

## PVCA basketball season cancelled

by Brad Hill

The Varsity Basketball Season for PVCA has been officially cancelled. The season was cancelled at the last minute after three practices, due to other schools opting out of a season and a coronavirus outbreak at the PVCA High School. Unofficial practices have resumed as of March 2, but no games are expected to be played. John Mateo, a freshman, is understanding but still upset at the cancellation. "I can understand why they did it, but at what point are we going to go back to normal?" Everyone hopes that the season can resume for next year.

## NBA all-stars announced

by Brad Hill

The NBA all-stars were announced recently, with the all-star game scheduled to be played on March 7. The captains of the all-star teams, LeBron James and Kevin Durant, who will be sitting out of the game due to injury, will draft their teams over a video call. The pool of players that they can choose from includes Kevin Durant's teammates Kyrie Irving and James Harden, who was recently traded to the Nets in an extensive four team trade. LeBron James' teammate, Anthony Davis, is also an all-star but is sitting out due to injury like Durant. The two injury replacements are Domantas Sabonis and Devin Booker. The dunk contest, three point contest, and skills challenge are also part of the festivities.

## Buccaneers win the Super Bowl

by Brad Hill

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers defeated the Kansas City Chiefs 31-9 on Sunday, February 7 to win Super Bowl LV. Tom Brady won his seventh Super Bowl and declared Super Bowl MVP for the fifth time at the age of 43, but the defense carried the Buccaneers, holding one of the most potent offenses in the NFL to single digits. Brady also became the oldest player to win a

### The Talon Staff

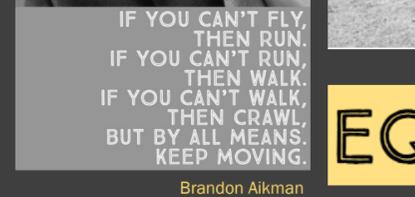
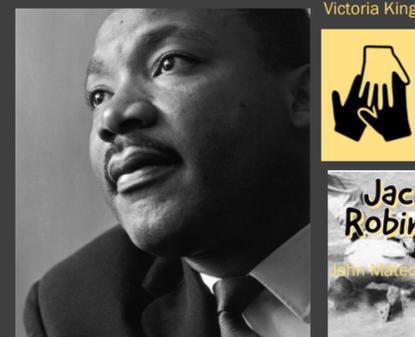
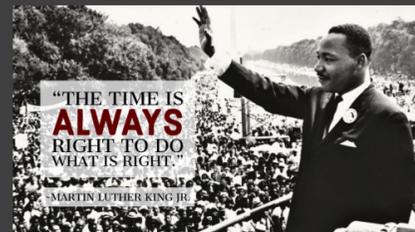
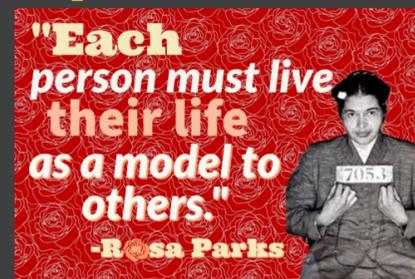
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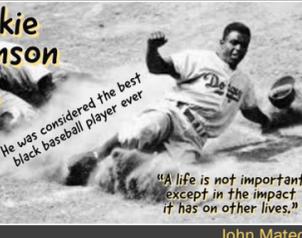
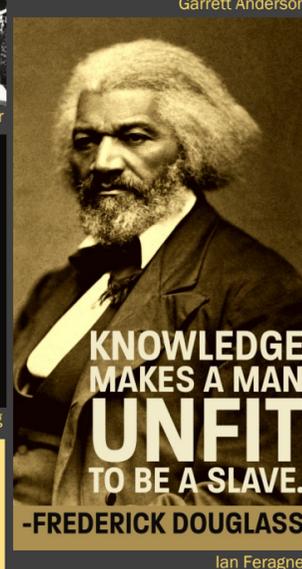
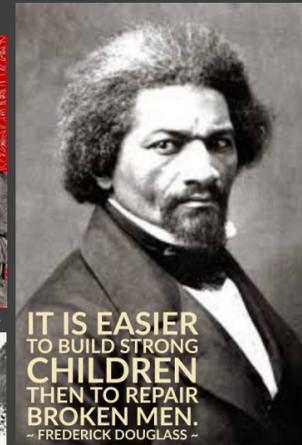
## Digital Media class creates Black History Graphics



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1. Gonzaga
  2. Michigan
  3. Baylor
  4. Illinois
  5. Iowa
  6. West Virginia
  7. Ohio State
  8. Alabama
  9. Houston
  10. Villanova
  11. Florida State
  12. Arkansas
  13. Kansas
  14. Creighton
  15. Texas
  16. Oklahoma
  17. Oklahoma State
  18. Texas Tech
  19. San Diego State
  20. Loyola-Chicago
  21. Virginia
  22. Virginia Tech
  23. Purdue
  24. Colorado
  25. Wisconsin

