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U.S. IMMIGRANTS ARE **LIVING IN TERROR**



SCARLETT MORA • age 10

Illustration by Emma Vitoria

Since President Trump took office for a second time on Jan. 20, 2025, 200,000 people have been deported, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has arrested more than 100,000 people. ICE's goal for the number of arrests per day is 3,000 people, according to the *New York Times*.

Some immigrant parents are keeping their kids from school because they are afraid that their children might get picked up by ICE while they are in class. Kids are also afraid of being deported by ICE without their parents. Many immigrant groups are targeted.

"It's been like a nightmare," Daria, 41, a Ukrainian immigrant, told NBC News. "We are scared and we feel uncertain of everything around us."

Trump removed the humanitarian parole status for half a million immigrants from Nicaragua, Venezuela, Cuba, and Haiti, according to *Democracy Now!* The Trump administration is threatening them to "self-deport" or face arrest. As Guerline Jozef, executive director of the Haitian Bridge Alliance, said in

a statement to *Democracy Now!*, "DHS is tearing those lives apart, forcing families into chaos. ... This is not policy—it is punishment."

Some ICE officers have been tricking immigrants and arresting them even though they don't have a criminal record. There have been many cases of ICE officers ambushing people at immigration courts around the country. Many arrests have been done by plainclothes officers—meaning officers without their uniforms on—who cover their face and refuse to reveal their name. For example, Dylan, a 20-year-old Venezuelan living in the Bronx, was arrested by plainclothes ICE officers even after judges dismissed his deportation case, according to Chalkbeat.

On June 14, 4-6 million people gathered in the streets in "No Kings" protests across the country. They were protesting the far-right policies Trump has pursued since assuming office. "All of our rights are being violated," Michelle Verne, 56, who marched in Los Angeles, told the *Los Angeles Times*.

The protests in Los Angeles, where

people protested for multiple days against immigration enforcement raids in businesses, restaurants, and homes, resulted in violent suppression, with police shooting rubber bullets and tear gas at protesters. Some cars and property were destroyed.

Trump responded by sending the National Guard to California without the governor or mayor's consent.

Some U.S. citizens are willing to put themselves at risk to protect vulnerable immigrants. For example, according to Chalkbeat, in late January, a Manhattan principal told a concerned immigrant mother, "ICE is going to have to arrest me before they arrest your daughter." He added that they would lock her daughter in his office, if needed. The mother was reassured and took her daughter to school.

The American Civil Liberties Union states that if ICE, police, or border agents come to your home, you should not open the door, but should speak to them through the closed door. If they have a warrant signed by a judge, they can slide that under the door or hold it to a window. They say to stay calm and

have your citizenship or immigration documents ready. It is also a good idea to have a list of emergency contacts on hand, including children's schools and a lawyer.

Arise Chicago, an immigrant advocacy group, is one organization that is teaching immigrants what to do if ICE comes and tries to deport families and individuals, according to *In These Times*. The organization wants to teach immigrants how to protect themselves and to be educated on their rights—and to not open the door if ICE comes knocking.



NewsBrief



Libraries Can Help People Stay Cool in New York City

AIDA CEPEDA • age 11



Photo by Guzel Maksutova on Unsplash

There's more to heat than just dehydration and feeling hot. Extreme heat can harm human health by causing heat strokes or even death. Just last year, around 2,300 people died in the United States during the year's hottest summer months. In New Jersey, the high temperatures caused trains to shut down, interrupting service. In New York City each summer, about 350 people die from extreme heat. Luckily, New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM) has a program to expand cooling centers to help mitigate the issue during these summer months.

Mayor Eric Adams and NYCEM Commissioner Zach Iscol announced in summer 2024 the "Beat the Heat" safety plan for New Yorkers to proactively tackle the heat during the summer. The city has implemented an interactive map showing "cooling center" locations across the city, including libraries, recreation centers, and parks with fountains. The city is also distributing free air conditioners to eligible people and cooling kits containing essential heat safety supplies for at-risk groups.

Many people don't know that libraries serve as cooling centers for people during extreme heat waves, but there is one problem: Not all libraries in the city have air conditioning. The New York City Council is providing about \$58.3 million to fix this, but budget cuts mean not all library buildings have working AC units.

Bobby Williams, 61, who currently lives in a shelter near a library, is affected by this problem. "For people like myself, this is a very safe haven for me and I get things done," he told *Gothamist*. "I don't have money. I don't have a home. So this is really important for me."

