Mockingbird Times,

Recipient of 2005 Congressional Angels in Adoption Award

Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth.

September 2006 | Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation | Volume VI, Issue 9

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)

In This Issue

Letter from the Editor
Jim Theofelis
Page 2

Becoming a Senior
Larisica Asher
Page 2

Balancing Work and School
Sherrel Dorsey
Page 3

Finding My Way
Surri Evans
Page 3

Voices of Youth, Voices of Community
Jessica Garcia
Page 3

African-American Stereotypes
Samuel Martin
Page 4

Creative Corner: That's My Tidal Wave
Jonell Monique Gordon
Page 4

Creative Corner: Sister, Brother, & Me
Katie H.
Page 4

Creative Corner: Somewhere in the Middle
Dominic Rush
Page 4

Letter from the Editor
Jim Theofelis
Page 2

Welcome Home

Jamica Henderson

What would you do if you got the chance to become the guardians of your siblings still in foster-care? If you were in my shoes (just graduating from high school, exiting foster-care and living on my own) how would you answer this question? Taking in my siblings is something that I have told myself I would do if my siblings were not out of the system by the time I "aged out." I have been working at Mockingbird for over 2 ½ years now and I have learned a lot. After being here for a while and becoming good at my work, I have begun to feel that I can do something about fostering my siblings.

I was in foster-care for four years and I still have siblings in care. Working at Mockingbird Society has helped prepare me for the reality of becoming a foster parent to my siblings. I have learned so much about the system and what it would take to get them in my custody. I know many of the steps and work it would take for it to happen. I graduated in 2005 from high school and now am in college. I have my own apartment, a good job, and am living a pretty smooth life. Since I have been on my own for a while, I have been researching about ways I could get my siblings. When I think about me taking them in, I get really excited. But I know it will be a challenge. I like challenges and this one I know I can handle. I know that there would be some good and rough times. I know that it's the rough times that will also help our family grow. I feel that being able to be there and supporting each other will be fun as well as important.

While I was in foster-care, I lived in one home. I was really blessed to have the one placement and lucky to get the foster parents that I did. My siblings entered the system at the same time as me and have already been in five or more homes. It is hard to see your family going through all of that when you got to have the "good" foster parents. It hurts, when you lived with them so long before you were in care and then to stand by and watch them get treated in ways you never would imagine. This is what made my vision stronger about getting custody.

Well the day came when I was asked, "Would you like to be the guardian of your brothers?" Of course I would! I could see myself taking them in, taking them to school, getting them involved in extra activities and more. Now that I have the opportunity to, I am going to do it. While I was in foster we would have to visit with each other. In the midst of visiting we would always talk about us becoming a family again. I would always tell them if they were still in care when I got on my own, that I would take care of them. I believe, in some ways, the system has helped us to stay the strong family that we were. I say this because even though my sibs and I have always loved each other, being separated in the foster-care system has made our relationships and love even stronger because of all the ups and downs we have had to see each other through.

So, I come back to my question. Do I get to reunite my family, or pass up this chance? What would you do? Would you take in your brothers and all work together like the family you are? Or would you let them stay in foster care? I will keep you all posted.

Remembering Tupac

Raquel Granath

What made Tupac Shakur such a remarkable artist? Was it his love for women and money? Was it his "thug life" mentality that had the nation in a frenzy? How did a ghetto child transform into such a talented, brilliant and influential entertainer? As we reach the ten year anniversary of his brutal assassination, the solution to these and many other questions about his life continue to go unanswered.

Tupac was born in 1971 to Alice Williams who called herself Afeni Shakur after joining the African-American nationalist group called the Black Panthers. Following her acquittal for conspiring to set off a racial war, she struggled to raise her son in Bronx, NY while working as a paralegal. Unlike other children, when Tupac misbehaved the consequence often consisted of reading an entire issue of *The New York Times*. When he was two years of age, Afeni gave birth to a second child. A few months prior to her conception, Sekyiwa's father, Mutulu, was sentenced to sixty years in prison for a fatal armored car robbery. With the absence of Mutulu in their household, they experienced extremely hard times. Tupac recalls, "I remember crying all the time. My major thing growing up was I couldn't fit in because I was from everywhere. I didn't have no buddies that I grew up with."[1] As his life continued, the question of his father's identity afflicted his thoughts. Turning inward, he began to write love songs and poetry expressing his loneliness and yearning to know his father. As time progressed he started acting. "The reason why I could get into acting was because it takes nothin' to get out of who I am and go into somebody else."[1] He landed his first role as Travis in the world renowned play "A Raisin in the Sun," at the mere age of twelve.

