

# The Carver Times

MAY 16, 2018

## MICHELLE OBAMA: INTRO TO COLLEGE 101

By Agung Putra

"Look at Philly!" Michelle Obama exclaimed. "We are all here because of you." On May 2, 2018, 8,000 college bound students attended College Signing Day at the Liacouras Center at Temple University. All of the seniors who attended this event had plans for their future whether it was attending college or serving in our military. Philadelphia hosted the fifth annual college Signing Day with Forever First Lady Michelle Obama and other top celebrities like Nick Cannon, Zendaya and Rebel Wilson.

Michelle Obama explained the history of the event and why she and others were there. "This is my 5th signing day event. We started doing this back in 2014. Remember, we were in the White House then." Mrs. Obama continued motivating the audience, "you are all the stars. We knew we needed to make going to college as big a deal as getting a contract." All of celebrities' appearances were significant because they motivated the college bound seniors to feel that anything is possible. These soon to be high school graduates are the next generation to provide hope to the country.

One parent proclaimed, **"I am excited to be invited as a parent. ... Michelle Obama is a friend in my head. She always has been, she was the first African American first lady, and we're about the same age, and she represents such elegance, and excellence, and leadership. I'm glad, proud, and excited that they chose Philly this year to come. And my child's a senior, so we both got to come and experience it."**

**"You guys ignored the haters. You buckled down. You focused. You surrounded yourselves with positive people."** Michelle Obama, May 2, 2018 There is no controversy surrounding the fact these college bound students will be the generation to fix the country's mistakes, like the recent election. Further, the country experiences serious problems with income equality which impacts a student's desire to go to a certain college. Michelle Obama reminded the crowd that this will not be easy.

Michelle Obama shared her story. "I was where you were way back when. I went to public schools my entire life. When I decided I wanted to go to college and I applied, do you know what my counselor told me? She told me don't set my sights too high... There are always haters out there telling you what you can't do." She asked the crowd if they'd ever gotten this same message. "I know that



for many of you, some of you are the first or only people from your community to take this step. That might feel scary. I went from the South Side of Chicago to Princeton University." The graduates in American society are bright, diverse and educated, so colleges better make room for them.

Many gathered in this generation of college bound students reject our current president. Although the event itself was not political, shots were fired at the president and our current political climate. Comedian Robert De Niro asked the crowd if there was anyone attending Trump University, and Nick Cannon replied, "only Kanye." The crowd shouted an unpleasant reaction, screaming boos with their thumbs down and laughed at Nick Cannon's joke. This was certainly expected because Philadelphia is a liberal city and when you discuss Trump, the reactions are almost always negative.

In fact, most of the students that I asked said that the Obamas are still their president and First Lady, meaning that they don't recognize or acknowledge the current president. A feeling of no recognition to the man in the White House is a popular trend among this generation. This rejection of bigotry and divisiveness makes me optimistic about the future and glad to be a part of this diverse generation.

The attendees were certainly hopeful; walking around the arena, watching the joy of high school seniors across the city discussing their college goals, inspired me to do the same. No matter the institution, whether it was a local community college or an elite Ivy League school, everyone was hopeful. Parents were proud of the legacy that they made or their children's achievement being the first to attend college in their family. People might talk down about this experience, but going to college will improve society as a whole. Yes, this country might have its problems, but with growing incoming college class, there is no doubt in my mind that it can be fixed by this educated generation. It was Janelle Monae who said: **"I am hopeful when I look out and see the sea of diversity, all these beautiful faces, this is the American Dream."**

# SCHOOL REFORM COMMISSION IS OUT, SCHOOL BOARD IS IN! WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

By: Sawda Sarah, James Hillyard, and Emese Bata

On April 4, 2018 the Mayor of Philadelphia announced a new school board for Philadelphia schools. Before this, there was a School Reform Commission (SRC), appointed by the Mayor and the Governor, which voted to end itself.

**As students, we need to know about who is making the decisions for our schools!**

One of the reasons we care is because of the funding for our schools. So it's important that the mayor says we will find more money from the city now, with a School Board.

