

The Excalibur

The Online Nazareth RHS Student Newspaper



Thanksgiving – We Remember

By: Julissa Devonish

Editor's Note: Julissa, a member of the Excalibur Newspaper Club, graduated in 2020 and wrote this article as a tribute to the memory of Dinsio Walo-Wright, who passed away in November 2019. Dinsio was the niece of our Assistant Principal, Nancy Roberts. As we celebrated Thanksgiving this year, Ms. Roberts expressed again her heartfelt gratitude for the support of the Nazareth community during that difficult time.

The fall of 2019 was a tough time for our beloved assistant principal Ms. Roberts. She bore the weight of knowing an angel that left this world too soon. Her amazing niece Dinsio Walo-Wright lost her long but hard-fought battle against Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG), a rare brain tumor with no known cure to date. This young soul passed away at the age of 22 on November 28, 2019.

Dinsio is remembered as a compassionate, selfless, and kind person who had a great presence in activism and always stood up for others. As Ms. Roberts says, "She

was one of the easiest people to love because she was such a loving person." Her college newspaper, *The Temple News*, honors her with these words: "While at Temple, Walo-Wright helped found Student Activists Against Sexual Assault, a campus organization whose goal is to provide resources to survivors of sexual violence. Her impact is huge, and it's amazing that someone can do that in 22 years. She was a student who made a great impact in our community and program."

Dinsio was a fighter and a warrior. She wanted money to be raised for the *Cure Starts Now* research on the particular type of cancer that she had. In support of her wishes, the Nazareth community raised almost \$2,500, including about \$1,700 from a special Sunday basketball event and about \$150 through a "dress down" day. Members of Dinsio's family were able to come to the Sunday event, and they were (Continued on p. 2)

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Thanksgiving/Christmas
Holiday Edition



- Special Events -

9/22 Opening Mass
10/8 Virtual College Fair
10/15 Hispanic Heritage
Celebration
11/18 International Day
11/23 Thanksgiving Mass
11/30 – 12/4 Ryken Week
12/3 Fine Arts Program
12/21 Christmas Mass
12/22 Christmas Show

Thanksgiving – We Remember (cont.)



Members of Dinsio's family at Nazareth

welcomed with much compassion and support. Ms. Roberts, who often talks about the Nazareth community as a family, says that her sister and other relatives felt as if they were part of our family during that special event.

Ms. Roberts is more than thankful for the support from the Nazareth community: "What this school did is so meaningful for me because it's what Dinsio wanted. There was an overwhelming amount of support. The school is incredible." Ms. Roberts is happy and grateful to know that Nazareth helped her niece's last wishes to come true. She cannot be more appreciative to be part of such a marvelous and caring community.



Dinsio the Activist



Nazareth Students Reflect on the Effects of the Coronavirus

By: Daniel Korede

In March our lives came to a sudden halt. Social distancing and wearing masks were required and encouraged to help prevent the spread of “the Rona.” People around the world had to adjust to this new lifestyle, and U.S. high school students, including the students at Nazareth, are no exception.

Having to stay close to home for an unspecified time period has led to various reactions by members of the Nazareth community. This time of quarantine has caused school activities to be modified, put on hold or even cancelled - activities such as the spring sports season, the Science Fair, the Student vs. Faculty Frenzy, field trips and college fairs. Some students were asked how they have felt about the quarantine from March until now:

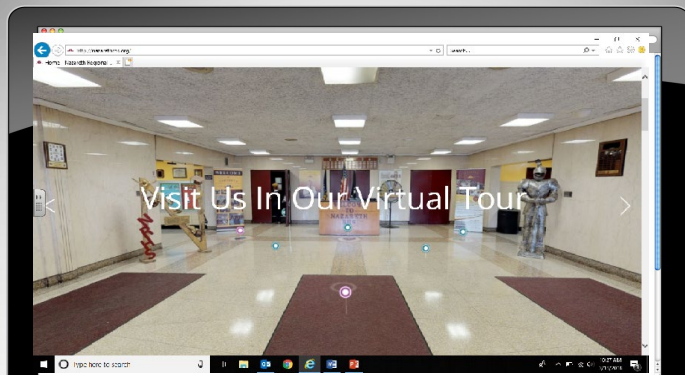
Amber (Senior) - Did not have strong feelings about the lockdown
Courtney Bentham (Senior) - Expressed a strong dislike for the lockdown

