

MINORITY REPORT

Double Issue: Minority Health and Senior Statements

May 2010

This paper aims to spread cultural awareness of the challenges facing historically disadvantaged and ethnically underrepresented groups in the IMSA community and the world as a whole. We believe that with the proliferation of knowledge through words, we can confront the stereotypes facing these groups and change commonly held misconceptions.



HIV/AIDS: How does it affect Black society?

By Omotayo Balogun

Courtesy of Omotayo Balogun



HIV/AIDS is always one of the diseases that come to mind whenever health in black society is addressed. This is largely because of Africa which has been affected

the most by this disease. However, even here in America, blacks are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. In fact, black Americans account for over 40% of AIDS related deaths and 50% of HIV/AIDS cases.

It is surprising that even with all of the advantages in the American healthcare system, African-Americans account for such a significant portion of the epidemic victims. Unfortunately, black community has several more

disadvantages than other race groups in the U.S.

Across all races, engaging in unprotected sex with a male is the leading cause of HIV. This event appears to be more likely especially amongst African-American homosexual males who account for roughly half of black males living with AIDS and a significant portion of males with AIDS over all. There is mostly speculation as to why black gay males are at such great risk of

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Courtesy of www.oralcancerfoundation.org (left), www.mygenecologist.com (right), www.plan2008.cancer.gov (cover)



Tobacco smoking is one the main factors that contribute to oral cancer cases. Statistics show that 33% of black males smoke cigarettes. Therefore, black males are at a higher risk of contracting oral cancer than any other racial group. Oral cancer is often overshadowed by diabetes and AIDS in terms of diseases that primarily affect black males. At left, a doctor examines mouth x-rays. At right, is the African American flag.



Oral Cancer: The Invisible Minority Amongst Health Issues That Black Men Face

By Shawon Jackson



Courtesy of Shawon Jackson

Black men live 7.1 years less than any other racial group. Every year over 100,000 African-Americans have a stroke. Forty-four percent of black men are considered to be overweight, and twenty-four percent of black men are obese.

As shocking as these statistics may seem, this is the reality that African-Americans, especially black males, are living. The disparity in health between black males and other racial groups stem from a wide array of reasons: racial discrimination, lack of health care and poverty.

While diabetes, hypertension and other cardiovascular diseases are common health issues that black men face, recent studies show that black males have developed a greater concern for such health issues; however, there still exists a lack of concern for another health problem many black males suffer from: oral cancer.

As one may predict, seventy-five percent of cases of oral cancers are connected to tobacco smoking and large consumption of alcohol. According to *Men's Health*, more than thirty-three percent of black males smoke cigarettes. For this reason, black males are at the highest risk of developing oral cancer compared to any other racial group in the United States. Studies conducted between 2001 and 2005 found that approximately 17 per 100,000 black men had oral cancer, whereas the incident rate for white males is 15 per 100,000 men. For black males, the incident rate increased to 19 per 100,000 by the year 2006.

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Infant Mortality Among Black Americans

By Bayo Bankole



Courtesy of Bayo Bankole

One of the most utilized yardsticks in determining the health and wellbeing of a select community is the infant mortality rate. This number can be utilized to gauge not only the health of a community, but also a host of other indicators of socio-economic status. Among Black Americans the infant mortality rate is 13.6 deaths per every 1,000 live births. This is a startling number when it is compared to the average infant mortality rate in America, 6.9 deaths per every 1,000 live births. This number indicates that multiple socio-economic factors still place Black Americans, and more specifically black mothers, at a disadvantage when compared to their non-black counterparts.

The leading cause of death among Black infants is low birthweight. According to the U.S. Department for Health and Human Services, four Black infants die of low birthweight for every white infant. A number of factors come together in creating this statistic; however it is difficult

to point out a single facet. A multitude of theories have been proposed to answer what effect social status has on the birthweight of infants, one of the most popular of these being the theory of ‘material deprivation, culture, and behavior’ proposed by Rutter and Quine. They suggest that,

“Social class has an effect on health outcomes because people at the bottom of the social scale suffer material deprivation and are part of a culture in which the predominant forms of health behavior are considered harmful.”

