

VACCINES: SCIENCE OVER MISINFORMATION



Original illustration by Cara Wang
SHANTY TEJEDA • age 11

In the United States, the rates of measles have been rising, while the national vaccination rate against measles is declining, according to *Harvard Health*. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 2,605 confirmed cases across over 44 states in 2025. Most of the cases have been children.

“This is the largest number of cases in a year since 2000, when the disease was declared eliminated in the U.S.,” wrote Dr. Robert H. Shmerling in *Harvard Health*. In West Texas, the epicenter of recent measles outbreaks, vaccination rates against measles have dropped to 82%.

According to the Cleveland Clinic, common symptoms of measles are rash, muscle pain, fever, red eyes, runny nose, sore throat, and cough. Complications include pneumonia, hearing loss, and even death in some cases, reports *Harvard Health*. Measles vaccinations are highly effective in preventing the spread of measles.

What’s peculiar is that even though science has proven vaccines

are important to prevent illnesses like measles and yellow fever, the U.S government is stripping vaccine development.

This is due to the MAHA movement, which stands for “Make America Healthy Again,” under the administration of President Donald Trump. This movement is led by Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and other vaccine critics, who claim vaccines are harmful.

Secretary Kennedy Jr. is defunding vaccine development and research, meaning he is withdrawing money used to continue the research and development of new vaccines. Also, instead of relying on the experts that help with vaccine guidance, he is listening to vaccine critics, has made it harder to get COVID-19 vaccines, and is trying to limit the vaccines that have been long recommended to children.

Most children are required to get vaccines to go to school, which is called a “vaccine mandate.” This is important to prevent the spread of illness in schools, where risk is high, considering children interact

with each other in small spaces. But Florida recently became the first state to end vaccine mandates.

Some critics say vaccines cause autism. In an interview with Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Arturo Casadevall, an infectious disease physician, said that this is misinformation—vaccines save lives. They do not cause autism.

In January 2026, Kennedy also removed six vaccines from the regular children’s vaccine recommendations, including meningitis, which can be fatal. The vaccine can help cases of the disease from becoming serious, according to many clinical trials. “MAHA” is not an ideal name for the policies that are being put in place. The movement says “Make America Healthy Again,” yet with all the policies against vaccines, it is making America less healthy.

HOW VACCINES WORK

Now more than ever, people need to know that vaccines are important and helping them, rather than harming them like the Trump

administration is claiming. According to the World Health Organization, vaccines have saved more than 154 million lives over the last 50 years.

“Vaccines teach the body to protect itself against specific germs without taking the risk of an infection,” said Dr. Casadevall on the Johns Hopkins *Public Health On Call* podcast.

The mRNA vaccine, which is used to prevent serious cases of COVID-19, instructs the body to create a protein of the virus, and teaches the immune system about it so that the immune system knows how to fight it.

EDUCATION AND STAYING INFORMED

By supporting vaccines, you can help prevent the spread of measles and other contagious diseases in your community. You could also engage in respectful conversations with people who are against vaccines and teach them how important they are, using reliable sources. The more people who get vaccinated against a disease, the less likely outbreaks will be, and everyone will be safer.

NewsBrief



The World of Rhythmic Gymnastics

BROOKLYNN THEN • age 11



U.S. all-around champion Rin Keys. Photo by usagym.org

The world of rhythmic gymnastics is very interesting. It has many different qualities, and that's what makes it so magical.

Rhythmic gymnastics is a sport under the "gymnastics" umbrella. Though it was recognized by the International Gymnastics Federation in 1961, it wasn't an Olympic sport until 1984, when it made its world debut in Los Angeles, according to ESPN. Its four main apparatuses are hoop, clubs, ball, and ribbon. These are the key elements to rhythmic gymnastics, as they are the most important when competing. Another crucial part is timing. Solo routines are between 75 and 90 seconds, but for group routines, they are usually up to two-and-a-half minutes. "Judges also evaluate technical value, including body difficulty and apparatus mastery and originality, dynamic elements and dance step combinations," writes ESPN.

You might know some rhythmic gymnasts, like Rin Keys. Rin Keys is an American rhythmic gymnast who won a silver World Championships medal in September 2025. Her win was a surprise. Keys's goal going forward in rhythmic gymnastics is to get to a higher level and learn more about herself and her skills.

