education so that future marginalized students don't have to undergo what I did. I have a younger sister in elementary (school), and I'm afraid that she'll go through what I and my other siblings did, and the countless others in the United States. I advocate for this because I believe our current education system can change for the better.

Q: *What are some barriers that students of color face to achieving an education?*

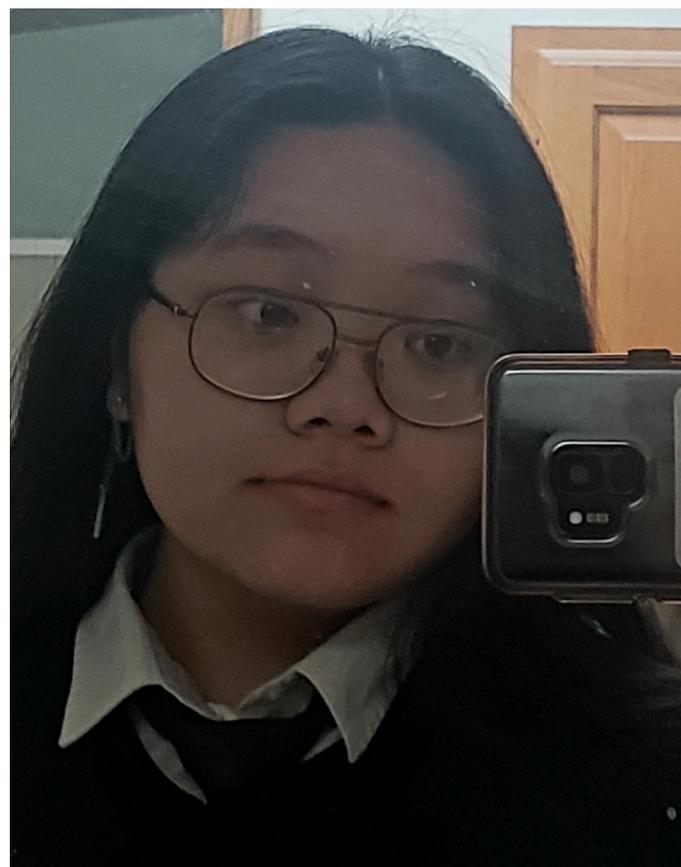
A: There are so many barriers and obstacles that students of color face while in education. ... The English-language learner and English as a Second Language programs have benefited and harmed many students of color. I used to be in

the ELL program, and I am lucky to have left it early in elementary school. Throughout the U.S. and Minnesota, ELL and ESL programs look so different depending on the district, the funding allocated and what curriculum is taught. With the variety and inconsistencies of funding and curriculum, and the lack of support for teachers, families and students, it is bound to be a program to harm the most vulnerable.

It becomes a barrier that affects our ability to understand and accept our racial and ethnic heritage; we lose our language and identity in the process of gaining English and "American-ness," and this leads to an additional psychological barrier that impedes on our academic ability.

Reform in the ELL and ESL program is needed, and what's more is that intentions may be good, however, the practice is flawed and does not make up for the harm and erasure that is happening. Multiple languages are not being celebrated, such as African American Vernacular English and world languages, and the education system must begin to honor these languages in meaningful ways rather than performative moments that tokenize.

A major issue is that these students and families do not have a choice or are given any information, therefore are unable to advocate for themselves. There must be



Laichia Vang

opportunities to advocate for themselves that have a variety of ways to provide feedback.

Cultures have different attitudes and methods when interacting with teachers. We must understand that and provide accessible options.

Q: *What advice would you share with Minnesota teens who want to speak up and advocate for social change?*

A: I always think about Mariame Kaba's words in "We Do This 'Til **YOURSELF** *continued on page 28*

TV Campers Dive into Health Equity

THREESIXTY SUMMER CAMPS are magical. Nine students got to experience this special magic when they attended ThreeSixty's all-star TV Broadcast Camp, sponsored for a fourth year by the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. The theme of the camp explored racial health equity issues in Minnesota, specifically examining racism as a public health crisis.

