

### All About Equity in Education

by Louis A. Craco III

Going to school started on April 23, 1635 at the first Public School established in Boston, Massachusetts, before we became the United States. It was for boys only! Girls were not allowed until 1789.

The United States had a Civil War from 1861 to 1865, because the South wanted to use slavery and the North was against it. **President Abraham Lincoln** issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, because Black people were forced to be slaves and were treated unfairly. Slaves were not allowed to read or write. It was against the law to teach them. To end this brutal environment, the President decided to set them free. The war ended. The first Black public high school opened in 1870 in Washington, D.C.

This is all about equity in education! But still everyone was separated.



A very special Back to School Drive, check out pages 3 & 4 for more!

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Then, on August 28, 1963, *Martin Luther King, Jr.* made a speech to the world about his dream of equality. It is called the "I Have a Dream" speech. He wanted Black children and White children to all go to school together.

There are many people with disabilities. In history, they were sent to an institution, away from their families. The institution was in the past. We are in the present. People with disability are different but we are together with the world. Including and inviting people with disability into the world is good for everybody. This is called inclusion.

I have learned so much knowledge at **Cooke School and Institute** in Manhattan, NY. Science, Math, Gym, Recess! One memorable event this year was walking from school down to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to learn more about ancient Rome and Greece. I'm a little bit Italian, so I learned more about my culture and saw my heritage at the Metropolitan.

The movie "The Greatest Showman" is about people who are different. They were in P.T. Barnum's circus. At my Middle School Graduation we sang one of the songs, "This Is Me". I had a solo part:

Another round of bullets hits my skin Well, fire away 'cause today, I won't let the shame sink in We are bursting through the barricades And reaching for the sun (we are warriors) Yeah, that's what we've become

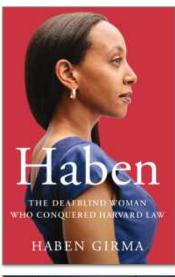
> Won't let them break me down to dust I know that there's a place for us For we are glorious

I understand what the song is about. I know what they felt. They believed in themselves - who they are. Just because they were different doesn't mean they have to be judged.

We went to my brother's graduation from **Berkeley Carroll High School** three weeks ago. **Haben Girma**, a disability rights lawyer, was the guest speaker. Haben is blind and deaf. She has a Seeing Eye dog who guides her and helps her with what she needs to do. This dog, Mylo, protects his owner. Mylo helped her get on the stage, then he lay down beside her. Amazingly, Haben can speak very clearly. When she first asked to go to **Harvard Law School**, they were shocked and said, "We have never had a deafblind student." She said, "Well, I've never been to your school before!" She stood up for herself. She advocated for who she was. Haben may be blind and deaf, but she was still able to go to **Harvard Law School**!

This is all about equity in education! The past will never be the same! We are going to the future! We are warriors!

Louis A. Craco III Self Advocate and 8th Grade Graduate Cooke School June, 2022 Congratulations Louis on your 8th Grade Graduation! You are an inspiration to everyone at The Imagine Society! Thank you for sharing this essay with us, and teaching us about Haben Girma!





Louis A. Craco III is in 8th grade at Cooke School and also on the Youth Editorial Staff at The Imagine Newsletter!

#### A Very Special "Back to School" Drive at Lagree Baptist Church

The Imagine Society is proud to support the Lagree Baptist Church's "Back to School" drive for the 2nd year in a

