

# 5th Annual STUDENT VOICES PROJECT



Our fifth annual Student Voices Project brought in writing from 163 middle and high school students representing six U.S. Friends schools. We selected 20 honorees whose submissions are featured here. However due to space limitations in our print issue, we're unable to showcase all honoree submissions in their entirety. Some have been excerpted on the following pages with the rest of each story appearing in our online edition available at [Friendsjournal.org](http://Friendsjournal.org), where you can also see a full list of all 163 participants.

## PROMPT

Tell us a story about how one of the Quaker testimonies was made real to you in your life. We're looking for *true* tales that involve *you* somehow and illustrate how a testimony went from abstract concept to real-life presence.

## Center Yourself

*Naomi Brangan, Grade 7,  
Buckingham Friends School,  
member of Wrightstown Meeting in Newtown, Pa.*

**M**y journey through my Quaker faith and education all started in nursery school. I went to a small Quaker nursery school. It's the kind of place where I sat on my teacher's lap, and the room was filled with worn wooden blocks with a certain cozy smell I can still remember. There's a beautiful meetinghouse on the property, and a couple times a year, the meeting would invite the children at the school to join them for meeting for worship. I don't remember what I felt the first time I walked into the meetinghouse, but today, I walk in and am consumed with a warm feeling, seeing the old benches and wood, smelling the history that has existed there for hundreds of years.

The first time I sat through a meeting for worship was rough. I was fidgeting, looking around the room at everyone multiple times, and not able to center myself. My mom told me to center myself, but I didn't even know what that meant.

We gradually kept coming back to meeting, and eventually became regular attenders. The meeting was very inviting and open to us, which made us feel comfortable there. After nursery school, I went on to attend another Quaker school, and that is when I really started to understand

Quakerism. I came to understand the proper meeting behavior, and I really embraced being there.

The meeting that my family attended varied from the one at school. In school, people were whispering during worship, even the seventh and eighth graders. At the meeting my family attended on Sundays, it was always very quiet and no one talked unless they stood up. I noticed my own behavior was different, too. At school, my best friend whispered to me, and of course I whispered back. We got in trouble, but we were so inseparable that it didn't matter so much to us, because we could not stop talking to each other for even half an hour. At the meeting my family attended, I was really silent, besides some very soft whispers to my mom. The whisper to my mom was always something relevant in my mind, even if it seemed like the most irrelevant thing to anybody else.

When I was in fourth grade, we started attending Philadelphia Yearly Meeting annual sessions. Every person there was very welcoming, and more than willing to help us out. I was with a group of kids that were kind and fun to be around. We also started to go to the quarterly meetings, and we liked attending those, too. Third grade was when I learned the Quaker testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality, and stewardship. After this, I tried to weave these things into my way of life. I started to live more simply, realizing all of the stuff I didn't need, which I donated to kids that need it more than me. My family started to participate more in helping out the community. I am very grateful that Quakerism has taught me to see the light in every person, regardless of what their race is, where they come from, and who they are.

Now that I am older, I do my best to incorporate the Quaker testimonies into my everyday life. I do not know where my future is headed, but I do see Quaker faith being a big part of my life to come. Now when my mom tells me to center myself, I know exactly what that means. In fact, my mom doesn't say it to me anymore, for I have learned to center myself on my own. ▣

### More Student Voices Online

We didn't have enough room in our print edition to include all the great writing by the SVP honorees this year, so be sure to read their full submissions online at [Friendsjournal.org/studentvoices2018](http://Friendsjournal.org/studentvoices2018).

"This man put so much love, passion, and heart into everything he said to us that day, mostly because this was such an important issue to him. Listening to him made me realize this was an important issue not just to him but to me as well. I discovered a side of me I wouldn't have found without this incredible experience. At this point I realized that it was up to my generation to fix this issue."

—*Read more online: "Our D.C. Family" by Gianna Katsock, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School*

"At various farms, we harvested vegetables and pulled weeds from the ground, knowing that each piece of produce would be transformed into a filling meal for homeless people. As I squatted on the ground and bits of dirt seeped through the straps of my sandals, I realized the importance of having an interconnected and dependent community. Every piece of produce that our group harvested from offsite farms was sent to a local soup kitchen, which then made hearty meals for people who are struggling."