He got in touch with his talent as a rapper when he moved to Baltimore at the age of fifteen. Everyone in their small town feared the notorious reputation of the Big Apple so he adopted the name MC New York. He started his school career at the prominent Baltimore School for the Arts, excelling at ballet and acting. It was here that he finally felt in touch with himself and accepted his white classmates. "That was the first time I saw there was white people who you could get along with. Before that, I just believed what everyone else said: They was devils."[1] Tupac had decided that his true passion was the arts and that he would pursue a life as an artist.

Tupac Shakur

Unfortunately, Shakur also had an uncontrollable lust for trouble. By the time he reached his twentieth birthday, he had been arrested eight times and had served eight months in prison for sexual assault. He was also the subject of two wrongful death lawsuits, one including the death of a six year old boy who was caught in the crossfire between Shakur and rival gang members.

As the eighties approached, Tupac was falling further and further in love with hip-hop. In '87 he teamed up with Eddie Humphrey, who went by the name Humpty-Hump, and some other Oakland based rappers to form Digital Underground. In 1990 they released their debut album Sex Packets, an effervescent testimony to the "boogie power of hip-hop." In 1992, Tupac broke free from Digital Underground and made his solo debut with the album 2Pacalypse Now. He then began the high-speed road to stardom that would later cost him his life.

The following year he starred as Bishop in the film Juice. His superb performance earned him respect in the acting world. Later on that year he released his second album, Strictly 4 My N.I.G.G.A.Z., an album that brought him coverage on the pop charts. He also found himself on police radar when allegations arose of him being involved in a violent attack on an off-duty police officer as well as another sexual assault case. It was around that time that he starred in his second film, Poetic Justice, alongside Janet Jackson.

The first attempt to end his life occurred in November of 1994 when he was shot five times during a robbery in which thieves escaped with $40,000 worth of jewelry. Incredibly, Pac survived and recovered from his injuries to produce his most impressive artistic accomplishments, including Me Against The World and the double CD All Eyez On Me which sold over five million copies on their own.

Tragically, a little over two years later Tupac was shot and killed following a Mike Tyson fight on September 7, 1996. His death was very painful to his fans but not surprising. Tupac said himself that he expected to die by the sword before he reached thirty. His assassin is still unknown to this day. The only

Tupac Continued on Page 4

Letter from the Editor

Jim Theofelis

The dog days of August are behind us and despite my own reluctance it is indeed time to bid farewell to the summer of 2006. September is the official month that transitions us into the Fall season, which for most kids and families means "back to school." For many children and adolescents and particularly those who have experienced trauma in their lives, transitions can be very difficult. Summer is typically a time that involves fewer expectations for kids, and of course school is just the opposite. For those kids who do well academically, school can be something to look forward to, as it provides a source of positive reinforcement, some predictable structure and an avenue for social relationships and activities. For those children and youth who do not do so well academically, school can be a very stressful place. Of course transitions are a "part of life" that we all need to learn how to deal with. However, parents can be a major source of support to kids as they face their anxieties and fears about school, grades, peers, teachers, etc. First, I would invite each of us to remember a time when we were scared about facing something and then to reflect on what was helpful and not helpful. All too often we as adults skip that human exercise of reflection and move straight to being the "expert," telling kids "there is nothing to be afraid of." Normalize their anxiety by expressing some compassion for the youngster, e.g. "Of course you're nervous, it's the first week of school-you're supposed to be nervous because it is such a big deal. I bet most of the kids in your class are nervous." To better assist the youngster who is struggling with the transition to school, it might be helpful to "anchor" the youngster. Another way to think of it is what I call "grounding." I let them know that when they return we can make cookies, play catch in the back yard, or do some other activity that the child enjoys and can look forward to. Mostly, remember to thank them for having the courage to do the things they don't want to do and remind them that you are aware of how hard they are trying and you respect that characteristic in them.