An anonymous sophomore - Expressed a clear disdain for the lockdown because of the interference with daily life

Nicholas White (Junior) - Had a

clear dislike for the lockdown, partly because of the cancellation of sports
An anonymous junior - Had a positive attitude on the lockdown since it has allowed some time for other indoor pursuits and activities
Corey (Junior) - At first was relieved and had a positive outlook on the lockdown since it allowed for what he thought would be a relatively short break from school
Greg (Sophomore) - Saw the situation in a “gray area” where it seems to get better at some points and then worse at others. He gave the example of how Nazareth students were finally able to go back to the building in a hybrid model, and then classes in the building were suspended again for about two weeks.

Nazareth is still enduring many challenges, returning to the building for two days and then going fully remote again because of a snowstorm. We are still living in a time of upheaval, as the pandemic continues among several other social and political issues. However, with the development of vaccines and the start of their distribution, it seems that there is an end in sight. Our faith in God and responsibility for the well being of others tells us that we must remain hopeful and do all we can to prevent the spread of the virus. While the quarantine can feel frustrating, we know that it is for a good cause.



Visit the virtual tour of
our school at:

<http://www.nazarethrhs.org>

Graduation 2020: Naz Does It Right!

By: Winnie Pierre-Louis

Editor's Note: Winnie, a four-year member of the Excalibur Newspaper Club, graduated in 2020 and wrote this article about her amazing graduation experience.

2020 has been an odd year for all of us. The coronavirus pandemic caused everything to shift to online sites such as Zoom and Google Meet. Most members of the Nazareth community did not expect Friday, March 13, 2020, to be the last in-school day of the year. Nazareth successfully shifted to online classes without any major problems. Unlike most schools, we did not have to take a break and we were still able to have our Easter Break.

One of the bigger concerns that the seniors and their families had was what would happen with the prom and graduation for the Class of 2020. It was not possible to have an in-person prom, but our graduation was a success. I had such a memorable experience at this graduation that the Nazareth staff helped put together. When I first heard of the idea that Mrs. Quiles, our Principal, had for our graduation, other seniors and I immediately called it a "Drive-Thru Graduation." I was so glad that instead of being stuck behind a screen and moving my tassel from right to left in my living room, I would be able to see some of my friends and my teachers in person for the first time in almost three months. In a way, this graduation was for both the Class of 2020 and Mrs. Quiles, because she would be leaving her role as Principal and stepping into her new role as President of Nazareth Regional High School.

Our graduation was held on June 5, 2020. Before the ceremony, the graduates got everything they would need including their cap and gown. The ceremony began with a welcome by Mrs. Quiles, a prayer by Fr. Rony Mendes, and speeches by the Valedictorian, Leonella McDonald, and the Salutatorian, Julissa Devonish. We were parked in alphabetical order in the parking lot behind the school. As our names were called, we drove up to the front of the school to receive our diploma

and awards. It was so uplifting to hear everyone honk their car horns whenever a graduate's name was called.

The ceremony was recorded and streamed live on Zoom. If there had been a regular graduation, some family members would not have been able to come, but because of Zoom, they were able to come virtually! At the end of the graduation, we even had a "car parade." It was so amazing to see everyone receive their diplomas and hear that our class had a 100% graduation rate!

The Class of 2020 is truly unstoppable. Most of us were born shortly after the heartbreaking event of 9/11, and we graduated from high school during a pandemic. We are a strong class, and our story is far from over. When I was a freshman at Nazareth, I already knew that I would be graduating with people who would help to change the world.

My graduation was an amazing and unique experience. The love and support I received during my time at Nazareth will stay with me forever. To current and future Nazareth students: Those four years of high school go by quickly, so make sure that you appreciate your classmates, your teachers, the staff and your Principal. Always try your best to do the right thing; you never know who's watching! I received awards at graduation that I didn't even know existed. You can inspire others and change someone's life without realizing it. No pandemic or any other challenge can stop you from focusing on the needs of others and fulfilling the great purposes that God has for you!



Hispanic Heritage Celebration

By: Sephora Vixama

How can we inform students about important cultures of the world while at the same time keeping them safe, happy and healthy? Covid-19 has made attaining this goal more difficult - six feet and all. How will we hold their attention through a little screen? Modern problems require modern solutions! With a pre-recorded video detailing various parts of Hispanic culture, from famous figures to cooking recipes with the family, Nazareth was able to involve everyone in a great celebration!