This is an ongoing problem that is negatively impacting the New York community, but staying informed can help you remain safe and proactive.

nation & world

AI Chatbot Companies Are Rushing to Fill the Shortage of High School Counselors

SHANTY, AIDA, ASHLEY, NOEL, and INDYKIDS STAFF

Human counselors in schools might seem like a given but are currently becoming more uncommon. *TechCrunch* reports that more than 17% of schools in the United States don't have a school counselor, an important role to support students' social and career development.

Established in 2022, a company called Sonar has created an AI chatbot called Sonny to address mental health support shortages for students. Although in its early days, it is available to more than 4,500 middle and high school students.

CEO Drew Barvir described his product to the *Wall Street Journal* not as a direct replacement for a school counselor, but as a "wellbeing companion," he told the *Wall Street Journal*. It's important to note that Sonny is not a completely technological product. It is only accessible from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m. because staff are required to monitor chats, though it's not clear exactly what they do.

Sonny has debuted to positive reviews. Berryville High School in Arkansas reported a 26% decrease in student infractions after students were introduced to the chatbot.

There are several potential tricky areas that come with increased technology, however. The job of a counselor is a sensitive one, where counselors are privy to sensitive student information. A company having so much data raises concerns, especially when dealing with minors. Some therapists say that Sonny's detection skills are limited due to its inability to read behavioral or visual cues. But the real humans monitoring the chats could fill in those gaps.

But not all of these products have real people involved, which raises more concerns. ChatGPT, although not marketed for mental health, has attracted teens aged 12-18, 58% of whom say

they've used the chatbot for mental health support, according to Common Sense Media. Though many say it is helpful, sometimes the AI gives them wrong information or even dangerous advice, according to CalMatters.

What concerns many experts is the lack of regulations on these AI chatbots. Lawmakers in states like California have introduced bills to put limits on chatbot companies. But President Trump is trying to prevent states from enforcing AI regulation for the next decade.

Barvir tries to make it clear to students and schools that "Sonny isn't a therapist." Even so, student engagement with the chatbot shows an alarming gravitation toward AI when the need for human therapists remains unmet.

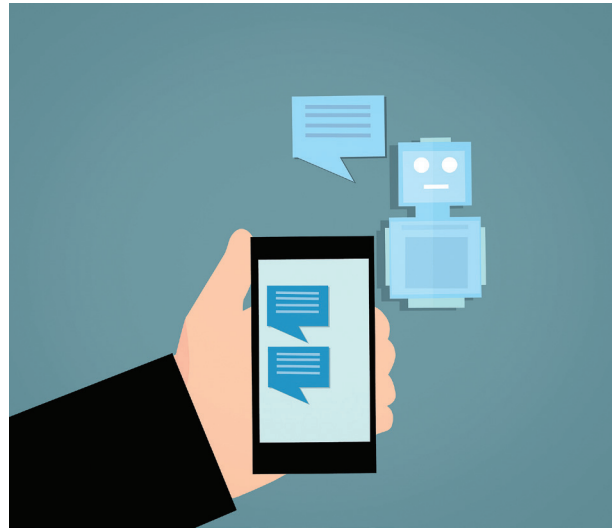


Illustration by piqels on Wikimedia Commons

From Pet to Pest: The Dangers of Releasing a Goldfish to the Wild

BROOKLYNN THEN • age 10

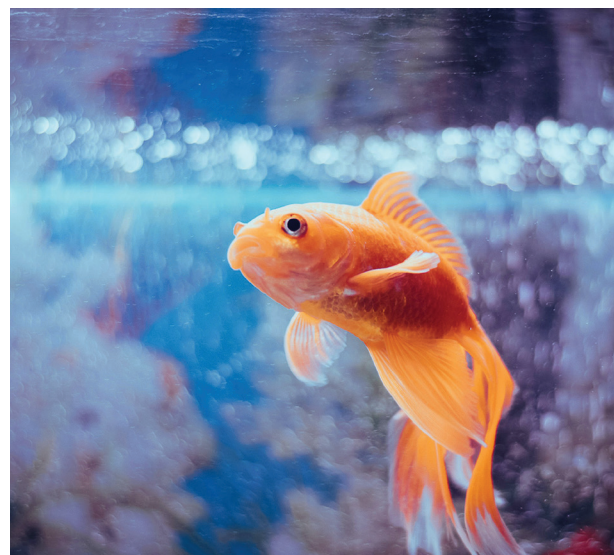


Photo by Kabita Darlami on Unsplash

A giant goldfish was found by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in Lake Erie last year. At first, it may seem harmless: just an overgrown fish. But it is more than that.