The fact that Blacks are disproportionately poorer than their white counterparts could be a large component in the disparity in the rates of low infant birthweight, and by extension infant mortality. Although Black mothers are almost as likely to receive parental care in their first trimester as non-Black mothers they are also 2.5 times as likely to only receive it in the third trimester or not at all. This is only one of the many effects that poverty has on the developmental health of a child. Other factors such as stress, diet, environmental status, and access to advanced medical care play a significant role in increasing the rate of infant mortality among Blacks. This same phenomenon can be observed on a global scale, as countries with lower GDPs per capita tend to have higher infant mortality rates. The strength of

the correlation between poverty and infant mortality is startling.

The infant mortality rate is not only a reflection of the health of a community. It also reflects the social status and background of those who comprise it. Impoverished Black Americans are beset on all sides by challenges that spring from their socio-economic condition. The disadvantages that result



Courtesy of www.capturedbycarrie.com from this condition range from lack of access to adequate medical care to the scarcity of fresh produce. Although lowering the infant mortality rate among Blacks and Americans in general will require a multipronged effort of considerable scale, we cannot discount the impact that poverty has on this figure. Although modern medicine has shrunk the number of infants who die to a marginal value when juxtaposed to that of earlier ages, if the poor cannot find their way to these modern treatments, then they might as well not exist. In the words of Zora Neal Hurston, “There is something about poverty that smells like death.”

Filipinos in the World of Healthcare

By Reichert Zalameda

Courtesy of Reichert Zalameda



When it comes to healthcare, or the medical field in general, it is recognized that a large part of registered nurses (RNs) are Filipino.

There is no real proof for it, but it is the perception many have about the Filipino community. All of the Filipinos I know are either nurses or have relatives that are in the medical field. On top of this fact, there are also Filipino doctors who are well respected in their field of study. However, the public's view of Filipinos in the medical field has recently been tainted. The most recent blow to the Filipino community is the comment made in ABC's *Desperate Housewives*. In questioning her doctor's medical ability, Teri Hatcher's character, Susan, demands to see his medical school diploma just to make sure that he did not graduate from "some med school in the Philippines." This outraged

"...if you go to any hospital in America, you will most likely find a handful of Filipino nurses, both male and female, on every floor. They are recognized as some of the most hard working and honest people."

Reichert Zalameda

the Filipino community, both in the United States and in the Philippines. Many demanded an answer as to why ABC would allow such a blatantly degrading comment like that to be aired. Teri Hatcher herself was ashamed to be the face who said the words. Of course, she and ABC offered a public apology, but by then it was too late. The damage had been done. Philippine medical schools are recognized to produce and deploy doctors from around the world. Many universities, like Far Eastern University, or FEU, employ American textbooks and teaching techniques in their classrooms. This in itself cancels out the idea that Filipino doctors, or those trained in Philippine medical schools, are second rate when compared to doctors trained in the United States. In a special article to the *New York Times*, Pamela G. Hollie reported that

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Filipinos are a strong presence in the medical field. Many are nurses while many respected doctors are also of Filipino descent. However, the media has the power to change the perception of a culture. On ABC's *Desperate Housewives*, Filipinos' contribution to the medical community was challenged.



Courtesy of www.ilsdole.gov.ph



Courtesy of www.ofwngayon.com

HIV/AIDS

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contracting HIV. There is no evidence that suggests that black homosexuals engage in behaviors that are in anyway more risky than the behaviors of their white and Latino counterparts. Similarly, black women have been greatly affected by the AIDS epidemic. However, in the African-American female demographic transmission usually occurs through heterosexual relations. Either way it is spread, sexual relations accounts for one of the biggest factors of HIV/AIDS in African- Americans. Unfortunately this problem is a result of socio-economic factors that do not have a quick solution. The presence of HIV amongst blacks correlates to a number of other sexually transmitted diseases that affects blacks more than any other group. Such evidence suggests that unprotected sex is not uncommon in African-American culture.

The use of injection drugs by African-Americans is another reason why there is such a high incidence of AIDS in the black community. About one-third of all black HIV patients received the virus as a result injection drug use. Overall, use of injection drug use and thus transmission of virus through this medium is more likely to affect African- Americans than any other racial group. Injection drugs are highly expensive, thus these customers often times to turn to prostitution to fund their habit. This further facilitates transmission of HIV because prostitutes who are under the influence are less likely to insist that their clients use protection.