On October 15, 2020, a chilly day, the students clicked on the Zoom link that connected them to our Hispanic Heritage Celebration. Courtney Sacks welcomed us, followed by prayers spoken in English and Spanish by Ms. Batista and Tanisha. Right after we were greeted by Mr. Gando's two gorgeous and bubbly children making flan and teaching us some Spanish terms. The chat exploded like a firecracker: "aws" and "adorables" everywhere. "He's so cute, ima cry." The chat icon lit up orange every four seconds throughout this virtual assembly.

Next Dillon and Gregg introduced us to the role models Roberto Clemente and Anthony Ramos. Hey, did you know that Ramos was born right here in Brooklyn? Look at him now: shining in popular productions like *Hamilton* and *In The Heights*, which is set in the largely Latinx neighborhood of Washington Heights. How inspiring! In between informative presentations about other Latinx role models and how much they have contributed to our society, seniors Dillon and Tanisha sang *La Isla Bonita* in Spanish - their pronunciation was impressive!

The last event was the Dancing montage: Students and teachers recorded themselves dancing to some classic salsa music. One teacher was swaying with a peculiar dance partner - a thin white bed sheet following his every movement! Another teacher was twisting and turning with her Goya adobo seasoning as she prepared a meal in her kitchen. One student even had their pet dog hopping on two feet to the rhythm of the salsa music. The video ended with a reminder of how important it is to vote, so all Americans can be fairly represented.

Behind the Scenes with Mr. Gando

By: Sephora Vixama

Mr. Gando, one of our Spanish teachers and the recipient of this year's Ryken Award, answered a series of questions about the making of the Hispanic Heritage Celebration video:

What was the overall experience you had during the process of making the video? It was fun! The experience had nothing to do with typical "academics," making it possible to see the students who participated in a different light - like Dillon with his outstanding writing skills, and Courtney Sacks and Tanisha with their strong screen presence. There's more to a student than just their grades!

What setbacks did you encounter? The main concern was getting the videos and putting them together. At first, we were thinking of doing live choreography. The parents were not too fond of that idea. Then we decided to switch to a "free for all" where we would give extra credit to students in exchange for a dance video. The freshmen had the best response!

What do you think of the Zoom presentation? We were able to see that our hard work paid off! The feedback in the live chat showed us that everyone was supportive and that we had grabbed their attention.

What was the overall message you wanted to convey? We wanted to highlight individuals who have made contributions to society - like Shakira who has been so involved in helping children in poverty. We were trying to counter the negativity that is too often directed at Latin Americans with a celebration of their many contributions. We wanted to show that it takes all of us to build our country and make it better.



Education champion Shakira says, "A school opens and the world changes."

Beale Street Comes to Life

By: Demetria Baptiste

In 1974, James Baldwin wrote his fifth novel, *If Beale Street Could Talk*. In this novel he tells the story of pregnant nineteen-year-old Tish and her wrongly imprisoned boyfriend, Fonny. Baldwin portrays what Tish and her family go through trying to get Fonny out of prison. Although the story is fictional and takes place in the seventies in Harlem, many of the events in the characters' lives occur in the lives of African Americans throughout our country today.

There are many instances where Beale Street comes to life in families much like Tish's. These families struggle with legal fees and gathering evidence that can lead to the exoneration of a family member who was falsely accused, just like Fonny was. According to [Bonczar](#), one in three black men will be imprisoned at some point in his life. Fonny, like other young black men, fell prey to a system designed to hurt the black community. Mrs. Rogers, a young Puerto Rican mother, was sexually assaulted and a racist NYPD officer falsely accused Fonny of the crime. When the assault took place, Fonny was in his flat with Tish and his friend Daniel, who was also wrongly imprisoned after officers claimed he stole a car.

Baldwin's fictional story is the sad reality for black people all over this country, including the Central Park Five. In 1989, a group of black and brown boys between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, Kevin Richardson, Raymond Santana, Antron McCray, Yusef Salaam, and Korey Wise, were arrested, pressured into confessing to a crime they did not commit, and imprisoned for seven to thirteen years. Despite the evidence of their innocence, they were wrongly imprisoned for a crime of which they were ultimately exonerated.

