

## Student Contest Winners: Teenagers Look at the News; letters

The New York Times

February 22, 2020 Saturday 10:17 EST

Copyright 2020 The New York Times Company All Rights Reserved

**Section:** OPINION; letters

**Length:** 1384 words

**Highlight:** We selected seven of our favorites from among the 200-plus entries in this year's student letter-writing competition.

### Body

---

We selected seven of our favorites from among the 200-plus entries in this year's student letter-writing competition.

To the Editor:

Re "'Should We Leave?' Life in China Under Coronavirus Lockdown," by Frankie Huang (Op-Ed, nytimes.com, Feb. 7):

As a Chinese-American, I read these words with nothing but empathy. Just seven months ago, I visited quite a few cities in China. From Suzhou's futuristic Space Lab restaurant to the Shanghai World Financial Center, China has attracted so many, including me, a high school sophomore from Arizona who dreams of working in Shanghai one day. It's hard to imagine that China, with its modern facade and booming economy, has become a place so many want to flee now.

The initial oblivion to the gravity of the virus, thanks to censorship, quickly turned into panic and chaos. Most of my relatives live in China, and I fear for them. My aunt barely opened the door when my grandma came to visit, because she had just been to the hospital pharmacy without a proper face mask. Their daily routines are interrupted and restricted. But when all of this ends, I hope that the Chinese government will afford its people the right to information transparency, paid for with lives that could have been saved had the whistle-blowers not been suppressed.

Eleanor Wang, 15

Desert Mountain High School

Scottsdale, Ariz.

To the Editor:

Re "Mayor Pete's Gay Reckoning," by Frank Bruni (column, Feb. 2):

When I was a little kid I used to tell everyone that one day I was going to be president. Then in 2016, Donald Trump was elected, and all of a sudden a harsh reality set in: The people of America would never accept a queer person as their president, let alone a Jewish queer woman.

## Student Contest Winners: Teenagers Look at the News; letters

However, now I feel a little bit of hope after seeing the results in Iowa. While Mayor Pete is not my first pick, he is a symbol of so much more. His success shows that America is growing up and a gay president is not impossible. I will not be old enough to vote in this election, but it still means so much to me. It feels so good to know that while we still have a long way to go, my dream no longer feels that far out. And who knows? Maybe one day I will be president.

Zoe Glickman, 16  
North Atlanta High School  
Atlanta

To the Editor:

Re “14-Year-Old Charged in Murder of Barnard Student” (news article, Feb. 16):

The decision to try Rashaun Weaver as an adult is a tragic mistake that lays bare a major flaw in New York’s criminal justice system. As a leading civil rights lawyer, Bryan Stevenson, argues in his book “Just Mercy,” “no child of twelve, thirteen, or fourteen can defend him- or herself in the adult criminal justice system,” and such trials often result in wrongful convictions.

We already have an alternate court system to try accused children, and it exists because juries, judges and lawyers accustomed to adult defendants do not create a just environment for child offenders. New York has therefore recognized that family courts run by professionals experienced in handling children are necessary to ensure fair proceedings.

If we have acknowledged the adult system’s inability to try most child defendants justly, why do we deny some of them that justice based solely on the nature of their crime? While the murder of Tessa Majors was a heinous act that demands punishment, an unfair trial of this 14-year-old serves no one.

Samuel Goldston, 15  
Saint Ann’s School  
Brooklyn

To the Editor:

Re “Stop Blaming History for Your All-White, All-Male Movie,” by Aisha Harris (Op-Ed, nytimes.com, Feb. 6):

Though Ms. Harris intelligently analyzes the whitewashed version of history that has existed in the cinema for far too long, I take issue with her placing the burden of responsibility to fix this country’s representation problem on the individual artist.

