

**First Place 5/6**

Sarah Stieglemeyer- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Lakeview Intermediate  
Yukon, OK

Diary of a Resilient Girl

When you think of the word resilience who comes to mind? For me, I think of Anne Frank, a Jewish girl who died in the Holocaust. Anne is the author of an influential diary she wrote while in hiding. She was such an amazing role model of endurance that I hope you learn from her story.

Anne Frank's diary is the only reason millions of people know her name. Anne got her diary as a 13<sup>th</sup> birthday present and wrote in it until her arrest in 1944. On July 6, 1944, she wrote, "To be honest, I can't imagine how anyone could say 'I'm weak' and then stay that way. If you know that about yourself, why not fight it, why not develop your character?" Aside from hopeful journal entries like this, Anne also wrote stories, essays, and fairytales in her diary. Her words were so inspiring that she is now known for putting hope in people's hearts and pushing through until the end.

Anne's diary often showed she was optimistic about her situation. She wrote, "We still love life, we haven't yet forgotten the voice of nature, and we keep hoping, hoping for...everything." Her father Otto Frank thought the whole diary was so powerful that he published it in 1947 after Anne's death. He was right because a book written by a 13-year-old girl is one of the most widely-read works of nonfiction.

Anne knew her situation was dangerous, but she persevered. She said, "I want to be useful or bring enjoyment to all people, even those I've never met. I want to go on living even after my death!" About six million Jews died in the Holocaust, including Anne and her sister in 1945, a year after their arrest. Through two years of hiding, Anne Frank persevered and kept a hopeful attitude.

While hiding for her life, Anne Frank wrote a diary that would one day influence millions. Through the hardships of the Holocaust, Anne Frank persevered. Her story lives on as a hopeful reminder to all those who say they cannot get through a hard time in their life. To those Anne said, "The happiness in your own heart can only be dimmed; it will always be there, as long as you live, to make you happy again."

## **Second Place 5/6**

Christopher Solomon- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Waynoka Elementary School  
Waynoka, OK

### Stephen Hawking: A Symbol of Resilience

Webster's Dictionary defines resilience as, "the ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again after something bad happens." In my eyes, resilience is not giving up when life throws challenges at you. One person I think of when I think of resilience is Stephen Hawking, who was one of the greatest scientific minds of our time.

Stephen William Hawking was born on January 8, 1942, in Oxford, United Kingdom, and died on March 14, 2018. Hawking was the oldest out of Frank and Isobel Hawking's four children. Stephen Hawking was always very smart. When Hawking was a teenager, he and his friends built a computer out of old clock parts, telephone switchboards, and other recycled items. Hawking entered the University of Oxford at the age of 17. While at The University of Oxford, Hawking studied physics. At the age of 21, Hawking was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, more commonly known as ALS. A short time after he was released from the hospital, Stephen had a dream that he was going to be executed. Hawking said that his dream made him realize that there were still things to do with his life. In a way, Hawking's disease helped turn him into the great scientist he was. After his diagnosis, Hawking still worked hard every day. Over the years, Stephen Hawking wrote or co-wrote 15 books.

Stephen Hawking is a man that has shown resilience many times in his life. Hawking believed that his passion for science helped his body, and mostly his mind resist the decline other ALS victims experience. Stephen Hawking once said, "However difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at." Stephen Hawking could have quit everything he loved because of his illness, but instead, he made the best of it. Hawking changed the way we look at the universe with his remarkable theories and outreach. He also inspired generations around the world, making some of the most complicated physics of our time accessible to the masses.

Stephen Hawking was a remarkable, strong, and courageous human being. Hawking never lets the lights go dark, that is why he is a symbol of resilience.

### Third Place 5/6

Janelle Amoah- 6<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Fisher Elementary School  
Oklahoma City, OK

#### Too Ugly!

Have you ever wondered what it feels like for someone to not want you because you are “different?” Well, Robert Hoge has had that happen to him by his very own mother! “Everyone's uglier than they think. Everyone's more beautiful than think, too!” Robert Hoge says. Love yourself, whether you are different or not because that is what makes us beautiful!

