

Dear Superintendent Michael Martirano,
Assistant Superintendent Karalee Turner-Little,
Board of Education Chair Mavis Ellis,
Board of Education Vice Chair Vicky Cutroneo,
Board of Education Member Kirsten Coombs,
Board of Education Member Christina Delmont-Small,
Board of Education Member Jennifer Mallo,
Board of Education Member Sabina Taj,
Board of Education Member Chao Wu,
And all Principals of Howard County Schools,

We are reaching out to you on behalf of current and former students of the Howard County Public School System, regarding racism within our community. Given the recent senseless murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, George Floyd, and countless other Black people, it is important to address how the Howard County Public School System has upheld structural and institutional racism in its schools. We must ensure that People of Color in the HCPSS community are heard and advocated for. HCPSS has a duty to provide their students with safe learning environments, where they receive equal education and adequate representation within that environment. The actions we have seen from HCPSS thus far are inadequate in addressing racism within the community and ensuring that Black students feel safe and represented in their communities.

Regarding the June 4th statement from the superintendent regarding hateful incidences, we believe that simply addressing reported incidences of racial biases is not sufficient. Not all students who experience discrimination in the HCPSS school system feel comfortable reporting incidents of racism, so there are undoubtedly countless cases that go unnoticed and unaddressed. Punishing reported instances of racism is not enough. We need to dismantle the White supremacist notions that fuel these incidences. Based on the responses of community members, we have compiled several necessary action items. These action items must be addressed in order to limit the racial biases found in and perpetuated by our schools. We demand that HCPSS takes action on the following items:

- 1) **HCPSS must change the curriculum and institute a required Black history course.**
The HCPSS curriculum must be adapted to include a variety of non-Eurocentric narratives in all classes. This may include but is not limited to: increasing the time spent on Black history and increasing the number of books/film/art by Black individuals included in the curriculum. In STEM classes, the contributions of People of Color to these fields needs to be discussed directly and heavily. HCPSS needs to institute a mandatory history class that explicitly addresses the history of Black people, along with emphasizing histories of other marginalized groups. In addition, the curriculum must include discussions of racial biases, how they are reinforced, and how to correct for them. The curriculum needs to also include anti-racist literature, such as “So You Want to Talk

About Race” by Ijoma Oluo. The curriculum must address how racism continues to be perpetuated in our society by the criminal justice system, the education system, and the housing market. “The New Jim Crow” by Michelle Alexander addresses many of these topics and should be introduced in High School English classes as a required reading. In addition, race and bias needs to be addressed in regards to all extracurricular activities.

- 2) **HCPSS must identify and correct for racial bias in the HCPSS hiring process.** In the testimonials below, many students have highlighted the lack of diversity in HCPSS staff. In addition, your website suggests that in 2018, only 40% of high school students were White, yet over 80% of your teachers are White. There are similar patterns in your middle and elementary schools. Your staffing currently vastly underrepresented People of Color, and that must be rectified immediately by increasing your efforts to hire People of Color.
- 3) **HCPSS must require all staff to undergo comprehensive diversity & inclusion, cultural proficiency, bystander intervention and conflict mediation training.** Cultural proficiency training is currently optional for HCPSS staff. The training mentioned above must be mandatory and conducted by an expert. The training must occur on at least a yearly basis (if not much more often). Training needs to include discussions of unconscious and implicit bias and how these biases affect interactions both within and outside the classroom. These classes shall be held in-person to ensure engagement with the material. Students need have discussions of cultural proficiency and bystander intervention in their core classes. We note that our teachers should not bear undue burden and thus they should be compensated for this training.
- 4) **HCPSS must hire more DEILS and increase the number of opportunities for students/ faculty / staff to discuss race.** HCPSS must promote culturally minded, equitable practices both inside and outside of the classroom. Speakers and assemblies need to be utilized to highlight the experiences of non-White individuals. Classroom discussions must emphasize diverse voices. HCPSS needs to hire more specific and generalized diversity, equity, and inclusion liaisons (DEILs), including black student and family liaisons, in all schools and increase the compensation they receive for their work. Liaisons will be responsible for increasing opportunities to discuss race and better utilizing existing venues (such as assemblies and field trips) to address race.
- 5) **HCPSS must provide the public with regular updates and easily accessible deliverables,** showing that progress has been made towards accomplishing these and other goals, such as the ones voted on by the Committee for Diversity and Inclusion in the school year 2016-2017 (included on the HCPSS website). It is unacceptable that the most recent information regarding diversity and inclusion on your website is nearly three years old. Additionally, the most recent information regarding staff diversity is two years old. Information on your website must be updated each year and the Committee for Diversity and Inclusion needs to meet regularly.

- 6) **HCPSS must implement an anonymous reporting system for instances of discrimination.** This system would allow students, faculty and staff to submit any complaints about discrimination, microaggressions or blatant racism. All complaints submitted to the system must be investigated. This system would allow for an additional level of accountability from all members of the school system. This would also protect students who do not feel comfortable reporting instances of discrimination. Findings of the investigation must be made public (but conceal names and identifying information). Information on action taken after the incident must be recorded in the report.
- 7) **HCPSS must examine how the presence of School Resource Officers perpetuates discrimination and violence against Students of Color.** The presence of School Resource Officers is often threatening to Students of Color. Having Resource Officers in our schools subjects Black and other marginalized individuals to the devastating effects of racial profiling at an incredibly young age, which further perpetuates the school-to-prison pipeline for Students of Color. HCPSS should remove School Resource Officers and redistribute the money towards other initiatives, such as hiring additional school counselors and psychologists, behavior specialists, and support professionals and providing conflict mediation training for all faculty and staff.

We want to address the possibility that the Board of Education for HCPSS may already be making progress on some of the action items highlighted above. However, the information on the HCPSS website is outdated and thus it is hard to tell what, if any, progress is being made regarding reducing racism in our community. Moving forward, HCPSS needs to improve transparency and accountability by maintaining updated information about diversity initiatives on your website, in addition to providing information on how actions taken by HCPSS impact reported cases of racism in our schools.

The HCPSS website states “HCPSS is committed to creating an inclusive environment for all students and ensuring that all backgrounds and interests equally represent the voice of the student body. Students have the opportunity to share their experiences both inside and outside of school and to contribute to programs that promote positive behavior in their school community and foster respect for all cultures and diversity throughout the system.” Many students feel that the environment is neither inclusive or safe for them if they are non-White. HCPSS states its commitment to diversity and inclusion, yet many deliverables on these initiatives are yet to be seen.

Included with this letter, you will find testimonies, experiences and suggestions of current and former students of HCPSS. These testimonies are unedited, other than removing specific names or identifiers of the people who wrote or were mentioned in these testimonies and fixing spelling errors. The names of some of the individuals below have not been included upon their request. Many students shared stories with me that they do not wish to share with the public. I implore you to read the stories and suggestions of these current and former students. Many describe horrific incidents of racism, some of which were never dealt with. Action must be taken

to protect Students of Color and to better our schools and students. If you do not take action, you are complicit.

Sincerely,

Current and Former students, faculty and staff of the HCPSS community

Victoria Owens (Glenelg '15)	Berit Batterton (Howard '16)
Abigail White (Hammond '17)	Bianka Onwumbiko (Glenelg '16)
Aboli Dahiwadkar (Mount Hebron '20)	Blaire Ridgely (Mount Hebron '19)
Alex Borleis (Long Reach Staff, Reservoir '07)	Bradley Hennessie (Oakland Mills '04)
Alex Koontz (Glenelg '15)	Breanna LaTondre (Marriotts Ridge '13)
Alex Wang (River Hill '12)	Bria Warren (Glenelg '13)
Alexander Anderson (Glenelg '14)	Brianna Stanley (River Hill '18)
Alexandra Berges (Marriotts Ridge '13)	Brittany Bryson (Howard '15)
Alexandra Kelly (Glenelg '12)	Caitlin Kelly (Glenelg '10)
Alexia Petasis (Centennial '15)	Camryn Long (Glenelg '13)
Ali Mallo (Wilde Lake '15)	Caroline Simon (Glenelg '15)
Alice Choe (River Hill '16)	Carolyn Bevans (Wilde Lake '09)
Alice Joo (Centennial '17)	Carson Blasko (Long Reach '12)
Alicia Bazell (Atholton '14)	Casey Wilson (Glenelg '16)
Allison Krein (River Hill '15)	Charissa Zhu (Centennial '18)
Allison Lloyd (River Hill '13)	Chris Buckley (Glenelg '14)
Ally Piper (River Hill '12)	Christina Kim (Atholton '20)
Alyssa Stanek (Wilde Lake '09)	Christine Shen (Marriotts Ridge '14)
Alyssa Walter (Howard '16)	Ciara Davis (Glenelg '13)
Amber Khan (Atholton '10)	Claire Costa (Glenelg '19)
Amy Blanchard (River Hill '19)	Clarie Valdivia (Wilde Lake '06)
Amy Hairston (Oakland Mills '01)	Claudia Carman (Glenelg '17)
Amy Upchruch (Glenelg '16)	Cloe Dixon (Long Reach '15)
Ana Cunningham (Centennial '21)	Colleen Higgins (Howard '12)
Anna Gipsov (Atholton '14)	Connie Chen (River Hill '12)
Anna Hovet (River Hill '18)	Corinne Krushinski (Glenelg '16)
Anna Mateo (Marriotts Ridge '12)	Cynthia Pope (Oakland Mills '05)
Anne Harshbarger (Glenelg '15)	Daniel Kundrat (Long Reach '19)
Anthony Chadwick (Oakland Mills '05)	Darsh Patel (Atholton '14)
Anusha Nathan (Centennial '14)	David Valdivia (Wilde Lake '02)
Apoorva Ajith (Centennial '20)	David Schiffer (Howard '12)
Ari Harris (Howard '15)	De'Asia Gloria (Howard '15)
Austen Roberson (Howard '19)	Deeba Jafri (Parent of '20 Grad)
Avery Bazell (Atholton '18)	Demetria Fortson (Glenelg '13)
Azmeena Rao (Marriotts Ridge '20)	Derry MacDermott (Glenelg '12)
Becca Kaylie (Reservoir '17)	Diana (Fooksman) Forbus (Wilde Lake '99)
Bella Onwumbiko (Glenelg '12)	Diana Budman (Glenelg '15)
Ben Anderson (Marriotts Ridge '18)	Dorothy Callahan (Wilde Lake '15)
	Dr. Jenan Holley-Cuthrell (Long Reach '07)
	Eddy Choe (Centennial '16)

EJ Taylor (Glenelg '13)
Elasia Jackson (Wilde Lake '23)
Eleanor (Mount Hebron '21)
Elissa Dorsey (Glenelg '15)
Elizabeth Kwon (Centennial '16)
Elizabeth Nguyen (Wilde Lake '16)
Emaan Bhutta (River Hill '18)
Emily Allen (Oakland Mills '11)
Emily Blakely (Oakland Mills '00)
Emily Buckley (Glenelg '17)
Emily Chandler (Glenelg '17)
Emily Gorey (Glenelg '16)
Emily Heleba (Centennial '20)
Emily Long (River Hill '13)
Emily Waters (Oakland Mills '04)
Erika Koontz (Glenelg '13)
Erika Laux (Marriotts Ridge '11)
Erin Cutroneo (Glenelg '17)
Erin Mahoney (Wilde Lake '11)
Evelyn Chen (Centennial '15)
Farah Helal (Centennial '20)
Farhan Bader (Centennial '14)
Farhan Bader (Centennial '14)
Fransiska Dale (Centennial '17)
Gabrielle Griffith (Glenelg '16)
Gabriella Nowicki (Atholton '12)
Gabrielle Garofolo (Glenelg '18)
Genevieve Jones (Atholton '15)
Genevieve Mansfield (Glenelg '15)
Grace Ganel (Calvin) (Oakland Mills '12)
Greta Sobieski (Glenelg '13)
Gwen Kokes (Marriotts Ridge '11)
Hali Kim (Centennial '16)
Hannah Blumenthal (Atholton '22)
Hannah Cash (Glenelg '13)
Hannah Kim (Marriotts Ridge '20)
Hannah Lee (Centennial '15)
Hannah Seen (Mount Hebron '23)
Hannah Tralka (Glenelg '16)
Harper Montgomery (Glenelg '15)
Heejin (Long Reach '14)
Hyejin Yoo (Centennial '18)
Iftekar Husain (Oakland Mills '10)
Isa Carunungan (Long Reach '16)
Jacklyn Clark (Howard '12)
Jacqueline (Mount Hebron '08)
Jake Bart (Marriotts Ridge '12)
James Newton (Glenelg '15)
Jane Hilger (Wilde Lake '18)
Janell Winkowski (Long Reach '07)
Janette Yacynych (Mount Hebron '15)
Janie Shih (River Hill '14)
Japjyot Singh (Hammond '14)
Jasmin Gashti (Howard '15)
Jasmyn Thomas (Hammond '15)
Jayme B. (Glenelg '11)
Jeanine Gezelle (Glenelg '15)
Jeff M (Centennial '11)
Jenna Boule (Wilde Lake '10)
Jennifer Solan (Centennial '19)
Jennifer Thai (Glenelg '15)
Jenny Haynes (Atholton '14)
Jess Goldstein (Wilde Lake '07)
Jessica Jiang (Centennial '16)
Jessica King (Glenelg '15)
Jessica Smith (Wilde Lake '14)
Jessie Link (Centennial '14)
Jillian Schulyer (Glenelg '15)
Jisoo Choi (Centennial '18)
Jivana Jasthi (Glenelg '14)
Jody Cole (Wilde Lake '15)
Jonathan Reyes (River Hill '10)
Josephine Stommel (Glenelg '15)
Josie Yodzis (Marriotts Ridge '20)
Joy Scalabrin (Marriotts Ridge '13)
Julia Decre (Long Reach '15)
Julia Dembowski (Long Reach '11)
Julia McCready (Parent)
Julia Rankin (Glenelg '17)
Julia Valdivia (Wilde Lake '09)
Julia Zhen (Centennial '15)
Julie Etheridge (Centennial '11)
Karina Joseph (Hammond '20)
Katelin Phelps (Centennial '18)
Katerina Havlik (Centennial '14)
Katharyn Volz (Glenelg '10)
Katherine Murbach (Glenelg '16)
Katherine Yi (Mount Hebron '19)
Kathleen Hogan (Centennial '18)
Katie Waddel (Glenelg '13)
Katrina Jolly (River Hill '18)
Kavya Sundar (Centennial '12)

Kaylee Dungan (River Hill '10)
Kayleigh Decker (Marriotts Ridge '11)
Kayleigh Hasson (Centennial '18)
Kaylin Craine (Glenelg '17)
Kelly Granahan (Atholton '10)
Kevin Costello (Centennial '16)
Kimby Josephson (Wilde Lake '09)
Krista Pecenka (Wild Lake '13)
Krista Wessinger (Mount Hebron '08)
Kristen Volz (Glenelg '13)
Kristin Li (River Hill '15)
Lane Schanck (Marriotts Ridge '21)
Laura Horowitz (Wilde Lake '07)
Laura Royden (Wilde Lake '09)
Lauren Arena (Glenelg '16)
Lauren Yarnall (Marriotts Ridge '12)
Lauren Young (Centennial '16)
LeAnne Young (River Hill '12)
Lekha Tantry (Centennial '16)
Leslie Decker (Marriotts Ridge '09)
Leyla Babaturk (Wilde Lake '09)
Libby Norford (Marriotts Ridge '13)
Lily Barragan (Glenelg '19)
Lindsay LeTellier (Glenelg '17)
Lindsey Siferd (Wilde Lake '09)
Luke Byrne (Centennial '12)
Luke Spence (Marriotts Ridge '11)
Lynzee Loudon (Mount Hebron '20)
Maddie Caldis (Centennial '17)
Madeline Judd (Glenelg '15)
Mai-Han Trinh (Wild Lake '14)
Maison Holcomb (Mount Hebron '20)
Maison Holcomb (Mount Hebron '20)
Majid Waheed (Oakland Mills '09)
Mallory Baldwin (Mount Hebron '14)
Mallory Jobb (Glenelg '19)
Manzano Akhtar (Centennial '15)
Maria Ayoub (Centennial '14)
Marina Glennon (Centennial '15)
Mark Levender (Wilde Lake '10)
Martha Girard (Glenelg '17)
Mary Lewis (Wilde Lake '09)
Mathavi Sankar (Centennial '14)
Matt Stillwell (Glenelg '15)
Matthaeus Dale (Centennial '21)
Matthew Hulett (Glenelg '18)
McKenzie Scott (Wilde Lake '16)
Mechelle Williams (Wilde Lake '09)
Meera Mazloom (Atholton '09)
Megan Daugherty (Centennial '18)
Megan Fabbri (Atholton '13)
Megan Haley (Long Reach '15)
Megan Jackson (Reservoir '11)
Meghan Maloney (Howard '11)
Meghna Manohar (Wilde Lake '16)
Megumo Fukuzawa (Centennial '19)
Melissa Schoppet (Reservoir '15)
Mengyuan Sun (Centennial '15)
Meridian Kenol (River Hill '15)
Michael Havlik (Centennial '16)
Michael Hudson (Long Reach '15)
Michael Mazzullo (River Hill '11)
Michelle Liu (Marriotts Ridge '20)
Mitchell Skopic (Marriotts Ridge '14)
Molly Fabbri (Atholton '10)
Muftiat Ogunsanya (Reservoir '14)
Naomi Chao (Centennial '21)
Naomi Lilly (Howard '16)
Naseem Ahmadi (Glenelg '15)
Natalie Cross (River Hill '20)
Natalie French (Howard '15)
Natalie Romine (Glenelg '14)
Natalie Van Horn (Oakland Mills '09)
Natasha Kumar (Atholton '11)
Nathan Bruns (Glenelg '16)
Neena Sengupta (Marriotts Ridge '20)
Nick Haley (Glenelg '13)
Nicole Lee (Centennial '18)
Nicolette Wolfrey (Glenelg '14)
Nina Parekh (Centennial '16)
Nina Ross (Reservoir '13)
Nishy Hosamane (Marriotts Ridge '17)
Noelle Mitchell (Centennial '22)
Nora Ezzat Cizzillio (River Hill '10)
Olivia Graziano (Glenelg '15)
Olivia Kuykendall (Hammond '16)
Oluwakamiyefogo Runsewe (Marriotts Ridge '20)
Pamela Winter (Wilde Lake '09)
Pamela Winter (Wilde Lake '09)
Pari Kumar (River Hill '12)
Patrice Blake (Long Reach '15)

Praxedes Osong (River Hill '10)
Rachel Dooley (Howard '16)
Rachel Harris (Centennial '19)
Rachel Herron (Glenelg '10)
Rachel Kim (River Hill '13)
Rachel Knobel (Atholton '13)
Rachel McGrain (Wilde Lake '09)
Rachel Swearingen (Marriotts Ridge '12)
Rachel Winter (Wilde Lake '10)
Rebecca Lee (River Hill '14)
Regina Wang (Centennial '20)
Rhea Sirithara (Centennial '17)
Riley Matties (Centennial '15)
Rima Teymourlouei (Glenelg '15)
Robin Cargle (Centennial '14)
Ryan Jose (Howard '13)
Sally Kim (Centennial '18)
Samantha Mosley (Oakland Mills '21)
Samuel Paul (Howard '15)
Samya (Wilde Lake '23)
Sara Baloch (Marriotts Ridge '18)
Sara Josephson (Wilde Lake '04)
Sarah B Ferrell (Marriotts Ridge '11)
Sarah Boone (Wilde Lake '09)
Sarah Cagas (Centennial '14)
Sarah Girard (Glenelg '15)
Sarah Klyap (Oakland Mills '04)
Whitney Lewis (Hammond '02)

Sarah Moore (Wilde Lake '16)
Scott Beottinger (Glenelg '16)
Sean Danaher (Centennial '10)
Sean Higgins (Howard '15)
Serena Lao (Wilde Lake '13)
Shannon Long (Glenelg '12)
Shanvi Panda (Centennial '20)
Sheetal Chopra (River Hill '11)
Sibi Gnanasundaram (Centennial '05)
Siri Rao (Mount Hebron '20)
Sophia Ross (Glenelg '16)
Stephanie Choi (Marriotts Ridge '19)
Storm Blanco (Mount Hebron '21)
Summer Romack (Oakland Mills '91)
Suzie Byun (Centennial '17)
Sydney Ziegler (Centennial '15)
Sylvia Hennesie (Oakland Mills '04)
Talia Schwelling (Glenelg '15)
Thomas Kato (Oakland Mills '19)
Timothy Baker (Hammond '15)
Tony Terrasa (Hammond '17)
Unnati Mehta (River Hill '12)
Venya Gushchin (Marriotts Ridge '14)
Victoria Airapetian (Reservoir '17)
Victoria Prather (Reservoir '13)
Vyshnavi Kosuri (Marriotts Ridge '17)
Weijia Cheng (Centennial '15)

And many anonymous members of the HCPSS community

Victoria Owens, Glenelg High School, Class of 2015

“I have written this petition to demand change within our schools. Over the past week, I have received over 400 testimonials of individuals who either experienced or witnessed racism within HCPSS schools and wished to support this petition. I hope that the testimonies below will convince you that racism is still a serious problem in our schools. I hope that this will compel you to take action. As an alumnus of the Howard County Public School system, I want to see HCPSS institute changes that will help our community be more inclusive, more accepting, and less blatantly prejudiced. HCPSS has an obligation to educate our children to the best of their abilities. A Euro-centric curriculum and ignoring racism in our schools does not reflect the best efforts of HCPSS to educate or prepare children for the world.

During my time at Glenelg High School, I was unaware at how inadequately race was being addressed. During my 12 years in the HCPSS school system, I do not think I had a single Black teacher. In fact, my teachers were predominantly White males. I did not have a Black professor until I was in college. In addition to Black individuals not being represented in the staff during my time at Glenelg, they were rarely represented in the literature that we read, or the other academic material we consumed. The Black history I was taught was limited to slavery, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr. I did not realize the injustices of the euro-centric curriculum until college, where I was taught about Black history, racial injustice, and respecting diverse viewpoints. Glenelg High School is sending its students out into the world unprepared.

In my time at Glenelg, I vividly remember someone bringing a confederate flag to a football game. The next day, a group of students wore various confederate flag apparel during lunch. To my knowledge, there was no discussion about the implications and history of the confederate flag. Additionally, staff took little effort to address other instances of discrimination. As an alum, I am continually disappointed by the Howard County Public School System’s hesitation and reluctance to act. It is not enough to reprimand someone after they target someone. HCPSS needs to be actively working to prevent instances of racism instead of retroactively handling it. HCPSS needs to be working to hire a more diverse staff, along with diversifying its academic materials.”

Anonymous, referring to their experiences with racial bias:

“It was crazy. But (a Hammond Faculty member) handled it fast.”

“Black people need to be heard”

Anonymous:

“The problems that I saw over and over again in high school, reflected on school culture and climate. Being in a rural area, it's not surprising that students' worldviews developed from ignorance and the racism of the community that they lived in. However, the acceptance of racist speech and actions throughout the school buildings and campuses was inexcusable. It was often that I heard racial slurs as I walked through the hallways, often met with joking and joviality. The people around them were usually uncomfortable, but the popularity of the people

speaking hate drowned out anyone who remarked against it. Small groups of privileged White boys, raised to believe that no one could touch them, because in practice, no one could. They'd be openly hateful and racist in the halls, then call to arms students around them for support, drowning out the noise of those opposing it.

But it'd always escalate. From bringing a confederate flag to football games to spray painting swastikas and racist slang all over the school. I remember vividly having a boy on my bus talk about his father's involvement in the KKK and the murder of Black people in our community. To this day I think about it every time I drive my old bus route. I can only imagine the way my Black friends on that bus felt.

HCPSS needs to do better. There are not enough candid, passionate conversations between teachers and students about the immensity and severity of this problem. Instead, White students are allowed to get away time and time again without consequence. Maybe it's not just about saying "don't write any more referrals for the Black kids so that our numbers look good." Maybe it's taking trauma into consideration, and holding all students accountable, and taking a long hard look at how being in school might be CAUSING trauma for Black kids."

Anonymous:

"In terms of curriculum, Howard offered an AP European History class, but I do not recall another class about other regions of the world outside of US and World History classes. On the social side, there were always comments of microaggressions when it came to rumors of fights between students. People would comment that there were weaves left in the girls bathroom sinks, which everyone knew meant two Black women were fighting, and people would laugh about it."

Anonymous:

"In my 3 years at Glenelg (yes, 3 because I graduated early due to the problems I experienced while there), I witnessed several racially driven incidents. The most memorable being a White male that wore a confederate flag as a cape to school one day. Our school had been vandalized with racial slurs and the next day, this White male wore the flag to school with pride. I saw him walking around the hallway with it on for at least 1-2 periods. From what I heard; no actions were taken against him. I also feel that one specific teacher would invalidate people of color in her classroom in reference to any past events referencing race. I felt that students in her classroom felt unsafe to speak up on current events (which was literally half of the point of our class given the fact that we had to do current events presentations in the class). I felt that in our predominantly White school, if any person of color spoke out on racially charged events, they would be ridiculed by classmates and sometimes even the teacher with comments similar to current events. For example, the "all lives matter" comments or closest racist remarks from White students that insinuated their racist views. I know several of my friends that were subject to the n word being thrown around at them and having to "be okay" with it because it was "just a joke". Glenelg has always been a primarily White, Christian school from what I

experienced, and I am grateful for my decision to graduate early and get out of there. I wouldn't want to personally speak out as an advocate for my friends in fear of being bullied on my bus ride home by the local farmers. I am grateful to have gotten out of that school and into Towson where there is a larger demographic for POC, and professors were not afraid to speak out and keep their White students in check. HCPSS is not a good school system unless you're White and that's that.”

Amy Upchurch, Glenelg High School, Class of 2016:

“I feel that the exposure to diverse cultures in Howard County Schools (and especially Glenelg) is incredibly limited. There was a very clear and strong focus on European historical events, as well as a downplay on the history and cultures of any non-European country. This can be found in most of our other classes, with books by mostly White authors and instruction by mostly White teachers. Growing up in the Howard County School System, I'm not sure I ever had a Black teacher, and I can recall very few non-White teachers overall. Being that I was a student of HCPSS for over 12 years, that is absolutely appalling. There is no way to expose students to various cultures if only one culture is being presented. This did not prepare us well for the world, and it is fostering a system of White supremacy and institutional racism. In a graduating class that was already 88% White, this made for dangerous, yet far too predictable outcomes. While I was at Glenelg, multiple incidents of blatant racism occurred (though countless issues took place behind the scenes), and I am now embarrassed to say that I attended that school. Howard County brags about being one of the best school systems in the nation, but that cannot possibly be true if we are turning our backs to so many diverse perspectives. If we still wish to lead the way in education, we need to make significant improvements to the way we address race in our schools.”

“I believe that revamping the hiring process in schools is absolutely imperative, and that would be a strong first step. I also believe that inviting speakers with different backgrounds than the students would also be wildly beneficial. I think the "Howard County bubble" is all too real and students need to be brought out of their privilege at a younger age. I surely wish they had done this while I was in school. So many of the students in our county are White and come from a wealthy family, and this narrows their worldview significantly. When they only interact with individuals with a similar upbringing, it leads to the idea that everyone has this same background, and that could not be farther from the case. Howard County residents are extremely privileged and not recognizing this privilege is one of the largest problems I see with students I graduated with. Additionally, humans tend to fear what they don't know, which explains (but does not excuse) the racist behaviors by so many in the area. We cannot allow these issues to continue for even one more school year. Being exposed to individuals from various walks of life is necessary to their success in life, in and out of the classroom. Being able to empathize and communicate effectively with people who look or behave differently than you is a necessary skill for both human decency and success. Introducing students to more Black artists and authors would also go a long way to expanding their worldview. This is not an exhaustive list by any

means, but I feel that it would certainly be a good start to improving our (currently non-existent) race education in Howard County. “

De'Asia Gloria, Howard High School, Class of 2015

“I felt like I had less of a chance of succeeding at Howard compared to the White students even though I tried hard my entire year. I had a guidance counselor tell me I don't know if I am going to be able to get accepted to the schools, I wanted to go to discouraging me. I ended up going to a HBCU where I graduated with an accumulated GPA of 3.6 graduating as Magna Cum Laude. I also felt overall uncomfortable in my classes being the only Black person hearing inappropriate things from my White classmates.”

Ari Harris, Howard High School, Class of 2015

“As a Black, female student I had a White teacher call me "ghetto" and ask if my hair was a weave. During that time, I did not feel supported by the administration. I have also seen the words "NIGGER" spray painted on a student's locker. To uphold this facade of a "reputation", Howard never addressed the issues. I have never seen Howard's Administration take action on race related matters. Also, during the Trayvon Martin case in an effort to remain "unbiased" nobody spoke on the matter. Black students were hurting during this time and fearful of police. Howard's administration ignored it while continuing business as usual.”

(HCPSS should institute) “a "No-Tolerance" policy in which students/ teachers who use hate speech or act in a racist manner are expelled/ terminated. Also, requiring all administration to take "Unbiased training" in which they learn to equally educate and cater to all students fairly.”

Anonymous:

“I don't remember there being much emphasis on Black history month until my mother started poetry slams during Black history month. During these poetry slams, we would highlight African American poets by reciting their poetry. I remember my 9th grade year, I was called “ghetto” by a teacher for being too talkative with my African American peers.”

Emily Gorey, Glenelg High School, Class of 2016:

“It took getting to college to recognize the privileged bubble I grew up in. Reflecting now, it is difficult to come to terms with the repetitive instances of racism at Glenelg throughout the years. However, it does not surprise me knowing how the lack of diversity in Glenelg's halls goes unacknowledged. I wish I understood that my POC classmates had a different experience. I wish I felt a pause during this formative time in which I was able to listen and understand just a little more. I wish Glenelg gave me the tools to be a good ally and be actively anti-racist in an environment that fosters a narrow worldview. I wish my HCPSS education went beyond doing me so much good and did good for those less advantaged.”

