



BELL Academy and Lawrence Woodmere Academy
Collaboration

**"Names, Not Numbers©"-
Intergenerational Holocaust Oral
History Film Documentary Project
2021-2022**

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The Process

Students in 8th grade are made aware of the extraordinary opportunity they have to participate in the Names, Not Numbers program. Since participation is in high demand, students are required to submit a persuasive essay indicating why though they should be included in this yearlong project. The essays are reviewed by staff members, and students are selected for participation. Students are made aware of the commitment they need to make in order to ensure the project is successful. This includes conducting research on key historical events, as well as researching information on the survivors they will interview. This ensures there is strong foundational knowledge and students are adequately prepared for the multiple phases of the project.

Student Persuasive Essays

Below are excerpts from some of the essays submitted by students:

8th Grade Student: *“As a BELL Academy student, it would be a great privilege to be involved with this project. Interviewing and documenting Holocaust survivors will allow me to procure an in depth experience of occurrences with direct association from primary sources and pursue my fascination of filmmaking. This program is committed to advocating the voices of Holocaust survivors; I would love to dedicate my assets to this cause and become well-versed in the rudiments of the Holocaust.”*

8th Grade Student: *“I am extremely interested in history and the Holocaust is a very important part of history that I would like to explore further. The Holocaust had a big impact on the world and continues to do so today. I believe that my generation is the last generation that will have the opportunity to interview Holocaust survivors and I would like to utilize this opportunity by talking to, and learning from, the survivors. My great grandfather, Cornelius F. Reed was a soldier in World War II and I would love to learn more about what he fought for, and learn more about the survivors he helped save.”*

8th Grade Student: *“The purpose of this letter is to share with you why I deserve to be a part of the Names, Not Numbers Project and to be able to interview Holocaust survivors. Before the coronavirus pandemic, I had the opportunity to visit the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C and will forever remember my experiences from the trip. During the time, I had shown interest in World War II and the events leading up to the liberation of Jewish people all across Europe. It still baffles me today that religion and race has played such a large role in equality throughout world history, and the lack of empathy that has been shown towards different minorities. As a descendant of African slaves, it’s difficult to accept that people were once alright with treating your people with cruelty and taking away any knowledge descendants would ever have of knowing where they came from. But I would have never been able to come to this conclusion and learn about the history of slaves without people who were directly impacted, sharing their stories and raising awareness to prevent something like this from ever happening again.”*

Launching the Program

On November 12th, 2021, BELL Academy and the Lawrence Woodmere Academy (LWA) collaborated using a virtual platform for our students and staff. Due to safety protocols and restrictions, the students and staff met virtually to discuss the importance of the program, as well as the logistics. This was a wonderful opportunity for two school communicates with very diverse backgrounds to collaborate and begin to form partnerships. At this time, students were grouped, combining equal amounts of students from BELL and LWA.