Robert Hoge was born and raised in Brisbane, Australia on July 23rd, 1972. Robert's parents knew he was different, and something was wrong with him from the moment they saw the look on the doctors' face. Back then, there was not very advanced technology so usually a mother's first question would be, “Is it a boy or a girl?” But for Robert's mom it was, “Is my baby, ok?” You see, Robert was born with deformed legs and an enormous tumor between his eyes. When his mom saw him for the first time she was absolutely baffled, she knew that he did not look like a regular baby, so she immediately said, “Get that thing away from me.” without hesitation or even saying bye to little Robert. “Perhaps he will die,” Robert's mom said to his dad. His mom wanted nothing to do with him, but Robert's dad knew he could fight this and knew he could make it home. Robert was also left in NICU for 5 days until he got his first surgery, getting his tumor removed only at 5 days old. Robert was the youngest and “weirdest” out of all 4 of his siblings.

The challenges that Robert overcame were very impressive due to him having a prosthetic leg. Robert could swim, ride bikes, and play sports such as lawn bowling, and soccer. Of course, to Robert those were ridiculously hard challenges he had to overcome, and they were not easy. According to Robert those challenges were not as fun at first because he got bullied, got rude comments, and looks. But he did not give up because he knew he could do it no matter what!

Robert knew that he could do what any other child his age could do so he did not give up no matter what. His resilience impacted others by him speaking up about his disability and how other people should not allow bullying for being different.

This essay has made me feel incredibly sad, but also joyful because I was mad how Robert was treated as a kid but now, also glad because he has overcome hate and has a better life. Robert has now even made his own book, gotten married, and has 2 daughters! But, let me ask you this, how would you feel if you were being treated rudely for being different? Treat others how you want to be treated!

## **First Place 7/8**

Avery Burton- 7<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Seiling Public School  
Seiling, OK

### Rhea Wildfires

In mid-April, 2018, there were several wildfires near my community of Seiling, Oklahoma. For days, the skies were black and smoke filled. The air was thick and smelled like cedar burning. I went to school the morning of the Rhea Wildfire, the skies dark at 7a.m. Little did I know, that was just the start of my community coming together to face hardship, leaning on each other for support, and working towards a common goal for safety.

Reports of the Rhea fires' size ranged from 260,000 to 280,000 acres. The fire started approximately 30 miles from my home and quickly became so close that you could see the red, fiery glow above the trees at night. School was let out that afternoon and everyone banded together to ensure that our cattle, our children, our neighbors, our friends, our parents, and grandparents were well taken care of and out of harm's way. Evacuations filled our house with friends, family and then some. Our neighbor, who was a firefighter during this time, called to let us know that the fires should miraculously miss our homes. We were extremely grateful to him and his entire crew for keeping my community safe.

With the hard work of firefighters from all around Oklahoma, and the National Guard, the fire finally came to an end. The Rhea fire took two lives, countless animals, homes, structures, and hundreds of thousands of acres of land. Even though the fire was devastating, my community didn't let that hold us back from redemption. We learned that even in the most difficult of circumstances, if we rely on each other, we can do impeccable things.

Through clothing, food, water, and various agricultural donations, my community united together which shows me that good things can come out of difficult situations. The thoughtfulness of those in my community continues to show through other trials and hardships. The Rhea Wildfire was one of the worst local disasters, but has given Seiling, Oklahoma a gift of strength and resilience.

Nearly four years later, the trees still look charred, but will soon flourish with new branches and green leaves. I will never forget that April day, with the smell of the thick air, or the red glow of the fire. But what will stick with me most is the outpour of loving strangers coming together to redeem our community.

