Welcome to Preston Echoes!

This year our staff decided to bring back Preston’s newspaper. Preston Echoes offers a forum for all girl interested in journalism, writing and photography. Our goal is to make information available to our fellow Preston students, while also using our writing skills to write in depth articles on an array of topics. On the Preston Echoes website, girls will be able to read about student events, sports news, and editorials. We will also be featuring an ask and answer column, where girls can ask our anonymous Pinkie for advice.

Click Here to Look Back At Our First Issue!

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2780 Schurz Ave
Bronx, NY 10465
prestonechoes@prestonhs.org
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National English Honor Society 2018 Induction Ceremony
By Kevise Canales-Jenkins

What a great start to March! A resounding number of about 30 panthers were inducted into the National English Honor Society on March 1st. With a warm welcome from the society’s president, Jessica Haas, the night ran smoothly. After several speeches from the executive board, including myself as Secretary and Treasurer, Jennifer Suin, our guest speaker, Sasha Panaram, came to the podium. Ms. Panaram, a Preston alumna from the class of 2009 gave this year’s inductees an eloquent speech about the power of English in today’s world and the important role that it plays in society and our own lives. Ms. Christine Forlini then closed the ceremony with some “funny” jokes and inductees affirmed their membership by reciting the society’s pledge. We congratulate all the new inductees and welcome them to the prestigious and honorary society that will continue to thrive with its new additions.

Mother Daughter Brunch 2018
By Ava Tulipano

Preston regularly promotes unity among its students and fosters the bonds they share. It is because of these bonds that Preston hosts their annual mother-daughter brunch to celebrate a mother and daughter’s relationship. This year’s brunch was arranged by Grace Fragale and was hosted at the Marina Del Rey, where they served food and played music. Before the food was served, Miranda Martinez, a senior, said a prayer with her mother and grandmother to bless the food about to be eaten. After eating, Preston organized a game for both the students and their mothers during which each table was given rolls of tissue paper with the purpose of making a prom dress. It has been tradition that one girl from each table would be chosen to wear this masterpiece, but this year they chose a mother from each table to dress up. After each mother was dressed, they got into a line on the dance floor in preparation for a full-blown fashion show. This type of activity expresses the unity amongst the girls and their moms, because they joyously worked together and had the chance to celebrate each other’s work.

The mother-daughter brunch consists of each grade level within the school, yet each year it is most significant for the seniors who are preparing to leave the Preston family. Junior Raquel Alicea spoke about the importance of a mother-daughter bond and how it will continue to grow as seniors move on from high school. As she read her speech, mothers of the senior girls lined up with their daughters next to them and exchanged flowers. After the exchange, mothers and daughters slow danced together while the juniors, sophomores, and freshmen were invited to join them with their mothers. It is important for someone to understand and establish a strong relationship with her mother, because she is her daughters biggest supporter. A girls relationship with her mother will change and grow throughout her life, especially during the transition from high school to college, where a daughter begins to gain a newfound independence.

I have attended this brunch for the last three years. It is most definitely something I look forward to each year, and it always reminds me how appreciative I am for everything my mother does for me. My mom was very involved this year. She was chosen as the mother of the table, getting dressed up and walking the runway. It was amazing to see her in her element.
Our Month, Our Courage, Our Rights
By Blessing Njoku

March is nationally recognized as Women’s History Month. Why is this? In February of 1980, President Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation declaring the Week of March 8th, 1980 as National Women’s History Week. State departments of education then encouraged celebrations of National Women’s History Week as means to teach equality within classrooms. By 1986, 14 states had already declared March as Women’s History Month. Finally, Congress declared March as National Women’s History Month in 1987.