—*Read more online: "To Build Is to Love" by Quinn Daugherty, Grade 10, Westtown School, attender of Unami Meeting in Pennsburg, Pa.*







## Comfort in Diversity

*Jady Williams, Grade 9, Westtown School*

This is my first year at Westtown School. I am a proud Christian who goes to church and worships God. At my church we sing, dance, cry, and mostly make noise! I am comfortable in this environment because in my culture, we recognize that God deserves all the praise. This is a strong aspect of the African American experience. Through religion, I am constantly learning more about my history and my present.

Then I came to Westtown. Everyone at Westtown was so free and loose, I became afraid to share that I was Christian. I thought people wouldn't like me because of my religion. The school welcomes all religions, but in sharing about my Christian religion, I would become even more of a minority. Most people at Westtown are spiritual, atheist, or agnostic. While I am not one to shove my religion onto others, I became worried they wouldn't like me. I became worried they thought that I was going to whip out the Holy Bible, read scriptures, and throw holy water at them. There are many stereotypes about Christians. I was also afraid that people would make fun of and mock me because I am a Black Christian—you know, the good old stomping-on-the-ground, screaming “hallelujah” kind—or that people would say we are “ghetto” and wear “extreme” clothes.

I am used to people assuming things about me that are quite offensive. However, as my knowledge of Quakerism developed, I found a sense of comfort. I like that Quakerism holds a spot for community. This made me realize that no matter what people think, I am apart of this diverse community. I can live life, be Christian, and have friends all in one. The people that make up Westtown today have formed this sense of community, and I feel more comfortable to be myself and express my religion. I like that the SPICES all relate to the world in huge way and that people who follow them are choosing to contribute to a better world. Quakerism has the power to change the world, and as a full-time Christian, I am on board to help! □



“By the time Grace and I became ice hockey teammates, I had finished four years of Quaker education. Throughout these years, I learned that everyone is equal no matter their race, religion, gender, or place in society. Growing up with this Quaker value taught me to treat everyone fairly and to stick up for others when they are not being treated well. Being a good teammate to Grace created a prime opportunity for me to live these Quaker values and testimonies.”

—*Read more online: “All Teammates Deserve Respect” by William Reardon, Grade 8, Buckingham Friends School*

## Finding My Community

*Jocie Resnik, Grade 9, Westtown School,  
member of Goshen Meeting in West Chester, Pa.*



I grew up going to a Quaker meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina. I never truly liked going to meeting because it always felt way too long. My family and I moved to Pennsylvania about four years ago, and we continued to attend Quaker meeting. One day my mom told me I was going on a Quaker retreat. I remember staring her in the eyes and telling her “no.” We had just moved. Quaker retreats were not new to me, but the people here were. I did not know any children or teenagers my age, and I did not know if any of my current friends were Quakers. On top of not knowing anyone, this retreat was in the middle of nowhere. She proceeded to tell me all about how exciting it was going to be and how I would make some amazing friends and great memories. So I decided out of the willingness in my heart that I would go. The retreat was from Friday night to Sunday afternoon. I thought by Saturday morning I would want to be gone, but then I got there and my entire perspective changed.

I was greeted by a very nice woman. She introduced me to her daughter and some of her daughter’s friends. I could tell they all knew each other, which made me nervous because I thought that maybe they would not want to add another person to their little group. The girls started showing me around and told me where to put all my stuff, then we all went outside to go meet the others. Looking back I realize how dumb I was to be nervous—they were the nicest group of people I had ever met. We all hung out like we were old friends, yet it was our first time meeting each other.

Later on, we did team-building activities and played some get-to-know-you type of games. I learned all about how people became Quakers. It was so interesting to hear everyone’s story and to relate to them. It felt like I really knew these people and that I could connect with them on a deeper level. We talked for hours and hours until we finally fell asleep. Then the next day we did it all over again. It felt like no matter how long we had been talking we could still talk for hours more. It was amazing to be able to connect with these people like friends and to relate without truly knowing each other that well. Everyone treated each other with such respect and friendliness, it was absolutely insane.