We interviewed Ron Whitehorne about the SRC, someone who also opposed the SRC for many years. He even applied to be on the new School Board in order to have more influence on education in Philadelphia.

**Background** Ron Whitehorne, a retired teacher, has been a political activist in Philadelphia for four and a half decades with ties to the civil rights, anti Vietnam war, and labor movements. He became a teacher in the 1980s and was a longtime PFT building representative and co-chaired the teachers' union (PFT) Community Outreach Committee.

**We asked him about himself.** I wasn't born in Philly; I grew up in Vermont. I came here in the 1960's and got active in civil rights and anti-Vietnam war movement. I started working with students. We did "liberation schools" to re-teach American history which then left out people of color. I became a teacher at Julio DeBurgos Middle School for 20 years.

While teaching and after retiring I was active in education organizing and advocacy, fighting for the rights of students, parents and teachers for improved schools. Currently I am a member of 215 People's Alliance, trying to build movement for economic and racial justice. I waged a fight against the SRC. I am currently focused on better funding for schools.

**We wanted to know why he opposed the SRC.** It's undemocratic for the state, overwhelmingly white, to decide about schools in a city that's overwhelmingly people of color. Everyone else gets to decide how they run their own schools. It's racist. The policies that were pursued under state control were bad and they didn't consult with voters, parents. They introduced privatization. There was a growth of charters, and they handed schools over to charters happened under their watch.

When Corbett was governor the budget was cut to

the bone. When the SRC came in the argument was that we'd get more funding. But we didn't!

**For clarity on his organization, we asked what steps did he and the group take to get the SRC to end itself.**

Our coalition was around for two years. A lot of work was going on before that. Since the SRC came. In particular, there were student and parent groups who wanted to stop the state take-over. At first they were going to turn over schools to a for profit company, Edison. They paid them to study what was best, and Edison said Edison should take it over. But because of the push back they couldn't do that.

So there was a movement from the very beginning opposed to the SRC. There were protests all along. A turning point was when Tom Corbett became governor. During that time they came up with a plan and hired an outside group, Boston Consulting, to develop a plan for consultation. The hallmark was that we should get the schools "we can afford." That meant get rid of libraries, nurses, give teachers a pay cut, put kids in front of computers. That pushed people to say that "we really have to fight this."

This fight led to the Phila Coalition for Public Schools in 2012. That was a bigger and stronger coalition that included student groups, union, parent groups. I worked for that organization. That group did a lot to mobilize people. Some people went to jail for civil disobedience, against the budget cuts and the plan they had.

We got 40,000 people to sign a petition to put the question about abolishing the SRC on the ballot. City Council didn't want to do that but they did. It was on the ballot in 2015 and over 90% wanted to get rid of it. It was non-binding referendum, so they didn't have to do anything, but it showed that there wasn't any support for the SRC.

That laid the groundwork for the current coalition. Some people thought we would have to live with the SRC but the new coalition said we have to get rid of it. We would be stuck with it if the current governor didn't get re-elected and a Republican governor could add his own people. We saw this as a window of opportunity.

We targeted the mayor. We needed a majority who would vote to dissolve themselves. We met with the mayor, Kenney, about it. One member of our group, a young woman with green hair, was very strident, and every time he would be somewhere she and other people would ask him about it. We don't know why he decided to do it, because he didn't run on this as his platform. It took some pushing, but I think he got it that if he didn't do it now he might be stuck with a Republican SRC.

Instagram: @thecarvertimes *continued on page 3...*

# SCHOOL REFORM COMMISSION IS OUT, SCHOOL BOARD IS IN!

FROM PG. 2

By: Sawda Sarah, James Hillyard, and Emese Bata.

**We asked him about the differences and similarities between the SRC and a school board. We wondered if this new school board be just like the the old one before the SRC.**

There are some efforts to make the new School Board different. The process this mayor went for was more inclusive than the old school board many years ago. The mayor still gets to appoint, but they asked people to apply. 500 people applied. There was a nominating committee.