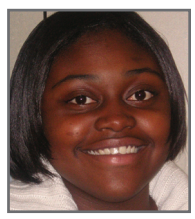
Jim Theofelis
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org

Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, Mockingbird Society. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, joins Miss Maudie in teaching his kids that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird because "…Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us." What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world in which our most vulnerable children and youth were protected and valued with the same commitment that Atticus had for mockingbirds? Join the Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

Becoming a Senior

Larisica Asher



I am becoming a senior this school year and it seems kind of scary. The only reason that I might be afraid is because it gets a lot harder. When I say harder, I mean that the work and the teachers get strict. You have way more responsibilities put on you. Also, being a senior can be very busy. Starting this year, I will be a part of the Rainier Beach Cheer Team. When we start I look forward to cheering for the guys on the football and basketball team. I also look forward to going on all the trips we take and also trying to go to the finals.

Now, lets talk about the work. I must say, it was very hard getting to where I am now. For instance, the finals and projects you have to complete to get your final, passing grade are hard. In my freshman year, I had to go to summer school because I didn't do too well in one of my classes. That was the only year I had to go to summer school and now I do better with my schoolwork. In my sophomore year I passed all of my classes with a C+ average. It was a time when I was going through some things that affected my work and it was really hard to focus.

Some of the problems that affected me in my sophomore year followed me to my junior year as well. My biggest problem was my living situation. I was in a good foster home, but didn't like how I was being treated. Like sometimes it was ok, then it was like hell. The only reason I say it was like hell is because I was in the foster home for about three years. The foster mother and I had our disagreements from time to time but we got through them. Like in order for me to live in this foster home I had to make a lot of changes about myself. Now I am willing to make these changes because they have helped me in life now.

Now, in my junior year, I had some other major problems with boys, and different living arrangements. These problems were so bad that I got to a point where I didn't want to go to school anymore. I never dropped out or stopped going, but I started to come to school really late or when I got to school I wouldn't go to class. As it got closer to the end of the year, I had realized that I needed to pass these classes or I would become something that I didn't want to be. I didn't want to become a fifth year senior. So, I got my act together and got back up on my work and attendance. So that by the time finals came around, I knew that I was going to do well and pass so that I wouldn't be left behind.

I am now a senior and I am really looking forward to going back to school. Because I have seen what I have done wrong in the past, I now know what changes to make to be successful. Another reason I am excited to go back to school is because I will be the first one in my family to complete high-school. I think that this year I will have a little struggle, but I know that I will do much better than what I did in the last three years. I really am looking forward to walking across that stage and seeing my mother and family in the audience screaming my name. Letting everyone know how proud they are of me.

In closing, I would like to send a "shout-out" to all of the foster youth who have had some good and some bad experiences and ups and downs in their lifetime. If you are having any problems making it through school, I hope this will help you some. I also shout out all the people I went to school with that helped me get through my hard times. A word from me to the readers; you can make it if you try. This is me speaking now as a new and improved senior at Rainier Beach High School.

Treehouse
Giving foster kids a childhood... and a future.

Hey All You Treehouse Families!

Looking for great last minute Back-to-School clothing? Don't forget to stop by the Treehouse Wearhouse.

What you need:
Updated 2006 referral from your DCFS caseworker OR have already shopped this year (Four visits per year), and picture ID is **required**

Wearhouse Shopping Hours:
Tuesdays: 2:00 - 7:30 PM
Thursdays: 10:00 – 1:30 PM
(NEW! Beginning September 16th)
Third Saturday of each month 10:00 – 2:00PM

Contact (206) 267-5185 for more information
Treehouse • 2100 – 24th Avenue South, Suite 200 • Seattle, WA 98144
www.treehouseforkids.org

All incoming Letters to the Editor should be addressed to Mockingbird Editorial Staff and will be opened by Editorial Staff. All incoming correspondence to reporting staff under 18 years of age will be opened first by Mockingbird Editorial Staff.

