

# The Fieldston News

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## Class of 2016 Graduation: On Playing with Wynton Marsalis

By OLIVER BELLINSON

It is hard for me to articulate my exact emotional response to hearing Mr. Marsalis play. To hear someone of such talent render one's art invites a variety of emotions, but before I get to this, it is important for me to describe how I felt in the weeks leading up to this event. In the weeks prior to graduation, it struck me that I had done nothing to deserve playing with Wynton Marsalis. There are those who work their entire lives for opportunities to play with such dedicated musicians whom they admire, but because I went to a school like Fieldston, I was given such a privilege easily.

Learning this was motivating for me in that it made me want to make myself more deserving of such an opportunity through meticulous improvement of my technique. In an effort to achieve this, I began listening to Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers along with jazz pianists Mulgrew Miller, Duke Ellington and Red Garland, among other jazz legends. In my search for further musical knowledge, I also came across a recording of Wynton Marsalis playing a jazz piece called "The Sheik of Araby". In it, he appeared calm and confident with his shoulders loose. He seemed to dance to the music while he played, moving his shoulders and head from side to side and tapping his foot to the beat. This confidence is something all great jazz musicians seem to exhibit. It is sometimes difficult for one to maintain this confidence and looseness, particularly when one is playing a very challenging passage. It takes mentally removing oneself from pressure and focusing entirely on the music itself to achieve this in playing. Again, this is no easy task. As graduation approached, the pressure began to build - and not just



Wynton Marsalis giving the commencement speech at Fieldston's 2016 graduation.

PHOTO BY PHIL KESSLER

for me. Friends of mine in the jazz group were nervous, working on their solos tirelessly in preparation for Mr. Marsalis's arrival. That pressure, combined with all the others graduation and ending high school entailed, coalesced, and seemed to put even the most advanced musicians in our group on edge.

By the time graduation came, the pressure had reached its zenith for many; the time had come. No more than a few feet away, dressed elegantly and standing with great confidence was Wynton Marsalis the jazz legend. Just before we got up to start playing, my friend looked at me and let out a nervous laugh, to which I responded similarly. We all went on stage to set up, half of us nearly tripping on the wires from the amps on approach, myself included. Our teacher, Mr. Christensen, prepared us and he started the count off. I glanced over at Mr.

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## Revising Fieldston's Curriculum

By KEERTI GOPAL

"We now need to commit to daily affirming, through our words and actions, the identity of each of our students," said Mr. Cairo in an email to the ECFS community on May 27th, 2016. The email came in response to the "prank," on campus last year, that prompted an immense emotional reaction and sparked important conversation. Last May, student activists organized a walk-out with an open-mic for people of color to share their stories with the community, and students spoke about the ways in which Fieldston has failed to affirm their identities. As Mr. Cairo said, this needs to change. So how does Fieldston begin creat-

ing an environment where students of all identities are affirmed? Part of the answer is curriculum.

"There is a great deal of talk of diversity at Fieldston," said Science department chair Paul Church, "and while we like to believe that we have fostered an inclusive environment where everyone can feel free to be fully present, recent events have shown that we have fallen short of our goal." Last spring, Fieldston's department chairs began conversations about the current academic curriculum and how it needs to evolve. One important focal point is a simple but challenging idea: in-

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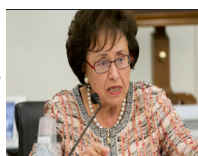
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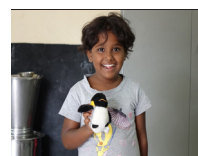
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# Life After Wrongful Imprisonment Is Scarcely Life at All

BY ALEX GREENBERG

The number of exonerations in the US has more than doubled since 2011, and that trend is only increasing. Last year, a record number of 149 defendants were exonerated of crimes they didn't commit, serving, on average, fourteen-and-a-half years in prison. To put that in perspective, that's three exonerations per week: three people, essentially kidnapped by their state, denied a fair trial, and punished to the fiercest degree for a crime they never committed. People like Bobby Johnson, a 16-year-old with an IQ of 69 who was tricked by two New Haven detectives into pleading guilty after one of the detectives (known for his self-ascribed "100% success rate in solving homicides") promised Johnson that he would receive probation if he confessed and the death penalty if he maintained his innocence. Johnson was ultimately sentenced to 38 years in prison as a result of this false confession and other exculpatory evidence withheld by the prosecution but was exonerated in 2015 after serving nine years in jail.

If Johnson's experience sounds like an anomaly, it's not. According to the National Registry of Exonerations, in 2015 alone, 27 exonerations were because of false confessions and 44 of the 58 homicide exonerations included official misconduct of some kind. The injustices of the criminal process; from detainment to interrogation to trial, are numerous and far-reaching: there is much that has been said—and much more that needs to be said—on this issue. However, few people are aware of the hardships exonerates face after they are released from prison and the ways our society tosses the wrongfully convicted to the curb with virtually no support.