Every month, we highlight the women, both suffragettes and abolitionists, who worked tirelessly for rights that we often take for granted. This year, for Women’s History Month, we should also highlight the women who are working tirelessly in the #MeToo movement to end the stigma around sexual harassment. The patriarchal society we live in has silenced women for a long time. Women have been too afraid to speak up, because in the past women were always to blame and men walked away care free. One of the most infamous examples of this is the Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton affair. Bill Clinton did not suffer anywhere as much as Monica did as her name was tainted for years following the event even though it clearly takes two to tango. Through the #MeToo movement, men are being held accountable for their actions and women are marshalling their courage and bravery to lead the next generation. Women are no longer accepting the “boys will be boys” narrative. Those brave suffragettes and abolitionists worked hard for us to have the right to vote.

Today, the brave women coming forward with their stories are giving women back their power, so that perhaps one day women will be seen as equal to men in society.

Saved by the Bell! Or not?
7:02 am (IRIS) Preston will be closed today, January 8th, to repair a pipe rupture that just occurred in the main building.

Preston High School students have had to transition between their everyday classes without bells since January 9th, 2018 after the pipe rupture damaged the bell system. At first, some students didn’t even notice the absence of the bells. For others, it was confusing not having a bell to dismiss them to their next class. Now however, both students and teachers have become accustomed to checking the time in order to get to their next class punctually. Some teachers have even set custom alarms on their phones to alert them when to dismiss students.

Without bells, students and teachers have had more flexibility in terms of schedule. Not using a bell system indefinitely would provide a more functional learning environment. One major argument against remaining bell-free, is that not having bells gives students leeway to arrive to class late without an excuse. The Student Handbook (2017-2018) states, “...students who are late for class must accept the penalties stated in the teacher’s policy sheets.” Since consequences for student tardiness are left to the teacher’s discretion, teachers can take proper measures to ensure students are held accountable for lateness despite not having bells. Furthermore, sometimes students need a little more time to finish a test or teachers might need a couple more seconds to finish a discussion. Without the distraction of a warning bell, necessary instruction can be fulfilled.

Dismissal without bells allows students to be responsible enough to get to class on time on their own. Although arrangements have been made to fix damages to the building, remaining bell-free is definitely something to take into consideration.
Back in 2007, the term “MeToo” was first stated by Taran Burke, an American civil rights activist from the Bronx, after hearing a gruesome account of a young girl’s experience of her sexual abuse. Although not a victim of sexual assault herself, Burke knew that enough was enough and that these victims should not have to hide in their shame any longer or even feel ashamed in the first place. Tarana Burke then founded Just Be Inc., a nonprofit organization that strives to give sexual harassment and assault victims the empowerment to use their voice. She says, “Sexual harassment does bring shame. And I think it’s really powerful that this transfer is happening, that these women are not just to share their shame but to put the shame where it belongs: on the perpetrator.” Burke coined the phrase “Me Too” to raise awareness of growing problem that is sexual harassment, urging victims to raise their voices and realize that they are not alone. If only she knew how momentous this phrase would become.

In October of 2017, The New York Times issued an article containing speculations against director, Harvey Weinstein, made by some renowned actresses. Weinstein, known for his co-direction of the movie production company of Miramax, which produced several famous films such as Pulp Fiction and The Crying Game, also winning several Academy Awards and Tony Awards, denied all allegations. However, his assumption that he was scott-free after those few accusations was a big mistake. In the next two weeks, more than a dozen women came forward to tell their stories of sexual assault perpetrated by Weinstein, including Angelina Jolie, Gwyneth Paltrow, Cara Delevingne, and Lupita Nyong’o. These stories ranged from lewd comments made by Weinstein, to groping, and even to rape.

As more people seemed to be emerging with stories about Harvey Weinstein, other Hollywood celebrities were being accused of sexual misconduct as well. Just about two weeks after The New York Times published their article on Weinstein, actress Alyssa Milano, known for her roles in Who’s The Boss? and Charmed decided to use her vast social media outlet to give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem that is sexual harassment. She tweeted out, “If you’ve ever been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet.” Milano went to bed that night not knowing she would wake up to over 50,000 replies and experiences from over 85 countries.