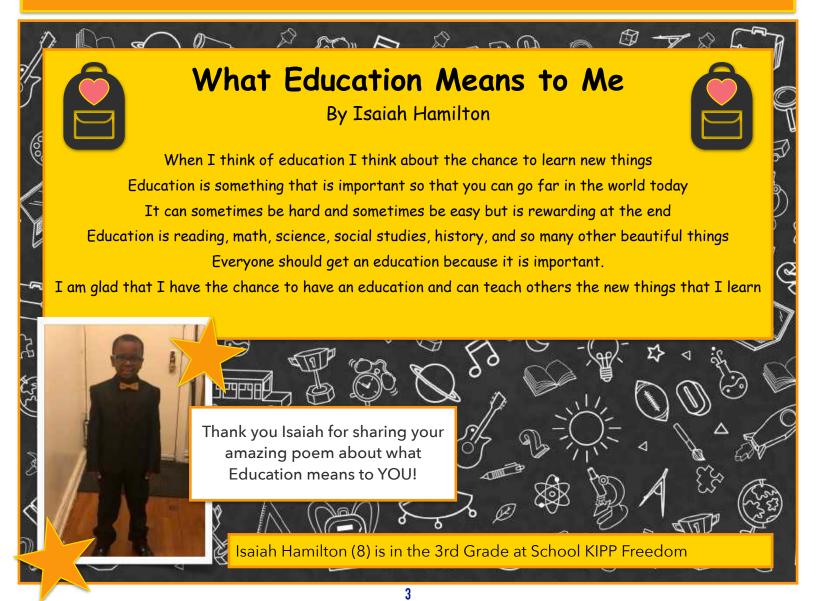
row! Thank you the amazing *Sade Williams* for putting this incredibly important service together for students in need in The Bronx Community. Thanks to money raised by our generous Imagine family we donated 200 counts of school necessities glue sticks, pencils, erasers and pens for the students in the Lagree community. As Sade told us, it meant so much to the children that last year they were able to give away 300 book bags filled with school supplies "kids need to ensure they have a successful school year." *The Imagine* 

*Society* believes that **EVERY STUDENT** should have the same access to education, supplies, and technology, which is why we're committed to supporting events like this one at organizations like *Lagree Baptist Church* and our Calculator Drive last year for the unhoused young students at the <u>Henry Street Urban Family Center</u>. It's not too late to help enrich the academic experience of the children at Lagree! You can make a donation



<u>HERE</u> to help support! Special thank you to *The Imagine Society*'s Superstar Advisory Board Member Marina Franklin for connecting us to this very special "Back to School" Event!

Check out on this page and the next page, incredible poems from students at Lagree on what EDUCATION means to them!



### What Exactly is Education?

by Moraya Tosin

What exactly is education? Is it going into a building filled, With teachers and classrooms? Is it sitting at a desk in front of the teacher, going over a lesson? Or, looking at your notebook as you, copy down everything the teacher has wrote on the board.

In certain eyes it's not. Education is stepping into a portal, A portal that takes up at least 1/3 of your lifetime And during, this "part of your lifetime," you discover New things about life and the world around you. And of course you will face bumps in this portal And those bumps, are advanced parts of the world, things you may not understand. But as this portal of education takes you further, those bumps will start to smooth out. For some people, this portal won't always go in sync with everyone else's.

Many learn slower than others, Many learn quicker. Some people may rarely face bumps, Others may face bumps for every-thing they learn about. Or whatever grade they enter. So remember the meaning For years to come. For others seeking where it comes from If you don't take these words and hold them tight. You'll be asking yourself the same question every-time you wonder... What exactly is education?



Thank you Moraya for sharing your profound and beautiful poem!

Moraya Tosin (11) is in the 6th Grade at Icahn Charter School 5



This summer, **The Imagine Society** has decided to focus on "Equity in Education," highlighting different ways we can help students in need get access to necessary supplies, technology, and encouragement while enriching their educational experience. As you might remember from our <u>March Imagine</u> <u>Newsletter</u>, we introduced you to the library at **Green Hill School** in Chehalis, Washington. Green Hill is a maximum security fenced facility for young men sentenced to Juvenile Rehabilitation. Their incredible librarian **Julie Forbes** is on an inspiring mission to support the dreams and aspirations of these young men, and to provide for them a world-class library where they can grow and thrive. Every day the students at Green Hill request books they would like to read, books that help inspire their future selves: that take them through their journeys of education, career, parenting. **The Imagine Society** Youth Leaders have decided to help fulfill the **Green Hill Library's** book wishlist! In addition our Imagine Youth Leaders have designed and created bookmarks that we'll be sending to the students with our donations, so that the students at Green Hill will know they are a part of the Imagine Community that is here to help support, encourage, and engage Youth Leaders near and far! Check out this page and the next to learn more!