"Through Blue Cross' collaboration with ThreeSixty, we are working to give voice to those most impacted by inequity, create greater understanding of where and why health inequities happen and develop the next generation of diverse storytellers," said Sasha Houston Brown, senior communications and advocacy consultant at the Center for Prevention.

The TV camp was led by ThreeSixty program manager Dymanh Chhoun, a ThreeSixty program alum who brings more than nine years of TV news experience into the classroom.

Chhoun said he has been looking forward to leading TV camp since day one.

"I was so happy about bringing great reporters, photojournalists and editors to the students and classrooms," Chhoun said. "There is so much that I know, and I was ready to teach the students all I know. I was happy with the end result. It was amazing to see the stories. I wish I had the same opportunity to do this as a student because the videos looked so professional — it was unbelievable."

The first day kicked off with nine budding storytellers eager to dive right in. They worked on a mock TV package, partnering up and interviewing each other. Within minutes, the students had found their angles and put together some incredible



Safiya Mohamed
ThreeSixty alum
and St. Thomas
Dease Scholar

videos with just their phones and computers. Not bad for first-timers!

Students were paired up with media professionals to assemble their TV packages. This year's partners included University of St. Thomas Emerging Media Department, KMSP-TV, WCCO-TV, KSTP-TV, KARE 11, Twin Cities Public Television, Star Tribune, Unicorn Riot, University of Minnesota Hubbard School of Journalism, BMA Cable Networks and more. Professionals from these groups walked students through the interview process, writing their scripts, picking out B-roll and voicing their tracks.

Students also received help in performing their stand-up and recording anchor intros.

While this process may sound overwhelming, students were able to withstand the pressure and thrive in the fast-paced environment that is the ThreeSixty newsroom.

"My favorite part about camp was filming the video. I really liked doing the stand-up, and the quality of the video was so good!" student Gwynneve Vang said.

As a former TV camp student, I remember the extraordinary feeling of being in the ThreeSixty classroom and working on my own news package. Seeing these students in the very position I was in two years ago, with the very sparkle in their eyes that I had, and exhibiting the very passion and eagerness I did, was extremely gratifying.

The future of journalism is in good hands with these excellent storytellers.

Watch their stories [here](#).



TOP: Nine rock star students completed the week-long TV Broadcast Camp at the University of St. Thomas. They told stories about racism as a public health crisis with support from the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN and reporting teams of professional journalists. **MIDDLE LEFT:** KSTP Reporter Kirsten Swanson works next to reporter Han Vu-Tran to write her first TV story in the University of St. Thomas Media Lab. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** Reporter Ariana Yasmin listens to coaching from her KARE 11 reporting team, which includes reporters Gordon Severson and Heidi Wigdahl. **BOTTOM:** Reporter Ivan Rahouski interviews his source with the help from his University of Minnesota Hubbard School of Journalism and Mass Communication team, including professor Regina McCombs as his videographer and editor.

GROW from page 8

a month. They also learn video and photography skills to be able to document their experiences.

All of these skills can be applied later on in different aspects of their lives. The produce is also taken home to their families and shared with the community, promoting a healthy and nutritious relationship with food.

As the garden continues to expand, AICHO is struggling to find more green space in downtown Duluth.

“We haven’t necessarily had support from the city and the county,” Olson said. “We did partner...with another agency where

they already had landed some space, but they just didn’t have the capacity to expand it the way that they would have liked to and we would’ve liked to.”

AICHO hopes to secure more land or an undeveloped building to expand its community housing, garden and other programs within the next five years. As long as there is a need and desire, AICHO will continue to use arts and culture to support the community.

“Our mission and vision is to honor the resiliency of Native American people,” Olson said. “And we do that by strengthening communities and centering our Indigenous values in all of our work.”

