



"Do not call for black power or green power. Call for brain power."

-Barbara Jordan

Level-Up is a monthly publication of civic engagement, education, and history!

“The Meaning of America’s Electoral College”

The Electoral College; We’ve all heard of that word when talking about the general presidential election, but do people know what it means in correlation to our voting rights? Or do we just push it off and ignore what happens in this unusual and confusing process?

The Electoral College is a body of electors chosen by a larger group. These groups of people are separated by state; different numbers are for every state depending on the population. For example, Massachusetts has eleven electors, meaning eleven people are a fraction of what matters when picking who gets to be the president of the United States. Citizens pick people that are the electors in their state and the elector chooses who they think should be the president. To put it clearly, if you are a citizen that is of age to vote, unless you are chosen to be an elector, you do not have a direct way to pick the president.

How are electors chosen? The only reason you can’t be chosen to be an elector is because you are a Senator, Representative, or are a government office holder. The electors meet in a place in their state to vote by ballot for the President and Vice President. Party officials choose the elector; it is a reward for that person giving faithful service to their party.

Not all states require the electors to stand by their choice of the one candidate they believe should be the face of our country, so really, they can change their vote at any time, the only thing that’s keeping them from switching to the other candidate are their morals. These people are known as faithless electors, and you can see why some people think that that is flawed. So how did this kind of voting come to be?

When the founding fathers discovered the idea of the electoral college, not many people were privileged enough to have an education, which told them that the citizens were too uneducated to make their choice, thus giving more educated people the choice of who to vote for. In the Constitutional Convention of 1787, it was designed to be like this, unknown and unheard of. Now that more people get to know more about the candidate and their view on a certain issue, is there really a need to keep it?

The Electoral College was thought to go well through the course of time, but with what happened with the 2016 general election, there were many reasons for people to speak out on what went down but one stood out. On November 9th of 2016, Donald Trump had won the presidential election over Hillary Clinton.



**By Michelle Puch,
Doherty High School Intern**

The Electoral College map was 306 to 232 with Donald winning, but Hillary had won the popular vote by 2,864,974 votes. That’s almost 3 million people. People go by opinion on which should matter more; citizens that like Donald Trump say the Electoral College is more important, it’s what made Donald Trump the president in the first place. People that would choose Hillary argue that if the Electoral College weren’t here, Hillary would’ve been president instead.

More than five hundred proposals have been turned in to make the Electoral College better since 1797. The only way to amend it is to first have it be approved by the Congress, and then it must be ratified by $\frac{3}{4}$ of the states. Will there be any major effort to abolish the Electoral College? Or will there just be complaint after complaint?

Programs and Services

LEVEL UP-JOURNEY

Over the course of the semester, each participant will take part in one of the Seven Level-Up Journey experience modules.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND BUILDING

Through civic engagement, community organizing, volunteering and different language skills youth will acquire community organizing and building skills. These skills help the youth not only to fit in their community

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Training for civic and placement exams will be provided to help youth and young adults achieve their future goals and dreams.

COLLEGE READINESS

College readiness is the key for youth and young adults who wish to continue their education.

Program participants will be encouraged to attain their full potential via college prep in the areas of education, teaching, writing, and involvement in the production of "Level-Up" newsletter.

CAREER OUTLOOK

It is very important to assure at-risk youth and young adults are skilled for the current job market. Through "Career Outlook", different areas like job search, finance literacy, and an entrepreneurial series, will be presented in seminar setting.

TECHNOLOGY ETIQUETTE

In this era, technology is misused by our youth and young adult. Technology etiquette that addresses proper use of social media will be taught to program participants.

SYSTEMATIC RACISM

Racism is a sensitive issue and many times we shy away from it. The "Systematic Racism" module will teach program participants about race, heritage and culture and how to identify and appreciate self, and how to work around structural and institutional racism.

EXTENDED SUPPORT

Youth and young adults are part of families that make up our communities. Without enough family support in the communities, our youth and young adults do not thrive. UNITEYCDC works to extend support to youth, families and the community at large through counseling referrals, character building and recreational activities.

"UNITEY CDC is committed to being the culture broker who connects Level Up program participants to private, public and non-profit sectors by providing a holistic streamline approach for access to social and human services, assuring a quality tomorrow for the youth and young adults who reside in the City of Worcester."

Source: <http://uniteycdc.org>



By Tionna Cox
Doherty High School Intern

Mindful Minds

"Black Suicide Rates?"

The Suicide rate of young black children has come to reach an all-time high. A research study in 2015 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention stated that Suicide rates for children ages 5 to 11 years old has doubled from 1993 to 2013.