Anonymous:

“Glenelg HS is full of racist rednecks who only care about themselves, they are not taught any different. They proudly wave confederate flags and do not see the repercussions of these actions because there is not diversity in the school. There are only about 20 African American students in the entire school if that and they are much better people than half the hicks yet who get suspended and disciplined the most, not the students waving confederate flags. The school system feeds into this because they do not educate students of the values of other religions and races. We only talk about Europeans conquering new wonderful lands and not the massacres they created in the name of God. As well as HCPSS typically employing White straight female teachers. Then when they do get a more diverse group of teachers students vandalize the school with hate symbols and words because no one has taught them better and that it is okay to be different.”

James Newton, Glenelg High School, Class of 2015:

“I vividly remember the incident in 2014 when students brought a Confederate Battle Flag to a football game and came to school wearing them a few days later. The incident sparked in me an interest in the complex history of race in the country. I had known prior to the incident that the flag was seen by many as a symbol of racism, but I did not know much of the history behind it. Through research, I learned that the flag was one of the many symbols used by ex-confederates to uphold racism in the Jim Crow south and is used by present-day hate groups. I also learned more recently that it stood for something else: treason. I believe the school system I attended for 13 years must be more serious about teaching students about this history. After all, America's founding fathers believed an informed citizenry was a prerequisite for democracy.”

Anonymous:

“Like many others have already voiced, I witnessed far too many racial instances within my 10 years as a student of HCPSS, and to this day I cannot believe how boldly and blatantly racist some of my peers were - from everyday conversation to the deep Confederacy pride and flag-waving. From an official standpoint, HCPSS was not racist, but they must do more - they must actively fight the systemic, institutional, and interpersonal racism within our county. I'd like to touch specifically upon a microaggression that has stayed with me, 10 years later.

As the Glenelg area is predominately White, my classes rarely had more than a handful of minorities; including myself, it would probably be around four students in a class of twenty-five. Specifically, in my 7th grade reading class, I was one of two Asian American girls. Because our seating assignments were alphabetical, we were seated right next to each other. While we didn't look alike (and to make things even easier, only I wore glasses), my teacher was not able to tell us apart. If she called me the other girl's name, she would apologize but would not make additional effort to correctly learn how to tell us apart. While this may be common in the first few days of school, it took this teacher over four months before I was no longer called the wrong name.

I was very visibly frustrated as she repeated her mistake over and over in a class I had three times a week, because as a young student, it was hard for me to process how my White teacher could easily identify and differentiate twenty White students, and yet struggled on (and visibly did not care) how to differentiate between two Asian American students. Her apathy towards my frustration made it difficult for me to feel valued as her student, nor did I feel comfortable in this exclusive environment. Though she may not be intentionally malicious, I can only imagine this was not her only microaggression towards non-White students.

By requiring teachers to undergo comprehensive diversity and inclusion training, I hope that microaggressions like this won't happen, and with HCPSS taking a stronger stand against racial bias of any sort, I hope this will allow students to feel more comfortable expressing instances if they ever do encounter them.”

Natalie French, Howard High School, Class of 2015:

“I do not remember learning much at all about Black history in high school; I know that the Civil Rights Movement was covered in my 9th grade US History class but do not remember if there was any attention paid to the continued effects of racism in US society beyond the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Most of what I now know about Black history I have learned since graduating high school. The history narrative we learned was incredibly White-washed and painted the United States in as favorable of a light as possible. In all of my English classes I can only recall being assigned one book written by a Black author and a brief unit on the poets of the Harlem Renaissance. There needs to be a diversification of curriculum in HCPSS and recognition of the fact that there still remains much, much more work to be done in dismantling the systemic racism upon which this country was built.

In addition to the White-washed curriculum, I only had one Black teacher in all four years in high school; the rest were White. HCPSS needs to diversify its hiring practices to provide more opportunities for teachers of color.”

Genevieve Mansfield, Glenelg High School, Class of 2015:

“I began my education in HCPSS at Bollman Bridge Elementary School & Patuxent Valley Middle School. Both of these schools were considerably more diverse than the high school I would end up going to: Glenelg. In fourth grade, I began taking GT classes and I saw that these classes were considerably LESS diverse than my general homeroom class, though at the time I did not recognize it. When my family moved to the Glenelg area in 8th grade, I started school at Folly Quarter MS. I immediately noticed that students at this school were treated with much more respect from faculty, given more freedoms, and supplied with more resources. This was in stark contrast to Patuxent Valley where students often had freedoms and resources limited. The difference being Folly Quarter's wealth and predominantly White student body.

At Glenelg High School, a very conservative, White, and oftentimes overtly racist institution, I witnessed my classmates run through the halls wearing confederate flags and often walked by them attached to cars in the parking lot. After this happened, the principal refused to

educate the student body on why the confederate flag is a hate symbol. This and many other moments throughout my education in the HCPSS showed that staff and administrators were unconcerned with actually educating us about the need for racial justice even though they claimed to care about 'diversity.' My Black history education in HCPSS was extremely limited, including only slavery and highlights of the Civil Rights Movement. When we were taught about the Civil War, I remember teachers giving credence to the idea of 'states rights' as well.

Howard County has an obligation to provide its students with a genuinely anti-racist education. The status quo is wholly inadequate.”

Anonymous:

“I have seen the words White power and nigger lover written on school property that only got painted over and never addressed or publicly announced as if they never happened. When bigger incidents like confederate flags and sprayed painted racial slurs that targeted the African American principal by name happened the school had to publicly make a statement, but then no discussion about it with the students took place as if nothing happened. Students and staff were left traumatized. There was no support team that came. When a student or faculty dies there is a support team but when a hate crime happens everyone is just to ignore it like it never happened. I have been very vocal about how there is not a Black history month assembly or school wide event during the day at Glenelg High School. Information about Black Historical figures are sometimes played on the announcements and one year teachers were invited to decorate their doors. it is not normal for HCPSS to be a county that prides itself on being diverse to have a High School that is more than 80% one race.”

Naomi Lilly, Howard High School, Class of 2015:

“During many of the walkouts in 2016, a Black staff member stopped me and a group of protestors to let us know if we engaged in any protests, we would be suspended or expelled.

In my AP Government course, a group of White boys would regularly shout nigga every day in class to incite responses from myself and the other two Black students in class.

After running for an SGA President role, a White teacher met me with hostility to note my campaign (devoted to diversity and inclusion) was aggressive. After our meeting, a student on the board let me know she did not address any other candidates with the same hostility.

During a spirit week event our school step show performed. The performance was met with boos and jeers noting the students needed to “take that to Long Reach.” Nothing was done by administrators.

After I was accepted into Duke University, a White math teacher expressed his shock. “You got into Duke!?! Hmm.” His response suggested everything I needed to know about his emotions towards my acceptance as a Black woman.

Black friends of mine who did not share the same AP and GT courses, regularly expressed their experiences with teachers who instead of encouraging them to test into higher

courses, expressed that they didn't have a chance. I always wondered if those suggestions helped to keep the quota of AP and GT classes to what always seemed like less than 5 students per class.

In one of my Spanish courses a student regularly told me I was darker than a rusted penny and joked about how I belonged on a plantation. Our teacher, a White woman, never said anything."

(Change within HCPSS should include) "Inclusion of texts by Black authors, especially in reference to parts of US history that seek to sell repetitive, and often incorrect stories about slavery and the civil rights movement, regular Unconscious Bias Training for staff and students (&) a larger county wide coalition that includes teachers and Black students to monitor the environment for Black students within schools.

Anonymous:

"I think all the big incidences have already been spoken about but one thing I'd really like to emphasize is that I spent 12 years in HCPSS schools and I did not have a single Nonwhite teacher until my senior year of high school. Let's get some diverse voices teaching our kids about the world bc right now the casual racism and hatred that exists in Howard county is shameful. I do not feel proud when I tell people from the area where I'm from or where I went to high school. I recognize that I was lucky to receive the public school education that I did but my god when the (world history) teacher doesn't even mention any country south of Egypt in their curriculum there are some major problems there. Do better, make your students proud to tell people where they're from."

(HCPSS should) "Hire non White teachers (ESP Black teachers), require Black history to be included in our American history courses and offer a class entirely devoted to the subject (&) do literally anything when students come to you about issues relating to race"

Anonymous:

"Going to Howard High, there was a cult of White boys, usually identified by camouflage clothing that everyone knew was racist. I remember when our Black assistant principal came into the auditorium and the boys started whispering "Here comes the N-word" and laughing. And they kept saying the N-word over and over as if it was some type of inside joke. There were some other instances of microaggressions, but this was the most blatant example I have witnessed."

Erika Koontz, Glenelg High School, Class of 2013:

"I remember learning about the Black Panther party as being overtly violent and negatively represented in history class. I learned that they were citizen outcasts with crazy ideas. This is only true in the sense that their idea to police the police was crazy. Their group identity was not defined by violence. Their cause was just and needed in the 60s-80s (and earlier) as it is needed in present day. I also remember learning about 'peaceful' protests involving Rosa Parks and MLK, where they ONLY were peaceful. They participated in riots and other forms of

protests that did not err on the side of peaceful- where those protests made the difference in political change. I am recalling these specific memories to describe why I feel lied to and blindsided by my public education from HCPSS relating to the history of race, racism, and people of color in this country. It is certainly not fair to me, my fellow students, and then the people that are in my life for me to perpetuate false and incomplete history lessons that I learned in public school. I demand change in the format of a more holistic education concerning race and racism in America. We need to know the full story. We need to know the truth about the Black Panther party, about Rosa Parks, and about MLK. So much history has been left out- so much IMPORTANT history. It is clear from the senseless killings of people of color to the present day that no one has learned the full history, let alone the perils of an incomplete picture of knowledge.”

Anonymous:

“There was a clear absence of curriculum that specifically focused on Black history. While there were some efforts by teachers to tailor their curriculum to focus on Black novelists (example: an AP Literature teacher teaching *Beloved* by Toni Morrison) the curriculum was heavily Eurocentric. If history courses included a mention of Black history and achievements, it was only amidst a larger framework of largely-White historical events and figures in the United States. There were no opportunities to focus IN-DEPTH on the experiences of persons of color, either in English or History courses. The history of persons of color and minorities was not humanized, but simply acknowledged. For example: discussing how the government forcibly removed indigenous Americans from their homes, but not really expanding and going into depth on the impact this had on people, then and now. Additionally, I did not learn about redlining, housing discrimination, and other aspects of structural and systemic racism until college. If I was educated about privilege and race during my high school years, it was outside of the school system, and this learning really only began in-earnest during my college years. The school system must do better in providing opportunities to foster this learning and awareness amongst their students. There are so many opportunities to recognize the amazing work of persons of color in Maryland, in particular, as well as to acknowledge the history of slavery, segregation, and racism in Howard County that continues to affect our present. But the school system did not provide us with outlets to learn this history and explore this reality. Finally, the school system must do a better job of supporting students of color, particularly Black students. Especially at Glenelg High School, a predominately White school, I could tell that there were few spaces where Black students felt welcomed. The 2018 incident that occurred with the defacing of Glenelg by students who drew symbols of hate (which was deeply offensive to myself as a Jewish alumnus, but also to many students of color and particularly to the Principal, a Black man), must never happen again. I cannot imagine how students and staff of color must feel during this time, but they should be given space as a part of HCPSS, to feel this way. Change must occur, for the good of our community.”

(HCPSS should expand) “the United States history course into two years to focus more deeply and intentionally on the experiences of persons of color - particularly Black history. Additionally, or alternatively, making the African American history course into a FULL YEAR (I can't believe it's just a half year elective) that all students must take before graduating. Also, ensuring that there is greater diversity amongst the hiring of staff and teachers in the school system - all subjects need to be taught by diverse teachers and all subjects must incorporate diverse history and viewpoints within them (ex: recognizing the contributions of African American inventors in a technology or engineering course, such as Benjamin Banneker, who was born and raised in Maryland). Finally, the elimination of school resource officers, in favor of greater investment in counseling and support staff.”

Anonymous:

“People were very disrespectful to Muslims like me and would make very ignorant comments regarding Muslims. My sophomore year, these two people dressed up as Muslim for Halloween by attaching a crescent moon to a trash bag and wearing it. I was made aware of it when I saw the person post a picture on Instagram. Back then, I was very soft spoken and being a part of the very few Muslims at school, I feel that even if I did expose them, there would be more backlash towards me. Lots of people I knew though commented on the picture laughing and “going along with the joke”. It was left up for a good while I will say, and I think as the person grew older, he knew that was inappropriate and took it down. The post in general made me very embarrassed because I thought that people at school would view me through that lens, as a trash bag, and not someone welcome there. I never felt proud of my upbringing until I went to college, where people knew not to do stuff like that.”

“There needs to be cultural awareness classes in Howard county in addition to privilege seminars.”

Sophia Ross, Glenelg High School, Class of 2016:

“During my time at Glenelg High School (2012 to 2016) I witnessed numerous instances of racism. These instances and the administrator’s inadequate responses to these incidents sent a clear message that racism was okay. Recalling my time at Glenelg, it was sickening to see students wearing confederate flags on their clothing, and to have our school in the newspaper because students brought confederate flags to a football game. Glenelg had amazing teachers, staff, and students who have made me proud to be a product of our school system. But I am ashamed at the response, or the lack of a response, which has come from the Howard County Public School System in response to racist incidents. No student or staff member should have to fear going to school. I also want to recognize the lack of acknowledgement of practices such as redlining and mass incarceration of Black and African American individuals in the history curriculum I was taught. There has also been a lack of diversity in the literature we were required to read for English courses.

I was privileged to have the opportunity to attend Towson University for the last four years, during my time at Towson I became a part of a student body with 18% of students who identified as African-American or Black.* A stunning shift from Glenelg High School, which is currently made up of less than 5% African American or Black students.* At Towson I was also exposed to Black and African American culture and history. College should not be the starting point for learning and being exposed to diversity. Especially because students may not get the opportunity to attend college.

The Howard County Public School System MUST do better in providing opportunities for students to learn about the significant contributions of Black and African American individuals to our society. The Howard County Public School System should recognize the amazing work of persons of color in Maryland, in particular, and acknowledge the history of slavery, segregation, and racism in Howard County that continues to affect our lives today. The Howard County Public School System did not provide us with outlets to learn this history and explore this reality. Finally, the school system must do a better job of supporting students of color, particularly Black students.

*Sources:

https://www.towson.edu/ir/documents/f_hdct_car_coll_eth.pdf

https://www.hcpss.org/f/schools/profiles/prof_hs_glenelg.pdf”

Matt Stillwell, Glenelg High School, Class of 2015:

“I remember an incident involving one of my classmates who had brought a Confederate flag to one of the River Hill vs Glenelg football games. In the days following I remember several of my other classmates supporting his decision by walking around the halls with hats and gear with the confederate flag. I remember them making racist comments regarding the support of the flag. Also, while we are on the topic of unjust actions. I very clearly remember a handful of students actively mocking and trying to sabotage the Day of Silence which was to help show solidarity around LGBT rights. Unfortunately, there were undoubtedly several discriminatory students in Glenelg in the 4 years I attended. It made it worse by the fact that there were so few minorities in the school and the years of discrimination handed down by the families for generations.”

Anonymous:

“Many people have experienced racism at Glenelg high school. This is a known fact, yet the administration (at that time) and the current administration have not rightfully reprimanded these racist groups/people. We can remember the confederate flag issue in 2015, which was claimed to be “an expression of southern pride” and “freedom of speech violation” when confronted. The situation began with the confederate flag at a RH vs GHS football game and continued spreading through the school. Uneducated teenagers started supporting the wearing of confederate flags baselessly. We could not defend ourselves from the looks and glares from the confederate students. The school was truly divided. GHS’s ~20% minority students often formed

groups together, with people that understood them, could relate to them. They felt safe. Others assimilated to the majority group and internalized racism against their own kind in order to fit in. One day at lunch (in the midst of the confederate flag situation) a group of White confederate flag supporters walked past our minority group table and said, “this is only happening because of people of YOUR kind”. At the time we brushed it off, not realizing the importance of using our voices in that moment. The education on SYSTEMIC racism needs to be updated. Overt racism is only a part of the issue. Whites at GHS do not understand that slavery and its effects are STILL PRESENT!!! WE ARE STILL LIVING IN IT! Change can be made but it starts with education.”

Margaret Blount, Howard High School, Class of 2017:

“My experience at HHS was one of almost entirely White teachers and a few NBPOC. The curriculum focused mainly on White history and White stories. If we can read about WW2 concentration camps in 6th and 9th grade, we can read more about slaves and other Black experiences throughout our education.

I would also like to address that I learned to view natural Black hair as unprofessional while attending HHS through incredibly racist enforcement of the dress code. No head coverings were allowed at all (due) to possible "gang affiliation." Spare me. It was used as a way to degrade and distract Black young women from their education.

While many people had a positive relationship with our campus policeman, I think funds for student management could be better spent on extra support workers such as social workers or a full time psychologist, who could both lend their expertise to extra anti-racism training for staff and students. I am ashamed of some of the things I said to and about fellow students in high school and learning more about specific racist actions and microaggressions would have gone much further than a few anti-bullying gatherings.

There are many things HCPSS do well but addressing the deep seated racism within their hiring process and school policies must continue to be discussed and addressed.”

(HCPSS needs to) “address the racial biases included in the dress code.”

Abigail White, Hammond High School, Class of 2017:

“I have lived down the street from Hammond High my whole life. And growing up, I had many friends who lived in my neighborhood but eventually moved away because their parents did not want their child attending Hammond. So, even as a kid, I was aware that Hammond had a bad reputation, and as I grew older, I began to put together why that was. There was a reason Hammond used to be nicknamed the "Jungle on 32." People in this community saw that Hammond had a majority of Black students, and thus they inherently had racist notions about the culture of the school.

Besides the racism outside of Hammond, there is also a power structure that exists within its walls. As an upperclassman, most of my classes were AP courses. Because of this, I got to be a part of a bubble that consisted of mainly White students, like myself. I came to realize that it

was not an accident that the student body was segregated in this way. My senior year, there was a Black student my age who claimed that implicit bias existed within the school, because when he asked a teacher for a recommendation for an AP class, that teacher told him that he didn't have what it took. I came to believe that his race was a factor in this teacher's decision to doubt his abilities. And I believe that this doubt begins at a very early age. As an aspiring educator, I have become increasingly aware of the gap in opportunities between Black students and their White counterparts. Just one of the many opportunities that we fail to give equally to our Black students is simple belief in their abilities. The truth is academic talent cannot flourish and develop unless it is nurtured. If a teacher has low expectations, this will most likely result in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

There is a reason that there were so few Black students in my upper level courses. It is the same reason that people move out of Hammond's district, and it is the same reason that rich, White families are angered when the school board attempts to enact redistricting to balance the populations of disadvantaged students. There are certain assumptions that are made about people based on the color of their skin. And this has permeated the Howard County School System, to such a degree that we cannot even see that it's there. It is just a part of the norm. And this is not acceptable.”

(HCPSS should balance) “the funding that each school receives. Because schools are funded by property taxes, there is a huge disparity in wealth across the county. This contributes significantly to racial inequity.”

Anonymous:

“In 8th grade US history, we spent a day picking cotton and listening to songs that would have been sung by slaves. Even to us as 8th graders with little experience of the true nature of race in history, it felt wrong. In high school, we discussed the murder of Emmitt Till, but things like the LA riots in the 1990s and the war on drugs were never discussed at all. Black history month was an opportunity for the administration to force us all into the auditorium to watch and listen to predominately Black media and art, which was incredibly interesting and empowering, but the manner in which it was approached and the lack of conversation outside of that made it seem like it was basically a diversity checkbox, the appearance of caring.”

(HCPSS should) “include teaching about race as it relates to other topics, such as music, art, science, and technology. It is not enough to just have classes about African American history, race and other discriminating factors have continually played a role in the development of many other disciplines.”

Patrice Blake, Long Reach High School, Class of 2015:

“My first experience with racial bias with HCPSS was in elementary school and my mom noticed but I had no idea what was going on. That was my first lesson in life where I realized “I can't do what the White kids do”. In high school I had a science teacher go as far literally segregating the class. White /Asian kids on one side Black/POC on the other side. She even tried

to say that it was random, and she just made the seating chart at random BUT at that time teachers made them on the computer IN COLOR with our pictures. We noticed as a class she literally wasn't even teaching in our direction and We were being penalized for the labs and class work that wasn't being done or done incorrectly because she was refusing to really teach us. Finally, we started making a ruckus in the classroom until she called 2 assistant principals and Security and we told them what was going on and they could see they had a problem and it wasn't the kids. They called the parents and told them they had a problem and that they were sending the teacher for a few weeks of diversity training, but I honestly don't know if that was enough. I know we really truly felt as if we were fighting for our rights to learn in this class and I know I think about this incident often, it was like I knew I was in a predominantly White school system but I thought I was safe in that predominantly Black school...but I wasn't."

(HCPSS should) "hire more Black teachers"

Meghan Maloney, Howard High School, Class of 2011:

"I echo so many stories that I am reading on this document and so inspired and proud of the community for being agents of change. While growing up I didn't realize all of the injustices, as an adult I am learning and growing, and I see how harmful the system wide racism is. I encourage everyone reading this to watch the 13th on Netflix, it is the most eye opening documentary I have seen.

Regarding the handling of racial situations, I feel that Howard county has worked hard to sweep instances of injustice under the rug. They blow off situations as only reflecting one individual instead of the situation as a whole. When racial situations occur, we need to educate and grow from them (we are a school system after all) we need to not only give students of color a voice but listen to that voice, respect that voice, and change from that voice. We need to realize that it is the time to admit we were wrong, change, and not keep justifying our poor actions.

Regarding the curriculum, not only is POC's history widely ignored but We are also taught to pity and feel bad for them (slavery, civil rights, etc.) as opposed to respecting their fight and reveling in them as the hero's they truly are. We are taught that violence is okay with war and when White people initiate it but when POC initiate it (Black panthers, "riots", etc.) it is unacceptable. We were not taught about current racial injustices, how to be anti-racist, or systematic racism. I also have a very clear memory of a debate that we had in English class about whether the N word was wrong.... That is not up for debate. A huge learning opportunity was missed to explain how much hate the meaning of one word has and how important it is that the Black community took back the word. What an opportunity missed to give Black students a voice. By putting this up for debate the teacher gave a hateful voice to White students who should have no voice in this matter but to support our Black communities. I hope the curriculum provides more opportunities for learning about the countries non-White history, because it is important.

As a teacher myself (in Montgomery county) I see firsthand how impactful it is for students to have teachers that reflect them in gender, sexuality, and race. When hiring I hope that the county searches for a more diverse workforce to help students be able to see themselves in a teacher and staff, and have an ally who can understand because as a White teacher I will never understand what a student of color goes through. I can be an ally and stand with them, but it is more important that they have someone who understands.

I hope that our county changes. I hope that our county no longer shies away from making White people uncomfortable and pushes their community members and students to address their biases and fix them. As a once again resident of Howard county I hope that the system makes changes to support the POC living in our community.”

(HCPSS should insist) “on community building around hard topics.”

Bria Moss-Wilkerson, Oakland Mills, Class of 2010:

“In 10th grade, my grade on a paper was lower than it should have been because I used the word “toggle” to talk about an author shifting between ideas. My teacher (who I won’t name because they passed away) circled the word and wrote a note about how plagiarism is punishable.

When I brought the paper home and noticed the comment, my mom was HOT and explained why that was wrong (I was oblivious). She made me dispute it with the teacher.

The teacher explained that “toggle” was a really mature word and they thought it must have been plagiarism. I explained that I used the thesaurus so I could use a better word to make my point. My grade was changed.”

Anonymous:

“As a Black teacher who grew up in Columbia, I have consistently felt paralyzed in situations where kids have wanted or needed my support, but I feared losing my job if I spoke honestly about the racism in my county. I’ve sat in teachers lounges where teachers have made fun of students’ names, called students thugs, and laughed at the concept of microaggressions as though they were not the main perpetrators of them. This year I started at a different school in the county. In the beginning of the year when, I expressed to my Teacher Development Liaison that I was having some behavior problems in my room with a few girls, and I was looking for suggestions on how to build relationships with them, the only advice I got back was “well you just named 4 Black girls who can get all Black girl attitude and you’re Black, so why don’t you get all Black girl attitude right back on them?” But the same woman claimed she couldn’t be racist because she had a Black boyfriend. I constantly have been asked to mentor “tough Black kids” solely on the basis that I’m Black and will be able to break through to them, as if I’m going to go militantly harsh on my students in need. As a Black teacher I want my Black students to succeed and see there’s no one way you have to be in order to be “Black,” and that all of their Black identities are valid from the most socially accepted to the least. But the only advice given to me from someone who should have been able to help me was to just play into stereotypes and

not address the relationships or needs of a student struggling. I also feel like my administration makes excuses for some students of color with the message of “students like those can’t help it” but at the same time doles out harsher punishment to students of color. I’ve suggested that students of color that may have difficulty in other classes but do well in mine go out for certain after school activities, and have gotten the response from teachers running it of “oh no don’t you stick them with me. Don’t you do that to me.” I have a principal who says that we shouldn’t be using our RSO to manage student behavior but the minute the hallways seem a little too chaotic is in the walkie talkie calling for the officer. Things need to change. Teachers need to confront their White fragility and privilege. All teachers need to tackle any elements of anti- Blackness that they may have and be willing to confront it daily, not just put on a fake face during training.”

“Black, Hispanic and Asian achievement liaisons need to receive livable salaries. Every BSAP I know needs multiple jobs to survive. LGBTQ+ liaisons need to exist as well. Optional cultural proficiency training over the summer isn’t enough. Class sizes need to be made smaller and standardized testing emphasis needs to decrease so teachers can focus on having these more valuable conversations in the classroom.”

Jasmyn Thomas, Hammond High School, Class of 2015:

“When people from predominantly-White schools learned I went to Hammond, they’d always sneer and ask, “What’s it like going to school with Black people?” The most valuable thing I gained from my HCPSS education wasn’t anything I learned in the classroom. It was learning to be around and appreciate diverse people.

Even at Hammond, our classes were Eurocentric. I took Chinese History in college. Every single lesson I thought, “How was this not mentioned in high school?” It’s abhorrent I didn’t know anything taught in that course except for the Silk Road. I should’ve learned some of it in my “World” History class. I also took African American History in college, and again, it was more transformative than it should’ve been. In my Government and US History classes, I should’ve learned how deeply invested the US and Americans were in racism. I should’ve learned how the Black community (among other marginalized groups) have been so resilient over and over again- not just in the Civil Rights Movement. I am half-Black, and HCPSS failed to educate me on the history of my own people.”

“People in predominantly-White schools need to be exposed to more diversity continuously.”

“Diversity & implicit bias training should be required continuously and in-person (so people can’t just skip through). This could be implemented as a required training at the beginning of each school year, required professional development, or a requirement for license renewal.”

Anonymous:

“Students in middle school commonly used insensitive language about Black students and it was not until a few years ago that I realized how messed up it all was. Teachers could have had the power to stop this and educate students better on the power of their words, and on the wrongness of their thoughts. I'm sure some things have changed a little bit at this point, but bigger change needs to happen and the conversation about race needs to be faced, not ignored. In addition, Black history needs to be taught better, and many other cultures and histories outside of White America.”

Anonymous:

“Hammond and other minority-majority schools are under-resourced and suffer from a reputation based in racist beliefs. Many Howard County students/parents actively disparage Hammond (formerly known as "The Zoo on 32") for its diverse demographics and insist that their children be districted to the surrounding schools (this should surprise no one).

While most of the educators and faculty mean well, there is little structural initiative taken to include Black topics/culture in history/English/psych/government.

The largest and most pervasive structural problem I witnessed was the demographic asymmetry between advanced (AP/GT/Honors) classes and the "on-grade-level" equivalents. AP classes I took at Hammond often bore no resemblance to the overall demographics of the school.”

“HCPSS should definitely add a required African American studies class”

Hannah Tralka, Glenelg High School, Class of 2016:

“Glenelg High School and the Howard County School Public System in general abounds with both overt and covert racism. As a White person who benefited from these systems, I want to speak out against this and also put my support behind any person of color's experience with racism that they present in this letter. I have learned so much since leaving HCPSS and have so much more to continue to learn regarding race, but I will attempt to outline some of my observations and demands, as informed by the BLM movement, below.

Confederate flags, graffiti, and racial slurs are common in GHS and no accountability is demanded from the perpetrators of that violence. There is also a clear lack of Black people and people of color as both students and staff, creating White supremacist power dynamics and racist situations. Glenelg High School teaches White-centered lessons, excluding Black history and conversations about racism. The lessons that do mention things like slavery do not include critical analysis of how these systems continue today and what we should be doing about it.

People of color, including queer people of color, should feel comfortable going to school in this county instead of needing to be constantly vigilant in the face of discrimination. Howard County is raising racist White children to be racist White adults, with the power to implement discriminatory policies on top of individual disrespect/discrimination. They have the opportunity to change this on the institutional, county-wide, school-wide, and individual level. Howard County overall needs to implement a diverse, better hiring process and include people of color

when creating lesson plans (listen to people of color!)- specifically making sure to educate White teachers on Black history and anti-racism, especially implicit bias. There are teachers and administrators out there that wish to create a more inclusive space, so give them the tools to do so.

Space also needs to deliberately be made in curriculum for naming privilege- something that was never addressed at my school. The Whiteness and wealth at Glenelg must be pointed out and used for dismantling the current system. There also needs to be explicit support systems in place for people of color at Howard County Schools- systems that listen to community needs proactively. These systems can also help break down the clear, unwarranted, and wrong racial segregation created by the county between "lower level" an "upper level" classes, which ultimately can significantly impact an individual's health and life. This can start with officials and administration connecting with local BLM groups and Black teachers/students and listening to their demands, creating lesson plans and policies all without taking the emotional and intellectual free labor of people of color (aka please PAY POC for their hard work once you hire them!).