HOUSING from page 8

parents who do not have custody of their children while they work on their sobriety, mental health or increasing their income. When they are ready, they safely reunite with their children.

“Seeing families that have come from a lot of trauma and have been faced with an array of barriers ... and move forward in a positive, good way in their lives, it’s been life changing,” Olson said.

However, the housing program cannot move forward without assured land.

“It has been frustrating. We’ve been trying to lease a parcel of land in their community so that we could expand our programming. We also have been in

numerous conversations about purchasing land from vacant lots or collaborating with agencies that we know of but aren’t utilizing the space,” Olson said.

The lack of support from the city and county is also a reason for the slow progress in developing additional affordable housing.

In spite of the frustration, in five years Olson expects AICHO to expand its domestic violence shelters in hopes of serving more victims and their children. They wish to secure either more land or an undeveloped building in order to provide affordable housing for the community.

“We are a team of dreamers,” Olson said. “We’re always looking into the future of what we can do.”

NONPROFIT from page 11

is so important to Latino people. She recalled once ordering a Coke at a bar outside of the Twin Cities; the server asked her what she was doing there and if she spoke English.

“It’s not happening in the Twin Cities area, but outside it’s happening all the time,” Lopez said. At CLUES, she said she can

connect with open-minded people and share experiences and culture.

The name of CLUES’ community garden, Jardin de Armonia y Accion, reflects that type of healthy, positive and accepting environment. The name, which translates to Harmony and Action Garden, is a new symbol, Morales said, of a harmonious community.

JUSTICE from page 10

one’s criminal records, easier.

“Hennepin County has been taking steps in certain sentencing cases and in certain diversion efforts to make sure that the record is gone,” she said.

Prahl Martin notes that the benefits of expungement have opened doors for housing, education and employment.

While dealing with the consequences of one’s actions is extremely important, Hennepin County has been and continues working on initiatives to help prevent youth from entering the criminal justice system. Partnering with Allina Health, Hennepin County has implemented a program called Change to Chill in public schools.

The program focuses on creating a safe environment where young people can get the help

they need. From providing rooms where young people can hang out to providing counseling, Change to Chill is providing underrepresented communities the help they often do not receive.

Godwin Kasongoma, a senior at Columbia Heights High School, said, “I didn’t really see this much devotion to mental health (at her school). I’m disappointed that they did not have this program earlier on.” Godwin is an intern with the Transition Age Youth coordinators.

Godwin noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement have had a significant impact on students’ mental health, and life in general. Because of her passion in the area, Godwin joined the Student Wellness Committee at her high school, focusing on student well-being.

FOODS from page 11

the sake of continuing traditions in food. The fresh food necessary for most cultural dishes is expensive and difficult to find in many lower-income communities.

“Like a lot of communities, we work a lot and don’t have the money to have fresh produce, or food that is good for you all the time,” Patricia Morales, one of the community garden workers, said through a translator. “We can only afford what the cheapest option is, and the cheapest option is usually just processed food and things with high fructose corn syrup.”

Many of the cultural foods that Latino communities hold dear can’t

be made with processed food.

“We cook with fresh food, not canned goods,” Calvo-Nieto said.

Cultural foods can be both healthy and authentic, she said.

The CLUES community garden, at its heart, aims to provide families moments like the ones Calvo-Nieto remembers.

“My mom taught me how to make tamales from a very young age. All of my sisters sit down and we do it all together,” she said.

And now CLUES is working toward growing the access even further, so more generations can carry on these traditions. That starts with expanding



CHRISTINE NGUYEN

Lexi Prahl Martin

Prahl Martin, Godwin, and other interns and Transition Age Youth coordinators work to create a better community for young people by helping them correct their mistakes, work through their traumas and then change the course of their life. They are the future of our community.

“Young people are the heart of our community,” Prahl Martin said. “And we want to make sure our heart’s going strong.”

community gardens and their reach through advocacy at all levels of government.