- NBA Standings
- EAST**
1. Philadelphia
  2. Brooklyn
  3. Milwaukee
  4. Boston
  5. New York
  6. Toronto
  7. Miami
  8. Charlotte
  9. Indiana
  10. Chicago
  11. Atlanta
  12. Cleveland
  13. Washington
  14. Orlando
  15. Detroit
- WEST**
1. Utah
  2. Phoenix
  3. Los Angeles Lakers
  4. Los Angeles Clippers
  5. San Antonio
  6. Portland
  7. Denver
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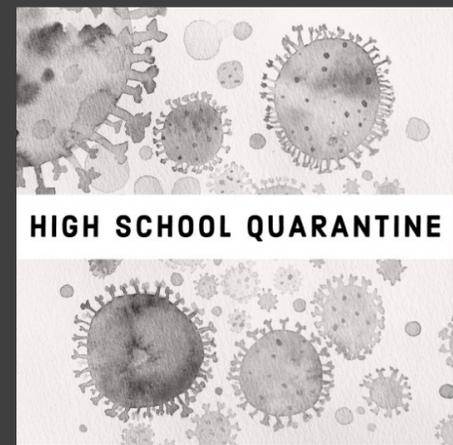
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# THE TALON

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021 ISSUE 3

## SPECIAL EDITION - BLACK HISTORY MONTH



### HIGH SCHOOL QUARANTINE

### BACK IN QUARANTINE, STUDENTS LAUD NEW REMOTE LEARNING SCHEDULE

By Benjamin LeBlanc

During the weeks of January 17th and January 24th, after the freshmen and then the sophomore class reported positive cases of COVID-19 and began quarantining, Pioneer Valley Christian Academy high school students transitioned to remote learning.

The decision, which prompted the latest in a string of quarantines dating back to October, was made by Headmaster Mr. Duff after consulting with the local board of health per state and local guidelines. This decision relieved teachers of juggling teaching students virtually and in person and relieved students from having to take their midterm exams.

"Because there is minimal scientific research [on COVID-19] from which to operate and make decisions, I thought it was the better side of wisdom to quarantine the high school for a few days," said Mr. Duff. He went on to say that cancelling midterms came at small cost because they only account for 10% of a semester grade and teachers could accurately assess students' knowledge without them.

The decision came as Massachusetts experienced a sharp increase in new cases that began in October and peaked in January which was caused by a period of heavy travel during Thanksgiving and Christmas. Over Christmas vacation, new cases more than doubled from 3,843 on December 21st to 9,003 on January 2nd, placing MA in the highest risk category, according to a New York Times Database.

Before being dismissed from school, students received a copy of the new schedule for remote learning: four classes separated by ten minute breaks would be held on Monday through Thursday from 8:00 A.M. to 11:50 A.M. On

Fridays, teachers would be "available for help from 8:00 A.M to 2:30 P.M. via email or telephone." Mr. Duff clarified that the first week of online classes would begin on Tuesday, January 18th in order to give teachers ample time to prepare.

High School English teacher Mrs. Witherow revealed why the schedule for remote learning had been updated for the 2020-2021 school year.

According to Mrs. Witherow, the Instructional Committee, a group of teachers representing the various divisions of PVCA, met over the summer to sketch out a plan for remote learning in the case of an outbreak. They drew on data from models used by schools nationwide and surveys PVCA parents took at the end of the 2019-2020 school year during which student learning was mostly asynchronous.

"We saw that students needed a more structured schedule and more live classes, but that they also needed boundaries, so they didn't feel like they needed to be in school mode all the time...." said Mrs. Witherow. "By allowing students afternoons to work on asynchronous tasks and meet with teachers, students can create some boundaries in their lives and achieve balance."

By all accounts, it seems that balance was achieved. Not only was the new schedule well-received by students, but many reported improvements in their mental state and productivity. Caleb Branco ('21) said, "Having a



### REMEMBERING BLACK HISTORY: TAKING STEPS TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE

By Victoria Sharpe

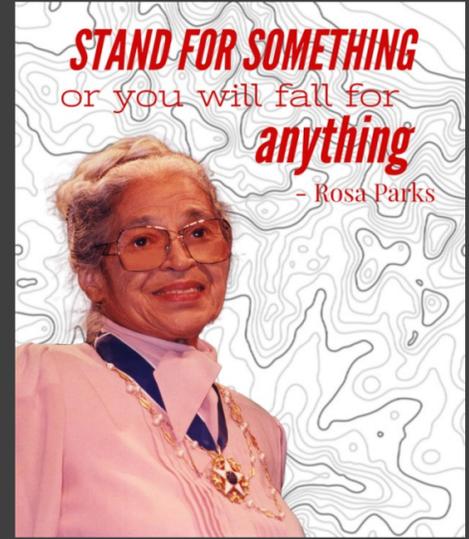
During the month of February the United States acknowledges the accomplishments of

a shorter school day means I don't have to worry about conserving enough energy to get through the whole eight hours. I can devote more of that energy to each class now."