You can't talk about rhythmic gymnastics without mentioning the costumes! They're usually sparkly with many rhinestones and can be quite expensive. And they are decorated with elegant designs, mesh patterns, and fabrics. But there are some rules. All leotard parts must not fall below the sternum or shoulder blades; skirts, if attached, also cannot be longer than the upper thigh. Any decorations must be laid flat on the leotard, and small stud earrings are usually the only jewelry allowed.

In conclusion, the world of rhythmic gymnastics is beautiful, exciting, and competitive.

nation & world

“Make Billionaires Pay” March Focuses on Climate Change and Migrant Rights

LEO BEATON • age 12

“Make Billionaires Pay” was a march held on Sept. 20, 2025, to stop climate change and fight for more migrant rights and gender equity. The core demands of the protest were to shut down billionaires, fascists, and polluters, according to the march's website. Some other demands were to fund the future, protect the global majority, and to defend Mother Earth.

The protest was held on the anniversary of the March to End Fossil Fuels and on the first day of the U.N. General Assembly, which was important because a lot of world leaders were there to see it.

This protest followed the “Make Polluters Pay” movement, the March to End Fossil Fuels in 2023, and the “No Kings” march in June. Another No Kings march took place on Oct. 18, 2025.

The Make Billionaires Pay movement is targeting billionaires because they are contributing the most to climate change, and they have the most power and money.

The protesters brought art pieces of Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk with bloody globes in their hands. They also brought a “Climate Polluters Bill” the size of an Olympic swimming pool, symbolizing the costs of climate change.

The protest also focused on migrant rights and anti-militarism, because climate change is forcing people to have to leave their homes. Climate-related disasters have forced 250 million people to move from their homes in the last 10 years, according to the U.N. Refugee Agency, and this type of migration is going to affect a lot more people going forward. The protesters think we need to welcome people that come here because they need help.

The protest's organizers also wanted to point out that the countries with the least emissions are the

ones suffering the most from emissions, according to *Inside Climate News*.

“We're in a moment where the threat is so large that it is not useful to have mobilizations that focus on one issue at a time,” said Tamika Middleton, chief political and strategy officer at the Women's March, to *Inside Climate News*.

A challenge of the climate change movement is that it feels distant, unlike some other crises, and that it doesn't affect your day-to-day life as much as some other problems, such as high grocery prices.

This protest was part of Climate Week NYC in September. During this week, there were hundreds of events about climate change, “from policy gatherings and climate fintech discussions to community-led initiatives and art installations,” according to *Newsweek*.

Other cities that had protests on Sept. 20 were San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Milwaukee, Dallas, and Key West, Fla.

Climate Week wasn't the end of these kinds of protests. There will continue to be movements about climate change until it has gotten better.



Photo by Nikon Corporation on Unsplash

If You're on Medicaid, You Could Lose Your Healthcare

SHANTY TEJEDA • age 11

For about 70 million Americans, including some immigrants, Medicaid is a highly important government program. It assists families that cannot pay for private healthcare. This is critical for low-income people to afford hospital bills, doctors' visits, glasses, and other healthcare.

Soon Medicaid recipients between 19 and 64 years old will be required to work at least 80 hours per month to keep their insurance. This is a critical problem for citizens that have health conditions and may not be able to work. Most recipients of Medicaid are working if possible, according to CNBC.



Photo by Senate Democrats for Wikimedia Commons

Not all Americans qualify for Medicaid or can afford private insurance. As of 2025, 9.5 million have no insurance, or are uninsured. More people losing their health insurance will mean worse health outcomes for many Americans, which could eventually lead to the population decreasing.

This is all part of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act passed by President Trump. The United States has a national debt of approximately \$37 trillion and is trying to reduce spending on healthcare. But at the same time, the government is giving more funds to the military.

The United States spends nearly twice as much as other wealthy countries on healthcare, but other countries have significantly stronger healthcare. Compared to other wealthy countries, the United States spends a range of 17% of gross domestic product on healthcare, while other countries spend 7% to 9%, according to the Commonwealth Fund.

Universal health coverage is globally affordable or free healthcare that everyone in a country can get. This has succeeded in many countries, like France, where almost everybody has both public and private healthcare. This is something the United States could learn from other countries.

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Is the Craze Around Labubus Slowly Dying?

