A NOTE TO PARENTS

Please use this newsletter as a way to bridge the gap between school and home and have conversations that are an extension of the work they are doing in homeroom.

This month, students looked at two controversial questions and were asked to debate them in class. The first was ‘should states abolish the death penalty?’. Students were given background information and were given the facts on why these questions are controversial. After, they did some research and debated with their peers. The second question was ‘Does the First Amendment allow a business to deny services to people on the basis of the business owner’s religious beliefs?’ Students learned about a real Supreme Court Case where a bakery in Colorado denied creating a wedding cake for a gay couple because of their religious beliefs. In both debates, students were given the actual decision made by the courts.

To close off our Social Justice Homeroom lessons, we recapped privilege again. This time, identifying alternatives forms privilege that students may not be aware of. For example, passport privilege, socio-economic privilege, and able-bodied privilege (to name a few). Students watched a video that used insects to discuss how sometimes we all have our own struggles and challenges - some small and some huge. And sometimes it may be hard to understand what someone else goes through because you don’t share their experiences. After, students completed a task with different scenarios and they had to identify the oppressed groups privilege and determine equitable outcomes.

EXTEND THE CONVERSATION

Consider learning more about the death penalty and the biases it continues to manifest by watching the movie Just Mercy. After graduating from Harvard, Bryan Stevenson heads to Alabama to defend those wrongly condemned or those not afforded proper representation. One of his first cases is that of Walter McMillian, who is sentenced to die in 1987 for the murder of an 18-year-old girl, despite evidence proving his innocence. In the years that follow, Stevenson encounters racism and legal and political maneuverings as he tirelessly fights for McMillian’s life.

Watch the trailer here. Watch on Hulu, HBO Max and Amazon Prime or read the book!

TERMS

Students have discussed common definitions for these terms:
Privilege
Precedent
Amendments
Execution

REFLECT

Walk in Someone’s Shoes
The videos below share the experiences of people with disabilities. Many able-bodied people do not realize the privileges they have since the world is catered to meet their needs and these videos can help you learn about the experiences of people with disabilities firsthand.

Comedian Stella Young points out the problem with “disability porn” and the objectification of disabled people. Watch

The Opportunity of Adversity with Aimee Mullins helps us begin to make the shift from thinking about ableism as a problem within the individual to a problem with how society is constructed. Watch

EXPERIENCES

Take positive action in your own community.
You can learn about issues within your community by watching local news broadcasts, reading the newspaper, and listening to podcasts. Write letters and call your elected city and state officials regarding the issues your community faces. Find your elected officials’ contact information here.

“Misunderstanding arising from ignorance breeds fear, and fear remains the greatest enemy of peace.”
– Lester B. Pearson