

BARRINGTON STAGE COMPANY

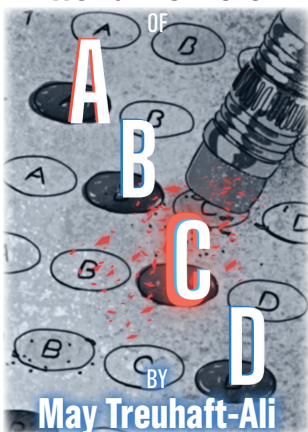
JULIANNE BOYD, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

AND

Edward and Carla Slomin

PRESENT THE

World Premiere



May Treuhaft-Ali

FEATURING

**Melvin Abston Justin Ahdoot Torée Alexandre Juri Henley-Cohn
Maribel Martinez Chavez Ravine Pearl Shin Brandon St. Clair**

SCENIC DESIGNER

Baron E. Pugh

COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER

Fabian Obispo

BERKSHIRES PRESS REPRESENTATIVE

Charlie Siedenbug

COSTUME DESIGNER

April M. Hickman

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

Kyra Button

NATIONAL PRESS REPRESENTATIVES

The Press Room

MOVEMENT DIRECTOR

Kevin lega Jeff

DIRECTED BY

Daniel J. Bryant

SPONSORED IN PART BY

Mary and Philip Oppenheimer, Terry and Arthur Wasser

ABCD was developed as part of The Playwrights Realm's Writing Fellowship
(Katherine Kovner, Founding Artistic Director | Robert Pereira, Producing Director)

ST. GERMAIN STAGE

AT THE SYDELLE AND LEE BLATT PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

JULY 1-23, 2022



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TIME & PLACE

March through June in a school year during the No Child Left Behind era.

Carnegie Middle School, a public school in a low-income neighborhood with a predominantly Black and Latinx student body.

Columbus Preparatory High School, an elite and highly selective public school with a predominantly White and Asian-American student body.

Any American city where both schools could exist, but their students might never meet.

CAST

IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Davon Lawrence.....	Brandon St. Clair*
Bilal.....	Justin Ahdoot*
Ibrahim.....	Juri Henley-Cohn*
Ellis.....	Melvin Abston*
Tamara Gardner.....	Torée Alexandre*
Joanna Krueger.....	Chavez Ravine*
Sunghee.....	Pearl Shin
Mika Ramos.....	Maribel Martinez*

STAFF

Production Stage Manager.....	Kyra Button*
Dialect Coach.....	Monia Ayachi
Intimacy Choreographer & Fight Director.....	Jacqueline Holloway
Dance Captain.....	Melvin Abston*
Fight Captain.....	Chavez Ravine*
Lighting Programmer.....	Evan Kerr
St. Germain Head Electrician/Board Operator.....	Camille Harkins
St. Germain Sound Engineer/Board Operator.....	Julia McIntyre
St. Germain Crew Chief.....	Grace Weaver
St. Germain Wardrobe Supervisor.....	Charlie Barnett IV
Production Assistant.....	Alden Kennedy



*Actors and Stage Manager are members of Actors' Equity Association.



The Director and Choreographer are members of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING UPDATES TO THE SEASON PLAYBILL

Associate House Manager.....	Alex Karpinski
Associate Technical Director.....	Benjamin Reading
Sound Technician.....	John Hoag
Properties Supervisor.....	Faith Boucher
St. Germain Wardrobe Supervisor.....	Charlie Barnett IV

CAST



MELVIN ABSTON (Ellis) This Chicago native and current Harlem resident makes his BSC debut in *ABCD*. Broadway/National tours: *Sister Act*, *Skittles Commercial: The Broadway Musical*, *The Lion King* and *The Little Mermaid*. TV appearances include *Law & Order: SVU*, *Blue Bloods*, *Gotham*, *Touch*, *Chuck*, *Raising Hope* and recurring roles on *Grey's Anatomy*, *Weeds* and *H+: The Digital Series*. Additional theatre credits include Roundabout Theatre, Ars Nova, Pasadena Playhouse, 5th Avenue Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage,

