Alice Walker Visits NRHS

By Gray Marlow

The American writer and activist, Alice Walker, made a nearly three-hour-long visit to New Rochelle High School this October to answer questions from students and community members ranging a vast amount of topics. The night was filled with laughter, cheers, and many insightful answers by the eloquent poet.

The event, “An Evening with Alice Walker”, was sponsored by NRHS and the Women’s Enterprise Development Center with Dr. “TEA” Traci Alexander moderating. Dr. Alexander was the key connection that brought Alice Walker to the Whitney Young stage in New Rochelle.

Ms. Walker arrived with a lively group, including Bongi Duma from the cast of The Lion King, who spoke about his life growing up in South Africa during apartheid, and 1,000 copies of her newest book Taking the Arrow Out of the Heart. She later spoke on the collection of poems, citing a Buddhist metaphor as the inspiration for the title.

After taking some time sharing her thoughts on the book, Walker began fielding questions from the students and community members in the audience. The topics ranged from police brutality to how to become a writer and back. Each question was answered with words of wisdom from the knowledgeable author.

In reference to a poem that was inspired by an incident where a white police officer shot a black teenager, Ms. Walker said, “This is a message that I wish all of the police officers and vigilantes and Klans’ people truly understand — that you really don’t get away with inflicting suffering and pain and hurt on mothers.” Her words spoke volumes to the audience members as they cheered and applauded.

After a question about writing, the poet said, “Really follow your spirit, because writing enlarges your spirit.” And later stated, “Writing writes back to you. Writing improves you as a human being.” The audience hung on to each word out of the legendary author’s mouth, taking in each idea she touched. One student, Felicity Flores-Drew, was particularly captivated. Walker’s words spoke deeply to her as she is an aspiring poet. Felicity has been a fan of the accomplished author for much of her teenage years, first finding the esteemed The Color Purple. When given the chance to ask her idol a question, she first thanked the author, saying, “You have given me resilience beyond words.”

Later, when asked about what the experience meant for her, Felicity said, “I took away that even though Alice Walker is a literary legend, she’s human, just like the rest of us. Adding, “The next generation of writers can only be acknowledged if they attempt to write, no matter how poorly they begin,” echoing the words of Ms. Walker.

The mass of people that walked out of the auditorium that night each had smiles on their faces as they carried their new books home with the words of the astonishing Alice Walker reverberating in their heads. It was not only a positive night for those that attended, but one that will stick in the memories of students like Felicity Flores-Drew.

Photos provided by Mrs. Lydia Adegbola

2018-2019 School Year Brings Changes to NRHS

By Susanna Procario-Foley

The other day, a student arrived at my 3rd period class about ten minutes late; however, he was not admitted into the room. Our teacher, upholding the new rules, told him, “Sorry man, you’ve gotta go to the late room.”

According to the new late policy, students may be permitted to enter class up to 3 minutes after the bell signaling the end of the transition period in between classes. After that 3 minute grace period, any student who comes to class must go to the late room where their parents will be notified of their tardiness.

At the beginning of the day, the grace period is extended to 5 minutes to accommodate for traffic conditions or likewise circumstances out side of students’ control on the way to school. Like all prior lateness rules, this approach intends to encourage students to get to class on time. The idea is that students’ reluctance to miss an entire lesson motivates them to walk a little bit faster in the hallway. Consequently, the hallways should be a little bit less crowded and a lot less noisy during class time.

In addition to the new lateness policy, there are new rules regarding discipline. This year, NRHS is placing a much stronger emphasis on mindfulness. During orientation on the first day of school, all students witnessed a presentation that defined mindfulness as recognizing and accepting how one’s mind and body feel in the present moment.

A student who would previously be sent to in-school suspension for a given offense will now be sent to the Mindfulness Center where they will be provided with academic support and taught restorative practices. This aims to help students break bad habits, grow, and reach their academic potential.

