Dear YB
By Ms. Hiba

Dear YB family – let’s be transparent for a second. We’re tired. It’s mid-year and we’re trying our best to hold on to that frenetic spark of energy we felt during Mental Toughness. But, rolling out of bed and trotting to school seems to be getting tougher as the days roll by.

Yet - despite the odds and the endless abyss of a warm bed, we make it out!

Have you ever observed how connected we are, as humans, to the weather outside? Springtime weather wraps us in a feeling of hope, as the Earth unfolds into a virescent paradise. From there, we gently ease into long summer days, filled with endless sunshine and yummy fruit. We slowly transition into autumn, and watch the leaves change colors, falling placidly to the ground. We harness those last bits of uninhibited solar energy for the pending doom – winter.

Think about it this way: we owe the winter a lot. As the trees shed their leaves during the autumn, they fall to the ground and decompose – sowing the ground with their nutrients. In comes the winter, a period of rest. Nature recoups her energy while the ground freezes over. Come spring, when the ground begins to thaw, we reap the benefits of those long restful months.

It’s symbolic. We learn the beauty of patience during this time. As we struggle, nature teaches us to be resilient. We can’t smell the flowers if we don’t wait for those leaves to fall; for the soil to replenish.

It is recorded in the hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) once stated:

إن ساعة القيامة تأتي، وأنشئ أشجاعاً

If the Hour of Resurrection comes up, and one of you is holding a sapling, finish planting it.

Within that, he relays it’s not as important what blooms in the end (if the End of Days is upon you, you probably won’t see it). Rather, it’s about the act of planting the seed; the intention. In every struggle, every “winter” – assess yourself. How intentional are you? What’s your internal dialogue as you brave the cold? How often do you practice forgiveness with yourself? How often do you love unconditionally, even when you’re afraid?

Imagine yourself as a tree. Nurture your roots during these dormant months. Be gentle with your branches during those brittle, cold nights. Eventually, when life defrosts, and your limbs begin to glisten with waxy, green leaves and fragrant flowers – celebrate yourself for the wisdom you’ve gained bearing the winter. Bear in mind, the Law of Conservation of Energy teaches us energy is neither created nor destroyed, it is merely transformed. That beginning-of-the-year-mental-toughness energy never went anywhere. It’s been molding and transforming this whole time. Harness it and be great.

Educational Malpractice
By JB (aka Joy)

We often say the system is broken, but do we include education with that? With recently watching “I Just Sued the School System” by Prince Ea - it brought to my attention that not only [do] they want us to be broke and uncomfortable, but also dumb - and literally nothing has changed. Coming from experience, something about a classroom just wasn’t for me. He shows how they put us in rows, telling us to raise our hands, when to talk, telling us what to do, what to say, how to think. Getting us ready for factories? What does that even mean?!
Eagles vs. Trump
By Denzel Johnson

The Philadelphia Eagles finally won the 52nd Super Bowl. President Trump congratulated the Eagles and invited them to the White House. The Eagles declined. I feel as though the Eagles declined because of all the commotion Trump brings. A lot of people tend to look beyond his “title,” meaning it’s not just about him being the President - it’s about what he’s doing with his position. Philadelphia was one of the many cities that was caught in his crossfire. For example, he demanded to stop giving out “free money.” I feel as though it would have been a great platform or opportunity for the Eagles to be present at the White House, but furthermore - much more respect to them for looking beyond his title. This is how I feel about the Eagles declining the invitation to the White House.

What killed Erica Gardner?

“What I think killed Erica Garner is a combination of clinical and social causes. The social causes lead to the clinical causes. The killing of her father could have triggered many mental health issues. In my opinion, what really killed Erica Garner is a horrible system that was never meant for us.” - Denize Wells

“I think a lot of things killed Erica Garner such as the social, the heartache, the trauma and stress and reliving and seeing her father’s death plastered all over the internet. I don’t think it was just the heart attack or the enlarged heart. But the social causes of death have a main trigger in her death.” - Paris Salazar

