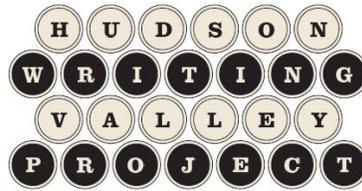


Courageous Writers: Hyde Park 2018

at

Roosevelt-Vanderbilt-Van Buren National Historic Sites



www.courageouswriters-hvwp.org

Anthology 2018

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The Ghost of Vanderbilt Mansion
Delia Burke, Age 10

It was a dark night and the only light I could see was from the bright moon and stars. A cold wind rushed through the air and hit my face. I whipped the snow off my shoes and stepped inside. All of a sudden, I heard a noise coming from the living room! I knew it couldn't be the butler because he was spending a couple of days with his family--leaving me all alone to take care and manage the Vanderbilt's mansion.

I carefully walked toward the living room. Once I got in there everything was fine and in order, so I thought the noise must have been my imagination, but then a bookshelf almost fell on me! I quickly hurried out of the room. Once I got out of the room, I cautiously examined the room to see who could have done such a horrible thing. Once I didn't see anyone I slowly returned to the room to put the bookshelf up.

After I finished, I went downstairs to go to sleep. But I couldn't sleep. All I could think about was who could have pushed the bookshelf. Once I started drifting off to sleep, someone grabbed my neck. Their grip was hard and their voice was cold as they spoke. They said, "I warned you once and I'll warn you twice: he is coming soon." I felt the grip on my neck slowly fade and a cold chill went through the air. I looked around my room but no one was there. It was like a ghost had done it.

The next morning I was puzzled. I couldn't explain what had happened. The only logical explanation was that I just had a bad dream. As I went outside I saw what a beautiful morning it was. Highlights of pink, blue, and gold filled the air.

As I stepped inside, a cold wind blew through the air. As I started walking up the stairs I heard footsteps behind me so I quickly turned around. I saw a figure at the corner of my eye, but I continued walking up the stairs thinking my eyes were playing tricks on me. But I continued hearing footsteps behind me so I started running up the stairs. So did the footsteps. Once I got off the top step, I raced to

Mrs. Vanderbilt's room and locked the door. The door knob started moving and suddenly it stopped. Silence was in the air. At first I thought it could be gone. Then it walked through the door!

My throat went dry. All of a sudden my heart was beating faster than it ever has before. The figure cornered me and said in a dark cold voice that rattled my bones, "This is the final warning and it's a clue. If you study hard and fast this will come to pass. If you face it and face it good it won't linger any longer."

After the figure spoke, a cold wind went through the room and sent a shiver down my spine. When the figure left I dashed downstairs to call the butler. As I was dialing his number the figure grabbed my arm and said, "If you tell him harm will come. If you don't no harm will be done."

When the butler picked up the phone, I immediately asked him if he knew if someone had something against the Vanderbilt family and he said there was this girl who was very poor and needed money so she asked for a job with the Vanderbilts. They couldn't hire her because they had too many servants already at the time. Sadly she died later that year from tuberculosis. Her brother was devastated and mad. When he found out he also died of tuberculosis later that year.

"Oh." I said, my voice almost trailing off.

"Why did you need to know that," he asked.

"Oh," I said. I was about to tell him when I remembered what the figure had said. "I was just wondering," I answered. Once the phone call ended I stepped outside and tiny snowflakes hit my face. Suddenly I realized that they were ghosts!

Suddenly the ghost appeared in front of me and she transformed into a young girl and said, "You know who I am now so I will make it quick. He is coming at 12:00

so prepare yourself quickly. I want to cause no harm, so don't be alarmed. I will be on my way.”

I ran inside, and as I did the wind hit my face, pushing my hair back. When I got inside, I realized that the ghost didn't know that the Vanderbilts didn't stay at the building the whole time, so I realized I could dress up as Mrs. Vanderbilt and come to the ghost to make everything right.

Once I looked exactly like Mrs. Vanderbilt I headed downstairs. Then, suddenly, someone grabbed me and pinned me to the wall. They spoke in a cruel voice and said, “I come for revenge to cause someone harm.”

The girl from outside burst through the doors, and you could tell by the way the person was holding me that they were surprised. She said, “Let her go. She caused me no harm.