Before I began my work with the Chicago Innocence Center this summer, I imagined that exonerates lived lives akin to public heroes; beneficiaries of multi-million dollar civil suits who had widespread community support and robust social benefits to help compensate for the time taken away from them. Well, this perception couldn't have been further from the truth.

As perverse as it may sound, the



Department of Justice Hearing in Chicago where the Innocence Project lobbied for various reforms.

COURTESY OF THE CHICAGO READER

exonerated are actually punished for being innocent, more so than parolees or offenders on felony probation are. All guilty inmates released on parole are assigned to a supervising officer whose job it is to help these offenders on their journey towards independence and self-rehabilitation. Parole officers are responsible for helping offenders land jobs, sometimes even setting up interviews with potential employers. A good parole officer also works closely with the offender to find suitable housing and affordable medical treatment for any mental or substance issues they may have. Exonerates get none of this. "Because the exoneration and innocence work has not caught up to the immensity of the system, the laws have not caught up to the standards of fair treatment for exonerates," explains Pamela Cytrynbaum, Executive Director of the Chicago Innocence Center, a nonprofit organization that investigates and exposes wrongful convictions.

As if an exonerate could walk right out of prison after decades of incarceration and pick up right where they left off. Of the 58 homicide exonerations in 2015, 23 of the prisoners were under the age of 20 when they were convicted. How can we expect an exonerate, who was a teenager at the time of his arrest, to emerge from prison in his forties

and all of a sudden possess the experience, training, and interpersonal skills it takes to be a functioning member of society? According to a 2003 survey of sixty exonerates by Heather Weigand, 57% of exonerates never achieve the same income level they did when they first entered prison and at least 44% end up living in someone else's house indefinitely.

John Wilson, a professor of psychology at Cleveland State University studies the psychological effects of wrongful imprisonment. He explains how prison life can cause psychiatric morbidity in the minds of the wrongfully convicted in a way that true criminals don't experience. "The person who's incarcerated for an act that they did, they know they did it. There's no doubt in their mind that they committed a crime for which they're serving a sentence. . . . People who are wrongfully convicted and innocent know they're not criminals. They know they're different when they enter the prison system. They are not criminal personalities. They're not sociopathic or psychopathic individuals. Usually they're normal people who by circumstance ended up in a very horrific system of injustice by the criminal justice system itself. So they know they're different, and in my experience that makes it even more diffi-

cult for them to endure the traumas and the stresses of imprisonment. . . . They're not a criminal mentality, they're not anti-social, they're not against society, they don't calculate to hurt people. . . . Looking at the spectrum of traumatization to their psyche — the many ways in which these injuries permeate their being — I believe that the injuries from a wrongful conviction and incarceration are permanent. I think they're permanent scars." Indeed, according to a survey conducted by the Life After Exoneration Program, at least 28% of exonerates suffer from PTSD, 40% suffer from depression, and 30% have anxiety. A prisoner spends years learning the survival skills of prison life—secluding themselves, numbing their emotions—only to be tossed back into the real world where those finely-honed skills are now the very handicaps preventing their successful reintegration.

Financial compensation is yet another stage where exonerates are thwarted. Only 41% of exonerates ever receive compensation for their time spent in prison. 23 states have no compensation statutes for the wrongfully convicted. In other states, the amount of money given to exonerates varies tremendously. Texas offers exonerates a relatively robust compensation package of

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# Reflecting on Orlando

BY WILL KLEIN

June 12, 2016 is a date that will forever exist in infamy in American history. It happened in the early hours of Sunday morning, at time typically saturated with hilarious, drunken dancing, and unbridled joy. It was during this time that a highly disturbed man claimed the lives of 49 queer individuals when he assaulted Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida. The attack occurred during one of the club's most popular nights: Latinx Night. For readers unfamiliar with this term, Latinx is often used to refer to a trans or gender non-conforming individual of Latin heritage. The attacker had gone a step further and assaulted not only the queer community but also queer communities of color.