School Police
Paris Salazar

My opinion on the school police text/article is that if there is going to be school police, they should go through proper training and protocols. I think that the whole incident could have been avoided if schools hire the right trained officers. School police are not/do not have the right to forcibly put their hands on anyone if it is not well needed. In some cases, they do come to certain incidents where they may need to forcibly put their hands on school kids. Also I think only high schools really need school police because high schoolers - some like to fight, argue, and just like to start stuff. But I do not think middle schools or elementary schools need school police because with the right learnings and teachings, kids 12 and down should have relationships with students. Students that young should not have to feel imprisoned at school. And school police damn sure should not in any way, shape, or form put their hands on someone else’s child, especially an 8-year-old child, and throw them on the ground and basically beat him up. My point is that these young children do not need police in their schools. Middle and elementary schools should focus on getting better lunches, after school programs, better education plans for these young minds, and put the money they’re putting into these school police officers and pay for a better education system and programs for these kids instead of making them feel like they are on lockdown at a place where they should feel the most freed, safe, and able to be their self. And not have to worry about going to school with no scrapes, bruises, or scars, and coming home from school with all of the above. No parent should have to worry about their child coming home from school hurt. This is why I think only high schools need school police.

MOVE 9
By Marisol Latorre

MOVE is a Philadelphia-based black liberation group founded by John Africa in 1972. In 1978 there was a standoff and one police officer died, several people were injured 9 people got life sentences in prison. In 1985 there was another standoff, which ended when a police helicopter dropped a bomb on their row home in the middle of the 6200 block of Osage Avenue, causing a fire. 11 people were killed, including 5 children. The fire went out of control and destroyed 65 houses in the neighborhood. Even though it was such a dramatic occurrence in the city, not a lot of people do not know what really happened. More so, I think that they should have handled the situation in another way instead of killing so many people.
ZAKARI Pt 1
By Tamir Rice
Ja’qirah: So Ms. Kenya! What made you leave New York?

Ms. Kenya: Ooooooh, I love this question!!

J: ~laughs~

K: I am, as you know, born and raised in Harlem – the village of Harlem USA, New York! We call it the village because it is a very powerful part of New York, part of a country, part of the world. But it’s true to the village style because it’s only forty blocks, vertical and horizontal – meaning wide. So, it’s truly like a village feeling!

I wanted to experience a life as an adult in another city. I went to college in Virginia and Washington DC. Something a lot of people might not know is, not only have I been an educator for the past fifteen years, but I’ve traveled as an international educator. Both as a teacher and a person who coordinated other educators in New York to go to other countries. With that being said, I came back to New York, full-time. I always kept my home in New York, but when I came back, I said I would love to live in another city in America. I went to grad school at Temple, but I commuted back and forth. That was ten years ago. I said, you know what? I love Philly, it’s close to home – let me go and give Philly a run. And that’s how I made it here. I’ve been at YouthBuild for two years now.

J: Oh wow!

K: *musing* But, you know what they say… home is where the heart is. I still have a house in NY, a life in NY. I’m in Philly for right now. So, we’ll see.

J: You just said you were from Harlem, [but] do you like Cardi B even though she’s from the Bronx?

K: ~laughs~ I love Cardi B!

J: ~laughs~

K: She represents for all little black girls, for Afro-Latina, for the Bronx, for New York. But, she also has this really powerful representation of ‘I started from the bottom and now I’m here.’ Regardless of what people might have said about her to tarnish her image, she is a very powerful identity around understanding black feminism, in it’s action right now. It’s excellent representation for young women like yourself to be unapologetically who you are.

So we got a lil’ bit of the ratchet moments, and we got a little bit of intelligent moments! I think that’s what makes her so genuine because she’s unapologetic [and] authentic. What you see with Cardi B is truly her culture, community, and family. So… do I love Cardi B? ABSOLUTELY! She’s one of us! She’s a homegirl.

J: So what made you teach Social Studies?

K: I loved social studies, history, and geography growing up. That was my favorite subject in high school. I was that student that challenged my teachers. I might not have loved math, science, or even language arts for real, for real! However, I loved going to history class. I [decided] I wanted to go to college and become a lawyer…. honey, I got to college and did not like the structure of the government and the law. So, I began thinking how I could learn the law, study it, but also be able to eradicate and change it as well.

I began to shift from being the student to becoming that teacher of history, of government, of culture. I officially majored in History in college and did quite a few study abroad programs, research programs in other countries, I went to other universities… and that experience exposed me to the ‘teaching’ side of social studies.

