

Growing up, there has always been something extraordinary about people's individual stories. Whether it is a recounting of their day or a whole life story, I've been fascinated by the lessons and wisdom people of all color, shape, and age have to share. It began at an age before I could read, where I would stare at books for hours on end, until eventually I could read them. Learning fiction and nonfiction stories of others moved me to begin creating "family newspapers", where I would write news stories for my family around the age of eight. From there on, I've been striving to give a voice to the individuals unheard.

Going into senior year after an entire redesign another year as Editor-in-Chief, but also taking on the in-depth editor position, I knew from the start I wanted to challenge the paper and take risks through covering controversial topics. From the #MeToo movement, mental illness, gun violence, and bullying, I dived into the growing pool of journalists who are taking the risk in their schools to push the limits on coverage. But I couldn't have done that without pushing my community as well.

I can't begin to explain how many people have turned me down for an interview about whatever topic I was researching and reporting at the time. After two issues, I began to notice the change in demeanor with staff, students, and other faculty at the school when it was me who was approaching them for the paper. They knew I was going to ask them the difficult questions.

Through these massive in-depth stories, I opened up the minds of my community as well as myself. I dug deep into both sides of the topic at hand and was able to present a deep look into the issue. But most importantly, I learned personal stories from my peers, teachers, and community involving each topic I covered. Despite the ones who refused to answer my questions, people who had not had their voice in the public were able to come forth and share their experiences, opinions, and stories. It was an incredible year to be a writer and the risks taken only further proved to me the power journalism and writing can have on a community and on the self.