AIDA CEPEDA • age 11



Have you ever seen a Labubu hanging off of someone's bag?

Labubus are collectibles with a huge smile, long ears, and nine sharp teeth showing. They are made by a Chinese company called Pop Mart. The Labubu is a magical creature that appears in a fairy tale by Hong Kong artist Kasing Lung. Labubus became popular when the famous K-pop star Lisa started making videos about how she loved Labubus. From there, it spiraled, and then everyone started buying them. Celebrities like Dua Lipa, Naomi Osaka, Kim Kardashian, and Rihanna have all been spotted with Labubus.

Labubus that hang off purses or bags are called “charms” and cost \$27.99. But online resale prices of Labubus on sites like eBay can range up to \$10,585 or more, according to *Forbes*, depending on what type of Labubus you buy, what edition you get, and how rare they are. For example, “a one-of-a-kind human-sized Labubu doll in mint green sold for \$150,000 at a Beijing auction,” according to Bloomberg.

Pop Mart uses blind box marketing to increase its sales. Blind box marketing is when a collectible like a toy is boxed, but which one you get is actually a surprise. Because of this marketing strategy, Pop Mart's revenue has soared up to 13.9 billion yuan in the first half of 2025 alone, or almost \$2 billion USD, according to Bloomberg.

Blind box marketing is controversial because it can become addictive, according to *The Guardian*. You go to the store to buy one, but you didn't get the one you like, so you go back to the store to buy another, and the cycle repeats. Once you find the one you want, you just want more. Many adults nowadays want to collect items like Labubus to

escape from reality and to feel like a kid again, explains *The Guardian*. For younger people, it's a way to gain popularity and friends.

As Dana Nguyen told *The Guardian*, “You're already struggling as it is, with the economy, with society, and you think: OK, let me just have a little sweet treat because I'm not able to afford other luxuries in life.” The 27-year-old from Monterey, Calif., realized she had a problem when she calculated that she had spent \$4,000 on Labubus.

Collecting toys such as Labubus can be dangerous because, sooner or later, it can become an addiction or fuel the need to gamble more. For example, a study cited by *The Guardian* from 2023 found that young people who buy blind boxes gambled more six months later than those who did not buy blind boxes.

But have you recently seen fewer Labubus than when they first came out? The big question is: Will the craze around Labubus continue? It is not certain whether it will drop in popularity like previous toy trends, such as Beanie Babies, or if they will stay around like Barbies. Time will tell.



Photo by Declan Sun for Unsplash

AI Data Centers Are Gobbling Up Energy and Water

BROOKLYNN THEN • age 11

It is 2,250 acres of farmland that will never be farmed again,” Julie Richmond Sauer, a registered nurse in central Louisiana, told CNET.

What exactly happened to those acres of land? In this case, an AI data center that is going to be built in Richmond's area.

A data center is a facility that stores and distributes the information necessary to run our technology, such as hosting photos and videos, streaming, and handling transactions, according to CNET. These centers also hold data for applications, including artificial intelligence generative tools—like a factory for AI.

AI data centers sometimes use more energy than a small town. One of the biggest uses of AI data centers is ChatGPT, which was launched in late 2022 and now has an estimated total of 700 million active users each week.

AI data centers use a lot of water and energy. Meta's AI data centers used 1.39 billion gallons of water around the world in 2023, and almost half of

that water used was permanently taken from local water resources. Despite using so much more water since the explosion of AI, both Meta and Google say they would like to be “water positive” by 2030, which means they would like to give back more water to the communities than the data centers take. But according to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, over the next five years, large data centers could use enough water to supply 4.6 million homes.

As a consequence of this increased water usage, a lot of people might not have clean water for drinking. Tech companies have proposed a solution. Instead of using clean water that can be used for drinking, the data centers could use water that isn't suitable for drinking, though this might be complicated.

The Trump administration is very supportive of AI data centers, saying they want the United States to lead AI innovation around the world. But we don't know how this will all end up.

Photo from Rawpixel



Science Briefs

Can Exposure Therapy Cure Peanut Allergies?

SCARLETT MORA • age 11



Photo by Isai Dzib on Unsplash

Nut allergies are so common that “one in 200 adults and one in 50 children are allergic to peanuts,” according to the BBC. “Peanut allergy is very common in children and almost never goes away,” Stephen Till, the director of a clinical trial on peanut allergies in London, told the BBC.