Flash forward, I come from a long line of educators. I’m fourth generation teacher – my aunts, my uncles, my cousins, my mother, grandmother, great-grandmother were all teachers in some capacity. I said, you know what? I’m going to do the same exact thing that my family historically has done, but I’m going to teach my favorite subject, while I bring in my entire experience of loving cultures and also being able to work with young people to think critically about the world that exists.

J: Damn!

K: ~laughs~

J: I never knew you were so deep! ~laughs~

J: Do you think Black – with a capital “B” – people can be racist?

K: I don’t believe Black folk – with a capital “B” – can be racist. I say this because race is a social construct. Meaning, it has been socially defined in our society today. People are black [or white] because of a social construct. The root of race is racism. With that being said, with racism there is power. Black people in a white supremacist world do not have power. White people have power, whether they are racist or not. So when white people say “I am not racist” …okay! But you still have a level of power over me as a black woman, right? So if I’m a black woman, that defines my level of power in this country, and in this world. So, to answer your question about black people – I don’t think black people can be racist because they don’t have power behind their identities and stereotypes. Now, can there be people who harass or [act] judgmental because lack of knowledge or information? Yes! Black people can have a judgment against another group of people. But do they have power within our country is the question.

J: Did you watch the Super Bowl?

K: I did watch the Super Bowl! J: Eagles or Patriots?


K: What?!!

J: ~laughs~

K: Listen! I live in Philly, of course!

J: Omggg

K: They were the underdogs!

Phillly is a underdog city you know? A gritty, grimy, rough city. The people represent that culture in a very positive and affirmative way! I felt that the team itself was an affirmation of the city. I think back to their song – Meek Mills - like, come on! In terms of understanding gritty and grimy – even about him being incarcerated right now.
K: I’m easing into the day because I’m leaving till about 6:30-7:00. But it gives myself enough time to woosah. So I have a little jazz, but by 6:30 I’m ready to pump it up a little bit! Any given day Ms. Kenya can have on a little Cardi B – don’t get it twisted! I might throw in a little Biggie or a little Cam’ron! You know I am from Harlem! This morning was a great example! Driving in, I was listening to ASAP Ferg. J: ASAP Ferg? You listen to him?!
K: Yes I do! *starts rapping lyrics* - I was like yes! I love this song. But you know what? It’s because I like the message in it as well, and it makes me feel good! I went from John Coltrane to ASAP Ferg.

J: Why are you so proud and comfortable to exposing your culture to everyone? i.e. How do you rock the fact that you’re a black queen?
K: A lot of that has to do with my family and my upbringing – the values the morals, the culture, the community that I made me who I am. So, when you see Ms. Kenya you see generations of very proud black women. You see spunky and very ‘tell-it-like-it-is’, comin’ through!
J: *laughs*
K: I am who I am because of them. I am very thankful to have known my great-grandmothers and even my great-great-grandmothers…. when I say very spunky women! But also very strong and prideful men as well!
My dad is a very proud black man and I was very fortunate to grow up in a household with both my mother and father who were very clear, culturally, on who we were as black people. Hence, they named me Kenya and during the time where a lot of people were naming their children after African countries. That is who I am.

J: How would you tell a young African-American female that’s going through it that it’s gonna be okay?
K: Baby girl, it’s gonna be okay. It truly is. That’s exactly what I would say… it’s going to be okay, because someone survived so you can exist. Think about that… someone survived so that you could exist. If they didn’t survive, you wouldn’t be here.

J: Growing up in a household filled with strong African-American individuals, did you feel being black was the place you wanted to be?
K: Oh yes! I never wanted to be anything else but black, girl! I can’t even imagine myself not bein’ no black woman. I love it! It’s such a honor, because it goes back to that survival. Someone, as a little black girl, survived so our existence can be. So, the expectation is that ‘if I could survive, so can you.’ And whatever healing you need to have happen – tap into that. If you don’t have any resources, reach out to someone if you feel comfortable. But beyond that it’s not just about survival, it about the warrior in you.

J: *repeats Ms. Kenya* …it’s about the warrior.

J: Some people believe since Trump became president, it’s become harder for blacks. Do you agree?
K: To be black is to be a very patriotic American female! Driving in, I was like yes! I love seeing. Images that looked like us. It’s because I like the message in it as well, and it makes me feel good! I went from John Coltrane to ASAP Ferg.