Expert Training

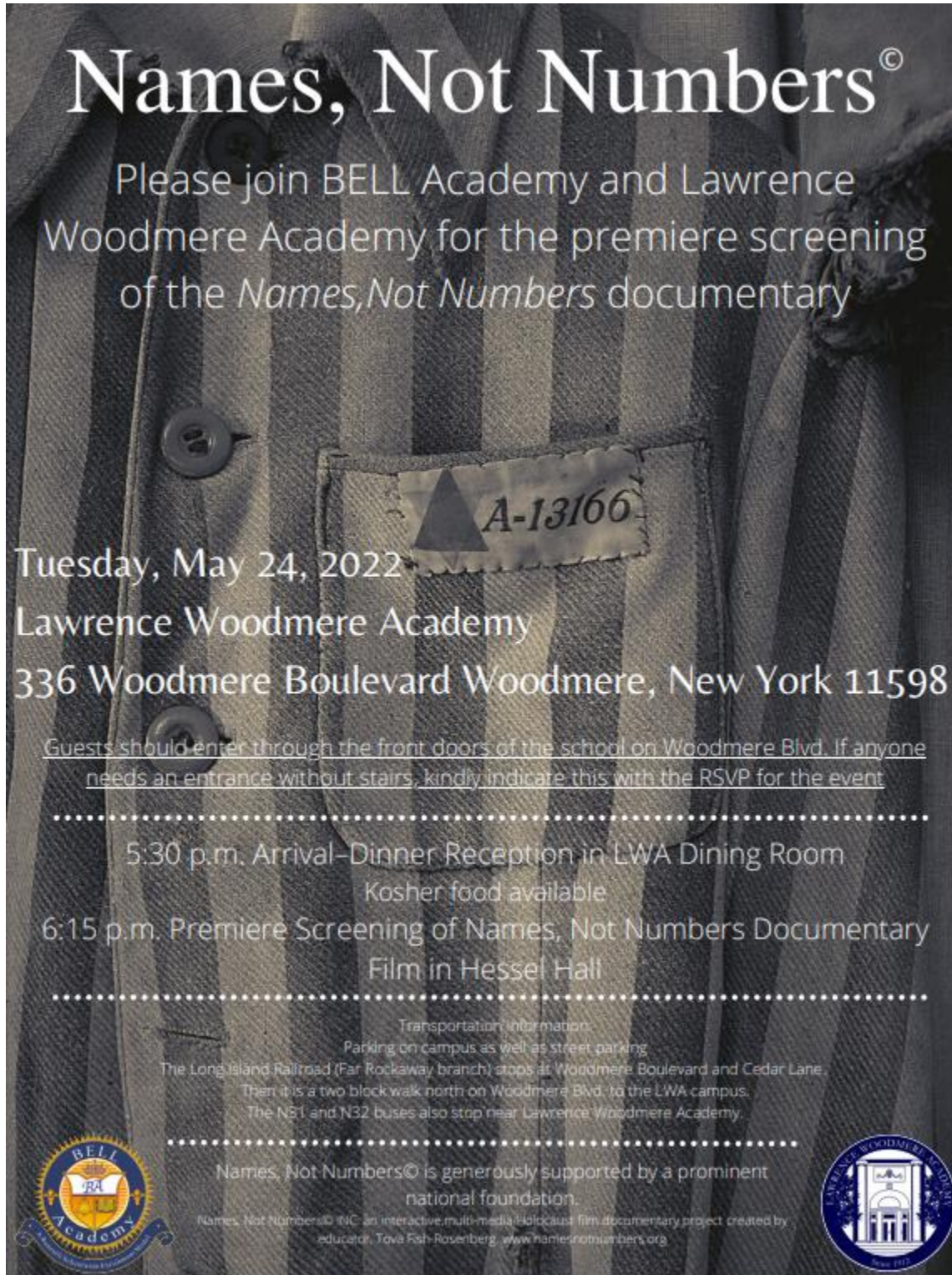
One key factor in this program, is that the quality of work is done with fidelity and students partake in real-world experiential learning. This is achieved by including professional practitioners in the relevant fields, who are willing to provide our students with in-person training. Students had the unique privilege of learning interview techniques from professional journalist, Jeff Salgo. Mr. Salgo shared his experiences with students and adequately prepared them for the upcoming meeting with the survivors. After reading the biographical information about each individual survivor, and now equipped with the training from Mr. Salgo, students were able to meaningfully prepare interview questions to ask their survivor.

Students also gained firsthand knowledge on filmmaking techniques from professional filmmakers. The experts engaged our students in hands-on activities, familiarizing them with the equipment, as well as filmmaking concepts to ensure they produced a quality project.



Movie Premiere

On Tuesday, May 24th, 2022, LWA hosted the in-person premiere of the documentary. The Holocaust survivors who were interviewed for this project were accompanied by their family members, and joined the students who had the honor of interviewing them. The event consisted of a dinner, and a collaborative viewing of the final project.



Names, Not Numbers[©]

Please join BELL Academy and Lawrence Woodmere Academy for the premiere screening of the *Names, Not Numbers* documentary

Tuesday, May 24, 2022
Lawrence Woodmere Academy
336 Woodmere Boulevard Woodmere, New York 11598

Guests should enter through the front doors of the school on Woodmere Blvd. If anyone needs an entrance without stairs, kindly indicate this with the RSVP for the event

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5:30 p.m. Arrival–Dinner Reception in LWA Dining Room
Kosher food available

6:15 p.m. Premiere Screening of Names, Not Numbers Documentary
Film in Hessel Hall



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Transportation information:
Parking on campus as well as street parking
The Long Island Railroad (Far Rockaway branch) stops at Woodmere Boulevard and Cedar Lane.
Then it is a two block walk north on Woodmere Blvd. to the LWA campus.
The N31 and N32 buses also stop near Lawrence Woodmere Academy.