The use of the prison system to take away the liberty of people of color has been happening since the thirteenth amendment was passed in 1865. This amendment states, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, *except as a punishment for crime* whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction" (italics added for emphasis). This "loophole" allowed

Slam Poetry

By: Julissa Devonish

Editor's Note: Julissa, a member of the Excalibur Newspaper Club and the Salutatorian of the Class of 2020, enriched her high school experience by participating in several clubs. She wrote the brief article below shortly before she graduated. Many of our clubs have been meeting virtually during this time of remote learning, and a few have started to meet in person.

You may know April only for April Fool's Day, Easter or April showers. But did you know that it is also the month dedicated to the art of Slam Poetry? The literarily uncultured may ask, "What is Slam Poetry?"

Slam Poetry is spicy poetry. It is no longer *just* reading but becomes a performance and a competition. The art form was originated in 1986 by Marc Kelly Smith, who performed this new genre at a Jazz club in Chicago. He believed normal poetry to be too structured, too rigid, too stuffy. If you want to experience this livelier version of spoken word, feel free to sign up for Slam Poetry Club. Members write their own pieces on what they feel passionate about and perform them. These talented lyricists can also create their own bars for a rap. This club is for those who have a way with words and a love for beats and flow.

states to pass laws that enabled them to imprison and then enslave black people who had just gained their freedom. Black people are still being arrested and given sentences for nonviolent drug related crimes that are harsher than the sentences given to their white counterparts for the same crimes. According to [Carson and Sabol](#), black men are incarcerated at a rate six times that of white men.

How long will Beale Street continue to live? May our generation be the one that helps to bring about the day when the fictional story of Beale Street becomes just that, a fictional story that no longer reflects the realities we face every day.

Sisters Reaching Out

By: Nadia Cadet, Class of 2020

I spent four phenomenal years at Nazareth Regional High School, and I am especially grateful for the impact that the Sisters Reaching Out Club had on my life. As a freshman, I was eager to expand my circle of friends and acquaintances. I remember, however, being reluctant to join the Sisters Reaching Out Club. What finally pushed me to join was the encouragement of my two best friends, who were also eager to join the club. The club welcomes every girl of every class, so I was a little intimidated at first by the prospect of interacting with upperclassmen. My sense of comfort was found in my two friends and our club leaders, Ms. Dove and Ms. Batista, who was also my Spanish 1 teacher. I still felt reluctant to develop any friendships or interact more with my fellow club members.

I can't exactly pinpoint when the club began to be an essential part of my high school career, but I do know why it became essential - the need for solidarity. Young women in high school don't always get along with each other, but one thing I have always found beautiful is the way we are able to put our differences aside to be there for each other. I've seen it firsthand many times, whether it be comforting a girl who is crying, regardless of how well you know her, or supporting and cheering for each other during school events and pep rallies. I came to realize the importance of the club and what it stands for. The club always encouraged us to talk to each other, and we often had meetings that consisted of talking about the culture of our school and our own social problems and giving each other advice.

Sisters Reaching Out helped me grow as an individual who recognizes the importance of my voice and how to utilize it for the greater good. One of the guest speakers who contributed to that growth focused on how to use social media for greater purposes. We learned about how we can further our career through social media networking and how we can use social media as a platform to shed light on important topics.

My wish for all the girls at Nazareth, especially the incoming freshmen, is that they will give the club a chance, even if they are hesitant at first. The club facilitates a bonding experience for the girls at Nazareth that allows them to have a safe space to talk to people who may be going through the same thing they are going through. The club also teaches skills that are essential to future success such as public speaking, social media management, self-love, and career development. It is important for every high school girl to get the opportunity to feel a sense of belonging and community, especially during those times when they feel like they are going through something alone.

This sentiment especially rang true during my last couple of months at Sisters Reaching Out. During this time of quarantine, we couldn't meet physically, but we continued to meet with each other virtually. During this especially hard time it was gratifying to be able to talk with our group leaders and each other about what we were going through and how we could look ahead to the future, especially important for the seniors who were preparing to go off to college. The club is a part of my high school career that I will never forget, because of all that I learned and the bonds that I have created. I hope that future members of the club will also experience the joy and bonding experience that happens as a result of "Sisters Reaching Out."

Special Thanks to Ms. Batista, Ms. Dove and all the other group members!





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