Over the course of the next several weeks, famous men in a variety of fields, ranging from sports to politics, were accused and brought down by these claims. From Kevin Spacey (an actor most well known for roles in movies and shows such as American Beauty and House of Cards); to Russell Simmons (co-founder of DefJam records); from Al Franken (U.S. Senator); to Eric Davis (former N.F.L. player and radio host on ESPN); even to the once beloved Matt Lauer (co-host of the NBC Today show), the list goes on and on. While we would like to watch the careers and lives of these accused go crashing down, there are many who refute this movement, claiming it is too “broad” and “common”.

Although sexual harassment may seem like a very black or white topic of right and wrong, many disagree. According to the article “Publicly, We Say #MeToo. Privately, We Have Misgivings” by Daphne Merkin, many began to observe that there was “a disturbing lack of clarity about the terms being thrown around and a lack of distinction regarding what the spectrum of objectionable behavior really is.” That is why it’s important to understand what sexual harassment is.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted touch, unwanted attention drawn to one’s body, and even any unwanted verbal ‘compliments.’ Every 98 seconds, an American experiences some form of harassment. One survey from Quinnipiac University found that 69 percent of people said their assault took place at work, 43 percent said it was in social settings, 45 percent said on the street, and 15 percent said it happened at home. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), approximately one in five women will be victims of rape in their lives, while one in seventy-one men will be rape victims in their lifetime. About 46% of lesbians reported sexual violence other than rape during
their lifetimes, while 40% of gay men reported sexual violence other than rape during their lifetimes. While sexual harassment is indeed a repulsive act, it is unfortunately a common occurrence. However, many victims do not come forward about their situations. This is because, more than 75% of harassment victims experience retaliation when they report their experiences. Our society has fallen too far into the hole of what is called rape culture toleration. Rape culture is a concept used to describe a setting in which sexual harassment is normalized due to social attitudes about gender and sexuality. To think that rape culture exists among a society that claims to have come so far, in fact only takes steps backwards by blaming the victims. That is something the #MeToo movement is trying to bring to light and to eventually stop: to educate those ignorant enough to blame victims.

The #MeToo movement is not just a trending hashtag on Twitter; it is not just a reason some of your favorite stars wore all black to the Golden Globes, and it is certainly not something “trending” that will come and go as did the Ice Bucket Challenge or planking. This monumental movement is here to stay, and it is only gaining more fuel as time goes on. Sexual harassment can be from a friend; it can be a complete stranger, a relative, a celebrity, a classmate. It can be anybody, and it can happen to anybody. Every day, more than 570 people in the U.S. experience some form of sexual harassment. This includes rape, unwanted physical contact, and cat calling. It is not flattering, it is not complimenting, and most importantly, it is not okay. It is degrading, embarrassing, and downright humiliating. The way it has become so normalized for some people makes matters worse. There is no excuse for rape culture. It is not a question of "What were you wearing?" or "How much did you drink?" We all want change in the world yet refuse to let go of the stereotype that somehow this could have been the victims fault. It is wrong to shame female and male victims into silence. It's time to stop teaching about prevention rather than teaching about what consent is. If somebody shares his or her story with you, understand that it was hard for him or her to talk about that experience and he or she trusts you.

Lend an ear, and, most importantly, your support.
Sarah Como, Class of 2010

By Lianna Lutchman

From the graduating class of 2010, Sarah Como returned to Preston – a place she considers home, in hopes of gaining experience as a guidance counselor. Preston High School was Como’s first choice, since she lived in the area and her mom and aunts have also attended Preston. As a member of the Italian club, Sarah Como has had as many experiences as the current Preston Panthers, and has participated in the renowned lock-ins and discovery day trips that are hosted by Preston. In general, she enjoyed history, but her favorite classes at Preston were her senior year English class, which had pop culture incorporated into it, and Psychology, taught by Dr. King. She realized her passion for the subject after taking his class, and decided to major in Psychology at Iona College once she graduated Preston. Currently, Ms. Como is trying to achieve her Masters at Mercy College for school counseling. And, while coming back to Preston wasn’t planned, there have been many memorable experiences here, since one can never really know what to expect once a new day starts. When asked what she would say to her high school self, she replied, “It will all work out.” And, to the current seniors (and soon-to-be seniors), she also wants to remind you all that you shouldn’t wish for the year to fly by, but instead, you should “enjoy your senior year.”
Four for Flo Jo
By Angela Akalonu