## Second Place 7/8

Adrianna Rivera- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Chandler High School  
Chandler, OK

### The Bombing of Hiroshima

When people get told about the bombing of Hiroshima they generally get told that it was what ended World War II, but have you ever thought of what happened to the people who lived there? The entire community was destroyed. Some people actually got sick and died because of the bombing. However, the people didn't let that stop them from returning to the life they knew. Less than ten days after the bomb was dropped, the people who survived came together to rebuild their home.

They collected the things that weren't burned or broken and started working hard to start their lives again. They must have been grief stricken, but they didn't let that stop them. They kept going. There was a rumor that nothing would grow for 75 years. However, a single patch of Red Canna flowers bloomed in the rubble and people's courage and hope was restored. Soon, Hiroshima residents that had been evacuated and soldiers who were off fighting in the war came back, and Hiroshima started the long journey of recovering. The schools in Hiroshima were either destroyed or being used for relief and temporary shelter for atomic bomb victims.

So, only a fourth of their former schools were used for actual schooling. Still, teachers found places for children to learn. It is said that 2,000 to 6,500 atomic bomb orphans lived in Hiroshima after the war. Since they lost their families, they were all alone. Some even ended up living on the streets, they did things like shining shoes to survive.

Today, Hiroshima is a bustling manufacturing hub with a population of over 1.1 million people and counting. The people of Hiroshima went through a lot that year and were still getting affected by the bombing years after it happened. For example, people were still getting diseases from it, like leukemia. There was a girl whose name was Sadako, the bombing happened when she was 3. When she was eleven she found out she had leukemia that was caused by the bombing even though she didn't show any symptoms after the bombing happened.

This just proves that it the bombing still affected Hiroshima years after it happened. However, they were resilient and bounced back from everything that happened to them. Even though the bombing was terrible they became stronger. They grew from that experience. The people of Hiroshima had their home destroyed but were persistent and kept moving forward. These people are inspiring to me because they never gave up. They recovered from the bombing and now their community is bigger and better than ever.

### **Third Place 7/8**

Jada Burns- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Oakdale Public School  
Edmond, OK

#### Jada's Liberia

My mother was born in Monrovia, Liberia in 1986 on a Sunday at 6:30 a.m. in the middle of a war. Her own young mother was only sixteen years old and all alone and hope seemed elusive. When my mother was only three years old, she was shot by crossfire from the battlefield. My mother's story is one of resilience and redemption in the face of the Civil War and tragedy. Her name is Gloria Miller.

When she was only three months old, her dad took her away and gave the baby to his older sister to raise because her mom was too young to take care of a baby. My mother told me that she knew she had a father who made sure she was cared for, but she has never met him or even spoken with him. At that time, we had a civil war going on that had been going on for over 20 years. Our country is the 4th poorest country in the world. We've had civil war off and on for many years. When my mother was only three years old and fleeing from the war she was shot in my left upper thigh and her injury wasn't healing correctly. My mother's aunt raised her until she was about eight years old and her dad got married. Next, her step-mom's family sent for the baby to go live with them.

While my mother was with her step-grandparents they went back to Liberia. My great auntie was married to a Ghanaian so when the war got bad they had to move to Ghana and they lived in the camp for a few years until after the war died down a little bit. Then they went back to Liberia. In 1996 they had a really bad war, one of the worst wars ever and the area got so bad they had to flee and go back to Ghana.

After teaching with some missionaries, my mother's father was offered the opportunity to come to America. So, when the war broke out he went ahead and filed for my aunt and my mother to come to the United States, so they went to Ghana and waited there until they came over to America in September, 1997. At that time, my mother was able to come to America for surgeries to help her leg heal.

The woman who took care of my mother still lives in Ghana with my mother's other siblings and she comes to America back and forth, but right now she's still living in Ghana. The doctor who operated on her leg had to do it quickly because it was getting infected, but they operated and cut off the tissue that was getting infected. To this day my mom still has the bullet in her leg.