#### YOU can help enrich the lives of the students at Green Hill Library by purchasing a book from:



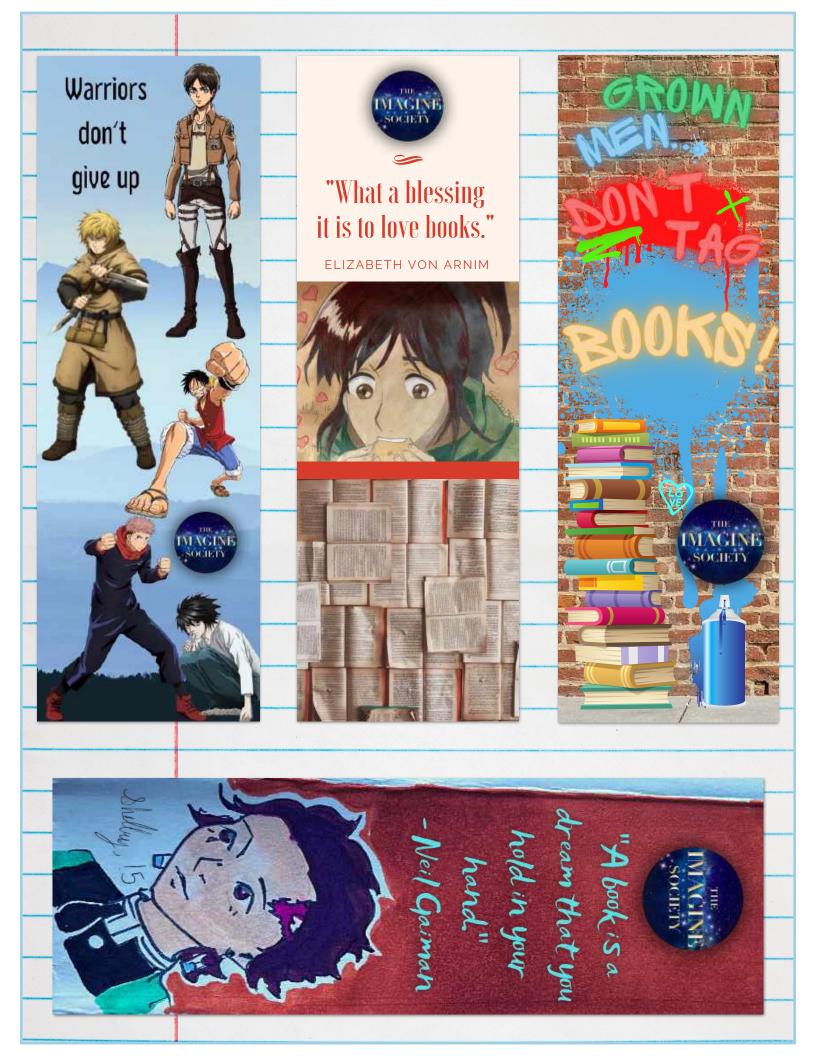
Green Hill Students Amazon Wish List

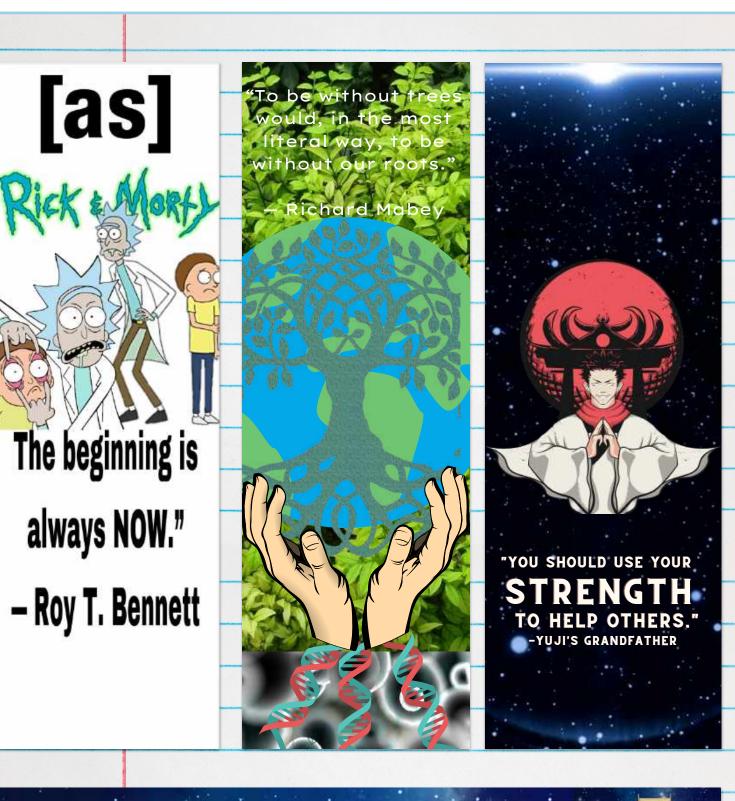


Why Books? Books are a lifeline for our young men. They inspire, educate, stabilize and soothe. They take them to other worlds, help them understand other people and ultimately open them up to seeing themselves. Our guys are bright, funny, resilient and they are always learning, thank you to everyone who has made literature a connection to the outside world." - Librarian Julie Forbes