He answered, “But Dolly, she wouldn't hire you.”

Dolly answered, “You don't know why though, do you?”

I slowly felt his grip lessen. Tension filled the air. There was silence. I started to speak: “We couldn't hire her because we had too many servants as it was. If we knew she needed money, we would have given it to her.”

After I explained the rest, we arrived at a truce. As they left, they said, “We leave in peace and won't cause any more harm.”

As they left, I felt a feeling of pride that I had solved this problem.



Delia wrote this piece because when she visited the Vanderbilt mansion, she felt that there might be paranormal activity in the space.

My Great Depression

Susha Edwards, Age 14

Yesterday, we were all gathered around the living room table playing Monopoly and having lots of fun when dad entered the house with a grim look on his face. Since we had been expecting it to happen for a very long time we all knew the reason. He had finally been fired. Mom has a job as a secretary but if dad doesn't find another job soon, we'll lose the house, and I'd have to drop out of school and find work. We never have enough money and we usually have a hard time making ends meet.

Things have been pretty bad these past few years and they don't seem to be getting any better. Our neighbor committed suicide last week and we're all still in shock because he seemed to be getting along just fine. Well, as fine as you can be living like this.

When I saw how bad the living conditions were for other people it made me think how lucky we were that we didn't have it any worse.

Some people can't afford to even buy their meals for the day. It's become a daily necessity for me to go to the bread line at 4 in the morning so we can collect our bread and for me to go to the soup kitchen to get watered down soup for us to eat at dinner (the government adds water to the soup so more people can be fed). Sometimes, on special occasions, we eat macaroni and cheese or chipped beef on toast. I often help out in our small kitchen garden where we grow vegetables and herbs.

When we have free time we used to go to the movies, but now no one can afford that luxury. Instead we play cards with our neighbors, play board games, listen to the radio, and sometimes go out and play mini golf (it only costs 25 cents per round).

As hard as things may be, hopefully we can get through this in one piece.

This piece of writing was inspired by our visit to the FDR museum.

Lola
Zoya Edwards, Age 12

Lola thought long about the prospects of freedom. She had a nice home; everyone loved her, yet she loved being alone sometimes, outdoors, free from anyone's grasp. She could do what she wanted without being told off. Her master would talk about freedom rights; they were only for humans.

She heard footsteps.

"Hey Lola, c'mere little... fuzzleball!"

A small boy everyone called Franklin was crouching by the doorway of her room.

Lola stood up on four paws and left the comfort of her soft, cozy bed.

"Dinner's ready!"

"Coming!" she barked.

After dinner

As she strolled back to her room, she bumped into Topaz the cat.

"Watch where you're going!" shouted the startled tabby cat.

"Sorry, but you don't have to shout at me!"

"I'm only shouting because you're shouting!"

This was followed by an intense staring contest and ended with Lola pinning Topaz to the ground.

Franklin heard them and rushed over to see what they were up to.

F: *gasp* What are you two doing?!

L: Role-playing

T: It was Lola!

F: Well in any case, you two should go to bed. It's getting late.

L: Why do we have to listen to you?

F: Because I own you!

Walks off

T: So... Can I go sleep now?

L:... *gets off* Sorry about that...

T: It's okay. *about to leave*

L: Topaz...

T: *Stops and turns around* Yes?

L: I need to ask you something... Do you want to escape?

Scared

Branson Figueroa, Age 11

It's time. Time for D-Day. I hopped into the boat, praying that he would survive. Friends were shaking because they didn't want to die. We were not prepared for what was about to happen. Suddenly we hear cannon shots and see cannon rounds flying through the air. Everyone started to duck. Next came an onslaught of bullets flying everywhere, piercing the bodies of our allies. Once the fog clears we see thousands of men waiting to shoot. As we're coming in to shore, the Nazis started shooting half the people in my boat. I was not as unfortunate, for I jumped out of the boat with the other half of the soldiers. I swam all the way to shore and hid myself behind a tank trap. Once all the boats reached the shore, I started to believe that we had a chance, but that all went away when a bullet struck my arm. I heard someone say, "Stay with me," until everything turned black.