This huge fish was found as an invasive species to Lake Erie. "Without a tank limiting their size, goldfish that once fit in the palm of your hand can balloon into giant, football-sized invaders that compete with native species for food and habitat," wrote the USFWS on social media.

The giant goldfish can also damage the water quality of the lake and introduce parasites to the water, while stealing food from many native fish. It can grow up to four pounds. It is also a voracious eater, which means it can eat the plants, fish and insects living near and inside the water, which can harm ecosystems. In the end, releasing your fish at first may seem like a good deed, but it can create long-lasting problems.

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Who Is Elon Musk?

NICO, NOEL, BROOKLYNN, SCARLETT, and INDYKIDS STAFF

During the presidential campaign, Elon Musk, a 53-year-old multibillionaire, spent more than a quarter-billion dollars to back Donald Trump and other Republican candidates, according to CBS News, making him the largest donor in the 2024 election.

On Trump's first day in office, he created DOGE, or the Department of Government Efficiency, run by Musk, who served as a top adviser to the president. DOGE's stated role was to modernize federal technology to create maximum government efficiency. Many who work in DOGE have little to no government experience, yet have far-reaching access into federal data systems and the ability to shut down "DEI programs" and even entire agencies. Many lawmakers and lawyers representing numerous federal workers allege that Musk has broken laws, union contracts, and civil service protections.

But who is the man who started DOGE, and how did he rise to such a prominent role? Elon Musk was born in South Africa to a wealthy family. He co-founded PayPal, which was sold to eBay in 2002 for \$1.5 billion. Musk then started SpaceX, aiming to create a new NASA, and took over Tesla, an electric car company. In 2022, he bought the social media company Twitter, changing its name to X.

Critics of Musk and DOGE have taken their complaints to court, where judges have succeeded in stopping some DOGE orders, but not all of them.

IndyKids reporter Nico and her parents attended a rally protesting against DOGE and the Trump administration in March. Nico's mom, Hae-Lin Choi, is the political and legislative director of the Communications Workers of America union. Choi's union chose to protest against Musk "because DOGE is destroying important services that the government provides for no good reason other than corporate greed," she said.

Musk left DOGE in late May. What was accomplished? According to the *New Yorker*, DOGE cut more than 280,000 government jobs. It pressured government agencies to cancel anything related to

DEI, including removing the words "diversity" and "equity" from grants and websites. It gutted USAID, which was responsible for delivering humanitarian assistance throughout the world. It also gutted the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, which helped protect Americans from being exploited by banks and other financial institutions. With all of this, it's estimated that these cuts represent, at most, less than 3% percent of the federal budget, according to the *New Yorker*. Observers note that cutting thousands of jobs is likely to make the government less efficient.

Even though Musk has left Washington, his influence there still lingers beyond DOGE.



IndyKids reporter Nico Levitan with her parents at a rally in New York City, March 2025

The Health Risks of "Mukbangs": A Closer Look at the Trend

BROOKLYNN THEN • age 10

Mukbangs are a type of live stream and a viral internet sensation where YouTubers gorge on inhuman amounts of food. The word "mukbang" means "broadcast eating" and originated in South Korea. It gained popularity because it can feel like having a comforting meal with a friend. But it has gotten out of hand.

There are many different "mukbangers" on the internet, but only a few are famous. For example, Nicholas Perry, better known as Nikocado Avocado, is a Ukrainian-born American YouTuber who started his YouTube channel in 2014. His initial content was about his vegan lifestyle and musical performances, but soon after, he was caught up in the mukbang web. He quit mukbangs since he was dealing with a lot of mental health and physical health issues, even disability, because of his extreme overeating in constant mukbang videos.

Mukbangs are popular, but so dangerous that the South Korean government announced that they would set laws that would manage obesity and mukbangers. They set this law because many South Korean officials were noticing the change in many influencers' or residents' health. The law was received poorly by the many fans of mukbangs. There were even petitions against this law.

Two young mukbang influencers passed away from this trend: Pan Xiaoting from China and Dongz Apatan from the Philippines. Both died from binge eating last summer.

A large study published in Sage Journals found that people who regularly watch mukbangs—or

similar-style videos—could be more likely to start eating poorly. Not only can the influencer be harmed, but the viewers can be harmed, as well. Abbey Sharp, a dietitian and wellness YouTuber, has also criticized mukbangs, saying, "What I do have a problem with is that Americans have appropriated this concept of mukbang to no longer be about companionship, but rather to these over-the-top, sensationalized eating challenges," according to *Thrillist*.