Please check out the next page to see some of the amazing youth-designed bookmarks to be donated and shared with the students at the Green Hill Library! Now they're yours to enjoy too!

Calling all youth artists it's not too late to contribute your own bookmark! Drop us a line at outreach@theimaginesociety.org to submit your own!









# Beauty in Books

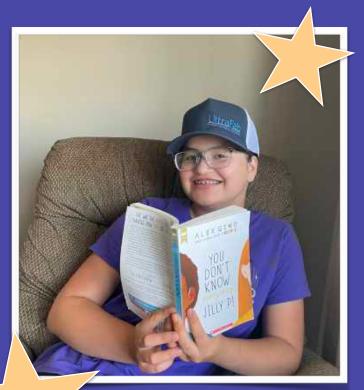
### **By Shelby Fenton**

I have always had the luxury of taking home the majority of the books I wanted to read from the bookstore or library. Due to the fact I did not have many friends and was quite shy as a small child, these novels all meant a lot to me. I found that when I was reading a novel with characters I connected with and enjoyed, school and the bus was much more fun.

A lot of people relate to a dislike of books and the belief they will never find a book they will enjoy but I believe there is at least one book for everyone! I also had this dislike until grade two when I discovered my school's library had books discussing the topic of ancient civilizations. I had read those books until I had read and obsessed over them all. Over time I had eased my way into fictional stories with characters I adored and enjoyed! I liked drawing what I thought the characters looked like and what they would way or how I imagined certain parts of the book would look like. As I got older the book "You Don't Know"

Everything Jilly P." (by Alex Gino) has made me more interested in more fiction and non-fiction stories discussing issues people in marginalized communities face. Reading these books help me understand certain topics that would be harder to process in other contexts

Although reading doesn't necessarily have to be educational, it's what I enjoyed, and all kids should have access to the books they enjoy. Children can develop a sense of community with other readers through books. Children that share similar interests can find a space to exchange ideas, artwork, and theories! Everyone, especially the youth, needs to have the freedom and resources to read pieces of media they enjoy. It can be a fantastic opportunity to share used books with small free libraries, and used book stores, or share them in other ways if you would like to help share books!



Thank you Shelby!

Shelby relaxing with one of her favorite books!

Shelby Fenton (15) is a rising 11th Grader at St. Timothy's High School in Alberta, Canada. Shelby is also on The Imagine Society Newsletter Youth Editorial Staff!

### Still Separate and Still Unequal By Jack Gaffigan

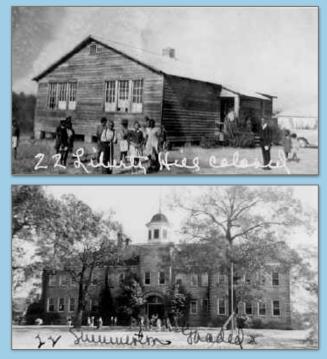
Until modern history can confront the realities of blatant racism in our not so distant past, it will be impossible to achieve a truly just and equal society. "Separate but Equal" was one of the most fraudulent legal principles in American history. The Supreme Court decision of Plessy v. Ferguson formalized this inherently racist idea in 1896, allowing state sponsored racial segregation in education, housing, services, medical care, transportation and pretty much everything.

The case began in 1892 when a mixed-race resident of New Orleans named Homer Plessy violated Louisiana "Separate Car Act" and was charged with boarding a "whites only" train car. Plessy's lawyers petitioned the Judge John Howard Feguson to throw out the case on the grounds that the charge was unconstitutional and violated the 14th Amendment that established legal equality between whites and blacks. Ferguson overruled the petition, and the Louisiana Supreme Court upheld Ferguson's ruling stating that the white train car was equal to the "blacks only" one. After Plessy appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, they issued a 7-1 ruling that the Louisiana law did not violate the 14th amendment because that amendment did not and could not require getting rid of all "distinctions based upon color." They totally ignored Plessy's lawyers' arguments that the law implied that black people were inferior and was clearly unconstitutional.