Chris, an adult who is allergic to peanuts, is a patient in professor Till's trial. Once, Chris accidentally ate a dish that had peanuts in it at his local Indian restaurant. His reaction was that he had spots on his lips, he started vomiting, he felt his throat close up, and he got hives all around his body.

The trial Chris participated in used exposure therapy. Exposure therapy is when patients are given a small amount of peanuts, which slowly increases to a bigger amount of peanuts. This is a type of immunotherapy in which a patient is building resistance to an allergy. In the trial, the doctors started by giving him a fraction of a milligram of peanut powder. After he didn't react to it, they built up the peanuts and, by the end, gave him five whole peanuts. To still keep up his stamina, he eats four peanuts every morning. Though it didn't work for everyone in the study, it changed Chris's life by reducing his anxiety when going out to eat, and removing his fear of food and traveling.

An allergic reaction affects the body by creating an antibody called immunoglobulin E (IgE), triggering an inflammation response. The usual treatment to respond to allergic attacks is the EpiPen, which quickly reduces inflammation. Scientists are now researching a new antibody that could target IgE and stop allergies at their source.

Along with finding cures for peanut allergies, scientists are also trying to discover why people get peanut allergies in the first place. Some theories are that it's due to genetics or changing gut microbiomes, according to *Scientific American*. Robert F. Kennedy Jr., U.S. secretary of Health and Human Services, claims that peanut allergies are caused by childhood vaccines, but there is no evidence for this. Now the Trump administration is also putting “peanut allergies” on a list of words that will receive extra scrutiny for funding, according to Tom Lum in *Scientific American*. This will slow down research into peanut allergies and make it harder for scientists to find a cure. Because so many people have peanut allergies nowadays, it is important to understand how people get them and what cures are getting developed.



Our First Amendment Rights Are Under Threat

NICO LEVITAN • age 12

Ever since President Donald Trump began his second administration, there has been a rise in government censorship. The Trump administration says that it is limiting “federal censorship,” according to an executive order, but it is really restricting any speech that frames it negatively.

For example, in September, the Trump administration threatened ABC when late-night host Jimmy Kimmel made a comment on his show about the death of right-wing activist Charlie Kirk. Kimmel’s show was briefly suspended as a result. According to *The New York Times*, the Trump administration has also sued other major media organizations. He even halted federal funding for PBS and NPR. Although other presidents have also been upset by opposition to them in the media, none have used their power to pressure the public in this way, according to *The New York Times*.

Fortunately, a lot of speech is protected by the First Amendment. The First Amendment is a constitutional amendment passed in 1791 that protects the right to free speech, belief, and association. The First Amendment is important because it protects people who have different political views from being punished by the government. The government is now claiming that the speech they are prohibiting is “hate speech,” which is speech that is intended to incite violence against someone or something. However, most of this speech is protected by the First Amendment, no matter how much someone doesn’t want to hear it. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, when controversial opinions become “hate speech” or even illegal is usually a matter of opinion.

Many international students who participated in college protests have been targeted by the Trump administration and even deported as a result of their political views, which goes against their First Amendment rights. Mahmoud Khalil was a Columbia University student who was one of the first to be targeted and detained by the Trump administration for his participation in pro-Palestine protests. He was detained at an immigration facility for three months, missing his son’s birth, before a judge ordered his release.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has revoked hundreds of the pro-Palestine immigrant students’ visas, according to Al Jazeera. The Trump administration justified deporting these students by saying that foreign students have minimal rights and can be removed for violating the privileges of being in the United States. In September, Federal Judge William Young ruled that what President Trump is doing is a violation of his oath to protect and defend the U.S. Constitution. According to Judge Young, pro-Palestine and anti-Israel activism is not the same as supporting terrorism, as the Trump administration says. This deportation drive is illegal, according to Young’s ruling, because immigrants, including foreign students, are protected by the Constitution.

It’s important for readers of all ages to know about the censorship that is happening from the government. Readers need to be aware of what’s going on and be aware that many news stations might not be sharing the full truth, or any of it.



Photo by Nvss132 for Wikimedia Commons

Censorship in the Classroom Is Growing in the Trump Era

Censorship in U.S. classrooms has been on the rise since President Donald Trump began his second term. Students, educators, and families are being negatively affected by his new policies.