When I first heard of the shooting, I felt nothing and was emotionally paralyzed. My world had changed so suddenly and the insulating bubble that Fieldston had carefully built around me, had burst yet again. I had to hide my shame and pain from my family in order to keep my life as a gay teenager separate from the one I lead at home. My emotional process became stunted and was reduced to a balancing act between white, heterosexual, and cisgender apathy

and the raw pain in my heart. In the weeks following the shooting I was able to mask my pain throughout the day until I found myself alone in my stark bedroom. It was then that my grief would overtake me. It lurked in the dark corners of my mind, waiting for me like an old friend I thought I had long since outgrown. I began to feel hollow, as if I had lost something important to me. The only thing I seemed to be able to do was grin and bare it. I didn't want to let people see my pain; I didn't want to let the world in. In writing this article, I am reminded of the words of Carlos Maza, a queer writer of the Washington Post. He writes "[LGBTQ people] have become masters of seeming fine, of convincing ourselves that we are fine, when we are not fine. Because we badly want to be fine." I wanted so badly to be normal. I wanted to be able to wake up every morning and not have to put on my armor and brace myself for the hatred that is endemic to our world.

Unable to mourn the loss of my queer brothers and sisters, I involuntarily engaged in a balancing act; I would flip rapidly between not feeling "gay" enough and feeling apologetic for my flamboyance. Despite having been hundreds of

miles away from the shooting and having lost no one in the tragedy, I was not left unscathed. I could feel the shame that I had left behind me when I came out of the closet at Fieldston take control of me again. I felt weak and isolated and ashamed. I couldn't bring myself to grieve because it was not safe for me to do so. I couldn't bring myself to grieve because it made me too vulnerable in a world that is too harsh. I couldn't bring myself to grieve because it would mean acknowledging the shooting as a part of my reality.

Even now, this article is the first formal means of mourning I have experienced, so forgive me if my thoughts are disjointed. After the shooting, I became terrified of leaving the safety and seclusion of my apartment. I was afraid that the slight hints of "gay voice" in my speech or the colorful tank tops I used to like would end my life. I was afraid that being my true self would end my life. All at once I found myself forced back into a closet that I had been fighting to escape for years. It wasn't until a couple of days before NYC Pride that I came to the realization that this toxic fear was the shooter's true goal. He wanted to strike terror into the LGBTQ community and wanted us to hide from the world that we have only just begun to feel comfortable existing in. Suddenly the chant "we're here, we're queer, get used to it" became

a less obvious statement.

I can only truly speak for myself, but my healing process has been a long and slow one. Slowly and cautiously I wanted to reconnect with my sexual identity. I was tired of feeling ashamed and hiding who I was from the world. Many people find escape from the mundanity of everyday life in television and movies; instead, I found my salvation. I began to watch every queer show and movie under the sun, trying to find some story to give me strength or some character to inspire me to fight back. Soon enough I realized that the best way for me to be strong and for me to fight back was and is for me to embrace my gayness and not care about the judgement of my peers. Orlando devastated the LGBTQ family, but like Stonewall, and like the AIDS Crisis, we rise again as a stronger, prouder, and louder force for change.

## Wynton Marsalis Cont.

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Marsalis, who was sitting confidently and in comfort, just as he did in his recordings. This confidence, for some reason, was contagious. His very being there was enough to inspire. As I launched into my intro, I quickly drew back on each note and swung to the next with ease, though it was relatively fast-paced. The horns then picked up the melody with great purpose; it was clear that Mr. Marsalis had inspired them to play their best as well. Our drummer carried us with perfect rhythm and our bass player matched to her ride cymbal precisely. Then came Mr. Marsalis's solo. I saw all of the confidence in this man funnel into his music. He did not simply pull some pretty notes together, he told a story with each phrase. I recalled a quote from Mulgrew Miller the great jazz pianist: "Learning to play is a lot like learning how to speak." Mr. Marsalis spoke beautifully. All the solos that followed, along with the shout chorus all the way to the end, had a greater clarity and sense of direction than in any of our rehearsals prior to that day. This is what it was to play with Mr. Marsalis—to have confidence in one's own musical ability, to dismiss anxiety and to place one's love of jazz over all else.



Supporter at NYC's Annual Gay Pride Parade.

COURTESY OF CBAS NEWS

# Summer Story: World Fellowship

BY SAOIRSE MAHER GREENE

My parents have been taking me to the World Fellowship Center ever since I was born, and this summer was my fifth time working there. Located at the foot of Mt. Chocorua of the White Mountains, the World Fellowship Center is a secular summer conference center and family camp “where social justice meets nature.” The center was founded in 1941 by communists, and today is still a safe space of gathering for politically-minded people of all ages, genders, races, nationalities, and walks of life.

Being on staff at World Fellowship is one of the most important parts of my life. A “general staff” member such as myself spends their days working in the dining hall, in the gardens, on housekeeping, or around the campus, fixing any broken items. And while cleaning toilets and scrubbing burnt pans has its moments, the best parts of my time on staff took place during my time off.