This data was so surprising to researchers that an extra year was devoted towards re-analyzing data. However, the same results were found, from researchers led by Jeffrey Bridge in Columbus, Ohio.



"I was shocked, I'll be honest with you," said Jeffrey Bridge, an epidemiologist at the Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

The published journal of JAMA Pediatrics states that, the rate had risen from 1.36 to 2.54 per million. Well above the rate for white children that has fallen from 1.14 to 0.77 per million. As example suicide by hanging and suffocation has roughly tripled for black children, while relatively remaining the same for white children. This is the first time that a national study has found a higher suicide rate of blacks as opposed to whites regardless of the age group

Explanations were offered within the study including that "black children are more likely to be exposed to violence and traumatic stress, and that black children are more likely to experience an early onset of puberty, which can increase the risk of depression and impulsive aggression." Another explanation for these unexpected findings would be that there has for a long time and to this day been a stigma on Mental Illness within the black community. As well as reluctance to even talk or bring up the topic. Per the National Alliance on Mental illness or NAMI there are many possible reasons that play into this issue. Ranging from socio-economic factors to the lack of African American health professionals. It would not be uncommon to hear mental illness being a "white people" issue, or a statement of the sort. However, in many black communities, community health experts say "mental health remains a deeply stigmatized "white people problem," or a personal weakness, rather than an illness. And little is being done at the community health level to shift this perception. Hopefully within the coming years more will be done within the black community and the black community will begin to de-stigmatize mental illness and learn about treatment options. The future is meant for progression, let's educate.

MEET THE INTERNS

North High School



My name is Nakiesha Waller; I am 17 years of age and was born & raised here in Worcester, Massachusetts. As my childhood is coming to an end & adulthood is ready to hit me I find that I am not prepared. I wish I could go back to my younger years & tell myself “enjoy being a kid while it last, because growing up sucks”.

Civic engagement is uniting the community and making it a better place to live. Making the community a better place is no easy task but we through community service & volunteering. Also, many people may not know but getting involved in political process and issues that affect the community is part of civic engagement, whether it’s individual or a group effort. What I think of Worcester -I think that Worcester is a very diverse place to live. Being born and raised here has prepared me for the real world. Worcester is a great place to live.



My name is Jose Ortiz Jr. As a kid, I wanted to be a cop but when I grew up I decided on something different. My learning disability and walking disability made it hard to dream big like Michael Jordan or Larry Bird or David Ortiz or even Jackie Robinson but I played basketball and baseball. I’ve showed people that said I can’t do what they can do, I can do it. I’ve been the role model for a kid with similar problems in his life, so I decided to go back to playing baseball because I love it. I was so happy to hear that someone looks up to me literally.

Civic engagement to me is working as a community to keep the environment clean and safe for the children to play in the parks. There’s clubs like the Boys and Girls club of Worcester, Girls Inc. that might use these parks for fun activities like soccer or outdoor basketball.

What I think about Worcester is a good place to me but it has its flaws and as a kid I just wanted to get away from here. I wanted to move somewhere warm like Florida or California.



My name is Gabriela Cruz, I am 18 years old. I am a kind, responsible and caring person. I care about others and I try to help as much as I can. I came from Brazil a year and half ago to live in the city of Worcester. I am now bilingual and diverse and lucky person to be living here in the United States. I do volunteer work in my community whenever I can. It is my pleasure to be a volunteer in my city, I am willing to help whenever I am able to.

Civic Engagement is a topic that goes with progressing together in a society. It has to do with the population cooperating in community to grow, based on our own knowledge, skills, desires and ideas of how we should work together to provide a better environment to the population. It means to be able to teach people in whatever they need help with to succeed in life, making the whole community succeed together.

What I think about Worcester – is a really nice place to live. The diversity the city contains has given me the opportunity to personally interact with people from all around the world. Living here has provided me the knowledge from other cultures, which helped me to expand my known about the world and different civilizations.

“Tokenism at it’s Finest in the United States”

In the United States, Blacks have been subjected to subordinate positions since the dawn of slavery. Excluded from positions of power, Blacks found themselves in impoverished communities without the right to vote, and faced discrimination from *all* systems. In the nineteenth century during Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidency, he assigned the first Black Cabinet in the United States. The goal was to token these African American males so that the race relations remained “good” between Whites and Blacks. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw some of the most horrific times for Blacks. Race relations were at its peak during this time and, undoubtedly, the term *token* was a juxtaposition. While race riots destroyed Black communities, for example the Rosewood Massacre of 1923, only a few Blacks held positions of power.