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Names, Not Numbers[©] is generously supported by a prominent national foundation.

Names, Not Numbers[©] LLC an interactive multi-media Holocaust film documentary project created by educator, Tova Fish-Rosenberg. www.namesnotnumbers.org

Student Speeches

As part of the movie premier, students from both schools had the honor of addressing the audience, highlighting the value in participating in this experiential learning opportunity.

The speech of one of the 8th grade students is included below:

“Good evening ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Emilia and I am a student at BELL Academy.

I want you to imagine that from the time you were born, you were told that you must be absolutely silent because you and your family are hiding from soldiers coming to kill you. When you ask why your parents answer that it's because you are different from them. That's just one of the millions of scenarios of what happened to people throughout the Holocaust. The Holocaust was the mass murder of Jews and other people Adolf Hitler deemed not worthy of life. The Holocaust was so outrageous, that some people don't even believe it happened. That's what the Names Not Numbers program is for, to make sure that we never forget so we can prevent it from happening again. I understand that we are gathered here today to display the hard work of Laurence Woodmere Academy and Bell Academy students, and I thank them for their contributions. More importantly, the purpose of tonight is to witness and document the history and the resiliency of the human spirit. The survivors tell their stories so they can be heard, by my and future generations, and ensure the stories live forever.

When I first started this program, I had an abundance of facts and statistics, but no sense of what life was like during that time. This project has significantly impacted my peers and me. I was made aware of just how terribly cruel the world can be. But the more valuable lesson is how kind, brave, and hopeful people can also become. We can choose. So, today I stand before you as a changed individual. Not only am I aware of hate, but ready to combat it. With what, you ask? That's easy, with love.

Thank you to the Holocaust survivors who were so generous to share their life stories with us and especially to Asher Matathias, my survivor, who made everyone in the room light up with laughter and taught me how precious life is.

Thank you for your time.”



Sharing with the School Community

On June 23rd, 2022, our entire school community, which spans grades 6-8 had the opportunity to view the completed film. The flyer was shared on our school's website and widely distributed to our email distribution lists, ensuring the project can be celebrated by as many families as possible.

NAMES, NOT NUMBERS

Join BELL Academy at the premiere viewing of
Names, Not Numbers®

June 23, 2022 ★ 9:00 a.m. ★ [YouTube](#)

To view, click YouTube link above, or go to: <https://youtu.be/N2sTTI-apll>

Names, Not Numbers® is a documentary produced by BELL Academy students, along with professionals, in which Holocaust survivors share memories, stories, and lessons of the Holocaust. Through this experience, BELL Academy students not only learned of the Holocaust, they have also been inspired to continue combating anti-Semitism and all forms of hatred and intolerance.

- Documentary can also be viewed any time after premiere
- Names, Not Numbers INC® An interactive, multi-media Holocaust project created by the educator, Tova Fish-Rosenberg
- The Names, Not Numbers® Program is generously supported by a prominent national foundation

