

WRITTEN BY THE STUDENTS  
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# I AIN'T GONNA LIE

HONEST REFLECTIONS ON  
AMERICAN SCHOOLS

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*Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire*

-Plutarch

## **GROUP ONE: AMAYA, DENISSE, LUISE, AISSE**

### **AMAYA BROOKS**

#### **An Equation a Girl Never Forgets: $E+R=O?$**

Having friends in high school was something I struggle to have. But I had a lot of staff members that I had a great friendship with that help me so much as whole in high school Mrs. Guash was a guidance and Ghie was dean in my school they both understood my story as a student and my behavior problem and try to help me come up with a better solution to solve my problems because I wanted to make change

I struggled in history for many reasons it probably was that fact I had class the second last period of my school day I was always tired. I was in class full kids that can care less about this class. had a teacher that made the subject boring Mr buxs I felt wasn't the greatest teachers found time to waste during class to check other kids behavior. We only had 45 minutes per period we never as a class got alot done because of other students taking advantage of the teacher. He was one of those teachers that had to stop the whole class to check one student and their behavior which out of 45 minutes it takes 10 minutes for everyone to come in calm down it takes 5 minutes just for him to finish correcting students. I was always lost in class when I told him he tries to accuse me of talking to peers about things off topic is the reason why " i'm having trouble" which isn't true because I didn't like anyone in class so why talk to them. Mrs buxs and I always bumped heads in class.

Today I went to U.S History class Mr.Buxs assigns a group project for my class and gives a due date thats is different from whats on pupil path. So I tell mr. buxs "you do know that there is different due date on pupilpath then what you verbal said to the class" so he looks on pupilpath and it turns out I was correct. Instead of apologizing for it say its an error and warning other kids. Mr. bux basically he tells me "there is no

reason why I need to act so cocky and arrogant“ at this moment every student heard him say that to me I was so embarrassed and confused that he put me on the spot why he use those words to describe me as a student. So I told him who the f\*\*k are you talking to and how am I cocky and arrogant for helping you out.

But Mr.Buxs he tells “ Amaya, I’m tired of you and your outburst during class and you are distracting the whole class from learning you need to learn to have self control if you don’t stop im calling your mom and i’m calling school safety escort you out of my class” I reply “what are talking about all I do is come straight in classroom, on time! Take a notebook out and get started with classwork im probably the only student that does I don’t care if you call my mom im not waiting for you try to make an example out of me which is unfair.” He calls safety so they can come I told him” I’m not leaving class because today you acting like a complete d\*\*k, just because you had a shitty day doesn’t mean you make mine one too.” When I look up at the door two safety agents and my dean Mr Ghie was there he tells me “Amaya come to my office your not in any trouble we need to have a little conversation so bring your belongs please come with me.” I didn’t fight or argue with Ghie I just got up went with him the whole elevator ride down to his office I was so mad and frustrated at myself because I willing let him get under my skin, that made me so angry I missed out on my purpose my reason for being in school which is to be present for the review but instead I’m on a one way ticket heading to the dean’s office because of him.

Ghie brings me into Mrs Guash office we both sit at a round table in her office. I gave them a play by play on what happened and they started laughing because they knew earlier that today before I went to class I didn’t want to go because “I felt his vibe will be bad, I’m not here for the shenanigans he got going on because he couldn’t find a park that morning” so the

fact that not even 15 minutes and yes 15 minutes after the late bell rings . I'm back in her office yelling "Guacamole this teacher picked the wrong one, on the wrong day to F\*\*K with me" had the whole office laughing.

Mrs Guash said to me what is your goal when you walk in that class I said "prepare for the regents " do you think what just happen in class helped or harmed you and your goal I said to her "no it harmed my goal. " She then tells me teachers have upper hand of students because they are responsible for your grades. Teachers are human and make many mistakes, they are normally out number in classroom so when you call him out after his bad day you straw that breaks the camel's back this doesn't make it right also this isn't the time to try to argue with him since it's last week of the marking period what he said but you only have control of who? I said " myself " so in the event you want a positive outcome your response has to be positive right ? I agreed so do you believe in this event your response was positive or negative I said while rolling my eyes "it was obviously negative" Ghie jump in and says  $E+R=O$ . Event plus response equal outcome. So next time you are put in this situation think about your outcome, you can't control event but you can change your response so you can get the results right outcome you want.

Little light bulb went off in my head and it explains a lot of the disconnect from other teachers why I didn't have a lot of friends in middle and high school. So that point on I made a mental note sometimes not saying anything can make you win in the event you need to respond. To Wait process information on event you are not in any hurry to make a choice, weigh out your option if you pick one option over the other what is your result ? And how is it different ? Is this the result you are trying to achieve if not what are you trying to do to change your results. At that very second everything made more sense than before, I left her office with a better understanding of everything. So after

that day, I promise I won't let another teacher get up under my skin. I'm in control of my education and my life I won't let the event control me to the point I lose focus of my goal. Since that point I never argue with any teacher when it happens I just listen, wait after class to respond. So no one is pressure to act a certain way it has worked for a while, I pass it to all my friends when I have advice to give, because it has help me so much on my daily interacting with other people but more so teachers.

**GROUP ONE: AMAYA, DENISSE, LUIS, AISSE**

***DENISSE FERNANDEZ***

**The Teacher that Opened my Eyes**

Growing up my parents always told me that having an education was the only way that people would take me seriously and that that's how I'd never be stepped on. One particular moment in my life that changed my view on education was in second grade and even if it was 12 years ago, I still remember it as if it was yesterday. Second grade is a grade where it's not hard, there isn't a lot of challenges, but for me I'd say it was the hardest year and I still say it now, which is crazy because college and high school should be the most difficult, not elementary school. I was 7 years old and I had been in the United States for only 4 years so the language was new to me still and my parents only spoke Spanish in the house so I only learned Spanish my whole life until I started going to school.