This terrible decision gave power to states' legislators (that were white) the power to make laws controlling black people and crippled any civil rights movement for half a century. Segregation by "race" and controlled by a system of white supremacy meant that this decision constitutionally sanctioned Jim Crow laws (laws barring African Americans from sharing the same services as whites) and grossly violated the civil rights and civil liberties of African Americans.

"Separate but Equal" was a complete fraud because the "separate" facilities for blacks were always inferior. For example, in contrast to white schools, black schools had little resources, were sometimes housed in shacks and some had no toilets, water supply, desks, blackboards, supplies or books and the teacher made less than half of the money in many cases.

A study by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History showed that in the 1949 to 1950 school year, for every dollar spent on a white child, there was only 24 cents allotted for each black student. You don't have to be a math wiz to figure out that those numbers are not "equal." Also understandable that the same study showed that in that county the average education of black adults was just over four years.



PHOTOS OF A BLACK SCHOOL AND A WHITE SCHOOL (Courtesy of South Carolina Department of Archives and History)

The precedent of Plessy v Ferguson influenced setbacks on Black

Americans for generations, but the fight for justice continued. One organization that fought for racial equality was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded in 1909. For the first 20 years of the NAACP, its main goal was to try to persuade legislative bodies in the US to enact laws to protect African Americans from lynchings and other violent racist acts. However, beginning in the 1930's the NAACP's Legal Defense and Education,

under the leadership of Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall, turned to the courts to makes steps toward overcoming legally sanctioned discrimination.

In 1950 a minister named Oliver Brown in Topeka, Kansas went to enroll his seven year old daughter Linda in an elementary school seven blocks from their home, since it was a whites only school and Linda was black, she was denied admission and forced to go to an impoverished black school across town, by way of walking to a bus that picked her up a half mile from where she lived. Oliver Brown filed a class-action suit against the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, in 1951, claiming that schools for black children were not equal to the white schools, and that segregation violated the so-called "equal protection clause" of the 14th Amendment, which holds that no state can "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." His case went before the U.S. District Court in Kansas, which agreed that public school segregation had a "detrimental effect upon the colored children '' and contributed to "a sense of inferiority," but still upheld the "separate but equal" doctrine (History.com). Then, Brown's case and four other cases related to school segregation came before the Supreme Court in 1952, the Court combined them into a single case under the name Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka.

Thurgood Marshall, the head of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, served as chief attorney for the plaintiffs. Initially the court was divided on school desegregation and Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson held the opinion that the Plessy verdict should stand. But in September 1953, before Brown v. Board of Education was to be heard, Vinson died, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower replaced him with Earl Warren, then governor of California. In a The new chief justice succeeded in securing a unanimous verdict against school segregation the following year. Warren wrote that "in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place," as segregated schools are "inherently unequal." As a result, the Court ruled that the plaintiffs were being "deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the 14th Amendment." The decision was issued on May 17, 1954. Thurgood Marshall 13 years later was appointed the first black Supreme Court justice.

Even though Brown v Board of Education did not totally succeed in all schools being integrated (I suggested you read some history about the fierce racist opposition to it, such as when "The Little Rock Nine" in Arkansas had to be escorted under armed guard to attend school), the decision fueled the civil rights movement. By overturning the "separate but equal" doctrine, Brown v. Board of Education set the legal precedent that would be used to overturn laws enforcing segregation in other public facilities. But even with its positive impact, the historic verdict fell short of achieving its first mission of integrating the nation's public schools which remained segregated for years. Linda Brown never did go to that school either, though her younger sisters attended integrated schools.

Today almost 70 years after Brown v Board of Education, there continues to be dramatic racial inequalities in the nation's school system, mostly due to where people live, which also is tied to historical racism. There continues to be astronomical differences in resources between schools in wealthier areas and the schools in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods across the country. In other words, we are still separate and still unequal. Until we learn to correct society with equity, recognizing that each person has different circumstances and needs to be allocated the exact same resources and opportunities, we can never have an equal society.



Thank you Jack for writing your essay highlighting the history of inequity and inequality in education. It's so important for us to remember this history!