# Summer Story: The Eye Doctor

BY MATTHEW DE BOER

This summer, I had the fortunate opportunity of working for one of New York’s top ophthalmologists, Dr. Nancy H. Coles. I have always been passionate about science and medicine, so I truly struck gold when I stumbled upon this internship on the “Fieldston Summer Jobs” page.

I quickly learned after mistakenly calling her an “optometrist,” that an ophthalmologist is a doctor who specializes in the eye and vision care, both medically and surgically. Though I was not quite making incisions into the eyes of any patients, I was shocked at how much responsibility I was given. She taught me how to take vision, work the machines, write charts, deal with patients, and as confusing and complex as it all was, I learned a lot and had fun through it all.

The internship took place on the Upper East Side in her private practice (this means that she was self-employed and that she had many years of success allowing her to open her own practice). I learned

I have never met people as interesting, compassionate, and dedicated as the staff and guests at World Fellowship. Whether it’s a casual chat by the tea table or a heated debate that lasts until the small hours of the morning, people often connect meaningfully and productively with one another. I can recall several hours-long discussions that have taken place in the library/conference room -- on the American education system, on past and current Nicaraguan politics, and on the concepts of ownership and property. In addition to those conversations that arise organically, programs are offered most mornings and nights. This summer I attended many, including a Witness for Peace report-back on Cuba, a presentation on anti-Nuclear Weapons activism, and a Capoeira workshop.

World Fellowship is both unique and necessary in a capitalist country filled with racism, sexism, and countless other forms of hate. A

all about the advantages and disadvantages of being your own boss, the complications of trying to make everyone happy, and the struggles she had to overcome as a woman in medicine.

Though I learned a lot about medicine socially, I also learned immense amounts about the eyes themselves. I learned how to take photos of the back of patient’s eyes, and how to analyze each and every tiny blood vessel. Who knew that a straight blood vessel versus a crooked one could mean the difference between perfect ocular health and potential blindness? I developed a new appreciation for how the tiniest details can make the largest difference.

Overall, my experience working at this office far exceeded my expectations. I learned a tremendous amount about myself and my work ethic, the challenges of opening a private practice, and of course, the eyes.

huge, beautifully-painted “Black Lives Matter” banner hangs in the dining hall, union bumper stickers can be seen on most cars, and Marxist paraphernalia tends to pop up in random places. One day, in our time off, staff members went into town to put up anti-Islamophobia posters. After the shootings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, staff and guests organized a demonstration in solidarity with Black Lives Matter.

Of the many lessons I have learned during my time at the World Fellowship Center, the most important is that of unity: we need to work across borders, physical and otherwise, to realize our most idealistic dreams of what our communities can look like.

# Summer Story: Volunteering in India

BY BRYCE KASSALOW

This summer I volunteered for VisionSpring, a social enterprise whose mission is to provide affordable and accessible eye care to the developing world. I worked with VisionSpring’s India division and spent one month living and working in the city of Delhi. I was assigned to shoot and edit promotional videos for their website. I worked from 10-6:30, Monday through Saturday, and then explored Delhi in my off time.

My neighborhood, Dwarka, Sector 7, was a wild, loud market, which peaked in noise and activity at around 9:45 PM. Early nights were not an option so exploring after work became a daily routine. I was hitting some cool underground spots. One night I went to a jazz club with a 24-year-old girl from Holland and we watched the Indian version of John Mayer perform. Within the first week I also met some nice families who took me in like their own. I was invited into strangers’ homes to enjoy home

cooked Indian food with entire extended families. After eight days of living and enjoying Delhi I was re-assigned to the city of Pune for the week. I left Dwarka and flew off to Pune where I was able to see some fieldwork firsthand and witness some of the good that VisionSpring does on a daily basis.

One woman was a tailor in her early sixties who had a +6 prescription (extremely farsighted) and had never been treated. When she was handed her first pair of glasses, she laughed uncontrollably, unable to contain her excitement. VisionSpring had given back her livelihood: she could work again. My days at the vision camps were some of the most rewarding days of my life. So many lives were improved by the 500-year-old solution of eyeglasses. I took so much away from my trip, and it introduced me not only to the world of healthcare and the medical profession, but also a culture that is at once vastly different and strikingly similar to mine.



Bryce Kassalow '17 during summer break in India.

COURTESY OF BRYCE KASSALOW

# Fieldston Curriculum cont.

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for September, we'll start with a brief overview of where most of the academic departments are headed.

For some departments, the work will be in changing the content of the curriculum to allow for a wider range of stories and perspectives. One concern some students have raised is that the graduation requirements for History are often filled in the first two years of high school, with European history and U.S. History. While this leaves students room to take electives for another two years, it also makes learning about non-western cultures optional. "I am among those who favor one semester of non-western or comparative history during junior or senior year- but there is not consensus around that," said Jim Cullen, last year's History department chair. Opposition to extending graduation requirements comes mostly from the idea that it would cut into the junior-senior elective program, where students have the freedom to choose what they want to study. On the other hand, the current program leaves many students without being exposed to non-western history at all.