We wanted a student representative (a voting representative) and we wanted to get rid of the fact that they said you had to be a registered voter (so undocumented people could be on it). Of the 27 nominated there weren't enough parents of color from low income communities and very few educators with lots of experience.

It will clearly be better than the SRC. The mayor will be more accountable to Philadelphia than the legislature and governor. The terms of the people who will be appointed will be the same as the mayor's term.

**We also wanted to know what he thought about the differences a school board will make for students, and how these changes would benefit students.**

The SRC didn't care what anyone said, especially students, teachers, parents. They weren't accountable to us. Rather, they were



accountable mainly to the state.

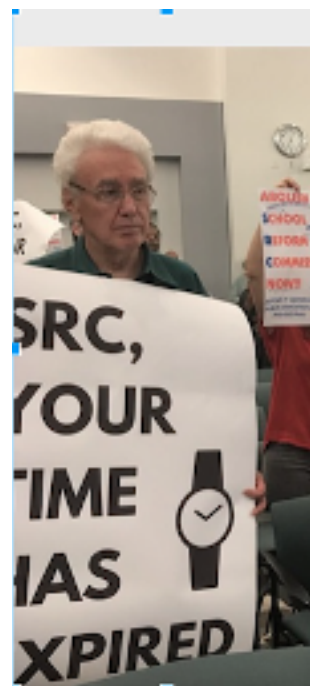
Hopefully the new board will be more open to the input to students, parents, etc. There are no guarantees. We will still have to organize and push our agenda.

We should ultimately have an elected school board. That's what we need because that's real accountability and we could vote people out.

The fight about funding is important. It's positive that the mayor wants to fund the schools, and he's right that the state doesn't want to. The city doesn't have the resources. He's letting like corporations and universities off the hook; they aren't paying enough taxes, or any taxes in some cases. We're calling for "mega non-profits" like big universities and insurance companies - they should agree to pay property taxes though legally, they don't have to. We want them to pay 1/2 of what they would pay if they were taxed.

For example, the University of Pennsylvania has an endowment that is as big as some countries. What they like to do is "charity," like funding the Penn Alexander school in West Philadelphia. And mainly Penn employees can send their children there. They want to say that's our contribution, but we are saying they should pay a dedicated amount that the city can control and give to many schools.

Parents and students, what do you want to tell the new school board?



Ron Whitehorn

Instagram: @thecarvertimes



# Teacher Interview



By Sawda Sarah and Emese Bata

Interview with Mr. Mandell, History teacher at Carver E&S

**Name:** David Mandell

**Years at Carver:** 7

**Education:** Temple University

**Hidden talents:** Speed Typing "I type close to over 90 words/min with little to no errors"



**Sawda Sarah:** Tell us a little bit about yourself?

**Mr. Mandell:** I graduated high school in 1982 (that makes me 53). I live by myself and three cats in Northeast Philadelphia. I am politically active in my neighborhood. I enjoy going to neighborhood meetings and being a part of my community.

**Emese Bata:** Why do you like cats so much?

**Mr. Mandell:** They're fuzzy and cute. Also, they give us unconditional love. You don't have to walk them. (And they're smarter than dogs.) My cat's names are Squeakles (girl), HoneyBear (boy) and the Spark (boy). I also have shelters that I made outside and take care of stray cats.

**Sawda Sarah:** What did you learn from being in the military?

**Mr. Mandell:** To be punctual; to be honest; and do things to the best of your ability. Lastly, not to be afraid of failure.

**Emese Bata:** What are some of the things you want regular people to know about serving in the armed forces?

**Mr. Mandell:** It's an amazing experience that will change your life forever. It will help you grow as a person and unveil the strengths you did not know existed within you.

**Emese Bata:** If you could only teach one subject for the rest of your life what would it be?

**Mr. Mandell:** Tee hee. :) That's easy. American Government. I want to instill the pride and power of being an active American citizen into our students.

**Sawda Sarah:** We finish the interview and you step outside the office and find a lottery ticket that ends up winning \$10 million. What would you do?