Mukbangs can also be dangerous for the viewers because they can develop body dysmorphia by thinking about how skinny some mukbangers can be while eating that gigantic quantity of food.

In conclusion, mukbangs can be dangerous for everyone—the viewer and influencer—even if it just looks like a fun eating video.



Photo by Kim Sunjoo for the Korean Culture and Information Service for Flickr

Science Briefs

Oil and Why It's Universally Dangerous

NOEL FERNANDEZ • age 10



Photo by Brian Burke for Flickr

According to the Union of Concerned Scientists, every day the United States of America uses 20 million barrels of oil, which is equivalent to 1,200 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Oil provides a lot of energy even with a small amount, which allows us humans to get to our destinations in cars, buses, and airplanes. Oil is easy to store and transport. Much of our electric grid uses fossil fuels like natural gas and coal, which is how we can use Zoom and our laptops and computers.

According to The Wilderness Society, oil companies have leased over 12 million acres of public land for fossil fuel development. However, fossil fuels are dangerous to humans and animals. Burning oil leads to diseases because it evaporates, which releases particulate matter into the air, creating pollution and increasing the risk of diseases to the heart and lungs.

According to the World Health Association, around 7 million people die per year due to air pollution. The Union of Concerned Scientists states that each year, up to 30,000 premature deaths are caused just by particulate matter.

Fracking, a way to get more oil, is especially dangerous because it is connected to toxic water and air pollution, which can cause workers to get diseases. Fossil fuels also accelerate climate change because extreme weather events are linked to fossil fuels that release heat-trapping gases.

In the last 50 years, natural disasters caused by climate change have claimed the lives of over 2 million people and have cost over \$4.3 trillion, according to a 2023 report by the United Nations.

We can use other forms of energy, like solar-powered energy, wind-powered energy, and hydro-powered energy, as a solution to stop all of these deaths from happening. Switching to electric-powered vehicles would greatly reduce air pollution.

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There is a long, ugly history of people in power demonizing groups of people for political gain.

Blaming “undesirable” groups of people was a way for Hitler to consolidate power by rallying the German people around the common causes of fear and hatred.

Scapegoating trans people or immigrants for the problems of society distracts from what is really happening, and prevents many from understanding

the true causes of suffering. Oftentimes blaming groups, like calling women witches in the 1600s, has also served as a way to prevent those groups of people from becoming powerful and independent.

Despite the title of this section, blaming political opponents is anything but a game. As history has shown us, scapegoating vulnerable populations can result in unfair treatment, a loss of human rights, detainment, and even the sanctioned murder of innocent people.



Photo from Library of Congress Public Domain

THE BLAME GAME



Photo by Victoria Pickering for Flickr

Setting the Record Straight: Misinformation Spread About Immigrants Explained

GRACE STEVENS • age 15

From the start of U.S. history, there has always been extreme discrimination against immigrants. In recent months and years, news outlets and politicians have been spreading a lot of misinformation about immigrants.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, an immigrant is “a person who has come to a different country in order to live there permanently.” People immigrate for a variety of different reasons, from wanting better opportunities to seeking asylum. Immigrants have an extremely positive impact on the country, according to the American Immigration Council.

Currently 53.3 million immigrants live in the United States, making up 15.8% of the total U.S. population. With an increase of non-European people immigrating to the United States, racism has slowed down the immigration process.

There are three main ways that an immigrant can become a citizen of the United States. “Immigration to the United States on a temporary or permanent basis is generally limited to three different routes: employment, family reunification, or humanitarian protection,” explains the American Immigration Council. The process can take years.

Additionally, laws like the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which banned all Chinese immigrants from entering the United States, have made immigration harder or even impossible. Though this law was abolished in 1943, similar laws do still exist.

The Trump administration has dehumanized immigrants who don't have documentation by calling them “criminals.” However, immigrating to the United States without documentation is a civil violation, not a criminal offense. But this narrative has been used to target all immigrants, even though, as of 2023, 77% of immigrants in the United States are in the country legally, according to the Pew Research Center. In addition to the ethics of it, deporting undocumented immigrants also strains the economy.

The spreading of misinformation has accelerated in recent months, with Trump using many major tragedies to fuel his anti-immigrant agenda.

The Trump administration has repeatedly tried to alter public opinion against immigration by pinning crimes on undocumented immigrants. However, undocumented immigrants have “substantially lower crime rates than native-born citizens and legal immigrants across a range of felony offenses,” according to AP News.

