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A FREE PAPER FOR KIDS, BY KIDS

CENTER SPREAD
**OUR TRIP TO
GOVERNORS
ISLAND**

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IndyKids



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www.indykids.org

FREED BETWEEN THE LINES



TERRA MORRISON • age 12

Original illustration by Kit Mills

As far back as ancient times, censorship has been a tool to remove and restrict information from the public. The first recorded book ban in what we now call America occurred in 1637, when the Massachusetts Bay Colony banned *New English Canaan* by Thomas Morton because it gave a harsh criticism of Puritans in New England.

Now all over the country, schools and public libraries are facing calls to ban and remove books that some consider to be putting bad ideas into children's heads. This includes books containing LGBTQ+ characters or ones that seem even slightly inappropriate — for example, *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. In these cases, people argue that kids are too young to be exposed to these types of ideas, and that reading about them will be a bad influence or even unhealthy.

According to the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, there were 4,240 unique

book challenges in 2023, which was up 65% from 2022. The books that got challenged most often in 2023 were by or about LGBTQ+ and BIPOC people. The American Library Association (ALA) has estimated that books representing LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC voices made up almost half of all censorship attempts in 2023. According to the Unite Against Book Bans campaign, "Many of the people seeking to censor library materials mischaracterize books with cherry-picked excerpts intended to provoke outrage and create a false impression of what they're about."

According to the ALA, parents and pressure groups accounted for almost half of the challenges against books in 2023. Book challenges try to give reasons to remove books from public view.

The ALA says these challenges and bannings can be very harmful to children who need a lot of this information to learn and to gain an inclusive perspective on society.

However, people are fighting against book bans. Banned Books Week is a national event that celebrates literature and helps unite people against book challenges and bans. It began in 1982 to help alert people to the injustices and suppression of book bannings. The theme for this year's Banned Books Week is "Freed Between the Lines," and it is set for Sept. 22-28.

In addition to Banned Books Week, there are also many resources that help give people access to literature and fight against book bans. The Book Résumés project lists hundreds of volumes and gives information on them. These résumés give reasons and evidence for why a book is important to read so people can defend that book if it's being challenged.

Another resource is the Books Unbanned project, which gives kids aged 13 to 26 access to audiobooks of banned books through their local library. These may be books that people do not have access to due to

censorship, or simply because they do not have access to a library or are unable to get to one. The Books Unbanned card provides a resource to a wide variety of people. For example, one 21-year-old Books Unbanned cardholder from Utah shared: "I'm Latinx and queer, and it's really important to me to have accessible content that speaks to me. I believe in freedom, and there is no freedom in censorship."

Book banning can remove important resources from view, especially from children who could greatly benefit from them. Although many book challenges are presented every year, there is still a huge amount of work being put in to fight back. There are many groups and individuals putting a ton of effort into preserving books in libraries and reintroducing ones that have been removed. With much labor, people are trying to reverse the harm that censorship has caused and protect access to books in America.

NewsBrief



Bell Ringing Is Coming Back to Spain

AYAAN SOORMA • age 10 and INDYKIDS Staff



Nowadays we use devices to communicate and talk to each other. But in Spain, there is an effort to bring back a way of communicating used many years ago. Ringing church bells was a very popular way to communicate in Spain in the past. In 2022, UNESCO added manual bell ringing (bell ringing by hand) to its “Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity” list for Spain. According to UNESCO, “Over the centuries, bell ringing has served as a means of expression and communication in Spain, fulfilling a number of social functions.” Bell ringing was used to signal many events like natural disasters, celebrations or just community gatherings.

Although bell ringing isn’t in wide use, the loud sound still attracts people. Because technology has advanced, many churches have automated bell ringing systems instead of having them rung by hand. People learn about major events from their phones or by watching the news on TV. But special schools and individuals interested in the tradition of bell ringing are trying to bring it back because it is a way to gather people together in real life and be social. One such school, the Vall d'en Bas School of Bell Ringers in Spain, just graduated its first class of 18 students who learned how to ring bells by hand, which involves pulling heavy ropes and learning the difference between certain sounds, what they mean, and how to make them.