Socio-economics plays an important role in the transmission of HIV especially when pertaining to blacks. Poverty, one of the greatest socio-economic problems in the black community, is also one of the greatest contributors to the

AIDS epidemic. Studies show that poverty is directly proportional to school dropout rate which is inversely proportional to income. Because poverty is so common in the black community, the school dropout rate amongst African-Americans is high. Consequently, these Americans have a lower household income. Further studies show that illegal activities like drug use and prostitution are linked to lower income. These illegal activities are facilitators in the transmission in the HIV virus. Thus, because blacks are more likely to participate in these activities, they are more susceptible to AIDS. “The symptoms of poverty also influence sexual relationship patterns that encourage the spread of HIV.”

Poverty in the black community has also made it more difficult for blacks to have access to healthcare because of the price of insurance. Therefore, medical professionals are often seen when it is too late to cure or catch a disease. Because HIV/AIDS is not detected early amongst African-Americans, those who are unknowingly affected by it are able to unknowingly spread it to others continuing this cycle.

HIV/AIDS is oftentimes as just the “Africa problem”, however, a significant portion of the American population is being affected by this epidemic. There are many U.S. based international AIDS relief efforts, but more efforts need to be made in the U.S. to stop the spread of this disease. Without more education and medical assistance to African-Americans, the AIDS epidemic will continue to ravage the black community until black Americans begin to see depopulation mirroring that of the epidemic-ravaged Africa.



HIV/AIDS is a very serious issue in the black community as it is spreading at an alarming rate. Socio-economic status is a large contributing factor in the transmission of this disease.

Courtesy of www.averl.org (right),
www.blogout.justout.com (left)

Oral Cancer Continued from pg. 2

Although there is not a significant difference between the number of men with oral cancer between black and white males, the difference in survival rates between the two groups is appalling. Over a five-year period, sixty-one percent of white males will survive oral cancer but only thirty-six percent of black males live with the disease.

“Could these health issues not be prevented from a yearly exam?” one may wonder. Although common to other racial groups, majority of black males fail to consult their doctor or physician about health issues, especially after the age of forty, which is, ironically, when they are at the greatest risk for oral cancer.

The good news, however, is that some steps are being taken to raise awareness to the

African-American community about oral cancer. April 12-18, for example, is Oral Cancer Awareness Week, and The National Institutes of Health has begun a campaign that urges black males to get tested for oral cancer.

Oral cancer may be considered the “minority” of diseases that black males face, but this is no reason why it should be overlooked. An immense amount of effort has been put into informing the black community about diabetes and related diseases, and the same needs to be done for oral cancer. Awareness is a small job that can produce the greatest change, and by simply knowing how to prevent oral cancer, black males will slowly, but surely, gain those 7.1 years back, and enjoy the entirety of their lives just as any other racial group would.

Filipino Nurses Continued from pg. 4

many foreigners apply to get into FEU, but every year, only a few are accepted because only 5 percent of first year applicants can be comprised by foreigners. And even that five percent, after graduating and moving back to their respective countries, do well in their practice. Many confess that they would rather go to medical school at Yale or Harvard, but FEU appreciates their talents and prepares them well for their field.

On another note, if you go to any hospital in America, you will most likely find a handful of Filipino nurses, both male and female, on every floor. They are recognized as some of the most hard working and honest people. Of course, I cannot presume to speak for all of the 7,000 plus islands in the



Courtesy of www.kabacare.com

Philippines, but I am fairly certain that we did not deserve such a comment said about us. Since the end of the Second World War, the United States and the Philippines have worked hand in hand. This one comment will not immediately bring down that friendship, but if it is not addressed, it will go on and eventually tear apart what generations of Americans and Filipinos have worked so hard to build. Mutual respect is what is needed most for this international relationship to prosper in both countries. It is something that I think is clearly present in the IMSA community. The ethnical diversity on our campus opens our eyes to each other and truly prepares us to be positive change in our world.

Chinese Health

Under the American Healthcare System

By Katie Shi

Traditional Chinese medicine embodies hundreds if not thousands of years of Chinese philosophy and culture. The Chinese have a holistic approach to medicine that is influenced by Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Chinese medicine incorporates cultural concepts such as yin-yang and qi, an individual's 'energy.' For example, with yin and yang, it is all about balance. The body, as well as food, is supposedly divided into yin and yang components. It is believed that by eating a good combination of yin and yang food, the body will be balanced and healthy. However, eating excess yin or yang foods will lead to ailments like fever and dehydration. Like yin and yang, qi, one's personal energy, is also about balance within the body. Qi (pronounced like 'chee') flows throughout the body and governs the function of the lungs and the heart. If an individual's flow of qi is interrupted, that individual's health will be

damaged. Thus, the Chinese developed tai chi as a means of exercise that institutes qi balance in addition to acupuncture. Overall, the Chinese idea of health is very natural and holistic, and therefore, Chinese medicine is as well. Chinese medicine consists of herbs and other natural methods of recuperation, and it seems to work well.