Trump’s February 2025 executive order, “Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling,” works to stop funding that goes toward teaching about racism and supporting trans youth in schools, according to EdSource. It even goes so far as possibly prohibiting education about slavery and other racism. This would result in an extreme deficit in students’ true, unfiltered, historical knowledge.

The order would also bar support from reaching trans students, and stop educators from providing that support. As Dan Guttman, an Iowa elementary school teacher, told the National Education Association, “The message has been loud and clear to queer families, students, and educators, we’re not so welcome in our schools.”

Conservatives have accused teachers of indoctrinating students with a negative perception of American history. However, according to a study by the American Historical Association (AHA), teachers are not aiming to indoctrinate students, but to give them a

true perspective on global and national issues. Thousands of teachers across all 50 states were also interviewed and surveyed as a part of the AHA’s research. This survey concluded that some teachers fear that they will be “accused of bias,” according to *Education Week*.

In 2024, 35 educational “gag orders,” which PEN America defines as “direct restrictions on educational speech in the classroom,” were filed for K-12 schools. Five of these became law. In addition to this, recently a platform called PragerU is on the rise, reports *Vox*. It is a right-wing program that makes short videos about topics including U.S. history. In August, PragerU partnered with the White House for its new Founders Museum exhibit featuring AI videos of the Founding Fathers. Their content is controversial, for example, in the way they choose to portray slavery. Their goal is to show slavery only from the angle of abolition and that America pushed for freedom, rather than teaching about slavery itself and that half the country was fighting for it during the Civil War. PragerU’s creators say that children should be taught to be proud of their country, but they are leaving out important details of history.

PragerU has formed partnerships with several states in the past year, notably Louisiana, Florida, New Hampshire,

Oklahoma, Montana, Arizona, South Carolina, and Idaho, influencing their education systems. According to the Associated Press, one of Oklahoma’s public school superintendents, Ryan Walters, said, “As long as I am superintendent, Oklahoma classrooms will be safeguarded from the radical leftist ideology fostered in places like California and New York.” Walters also wants to use PragerU to create a screening process for teachers coming from blue states. This test has been widely criticized, being called a “MAGA loyalty test,” according to the Associated Press.



Photo by Kenny Eliason for Unsplash

TERRA MORRISON • age 13

On top of the growing attempts to censor what is taught in schools, millions of dollars in funding for important public broadcasting companies are being rolled back by Congress. These funding cuts will put programs like NPR and PBS in jeopardy, while millions of people still rely on them for their news and information.

Yet there is pushback. Some of President Trump’s attempts to censor education have faced legal backlash, and action has been taken to protect academic freedom. Despite the upswing of censorship in schools, there are many people actively working to fight against it. The future of America’s students and school systems depend on it.

Public Media Gets Defunded by the Trump Administration

LEO BEATON, SCARLETT MORA, SHANTY TEJEDA, SUMMER GORIN, NATHALIE MEDINA, and INDYKIDS STAFF

The Public Broadcasting Service, or PBS, is a free news and education network funded in part by the government—until now. PBS is under threat because it is getting defunded. Because of this, they are going to lose \$500 million, or 21% of their overall funding. Taxpayers paid just \$1.40 every year for PBS programming.

PBS Kids is being cut by 15%, which will take a toll on kids’ learning. PBS Kids is important because it is not only a reliable source of television for children without cable, but it is also educational. PBS also doesn’t have ads.

As Rachel Barr, professor and chair of the Department of Psychology at Georgetown University, told *Mother Jones*, “What’s been found, again and again, is that access to educational content is more predictive for learning, for academic outcomes, and social outcomes. And again, the effects are strongest for families that don’t have access to other material resources.”

The consequences are “34 immediate layoffs” and “the closing of dozens of open positions,” according to *The New York Times*.

“These decisions, while difficult, position PBS to weather the current challenges facing public media,” Paula Kerger, the chief executive of PBS, told *The New York Times*.

Why is President Trump doing this? His political views are against those expressed in public media outlets like PBS. According to *The New York Times*, he has called PBS and NPR “radical left monsters.” He wants people to lose interest in NPR and PBS so they don’t hear different beliefs.