Trump has also used natural disasters to turn Americans against immigrants. He claimed that relief money sent to states after Hurricane Helene in October 2024 was instead given to undocumented immigrants, according to the *Washington Post*.

The ideas that Trump is spreading about immigrants have undoubtedly affected their lives. Thirty-six percent of immigrants say that the false narratives spread by Trump have increased the racism, discrimination, and violence in their lives, according to KFF. As a 41-year-old Chinese immigrant man in California told KFF, “Donald Trump's rhetoric has demonized all immigrants and make them feel like second-class citizens.”



Photo byNitish Meena for Unsplash

The Alien Enemies Act Is Back

TERRA MORRISON • age 14

In 1798, the Alien and Sedition Acts were passed because the United States was having a significant naval conflict with France. They were passed as precautionary measures in case the countries went to war. Although some of the four laws that made up the Alien and Sedition Acts were used, the Alien Enemies Act was not. But it was never revoked.

The Alien Enemies Act gives the government power to remove noncitizens from the United States without due process if there is declared war between the two countries. However, it can only be invoked during wartime to remove noncitizens who could pose a threat and are linked to an enemy nation. The act also specifies that it cannot be applied to U.S. citizens and that people must be at least 14 or older to be removed or incarcerated.

Despite not being at war, in March, President Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act, deporting 238 Venezuelan migrants who were then imprisoned in El Salvador. Trump justified the deportation by alleging that the Venezuelans were Tren de Aragua (TDA) gang members who were a threat to the United States. At least 27 did not have a deportation order against them. According to the Trump administration, their tattoos supposedly identified them as TDA members. But this evidence was “unreliable” and “highly subjective,” according to NPR's *Throughline* podcast.

Critics of Trump are describing his invocation of the act as “a massive overreach” and an “abuse of executive power.” A federal judge recently said using the act against alleged gang members was illegal. The Venezuelans were returned to Venezuela in a prisoner swap in July, after four months of abuse in the Salvadoran prison.

This is not the only time the Alien Enemies Act has been invoked. Although it was used during the War of 1812 and World War I, its power was used on a greater scale during World War II. Immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt invoked the act, ordering the internment of 30,000 Japanese, German, and Italian noncitizens.

Two months after Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt signed an order targeting Japanese American citizens. This allowed the government to round up and forcibly relocate anyone of Japanese descent, even if they were a citizen. Roosevelt did this despite a lack of evidence that Japanese Americans were sabotaging the United States or working with Japan. By the end of the war, in 1945, over 100,000 people had been forcefully relocated, some of them for over three years.

Now, as Trump voices his plans for mass deportations and incarcerations, Japanese Americans are alarmed. Descendants of incarcerated people see the threat that the act poses to our country.

Mike Ishii, co-founder of Tsuru for Solidarity, said, “We are angry that this current administration is actually using the template of Japanese Americans' forced removal and mass incarceration as a blueprint to target immigrants. This is a campaign of hate, and it's going to destroy the civil society of this country.” The treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II leaves a terrible mark on the history of our nation. The use of this act threatens the core values of the United States, especially the right to due process.



Why Is Trump Demonizing DEI?

LUCA CANTAGALLO • age 15

Today, it seems that all you hear about is DEI. But what is it, and why is it important?

DEI, which stands for “diversity, equity, and inclusion,” is a framework that provides opportunities to underserved communities. But DEI isn't a new concept; in fact, one of the first times it was introduced was in the late 1800s during the Reconstruction era, just after the Civil War. Congress tried to establish the Freedmen's Bureau, which provided former slaves with basic necessities and helped them look for jobs and land. But then-President Andrew Jackson vetoed legislation to enforce it, claiming that it was discriminatory toward white people. This, coupled with pressure from white Southern voters, led to it being shut down only six years after it was formed.

Another example of DEI was during the civil rights movement, led by icons like Martin Luther King Jr. At its height, President Lyndon Johnson signed the landmark Civil Rights Act, which banned employment discrimination based on race, religion, sex, and national origin.

DEI is being scrutinized because the Trump administration has called it “discriminatory” and “racist” against white people. But DEI not only helps people of color, but also other disadvantaged groups. This includes white women, as well as veterans, who, according to the Census Bureau, are almost 75% white, as well as disabled and LGBTQ+ people.