I wake up groaning but see a medic. He patched up my arm and then ran back for cover. I see nothing but bullets flying through the air. I try to get up to get to better cover, but I do not succeed. A horrifying tank is approaching my allies. I see a few die from being crushed and some blown up from a tank shot. I quietly sob because I don't want other people to think I'm unmanly. Now I think about the people who have died. I get up and charge at the tank from the behind. I hop onto the deadly tank and open the hatch. I jump in and start blasting the members as my allies jump in to man the wheel. I suddenly take control of the cannon when I start to drive to the enemy lines. Suddenly we start getting shot from both sides. Our men think we are enemies. The next thing I see is dark blood and flames as the tank explodes. I feel and see the dirt but what I do not see is the Nazi next to me. I turn my head to see the depressed Nazi who pulled the trigger. I shut my eyes but notice there was no bullet to fire. I opened my eyes and see him pull out a knife. We start wrestling for it. I grab it and successfully stab him with it. I start to shake and hyperventilate as I grab my gun and push forward. I see all the Nazis retreating to their base. I see all my buddies move forward to where I'm standing. I suddenly shout out "let's finish this!" We start to go through the trenches they made.

There were enemies everywhere, but that didn't stop us from getting through. Our group had the upper hand. We had better weapons and better-trained men. After the bullet-fire we started to run into the buildings. When we approached the first building we tried to be as silent as we could. I started to lay out all of the men in building one. We did the same for building two. Building three was the most dangerous. Most of the Nazis were in that building. We cleared out the first floor easily. As we got to the second floor we saw a lot more men. We finished them off with the support of my buds. My buds said they would guard the door while I went to the final floor. I walk in but I see no one. I look around and I see one Nazi remaining. I see him aiming his gun right at me! I drop my gun but he did not care because he still pulled the trigger. He shot me right in the chest. I tried to stop the blood but I could not do anything because the enemy was holding me down. As my friend came down I started to see the light but right before I passed I heard a gunshot and heard the last words I would ever hear: "Stay with me!"



Historical Places

Franklin Han, Age 11

Throughout the week, we went to many houses, or I should say mansions and they were huge! As you can see in the picture, I couldn't even fit the whole picture of the mansion on the whole paper.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt's (AKA FDR) Springwood mansion had over 30 rooms! Isn't that just insane? Also because FDR was a Democrat and Hyde Park was mostly republican he had real cannon outside his door to protect him. That was just a joke that someone had made, but the cannons were actually a gift from the U.S. Navy. They used to work. That was pretty cool right? What's even cooler is that he had a dumb waiter in his house (just in case there was a fire) he could get down by himself because he was in a wheelchair. He would pull himself up and down that thing twice a day. He also was the one to invent the presidential library, and he was the first and only person that worked in a presidential library while he was the president. He also made a speech there.

The next day we visited the Vanderbilt mansion. It had 50 rooms in total!!! Now if you thought that was crazy, one of the other Vanderbilt mansions was 250,000 square feet! Now this one, not the 250,000 square feet one, (bummer, isn't it?) belonged to Frederick Vanderbilt. It was crazy big! It could hold 16-18 people at the dinner table, and if you didn't think that was crazy enough, they had throne chairs!!! The outside is mostly made of marble so it was very expensive for that

time and our time. First they paid three million to build it, then a million more to have furniture imported from Italy, France, and other countries. We also went to the railroad station which there was lots of fun. A lot of us got tricked by the fake conductor or the fake person at the counter giving out tickets for the train. The train station also had remote control race cars. (The yellow track did the best! But shhhhhh. Don't tell anyone =).) We also got some gum from a gum machine, for one cent! The gum actually tasted good too! I thought the gum was going to be a ripoff at first but then I thought it was the best gum ever! We also were told by the priest of St. James Episcopal Church that the graveyard at the church had some famous people buried in it, like FDR's parents Sara Roosevelt and James Roosevelt. That was pretty cool.

On Wednesday we went to Eleanor Roosevelt's home/cottage. Even her cottage is bigger than a normal house. Her land is huge too. She has a fancy pool, a tennis court, a large, life-sized doll house, and much more. She lived near a creek called Val-kill. In her house she had a lot of silverware. She had a sleeping porch, and I now really want one too. You see, the porch was upstairs, not like the usual ones today. The sleeping porch had tons of windows, so Eleanor had a good view. FDR built the cottage for Eleanor. She would even have have barbeques there for the local school. She was good a making hot dogs.

