

# HANDS FOR A BRIDGE NEWSLETTER 2018/2019



“HONESTY AND HUMILITY ARE THE CATALYSTS  
THROUGH WHICH THE WORLD CAN BE BOTH  
HEARD AND TRANSFORMED.”

-JAMES CLOWES

## ACTIVISM

This year our class was split into “committees,” each covering a different topic, whether it was social justice based or about potlucks. Our social justice committee was successful in planning and executing a carbon walk on Earth day.

“The recent marches and protests revolving around climate change caught the attention of this year’s Hands for a Bridge class. It had been in the back of our minds, especially since the class would be expelling large amounts of carbon into the atmosphere with our travel to and from Northern Ireland and South Africa, but after the release of recent studies warning that humanity has 135 months to make changes or else there will be no chance for the future of this planet, HFB realized that we needed to act immediately. The HFB Social Justice committee took on the project, and on Earth Day, we marched.

### **“HFB REALIZED THAT WE NEEDED TO ACT IMMEDIATELY.”**

To enforce our emphasis of activism, the class made signs with statements like “there is no planet B” and “climate change is real” written on them. But there was a problem, how could this march be organized in a way that will be reasonable for students to get to a central meeting point, and pass locations with a lot of people? The solution was simple; create two meeting locations, one in front of Eckstein Middle School and the other at the Greenlake Community Center. This way we could show younger students that we can in fact take action and show adults (especially those who value a healthy lifestyle like those who frequently walk around Greenlake) that change is possible and simply walking is one thing that we can do to have an effect on climate change.”

-Rachel Becker and Natalie Stamatatos

### ANOTHER COMMITTEE IN OUR CLASS CREATED A **CLASS MAGAZINE**

The HFB magazine is as much of a magazine as as year book. The point of our group is to make basically a momentous so all the students can have something to look at later and reflect on the amazing experience they had. We also show where people came into the program by the application art. Each person did something different from poems, to drawings, to pictures, friendship bracelets to all sorts of creative things! Now we also included picture we have gotten

over travelling, which was a pretty big part of the class. We hope that everyone can enjoy the collection of art and experiences we have collected, and have a physical thing to remember it by.



## STUDENT WRITTEN POEMS

### GOD OF SMALL THINGS

Flies are my gift to god  
you are the God of Small Things

Small Things.  
They litter the dusty windowsill like  
half-baked, crispy flies.

Today you are a God. I am a hulking spider.  
a weaver of the Small Things.  
I see them all.

I see the girls I babysit,  
With gap-toothed grins,  
elaborate brown braid crowns,  
and Disney channel crushes.

They beg me to play  
American Girl Doll, Barbie Doll.

They always fight over the best doll,  
The best doll is whatever one is blondest.

I bring over a bin of my old toys,  
sitting in storage, clothes creased,  
bangs cut by kid's scissors.

I tell them they can pick whichever one's  
they want and the rest will go to Goodwill.

"We want them all!" they exclaim.  
Greedy when presented with such spoils

At the end only two dolls are left,  
coated in glitter and dust at the bottom of the bin.

Out of all the dolls I had only  
two that were African American.  
Those same two dolls  
Stare back at me,  
coated in glitter and dust.

Words splutter in my throat.

What do I say?  
Is it my place to say anything, they're not my kids!  
What do I say?

The web complicates, drawing more and more in

When my friend has to cover her pointe shoes in oily make-up, just hours before the  
performance. The choreographer wanted shoes that actually matched her skin tone, and when  
they looked to order a pair for her specifically, the company went out of business.

What do I say?

When my friend has to explain to me that it's more embarrassing for her to ask for a fork instead  
of chopsticks and no, she's not going to do it for me.

What do I say?

When someone says the n-word while singing along to "Golddigger"

What do I say?

I said nothing. I let other people explain and just sat there awkwardly, unable to move. Or  
apparently, to act.

I just sit there. Slipping it into my memory, preserving it with silvery strands.

And now what do I do,  
I just sit there,  
weaving together  
These memories

And for what? To give to you  
I guess

You are the God of these memories  
These are the Small Things I offer up to you

What do you say?

-Alea von Hagel

I run into the arms of the ocean.  
My mind echoes,  
“Teach Me”  
But my mouth says nothing.

The wind whips through my ears,  
As I reach for the next branch,  
My skin catches on the bark and I watch my blood  
Seep into the tree-  
Down to its roots,  
It is not long before I have infected the forest.  
I feel a bird return to its nest miles away,  
I learn to worry about nothing but growing.