When I started the second grade, I was so excited to make new friends and to meet my new teacher but everything changed so quickly. I spoke a little bit of English but it was "broken" and you could still hear my accent. Besides the fact that I was embarrassed about the way I spoke, I was the only Hispanic in my class, so that made me feel even more uncomfortable. Every night I would go home and read book after book after book hoping that the words would stick to my brain and I could say them the right way. My mom and dad were my biggest supporters, they always reminded me that I was really brave for being in a class where everyone spoke English, they gave me hope. The first few days school was good and I felt good about myself, but one day everyone in class was taking turns reading a book and boy was I nervous, when it came to my turn the teacher told me "Denise get up here and read "I was so nervous that I



was shaking and even more because I was the only one who was told to go up while everyone was allowed to read sitting down from their desks. I began to read and I was clearly struggling so the kids began to laugh and my teacher said “ alright It’s useless you’re making the kids get confused” and I felt so disappointed and useless. That night I went home and I told my parents, and they said that maybe she didn’t mean it, maybe she just didn’t want the rest of the kids to get confused by the way I was saying the words so I kind of felt better because I thought my parents were probably right. During the rest of the year the teacher continued to make feel less of a person because I didn’t speak English, she would get in trouble if I didn’t pronounce a word right or if I didn’t answer I a question correctly. She would also tell me “you should’ve stayed in your country, you would’ve done better there” It was up to a point where I didn’t want to go to school anymore because I felt useless, and I thought school wasn’t for me. I thought I would never be able to overcome the challenge of not speaking English. The school year eventually came to an end and it was time for report cards, I was so happy becauseI could finally move on to third grade and get another teacher, but that wasn’t the situation. I got left back and I was in shock, my parents were in shock and they were upset with me which was what hurt me the most. My parents came up to the school and tried to explain to the teacher that I tried really hard and that I didn’t deserve to get left back but the teacher wasn’t having it. We even tried to show her my cousins report card and mine because it was exactly the same, our grades were so similar and she had passed, and so that’s how we knew it wasn’t my grades, it was the teacher. She told my mom that I didn’t deserve to pass, that I wasn’t putting effort into learning and that it was useless if she passed me to third grade. I had lost hope. Some people might think it wasn’t that bad and I should’ve just ignored it but especially when you’re just a child those kinds of hurtful words stick to you and what said has always impacted me.

Thanks to her though I do so well in school, remembering her words give me the motivation to do better. After that there hasn't been a year where I haven't been on honor roll and I've been offered scholarships for out of state colleges. I now know I am smart and I can do anything I set my mind to. Being an immigrant should not affect anyone's school life or just life in general. You should be able to go to school and not feel judged about your race. You go to school to learn and that's the only thing you should be focused on, especially at a young age.

## **GROUP ONE: AMAYA, DENISSE, LUIS, AISSE**

### **LUIS SIERRA A Teacher's Care**

It all started in my junior year of high school. I took an AP Spanish class that was mostly seniors with very little juniors. I made friends in that class besides her, she always chimed in on the conversations and make jokes with us. She was just one of those teachers that gets along with all her students. I had Ms. Baduy since my sophomore year and got along with her right off the bat. Ms. baduy is a nice, fun, and caring teacher, she's in her early twenties so she still new what was going on in the school and what went viral on instagram, snapchat, faceboook, etc. She was my favorite teacher from that school and she knew it too but junior year was when we got closer and i knew i could count on her.

Everyone rushed out of the classrooms and into the hallway as the bell rang. I was the last one out and walked down the stairs to Ms. Baduy's class and sat on a desk as i waited for her to finish grading some papers, there were some other kids in there finishing up a test. They looked at me for answers since they knew i was a senior and score a 4/5 on the ap spanish test. I gave hints to some since i knew they were just going to fail the test and afterwards they left and felt satisfied with the 65 they would get. Ms. baduy looked up at me and smiled and then looked back down, she always treated me like family as if we were siblings, her smile and energy was warm and welcoming. Once she was done with the papers we talked about our day and how we cant wait for the summer to come, she told me she was pregnant a few weeks ago and now she tells me how its going and how she can't wait to have her daughter in her arms already. No doubt about it, her daughter is gonna be lucky to have her as a mother. I left for

home after that and walked with some friends, talking about our plans for college life.

Graduation was getting closer and i popped into her room more often since i knew i wouldn't see her for a while. This time she had more of a bump and she seemed tired from all the school work. No kids in the classroom as she's been taking it easier compared to how she started the year. I sat on top of a desk and smiled at her and she returned the same smile back. This time i asked her about her college life and she told me about how she traveled and studied. I told her what i planned to do and she seemed taken back. I guess she wasn't expecting me to leave the life i lived. I told her i was tired of being on the streets trying to make a dollar out of everything i could and that i just want some desk job. She knows about the many things i did throughout high school and knows that some of them weren't the best decisions i could've made. Regardless of what i did she never judged me, only told me to be careful and to keep my head on straight. This time it was different, after looking shocked by the change that i want she told me that i'm a good kid and that she see's the light in my eyes. She always gave me confidence and helped me see what i have to do to become successful.

My big sister, thats what she is. She never was my teacher and i know i'm not the only one of her students that feel this way. Most call her mom but i don't see her as that. She lead me to the right path and now i know to keep walking it. All of our conversations made me want to be 'better' in a way. To leave behind the street life and begin to create a new and more stable lifestyle. What she said to me replays in my mind when i struggle, her telling me the potential that she see's in me. I'll never forget my time in BLMHS because of her and i'll always be happy to hear from her. My younger sister just entered that school and i told her that once Ms. baduy comes back to school that she should go and say hi to her and give her my best wishes. No doubt about it i told my sister to get close to her because Ms.

Baduy is gonna look out for her and make sure she stays on track. Not all teachers show the same care, some just care that the students do their work and pass, others only care about their paycheck. Some do go out their way to make sure you're okay and to know what goes on in your life.

## **GROUP ONE: AMAYA, DENISSE, LUIS, AISSE**

### **AISSE TOUNKARA Unit One Essay**

As a young child I knew education would be my way out. My way to escape my environment and become something/ somebody in life. Education saved me from a lot of the violence that was going on in my neighborhood. Education allowed me to stay hopeful. One particular moment that I experienced changed my entire view on education forever. I remember it like it was just yesterday. It was junior year and it was time to start looking into colleges. I remember telling my counselor, I would like to attend St John's University. She looked at me and stated "that school is expensive your family can't really afford it". In my head im like "bitch bye" It really brought me into a deep depression. Here I am having hope that my future would be so bright but I have someone who was supposed to be guiding me help me look for schools and encourage me to keep going in life say "your family can't really afford that. I went home later that day and spoke to my mother. I said to my mother "Mami my counselor ruined my hopes of attending the school that I dreamed of always attending. My mother looked at me and said never let anyone stop you from doing and going places where you always dreamed of going. That taught me to never let financial barriers get in your way.