Xavier Pallàs, the founder and director of Vall d'en Bas School of Bell Ringers, told the Associated Press, “This is a means of communication that reaches everyone inside a local community and can help it come together at concrete moments. That can include a death in the community or the celebration of a holiday. It can help mark the rituals that we need.”

nation & world



The Way We Dress: How Dress Codes Can Be Connected to Systematic Racism and Sexism

GRACE STEVENS • age 13



Dress codes in schools are supposed to maintain a distraction-free, safe and professional environment, but can instead make students feel less than their peers because of sexism or racism in school rules. Some school dress codes have rules directly targeting certain genders or ethnicities. These exist because school dress codes were established at the same time as public schools, and many of these rules have not changed since then. That leaves rules that are fit for how people dressed in the 1830s and not in the world we live in today.

A study by *Education Weekly* in 2022 found that 90% of dress codes are about clothes predominantly worn by girls, but many dress codes also have rules about only boys. Cheyanne Mumphy of the Associated Press writes, “In 2020, the ACLU of Texas identified 477 school districts with boys-only hair length rules. Since then, half have removed the restrictions from their policies, according to an ACLU report.”

Dress codes also have rules about certain races. *Education Weekly* shares that “59 percent of dress codes have rules about students’ hairstyles that disproportionately impact Black students.” *Education Weekly* also found that schools with more Black and Hispanic students have stricter dress codes.

Having rules specifically about the global majority’s hair goes against the CROWN Act, a law in about 20 states. It stands for “Creating a

Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair” and was put in place to stop discrimination based on natural hair in educational and professional settings.

While the CROWN Act is a step in the right direction, it has not completely stopped dress code discrimination based on race. One example of this is Darryl George, an African American teenager who attended Barbers Hill High School in Texas. He was banned from attending school for most of the 2023-2024 school year because of the length of his locs.

PBS shared that for much of his junior year, George “either served in-school suspension ... or spent time at an off-site disciplinary program” because his hair violated the school’s dress code. George’s family has accused the school of going against the CROWN Act. When the case was taken to a Texas court, it sided with the school system. Before the trial, Darryl told AP News that “[Wearing locs is] how I feel closer to my people. It’s how I feel closer to my ancestors. It’s just me. It’s how I am.”

School is a place where students should feel safe and respected. Schools made dress codes to ensure that, but they often have the opposite effect. Dress codes have left students upset and even taken out of the school building. A measure made for safety should make students feel safe, not discriminated against.

Between Wars and Climate Disasters, Millions of People Are Forced to Leave Their Homes Each Year

ZAYNAB LATHEEF • age 12

Every year, many people are forced to leave the comfort of their homes, also known as displacement. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, over 120 million people worldwide have been displaced because of “persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations.” Most of the world’s refugees are from Afghanistan, Syria, Venezuela, Ukraine and Sudan.

Some displaced people go to another country.

Some move within their own country (internal displacement). Some people who are displaced go back home eventually. Some never do. “Forced displacement is one of the global challenges of our time,” says Kelly Clements, the deputy high commissioner for the U.N. Refugee Agency.

Since Oct. 7, 2023, there’s been mass displacement due to Israel’s war on Gaza. “We estimate that nine in every 10 people in the Gaza Strip have been internally displaced at least once, if not up to 10 times, unfortunately, since October,” said Andrea De Domenico, head of the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. “Behind these numbers, there are people ... who in the last nine months have been moved around like pawns in a board game.”



Syrian refugee camp in the outskirts of Athens. Photo by Julie Ricard on Unsplash

Sudan is where the world’s largest displacement crisis is currently taking place. According to the U.N. International Organization for Migration, more than 10 million people have left their homes in Sudan because of the civil war. Close to 27,000 additional Sudanese people have been displaced because of flooding since June, per the United Nations.

Natural disasters on their own are a big reason why people leave their homes. In 2023, around 25 million people worldwide were internally displaced

due to disasters such as wildfires, floods and hurricanes, according to the Global Migration Data Portal.

