



# We See

## What We See Changes Who We Are

WITNESS Project Youth Page is made possible by the Margaret Clemons Foundation and The Ministry of Education



A few of the WITNESS Project Youth Reporters - left to right: Kwesi Archer, Daisha Henry, Marcel Persaud, Haresh Bhagwan, Danita Jaundoo

## Welcome to the WITNESS Project Youth Page!

Dear Reader:

I am Letty N. Kisten, editor of the Witness Project Youth Page. WITNESS Project uses the arts to call attention to the fact that children are witnesses to adult behavior, and it sets the tone for their futures. Youth are witnesses to everything – good and bad – and they learn from what they see.

The authors of these articles are the Witness Project youths who are between the ages of twelve through twenty, and reflect the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of Guyana. These authors, in their writing, strive to share their own experiences, those of others, and reveal how these experiences have impacted them. Identifying elements in

these articles have been altered to preserve anonymity. While most of the articles centre on violence in the home and neighbourhood, some of the writings, photographs and cartoons reflect on happy and meaningful experiences. These articles showcase a wide range of the youths' talent, as: artists, cartoonists, creative writers, photographers, poets and reporters.

The process of gathering and editing the articles has been a joint effort by Witness Project team members in Guyana and New York. The idea for a Witness Project Youth Page originated with Margaret Clemons, founder of the Margaret Clemons Foundation (MCF). Alysia Christiani, MCF's

Project Manager, travelled to Guyana from New York to conduct creative writing workshops over the summer of 2012. Rosheni Takechandra, Program Director in Guyana, worked with the writers through the brainstorming and drafting stages; Carrie Myers and I annotated the articles for revision, and then returned them to Rosheni, who guided the writers through several more drafts before their work was ready for publication.

In the end, the credit goes to the young people who are sharing their stories and feelings in these pages, many of them for the first time. Their courage, creativity and many hours of hard work make this project possible, and issue a powerful cry for change.

### Woman Hit in Face by Picket Fence

By WITNESS Youth Staff

It was a very cool Friday afternoon about thirteen minutes past four as I walked down to the park to catch a bus to go home. Unfortunately all the buses were filled and I couldn't get any. However, it was getting late so I decided to take a shortcut to the main road, hoping I would get a bus there. While walking through the shortcut I saw a man and a woman quarreling in the street. The woman had on a black skirt, a white top with orange dots, and a pair of rubber slippers. The man wore a blue t-shirt with white

stripes and short green and blue pants. I heard the woman telling the man that he is not fit to be a man. The man got angry, and pulled out a picket from a neighbour's fence and hit the woman three times in the face with it. The woman fell to the ground crying in pain, and bleeding. The neighbours around came out and saw what had happened to the woman. A couple of minutes later a car showed up and some of the neighbours put the woman in the car and took her away. However, the man remained there and no one

said anything to him. I then realized that I had forgotten that I was heading home, so I walked quickly to the main road. There I got a bus and headed home. While on the bus I wondered about the woman and whether she had children. If she did, how would they feel about their mom being hit by a picket fence? I know if that was my mother I would be very upset. No one would want their mother to be abused. It would hurt them deeply inside, and at the same time make them afraid.

## The Essequibo Woman

By WITNESS Youth Staff

One day after visiting Capoey in Essequibo, I saw an event which was very interesting to me, since it proves the extent of a mother's love. As we were getting in a speed boat to depart the shores of Essequibo, I saw a woman, who sat on the seat in front of me with her two children: two boys, one about six and the other about four. The sun was blazing hot, but she took her two sons and buried their heads into her chest so as to avoid the sun from burning their faces. As time went on and the boat filled, it was time to leave the stelling. On our journey back to Parika I noticed the smaller son crying, apparently he was scared of the boat and the speed it was travelling at. One would assume she would tap him on his hand and say "hey! Stop it, we are almost there" but to my surprise she pulled him closer to her. Her life vest was in the

way however, and that's when she amazed me by taking her life vest off and placing it around her older son. She then pulled her smaller son closer to her and he eventually fell asleep. What could have happened by her taking off the life jacket? I don't know; maybe the boat could have flipped over and then she could have drowned? Maybe the boat could have dipped too far forward causing the entire back to pitch up thus causing everyone to pitch out into the vast Essequibo River. These are a few nightmares that could have happened within that short period of time, but I guess this is how a mother is. The love and care for her children, makes her a woman, --a super woman who would defy all odds just to make sure her loved ones are safe and happy. This is a MOTHER!

### About Our Editor

Letty N. Kisten was born in Berbice, Guyana, and is an Adjunct Associate Professor of English at Long Island University in Brooklyn, New York. She began teaching English Composition and Basic Writing courses at LIU, after graduating with a Master's degree in English/Teaching of Writing, from Long Island University. Letty has also taught at College of New Rochelle in Brooklyn and Montclair State University in New Jersey. She earned her Bachelor's degree in English from City College of New York and was a staff writer for the college campus' newspaper. Letty is a member of Modern Language



Association (MLA), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC).

### WITNESS Project Youth Reporters

- Kwesi Archer
- Haresh Bhagwan
- Judith Cameron
- Mark Davidson
- Reanna Douglas
- Daisha Henry
- Verney Henry
- Shakera Hoosain
- Danita Jaundoo
- Kevon Jones
- Linda-Deyi Lin
- Chantel Lewis
- Fiona Maughn
- Teriq Mohammad
- Krissy Morgan
- Kimberly Morgan
- Kaesia Munroe
- Nakasi Noel
- Marcel Persaud
- Rajendra Ramesh
- Devi Sankar
- Anthony Vishnu

### "What we see changes who we are" JR

Are you a witness or victim of violence? You are not alone. Make your anonymous call to Help & Shelter today and speak with a live counselor on 227-3454 or 225-4731.