On Thursday we typed our writing on the computer, which was very slow, but we managed. We also published on Thursday too.

Lastly, on Friday, we tried to make the visitors write and to inform them about what we learned. The camp was fun. You should go too!

Franklin wrote the piece because he felt like it would inform other people and more people come to this camp because it was really fun.

The Car

Rachel Reinking, Age 15

I didn't realize I remembered the chill until I walked into the room.

A memory of the place had been nagging at me all day- but I disregarded the prickle of the recollection as no more than a twinge caused by the cool temperature. The basement of the presidential library was drafty, no, more than drafty: the room was cold to a point that I wanted to put a sweater on. And it was late July.

I had been walking down a stretch of the hallway that was covered in plaques, pictures, and posters, much like any part of the Presidential Library. I could tell by looking ahead that there was a large glass display case around the corner, but my angle of vision was such that I couldn't quite make out what the case held.

It was when I rounded the corner that the memory came rushing back to me.

Encased in the glass box was a dark blue car, clearly a relic of the early twentieth century. The car was obviously high-end for its time, shiny and pristine. Not so much as a dent or scratch marred the gleaming surface. The driver's door was cracked open to reveal an impressive array of knobs and sticks. Upon closer inspection, there was an obvious lack of foot pedals. Franklin Delano Roosevelt had once owned this car, and polio had taken away his ability to use his legs and feet to drive, but it had quite plainly not robbed him of the desire to feel the wind in his hair as he careened down the road, wholly in control of the vehicle.

I had seen this car before, but it had been nearly five years since my last trek down this hallway, on a fifth-grade field trip that had seemed endless to my eleven-year-old self. The memory of this experience had been buried under many other things swimming in my subconscious: math formulas and dates in history to remember for school, new memories created and experiences endured since then. But as I saw the car, the recollection of the trip wormed its way to the foreground of my mind, not so much an experience as a series of sensations: my classmates crowded shoulder to shoulder, standing in the small, enclosed space; giggles and nudges, sneakers squeaking against the shiny floor. I remembered standing next to my friend, listening to her whisper. I remembered looking at the model ships in glass cases slightly further down the hall, and hearing boys being reprimanded for fiddling with the switches that cast the miniature boats in illuminating light. I remembered feeling slightly

claustrophobic from both the tightly packed cluster of children and the absence of windows in the hallway. I remembered my feet aching, I remembered being worn out, and I remembered being cold. It must have been the same person five years ago who had been entrusted with the task of turning on the air conditioning.

But more than anything, I remembered the car. I remembered listening to a guide talking to us, but the only part of her speech that I recalled was the fact that FDR was known to be a bit of a speed demon on the road. The car was a snippet of history; more than that, it was a part of someone's history. It contributed to FDR's legacy because it was a part of who he was. Only he will ever know how many times he took this car out for a spin, racing down the roads at a clip fast enough to rattle even the most stoic passenger, but knowing that he owned a car that enabled him to drive despite his disability, and that he liked to drive at speeds that defied the realm of safety and sanity, helps us to understand not just the history that he contributed to but also the history that he created.

Both times I had gone to the museum, the purpose was to learn, and sometimes history can do that. But sometimes, history can help us to rediscover events from our own pasts, even something as insignificant as a dull, chilly room stuffed with restless preteens. On that midsummer day that really felt more like winter, it was the car and the cold, working in tandem, that awoke my subconscious mind.

This story is inspired by a strong sensation that I felt when I saw FDR's car in the basement of the presidential Library and the memory of a previous sighting of the car that it evoked in me. I had such a strong reaction to seeing the car that I knew I had to write about it.

An Overview of The Great Depression

Brooke Zaytune, Age 12

Despair has set over the peak of the Dust Bowl. The dust storms here in Panhandle, Oklahoma are a normal event; mothers shelter their children in nothing but a blanket to protect them from an intrusive dust invasion sweeping from their breathing canals to their lungs. Fortunately, most have a home; it's the only thing keeping them here. For the homeless there's a car. For the car-less there's the mental, emotional and physical preparation to start the journey North--to leave the place where they were born and raised, to face the financial monsoon that is the Great Depression.