“We are trying to figure out ways that we can engage with local, county and state officials to help move legislation and policies that would change how people are able to access land within the city,” Peña said.

Garden-to-table produce is key in Latino culture and food. And food, Peña said, is love.

“Food really brings families together,” Calvo-Nieto said. “And I think that’s why it is important to provide those cultural items, so they can continue and hand down traditions, foods and recipes.”

YOURSELF from page 26

We Free Us.” She says, “Let’s begin our journey not with the question, ‘What do we have now, and how can we make it better?’ Instead, let’s ask, ‘What can we imagine for ourselves and the world?’ I want to share that to Minnesotan youth. There is an overwhelming amount of issues in our world, and so many forces that are upholding these oppressive systems. I don’t know where to start at times, but I always think back to what kind of future

I want to live in. Envision that future, relish in it and believe that it can actually happen.

I also want to say that social change relies on yourself. Don’t ever forget yourself and your needs. We are also a part of social change, especially regarding mental health and healing. In America, life is about productivity, the hustle culture and overconsumption in self-care.

We rarely get to heal, and we don’t even know where to start

because the methods we need are sometimes things we don’t know.

To be radical, to be a part of social change, is to start with yourself and heal and understand your experiences. It is a lifelong journey, but social change must be rooted and grounded into your own experiences and the ability to recognize how our experiences connect to everyone’s experiences.

Reporter Helen Mohamed, of Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, contributed to this report.

STORIES from page 26

narratives but never tells them what stories to cover.

“It’s about recognizing that, because of their lived experience and their cultural background, they have expertise that I will never have. I can help them to become a better reporter, but I’m trusting their editorial judgment from the start,” she said.

Her confidence in the journalists brings out the best in them. She said she had been amazed by the stories her reporters have come up with and doesn’t think those stories would necessarily have been covered in a mainstream newsroom.

But Combs wants more than to simply assist BIPOC youth in writing great stories. “Their experience

to me is more important than the finished product of what we put on the air,” she said. “It’s more important to me that they feel supported and valued. ... Their gut instinct is strong, and they are worthy of working in great big newsrooms across the country.”

More newsrooms are looking to hire BIPOC journalists, but experience is essential. It’s leading to crisis in mainstream news right now.

According to Combs, the concept of unbiased is controlled by white male perspectives, and “to anybody outside of that community ... it’s pretty obvious that there is a bias in the reporting.” She added, “It’s no longer about saying I’m unbiased, but being transparent about what you stand for.”

As Combs continues to work



EMILLIDEN

Marianne Combs

with Racial Reckoning on bringing forth the voices of young journalists of color, she finds hope in doing journalism a different way.

“We’ve decided just to keep telling stories, as long as there are stories to tell and there’s an appetite for them.”

He works with decision-makers across Minnesota, such as Gov. Tim Walz’s office and far-reaching organizations, including the Centers for Disease Control and World Health Organization.

All are defining health disparities as differences in health that are preventable. What this means is the priority of racial and health equity is embedded in science, as well as social science. And Moua’s team adds the missing voices to the table.

Moua knows firsthand how different perspectives change the conversation. He witnessed his parents as “view-changers” in the Asian community as they too stood up against racism.

He’s proud of being Hmong and knows how impactful his work is in his community.

“There’s something that makes me feel accepted,” he said. And so, he continues to advocate for refugees and people of color like him.

“We advocate together,” Moua said. “So you’re seeing more people of color at the table and creating their own tables. We’re not trying to fill vacancies. We’re trying to redesign entire tables and say, ‘I don’t like your rules, and ... I’m not here to fulfill something for you. We are here to decide upon things together.’”

Another term for this is cross-cultural power, which Moua describes as getting together with people of different backgrounds to take an action that will affect the community positively and equitably. In turn, it helps to prevent racism as a public health crisis.

Moua’s work involves diversity across the board.