As an alternative to out-of-school suspension, Mr. Mon-teleone has developed a program entitled Choices. This is a support program designed to help students resolve problems in a more effective manner. It will take place at the Boys’ and Girls’ Club of New Rochelle. Students who choose this option as opposed to out-of-school suspension will participate in restorative circles, self-esteem building activities, and programs that will support their academic achievement.

Lastly, there have been several changes to the administration. Mr. Starvaggi, the former Assistant Principal is now interim Principal. Mrs. Edwards-Thomas, the former House 2 Principal has become interim Assistant Principal. Mr. Mackin, who retired as the dean at Albert Leonard Middle School in 2016, has taken Mrs. Edwards-Thomas’ old position as House 2 Principal. Finally, Mr. Curley is the new director of guidance.

Our administration is working closely with teachers and security guards to acclimate students to these changes, enforce new policies, and make sure that this school year runs as smoothly as possible.
Editorial: How College Board Testing Hurts Students

By Liliana Conroy

On October 10, New Rochelle sophomores had their first encounter with the College Board when they took the PSAT. For many, this is just one of five or ten College Board-designed exams that they’ll take in high school. The organization claims to be “dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education,” and supposedly does this service through its administration of the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, and Advanced Placement exams.

On its website, the College Board describes itself as “a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity.” Given this description, though, I don’t think most students would recognize it. Instead, we know the College Board as the company that produces the tests which are some of the biggest stressors in high school. Though students have control over which tests they take (some don’t take AP courses, and others opt for the ACT instead), some routine of standardized testing is necessary to gain admission to the great majority of colleges in the United States. We’re told this from the beginning of our freshman year, and the scores that we achieve on these tests (most critically on the SAT) are often determining factors in a college admissions office.

A study released in 2017 co-authored by a College Board administrator showed that average grades for high school students are increasing, so a high grade point average loses value in the admissions process. The authors argued that this meant admissions officers should focus more on standardized test scores than on GPA, and while some critics have called this an attempt at self-preservation by the College Board as the test-optional movement gains strength, many admissions offices take SAT scores to heart. This means that the test prep routine becomes a critical part of many people’s high school experience in junior year, if not before. It’s stressful, especially on top of difficult coursework and extracurricular events.

This routine also isn’t cheap: the SAT test alone costs $47.50, subject tests cost $26 per sitting and $22 for each test taken, and AP exams cost around $94. This doesn’t include the cost of test prep resources, and the process becomes a major financial drain for many families. SAT fee waivers are available for those students motivated to ask, but each student is limited to two. This places lower-income students at a further disadvantage to wealthier peers, as wealthier students can not only pay for tutors and prep courses but can also afford to take the test as many times as they wish to take advantage of the ‘superscore’ policy at many schools. It’s unsurprising, then, that high family income has been shown to correlate with high SAT scores. And while the College Board bills itself as a “not-for-profit organization” (and is actually tax-exempt because of its legal status as a nonprofit), the company brings in immense amounts of money. College Board President and CEO David Coleman made $734,192 in fiscal year 2013, and the Washington Post’s Valerie Strauss states that “it’s easy to mistake big non-profits such as [the College Board] as for-profit companies, because they operate in similar fashion. They pay their top people a lot of money, charge fees for their services, make investments, market and lobby legislators.” While there’s certainly a justification for paying top executives well, it seems excessive to force students to pay $12 to electronically send their SAT score to each individual college to which they are applying and then to pay such an extravagant salary.

The College Board’s failures don’t end with its contributions to wealth disparities in college admissions. More practically, it has administered flawed tests in the past. This has been exemplified at least twice in the past year alone, as controversies with two consecutive SAT administrations have made news and sparked anxiety in students, especially this year’s graduating class. In June, test-takers were surprised to find that their scores on the exam’s math section were lower than expected. Some students taking the test for a second or third time found that although they had gotten more questions correct than on a previous administration, their section score was lower. The College Board chalked this up to the “equating” process, which apparently adjusts for a test’s difficulty by making students get more questions right to achieve the same score. However, the extent to which June scores were adjusted implies that the College Board had made that test administration significantly easier, thereby disadvantaging skilled students who would have performed well on a more difficult test and who plan to apply to schools at which a 700 carries significantly more weight than a 650.