Nevertheless, this brings us to the term *tokenism* because at it’s finest it shines light upon those Blacks who were simply used as ponds to ease “racial tension,” and/or to signify good race relations between Whites and Blacks. Race relations have never been solved by placing a Black person in a position of power because the racial hierarchy in places allows Whites to dominate *all* systems and institutions in the United States. Many tokened Blacks identify with the middle/upper class, have decent jobs, and can matriculate into White society. Consequently, *tokened* Blacks are often blinded by their situation because they do not face the same discriminatory practices that Blacks of the lower-class do. For instance, during the election Hillary Clinton basically tokened Beyoncé and Jay Z to help gain the votes of the Black population for her campaign. She also went as far as to respond that she had “Hot Sauce” in her bag, when asked what she carried on the Breakfast Club. It backfired on Hillary in the Black community because it was clear that she was using Black culture and entertainment to gain the votes of the Black community rather than addressing the serious problems at stake.

We might think we’ve come a long way and live in a “post-racial” society, but truth is we really haven’t. With the deaths of hundreds of unarmed Black men and women at the hands of the police, the incarceration of over millions of Blacks and the removal of low-income families tells an entirely different story. Tokenism by enlarge does not provide a solution to these serious issues, rather it perpetuates this façade of “good” race relations. Something has to give, and it can only change if we are willing to work together on all fronts. Yet, in all honesty it will take a lot of work.



By Yonetta Harris, Holy Cross
Community Engagement &
Social Media Intern

Have Society Change How they treat the LGBTQ community?



**By Arati Chapagai
Doherty High School Intern**

My friend and I were talking about writing this article and I asked her what her opinion is on this. It's their freedom, if that's what makes them happy, then why go against them or discriminate them, just mind your business and let them have their happiness, they deserve that." And I unreservedly agree with this

In the past few years, the society has become more accepting of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, Transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) community. Based on a survey done by the Pew research center, 92% of America's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender adults say that the society has been more accepting of them than compared to a decade ago. However the research also shows, there are still certain numbers of people that say that some societies have the acceptance rate of 0-10% towards them.

Even though, the marriage equality act was passed in 2013, but when "coming out" to family members or friends, it still seems to be damaging relationships. Mostly bisexuals, now have a higher percentage rate of being married versus the other LGBT adults. Some say wings married isn't only about love, companionship and making commitment but it's alright about one's rights.

Along with the discrimination in their own communities, they also faced struggles towards being employed and having health insurance. While on job, they have been harassed or treated differently because of their sexual identity. This mistreatment can cause them to have mental health conditions such as depression. Based on NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illnesses), LGBTQ community is 3x more likely to face mental conditions than any other group. They are also at a higher risk of suicide.

In the youth, LGBTQ community, because of their fears of facing their identity and revealing themselves, they might have self-harm thought and experience the symptoms of depression more than the public.

OUR MISSION

To be a builder of positive powers that will enhance the potentials of Black youth ages 12 – 17 and young adults ages 18 – 26, thereby enabling them to efficiently navigate and be of service to their neighborhoods while dealing with the traditional stereotypes and assertions of being at-risk.

OUR VISION

To be the community leader that increases access and awareness to resources producing skill sets that forms a prosperous and civic-minded future for Black youth and young adults.

LEVEL-UP JOURNEY

Over the course of the semester, each participant will take part in Seven Level-Up Journey experience modules. As recognition is the key in motivating our youth and young adults, program participants will be rewarded for their achievements and efforts toward the program goals and measures.

Our Contacts

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PARHAM'S CORNER



We Work Hard For Our Money!

There is an element of social imbalance, easily seen when analyzing the wage gap between men and women.

Recently, the White House issued a report on Women in America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-being. The report was conducted and presented by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration, and the Executive Office of the President Office of Management and Budget for the White House Council on Women and Girls in March 2011. The report studied the current role women serve within the family unit, academia, workforce, and health activity, in the American social structure. Although it is evident that women account tends to be more likely to achieve higher education degrees, and account for greater workforce retention men, these specific gains do not result in equal pay.

Even with a college degree, women still receive 75 cents for every dollar that a man earns as of 2009, per the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Women now account for 61% of the workforce, but most are not in high paying jobs. Rather, women tend to fill supportive service jobs such as administrative or customer service jobs. In contrast, their male counterparts are settled in the higher paying technological careers of computer science, biotech, and engineering.

In addition to the wage gap inequalities faced by all women, women of color face even greater inequalities - a deep and widespread problem, which resists social change in America today. This gap is due in part to the difficulty women of color have in gaining entry to the fields of research, science, math and technology, which lead to jobs in industries with the highest paid career trajectories.