The History elective program in forms V and VI has a lot to do with the kinds of courses students are able to take. In both History and English, there have been cases when non-western courses were offered but canceled due to lack of enrollment. Just last year, an Asian-American Literature course had to be dropped after only a few students signed up. "Here we come up against another tension," Mr. Cullen continued. "Student-centered education can be wonderful, but the choices students make, or don't make, don't always seem wonderful. There's a tradeoff here." Mr. Drybala, chair of the English department, brought up another possible reason for lack of interest in courses like Asian American Literature. "The other thing is that we haven't really done enough to promote what's coming out of Asia," he said. "With writers who are, unfortunately, not very known to an American audience, you're not going to have a large appeal to people who don't really know literature." A possible solution, he continued, would be to promote these writers in other courses, to get kids excited about the content.

In English, we have to look

critically at the authors and texts we choose to read. What electives are offered, and what voices do they prioritize? Is every Fieldston student reading authors that are women, or queer, or of color? Are we truly reading about a variety of experiences? "It's challenging for us because most of the English curriculum has been traditionally built around not diverse voices," said Mr. Drybala. Looking forward, the English department will continue discussion and evaluation of the current curriculum, focusing particularly on the Form III curriculum, looking for ways to increase diversity. Creating a more inclusive curriculum will take a lot more than just a more diverse course offering. Some of it will fall on the community as a whole: we need to make the choice to learn about cultures that may be unfamiliar to us.

Diving into unfamiliarity is a big part of the Foreign Languages curriculum. "Language is intrinsically tied to the target languages' culture, and as such, students are constantly exposed to global perspectives," writes Christine Perez, chair of the Language department, in notes on a department meeting. Still, she believes there is definite room for improvement and increased diversification. This year, for the first time, there will be two levels in the Spanish for Heritage Speakers class, with a newly adjusted curriculum. This, says Ms. Perez, "is a great step in

regards to giving students of diverse backgrounds the opportunity of not only learning a more formal Spanish, but of also finding a safe space where they can learn about their Latin American and Hispanic history, literature, and other areas of the academic world that they are not exposed to in their regular classes." The Language department plans on doing more curriculum work when school resumes in September.

"Like many disciplines," said Dr. Church, chair of the Science department, "much of our scientific knowledge base rests on the research dominated by heterosexual, upper class, white males...it is essential that we include work by individuals from underrepresented groups." Church went on to describe the goals of the science department, mainly concentrating more on valuing content from a more diverse range of perspectives. He also spoke of programs like Fieldston Women in Science, that work to provide opportunities for girls to delve into the discipline. "There are still individuals who we have failed to reach," added Church, "We continue to look for more opportunities to engage any student who feels marginalized."

The problems faced by women in math and science courses are often talked about. Gender stereotypes and subliminal messages can cause girls, as they grow up, to move away from STEM. But gender isn't

the only factor that can exclude students in STEM. "From what I've seen," said Rob Greenwald, chair of the Math department, "...it does appear that students of color are underrepresented in the intensive classes and over-represented in the 1 level classes." This, clearly, is a huge lapse in Fieldston's adherence to a mission of equality. Greenwald, who recently read *Whistling Vivaldi*, a book on the effects of stereotypes, feels that he has gained knowledge that will help the department combat this issue. "Taking fairly simple diversity affirming steps and removing cues that may reinforce negative stereotypes can help improve the performance of these groups. Something as simple as asking students to tell their teachers about their backgrounds and history in math may help students feel more comfortable in a math class and perform better...I am committed to addressing these issues and doing all that I can to improve the experience of all our students at Fieldston."

Tom Christensen, chair of the Music department, is reading the same book as Mr. Greenwald, and says it has changed the way he looks at the issue of inclusivity. "The book is about what the author calls 'stereotype threat' and examines how students perform on tests and in class when they feel they are being judged because of various stereotypes involving anything from race to gender to many other things," he explained. "It has made me think that we can be more sen-

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Fieldston campus.

PHOTO BY KEERTI GOPAL

# Interview with New York Representative, Nita Lowey

By ILAN LUTTWAY

Congresswoman Lowey is currently serving her 29th year in Congress for the seventeenth congressional district. She is the first woman ever to be the top ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee and is widely known as one of the fifty most effective members of Congress, according to Congressional Quarterly, saying she “maneuvers skillfully through the appropriations process.” As the top ranking Democrat on the appropriations committee, she gained the respect of some of the most influential people in the Capitol. Lowey is most respected for her ability to work across the aisle. The Congresswoman simply “delivers” (Newsday Press). From educational opportunity and women’s issues to public safety laws and national security, Lowey makes a difference in any way that she can, everyday. New York Daily News gave Lowey the title “New York’s key Members of Congress”. With her passion, integrity, and her love for America, Lowey strives to improve society for the future of her family and her country.

