

Creative Door Designs for Black History Month

By Hazbel Payano



Ms. Litos in front of her winning door decoration that her students created.

This year's winner had a lot of hair, big red lips and beautiful brown eyes. And no, we're not talking about a person. We're talking about this year's Black History Month door contest winner.

First place went to Maria Litos, Halsey English teacher and ELA coach for her door with the fabulous hair. **"We were very excited about winning the contest," said Litos. "All my students came together to do this."**

Litos relied on her students to come up with ideas for her winning door decoration design. "My students wanted to represent Black History Month with different ideas. They modeled it together and came up with a design that featured important figures in history that were black."

Second place went to chemistry teacher Belkis Campos Leyva. Third place winners were social studies teacher Gregory Sampson and ethics and careers teacher Michael Cerrato.



2nd prize-Rm 281



3rd prize tied with Rm 376 and Rm 211



Halsey Climate and Culture Coach Norma Cardona and Guidance Counselor Yasmin Maher organized the contest. They wanted teachers and students to get creative with their door designs as they honored memorable members of the Black Community.

What Do Teachers Think About Black History Month?

By Harvey Cuevas, Stephanie Sanchez and Kerline Stavien

The US first started celebrating Black History Month in 1926, as part of Negro History Week. This week-long event was held every year in February to coincide with the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and Social Reformer Frederick Douglass. Both men played important roles in helping to end slavery. Later, in 1976, the celebration was expanded to a month. Since then, Black History Month has provided us all an opportunity to recognize the importance of the contribution of Black history in American Culture.

During Black History Month, many teachers included the contributions of Black Americans into their lessons. We asked teachers why they felt it was important to include a Black perspective in the curriculum.

"I feel students need to know more about Black History Month and its origin," said English teacher Dr. Nicole Riggins.

"Many of the most prominent figures in history were black, whether in sports, politics, and science. They did much for our history," said English teacher Maria Litos.

"Black Americans have made very significant contributions to the prosperity of our country, not only in politics but also in science, medicine, engineering and all the major disciplines. This celebration of black people and their accomplishments should not be confined to just a month," said learning language disabilities teacher Steeve Caesar.

"I think it's important to celebrate Black History Month, just as it is important to celebrate all types of history, like women's history, LGBTQ history, Italian history, Irish history. All history is important," said social studies teacher Paul De Pascale.



Carter Godwin Woodson was known as the "father of black history". He started the celebration of "Negro History Week" in 1926.

Speaking Up About Diversity

NEWS FOR THE HALSEY HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNITY

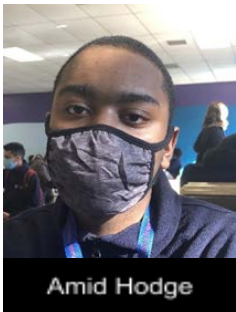
PAGE 7

Students Reflect on Race and Importance of Diversity at Halsey

By Demoni Gause

Black History shouldn't be just confined to February. That month was fought for by the ancestors of the many black and brown people we know today. February was the month chosen because it covers the birthdays of Fredrick Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. Both men were abolitionists in the mid 1800's and wanted to stop the cruel treatment of Black people. During those very dark times there was separation and segregation in this country. The nation was divided and needed to come together and fight for peace. Because of them, **we are now closer to the finish line.** We asked students at Halsey Academy to share their thoughts about this month when we all recognize the achievements of African Americans and their contribution to our society.

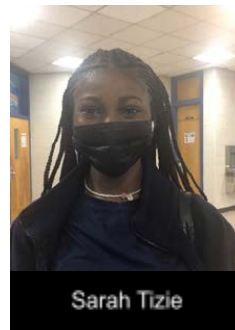
For sophomore Gaemlie Baptiste, recognizing diversity in our school is important. **"Black History Month is a month when all people of color are able to find themselves and see what our past ancestors have done for us. In school, people of color stand up for who they are and show that they are not just objects but people like everyone else.** Black students used to not stand for themselves and had no way of knowing who they were and did not like themselves, but now they understand and have found themselves. They can now express and show off the natural beauty of being Black. This is what makes Black History Month special."



Amid Hodge

This special month has allowed black and brown students to come together and express themselves unapologetically, no matter where they come from or what experiences or hardships they have faced. Everyone's trauma is different. "At times it can be hard especially when it comes to police brutality and injustice," said senior Amid Hodge, who identifies as African American. **"It's hard to walk in our shoes. We are seen as naïve kids who do not understand. The sad reality is we understand all too well. I am Black! I**

own it. The diversity here helps me fit in. In this world we are all pieces just trying to fit in."



Sarah Tizie

"Being Black means a lot," said senior Sarah Tizie. **"Even though we fight for acceptance all the time, we are strong and resilient. I feel comfortable here in America because I have friends from diverse backgrounds. In school I feel like it is great being around other people that are unapologetically themselves."**

Tizie is from the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, but she has lived in New Jersey for most of her life. Knowing English has allowed her to find her place in the school community. "I mostly speak French, but I still communicate with all my friends in English, which is a beautiful experience. Language is only a barrier if you allow it to be."

"To me Black is beauty and power and all the strength that comes with it," said senior Alexandra Gresseau. As she looks ahead to graduation, she hopes college will be as diverse as Halsey. **"Being Black is not something I allow people to stigmatize. I am from Haiti, and I still show my love to all my other colorful friends from other backgrounds and countries. I view my skin with great honor. It is an honor to wake up and be me. Who we all are is something special. I just wish everyone could see it."**



Having dark skin does not mean division. Everyone has a different shade of skin, but it does not mean people have to cut away from everyone. People come from all over the world and that is what makes getting to know them worth it. **People should share the beauty of their culture rather than keeping it bunched up.**

"I'm proud to be an Afro-Latina. It feels good," said senior Jillian Tavarez Suarez. **"Living life is exciting. Diversity means a bunch of humans doing different things while being themselves.** I do not think about the negative stuff. I choose to not let that get me down. We choose our paths, and we get to choose to be happy."