In the United States, about 2.5 million people were displaced because of weather-related disasters in 2023, according to the Census Bureau. There were 28 major disasters in the United States in 2023. This year, 22 people

died in the Houston area because of Hurricane Beryl. Around 2.2 million businesses and homes lost power. The Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico were also affected.

Displacement requires us to help those who are affected and to address the root causes, which are climate disasters and wars. “If we have that kind of international cooperation, we have a chance of being able to address this,” Clements says.

The Threat of Christian Nationalism

SHANTI HUBBARD-BENNETT • age 13

Being a Christian is very important to some people, but should it be forced upon those who have different values? The 2024 election is coming up, and if Donald Trump gets reelected, there is a plan called Project 2025. Project 2025 threatens women, LGBTQ people, immigrants, the environment and will change a lot about the country. This is part of a trend of Christian nationalism we are already seeing.

What is Christian nationalism? Brad Onishi, a religion scholar who used to be an evangelical minister and Christian nationalist, told PBS, “Christian nationalism is an ideology that is based around the idea that this is a Christian nation, that this was founded as a Christian nation, and, therefore, it should be a Christian nation today and should be so in the future.”

Not every Christian is a Christian nationalist, but there are some in politics and government who would like it to be mandatory for everyone to think the same thing and have the same values as the government. For example, House Speaker Mike Johnson flew a Christian nationalist flag outside his office, and Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito flew the flag at his vacation house.

In Louisiana, the government is telling public schools that by the start of 2025 the 10 Commandments have to be hanging up in every classroom. The government wants it to be a large poster with an easily readable font. The poster will come with four paragraphs talking about how the 10 Commandments “were a prominent part of American public education for almost three centuries.” In Oklahoma, Ryan Walters, the state’s



The White House, Washington, D.C. Photo by Nils Huennerfuerst on Unsplash

Science Briefs

Rising Temperatures Are More Dangerous Than You Think

ARMAAN SOORMA • age 12 and INDYKIDS Staff



Full Disk Earth. Apollo 17, 1972. Photo by the New York Public Library on Unsplash

Temperatures all around the world are slowly rising every year due to climate change. While these rising temperatures may not seem to be harmful, they are not only creating problems in everyday life, but are killing thousands of people per year.

High temperatures in New Jersey recently caused electronics in trains to malfunction, delaying trains and suspending some service. While all this might not seem major, hundreds of thousands of people take the New Jersey Transit not just to visit places, but to travel to their jobs. Further, to try and resolve this trouble, New Jersey Transit increased commuter fares to bring in more labor, which caused mass frustration among daily commuters.

Beyond generating daily inconveniences, rising temperatures can be lethal. According to a recent Associated Press analysis of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data, just last year around 2,300 people died due to extreme heat in the United States during the summer months. While people might not realize the risks of high temperatures, Andrea Thompson writes in *Scientific American* that “heat waves are the deadliest extreme weather events in the U.S., killing more people than hurricanes, tornadoes and floods combined.” With how temperatures are rising, this could get worse.

Temperatures are on the rise, but, with everyone’s help, we can decrease the problems caused by high temperatures. Small actions can have big results, such as how closing a light or taking shorter showers can definitely help slow down climate change. As more people become aware of the threat climate change is posing, we could hopefully have a greener Earth.



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OUR TRIP TO GOVERNORS ISLAND

About Our Trip

LEE CLARK • age 12

We took a trip to Governors Island to talk to and learn about several different organizations there. We interviewed representatives of Flux Factory, Billion Oyster Project, Climate Imaginarium, KODA, Extinction Rebellion and the NYC Climate Writers Collective. All of these groups were part of Governors Island Arts' annual Organizations in Residence program. Volunteers, artists and activists work on a variety of projects here, such as restoring a billion oysters to the New York Harbor or making art out of recycled materials. Meeting these people truly showcased the importance of art and climate activism in Governors Island's community.

Read the full articles about each organization we interviewed online at [IndyKids.org](https://www.IndyKids.org)!