Milwaukee Rep, ZACH Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse and The Goodman Theatre. Proud member of AEA and SAG-AFTRA, but an even prouder Father to Jaron, Stevie and Kae! MelvinAbston.com



JUSTIN AHDOOT (Bilal) NYC: Off Broadway: *Sleep No More* (Punch Drunk); Off-Off Broadway: *Neighborhood 3: Requisition of Doom* and *The Mysteries* (The Flea Theater), Regional: *Disgraced* (Pittsburgh Public), *Cymbeline* (Richmond Shakespeare); performed his solo show *Justin versus* at Richmond Triangle Players, and *Uncle Tom: Deconstructed* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. TV: *Upcoming Fleishman Is In Trouble* (FX), *Little America* (Apple TV), *The Good Cop* (Netflix), *Law & Order: SVU*, *The Americans*, *Blue Bloods*. BFA

Virginia Commonwealth University. Big thank you to Daniel, Zi Alikhan, and May for their love and support during this process. This performance is dedicated to my late grandmother Tooba. JustinAhdoot.com



TORÉE ALEXANDRE (Tamara Gardner) Originally hailing from Yonkers, NY, Torée is a graduate of Point Park University with a B.F.A. in Acting and a minor in Musical Theatre. She most recently played Riley in *How to Catch Creation* at Geva Theatre. Torée is honored and humbled to be working with Barrington Stage on this gripping play that hits so very close to home. Torée's mother has so generously dedicated nearly 30 years to the education system. Teachers are jewels among us and need to be protected and respected, "thank

you so much Mommy!!" Glory to the Most High! Giving many thanks to the people who inspire her daily: Paige, Mama, Mommy, Andre and CHI Talent Management! Sending love, light and lift to all.



JURI HENLEY-COHN (Ibrahim) is thrilled to be returning to BSC. He last performed here in the one-man show *Bashir Lazhar*. Off Broadway: *The Strangest* (4th Street Theater/NYTW) and *Inventing Avi* (Abingdon Theater). Regional: *Oslo* at Roundhouse Theatre (Helen Hayes award nomination); *Dracula* at ASF; *Dying City* at Opera House Arts; *The Blue Demon* at Williamstown Theatre Festival. Film/TV credits include: *Dear Edward*; *Divorce*; *Ramy*; *Orange is the New Black*; *Halston*; *Blindspot*; *When They See Us*; *The Loudest Voice*; *Unforgettable*; *Blue Bloods*; *Believe*; *Golden Boy*; *Jessica Jones*; *American Odyssey*; *Odd Mom Out*; *Brittany Runs a Marathon*; *Manifest*. JuriHenley-Cohn.com



MARIBEL MARTINEZ (Mika Ramos) is honored to be making her BSC debut with *ABCD's* world premiere. Off Broadway: *Will You Come With Me?* (PlayCo); *Julius Caesar* (New York Shakespeare in the Park). Select Regional Theatre: *Vanity Fair* (Shakespeare Theatre Company, American Conservatory Theater); *Christmas at Pemberley* (Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park); *Henry V P 1* (Folger); *Black Joy Project* (JAG). TV credits: *Evil*, *New Amsterdam*, *The Watcher*. She is in community with the Latinx Playwrights Circle and with Dominican Artists Collective as a part of the Artistic Producing Team. Maribel-Martinez.com



CHAVEZ RAVINE (Joanna Krueger) BSC: *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In the Upper Room (Denver Center for the Performing Arts), *Cullud Wattah* (The Public Theater), James Lapine's *Muscle!* (Pegasus Players Theatre). Off Broadway: Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (The Duke 42nd). Regional: *The Winter's Tale*, *The Comedy of Errors* (Santa Cruz Shakespeare), Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (The Arden Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre), *Black Pearl Sings!* (Portland Center Stage), *My Fair Lady* (OSF), *Yellowman* (Virginia Stage Co.), *Daughters of the Mock* (Congo Square Theatre), George C. Wolf's *Spunk!* (Penobscot Theatre), *The Winter's Tale* (Chicago Shakespeare Theatre), Mark Hayes' *Civil War Voices* (Virginia State Theatre), *Crowns* by Regina Taylor (The Theater Project), *Being Beautiful* (Bailiwick Repertory Theatre), *Bronzeville* (Pegasus Players Theatre), *Menopause The Musical* (Heartland Theatre). Film/TV: *Barbershop II*, *Death of a President*, *Sleepwalk with Me*, *April Fools*, *Tapioca*, *Southern Cross*, *Prison Break*.