**Mr. Mandell:** I would do everything I could to make the world a better place. I would

give money to Carver; my friends; I would help rebuild libraries; and give money to the State of Israel. Of course, I'd help my parents as well.

**Sawda Sarah:** What would the students be surprised to find out about you?

**Mr. Mandell:** I love to disco dance.

**Emese Bata:** What's one thing that annoys you about people?

**Mr. Mandell:** Phony people. I can spot them a mile away and I enjoy letting them know what I think.

**Sawda Sarah:** If you could choose any other careers what would it be?

**Mr. Mandell:** I'd love to fly an attack helicopter.

**Emese Bata:** Who was your role model growing up?

**Mr. Mandell:** My foreign language teacher, Mrs. Adini. She inspired me to be a teacher.

**Sawda Sarah:** If you could take the students on a field trip to anywhere in the world, where would you take them?

**Mr. Mandell:** Probably to the stratosphere so we could look down on the earth and see what a precious gift has been given to us.

**Emese Bata:** Is there a quote that you live by?

**Mr. Mandell:** "Don't wait until tomorrow what you can do today."

**Sawda Sarah:** What is the funniest thing a student has ever said to you?

**Mr. Mandell:** Do I shine my bald head every morning...?

**Emese Bata:** If you could have a superpower what would you choose?

**Mr. Mandell:** I would absolutely love to fly and feel the freedom that a bird must feel.

**Sawda Sarah:** If you could meet

any alive or dead person who would it be?

**Mr. Mandell:** Lol, that's simple! James Madison who is responsible for giving us our cherished Bill of Rights and the Constitution. It's these rights that people from all over the world come to America to have. Our liberty and rights are a blessing -- a gift that our Founding Fathers gave us to pass on to each generation.

**Emese Bata:** What is your favorite tv show/movie?

**Mr. Mandell:** The Brady Bunch. A sitcom from the 1970s about an extended family.

**Sarah:** If you could go back in time which time period would you choose to go to?

**Mr. Mandell:** The 1700s to speak with our Founding Fathers and get their opinions on some questions I have.

**Emese:** What is your first memory from school?

**Mr. Mandell:** When I was in first grade my mother could only afford a Crayola Crayon 8 box and other kids had the 64 box crayons with the built-in sharpener and I was embarrassed. However, after I drew my first picture with only eight crayons, and saw what a good job I did, I was no longer embarrassed and I was proud of what I did with so little. I'll never forget that. I still tell that story to my students today.

**Sarah:** If you were to write a book what would it be called?

**Mr. Mandell:** "All the ups and downs of teaching."

**Emese Bata:** In which other teacher's class would you enroll if you could.

**Mr. Mandell:** Dr. Franchetti's Biology class. I would see that as a challenge to master.

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*Teacher Interview Continued..*

**Sawda Sarah:** What are 3 traits that in your opinion every person should have?

**Mr. Mandell:** Compassion; a sense of humor; and honesty.

**Emese Bata:** If you could eat the same thing everyday what would it be?

**Mr. Mandell:** I'd love to eat chicken parmesan every day. I can't get enough of it. (Chicken with melted cheese and home-made tomato sauce.)

**Sawda Sarah:** Describe yourself in 3 words.

**Mr. Mandell:** Compassionate, honest, and resilient.

**Emese Bata:** What is something you're really proud of.

**Mr. Mandell:** That I've made my parents proud of what I've done with my life.

**Sawda Sarah:** How do you think students will remember you and your class?

**Mr. Mandell:** For being kind; and having interesting discussions as well as showing students that learning history can be meaningful when lots of connections to today are made.

**Emese Bata:** If you could change one thing about this school what would it be?

**Mr. Mandell:** I'd like to see more students wearing the school uniform properly. We have uniforms for a reason. Productive citizens need to be able to follow basic rules - whether they like it or not.