Chinese people living in the U.S. today rely heavily on herbal Chinese medicine to treat their ailments, especially the elder Chinese. The elder Chinese do not seek health care from medical professionals because of the language barrier. Most elderly Chinese people in the U.S. speak little to no English. In the 1990 census, 2.4 million Asians stated that

could not speak English proficiently and 48% of the elderly Chinese claimed that they could not speak English at all. Thus, these older Chinese people cannot communicate very well with doctors and explain the symptoms or pains they are experiencing. Therefore, they must rely on family members to explain their predicament and sometimes, their family members cannot comprehend the medical terminology that doctors use. To avoid this situation, many elderly Chinese people do not seek medical care from professionals, and thereby, create the illusion that Chinese Americans are healthier than they really are.

Another health concern for Chinese Americans is the fact that the diseases that are prevalent within the Chinese community, such as Hepatitis B, are not a big concern for other races. Thus, when Chinese Americans

do go in to see a doctor for a check-up, those diseases are overlooked, which can be detrimental to their health because they are highly susceptible to those diseases.

The culture difference between China and the U.S. is reflected in many ways, including medicine and health care. Currently, there are many issues pertaining to Chinese health in America that are unknown. Hopefully, now that these issues are exposed and the second generation of Chinese Americans are fluent in English, there will be fewer concerns regarding Chinese health in the U.S.



Courtesy of www.dbtechno.com

Senior Statements

By Gabriela Cardoso

The most unforgettable things about IMSA are definitely the amazing people you come across. I can honestly say that I have met some of my life-long friends here and that is impressive considering I'm only seventeen years old. Of course, the work-load will also be unforgettable, but we made it and all of us were accepted into good schools- we are all where we are meant to be. I know it is very easy to worry about grades, college, SATs, but you have to enjoy your time at IMSA and truly enjoy every second of it because in a blink of an eye it is gone. I still can't believe graduation is less than a month away! Anyway, just know that no work you do is in vain. Honestly, every good grade on an assignment prepares you for what is yet to come. You begin to develop those study habits that will be greatly appreciated in college and you realize how important it is to know your teachers because they can be a



Courtesy of Justin Glasper



great resource. I know that is easy to get down on yourself after a failing test or project, but what I always say is "Four years from now it won't matter if you got a B in a class or a C on a test." I had many breakdowns throughout my IMSA career, but I made it this far. Everyone has a special gift in him or her, and everyone is amazing; you just have to believe in yourself and find it for yourself. You have to find it so that others can see it too. Find what makes you happy

By Justin Glasper

When I look back on the past three years I have spent here, I am bombarded with a stream of images. I see the late nights I pulled trying to finish my homework and the many laughs I shared with my friends. Most importantly, however, I see the ways in which I have changed. When I first came to IMSA, I was afraid to try my best, not because I did not want to fail, but because I felt that no matter how much I

and do it all the time! Smile and laugh because it releases the stress :) Talk to your friends because no one can understand you better than those who are living IMSA with you. And remember to never feel inferior because you are Latino, African-American, or another minority. Instead, feel proud. Take pride in all of your accomplishments and celebrate you! Enjoy Life's journey all the way through and just feel the love.

achieved I could only go so far because I was limited for being a minority. From all the experiences I have had at IMSA, though, I know now this could not be farther from the truth. I have watched my peers do things unimaginable to most teenagers, and I myself have accomplished things I would have never even considered a few years back. I learned that success has no distinct form or shape. The obstacles that stand in our way are

Photos courtesy of Gabriela Cardoso

Justin Glasper (Cont.d)

placed by us only. Here I have found people who truly want me to succeed and have supported me in all my endeavors. Though cliché, support, determination, belief in yourself, and perseverance are truly the tools that lead to success.