In the North the air is dreadful. Hundreds of people crowd the streets, selling whatever they have for money to eat. If you turn the corner there's a soup kitchen with an inundation of people waiting to be fed. Right next to to the kitchen is a reminder, a forsaken burgundy building that was decorated with the words J.J Phillis Local Bank. It's a reminder of poverty, of the thousands of people crowded in that very bank who lost their savings here on Black Tuesday, October 29, 1929.

When the stock market crashed in 1929 it showed how one moment, one singular minuscule moment, can change all of history for a whole nation. The depression and fear in that moment swept over the people with more power than the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression combined.

Brooke lives in Cornwall, NY with her mom, dad, brother, cat, and dog. She enjoys skiing, dancing, and cooking in her free time. She was inspired to write this piece from the letters in the entrance way wall in the FDR Library.

Roosevelt's Friends

Alex Zhu, Age 11

It was a fine day when Quincy was at the archery range, shooting targets, and hitting bulls-eyes easily from over a mile away. His little sister was watching, bored, but his brother Winston was jumping up and down after every bulls-eye, as if it was his first time.

"This is boring. Hey Winston, you wanna go visit Mrs. Roosevelt? She's probably cooking some hot dogs." Gwendolyn knew that would get his attention. It always did, since he loved hot dogs and hamburgers more than anything, except for ramen noodles. Those were his favorite.

"Of course!" exclaimed Winston. "Do you think we should ask Robert or Franklin?"

"Nah. Franklin is too busy drawing, and Robert II is still playing video games."

"Wait, didn't Dad say to stay with Quincy?"

"Don't care."

Soon, Winston and Gwendolyn could smell smoke. They were arriving at Val-Kill, and could see a huge plate of hot dogs. Eleanor was making some more hot dogs.

"Hello, kids! Do you want some hot dogs? They're fresh off the grill." Eleanor waved.

"Don't mind if I do." said Winston, as he scooped up a hot dog and shoved the whole thing in his mouth. "Mmmmmffffffhmmmmfff."

"Winston!" Gwendolyn scolded. "Don't be so rude. Sorry, Mrs. Roosevelt. Don't mind him."

"It's okay, dear. I'm glad you're enjoying them," Eleanor said to Winston while he was pigging out on hot dogs. "You should have some too."

"Thanks, Mrs. Roosevelt." Gwendolyn took a hot dog and quickly chomped it down.

Meanwhile, Quincy decided to take a break. Tomorrow he would try shooting from one and a half miles away. He turned and suddenly realized

Gwendolyn and Winston were gone. “Hey sis? Winston? Where are you?” Quincy started running back to their house. Suddenly, he was yanked up and caught in a net. Then he blacked out.

“Hurry.”

“We have no reason to hurry. Jones won’t see us.”

“Got him, let’s go.”

“Wait, he’s waking up. I’m gonna punch him.”

Then Quincy blacked out again.

Gwendolyn and Winston walked back to the shooting range with full stomachs. “Hey, where’s Quincy?”

“Probably left to get some food.” replied Winston.

“No, his arrows are still here. He must have been kidnapped!”

Gwendolyn shouted. Robert ‘Striker’ Jones was coming to the shooting range.

“Where is Quincy?” he thundered. “I told you to stay with him! If he’s gone then...the Ku Klux Klan must’ve taken him! Winston, go to your room,” he said through clenched teeth. “Gwendolyn, come with me.”

Gwendolyn walked with her father to Eleanor’s house, Val-Kill.

“Hello, Eleanor.” Jones said. “I need your help finding Quincy. I’m very certain that he’s been taken by the Ku Klux Klan.”

“You do think so, hmm?” Eleanor responded. “I’ll see what I can do.”

Splooosh! Cold water splashed over Quincy, jolting him awake. “Hello, Quincy.” The figure had lots of jewelry, but also advanced body armour. “I am Ku Klux Klan, th-”

“Let me guess. The leader of the Ku Klux Klan?”

“Yes. Be quiet! We are the group made to resemble the Ku Klux Klan, and we will use you to destroy Eleanor Roosevelt and Striker Jones.”

Quincy felt around the sack he was in. Quickly he realized that they had never taken away his hi-tech bow, capable of becoming a suit of armour while maintaining its super-powerful weaponry. The suit would give him immense power, but it would not be enough to take out the entire Ku Klux Klan. He also had his quiver, capable of turning into a helmet and

jetpack, and provide incendiary, poisonous, and many other types of arrows. But he would have to wait to bust out of the building.