Financial barriers are a big issue when it comes to college. Often people get into these really good schools and when the time comes they never end up going because of financial situations standing in their way. That's a huge issue. A couple months ago I was honored to be apart of Michelle Obama's Reach Higher Initiative program. Out of 200 students only 10 highschool seniors were selected to be apart of this Conference at Howard University in Washington D.C. This conference was

mainly for first generation college students and all the obstacles it took us to get to the place we're at now. It taught me to never give up, to keep beating the odds, and strive against everything. One thing in particular that stuck with me was when Mrs Obama was a highschool student, her counselor said to her, "Your reaching too high, You should look into other schools because you are not Princeton material". From there on forward she knew she could do anything she wanted to achieve despite what people would say.

As you maneuver on in life people will always try to discourage you with their negative comments. They will always put their fears onto you. But you have to rise above that and not let no counselor stand in your way, no financial barriers, not anybody. If you allow people to project their fears onto you, you won't live. I've had jobs throughout highschool but I said to myself "education is going to be essential for my success, my future, and the people who love me. As the years went by, I realized that education was important to me and that it always will be. I've struggled a lot and I've seen the struggle right in front of me. But I knew with education I'd be able to change that struggle my struggle. I did not allow that moment with my counselor define who I was, who I am, and who I will become. I knew I would redefine success by pursuing higher education. Attending law school was something I knew I'd be interested in pursuing.

Even as a youngin I did college programs, started networking with people, enrolled in internships, and did everything possible to be successful in life. I also remember entering City Tech the first day of July to discuss my financial aid. The lady at the financial aid desk would send me back every day for a whole month. "Your missing this, your missing that". This kept going on until the second week of the fall semester. She said to me "If your financial aid is not processed you will be forced to drop your classes, or pay out of pocket for your tuition". I reached a breaking point because I was so overwhelmed. I had to endure so

much just because I wanted to pursue higher education. I managed to save enough money for textbooks, and transportation fees until my financial aid was processed. In highschool I learned that financial barriers were a major problem in why most of the people in my community never reached college, or had no other choice but to drop out of college. I Aisse Tounkara was never going to let financial situation get in the way of what's dearest to me. I'm sending a message for people to understand that financial barriers are a major problem when it comes to pursuing higher education. Financial barriers suck. It should be addressed more often. It makes you not want to attend college because it's a lot to deal with. But you have to have patience. Now imagine a young girl from the Bronx who did not let financial situations stop her from dreaming, and achieving.



**NEIL DURAN**  
**Final Draft**

The Bronx home to the second greatest baseball team The Yankees, a melting pot of multiple ethnic groups, and the birthplace of modern hip hop! A significant portion of my life i've spent absorbing the plethora of experiences the Bronx has to offer, ranging from exciting games at Yankee stadium, and also living one block away from the esteemed Grandmaster Flash's old project building. "Plethora Of Experiences" Neil you only named two things, what about "the melting pot of multiple ethnic groups"? We'll get into that eventually, see I can't talk about the people of the Bronx without talking about the public education of the Bronx. Out of my 17 years of my life roughly 12-13 Years were spent in public education system, and it was to put into simple terms "shitty". While I will admit that the years leading up to the Obama administration were bearable, the minute Michelle Obama changed the standard for school lunch everything went downhill. The first problem being that the food changed from being actual food, to "healthy" alternatives, which boiled down to pre-made microwaved food. The Bronx was notorious for it's bad food in general and these changes made it worse; crappy school lunch was the least of my problems in elementary school. I was deemed a troubled kid young, and encountered my fair share teachers who would've loved to not have me as a student. I ended up not spending a lot of time in elementary school, and spending most of my 4th and 5th grade year in therapy. This was counterproductive since I missed out on key moments that kids have during their elementary school years, recess, making friends, gym periods. My therapy sessions ceased since it started to take a noticeable toll on my family financially, and as I transitioned into

middle school my life continued to deteriorate. I lacked the necessary social skills to make friends, and developed an anxiety disorder ironically named SAD. Social Anxiety Disorder made it difficult to make friends, since I was constantly afraid of being judged to the point that I would avoid human contact. I tried to emulate my older sister since she was smart, popular, outgoing, and had a lot of friends. My attempts yielded some results, I needed attention so I made a conscious choice to become a trouble maker. I didn't like teachers anyway so stopping lessons and slowing down the classroom was a win-win for me. High School was the turning point for me since I stopped being awkward, and started to mature immensely. Raymond Keith Gilyard is both a writer and a professor, but most importantly he's been in the NYC education system, he talks about his experiences in his piece "Voices of the Self". Within this piece he talks about his firsthand experience with school and his struggle with drugs he brings up one experience and states "Mrs. Brody, called me in for a long talk. She was a nice person, engaging. This was serious talk. No sermonizing. Just a realistic look at things. She suggested I enroll as an outpatient at Greenwich House." Keith Gilyard talks about his schools efforts to bring him back from his heroin addiction, the counselor is recommending him to rehabilitation center, promptly after this encounter more faculty in the school do what they can in their power to make sure Keith graduates. This made me think about my outlook on education since it still hadn't changed, teachers/faculty never did anything for me, when I struggled with depression, when I yearned for attention, no teacher came and gave me what I needed. A helping hand, all I wanted to hear was that someone cared, I'll admit partially it's my fault since I treated them like crap, but it's kinda their job to help me out soooo that's on them. My mental issues still burdened me in high school, but I had friends now which helped keep my mind distracted. I created meaningful relationships and really enjoyed the merits of friendship,