When we all sang songs around the campfire and talked all night long, I realized how much I appreciated this tight community and how much I appreciated the individuals I was with. I did not need to be on my phone the whole time or talking to my best friend because I was already with a great group of people. I am glad my mom made me go on that trip because it gave me a deeper appreciation for those around me and for the community I have. □



“When I was three years old, my mom was diagnosed with lung cancer. Our community was amazing. They made us food and helped take care of her. They had a fundraiser so that my dad didn’t have to work and could spend all his time in the hospital. They also did it so we wouldn’t lose our house. People also watched me when my dad was at the hospital late.”

—*Read more online: “From the Circus to the Community” by Rosie Reed,  
Grade 6, Greene Street Friends School*



## Community or Competition

*Olivia Dietrich, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School*

I shakily stepped out of the car. I had to grip the door for support. Even though it was a calm, sunny day, I was freaking out. Carefully I pulled my ice skating bags out of the car. I could've sworn the bags had gotten heavier. I slowly walked into the rink and started to jog around as a warm-up. I also stretched and jumped rope. I was totally exhausted from nerves and the running and jumping to stay warm. I looked at the clock, and to my dismay, my warm-up had only taken five minutes.

The clock hands seemed to inch slower than usual, and I grew bored, so I grabbed my ice skates and started to lace them up. The worn laces were rough on my hands as I pulled them, so hard that my fingers were on the verge of bleeding. Slowly I stood up. I was extremely scared. I pulled my jacket around me and stepped forward. My skates teetered with every step; it was as though I had forgotten how to walk. I looked around at all of my competitors. We stood there in silence; nobody said anything. After all, we were competing against each other.

Time suddenly seemed to zip by as I realized it was my turn to do my routine. I was about to step onto the ice when a girl who was competing against me whispered, "Good luck! You are going to do great!"

I pushed off onto the ice with a little more confidence. What she said had meant the world to me. At that moment, I truly understood the meaning of community and realized that we were not just competitors trying to be better than one another. We were all a community of people who had the same passion. We all worked extremely hard to get to this moment. Even though I was wearing a short sleeve dress, I felt a sudden warmth spread across the rink. I heard the music start. There was a steady beat, and I looked up. This was exactly where I wanted to be, with a few new friends on an ice rink. A smile stretched across my face, and I skated my best.

I finished the routine with the final position, and glanced at everyone around me. After I stepped off the ice, I tried to take the time to say, "Good luck!" and smile at every person. The smiles seemed to be contagious, and suddenly everyone was laughing. Once we had finished competing, we walked out together. Even if we were all competitors from different parts of the United States, we could still be friends who loved ice skating. Being competitors was not meant to separate us; it was meant to bring us together. In that moment I did not care about the results. We had skated our hardest and deserved a chance of doing well, and even though we all wanted to win, the competition was never about winning; it was about bringing people with the same hopes and dreams together. □

## Family Is Family

*Abel Rupertus, Grade 6, Greene Street Friends School*



I am adopted. Both my mom and my dad are white. Both of my sisters are also white. My brother and I are from Ethiopia, and we have brown skin. I love my parents, my sisters, and my brother. Even though we don't all look the same, we're still a family. I live in the Mount Airy neighborhood of Philadelphia, an educated and diverse community. Although incidents of racism don't happen very often where I live, there have been times when people have questioned whether we belong together.

Last summer, when I was walking around with my sister at a baseball tournament, we saw a boy about my age whose team I had just played. He came up to us and said, "Are you boyfriend and girlfriend?" We thought he was just being weird and said, "No, we are siblings."

"You can't be siblings. You are not the same skin color!"

That made me feel terrible. I guess because of where and how I have been raised, I did not realize people could be so foolish.

I went home and sat in my room, trying to read, but I couldn't stop thinking about this incident. Why do people assume that people of different skin colors can't be related? The more I thought about it, the worse it made me feel, but it also made me think how lucky I am to be mostly surrounded by accepting people who know that I belong.

Believe it or not, this same thing has happened to me several other times: twice at school, twice at baseball tournaments, and even once walking down the street to the grocery store. (That time, it was actually a neighbor.) Usually, it is kids that make assumptions about my family because they just don't know any better. Once when I was in kindergarten, we had a substitute teacher. At the end of the day, my mom came to pick me up. When she came into the classroom, the teacher was hesitant to let me go home with her because we do not look alike. I was young so I don't remember it very well, but my sister recently reminded me of this moment. I was shocked that a grown-up could think that.