Thank You's

Jessica Tufts; Steve and Linda Arai; Kathy Elias; Lynnea Manahan; Siri Throm Saxe; Bob and Jan Whitsitt

Meet Our Staff

Executive Director
Jim Theofelis

Youth LEAD Coordinator
Najja Morris

Operations Manager
Ros Ghan

Public Relations
Darcie Gray

Executive Assistant
Lauren Frederick

Americorps Member
Dietra Clayton

Senior Youth Representatives
Misty Lou Cook, Dennis Fisher, Jamica Henderson

Youth Representatives
Larishica Asher, Terasa Asher, Surri Evans, Jessica Garcia, Raquel Granath, Renita Baskin, Samuel Martin, Zeb Willis

Contributing Writers
Sherrel Dorsey, Jonell Monique Gordon, Katie H., Dominic Rush

Volunteers
Chrissie Jackson

ABOUT US: The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents involved in homelessness and foster care. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of Mockingbird Society are paid between $7.63 and $8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to $25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 50,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the U.S.A, through a private distribution list and as an insert in *Real Change*, a Seattle-based community newspaper. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of The Mockingbird Society and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to The Mockingbird Society may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright 2006 The Mockingbird Society.

A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox

Make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable youth and support the Mockingbird Society!

Donations may be tax deductible and all donors receive the *Mockingbird Times*. Enclosed, please find my check made payable to Mockingbird Society in the amount of: $ _____

Suggested Donations:
$ 1,000+..... Protector $500-999.....Caretaker $250-500.....Organizations $50+.....Supporter $25.....Foster Parent

NAME _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 240, Seattle WA 98144, or donate online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

- ❒ Please bill me for the amount indicated.
- ❒ My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.
- ❒ I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.
- ❒ Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

Balancing Work and School

Sherrel Dorsey

Going to college full time is no piece of cake. It becomes even more difficult when you have to work and study at the same time. I worked five blocks away from my college dorm at the GAP. My hours were inconsistent and I could only work nights and weekends. Needless to say I did not get much studying done my first semester.

Like many of my college friends I acquired a second job as an assistant to a publicist. Desperately, I tried to balance two jobs, school and a tap dancing ensemble that I was in at the time. My grades suffered and so did my bank account. I worked hard to pay for a school that I hardly spent time in all because I did not plan ahead.

There are many things that I wish I would have done differently. Things that may have helped take some of the stress off of my first year in college. Here are some things that you can do to better prepare yourself for your first year in college if you have to maintain a part time job:

- **Save your money** during the summer in preparation for the fall. You will need this stash for unexpected expenses, entertainment and transportation.

- **Shop smart.** Buying supplies for your dorm can get expensive. Find all of the sales. The 99 cents stores are a great way to fill up on small but necessary things like binders, soap, toothbrushes, dishes and Tupperware. Many home décor stores offer great deals during the fall like Target, Bed Bath and Beyond, Kmart and Linens and Things. Buy your necessities in bulk to avoid the end of semester crunch when you've spent all of your money and meal card dollars.

- **Apply for scholarships.** Even small monetary awards save you time and money. The more money you are awarded the less time you have to spend working. Searching for scholarships is extremely difficult when you have to work and go to school. Spend your summer writing essays and applying because your time will be scarce once school begins!

- **Plan ahead.** Prior to arriving on campus create a resume and have it reviewed and edited by an adult. If you have no prior work experience fill your resume with your achievements, extracurricular activities, skills and interests.

- **Contact your schools career center.** Call a month prior to your departure and find out what types of part time jobs are available in your area. Many businesses and neighborhoods post employment opportunities within the school.

- **If you are offered work study** in your financial aid award letter take the opportunity to find out what types of jobs are available on campus. This can be done simply by calling the individual department offices of your school.

- **Make upper-class friends** who have knowledge of jobs around your school. Majority of the time finding a great job depends on who you know. These people can make recommendation to their employers and inform you on great work study jobs.