My horse and I become one.  
I mount up,  
And we decide to walk until we reach the horizon.  
The point is that we will get to walk forever,  
The horizon eternally out of our grasp.  
I learn to set impossible goals.  
Even if they are never accomplished,  
They will take you to far away places.

My best friend tells me  
She is afraid of horses.  
I teach her to run her fingers down a stallions spine,

I ask her to watch his head droop in bliss.  
I teach her that fear cannot control an open heart.

I pull a trigger for the first time.  
I am taught to point dangerous things away from anything you do not want to harm.  
I am taught to relax my shoulders,  
And take deep breaths.  
If you close your eyes,  
The air sings to you,  
And soothes your shaking hands.

My cousin is 10 when she declares that she hates learning.  
I tell her that is impossible.  
She tells me her teacher is mean.  
I tell her there is more than one way to learn,  
I teach her to believe me.  
I teach her to love the feeling of mud under her fingernails.  
She teaches me how to relinquish my fear,  
And together,  
We run back into the ocean.

-Ava Paul





## HOMELESSNESS COMMITTEE

Recently, hoards of young techies have flooded Seattle in a tech boom centered around large companies like Amazon and Microsoft. However, in the midst of business prosperity in the city, Seattle is home to one of largest homeless populations in the country. Year after year, our city has been unsuccessful in passing measures that take decisive action to help these people and find solutions. Without the assistance of government programs, much of the brunt work is left to nonprofit organizations to make a difference in the community. Nonprofits such as YouthCare work to support the 3,600 homeless youth in Seattle.

This year, I headed the HFB homelessness committee in organizing a two-week long, school-wide winter clothing drive to benefit YouthCare. Even though we experienced quite the learning curve when it came to advertising, the drive was largely successful. In the end, Arabella and I delivered twenty-five bags of clothing to our partners at YouthCare, who were so excited when we arrived with our donations. It was a wonderful experience collaborating with YouthCare and helping out the homeless youth in our community, even though perhaps in a minor way. While holding a clothing drive doesn't prevent homelessness, it is a small act that provides people warmth and dignity.

Thank you so much to everyone who helped make this possible, especially Arabella, Elias, Aiden, and Mr. Nolet.

-Amelia Grosskopf

## POTLUCKS

This year I served as the chairperson of the potluck and breakfast committee. At first we struggled a bit to come up with ideas on how to make an impact and contribute to HFB as much as the other groups, especially when it came to our monthly potlucks with parents. It was difficult, particularly at the beginning of the year, to remind everyone to have their switches on during potlucks and make an effort to sit and converse with the parents instead of clustering in cliques. In an attempt to solve this we began writing and printing out conversation topics and questions for our classmates to discuss with the parents. This wasn't completely successful and many people disliked it altogether, but on the bright side I did witness it spark conversations on multiple occasions and that's what counts. As the year wore on and the potlucks became less and less centered around trip information and logistics, it remained a challenge to encourage everyone to make an effort despite that we had been working on this all year. But my fellow committee members and I didn't give up. We continued stressing to everyone that these potlucks aren't just about food, they are important community events, an integral part of the fabric that makes up our HFB family. Although it may have been difficult at times, I'm so glad I served on the potluck committee, it has been gratifying work that added to my HFB experience.

-Maria Santos



## NORTHERN IRELAND EXPERIENCE

### STUDENTS FROM THE NI TRIP SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES:

“As we got off the train station on Derry, we were greeted by the welcoming crowd of HFB students and parents. My homestay Ciera was the absolute best! I shared a room with her, and her younger sister Charlotte and we got to bond a lot. The first couple of days the Oakgrove students had off so we spent that time exploring the city center, the walls, bogside, waterside, and more. The Derry Girls mural by the shopping center was really cool. Walking along the walls and seeing how much of a divide still occurs in the city was actually quite shocking. It was very powerful to talk to people who were involved in the conflicts we studied.

The next couple of days we spent at Corrymeela for our retreat. We spent time along the coast, on the rocks by the shore and the area around there. During our group discussions I got to know a lot about my peers and myself, the show and tell was an emotional experience that I am glad I go to share with those there. The amount of food and candy I ate was very questionable. Thanks Mr. Harkin!