#### Jack Gaffigan (16) is a rising Junior at York Prep High School

### Where Did All the Villagers Go? A Young Person's Perspective on Reproductive Rights

by Emily Blumstein

#### Note to Kids from Emily:

Abortion or a law called Roe v. Wade is something you may or may not have heard grown-ups talking about, seen on the news, or read on the internet. It's something for your adults at home to talk about with you. However, you may know it's causing a lot of people to be upset, and a lot of people to be hurt. What I can say is there's a lot you can do to help. Sometimes moms and dads aren't prepared for babies when they arrive. Have you ever heard of a baby shower? It's when family and friends come together and bring new moms and dads everything they need for a baby. Unfortunately, not every mom has the support for a baby shower and has trouble buying things like diapers and baby wipes. Just like milk for her baby, these are necessities to keep babies healthy and happy. If you can, the next time you go to the grocery store, ask your parent if you can buy some diapers for a local shelter or organization that is there to help families. Even if grownups say it is not the right time to buy and donate diapers, I would like you to remember these families who need our help when you pass the baby section at the store.

Once I learned how to strap my own velcro light up sketchers, I began changing diapers. Dolls, stuffed animals, my dog, and any baby I could care for. Becoming an aunt at 8 years old, my duty as diaper changer was a title I wore proudly. 3 nieces and a nephew later, and countless babies I nannied growing up, the little moments of bonding and comfort fostered are irreplaceable.

In college at Rutgers University, I worked on the maternity ward at a nearby hospital. The art of holding a newborn "like a football" and more advanced skills like burping and giving enemas became a piece of cake. I also got to elevate my diaper changing skills; the importance of lathering on the diaper cream, checking for rashes, and soothing baby. Of course, I became an advocate for Pampers (so much better than Huggies!). Gossiping with moms about the latest trends in baby products and teaching Dad (or whoever needed the tricks) how to set up their new bugaboo butterfly stroller. Although my caretaking resume grows, whether it was babysitting or working, my duties always had an expiration; my shift came to an end or my weekend with the kids was complete.

Changing diapers had become second nature to me, a "mothers instinct." Of course, at 19 although I got baby fever every day I was at work, I was still unprepared and ill equipped to care for one myself. Often, the instincts and love a young mother has, even with an unplanned pregnancy are sharp. She knows what she needs to take care of her baby. The gravity of the work started to hit me. **What if mom knows baby's diaper needs to be changed but she doesn't have one?** 

Working at a private community hospital with lots of resources and support, I was also met with patients entering my care from poverty and with trauma.Women who are unsupported, isolated, and ill prepared. *Without the resources (financial or emotional) to take on this incredible challenge, how can we expect our youth to thrive?* 

Babies born into poverty, the mothers who deliver them, and the impoverished communities helping to raise them have far less access to family planning services and education. It is my opinion that we allow moms to deliver babies and send them off into the dark to fend for themselves. This may be an obvious conclusion I am making for some, but our government by forcing no choice in family planning, they are oppressing not only our bodies and freedom, but our ability to move up in the world. Also, the resources beyond delivering into postpartum are abysmal. With all the political heat, every day mothers leave the hospital unsupported, their babies entering the world at a huge disadvantage medically, financially, and without the same community as I grew up with. Instead of the money, time, and support for "Pro Life" causes, where are the masses to teach girls how to care for babies? House and feed them? How to clip baby toe nails? *It takes a village to raise healthy, happy babies. We need to be the village.* 

I love being a part of **The Imagine Society**, learning from young people from diverse communities and perspectives. Being half Jewish and half Catholic, and growing up with friends of diverse religious upbringings, my views, both personally and politically, have been shaped by so many experiences and perspectives. What religion gave me growing up was a sense of belonging, direction, community, and a fierce commitment to service. Religious doctrine is a huge part of the laws we are putting into question. I consider myself religious, I am not here to share my personal or political views, but rather shed light on how religiosity can be an agent of change when discussing abortion rights; maybe not the way you might think.