unfortunately I still didn't have anyone to relate to. 12th grade year is when I really distanced myself from school, I essentially missed the whole year, due to lack of motivation for school and life itself. What I wanted was a teacher like Mrs. Brody or the other teachers in Gilyard's life. I didn't have this connection until the 12th grade, What was different about this chapter in my life is that my teachers actually cared for me. My first period teacher would call me so I can come to school, even if I was late I was accepted with open arms. For once educators cared about me, after so many years of being neglected, the people I wanted to acknowledge me had done it. Even with their efforts not much changed in me, it wasn't until half way through the year that their dedication to my success was apparent. After receiving barely passing marks I was done with school, I tried to be interested but I was having trouble immersing myself into the mentality of scholar. Mentally I was somewhere else and around this time is when I was contemplating suicide, the dean of my school was notified by my advisor after she overheard me talking about it. My dean of advisor broke into tears upon hearing this, since she knew me for nearly a decade and loved me like a son. The efforts to make me want to live and succeed were not apparent to me until that moment, every time she tried to avoid giving me harsh punishments, she would give me detentions and hope I learned my lesson. Their love for me made me wake up and realize that I deserve to graduate, just like Gilyard, when and effort was made to improve my life by others, I decided to take it and make my way through the hardship.

REXHEP KUQI

## Assimilation

There were many events that completely shifted my view on education and school, but the **number one factor was social media**. The constant *exposure* to how hated school was, waking up to go to school, growing old and dealing with more responsibility made me assimilate with how everyone else thought towards school. Most posts I would constantly see were posts I'd relate to which increased my distaste for school. Posts that consisted of making fun of some teacher's logic, or how dumb the SATs were, or even peers talking about how bad school was and how tiring it was. Eventually, I grew a strong distaste waking up every morning for school only to feel fatigued and lazy. Every single day just felt the same and it was exactly the same, waking up every morning for school, go home and do the work assigned to me that's due whenever, shower, sleep, and repeat. The constant testing and being forced to socialize with other people massively increased my distaste towards the environment. The fact that I'm in college now and looking back at high school, it makes me feel like it was the easiest thing to go through while I know back then I was stressing out insanely. I messed up my first year by never going, cutting, and just being rebellious but eventually that bit me in the ass. Failing my first year dropped my GPA to below three and damaged my chances of getting into John Jay, which was my dream choice, that I got denied to. I've always considered myself to be an introvert and not be that open, and I still am that way. I will push aside any social incapability I have to actually be social and make the first move when needed, but I will not go out of my way. Being exposed to social media really made me follow how everyone else thought towards school, but eventually I became open-minded about education and school, and still, my opinion

was still the same. All the testing seems pointless to me and it's primarily a test towards your own intelligence.

I would concur that my intelligence is insulted if I were to get a bad grade on a test or something, when in reality, I know I'm more educated in other areas. My forte is primarily writing, reading, debating, history, etc. However, with math, it's like I'm completely a brick wall and I'm incapable of solving anything. Basic math is a given and you learn in back in elementary, but excelling in math is something I'm completely incapable of doing. I was to be put in honors for a government class back in my senior year of high school but I was too lazy to even talk to my counselor on how I was recommended by my teacher to be put in it. Everybody will either have the same opinion as you do towards school, or a completely different one which is alien. Either having a distaste for school is more known and popularized or it's actually a wide-spread opinion amongst the youth. Finally having a small schedule for my senior year really made me careless towards actually putting in the effort for my classes. After being accepted into a college and knowing I'd be graduating guaranteed, the case of senioritis really hit me hard. Senioritis is a form of disease that spreads amongst seniors when they would stop caring and putting in effort for their last classes. I would even leave my third period class, which was my last class in my schedule, just to work a morning shift at my former job, that's how I knew my former job was more of a priority than a gym class I knew I was guaranteed to pass.

I never really understood the concept of regents, as New York is the only state to have them. I questioned if it's only to test a student's intelligence or categorize students, and to this day I still don't understand it. It's the least of my worries now as I'm in college and have other things to worry about. College has a whole new esque which I actually really enjoy in comparison to high school. You have more responsibility, which can be a con to others, but you have free reign to do what you want with your

time. I'm responsible to show up to my classes and pass these classes to move onto the next year and fulfill my major and not having "big brother" constantly watching your every move is relaxing. Finally turning eighteen has its wonderful perks of being an adult and actually living life, and the majority of my youth I've always fantasized how adult life would be and would I be ready for it. I've always felt like my mentality was older than my age and it was a constant struggle for me. College feels a lot smoother than high school and I cherish that completely and I have high hopes for college than I have ever had for high school. I started hating high school as soon as I realized how bad the environment was. The people were horrible and fake, the testing was ridiculous, and people even cheated on the regents when it's strictly forbidden. Now I ain't gonna lie, who wouldn't cheat on the regents you know, but it just goes to show how bad it was. Having a clean slate in college to meet new people and have a different perspective on education that wasn't forced by social media really made me open-minded about it and happy. When Amaya's mother told her, "school ain't officially free so you gotta go," that really hit me hard and realized how important college can be. It differs dramatically from high school cause I just didn't care but now in a whole new environment, my opinion changed dramatically. Social media always deemed college was important, and so did many adults I've met.

GROUP TWO: NEIL, REXHEP, ELAYNE, SHANIA

## **ELAYNE MATOS**

### **If I Passed**

After transferring schools Clinton was NOT your regular high school at all, I don't care how much you can relate or compare to your high school. This school was just on some other shit. On my first day of school... let me tell you. That is when I realized this school was not shit. Why right when I walk in through the doors the security guards by the scanners looking at me like I'm their next predictor. Looking like hungry ass lions in the wild. Honestly this is a school. They swore they were working at a prison word to my mother. You got security guards patting you down and passing the hand wand all around you. I'm just thinking in my head "What the fuck do these kids bring to school? Like am I bugging or?" .

Anyways after the trauma with the security guards..oh that was nothing compared to what I saw. I literally could not tell the difference like was I at school or on Fordham road right now ? These guys posted up on the wall, hollering at girls and playing dice (sort of like gambling) in the corners. I just kept walking straight trying to ignore all this nonsense especially these ugly kids trying to holla at me. I saw a friend I made on Facebook that went to this school down the hallway. I was so relieved because I did not even have a schedule in my hand therefore I had no clue where my classes were. She was so cute with her dirty blonde curly hair and her Nike outfit from head to toe. She approached me all happy and excited. She laughs at me and says "are you okay you look lost hahahah" which I was honestly. "Yes, I am I need to find an office or something because I do not even have my schedule bro" I responded stressed. She directed me to an office where I waited a whole hour. Walking with her felt like I was a child at a carnival who had lost their mother. At every

corner she greeted someone and every time I blinked she was on to the next. It was so stressful figuring out where she went and all these people looking at me.