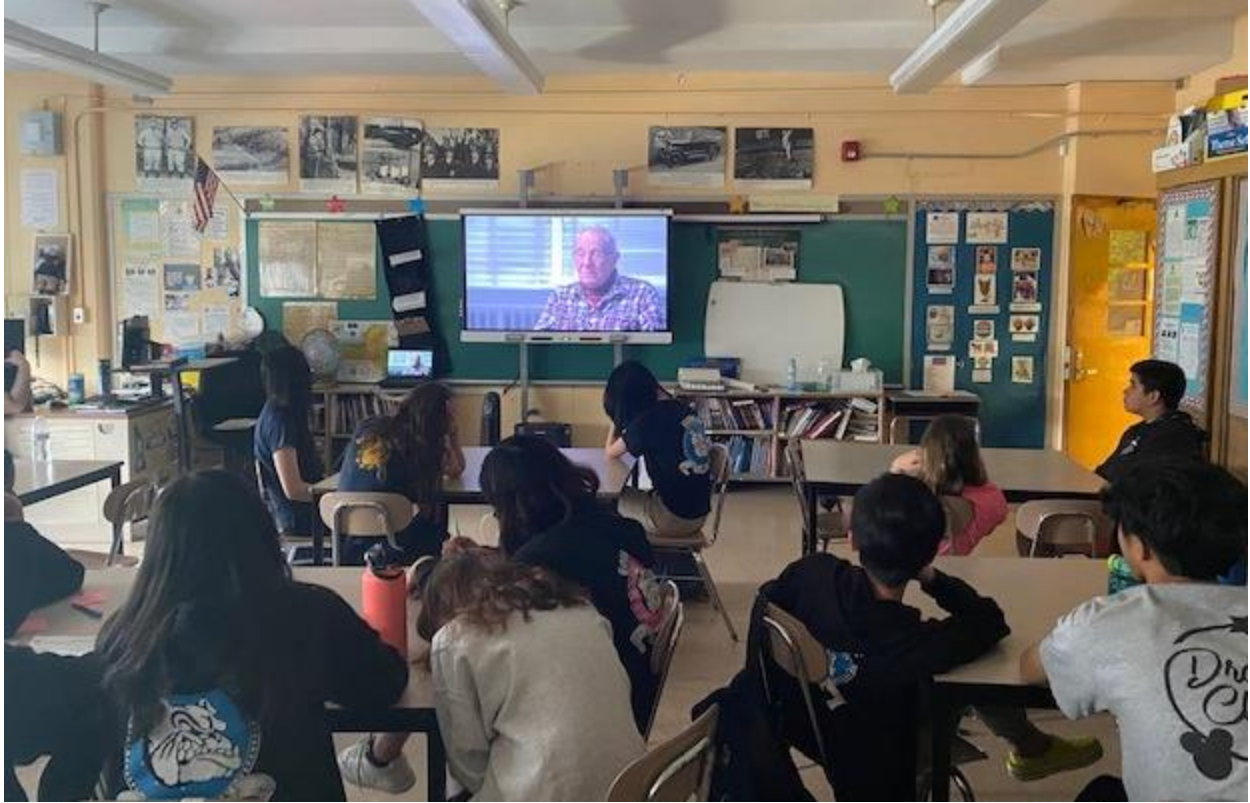
Student Reflections- BELL Academy

8th Grade Student: *“As I got farther into the program, from the reporter to the lesson on cameras, I got more invested. So, when the interview day was here I was filled with an aura of excitement and nervousness. I shook his hand, I greeted my survivor and everything became still because I realized this is a person. It's not just one of billions of people, it's one person that had experienced something horrible. And it truly was his name, not his number. That's my experience at Names Not Numbers.”*

8th Grade Student: *“Names, Not Numbers has been a wonderful experience to be part of. Being able to preserve history and become more aware of the historical circumstances, social aspects, and film creation itself was a once in a lifetime chance that I will be forever grateful of. Meeting my survivor, Dr. Alex Levy, who had this great charisma was truly a gift and the most meaningful part of the experience. His willingness to share his emotions, family, and tell my group of his life while cracking jokes was very endearing to hear.”*

8th Grade Student: *“Being a part of the Name Not Numbers program was an amazing learning experience and a great privilege. Most importantly, I learned more about the Holocaust and the people who lived through it. Listening to the survivors' unique stories and history taught me more about the events that took place during World War II. Furthermore, I was particularly inspired by these people's resilience. It was great working as a team with other people to make a production to present to others.”*

8th Grade Student: *“The program has helped me gain an insight on what really happened during the Holocaust. With the first person accounts, I was able to almost see what was going on as well as understand better. Overall, the program has helped me grow as a person and be very thankful for what I have, even during hard times.”*



Staff Reflections

Laurence Klein

U.S. History educator, BELL Academy

"In each of us there is a small piece of history."