These stories make me think about the importance of equality and community. Although people aren't calling me a mean name or something, they make me feel like I don't belong. When this happens I think for a while about the effects of racism. It makes me so sad, but at the same time happy that, for the most part, my classmates and friends understand that people of different skin tones can be family. In many ways my community is amazing. I hope that in our changing world people and communities can accept, welcome, and appreciate every variety of family. □



## Would You Still Love Me If I Were a Boy?

*Sawyer Beveridge, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School*

I remember the night I told my mom I wasn't exactly a girl. I was so worried about telling her. I can't talk to my parents about regular things much less something this close to my heart. I could hear my heartbeat in my ears. I considered not telling her. I considered running back to my room, living in the dark for the rest of my life. I have some stress issues, which helpfully decided to show up; my body felt like it was locking up. I was feigning tears. I finally brought up enough courage, or stupidity, to tell her. I blurted out my question, "Would you still love me if I were a boy?"

I seriously almost cried right then. I almost let the powerful waterfall of sadness consume me. Time seemed to freeze. She said she would love me no matter who I was, and we left the conversation at that. The next night we had a little follow-up talk. I don't remember what was said, but I do remember crying. But that night I felt peaceful; peace seemed to flow over me. But at the same time, brewing behind that sense of peace, there was also fear.

The second time I told somebody was in a test essay in fifth grade. I wrote about how life is a maze and everybody has their own challenges. I put my "challenge" at the end. What made me nervous about the essay was that one of my classmates had to proofread my essay. I was paired with a boy named Quinn. After he finished reading, he got a kind of panicked look on his face, told me my essay was fine, and almost ran off.

Later that day my teacher, Ms. Dufour, came up to me while we were walking on the track and said, "You can come talk to me if you ever need any help." I was very grateful for these words, and she was the first person to call me brave.

I realize some people are hated for being transgender or gay or anything else. Other people are afraid to tell their own parents these things about themselves. And when I hear about people being hated for something they cannot control, it makes me furious.

Nelson Mandela once said, "No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

I don't know how many people have had to grow up different from the norm, oppressed like grass under a heavy snowfall. But grass will spring back up, stronger, smarter, and kinder. I don't know how many people have been hurt or died because of something about themselves that they could not control. But I do know that I am fortunate to grow up with people who love me with no end, no matter who I am. For what I am some have been called horrible slurs, but I have been called brave. I do not think I am brave. The oppressed are brave; they rise again like grass after you step on them. Why can't we be at peace? Why can't the world be at peace? □

# The Imaginary Box

Jules Needleman, Grade 6, Greene Street Friends School



I was different in third grade. Some of my classmates thought antagonizing me was cool; they used it as a badge of social acceptance. I saw many of them as complicit when they witnessed my antagonization. While it only happened occasionally, it stuck with me. What I've found to be true is that the people who found antagonizing me fun or enjoyable just didn't understand me.

As the antagonization continued, I began to show more and more of myself. I dressed in leggings under my jeans; I wore a flowered undershirt under my larger, long-sleeved t-shirt. Of course, it didn't stop anything, as nobody could see the articles of clothing. None of my friends even knew. Even though it satisfied my conscience, it just wasn't enough to make my conscience, or myself, actually happy. So I began to shy away from anything viewed as traditionally masculine. I was stuck in a gray area of sorts.

In this gray area, I made many discoveries about myself. I learned things both trivial and meaningful. Not only that, but I also learned about integrity. It was the theme of the year when I was in second grade, so I knew something about it. But, in that gray area, I learned integrity wasn't just on the outside, but it is possible to be truthful to yourself as well.

I proposed a hypothetical question to myself: *What if you didn't shut yourself away in an imaginary box of sorts?* This question sparked some very deep thinking. It also brought up other questions: *Are you going to tell anyone? If so, how? What will people say, and what will they think? Will my friends be mad because I didn't tell them earlier?*

My mind swarmed with these questions for the next two weeks. One by one, the answers became apparent to me. All of them, except for one: *Will my friends be mad?* Countless scenarios ran through my mind; many of them were of my friends turning their backs on me and walking away, their chins held high. Now, looking back on it, it seems quite stupid, but it almost made me not want to step out of the imaginary box. Nevertheless, I did step out, but it was a gradual process. It started with me telling my best friend that I am actually a girl.