This topic is important for readers to know about, especially because PBS Kids plays a very big role for children with limited resources or who don’t attend pre-K or 3-K to get access to early childhood education.



Photo by PBS Kids on Wikipedia

Museum and Art Censorship Is On the Rise in the United States

SHANTI HUBBARD-BENNETT • age 15

U.S. President Donald Trump is censoring artists by limiting their First Amendment rights to freedom of speech. Museum and arts censorship goes against everything this country has stood for since it was founded.

In the MAGA era, institutions like the Smithsonian museums in Washington, D.C., are getting censored because Trump says their exhibits are “too woke,” even though artists are just sharing their own opinions, cultures, and lived experiences, according to NPR. “This is not just a concern for select institutions,” the American Association of Museums said in an Aug. 15 statement to NPR. “These pressures can create a chilling effect across the entire museum sector. Freedom of thought and expression are foundational American values, and museums uphold them by creating spaces where people can engage with history, science, art, and culture in ways that are honest, fact-based, and thought-provoking.”

In New York, the Whitney Museum paused its well-known Independent Study Program for the 2025-2026 year, after canceling a planned performance that talked about the war and humanitarian crisis in Gaza, reports *The Art Newspaper*. The artists said in a letter that the museum claimed the piece was “inflammatory.” The letter puts the decision in the context of a “broader political climate of fear and intimidation in the United States,” following recent “crackdowns on free expression, protest, and speech by artists and scholars supporting Palestine,” according to *The Art Newspaper*. Trump is creating this kind of fear for artists and is making them fear that they won’t be able to express themselves. This is a tactic of intimidation.

For museums as established as the Whitney and the Smithsonian to shut down exhibitions because they are “controversial” sends a much bigger message. It says that certain viewpoints, especially those that challenge political power, are being treated as off-limits. And the impact doesn’t stop at one canceled performance—it spreads, making other artists think twice about speaking out or pushing creative boundaries. This is exactly how cultural spaces lose their freedom bit by bit. When major museums withdraw or shut down politically charged work, it signals that some viewpoints are institutionally unacceptable, and discourages similar work in the future.

Artists have rights just like every other person who lives in America, and those rights shouldn’t just disappear because someone in power doesn’t like what they’re saying. If we don’t stand up for free speech now, things could slide in a seriously scary direction. It could get to the point where you can’t share any opinion unless it matches whatever the president wants to hear, and once we let it get that far, getting our voices back won’t be easy. That’s why speaking up now matters so much.



Photo by Fuzheado for Wikimedia Commons



Fighting for Healthier, Cleaner Communities

ASHLEY KISER • age 14

Roishetta Ozane and her children reside in Sulphur, La., also known as “Cancer Alley.” In Sulphur, there are numerous petrochemical, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and oil and gas polluting facilities. In simple terms, LNG is a type of gas mostly made of methane, which is very bad for the environment, according to the Environmental Health Project. So Roishetta and her 12-year-old daughter, Kamea, decided to bring attention to this issue in their communities.

Roishetta is the founder of the environmental justice program, the Vessel Project. Roishetta and her daughter Kamea appeared on *Democracy Now!* in August to discuss their national tour to confront the business leaders who are implementing natural gas projects that are harming their community. They’re calling it the “Toxic Billionaires Tour.” Their objective is to bring attention to major banks and executives who “sit here in New York and in offices in D.C. [and] make decisions for our community, decisions that are killing our children, decisions that are harming our air, our water and our life,” said Roishetta to *Democracy Now!*

Roishetta’s kids, especially her 7-year-old, have a hard time playing outside because, as she puts it, they say, “Mom, it stinks out here. It smells like rotten eggs. I don’t want to be outside.” And her daughter Kamea has developed eczema and asthma from the harmful chemicals in her community.

“The Citibanks keep funding these fossil fuel industries in our communities. They put them in the small Black and Indigenous communities on purpose, because they know that we can’t do anything about that. They put them in poor communities and low-income communities on purpose. This is not OK. This is racist,” said Kamea at a protest outside Citibank.

Roishetta and her family have been fighting to create cleaner, healthier communities, but nothing seems to be working. In the fall, they took a big step by going to New York to get the attention of Citibank and executives to make them understand that having fossil fuel industries near communities does more harm than good.



Roishetta and Kamea Ozane on *Democracy Now!*

Someday You Could Be... A Broadway Actor Like Keisha Gilles!