PEARL SHIN (Sunghee) A Korean-American actor with "remarkable texture and command" (Laura Collins-Hughes of *The New York Times*), Pearl is incredibly excited and honored to be a part of the *ABCD* world premiere. Originally from Nashville, she now divides her time between LA and NYC. Recent bookings include *The Equalizer*, *Law & Order: SVU* and several national commercials. She'd like to thank U-Shin and Chiara for being her tireless advocates, and is so incredibly grateful for her unbelievably supportive family and friends (love you 엄마, 아빠, 어머님, 아버님, John, Em + 수진 ♥), who she wouldn't be here without; and Wesley – who's better than us?



BRANDON ST. CLAIR (Davon Lawrence) Hailing from Atlanta, Brandon St. Clair is a product of the Atlanta Public school system and couldn't be more proud to express his art through this work. A few of Brandon's credits since moving to NY have been *Law & Order*, *Power: Book 3* and Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival's *Lamentable Trial...* Brandon is a recent graduate of the UNC/Playmakers MFA Program Class of 2020 and has made NY his new home. Playmakers Rep: *Native Son*, *Topdog/Underdog*, *Galileo*.

Website: BrandonSaintClair.com

CREATIVES

MAY TREUHAFT-ALI (Playwright) is a playwright, director, and dramaturg. She couldn't be more thrilled to have her first-ever production at Barrington Stage. She is the 22–23 Van Lier Fellow at Rattlestick Theater. She is also part of Ars Nova's Play Group and the Middle Eastern American Writers Lab, and an alumna of Clubbed Thumb's Early-Career Writers' Group and The Playwrights Realm Writing Fellowship. She has received commissions from Barrington Stage Company, South Coast Repertory, and Theater Masters. She recently served as Associate Director on the world premiere of *SHHHH* by Clare Barron at Atlantic Theater Company, and is the Literary and Community Engagement Assistant at Playwrights Horizons. May would like to thank Daniel, Kyra, and this incredible cast and creative team for bringing her words to life and making this process so joyful. She'd also like to thank the Playwrights Realm, all the collaborators who have contributed to this play's growth, her colleagues at Playwrights Horizons, Mom and Ross for their love and support, and most of all, her twin sister Layla. This play is for her and all the teachers like her.

DANIEL J. BRYANT (Director) is excited to be directing at BSC, so close to his birthplace of Springfield, MA. Most recent directing credits include *What To Send Up When It Goes Down* (Congo Square Theatre), *How to Catch Creation* (Geva Theater) and *Feeding Beatrice* (St.Louis Rep). Previously serving as Associate Producer/Director of Community Programs at Baltimore Center Stage under the leadership of AD Kwame Kweih-Armah and Hana Sharif, Daniel designed BCS's Mobile Unit program, producing and directing *Antigone*, *Twelfth Night* and *Endgame*, as well as directing *A Wonder In My Soul* for the main stage. Daniel is also an ensemble member and former artistic director of Congo Square Theatre in Chicago where he directed/produced *What I Learned in Paris*, *Brothers of the Dust* (2012 ATCA New play Award, BTAA for Best Play), *The Fall of Heaven* and *King Hedly II* (BTAA for Best Ensemble, Best Director). Daniel is a member of SDC, SAG-AFTRA and AEA.