Once I walked in there was a huge line with students with complaints about their schedules and all that nonsense. When the counselor finally got to me she kept going on how I was not on the system yet and a bunch of excuses on why I didn't have a schedule set up yet. She looked weird to me. She had pointy reading glasses and looked like the suit maker from the incredibles. Honestly I did not care I just wanted this to be over with. She made my schedule right then and there. I mean you could say I was lucky because I got to pick which classes I wanted which is rare in high school. While she was putting my schedule together breaks were taken in-between with a lot conversation about nothing work related very unprofessional.

After leaving that office at 12pm I headed to my 5th period class where only 10-7 students were present. Mind you the attendance had about 30 students who were supposed to be there. Now this was the most shocking I see this spacious room with no students. The teacher rushing around the room with her blond curly hair going on about some nonsense. A couple of students on the smart board watching a football game and the rest well talking. I sat down and just stared at everything going on. She exclaimed out of nowhere saying "please take out a pen and paper and look productive thank you". So is she not planning on teaching a lesson? Anything? I realized how going to class in this school was rare I just couldn't understand why would that even be rare. I came from a school where if you came late you had detention or if You didn't wear uniform you got sent home and where you rarely saw one person in the hallways. Also you would have to pay a dollar Friday's to Not wear uniform but that is another story.

Coming to Dewitt clinton high school impacted the way I viewed education and school because first and foremost no one



seemed to care about their education. The staff and teachers didn't care about giving it to the students either. This school showed me how a school is an effort everyone part takes in not only the teachers. A teacher can not teach a class if the students do not show up. This also showed me how some educational campuses are corrupted and most importantly none cares about your education more than you. What you put in is what you get out of it. This school that I am describing to you is where a lot of famous people graduated from including Stan lee. A school with money and many opportunities of programs and everything you can name provided and these kids did not take advantage. Education and school has to be something you want and are willing to work for it will not be handed to you all the time. Sometimes you have to work for it. That was a big lesson I learned there. It also impacted me to learn on my own and to not rely on my teachers for everything, to take responsibility for my own education.

**SHANIA ROMAIN**  
**Chain of Events**

That lil boy really saved my life I tell you man! Have you ever heard the saying “ My son changed me.. he made me a better person ,I am so glad he chose me to be his mother”? That’s me, and I can relate.Let me run you through the “Chain of Events”.I was a troublesome kid in highschool, I went to the Urban Assembly School of Law and Justice located at 283 Adams Street, where I was notorious for getting suspended expelled getting into fights etc.It was literally the worst academic time of my life . Did I hate school? No. Truthfully, I just need a little L.O.V.E. I was literally fighting demons everyday . Let me break it down a little for you. Every other kid can sit and boast about how they enjoyed their prom , their senior trip or how they became the president of a club or something . They exclaimed how they got into their dream college, dorming etc. I was the opposite. I got arrested , I got left back ,I became pregnant .I was the only one who didn’t graduate . While there was a 99% graduation, I WAS THE 1%. LOL!! Isn’t that funny? No,its not .

Classes usually ran like this 8:45 am you had to be in advisory where you basically got prepared for all of your classes. Your advisor usually spoke to you about the events going on in the school. He or she spoke to you about things your other teachers were saying about you the class you needed to improve on, checked attendance etc . My name was never called , I was never there. Your first class didn’t start until 9:00 am. My first class was Global , I had to take that class again because I was a dick head who couldn’t pass it the first time. History was one of my best subjects too, like what the hell ! The class wasn’t even that hard to

be honest. For example, Napoleon Bonaparte was a French man who moved his way up during the French Revolution . He led the French Army during hard times blah blah blah and the other nigga got his head cut off cause he was being a Tyrant and people didnt like the way he was ruling. See? It wasn't that hard..

Fast forward to the time that I got arrested. Like I said I was a troublesome kid who needed some love and this is the story called "Chain of Events" It was a sunny day in mid winter , you know like when winter is finishing up not that cold but cold, you still had to wear a coat but not a big one . There was no snow. I had a blue Nautica coat, a burgundy H&M sweater, dark blue jeans and some all blue Adidas shell tops. Blue was my favorite color . I loved those blue shell tops don't judge me, and yes the other reason had to do with a gang affiliation . The "Crips " . I am sure everyone has heard of them . I was affiliated ,not official . I didn't fight or get jumped to get in ,I just had a crip boyfriend will ex boyfriend now .He went by the name "Loco". Anyways, my hair was in a bob and of course my eyebrows were done well drawn on . I remember having some hoop earrings. By the way ,those are the by far WORSE earrings to wear during a fight especially when you're eventually going to be escorted into an NYPD van lol. I didn't have any nails on thank God because they would have broken during the fight. This was no ordinary fight . This was a fight against a pissed off angry teen and an NYPD cop . Yes he was White , so you can only imagine how I felt. My friends and I were Downtown Brooklyn standing in the corner as we watched the whole block go in shambles as there were also other schools Downtown. On this day everyone was fighting for some reason and we were just standing there laughing like what the fuck is going on. The dummies (cops) came last minute when everything had settled down and everyone got their fights in and the bock was clear again . Here come the pigs acting as if they were doing something running and pushing people me included . This is what started this whole fucking shit in the first place . As

we are standing there officer Bradley yes I remembered his name because to this day I still want to press charges decides to push through our circle and literally break it apart . How can ONE person maneuver to break a five person circle ? That had to be one big ass push! I turned around and yelled “WHAT THE FUCK “?? Of course I was the only loud one who said something because everyone else were pussies and I didnt think that the goat heard me . Instead this piece of shit turns around stares me down with his blue master of the slave eyes and grabs up my fucking collar . My friends just stand there shook and scared . What CAN they possibly do though , they don’t want to get shot! He does this for about 45 seconds . Im not gonna lie, I was scared as fuck but that only enraged me more. I got angry.”Oh hell no , does he know who the fuck I am”? I am not your regular black bitch I WILL CUT YOU !” I grabbed my pocket knife out my bag and began cursing out loud “ I am not the fuckng one ..!! “ You messed with the wrong MOTHER FUCKING BITCH “ !! I made enough ruckus to catch the attention of a black officer who put the cuffs on me and took me to the precinct . I was in that dirty stinky pissy ass precinct crying and banging on the walls for about 3 hours where they had me do the regular take off your belt shoe laces earrings etc . Do you know what it feels like to have flappy shoes with no shoe laces?? Eventually they let me out and of course my mother was unhappy she called my whole family and told them I was a big disgrace , which I was. This was only one of many disappointments .