Keisha Gilles is a Haitian American singer, actor, teaching artist, and cabaret performer in New York, N.Y. She is currently featured in *Aladdin* on Broadway. She is also a cast member on the hit children’s series, *Ms. Rachel*, and has produced many of her own plays and theater projects. *IndyKids* spoke with Gilles in October 2025.

What sparked your interest in musical theater?

KG: I was really lucky to have had a really robust arts programming in my public school, so I was exposed to drama and music and arts at a really young age. In elementary school, the show choirs from the high school performed for us. And I was like, “I have to do that. I have to be on stage. I have to be in one of those sparkly dresses and singing and dancing at the same time.”

What was it like being the child of Haitian immigrants?

KG: It was challenging at times. For the most part, the other students that I was around were all very Americanized. So bringing my cultural food to lunch was something I didn’t want to do. It wasn’t as cool to be Haitian American back then as it is now, which I’m really glad has changed. I’m glad that I am a child of immigrants. I wouldn’t change it for the world.

What did it feel like when you first learned you would be on Broadway?

KG: It was unbelievable. It was a dream come true. I will never forget. I got to do *Book of Mormon* on Broadway. I was covering someone’s

leave for a little bit, and that turned into another job with them. And it felt amazing. It felt like all my dreams were coming true.

Were you ever on other Broadway shows?

KG: Right now I’m doing *Aladdin* on Broadway. Hopefully soon I will do another one. But the hustle really never stops. As an actor, you’re still auditioning and trying to figure out what story you want to tell next.

Did you ever have stage fright?

KG: Yes, a lot of the time, especially in college when I was learning how to be an actor for real. And when I was younger, I would get really nervous. I had this habit of having to have a bottle of honey with me, because I thought, “My voice will never survive if I don’t have honey.” So I would have the honey with me and, like, guzzle it. I don’t do that anymore, because I don’t experience stage fright at that level anymore. I do have nerves, but sometimes I’m just excited, and the nerves and excitement kind of run along the same pathways in my body. But on the daily, when I’m doing *Aladdin*, rarely am I actually nervous, unless I have an injury I’m dealing with or my voice just doesn’t feel right—then I might get a little bit nervous. But I know what to do. I know how to handle these things. So my confidence kind of takes over, and it’s fine.

Do you have any advice for kids who want to do musical theater or acting?

KG: Practice every day as much as you can and find the playfulness in it.



Broadway actor Keisha Gilles

Meet *IndyKids* Reporter:
11-Year-Old

Shanty Tejada

INDYKIDS STAFF

My name is **Shanty**, and I enjoy reading, writing, and analyzing. One of my favorite things to do is create art, whether it’s poetry or paintings. I would describe myself as optimistic and, overall, a joyful and logical person. I am 11 years old, and I live in Manhattan, N.Y.

As a young journalist, what is your favorite article you’ve ever written for *IndyKids* and why?

Shanty: My favorite article I have written for *IndyKids* is my freshwater article. I personally favor it because it was my first article, and because it really brings awareness to the ecosystem which people are taking for granted. Pretend you’re talking to a kid who has never heard of *IndyKids*. How would you describe *IndyKids* and the experience of writing an article?

Shanty: It is lengthy, but the results are worth it. While you do

have to research a lot, it is for a good cause, as the article can end up beautiful and neat.

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

Shanty: Always cite your sources, and don’t use “I” pronouns.

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

Shanty: I learn a lot from the articles I write, so it helps me inform my parents, my friends, and even myself about the topic.



PERSONAL REPORT

NYC Needs More Park Precautions

NATHALIE MEDINA • age 10

The entire city budget of New York City is roughly \$115 billion. But the parks budget is only \$580 million, reports *City & State*.

“The entire forestry department, which cares for all the city’s parks as well as street trees, has been underfunded for decades,” Adam Ganser, the executive director of New Yorkers for Parks, told *City & State*.

Now parks need more money so that they can be cleaner and safer. In New York, people go to parks so that they can have fun with family or friends, get away from smoke and loud noise, and breathe fresh air in an area that is quiet and peaceful.

People stop going to parks because they are dirty and dangerous, and some neighborhoods have less green space, such as in Queens Community District 2 and Brooklyn Community District 17, according to *City & State*. The parks with less resources also have fewer volunteers. “Look at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx, which has a tiny conservancy of about four people. It gets nowhere near the care that Central Park does,” said Ganser.