To minorities at IMSA, I leave you this advice: Do not ever sell yourself short on your capabilities and ability to achieve your dreams. You are able to accomplish whatever you set your mind to do. To all underclassmen: never for a single moment think you are alone in any hardship you face. IMSA is full of people who genuinely care and if you keep an open mind, they will become some of your closest friends. Last, but definitely not least, throughout your time here, remember to stop from time to time and enjoy your IMSA experience.

By Leslie Martin

Three years at IMSA is enough time to learn many things about the world and communities other than where you are from. Where else could a girl from some pace near Indiana embrace an unusual connection with the Chinese language? That's just a little bit to say about myself, where others have accomplished things even more phenomenal. In closing to others who find themselves at the same point I was one or two years ago I have one bit of advice to share; keep going. These words may seem mediocre and similar to an attempt to feed off our own President's campaign pitch, but I mean these words in the most sincere way. From spending three years here I have learned that my comfort is not so much defined by the color of people's skin in the

room, but rather the diversity of its people and the caliber of our



Courtesy of Leslie Martin

conversation. I have learned that it is best to not react with offense to many statements but a strong example, oneself, can be the best response. Most importantly, I have gained so many friends and established so many connections that had I allowed myself to fall short of walking across that stage, I would have felt nothing but regret. A unwavering focus on the purpose of being at IMSA and on the pleasant traits you would like to acquire from this place are the best means to avoiding failure; after all, no matter how loosely we use the word we all know that we are far from in fact being a failure. Allow yourself to enjoy every moment of this place no matter how busy you may feel, because at the end of the year all that will matter is you how you spent your time and who you made memories with.

By Malik Alim

During my early days at IMSA, I had a chip on my shoulder. I recognized that I was one of very few black males to be accepted and I used this knowledge as motivation to come against every stereotype of

underachievement and laziness associated with my race. Because of my attitude, I was confrontational and defensive whenever discussions about race came up, which was quite often as any IMSA student can attest. With each conversation, I became more mature. I grew into the open-minded persona that people would come to know me for. My role at times was that of a bridge between groups; I will forever be thankful to IMSA for unlocking that part of my personality for me.

My best advice for underclassmen would be to allow IMSA to leave its mark on you, but never abandon your



Courtesy of Malik Alim

originality and always remember where you come from. The Academy has the distinctive ability to bring out the best in people's personalities and transform erratic thought processes into responsible mindsets. Embrace what IMSA has to offer and bend it to fit your needs and interests. IMSA offered me the opportunity to have sleep-deprived conversations about life at 3 o'clock in the morning with young men of different backgrounds. Those types of experiences have proved invaluable to me. Figure out what unique experience is hidden within your time at IMSA and let it transform you.

By Maria Martinez

As a minority who lived most of her life in East Aurora, where the majority of the population is Hispanic, I knew I was going to experience a great culture shock coming to IMSA. How right I was. As soon as I set foot in the main building, I was surrounded by people from very diverse backgrounds. At first I thought there would be no cliques at IMSA; I was shown otherwise. In a school where Hispanics and African American are the minority, it is quite easy to remain with those similar to you. As natural as this may be, it is definitely worth it to break out of that shell and make the effort to form friendships with those different from you. Although IMSA is known for its stellar academics, it is definitely the people here that influenced me to be who I am today. As a minority, you will often encounter the stereotype that you (being Hispanic or African American) may not be the brightest, wittiest, etc, but you have to break away from those thoughts. Paying attention to this will bring you failure. Having dreams and doing everything possible to realize them, that will bring you success. Do not ever let something like race, skin color, or stereotypes influence your course of action or define you. Always remember that you

Courtesy of Maria Martinez



are the architect of your own life, and it is your choices, not those of others, that will take you where you want to go.

By Mariam Alaka

“I hate IMSA!” That was my mentality throughout my whole IMSA experience until senior year, and there were still times towards the beginning that I fell into that mode. I didn’t appreciate IMSA or really want to be there until college essays. With college essays, you’re forced to reflect on your IMSA career and you realized how much you changed, and how your IMSA experience differs from how your home school experiences were. My advice to minority underclassmen is that they should not allow what people say or do affect them. There are times when they may think they are facing racism, or people are picking on them and they allow it to consume their lives. Learn to let what people say go, because in the real world, you will probably face more. Don’t hold on to every little thing, and enjoy every moment because you don’t want to be in my position wishing you would have. The force that helped me succeed and strive was staying focused on my goal and time management. As long as they have a goal, use all resources, and stay focused, they will not fail.