For example, he works closely with underrepresented communities in Minnesota, including Karen refugees. According to the Karen Community of Minnesota, 2017 statistics show there were over 17,000 Karen in Minnesota, many living in St. Paul and Maplewood.

MOUA from page 10

“hopes will impact in a durable way.”

Moua said white supremacy is the biggest obstacle in his work.

“A lot of it is rooted in white fragility, this sense of if we acknowledge this, that then implicates us as a society,” he said.

But he doesn’t let that affect his game plan.

His team members remind each other of a saying: “If you’re not on the table, you’re going to be the menu.”

Together they have to tackle racial inequity, something Hennepin County declared a public health crisis last summer following the events of racial unrest.

Moua’s team remains on high alert for issues impacting communities of color.

“How things are fought for are shown in lots of things,” Moua said. And solutions start with getting the right people involved in the action.

CRISIS from page 10

He went on to receive a graduate degree in public health from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

His mother worked at the public health department in Eau Claire for 25 years, and his father worked at Eau Claire City Hall.

“I was forged out of civic engagement and public health,” Moua said.

His views came together by the discrimination he witnessed. When his father, who has a strong Hmong accent, would try to help people find housing, he was told the properties were no longer available.

“I would call in a perfect Midwestern accent, and they would say, ‘Oh, you can come by anytime you want.’ But if I disclosed my name, they said, ‘Oh, sorry, it’s taken.’”

Moua said an intentionally designed racist system has led to discrimination. Now as the director of racial and health equity and advocacy at Blue Cross and Blue Shield, he is in a position to help change that system.

He said it’s important to legally classify racism as a public health crisis. He is currently working on doing so with Minnesota Reps. Ruth Richardson and Rena Moran, as well as with Gov. Tim Walz’s administration.

Moua discussed the social determinants of health framework, which says that only a small percentage of a person’s health is determined by direct health care at a clinic. Another small amount is created by genetics or physical behavior.

“The majority is the social factors, so that’s your education, where you live, where you work, your gender, your social experience,” he said.

He points to COVID-19 as an example of how race, gender, ZIP code and income all affect people’s access to health care,

as it has only escalated existing social inequities in our current health care system.

“For somebody like me who has been deep in this work for a long time, of course this is going to be exacerbated by COVID-19. And if we have pre-health conditions, COVID-19 is going to exacerbate them. The hope is that it shines a sustained, concentrated light on racism, which then will cut across multiple issues, not just health. It’s embedded ecologically in our society.”

Moua describes how he is often the only person of color involved in key decision-making processes and how that must change. There are now more people of color at the table — and creating their own tables, he said.

“We’re trying to ... say, ‘I don’t like your rules, I’m not here to fulfill something for you,’” he said. “We’re here to decide upon things together.”

He achieves this by leading policies designed to reduce commercial tobacco use and food insecurity and increase physical activity. And when Moua isn’t actively calling and meeting with policy makers and community members, he is organizing and carrying out plans to design transportation for everyone in area communities.

Through his upbringing and profession, Moua can distinguish how current racial health system inequities are upheld, and he tailors his work to address them. He said that we must evaluate how we advocate, how things are fought for and how they surface. Though meant to help, these programs can negatively affect inequities in homeownership and graduation rates.

“It is preventable, avoidable and unjust, and these inequities are not natural,” Moua said. “They did not happen out of thin air.”

RESPECT from page 13

Those communities come from seven different states, and they benefit from all of Family Tree’s programs, including education services for high schools and the medical community.

“Most people support the programs, but there are critics,” Crowley said. “They say we’re doing awful things to people, or that we’re forcing hormones on people or that we’re part of this movement to kind of destabilize

masculinity. That’s not true.”

She notes the LGBTQ+ youth have received a lot of hate and disrespect.

“These are human beings that live life differently,” she said.