The History of Governors Island

ESTEBAN GUERRA • age 12



In 1524, Governors Island was known to the Lenape as "Nut Island." It was then held by Dutch colonizers, before England captured it in 1664, along with the rest of New Amsterdam (now New York City). In 1699, the island was named Governors Island and was reserved for the British governors' use. After the American Revolution, the new state of New York took over Governors Island and later gave it to the U.S. government for military use in 1800. For the next 195 years, it was used by the military and the Coast Guard.

After the Coast Guard left in 1995, 22 acres of Governors Island were given to the National Park Service in 2001, and the rest of the island was sold to New York City and New York state for the use of the public in 2003. In 2005, the island was opened to the public, and in 2009 ferries started running to the island. In 2010, the New York Harbor School opened on the island. Today, almost 1 million people visit the island each year to view historic sites, art, and have fun in the park. In 2023, it was announced that the Climate Exchange will be opened in 2028 on Governors Island to do research on climate change.



IndyKids • Billion Oyster Project's Asly Ventura and Konner Wade Campbell Scheel stand on a giant pile of oyster shells.

Bringing Oysters Back to NY Harbor

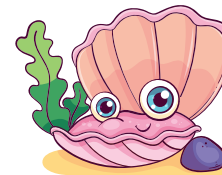
ESTEBAN GUERRA • age 12

Billion Oyster Project is an organization that is trying to return the oysters back to their natural habitat and prevent them from extinction by creating more oyster reefs in New York Harbor. The reason why they might go extinct is because people

continue to harvest and eat them too quickly, leaving them very little time to continue growing. Billion Oyster Project has helped restore oyster reefs in 19 acres of New York Harbor, but in the past there were 220,000 acres of oyster reefs in the harbor. Oyster reefs provide a habitat for hundreds of species.

The organization has set a goal of 1 billion oysters in the harbor because once they reach that number, the oysters can start sustaining themselves. Now there are 122 million oysters in the harbor. Creating more oyster reefs is also beneficial to us because it will allow the harbor to be filtered in an eco-friendly

way, and it also protects New York City from floods during storms. Oysters are eco-friendly filters because they filter the water as they eat, which helps clarify the water and remove certain pollutants, including nitrogen. An adult oyster can clean up to 50 gallons of water in a day.



Flux Factory: An Organization for Artists to Continue Their Art Journey

ANAYANSI FREILLA-WILLIAMS • age 11 and INDYKIDS Staff



Flux Factory is a nonprofit organization for artists. People apply to make and show art at the space. Flux Factory was started in 1994 in a former spice factory in Williamsburg by a group of artists who needed a space where they could make and share their art.

Over the years, Flux Factory has gone to many places, including Sunnyside, Queens, and Long Island City. Now Flux Factory has many locations, and one of them is on Governors Island. Flux Factory hosts events for artists to show their work, about 75 every year. Flux Factory is supported by donations, so the public doesn't have to pay, but the artists still get paid for showing their art.

MaLo Sutra Fish is a resident at Flux Factory on Governors Island during the

summer and fall of 2024. MaLo is a photographer, a writer, and makes films. MaLo likes to take things considered not beautiful or imperfect and make them beautiful in her artwork.

IndyKids visited MaLo's PROCESS Exhibition on Governors Island and learned about analog photography, which is how photography was originally done before digital cameras and phones.



Artist MaLo giving IndyKids a tour of her exhibition at Flux Factory's house on Governors Island.

The Amazing Art Program KODA

NOEL FERNANDEZ • age 9

Have you ever wondered if there is an art program on an island where you can learn more about its history? Well, if you visit Governors Island this fall, you'll find an art organization called KODA.

KODA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to mid-career artists, providing residencies, exhibitions and arts education. They currently have a residency program on Governors Island. KODA was founded in 2019 to support artists who make artwork about social justice-related topics.

The KODA art program has invited artists to create work under different social justice themes like Border + Boundaries, Racial Justice, Land + Environment, and Identity + Justice. KODA is now focusing on a mental health residency program from Aug. 1 to Oct. 31 for women and people who are nonbinary. According to Elif Usuloglu, KODA's program manager, the reason why they focus on mental health is because Klaudia Ofwona Draber, KODA's founder and executive director, thought it would have a good impact globally since it is a crucial topic of our life.