It has been two months since the tragic Orlando shooting and killing of 50 innocent people by a man on the United States terrorist watchlist. Just the latest in a string of mass murders that could potentially have been prevented with a stricter gun policy. The buzz in America is rising. It’s time for Congress to do something! #nomoreblood.

Democrats respond. They announce that the “no-fly, no-buy” legislation in appropriations is passed, but the Republicans outnumber them on the floor, leaving the legislation a failure.

Protest and debates arise. Republicans adjourn the house early and turn off all C-Span cameras rather than continue the debate.

Democrats remain in the house, refusing to leave defeated like they have each time a mass murder has occurred and no action has been taken. Columbine, San Bernadino, Colorado Springs, Charleston, Newtown, and still, even the most basic gun control reform cannot get passed. But this time, things are different. The sit-in has begun. Cameras are on, streaming, speeches



House Democrats begin Gun Control Sit-In.

COURTESY OF NBC NEWS

begin, the country watching. And in the center of it all, 14 term, 78 year old Congresswoman, Nita M Lowey.

Democrats cheer, “No Bill, No Break”, “No Fly, No Buy”. Speeches are given. They sit. They wait. They cheer again. Speeches are given. 24 hours pass and Democrats refuse to leave until finally they are forced to by the Republican Speaker of the house. But the point has been made. Congresswoman Lowey and almost 170 of her colleagues will no longer take defeat on Gun Control. “It’s time for action to end preventable gun violence. We can not allow suspected terrorists to buy guns and we must have comprehensive background checks to keep guns out of the wrong hands...”

The following is an excerpt from my interview with Congresswoman Lowey, the author of the “No-Fly, No-Buy” legislation and many other gun control bills which she has been sponsoring in the house for almost three decades:

Ilan: *What initiated the sit-in?*

Lowey: Every day, we hear about incidents all across the country where people are dying from guns. Recently, there have been even more major demonstrations of violence, such as the Orlando shooting. Many of my colleagues from places like Chicago and other cities tell me that these shootings are a normal course of events. Every day people are dying from guns. So I felt, and many of my colleagues felt, we would no longer be silenced. We have been trying to pass legislation into Congress, year after year, such as ‘No-Fly, No-Buy’, which means if you are on a terrorist watch list

you can’t buy a gun, or more background checks, but we can’t pass it. Even when the head of the FBI says 3 days isn’t enough; that you need 6,7, 8, or 9, days to do thorough background checks.

Our caucus just felt enough is enough and we got to get some action. John Lewis who is a civil rights leader and other members of the Democratic caucus decided that we should do this sit-in and let’s do it now. And it just happened! They started it, others joined them, we were up all night...

Ilan: *But, Speaker Ryan said that he allowed a fair vote on the issue and the Democrats lost. Is that a fair statement?*

Lowey: That is really disingenuous because what happened in appropriations is I introduced, for the sixth time, my ‘No-Fly, No-Buy’ amendment, and it passed. But when it went to the floor all the Republicans and two Democrats who are supported by the NRA voted against it. So, for the speaker to say ‘I gave the Democrats a vote’, that’s just not true because it wasn’t regular order on the floor of the house. So what we began to say was ‘No Bill, No Break, No Bill, No Break’. We were saying this over and over again, and although they turned off the C-Span camera, my colleagues taped the sit-in with an app called Periscope and by other means. We kept saying, ‘We shouldn’t be leaving on a break when people are dying, dying from guns.’ But, I’m very concerned that the power of the NRA, the power of campaign finance and contributions, is not going to enable us to have a real vote.

Ilan: *Why are members of Congress still voting with the NRA, even when it is clear that action must be taken if we want to stop the seemingly endless mass murders in America?*

Lowey: The NRA has so much power among Republicans and even some Democrats. The two Democrats who voted with the Republicans on the appropriations committee rely on the NRA to keep their seat in Congress. It’s because they give a lot of contributions to candidates and if you vote against them, they will have retribution. They will take revenge on you by supporting your opponent.

Ilan: *How can it be solved so that Congress, Democrat or Republican, can have a fair and unbiased vote on gun control?*

Lowey: I think we need to campaign finance reform. NRA gives huge contributions, as do other PACs, to maintain control in Congress. The only way to have a fair vote is through reform. But mainly, we just need to get out there and educate the voters. Over 90% of the people felt in polls after the sit-in that ‘No-Fly, No-Buy’ should be passed. And that’s simple. That’s just if you’re on a terrorist watchlist, you shouldn’t be able to buy a gun. But assault weapons, it is evident after so many of these senseless crimes that assault weapons don’t belong on city streets.