“Lock him in the cellar with the rats,” Khan ordered.

Back at Val-Kill, Jones, Gwendolyn, and Eleanor had formed a plan and were walking towards the house of a spy in the Ku Klux Klan. They found out the location: the Presidential Library. He would be trapped in the upper section with all the books. The trio walked into the Library.

“I can’t go here.” said Eleanor. Her breath was quickening. “Too many memories. I am very sorry, but you’ll have to go on without me.” Then Eleanor vanished.

“Wow, Dad. Did you know that this office of FDR’s is almost completely original?”

“I did. Stay away from everyone, Gwen.”

“FDR was also a democrat, and he ran for four terms, but died before he could finish the fourth. He saved the country from the Great Depression with the New Deal acts, stopped the Dust Bowl by planting trees, and led us through WWII.”

The two ran up the stairs and found a secret passage that led them to the main room of the Ku Klux Klan’s secret hideout.

“Kill them!” ordered Khan.

“Stay behind me!” Jones shouted. They ran, and then while everyone was distracted, Quincy ran. Armour materialized around him.

“Meet me at home!” Quincy shouted. All three of them ran. Soon they passed a police station, and a few police poked their heads out.

“Call the Secret Service, the Ku Klux Klan is here! Go Go Go Go GO!” the head officer shouted.

Soon, all three of them were safe. A fireball streaked past, and Robert finally looked up from the game he was playing, and a few embers burned Franklin’s drawing.

“And this is why you do what I tell you. Always stay together.”

“Alright, Dad.” Gwendolyn and Quincy responded together.

“Well, I’m gonna sleep for the rest of the day.” said Quincy. “After, we can play Monopoly.”

“Sounds good to me.” said Gwendolyn.

I decided to write this piece after visiting many historical sites, including the Hyde Park Train Station, The FDR Presidential Library, and Val-Kill. I was also inspired by a picture of FDR as a child shooting birds, or practicing archery.

How is Fair?

Robert Zhu, Age 14

This is a question that most do not think to ask. Instead, they turn to a far simpler question: “What is fair?” However, there is a much more profound question. How? How do we judge what is fair? How can we be certain of our decisions? In short, “How is Fair?”

All humans are born with some sort of ability to see what is fair. However, each person's view of the world is different. This is because humans base fairness on their own conscience and morality.

I believe fairness to be judged primarily on the basis of equality, but it is also tempered by other factors, such as age, familiarity, social standing, and the general context of the situation. For example, consider this situation: A person is handing out candies . They give one person three, someone else two, another person one, and a fourth person gets two. This is actually fair, though it might not seem like it at first. It makes more sense when you take a closer look at who these people are. The person giving out candies is a mom with three children. The people who received two candies each are her two sons, while the person that received three is her daughter, who is younger than both of her brothers. The person that did not get any candy is a friend of the mom, who declined the offer because they don't like candy. This example clearly shows how fairness is based on both **needs** and **wants**. The littlest sister **wants** the same thing as her brothers, but **needs** more because of her age, so she gets

three. The friend, however, doesn't want any, and doesn't **need** any, so they don't get any.

This idea seems to work well at first, but eventually, some rebellious teenager will ask, "Are you sure this actually works? I don't **want** my parents to boss me around, but everyone says it's fair for them to do so." However, they would find that, if you were to expand on the idea of **needs** and **wants**, you would find that you **need** your parents' guidance. In a similar way, you could use this method to judge everything as fair or unfair.

At Hyde Park, there are many beautiful estates and museums. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, written by Eleanor Roosevelt, is displayed in Val-kill. The Declaration is an excellent example of fairness, setting all human beings equal before the law. On Eleanor's estate, there is also the furniture factory, where Eleanor gave jobs to people that **needed** one, and ensured that they would have an equal chance to succeed in life.

The base idea is simple and functional: give everyone the same things, but then factor in their **needs** and **wants** to balance it out. In this way, you will be able to see what is fair and what isn't, but be warned: not all aspects of life are black and white, and sometimes, you will find that the situation is a lot more complicated than you first thought.

Robert is the older brother in a family of four. He lives with both of his parents and his younger brother Alex. He just graduated from Van Wyck Junior High School, and will be starting at John Jay in the Fall of 2018.