I then got pregnant and this what really changed my life. My baby boy who was supposed to come onto this earth February 22nd 2019 arrived 12 weeks early November 30th. Born premature at only 30 weeks ,he is the reason why I am the way I am now ,a different person. The new and improved Shania Romain . There was a huge shift in my academic development and he is the definitive cause of that . When my son came into my life it changed my perspective of life. I thank God everyday

for him because I would have still been out there being a dickhead kid. He made me want to do something with my life. I WANTED to get focused.I WANTED to get on track. I had to, I really didn't have a choice. I had someone who was looking up to me . His name was Leonard Elijah Jermaine Romain-Martin and although he passed away from Necrotizing Enterocolitis which is when the large intestines dies due to being inflamed ,he had a large impact on my life for the little time he's been here . He gave me a purpose and he is the reason for my change in behavior and the way I view education . I would never want my son to go through the things I went through , I had to switch up quick and take advantage of the opportunities in front of me. First it was finishing school , and getting into college so that I can make him proud because he was and still is the closest thing to me. No one should ever have to lose a kid that young but God knows best. One thing that I admire about him is how he never gave up on life, when the doctors told me that he only had approximately three days left , he showed us that he can push for seven ! He is my angel , my personal motivation to keep going, he changed my life. I made a promise to him when he was passing away to not make my mother disappointed anymore and a vow to make him proud . He taught me to keep going,and even when life is against you keep trying,you keep striving. This is why I am never going to give up on myself again .This is the new and elevated Shania Romain. I am determined to reach my goals because my son didn't live to reach his and as his mother, I have to make him proud.

GROUP THREE: CHRIS, MICHAEL, CHRISTIAN, JONELL

**CHRIS CHAN**  
**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Education is a beneficial thing, and I feel that no one should ever take it for granted. Especially if you look at those who risk and sacrifice everything they have for their kids or themselves to learn. Of course as a little kid, these thoughts don't fly by your mind, and you just go on and follow what you see. You're always told to just try "hard" but that isn't always the case. Majority of the time, playing it smart and not necessarily working hard gets you further.

I was never a bad kid in school or in general causing havoc in class, disputes with teachers, etc. I did do some dumb stuff here and there like that got me standing in front of an adult having to explain my actions. In class, I paid attention and did my work, got some laughs in with my friends, etc. I never got to hang out afterschool daily, I was picked up in a car and didn't ride the train. At the time, I hated it and resented the proposition of being picked up because I wanted to hangout afterschool with my friends and take the train alongside with them. Afterschool, I went straight home and did homework. Homework always took at least an hour, with English being the most time consuming. That class always had me worried, we had to read multiple books every year. It was late October in 7<sup>th</sup> grade when I started to realize that almost everybody in my English class had the same grades, all in the 90s. The teacher wasn't bogus, she was legit, she graded hard. Seats were moved in the second semester and I had a new neighbor. His name was Orion, he was a tad taller than me and had the newly released Jays on. I wouldn't say he had the best attendance nor care for his grades. However, we became good friends and sat together in other classes. One night, I struggled hard on this book review that I was given weeks to do and I didn't

even finish reading the last 5 chapters. I ended up arriving to class the next morning empty handed. I was certain others had failed to do it as well. To my surprise, sitting beside me in the calmest stance, Orion had the whole sheet filled out. Every quote, explanation and scene, from each chapter written on his paper. I was in awe, I felt absolutely retarded and I asked him how he finished it with such ease. I was expecting a response of hard work and nights of reading but instead he showed me a link to an online site that gave every detail from the book. It kinda struck me at that point that I was clueless to the vastness of the internet. I ended up getting an incomplete for my final grade. For the next assignment, I did what any other kid would have done. It was there I understood the finesse of the system. This was all homework but I never had the balls to cheat on a test. It was too risky and I never really needed to.

Middle school went by like a breeze, tears on the last day and thankfully for me, the closest friends were going to the same high school. It was a chance to start fresh and exceed better than I did for the last 3 years. It was during the first week of high school when I had my first serious talks about academic honesty and integrity. It was easy for me because I knew the cheats to the answers and it was to the point that I barely look at the questions and I just copy it from the sites.

Deep down, it was easy for me but it would hit me hard when tests came up. I wouldn't say I never cheated on tests but I soon came to realization that I was struggling because I kept choosing the easy way out and never took my time to think and do these problems. I started to pick up my pace for a while before my senior year. I came to understanding that by doing it the easy way, I was hurting myself and I wasn't learning much.

With my senior year around the corner, I stressed on SATs and college applications. I had switched between 3 different guidance counselors, and I couldn't really go to anyone to ask about college. It hit me that it was the real deal, I can't finesse my

way out of this. The night after we took the SAT, I came out my shower and my phone was blowing up. I had scrolled to the top of the group chat to see what had originated from this spam of messages. My friend that went to another high school in Brooklyn sent, "*Highkey just cheated on my SAT...this dude did not give a single shit.*" Our first instinct was call bull, but he said he did and so did the rest of the class. Explaining to us that the proctor did not care at all and the whole class had their phones remaining inside their pockets. The proctor also left the classroom a great deal of times and even proceeded to take his phone out. I couldn't be livider, my proctor was out here checking people's water bottles and calculator but his proctor could do such a thing. Of course, we all took to conclusion that maybe he was trolling after all. Soon after, when we received the SAT scores back, we all pushed him to show his score. I kid you not, this kid got a 1400 on it. Obviously our scores were nowhere near that range. The whole group chat had responses with jealousy and frustration. I gave up the concept of cheating because it affected me negatively as a student and a person, but after all I was defeated by the fact that people had cheated their way into college. This also reflects on the admission scandals that were exposed recently, but these events came way after this story I'm telling. There are loopholes around the system and its not perfect but sometimes you're lucky and sometimes you're not. Education itself is highly useful and important but the system itself is very broken and corrupt. I know a lot of people that were devastated they couldn't get into their college of choice but just to know someone else might've used their phone throughout that SAT that scored hundred points higher is messed up. However, if you truly work hard and exceed in academic studies, you will eventually be successful no matter what. In conclusion, the educational system has its ups and downs, but mostly it's about the people you know and the favored events you come by.