Getting to experience school and how they lived was a once in a lifetime experience. The school system is so different. More grade levels together, more classes in one day, starting to study for college/ University earlier. I think my favorite part was getting to talk to so many different people and answering questions about America and Seattle. I think my favorite questions was as to why we have the illuminati on our money.

The heartbreaking moment we left our home stays and headed to the coast was heart wrenching. Having to leave those who I had just spent 10 straight days with and made so many lasting memories. The waterworks were sure to show up. The castle ruins and Giants Causeway were such amazing sights! In Belfast we took tours in the Catholic and Protestant areas and got to see one of the main walls separating the communities. I loved getting to write my name on the wall!

Overall, this trip was one that I will never forget. Filled with so many memories and experiences I never thought id get. I hope to be able to travel back there and visit the Oakgrove students. Or even to just explore more of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The bond I created with not only the students abroad but also my classmates are ones i'll cherish, especially all twelve of us girls sleeping in one room.”

-Maddie Dennis

“There were so many rich moments from the trip in Northern Ireland. However, if I had to narrow it down, I would say that my highlights consist of the following. The first experience that really influenced me a lot in a positive way as a person is how I got to connect with so many people so quickly. I felt immediate connections with people from the school, from the HFB group of course, my homestay and his family. The feeling of being warmly welcomed into open arms right away truly gave me a strong sense of belonging and that will always last. From this, I now feel like I can be a part of another community of young adults overseas.

Other aspects of the trip that I appreciated were all of the places we visited to really enjoy a lot of the country, and even Dublin in Ireland as well. Learning a lot about lifestyle and culture through the people in the community as well as through tours also made the trip feel a lot more enhancing. Whereas, just a regular trip somewhere with your family. But out of everything, these really made my trip very special.”

-Ethan Eckert

“When I traveled to Northern Ireland I was really scared about how my homestay and I were going to react with one another. I had hoped that we would become like sisters in the week we were there. I was so lucky because Megan and I grew so close to each other, not only that but I spent a lot of time wither her family joking around. I feel so lucky to be able to meet her and her family, they let me into their house with open arms. I think that I would never have the serious and personal conversations like I had with them when I was there. I can't wait for Megan to visit my family in the summer!”

-Bridget Reid

**“THERE WAS SO MANY AMAZING PARTS OF MY TRIP  
THAT I WILL REMEMBER FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.”**

None of those are more memorable than our show and tell at our retreat. I was blown away. How open and vulnerable everyone was. People were sharing items and stories that were very personal and perhaps never shared to other people. The amount of courage to put yourself in a position to be vulnerable was incredible. It allowed us to become closer and be able to have tough conversations. I will never forget the message of if you put yourself in a vulnerable position it can create a strong relationship.”

-Arabella Davis



## IN CLASS

Because Hands for a Bridge is an LA class, there is a lot of reading involved. This year we read four books: *Citizen*, *Cal*, *My Traitor's Heart*, and *Beloved*. After reading them we always held in-depth discussions about the concepts discussed in the books and connected them to the problems we face in our own communities. There are also sometimes projects assigned in the class, most recently our Guerilla Poetry Project, where students will perform poetry pieces about issues that are important to us in front of unsuspecting classes.

-Julia Weber

You have previously heard that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Did you hear that HFB hosts Carbon-free, plastic-reduced and health-focused breakfasts. Organized by a committee, sign up sheets would be sent out with an excited buzz. Natalia Stamatatos quotes “The breakfasts were a nice opener for the morning and they got everyone ready for the day.” Fueled by delicious food, the class would play games, write gratitude posters or sing songs. After all the positivity, make sure you clean up your mess to allow the light-hearted mood to continue for the day.

-Tessa Small



## HFB 2018 RETREAT:

October 6 2018 the hfb class and our south african guests went to warm beach retreat center. We arrived Saturday morning and kicked off the weekend with a scavenger hunt around warm beach with our cabin members. Then spent the afternoon making masks. The prompt for our masks was that the outside of our mask was how other people saw us, then when flipped, the inside of our mask was who we really were. We spent much of our saturday afternoon journaling as well as playing gaga ball. A game we came to love over the weekend, where we stood in a large hexagon ring and with a big red ball, the goal was to hit other people's feet, with the ball by hitting it with your hands. We exosted ourselves with several hours of gaga ball that weekend. And let down our guard when we made up dances and showed then to each other. When we became vulnerable we were able to open up to one another and it made the weekend so much more impactful.