Experts David Glasgow and Lily Zheng argue in *USA Today* that DEI is essential to achieving a true meritocracy because it levels the playing field for underrepresented communities, expands the talent pool, and helps identify the most qualified candidates. Zheng emphasizes that it is impossible to support a real meritocracy without DEI. Research backs this up: A 2019 study analyzing over 83,000 fake job applications submitted to more than 100 major companies revealed widespread racial bias, especially against Black applicants, according to *Forbes*. Without DEI enforcement, discriminatory hiring remains the norm.

Even so, Trump and Republican lawmakers have blamed DEI for a slew of unrelated events, including the Potomac River mid-air collision, the Los Angeles wildfires, the CrowdStrike IT crash, the attempted assassination of Trump, and the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse. These incidents were all falsely attributed to so-called DEI hires, a term popularized by Trump's MAGA movement to claim people get jobs they shouldn't because they're diverse, not because they deserve it. Conservatives argue DEI undermines meritocracy and unfairly disadvantages white people by promoting unqualified candidates of color, despite clear evidence to the contrary. The Trump administration's anti-DEI stance is another way it is spreading lies to the American people.

FACT-CHECK: WHAT'S REALLY HAPPENING IN 2025 WITH TRANS RIGHTS AND THE GOVERNMENT

SHANTI HUBBARD-BENNETT • age 14

Politicians like President Trump are using misleading language to create fear and pass laws that target queer and trans folks. Being trans isn't new, and it's not dangerous. What are some of the biggest false claims being pushed now?

The government is telling the truth about gender and trans people.

✗ **False.** President Trump and other officials have been spreading false information that puts LGBTQ+ people at risk. They've made up terms like “gender ideology” and “transgenderism” to make being trans sound dangerous or unnatural. They've also tried to redefine “sex” in a way that ignores science and medical facts.

✓ **What's True:** Experts agree: Gender isn't just about your body at birth—it's more complex, and it's different for different people. The term “gender ideology” was created to make people afraid of trans and queer people, even though they are not a threat.

Being trans is just a craze or a fad.

✗ **False.** Being trans isn't some new trend or something people “choose” because it's popular. It's a real and natural part of who some people are.

✓ **What's True:** People have expressed gender in lots of ways across history and cultures. It's not just “male” or “female.” Being trans is just one part of human expression. Everyone deserves to be accepted for themselves.

Trans athletes have an unfair advantage and threaten women's sports.

✗ **False.** Many people say trans athletes, especially trans women, are too strong or fast and ruin fair competition. But medical experts explain that hormone therapy changes the body a lot—lowering muscle mass, strength, and speed.

✓ **What's True:** Trans athletes don't threaten women's sports, they just want to compete like everyone else. According to the National Institutes of Health, there is no evidence of athletic advantage for trans women who have been on hormone treatment for many years.

Trans people don't need special healthcare because it's “experimental.”

✗ **False.** Some people say gender-affirming care is unsafe or just a fad, but that's not true. Medical experts have studied it carefully and say it's important and effective for many trans people's health.

✓ **What's True:** Trans people deserve equal healthcare, but this administration, and the Supreme Court in *Skrametti v. Tennessee*, are allowing states to deny life-saving gender-affirming care for trans youth. Major medical groups like the American Medical Association and American Academy of Pediatrics say this care is safe and needed. Denying it isn't just unfair, it can seriously hurt people. Without support from the government for these kids, families are left to suffer and figure out how to keep their child safe and healthy.

Everyone deserves to live as their true self without fear, judgment, or discrimination. Trans people aren't dangerous or new—they're human. The real danger is letting fear and misinformation shape laws that hurt people living as who they are.



culture & activism

Being More Independent Is Good for Kids

NICO LEVITAN • age 11

As kids grow older, they often want more independence. And as they get more independence, they will be more prepared for adulthood. Studies show children and teens learn better when they have more choices, according to the *New York Times*.

“While we want to wrap our kids in bubble wrap and make their worlds perfect, we do them no favors if we shield them from all discomfort,” Phyllis Fagell, a school counselor and author, told *Vox*. “What we want to do is give them tools to be resilient so that they are able to bounce back from a low grade, getting cut from a team, flubbing a line in a play, or sending a text they thought would be funny but that landed mean. All of those things that are part of growing up.”

In many cases, school is not helping children feel independent, because it does not give them enough choices or creativity. Only 33% of 10th graders say they get to develop their ideas in school, according to a Brookings/*New York Times* poll. And because of this lack of independence, around half of the people in Gen Z did not feel prepared for the future, according to a poll by Gallup and the Walton Family Foundation.