When parks become unsafe, children get hurt more easily. According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, each year more than 220,000 children under the age of 14 are treated in hospital emergency rooms because they get hurt in parks or playgrounds. Some things like bumps and bruises are most common, but you can also break a bone, dislocate something, get a concussion, and sprain an ankle.

My friend fractured her ankle and broke her toe going down a slide that had square holes at a park. Because of the holes, her foot got stuck on one of the squares. She has been wearing casts and boots for over four months and has to wear them for two more months at the time of this writing. Since my friend got hurt, I have been more cautious about what equipment I use.

More injuries like this occur when equipment at parks have sharp edges in areas where people turn, hard materials like poles and swings in the air, and old worn-out items with holes or rust. Hot surfaces, like a metal slide or the place that you hold on to in the swing, can burn you in less than three seconds in the summer. If you fall down on hard surfaces like a concrete floor, you might get cut, scratched, or scraped.

Parks that are not taken care of well enough, or at all, might have very few people that go to them because of dirty bathrooms, rats, rust, holes, uncut grass, low-quality equipment, and the park being small. People would rather not go

to parks that have broken and rusty equipment and are really dirty.

Parks can become cleaner and safer, but they need help from the government and the communities. With that help, they can be the way that people would want them to be. At a minimum, parks departments should replace rusty and broken items. Parks should be well maintained—grass should be cut, soft surfaces should be added, and sharp edges removed. Items with holes should be removed, and bathrooms should be clean. Parks should be fixed so that people enjoy them without having to worry.



Photo by Tdorante10 for Wikimedia Commons (Loreto Playground in Morris Park in the Bronx)

A Snapshot of My Life

by IndyKids reporters

What is your favorite hobby and why?

My favorite hobby is chess, because I like how much strategy there is in it.

Leo, age 12,
from Bronx, NY.

My favorite hobby is probably doing acrobatics and listening to music and also reading.

Brooklyn, age 11,
from Manhattan, NY.

One of my favorite hobbies is dancing to music on Spotify because it gets out a lot of your energy and is just really fun.

Summer, age 10,
from Brooklyn, NY.

One of my favorite hobbies is to draw, because it is peaceful and I can draw whatever I want.

Nathalie, age 10,
from Manhattan, NY.

Some of my hobbies are volleyball and reading. I enjoy both of these. When I read, I feel like I'm in another world, which is nice to escape the real world.

Aida, age 11,
from Manhattan, NY.

One of my favorite hobbies is hanging out with my friends and reading, because it distracts me from the world.

Scarlett, age 11,
from Manhattan, NY.

My favorite hobby is listening to music or reading, because it is personally relaxing. And I love books.

Shanty, age 11,
from Manhattan, NY.

Getting Wild With... Sea Invertebrates!

SUMMER GORIN • age 10

Sea invertebrates are underwater creatures that do not have spines, or are spineless. You and I, other mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and amphibians are all vertebrates. Invertebrates are important because they are important prey for fish, marine predators, and humans, according to NOAA Fisheries. The most common types of sea invertebrates are mollusks, crustaceans, and coral. Some kinds of invertebrates are endangered, such as white abalone and Elkhorn coral.

Sea invertebrates live in the sunlight zone, according to NPR. One of these animals is the mollusk, whose shell is made out of calcium carbonate, making a hard shell to protect its back because it doesn't have a spine. Some other examples of sea invertebrates are sea stars, brain coral, clams, shrimp,

phytoplankton, octopi, squids, crabs, lobsters, and more.

Invertebrates can regenerate, have super strength, and even sometimes steal other animals' abilities, details NPR. Some types of brain coral make a chemical called mayamycin. Mayamycin is being used in clinical trials for many different types of cancers, including melanoma, pancreatic, and renal cancers, according to NPR.

Sea invertebrates have existed on Earth for over 600 million years. They are important for readers to know about so that they can help with endangered invertebrates and learn to care for the ocean and the animals living in it. Scientists are still discovering medical breakthroughs by studying invertebrates, which makes their conservation even more important.



Photo by Karlis Dambrans for Wikimedia Commons

Thank you for your continued support!



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 21st 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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