# STILL MARCHING FOR OUR LIVES

**By: Laura Frances Taylor**

On February 14th, 2018 a shooting took place in a high school in Parkland, Broward County, FL. Seventeen people (teachers and students) were gunned down by a lone suspect who was a graduate of the high school. On March 14, exactly a month after the tragedy, a student-led demonstration took place called March for Our Lives in Philadelphia. On that day, fate brought over 800 high school students in the Philadelphia area to participate in the walk out to commemorate the lives lost not only in Parkland but also in other school shootings that have taken place in the United States. Students from different schools and different communities stood together to say "No More" and demand change.

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." - Constitution of the United States of America 1789 (rev. 1992), Amendment 1

The first Amendment protects United States citizens in ways that give people of all ages the right to peacefully protest and voice their opinions. For a lot of attendees, including some Carver students, it was their first time being involved in such a national demonstration.

"It was beautiful," one Carver student recalled, "I had never seen anything more fascinating. The atmosphere was positive, and I'm happy to have been a part of such a powerful demonstration." She



proudly wore the pins that were given out at the march. For students, there was pressure to go and also to stay, so there was a kind of tug of war. Students had to make a decision for themselves.

A host of Carver students came out to support the cause. They went out to exercise their freedoms and they were praised for it such by local news stations. That made me feel like I was a part of something that could make change possible.

Did you attend the walkout? If so, what was that experience like for you?

## Respond here...

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# LIFE IN JAPAN AS AN EXCHANGE STUDENT: NORTH KOREA AND NUCLEAR BOMBS

**By: Emese Bata**

*I interviewed Csenge Szobi, who is an exchange student from Hungary, and she is also one of my best friends. She went to Japan seven months ago as an exchange student, and she will stay there for another couple of months. In this interview I was particularly interested in her experiences and understanding regarding to North Korea and the 2017 missile test launch.*

**Where do you live in Japan?** I live on the island Honshū with my host-family. The city is called Shunan city, in Yamaguchi prefecture. It's about an hour from a bigger city called Iwakuni. Iwakuni has an airport and also has a U.S. military base close to the airport. Some Americans live there, and you need a passport to enter. There was a voluntary option in my school to go there and help in an elementary school in Iwakuni. I wanted to go, but I couldn't. For an exchange student, it's even more troublesome, because you need a visa to get in.

**Is it operating as an army base?** It's officially called MCAS Iwakuni, and it is home to approximately half of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, elements of the 3rd Marine Logistics Group, Fleet Air Wing 31 of the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force, and other units of JMSDF.

**A few months ago a missile was launched from North Korea towards Japan. Did that affect you?** The missile went above Hokkaidō, the most Nordic island in Japan. It wasn't as big of a thing as if they were to send it over Tokyo (the capital of Japan). A lot of people had to evacuate from Hokkaidō because it wasn't sure if it is going to hit the island or not. Luckily it landed in the ocean. (It was said to be a test launch which is sad, because first what are you testing for, and second, you shouldn't do test launches over other countries?)

**Did you hear that alarm?** No, because I lived in the southern part of Japan. But I did see it on the TV and in the news. In the news, they also mentioned that North Korea might be planning to send a missile to Iwakuni. This way they could hurt both America and Japan with one missile.

**Do you have bunkers or safe places to seek refuge if something like this happens?** I know nothing about safe places, but we did have a practice evacuation in school. In the city, as a citizen, I had no idea what we are supposed to do if the radar goes off, warning that there is missile threat. If something is coming, than radars immediately go off and warn people.

**Is it like a fire alarm?** Yes, it is like a fire alarm, but it has its own sound. In Japan, there are a lot of natural disasters, so there is a specific alarm for fire, earthquake, and typhoon too. The place where I live, apart from the presence of the Iwakuni base,

is a very safe place because it's surrounded by mountains. That means that the tsunami can't reach it. As long as I have lived here, which is seven months, there has only been earthquakes that caused minor damage. Compared to other parts of Japan where I live is safe.