Florence Griffith Joyner, also known as “Flo Jo,” became an Olympic track and field champion during the 1988 Seoul games, retiring in the same year. Breaking world records in the 100 and 200 meter events, she earned four medals and also the title “World’s Fastest Woman.” She was extremely different in her style compared to other racers, wearing one-legged running outfits, brightly painted fingernails, and letting her long hair flow as she ran.

She grew up in the projects of South Central Los Angeles, starting to run at just seven years old. Flo Jo was successful outside the world of track as well. She designed clothing, was an author, acted, reported as a sports newscaster, and was also a mother and wife. Flo Jo was also appointed as the co-chair of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, where she spoke eloquently about her enthusiasm for fitness. Joyner died at the early age of thirty-eight on September 21, 1998 in Mission Viejo California. Her legacy and zeal for sports still lives on today, especially in the lives of aspiring female athletes.

Preston’s Cheerleaders
By Ariana Pizzo

Preston’s cheerleaders are a cornerstone to the school, spreading spirit and cheering on the athletic teams. The girls are known for performing against other competitive local cheer teams as well. They always do their best and succeed in placing at these competitions. Not only do the cheerleaders perform the conventional cheers and chants, but these talented ladies also execute perfect stunts as well as perform tumbling and dance routines with great fervor. It’s difficult work that the cheerleaders pull off gracefully; not to mention, it’s extremely exciting to watch!

After preparing and practicing all year long, the team’s hard work finally paid off at Nationals. Earlier in February, the cheerleaders had the opportunity to travel to Florida to compete for Nationals—as they do annually. This year, they reached Semifinals, and although they did not make it to Finals, the girls did a wonderful job and had a fabulous time together.

Marisa Mancini, who was recently named the new cheer captain, gave her input on how she felt this season went: "We had a good season and worked really hard to get as far as we did. We had a lot of new girls this year who really stepped up and did an amazing job. Being made captain was an honor and came with a lot of responsibility. As captain, I had to make sure I was motivating the girls. It’s a lot of work, but it’s all worth it in the end.” When asked about their trip to Florida, Marisa said, “It’s a trip we all look forward to. We’re competing against some of the best teams in America, and it’s amazing. It pushes all of us to work really hard throughout the season. It will always be a bonding experience for all the girls, and we definitely come back closer every year.”

The cheerleaders do an extraordinary job and continuously help to brighten our school spirits. They have formed an unbreakable bond throughout the past few years as a team, and the girls are always so excited when a new member joins. Without them, we would be missing the enthusiasm that makes our school complete. We congratulate the cheerleaders on all their achievements thus far and applaud them for their steadfast dedication and efforts. We look forward to seeing what the ladies have in store for next season!
Preston High School Step Team
By Kyra Thomas

Preston's Step Team has been around for many years and still knows how to make the school excited. The Step Team is one of the hearts of our school. It represents “determination” and “sisterhood,” as said from some of the members on the team. The young women on the Step Team attend practice twice a week, total likes four hours a week, while also maintaining a focus on their school work and school requirements.

One of the captains on the Step Team, Brianna (Class of ‘18), speaks very highly of the team. Brianna says, “The biggest strength of the Step Team is that the young women are all very determined to learn both old and new steps. Unity makes us stand out.” I also spoke to four other members of the team to hear what they believed were the biggest strengths of the Step Team. “Our desire to learn new steps,” said by Faith (Class of ‘20). “Our confidence,” adds Kaili (Class of ‘21). Mya (Class of ‘21) says, “The sisterhood and determined optimism” is their biggest strength. Every team has its ups and downs, however, but their downfalls, as well as each other, motivate them to stay on track. For example, the girls say some of the weaknesses are “trying to stay together” -Brianna and Kaili and “timing,” according to Faith. “Moving too fast, trying to stay on the same pace,” adds Mya. However, the members of the Step Team all agree that once you are aware of your struggles, you can then work on ways to overcome them, together.