Ilan: *What was your experience at the sit-in like?*

Lowey: I was so proud to be a Democrat that night because, as much as we can keep talking and giving speeches, we really felt that we were going to be able to move the process forward. Unfortunately, the Republicans closed down the house. If it weren’t for Periscope, the public would never have known what was going on. And, to be able to stand or sit with John Lewis, a great civil rights hero, for him to lead us, that was quite an emotional moment.

Ilan: *Where do you stand on the gun control controversy in the U.S. and*

# Black Lives Matter

By MAYA GEMSON

As events of terror constantly fill every platform of social media, I am forced to react. I am forced to have an opinion, to show remorse at our society, and forced to look at who is stepping up. After taking Crime & Punishment, I was introduced to the cruel world that is the justice system. I learned about the hundreds of unsolvable problems that happen inside prisons and courtrooms every day. The class terrified me. It felt like there was no silver lining and that if there even was going to be a fix, it wouldn't come for a long time. I began to notice the little aspects of my life that promote anti-blackness, and create a direct pipeline to prisons for both men and women of color. It was a reality check.

The shootings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile and the subsequent events in Dallas not only terrified me as a person of color, but also forced me to worry about the future of this movement. The shooting of the police officers as well as Dallas civilians illustrate that our country is on the precipice of a divided future if something is not fixed. The unjustified killings of people of color can no longer be accepted, and as the events in Dallas showed, a flare of violence and anger is inevitable.

The racism that I learned about in 1st grade was a gross understatement of the real world. But I also learned something in the class I hadn't thought of before: the youth

can be the best catalyst for change. At our age, we have experienced the real world to the extent that we know it's not pretty, but there is a certain level of hopefulness that kids possess that I don't think adults have. I have watched my peers speak out and address these issues with not only sentiments of justified anger, but also ones of hope. But I am not blind to the fact that not everyone cares. To me, one of the scariest aspects is that some people don't recognize the problem, don't make any attempts to understand the problem, and don't put in any effort to end it. Those are the people that are going to make this war a lot harder to fight than it already is.

I recognize that bias also plays a huge role in this movement, and that however you identify can impact the issues you care about. It is impossible not to experience and react to life as it plays out through our own eyes, and therefore our own point of view. I urge people to rethink what truly separates us, and think about why this cannot just be an issue for the community of black men and women. I think through a deeper understanding of why the system is this way, and why our biases force some people to care while others can shrug it off, we can come to a unifying conclusion that things must change. Through this understanding, which all Fieldston students should have, there is no excuse not to care.



Congresswoman Nita Lowey of New York. *what would you like to see changed?*

COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK TIMES

Lowey: Well, my stance is simple: we absolutely need gun-control. The legislation that I talked about is very basic and we have to do a lot more. There are many people who are in hospitals, dead, or needing more mental health services because of assault weapons. They are not being used to shoot animals, they are being used to shoot people. But as a start, we have got to make sure that if you are on a terrorist watchlist and you can't fly, then you shouldn't be able to buy a gun. And finally, a longer background check. The head of the FBI told Congress that 3 days wasn't enough for an efficient background check.

Ilan: *Would you personally, and speaking for Democrats, go as far as to fully banish guns from citizens if the opportunity was given?*

Lowey: I, we, are not saying that people don't have a right to own a gun. I'm simply saying that they shouldn't be able to go on a city street with an assault weapon. I've never had a gun, I don't have any interest in having a gun, but I'm not saying that people shouldn't be able to own a gun. But if you're on a terrorist watchlist, you shouldn't have a gun. If you can't pass a good background check, you shouldn't have a gun. There are clear guidelines that, in my judgment, have to be in place so dangerous people, people who have no problem with shooting someone, or engaging in violent crime, don't have a gun.

Ilan: *Even though the sit-in failed to secure the votes the Democrats were seeking for new gun control legislation, how do you think it has impacted our nation?*

Lowey: I think it had tremendous impact in my district and in other districts. In fact, there was a national day of action on the Wednes-

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3901 Fieldston Road, Bronx, NY 10471

**Editors-in-Chief:** Emma Mitnick, Alex Greenberg, and Keerti Gopal

**Managing Editors:** Tyler Friedman and Ben Kava

**Art, Layout, and Design Editors:** Andrew Celli

**Contributors:** Maya Gemson, Bryce Kassalow, Oliver Bellinson, Ilan Luttway, Saoirse Maher Green, Matthew de Boar, and Will Klein.