Finally, the presence of police in schools should be eliminated. Police presence has been shown to lead to violence against people of color, whether that be physical or systemic. Howard County should instead invest in other community support such as more mental health care professionals (which is very much needed, as proven by the high percentage of those struggling with mental illness and suicide attempts/ideation who are not supported or even noticed, made worse by facing daily discrimination--I can personally attest to this as a queer woman who struggles with mental illness), anti-racist education professionals, homelessness support, LGBTQ+ support, and domestic violence support (all issues that are ignored by the county). Addressing BLM will, in turn, address these issues too- as oppressions, although different, are connected.

I have witnessed this racism first-hand and can confidently state that Howard County is complicit. There is so much more that I could say and I'm sure I don't know half of what my classmates of color experienced. All in all, Howard County has a lot of changes to make and I demand that the voices of people of color, especially Black people, be heard and that actual, sustainable, long-lasting action is taken.”

(HCPSS must) “removes ties with the police and invests in community organizations instead.”

Derry MacDermott, Glenelg High School, Class of 2012:

“Teachers should be required to teach systemic racism and injustice. It goes hand in hand with teaching about MLK and Civil Rights. All history should be shown, not just the comfortable conversations.

Also, Glenelg High School where I attended needs to take better action in accounting for racism and students who align themselves with White supremacy. As a school with majority White students, this needs to be a requirement.”

Iftekar Husain, Oakland Mills High School, Class of 2010:

“My experience with racism in the school system was at the structural and individual level. My first major concern was the presence of a police officer in the school who usually followed Black students around and made many of my peers feel targeted and under surveillance in a place that’s supposed to be a learning environment. The random drug searches with canines are also unhelpful and criminalizes students with substance abuse issues rather than treating it as a health issue. When I attended high school there wasn’t a major focus on Black or Indigenous American History in our required social studies classes. Sure, we glossed over the Civil Rights Movement in the 60s and slavery before the Civil War, but we didn’t delve too deeply into those topics or actually talk about how those events influence what we still experience today. If you wanted to have a fuller understanding of that history, you had to take an elective. I was also concerned with how segregated our AP classes were in comparison to the regular or remedial programs. The AP courses were usually composed of mostly White students who were thusly prepared for AP tests and college level curricula while many Black and Latino students were discouraged from taking those same classes. On the individual level, other students have called me a terrorist or homophobic slurs online and in-person, and I also think that is because of a lack of early education about people from different faiths and nationalities or around LGBTQ+ experiences. None of those (White) students were held accountable for what they said.”

(HCPSS should) “remove police officers from the schools and stop the random drug searches. Hold students, teachers, and staff accountable for hate speech.”

EJ Taylor, Glenelg High School, Class of 2013:

“During my time at Glenelg, I witnessed multiple instances of bullying towards minority classmates and repeated instances of White students dismissing non-White focused history and experiences. During my freshman year American History class, a classmate gave a presentation about reverse racism and the plight of White Americans, specifically discussing how he felt White Americans were being hunted down by minorities. Though the teacher disagreed with the presentation, it was permitted and there was no discussion about how irresponsible, incorrect, and dangerous the presentation was. After the death of Osama bin Laden in May of 2011, Middle Eastern friends disclosed that they had received anonymous calls referring to bin Laden as their father/uncle/cousin/etc. and veiled references to how they should watch their backs, despite not even being the same ethnicity as bin Laden. When we were to read *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 11th grade, the discussion surrounding the use of the N-word was led by a White teacher to a majority White class, with pressure put on the few Black students present about whether or not the use of the word was acceptable. My Black classmates were forced to shoulder the responsibility of teaching everyone and alleviating their guilt, even though it was well known that multiple students in that class used racial slurs with reckless abandon. When students revealed their colleges every year, a discussion inevitably followed during which it was declared that any non-White student that was set to attend a good school or received a

scholarship only got there as part of affirmative action. The back hallway where drama students would paint bricks upon graduation has a brick painted with the Confederate flag. I'm certain there are thousands upon thousands of other examples, ranging from daily microaggressions to overt language and actions, that students faced that I did not notice or do not recall. Part of this failure to contemporaneously recognize the violence faced by students is due to my own failure to educate myself, and part of it must be placed at the feet of an administration that showed no interest in educating me. Systematic racism pervades our culture and educational system, and the examples of it in our curricula could fill volumes. These are specific examples of what I saw in my time there. Examples that went unreported to teachers and administration (as well as examples that teachers and administration were clearly aware of at the time), because it was known that nothing would be done. Glenelg and HCPSS did nothing to rise above such hate. Glenelg was (and I'm sure continues to be) a "good old boys" club with racist hate and violence passed down over generations, masquerading as if it didn't exist. Were we ever taught that the desegregation of Glenelg occurred within the lifetime of many of our parents? Were we ever told about the burning cross that was placed on school grounds in 1990? I felt no surprise when students committed hate crimes by spray painting racist slurs and symbols on school grounds; I was surprised when people pretended to be shocked. Glenelg High School has racism, sexism, homophobia, and intolerance woven into the fabric of its existence. It's well past time to do and be better."

Anonymous:

"As a White female, who attended HCPSS K-12, I did not experience racial injustices but have been told by others I know who have. I cannot begin to imagine or know all they went through during those years. I also shudder to think that, if at any time I may have said something insensitive, laughed at their expense, or anything else to make them feel unheard. I want to apologize for my ignorance; I am still learning and am working to know more; to be more informed and know what I can do for my fellow man, especially for people of color. As a former student of this school system, I feel that it is of the utmost importance to teach about systemic racism and the injustices in our schools/county/state/country. We may learn about the Civil Rights Movement as a whole but each day, I am learning more about how the injustices did not end after the 1960's and 1970's. I wish that I had known more prior to this point in my life. I believe that our students truly need to understand how systemic racism began and how it is still affecting our lives today. I want the future students of the HCPSS to be well informed members of society, more than myself and others who were taught with, before and after my time. Howard County prides itself on diversity and inclusion, yet, more and more, I know that this was not the case. Also, after reading the entries above, the HCPSS needs to hold their schools accountable for racism. I sign this petition in hopes that everyone is heard, and real change can begin."

Anonymous:

“Generally speaking, I do not recollect any egregious racist act while attending MRHS. However, this is not to suggest that they did not occur or that I did not witness them—I am sure that I did. As a White teenager who had not yet been introduced to the concept of anti-racism, it is likely that microaggressions, and even more aggressive incidents, were normalized and rendered invisible in my memory. What I do know for sure— (1) students of color who I know have experienced racism at the hands of both students and faculty, and there was a general culture of insensitivity amongst the students. This is why it is important to note that, (2) the curriculum has been White-washed. I remember reading only two written works from Black writers. Any history class I had was, ultimately, a joke. The only class where I recall actively learning about other countries and religions was in my government class with Reynard Parson. Most of what I have learned about Black history, Black art, anti-racism, and the like has been done either through higher education or personal reading. This is a huge issue— many students (especially now, what with a global pandemic) may not attend college or put it off for a year or two. While White people need to put in their own time and effort to educate themselves about anti-racism and the cultures of other races, it is imperative that this learning begins in the classroom. All educators must be compelled to update their curriculums, regardless of which subject they teach— English teachers should teach written works from People of Color, history and government teachers must teach about the Black Power movement and about Black history outside of the Civil War and the institution of slavery, as well as the feminist movement and its waves, the genocide of Native Americans and Native culture in general, Apartheid, and Japanese internment. Science and math classes must actively reach out to Black students, as well as girl students (studies show women and Black students are actively discouraged from studying these subjects). All educators should have required diversity training in regards not only to race, but socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, and all various and intersecting identity markers. Health and sexuality classes need to undo the racist and homophobic associations with HIV and AIDS and include homosexuality in its curriculum. And that’s just what I can think of off of the top of my head— there is much more to be done when it comes to the curriculum. I understand that this letter is specifically about race, but it is impossible to discuss racism without also including homophobia, transphobia, misogyny and other bigotry— specifically because People of Color who are not straight, cis males are often rendered invisible and receive inordinate abuse. You cannot address racism against Black people without also addressing misogynoir (racism against Black women specifically). Racism is not a universal experience, and different intersecting factors of identity will affect how a Person of Color experiences racism. Hopefully, you catch my drift— the male-centric, heterosexual, White-washed curriculum is actively harmful towards its students, both in that it either ignores or targets groups of students who are not straight, cisgender, and White, and that it upholds White supremacy and validates internalized racism in its students. Additionally, HCPSS should be far more inclusive in regards to its staff— I myself have only had two Black teachers, one (to my knowledge, though I acknowledge I may have had teachers who are considered White-passing)

biracial teachers, and one Asian teacher. This is unacceptable, and again, upholds White supremacy. Overall, HCPSS needs to do much better for its students and faculty.”

Anonymous:

“I attended two different HCPSS schools during my high school career. During my first year and a half, I attended Mt. Hebron High School, and afterwards I transferred to Long Reach High School. I think it’s safe to say that race is treated vastly different between the 13 high schools in HCPSS. During my short tenure at Mt Hebron, one of my classmates broke into the school after hours, stealing computer equipment and graffitiing racist symbols and messages all over the walls of the school. I had no teachers of color during my time at Mt. Hebron, and when I was in the process of transferring to Long Reach, I was told to “not get shot”, presumably because Long Reach is located in an area with lower socioeconomic classes and more people of color.

I feel incredibly blessed to have graduated from Long Reach High School. I do feel that race is not only acknowledged but CELEBRATED there. From the vast amount of student organizations to the events that honored the eclectic mix of cultures like the BSU fashion show and the Culture show to just open ongoing conversations about race, I left Long Reach with the ability to healthily dialogue about race.

Meanwhile, I heard my classmates of color describe microaggressions they experienced while at other schools in the county. A Black classmate of mine described a time he was at River Hill High School for an event, and students he interacted with there told him that they were surprised he went to Long Reach because he was “so well spoken”. A Filipino classmate of mine who had transferred from Centennial described feeling ostracized from the Asian community because he grew in one of the “poor Asian countries”.

Now, hearing about all of the fuss from Western Howard County parents about redistricting, I see nothing has changed in the 8 years I’ve been out of high school. Something needs to be done, and people need to be honest with themselves about the REAL reason they’re worried about redistricting. Because based on my experience, it wouldn’t be such a bad thing. Long Reach isn’t perfect and could benefit from some of the action items listed in this letter. But maybe take a look and see what’s working there. Some of these Western Howard County schools have a long way to go.”

Anonymous:

“There were many times I faced racism. But there are two incidents that specifically come to mind.

My sister is 5 years younger than me and went to Mayfield Middle School. During the summer, she wanted to change her schedule, so my mom drove me and my sister to Mayfield. When we got there, my sister and I went into the front office to explain the situation. The lady told me that we needed an adult with us in order for them to proceed. I told her my mom was in the car waiting for us and I could get her. She then asked if my mom could speak English (we’re

Asian). When I told her, my mom was not fluent, the lady told me “Don’t even bother then. I’ll just process this.” At the moment, I just let the situation pass and went home. However, the more I thought about it, I was disgusted with her racism.

Another time I encountered racism at HCPSS is when I was in elementary school (Deep Run Elementary), the teachers put me in an ESOL class because I was Asian. However, English is my first language. The teachers quickly realized I didn’t need to be in ESOL and took me out after a week. But regardless of that, my teachers judged me for my race that I was not good at English (which made absolutely no sense because I have always been in English GT).

I was too young to understand but I know my parents have faced racism at HCPSS during conferences as well. They had an interpreter, but I know there were faculty members who definitely made racist remarks or did an action to show their racism.”

Anonymous:

“After my friends found out in middle school about my Puerto Rican heritage, I became immediately pegged as the "poor Mexican" of the group. If I showed up with new shoes to school or something more than a sandwich for lunch, I would be told "wow I didn't know that poor Mexicans could afford [___]." I felt invalidated, hearing my friends group me as well as any other Hispanic as Mexican. I also now know the terrible implications associated with perpetuating such a stereotype about people actually of Mexican descent.

My US history teacher took the time to make us the point that we were taught incorrectly about the Civil War up until that point and that in fact, the Civil war was about "states’ rights." Lying to children in the classroom leaves us entirely unarmed to combat racial bias in ourselves and those around us. It perpetuates the violence of the society we live in.

In a class I took my sophomore year, a White teacher frequently made a point of correcting a Black student's pronunciation in front of the class. The student repeatedly responded to the teacher that it was his accent. The teacher consistently denied this and continued correcting him publicly. This continued for a long time and the relationship between the student and the teacher continued to grow adversarial throughout the year.

As a Hammond grad, I encourage anyone looking for manifestations of racism in HCPSS to look at the demographic representations of students in and the variance in the physical condition of the schools in Howard County. You'll notice blatant segregation of marginalized communities into schools like mine. Every time it is time to draw the school districts, we see the onset of activists attempting to stop the mixing of students at schools like mine with students at schools like River Hill, and the school board caves over and over to the privileged and ignores the voiceless. It is not a coincidence that we are one of the schools that is always overcrowded and chronically told that our building's renovations will have to get pushed back.”

Jillian Schuyler, Glenelg High School, Class of 2015:

“In the Glenelg/ Glenwood/ Lisbon system, students were taught to call Black people "African American". That is an aggressive assumption of students' ethnicity and nationality and

it is not correct. The overall education on ethnicity was Whitewashed and "timid". It placed the impression that talking about skin color was "hush hush". This muted BIPOC children's conversation on their cultural background and emotions toward what was taught. Furthermore, we were not told the truth about White inventors, entrepreneurs, or leaders stealing their ideas or not giving credit toward BIPOC in history. The diversity in the teaching staff was continually lacking and insensitive toward BIPOC history and current events. We didn't have to watch movies on all history, just Black history (12 Years a Slave). At Glenwood middle students we watched a series of clips from 12 Years a Slave, while our White male teacher remained quiet. The terms oppression and racism were NEVER used or explained. This same teacher would teach other subjects with fervor and class discussion, but slavery was on a screen that young minds didn't discuss. The education system is flawed by the curriculum, educators, and counselors. The blatant hateful racism enacted by students is encouraged by the silence of Howard County education."

Rima Teymourlouei, Glenelg High School, Class of 2015:

"During my 12 years as a student in the HCPSS school system I noticed issues of diversity in both curriculum and the student body. I had the unique opportunity of attending different HCPSS schools across the county. I attended Deep Run Elementary & Mayfield Woods Middle up until 7th grade, where I had classmates from multiple racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. I had peers that I could relate to, and then peers I could learn from. This is not to say my experiences at these schools were perfect, or that no race issues exist. But these experiences did positively impact how I view people from different backgrounds than I. In my opinion, racial bias often exists in people with a lack of exposure to diverse cultures or backgrounds. Looking back the exposure I had was key in my development and helped widen my worldview. If my classes weren't teaching me about race, then at least I learned from experiences with my peers and classmates who looked different than I. In 8th grade my family moved to western Howard County where I attended Folly Quarter Middle & later Glenelg High School, which was obviously an incredibly different landscape. I felt that the students in that area were not exposed to other races, cultures, or backgrounds, and as a result were living in a "privilege bubble". There was very little diversity in the student body and the staff, so these students weren't getting exposed to issues of race or even really talking about it. It came as no surprise that there were, and still are, multiple incidents of hate at Glenelg High School."

Anonymous:

"I am ASIAN and WHITE. I've been called racial slurs and fetishized by classmates. Private photos were spread through the school and my phone was taken by the police and the boys were never in trouble. I didn't learn anything about Black history in class. Confederate flags were waved in the football stands EVERY SINGLE home game and displayed on student's vehicles. Racial slurs were written in the bathrooms, lockers, stalls, etc. People got very violent during spirit week and wrote whatever they could everywhere."

“Educate the next generations PROPERLY AND EFFECTIVELY. DO NOT LEAVE ANYTHING OUT.”

Natalie Van Horn, Oakland Mills High School, Class of 2009:

“While I remember OMHS as diverse on a variety of levels and had the privilege to call people friends who came from all backgrounds, it does not mean that they had that same utopian feeling. Knowing I have former classmates who are now teachers who are doing this work, I have also heard that the population of the school has shifted and that a lot of faculty are not equipped to deal with their needs. It is critical that OMHS and all HCPSS schools teach students about anti-racism and continue to celebrate diversity in a tangible way.”

Anonymous:

“First and foremost, I will say that I went to one of the best high schools in the county, at the time. My overall Howard County school experience was positive, and I have them to thank for foundational education. This preface is to convey my disappointment upon finding out what little history I actually knew in my adulthood.

I learned about world history, and I mean actual world history, in pieces, through specified college courses, and general curiosity. I started to resent the fact that Black history was isolated into one month of curriculum, not to mention my overall lack of international insight and the influences people of color had on the building of our country.

I learned on my own, and I am better for it, but there is something to be said about a curriculum that overlooks key parts of a legitimate happenings and passes it off a well-rounded education.

Now, in my time I also experienced direct racism, and gained an understanding as to how seriously the collective took such things.

I was lucky enough to go 17 years only experiencing microaggressions, and back-handed compliments. I grew up, quite literally, with most of my senior class. Through adolescence and young adulthood, we shared memories, and classrooms.

You can imagine my surprise when a student, one who I knew since I was 10, looked me in my face and called me a "Fu*king Ni**er," at a party. In anger, shock, and hurt, I hit him.

So, I'm not condoning my actions. You don't hit people, it's not right. I don't see it necessary to defend myself any more than that, because to this day, it has been the only time I have lashed out like that.

His, friends helped him up, and as he rose, he repeated, "did that Fu*king Ni**er, just hit me?"

I have a name. It's Praxie. Everyone knows my name; everyone knows how to say it. Everyone knows who I am. Especially this student. I know him, I know his brother, he's my classmate.

My classmate that night reduced me to a racial slur in front of everyone and thought nothing of it. My classmate referred to me like I was dirt for doing nothing but existing in the same space as him. He took it upon himself to deduce me to my skin color.

You can imagine the scandal and the excitement. It was not one that could be contained come Monday at school. So much so, that several students and teachers were made aware.

I would like to reintroduce myself. I am Praxie Sugar Ray Rocky Ali Osong. Not only was I made to be the focus of the incident, it was turned into a running gag. Whenever I raised my hand in class people jokingly ducked and flinched, because "look out" Rocky is swinging again. Ali is ready to fight. Sugar Ray is out to play. Was I like that before? Violent, aggressive? No. No I wasn't. Was I like that after? No. No I wasn't.

Except I was to them.

My momentary act of, in my opinion, justified violence, eclipsed a racist's words. I hit a boy, and others saw. My action and consequence are laid out in front of me in the form of a person I knocked down and the subsequent jokes that ensued at my expense.

What about him? No one called him wrong, no one challenged his words, no one sought to correct his rhetoric. Not even the teachers who asked me to share my exciting and violent story to the entire class.

Yes, I told two teachers and two classrooms, back to back, 3rd period and 4B, my story. I admitted what I did, and I said why I did it.

He never looked me in the eye after that. I never got an apology, nor do I want one. The school never dealt with it, and my peers carried the joke to the end of the year. We were even a suggested nomination for "Best Future Couple." That got a lot of laughs.

The only people I know who openly condemned this person's words were a fellow Black student and my cousin who just happened to be there when it was said. My best friend didn't even say a word.

I learned a couple of things that year. As a Black woman, I will be made to look angry at every chance. It will stick to me like a stain and whatever I do, I am my actions. I also learned that I am and, in that moment, was a spectacle. That night I did something exciting. The following week I retold the story like I was on stage performing for people to ooh and ahh.

I thought at first it was cool, but years later as I carry deep regret and shame about how I didn't speak up. I wish I fought for my dignity. I wish I fought for my race. I wish I actually fought and not reacted.

I realize it was not only up to me.

When presented with an opportunity to correct a deeper issue, River Hill chose to let it simmer down. They did nothing.

You could say I got off lucky. I don't think so. My school and the people in it, knew I was not a violent person. They knew I didn't go around lashing out at people. That's why I didn't get punished. They knew why I did it. They understood why I did it. They just didn't think it was serious enough to address. Being called the N word to my face was a casual racist incident. Not one, to write home about.

Two teachers, probably more, chose to exploit an incident and focus on an angry Black girl and not the racist White boy.

It's not like a racist White boy can ACTUALLY do that much damage in the world, right?

#Blacklivesmatter

#changethecurriculum”

Nicolette Wolfrey, Glenelg high School, Class of 2014:

“I am a White graduate of Glenelg High School, a school with a public reputation for racism. When I attended Glenelg, the school was 80% White and I believe that demographic limitation severely impeded the learning experiences of students. This was worsened in that the school never openly addressed the limitations of learning in such a segregated environment. I think that if teachers and administrators had taught students to be self-aware of their learning environment it could have helped White students hopefully begin to unpack some of their implicit and explicit biases. Our history classes were Whitewashed, and I think that an adequate history course would have explained how racism is still very much so alive. I did not learn until going to college and then later law school, that schools are still largely segregated and that systematic racism is prevalent in almost every aspect of society from healthcare, housing, environmental concerns, etc. While I also bear individual responsibility in learning this information and my failure to do so earlier in life is a result of my own White privilege, I think that high schools in HCPSS have an obligation to incorporate information on the continued prevalence of racism in their classrooms if they truly want to prepare students to be contributing and informed members of society.”

“I would recommend that all students are required to take a course specifically dedicated to teaching about the current presence of racism in our society, the importance of voting and civic engagement, and the need to continually engage and educate oneself on politics and the experiences of people who are different from them.”

Anonymous:

“As a straight White male, I didn't suffer from racial biases in the HCPSS school system or at MRHS, nor was I likely as aware of racial biases as I am today. Nonetheless, it's easy to remember the lack of real Black history being included in history curriculum outside some of the atrocities that the community has suffered over the past several hundred years. Thinking back, there could easily have been much less focus on the commonly known White European history and contributions that dominates all the classes and more focus on the contributions made by people of color throughout American and Global History. I see no need to learn the same European history every year you have to take a social studies class. Additionally, English classes never seemed to celebrate great authors other than mostly White authors, books by which seem to have become staples in English classes.

There were also certainly more direct racist incidents, including participation or encouragement by bus driver(s) that I had witnessed before. It's embarrassing to think back to those moments and both not have intervened nor had actual adults intervened when they were certainly around. Based on what I've seen more recently, I highly doubt anything has even remotely changed in the system and it likely has gotten even worse. I hope HCPSS listens to the communities that are asking for change in the school system and believes every word they choose to share rather than continue to push it under the rug in favor of the rich and/or White parents that don't want things to change."

Anonymous:

"The tracking by race is profoundly troubling in our district."

Anonymous:

"One experience with racial bias that particularly sticks out was regarding a staff member hired to help teach the marching band. He frequently singled out the only Black student within our subgroup of the band and did so in a joking manner as to normalize his racist behavior with the other students and encourage it as playful mocking. It resulted in the student leaving the marching band and music programs all together and the staff member being let go with no repercussions as far as I am aware. I believe he continued to teach at other high schools in the county, although I don't know that for a fact."

"There are many instructors involved in extracurricular activities that may not be tracked as official staff members by the county. There needs to be a more official hiring process for these people as they interact with students in a much more direct and unfiltered manner than most teachers do. Any racial bias training or vetting of these instructors is therefore potentially even more important than normal staff members."

Hannah Cash, Glenelg High School, Class of 2013:

"from an academic perspective - race was near non-existent. I remember vague "one class talks" perhaps once a year and depending on the teacher. but I cannot remember a single history lesson that explicitly and openly discussed race coming from Glenelg high school. the entirety of my education re: race in this country came from the continuation of my education in college. this should not be so. I did not begin reading works by Black authors until I was in college. Why is Huckleberry Finn the token "African American" story to teach us about race, when we have brilliant authors like James Baldwin? There is no excuse for this. and while in college, I looked back in awe (and worry) that such important lessons could be swept under the rug. I missed fundamental educational lessons during my time at HCPSS.

From a personal and humanist perspective - i had friends teased and bullied because of their race and sexuality. there was never any follow-through on reprimanding these bullies either. as a teenager, you (should) know what is right, and what is wrong, and I often felt confused and powerless that I saw my friends being treated by their peers in such a way, with no correction

from the same people who are meant to support and educate us. it not only confused and angered me, but it created a negative learning environment for all.

I became closer friends with a few people from my high school in college, and I was horrified hearing their experiences. they had a hard time coming to school and felt very isolated. and a year after i left Glenelg high school, there was a confederate flag at a football game. but that too was 'explained' for.

how can HCPSS claim to have such an excellent school system, when it builds a school system that occludes such an essential part of our history. and a history in which the ugly roots continue to grow. you can do a quick google of Glenelg racism, and reports of hate crimes come up. just last year, there were swastikas spray painted around the school

I attribute very little of all that I have learned from my time at Glenelg high school - if anything, I can be grateful for learning how not to act or treat others.”

(HCPSS) “should include sexuality (in the curriculum). i.e. lessons about gay rights”

Anonymous:

“I very clearly remember being used to racism in school. I did not experience it, but I remember witnessing it in some way almost every day. Some of it was ABHORRENTLY violent and outright, but a large majority of it was complicit and implied. This comes from many different places: the gentrification of this part of the county forcing lower-income families out of their homes, and excluding people of different socio-economic classes from moving in; the delusion of many of the White people living here that just because they don't scream from the rooftops that they hate people based on their race and have a token POC friend doesn't make them racist; the fact that, as of 2016 when I began looking into the disparities of the county, 40% of the Howard County student population was White and at Glenelg High school that figure rose to 80%, just 20 minutes away from schools with a majority minority population. I'm not asking that we bus students all over the county to find perfect balance. People should be able to thrive in the communities that they live in and have school and work easily accessible to them. BUT we NEED to make a concerted effort to be anti-racist, especially in places like Glenelg. We need to be transparent. Because I was privileged to attend college after graduating, I have been able to learn bits and pieces of the Black, African, Native American, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, Female, Non-Binary, LGBTQ+ and more histories and stories and perspectives that were SYSTEMATICALLY excluded from my education in HCPSS. There is no excuse for this. I spoke in front of the Board of Education in 2016 complaining of the lack of diversity in the literature curriculum for 10th Grade English. That year I didn't read a single book by a woman or a person of color (but TWO by Ernest Hemingway), let alone someone of the LGBTQ+ community. In 12 grade AP English, I didn't read a single PIECE of literature by a woman for the first 3 months of class. I will say, when I brought this to the attention of my teacher, he made every effort to change this and allowed me to help choose new material to add to the class. I believe that if the majority of what we read and work into our brains as canon is written by the White-Cis-Straight Man, that becomes our "standard." It becomes the lens, especially as a White

person, by which we are taught to see the world, and therefore, our standard for what the Human Experience means. So, when we read a piece by a POC or non-man, we do so primarily to understand the "alternative" perspective, not to add to a collective knowledge of human experience. It marginalizes minorities through implication. This is just one example of how our curriculum is failing HCPSS students. We need to learn Black and Brown history, not the White-washed version of it. HCPSS taught me MLK was a hero because of his plea for peace in resistance (which wasn't as straight forward as we were taught) and that Malcolm X and the Black Panthers were more extremist and more akin to terrorists. The TRUTH is NOT too complicated for teenagers. What is complicated is to teach them the White way and leave them ignorant of the true realities of the world, leading them to be more likely to become hateful and lacking empathy because their privilege allows them to ignore injustice. To teach students to address their implicit bias and to work to change them is part of a school system's primary RESPONSIBILITY to its students and the world they prepare them for, and cannot be achieved by simply checking a box on a "Diversity Inclusion" requirement. We need to change the system as a whole.”

Sarah Girard, Glenelg High School, Class of 2015:

“I will start by acknowledging the privilege I grew up with as one of the few Asian Americans in my year. While I faced many instances of racial stereotyping, as well as anti-Asian comments and behaviors, no one ever perceived me as dangerous or limited my academic growth due to their perception of me as less capable than my peers. If anything, the stereotypes associated with Asian Americans (hardworking, good at math...etc.) likely helped me excel as an individual in the Howard County school system.

That being said, I want to emphasize that my education at Lisbon Elementary School, Glenwood Middle School, and Glenelg High School utterly failed to educate me on matters related to race, inclusion, privilege, and empathy. Every day, I become more grateful that I was able to attend a college where these issues were not only a focus in classes, but also regularly discussed amongst students, coaches, and professors. However, the fact that it took a 4 year degree at a private college to make me aware that systemic racism continues to harm Black Americans in this country - that it took a private college for me to be taught by a Black educator for the first time - is inexcusable by any standard.

During my time at Glenelg, there were several incidences of students bringing confederate flags to school and football games. These are well recorded, so I won't spend too much time elaborating on how the students responsible were not held accountable, nor were these issues addressed by faculty or HCPSS in a sufficient manner. I want to focus more on the issues that were not documented by major news sources.

First, there was a girl on my bus in elementary school who openly stated, "I am racist, and proud." I specifically remember challenging her, asking if I offended her by being Asian, but it seemed almost as if this thought had not occurred to her. It became clear after spending each day on the bus with her that this racism that she was so "proud" of was aimed specifically at

Black and Hispanic students. It is likely she adopted these views from her parents, because hopefully no elementary school student would ever come to this belief on their own, but it was the school's job to rectify these beliefs. They continued at least throughout middle school (to my knowledge).

I remember in 6th grade that *Roots* was shown each day during the "Core +" period (the last 45 minutes of the day). I remember not being able to watch very much of it at all, that the violence, dehumanization, and abuse made me feel sick to my stomach, and I had to find other ways to distract myself during this time. Please don't misunderstand, I'm not advocating for shielding students from the atrocities that have and continue to occur, but the fact that there was NO discussion after these viewings, NO system to check on the few Black students who had no choice but to watch as 11 and 12 year olds, shows not only a lack of understanding for the material we were forced to view, but also highlights the performative nature of "education" related to these topics.