Svetlana Alexievich (Belarusian journalist and oral historian)

"I was ten years old the last time I saw my great grandmother. I sat with her in the garden of her nursing home for over an hour. As a young boy, the surroundings of the hospital and the physical condition of the 100+ year old woman made me uneasy. She grabbed my hand unexpectedly and asked if she ever told me the stories of growing up in Lithuania in the late 1800s. She spoke about the anti-Jewish riots—known as pogroms—that ensued the region which was under Russian control at the time. Many Jews, including family members, were killed and their homes were plundered. She recalled how her mother, upon hearing the Russians were approaching, hid her daughters in the barn and stashed their valuables in the wood oven. Relieved that the Russians caused only minor damage to the village, they celebrated that night with a feast, only to later realize that they forgot to remove their valuables and documents from the oven before cooking. In response to the antisemitism, my ancestors looked to leave Lithuania, eventually immigrating to the United States.

A few weeks later at her funeral, I could not stop thinking about the stories she shared that afternoon. Although I was grief stricken at losing my great grandmother, I was also saddened by the possibility that the stories and family history she shared with me could be lost forever. Upon returning to school, I wrote down all the stories for a class assignment. Not realizing it at such a young age but I had completed my first oral history.

I continued interviewing family and community members, first as a DJ on my high school radio station, later as a film major in college. While the final product of these oral history projects was important, the most crucial part of the experience was the moment I sat down with someone and conducted the interview. It was a rewarding feeling being a producer of knowledge and not just a consumer of knowledge.

As an educator in the New York City public school system for the past 28 years, I have assigned an oral history project each year as a tool for meaningful learning. Many students feel that history happened somewhere else, to people different from them. Oral history projects help students understand that people all around them lived through the major changes they are studying in class.

Five years ago, BELL Academy became involved in the "Names, Not Numbers" oral history program. Students have had the opportunity to research the history of the Holocaust, practice interviewing skills as well as learn filming techniques. Their preparation results in an interview with a Holocaust survivor and the production of a film. The opportunity to learn about the Holocaust directly from those who experienced it creates a deep personal connection for the

students because they have taken on the great responsibility of passing down the stories of the Holocaust survivors for the future.

Every year that I have taught, I tell my students the experiences that my great grandmother shared with me in the nursing home garden. I tell the stories not as a classroom lesson but to bring a human element to history ... or maybe retelling her stories remind me of that young boy who loved his great grandmother and his hopes that she would not be forgotten.”

Jennifer Rizzo
7th Grade ICT Teacher, BELL Academy

“I have been a part of the Names, Not Numbers program for several years. My role in the program evolved from being a chaperone for the students during trips, into planning, collaborating with a new school, and introducing them to the program. I am truly grateful to be part of such an incredible program. The evolution from students applying to be a part of the program, to learning about the Holocaust, learning about interview and camera techniques, finally meeting a Holocaust survivor, and conducting an interview is something that could never be replicated in any other program. The students’ apprehension about collaborating with another school quickly turned into excitement once they were able to meet in person. Having a greater role in the program has made the experience exponentially more rewarding. Witnessing the students hear the extraordinary stories about perseverance and determination was a privilege. I hope to be able to help continue the Names, Not Numbers program for as long as we are able to, so more students can have this opportunity.”

David Abbott
Principal
BELL Academy

“I would like to share how incredibly fortunate we are to be a part of the Names, Not Numbers Program. Throughout my 26 years in education, I’ve never encountered such a meaningful and impactful experiential learning opportunity, and I am truly grateful to be able to engage my students in this special collaboration. Along with the students from the Lawrence Woodmere Academy, our BELL Academy students have been able to break down cultural barriers and work side-by-side towards a common goal. A goal to think critically about atrocities from the past, a goal to highlight stories from some of the most inspirational Holocaust survivors, and the goal of how we can work together to ensure these events are not repeated.

The question we, as educators, often ask ourselves is how we can engage students in such controversial topics of hate, discrimination, and racism. One thing we can say for certain, is that ignoring the past, and not confronting the painful realities of today, will only permit feelings and attitudes fueled by hate, to flourish. We need to empower, we need to educate,

and programs like Names, Not Numbers is an effective way to engage our students in experiential learning on such important issues. As an educator, it is inspiring to see how this program helps our young people identify ways of lifting their voices in advocacy- to make change- to silence the voices that promote hate and discriminatory behaviors. Not only are our students afforded the opportunity to partake in these meaningful interviews with Holocaust survivors, but they also acquire filmmaking skills, interview skills, and communication skills, which are essential for their academic and career development.