**Printing:** Kirk Ruebenson and Carl Smith

**Faculty Adviser:** Bob Montera

# Fieldston Curriculum Changes cont.

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sitive and proactive in this area in the music department.” In terms of curriculum, Mr. Christensen thinks the Music department is doing pretty well. “We offer an unusually diverse program for music students in the Upper School...If a student feels that they want to study a particular type of music, they will most likely be able to find it somewhere in our curriculum.”

Exclusion of all kinds, particularly racial and cultural, can come up in every facet of school. “We work in a school where there’s a long and valuable history about race,” said Clare Mottola, chair of the Theatre/Dance department, “and we need to be acutely familiar with Adler’s original intentions.” This

department’s goals for the coming year include presenting characters, productions, and dialogue that students can see themselves in. “Our department has always sought and will continue to seek to dismantle the white, straight, Eurocentric, male, patriarchal way of making art and presenting art. Therefore, at a school that has predominantly white, straight identifying individuals, it is even more pressing to think about everything we do as an antidote and perhaps a response to that.”

The new year will bring dialogue in every department, and the Ethics department specifically will have a task force devoted to rethinking the Form III curriculum. “I think the 9th grade curriculum needs to be given

significant consideration, because it’s the primer for the rest of your high school career,” said Ethics department chair Rachel Ehrlich. It seems that the main challenge of this curriculum is the tension between presenting the ethical canon as something valuable that needs to be explored, and something dated that needs to be critiqued. The Ethics department (like History and English) is also looking closely at their elective program. “I believe very strongly that we have to have some kind of requirement,” said Ms. Ehrlich. “A marginalized identities or non-western requirement or something like that, that exists across all departments.”

The goal of the Ethics department, in Ms. Ehrlich’s words, is

“engaged citizenship.” And that idea, that students strive to understand and better the world around them, is the very core of our school. There isn’t a simple solution to the issue of cultural inclusivity. There’s no master list of courses or topics, no checklist that will guarantee no Fieldston student feels excluded. This conversation will be continuous, but it is heartening to know that all departments have begun discussion and reflection. At the end of the day, as Clare Mottola put it, “no member of this community should ever be in a position where they feel like a guest.” It’s sad to think that we aren’t yet at that point, but it’s an ideal we must strive for.

# Life after Exoneration cont.

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\$80,000 for every year spent behind bars. New Hampshire, on the other hand, offers exonerees \$20,000 maximum, regardless of how many years served. Most exonerees, however, don’t even meet the eligibility requirements to be affected by the fluctuation of such statutes. In some states, including Nebraska, exonerees cannot claim any compensation if the court finds that they somehow contributed to their own conviction (by, for example, falsely confessing to a crime). This is a heavy restriction given that 1 in 4 people exonerated by DNA evidence made a false confession or incriminating statement during police interrogation. It is erroneous to assume that exonerees who confessed did so on their own volition: in a 2004 study

conducted by Drizin and Leo, it was found that 1/3 of the 125 proven false confessions were by juveniles who either cracked under the pressures of interrogation or, as Calvin Ollins put it, “didn’t understand what they were getting themselves into once they signed that statement.” In other states, such as Montana and Missouri, only those who were exonerated by DNA evidence can receive compensation and certain states require an official government pardon to be eligible for compensation.

And in the time they await compensation, exonerees are levied with yet another burden, their criminal record. That’s right: A person who is wrongfully convicted and later released must file a separate motion to have their record expunged. If

that motion is successful, they then receive what is called a Certificate of Innocence which officially seals the conviction and states that the defendant should never have been arrested in the first place. But obtaining such a certificate can take a long time: each agency is given 60 days to object to or sign off on a defendant’s petition of innocence and then the law enforcement agencies are given another 60 days to expunge the record. There are additional filing deadlines that place further strain on the exoneree to get it right. Thus, in the best case scenario, an exoneree can expect to wait at least 4 months before his or her innocence is officially recognized by the state.

In the meantime, an exoneree is treated as an ex-felon and is unable

to vote, travel, live in public housing, or receive federal cash assistance such as food stamps and SSI. [1] When an exoneree goes for a job interview, they are sorely disadvantaged if their employer decides to run a criminal background check, which approximately 2/3 of organizations do. A parolee, under the guidance of a parole officer, has a government agent on his side and may learn strategies to help minimize the turbulence of reintegration. Exonerees have no one to point them in the right direction. They are victims of a system that not only steals the best years of their lives, but saddles them with handicaps that imprison them long after they leave their cell.



Fieldston Lower School renovations.



Upper Field in the summer.

PHOTOS BY KEERTI GOPAL