My mother's story is still one of the best stories of resilience and redemption that I have ever heard. My mom has inspired me since I was young. She has taken care of me and my brother by herself. She has worked more than one job for so many years and it inspires me to just work harder. She has been staying strong for me and my brother these past few months. We both lost our auntie and I lost my dad. My mom had to be so strong, she had to continue going to work, no time to stop and just grieve like me and my brother, but she's still being so strong, I am so grateful for that. I hope to remember to stay that strong when I get older and problems come my way. A quote she always said to me and my brother is "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger." Every time I look at my family everything that has happened to us has made us stronger and I am so grateful for that.

## **First Place 9/10**

Michaela Stevens- 10<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Arkansas School for Math, Science and the Arts  
Hot Springs, AR

### Resistance of the “Radium Girls”

Sometimes resilience seems useless. Sometimes struggling leads to no reward in our lifetime. But resilience is never futile, no matter the delay in reward. This is exemplified in the “radium girls” whose death and suffering was not discussed until after most of them died. They were not immediately hailed as champions of labor regulation in America and the lesson that should have been taken from their experience took time to sink in.

At the beginning of World War I, factories appeared all over the United States to produce watches with faces that glowed in the dark. Women worked in these factories painting the delicate faces with miraculous glowing paint. This paint contained radium, a toxic substance discovered only 20 years prior. Because of the small size of the watch faces, the women working in the factory often pointed the ends of their paint brushes with their lips, ingesting the toxic substance. The women had no idea of the danger they were in, even wearing their nicest clothing to work so it would glow from the radium dust when they went out at night.

Soon, the women of these factories experienced serious health issues and, at first, no doctors could tell exactly how they had fallen ill. For two years, the bosses of these factories staunchly denied any connection between the death and illness of the girls and the materials they worked with. The company performed studies which concluded that the radium was harmful, but refused to accept the results, performing and manipulating more studies until they came to the opposite conclusion. Whenever any of the victims gathered the courage to fight the company, to seek answers for their illness, and to seek justice for their suffering, in each case they could not do so without a good deal of ridicule and because of the immense power of their radium companies, and were unsuccessful for years. It was not until 1938 that a dying “radium girl” successfully sued the Radium Dial Co.

Most of the women went without justice for their illness and death because they died before they could sue or benefit from a lawsuit. The public believed that radium was safe for years after the “radium girls” first showed signs of illness. While this is one of the first cases in which a company was legally held accountable for harming its employees, it was not an easy monument to reach. What we must learn from this event is that it is often most important to listen to those with the smallest voices. They are the ones with the most to lose when they speak out against authority, yet they are still undermined and denied justice. However, we must also acknowledge the resilience of the “radium girls” and their persistence in a seemingly futile and endless fight which they never chose. Individually, one can learn from their perseverance to do the same in the face of adversity even when no one listens. In the end, the “radium girls” won and paved the way for a new era of worker rights, but instead of viewing theirs as a story of victory it must be interpreted as a cautionary tale of how dangerous it is not to listen to the suffering.

## **Second Place 9/10**

Isadora Wise- 10<sup>th</sup>

Powell County High School  
Stanton, KY

### Heartbreak and Resilience

Throughout history, we see groups of people massacred and still remain strong. We could see this in the early 1830's with the Trail of Tears, the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, and more recently in the 2016 Pulse Nightclub Shooting. No matter how horrific the event is, we see the people affected rise and stay strong; even when they believe there is no way they could recover. Nonetheless, these groups redeem themselves and push forward together, in hopes to make the best of these situations, and bring a newfound sense of resilience when all hope has faded.