*Continued on the next page*



"I am close enough to see all my pores, all the smeared residue of makeup, all the bumps and edges of my skin. All of my flaws are in plain view. Usually, my hands would be poking at a single red blemish on my face, my eyes glaring. My next step would be to backup and look at my body, my eyebrows knitting together in a look of confusion, like how do I still look like this when I wish every day it was different. That I was different. *If you could just change one thing about yourself what would you change?*"

—Read more online: *"The Art of Loving Yourself"* by Frances Kelly, Grade 10, New Garden Friends School

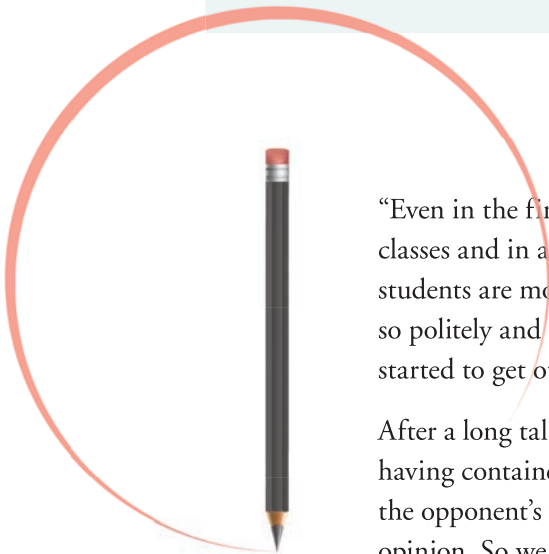


It seemed as though I had only put my finger out of that box, but I soon realized that it was more like my head and torso. It certainly felt like a risk to me, even though I knew she would keep it a secret until I was ready to announce it to the grade. I was scared and unsure of what was ahead.

My parents knew that I was a girl even before I officially came out. I dressed in traditionally “feminine” clothes the entire summer of 2015. Then, that very same summer, I told my parents that I wanted to come out to the entire grade.

On the first day of fourth grade, my anxiety levels were very high, higher than usual. On that day, my mind was perturbing me with more scenarios, even stranger and more unlikely ones, at that. All I was thinking about was how everybody would react. Until, I felt a hand on my shoulder. I whipped around, but before I could see the person that the hand belonged to, I was pulled into a hug, one that was warm and welcoming, a hug that made me feel safe and happy.

I made the announcement to the whole grade almost as soon as the school day started. After I made the announcement, I felt lighter, like a huge proverbial weight was lifted from my shoulders. I was happy that I confronted myself; if I hadn't, I have no idea where I'd be today. Truthfulness and integrity are an integral part of everyday life. It just goes to show, if issues, whether they be monumental or trivial, are ignored for too long, they can build up, until one is left with a sizable quandary with an uncertain outcome. One is left with not only a crossroads with two lanes, but a crossroads with a thousand lanes, and more often than not, the path one chooses leads to more quandaries. Those quandaries lead to their own respective crossroads, culminating with a downward spiral. However, if one knows oneself, and is truthful to oneself, then peace and happiness are within reach. □



“Even in the first week of school, the election was talked about in classes and in a school assembly. In these talks, teachers stated that students are more than welcome to discuss this matter, but they must do so politely and kindly. That is easier said than done. Starting in early October, things started to get out of hand. . . .

After a long talk in my history class, we finally realized that the debate the students were having contained false information about both parties. We were not discussing to learn the opponent's view, but instead speaking in order to rant or judge the other side's opinion. So we went to the school staff and presented an idea to help bring our student body back together.”