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J: *repeats Ms. Kenya* …it’s about the warrior.
J: Why is your order at Starbucks so detailed? You want it to be perfect!
K: ~laughs~ First of all, I love coffee! I lived on an Ethiopian coffee farm a couple years ago. So, when I say I know coffee – I’m talking about straight-up, motherland, out-of-Africa coffee bean! The coffee we drink in the morning is that family’s farm – how they make their money, how they package and ship the coffee to us in America. I was on that farm. My cousin even married one of the sons! So I love coffee. With that being said, I think it’s important to taste the flavors. It’s important [to me that the YB students working in the café] realize that strive for excellence component. So, even if it’s making a cup of coffee, strive to make the best cup of coffee for that potential customer. Particularly a customer that knows you and only wants to see you do better – not someone that doesn’t know you and tries to be ugly. That’s that whole other conversation. Because I see the potential and greatness in all the students, that’s me pushing us all to be excellent. So yes! It’s very particular and specific because I want that coffee, but I also want you to be excellent.

J: Final question! What made you come to YouthBuild?
K: Nice! That’s going back to the original question – [J: - of you leaving New York!]
K: Yes! I’ve been familiar with the YouthBuild movement for years. A friend of mine worked at YouthBuild Philadelphia, I know people that worked at the YouthBuild in Harlem and the national organization. I was also familiar with their work in South Africa. So, when I was looking to explore whether I stay in the classroom or [not], I said if I go back into the classroom, I wanted it to be from a very non-traditional perspective. I didn’t want to go back to a traditional high school to teach 12th grade social studies. So, when I heard about the opportunity at YouthBuild, I said, why not apply? I was working with opportunity youth – young people that were failed by the system. So, how could I show them their greatness, be a part of their elevation as they go to the next level in their life, but do what I’m extremely passionate about. Bring the two worlds together. [Plus] I wanted to come to Philadelphia. All these things came full circle – and that’s how I came to YouthBuild Philly.
J: Thank you so much!
K: You are welcome! That was fun.

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Black Mystery Month

Complete the crossword below

Across
1. Bert S. More fought to stop segregation at this boarding school in Philly
2. This basketball player took the 76ers to the finals in 2001
3. The fight for the right to work, labor rights, fair education, and desegregation were part of the movement for
4. A former Black Panther, journalist and activist who is currently a political prisoner
5. African American community Marcello in a cartoonist and coffee shop in Kensington started by a black woman named
6. The oldest black newspaper is still published in the nation
7. The Avenue where the MOVE family home was bombed in Philly
8. Sometime residents have to move after large institutions buy up space and make living more expensive. It’s called
9. He was apart of the black power movement and The nation of Islam. He lived in North Philly for awhile to help
10. These women started this massive black social movement with a hashtag on Twitter after the murder of Trayvon Martin

Down
1. The Meek’ll Mill song that became the official anthem of the Philadelphia Eagles
2. This means freedom in Swahili
3. This Indigenous Tribe was in Philadelphia before European settlers took the land
4. It took until 1567 for the first black Philex player to get his chance. His name was

Created with TheTeachersCorner.net Crossword Puzzle Generator

In this lithograph, eight powerful African American women from the past and present display a colorful quilt that is a communal symbol of their achievements. Through words and text, symbol and metaphor, Faith Ringgold (artist) acknowledges the contributions of African American women and honors their traditions. She is a painter, soft sculptor, quilter, performance artist, and author; and she always speaks in a clear voice that affirms women, especially African American women.
From Mr. Ant’s Desk…

Black History Month is sometimes boiled down to black achievement day. A day to celebrate extraordinary achievements from extraordinary people in our past. However, it is important to understand that black people doing extraordinary work is ordinary! We do this everyday. The people who take care of their children, the people who cook and feed their loved ones, people who take time to mentor, assist and teach people around them: mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, by blood or by love. People who defend the people they care about and work to make sure that when they are doing well, the people around them are doing well too.

History is made by masses of regular, working class black people putting work in to make change. Even the names that we raise up every year were once considered ordinary people. Before Malcolm X led the Nation of Islam and inspired millions, he roamed the streets, involved in petty crime trying to make ends meet. All he needed was an opportunity to take his life into his own hands. Martin was brilliant in highschool and well revered in his church. With enough opportunity, he took his local church sermons and expanded into to the entirety of the American conscious. Huey Newton graduated high school unable to read and relatively poor. But Huey Newton died with a PhD in social philosophy, and a hand in creating of one of the most revolutionary black organizations the world has ever seen: The Black Panther Party.