The word sisterhood comes into play again when asked about the sportsmanship that the team exhibits. Brianna says, “the girls support each other, and are always willing to help one another out.” Ashleey (Class of ‘21) says that the members are “good at helping each other out.” Mya adds that the girls are “always opened minded and always willing to come to practice.”

Everyone on the team has their own part but when they work together, it becomes something bigger. But one thing that everyone on the Team is equally excited about is completing their goals for the year. For example, Brianna’s goal is “to become closer to the girls and win more competitions.” Faith’s goal is to “be able to make competition, master steps, and get the crowd more engaged.” Ashleey’s goals include “mastering the steps and passing all tryouts.” That being said, the Step Team consists of some the most hard-working young women at Preston High School and are an integral part of Preston’s community.

We hope to see many more years of the team inspiring us and achieving their goals.
Movie Review: Black Panther

By Jasmine Johnson

Engaging action sequences, tasteful scenery, and a compelling narrative are only a fraction of ways to describe Ryan Coogler’s newest blockbuster, Black Panther. Chadwick Boseman’s T’Challa, Michael B. Jordan’s Killmonger, Lupita Nyong’o, Forest Whitaker, Angela Bassett, Daniel Kaluuya, and Andy Serkis headline a star-studded cast of characters. The record-breaking film follows the introduction of the Wakanda culture, as well as their hero and king: the Black Panther. The Black Panther was welcomed into the Marvel Cinematic Universe. The encapsulating visuals make it one of a kind in comparison to today’s comic book movies. Despite 2018 just beginning, Black Panther has easily become one of the year’s most talked about movies. The thought of it being the all-time best comic book movie has come into question and is justified, however, time has yet to tell. Be sure to watch and take part in the world of the Black Panther.
Dear Pinkie,
I’m looking for some new books to read. Can you recommend any?

I haven’t had much time to read so I can only recommend a couple of books: A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini, Tell No One by Harlan Coben, The Book of Unknown Americans by Cristina Henríquez, and The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie. I hope you enjoy these books just as much as I did!

Pinkie, I want to be more involved, but I’m too scared to run for class president. What should I do?

Running for class president can be frightening and it’s okay to be afraid but the most important thing to know is that you shouldn’t let fear stop you from trying out new things. Tell your friends so that they can help you and give you more confidence to run for class president. If you don’t succeed, there are plenty of other opportunities. You can run for homeroom VP or Treasurer or you can also run for a leadership position in a club. Being involved can also be volunteering after school for different events or simply just joining a club and attending all of the meetings. Remember not to be afraid to try new things. Good Luck!
Debate over the New Vending Machines
By Yeriel Smith

The Preston community, though we knew what the future held, were shocked by the new snacks in the vending machines. Mutters were heard throughout the hallways, sideways glances were thrown towards the new snacks, and many students were just downright confused. When a poll was sent around, a resounding ninety one percent of students claimed to be dissatisfied by the new snacks. One comment, made by Preston junior Aiyana Adams, expressed dissent about the higher price for items that could be accessed for a lower price at a local store. She was referring to the water, an though it is in the same size bottle, it now costs twenty five cents more. Other students complain that it has taken the convenience from the vending machines, saying that many of them went to the vending machines because they didn’t have time to go in the morning. Other, more health conscience students, expressed their satisfaction over the snacks. They were happy that this eliminated the temptation that the previous vending machines had held. The majority of students, however, said that they would simply resort to buying their snacks from outside vendors. One improvement that many students suggested, would be to revert back to the original prices in the old vending machines, or to fix the card scanner. Many are hopeful and look to the future for improvements, and hope that their feedback will fall on willing and open ears.