Students still paid for the test, and those who were unhappy with their scores had time to sign up for the next test in August. However, just a few days after the August test was administered, several news sources found that the same test had been administered internationally in October of 2017 and its answers had been circulating online for months. While students will still be allowed to keep their scores, this could give those who had seen the test before a significant edge in college admissions. Not only does the College Board have undue influence over the college application process, but its missteps have the potential to artificially alter a student’s admissions chances, and as of yet the organization has not taken real measures to address either of these issues.

The SAT and other College Board tests have governed college admissions for decades. Today, though, the “test-optional” movement is growing. Colleges across the country are giving applicants the choice of whether or not to submit SAT scores, giving these schools larger applicant pools and sending a wake-up call to institutions like the College Board. While the test-optional movement is likely partially rooted in colleges’ desire to raise their average admit’s SAT score by ensuring that only the highest-performing students will submit scores, it also creates enclaves of classes whose students are more socioeconomically diverse with a broader range of academic interests. As the College Board attempts to compensate for this deviation by diminishing the role of GPA and other factors in the admissions process, the organization would do well to learn from both its recent errors and its critics’ words, and work harder to follow its own stated mission of “[connecting] students to college success and opportunity.”

The Huguenot Herald

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Advice for Surviving Junior Year

By Liliana Conroy

Junior year has a reputation for being the hardest year of high school, and sometimes, the most stressful year of your life so far. It’s the time when, for a lot of people, the college admissions process starts to feel real. People take their greatest number of advanced classes (except for a few over-achieving seniors I know) and begin to feel like every decision they make is pivoted on their future. At least, that’s how it was for me.

I never really believed the stereotypes of junior year as a freshman and sophomore. I thought that the upperclassmen I knew were just venting, or trying to scare me and my classmates with how difficult our lives were about to be. However, when I became juniors, though, I realized that a lot of what they’d said about junior year was true. Academics were harder than ever, and the reality of college in our futures was scary (though less scary than it is as a senior). But as hard as junior year may be, it doesn’t have to be a completely awful and anxiety-filled experience. I’m not an expert, but I did get through junior year myself, and had an okay time. Here are some ways I made junior year easier for myself.

1. Junior year is the first time that most people get some degree of freedom in their course selection. You can use that to your advantage. Try to get a well-rounded schedule, but also, if possible, take at least one class just because it interests you. It will be much easier to get work done if you like the material, and your grades will probably be better. (Current juniors have already basically completed course selection, so this may apply more to sophomores.)

Also, though, don’t be afraid to drop or switch a class. Last year, I switched from honors math to regular math, and I think that was one of my best decisions of the year. Though I wouldn’t advocate dropping every class that causes you stress because you do need to challenge yourself, sometimes dropping one of several difficult classes gives you more time and energy to devote to your other classes. I would not have done as well in any of my classes if I had stayed in advanced math, and after switching classes, I was able to give more time to each class I was taking. This also applies to extracurricular activities: if you’re stretching your time too far and you can’t focus time on school or on the things that mean the most to you, it might be time to give something up. It’s not possible to do everything, and you’re not ruining your college admissions chances by reducing your stress level and improving your junior year experience.

2. Take standardized tests early when possible. I know no one wants to think about the SAT and ACT, but at some point you have to, and you’ll have a much easier senior year if you finish testing as a junior. Testing early gives you time to retake tests if necessary, and also just gets you used to the process of testing that unfortunately happens a lot during junior year. You may want to look through practice versions of each test and try one under time to see which one works better for you before you decide which to take. (You really don’t need to take both unless you change your mind about which test to take.) You should also try to sign up for your test date early, so that you don’t end up having to drive to another state to sit for the test.