In Yahoo News, experts share a few tips for parents and teachers to help kids develop their independence. Kids should know what to do in case of an emergency, know phone numbers for important contacts, have money on them, know what to do if someone on a train/bus is making them uncomfortable, and more. But experts caution that most children under 12 should not be left alone for long periods.

Norwegians have very different parenting styles on independence, according to the *Guardian*. For example, most parents get home late. This leads to children getting home before their adults and needing to be able to prepare dinner and do homework on their own. Kids also go to and from school by themselves, since they often live near their school. Norway has a much lower crime rate,

which makes parents more open to letting children roam free.

Developmental psychologist Aliza Pressman told the *New York Times*, “Let kids do for themselves what they can already do. And guide and encourage them to do things they can almost do. And then teach and model for them the things that they can’t do.”



Photo by Kampus Production for Pexels

Someday You Could Be...a storyteller like Clara Ibarra!

Clara Ibarra is the coordinator for *Democracy Now! en Español* and founder of the Grandparents StoryLab, an intergenerational podcast project that connects the youngest and oldest generations through the power of storytelling. *IndyKids* spoke with her in spring 2025.

Describe your work with *Democracy Now!*

Clara: My experience has been great. Every day, I translate the headlines. If you watch *Democracy Now!*, the first 15 minutes are headlines. Me and a team of five people translate, and we make sure the words are correctly translated, the people are correctly represented. We make sure that it is Spanish that everyone in the U.S., in Spain, or in Latin America would understand, to make it as universal as possible. At *Democracy Now!*, I’ve seen how the stories of individuals, of people like you and me are the real news. When you go to what is happening to the people and how they are experiencing it, that is where you find the core of the story. Many times in the headlines we will have statements from the people in charge, like the U.N. or presidents, but it is the voices of everyday people that are most important. At the core of every story is the voices of everyday people, and it’s all about finding that connection.

What inspired you to create Grandparents StoryLab?

Clara: A big inspiration was that a lot of my friends were having kids, but they were being born and raised in the city without the presence of an older generation. I grew up in Colombia, and I was very close to my grandmother, and I realized that that was not going to be a reality for me if I had a kid, and it was not the reality for a lot of kids in the city. Many of them didn’t have elders in their lives. So I thought we could create that for them. We can bring elders and kids together, make that conversation and record it.

Why do you like working with elders and young kids?

Clara: There is so much wisdom from elders or older adults in our lives—so many experiences and so much that they have seen. I just wanted to pick their brains. And I wanted to pick their brains using younger brains, which is even more fun. In Senegal, they say that every time a person dies, it is as if you were burning a library. At Grandparents StoryLab, we want to store those libraries. We want to go into the elders’ minds and record some of that.



Clara Ibarra of Grandparents StoryLab

Meet *IndyKids* Reporter: 11-Year-Old

Aida Cepeda



INDYKIDS STAFF

Hi, I’m **Aida**, and I’m 11. I like to dance and do acrobatics and mostly be with my besties. I love making music playlists. My favorite sport is volleyball. I wonder if we’re alone in the universe, or are there other civilizations out there?

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

Aida: As a young journalist, my favorite topics are controversial topics. It’s just so fun to find out everybody’s opinion on the topic, and hearing every side of people’s point of view on the topic causes you to have a shift in the way you see things. It’s almost like seeing a dance that is controversial. People have their opinions on it, and you learn from those opinions.

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

Aida: Something I’ve learned from my experience at *IndyKids* is getting a whole new vocabulary. I have learned so many new and different words, like “proactive” and “mitigate.” Not only that, but I learned that I do not need to be perfect to write

a good article. All I need to do is put my mind in a good spot and not stress. That’s what makes a good article.

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

Aida: I think being an *IndyKids* reporter and raising awareness is so important to my community, to kids and other people who read these articles, because many people don’t know things that are happening out there, and by reading, that can help spread awareness. Kids talking to kids is super empowering. Kids speak to each other in a way adults can’t, and that’s what makes these articles special.



PERSONAL REPORT

Being Comfortable in Your Own Skin

ASHLEY KISER • age 13

A few months ago, my father drove me and my mother to a farmers’ market located in the depths of Long Island. As soon as we drove into the neighborhood, I saw big, beautiful mansions, and each house was spread apart perfectly, not a piece of trash in sight. I saw expensive cars in the driveway, and big, beautiful acres of land surrounding each house. I remember how smooth the roads were, the wheels of our car flowing smoothly on the pavement, compared to rocky roads and annoying potholes in my neighborhood in Queens. As of then, I realized the type of people who reside in this neighborhood: white, wealthy people. Our car pulled into the driveway of the farmers’ market. There was so much good-quality land surrounding the farmers’ market in the distance.