"...I love the new schedule. I think the ten minutes in between classes gives enough time for us to get whatever we have in between done," said Victor Brunson ('22).

The general consensus among students is that, in previous quarantines, they were caught between making time to "do other things at home" and "working late into the night" to finish classwork and homework. But with the new schedule in place, they felt more prepared and motivated to complete their assignments.

"In the beginning of the school year I hated online school," said Kayla Calendar ('22), one of the few students who has been doing remote learning since PVCA shut down in March of last year. "When I had to sit behind my computer for eight hours a day it was harder to focus and find the motivation to complete assignments on time or even at all. But the new schedule gives me an ample amount of time and motivation to finish."



African Americans and remembers all of the trials and suffering they endured. One of the original reasons for recognizing Black history was to prove that the African American community had played an important role in America's creation and, therefore, African Americans should be recognized as equal citizens. At the time the idea for a black history recognition was suggested, there were many issues with equality because of the racism plaguing the country. Over the years America has come quite a long way and has made (Continued on page 2)

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“THE NEW DAWN BLOOMS AS WE FREE IT. FOR THERE IS ALWAYS LIGHT, IF ONLY WE’RE BRAVE ENOUGH TO SEE IT. IF ONLY WE’RE BRAVE ENOUGH TO BE IT.” AMANDA GORMAN

## REMEMBERING BLACK HISTORY: TAKING STEPS TOWARD A BETTER FUTURE

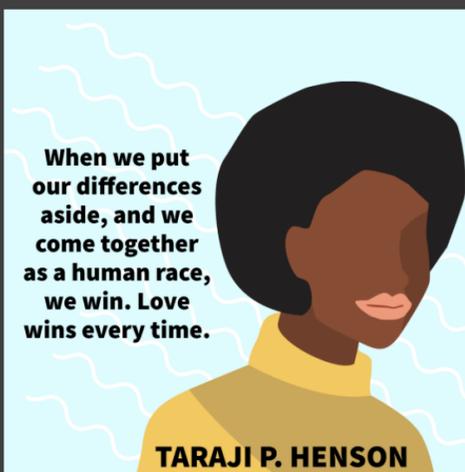
by Victoria Sharpe (Continued from page 1)

much progress such as the abolition of slavery, the end of segregation, and the passing of the Civil Rights Act, but there is still a long way to go. Growing up in a black family, I was always aware of the racism that was in our country and how it had not gone away, but many people did not grow up in the way that I did. For me, being aware of the problems African Americans face made them easier to recognize and to talk about. Many people do not know about the inequalities in our society or the racism that it allows, but talking about these issues will help to stop them. Ignorance is a large part of why racism still exists, but in 2020 our country took a leap in the right direction.

Last year, hundreds of thousands of people took the time to educate themselves on racial issues in America and were inspired to do something about it.

Over the course of many months, there were marches and protests across the nation for racial equality. Despite the

pandemic separating us, many people found common purpose to unite them: the fight for equality. Although racism will not be solved over night, it is vital that we never forget the past and that we learn from it so that we, as a nation, can continue to move forward towards a better future.



## PIONEER VALLEY CHRISTIAN ACADEMY HOSTS BLACK HISTORY MONTH FILM FESTIVAL

By Benjamin LeBlanc

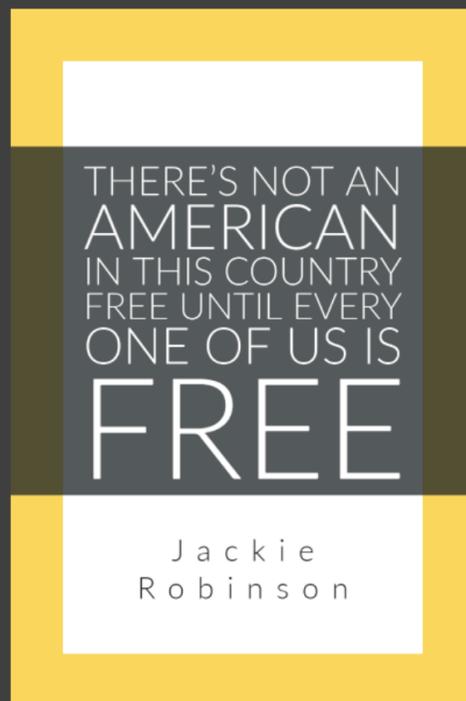
A six year-old girl approaches the entrance of a public school, escorted by four federal marshals as an angry white mob screams in protest; a longtime death row inmate is strapped into an electric chair for capital murder after committing involuntary manslaughter; a civil rights activist faces off with a KKK chapter leader. These were just some of the images school projectors displayed on February 26th during the Pioneer Valley Christian Academy Black History Month Film Festival.