—*Read more online: “Different Opinions, Same Community” by Olivia Jaekle, Grade 10, Westtown School*



## Teaching Equality

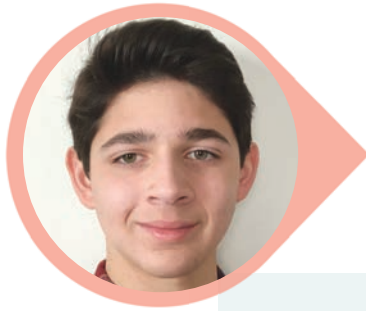
*Chloe Arden Allman, Grade 9, Westtown School*



When I was about three years old, my family hired a babysitter named Chelsea. Chelsea was quite the culture shock for my white, “Hi, we’re the Griswolds!” family. My sister and I were quickly swept up in Chelsea’s sea of musical talent, sewing, crazy personality, and general affection. We hung around her like thirsty puppies, trying to soak up some of her creativity and spunk. From sewing some of the best Halloween costumes, to highlighting my sister’s hair when she was in seventh grade, everything Chelsea did was the coolest. I credit Chelsea the most for my personality of acceptance and open-mindedness, and I will never forget when she taught my family the most important lesson of equality.

When I was six years old, I remember overhearing one of Chelsea’s phone calls with her friends. “I met someone,” she said. “They’re a girl but not really. They’re gonna be a boy. I think I love her though.” After she hung up, I remember asking Chelsea, “Are you gay?” To six-year-old me, being gay was not necessarily bad, it just wasn’t normal. Both of my parents were socially and politically very liberal, but talking about homosexuality and race just was not a regular conversation back then. However, Chelsea’s new boyfriend was the change of that. I remember meeting Eli, and my mom and Chelsea sitting me down and telling me how Eli was born a girl, but in his mind he always knew his body did not match his brain. He felt like a boy and was going through hormone therapy that would make his body align with his brain. Eli became a regular figure in my life, taking care of me along with Chelsea. His easy-going attitude and impressive gallery of colorful tattoos made him almost cooler than Chelsea. When I was younger, I never understood why, when I explained how Eli used to be a girl, to my close friends at school, some of them reacted in disgust and confusion.

Growing up with Chelsea and Eli and carrying my relationship with them into my teenage years has been such a blessing to my life. From the time I was ten, I became passionate about race, gender, and sexuality equality. Chelsea taught my family and me the importance of educating oneself and remaining open-minded to all people. I think often of how far we have come in advocating for transgender rights. Recently, Chelsea and Eli were married. Eli got his name and gender legally changed and is scheduled for top surgery soon. Much justice, however, is needed for the transgender community, especially within legislation. The cause is dear to my heart, and I believe if a six-year-old can be so accepting of another person, then the whole world can. I urge everyone to educate themselves about different causes and people, because I learned from Chelsea the first step to equality is understanding. ◻



## Finding Simplicity in My Life


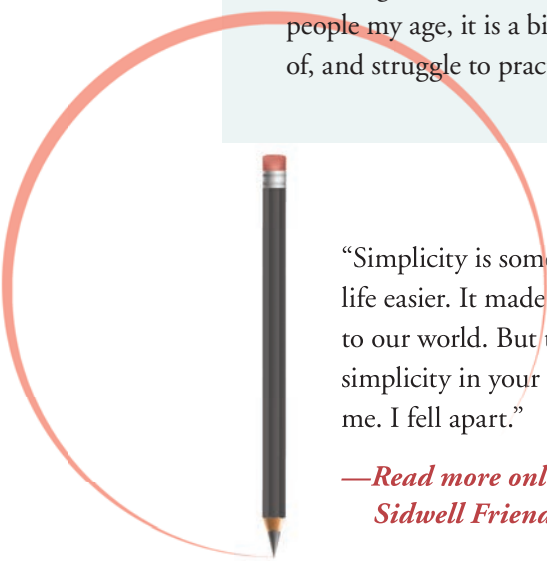
*Robert Bennett, Grade 9, Westtown School,  
member of Durham (Maine) Meeting*

As many people's lives become more cluttered with events and activities, we become more and more reliant on physical items. I spend a large amount of time thinking about this during the summer. My family spends about a month on Southport Island in Maine. We stay in a cottage that my dad's grandparents purchased during the Depression. It has electricity and running water, but we have no access to the Internet, and we are forced to spend time away from our electronics. As a result of this, we are kept away from the clutter caused by our digital lives.