KEVIN IEGA JEFF (Movement Director) is an accomplished dancer, award-winning choreographer, acclaimed artistic director, respected dance educator and innovative executive leader. He creates transcendent works while inspiring those around him to foster extraordinary lives, onstage and off, through dance/art-making. After co-founding and serving as Artistic Director of Deeply Rooted Dance Theater for 24 years, Jeff became creative/executive director of Deeply Rooted Productions in 2019. His choreography has been featured in film, on television and on Broadway. He recently was named one of 10 recipients of the Field Foundation's Leaders for a New Chicago. He has taught nationally and internationally at public and private educational and cultural institutions.

BARON E. PUGH (Scenic Design) Berkshire Theatre Group: *B.R.O.K.E.N code B.I.R.D switching*. Lyric Stage Company of Boston: *The Light, Breath and Imagination, The Wiz*. The Huntington Theatre: *The Bluest Eye* (Associate Designer). Trinity Rep: *Tiny Beautiful Things, Radio Golf*. TheatreSquared: *The Elaborate Entrance of Chad*

Deity, School Girls. SpeakEasy Stage Company: *Passover, Choir Boy, School Girls*. Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival: *How I Learned What I Learned*. Shakespeare Theater of New Jersey: *The Comedy of Errors, Snug*. Baron received his MFA in Scenic Design from Boston University and is a proud member of United Scenic Artists Local 829. For upcoming productions, please visit BaronPughDesign.com. Follow @bpscenic on Instagram for behind-the-scenes content.

APRIL M. HICKMAN (Costume Designer) is a Connecticut-based costume designer, stylist and costume illustrator for stage and film, originally from Denver, CO. Her most recent design credits include *Omar* at Spoleto Festival; *Stick Fly* at St. Louis Repertory; *Nine Night* at Round House Theater; *The Mountain Top* at Weston Playhouse; *Blue* at Michigan Opera Theatre; *Border of Lights, Ghosts of the Diaspora, Freaky Dee, Baby* at Williamstown Theatre Festival; and *Capricorn 29* at The Tank. April currently holds a position at Wesleyan University as an Assistant Professor in the Practice of Costume Design. She received an MFA in Costume Design from Yale School of Drama, and a BFA in Costume Design and Technology from The University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

JASON LYNCH (Lighting Designer) BSC Debut. Off Broadway: *You Are Here: An Evening with Solea Pfeiffer* (Audible Theatre/Minetta Lane Theatre). Regional: Alley Theatre, Alliance Theatre, American Players Theatre, Arkansas Repertory Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, City Theatre Company, Dallas Theater Center, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Geva Theatre Center, Goodman Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, The Old Globe, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Seattle Repertory Theater, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, among others. Jason is a proud member of The Association for Lighting Production and Design and is represented by United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829 of the IATSE and The Gersh Agency. JasonDLynch.com, @jasonlynch.design on Instagram.

FABIAN OBISPO (Composer & Sound Designer) BSC: *American Underground, The Chinese Lady*. Off Broadway: Ma-Yi Theater, Public Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club, Manhattan Class Company, Classic Stage Company, Atlantic Theatre Company, Vineyard Theatre, The New Group, New York Theatre Workshop, Theatre for a New Audience, The Acting Company. Regional: Arena Stage, The Shakespeare Theatre Company, Kennedy Center, American Conservatory Theater, Goodman Theatre, Guthrie Theater, Alliance Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Huntington Theatre, Cincinnati Playhouse, Cleveland Playhouse, Seattle Repertory, Hartford Stage, Long Wharf Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Playmakers Repertory Company, Indiana Repertory Theatre, among others. Awards: Berkshire Theatre Critics, Barrymore, International Motion Picture and the LA Film Festival's Indie Short Fest.