Currently there are more than 100 bills restricting the rights of LGBTQ+

community members throughout the country. These bills range from limiting LGBTQ education, the banning of trans people from sports and the restriction of health care. In many parts of the country, trans youth are facing more barriers than ever before.

Even with all this criticism, Crowley will continue to help the LGBTQ+ community.

“There’s a basic level of respect and dignity that we owe them,” Crowley said. “I like to think of the Family Tree as a refuge for people.”

ACTIVIST *from page 20*

candidate who was doing very progressive work. He was ecstatic that she helped get the council member elected and contributed to shifting policies for the better on the local level.

“It was a really good example of how the change that we want to see has to start at a very micro level,” she said. “These are your neighbors and your community members, and it is the individual relationships that lead to systemic change.”

This experience allowed her to use her skills to enact change, especially in her position at Racial Reckoning.

Gerezgiher didn’t envision going into journalism. She hadn’t had any experience in the field since her involvement in the ThreeSixty Journalism program at the University of St. Thomas during her time in high school.

She was growing increasingly angry with her hometown in 2020 due to racial inequalities and police brutality when ThreeSixty

Journalism reached out to her. They were looking to connect program alumni with a new project called Racial Reckoning that was going to cover the court trials for the police officers involved in the death of George Floyd.

She signed onto the project despite her lack of experience in the field. Since then, she has enjoyed having her passion for activism intertwined with her job. She mostly works on creating short daily updates aired on AMPERS stations and other affiliated programs across the country. However, her new job has not come without its challenges.

Gerezgiher recalls the week Daunte Wright was killed during an encounter with a police officer as the most difficult week of being a reporter.

“It was challenging, just as an individual and as a reporter, to sit through [Daunte’s family’s press conference]. That was a hard moment for all of us. But then to deal with the very real grief of his family and to figure out how to translate that into a very short



EMIL LUDEN

Feven Gerezgiher

update was something that I had to sit with,” Gerezgiher said.

Wright’s murder fell on the heels of Floyd’s, which followed so many others. These police killings have caused irreversible pain to BIPOC communities and the country.

“The pain of the past year is being forgotten. I hope people continue to remember that people are tracking these issues and they haven’t been forgotten,” Gerezgiher said.

SANCTUARY *from page 13*

Crowley explained gender-affirming hormone care is “for transgender people who want to align their hormones with the gender they feel comfortable with.”

According to Crowley, the clinic was one of the few to offer an informed consent model. The model informs patients of the risks and benefits of receiving the hormones, then they decide if they want to proceed with it. When paying for appointments (\$200-\$400), the clinic has a sliding fee scale based on the person’s income. It also offers medical assistance if qualified and accepts state or private health insurance.

The process for dealing with youth varies depending on age. The clinic provides resources to parents whose children have not reached puberty to support decisions on their child’s gender identity. The clinic will not get into hormone and medical discussions

until the child is old enough to accept a more solidified gender identity.

In addition to the clinic, Family Tree has a comprehensive sexual education program for high schools and people of all ages. It also offers a sex ed program for people who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing.

“Treating them as human beings, talking about their bodies, their relationships, different gender identities to different sexualities are all centered in our education,” Crowley said.

In order to make clients feel welcomed, Crowley said staff are representative of the people they’re serving. The clinic employs LGBTQ+, Black, Indigenous, people of color and Spanish-speaking staff.

“When someone goes into the doctor’s office and looks around and sees people who look like them or share experiences that they do, they’re going to go and tell their friends,” Crowley

said. “That’s really going to be our strongest way into different communities.”

Dealing with criticism for the clinic has remained peaceful on site, but online it’s a different story. The clinic has received criticism for giving hormones, but according to Crowley, “there is nothing that we are giving children that you wouldn’t give a child in another fashion.”

Crowley believes the trans community is in a time where they have been able to express themselves to an extent they haven’t seen before.

“At some level we should love everyone, no matter how they are,” she said. “We’re not harming other people; there isn’t recruitment going on.”