Klaudia Ofwona Draber and Elif Usuloglu stand outside the KODA house on Governors Island.

Extinction Rebellion Is Protesting to Help Spread Awareness About Our Climate Crisis

MAX RAGOLIA • age 13

Protests are going on in New York City because of an organization that is trying to improve the environment and make people aware of the global climate crisis. Extinction Rebellion is an organization with an estimated 250,000 members who join in protests and help improve the environment. The organization was co-founded in the United Kingdom by Gail Bradbrook, who has been arrested many times for acts of civil disobedience to help the environment. Civil disobedience is when people protest in nonviolent ways for reasons that they think are right and necessary.

Extinction Rebellion NYC was inspired by Extinction Rebellion UK and nonviolent movements such as Occupy Wall Street and the civil rights movement. On May 11, Extinction Rebellion activists protested the Masters Agility Championship Finals of the

Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show. People ran onto the stage with a sign reading "No dogs on a dead planet." Miles Grant, an Extinction Rebellion spokesperson, told Yahoo News, "We are not protesting dog lovers, nor are we protesting the dog show. We are demanding that we all acknowledge the reality of the climate catastrophe that is unfolding before us all. If we don't disrupt, nature will! Nature's disruption will last much longer." In June, they disrupted a golf tournament in Connecticut. Last year, they disrupted the U.S. Open, saying, "No tennis on a dead planet."

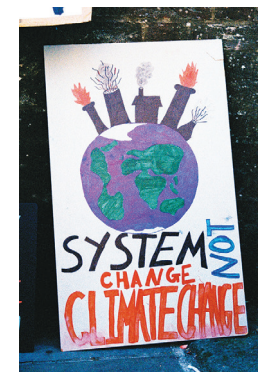


Photo by by Scott Evans on Unsplash

NYC Climate Writers Collective Imagines a Better Future

LEE CLARK • age 12



IndyKids reporters did a mini writing workshop with the NYC Climate Writers Collective at Climate Imaginarium.

In order to have a brighter, more positive future, we have to imagine it first. The NYC Climate Writers Collective was founded by a group of storytellers to draw attention to the climate crisis. The individuals in the group were feeling "really lousy about the way that the climate crisis is not being addressed quickly enough by political figures," according to Sarah Hermes Griesbach, who works at the organization. At the collective, writers create stories illustrating a positive climate future, with interesting solutions to several environmental issues.

Several stories showcase superheroes helping people who do not have access to clean water. Others include haikus responding to negative emotions. The collective used to meet at the Climate Cafe, a place where individuals met with a common desire to end the climate crisis, and now they meet on Governors Island. The group is nonhierarchical: Everyone has an opportunity to make a difference.

The NYC Climate Writers Collective is open to the public. They hold workshops four to eight times a month, each one being about two hours. These gatherings each have a specific theme, such as a love poem to a tree.

The Crisis of the Imagination

ARTHUR ALCOFF • age 13

"The climate crisis is a crisis of imagination," says social scientist and performance artist Yumi Rodriguez when talking about the Climate Imaginarium, where she works as a community organizer.

The Climate Imaginarium is a cozy house on Governors Island with haikus and art about climate change on the walls. In the house, they are developing a production studio, a laboratory and a collaborative space for, in their words, "learning, performance,

exhibition, and engagement with the public." The Climate Imaginarium evolved from the Climate Imaginations Network at the Columbia Climate School. Founded by Joshua Nodiff, the Climate Imaginarium opened its doors on May 18 with the purpose of cultivating a community of arts and culture organizations and climate storytellers.



culture & activism

Randoseru: More Than Just a Bag

NIKHIL SABNIS • age 11

Many students and their families went shopping over summer break to find a backpack that fit them for the new school year — perhaps because their old one tore last year, or perhaps just to start the school year with something new. Maybe you were one of them. Not in Japan.