Emmaus: More Than Just An Excuse From School
By Daniela Hernandez

A trip where all you do is talk about God and sit with girls you’ve probably never even spoken to. Yes, this could be the idea of the yearly trip that a select group of girls take with their chaperones - Mr. Trosa, Ms. Cornelius, Ms. Wnuk, and Ms. Fragale - but this idea is only partially correct. I’ve heard the explanations of the banners, but never understood why it was such a great trip. As soon as I heard the announcement, I knew I had to sign up. I had to finally see what everyone would go on and on about, and now was my chance. As I went on Emmaus, I had no idea what to expect because no one says anything about it. Yet, getting on the bus, I looked around, all familiar faces, some I have spoken to and some I just smile at on a good day, but I couldn’t imagine the next 3 days.

Each of the three days comes with talks, games, laughs, and naps too. From opening my eyes to the religion that I have been raised in, to opening my eyes to the girls around me, Emmaus taught me more than any other school trip ever has. I finally learned what the excitement was all about. But I’m sorry I just can’t tell you; it’s just part of the fun! Trust me, I will definitely be attending this trip again next year, and I believe that every girl in Preston should take this opportunity as well, because once you come back home there is a fire burning inside you... one that never goes out even XLV years later!

Compulsory Voting in America?
By Zenaida Perez & Daniella DeAngelis

In the 2016 presidential election, voter turnout declined, approaching its lowest point since 1996. Despite being such a contentious and intriguing election, only 55% of eligible voters utilized their suffrage, provoking a relevant debate over voting requirements. Voter turnout is constantly fluctuating due to the non-compulsory laws implemented in the United States. According to most Americans, the very thought of mandatory voting laws infringes upon their rights. In other foreign nations, voting is regulated by the government, rendering it the obvious decision. Compulsory voting in the United States poses a difficult question due to the various arguments in its favor and in opposition to it.
The Benefits of Mandatory Voting
Many regard voting as an intrinsic part of citizenship in a democracy. A democracy is built upon the active participation of its citizens. Exercising one’s civic duties strengthens the democracy. Enforcing voting laws would reinforce feelings of nationalism and patriotism, benefiting the country as a whole. Also, requiring all citizens to vote provides the country with representation more closely aligned with the population. Minorities and low-income groups are less likely to vote because they cannot afford to miss work, and there are many barriers that exist within the current voting system that are discouraging. Due to this, these groups are disregarded by politicians. Compulsory voting forces candidates to campaign to all groups. Imposing voting will positively affect both the nation and the individual.

In several countries, mandatory voting is practiced and proves to be very fruitful. In Belgium, choosing not to vote results in punitive measures, such as having the right revoked for 10 years. Australia employs compulsory voting to aid the assimilation of newly arrived immigrants. After the adoption of voting laws, voter turnout escalated to 80% of the eligible population, whereas the United State’s turnout is nearly half. These countries hold the notion that mandatory voting diminishes polarization. The polarization prevails in the United States because ardent partisans govern low turnout elections. The United States may need to consider compulsory voting as a solution to creating an efficient political system and a faithful democracy.

The Challenges that Ensue with Mandatory Voting
Although many associate voting with democracy, if forced, it can be seen as contradictory with the principles of the nation. People may exercise the right not to vote, and in the same manner, they can exercise the right to vote. Coercing the public to vote undermines the very nature of democracy. If people perceive compulsory voting as a form of oppression, there will subsequently be outcry. Also, if forced to do so, many will make the decision lightly, without putting in any thought or effort, leading to increased votes with no political basis. In this case, quality prevails quantity. The low voting turnout should not be feared, rather it is the invalid and random votes that are daunting. Is picking a candidate at random simply to fulfill one’s civic duty consistent with the democracy practiced in the United States?

The American ideals of freedom and individuality define our culture as a whole, and the debate of compulsory voting laws emulate these ideals. Can we possibly institute these laws while still abiding by the basic principles of the United States? Due to this perennial debate, the country will always stand divided.
Staff