With origins dating back to 1915, Black History Month was first recognized by President Ford in 1976. Ten years later, President Reagan stated, in a presidential proclamation, that “the foremost purpose of Black History Month is to make all Americans aware of this struggle for freedom and equal opportunity,” as well as

“to celebrate the many achievements of African Americans from science and the arts to politics and religion.”

In a year filled with reminders of America’s troubled past that have brought race to the forefront of national discourse, schools across the country have found ways to observe Black History Month in the COVID-19 era. But unlike other schools, PVCA had the task of commemorating Black History Month from a Biblical perspective.

In a statement, the school headmaster Mr. Duff said, “Black History Month reminds me of the magnificent diversity which God created in everything that He touched. Because of our sin (the fall) however, mankind far too often has used this diversity to do harm to one another. The movies that were chosen for the students to view depict the hurt, violence, and damage done because we have failed to



Digital Art Designed by Brad Hill, Grade 9

follow the two greatest commandments, which are to love God and to love your neighbor, followed by the Golden Rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” As Christians, our goal is unity while respecting and appreciating the diversity that God has created. After all, we are all of one race, as we all descended from Adam. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (John 13:35).”

On the morning of February 26th, High School English and Bible Teacher, Mr. David, emphasized this theme of “one human race” in a message he delivered for high school chapel on how Christianity and race intersect “There are not different races, there are different ethnicities belonging to the same human race,” David said.

The message, while grounded in the idea of human equality in the sight of God, offered an answer to the callousness of our contemporary culture. “Racists may not deserve your forgiveness, but we deserve

## VALENTINE'S DAY SPOTLIGHT: PVCA LOVE CONNECTIONS



CHRIS ANDRE ('88)  
& EMILY LECLAIR ('89)



Emily and Chris Andre sent all three of their daughters to PVCA. Daughters (pictured left to right) Nina ('15), Olivia ('20), and Sophia ('18) are all graduates of PVCA and currently in college or graduate school. Emily is currently teaching preschool, and Chris continues to coach the high school soccer team.

NATHAN ROSARIO ('99)  
& ERIN DEARING ('01)



(Left) Nathan and Erin pictured just a few years after graduation from PVCA. (Right) The Rosario family: Nathan, Jaxon, Anya, Myla, and Erin

by Alexa Walker

The term “high school sweethearts” can mean many things. It can refer to a first love or a couple who has dated since high school. Often, others wonder what happens to those couples after school. At Pioneer Valley Christian Academy, 30 couples have married a fellow alumnus whom they met at PVCA.

The most recent marriage of two graduates was between Nathanael Brosseau, who graduated in 2019, and McKenzie Thomas, who graduated a year later. They married in January, 2021. “If anything, we’re so blessed to have met at such a young age because we share so many memories and will have so many more in the future. I married my best friend and that’s so awesome,” McKenzie says.



Some of our PVCA faculty and staff also found love in high school. Chris Andre, who graduated in 1988, and Emily LeClair, who graduated in 1989, met in the PVCA cafeteria. They started dating, continued through college, and married in 1993 after Mrs. Andre’s graduation. “PVCA has always been a big part of our lives”, she commented. “Not only did we meet here, but I got my first teaching job here after college. I was blessed to send all three of my daughters here. Ironically, my daughter is still dating her boyfriend that she met at PVCA,” Emily says.

Jeff Lansner, also a part of PVCA’s staff,

married Kristen Fidalgo. They both graduated in 2006. Despite going through high school together, they did not date until the year after graduation. “I was really immature in high school, but the slight maturity I had was to know if I had dated her in high school, it probably wouldn’t have lasted,” Mr. Lansner says. They dated all through college and married in August 2011. “It’s been marital bliss ever since,” Jeff says.

Similarly, Nathanael Rosario, who graduated in 1999, and Erin Dearing, who graduated in 2001, are married and have two children who are students at the school. They met in the hallway by the payphone, where Erin gave Nathanael her pager number. They went to college separately and did not date, but they later rekindled their relationship. “We felt we needed that breaking off, and then when we reconnected. If we hadn’t gone to Pioneer Valley, we wouldn’t have reconnected” Nathanael says.

Whether dating in high school or after, Pioneer Valley Christian Academy has produced a large number of families and happy marriages.

JEFF LANSNER & KRISTEN FIDALGO ('06)



(Left) Jeff, Lily, Kristen, and Levi pose for their annual Christmas photo.