A special thank you to the Legacy Heritage Fund, for their generosity and support. We continue to be grateful to Tova Fish-Rosenberg and Dov Rosenberg, for welcoming us to share in their passion.”

Brian O’Connell
Head of School
Lawrence Woodmere Academy

“The Names, Not Numbers project was not a typical school endeavor. It was an experience of personal and empathetic interaction that is central to who we are as human beings. Jehuda Lindenblatt, Anita Weisbord, and Asher Matathias shared their personal stories with another generation of witnesses of witnesses so that the future may be informed by the past. Throughout the process of making this documentary, our students, who typically consume mostly detached 2 dimensional digital experiences, experienced the factual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of history via the stories shared by our engaging survivors. The culminating event brought two diverse schools together from two very different communities. The feedback from the parents was consistently appreciative. The Names, Not Numbers project moved our children to a heightened understanding of the Holocaust and humanity in multiple ways. Our families, too, departed this experience with stories to share and messages to spread. Thank you to all of the supporters of Names, Not Numbers and our three special survivors who empowered our educators, students, and parents to feel, learn, and grow from this amazing process.”

Student Reflections-LWA

OLIVIA HERRARTE

When we first started this project, I was nervous, but when our survivor started sharing his story, I was interested and excited to learn. Something that surprised me was when he talked about how they took his grandfather and played games with them. My favorite job was interviewing the survivor. The message our survivor gave was to love others and be kind to others. I want people to know that this is a once in a lifetime experience that will help share stories. I want people to know that this happened and it was real. People should hear stories and stop brushing it off like it's nothing. I was nervous to meet the students at first because I didn't know them. I later learned that there was nothing to worry about because they were all welcoming. I made many friends, and some I talk to on a daily.



When I first saw the film, I was surprised on how well it turned out. It was really well done, and all the hard work was displayed. I was nervous at first, but I felt proud and accomplished to see myself in the film. My favorite part was watching the film with friends and giving the gifts to the survivor. If I were to do this project again, I would be excited to learn about more survivors stories

Addison Cooper

Before the interview, I was very nervous, because I knew there would be sensitive subjects, and I didn't know how I was going to react. I was also very excited, because I knew we were going to be the last generation to hear their stories. This was exciting, because now I can share their stories with people to make sure this won't happen again. When Anita started talking about how her best friend went against her, my heart broke for her. I really enjoyed interviewing Anita, because her stories were so interesting and very sad. Anita wants us to keep her story alive, because she won't be here forever, and to always have hope. I would like people to know that it wasn't about their numbers, it was about their names, and how every person had a different experience and a different story. After watching the film, I was very happy on how it turned out. I did not mind seeing myself on screen as much as I thought I would. This was a great experience and I would definitely do it again. I thought that the survivors shared their stories so well, and I enjoyed learning more about all of them. I thought that it was filmed so well and we could hear everything so well. I am very proud of the documentary and can't wait to share it with my friends and family.



GABRIELA PIERRE - REFLECTION

My first impression of my survivor was that he was a really kind man, when he first walked in he had a big smile on his face and waved. I already knew a lot about his story prior to the interview, because I had read his blog; although, hearing him actually talk about everything I had read felt way different, and had a bigger impact on me. His overall message was that we should stay involved with politics and always get the full story. I feel that the NNN program is an opportunity everyone should be able to experience. I will never forget this experience, and it was a honor to interview Dr. Alex Levy.

Layla Rodriguez

I was very nervous at first. I wasn't sure what to say, but once we started talking and asking questions everything went very smoothly.

My favorite part was doing audio and recording.

I was scared meeting the BELL girls at first, but then they turned out to be very sweet. They were helpful when we had questions about things in the process.

I would like people to know and remember that the past is important and to know that, even though it had happened a while ago, this can really affect people's thoughts and relationships with people growing up.

Our survivor's message was to always love each other and be kind to one another.

I was very excited to seem the film on the screen. I think it had turned out amazing and couldn't have been any better.