We should not criticize movies like “Driving Miss Daisy,” “Green Book” and “Ford v Ferrari” for being made, even if they recreate the same narrow-minded historical narrative, but we should criticize the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for elevating such movies above groundbreaking and worthwhile cinema. As long as Academy members are considered to be the arbiters of good taste, some of the most compelling counternarratives will always be overlooked. Giving “Parasite” the best picture Oscar was a big step forward, but one must remember that progress has been slow and practically forced upon the Academy.

To blame directors and artists for this systemic issue is ineffective and misguided. Martin Scorsese is a cinematic genius, but we should not expect him to write and direct an intimate, nuanced and moving picture about being a young black woman in 21st-century America. When such movies get made, however, the cinematic powers that be need to be encouraging.

Joseph Katz, 16  
Indian Springs School

Student Contest Winners: Teenagers Look at the News; letters

Birmingham, Ala.

To the Editor:

Re "The Parkland Massacre Isn't an 'Anniversary,'" by Gregory Gibson (Op-Ed, Feb. 14):

As a gun violence reporter for The Trace's "Since Parkland" project, I researched young victims' lives, discovered their talents and felt their hearts' desires. The victims had dreams like becoming accountants, playing professional basketball and raising a family. As a teenager myself, I found it devastating to write about students as young as I whose futures were destroyed by a series of shots.

As Mr. Gibson notes, euphemisms have been invading the headlines, desensitizing the public to the tragedy of gun violence. We've gotten to a point where we're able to watch reports on mass shootings without flinching — we're practically in an Orwellian world.

We should be scared. Victims are not abstract ticks to add to the gun violence toll, but human beings who were killed. We have to stop sugarcoating the truth. Almost every day, someone my age will be murdered with the tug of a trigger. The next victim might be me.

Nadia Farjami, 18

St. Margaret's Episcopal School  
Laguna Hills, Calif.

To the Editor:

I wholeheartedly agree with "Bring Back the Tomboys," by Lisa Selin Davis (Sunday Review, Feb. 16). Acceptance for masculine girls and feminine boys has increased over the years, but the general stereotypes of masculine girls being lesbian and feminine boys being gay haven't gone away. If a female wishes to wear male clothing, she is assumed to be a lesbian, or if a male takes care of how he dresses or looks, he is assumed to be gay. Why can't people just be themselves without a label attached to them?

When Billie Eilish first became big, many people speculated about her sexuality because of the way she dressed, but as Ms. Davis said, Ms. Eilish "offers a refreshing twist." She has a confidence and a swagger that inspires girls around the world to be themselves. She is today's modern-day tomboy.

But it takes a lot more than just one person to break these gender stereotypes. It's an issue among boys and girls alike, and to change those stereotypes both genders need to stand together and fight against prejudice.

Amaya Esparza, 18

Granite Hills High School  
San Diego

To the Editor:

Re "Here's a List of Everything That Went Wrong at the Iowa Caucuses" (nytimes.com, Feb. 4):

The Iowa caucuses were a disaster. There is a simple solution to the caucuses: ranked-choice primaries.

Ranked-choice primaries are a happy medium between primaries and caucuses. Like current primaries, they use simple paper ballots that can be cast and counted without apps or making people move around a gymnasium all evening. Like caucuses, voters have the opportunity to choose "backup" candidates in case their first choice doesn't make the threshold for delegates, eliminating voters' fear of choosing the candidate they like best at the expense of wasting their vote. Through greater accessibility and greater expression of voter preference, ranked-choice primaries are more democratic than either traditional option.

## Student Contest Winners: Teenagers Look at the News; letters

This year, four states will be using ranked choice for the first time, and two caucus states adopted it for early voting. Voters in Maine, the first to adopt ranked-choice voting statewide, have found the process “easy” to understand, and voter turnout has increased significantly. This all makes ranked-choice primaries the ideal replacement for the seriously flawed caucus system.

Tim Mellman, 16

Oak Park and River Forest High School

River Forest, Ill.

PHOTO: (PHOTOGRAPH BY Getty Images FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

**Load-Date:** February 23, 2020

---

End of Document