Crowley thinks the Family Tree Clinic is a safe place to go.

“I kind of challenge people to think of the last time they felt joy when they went to their doctor,” she said. “Family Tree can be a refuge for folks.”

HENNEPIN *from page 13*

stressors and find ways to cope. Prah Martin finds the work necessary because she thinks mental health plays a role in every life choice.

This summer, Godwin became a high school ambassador for Change to Chill. She wants to create help within her school building and reduce the stigma around mental health.

From Godwin’s experience, high school students struggle with their GPA, expectations for their future, developing into adulthood and family. She noticed that students disregard mental health as an issue with these struggles.

“For example, say they were failing their classes. They won’t directly connect it with mental health. They’ll think, ‘Oh, maybe I’m pretty dumb.’” As she creates pathways through Change to Chill, Godwin hopes that the

well-being of high schoolers can improve.

Prah Martin works to ensure that regardless of their high school, all teens have access to resources for their well-being and overall any struggle they might face during their transition to adulthood. The resources are compiled on hennepin.us/youth, covering topics such as sexual health, emergency housing and scheduling a driver’s license test.

The work of these programs wouldn’t be complete without the work of youth. Prah Martin emphasized that they rely on young people in the community to make decisions.

“Honestly, most of the time, I just need to stop talking and listen,” said Prah Martin, about working alongside young people. “Listen, and respond and act — because usually they have the best insights on how to change and evolve things.”

GARDEN *from page 11*

the community garden coordinator at CLUES.

Located on the East Side of St. Paul right behind the CLUES office, Jardín de Armonía y Acción, translating to Harmony and Action Garden, was built in 2020 amid the pandemic with a three-year grant through Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Many fresh produce items are grown, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini and jalapeños.

Gardener Reyna Lopez has seen a large sense of community growing around the space.

“I’ve met a lot of Latinos there (at the garden), people from my country I’ve never met before,” she said. “It’s just amazing.”

Hindson spoke passionately about how, historically, many BIPOC people have been kicked off of land and not allowed to grow their own food.

“Agricultural workers in Mexican and Central American communities had a lot of rich agricultural traditions and agricultural knowledge coming here (to the U.S.). And because of immigration status, not being able to start their own businesses and instead being relegated to

work on white-owned farms for really, really low wages. And then, the whole process for starting urban farms or community gardens or rural farms (is) really complicated.”

“There’s loan discrimination,” she continued. “There’s all kinds of barriers in terms of the processes you have to follow; the permitting, the language access. And the amount of capital you have to have to start a farm or business, and then who you can sell the food to. Like Jennifer said, you’re mostly catering to wealthy white people instead of communities that are already experiencing not being able to afford high quality food because of all the systems that are in place.”

In the future, CLUES hopes to create an additional garden, either on the East Side of St. Paul or at its South Minneapolis office. For the time being, though, Jardín de Armonía y Acción is growing healthy and fresh food, improving the lives of community members and bridging the gap of long-lasting food access disparities.

“Everybody eats food and wants to eat good food and wants to have a closer connection to their food,” Hindson said.

Workshop Kicks Off In-Person Camps

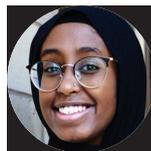
THREESIXTY HELD ITS first in-person program in 15 months with a three-day Emerging Media Workshop from June 28 – 30 at the University of St. Thomas College of Arts and Sciences.

Seven advanced students were tasked with creating a creative storytelling campaign for the university's Marketing, Insights and Communications team, under the mentoring of its staff.

Students were divided into two teams, each tasked with creating an agency and a campaign focused on diversity, equity and inclusion. The first group focused on the St. Thomas Dougherty Family College, interviewing Interim Dean Buffy Smith.

The second group focused on diversity in the STEM programs, specifically in the School of Engineering.