Japanese students in elementary school get one high-quality randoseru, a Japanese backpack, often purchased by their grandparents, that they keep from first grade through sixth. Randoseru are unique backpacks that have a rich history and cultural background.

First, there are several aspects of randoseru that make them so practical. Randoseru are heavy backpacks, usually made of leather or synthetic leather, made with a wide opening for textbooks, binders and lunches. They have multiple lockable pockets and one large flap that covers all the pockets. Most often, they are a box-like shape with a curve toward the top. Unlike fast fashion, these bags are made to last.

According to the *New York Times*, when filled with textbooks and daily items, randoseru can weigh up to nine pounds. And the *Guardian* reports that some students complained that these heavy bags hurt their backs after walking in the heat home. So why is the randoseru ubiquitous among elementary students in Japan?

Randoseru are more than just a book bag for students — they have a

complex history and origin. Randoseru initially began as a military bag from the Netherlands, called the ransel. It was first introduced to Japan in the late 19th century. Then, schools for elite families, such as the imperial family, decided that an expensive, leather bag inspired by the ransel would be carried by their students. Later, randoseru were used by school children during World War II, a time when school was seen as part of military preparation.

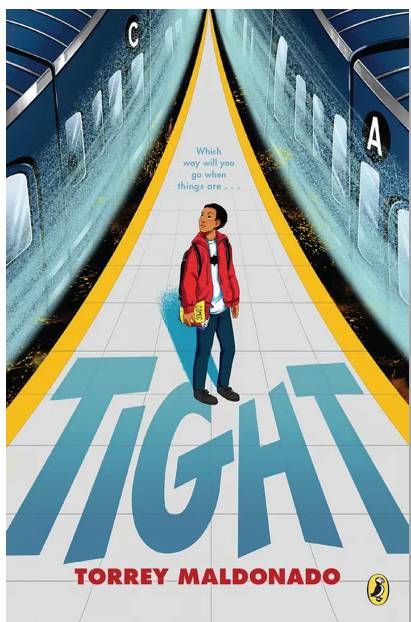
“After the war, the country [Japan] mobilized again, this time to rebuild an economy with dutiful, compliant workers. In recognition of the strong solidarity symbolized by the randoseru, some large companies would give the backpacks as gifts to the children of employees,” explains Motoko Rich for the *New York Times*.

Soon, having randoseru became a cultural tradition. Traditionally, boys carried black ones and girls carried red or lavender ones, but today they come in many colors. Today, buying and receiving randoseru bonds Japanese children, their parents and their grandparents. There are even ceremonies for the randoseru buying season, like one conducted earlier this year by Sony in Tokyo. Company president Hiroki Totoki described the randoseru ceremony as “an important bond that connects families.” At the event, the company’s 66th, 250 rising first graders each received a randoseru from the company.



Tight, a Book about Peer Pressure

AYAAN SOORMA • age 10



Cover of *Tight*, by Torrey Maldonado. Published by Puffin Books, An imprint of Penguin Random House LLC, New York

One of my favorite books is *Tight* by Torrey Maldonado. Books that I like are adventurous and teach an important lesson. *Tight* teaches an extremely important lesson, especially for kids and teenagers. *Tight* focuses on peer pressure.

The main character of *Tight* is Bryan. Bryan is a normal sixth grader who lives in Brooklyn, like me. In the beginning of the book, he goes to his mother’s workplace after school and meets a kid named Mike, who goes to the same school as Bryan. Bryan’s mother and father think that Mike would be a good friend. But soon Mike encourages Bryan to do dangerous things, which eventually ends up in a big fight.

The story is a perfect example of peer pressure. Peer pressure is when your friend or peer tries to make or pressure you to do something that you don’t want to do. Just because someone is acting all friendly with you doesn’t mean they are a real good friend. And most of the time, people fall for it. At the end of the

book, Bryan thinks about what he would do next time. Instead of following his friends into bad things, he will use his brain. That is the moral of the book. I would recommend this book because it teaches a great lesson that you could use a lot in your life, especially if you are a teenager.



Meet *IndyKids* Reporter: 9-Year-Old Noel Fernandez!