Pay attention to test schedules. If you’re taking SAT subject tests (some colleges require at least two, so it’s a good idea to take some if possible) you need to factor that into your SAT test dates, because you can’t do both on the same day. Some language subject tests are only given once a year (in November), so you’ll want to sign up for those soon after the start of school if you’re taking them. If you’re taking an AP class that has a subject test offered (such as US History), it might be a good idea to sign up for that subject test late in the school year. If you think you can prepare in time, there’s usually a subject test date right before AP exams start. As someone who tested on that day and did not feel prepared, I would be careful before signing up for that day, but it is an option. You should always look at practice tests, though, because some subject tests are very different from the AP course material (biology, for example).

If you’re taking AP exams, especially if this is your first year doing that, start studying earlier than you think you (Continued on next page)
Advice for Surviving Junior Year

(continued from previous page)

There’s a lot of material on the tests, and spacing out your studying will help you learn it more thoroughly than if you start studying three nights before. Even 15 minutes a day will make your life easier. If you don’t have the time or motivation to make a study guide, some AP courses have a lot of review videos online which can be helpful (APUSH especially has a lot of options). Take practice tests and write down the topics of the questions you get wrong, and study those topics. 3. My least favorite piece of advice to receive is “don’t worry about it,” because of course it’s not that easy. But I do have to say that there is no one thing that makes or breaks your college admissions chances—not your SAT or ACT score, or your GPA, or your class rank. When you’re researching colleges, don’t focus too much on their ranking. Instead, look at programs in your major (if you know what that is), and other factors that interest you (do you want to join Greek life? How big are the classes? Do they have majors and clubs that interest you?). Don’t let yourself get too caught up in the stereotypes of junior year. Yes, it might be stressful, but it doesn’t have to be awful. If there’s a club you’ve always wanted to join or some activity you’ve always wanted to try, it’s not too late to start! If I hadn’t joined a new club junior year, I wouldn’t be writing this piece now. Don’t be afraid to be new, because you might find something you really like. And as you’re trying to get everything done, don’t forget about your friends and the things you enjoy. You might not always get to have free time, but make sure to make time for yourself every so often, and know that the stress doesn’t last forever.

Coming of Age and School Change

By Gianna Cocovinis

It’s not often I try a new book that focuses on school change, but with the new year and some noticeably progressive changes that have been added, I thought what better of a time to observe the perspective of fictional characters as they navigate their own high school agendas?

Heretics Anonymous by Katie Henry has been getting quite the buzz in the book-nerd community, and with good reason. The story starts off with the main character, Michael, having his fourth first day of school in the past ten years. This presents him with having to constantly make new friends and deal with people’s curious looks and new-kid judgment in the halls, to the point where he sure doesn’t foster any high hopes for the traditional catholic school he has been enrolled in. For starters, he’s one of the only non-believers entering an environment that makes him a minority.

Michael’s first day at St. Clare’s Catholic School goes better than expected, though, taking him by surprise. He succeeds in making a new friend almost right away, which he doesn’t expect to happen. Lucy. Then Lucy introduces him to Avi, then to Max, and finally Eden. The students he meets have nothing in common except one thing that made them cross paths: they are connected by their differences, and for that all want change to happen. Their secret organization, “Heretics Anonymous” is a way for people in their school-who don’t fit the category as the average student-to have somewhere they can feel accepted. Each of them have their own reason for wanting to be in the club, whether that be choosing to loop around the dress code, identifying as a different religious group, or being a secret homosexual. So they’ve established their roles and issues with the system, the only problem is, achieving those goals have proven difficult for these outcasts when they can’t get up the courage and take action. When Michael shows up with an undeniably charismatic presence that quickly makes him the unofficial leader, the small band finally has a direction to go in that will bring about that change through underground projects. So Heretics Anonymous adds Michael as a member, and the team works to bring the school’s attention to their out of date policies. It’s easy to guess, though, that things spiral out of control from there. Michael has to not only deal with a school system that he cannot relate to, being in a different religious group and what comes with that, but he soon finds that there is more to learn about himself and his view of the world than he expected.