The students dove right into their assignments, and their passion for DEI was evident from their



Safiya Mohamed
ThreeSixty alum
and St. Thomas
Dease Scholar

enthusiasm, as well as the challenging questions. They also learned about what strategic communication is from professors and MIC mentors.

In just three days, both groups put together a stellar campaign with an article, a multimedia piece and a sidebar with statistics. The workshop concluded with a professional presentation, where the agencies – Rolling Thunder and Three Musketeers – shared their progress.

Mounds View High School senior Allison Brodin's favorite part of the workshop was, "The teams. Getting to finally be in the same room that's not a breakout room was everything I looked forward to and more."

As an alum of the program, it



ThreeSixty's Emerging Media Workshop was its first on-campus program in more than 15 months.

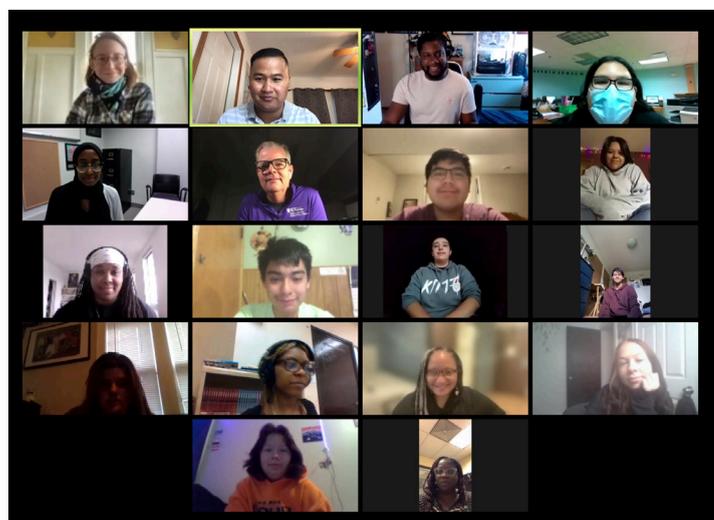
has been so rewarding to work with these excited, bright young storytellers. It brings me so much joy to see how engaged and passionate

they are about this work, and I'm so grateful to have witnessed their growth and dedication throughout this project. The world of

journalism better get ready for these incredible young journalists.

Visit our [website](#) to see the final stories.

MPR News Radio Broadcast Camp Returns



ThreeSixty's virtual Radio Broadcast Camps meant students from across the state could attend.

SIXTEEN STUDENTS FROM the Twin Cities and outstate Minnesota produced their first stories for air at ThreeSixty's Radio Broadcast Camp, held in partnership with MPR News, KRSM, MIGIZI and American Indian Family Center. Two sessions of the highly competitive camp were held virtually, and students' stories were showcased at an MPR Celebration on Monday, June 28, with Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan as the keynote speaker.

Students in the two camps created a radio story in a week, working with mentors from the MPR Newsroom. The stories focused on BIPOC youth leaders in Minnesota.

Even in the virtual setting, students brought their A-game and were ready to learn and create radio



Safiya Mohamed
ThreeSixty alum
and St. Thomas
Dease Scholar

stories. It was evident from the first day for both camps that they were eager to dive right in.

As a Radio Broadcast Camp alum myself, I found the infectious enthusiasm exhibited by each of these students a good reminder of why we do this work. Empowering the next generation of young storytellers is crucial to building a more equitable society, and I cannot wait to see what stories these young journalists report on next.

Click [here](#) to listen to student stories.

"My favorite part of radio camp was mixing, because it was cool to see it all come together."

–Dalaney Villebrun,
South High School

"Everything, but if I had to give an answer, it would be the story assignment. It made me excited to wake up and hop on the meeting. And, it was fun mixing together the story."

–Joaquin Skinaway,
Minisinaakwaang
Leadership Academy

"Meeting new people and working on my piece. Also, the staff was very patient."

–Kiin Aden,
St. Louis Park High School



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