In my homeroom class in 7th grade, a White boy continued to call me a "nerd" each morning. He would say something along the lines of, "wanna see a nerd? example A!" pointing to me. Boys on my bus would say things like, "You not B-sian, you A-sian!" whenever we were sent home with progress reports or report cards. Another boy at the end of 8th grade mentioned that "Asians all have these yellow teeth," and I remember uncomfortably laughing and agreeing with him because I wasn't sure how to respond. These comments about who I must be, due to how others perceived my race, made it extremely clear to me that my peers did not view me the same way as they did their fellow White students. It forced me not only to identify with my Asian side, but to completely ignore the fact that I'm half-White. What did it matter if my family is beautifully composed of more than one race, if students and teachers would only see me as Asian anyways?

In high school, whenever a guy would show some interest in me, friends would say that he must have "yellow fever!" I honestly didn't know what this meant the first time I heard it, but quickly understood it to mean that anyone who could possibly be interested in me was only doing so because they had a thing for "yellow girls." I had never thought of my skin as "yellow," but went along with the joke because again, I was not educated or mature enough to know how to respond.

Lastly, I distinctly remember a White girl from my psychology AP class junior year tweeting that she would rather "eat glass than deal with Asians." I didn't say anything to her, just vented to my sister about why this girl had so much hate for people she clearly didn't take the time to understand. I was confused, and hurt, but ultimately decided to put it out of my mind to fit in with the status quo.

These are only the instances that I can remember, but the bottom line is that I was fully unprepared to respond in each of these instances. I was terrified of straying from the path of the "studious Asian girl," because that is where I found that I could be successful and accepted. Howard County MUST address the amount of harm that continues to impact students of color, especially Black students, and provide the resources, support, and education to better prepare us

all to deal with the racist reality of our world. The public school system must work for everyone, not just the rich White kids who had "crushes" on the school police officer.”

Anonymous:

“I'm hoping political clothing will be banned on all School campuses, as well as on School Buses....it's often insulting and intimidating to the students to have to be exposed to political agendas. I've been insulted more than a few times by people who flaunt their agendas on their clothes. I called Calvin Ball's office last week to apologize for the deplorable attitude some people have shown him. It's hurtful and discouraging. I will also be following up on some of my concerns and suggestions as to how we can make our schools more comfortable for all students. I also will include my thoughts with the school board, the School Superintendent and other people who work for the Department of Education and Department of Transportation. And yes, I am a long time school bus driver. I am also fed up with bullies who love to denigrate others while working around students.”

“Let's all work together to make sure all students, from the time they step on the school bus, or walk into a school until they leave and get home.....is a positive rewarding day...it's a team effort that is needed”

Samuel Paul, Howard High School, Class of 2015:

“Race has played into so many of my experiences at Howard County Public Schools. I remember, going back to elementary school, that I went by my Yoruba middle name, Seun, in school. Many of my teachers failed or simply refused to learn how to pronounce my name, and I remember that I got in trouble for correcting my teachers when explaining how my name was pronounced. It made me so ashamed that when I went to middle school, I went by my biblical first name, Samuel, to avoid controversy.

Many of my classmates at Howard High School were openly racist to me, saying the n-word to my face telling me that I should not be so upset and to not let a word have power over me. Many of my classmates peddled in stereotypes about Black men, and it is with shame I admit I played along with this to fit in. I've had my own classmates tell me that I only got into college because of affirmative action. Many of the students at Howard High School had racially insensitive worldviews and I believe it is because the school system has failed to teach them about the true nature of this country.

Yes, our school system ticks off all the boxes: we learn about the horrors of slavery and the middle passage, we learn about reconstruction, and we learn about the Civil Rights Movement. But nobody teaches us about how in the post-reconstruction period African Americans were subjected to racial violence and Terror, where they were systematically denied the right to vote by being denied the right to live. Nobody teaches us how White racists in the South launched a series of coups against democratically-elected governments (Ex: Wilmington NC in 1898) that largely combined with massacres of African Americans in order to enforce a White supremacist hierarchy. Nobody taught us of the number of race riots that occurred in the

late 1910s and 1920s that destroyed the prosperity in Black communities. Nobody taught us about how New Deal programs were specifically designed to leave out farmers and domestic workers because they knew it would disproportionately affect African-Americans. Nobody teaches us about the history of racial gerrymandering in our politics, nobody teaches us how current voter suppression tactics are just a nonviolent legal evolution of the forms of violent and unjust voter suppression that occurred in the 1800s. Nobody teaches us that the only bombs dropped on American soil outside of the Pearl Harbor attacks were by White rioters in the Tulsa race riot of 1921 and by the police in Philadelphia in the 1980s. Nobody tells us about how the War on Drugs was specifically designed to mobilize White anxieties against Black and brown people. This does not even begin to get into the discussions of how race has played negatively against Black Americans in education, in healthcare, in sentencing guidelines for criminal offenses, and in general American life. Not to mention this country's continued abuses against Hispanics and Asians.

In my opinion the Howard County Public School System resembles the inequality in this country. The Howard County public school system has been content with pointing out the diversity in their schools claiming that there is no hate in our community and saying that the work of the civil rights movement has been completed. But even our County's Public School System is evidence of the achievement Gap in education based on wealth and by area. We see it in the gap between the rich students that go to Centennial High School and to River Hill High School and even Howard High School while lower income students continue to languish at Long Reach or at Oakland Mills or at Wilde Lake High School. We are content with pretending¹ as though those issues don't exist, while benefiting from a system funded by property taxes, that helps to reinforce inequality. Administrators are more likely to seek out and punish African American students for violating codes of conduct and they are less likely to punish White students who do the same. I have never seen a White student get punished for helping to break up a fight, but in my 9th grade English class I witnessed a Black student get suspended for putting himself in between students who were at each other's necks. I believe that this county has a long way to go before it can even claim to support or to stand with those who are fighting for equality in this country.”

(HCPSS should) “Improve the curriculum to include the diverse histories of Americans in the country, and people around the world, give teachers bias and sensitivity training (&) engage students with anti-racism activities early so students grow up with an appreciation of one another.”

Josephine Stommel, Glenelg High School, Class of 2015:

HCPSS should “incorporate mediation strategies into disciplines: this could include mediation circles, restorative justice, and other modes.”

Anonymous:

“In my entire educational career with HCPSS (K-12), I never had a Black teacher. Even if HCPSS had had a diverse curriculum, the lack of Black mentors and role models was detrimental to myself and my peers.”

Anonymous:

“As an African American alumnus of HCPSS, I was excited to return as a teacher in 2006; today, my children are HCPSS students but I am an employee of another school district. Although I can look back positively on most of my experiences while teaching here, there were things that I experienced that, to my knowledge, none of my other colleagues in my content area did.

After graduating from college mid-year, I was a long term sub at two HCPSS schools. I was thankful for the support and praise I got for my work, despite being in some tough situations as a new teacher. That summer, I was not hired for the positions I interviewed for. After a year in another district, I had the opportunity to come back, and I did- but after 7 years at that school, I was surplusd. After 1 year at my next school, I interviewed at 2 high schools in the summer, and was told that I could not transfer because the deadlines had passed- nothing could be done. After a very difficult 2nd year, I attempted to transfer again. I ultimately decided to leave the county for a position I was offered elsewhere. After taking that position, I learned that another current employee was handpicked for a position similar to what I'd been looking to return to, after a deadline that, when I was in the situation the prior year, could not be changed for me.

I don't think rules need to be bent in my favor- but I have watched them be bent for others, and not for me. There is no way for me to prove that what I kept experiencing was because I was discriminated against. But after reflecting on how hard I had worked for my “status” as a teacher and that, despite that work, people weren't “going to bat” for me when it mattered, I developed some suspicions. After I left, I was reminded by others that I had in fact grown into an expert in my field, and that I did have a lot to offer to the school system. It was, and still is, surreal that my work was appreciated by colleagues, students and parents, but seemingly not the system itself.

I think Howard County, as a school system, works to be inclusive and fair within their staffing policies, but there is a lot of work to be done at the central office level to be sure that those policies are put into practice so that qualified educators- particularly those of color- are not passed over for “favorites.” I'm a strong teacher, but not being a “favorite” for reasons beyond my control almost derailed my career.”

(HCPSS should) “Create space to discuss and study implicit bias at both the school level and central office. *This is where the majority of the county's issues with race reside. There are some blatant things that make the news, but most issues come from microaggressions and assumptions that are made. This is what is really impeding our progress here.”

Anonymous:

“Honestly, I'm not surprised that the majority of comments about racist and intolerant attitudes are about my school. Reading through these statements made by past students, I'm not sure anything has changed, despite the newsletters touting "celebration of diversity" at Glenelg. "Developing tomorrow's leaders in a community that values scholarship, citizenship, and diversity"? Bullshit.

There is a severe lack of diversity within our school administration which hinders progress. Glenelg has a disgusting power dynamic within the student body, where those who are White are free to say anything and the teachers will look the other way. More appalling is the fact that these individuals know that they have this privilege and that they continue to vocally express racial slurs/ offensive statements. Racial minorities (African American, Asian American, Latino/Hispanic American), LGBTQ students, and even religious minorities (Jewish and Muslim students) are all subject to offensive remarks and slurs.

Aside from the swastika symbols and racist graffiti galore on school property, I have experienced multiple micro-aggressions and have witnessed multiple racist slurs. During school projects, students tend to avoid social issues such as gun rights and abortions at the risk of being made fun of. In the library, I have heard the n-word being directed at African American students. By now, I am baffled that these people can still use ignorance as an excuse for their behavior. Later this year when COVID was spreading, I remember a fellow student commenting that if Chinese people didn't have such filthy eating habits then maybe we wouldn't be in this mess. She said this, next to a group of Asians, myself included, and then proceeded to start a discussion about how Chinese consume dogs/cats with more people. From what I have seen, a large portion of the student body is openly homophobic and transphobic.

Some students outwardly claim equality for all races, religions, and minorities, and those same people who supposedly “support diversity” display a different story on the bus ride home or in the corners of classrooms.

Exposure to Black History or any other minority culture, in general, is limited to the brief/general overview of civil rights which is often shafted because it is in the latter part of the year, or through Black History Month. From what I remember, *To Kill a Mockingbird* was one of the only novels to have an African American with dialogue. *TKAM*, pigeonholes Tom Robinson as the victim and that's it, and subsequently confines him to a one-dimensional character. There are so many different pieces of literature out there that describe the POC experiences: (*The Hate U Give*, *On the Come Up*, *Makes Me Wanna Holler*, *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*).

Every year, we have a “so-called” anonymous survey where we are supposed to give feedback about acceptance in the school community. After the survey, one of my classmates loudly exclaimed that there was racism in Glenelg and that there continues to be no racism in our school. Similarly, in interviews for school committees, we are asked whether there is racism in the school, in front of a group of students. Realistically, Glenelg is never going to receive truthful criticism until the administration can create a safe environment for student responses.

The same people who deny the existence of racism in our school reap the benefits of their privilege.”

Sarah B Ferrell, Marriotts Ridge High School, Class of 2011:

“As a student at Marriotts Ridge High School, I witnessed far too many instances of violence towards students of color to be able to recount them all: a range of hate speech and microaggressions from peers and staff/faculty, curriculum that made invisible the contributions of people of color (in history, literature, art, science, etc.), staff/faculty not intervening in moments of race-based aggression towards students of color, no opportunities to develop students’ awareness of systems of oppression, systematic racism, and the role of White Supremacy (historically & presently) at the system or individual level. The demands in this letter are essential to the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of Black students and families in HCPSS, as well as all students who are harmed by internalize White Supremacy; all students benefit from anti-racist teaching practice.

Throughout my college and professional career, I have been filled with a growing disgust for HCPSS. Though many tout it as a strong academic public school system, I look back and can only see the harms perpetuated by the racism and classism that plague our county.

I will highlight a few examples aligned to the demands in this letter:

Demands No. 2, 3, 4: MRHS did not permit a Black Student Union. Instead, they allowed a “Mustang African-American Awareness Club (MAAAC)”. This shifts the narrative and intention away from power-building by Black students. It instead centers the need for non-Black students to “be aware of” Black students and Black history. This is problematic in and of itself. As a White girl, I joined MAAAC -- though I did not have the vocabulary at the time, I was trying to be an ‘ally’ to address the extreme segregation I witnessed on a daily basis, without understanding that I should have been working within predominantly White spaces; unfortunately, there was no White staff at MRHS capable of leading anti-racist work for White students. This was also problematic and exemplifies the need for staff to receive routine and ongoing support for how to be effective anti-racist educators. When the MAAAC had student executive board elections, a staff member suggested I run for President instead of the Black male student that was running because “he doesn’t have any leadership experience.” Instead of recognizing this as an opportunity to support the leadership development of this student, the staff member wanted to continue investing in me, a White student. This was routine at MRHS, for staff to invest more time and energy in White students. This further neglects the very real lived experience of Black students that is in and of itself a valuable asset, especially in an organization like MAAAC, where my lived experience as a White student was not actually of value.

Demands No. 4 (and 2, 3): MRHS staff did not offer opportunities for student reflection on current events. Throughout the 2008 presidential election cycle, teachers did not make space to discuss the historic events. I have many memories of White students making racist comments about Barack Obama and never once did a teacher intervene.

Demand No. 1: During my AP Comparative Government and Politics Class, the teacher routinely made jokes and denigrating statements about other countries and forms of governments that were xenophobic. The class did not interrogate why non-capitalist and non-democratic forms of government have arisen around the world, the U.S. role in violently sabotaging these movements; rather, the teacher and the curriculum reinforced notions of American Exceptionalism.

Demands No. 1, 2, 3, 6: MRHS needs to deeply interrogate the disproportionate underrepresentation of students of color in advanced classes. Many of my peers, especially Black peers, would discuss how it felt to be in all-White classes, especially in AP or advanced classes. Tracking of students of color is a result of deeply entrenched, unconscious (implicit) bias and is not due to the abilities of students of color. Rather, all HCPSS schools must examine practices across elementary, middle, and high schools that result in the disproportionate tracking of students based on race/ethnicity, such as practices that: punish students of color (“push out” practices), undermine or denigrate students of color and their lived experiences, are unsupportive and unwelcoming for families and caregivers for students of color. Evidence-based culturally responsive teaching practices have demonstrated the ability for all students to succeed in public schools, teaching practices which were certainly not evident in my experience in HCPSS. Each individual school should collect data on the race/ethnicity of students across classes and extracurricular programming in order to examine what school-based and classroom-based practices and policies contribute to the disproportionate exclusion of Black students and families.”

(The work of DEIs) “should take an explicitly anti-racist lens.”

(HCPSS should) “add more data collection in order to drive decision-making and change processes related to how students of color, esp. Black students are disproportionately tracked -- both in classes and in terms of career vs. college opportunities.”

Gwen Kokes, Marriott Ridge High School, Class of 2011:

“I cannot remember one challenging lesson on race in America in my time as an HCPSS student. I only remember talking about race as ethnicity in regards to the transatlantic slave trade or lessons on Africa in senior year literature class.

My thoughts and beliefs were never challenged. I never swallowed or confronted my biases and racism. In fact, speaking up against racism seemed ill advised in our “post racial” communities (almost all of which was White). I leaned on Black friends to explain everything to me regarding their race and what discrimination they face.

I did well in high school — grades, sports, social life and I believe almost all of those successes had to do with being a White girl who didn’t speak up when she felt like it.

HCPSS needs to challenge our beliefs, challenge our students, and spread the culture of questioning.

I’m very grateful for my amazing education. I am also very sad that I didn’t challenge myself and my beliefs in high school or younger.”

Anonymous:

“I attended HCPSS schools K-12 and graduated from Glenelg in 2002. I was wholly unprepared for the diverse larger world, and I work hard now to combat prejudices and stereotypes I learned during my time in the school system. I feel so embarrassed now to think about the way I treated people of color (not poorly, but ignorantly) in my first years outside of the Howard County bubble.

As a teacher now, I am a firm advocate for the rights of all students for the opportunity to learn and feel that they have a place in school, but, honestly, not much has changed in 20-odd years. Most teachers, many similarly county-produced, do not or cannot do the hard work of pinpointing and confronting very real biases.

I sign and support this petition in hope of real change in what should be one of the greatest school systems in the country.”

Rachel McGrain, Wilde Lake High School, Class of 2009:

“The percentage of my classmates who were students of color decreased dramatically between elementary school (Longfellow) and middle/high school (Harpers Choice/Wilde Lake) when I began taking GT and AP courses. If segregation by "ability" is still an issue, I would like to see greater transparency and effort put into ensuring that all students are encouraged to pursue advanced courses. This could be tied into more anti-racist training for teachers and less reliance on standardized testing (again, I'm not sure if that is how decisions are still made).”

Camryn Long, Glenelg High School, Class of 2013:

“We must change the curriculums taught at HCPSS to include and emphasize our racial history and Black history! Any administrator that has borne witness to racism in our public schools and has stood by idly should be ousted. HCPSS needs to take a stand against racism.”

Anonymous:

“I remember in class, we were reading "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," and one of the assignments we had was to write an essay about whether or not the book should be taught in classrooms due to its usage of the n-word and other controversies surrounding the book. A fellow classmate posted their "essay," which only contained the n-word repeated over and over again, and some other classmates were laughing, commenting "it only gets better." We even learned in that class, that the n-word was originally used to describe slaves. So, this incident really disturbed me not only because of its blatant racism, but also the fact that these classmates learned about the origins of the n-word but still chose to use it as a "joke”.”

Ciara Davis, Glenelg High School, Class of 2013:

“Nothing about these stories surprises me. As a Black female student that went through Glenelg, I know firsthand about the racism many of us have experienced. And I know it extends

all around the county. I have so many stories, and I've listed some below. I know there are some I can't even remember.

- My 9th grade English teacher repeatedly called me out and tried to embarrass me in class for "not working" and then I had to deal with her as my "guidance counselor"
- A kid on my bus called his friend the N-word and only got quiet when another African-American student called him out
- That same kid tried to bully me and another POC on the bus by throwing things at us
- The Howard High School softball team said racist things about me on Twitter after a game (around 2011-12) and then tried to apologize by sending us gatorade the next time we played like Gatorade fixes racism
- The softball coach (2012-13) called the SRO on my parents
- Constantly hearing that schools with a larger minority student population were "unsafe" and "we should hide our belongings" when we went there for events
- After graduation, while attending a football game - that my brother was playing in - the students displayed the confederate flag
- My personal favorite: I got into UPenn and had to hear that a White girl in my class who didn't get in said I only did so because I was Black

HCPSS needs to do better. The recent comments that came out about Black families during the redistricting should show you how bad it is. And if it doesn't - HCPSS, you're going to be facing much bigger problems than racist graffiti. I'm speaking up because I want the next Black student that goes through this system to know that you're not alone, and you can always reach out. And to remember to stand up for yourself."

Brianna Stanley, River Hill High School, Class of 2016:

"Black history in curriculum was nonexistent, if it weren't for having a Black history teacher my sophomore year, I would have left River Hill as racially ignorant as I was when I walked in my freshman year. If it weren't for that one teacher, I would have never understood what our government was built for, and against. I remember that class being one of the best discussion based classes I had ever taken, and one of the most informative. It wasn't because of the curriculum, it was due to our teacher answering every student's questions honestly and always with the opportunity to follow up with a discussion. I look back now and realize how uninformed and ignorant some of these questions and students were. I believe it's because the majority of that classroom had never had a discussion regarding racism in our government's history. The majority of the class were White students who saw no benefit in joining the conversation of how they can acknowledge their privilege. This conversation should have started for every student, years before they entered high school. Racial bias was evident in River Hill, in every aspect of school. The entire school was drowned in White privilege, stemming from ignorant administrators, to teachers and coaches, and lastly students. Administration focused on sweeping any 'controversies' under the rug as quickly and quietly as possible and NEVER was there a direct address to incidents at our school unless it came from the county."

Anonymous:

“As a visibly Muslim student who is not Black, I experienced MANY incidents of racism, including having my hijab pulled off multiple times, being followed by older students chanting “Allahu Akbar” as I got off the bus, being called a terrorist, and more. I witnessed my Black friends being called the n word by White students when there were differences of opinion. In my government class sophomore year, a discussion arose about racism in the US and a White girl exclaimed “why don’t they just go back to where they came from then”. In my psych ap class senior year, the discussions surrounding prejudice and racism became so common and the refusal to believe our experiences by White people was so high, the class ended up with the right half being the White students and the left half became the Nonwhite students. That’s how we all sat for the rest of the year. Throughout my education in Howard county from kindergarten to senior year, the topics surrounding racism that were discussed in class were the same things over and over again. MLK, Rosa Parks, and a watered down version of the civil rights movement. There was no discussion of how slaves had to REBEL and FIGHT. No discussion of how badly native Americans were TORTURED. No discussion of how 9/11 led to countless acts of VIOLENCE and MURDER of brown people. No discussion of how the system (laws, taxes, real estate, gentrification, etc.) was created to prevent Black people from succeeding and protect White riches. How the system allows Black people to be persecuted more for the same crimes as White people, who often walk free. How jury selection leads to bias that increases the likelihood of Black people rotting in prison. HOWARD COUNTY DID NOT EDUCATE ME NEARLY AS WELL AS THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA DID.”

(HCPSS should)”increase hiring of Black and brown teachers, expand teachings to include REAL history including DIFFICULT topics such as how Black people are persecuted unfairly and how laws are created to specifically prevent Black and brown people from succeeding.”

Alexander Anderson, Glenelg High School, Class of 2014:

“The summer following my freshman year, I took biology over the summer at Long Reach Highschool. The staff there was a mix of teachers and administration from a variety of HCPSS schools. An experience from this summer that stuck with me occurred during a group work session where I was paired with a Black student from our sister class. We worked well together, but the teacher yelled at us of working too quickly and accused the other student of copying off of me. Our work was confiscated- we were punished for learning. It angered me that the staff assumed the other student wasn't contributing equally or was less intelligent; I couldn't help but feel that race had something to do with it. It angered me even more how the staff spoke to the other student and that they would reprimand a student for learning instead of praising them. It was clear that some of the students that had been struggling were actually gifted, but the attitude of the staff held them back.”

Jessie Link, Centennial High School, Class of 2014:

“Oh, Centennial.

Often I felt like I was the "token Black friend" of a lot of people at Centennial because the number of Black people was incredibly low. Impossibly low, in fact. Centennial is clearly not integrated with the rest of the county, and it is a disgrace. It has a "reputation" to uphold (upper middle class), and apparently this "reputation" can be upheld by continuing to have a large socioeconomic gap between schools which excludes many people of color from attending Centennial.

Being mixed, I was subject to a lot of different microaggressions at Centennial. "You're basically an Oreo." "You look Black but act White." "Where are you from?" You name it, I probably heard it. I didn't really learn about microaggressions until my race & psychology classes in college. It would be very helpful to have a larger unit on microaggressions in sociology and psychology classes which everyone should be taking.

The curriculum regarding Black history was practically non-existent, and when there was mention of Black history, it was White-washed. I don't even remember learning about anyone outside the peaceful civil rights leaders like MLK. What about Malcolm X? Marcus Garvey? These individuals were HUGE figures and completely excluded from the curriculum. Don't want to offend anyone, right? In addition, why is the focus only on social issues? What about what we contributed on the industrial side? Black history is not only about slavery and the Civil Rights movement. In addition, I think financial literacy should be added to the curriculum, as a lot of times minority communities are excluded from this arena, and that can lead to life-long problems.

I could go on forever about this, but the last thing I'm going to say is that I didn't have a single Black teacher in my entire journey through the Howard County School System (K-12; Northfield, Burleigh Manor, Centennial). Not one. I don't even need to tell you how unacceptable that is.

I loved going to school at Centennial, and I consider it to be a great privilege that my parents provided me. However, we can always do better, and we WILL do better to represent our communities of color. <3”

Anonymous:

“I've been going to HCPSS since kindergarten. Never once did I have a teacher of color. Black history was a topic left out of all my history classes and I didn't start learning about the true oppression African Americans face until my freshman year of college. This is unacceptable. Black history needs to be taught in schools; the fight for civil rights, Black scientists, Black politicians, etc. The students of Glenelg are majority White and completely blind to what goes on in the world and how it affects people. The students of Glenelg live in a bubble where they are protected when they say racist things and carry confederate flags. Majority are uneducated on how these words and symbols are hurtful. I urge HCPSS to take action and implement mandatory classes on Black History.”

Anonymous:

“I did all of K-12 schooling in HCPSS schools. I went to Ilchester Elementary School and Bonnie Branch Middle School. Then, my parents decided to move when I was in eighth grade and I ended up going to Centennial High School. The one thing I noticed throughout my school years was the lack of diversity amongst the student population and amongst the staff. Racial diversity doesn't just mean non-White. In order for our schools to truly be integrated and for our student body to truly be racially diverse, the student population in each school must reflect the actual population in Howard County. In Howard County, 56.6% of people are White, 20% of people are African American, and 19.9% of people are Asian. Bonnie Branch Middle School - White (35.2%), African American (26.4%), Asian (16.3%). Centennial High School - Asian (39.7%), White (39.5%), African American (8.9%). The lack of African American students at Centennial High School was always incredibly glaring to me, especially having gone to Bonnie Branch Middle School. In my 4 years at Centennial, I only had one African American student that consistently was in the same classes as me. This should not be the case 66 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*. I understand the fears of housing prices dropping etc., etc. We all know how unbelievably nasty the Wilde Lake redistricting debate got last year, which made me ashamed to say that I was from HCPSS. Elected officials at all levels and school administrations should figure out a way to untie this ridiculous association between property values and school districts. Tying student wealth to public education means that the whole system of public education is a failure.”

“In order for our schools to truly be integrated and for our student body to truly be racially diverse, the student population in each school must reflect the actual population in Howard County.”

Marc Levender, Wilde Lake High School, Class of 2010:

(There was) “far fewer BIPOC teachers than White teachers, a lack of diversity and awareness training and a lack of any multicultural considerations in any of my classes.”

Emaan Bhutta, River Hill High School, Class of 2018:

“There was essentially no Black history curriculum at River Hill. I think River Hill and the White, rich culture of it failed the Black students. My junior year, there was a leaked Snapchat of a classmate which pictured her holding a gun with the Black history month Snapchat filter on and the caption she added was “I’m boutta shoot some n****rs.” The response from RHHS to this deeply disturbing and threatening picture was performative, in-genuine and honestly just unacceptable. The school held a time where students could go in for discussions to talk about the incident but no real, helpful conversation was really had. They then worked on creating a diversity day program with a group of student leaders who wanted to be involved. This day of diversity was skipped by most students, but even for those who were there it was rather unproductive. We started the day with a White male guest speaker then continued to do activities

in groups that were really no more than get to know me activities. In addition, RHHS administration invited the local news stations before even telling the student planners about this. They simply wanted the media coverage so that this could be swept under the rug as quick as possible. That's the kind of school RHHS was under that administration and since that was only a few years ago and I still know students there I know that's the kind of culture that is still present."

"Teach about Black history in America. Stop trying to sugar coat it. Make students read books that will help them develop into better people. Do more!"

Nora Ezzat Cozzilio, River Hill High School, Class of 2010:

"I am Egyptian and Muslim and faced many issues both from the faculty and from students. I had teachers who were intolerant of me observing Islamic holidays that were never acknowledged by the school board, and have also had racial and religious epithets thrown in my face by students."

"The curriculum needs to be more well rounded to include Black history, Arab history, Mexican history, and so forth. There also needs to be a continued curriculum and discussion around human rights and the previous atrocities that have occurred that the school board has previously left unaddressed."

Maddie Caldis, Centennial High School, Class of 2017:

"From Dunloggin Middle School you were filtered in to 'Chentennial,' 'Wilde Rape,' or 'Mt. Heroin.' That doesn't include the micro aggressive and offensive nicknames for other HCPSS high schools that have been passed down for decades. There weren't many Black or Latino students at CHS, and the same 2-3 in the upper-level courses that I took were tokenized and often expressed feelings of frustration or isolation. We performed a production of "Aida" with no more than 15 Black students in the cast at a school that is 40% Asian and 40% White. How did that get approved? I am thankful to have had teachers and classmates who represented different races and backgrounds but that isn't the reality in all schools. There needs to be more representation, more education surrounding the history of racism in America, and more opportunities for discussion and conversation surrounding these topics in the classroom under the guidance of a teacher trained to lead them."

Anonymous:

"I grew up in Columbia, MD and followed the Swansfield- Harper's Choice - Wilde Lake chain of schools. I graduated from Wilde Lake in 2016 alongside most of my classmates from Kindergarten. Never once did I wish to go to a "Whiter" or "richer" school. While it was unfortunately evident that students at River hill were likely getting different treatment than those at Wilde Lake (which it thankfully partially addressed by this petition), I strongly believe that attending schools with such diversity fostered a strong community and taught me things about life and society that I never would have learned at other schools. While education is about

subject matter, it is also about being educated about society and what real people are experiencing outside of what you normally see in your everyday life (the good and the not as good). I never would have been exposed to such important experiences inside the racial bubbles contained by most other Howard County schools. I grew up with Black people, Hispanic people, Asian people, and White people as my friends and nothing less. You don't see hate as a kindergartener unless you are taught it, and thankfully my swansfield, harpers choice, and Wilde lake communities taught me that people are people, and race shouldn't divide us. If someone is worried that their child won't get "as good of an education" because they're going to one of these schools, maybe they should reevaluate what education really is and be grateful that their children are getting any education at all."