## PVCA elementary celebrates Black History

(continued from page 3) Railroad. The third graders learned about the quilts that concealed directions to freedom for runaway slaves. Each student participated in making his or her own paper quilt patterns. “They were shocked at the abuse that drove these poor people to run for their very lives. I was very pleased that they were recognizing the injustice of it all,” stated Mrs. Russell.



Eliora Buabeng and Billy Collins show off their coded quilt squares they colored in Mrs. Russell’s third grade class.

Throughout the month of February, the second grade read various books about civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks. Mrs. Feragne sought to instill an understanding of the progress civil right leaders have made. She pointed out that, “The things we read about did not happen that long ago.”

In agreement, 5th Grade teacher Mr. Beggs stated, “Many students were surprised at how African Americans were treated in the early seventies. The students were exposed to that in the movie we watched, (Woodlawn).” The fifth grade class learned of various significant figures in different categories, such as music, drama, athletics, educators, writers, activists and etc. Mr. Beggs ultimately hoped each student would walk away with an appreciation for all people that God created. “He has created everyone in his image, and (Everyone) is of equal value in his sight, and

therefore, should be considered equal in our sight,” Beggs commented.

Ultimately, each teacher wished to present Black History Month with a biblical perspective, with emphasis on equality and unity. “There is no greater truth that highlights the value of a person,” Mrs. Weferling explained, “than that we are made in His image.” Mr. Beggs added, “We honor each other because we are all created by God in his image.”

Mrs. Russel captured the essence of Black History month at PVCA. “My greatest desire is for students to see that God is not a respecter of persons. He looks at the heart. Pleasing him, (God) is what is most important, so we should be loving each other, no matter what we look like,” she stated.

## SHIRLEY CHISHOLM, ROSA PARKS, ROBERTO CLEMENTE, AND RUBY BRIDGES, AND WILMA RUDOLPH CHOSEN FOR FOURTH GRADE BIOGRAPHY PROJECTS

by Alison Witherow

Every year Mrs. Weferling gives the fourth grade class the assignment to research an important historical figure and do a biography on that person. Four students took the opportunity to research the lives of influential African Americans. Kadence Sharpe, Gemma Deyo, Jaxon Rosario, and Aniyah Beckford each chose the subject of their project because of that person's courageous, inspirational acts. Kadence Sharpe chose to do her project on Shirley Chisholm. "I chose her because she is inspirational and did a lot of cool stuff," Sharpe said. All of the students were amazed at their person's willingness to be the first to do something even when they were alone in doing it. Gemma Deyo researched the life of Rosa Parks. "I liked that she was the first African American that said no to getting off her seat on the bus," commented Deyo. Aniyah Beckford studied Ruby Bridges. "I thought it was cool that she was the first person to integrate into an all white school," said Beckford. All four of them were excited about how much they learned so after researching their historical figures. Jaxon Rosario did his project on Roberto Clemente. "I learned that even though there is something hard going on don't let anything get in the way of your goals," he explained. The fourth graders enjoyed researching their presentations and learning about those whom others had studied.



Kadence Sharpe designed her jackdaw to look like a voting booth. Kadence shared, "[Shirley Chisholm] is inspiring. Later [in her life], President Obama gave her an award."



Maya Ocana-Saunders, a multi-athlete herself, said, "I chose Wilma Rudolph because she was a runner and she liked to play basketball. Also, Mrs. Weferling read us a book about her and I thought she was very inspiring. When she was young she had polio, but then she became an Olympic runner, ran a business, was a gym teacher, and a second grade teacher!"



During the month of February, Mrs. Weferling's fourth grade class reads many books on important figures from Black History. Most recently, the students learned about Sojourner Truth.



"Sojourner Truth's dream was to have all of her kids and family with her in freedom. She picked the name Sojourner Truth. Sojourner means somebody who goes to many different places and not staying for a long time. She chose Truth because she belongs to God, and God's last name is truth." ~Taylor Graham



"Sojourner was very interesting. She had five children. Her master noticed everything she did and said he would release her a year early. She worked so hard that she wore her hand down to the one. She is known for her beautiful voice and singing and her persistence." ~Jeziel Gonzalez



where they could see, hear and feel black oppression instead of just reading about it. For Lujan Urena, a freshman, watching Ruby Bridges gave her courage to confront injustices in society. She states, "[racism] is talked about but not really so much that a lot of people really understand. The highlight of this movie is that it brought attention to these problems". As a Christian school, there is a responsibility to be proactive in creating a safe space and giving a voice to those treated unfairly due to the color of their skin. Schools should foster a culture in which Black and Brown students are not at a disadvantage.

## HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS REACT TO BLACK HISTORY FILM FESTIVAL

by Caleb Sierra

The Black History Month film festival at Pioneer Valley Christian Academy displayed a variety of films that brought awareness to Black history. The films included Just Mercy, Ruby Bridges, Hidden Figures, Red Tails, and The Best of Enemies. In the days leading up to the festival, students were given the opportunity to choose the films they wanted to watch. Students shared excitement in anticipation of watching the films. Even though some students did not know what to expect, everyone left with a different perspective about African American History. The films allowed students to understand why race in America is so important and how race affects our school culture. Teachers lead film discussions after each film to foster productive conversation about Black History. At PVCA there is a Black and Brown demographic. For that reason, activities such as this one are key in bringing awareness to minority groups and giving

a voice to the Black and Brown population of PVCA. "These movies made me ashamed of the way our country handles these types of situations," stated Victoria Sharpe.

Victoria watched the film Just Mercy, a drama about the injustices in the judicial system of America. The film Ruby Bridges brought to light racism of years past, while Just Mercy demonstrated the effects of racism in American society today. Christiana Dockter, a freshman stated, "the movie detailed to me the racism affecting people in past years, and I haven't seen a movie like that before, so it was interesting to find out what actually happened". There is a need for conversations on racism to expose its evils and to allow students to be aware of their part in creating a more fair and just world.

The film format gave students a real perspective on racism and the films chosen truly developed the essence of the theme. Students were given examples of stories

## PVCA HOSTS BLACK HISTORY MONTH FILM FESTIVAL

(continued from page 2)



God's forgiveness much less," said Mr. David.

Once chapel concluded, high school students were dismissed to watch a film they selected from a list of six before participating in a group discussion that focused "on the contributions of black Americans, perseverance, and the Christian response to injustice." The films, which are based on the true stories of Black Americans included *Ruby Bridges*, *The Best of Enemies*, *The Great Debaters*, *Red Tails*, *Hidden Figures* and *Just Mercy*. Later in the day, the middle school student body gathered for chapel and watched *Hidden Figures*.

The response from students was overwhelmingly positive, as it was the first time PVCA had observed Black History Month on a school-wide basis.

Gianna Albano, ('22) said, "I really appreciated the time the teachers took to put the films together, and I thought it was a really good experience for everyone at PVCA to watch and to reflect for a few hours on our current situation."

"I thought the movie was good," said Victoria Sharpe of *Just Mercy*, which follows lawyer Bryan Stevenson as he labors to overturn the wrongful convictions of death row inmates in 1980's Alabama. "It really opened my mind to the flaws in the justice system and the way that people are treated, and it made me realize that we need to take more time to listen and more time to think before we do and say things." She said of the group discussion, "it was really good to talk about things and other people's opinions and see where everyone stands. And it helped to just get the conversation going and being more comfortable with things like that."

"It was really good, the acting was on point," said Jacob Thomas ('23) of *Red Tails*, which centers around the exploits of The Tuskegee Airmen, an all-Black fighter squadron that fought in WWII when the U.S. military was still racially segregated. "It showed emotion that I didn't know it was going to show. And it focused on a lot more racism that I thought it was [going to]. You look at a fighter jet movie, and you don't

think it's gonna be about racism."

A brief on the festival and links to the films were posted on the PVCA website, and parents could contact Administration Assistant Mrs. Taft via email if they didn't want their child to watch a certain film.

High school English teacher Mrs. Witherow, the lead organizer of the event, and middle and high school science teacher Mrs. Callender, who served as a consultant, explained how the festival came to be and shared their vision for the future.

"I think it's important that PVCA acknowledge the history and the contributions of all of our community members. Black History Month is an important part of American culture, and we needed to recognize it in school," said Mrs. Witherow. "I asked Mr. Duff if we could hold a Black History Month film festival, and he immediately agreed that it was a good idea."

According to Mrs. Witherow, she and Mrs. Callender, along with several other faculty members, spent February vacation previewing films to show at the festival. She said the selection process was expedited by the fact that their choice of films was already limited under PVCA's licensing agreement with Christian Viewing License International (CVLI).

Both Mrs. Witherow and Mrs. Callender said that in previous years Black History Month responsibilities fell on individual teachers, namely Mrs. Funchion and the digital media class, which helped spread awareness by creating posters highlighting the contributions of African Americans. "That was a great start, but we wanted to do a little more this year," said Mrs. Witherow, who also shared her goals for the festival.

"I hope that students will learn more about the contributions of African Americans and will recognize the perseverance that was required of African Americans in order to achieve all that they have," said Mrs. Witherow. "I hope that students will be more inclined to consider the experiences of people from different backgrounds, but ultimately, I hope that PVCA students will evaluate everything that they watch and their own actions by the Word of God."

Despite the success of the festival, Mrs. Calendar said that Black History Month would receive more attention in future years.