I am rarely thrilled to put down my cell phone and spend time outside, but once I get over the initial shock of being separated from my electronics, I realize how much more we are able to take in when we aren't looking at the world through a screen. It makes life simpler to only be interacting with people in person and be out of touch with everything that is happening everywhere except for what is right around you. It is hard not to enjoy the simple and straightforward life I am forced to live there; it is always a very refreshing month for me. I think a lot afterward about what I could do to change my day-to-day life to make it more similar to my time on Southport, but I find with school and other activities it is hard to live without many of the things that previously thought were essential. My parents grew up in a time when people were not consumed the way we are by portable electronics. I think about how they got on just fine without it all.

I have found that to reduce my usage, everyone around me would need to as well, and I think that is something that we can't just do overnight. I love the simplicity of living without my phone, and will continue to look forward to that month every summer.

I feel that simplicity is a testimony that is not particularly clear as others. What is meant to be more simple? I find that my digital life is the most complicated part of my day-to-day life. This might not be true for everyone, but I think for the majority of people I know, especially people my age, it is a big, complicated aspect of their lives. This is easily the testimony I think of, and struggle to practice most in my life. □



“Simplicity is something that everyone needs. It’s something that makes life easier. It made my life easier. It adds a glow and a breath of fresh air to our world. But the strange thing about this is that if you don’t have simplicity in your life, you aren’t properly cared for. That is what happened to me. I fell apart.”

—*Read more online: “The Realization” by Elizabeth Hare, Grade 6,  
Sidwell Friends School*



## Peacefulness in a Chaotic World

*Zein Mosarsaa, Grade 10, Westtown School*



Peacefulness has been a common theme throughout my life and my journeys. My mother and father have been through so much growing up under Israeli occupation in the West Bank. Many of my dad's friends have been imprisoned during the occupation, and many have died from the military violence and shootings that occur. Still my parents raised me with Quaker values, whether it was from attending a Quaker school (where my mom was a teacher) or taking me to the meetinghouse every Sunday before my piano lesson. Through their actions and choices, they taught my siblings and me to understand the Quaker testimony of peace.

Being peaceful doesn't always come easy, especially with Palestine being under occupation; everyone is so angry and they resort to violence. Even my father has been through this phase, where he was so angry at the occupation, he started throwing stones at the Israeli army. After his friends were arrested, my father quickly realized how stupid throwing stones at soldiers is, how being violent toward an army will bring you nothing, how it will do no good. My father is not a Quaker, but he believes that violence will never do good. Violence is not the answer. Being peaceful amid one's anger shows one's strength. Stones and rocks mean nothing when it comes to resolving an issue as big as an occupation.

My mother has always believed in Quaker values. She likes to go to meeting for worship every Sunday as it allows her to connect with her Inner Light. When I was back home she liked to take me with her; she tried to teach me Quaker morals as much as she could so I can live with them on a daily basis. My mother is one of my biggest role models for being a peaceful person. Living under the occupation and in an extremely close-minded society has made her even stronger. I also live in an extremely close-minded society; it is extremely sexist, and somewhat violent in its own ways. But even if one is absolutely livid, screaming at someone and hurting someone will not do anything. My mother always told me, "Although you're angry, take a deep breath and talk—don't yell, speak."

My parents made sure that I did not grow up approaching situations in a violent manner, that I did not approach problems with an attacking demeanor, whether it was a verbal argument or a physical fight. Whenever my parents and I fought, we would sit down and talk through it; there were very few situations where someone had to yell. Growing up in this environment may be very hard, but I am glad my parents raised me to be a strong independent woman amidst the brutality of the occupation. I learned that I may have significant anger toward this occupation because it took away precious people in my life, but I also learned that settling violence with even more violence and hatred will never solve this issue. I learned that peacefulness is always a way to go; it's always possible. □



## Stewardship Brought to the Streets of Our Capitol

*Jonathan Kornegay, Grade 9, Westtown School*

I've been surrounded by Quakerism since I was about three years old. From preschool through fifth grade, I attended Goshen Friends School. Then I started attending Westtown School, another Quaker private school, where I'm currently in ninth grade. Quaker values and SPICES were always integrated into both of my schools' curriculums. At Westtown, I attend meeting for worship every week, learn about the history of Quakerism in classes, and witness as well as participate in meeting for business. I am not a Quaker myself nor part of any other religion, but I love learning about the role of religion in the world and throughout history. Quakerism is a religion that I respect greatly, and I agree with many of its values. Even though I have known about the Quaker testimonies for years, I had yet to apply one to a major life decision until just recently.