Anonymous, Atholton High School, Class of 2016:

"I grew up in Howard County never really taught to question the racial injustices and unfairness of the society we live in today. As a Black woman, I was silenced, and several times even made fun of by my peers for the color of my skin. I wasn't able to see my worth or beauty because it was never talked about and I wasn't given the support I needed to believe that as a Black woman I too had rights. I believe having more Black narratives and history taught would benefit groups of people in understanding their role in this unjust system and how to be a better ally. *Taught as by Black teachers!!!*

I still remember the endless jokes that were made whenever I walked into my AP class, "oh wow, are you sure you're in the right class. We don't usually see people like you here". I think more open discussions and Black narratives would also help Black students hear their voices. I think it would have made a huge difference in how I saw myself growing up, as I am still trying to unlearn all the negative things I was told and led to believe about my skin color. This is not just about White people, this is about us. Us, Black people, and anyone that has ever felt outside the margins, to regain their truth and confidence."

Anonymous:

"I believe I am a product of this:

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/investigations/bs-md-school-segregation-series-howard-20170325-story.html>

I'm sure you are combing through hundreds of comments right now, but if you have time, that article includes a powerful 5 minute video explaining how Howard County Public Schools was investigated and it was found that they were systematically tracking Black students into less challenging classes regardless of grades and test scores.

I remember being separated from my friends from elementary school starting in middle school- wondering why my mostly White friends were in GT classes and I was placed in all on grade level classes. I always wanted to know why. I tried hard in school...my grades were good. I distinctly remember a friend saying "it was probably a test or something that we took." I thought "What test? What were my results? What could I have done differently?"

I remember reading long chapter books in second grade and labeled myself as smart. But that belief in myself as a “smart girl” changed drastically during my 6th grade year. No one ever affirmed my intelligence or presented me with options for GT classes. I was a quiet Black girl, not sure of what questions to ask or how to advocate for myself. So I assumed I must’ve failed “The Test” and was not “smart enough”.

I also remember sitting in the back of a Social Studies classroom in sixth grade all year long with another Black student who was known for her misbehavior. I knew even then that I was sitting there because I was a quiet Black girl. I was looked at as someone that this misbehaved student could “relate to” and I wouldn’t “encourage” this behaved student. Myself and another Black girl sat with her. I felt like we were nothing but pawns.

I could never focus on anything that was going on and eventually opening my progress report and seeing my first handwritten D. I was in shock. This was before the time of being able to check your grade online, but I still felt a sense of betrayal. Had I known, had I been told, “I know you can do better...how can I help you to do better?” that’s all it would have taken. But I remember thinking, this teacher probably doesn’t think I care- she probably thinks I get D’s all of the time. She knows I failed “The Test” and that’s why I’m in this class anyway. And she never has the White students sit next to Jessica(misbehaved student) so she must think that they care more....my self esteem plummeted even more.

Fortunately for me, I didn’t stay defeated and I did well throughout school. But even then, upon entering high school, I ruled out certain career paths because I assumed I wasn’t smart enough for them. Looking back now, I could see how the entire course of my life could have been different if I had someone affirm my intelligence and push me during those very formative years of my life.”

“There should be an Equity Office in Howard County.”

Anonymous:

“I want to address that de facto segregation exists in the Howard County Public School Systems. As someone who has graduated from River Hill High School and has benefited from the inequitable school and housing policies in this county, I was disappointed by how many families within my neighborhoods protested angrily and vocally against the new redistricting plans just last year. Although many of these families moved into these pricier homes directly seeking “better” education opportunities for their children, as an Asian-American myself, I want to call out that these actions support and perpetuate unequal public education based on socio-economic status, which is tied to, yes, race. I do not pretend to understand all the complexities of this issue nor do I have well-thought out solutions to this problem. In writing this, I want to say that families, especially Asian-American, cannot say that they are not involved in these issues of race and privilege when your actions contribute to the problem of inequity in this country due to systemic and structural racism.”

Anonymous:

“I attended Centennial High School. I initially took a lot of pride that I came from an extremely racially diverse county when I first attended college, especially coming from the community of Columbia, MD—designed and developed by James W. Rouse to be one of the first planned cities in America for racial and economic integration. However, only as I went through college and afterwards, did I realize that I did not have a single Black teacher in my elementary, middle, or high school education (I did not have many teachers that were non-Black people of color either, other than those that taught foreign languages). Nor did I really begin to understand racial issues and its impact on our country until college, when exposed to the immense diversity of students, educators, and perspectives. Looking back, I recognize even more the deep racial and economic segregation of our County's school system. Frankly, seeing the ugly and appalling side of parents during the recent redistricting debates showed the real face of many people in our community, who are not afraid to be outright racist and do not value diversity as much as they pretend they do.

I still believe I received a solid foundational education as a whole in high school. However, I do remember multiple moments of microaggressions (that I am aware of, but I know there must have been more) perpetuated by students and educators. I remember peers talking about surrounding schools that had predominantly Black students in a negative way. I do not recall any overt racially-motivated incidents in my high school (although I am sure they existed), however I've heard plenty of stories through the grapevine of such incidents in other surrounding schools, mostly perpetuated by students, that were deeply unsettling. I remember students in a nearby high school calling the hallway where some Black students hung out as the "jungle". Unfortunately, these are only some of the many comments/stories I've heard.

I also recognize how watered down Black and Native American history was taught to us. I think it's an immense failure of our national education system as a whole in teaching history and other subjects from the perspective of only White people. Nor did we really understand the gravity of the darkness of our history, which is extremely important to cover when our worldview is still being shaped/molded at that age. Although we were exposed to some Black authors in high school, many of the literature we read about Black people were written primarily by White authors. We need more exposure to authors that are BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color). I don't even think some of the literature written by Black authors were properly analyzed by the predominantly White teachers in our curriculum. I do not recall having an LGBTQ+ representation in the curriculum as well. Diversity in the student body is important, but also in our educators and the content that we are taught. The County schools need to actively incorporate ANTI-RACISM into their curriculums. Curriculum changes must be made from not just high school, but from elementary school onwards.

In addition to the requests above, I recommend the county schools to sever ties with the school resource officers/police department. Based on research conducted by the Justice Policy Institute in Washington, “having officers in school lead to more suspensions, expulsions and legal actions, especially among students of color” (<http://www.justicepolicy.org/news/12012>).

Please consider severing ties with the Howard County PD as an opportunity to be an example for other Maryland districts and districts across the country.”

Anonymous:

“There simply were not enough Black kids in high level classes and it really perpetuated stereotypes about Black kids not being smart. I don’t think there were enough opportunities to get Black students into high level classes if they weren’t previously in them. I also just feel like teachers were way more lenient with while students.”

“Hire Black women”

Anonymous:

“To sum in two words, my time at Glenelg High was uncomfortable and difficult. I was one of the few Asian Americans at the time, and Glenelg lacked diversity from the bottom-up, as the majority of the faculty, staff, and students were predominantly White. I found it difficult to find members of the community that respected where I came from and who I was. The ignorance that majority of these students and staff showed was blatant towards the cultures surrounding them and depicted behaviors of White privilege. The four years I spent at the school contributed to questioning MY own identity and being embarrassed about my own culture: failing to pronounce my name correctly, repeatedly questioning and not understanding why I don’t eat meat on certain days, being embarrassed by the smell of Indian food I used to bring for lunch.

From non-Black people saying the n-word (verbally and through social media) and painting racial slurs all over the school to confederate flags being raised at football games, it’s really easy to notice that none of these ‘mistakes’ were corrected and seemed to increase every year. To this day, I see some of my White classmates post racist material on social media. So why did no one try to put a stop and educate these students? Sure, maybe it should be college or secondary education’s job to teach them, but say they didn’t go to college (which is a choice of their own) then who will educate them? It should be the school system’s responsibility to guide these students on systemic injustices in society and the right way to treat people.

I have friends from other high schools in the county that did have similar experiences even if their high schools were more diverse. Part of the problem is due to the geographic redistricting of the students. Large opposition efforts from community members have left Glenelg in its bubble for many years. Last October, during redistricting efforts, a proposal was made to bring more diversity to regions like Glenelg. In an anonymous letter sent to the board, a resident of the county wrote “Blacks destroy school systems and schools” (New York Times). This district has been known to be home to high income families, but it seems some of them did not have the time OR money to educate their kids on cultures outside of their own demographic, but instead would rather avoid the problem by continuing to live in their bubble. HCPSS can do so much better by including race and diversity in the curriculum, especially in schools like Glenelg that have these toxic environments.”

Bria Warren, Glenelg High School, Class of 2013:

“I went to Glenwood Middle School from 2006-2009 and Glenelg High School from 2009-2013. Generally, both of these schools were known within the Howard County community as more prejudiced and more backward than other schools in the system. I can say that the behavior I saw at both of these schools was much worse than their reputations. As a Black teenager, it was difficult to learn effectively and grow in an environment like this.

Here are a some things that were said to me during my time at Glenwood and Glenelg: In 6th grade, a girl told me I “looked like a nigger,” but that I “was kind of pretty for one.” In 8th grade, a boy asked me, “Are you Black? Why do you have monkey lips?” In 10th grade, a boy told me he “just fucking hated Blacks,” but that I was “ok.” In 11th grade, a girl said my natural hair was “too Black looking,” and because of that, it was “not as cute.” “It only looks good when it’s straightened,” she said. And worst of all, in 12th grade, a “friend” started calling me the unwanted nickname of BNB, which stood for “big nigger Bria.” These are just a few of the racist things my classmates said to me during my time in school. I made the school administration aware of two of these instances, in which they did nothing more than tell the student not to say those words. Real action was never taken.

I also know that my fellow Black classmates watched the Confederate flag be flown at school football games, listened to horribly racist things being said in the hallways and in classrooms after the first Black president of America was elected and re-elected, and faced micro-aggressions daily, without administration ever stepping in.

The curriculum did nothing to help this situation either. We barely skimmed the surface of Black history, focusing only on the triumphant versions of US history which made America look not so bad. We learned nothing about the ways in which the system continues to oppress people of color today through mass incarceration, poverty, wage gaps, and job discrimination. In my opinion, students should not have to wait until college to learn about these things.

Students and faculty must be held to a higher standard. The examples I just gave show that this was the kind of language that my former classmates were taught at home and felt comfortable enough to say to their peers. This was the kind of behavior that was accepted and brushed over by the schools I attended just a few years ago. And THIS is the kind of system that molds prejudiced children into racist adults. Accountability is key. This is exactly why change is needed.”

Erika Laux, Marriotts Ridge High School, Class of 2011:

“My experiences with racism in HCPSS is only visible to me in hindsight, and it is all systematic and structural. The American History content taught to us was greatly Whitewashed. It shouldn't shock the people graduating from one of the best academic counties in the US when they learn about the history of people of color, indigenous peoples, and women of this country and the great roles that they played. In our reading classes, why did we not read one single book

from a Black author? Why was that even possible? The answer is systematic racism, and it needs to be brought to an end.”

Anonymous:

“I dated a Black male throughout high school. I am a White female. On countless occasions my peers made rude comments questioning our interracial relationship.”

Eddy Choe, Centennial High School, Class of 2011:

“I remember my guidance counselor, when applying for colleges, saying that I shouldn't go into my field of study and that "people like" myself should try to push myself into programs primarily in STEM. When I asked her what they meant by that, she said "People of your community such as yourself would be more suited in fields such as those." I'm Asian. They meant Asian people. I will not incriminate with a specific name because I'm afraid that some teachers and faculty are actively trying to perpetuate some weird "model minority" narrative based on some backwards thinking and that students are being pushed away from their true interests because of it.

I also had a 4th grade teacher who always coincidentally called on me or another student every time to solve something math related. We were the only two Asians in our class.”

Anonymous:

“I never once was taught about my White privilege. I was never taught that racism is still common today. I was never taught about the different types of racism. I was never taught about the things I said or did that showed I have racial bias even though I do not identify as racist. I was never taught how to fix my racial bias. Because it was a part of our school. Our entire school placed stereotypes on everything. Race, religion, socioeconomic status. Why did we not have conversations about this? Why was my social studies teacher the same White male for 3 years in a row? Why did he make us write about current event articles every week but never talked about “current events" regarding racism and prejudice. Why? Why did I have to dress up as Rosa Parks in elementary school? I am glad we learned about Black figures in history like Rosa Parks, but the only reason no one saw White people dressing up as Black people as an issue is because there were no Black people around. Why did the only back teacher I remember teach special education? Why didn't you hire more Black teachers? Why didn't you have more Black counselors? Why didn't you have more Black guest speakers? Why did we only learn about Black culture as African culture? Why didn't we learn about Black culture in America? Why didn't we learn about Hispanics in America? Why didn't we learn about Jewish in America? Or Muslims in America? Or any other American subgroup besides Christian Caucasians in America? The only time we ever talked about any other race or religion or other identifying group is when we learned about their country. We didn't learn about these groups in the country we live in in the current time. Why? Why did you fail in teaching us? Why did you fail our Black peers in not giving them a voice and also allowing them to be abused?”

Dr. Jenan Holley-Cuthrell, Long Reach High School, Class of 2007:

“I was born and raised in Columbia, Maryland and I have only ever known the Howard County Public School System as it pertains to my formative years. I had the unique opportunity to experience many different schools in the county as my family moved a lot. It saddens me to say that in every school that I have attended, I’ve experienced some sort of microaggression or overt racism. In elementary school at Bryant Woods Elementary, myself and the only other Black girl in my class were put in remedial class. I was a shy kid, being new to the school, and didn’t speak much, but I had no trouble completing my schoolwork in classes. It wasn’t until my mother went to school to advocate for me that I was put in classes that challenged me. Throughout elementary and middle school, I experienced an innumerable amount of microaggressions, like kids telling me that I’m not really Black because I spoke a certain way or listened to a certain type of music. In high school, I found my voice, and learned how to advocate for myself. I advanced myself into GT English in 11th grade. I challenged teachers who solely relied on textbooks and problem sets to teach students. No matter how many times I proved myself to be a model student dedicated to academic excellence, there was always a moment that made me think that I wasn’t good enough or smart enough. A teacher told me I was difficult. Students assume that I only got into a top college because I was Black. Administrators assumed I was skipping class while talking to a Black teacher in the hallway. These experiences have scarred my memories of childhood and deterred me from ever wanting to return to Howard County, let alone raise a family there. HCPSS cannot hide behind this veil of their so-called diversity when you can see the blatant segregation in schools throughout Howard County, the hate crimes and speech from students and parents alike, and the utter lack of leadership when the opportunity to stand up for racial justice and equity presents itself. I can only hope that the spirit of protest and revolution that is sweeping the nation does not miss HCPSS because change is so desperately needed.”

Anonymous:

“I was in the math honor society and tutored many students after school. I cannot believe the number of students that were in their junior or senior year that would come in after school to learn how to do simple division and multiplication. These Black driven students so obviously wanted to learn. There were never many kids at after school help which shows that just coming and making the effort is a lot. The school system failed them. These students were going to graduate without learning simple arithmetic and I cannot see any other fault but that of their teachers. They were trying. They wanted to learn. But, the school system allowed them to get this far into their academic careers without teaching them anything.”

Mallory Jubb, Glenelg High School, Class of 2019:

“I attended Glenelg when the hate crimes were committed against our principal and minority students. I saw how little was truly done to educate students after the incident. I

witnessed these racist students live fairly normal lives following, as their friends stayed their friends and not many people spoke up on the issue. I also know the history of Glenelg students and the many other racist occurrences including holding up confederate flags at football games, etc. I also wish the HoCo Curriculum emphasized the importance of educating ALL students about Black history. I took US History, World History, and AP US history and I still find myself unequally more educated about “White history”. Often in history, we spend so much time on the early years that moments such as the Civil Rights Movement and other important instances are squished at the end.”

“I feel school systems need to educate students from a young age of the importance of equity and teach students about Black history. Our school system also needs to do a better job addressing instances of racism that are not always broadcasted as heavily as hate crimes (such as micro aggressions and other more subtle forms of racism).”

Greta Sobieski, Glenelg High School, Class of 2013:

“As a White woman I cannot say that I have experienced racism at Glenelg nor can I say that I've ever felt unwelcome, unheard, or unrecognized because of my skin color. My knowledge of the privilege that I have was not something I completely learned about until after I went to a southern college and saw racism in full force, shameless and rampant. As I learned of the events that occurred at Glenelg from my younger brother and other Glenelg students younger than I, I began to realize how obvious it is that these students are not being educated to understand how their varying degrees of racism affects their peers. Whether it be compliance when making racial jokes or comments, or blatant support and donning of the confederate flag. Regardless of the "degree of severity" the racist remarks and actions are, it is unacceptable.

As a young adult, who is nearly 25 years old and has a college degree, it is embarrassing when I realize there are monumental moments in history that I am oblivious to because the education system has failed to include an in-depth coverage of Black history in it's curriculum. As someone who took multiple education courses in college, I understand that there is a fine line that teachers need to be careful of when they teach certain subjects. I understand that in order to remain unbiased, teachers must present all sides of history to allow us to figure out what we believe in, HOWEVER, this is not a matter of right or left, it's a matter of right and wrong. We teach our students about slavery and how Black people were stolen from their land and brought to America. We then put that unit in a drawer only to bring it back out for Black History Month where we review MLK and Rosa Parks.

For the amount of adversity that Black people in America have historically experienced and overcome, to condense their history into a few short units is insulting to Black students of HCPSS and it is damaging to the White students who graduate from high school with a vast lack of understanding in Black history and systemic racism. As I make posts on Facebook in regards to the BLM movement and see old classmates of mine turning previously safe spaces into places of ignorance and hate, it is apparent to me how severely these people were deprived of important information about Black history.”

Mallory Baldwin, Mount Hebron High School, Class of 2014:

“From what I can remember, the Black history “curriculum” consisted of a few movies about Slavery, Harriet Tubman, Jim Crow laws, Brown v. Board of Education and Martin Luther King Jr. We briefly discussed the horrific events Black people experienced in the past and the amazing activists that fought for equal rights. That’s where the conversation stopped. We never talked about the persisting racism and social injustice that affects Black students sitting in class present day.”

Anonymous:

“It was either my sophomore or junior year, but I remember I was in the locker room changing after gym. I was with a bunch of White kids and a few Black kids. I don’t remember what started it but I remember the locker room getting rowdy and a student started a White power and KKK chant. Being one of the few minorities in the locker room, it was definitely unsettling, especially for the Black students.”

Samya, Wilde Lake High School, Class of 2023:

“I think that the biggest issue I have seen a lot in Howard county is the racial divide between higher level classes. I’m Black and for the most part am in all GT classes but I have classes in all levels and you can’t help but notice that there are less and less Black people in higher level classes. I truly think something should be done to change this because it creates this stigma that Black people are dumb or “unfocused” cause they aren’t in GT when this isn’t the case. The students also comment on it saying that their regular classes are with the “bad kids” but those bad kids are just Black kids. I also think that this year during redistricting, people especially from river hill were saying they don’t want “diverse” kids from Wilde lake lowering their property value and test scores and Howard county was just like ok and something more should’ve been done especially since it truly showed the racial bias in Howard County.”

Anna Hovet, River Hill High School, Class of 2018:

“At one point we had to be able to label every country in Africa. We learned very little about when these countries formed, languages spoken in each country, relationships with other countries, and so on and so forth. As far as Black history in America, we learned about the civil rights act and movements. We did not learn about Stonewall. We did not learn about the NAACP.”

Anonymous:

“On social media people from other Howard County schools have thought it was funny to claim me as a Mexican and say that I sell drugs and that I'm illegal. which none of that is true.. yet again it nothing new”

Anonymous:

(Racism in HCPSS can be seen through) “students' use of the n-word on social media; in-person microaggressions”

Anonymous:

“My first year playing soccer was as a freshman on the varsity team. I remember my teammates telling stories about how Glenelg High School's team was racist, but I was naive at the time and didn't think that people could be racist. I'll never forget that on game day as we were warming up, many of the other teammates spat at and towards my teammates of color. I don't recall any racist slurs, but I also think they dressed up as "ghetto" imitating that people from OM dressed and acted this way. This was the first time that I was exposed to this and it's something that I'll never forget.”

Anonymous:

“The best part of going to Oakland Mills was the diversity in both the student body and the staff. I like in upstate NY now, and wish the school system here was more diverse. I know that, when we were in school, there were county schools that people thought of as "ghetto" because they were more diverse, and schools we thought of as racist and redneck-y because they were not diverse at all. I believe all schools would benefit greatly from a more diverse population. The more different kinds of people, from a variety of backgrounds, that you get to know, the broader your idea of the human experience is. We need to expose our kids to others who are not just like them so they learn that everyone in the world is not just like them, and they understand the value of that.”

Christina Kim, Atholton High School, Class of 2020:

“Although we do learn about some of the racial injustices throughout history, the only class I took that focused on it was AP US History, and even in that class the severity of the situations were not communicated as well as they should have been. Additionally, we stopped discussing racism shortly after the lessons discussing segregation, when in reality it was a deep-seated issue that continues on to this day.”

Anonymous:

“As a Black girl who attended schools in Howard County for most of my K-12 experience and has since graduated, I can reflect knowing that my time there was full of racial microaggressions. Over the years, in high school particularly, I heard affluent White peers decide that the high proportion of Black students at schools like Oakland Mills and Hammond made those schools, “ghetto.” When I was accepted into a prestigious university, I was told by two of my good friends of instances in which other students downplayed my achievement. In the first instance, another girl specifically claimed that I only got in because of affirmative action, while in the second, no explicit mention was made of race to my knowledge but do you really think the

same thing would have been said about a White or Asian student? We learn about affirmative action in school quite briefly but never about the fact that White women are actually the biggest beneficiaries.

I recall only having three Black teachers in my entire K-12 career: one in elementary school and two in middle school. For young Black boys, studies have shown that not being taught by individuals who look like them can be quite damaging. HCPSS needs to make an active effort to improve diversity in its hiring practices. HCPSS also needs to improve the diversity of authors in English curriculums. After reflecting on the books I read in my English classes, only in my senior year was there a real effort on my teacher's part to have us read literature that was not exclusively written by White men. Why can Shakespeare be read each year but not Black, Asian, Indigenous, and Latinx authors? It is not because individuals of these identities do not write but because curriculums do not seem to value their writing and the perspectives that take shape through their words.

History classes need not be taught from a Eurocentric perspective as many of mine were. It reinforces the idea of a White savior complex which only misguides students when they enter the real world and are (hopefully) forced to acknowledge that many groups of people were just fine before they encountered Europeans. In my years at HCPSS, I was told that I was shockingly articulate, called aggressive as I was only being assertive, and asked if my hair was real, if I could twerk, and a host of other questions taking root from stereotypes. When discussing my experiences with my natural hair, I was told by close non-Black friends, "yeah but it's just hair." Though upsetting to hear, I do not fully blame them. Students of color grow up in a world where their non-White skin encourages them to hate themselves, whether through stereotypes or a lack of representation in media and real life. This is a reality that most White students are unfamiliar with because books, products, etc. are made with them in mind. I believe history curriculums should at the very least make note of the Eurocentric beliefs that are forced onto most of us at a young age and discuss the current ramifications of those beliefs. Some male members of the track team also mocked Black culture by wearing durags (despite being White) and calling one particular warm-up "cotton pickers." Blind to the power of their words and actions, it was all just a joke to them but that was very disturbing to see and hear for me and other Black students. So to the Board of Education: high standardized test scores mean absolutely nothing if students are blind to the role of race because in this country, it permeates almost every aspect of life."

Anonymous:

"Our school was very diverse and yet there was still the occasional "casual racism", meaning conversations with overt racism or racist undertones being spoken casually. I am a White male and while this made me uncomfortable I did not have the courage to speak against it until I was older. While I never participated I know I only saw this side of the people who did because they assumed another White male would agree with them. As an adult I still experience these instances, with a lessening frequency up until about a year ago, but now I have the courage to speak against it. I think the curriculum needs to include what to do and how to stand against

racism when it is brought up with no minorities around. It is the responsibility of all of us to end racism and the best way to do that is to call it out in ANY setting, make no place a place of comfort for those thoughts and ideologies. This type of “casual racism” is perhaps one of the most dangerous as it gives it a place to settle and grow.”

Anonymous:

“We had a Black kid on our team, who our coach liked to call “boy” among other pseudo racist names. He called a number of the White players on the team “son” or “buddy” but always referred to our Black teammate as “boy.” The racist nature of this and other comments were explicitly pointed out to him on several occasions, by White and Black players, to which the coach would always dismiss as joking; “Can’t you take a joke boy?” So we started documenting all the racially abusive phrases and comments he would make for an entire month. We brought the entire extensive list and his responses to being told his comments were racist, to River Hills principal and athletic director. In a meeting with both, we presented all the data from a month (a full journals worth) and we were cut off from presenting and told “this clearly isn’t an egregious case, and clearly you haven’t warned him about how demeaning his comments are, so we don’t feel this requires any further action on our part.” The meeting lasted all of 5 minutes, and they didn’t even look at the papers of documented racial abuse.”

(HCPSS should have a) “neutral third party to handle any racial abuse complaints filed in the county.”

Rachel Herron, Glenelg High School, Class of 2010:

“My experiences with race as one of the few Black students at Glenelg belong to two categories: horribly egregious or willful ignorance. Here's what I mean, during my time at Glenelg I witnessed actions and conversations that were blatantly racist or was made to feel like there was no race problem at all, which honestly did more harm. I was in many AP classes, to my recollection, I was always the only Black person in most of my classes. The only Black person in the orchestra. The only Black person in many of my after school clubs. And every single teacher I had at Glenelg was White. So on top of the incidents of racism, whether it be the defending of the confederate flag or use of the n-word in the halls, there were very little conversations about these instances. After the election of Obama, a veil was lifted among many people, and that's when it became clear that the racism at our school was a community issue, as I heard critiques that were not political, they were blatantly racist. And there was little done to repair this issue. There was a Parent/Student meeting that I could not attend but my father did. While he appreciated it, we both wished it had been a school wide, mandatory assembly. Part of the reason why I wanted to leave Howard County was because I wanted to be in a place where there was not only more diversity, but more conversations about race and injustice. Most of the Black history I know was because of the research I did on my own and not because it was part of the curriculum. Whenever I had a chance to do a project on a writer, poet, hero, etc., I always chose a Black person to introduce my colleagues to people they never would have heard of. I did it so

often that my friend even made a snarky remark about how I only did projects on Black people. I feel like that experience perfectly encapsulates the issues with the euro-centric curriculum as well as the racism at the school. It was all just lacking education, understanding, and empathy.”

“Encourage your teachers to not only understand their Black students' perspective, but also empower the students to bring that perspective to their work in whatever class or subject that may be. Create harsher punishments for any type of hate speech in any form. Have mandatory diversity and inclusion sessions in classrooms and in after school activities, even if there are no Black students present (especially if there are no Black students present). Stop ignoring the fact that for many of the HCPSS schools, there is a major lack of diversity. Instead of pretending that it isn't happening, acknowledge it as a tool to help everyone grow.”

Anonymous:

“River Hill High School is (or at least, was) touted as one of the most diverse high schools in the county. I definitely took pride in that. It is only in retrospect that I realize that parading "diversity" was a way to avoid addressing actual issues with diversity. I literally don't think I had a single Black teacher (or a teacher of color, for that matter), which is unacceptable.

Additionally, our government and history courses presented an extremely diluted version of true US and world history; we received an accurate education with crucial pieces missing. I remember remarking that in AP US History, we had to memorize the name of every single WWII general/commander, but we barely spent any time talking about atrocities committed against Native Americans and how political maneuvers like the "War on Drugs" planted the seeds for systemic racism and police brutality as we see them today. In our English classes, we barely read any books by BIPOC, and any books we did read about racism and US history were written by White authors. I remember that I had joined the school book club for a few months; that was the only setting in which I read any books by POC authors. The one impactful book I read in high school on the subject, "To Kill a Mockingbird," was I think eventually banned. I must say, compared to my high school classes, several classes at Clarksville Middle School did a much better job of addressing racism without sugarcoating it. I read *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor in 7th grade, and the messages of that book have truly stuck with me.

The last thing I'd like to make clear is this: I am a non-Black person of color, and I did NOT face anywhere near the same challenges in this county that my Black colleagues faced in our system. In fact, I'd go as far as to say that many times, non-Black POC are complicit in perpetuating anti-Blackness. Many parents in the Asian-American community have fully bought into the "model minority" myth, and were happy to be overtly racist, along with White parents, in the face of potential redistricting a few years ago. I am concerned that if students do not receive proper, complete education about the history of systemic racism in middle and high school, they will not have the tools to combat the conditioned ideas that they inevitably inherited from their parents and fellow students.”

“I think parents in this county also need to be held accountable, and need to better understand systemic racism and diversity. I don't know exactly how, yet, but it would be worth exploring ideas that actively engage parents in these discussions, too. A lot of these biases start at home.”

Anonymous:

“I am sad to say that it took me this long to recognize that HCPSS is flawed in regards to racial bias. I am an Asian American, and I've always been aware of the racial bias I've experienced; however, I never related it to the fact that there was a gap in the historical education within schools and lack of representation. As I've reflected, I've now realized that I can barely remember having many non-White teachers. Why is that? How are we to learn about the racism that exists when most teachers are unaware of their own privilege? Who is going to start those discussions? I am now a teacher, and I'm recognizing the importance of having these conversations with my students who may never become aware of the racial issues and implicit bias within themselves otherwise.

I remember a time in high school where my English teacher, who was White, asked one of my Asian American peers when she learned to speak English. This peer was born and raised in the US. What kind of sense of belonging does that create within the classroom? Again, as a teacher, I've learned that one of the most important things you can do is to create a climate where all students feel wanted and cared for. These kinds of questions will not lead anyone there. It's bad enough when students within the school make racist remarks, but when it's the teachers, that's so much worse. I'm sure I'm not the only one who holds teachers to a higher standard.

In addition to that, I've realized how much Black history WE DID NOT LEARN. I feel like I'm playing catch up now, and I am blown away by how much I didn't know about the corruption within our government and justice system, especially towards the Black community. Why am I learning this now, 7 years post high school graduation? I am embarrassed that I've been blind to it all this time. Many things need to change, and the curriculum is one of them. What I gathered about the US government from high school is that it truly worked for the good of all people. I know now that that is not true, and we have a lot of work to do, especially on behalf of the Black community. I needed to learn that earlier, not so that I could revolt against the government, but so that I could help be a part of the positive change.”