"When we do it next year, it will be more expansive. This year it was more about trying to just see what's out there, comb through [the] copyright and logistical issues in showing [the movies] and having a starting place," said Mrs. Calendar. "If we work on integrating the narrative of our history, America's history, with many different voices from many different people, [black history] will be not unheard of, not as uncomfortable...So, again, hopefully there is this embracing of how God has created us, in all of this variety, in all of this diversity, all year long."

Judging from the students' responses, it seems that PVCA is ready for the change.

"I think it was a great start to celebrating Black History Month in a school where it typically isn't celebrated by everybody," said Ashley Drakes ('21).

Similarly, Skylar Chapelaine ('21) said, "[I] think that this is a good start for the school and it should be continued and promoted."

## PVCA elementary celebrates Black History

by Emma Kerns

Black History Month has been celebrated across America since 1976. Carter G. Woodson designed this celebration in order to address the lack of knowledge regarding African American History. PVCA's elementary school teachers use various hands-on activities to educate the students about Black History from a biblical worldview. As early as Kindergarten, Mrs. Berian reads her students texts like "Shoes like Miss Alice's" to demonstrate that, "Everyone who enjoys telling a story is capable of writing a book."



The third grade class focused on Harriet Tubman, one of the most influential leaders of the Underground (continued on page 7)

# The faith-filled life of Augustine Blount

by Alison Witherow

Most people in high school only think of Ms. Blount as their first grade teacher. But when taking the time to learn more about her, it is clear that her many experiences and wisdom will benefit the whole PVCA community.

After graduating high school in Springfield, MA, Ms. Blount was awarded a full, four-year scholarship to Smith College where she was a part of the largest African American population in the history of the school. There were forty African American students out of a few more than 2,000 students in her freshman class. She viewed attending Smith as an opportunity for African American women to enter an area of education that had not been there for them before.

Ms. Blount was preparing to be the first college graduate in both her mother's and father's families. She wanted to use the opportunity, but she was unsure about what type of career she wanted to pursue.

Her second year of college was the first year students had the opportunity to take classes from five different colleges. While taking a class at UMASS, Ms. Blount was shown a movie about speech pathology and fell in love.



A stop-motion snap shot of Ms. Blount in Greece during a street mime performance.

After graduating from Smith College, she attended graduate school at UMASS and double majored in speech pathology and audiology. It was then that Christ came into her life and changed everything. Ms. Blount said that the first thing she ever heard God say to her heart was, "Tell Me I can do whatever I want with your life".

After about six weeks of restlessness which she realized was caused by her lack of response to the Lord, she said, "Lord. You can do whatever You want with my life."

Ms. Blount explained that, since making the



Ms. Blount, along with others in her group, lined up for a performance in Hong Kong.

choice to give her life to God, "I have not made one decision that I was not sure God was leading me to".

God then led her to a church that was missionary minded.

The next strong impression God put on her was to teach. He called Ms. Blount into education, and she said she was willing to teach any grade but first grade. She was hired at Springfield Christian School to teach grade five. Shortly before the school year started, her teaching assignment changed to first grade.

After teaching for a few years, God called Ms. Blount into the mission field where she was able to travel all over, spreading the gospel. She spent 4 years in Ghana, Africa where they began a Bible school. There she started a women's ministry and taught in the Bible school. Ms. Blount thought she was going to spend the rest of her life in Ghana, but God had other plans and called her back home.

Even though she said she was not going to teach again, she was called back to teaching. She began teaching at Trinity Christian School in Windsor, CT.

For a period of time, not seeking God's will, she just wanted to get a plain job. During this time, she felt miserable and empty so she said, "Okay God, Your way."

Her former headmaster began encouraging her to apply at Pioneer Valley Christian Academy. She did not know a lot about the position and had no desire to apply. After her old headmaster persisted in encouraging her to apply, she decided she would apply to make him happy, but she did not expect to be offered a position. Ms. Blount handed in the application on a Monday, and on Wednesday, received a call for an interview. That Thursday she attended the interview, and woke up at 1 o'clock in the morning wanting the job. The

next day, she received a call from Mr. Duff congratulating her on the new position.

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Ms. Blount discussed how all of her amazing experiences came from listening to God, even when He was telling her to do something she did not want to do. She explained, "We come up with this idea of, 'God, I love You. Here's what I'd like to do



Ms. Blount's great-great grandmother, pictured in the center dressed in all white, grew up in slavery. She was freed after the Civil War.



(Left) Ms. Blount in China, the summer of 1986. (Right) While performing in Greece, Ms. Blount and others were filmed by a Greek camera crew passing by.

for You' He listens politely, but would much rather hear, 'Lord what do You want me to do for You'".