**MICHAEL MARIN**  
**Final Draft Unit One**

There are many events that everyone had experienced before when it comes to education. I consider education as a gift because it really changed the point of view of students of how we view education and how it gave us many opportunities to look forward to in the near future. Opportunities such as taking a wide variety of courses, joining amazing and fun clubs, etc. My experience my years in school really thought me a lot of things that helpful and useful in life. Ever since i started school when I was a little boy I wanted a nice education experience.

When I was started High School I knew that there was gonna be more opportunities for me take. High School is where it education impacted me the most. I was able to make lots of friends that would help me along the way. But when I first entered I kept hearing lot about this test called the SAT at first I didn't really know much about this particular as it was the beginning of my freshman year. Two years past then I was in my junior year. I knew it was gonna get a little more challenging as the SAT was coming up. But I soon as I realized next year was gonna be last year and looking back the education that i received was great overall I could explain it in many other ways. It was also good to be involved and do community service. All of my friends who studied with could also agree with me. The countless hours of studying and preparing for those tests.

Then came Graduation it made me look back from the beginning of my freshman year till now. It really made me realize that the things I learned will always be with me no matter what. Graduating from High School was a really a event that really

impacted my education Knowing that I worked hard fro 12 years even since first all the way up to now. Also knowing that college was just two months away. I was really happy with my high school experience and being able to earn my diploma for all of my hard work.

So the beginning of my freshman I didn't really know what to expect honestly after making a lot of friends in middle school who which I still hang out with to this day . I had to start all over again but the only difference is meeting new people who are gonna be my classmates for the next four years. I mean I have to make new friends which of course every freshman wants to do. So first day we were getting our new metro cards schedules and all other important paper work . So first day has passed I did talk to some people, but I didn't really consider them as new friends since its just the first day and that were getting used to being in a new school. But throughout out freshman year I did made lots of new friends which which they are all friendly of course. Now to my sophomore year Im still keeping in touch with the new friends that I made as we promised that we will help each other out . But sophomore year was the year that I really opened up more to lots of people. All thanks to a club that I joined but it wasn't just a club it was a team which I called them my second family as we treated each other like if we were brothers and sisters as everyday after our team meetings we would hang out or fooling around knowing that we were making memories . So then came junior year and oh man so many things that me and my fellow juniors had to deal with. Focusing more on our classes , studying for the SAT , preparing to qualify to become the next team officers for our senior year . So how did I studied for the SAT by attending Saturday SAT classes which I did find it pretty useful as they had teachers from other schools that would help us prepare. We even had to go through many SAT mock test which everyone did find it annoying well because it was mainly on Fridays but I guess it was kinda helpful. So the day of the SAT finally arrived and I

gotta say and my fellow juniors could agree too we were really nervous like we were really sweating . But me I did kept my cool and stayed calm . But even though we practiced a variety of topics we just didn't know what was actually gonna be on the actually test . So four hours has past and testing was over and we got scores and I guess I did okay but Glad we made it through . Now our officer training to become next years Team officers was almost done including the school year.

So after our end of the year celebration we just relaxed for a bit while preparing for regents . The regents were a breeze and then the end of our junior year knowing that Im about to enter my senior Year. So senior year was an amazing year I really had lots of fun and I really enjoyed it . Many memories were definitely made especially at prom and graduation the most it really made me look back my high school experience was an amazing one that I will never forget.

**CHRISTIAN PARRIS**  
**Second Draft**

It was my first year of high school I knew my high school was different but I don't know what was going to happen the first day I walked in following my schedule I didn't know any of the people in the room. It looked too small to be a class and there was no desk just a circle of chairs the teacher walks in describing what the class is and how for the next four years we would have this same class. I didn't know until senior year how important the people in the room were. My highschool was different for normal schools It was called an outward bound school which meant it didn't follow the same rules as other schools like we don't take the reagents except for ela and all the others would be replaced by essays. For most this would be the easiest school but it wasn't we where given hard essays that they said would prepare us for college and we had four years of that essay hard that we ever thought of it was especially hard for me. Because up to highschool I struggle to get good grades in ela I would of said it was my worst subject up to highschool. But over the years I grew as a writer or so I thought until the last ela assignment that I need to pass to graduate if I didn't I wouldn't graduate on time. I was so angry at the ela teacher who I that hated us all because she was out for three months. Then came back and expected us to be caught up on all the work we started reading the book class "The Kite Runner ". We had a class in the morning early 8:30 ever everyone would still be half asleep because but around the same time final project for every class would so people would be up extra late because you had three or four essays done around the same time.

My Ela class wasn't special it was regular 12th grade Ela in my school yet the work we were given wasn't they told us we would be working at college level Ela.