I have always been interested in current events, news, politics, and science. The 2016 election and its repercussions sparked my interest in government and in standing up for what I believe in on a national level. I started going to political rallies and marches toward the end of the election and in its aftermath. One of the main issues I care about is climate change and environmental protection. Climate change is a vitally important issue that needs to be addressed worldwide. After hearing claims on the news that climate change is a hoax, I felt that it was necessary to voice my opinion to our government. Then I found out about the April 29, 2017 People's Climate March in Washington D.C., and this is when the Quaker testimony of stewardship fused with my beliefs and actions.

My personal beliefs as well as the lessons I learned about protecting the environment through the testimony of stewardship at Goshen Friends and Westtown influenced my decision to go to the march, let my voice be heard, and stand up for what I believe in. I went with my mother on a large bus filled with protesters who were all headed to the march. When we arrived in Washington, D.C., a majority of the National Mall was packed with energized environmental activists who wanted to protect the rights of the environment and voice the magnitude of climate change. While we were gathering before the march, we got to talk to and observe people of all ages, genders, races, ethnicities, and religions, all present for one reason: to be stewards of the earth. Once the march started, I got to see the beauty of activism, stewardship, and Quakerism. Here were thousands of people of all different beliefs and religions marching together in peaceful agreement on an issue that was important to them. People were carrying signs representing many different aspects of stewardship, including animal rights, nature conservation, climate change awareness, anti-pollution, and anti-oil drilling.

Stewardship inspired me to take action in a way that I never thought I would at such a young age, and I am truly grateful that I did. The march went around the National Mall and

down Pennsylvania Avenue and ended at the White House. We chanted and held up our signs as we marched through the streets of Washington, D.C. The events lasted all day, and it was one of the most fun and inspiring activities I have ever participated in. When the march ended, I felt very satisfied for taking a stand for what I believe in and for being able to use what I have been taught and apply it to something in the larger community. While not everyone was Quaker at the march, the Quaker testimony of stewardship has the power to extend its reach to people of all religions and even those without religion. This day will stick with me all my life, and it is certainly not the last march I will attend. On this day, I was able to witness and apply the Quaker spice of stewardship to an action in real life, which I plan to do more in the future.

The endorsement of science, climate change, activism, and stewardship is something that I have always respected and will continue to respect about Quakers and their testimonies. I feel that stewardship is important to apply to real life because it can make the world a better place for everyone and everything living in it. The Quaker SPICES, values, and other lessons will stick with me and continue to positively influence my life. I will never hesitate to say that I am a huge supporter of Quakerism and will always be grateful for the meaningful education that Goshen Friends and Westtown has given me. □



“I couldn’t stop thinking about the young girl I had just helped. At first I thought I did it simply because I saw someone in need and felt the urge to help them. I was fine with that. But if I was being honest, I helped the girl because I wanted her gratitude. I wanted to feel thanked. I wanted to be the hero. I didn’t do it out the kindness of my heart. And that made me feel bad. I did it to make myself feel good, like I was doing a good deed, like I deserved gratitude. *Does this mean I’m a bad person?* I kept asking myself this over and over again.”

—*Read more online: “Soft Soap and Doom” by Laia Sarukhan, Grade 6, Sidwell Friends School*



“Our feet danced in an inch of water, and the wooden benches beneath us were worn from use and age. Anchored in the middle of the lake, my grandpa and I sat in the rowboat that had first belonged to my great-grandfather prior to his death. The boat’s blue paint was chipped and its hull seeped with water. The night was breezy, causing the water to ripple against the sides of the boat. With each deepening shade of the purple sky, our faces became more distorted and twisted in the fading light. My grandpa’s white hair clouded and my dark hair blended into the grey sky. We sat in silence, the water lapping against the sides of the boat.”

—*Read more online: “A Simple, Silent Moment” by Eliana DeHavan, Grade 8, Buckingham Friends School*