On June 12, 2016, a group of LGBTQ+ people were having a fun night of drinks and dance inside the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. As a gunman forced his way into the club, no one seemed to know what was bound to happen. As shots were fired, people continued to dance and have fun, until they saw the dead bodies fall to their feet. People ran to restrooms and dark corners, hoping to be spared by the assassin that had shot their friends. As the shooter made his way into the restrooms of the nightclub, he made a call to 911, pledging his allegiance to the terroristic group, ISIS. The shooter was later identified as Omar Mateen and was shot by police as they made their way inside the grief-stricken club. 49 people had been killed in this three-hour standoff between terrorism and justice, with over 53 people wounded.

However, the LGBTQ+ community stayed strong. They learned from the hate that had been forced upon many of their brothers and sisters. The act giving them the right to legally marry had passed nearly a year before in 2015, and after the shooting on June 15, this community grew stronger. During that same month, President Barack Obama designated the first national LGBTQ+ monument at the same location that the Stonewall movement had taken place in 1969. At the end of June, the ban on the Transgender population joining the military was lifted, after 53 years of prejudice. All of these events had happened within the same month of the Pulse nightclub shooting. But what about since then? How has this community shown resilience since the horrific shot rang out in the community: They fought.

Starting in 2017, we see that the LGBTQ+ community had many improvements to their rights. They started to stand up even more for equality to ensure that they would have a larger impact and make their late family members proud of their accomplishments. In 2017, Virginia elected their first openly transgender representative, Danica Roem, to the Virginia House of Delegates. In 2018, Colorado had their first openly gay governor, Jared Polis, take office, bringing a new representation to the community who once had to fight to enter a business. In 2019, New York passed a law stating that someone's gender identity or sexual orientation could not be used against them as a reason for violent reactions. This same law was passed in California, Rhode Island, Illinois, Nevada, and Connecticut. And now, we see more LGBTQ+ members in every aspect of the world. In June of 2021, five years after the fatal nightclub shooting, Carl Nassib was the first openly gay active NFL athlete.

Through these great strides, we see how this unpredictable, fatal event led to an uprising. We can see a true phoenix rise from the ashes, and we learn that we too can grow stronger with time.

### **Third Place 9/10**

Baylee Weatherford- 10<sup>th</sup>  
Valliant High School  
Valliant, OK

#### Category Five Resilience

Maya Angelou once said, "I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it." America has embodied this quote time after time, for example, in 1995 after the Oklahoma City bombing, a truck loaded with explosives was detonated outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, taking 168 lives. Ten years later, America found itself impacted again after one of the most tragic natural disasters, Hurricane Katrina, which killed more than 1,800 people and left most of the southeastern coast of the United States in shambles. These tragic events teach us that the power of recovering and learning from large scale destruction is much more powerful than the destruction itself.

On August 23, 2005, one of the deadliest storms ever recorded, Hurricane Katrina, formed in the Atlantic Ocean near the Bahamas. News broadcasters everywhere were preparing citizens of coastal states to batten down the hatches or evacuate. On August 29, 2005, a category 5 Hurricane Katrina made landfall in Louisiana. Levee failures caused the entirety of New Orleans and its surroundings to sink underwater. Citizens in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama were left homeless, dead, or missing. The damage was estimated to total more than 100 billion dollars. In the wake of the damage, government unpreparedness caused citizens to go without resources for days.

This magnitude of catastrophic damage was discouraging to the country, but America refused to be reduced. After Katrina destroyed families and homes people from all over flooded into the south to help rebuild. No matter race, gender, age, or social class, people came together with a common goal. Disastrous events like these force people to turn to each other for help and find comfort in community. In the first week after the storm over 10 million dollars were donated for disaster relief efforts. Later, a 14-billion-dollar levee system was installed around New Orleans. After Katrina, government officials were trained in disaster response. Times like Katrina cause depression, anxiety about the future and distress, but leaning on each other and building back better than ever shows the power of resilience during recovery. The same can be said for most catastrophic historical events.