INDYKIDS STAFF

Meet Noel Fernandez, a 9-year-old *IndyKids* reporter from Yonkers, N.Y. Noel’s favorite hobby is playing baseball, but he also enjoys gardening and taking care of plants, and playing with his dog. He also likes going to the beach. Besides being a baseball player, when he grows up, he wants to do something related to technology, such as being an engineer.

What sparked your interest in journalism, and how did you decide to become an *IndyKids* reporter?

Noel: The reason why I became interested in journalism was because I wanted to improve my writing grade and improve my writing skills. My robotics teacher told me about *IndyKids* and thought it could be helpful for me.

As a young journalist, what topics are you most passionate about, and why?

Noel: I am most passionate about climate change. I also am concerned about the amount of violence in the world. I am most passionate about these issues because it is very troublesome how the world is dying because of both of these problems.

Can you share something you’ve learned from your experience at *IndyKids*?

Noel: I learned how journalism works, from writing a draft to the final print of a paper, as well as the structure of an article. I also improved my writing skills, which helped my writing grade a lot.

How do you think being a kid reporter contributes to raising awareness and promoting positive change in your community or the world?

Noel: I believe it helps because it shows that some people in the world have big problems, and spreads more awareness of them. Also, if a kid is having trouble at school, reading a newspaper helps them learn more about the world and helps them improve their grades.



PERSONAL REPORT

Olympics Hijab Ban: Building Barriers, Not Bridges

AISHA SIDDIQA HASSIM • age 15

Hijab is a representation of who I am. It is a message to the world that I am a Muslim woman and I am proud of it. France took away a Muslim woman’s right to represent herself and her people at the Olympics. The 2024 Paris Olympics was supposed to be the first truly inclusive Olympic Games, but due to France’s ban on religious symbols, specifically the hijab, Muslim athletes were unable to compete if they wore a headcovering.

After the original decision from France, many human rights groups protested against it, claiming that it went against human rights laws, with Amnesty International being especially vocal about the injustices of it.

France continues to defend its decision by claiming that the hijab is a religious symbol and thus goes against the country’s principle of *laïcité* (secularism), where religion is kept separate from public life. By making

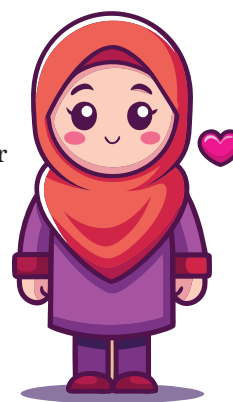
laws restricting people from wearing religious symbols, France argues that it is maintaining neutrality in public spaces and upholding the values of secularism.

However, this decision has sparked global debate. Many see it as a violation of freedom and human rights, particularly the right to express one’s religious beliefs. For Muslim women, the hijab is not just a piece of clothing; it is a part of our identity and faith. Denying us the right to wear it, especially on such a large stage as the Olympics, is an act of exclusion and discrimination.

The ban not only impacts athletes but also sends a broader message about the acceptance of religious diversity in public life. In a world where inclusivity and diversity are increasingly valued, such a ban appears to be a step backward. The Olympics should be a platform where athletes from all backgrounds can participate, without having to give up their beliefs or identities.

The controversy surrounding this decision will likely continue, as it raises important questions about the balance between secularism and religious freedom, and the extent to which a state can impose its values on individuals.

In the end, the question remains: Can true inclusivity be achieved if individuals are forced to choose between their identity and their participation in global events? For many Muslim women, the answer is clear. The hijab is not just a symbol; it is a part of who they are, and no law should force them to abandon that.



Someday You Could Be... Yumi Rodriguez!

ARTHUR ALCOFF • age 13



“Yumi has enough hope and imagination and creativity to get us out. Holding on to hope is really important,”

says Soledad Aguilar-Colon, a staff member at *IndyKids*. Yumi Rodriguez works within climate science and performative and visual arts. She is also a community organizer at the Climate Imaginarium, which is how I got to meet her.