I see those in my Catholic community protesting and participating in the anti-abortion movement. In another religious movement, at **Anshe Emeth Temple** in New Brunswick, New Jersey, I have found a group which shares my passion for life and motherhood, however channels this love through community support and action. The work I was a part of in maternity did not feel like enough. The inequity did not end when parents left my care. In fact, I now see birth for these families as just one step in an uphill battle to survive. I began to have trouble sleeping at night thinking about these experiences at work, so I started volunteering with the **Central Jersey Diaper Bank** through the synagogue. Members of Anshe Emeth Temple and others in the community see the need for a "village." We serve the Central New Jersey area and I am sure there are organizations just like CJDB in the US. I challenge you to find yours. This faithful group delivers supplies such as diapers, formula, clothing, toys, and wipes right to families' doors; empower young parents in need regardless of their background, including religion.

Where is the government to support my students and clients with significant disabilities and high support needs? Now working in special education, I see how this issue plays out over the lifespan. The government wants to preach a voice for babies found to have genetic diseases, but the lack of resources for these babies after birth, not to mention once they turn 21 is unspeakable. Growing up in New Jersey we see the 'best' disability advocacy and support. However, the burden is still put on families, with little help from social services.

All this anger and bargaining bubbled this past fall, feeling a helplessness I was all too familiar with. I am Catholic, and I am pro-choice. I cannot speak for any woman, or myself for that matter when put into the variety of situations which lead to abortion. Patient education, sex education and the womens right to choose are ideas I take seriously. But why does it feel that we have forgotten about those who were born?

Those who will inevitably grow up in dirty diapers, in desperate conditions, and starting off life without the "privilege" of necessities - not even to mention the recent formula shortage that is unimaginable in a country as rich as ours.

I remember one of my first weeks working on Labor & Delivery at the hospital, I was discharging a mom and baby. My glorified vision of caring for my baby dolls and nieces was quickly squashed. Not only was she a girl younger than I, but this was not her first delivery. She had complications leading to a C section and was having trouble walking. Way too enthusiastically as we packed up, I asked "do you need any supplies?" I didn't even let her reply and continued "Let me go to the supply closet. I will grab you diapers and cream and extra pads." The way I saw it, we had the supplies to give, and this woman needed our help. I thought **I** knew what was best for her and her body. She looked up at me, puzzled and aggravated "and who is going to carry that for me" I forgot. I was not wheeling her out to a warm car with a baby carrier and family member to help. We waited at the bus stop, as it drizzled. My patient held her baby in

one arm with a plastic bag of her own belongings in the other. With much assistance, she made it onto the bus. Unfortunately I have a lot of stories like this. Where she and her baby are now still haunts me. It gives me peace to know I now carry her diapers home, that she has a small village.

In my short lifetime I have worked in healthcare and education, I have had the honor to witness so much life, to be a part of people's stories I hope to share. We may feel out of control in a lot of politics, but as I see it, this issue is not political. It is human. I hope all Americans can agree that we don't want our children growing up this way. Being a part of a diaper relief movement has spun my feelings of negativity, fear and powerlessness about a grim situation into hope and action.

Dear Emily, thank you for sharing your essay with us, and for dedicating so much time to service and families in need of support!



Emily getting ready for a diaper delivery with the Central Jersey Diaper Bank

Emily Blumstein (23) is a graduate of the 2022 Senior Class at Rutgers University. She graduated with a degree in Psychology and Horticultural Therapy.

### Youth Volunteers Doing Amazing Things at The Ascension Pantry for #FOODFORFAMILES

This summer, young people from <u>The Imagine Society</u> have been doing AMAZING things at **The Ascension Food Pantry**! Youth Leaders from all over our city volunteered together in a shared sense of obligation and love towards our NYC home and neighbors struggling with food insecurity. Together they served over 1200 pantry clients with dignity and respect. Thanks to a generous donation, all kids on line at the pantry this August were also given a special "Back to School" necessities pack in honor of our "Equity in Education" summer mission. Thank you to the generosity and partnership of <u>Woolco Foods</u> for supporting this service EVERY MONTH and donating healthy and whole foods! Thank you also to <u>Adirondack Creamery</u> for your special August ice cream donation, for the 3rd year in a row! <u>The Imagine Society</u> believes we are a family in a grassroots and global sense, and now more than ever we are dedicated to servicing vulnerable communities. The compassion of our youth volunteers, and generosity of donors like you help make essential service events like this one possible. Email <u>outreach@theimaginesociety.org</u> if you and your family would like to volunteer at or <u>donate</u> to the next pantry service!



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## Equity in Education Word Scramble

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## Equity in Education Word Scramble