Using the above tools will help to eliminate some of the stress you will face during your first year of college. Even though I was able to secure around $12,000 in scholarships, I passed up opportunities to win a few hundred dollars that could have saved me more money and time. I waited until a month into school to find a job and struggled in my quest while competing with the thousands of other students looking for jobs. College is already difficult enough as you learn to adjust to a new environment, friends and workload. Make it easier on yourself by planning ahead.

The King County Kinship Collaboration presents:

2006 Kinship Care Gathering
Families Caring for Families

When: October 21, 2006, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Where: Brighton Elementary School – new location!
6725 45th Ave. S.
Seattle, WA 98118

The 2006 King County Kinship Care Gathering is celebrating its third year with a new location and new opportunities for kinship caregivers, families, services providers, community advocates and policy makers to share information and ideas, find resources and support and celebrate families caring for families. Please plan to attend our gathering and RSVP.

Continental breakfast and lunch provided.

Childcare provided for ages 3 and above.

Please contact Kristie Lund at 206-709-2106 to register.

Finding My Way

Surri Evans

After coming home one night, I noticed a piece of mail posted to the outside of my door. After I went inside and settled my daughter down, I opened it. It read: NOTICE TO TERMINATE LEASE. YOU HAVE TO BE OUT BY MAY 31 2006 OR AN EVCITION WILL BE PROCCESED. I was shocked and hurt at the same time because I thought that I had done everything possible to make sure me and my daughter had a safe and stable place to live.

The next day, I went to meet with Independent Living Case Manager and told her my situation. I needed help finding a new apartment, so we got on the computer and found some places. I called them, but had no luck. No one would rent to me because I owed my last property management company money. So what was I to do? I had to be out by the 31st and it was the 25th of the month. I had no choice but to move in with a friend of mine.

During that time, I knew I had to do something and fast so that my daughter and I wouldn't end up completely homeless. I kept looking at some potential renters that would rent to me even with the glitch on my rental history. Then, I realized that I didn't even have a stable income to pay rent or even any bills. So, what was I to do now? Things just kept getting harder. I was stuck staying with my sister and she was in the process of moving herself so that situation was very temporary. I was so worried that I could barely sleep or concentrate.

One day, when I was at work at Mockingbird, I attended a meeting for the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. That's when I ran into a woman from a program called Friends of Youth. I spoke with her and let her know my situation and she gave me the number to the Harmony House which is a transitional living home at Sandpoint for mothers and their children. My next step was to call and set up an interview and apply. I knew all I could do now was just wait, but I did feel like things were looking brighter for me!

In the meantime, I was also waiting to hear from Starbucks. I had applied with them about three weeks earlier (thanks to the completion of my training with Youthcare's Barista program). One morning I was asleep on my friend's floor and the phone rang. It was Starbucks! I was offered the job and was scheduled to start the following week. I was so ecstatic! Things were really starting to work out for me. The very next afternoon, I was at work (Mockingbird Society) and received a call from the Harmony House. Again, I had great news. I was accepted in the program and had a move in date for the first of August.

Well, I've been at the Harmony House for a month now, and as you can see I am still writing for the *Mockingbird Times* as well as working at the 23rd and Madison Starbucks. These last couple of months have been a pretty stressful but good experience for me. I'm looking forward to starting school on the 25th of September and am hoping things keep working out well. Actually, I am confident that things are going to work out well, because I believe in myself and I know that I'm going to get what I work hard for.

I have learned that by having patience and being determined, positive things can fall into place. Thankfully, they did for me.

HB 2002 is Accepting Applications: Act Now!

New legislation allows youth to remain in care and receive their medical benefits whole pursuing higher education.Talk to your caseworker for details about taking advantage of this legislation or contact Rick Butt at (206) 923-4891 for more information.

Voices of Youth, Voices of Community

Jessica Garcia

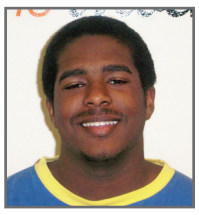
This summer I had the opportunity to participate in Voices of Youth, Voices of Community. This was a free youth empowerment project for "at-risk" (which included foster-care) and "homeless" youth. It was put on by a number of organizations which included Mosaic Multicultural Foundation, Northwest Network for Youth, Youthcare and the Richard Hugo House. I am really thankful to all the sponsoring organizations for giving me the chance to speak to the community and express my experiences with being a youth in foster-care in today's world.