Courtesy of Mariam Alaka



By Stephanie Bernardo

To all the young people out there:

Coming from a predominantly Latino-enriched neighborhood, coming to IMSA was a culture shock for me. I was and always will be a proud Berwyn, Catholic, Saudi Arabian-born, Filipina native, but interacting with such a diverse group of peers for the first time definitely took some adjusting. Roller coaster memories of belonging and feeling like an outcast passed by as I look back at my years here but I'm more than thankful that I went for the ride. With my amazing friends, new and old, strapped by my side and with my family watching me scream from below, I was able to confront the obstacles this high school had in its tracks. There were bumps along the way, times when I wanted to cry and scream my lungs out, friendships that unfortunately didn't last, but through this ride, I was able to face some of my biggest fears and



Courtesy of Stephanie Bernardo

grow as an individual.

As you guys continue your roller coaster life, I leave you with these words: seize every opportunity that comes your way for second chances are not always given. Always cherish those you love and never take people who

care about you for granted. Be proud of all your accomplishments and above all, be true to the person you are. I'm happy for all that I've been given and can't wait to tackle future rides that await me.

By Nick Reid

"In a place like IMSA, it is really easy to fall behind everyone else just because you don't perform as well as the other (insert race here) at your table. Students who used to be at the top of their class would find themselves giving up because no one expects them to excel past a certain point. Even I asked myself every now and then

why I try so hard if I'm just going to get crappy results. I realize now that I got those results, not because of my race, but because of how I felt about myself in comparison to others. Know that all have the same potential and are able to be successful students if they just have the confidence that they can be."

Courtesy of Nick Reid



By Stephanie Martinez

As a minority at IMSA I felt that I limited myself unnecessarily. I kept telling myself, “a B here at IMSA is like an A at my old school.” This always relieved me from stress but prevented me from going above my expectations. I heard most of my friends complaining about how bad their grades were and I could identify with them. The grades I was receiving did not seem out of the norm. Therefore, I continued with my mindset; “a B here at IMSA is like an A at my old school.”

I realized that my success did not depend on the success of the people surrounding me. My parents were always proud of me and my accomplishments at IMSA. As a result, I had to give myself a rude awakening and provide the extra push in order to change my mindset and habits about my school work.

I would like to leave the underclassmen with some advice. First, make sure you have confidence in yourself. With confidence so much follows. Second, develop an efficient work ethic. Notice the word efficient. When you work efficiently you have so much time for other activities including sleep. Third, sleep is so important!!! Lastly, enjoy every second of your IMSA experience. It is invaluable. Before you know it, it will be over. But you will be left with plenty of memories to smile about.

By Vashti Aguilar

I can remember leaving SEAMS in the summer of 2006. SEAMS was my first experience at IMSA, and it was incredible. I met so many students that were of many backgrounds, mainly African-American and Hispanic. I felt so at home throughout SEAMS, and I loved the challenge of writing a seven page paper in two days, and learning for fun. It was my first experience at a camp being away from home. After SEAMS I knew IMSA was a place where I could be happy. As I look back I don't recall having a set vision of what IMSA would be like. I just knew I wanted to get in. I wanted something different-an ultimate challenge. After being accepted it all started to hit me. I wasn't as “gifted” or as “smart” as I thought I was. I got the letter that said I had to attend EXCEL, and from the beginning, I felt inferior. No one at IMSA ever treated me less. For the first two years throughout

my IMSA career I told myself that things would be harder for me because I wasn't Indian, or Asian, or Caucasian. As a Latina girl at IMSA I downed myself. I became my biggest obstacle. I would sit in the math office for hours and ask questions, yet I would never listen to my professors' guidance because inside I was telling myself, “You are just so bad at math Vashti. Face it, you are not cut out for this.” As I dug myself deeper and deeper with my reckless thoughts, I distracted myself from my academic insecurities through my extra-curricular involvements. I found that I was good at doing what made me happy. I volunteered, and did projects, and helped organize multicultural and awareness events. I helped those around me, and tried to motivate myself academically as I motivated others.