I looked through the windows of the market and saw one group of people: light-skinned, wealthy people. I almost threw up. “Ash, just because these people are white and you’re Black doesn’t make you any less than them,” my dad said to me. My father and I have always had an open dialogue about our skin tone, especially since we have darker skin tones than my mother. All my self-identity issues about my skin tone came flooding back into my mind.

The three of us walked into the farmers’ market, and I immediately noticed how different I looked from the people there. It felt like I was on a different planet where I didn’t belong. These people had straight, light-colored hair, while I had curly, multi-patterned hair. They had white, light skin, which, in my mind, looked like they were all wearing shirts saying, “I’m better than you because I’m white and you’re not.” My skin is darker than theirs. I felt like I was wearing a shirt that said, “I’m Black, so therefore I’m at the bottom of society.”

Similar to my experience, so many people of color, including Black, Latinx, and Asian, feel as if they are less than or not good enough because either their skin tone is “too dark” or they are not white. As KFF Health News reports, “Black children with the darkest complexions experience higher levels of depressive symptoms.”

Adolescents and adults with darker skin tones often feel less than or belittled simply because they are not white. This is an issue that becomes of bigger importance every day. Talking about our skin tones, no matter how dark, should never be “awkward” or embarrassing. Love your skin tone, no matter the color.

Here’s the reality: As we grow up into young adults and go into our careers, or wherever life takes you, there will always be someone who might say something or label you just because of your skin tone. But don’t let that determine your potential throughout your life. No matter how light or dark your skin tone is, you’re capable of anything you put your mind to, no matter what anyone else says.



Photo by Levi Stute on Unsplash

A Snapshot of My Life

by IndyKids reporters

My Favorite Plant

My favorite plant is water lilies, because I like how they look and float in water calmly.

Shanty, age 10,
from Manhattan, N.Y.

My favorite kind of plant is roses, because roses are one of my favorite colors, which is red.

Ashley, age 13,
from Queens, N.Y.

My favorite plant is lavender, because it smells really nice and seems very ethereal. And it attracts a lot of different pollinators.

Brooklyn, age 10,
from Manhattan, N.Y.

My favorite plant is the carnivorous plant, the sundew. I admire its way of retrieving and eating prey. The sundew is both beautiful and interesting.

Nico, age 11,
from Manhattan, N.Y.

My Favorite plant is orchid plant, because they're nice and colorful, like purple and white. I also own a white one.

Aida, age 10,
from Manhattan, N.Y.

My favorite plants are red roses, because they are pretty.

Scarlett, age 10,
from Manhattan, N.Y.

Getting Wild With... Opossums!

SHANTY TEJEDA • age 10



These furry, cute animals are misunderstood as rodents and pests. They are North America's only marsupial and one of the best animals to have in your backyard. They help kill pests and are also tick vacuums, which is helpful, as ticks transmit Lyme disease: The opossum!

The Algonquian Tribe created the name "opossum," which means white animal. How do possums and opossums differ? "Opossums live in North and South America. Possums live in Australia and other countries," said Julie Cappiello, a writer at World Animal Protection. In casual conversation, people in North America often refer to opossums as "possums."

Opossums eat carrion, insects, ticks, and reptiles. They rarely contract rabies because of their low body temperature. Don't scare them, as they will enter a state where they play dead for one to four hours when they feel threatened. Opossums are also immune to snake venom.

Why wouldn't you love opossums? They are cute and kill pests. When they hiss, they're scared. If you find a wild opossum, contact a professional animal rescue group or shelter immediately, and they will know what to do.



Photo by Khâi Đông for Unsplash

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Now more than ever, we need sources of media for our youth that center the stories of people of color, immigrants, women, workers, and LGBTQIA+ communities. IndyKids is the nation's only social justice-oriented newspaper written by kids for kids. Now in its 20th year in print, IndyKids is distributed to classrooms and households in 35 states, helping thousands of youth think more critically about the news of the world. Plus, it's free and ad-free!

Subscription costs cover only the cost of mailing issues to subscribers. We rely on donations to cover all other costs of producing IndyKids and running our Kid Reporter Program, through which more than 800 youth have been trained as journalists.

Can you contribute today to help us continue printing IndyKids and training the journalists of tomorrow? Thank you for your continued support!

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