As Saturday night rolled around we ate some not so appealing food and then had an open mic. We sang, danced, performed skits and poetry. The evening was so much fun! With so many great singers and poets it was very enjoyable to watch. We then all went to our cabins, the cabins were a great way to spend time with people we usually don't get to talk with and make connections with the south african and seattle students.

Sunday morning was kicked off with more gaga ball, then a walk around warm beach. We went through the woods surrounding our cabins then walked down to where we could see the ocean. The morning was beautiful and a great way to end the weekend. After returning to the cabins we packed up and with one last gaga ball match we all headed home.

**“THE WEEKEND WAS FULL OF SELF REFLECTION AND NEW CONNECTIONS.”**

Although it was the last weekend we had with the south africans we continued to enjoy the company of our new friends. While we became vulnerable we let one another in and made unexpected friendships.

- Emma McGreevy and Others





## SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

### STUDENTS FROM THE SA TRIP SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES:

“Our trip to South Africa was not only a great experience, but an opportunity for us to learn about ourselves and each other. Throughout the trip, we took time to regroup and “say our numbers”, telling the group how we were feeling in the moment. This created a community where each of us could feel comfortable sharing how we felt and why. The activities we did as a whole group helped us find out more about ourselves as a person and learn from our overseas friends.”

-Reese Benson



“One of the most impactful experiences I had in South Africa was the learning we did surrounding District Six, a very important and diverse neighborhood in Cape Town. It had once rested at the foot of Table Mountain with a view all the way to the ocean. Within this community were those from all different walks of life; people seemed to not be judged on their race or religion, but embraced. However, District Six and the lives of its residents were changed forever in early 1966. The Apartheid government declared the neighborhood a “white area”, which resulted in the forced removal of thousands of those who lived there. Soon after their removal, the land where the community once thrived was bulldozed to almost nothing; a church and one house remained. Today, District Six looks essentially the same as it did after it was demolished.

Although our class had some prior knowledge about District Six before going on our travels, it made all the difference to be able to learn more about the neighborhood first hand. During our first week in South Africa, we visited the District Six Museum. The exhibit was set up in a beautiful church with stained glass windows and a balcony which ran along the inside of the building. Originally, the museum was meant to serve as a two-week long remembrance of the

neighborhood to mark the end of Apartheid. Twenty-five years later, the museum continues to invite visitors from all over the world to learn more about Cape Town and its history.

We were first led around the ground level of the museum by a tour guide who told us the story of District Six. He was an eighty-year-old man named Joe, and he had lived in the neighborhood until his forced removal at twenty-seven. He spoke of the basics of Apartheid and why District Six was destroyed, but also told us about the loving community he had experienced growing up. Afterwards, he set us free to explore other areas of the museum and the balcony, where there were many artifacts and photographs, including ones of Joe. One of the most eye-catching pieces in the museum was a thirty-foot-tall hanging display of street signs that were salvaged from the neighborhood.

After exploring the museum, some would think that my interest of District Six would be satisfied, but I couldn't get the stories of it out of my mind. On the first day of staying with my Bellville homestay in Belhar, I met another man who had lived in District Six until he was nine years old.

During the last few days of our trip, our travel group got the opportunity to visit District Six for a powerful story (read to us by Ms. Plesha) and some time for reflection seated in the open dirt field. It was then where I learned that the neighborhood remained untouched because of a campaign called "hands off District Six", which protested the rebuilding of the neighborhood into a white area. I was also told that there are plans to rebuild houses in the District, and the people who are first in line to live there are the residents who lost the homes so long ago.

The reason District Six is so important to me is because it is a story of hope: if you stand up for what you believe in and continue to believe in that cause, anything is possible."

-Stella Jarvis

## **"MY TIME IN SOUTH AFRICA WAS ABSOLUTELY LIFE**

**CHANGING.** I realized and learned so many different things that it's hard for me to make this into a short paragraph or two. There were so many different cultural differences as well as social differences and I am glad that I gained a new perspective.

The thing that I will forever withhold from my trip are the friends I have made and the memories created. I still keep in touch with both my Isilimela, Bellville as well as the South African I hosted and I always get excited to text them back. To me, the purpose of our trip was to build connections, learn, and to start the conversation. And my heart is so full and vibrant because that is exactly what I did. I had those conversations, learned, and now my duty will forever be to educate."

-Melanie Love

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO MADE THIS WONDERFUL YEAR  
POSSIBLE!

