

## VOICES FROM THE HALL 2013

### UNFAIR EXPECTATIONS

You know the name on the back of my jersey and you've seen me around. I'm the one whom you would recognize anywhere: volleyball, basketball, college classes, friends, family, student body president, club leader, working six shifts a week. But do I enjoy it? You know what my name is, my number, but you don't know me. I'm expected to be the smartest, most outgoing, the fastest and most committed. I'm always on the verge of a breakdown: stressed, nervous, constantly worried. Is it all even worth it anymore? And if so when do I draw the line? I must succeed. I must win. I have to do it all. It's the only way. I have the fear of letting my parents down, of the community being disappointed, my teachers thinking poorly of me. I'm trying, but I'm slowly fading. I'm the voice of the over-achiever, of the busy person, of the person who is afraid of failure. I'm the voice of unfair expectations. I wish someone would walk a mile in my shoes.

### BULLY

Ever since my dad died, my life has been constant pain. The physical things that my alcoholic step-dad inflict on me like cigarette burns: they hurt. But watching him beat my mom and little brother hurt me so much more. Everyone is afraid of me. I know no one likes me. But honestly, all I want is to belong. The only time I ever get attention is when I get in trouble for hitting a kid. Getting in trouble seems like the only thing I'm good at. I am the voice of the school bully.

### MINORITY

I am not one who can be judged by the color of my skin. It has become very clear to me that I don't fit any stereotypical category. Some say I act too white, while others say I act too black. What does that really mean? I kinda get lost in the labyrinth of things. Don't get me wrong: I'm not trying to be anything less than me. But it's kinda hard to excel when you're put in a box. I have to leap higher and run faster just to get people to see that there is more to me than my skin complexion. It's almost like I have to achieve perfection. I may not be picture perfect, but I'm worth a picture still. I am the voice of a minority, and I wish you wouldn't stereotype me.

### HIDDEN STRUGGLES AT HOME

My day starts at 6 am. I get out of the house as soon as I can. I sit in the school parking lot until the doors open. I go through my day just like everyone else, but don't particularly stand out like some kids do. School play? I'll help. Basketball manager? I volunteer. Need an extra concession stand worker? I'm there. Maybe I'm taking on too much, but it's better than being home. Two free meals a day and a hot shower, who could pass that up. Most kids look forward to weekends and breaks. I dread them. Why would I want to go home to two people who don't even acknowledge me? Getting what they want is more important to my parents than having a conversation with me. But no one at school sees that. I'm just a kid everyone sees, but doesn't really know. I'm the voice of a kid with hidden struggles.

## PARTIER

I'm only 17 and my best friend is Jack Daniels. At first it was a couple of drinks for a good time, but now it has become a habit. Every weekend I stumble home drunk, but as long as everyone had a good time, it's okay, right? Recently one of my friends was killed by a drunk driver. That could've been me killing another person. This isn't the life I want. I want to remember what I did last weekend and I want my friends to respect me. I'm the partier, and I just want some help.

## TEEN MOM

Everyone stares at me as I walk through the halls. I see them turn to their friends and tell them about how I made the biggest mistake of my life, and how I will never graduate. I want to prove them wrong. I have all A's and I'm graduating soon. They have no clue that my dad walked out on my mom and me. I never knew love from a man or how they were supposed to treat me. My boyfriend isn't supportive, and I'll end up raising this child by myself. I promise to be the best mom I can be. But it's not like everyone is rushing to hire a pregnant high schooler. Everyone judges me for this baby in my belly, but then they pressure me to make a right decision. I'm the pregnant teen, and I wish for some support.

## SUICIDAL STUDENT

It probably didn't have to end this way, but I felt like it was my only option. I am sorry for what my family now has to go through, but I saw no hope for my future. This was my only way to escape. You've probably seen my face in the halls every day, yet you don't even know my name...until now. I just wish someone would have talked to me in the halls. At least now I've made a name for myself. Signed: the voice of the suicidal student who no one will ever know.

## DRUG ADDICT

People look at me. Are his eyes dilated? Is he high? They don't know I can hear through the fog. And they don't understand. No one understands why I started, not even the other druggies. They do it for fun, but I do it to get away. My fog is my getaway from my life, the bruises under my shirt, the bone deep pain that penetrates the center of my being. The only way to deal with the pain is to numb it. I take another drag, hit another line, just to forget. But it never lasts, and now I itch for the next pill I can get my hands on. I can stop whenever I feel like it. I can! Can I? I'm the voice of the drug addict, and I just want lifted from the fog.

## EATING DISORDER

My friends tell me I'm pretty and everyone compliments my looks. I've finally hit my target weight, but I know I can be thinner. I thought I was in control of myself. I thought once the mean words stopped and the nice words started I'd be able to stop. But I still didn't feel small enough. It's taken its own path. I can go weeks without eating. I convince myself that every pound I lose is a pound towards a better me. But I know deep down that I'm weak. I'm losing as much sleep as I am weight. Each day I feel heavier and heavier like every pound I've lost has caught up with me. Maybe I look good on the outside, but on the inside I'm losing myself. I am the voice of the many students with an eating disorder.

### THE KID WITH DISABILITY

I sit in class all day. I hear the names they call me—slow, idiot, retard. They mumble under their breath—what’s wrong with that kid? I wish I knew the answer. It’s not my fault! In my head, it all makes sense. But actually doing it? Trying to learn? Trying to control my body? It’s harder for me. I don’t know why I can’t make friends the same as you. I have somebody with me, but that’s only because I need the extra help. Other kids avoid me like the plague, but I’m not that different from you. I sit through the snickers and the laughs. Their words slow me down more than our disabilities. I have my good days and my bad days. I have likes and dislikes. My learning disability won’t define me. We are the voices of kids with disabilities and we just wish you would accept us.

### STUDENT WITH THE MASK

Hiding my emotions is one of the hardest things I always have to do. Somehow I’m just good at it. I’m known to be the one who’s always smiling, laughing, and being happy all the time. What people don’t realize is that I’m not happy 24/7. I’m constantly being pulled into different directions. There are just too many things going on in my life and I just want it all to stop. Sadly, life doesn’t stop for anyone. My only solution now is to put a smile on my face and move on even though in the inside I am about to reach my breaking point and reveal myself as the student with the mask.

### JOCK

I used to play with such passion, but ever since I got my first state title, the pressure is unbearable. My parents tell me that they are proud, but only when I win. The school only knows me because of the sports I play. I play for the name on the front of the jersey, but I am known by the one on the back. I now hate what used to be my life, but I have no other way to get into college without my sport. The thing that hurts me most is that I will live my life knowing I will never live up to the satisfaction my father. I am the voice of the jock.