These people were shaped by the world they lived and had an ordinary thought: “I don’t like this, I’m going to try my best to change it.” Many of the people here at YouthBuild are also making a decision to change themselves and the things around them. We are revolutionary simply because of that. We are black history, black present and we will carve out the black future.

It’s all about Martin Luther king, Martin said had a vision, yeah he said he a dream, all race can come together, yeah ,we all be a team, Every man is treated equal and every women is a queen .

Black and white lives we gonna fight for our rights , If we work as a team guarantee we gonna be alright , We was down and counted out now we gotta live this life , Now it’s time to live my life , Now it’s time to do this right yeah

Everybody treated equal , everybody treated fair don’t matter how u look, we all different ,why care I don’t care about you skin, don’t care about your hair, don’t care about ya clothes, don’t care what you wear.

It’s all about your heart, and It’s all about your mind. Everybody is a star , step back and watch us shine , I Gotta bounce back and come stronger every time, and No more waiting , now it’s time to get what’s mines.

Yeah ,we all individuals, but no segregation . we all can learn something, yeah education, take our mind on a trip , no medication, just love , all peace, we don’t do no hating

One heart one mind , believe in faith man , Everybody in the world be should be treated same way , We got right because Martin came through with the game play. If I could bring him back he would be my main man.

People always doubt me, and they said I couldn’t rap, but dang look at me now, in my bag ,about to snap , if life was a race then I’m running extra laps.

We was all trying to rhyme , so y’all can hear the hard time , All the pain and the struggles y’all gonna feel them through these lines , No tears head up you just gotta keep an open mind . We graduate and overcome so watch us over the time.
I am From
By JB

I am from the rose, from crack and scum.
A b**** and bum trying get some - but got this one.

I am from
The state jumping place to place.
So, now I scrunch my face and do my thing.
That is where I was, this is where I am now

I thank god for my parents, and I ain’t even their child.
For sticking by my side and working it out.

I am from Diane and Wayne, they feel my pain.
Ain’t mean to say no names, but damn I changed.
They are my gain from my pain.
But, where’m I from?
How do you explain when you’ve been everywhere.

I am From
By: Vivienne Jones-Haley

I am from resilience.
I am from the struggle.
I am from an absurd family that pushes problems under the rug instead of bringing it to the damn light.

No one gives a f*** about my feelings.
I am from “why didn’t you tell me? I would have…” but in all reality you didn’t care enough to listen to my pain and hurt.

I am from a family who only sees each other at funerals or janazahs.
Not one call or text to say “hey are you even still alive?”

I am from a place where you have to fight to survive because there is no other option.
I am from either stack or starve.

I am from a community who only cares to gossip or fight not to rebuild and uphold each other.
I am from a f***ed up a struggle.
I am from allegations, lies and truths.
I am from “damn, that’s f***ed up.’’
I am from sadness and depression.
I am from hurt.

I am from overcoming obstacles and showing resilience.

Suicidal - The Suicide
By Anonymous

I'm Here In Body
But My Mind Is Somewhere Else
Just A Person Trying To Make It
Depression Eating Me Alive
No One Rewards My Accomplishments
Only My Down Falls
Always There For Everybody
But Nobody's Ever There For You
Wanting To Disappear
Some Days Barely Having Energy
To Get Out of Bed
But Nobody Notices
Trying To Stay Afloat
But Yet Drowning
Wanting To Die
But Wanting Desperately To Live
Always The Oddball Out
Desperately Wanting To Be Included
Just Wanting A Simple Hug
Or An “Are You Ok?’’
Suicidal
Minus The Suicide

To Myself
By Ja’qirah

I how how u feeling. I know trust me that shit sound dumb because it’s like how can I know all the shit u feeling if I haven’t experienced the shit u been through. But I know shit does get rough. I know I’ve cried and tbh, yeah u might have cried more than me. Probably not but what I can tell u I’m here to be your everything. I b damned if I be nothing. And I’m sure that u heard this before, but what I will say is yes, I’m young, yes I’m an adult, yes I’ve made mistakes, but I do know I mean no harm. My heart is pure, beautiful I want u to remember a queen never lets her crown fall, but I do know sometimes your head might drop no n front of me but because of me. Why? Shit not gone be perfect idk but I do know I’m attached to u and I love u.