Anonymous:

“The curriculum surrounding Black history month was woefully small and not well thought out.”

Anonymous:

“I started my journey with HCPSS at Deep Run Elementary School, where it was obvious that they did not receive the same number and quality of resources as other schools in the county. Deep Run had amazing teachers, those that genuinely cared about their students and wanted to

fight for their diverse student body to have the same opportunities as the rest of the county. In the third grade I transferred schools to Bushy Park Elementary School, a school that had just been re-built, with shiny new books and an abundance of resources. While this in itself is not inherently wrong, the differences in opportunity between the two schools were striking. I continued my education in the Glenelg area, later attending Glenwood Middle and Glenelg High, both of which held the same story. Throughout my entire public school education, I would say I had about 5 POC teachers. Those that I did have were often ridiculed and disrespected by my peers.

There was a clear divide between the student demographic within grade-level courses and GT courses. I started my Freshman year in grade-level courses, where often the POC students were placed. In my Sophomore year I bumped up to all GT courses, where the consensus was really that those who were in grade-level courses were below us. We were in a school that pushed for students to take all AP classes, when really that was a disadvantage for those who may not have the resources or be able to afford multiple AP exams.

While students were already at a disadvantage being placed in grade-level courses, they were forced to be in school with a very prevalent racist community. I will always remember the minimal repercussions that students had after a confederate flag was flown at a football game. Following that game, many students came to school wearing confederate flag attire out of spite of the note, very small, punishment that they received. The administration did not do much to stop these students - teachers would ask the students to go to the administration office, where that shouldn't have even been their responsibility. Those students should have been stopped in the hallways before even going to class. And this was occurring for days, if not weeks.

I don't entirely blame the kids at school. It is the school system, the parents, the community. We need to stand together, to teach the truth, and to raise our kids to learn history and accept all people for who they are.”

Lane Schanck, Marriott Ridge, Class of 2021:

“While I am not a person of color, I have seen and heard many teachers at my school perpetuate racism and stereotypes and blatantly ignore the students who do so as well. We need accountability amongst teachers as they are supposed to prepare us to impact the world beyond high school and if they are teaching us that racial bias is acceptable, we are likely to continue that attitude after we graduate. There needs to be accountability at HCPSS schools if we want lasting change.”

Amy Blanchard, River Hill High School, Class of 2019:

“Improve holocaust education before high school”

Clair Costa, Glenelg High School, Class of 2019:

“I did a research project on implicit racial discrimination within HCPSS specifically focusing in grade performance and recommendation. Any educator who claims to be free of bias

should read the essay

(https://docs.google.com/document/d/1zfi7WqVHLVQUPs3_3LGgzOS0TnYg5G6OkJHazCyfnxg/edit) and challenge themselves to face reality. HCPSS needs to do more to systematically, systemically, and structurally address this.”

Terri Reynolds, Mount Hebron High School, Class of 2008:

“Moved to MD in 2005, was instantly warned by a social studies teacher to be careful "in the jungle!" (That's what the staff & students called the hallway the Black kids hangout in). This same teacher would go on to tell myself and the class that racism isn't real and it's something that POC use as a crutch. He also told me that the "racial experiences" I spoke up probably happened because of my attitude or me playing the victim. The entire class joined in. The 3 years I was there, the classmates were allowed to make monkey noises walking past us, I also remember hearing those same noises from other schools while I was playing sports. There were teachers who allowed us to play "Blacks vs Whites" in PE and when the Black kids would refuse, we were given a 0 or sent to the office. I remember kids being allowed to call me any variation of the N word, and the teachers would usually laugh. I remember having classmates joke about buying all the WOC in our 08 class, because "his family probably already owned most of us!" Every time I defended myself against racial attacks, the teachers immediately corrected me, would tell me to apologize to the students and class, and to get over it, but the kids being racist NEVER got scolded. I remember being told that there could only be so many Black girls on each sports team, especially if the Black girls weren't going to be giving any "appreciation gifts." I had an English teacher call me a Black Witch and followed her rant with "You people disgust me!" I told my Mother, but of course the school denied everything and the teacher ended up dropping me a letter grade for "starting stuff with her!" I told my counselor, and the admins but literally everyone at Hebron could care less!!

Hebron is known for its racism, all Howard County is actually. I'm 30 years old now, and I refuse to step foot anywhere near Hebron or Howard County, because I know I'm not safe!! And I grew up in Kansas with actual KKK members!! Yall love to talk about how bad the city is, but I've never felt unsafe or uncomfortable in the city.....however the schools AND community have let me know myself, and my kind are NOT welcome in Howard County, and I'll gladly stay away...”

“There has to be community effort, no policy in place will be effective if the students know the rest of the community is against them! We had policies in place when I went to Hebron, but we also knew the whole town hated us, so we didn't see the point in trying!”

Jeanine Gezelle, Glenelg High School, Class of 2015:

“I think one of the biggest factors lacking from my experience at Glenelg was a continuous and candid discussion on race. If there did happen to be a class discussion on racism, the topic would be discussed as though it were merely a thing of the past, avoiding focus on the

indelible impact slavery has left on every US system. Learning about racism is one thing; learning about how we as White people are perpetuating it every day is another.

I had the privilege to be placed in advanced courses, some of which exposed students to prominent Black voices in literature. I didn't wonder until now: why were only advanced classes able to transcend a White-washed curriculum? And: why was there a stifling non-Black majority of students in higher-level courses? The general 'sorting' into higher-level classes is something I don't fully understand, but I do know that for many it starts at the elementary school level and is difficult to correct. Black students, no matter how intelligent and hardworking, are ignored by this system. No one should be shut out of necessary and meaningful discussions. Incorporating Black perspectives and stories into the curriculum through all types of media is a necessity.

I strongly believe that this lack of healthy discussion leads people, including myself, to lose sight of how they are part of the problem. As many in this letter have already mentioned, the GHS Class of 2015 woefully lacked diversity, and those that took pride in being overtly racist posed a very real threat to Black students. Using hateful racist language and symbols, even if it is only to be shocking, is inexcusable. The Confederate Flag Incident was not properly resolved. We know this because the culpable students came into school the next day wearing confederate flag clothing and, as far as I can remember, never apologized for their actions. There should have been conversations implemented in the classrooms and counseling sessions encouraged for students.

Years later, my brother had to walk into the school after it had been defaced with anti-Black, anti-gay, and Nazi symbols (by a completely different generation of students). Not to mention the supposedly less newsworthy acts of racism in between: the casual slinging-around of the N-word, the snickers at the N-word in books like Huck Finn and To Kill a Mockingbird (both by White authors), the swastikas in the bathroom stalls, the confederate flags on trucks, the references to predominantly Black groups of friends as 'ghetto,' the use of tired and hurtful Black stereotypes as 'jokes,' and so many more...

It's so important that Howard County in general does better in facilitating these discussions – no matter how uncomfortable they might be – and instructing on institutional racism. I have seen way too many Facebook statuses from Glenelg alumni claiming that this very real and deep issue of systemic racism is a 'myth.' Not everyone has the privilege of leaving the bubble, so please start taking these steps here at the K-12 level."

Anonymous:

"US history was taught from a very American viewpoint and did not do much to cover the hardships different minorities have had to face over the years. In fact I did not know about many different historical segregation events until I went to college. Without diversity in education it enforces ignorance and will lead to a future where America forgets the history of oppression, and will repeat itself."

Michael Dai, Atholton High School, Class of 2015:

“In elementary and middle school when I attended, messaging about race and racism in America was very reductionist and simplistic. The way that we approached civil rights and slavery was almost as if with Abraham Lincoln and JFK, that we had "solved" racism, which we understand to be far from the truth. I think the curriculum needs to be more complex (as appropriate), depending on the grade level, but needs to introduce the nuance of race as an ongoing difficult topic to younger kids. More so than that, the entirety of the curriculum that we learn about is incredibly Eurocentric - we spent such little time discussing the rest of the world and their contributions. We glaze over the civil war and do not discuss it at a depth that truly appreciates what the war was fought over. The fact that "states rights" was brought up during our US History discussions signifies that there is not enough emphasis that is truly placed on the horrors of America's past.”

Anonymous:

“One time I was walking up the stairs and a group of White boys yelled at an Indian Muslim student behind me to say "Allahu Akbar." and continued to mock and harass him. I yelled at them to stop which they did, but only that one time. I reported the incident to the front office, however literally nothing happened. Groups of students (mostly White boys) continued to target this student as a "joke," but they were just mocking him the entire time. To this day I am so angry at how the entire school treated this student. And I'm even angrier that the school did NOTHING to stop it, When I was at Marriotts Ridge (not too long ago), the White people treated people of any other race as a joke. Except for their token Black friend or token Asian friend or token Indian friend.”

Joy Scalabrin, Marriott Ridge High School, Class of 2013:

HCPSS should “the issue of redistricting. This has been a hot button topic in the school system as parents become concerned about their students being redistricted to "worse" schools. The school board did pass controversial redistricting measures in November to address ever increasing socioeconomic and racial disparities in certain parts of the county (Read more here: <https://www.npr.org/local/305/2019/11/21/781709432/what-howard-county-s-demographic-data-tells-you-about-the-school-redistricting-battle>). I think we all know that Howard County's schools are segregated, and the school board should take a more active role in addressing issues of equity through shaping school districts.”

Anonymous:

“During my time at River Hill, I truly felt like it was a little bubble. As a non-Black person of color, I did not recognize the exclusive environment that the school created as I was a part of the considerably large Asian population. This was disrupted when there was drama in regards to Homecoming Court. One year, it was predominantly students of Asian descent that had won. The backlash from other fellow students was immense and discriminatory that ranged from online posts to sharp glares and whispered racially charged accusations and insults. All for

what? A glorified popularity contest? From what I remember, we had an ineffective assembly meeting in which the student council "tore down" racism and ignorance with a paper brick wall resembling these issues. Students did not take it seriously and laughed at the stupidity but were happy to get out of class. This was a "wake up" call for me to demonstrate the ignorance and discriminatory practices that the school upheld whether intentional or unintentional.

Now, upon reflection, I recognize in terms of staff, the number of Black educators and administrative staff could be counted on one hand. In addition, at River Hill, we had a great ESOL (English as a Second Language) program that had students coming from all over the county. Through the UNITE club, I became acquainted with the students coming from all over the globe specifically from Latin America. I witnessed the teachers being condescending and degrading towards the students, many of whom were above the typical American high school age. The teachers would treat the students as children and indicated that they were stupid. They would repeat the same words over and over again in English when the students did not understand. It was insulting to watch so I cannot imagine how the students felt.

Lastly, throughout my whole entire experience, the curriculum was euro centric and focused solely on the history of White people. We did not learn about the genocides and horrible actions that Black people and people of color including Asian, indigenous, and Latinx have suffered in the United States of America nor globally. It was not until college that I learned about the Japanese internment camps during WW2 or the Chinese Exclusion Act or the propagation of Yellow Peril. When Asian countries were mentioned, it was to highlight the things that America has done to "help" these countries like the White savior swooping in to help the poor, uneducated, and defenseless countries. There was no mention of African or Latinx histories as well in the US. In regards to Black history in the school curriculum, slavery and the "bad parts of US history" were quickly swept over and not thoroughly discussed to speak about the relevant history of Black people in this country today and the systemic racism and discrimination against them in every aspect of life (housing, health, employment, etc.)”

Anonymous:

“River Hill is supposedly one of the best schools, not only in the county, but in the country. And yet, I didn't learn about systemic racism or the long-reaching effects of colonialism until I entered college. As a non-Black person of color, I acknowledge that a large part of the failure is on me - for not being proactive, for not challenging myself to learn, for not listening. However, I think there is a large role the school system can play in shaping how its students develop and see the world. HCPSS can take the right step in proactively challenging its students to have those difficult conversations about racism and our own privilege, actively work to dispel the Eurocentric narrative that pervades our country and recorded history, put its money to work and re-distribute funding and resources across its many schools, and so much more.

Many students of River Hill in particular have been born into considerable privilege - privilege that enables them (albeit unfairly) to have considerable power to amplify marginalized voices and contribute resources, if they so choose to. As an institution that educates our youth,

the school system is failing its students if it does not proactively teach the full history of this country and challenge us to critically think about our privilege from an early age.”

Neena Sengupta, Marriott Ridge High School, Class of 2020:

“Throughout my 4 years at Marriotts Ridge, I witnessed a silent culture of racism and discrimination. During my time, there was a group of predominantly White individuals who would often make lewd and racist comments both in and outside of the classroom. These comments would be ignored or brushed off by staff members. In one instance, these individuals would mock an Indian Muslim underclassmen, pretending to be his friend while also making fun of him both on social media and in person for his race and appearance. This occurred in front of staff members and NO ACTION was taken. There is a serious problem with diversity among staff members, as I have only had ONE teacher who was a person of color throughout my 12 years in the Howard County Education system. Teachers would often get my name mixed up with other students who were the same ethnicity as me but would never mess up the White students name. This may seem like a small instance but it made me feel like I was grouped with other students of my ethnicity rather than my own individual person. It was common knowledge among students of color that certain teachers favored the White students. They may not have said anything outright but their actions spoke louder than words. As a student, I think it is important to have representation in the classroom because teachers shape so much of our early education and childhood, setting up our values in the future. I remember learning about race issues and discrimination in a vague and un-confrontational manner. There was no real effort to facilitate discussion about race and history was always taught in a Eurocentric light. I learned about the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jim Crow and I was taught that after the civil rights movement race issues were completely resolved. However, especially recently, I have learned that is far from that case and I believe it is important for the education system to teach from all perspectives, especially those of minorities.”

Anonymous:

“I remember a unit in 12th grade English class on "African literature." We read two books--Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian novelist, and The Poisonwood Bible by Barbara Kingsolver, a White American novelist. The curriculum needs to be changed to include Black authors--and not sidelined as a separate unit. Reading only White authors unless there is a specific unit focused on "world literature" or "Black literature" others non-White voices while centering Whiteness. This communicates to students that White is the default--books written by White authors are "literature," while books written by people of color must be qualified. This needs to change.”

Anonymous:

“I always have been and always will be ashamed when I have to tell others where I went to high school. Glenelg has a tainted reputation that automatically transfers to its students. I am

ashamed to tell prospective employers that I went to Glenelg. I am ashamed to tell fellow Marylanders that I went to Glenelg. I am still ashamed of the actions of my peers and the lack of punishment that occurred when disgusting, insensitive, and racist incidents occurred. I am ashamed that my younger sisters will have to witness the horrible things I witnessed at Glenelg as a young woman. Glenelg and HCPSS needs change. This should no longer be up for debate. Do what is right.”

Anonymous:

“I had the opportunity to grow up in a very diverse community and my preschool teacher was a POC. I would have never thought that having a teacher that was a POC would have such an impact on my view of other people as I got older. I believe experiencing this, hands down, provided me with more education on social justice, acceptance, and respect for all, than any of my years in the HCPSS. Research has shown that "explicit conversations with 5-7 year olds about interracial friendship can dramatically improve their racial attitudes in as little as a single week" (Bronson & Merryman, 2009). When my family moved to be part of the HCPSS, I would never have thought I would hear a classmate say a word that NO child should know how to say, yet understand the context of at the age of 7. A young boy called a Black child a n*****. Hate speech in the FIRST grade. Therefore, I am asking you to please increase the diversity of our educators to allow for these conversations to happen, especially in early education.

I began with my early education experience because the rest of my education lacked the diversity I had grown up with and increasingly got worse. Not only was there a lack of diversity among students, but even among our educators. I did not have my first teacher who was a POC, until my junior year of high school. That is incredibly disappointing. Additionally, when my high school did try to expose its students to different backgrounds and cultures, it was too late. From my 4 years, we had ONE cultural day. On that day, I remember multiple people laughing at students who were showcasing aspects of their culture that they were proud of. Again, disappointing. Not one teacher interfered. There are numerous examples of hate speech, vandalism, and bullying that I witnessed the rest of my years.

Our future does not deserve to experience the hate that we have today. Please take a moment to review resources at <http://www.childrenscommunityschool.org/justice/>”

Karina Joseph, Hammond High School, Class of 2020:

“I’m a year younger than everyone in my grade, and when I first moved to Howard County, they refused to let me into the 1st grade level even though I had already passed 1st grade in the DC public school system. They then proceeded to test me, because they didn’t believe I was smart enough to be placed in the 1st grade. I ended up testing on a 3rd grade level, and they then decided that I was good enough to be in 1st grade. My second experience was at my 2nd HoCo elementary school. We were learning about slavery, and I had a student tell me that if we were back in times when slavery was acceptable that they would beat me if I were their slave. Another experience I had at this school was when one of my friends won a raffle or something

and a teacher bought him lunch from anywhere he wanted. He then shared his lunch with his friends, including me, and a teacher saw (wasn't even the teacher who bought him the lunch). I was the only African American female who took a fry, and she yelled at me, only, and told me what I did was wrong because they weren't my fries. Even though the person who won the raffle told her that he was sharing his fries because he didn't want them, she proceeded to yell and degrade me. She then called my mother and told her she couldn't have things like this happening on her site and insisted my mom come and pick me up. Then in my 2nd HoCo middle school the assistant principal of my school would always call me "meanie head". The main times he would do it was while we were in a classroom with my non-minority counterparts. Also at this middle school one of my friends at the time hit me, so I hit her back. This friend was of a lighter brown shade than me, and my teacher automatically thought that I was the one who hit her first because I was taller, and darker (I was still younger than my friend at the time) and so she sent me to the front office. The Assistant Principal, mentioned earlier, would not listen to my side of the story even though my friend said she hit me first and that I was okay. He then proceeded to call my parents for about a week and wouldn't give up until my parents agreed that I would have to serve detention even though I had done nothing wrong but defend myself."

Matthew Skopic, Marriott Ridge High School, Class of 2014:

"I witnessed harassment on the Men's JV soccer team. There was a Black player, gifted and well-liked among the players, who constantly had to deal with mistreatment from a predominantly White team. Some "teammates" liked to play a game where they'd see how close to saying the N-word (hard R) they could get before he spoke up. There was another incident where his family hosted a pre-game pasta dinner. While we were waiting to eat, I lost count of the number of times White players joked about his family serving us fried chicken, watermelon, etc. I was new to the team so I dismissed these incidents as team dynamics which I just didn't understand. The Black player always laughed off the ignorance and cruelty. I wonder now if he would have been as beloved if he fought back against these obnoxious entitled White boys. The boys were articulate, funny, and leaders so they wielded huge influence on the rest of the team. If you didn't play along, you'd cast yourself as an outsider; there is no room for outsiders on a team. At the time, the Marriotts Ridge's Men's soccer team had quite a reputation. I can't recall if coaches were present for these incidents but I pray they were not. I hope if they were aware they would have intervened at whatever cost to the team's reputation. I think an anonymous tip system could be implemented where reports of prejudice and hate could be submitted directly to the school administration, bypassing the coaches. I don't believe anyone intended to hurt their fellow teammates. But I'm confident work can be done to make non-White Marriotts Ridge students and teammates feel like the integral part of the school's community they absolutely are."

"Institute an anonymous tip system for athletes facing discrimination that bypasses the coaches and goes straight to the administration. There would be no conflicts of interest and students can feel safe and valued within their teams."

Demetria Fortson, Glenelg High School, Class of 2014:

“As a former Black student from Glenelg, I have experienced and seen countless microaggressions and racial bias throughout my high school career. From seeing the confederate flags being worn throughout the hallways, to being called the n word, to hearing I'm not allowed over someone's house or within a social circle because I was Black, to having hands put on me because I was Black... the list can go on and on. I can recount too many horrifying, racially charged experiences at Glenelg that have scarred me for my life.

At the end of the day, no one can erase these experiences from my mind, but HCPSS can do better by hiring more POC teachers, making White supremacy unacceptable within the walls, and accurately addressing race, racial injustice, and racial inequality within its lesson plans. This is the bare minimum that should be obtained by this school system that claims to give the best education to its students. Instead of keeping race hush hush we need to face it head on to resolve the racial problems that are ever so present within the school system. I know you can do better.”

Anonymous:

“I can not count how many times I heard my White counterparts say racial slurs while I attended Reservoir.

I went to Howard county public schools since I was 3 years old. Even when I was young, I could notice some teachers treating White students differently. The one instance that stood out to me the most is when my fourth grade teacher decided my project was “too good” and docked me for getting help from an adult. Everyone gets help from their parents at that age. She was telling me I wasn't smart enough to complete the assignment on that caliber.

I also want to note that we never talk about Black history or it's impact on the world. Not during American history or World history. The one week during February is not enough! I shouldn't have to take an elective to know my history.”

Muftiat Ogunsanya, Reservoir High School, Class of 2014:

“I reflect back on my time in HCPSS, specifically Reservoir High School and I'm so grateful that I did not allow for that school to break me. I experienced microaggressions and racial bias from students and a few teachers/staff from the beginning of my time at Reservoir. Coming from a Murray Hill Middle School that had a very large Black and minority population, we were greeted with immediate stereotypes and ignorant comments from White classmates from the other two middle schools that attend RHS. Black students were often referred to as ghetto and ratchet, and they considered our side of Rt. 216 to be dangerous.

I clearly observed (and at times was subjected to) some of my White teachers showing bias towards other White classmates and would allow them to get away with behavior that would otherwise get other students unfairly punished for, such as disrupting class or speaking out of turn. I was discouraged by my teachers and staff early on from challenging myself. When I wanted to take precalculus over the summer after freshman year, I was made to speak with the

math instructional lead at the time who essentially tried to convince me that the course would be too difficult and unnecessary for me to pursue over the summer. And it actually almost worked to discourage me had I not had a tenacious and adamant mother.

One of the most distinct, ingrained, and irritating experiences I had during my time at Reservoir came my senior year. I constantly heard remarks being made to me or about me that I had only gotten acceptances into certain colleges and only received the scholarships I did because I was Black, completely disregarding all of my accomplishments including receiving the number 1 class rank. I felt as though my classmates struggled with their inherent racial bias and had to find a way to undermine mine and other Black students' accomplishments because these kinds of comments were constantly made.

I only felt comfortable at Reservoir among the diverse community I cultivated which included majority students from MHMS. HCPSS needs to do better in educating it's students and challenging the racial bias that many students and in some cases, teachers possess. It is detrimental to learning and success. This only the tip of the iceberg of racial incidences I experienced during my 12 years attending HCPSS schools, and I consider my experience mild compared to many of friends who's experience I witness or have heard about.

Julia Zhen, Centennial High School, Class of 2015:

“There was an incident when I was in the National Honor Society my junior year. We were having a general body meeting, and the teacher leading the NHS referred to her student aid, a Black student, as her slave. When the general body of students audibly reacted to the comment (the teacher) responded “I’m not racist, my husband is Black”.”

“Include a more well-rounded curriculum that not includes an impartial and factually accurate telling of Black American history but also Asian American history and history surrounding the uprising of queer people and their uprising. If this can’t fit into the American history class then offer it as an elective.”

Anonymous:

“Glenelg did a poor job teaching me about the racial injustices including both past and present. My two best friends are Black and I saw many instances when they were treated wrongly. I remember students wearing political shirts, holding confederate flags, and making racist comments. I hope Howard county is able to educate students more on issues and makes sure every student is treated equally. A change needs to occur because these issues have been happening for too long.”

Anonymous:

“As a White female, I did not experience first hand any of the racism that my classmates most likely had to endure. I still want to share moments where I noticed the lack of diversity within HCPSS. I went to Atholton Elementary, Hammond Middle and Hammond High School. I graduated from HHS in 2011.

1) In my entire 12 years at HCPSS, I can count on one hand the teachers who were African-American. I had no teachers of Asian or Latino descent. I took 5 years of Spanish in HCPSS, and all of my teachers were White.

2) Like many other public schools around the country, I was taught that racism ended when the Civil Rights movement happened, that MLK brought everyone together. We were not taught about the hundreds of years of the scratching and clawing, the desperation, the screaming and shouting and the tears that it took for the Black community to obtain basic human rights. We were not taught that racism still exists in this country.

3) My classmates in elementary and middle school were 90% White. There was slightly more diversity in high school, but Hammond, Wilde Lake and Oakland Mills were still thought of as being "bad" schools... coincidentally, they also have higher POC populations compared to other HCPSS high schools.

4) I took both World History Honors and European History AP, and they were identical; World History taught primarily European history, and only lightly touched upon Asian history. They didn't touch upon African, Central American, or South American history. I had no clue what apartheid was until college. I learned more about African history from reading Trevor Noah's "Born a Crime" than I ever did from my 12 years of HCPSS, outside of "slavery happened."

5) Most of the books we read in HCPSS were written by White people. The first book written by a POC was Ben Carson's autobiography in 7th grade.

6) If it was acceptable to read Night by Elie Wiesel, a memoir written by a Holocaust survivor, in my 9th grade English class, you can have your high school English classes read 12 Years a Slave, Barracoon or any memoir written by a former slave. If it was acceptable for my 9th grade English teacher to show us 2 videos about the Holocaust that showcases graphic footage, your History classes can show the images of George Stinney's execution or of Emmett Till's battered face after he was murdered. Wikipedia should not have taught me more about America's horrific history regarding race relations than my own public education."

Megan Haley, Long Reach High School, Class of 2015:

"There were only a few instances I can recall where I learned about Black history and the Black experience. The basics were touched on in my sophomore year social studies class that covered ~1860 - ~2008. There were a few books I read in English like I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings and Their Eyes Were Watching God. This was not nearly enough information or detail on Black history and systemic racism in the U.S. I did not have a true understanding of the world based on my high school education. That needs to change."

Anonymous:

"“We have to understand that they are taught different priorities from us. You and I grew up in homes that emphasized education. They have homes whose cultures do not emphasize education.” -administrator referring to Black students.

“They were actually really funny” -teacher discussing minstrel shows (minstrel shows were incredibly racist and oppressive and we had just finished discussing that).

“Some stereotypes are born from fact. *Black student* Do you like watermelon? Of course you do! Do you know any Black people who don’t like watermelon? Of course you don’t!” -teacher trying to prove that the stereotype “all Black people like watermelon” is true.”

Anonymous:

“Hi, I would like to preface this by saying I have the utmost faith that the teachers that I personally interacted with at Centennial have the compassion and resolve to acknowledge that there needs to be change.

A year ago there was a petition to assuage school crowding and also desegregate schools. I made a mistake and signed a petition against it because at the time (1) I didn’t understand why schools couldn’t be expanded instead of shuffling people around and (2) I didn’t want to acknowledge the racism and classism in my neighborhood or in my house. Recently, I went back and read some of the letters of protest that were sent to the committee by parents in my community. They were disgusting.

I want to say that doing the bare minimum is to address the egregious racism that occurs on the school campus. A zero tolerance policy for waving confederate flags, actual punishment for racial slurs. This won’t necessarily change harmful mindsets, but it prevents them from surfacing.

On the demands of this petition: a lot of students look up to teachers and staff as role models. It helps to see a Black teacher and White teacher and an Asian and Hispanic and a foreign and a native teacher (you get the idea) support each other and just hang out with each other rather than be “other.” It helps to see those teachers interact with me and “get me.” It gifts us with the potential to open up and have real conversations, then to celebrate differences, which lets us achieve a deeper understanding of our own identity, and in return, have greater empathy for others. I know that finding a real connection is rare but just creating an environment where this is possible and fostering the education and tools to achieve the necessary social awareness does a lot already. I still remember a moment in high school when I found out both my teacher and I had a deep interest in this one intersection of politics and history. That was when someone “got me” in a way that my culturally and financially homogeneous set of friends and family didn’t, and that removed some views that I had that in hindsight, were dumb and harmful (to myself.)

More practically, I guess, just knowing about all these positive experiences with people who are different quells the fear and the prejudice. It is damaging to see and easy to absorb the racial slurs, stereotypes, and vitriol that gets hurled about on the Internet. A lot of people I know struggle with self-hate or internalized racism. These real, positive experiences counteract that negativity and the doubt. Sometimes by either choice or as a result of existing systems, school is the only place where it’s possible to form these experiences.

But I want to reiterate that it's not the responsibility of the teachers to build these "safe havens." I think good teachers can maintain it. Building one is a big burden to the already tiring job of having to look after a bunch of teenagers. I don't know how exactly but I urge the administration to take advantage of this wave of momentum to see if we can enact the change that was needed a long time ago. Maybe I'm naive and there won't be change, but this is the first time in my life where everyone I know is open to having conversations.

My little sister is in high school now. A couple months ago she told me she is afraid of a school shooting. Maryland has a very complex past and Howard county is home to, no offense, a lot of simultaneously dumb and wealthy people. If you put two and two, together, I am not comfortable with how things are.

Lastly, people go to school to get educated. Are we really educated if we don't know about the problems of our neighbors, on our doorsteps?

Addendum: I would also like to add that I strongly believe that we should petition African American history to be included as an AP exam just as European history or World history. There is much richness in AA history as there are terrible mistakes in our urban history and legal history that people need to know. The US history exam just covers US history in a very general scope and there is only enough time to cover bits and pieces of everything."

Anonymous:

"We weren't taught too much on Black history (or much on the negative side of US/Europe and their impact on the world as a whole)... Much of what I learned in regards to Black history was through my own research, or my friends. Though I have not experienced it (as I am not Black), my friends have told me about how non-Black students would call people the n-word, in addition to asking them questions like "Can I touch your hair? Can I touch your skin?" These questions are not only rude and inappropriate, but they are dehumanizing in the sense that others view them as people that aren't human. I feel our education at HCPSS does almost nothing to combat racism and discrimination, in addition to educating us about people of different ethnicities and races. Oftentimes to have a teacher include something, students ask questions about it in order for the teacher to include it in the class discussion."

"Please do better to teach students more than just the White side of history."

Genevieve Jones, Atholton High School, Class of 2015:

"Perhaps to continue efforts to reduce inequalities within Howard County -- reallocating more resources to school with more high-needs students, continuing redistricting pushes to make our county more equitable -- things of that sort. I know that's not overly specific, but I think it's important to continue to fight inequities within our own county."