She further explained that He will lead his people where He wants them to be, but may take them where they don't want to go. Ms. Blount explained, "It comforts me to know I am in the perfect will of God. There will be trials and difficulties that I'd rather avoid, but I will never let Satan blackmail me about doing what I don't want to do because I know that this is where God has me."

Ms. Blount also discussed the current situation for African American students,



Ms. Blount performing a mime about receiving a new heart from Jesus.

stating that students now have more opportunities but not a better experience. Even though she did not live where police dogs were attacking African Americans or where students were being spit on and called names for going out to eat, she lived when those events were happening.

Growing up, the only Black history Ms. Blount was taught in school was that African Americans had been enslaved. She took the initiative to learn about Harriet Tubman and other important African Americans. Because of this, her favorite



While in Austria, a newspaper crew captured Ms. Blount's group performance. Ms. Blount was the group's singer.

topic to teach her first grade class was Black History. She said, "I love teaching my kids how important they were because God said they were, regardless of race."

When Ruby Bridges was going to first grade, as one of the first African American students to be integrated into a white school, Ms. Blount was eight years old. She explained that situations like George Floyd's and Breonna Taylor's are the history people are living through today, while the history she was living through was Ruby Bridges and Selma. "If I were to say something to anybody I would say, Jesus first. Make sure He is real in your life. Let Him make the plan even though it is scary, and He will probably take you where you

don't want to go," Ms. Blount advised.

She continued to explain that if people were more willing to humble themselves and follow God's will for their lives, then there would be so much less nonsense in the world. God would never lead into racism and bitterness. "Everything I am telling you is not color coded, but it is Christ-coded. My experience is Christ first. That is how I see the world and its imperfections," she said.

"I am glad I lived long enough to see the improvements, but there will never be racial harmony if it is up to man to produce. Racism is a human problem, not just an American problem. It is hate. Because it is demonically inspired, there will never be true resolution outside of Christ. Things may get a little better for a while, it is a seasonal thing. While good laws could help, they are not the solution. Laws are not

## Middle school students watch Hidden Figures to celebrate Black History Month

by Gianna Albano

On Friday, February 26th, the middle school students participated in watching the film, Hidden Figures. The film tells the story of a team of female African-American mathematicians who served a vital role in NASA during the early years of the U.S. space program. After watching the movie, the students participated in a class discussion concerning the themes of the movie and their relevance to today's society. Mrs. Maynard was very proud of the way the students handled the discussion and their "being able to understand and recognize systemic racism so maturely and



"Is shocked me that everyone was rude to Katherine Johnson. They had to put a colored coffee station in just for her. I was like, 'Why? She's a human being. She's like everyone else. There's no point to change everything just because she's black'. It's crazy." ~Aleannys Cruz



"Although things have gotten somewhat better, there is still racism in the world, as we have seen with George Floyd. Racism isn't as blatant as it was in the sixties, but it's still lingering."



"Even if you don't like someone, you should still respect them as a human being and as a person no matter their gender or skin color. They are still a human being with blood as red as yours." ~Preston Ramos



"I was struck by the part of the movie where because Katherine Johnson took the bigger job at NASA, she had to walk a half mile to a colored bathroom. One day she broke out in anger at Harrison, and he kind of felt bad for her so he went down to the lower level and broke the 'no colored' sign by the bathrooms." ~Khristian Tejada



Ms. Blount is now an educational therapist for the Discovery Center at PVCA. She is pictured here coaching one of her students, Ben Funchion, while practicing his rhythmic writing exercises.

permanent.

Heart change is the only permanent solution. In the meantime, we need laws because they are a bandaid and bandaids have a purpose, but true harmony comes from the heart," Ms. Blount stated.

respectfully". "Not only were [the main characters] African American but they were also women. Without their contribution, this might have never happened so quickly in our nation's history," she stated when asked about the film. Mrs. Maynard believed it was "encouraging to the female students as well as the African American students to see how far we've come and where we still need to make improvements".



I loved the movie, but I didn't like how they had a separate coffee stations and bathrooms, or how they would slam the books on her desk when they wanted her to do the work. ~Charis Smith



"It really impacted me. I really liked how Harrison didn't really care about the skin color. He just wanted to get the work done. Katherine Johnson was a big deal for her gender and her race." ~Shalimar Reyes Torres



"I thought [Hidden Figures] got the point across. The world was not right, and it still isn't. By the end of the movie they started to realize what they were doing was wrong, and that they needed to stop [discriminating]. They began treating Katherine Johnson more fairly, and named a [NASA] building after."

"I really look up to Martin Luther King, Jr. because he was a great speaker and he really brought light to what was wrong, what they were doing, and what they needed to change. He was a Christian, and he was a very peaceful man that did not do anything on purpose to hurt someone. He kept his temper and he didn't care about race, but he cared about how people acted and their character." ~Caleb Hill