KYRABUTTON (Production Stage Manager) is excited to be making her Barrington Stage debut. She has most recently worked at Cleveland Play House on *Antigone, Where Did We Sit on the Bus?, Tiny Houses, Into the Breeches* and *Pipeline*, to name a few. Her previous credits also include *Dreamgirls* (Virginia Stage Company), *Hurricane*

Diane (Dobama Theatre), *Baby Camp* (Leviathan Labs), *Resistance* (Semicolon Theatre), *The Heart's Impatience* (Shufflefoot Theatre Company), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (St. Ann's Warehouse), *Medea* and *Dreamgirls* (Red House Arts Center), *This Day Forward* (The Vineyard Theatre) and *The Intergenerational Project* (Rose Bruford, London). Kyra is proud to hold a BFA in Stage Management from Syracuse University's Department of Drama and is overjoyed to be working on this production, with this team, particularly this playwright, who also happens to be a dear childhood friend. Thank you, May, for your words, your trust, and your joy!

MCCORKLE CASTING LTD: PAT MCCORKLE, CSA; REBECCA WEISS (Casting) Casting actors for Barrington Stage for 20 years. Pat McCorkle is pleased to be an Associate Artist at BSC. Broadway: Over 50 productions including *On the Town*, *Amazing Grace*, *End of the Rainbow*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Amadeus*, *She Loves Me*, *A Few Good Men*. Off Broadway: highlights – *Clever Little Lies*; *Sheer Madness*; *Tribes*; *Our Town* (Barrow Street); *Freud's Last Session*; *Toxic Avenger*; *Almost, Maine*; *Driving Miss Daisy*. Feature film: *Premium Rush*, *Ghost Town*, *The Thomas Crown Affair*, *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, *School Ties*, etc. Television: *Twisted*, *St. George*, *Sesame Street*, *Hack*, *Californication*, *Max Bickford*, *Chappelle's Show*, *Strangers with Candy*, *Barbershop*, etc. mccorklecasting.com

CHARLIE SIEDENBURG (Berkshires Press Representative) (Associate Artist, 18th Season) joined the BSC family in 2005 and has represented over 150 BSC productions. His work has led to features in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Boston Globe*, *Associated Press* and *American Theatre Magazine*. His many PR credits include the Metropolitan Opera (Live in HD), Paper Mill Playhouse, George Street Playhouse, Hartford Stage, Goodspeed Musicals, Long Wharf Theatre, Surflight Theatre and Two River Theater Company. He serves as Press Rep for Wagner College Theatre, The Minty Awards, Ghostlight Productions and Forestburgh Playhouse. Charlie is a 1995 Theatre/Arts Administration graduate of Wagner College on Staten Island, where he currently teaches Theatre Appreciation. In 2021, he received a Berkshire Theatre Critics Association Special Award for Exceptional Support of Arts Journalism in the Berkshires.

THE PRESS ROOM (National Press Representatives) represents the Broadway productions of *Hamilton*, *The Book of Mormon* and *Paradise Square*, as well as the Vineyard Theatre, Shakespeare's Globe, The Wooster Group, Rosie's Theater Kids, Building for the Arts, Hunter Theater Project, Miami New Drama, Paper Mill Playhouse, Ogunquit Playhouse, 3-D Theatricals, NY Classical Theatre, The Drama Book Shop and the Antonyo Awards. Recent: *Black No More*; *The Waverly Gallery*; *Gloria: A Life*, *Three Tall Women*; *Farinelli and the King*; *Beyond Babel*; *Waterwell's 7 Minutes*; Out of the Box Theatrical's *The Last Five Years*. Upcoming: Florida Georgia Line's *May We All*; *Personality: The Lloyd Price Musical*; *Born for This*; *Mister Miss America*; *Sidney*.

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If you have any questions please contact Evan Kudish at 413.997.6115 or EKudish@BarringtonStageCo.org.