We thought it wasn't going to be the most easy final because we did it for four years but the ela final was different from everything we learned. Almost everyone was procrastinating until the final three weeks of school before the break I thought we had enough time to get it finished but there weeks when by and it only felt like three days . In the final week before the break, there was a change in the atmosphere from relaxed to help me to graduate people that would come later every day was now on time begging for the teacher's attention because they were still on their first draft sadly I was in the same boat. I had to restart my whole essay from scratch. The last three days of classes trying hard to panel my final project what went threw my mind is I wasn't going to graduate because of one class. But I didn't give up I finished the first draft because of my crew mate and best fiend. My teacher never told me anything on if I was ready by the end of the day and I was so worried thinking I was going to disappoint my family and not graduate on time when my friend told me to relax

The reason why we had a week off was that it was region week but my school only took one region and I had already passed. So on the day of that week teacher would call in student so the can present or work on their essay so that they can present their project for a grade. My Ela teacher never called me in to work so I took it apron myself to go in the class. The room was silent and everyone was working as I walked in I told my teacher that I had finished my draft she told me she would check it as two days when by I got more and more worried telling my dad everything. He told me not to worry by it worried me more as time went by. Then one day I walked in and my teacher said I gave you edits I was happy because if I complete it I could panel but I didn't understand the edits she gave me. My family and friends told me I shouldn't give up as I became frantic but they helped me again

and again until the teacher told me I was ok. But before I could panel my paper had to be read by a second person and the second person said there were more problems with my essay but when I fix it my teacher said there were problems and it got me so frustrated going back and forward on the same paper. That day my dad came into town for my graduation he said don't worry I would help you get over the top. That night he stayed all night to help me and the next day it got accepted and I was able to panel but the had to give me a date I waited all day for news but nothing. It came 8:00 at night I got an email saying I can panel the following day. And I passed it. This related me to the story Amy tang because I wasn't great at Ela bit I keep trying till I got it. One example the author gives is when she says " Not waste money that way". In a conversation between her and her mother and how went talking normally she realized everyone got used to her making improper sentences. Then she wrote more and more just like me till she got better. This experience helped me grow and realized that the only way to get better at writing is to push yourself over the limits.

**JONELL WALLACE**  
**Essay One Final**

Coming to New York from Florida was not what I initially wanted and I'm still deciding whether or not I still want to stay. Even though I had just finished my sophomore year of high school in Florida, I was informed that I may have to go through sophomore year all over again to give me ample time to complete 8 Regent exams. My brother, having already gone through the New York public school system, informed me that it probably wouldn't be possible to take all my Regents and Regent Readiness classes in just two years. I then became worried that I wouldn't be able to pass these tests and I would have to stay back a couple of grades because of it. I initially feared the Regents even before I had encountered them and fully understood what they were and how they would affect my academic career.

However, at the beginning of my Junior Year Regents were the least of my worries. At the time of my arrival in New York, Florida was being hit by Hurricane, I couldn't get in contact with my previous school, meaning that I had no formal documentation, no transfer papers or an official transcript, from the previous two years of my high school career. All I did have were all the report cards of my previous marking periods. This meant that when I went to register for schooling with the Department of Education, they didn't have a clear idea of my academic standing and initially wanted to register me as a Freshman again. After reviewing my grades and matching my courses with the New York City school curriculums, I was then deemed fit to start as a Junior at any school that I would choose.

My next step would be to choose a school which turned out to be a lot harder than initially thought.

I first grabbed the large Directory of New York schools and tried to find the best schools in Brooklyn, I did have the grades to get into a good school. After being put on a waiting list for both Jason Madison HS, and Midwood HS. These schools wanted Transcripts, and transfer papers to be able to accept me. Then I found Millenium HS, and had a rather interesting experience during that would-be registration process.

My mother and I arrived at Millennium HS in September of 2017, about a week after school had started. We were directed into the secretary's office and was waiting for the principal to arrive. After waiting about 30 minutes the principal arrived and asked if we had transcripts and transfer papers, after we informed her no, she said that she couldn't allow us into the school with only report cards. A Polish couple, who wanted to transfer their daughter into the school, then walked into the office. And right in front of us after just denying us entry, the Principal informed the couple that they only needed report cards, and she could help them register right away. I was shocked and angry, but I honestly didn't dwell on the situation too long because I still hadn't found a school to go to yet.

I again grabbed the large directory and tried to find another school. And after looking for many days, I finally came across John Dewey High School. Dewey had decent school scores, a fair amount of graduating students , and a large number of student activities and clubs, and plus my aunt went there so I guessed it was an okay school to go to. So I soon went to go register. And it was during my registration for Dewey, that I met the Parent-Teacher Coordinator who would my lifesaver and personal guardian at school for the next two years.

Mrs. Gattuso was one of favorite people at Dewey. She helped everyone in any possible way that she could whenever they needed it. I remember she would get me lunch if I didn't want



anything from the cafeteria and if I wasn't feeling well she would let me stay in her office and talk a nap or just relax if I was ever stressed out. I would be in her office on a daily basis just helping her with whatever she needed as a thank you for her helping me and being there whenever it was needed.

Another person that really helped me was my English teacher in junior year. On the second day of school I met my English teacher, who later became my Mock Trial Coach, her name was Ms. Clark and to this day I'm extremely grateful to have been in her class. She was one of the best teachers that I have ever had. Ms. Clark, who was White and Korean, was a rather young teacher, small in frame but had the energy of a power house. She was very passionate about English and loved what she did and it really showed. She made it very easy to understand and made sure everyone was always engaged and attentive when she was teaching. Ms. Clark frequently gave tips and tips on how to remember things and formats that were important and words we could use to "spice up our vocabulary". She was such a big help during the English Regents and I will be forever grateful for her.

It was the day of the English Regents and I was what you could call terrified. I had prepared and studied the formats but that wasn't gonna help if I couldn't even remember what my name was. But I ate a good breakfast arrived early and was ready. I can't remember what happened during the test or what was on that test. But I do know that I was the last one to leave and I left in tears. I was absolutely positive that I had failed. As I was leaving I passed Ms. Clark's room. I went inside with the intention of apologizing for falling and to tell her I was probably going to be transferred out because of it. She saw me and stopped eating her lunch. She then asked me what was wrong and gave me a hug. I explained that I was sure to have failed and I'm sorry to have disappointed her. She then sat me down, asked me every possible question about the test, what I did and the formats that I used, and how I had answered the presented questions. It was

then that I knew that I had a teacher that actually cared about her students and was there for them, even when she didn't need to be. She told me that, from everything I told her that I would've passed with at least a 65. I left reassured and grateful for pep talk and reassurance.

After waiting two weeks antagonizing weeks, the scores were announced. Ms. Clark then informed me that I had passed with a 90, the highest grade in the class, and that she was very proud of me and that she knew there was truly nothing to worry about.

This has made me realize that there are teachers and counselors that actually care about their students and they would do whatever it takes to actually counsel them and make them feel better about whatever they are going through, it made me grateful that I had those types of teachers in my life and not someone who was there only for their paycheck.