Yumi was raised in Washington Heights and went to Columbia Climate School for her master’s degree in climate and society. Prior to that, she earned an associate of applied sciences in veterinary medicine.

She helps her community in many ways. She has made murals around the city symbolizing nature with the Audubon Mural Project. The murals are specifically of birds in order to

raise awareness about endangered species and beautify neglected spaces. Even though she likes birds, she loves spiders. We know this because of her pet spider, Charlotte, who she introduced me to during our interview.

Yumi “wears many hats,” which is a saying for when people do a lot of different things. Sometimes she wears one hat, and other times she wears multiple. Sometimes she wears a top hat, like when she performs for a social circus project called Circ of Humankind, which encourages people to socialize. Yumi described her inspiration in a video performance from 2019, saying, “In many ways humanity has become a threat to itself, and so I’ve decided to take it upon myself to expose the thread that keeps humankind together again.”



A Snapshot of My Life, by IndyKids reporters

What are my favorite Fall activities?

I enjoy drinking hot tea while reading a book during fall. It makes me feel relaxed and cozy, and gets me into the spirit of the season.

Lee, age 12,
from New York City, N.Y.

I love going in corn mazes with my family because I tend to lead and get everyone lost. I always like spending time with my family.

Esteban, age 12
from New York City, N.Y.

What I find interesting to do in the fall is either going outside to jump on leaves or visit my family and eat food in the breeze.

Noel, age 9,
from Yonkers, N.Y.

I like making a pile of leaves and jumping into it, and I like getting maple syrup and eating pancakes.

Anayansi, age 11,
from the Bronx, N.Y.

I enjoy going outside with my family and friends and going apple picking in different parks or farms.

Max, age 13,
from New York City, N.Y.

I like to go to the park and walk with family, or just reading.

Arthur, age 13,
from New York City, N.Y.

I love cooking with my family and friends. Drawing and hot cocoa. And movies!!! Also apple picking.

Amelia, age 10,
from the Bronx, N.Y.



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Getting Wild With... Oysters!

AMELIA GONZALEZ GINES • age 10

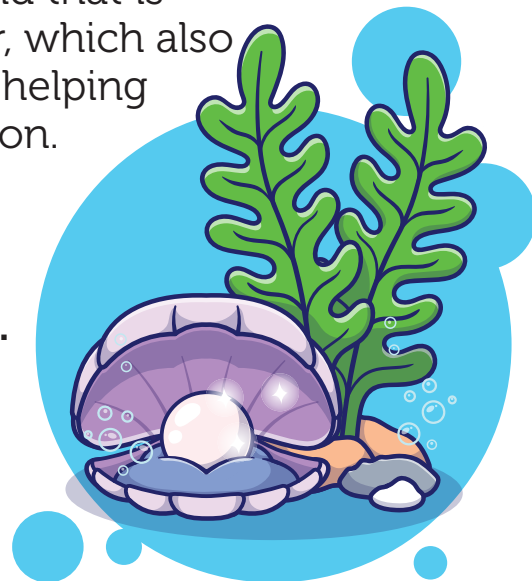
Did you know that oysters have lived for about 15 million years? Wow! For humans, we become adults in 18 years, but oysters become adults in one year, and they can live for up to 20 years.

Oysters are a type of mollusc. Snails and octopuses are also molluscs.

Oysters are important because they are recyclable, which means that if you put their shells back in water and leave them there, they will make homes for baby oysters.

Oysters have gills, and that is how they filter water, which also means that they are helping us stop water pollution.

Have you ever heard the joke, "Why don't oysters share their pearls?... Because they are shellfish"? They are more like humans than you think. They are alive!



E	O	Y	S	T	E	R	S	H	B
T	X	H	C	Y	H	Y	Q	U	A
M	M	T	L	M	M	R	U	M	C
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N	I	M	M	N	N	D	A	D	P
F	S	B	A	Q	C	B	R	I	A
L	L	N	T	E	X	T	T	T	C
Y	A	N	E	K	K	X	I	Y	K
Q	N	K	Q	B	L	A	S	O	S
R	D	H	C	J	L	D	T	E	N