To conclude, our past destruction can teach us how to recover and redeem ourselves with the power of community. Hurricane Katrina is one of the most tragic events in world history, it's defined by destruction, an unprepared government, and death. It can also be defined by redemption, resilience, and community. Instead of being reduced by this magnitude of tragedy, changing outlook on life, outlook on other people, and attitude, is the embodiment of resilience.

## **First Place 11/12**

Avery Brown-12<sup>th</sup>

Crossings Christian School  
Oklahoma City, OK

### Up From The Ashes

1256 homes, leveled.

35 city blocks, burned.

800 victims, injured.

242 Black-owned businesses, devastated.

An estimate of 100 to 300 lives, taken.

The horrific nature of these statistics seems nearly unreal, but two days of violence in Tulsa's Greenwood, Oklahoma brought these numbers to life. One allegation in one elevator spurred on 1.8 million dollars in damage and an uncountable summation of terror across the nation. During the prevalence of Jim Crow laws, white supremacy, land lust, and racial tension, this elevator confrontation between a young African American shoe shiner and a White female elevator operator caused a Tulsa Tribune article to be released, which then prompted a confrontation of Black and White mobs outside a courthouse, provoking a retreat into Greenwood and ultimately the utter destruction of a flourishing community.

As a fellow Oklahoman, born and raised, it caught me off guard when I only first heard about the events of June 1, 1921 at the age of 17, because up until recently, any mention of what happened was kept quite hidden from the public eye. Although this event, known as the Tulsa Race Massacre, sends sensations of shrillness up one's spine, a blind eye cannot be turned to it, because even though the Tulsa Race Massacre is a chapter in history books that Oklahomans wish could be re-written, it illuminates the way Oklahoma engaged in future growth, redemption, and resolution. Though it took some time, the people of Tulsa are now acknowledging and treating the racial scars of their past, as seen through the newly constructed memorial museum, Greenwood Rising.

The Greenwood survivors and Tulsa citizens began to realize that the only way to bring about true healing was to first come to terms with their past, acknowledging it and all its horrors, while simultaneously remembering the massacre's victims and educating present-day citizens of the truth; hence, Greenwood Rising was established. The epitome of a growth-mindset, Greenwood Rising stands to honor, educate, encourage, and examine lessons from the past in order to inspire present and future improvements. Think of it like this: hardship is like a wound... Only when acknowledged and effectively treated can proper healing take place. If ignored, the wound may still scab over with time, but there will likely be infections and a lack of learning from the past to prevent future injury. Ultimately, the past cannot be taken back, only learned from or repeated; it is up to us to choose. With racial tension still in existence today, the Tulsa Race Massacre warns against what these tensions have the capacity to do; furthermore, even amidst such a horrific past, there is hope for a better future. Learning comes through lessons and pain, but with a growth mindset, mistakes of the past can stay in the past.

## Second Place 11/12

Aaron Siegle  
Our Lady of Good Counsel High School  
Olney, MD

### Rising from the Rubble

Residents strolled down Main Street and ate supper with their families in the sleepy prairie town of Greensburg, Kansas, on May 4, 2007. Just another ordinary Friday in this close-knit town of 1,500 residents. Little did they know that very evening the tranquil community would be leveled by an EF5 tornado—one of the most powerful in American history. Twelve people died in the devastation and over 95 percent of the town's structures were destroyed. But the residents of Greensburg did not let this tragedy define them. Instead, their innovative response has generated global acclaim and a legacy that overshadows the destruction of the storm.

As the residents emerged from the rubble, they were left with a blank slate from which to rebuild. Fresh starts after disasters are often starting points for revolutionary change, forcing leaders to scrap the old way of doing things. And this is what Greensburg did. Greensburg was named for stagecoach operator and city founder D.R. Green, a nod to the town's frontier roots. But in the aftermath of the tornado, city leaders Steve Hewitt and John Janssen realized that the financing available following the tornado provided an opportunity to emphasize the "green" in Greensburg. Using funds from FEMA, the town decided that the new Greensburg would be America's most sustainable community. They were not trying to make a political statement—but being forward-looking and practical. They started by taking advantage of the very force that destroyed the town—wind—and built a wind farm that powers the whole town and several other neighboring communities. This was followed by a requirement that all homes be rebuilt under LEED platinum standards. The addition of solar panels, native plant gardens, a rainwater collection system and green municipal center capped off the transformation. Greensburg now saves an estimated \$200,000 a year in fuel and electricity costs and thousands of gallons of water from low-flush toilets and drought-resistant landscaping.