It’s hard for books to translate a sense of humor, and even harder to actually make someone laugh out loud, which I feel is a common occurrence without having the person right in front of you. But from the first opening lines of the page I got a sense of what I was in for. I was chuckling from the very start, and that only progressed as I got to know these characters, made funnier by the situations they wound up in. This author may be a median on the side, or she just has a way of writing a character with a sarcastic, witty sense of humor that appeals to the reader. Her writing style is quick, short and to the point. I found myself breezing through the scenes, not having any trouble or lack of motivation to keep reading because there really were no dull parts to slow me down. Everything had action, and everything was positioned so carefully that it all flowed without missing a beat.

I’d heard many people who have been given advanced copies expect to give this five stars. I’m usually pretty choosy with that kind of rating, there are always critiques I can make to a book that could make it better in my eyes, but Heretics Anonymous has really blown me away. After devouring the book in a matter of days, I can only say that the book will definitely be one of my top favorites of the year. Maybe it’s because a topic like this has not been talked about in young adult fiction, more often shied away from in general, but credit is due where credit is due. Katie Henry has made this book so relatable to the average teenager that I truly have no critiques to offer. A book like that was a breath of fresh air. Characters I could relate to, a writing style that took a new take on school change, and a new area of the contemporary genre that can start conversations. That’s what a great book should be, and for that I hold it in high praise. Bringing it back to what made me pick this book up in the first place, I realized that New Rochelle High school afforded us so many platforms and programs that lets students express themselves and change the world they live in. We all have a little bit of what it means to be in Heretics Anonymous, and we’re lucky that anyone in such a big world can make a big change.
By Carter Topol

This year, New York football has been a mixed bag, full of encouraging wins and devastating losses. As a New York Giants fan, I feel the fan base has been dealt more of the latter, but both teams have different paths going forward. Let's go over each team's season so far and see what the future looks like.

New York Giants:
So far, the season has not gone as many people have hoped. At the time of this writing, the Giants are 1-5 with an average defense and an inconsistent offense. Quarterback Eli Manning has struggled despite being gifted a rebuilt offensive line, a healthy Odell Beckham Jr. and star rookie running back Saquon Barkley. The defense has been better than expected, but is not good enough to carry the team to victory. As a result, the Giants have struggled out of the gate and their season is at a critical point.

Even worse, their future is unclear, as their starting QB is 37 and their offensive line, while improved, is still a mess. Overall, the Giants decided to go with a win now strategy by drafting Saquon Barkley instead of a franchise quarterback, like the New York Jet's Sam Darnold (more on him later), and it hasn't paid off so far. New general manager, Dave Gettleman, will have to draft well and sign the perfect free agents to steer the Giants in the right direction for the future.

New York Jets:
The Jets, at 3-3, may not make the playoffs this year, but they are very well set up for the future. This season is about developing rookie quarterback, Sam Darnold, and the rest of their young team. The Jets have many weaknesses on both offense and defense, as they have no clear top running back or wide receiver, and their defense is young and inexperienced. The future of the franchise rests on whether head coach Tom Bowles can develop Sam Darnold into a star QB and if general manager Mike Maccagnan can surround him with the talent he needs to succeed. After all, the Jets haven't had a star quarterback since the 1970s, so Jets fans are praying that Darnold is the answer. Overall, New York football may be uneventful for now, but it has a bright and interesting future ahead.

So far, New York football has been both disappointing yet promising, as both teams are going through struggles. The Giants season is all but over and they need to tear up the team to rebuild for the future. The Jets, meanwhile, are trying to build a Super Bowl contender behind Sam Darnold, but in order for this plan to work, Darnold needs to be developed into a star QB.

New York Giants/Jets Season Review… So Far
Pep Rally/Homecoming 2018

Photos by Ethan Turkewitz
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