Anonymous:

"As a Black girl, who lived in Howard county from 2003 for almost 10years.

When I was in elementary school (Columbia Area) I can remember being discriminated against by Peers because I was going through puberty earlier than most. I would get teased for having larger body features and just being bigger than most kids. I went to a predominantly White school and the Black students there either had a lot of money or hung out in different groups than I would because they didn't like me.

In middle school (in Ellicott city area) our curriculum explored plenty of race based topics, but I feel the White perspectives overshadowed Black perspectives. Also, we mostly heard of the slave narrative, rather than successful Blacks.

I had a middle school science teacher who got so angry at a Black student because they were not following directions that the teacher picked up a chair or something in the classroom and threw it to a side of the room because they were so angry. This occurred in front of the class and I'm not sure if it was reported.

When I was in high school I went through an experience being a cheerleader on the team and had a coach who didn't like me. Even though race never came up I felt as the only darker skinned girl, it was possibly race related.

Also in high school, another predominantly White school, and I felt somewhat ostracized because there was such a high performance rate and so many students with money that if you didn't fit in you just weren't in. I also was the only Black girl on one of the sports teams, so I certainly didn't feel like I belonged nor were my teammates inclusive.

The high school did a good job of effectively catering to their minorities but it didn't address the daily racial conflicts that many students experienced without being voiced.

There are so many stories that are said because many Black students lived a life of protesting everyday just to perform at school and nobody would know about the struggle. The Black kids with less money or short tempers, that I was around an elementary school or middle school, Will provoked the most and they were the students who often got referred for being bad and had poor reputations compared to other students.”

Eleanor, Mount Hebron High School, Class of 2021:

“Overall, I have felt isolated in most classroom settings. Oftentimes, I am the only Black student in my class and I end up feeling like the odd one out. I have had peers, people who I thought were friends, make comments regarding affirmative action, saying that I'll only get into a good college because I am Black. Such comments make me unspeakably angry because I work just as hard as my peers, if not harder considering my difficult family situation. In terms of the curriculum, Black history consists of slavery and segregation and maybe a little bit about the colonization of Africa. This is not to say I haven't had good experiences, I've definitely had great teachers and met some awesome friends. I also understand that there is no concrete way to deal with racial biases, I just wish these biases weren't as obvious so I could feel comfortable in my own community.”

Anonymous:

“English teachers did not refrain from exclaiming racial slurs during reading exercises of civil rights novels.”

Anonymous:

“During my 4 years of high school at Atholton, I do not recall having a Black teacher. From what I remember regarding our curriculum, there was definitely a lack of significant events that were left out from Black history. Upon reflecting, the main topic I remember is that MLK led the Civil Rights Movement and teachers echoed that we were all "equal" afterwards. I wish we were exposed to more than the "typical textbook topics" such as Harlem Renaissance, slavery, and the Civil Rights movement. What about the Tulsa Race Massacre, Henrietta Lacks, and Shirley Chisolm? In addition to encompassing more Black history throughout the school year instead of just during Black History Month, I hope teachers can start to engage with their students more about oppression, systemic racism, and inequality. I think having these productive discussions early can play a major role in how we continue to engage in these conversations as adults.

What's important is not only incorporating Black History in just U.S. history classes but also in English classes. The only book that I remember reading that had an African American character was *To Kill a Mockingbird*. There are so many talented and versatile Black authors that should be incorporated into the curriculum that tell stories from a Black person's perspective.

Another issue that needs to be addressed widely within HCPSS is the use of racial slurs. On many occasions, I heard students addressing each other in hallways offensively and oftentimes in front of teachers or administrators who said nothing and did nothing! Not only did this perpetuate the behavior but creates an unsafe and uncomfortable space for students and staff.”

Emily Allen, Oakland Mills High School, Class of 2011:

“I distinctly remember sitting in history class my senior year and being stuck in the most uncomfortable conversation with students and a teacher. The teacher had asked what the graduating students wanted to do for a career and based on race and gender demeaned students in the process. Telling an African American female student that she'll never be a lawyer or a judge and would only ever be a cop, or another that wanted to be a doctor that she'd become a nurse, but not saying the same thing to a White male student was unacceptable. As a White student I should have spoken up, and I regret that I didn't. This kind of behavior needs to be addressed in teachers and staff in our schools.”

Michael Hudson, Long Reach High School, Class of 2015:

“The HCPSS curriculum failed to teach me about the Tulsa Race Riots, Mansa Musa, and countless other important Black historical facts, achievements, and general information. However, we went over the civil war a bunch of times and could never learn enough about the racist White presidents that filled the 1900s, or slave trading kings from Europe.”

Anonymous

“I have seen racism and racial bias as a Howard County Teacher. I have personally witnessed teachers making remarks and not considering diversity in their classroom and honoring that we have different backgrounds in class communities and how important it is to advocate for that. I think teachers need more training and education and more cultural proficiency training. As a student, I feel that the Black history curriculum was completely inefficient. There is so much I have learned as an adult that should have been taught in History in high school. I think we need more instruction for all students on systemic racism, African American history in the US, and training on cultural proficiency. This should not start in High School but at an Elementary level!”

Anonymous:

“Two days ago, I found out that Mt. Hebron High School was named after a slave plantation. I was quite disgusted but not shocked because the climate of the school is racially charged and segregated. I could not have gotten away with half of the things the White students did in that school as a person of color. I remember hearing about the basketball coach not giving play time to any of the Black players. He was so rude and mean and nasty to them that year that they all quit. I remember learning about Black history for one week during US History but White history was taught every single day, every single year that I took a history class. The US history and World History curriculums are quite appalling and honestly racist. The fact that the teachers don't even bother to teach about important things like Redlining and how the United States Government disenfranchised Black communities throughout the entire country after slavery was abolished is quite devastating, and hurtful. The HCPSS curriculum does a good job at coddling White students and making them feel like the actions of their ancestors were justified. Meanwhile, Black students and students of color have to sit there uncomfortably and be traumatized at the textbooks justifying why Europeans pillaged and raped and rioted African & Latin American countries. A lot of the textbooks and readings have a lot of White savior themes and justifications as to why White people did what they did to so many societies. That is why so many people are so ignorant at HCPSS because they live in a bubble. This lack of education is the reason why so many kids at HCPSS are racist and bigoted. My Black friend was called ghetto at school. My Muslim friend was tormented and called a terrorist. One of my Iranian acquaintances told me how some people at the school would make fun of her and ask her if she was going to blow up the school. For World History, why do we not learn about Africa at all? Or Latin America? Or South Asia? Why do we only learn about North America and Europe as if they are the only continents that exist in the world? Also, when we learn about Latin America and Africa, all that is touched upon is slavery. African and Latin culture and history is not included in the curriculum. Again, the curriculum is racist.

There is resistance to racial awareness and sensitivity at Mt. Hebron. A teacher can confidently ask students to write a slave song and that said teacher can't see how insensitive it is to Black students in the class? Moving along, I remember cases where teachers would discourage Black students, Latino students and immigrant students from taking AP level and honors classes because "they couldn't handle it." Their intelligence was mocked and spitted on by teachers who are supposed to be uplifting students. A former history teacher who used to work at Hebron literally bullied an African girl out of her World History class. Why is there an assumption that these students are not capable of excelling in AP and Honors classes? White students are easily encouraged to take AP and Honors classes even if they are going to fail. They are given the opportunity to excel and fail in those classes. So why is it so hard to allow non White students to take those classes as well and give them the chance to either excel or fail? I was so tired of being the only minority in class. And I knew it was because teachers weren't encouraging Black and Latino students to take those AP classes as much as they encouraged White students and Asian students. Howard County might be a bubble for a lot of students, but for Black students and students of color it simply isn't. We notice everything. All the macro and microaggressions. It is time to address it because Black students and students of color should not feel attacked and out of place in their place of learning."

Anonymous:

"honestly, blatant racism is quite rare based on what I've seen. i think hidden discrimination is more of an issue. For example, a teacher choosing more White students over students of color for special activities. I've experienced a lot of this discrimination. i had a teacher who would quite literally NEVER choose a POC to play a part in a play or musical. ONLY if the character HAD to be a certain color would they ever consider it. it's obvious that films and musicals are not inclusive of Asians, and our theater department tried to mimic that. maybe not on purpose, but i was definitely not the only one who felt this way. Some people are the "token POC" where they're used just so the teacher can say they're not discriminating, which is honestly such BS. hoco stereotypes are so widespread, pretty much everyone knows them. Schools with higher Black students population are considered "ghetto" and "not smart", Asians are competitive and sneaky, White people are favored for EVERYTHING, etc... there are more stereotypes of course, but those are just the "popular" ones. ever since i was a kid, anytime i did something a White kid did i would be the one to get in trouble for it. I could get more specific, but I'll save them from the humiliation. (@thunder hill elementary school)"

Talia Schwelling, Glenelg High School, Class of 2015:

"During my time at Glenelg High School, I observed covert and overt instances of racism within the student body, the administration, and the curriculum. The now widely known confederate flag incidents at a football game and within the halls of Glenelg were disturbing displays of outright racism. What was equally disturbing to me was the lack of conversation coming from teachers and administration surrounding what the confederate flag stands for and

why these incidents were hateful and unacceptable. This lack of conversation was pervasive within friend groups and within the classroom.

One experience that sticks out to me related to teachers/administrators is when a new French language teacher (who is White) transferred from Oakland Mills High School to Glenelg. When the class asked why she decided to come to Glenelg, she responded by describing the student body at Oakland Mills – which is almost 50% Black – as ‘wild and unteachable.’ Teachers, students, and school officials often made off-hand remarks like this. The racist undertones of her decision to relocate were clear and gave folks in my class permission to make racist remarks and assumptions about students at Oakland Mills.

As race was almost never a topic of discussion in the classroom in a historical or modern context, I left K-12 uneducated about many issues facing BIPOC and unequipped to address the issues of racism and lack of diversity within the student body, staff, and administration of Glenelg and beyond. I acknowledge that as a White woman, the depth of my frustration will never reach the frustration that BIPOC students that attended and still attend Glenelg may feel.

No person should be unheard, undervalued, or underestimated, especially in a school environment. The way many members of the student body, staff, and administration of Glenelg behaved made many students feel this way and reinforced racism in our community.”

“HCPSS should re-evaluate the way students are 'punished' (i.e. suspensions, detentions, etc.). Effort should be allocated to understanding students and their individual circumstances. There were multiple incidents at Glenelg where racial bias played a role in punishments assigned to different students.”

Laura Horowitz, Wilde Lake High School, Class of 2007:

“The subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) racism in Howard County in general really comes to the forefront when we are discussing school districts. It was well known in my time at Wilde Lake that it, along with Oakland Mills, were the "ghetto" schools. We all know what this is referring to. This comment usually was accompanied by barely veiled racist remarks. I am saddened that this continues to be the way the school districts are discussed today. It permeates the identities of both the schools and the students. I am disappointed that, as a White person, I only began to recognize this issue as an adult.

This education needs to start in school. The school district needs to do better to support Black students and other minority students and to have candid discussions about the challenges they face in today’s society. I want a student body that is prepared to identify and challenge racism at every level and prepared to take action on lifting up the Black population that so often gets left behind, ignored, or held down. I support the motions of this petition whole-heartedly.”

Anonymous:

“I wish I could say I made a change in the racism at my school during my years at Glenelg but unfortunately, I can't say that I did. It's sickening to me that so many things come to mind when being asked to write about the racism I witnessed, and that nothing I did helped put a

stop to it. I dated someone who used the N word multiple times, casually and repeatedly when I told him not to. I listened to people in class make stereotypical racist jokes and wouldn't do more than give them a dirty look. One particular thing that comes to mind is that I was close friends with someone who was racist. She would often make jokes that she thought were harmless and I would tell her they were racist and that she couldn't say things like that, and she honestly never seemed to see anything wrong with what she said. I heard the things she said and I still spent time with her and considered her a friend. I even made excuses for her to my family saying that she genuinely didn't know any better. One night at a party she was yelling out blatantly racist things, including referring to people at the party by the N word. It never became a big deal and no one else at our school ever really heard about it. That's how normalized it was. That was the night I decided to stop talking to her completely. The fact that it was a difficult decision for me to make is embarrassing. I knew for months before how close-minded she was, but still I repeatedly ignored it and spent time with her. I was not brave enough to make a change and be louder about the issue. If I could go back to Glenelg now I would do plenty of things differently, but not standing up and speaking up for the people of color at my school is my biggest regret.”

Katerina Havlik, Centennial High School, Class of 2014:

“Even though we had American History every year during high school, there was barely any Black history included in the curriculum. The only history included some of the Trans-Atlantic African Slave Trade but ignored all history between then and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. I had to learn so much history of Black folk in the US on my own - this should not be the case.”

Caitlin Kelly, Glenelg High School, Class of 2010:

(There was) “Little to no black history curriculum”.

Anonymous:

“My Ted talk about this: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=h-c0g1ATtnA&t=3s>

The English and history curriculums may be diverse but that diversity almost never makes it into the actual classroom and when it does, the material is taught in a racist or naive manner. The last three years of my education are the only times I enjoyed a history class because I finally got good teachers. Half of the English books that have representation or discuss marginalized communities are problematic and don't even come from the communities themselves providing a white washed version of history that only satisfies 35% of our student body. The school never assigned me a book by a black author.

We need to have a diverse curriculum because I have seen teachers and students display blatant racism towards others and myself. The schools unquestionably try to sweep these instances under the rug in hopes of maintaining a good image but that never fixes the problem.

I have reported students calling me racial slurs, I have addressed teachers privately and in front of others and nothing changes anything. They make it seem like we are the problem and not

them. When you finally find a teacher who will listen they have to find a supervisor who will listen too. I am lucky enough to have developed relationships with different officials during high school that finally give me the opportunity to share my experiences but most students don't. I've cried over the things teachers said to me; I've cried over the misrepresentation in our books. I've fought for others' representation nonstop and I started fighting for my own this year. Enough is enough.

Also watch my ted talk. <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=h-c0g1ATtnA&t=3s>"

"There needs to be a form for students to report racist incidents from teachers or students available to all students at all times in plain sight."

Erin K., Oakland Mills High School, Class of 2021:

"Looking back at my years in school, I can only remember having two African American teachers. That means out of 7 years of school so far and having over 30 different teachers, the minority were African Americans. I have NEVER even had teachers of Indian or Spanish heritage. Although I have had no concerns or issues with my teachers, I believe HCPSS should provide students to have opportunities to work with all kinds of teachers, of different personalities and cultures. We are taught to look at experiences from all stand points but it is hard to understand this when the vast majority of teachers are European. Almost all the books I have read through the HCPSS curriculum were written from a white perspective. So yes, there is racial bias when the only books talking about this are Huck Finn, Tom Sawyer, and To Kill a Mockingbird."

Anonymous:

"I spent my whole childhood in Howard County public schools, and the very fact that I cannot remember learning about racism and racial inequality as it exists today is indicative of the fact that my education was not sufficient. I remember learning about systems but not about the flaws and shortcomings of current systems. The lessons I learned should have carried through to my understanding of the world as it is today, not just as it was in history. History lessons should have provided us with opportunities to confront racial injustice head-on. The most impactful lessons of empathy for and injustice in Black communities should not have come from college. White supremacy was talked about as a thing of the past when we all know that it is still rampant and more dangerous. This all should have been built into the foundations for education that we all received, especially as we all had/have privilege in some way or another living in Howard County. I, as a student, contributed unknowingly to these systems of oppression. All teachers and faculty contributed to them as well. It is a problem that Black students were not in my GT/AP classes; it is a problem that the divide was so obvious, and yet, there was no conversation about it. Staying silent on the glaring distinction between White and Asian kids in the "gifted" classes and Black and Latinx kids in the "regular" classes contributes to this narrative that Black and Latinx children are simply less capable. This sends dangerous messages to everyone involved about the value of identities based on race.

Many of the books we read were centered on White people. Without knowing it, this meant that I, as a person of color, subconsciously learned that my story does not matter as much. I internalized this without having any feelings about it at the time. I internalized this in a way such that being invisible felt comfortable. So comfortable that any visibility makes me uncomfortable, which just goes to show how much easier it is for White people to take up space.”

Anonymous:

“I had a Black teacher for science in eighth grade. At the end of the year, there were rumors that she had been fired for a variety of reasons. Then, when I went to ninth grade, I learned that she would be a teacher there, but for some reason, she never showed up. Sure, a lot of people may have questioned the effectiveness of her teaching style, but what made it so that she did not even come to her first day of work? I feel like this is definitely questionable because throughout my HCPSS education, I've encountered teachers who a portion of my classmates and I haven't necessarily agreed with their teaching style, but I've never seen a teacher just not come to teach. Was it because the environment (whether imposed on her by the staff, students, or parents) made this teacher so uncomfortable that she decided she no longer wanted to teach through the HCPSS? I may be wrong because maybe she had something come up that made her have to leave this job, but I still believe that HCPSS needs to diversify their staff more because aside from that teacher, I have never had a Black teacher in all my years. For a county that seems to appear inclusive, that highlights a fundamental problem. In addition to the need of diversifying the school staff, I also believe that the curriculum that students read and learn from should be diversified as well. Throughout my high school years, I've been fortunate to have had teachers who go outside of the curriculum, who seek literature and pieces of work written by minority races so that my classmates and I can get a more comprehensive understanding of the topic that we're learning and understand both sides of the situation. However, those teachers took the INITIATIVE, there was NOTHING written in the curriculum stating that they were to do so. What HCPSS students are learning has been whitewashed; HCPSS is depriving students the opportunity to learn important parts of US history through multiple lenses, and hence robbing students the opportunity to be able to approach a situation from multiple viewpoints, a crucial skill in life when encountering opposing views. A prime example can be how there is an AP European History in my school, but there is no African American Studies course in my school. It's offered, but there has never been enough interest to be able to hold it, and a reason for that is because this elective would only, on a 5.0 GPA scale, earn a 4.0 for an A, which can be quite detrimental to the weighted GPA. This community places such a huge emphasis on GPA, and that is understandable because that is an important part of applying to colleges, but HCPSS should consider making the African American Studies course at least an honors course so that more students will be able to learn and become more educated on a topic that many lack education in.”

Anonymous:

“AP classes are almost white or Asian children, and they are maintained and seem to keep anyone else from joining. There’s a teacher who’s said the n-word. Students are racist and have gotten called out for being racist or doing racist things. No one is doing anything to stop it. We have great black history month assemblies and then it’s like everyone goes back to wanting to oppress those who are the majority in this school.”

Anonymous:

“Centennial high school lacked A LOT of diversity in terms of having a black community in our school. I remember there was a table in the lunch room that was described as the “ghetto” table solely because it was the only table in the lunchroom where the black people sat there together. The problem also lied with the students who felt free to make those comments without ever being reprimanded.

Furthermore, our curriculum severely lacked in terms of having African American representation. This was the case not only in history class but also in all the subjects we had to take. We rarely learned about important African American artists, writers, historians, and scientists. Seriously though, why do we spend a whole quarter on Shakespeare’s’ non-sense when there are amazing Black writers, especially women writers, who deserve to be part of the curriculum and can do so much for students in terms of representation.”

“Some action items I would suggest are redistricting and working on implementing more representation for the Black community in ALL of our school subjects, starting from kindergarten all the way up to 12th grade. Hire a team of people who can make this happen.”

Anonymous:

“There are many major issues in HCPSS. For instance, our tennis team is not allowed inside of Glenelg due to previous racially-charged incidents. This extends to other sports, but I am not entirely sure which.

The schools are segregated. Consequences (suspensions, expulsions, arrests) are racially biased. The preschool to prison pipeline in HCPSS is real.

In terms of post high school plans, Black and Brown students are not being told to go to college as much as white students. The admissions in GT programs are biased against POC, disabled students, and other marginalized groups.”

Connie Chen, River Hill High School, Class of 2012:

“HCPSS teachers and staff are wonderful! However, the curriculum we had to teach at times was pretty limited around racial justice, and our classes were segregated. For example, in my AP/GT classes, I only shared them in 4 years with 3 black students.”

“Have more classes around racial injustice, history and impacts of colonialism”

Katherine Yi, Mount Hebron High School, Class of 2019:

“During my sophomore year of High School there was a walk out bc of a racist video that surfaced from a student from my school. After this walk out it was pretty much swept under the rug so I’d decided to make a document and interview a bunch of students around school to let me know some racist and unjust things that have happened at this school. I contacted the superintendent because I felt like our principal at the time was not doing the best he could to help the students. My email was completely ignored by the superintendent at the time. I forget her name. She forwarded my email to one of her assistants and she asked to meet with me. I asked her if I can bring my friends along because I am not the only voice that needs to be heard. She said no and when I got there I felt like she said no so that she can make me feel like a child and she can have power over me because I was alone. I gave her the document with everything written in it. She didn’t even take a look and put it away. She basically dismissed everything I said and left saying I should’ve just talked to the principal. After that nothing happened except the principal calling me the next day saying I was supposed to contact him first. After that day I tried my best to be more involved in the community but it was so closed off that nothing happened.

Another reoccurring thing is my art teacher who I was with for four years even in Ap art would continually dismiss my ideas and say “I don’t understand what you are trying to portray” and even take a couple points off bc my concentration for art was focused on political justice that focused on race and gender. I don’t know if she intentionally did this but it felt like she always picked on me, called on me, criticized me and all my other classmates saw this.

Another time I had a fever and went to the nurse to go home. I always ask if I can personally call my mother because she does not speak English well and the nurse proceeds to waste my time while I’m sick to ask “ why do you speak so well, you don’t have an accent at all. Where were you born? Wow your English is amazing. If your mother is going to stay in America she should learn English. You should teach her.” I told her I am sick, can I please just go home. She said “Ofc but next time teach your mom some English so it’s easier for the both of us.” I told her ma’am my mother has lived here 20 plus years with minimal English bc she doesn’t need it for well being.”

Another instance happened to my boyfriend who is African American, he took an ap comp sci class and the teacher asked him personally to switch out of his class on the third day of class because he feels like he will not do well. They didn’t have a single grade in yet so there was no way to tell if he would do well or not and he was the only minority in that class at the time. So many things happened at this school like students driving in during spirit week with flags and confederate flags on their cars. Wearing trump propoganda and confederate clothing to school and not getting in trouble. During my senior slide show only 20% of it was pictures of me and my friends plus other minority students while the other 80% were of the white student and when we got upset about it they claimed we never sent pictures when I have a record of everyone I know plus more sending 10 or more pictures. The girl that made the video claimed we were bullying her and went to the principle. That's just some of the stuff. I took an African American

studies class, wonderfully taught by a white teacher but we need this type of information in regular social studies classes and in literature or English classes.”

Anonymous:

“Shockingly enough, throughout my years of being a part of HCPSS since elementary school, I have only had one African American teacher during my senior year of high school. I only remember two Asian teachers during my years of being a part of HCPSS. None of the AP's I took and AP classes that I knew of were taught by African American or any other minority teachers. I think not that this is just a mere coincidence. There were so many incidences of white supremacy where many students walked around with the "Make America Great Again" slogan on their articles of clothing. It cannot be denied that Donald Trump stands for misogynistic, racist, and downright hateful ideas, and it truly made me feel uncomfortable to be at school sometimes. It angered me that none of the teachers seemed to make any attempts to discourage such actions. It really made me reconsider if I felt welcomed in this school. There was another incidence when a teacher made fun of two students who were speaking their native language during class. How dare you do that to your students? Teachers are supposed to be the ones who nurture, but you somehow think it is okay to make fun of your students? I really hope that Howard County could make it more welcoming for every student out there. No matter what their skin tone is and what language they speak, I hope a change is made so that none of these students have to question their importance while learning like I had to.”

Kaylin Craine, Glenelg High School, Class of 2017:

“My name is Kaylin Craine and I graduated from Glenelg High School in 2017. With everything going on, it has influenced me to do some reflection about my interactions in school. Oftentimes, I was told by classmates that I “acted and sounded white”. Why? Because I’m articulate and educated? When I would voice my opinions, I was told “Oh so now you want to act black”. While these comments may seem harmless, I became ashamed of who I was. I wanted to be respected, so I tried my best not to fit the stereotype. I wrote a poem about police brutality in my English class and I was afraid to ask others to read it because I did not want others to judge me on my views (I’ve included the poem below). My junior year of high school, people brought confederate flags to school. Some were angry, but many believed that it was a representation of “southern pride”. During field hockey practice, I had many people tell me “It’s just southern pride. Why is it a big deal?” I believe that these statements weren’t made out of hatred, but plain ignorance. The worst part is that I did not say anything. I did not defend my beliefs because I did not want to lose my friendships.

In math class, my classmates thought that it was funny that Glenelg was on the news and that we were “famous”. I remember my teacher scolding them and telling them that the incident was not funny, but rather a very serious matter. That was one of the first times that I felt like someone understood me. That same week, one of my closest friends asked “Why isn’t there a white history month?” I did not say anything because I could not believe what she had said. One

of my other friends simply responded “because white history month is every day”. In Spanish class, one of my classmates used the n word and I said nothing. My senior year, I was told “you only got into the Naval Academy because you are a minority”. The disturbing part is I started to believe that.

Looking back on these incidents, I am disgusted with my inability to confront them in the moment. How could I allow them to say these things? These past few weeks, I’ve been reaching out to old friends to tell them how I felt and why their comments were ignorant. You’re probably wondering what is the point of correcting them now because it happened almost four years ago? To be honest, I asked myself the same question. But if I am silent, I am part of the problem. If I do not make them aware of the magnitude of their comments, they believe that it is okay. Their views will be passed on to their children and the cycle continues. I want to break the cycle. It may be uncomfortable, but that is when growth happens. As I said before, most of these comments stemmed from ignorance. The simple solution to that is EDUCATION. To whoever is reading this, I challenge you to educate yourself on the topic. Do not be the reason that this cycle continues. To parents, teach your children to be empathetic and kind towards others. To the Howard County Public School System, students need more education on the history behind racism and its impact today. Students need more teachers who will correct their behavior. Do not turn a blind eye to what is happening in society. The world’s greatest power is your voice. TOGETHER, WE CAN DO BETTER. WE MUST DO BETTER.

Don’t Shoot

The sun shined brightly as the clouds moved across the sky
Alton Sterling stood on the corner
Red and blue lights flashed brightly in his face
He looked at the officers with confusion
His face ran with sweat and tears
“Get Down. Get Down”
Suddenly, the power of Zeus’ bolt ran through his back
Three bullets spiraled from the barrel
His body began to drift away
Thoughts of his family filled his mind
The family that will never see him smile again
His blood stained the concrete
Don’t Shoot

Red and blue lights flashed in his rear view mirror
Philandro Castile sat nervously in the car
“License and registration please”

Crimson blood bled through his white shirt
His daughter sat quietly in the back seat
Tears filled her eyes
She knew that she would never hear her father say “I love you” again
His soul faded away just like the memories they shared
Don't Shoot

“Hands behind your back”
Eric Garner’s body dropped to the ground
His eyes filled with fear, as salty tears ran down his cheek
The officer’s arm crushed his neck
“I can’t breathe”
“I can’t breathe”
“I can’t..”
Don’t Shoot

Am I next?”

Anonymous:

“Although I am not black, I have on multiple occasions heard multiple non-black Centennial students use racial slurs such as c--- and the n-word. Additionally, I have taken US History in both middle and high school, and both curricula grievously neglected African-American history and followed a heavily Eurocentric viewpoint throughout the year.”

Anonymous:

“Many students and staff in Howard County like to claim that we are part of an inclusive and diverse community, which is true to an extent, but overshadows the internalized racism that most of us have. Sometimes it's quiet, like when students, teachers, or even our school police stereotype and profile each other based on race or redistrict school districts to manipulate the diversity at each school. Sometimes it's loud, like when non-black people use the n-word in the hallways or paint Nazi symbols on the sidewalks. Whatever it is, racism needs to be addressed, and we have to stop pretending that we aren't a part of it. When students or staff, whoever it is, is racist, it MUST be dealt with appropriately - racism should never be swept under the carpet to be forgotten and eventually internalized. Before we make moves to improve our county, HoCo can't be considered, and should not be considered, "equal."”

Anonymous:

“For a school whose motto was “Where Diversity Excels” it did not always feel that way. We were viewed from the outside as the “bad school” (read black school) and it was known and felt, but often discussed in the school. In Howard County at large it can be easy for people to pat

themselves on the back and feel like by living in a planned and diverse community it is enough. It is not and those undertones were often papered over in school.”

Anonymous:

“There is a big racial bias problem at Glenelg (more so among the students than among the staff, as far as I have observed). There are plenty of outright racists, quiet racists, and bystanders. I will admit that despite trying to educate myself on race, I was a bystander. During my time there, we had multiple incidents with the confederate flag. Most students did not seem to think there was a problem with the flag. They subscribed to the idea that it's "heritage, not hate". To them, being called a racist was worse than actually being one. It was especially apparent how deeply rooted these racial biases are during the unit on race in my sociology class. The white students were quick to go on the defensive whenever a black student talked about their experiences with race. They were not receptive to any part of the class that conflicted with what they were taught at home. And that's really where this starts- home. Kids are not born with these biases. They are taught at home and reinforced by school, the media, and peers. I remember being taught about racism in ES and MS as if it were a thing of the past. We were taught that Lincoln freed the slaves, Rosa Parks and MLK fought for equality, and everyone lived happily ever after. It was not until high school that I started to really think critically about race and my privilege as a white person. This is not a situation that one assembly can solve. In the small, majority white, conservative town of Glenelg where some students' parents are rumored to be involved with the KKK, more action is needed. I think HCPSS needs to implement education on race starting at the elementary school level, getting into more complex topics as the students get older. I also think all staff should be required to have training focusing on racial bias. My thoughts go out to all HCPSS students and staff of color, especially Principal Burton, who was a target of the racist graffiti in 2018. Black lives matter. Thank you for listening.”