The writing workshops for all the youth were held for five days at the Hugo House. The director of the project was Michel Mead who I felt was an excellent teacher. He taught us how important it is to express on paper. He also told us stories of Native ancestors from all over the world. He shared stories of the Native people and about their beliefs of how we hold the world together through our stories and voices. This to me means that when we share our stories we can be a strong community, but can also be separated through negative things like violence, hate and drug use. These things can blind us from our true path in life.

On the last day of the project, we had the opportunity to share all that we had written with the public. This event took place at the Richard Hugo House on Capitol Hill. Many people attended the performance and I knew it would be a brilliant night from the moment I walked in. That night I expressed my anger, fears, progress and what it feels like to be in my shoes. While the youth read their poems, the crowd was moved. The evening went really well and I enjoyed it.

What I loved most about the Voices of Youth project was that it gave all of us the opportunity to reach out and take an active role in making a change in our environment by expressing through our voices. We all shared about the hard things our generation faces in today's society. We also let people know that we can move forward and see a better and brighter future for ourselves.

African-American Stereotypes



Samuel Martin

How are Elephants trained? They are hooked to a huge chain on one of their legs at a young age. After several years, the trainers reduce the size of the chain until it's the size of a thin piece of fisherman's string. The reason I tell this story is because the elephant never could break away at a young age, so it doesn't even attempt to later in life. I believe this story closely reflects the mentality of too many African-Americans today.

The civil rights movement began in 1955. Before this time, African-Americans were being killed just for living. African-Americans couldn't even get decent jobs. We were honestly treated unequal. Black people were put in the worst schools and were almost unable to receive any decent education. It was a time when we were not even able to eat in the same restaurants, use the same bathrooms, or even the same hospitals as whites. It was definitely oppression. I would like everybody to imagine not having an option to get a good education, not being "allowed" to sit in the front of the bus, being told that you are less than a whole person, or that you are not as good as someone else. This just goes to show that a lot of people do not appreciate what those before us had to go through for us to live in the way we do now.

It seems to me that after all the oppression we have experienced, we still are not bold enough as a community to take a step forward and "break the string". Many of the barriers to success that have traditionally kept African-Americans from succeeding to their potential have been reduced or removed, yet many people continue to live in ways that perpetuate that cycle of failure. I understand racism and prejudice is widespread, but there comes a point where the "victim" has to step up and stop waiting for a hero to come and rescue them. Most of the African-American Community doesn't understand that most of the stereotypes that are directed to the African-American race as a whole are things that some of us do in our everyday life. Don't get me wrong; there are a lot of exceptions. I also feel that we who don't reinforce the negative stereotypes, should do more to help change the behavior of those who do. It is true that some of us sag our pants to our ankles, steal, rob, and hang out on corners everyday. No-it's not all of us, but it is enough to call attention to it. If this is all people see in the media and it gets verified by those of us who behave this way, what else do we expect those people (who don't TRULY know us) to think? We can't get rid of the stereotypes until we stop living like we believe them ourselves. We have to act to make a real change happen.

I understand that racism is prevalent but people tend to give racism too much credit. It is also very true that African-Americans are pinpointed far more than other communities as having "negative" behavior. It's true that other races do all the things that you see in the media as behavior of African-Americans. It is also true that if you want better for yourself you have to take it. There are plenty of people in the community who are here to help rather than hurt. I think that if we really want to seek success as a race, we really have to do something about it, and that something begins with education. It doesn't help that a disproportionate number of African-American males dropout of high school. And there are a fair amount of them who end up incarcerated not too long after that.

I have a few ideas about how we can change those statistics; first of all, African-Americans should be involved in extra-curricular activities because statistics show that you have a much higher chance of graduating high school. There should also be more African-American run programs for youth. There should be SAT classes geared for minorities specifically. If all programs are coordinated by Caucasians, African-Americans won't be as interested. There should be more positive and unique programs that lead to more participation to improve the educational achievement of African-Americans.