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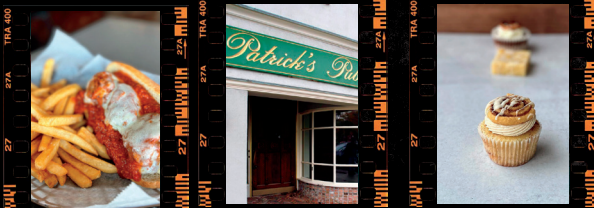
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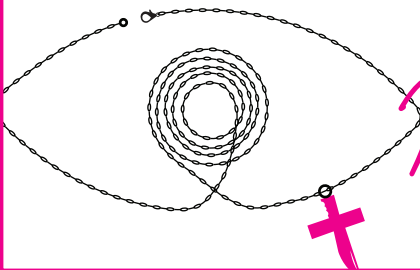
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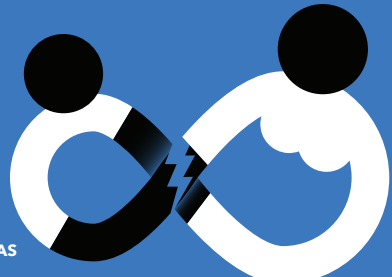
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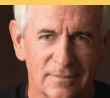
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THE MYTH OF BEING THE BEST

When she was 14, **May Treuhaft-Ali** sat in the audience at Hunter College High School's 2010 graduation.

The class speaker, **Justin Hudson**, delivered the following speech:

"I feel guilty because I don't deserve any of this. And neither do any of you. We received an outstanding education at no charge based solely on our performance on a test we took when we were eleven-year-olds, or four-year-olds. We received superior teachers and additional resources based on our status as 'gifted', while kids who naturally needed those resources much more than us wallowed in the mire of a broken system.

And now, we stand on the precipice of our lives, in control of our lives, based purely and simply on luck and circumstance. If you truly believe that the demographics of Hunter represent the distribution of intelligence in this city, then you must believe that the Upper West Side, Bayside and Flushing are intrinsically more intelligent than the South Bronx, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Washington Heights, and I refuse to accept that.

It is certainly not Hunter's fault that socioeconomic factors inhibit the educational opportunities of some children from birth, and in some ways I forgive colleges and universities that are forced to review eighteen-year-olds, the end results of a broken system. But, we are talking about eleven-year-olds. Four-year-olds.

We are deciding children's fates before they even had a chance. We are playing God, and we are losing. Kids are losing the opportunity to go to college or obtain a career, because no one taught them long division or colors.

Hunter is perpetuating a system in which children, who contain unbridled and untapped intellect and creativity, are discarded like refuse. And we have the audacity to say they deserved it, because we're smarter than them."

SHAMING TEACHERS INTO PERFORMING

At public schools across the United States, there have been a myriad of cheating incidents. The “perpetrators” range from students to teachers to administrators. Here are the two that inspired **ABCD**.

Parks Middle School Atlanta, Georgia

At Atlanta Public Schools, teachers experienced a culture of fear. In a district that annually received \$1 billion less than it needed, teachers and administrators alike were threatened with near impossible standards set down by George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind policy.

By 2006, Parks Middle School was lauded as a NCLB success story. Behind its rapid transformation was a cohort of teachers caught altering students' answers on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. Their cheating was motivated by an urgent need to prevent the state from shutting down the school.

As of February 2022, countless Black educators have been convicted and incarcerated for actions that seemed to be their only option. In a system that forces teachers to meet unattainable targets, then punishes them severely for meeting them in the only way they can, is there ever any chance of success?

Thank you to *The New Yorker* & Rachel Aviv's article “Wrong Answer” for providing much of this background.

Stuyvesant High School New York, New York

The culture at prestigious magnet schools marks college acceptance as the pinnacle of academic achievement and instills competition among students, tainting their relationships with learning and each other.

The narrative of meritocracy obscures the race- and class-based social hierarchies that prohibit some students from succeeding. Even at tuition-free schools, seemingly objective admissions tests cater to socio-economic privilege, and tend to exclude low-income, Black, Latinx and first-generation American students. For the few who get in, it can be difficult to fit in socially, and long commutes can preclude participation in extracurriculars.

In 2012, a Stuyvesant junior was caught texting answers to the Physics Regents exam to 140 classmates. If the pressure to perform sets people up for failure at both the underserved and most elite schools in our country, then whom does our education system serve?

Thank you to *New York Magazine* & Robert Kolker's article “Cheating Upwards” for providing much of this background.