IMSA has been a rollercoaster. I won't say I am 100% happy with my career at IMSA because if I could go back to sophomore year there are so many things I would change. I would study and sleep more outside of class. I would ask questions and admit to my mistakes. I would believe in my ability and potential to overcome my weaknesses and insecurities. I would take advantage of class time to fully listen to the wisdom IMSA teachers offer, because they are sooo good. I would look at my background and say, “yes, I am Latina, and things may come harder for me, but race and background are not the excuse. I will work work work.” Although I would do things differently I still smile when I look in the mirror and see how much I have grown. I became a citizen of the world at IMSA. I became a proud Latina girl. I became an open-minded individual who is appreciative of people, and cultures, and education. In a couple of weeks I will be able to say that I became a proud IMSA Alum ready to apply everything I learned at IMSA wherever I go. The best advice I could give is the following: Don't drown yourself in a glass of milk while you are here. Set all of your negative thoughts and assumptions on fire and let your strengths and weaknesses shine. Share your gifts and talents whatever they may be, and embrace those around you. Speak your mind. Ask questions. GIVE HUGS, and Ask for Hugs when you need them. SMILE and after failing a test just go to the hill and scream and then roll down the hill and laugh it all off :D

Editor's Note: "Anything But Black"

By **Brandan Matthews**

During my sophomore year, a Black woman came to IMSA to perform a series of soliloquies that she had written about her childhood. She discussed the issues that she had had with her racial identity and the envy that she harbored for girls who had lighter skin than her. As a child she wanted to be "anything but black." Later in her life, though, she realized the beauty of her culture and she learned to embrace herself for her natural appearance. I identified with this brilliant performer instantly. Like her, I too tried to be anything but black as a child. I conversed with very few students of my own race and I failed to stop my friends from saying racist jokes about blacks in front of me.

I will always be grateful to IMSA for showing me the error in my logic. As a result of my three years at IMSA, I have a much greater appreciation for my heritage. I would have not have expected to be a part of AASA or Minority Report when entering IMSA. I believe that minorities have a big responsibility in this community. Minorities at IMSA are gifted, talented, determined,

strong individuals who are able to perform academically in spite of the pressures of living in an environment with so much cultural ignorance. Still, many students have lower expectations for or simply dismiss the academic achievements of minority students. I do not blame these students for their ignorance, however. It is up to minority students to prove these stereotypes false.

IMSA has taught me that it is important for minorities to seek support from students who are going through similar tribulations. I have learned that the only way to expect non-minorities to think more highly of minorities is to educate them. My advice to underclassmen minorities is to make friends with people who are not of the same background as you so that you can learn about their culture as you teach them about yours. Never forget the value of a support group that has had similar experiences as you. Always be willing to branch out and meet new people. And finally, embrace your culture because if you do not, what reason do other people have to want to learn about it?

Editor's Note: Transitions

By **Bernice Fokum**

I can still recall the sights, sounds, and smells on that hot August afternoon in 2007—the day that I first moved into the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy. I could not have predicted then where I would be at this point in my life. Now, I am on the verge of graduating IMSA and entering the next phase of my life as a member of the Class of 2014 at Princeton University.

As I leave, however, I wish to embark some of the wisdom that I acquired over the last three years. Being a Minority at IMSA presents a rich, unique, and trying experience. As diverse as the academy is, it is clear that there is great underrepresentation in some populations. I would implore all of my Minority underclassmen not to allow this to hinder you. It can at times be easy to succumb to the intimidation and the perceived low expectations that come with being a Minority. I have discovered that the only limitations that one has are those that are self-imposed.

Rather than set up barriers with your classmates from different races, learn to

embrace them and study with diverse groups of people. My favorite memories include those times that I stepped out of my comfort zone and united with people different from me for the sake of knowledge. Do not hesitate to seek help from your teachers or your peers.

Take advantage of **all** of the opportunities that IMSA provides. Programs like Student Inquiry and Research are unique and stand out on resumes. Assume some leadership positions. IMSA is a place that you can discover your potential to lead and facilitate among your peers. Not enough Minorities take advantage of these resources.

It is hard for me to believe that my time serving as Editor-in-chief of this publication has come to an end. It is a bittersweet moment, but in this time of transition it is my pleasure to announce that the succeeding Editor-in-Chief will be Bayo Bankole. I hope that the strong tradition and mission of the Minority Report will continue for years to come.

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BERNICE

FOKUM



EDITOR IN CHIEF

BRANDAN
MATTHEWS



LAYOUT/COPY
EDITOR

Any questions,
comments, or
concerns can be
directed to

IMSAMinorityReport@gmail.com.

SPECIAL THANKS

Mr. Kotlarczyk
Bob Hernandez