I asked you how to train an elephant. Now, I'm asking you how to break the chain that holds the elephant down. After reading this, will you continue to leave the chain around you? Are you going to continue watching those around you struggle with a chain on them? Are you letting your child remain chained? Break the chain because everyone is equal and no one deserves less. Be Strong; Be Better.

American Friends Service Committee

The Safe Schools Coalition

Yo GLBT Youth!!

Do you have any ART, POETRY, RANTS, RAVES, DOODLES, SHORT STORIES, or COLLAGES that you'd like to share with other GLBT youth in Washington State? The Washington GLBT Youth Resource Guide needs some help! We are looking for some art from Washington GLBT youth (22 and under) to make this resource guide useful and fun. PLUS, if your piece is chosen for the zine, you will be awarded with a $10 gift certificate to local stores and shops!

Please EMAIL your work to:

Hbeck@ucsc.edu

Or MAIL your work to:

Beck C/O AFSC GLBT Program
814 NE 40th Street
Seattle, WA 98105

Washington's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Trans Youth Resource Guide is a project of the American Friends Service Committee, the Safe Schools Coalition, and the LGBT Tobacco Coalition.

Creative Corner

That's My Tidal Wave

Jonell Monique Gordon

I am half-tired
I am half black
Half Jamaican
Half Jewish
Part African-American
Curly hair
Straight hair
Different ages
Different Stages-some short, some tall
Family conflict
We do it all
From big, to skinny
From thin, to many
Asalama Lakum to Alakuim Salam
Hallelujah, praise the Lord
Different religions
Different consequences
From sitting in pews to penitentiary time
Locs, folks, gangsters, all kinds
One Gordon, many challenges
That's my tidal wave

Sister,Brother,& Me

Katie H.

There were but three,
all as little as can be.
Sister, brother, and me,
acting bigger than thee.
They're always together,
even as it happened.
When night started to fall,
just as our trust did.
It fell so quick,
we hardly noticed it.
He seemed so nice,
until he started it.
It was quiet like a dream,
but very much real.
Unlike the way he made us feel,
it was like a cheap deal.
It was as if our father left,
and came back a monster.
He knew it was wrong,
so he got punished for it.
Our own father had sexually abused,
Sister, brother, and me.

Somewhere in the Middle

Dominic Rush

Just a moment in lifetime,
Just a tragedy ahead,
Not knowing where each turn will lead,
Within seconds we might be dead.

Live each moment to the fullest,
Do not stop to wonder why—
In dreams,
Reach for the sky.

With so many people among us,
There are no certainties,
And all it takes is just one person
To reroute history.

Do not waste one moment in life,
How very precious they are,
What seems a long way off
Is really not that far.

Tupac Continued from Page 1

witness to his demise was Death Row Records president Suge Knight who claims to know the perpetrator but refuses to reveal his identity.

Following his passing, Death Row has released several records under the pseudonym Makaveli, a name that Tupac used even while alive. If you rearrange the letters to one of his albums, "Makaveli The Don Killuminati: The 7 Day Theory", you can make the sentence "Ok on tha 7th u think I'm dead yet I'm really alive". Meaning the 7th day after he was shot, he wanted everyone to think that he died but he is really alive.[2] Because of this and many other suspicious facts surrounding his death, many people believe that Tupac Shakur is alive and well somewhere. In addition, two other films starring Pac were released in 1997, one year after his death, Gridlock'd and Gang Related.

Tupac Shakur lived a life full of pain and misery, money and stardom. Even though he had his controversy, the fact still remains: he was a phenomenal poet and artist, and he will be remembered in reverence for years to come.

[1] http://www.alleyezonme.com/tupac/bio/
[2] http://www.angelfire.com/md/makavelli/alive.html

School Time is Here!

- Start the school year with a positive attitude;
- Keep up with daily assignments;
- Find study partners;
- Prepare the night before class;
- Eat healthy foods;
- Get plenty of rest;
- Have fun!

Get Published Get Paid!

We are looking for articles, poetry, artwork and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or homelessness. If you want to be published in the Times, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org. For more info and to check us out, go to www.mockingbirdsociety.org.