“race and racial bias (must) be included in the curriculum beyond learning about the Civil Rights Movement. For all staff to receive racial sensitivity training. For parents to receive educational materials on race to facilitate discussion with their children.”

Anonymous:

“I was bullied relentlessly all throughout middle school because of my hijab. Typically by my white, male peers, I was called names, shoved against lockers, cornered, etc. My teachers witnessed this but never said anything or spoke out against it. It continued when I came into high school as well. An adult staff member called my parents “terrorists” in my freshman year. My parents contacted the school and we got a verbal apology from the staff member, but that was it. Thankfully the bullying became less after freshman year, but it never stopped completely.”

“Speakers should come present annually in schools about racism/racial bias”

Anonymous:

“The only way to learn about Black history within the school system was if you took an elective class called African American studies. The teacher did an amazing job but as the class’ name is African American studies, it should be taught by a Black person.”

“I also think the lack of Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous peoples history should be added to the curriculum, not just here but everywhere. In mathematics and other common core subjects students should learn life skills like how to pay taxes, read from non Eurocentric points, and be able to feel comfortable within their religion at school. I think that there’s a lot that needs to be addressed within the school system to prepare students for life especially because not a lot of minority students have access to the same resources as White students. An example, offer a low cost or free SAT prep tutoring and ways for minority communities to overcome the bias of the test.”

Daniel Kundrat, Long Reach High School, Class of 2019:

“I’ve experienced white kids questioning why the books that we read throughout the school years are always about someone black.

There is also a Howard High School teacher who made a fake twitter account to speak against Black Lives Matter

Also the disappointing and disgusting thoughts on the redistricting. I understand parents who have concerns because of mobility to the schools or anything outside of race. But the fact that so many parents let alone their kids, had a problem with transferring to my school, the Reach, made me extremely angry. Long Reach Highschool by far, carries the best spirit in the county, and it’s hardest workers. It is infuriating that this county and community wishes to pride itself on its “diversity and inclusion” while not standing with them when the time comes. The rumors and stereotypes attached to the amazing kids at my school are nothing other than FALSE, terrible, and immature. It is saddening that the families in this county let their privilege of living in such a great community, blind themselves from seeing the beauty and power in those who live with them. The ignorant people of this country speak down on my school and it’s students, all while it was students of The REACH who led the Columbia Black Lives Matter protest. Do NOT question our worth, because we matter.”

“Audits should be performed on schools, in terms of upholding community and social standards. The factor to be analyzed and critiqued is how staff members and administration go about handling such social conflicts. If there is not already, there should be a Howard County department of diverse affairs that performs such investigations and can check those in power who may not be representing the HCPSS in an appropriate manner.”

McKenzie Scott, Wilde Lake High School, Class of 2016:

“At Wilde Lake, we always had a Black History Assembly and a Culture Day to celebrate our diverse students, but we never talked about those histories and cultures at other times, and I would like to see the county do a better job of making this part of students’ daily learning experience.”

Aboli Dahiwadkar, Mount Hebron High School, Class of 2020:

“The black history curriculum did not spend a significant amount of time discussing the lasting effects of slavery and segregation. It usually only was discussed during the Civil War and ending segregation through peaceful protest, without taking into account how it still impacts society today. There was no discussion in systemic racism, which is critical to understand in context of our society.”

Lynzee Loudon, Mount Hebron High School, Class of 2020:

“I feel like my school definitely made an effort to reduce racism and prejudice among students and faculty, especially after one particular incident that made national news in 2015/16. However, I believe that there are still more incidents than there should be; I felt like the administration should have given more severe punishments to students who made racist remarks . It was to the point where I’d be surprised if I did NOT hear a racial slur when walking through the halls.

I can remember an incident when one student called a black student the n-word, and then the black student was transferred out of the class after getting upset while the student who said the racist slur faced no consequences.

Another time, one of the English teachers made an assignment for her students to write slave songs and then sing them in front of the class. She was suspended for some time after black students complained about feeling uncomfortable, but from my understanding she is back to teaching like nothing happened. I am not suggesting that she should have been fired for this, but these types of inappropriate incidents happen all the time, most occurring without anyone batting an eye.

One time, I recall one of my middle school teachers interrogating me about what my parents did for a living. Although I know this teacher did not have any bad intentions, it felt like he was asking because it surprised him that a black student was in all GT classes, and he was curious about my upbringing and family situation. Needless to say, I felt very uncomfortable, but I brushed it off.

The last memory that I will share also occurred in middle school, I remember overhearing one of my classmates pointing out that none of the selected students of the month were black. “Makes sense” he laughed. Everyone who was listening agreed and laughed as well. I remember feeling so embarrassed in that moment that I had to leave the room because I thought I might cry. Little comments like these from my peers occurred all the time, but I just assumed they were normal and I should just suck it up. Now I know that racist remarks like these are not okay, and I hope that Howard County does a better job of educating students and teachers about prejudice.

Thank you for your time.”

Sarah Kylap, Oakland Mills, Class of 2004:

“I would like to see the county end the tracking of students in middle and high schools. Having different levels of academic classes (regular, honors, GT) is not a practice that can be supported by educational research and only serves to exacerbate the opportunity gap. As many alumni have noted already, the honors and GT classes in HCPSS are attended primarily by white students. This means that white students are accessing a different standard of education than students of color and this system of oppression must end.”

Emily Brown, Howard High School, Class of 2010:

“I found my US History curriculum to be extremely lacking, as most of the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King was missing from the lessons. I believe that too much time is spent on the post civil war reconstruction era, blaming that era for our present day problems instead of a holistic review of systemic issues. A complete review of the focus on the civil rights movement is required, along with an overhaul of present day conflicts. In my US Government class, we spent an entire unit on "the election project" surrounding President Obama's election but were told to leave his race out of our projects. I believe this was an oversight and that the Government courses should highlight discussion of policymakers of color. Also, in my HCPSS experience I had a very passionate Spanish teacher who opted to use one of her classroom times as an open discussion of the election of President Obama. I believe she was well intentioned, but the conversation was not thoughtfully led. Instead of it being on an as led per teacher basis, I encourage HCPSS to plan assemblies and school- wide engagement around these topics.”

Emily Chandler, Glenelg high School, Class of 2017:

“Hire more teachers of color and have actual repercussions for all micro-aggressions perpetrated by students and faculty.”

Ryan Jose, Howard High School, Class of 2013:

“I strongly support the expansion of the World History curriculum to go into Non-European histories for longer periods of time, specifically to go deeper into African histories. Also as a POC from the AP circle, something about the divide between the GT/AP circles of students and the "regular" circles of students doesn't sit right with me. If I didn't take a handful of "regular" courses, I would have mainly been exposed to the same set of people for the entirety of high school, other than extracurriculars. We should not be insulated from each other, and we should not be insulated from other schools. The racist undertones behind fellow students calling Long Reach "the ghetto" or a bad school are disgusting and unacceptable. Even when I hear more recent redistricting thoughts from some friends/relatives, Long Reach (majority Black/POC) is implied as a negative. That thought and that atmosphere needs to be acknowledged and explicitly dispelled.”

“Invest in Black (and Indigenous and POC) students and groups, and the schools where they attend. Fix your district demographics. Interact with other schools in the county more, to build that community.”

Anonymous:

“In school, I would say that classes aren’t that diverse. Maybe about 2-3 African American kids to 30 white kids. Throughout my years in the school system, teachers have definitely had some racial bias. For example, in my 6th grade history class, my teacher would never choose the African American kids for the answers. But if he did, he would always have a snide remark and choose a white student to correct them, even if they were correct.”

Maison Holcomb, Mount Hebron High School, Class of 2020:

“Since moving from New Jersey in sixth grade into the Howard County Public School System, I have had one teacher that was a POC over seven years of being an HCPSS student. Not only was there a lack of diversity in the teaching staff, but as a consistent GT/AP student since middle school I have never been in a class with more than just a handful of POC students, making topics such as the Transatlantic slave trade, an awkward class experience. In terms of curriculum, the most black history that will be taught is the same thing that has been taught since elementary school and that is ONLY about the colonization of Africa, the slave trade, and the oppression of African-Americans and the fight for civil rights which is still ongoing and was never truly resolved but the history books won’t say that.”

Anonymous:

“I did not have a black teacher teach me history until eighth grade. We learn pretty much nothing about black history, except a unit on MLK jr every February that is clearly just to check the box for black history month. I have also witnessed racism in teachers. There was a teacher who would never blame a white or Asian kid, she always blamed this one black boy. It got to the point the Asian kid could throw something across the room and she would blame the black kid. This is not just one teacher in one school, it’s happening all over Howard County. Administration never did anything to address the student's reports.”

“Require teachers, guidance, and administration to address the root cause of why kids may be “acting out” instead of just suspending them. (Reduces the school to prison pipeline)”

Anonymous:

“The general racial bias among teachers as I observed that not a single African American teacher taught an AP level class.”

Austen Roberson, Howard High School, Class of 2019:

“A vivid memory I have of the subtle racism in HCPSS is my high school years at Howard, with some teachers talking down on schools like LRHS, WLHS, and OMHS (schools with higher minority populations) and treating them as below us. My 11th grade math teacher had a ranking system, telling us some problems, “were so easy that it’s a Oakland Mills level

problem.” Even saying that through personal experience teaching there, the students weren’t as intelligent.

I also think back to the times in my senior year after college decisions were announced. It wasn’t uncommon to hear that I was the product of affirmative action. They would continuously make excuses for some of my accomplishments, saying my skin color made it easier for me. Others would say that the way that I act wasn’t black or that I was an Oreo because I did well in my classes. Some told me “I’m blacker than you” because of their interests in music or other hobbies.

I’m sure I have more memories that I’ve suppressed. To survive in Howard County you can’t call out these acts of subtle racism for fear of being ostracized by the community. It’s all to preserve the appearance of a wholesome accepting community that always chooses civility, although that couldn’t be further from the truth.”

“I suggest that the Black History course should become a more vague requirement. I think it should encompass any non eurocentric curriculum. Or accounting for the lack of viable teachers for said curriculum, create a requirement for the current history and English courses to add a unit each year on non-white culture.”

Davida Schiffer, Howard High School, Class of 2012:

“Make substantive policy changes to end the systematic racism, ableism, and sexism in HoCo Schools. Eliminate police presence in schools.”

Anonymous:

“It’s hard for me to talk about race with respect to my experience in the HCPSS, because it’s only with a lot of hindsight that I can understand the role that race played during a time that was for the most part a positive experience. I’m an Asian American who went to RHHS, and I acknowledge that I benefited from racial inequity. But that is an acknowledgement I would not have been able to make upon graduating high school. There is still a lot I question about my adolescence, but since these comments are pointed at HCPSS, I would distill it down to this: In eleventh grade, our summer reading was Ayn Rand’s “The Fountainhead,” and all the schooling I’d gotten up to that point had primed me to totally buy her “philosophy” (that is a generous term) of objectivism. It took me 5 years of undergraduate education to realize that the ideology of unbridled individualism is not only a fairy tale, but a tool of capitalist exploitation and white supremacy. And that is to say nothing of the fact that Rand’s writing is just bad.”

Anonymous:

“I think that the black history curriculum is insufficient. African history should be a class just like European history is. As far as incidents of racial bias, I cannot recall situations between staff and students in classes I was in. But I am also not black so I would not see everything. As I think about it, there were things I overheard that are racist comments. Some of these were worse than others, but they all portrayed non-whites in a negative way. I feel like the school itself

presents a biased environment. Not by the staff, but the students. They feel some sense of superiority to other students if they take an AP class. It has always upset me that this sense of class stratification within the school exists. This idea spills over into racial issues and how students see their peers. High school was many years ago and it is hard to remember everything, but there are definitely issues in the high school I attended and others in the county.”

“Include an African history class. Make reporting racism easily accessible. Create events to talk about red lining and systematic issues facing communities”

Maison Holcomb, Mount Hebron High School, Class of 2020:

“Through learning Spanish since 7th grade, progressing from Spanish 1 to completing Spanish 5 AP as a junior, I have never had a Spanish teacher who was of Latin American descent. That doesn’t even make sense.”

Anonymous:

“From elementary through high school, I essentially attended segregated schools. There was one black student in my elementary class who moved before we started middle school. My friend group was almost entirely white, and I never had a black teacher. I’m fairly certain none of the schools I attended even had a black teacher employed there until after I graduated. Overt racism and microaggressions were common among students. At school Halloween parties, cultural appropriation and racist costumes were common. After I graduated, a boy I shared a school bus with for years was arrested for spray-painting swastikas and racial and homophobic slurs on school buildings. Another boy who I had gone to school with since elementary school brought a Confederate flag to one of our high school football games. Our curriculum didn’t help - my American history classes didn’t really discuss racism or the experiences of people of color in the US. There was almost no education about the structural aspects of anti-black racism, mass incarceration, police violence, or how those problems persist to this day. Instead, my history classes implied that racism was over after the civil rights movement in the 1960s. My high school offered an AP European history course but didn’t have any history courses focused on majority non-white or non-Christian countries/cultures. Instead, we had to cover the entire history of the world outside Europe in one class - AP world history. In elementary school, for Thanksgiving, we made pilgrim and “Indian” hats to wear. We never learned about the violence that Christopher Columbus and other colonizers enacted on native people. I didn’t really learn how colonialism works until college. In my English classes, we read almost no books or poetry by non-white authors. Instead, we read books by white people that featured black characters or were about Africa (Mark Twain, *The Poisonwood Bible*, *A Light in August*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*). Though it’s important for white people to address racism, we should have also heard from black writers and discussed the problematic aspects/context of the books we did read. We shouldn’t have had to learn about the experiences of black people in the US almost exclusively from white people.”

Anonymous:

“In high school, I remember classmates tweeting out racial slurs and lots of microaggressions, including racist nicknames, against other schools in the county. Black History Month was acknowledged and celebrated in elementary (Triadelphia Ridge) and middle (Folly Quarter) schools, but not at Glenelg. I don’t recall reading books in English class by people of color until senior year AP literature, when we read *Beloved* by Toni Morrison.”

“First, the school system should prioritize diverse hiring. In my 13 years in the Howard County Public School System, I had three black teachers and two black administrators. At Glenelg High School, I did not have any black teachers and had only one non-white teacher. I believe that diverse racial and ethnic representation in the classroom is vital to dismantling racism in our county.

Second, HCPSS should prioritize in-person, immersive education about microaggressions at all levels of the curriculum. I’m a white woman, and I didn’t encounter this concept until I got to college. It really challenged me to think differently about some of my own prejudices that I did not confront in high school. Early education about microaggressions and their impact would help challenge the covert racism that pervades Glenelg and other schools.”

Anonymous:

“As an African American living and going to school in Howard County, I have seen and been affected by many instances of racial bias at school. I’ve been uninformed on certain opportunities, while the white kids have. I have felt uncomfortable and unsafe in class before because of racist comments made by other students in the class. I have been affected by racial bias and seen instances of racial bias numerous times at my school and other schools in the county.”

Sheetal Chopra, River Hill High School, Class of 2011:

(HCPSS needs) “cultural competency courses and history courses that focus on contributions of African Americans/ black people to our history.”

Anonymous:

“I knew about Long Reach's "reputation" years before becoming a student myself. I was always told it was "ghetto" and it wasn't a good school. Kids were moving out of the district or going to private school solely based on the rumors that surrounded the school. Looking back on it now, the school was a place for students to be anything they set their minds out to be, and they weren't limited by the color of their skin or what they believed. My freshmen year, I remember everyone telling me that Long Reach didn't have a great athletic program, and while that was true for a couple of years, I saw an underlying beauty in it. Kids who never played a sport had a chance to learn and some eventually became all-stars by their senior year. Coaches were buying equipment out of their own pockets because a lot of kids couldn't afford to have their own. I had the privilege of playing on an elite club team, but I knew others did not have the same resources

or means to have the same experience, despite their natural talent and potential. I also knew that was not the case at the "rich kid" schools such as Marriotts Ridge, River Hill or Glenelg. I had teammates from my travel team who played at those high schools, and they would tell me about all of the resources and equipment provided by parents because they could afford to have it. The same went for our music department. As soon as someone knew we were from Long Reach, we'd get stares, laughs and snickers. If I said I went to Long Reach, I was automatically deemed "ghetto" despite growing up in an upper middle class household. It was our diversity that other schools weren't used to. From showing up to our school with confederate flags, to starting fights over racial slurs, our school was always a target for racism.

Long Reach always offered African American studies, and had amazing Alpha Achievers and Delta Scholars programs for our black students and other students of color. There were clubs for literally every ethnicity from Latino Lightning, Black Student Union or Asian Student Union, there was representation everywhere. That being said, there were still racial tensions within our student population as well. The higher academic classes would see less and less students of color, especially black students. It was a surprise to some if a black student was in an AP class because many students associated a lot of the black students with being on-grade or below-grade level. I was in both AP and on-grade level classes, and the difference is astounding. The relationships between the teachers and students in AP/GT classes were much friendlier than the classes with more students of color. As a woman of color myself, it was hard not to notice subtle microaggressions that would take place among students and teachers. It wasn't as obvious, but there was definitely a divide between the black students and white students.

That being said, however, I would not have wanted to go anywhere else. Despite the divide, students were always willing to listen to one another. When it came to sporting events, we stood as one school against anyone that tried to badmouth Long Reach. When we found out that Mr. Burton, our former principal, was being sent to Glenelg, we knew that it would shock that community to have a black man as their principal. When we heard that he was the target from the racist vandalism scandal, every Long Reach student past and present felt that. He was Papa Burton to us, and a great role model for our black students. It was an absolute shame to see the school he led after us didn't appreciate him the same.

There was a lot of room to grow but I'm glad that I never felt threatened because of my skin color at my own school. I don't think I could say the same at some other schools. I always knew black lives mattered because of the environment I grew up in, and it was a shock when I realized not everyone agreed with that. Long Reach should not be the only school that offers African American studies year-round. It shouldn't even be a question as to whether it should be offered at other schools, in fact, it should be mandatory. We were taught European history our entire lives without a choice, so Black history and African American history shouldn't be a choice either."

Anonymous:

“I benefited immensely from being in an environment with lots of diversity in students' races and cultures, and I'm grateful for how these experiences helped me personally grow. I grew up around many different voices, and these differences led to healthy debate that helped me better understand our society and how to be a more well-rounded community member. Without many of my classmates, I would have never gotten the chance to learn unique perspectives on race that have made me much more empathetic and ethical in my thinking. As for the black history curriculum, *Black Boy* is still one of books I best remember, and I appreciated learning about history in AP World History and Government & Politics, although I think much more needs to be added, such as Juneteenth content, which was never taught to me.”

Anne Harshbarger, Glenelg High School, Class of 2015:

“It wasn't until years after I had graduated from Glenelg that I learned just how much was left out of our education about the history of racial injustice in the U.S. We were taught just the basics about the role of race and racism in American history, and I have learned that even those basics were misleading. As a few examples, I distinctly remember learning about the "states' rights" narrative of the civil war; learning simply that the 13th Amendment abolished slavery, without learning about the massive loophole it leaves behind in the criminal justice system; and leaving history class with the oversimplified impression that Martin Luther King Jr. represented the one right and peaceful approach to the civil rights movement while Malcolm X represented a wrong and violent approach. Racism and discrimination were presented as problems of the past that had already been solved.

Upon reflection, we discussed racism more deeply in my advanced English classes than in history, though even these discussions were limited. I strongly urge HCPSS to incorporate Black history and non-Eurocentric narratives into the curriculum to prepare its students to be well-informed and actively engaged members of their community. HCPSS students are not too young to be taught about racism in the U.S.; as you can see from these comments, Black students and non-Black students of color are faced with it every day in school. HCPSS can do more to support its students while in the school system by having meaningful conversations about race and taking students' accounts of racist acts by their peers and teachers seriously. Having these candid discussions throughout their HCPSS education will help students understand why the acts of racism you will read about in these comments are not okay and empower them to speak up when they see injustice.”

Anonymous:

“The HCPSS curriculum is riddled with racial bias that enforces white supremacy. Throughout my four years at Glenelg High School, I was only required to read one book by a black author: *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, and that was the very last book that we read in AP English during my 12th grade year. To emphasize, out of all four years of high school, I only read one book by a black author, at the very end. In addition to this, even our history classes were biased. For instance, our history classes suggested that black history in the US began with

the slave trade, when in reality there were black people present in North America before that. In this way, history was being taught through the perspective of white colonizers, rather than the perspective of people of African descent/black people. Therefore, the curriculum places greater importance on white voices than black voices, enforcing white supremacist ideologies.

As a black student at Glenelg High School, I vividly remember when a huge confederate flag was raised at a football game, and students wore the confederate flag to school the next day. I remember when black students spoke up about it, many white students wanted us to stop talking about it because it made the school look bad. They were more concerned about their reputation than our reaction to a symbol of racism, so they wanted to silence us. As an artist, I also remember wanting to paint a mural in the school that would denounce hate and promote racial justice, but several students told me not to because it would draw too much attention to the situation. These situations exemplify how placing greater importance on white voices than black voices can play out in real life and create a hostile environment for black students.

In addition to this, during high school, when cases of racist violence around the country made national news, it was never discussed or even acknowledged in class—it was always just business as usual. It was as if teachers did not see how those stories could impact us as individuals (*It is important to also note that during my 11 years in the Howard County Public School System, I only had 3 black teachers.*). If teachers did not want to take out class time to talk about these important real-life issues, then students should have at least been encouraged to speak with counselors about it if they needed someone to talk to. With that being said, HCPSS needs counselors who are trained to attend to the nuanced needs of black students as well as students of all marginalized groups.

However, racial issues are topics that should be discussed in class. I remember one day at school, I was sitting at lunch at a table full of only white students, and one of the girls looked at me and asked me for my opinion on affirmative action; interestingly, out of everyone at the table she only wanted my opinion. At the time, I didn't really have a good understanding of what affirmative action was, so I said that I wasn't sure. She replied by saying that she believed that it unfairly benefited black people. In college, I learned that affirmative action benefits white women the most out of any other demographic. Topics such as this must be discussed in certain classes in order to prevent the spreading of misinformation that is harmful to black people.”

“HCPSS must provide improved mental health resources for students facing racism, discrimination, and/or prejudice. Also, faculty and staff must be trained to identify the signs that may be indicative of various mental health issues. At Howard County public schools, too many students have shown a plethora of signs, yet never received any help from school officials.

Additionally, in order to correct the racial bias in HCPSS curriculum.. The curriculum must be informed by distinguished scholars in African and African American history.”

Elasia Jackson, Wilde Lake High School, Class of 2023:

“Most of my experiences with race in the Howard County Public School System, actually come from children of other schools, that are predominately white. It is generally just blanket

ignorance or disrespect for the black community and what they are and have been working towards.”

Anonymous:

“There was a lot of racism at River Hill that I, a white person, did not recognize at the time. In my AP classes, there were few black students. Some of my teachers would call on black students and ask them "how do black people feel about" an issue. Those students should not have been put on the spot like that and expected to speak for the whole black community in predominantly white classrooms. Many students at River Hill looked down upon other schools in the county for racist reasons and called them "ghetto." Many students also made casually racist comments about Asian people.”

Anonymous:

“For many reasons, I have tried to block out most of my experiences from growing up in the Howard County school system, and race definitely played a significant role. While I was fortunate to live in a community and go to school with more black children than other areas of the county, my family and I were not impervious to blatant ignorance. There are far too many incidents of microaggression to recall and count, and any number at all of the more glaring experiences of racism would be too many. I was never a big history buff (in fact I hated social studies and history class because it was so boring and whitewashed), but it would have meant more to me if I consistently got to learn about the actual history of my people. It also didn't help hearing all of the disrespectful things the other students would say about one of my social studies teachers (who was a black woman!). I hated that you had to both overexert your efforts and simultaneously shrink your inner self, restrain your mannerisms, and quietly fall in line to not only get into higher grade level courses (GT, AP, etc.) but also to be accepted in those spaces. I was one of never more than three or four black children at a time in each of my classes from the time I first moved to the county at age 9 until I graduated at age 17 (and in several cases, I was the only black person in the classroom). The entire time, I noticed black children who subjectively spoke out of turn were always quickest to be given detention/written up/sent to the principal's office, while their white classmates were given a warning or even had the teachers laugh with them saying their "just kidding around" *insert eye roll here*. Why was it okay for white people to be accepted as themselves and black people to only be respected/taken seriously if they played the part and played the token co-star in the classroom. There was an obvious and unintentional divide between the two sets of black people, because we weren't in the same classes and there weren't enough spaces or settings that consistently brought us all together (which, as an adult, I've felt was by design). People couldn't even bother to identify us clearly or see us as separate human beings with our own personalities (for at least 6 out of the 8 years I was in this school system, my name was constantly mixed up with two other skinny black girls, as if to say they could not tell us apart). I've had kids reach to grab accessories out of my hair on the school bus, or shout across the auditorium that I have a weave in (which I did not) because my

hair was styled a different way. I've listened to white kids say rude and disrespectful things about teachers in class and then say I'm the one with an attitude because my face isn't doing a good enough job of hiding the rage I feel knowing a black kid would never/has never gotten away with that kind of behavior. When I'd felt like I was being myself or actually speaking up for what I believe, I'm called sassy or an angry black woman, but when I'd go back to remaining quiet I'm "so polite and well-mannered", only for my younger siblings to be pressured by those same educators to fit in that same box which they were wise enough to not let themselves be bound by. The most collective space I experienced or witnessed seeing black students from varying walks of life come together was in sports, and even that wasn't safe when we'd travel to other schools in the county and have their students (and parents) shout racial slurs at us or tell us to go back home "to the ghetto". Truthfully, I could go on and on about the issues with this clique-based county, and it pains me to see how much hurt others have experienced in their testimonies here. But this is necessary. These conversations are necessary. This education is necessary. We matter WAY more than the world seems to understand. We are 100% just like everyone else, and deserve the same respect, the same resources, the same EMPATHY. HCPSS, please do your part in better educating your students, your faculty, AND the parents in this county to change their behaviors and mindsets. Thank you for reading."

"Action Items: Require REAL black history in your curriculum; provide more SAFE spaces for collective black activities; hire more black faculty; create REAL consequences for injustices against black people."

Anonymous:

"I'm an Asian American in all G/T classes. I went to Swansfield Elementary school and I am currently at Harper's Choice Middle school. Here are just a few of my experiences:

The first time I was in a G/T math class in elementary school, I had to stand up on my chair to do the times tables for a piece of gum. I remember looking down at a bunch of White students looking up at me and being really scared. As one of the only non-White students I already felt different and that exercise made me stick out more.

I had a classmate tell me that I lived in the "ghetto" when I was in a townhome. She lived in a townhome too, so it didn't make sense to me. I lived in Harper's Choice near the village center. There seems to be an unspoken "bad" side of town vs "good" side of town that correlates to race.

One time at recess, I was outside playing football with a Black classmate and a White classmate pulled me aside and asked why I was playing with him. I asked them, "Why, is it a problem?" and they just shook their head and said no, but I could tell that it was because he was Black.

I've witnessed multiple teachers treating Black kids as less. I have a Math teacher who obviously favors White students. The White students can scream and fool around in class and she won't get that mad and whenever they ask questions, she's patient with them. She tends to praise the White kids a lot. However, I notice when a Black student asks a question, the teacher

speaks to them in a condescending way saying things like, “I don’t even understand why you would ask that question, it’s simple.” I never feel comfortable asking her questions because I feel like she’s putting me on trial. This same teacher has said the N-word and white students have used the word as well.

People don’t know how to categorize me, I feel judged by who I hang out with. So when I’m with White classmates, I’m perceived as “white-washed” but I’m still not accepted or favored like they are even though we are all top students.

Since most of the kids in my classes are White, the majority of my friends are White. One time at lunch, a classmate came up to our table and said, “you need to get more diversity up in here,” and in an instant, all my friends whipped their heads around and pointed towards me and said they had me in their group like I was their token friend of color. This happened a few times to me and it made me feel like I wasn’t equal to my White friends and like I am an object rather than a human being.

I’ve seen an administrator ask a White student to put their phone away and the White student got cocky and sarcastic saying, “What are you going to do about it?” and the administrator just laughed it off. Whereas I’ve seen the same administrator yell at Black kids over minor things. With Black students, the administrator escalates it very quickly, raising their voice and yelling at them where you can see the veins popping out of their neck. There’s a certain venom to it when it comes to Black kids. I also noticed that when a Black kid and a White kid are sitting next to each other in class and they get in trouble together, the Black student is almost always the one that’s asked to move to another seat”

David Koralov, Centennial High School, Class of 2021:

“My name is David Koralov, an 11th grade student at Centennial High School.

Throughout last year, I’ve had some unsettling experiences with discriminatory statements by teachers. On the first day of school, I was mistakenly placed in a chemistry class for first period. In a “joking” manner, the teacher would say things such as “Women eat a lot. That’s like the main thing women do,” or “His name is like thirty letters long, you know he’s one of those Indians”.

Due to a scheduling error, that was the only time I had this teacher’s class. Nonetheless, this experience foreshadowed what happened throughout the rest of the year with other teachers. In particular, I had an AP Government teacher who would often make conservative comments (bragging about owning various firearms, complaining about voter fraud in Maryland, etc.). Then there would be “jokes”, such as “You can never trust a brown boy,” or “She’s Asian so she’s weird”.

And then there would be some really evil stuff. For example, at one point, I got into an argument with her because she said that “People in Baltimore should just stop being so lazy and get a job”. She did not say “black people,” but the message was clear.

I was the only student who would speak up against such statements, and I would often be met with insults such as “So, we’ve got a little socialist over here”. I eventually contacted my

school administration. However, I was unable to get the or the school system to officially admit that anything was done or said wrong. I reached out to several local politicians, they advised me to give testimony to the Board of Education. The link to my testimony is <https://www.instagram.com/tv/CAPCxy6HTG0/>”