Greensburg's ambitious rebuild proves that solutions to the climate crisis can come from unlikely places and have far reaching impacts. Today, municipalities from around the world come to Greensburg to learn from their experience. Greensburg's response teaches us that adversity can provide a springboard for new growth and opportunity. While tragedies are never welcome, they can unlock unlikely ingenuity that communities didn't know they possessed. By forcing us out of our comfort zone, disasters can cultivate new perspectives of our necessities, allowing us to reconsider the way things have been done in the past.

What does the rebuild of Greensburg teach other communities facing hard times? Most importantly is to not let adversity define them. Central to the success of Greensburg was that the desire for change came from within. There was a deep yearning to envision a better future for the community. Rebuilding sustainably was not the easiest option. However, by refusing to dwell on the disaster and pivoting to address the problems of the future, Greensburg's farsighted actions provide a shining example for us all.

### **Third Place 11/12**

Isabela Deneka- 12<sup>th</sup>  
Armwood High School  
Seffner, FL

#### Love is Stronger

On February 14th, 2018, Nikolas Cruz murdered 14 students and three faculty members at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. On Valentine's Day, a day that people should celebrate love, pure hatred flooded the 1200 building as Cruz loaded his AR-15. Within six minutes and 20 seconds, he ripped away 17 innocent lives and permanently altered the Parkland community.

Not unlike those impacted by the Oklahoma City bombing, Parkland survivors, families, and community members refused to allow catastrophe to destroy them. The survivors and their families serve as a beautiful example of how the best way to respond to suffering is by embracing it and finding joy again through our passions.

Three days after the massacre, survivor X González immediately set a precedent for how the Parkland community would respond to tragedy. In a heart-wrenching speech at a Fort Lauderdale political rally, X spoke about gun violence and laws that could have helped prevent the shooting. Like the task force that founded the Oklahoma City National Memorial, the students who formed the organizations responding to the Parkland shooting were inviting and inclusive. Along with 19 other students, X went on to co-found Never Again MSD, a political action committee fighting for stricter regulations to prevent gun violence. The students also organized March for Our Lives, and one month after the shooting, Parkland survivors and allies marched in Washington DC, seeking to push for legislation that would prevent massacres like the MSD shooting. Nearly 900 other related events took place around the globe, and they raised millions of dollars. The fight these children put up in response to their pain is truly admirable and is a perfect example of how to best respond to heartache.

The victims' parents responded by creating Stand with Parkland. The organization advocates for student safety reform, mental health resources, and ensuring responsible ownership of guns. February 14th was a day full of pure hatred and suffering, but the Stoneman community answered with pure resilience, passion, and love. Like the group that founded the Oklahoma City National Memorial, the Parkland community's response to an unimaginable tragedy teaches us that we have the choice to band together, embrace the challenge, and face it head-on.

Being a student in Florida, the Stoneman shooting is something I remember daily. Not unlike my peers, when a textbook drops, I always think I need to hide under a desk. The Parkland shooting was a horrific event, and the scope of Cruz's damage will never fully be understood. But the survivors didn't let the massacre stop them from pursuing education, passion, or progress. At their core, the Parkland community teaches us that the best way to respond to hate is with love. While February 14th, 2018, brought unimaginable pain, the community worked together to celebrate all the love in the world, despite their circumstances. The Stoneman community inspires all of us to cling to hope and use our suffering as motivation to help others and bring positive change to our communities and the country.