**What did the practice evacuation look like?** We were in our classroom when the alarm went off, and the people on the window side had to close the curtains because if the missile hits it would cause the windows to break, and it might harm people. Then we had to grab our desk and chair (everybody has his/her own desk and a chair) and push it in the middle to form a huge table. Then we had to hide under it to protect our heads. After the alarm stopped, meaning that the big explosion would have been over, the "survivors" gathered up. Japanese people are very organized, so even in these moments you are supposed to line up in alphabetical order and go to the gym building. According to the teachers, it's a really massive building so it's shouldn't collapse. Personally, for me, it's hard to believe that if a missile were to hit us the gym would survive it. The scary thing about this evacuation was that I thought that that was just an earthquake evacuation practice, until the last minute. Then I asked my friends and they said that it was a missile evacuation. They explained what was happening while we were gathered together in the gym. One sentence stuck with me: "remember this alarm sound very well because it might be important later". Remember it because you might have to know it. This basically meant that you have no idea when Japan might be hit by a missile in the future. That was scary.

**Can you talk about this in class?** That isn't taboo so yeah, but I haven't seen anybody talking about this. I sometimes ask my friends about it, but we usually only talk about how scary it is, and how there is nothing we can do in a situation like that. After the evacuation practice, I asked my friends, and we all agreed that if there were a missile the gym wouldn't protect us. A missile is a big thing. If there is a typhoon or there is an earthquake, some way you have a chance to protect yourself. Go into a massive building, if its a tsunami, or you know you have to protect your head if there is an earthquake, wait until it's over. But a missile... It's a weapon, it was designed to kill people.

Teachers only mention it when something big happens, like when the missile went above Hokkaidō. We have advisory before classes every day and sometimes they say that we have to remember what to do if a missile comes. They want us to know that this is a possibility and it's important for us to know what to do. I have a feeling that they also don't want to scare us.

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# LIFE IN JAPAN AS AN EXCHANGE STUDENT<sup>7</sup>

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By: Emese Bata

**Do you think that people are worried?** Well, they definitely aren't running around screaming that we are going to die. They are very calm and practical, but sometimes I can see the worry on some people's faces when the newspaper comes in the morning. They definitely don't deny that there is a chance that it happens, but they mainly seem prepared for it. At least that's what I noticed.

**Have you heard anything about Trump or the US?** Even though the U.S. is in alliance with Japan, my family has mixed feelings towards Trump and his decisions. The leader of Japan has made some questionable decisions in the past, so the adults that I sometimes discuss politics with say that both the leader of Japan and the U.S. aren't great, and that it might have some bad consequences.

**Do you talk about Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the school?** The memorial happened at the beginning of August when I wasn't in Japan yet. On the day when the bomb landed, there is a memorial service in Hiroshima. Every year a lot of people visit the memorial on that day. My family told me that a year before I came here they also went there. Luckily I was able to visit the Hiroshima dome and the Hiroshima museum on another day. The museum had a lot of interesting information. The fact that Japan got hit by an atomic bomb just so they could try the bomb out is really sad. Both of the cities were really nice, and a lot of innocent people died.

I also read in the museum that America was searching for locations to decide where drop the bomb based only on the fact that they wanted to kill as many people as possible. They weren't targeting military bases, Hiroshima wasn't a threat; they just wanted to test out how big of a territory the bomb could demolish. The fact that it was a senseless killing is what makes it really sad.

**What was the museum like?** In the museum, there was a map projected onto a big table, and it animated how the city looked before and after the bombing. There were a lot of pictures shown that were taken a few minutes after the bombing. These showed how badly the victims were burned and even how people were burning up alive. It was really graphic and sad.

**Do you talk about this in school?** In Japan, we have social study classes where we talk about a lot of things including religion or even Trump. I have to say that I don't really understand much about what they talk about in this class, but I remember that they were talking about Hiroshima and Nagasaki too. They are really educated about this sad part of their history.

If you want to know more about Csenge's time in Japan, check out her blog: <http://hungariansliceoflife.blog.hu>

**May 16, 2018 Edition Editorial Board**

<b>Sawda Sarah</b>	<b>Laura Frances Taylor</b>	<b>Brianna Mack</b>
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Google Classroom Code: **jdr2ztv**