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Final Action Plan Progress Report

“Can You Hear Us Now?” is the catchphrase I created for my Action Plan at Brown University’s Leadership Institute. The motto, along with a silhouette image of a female speaking into a raised megaphone, is simple and direct - political and social activism. Its message is clear but it is the person doing the speaking that is just as important. Students, not adults, are speaking on important political and social issues. Students are paying attention to national and international issues and it is students who are disturbed by what they are seeing and hearing from elected officials. The 2016 presidential election and the overall lack of civility and action demonstrated by our politicians motivated me to find my voice and act to be part of the solution. Not satisfied with watching from the sidelines, I needed to get in the game and make a difference. One voice may be silenced and ignored, however, the collective thunder of hundreds - or thousands - of student voices speaking as one demands attention.

I can be described as quiet, smart, polite, and a rule follower. However, not to be underestimated, I can also be described as curious, tenacious, and engaged. I am struck by the negative tone and stubborn partisanship of our elected officials on a number of issues, including gun violence, foreign policy, and women’s rights. I am disappointed that Congress and other leaders lack the will and courage to restore civility and stand up for what is right. I am bothered that compromise and partnership are viewed as weaknesses rather than strengths. Far from being alone in my observations and frustrations, I am confident that my generation will be able to reverse this toxic course. For my part, I decided to raise student awareness and take direct action by leading my high school at a Youth Action March.

The mission of the Youth Action March was to amplify youth voices and connect students with political and social organizations seeking to improve the world. The event symbolized peaceful social activism and brought students together to create a unified and powerful voice. In order to gain my school’s permission, I presented my idea and plan to my guidance counselor, teacher advisor, and even the superintendent. Once approved, I presented the plan to the Students Organizing for Active Resilience (S.O.A.R) Club, advertised the march and mission throughout my school, held information sessions at school during lunch blocks, designed
t-shirts, promoted it on social media, and arranged for transportation from my high school to Boston. The several month experience was nerve-wracking, challenging, and amazing.

The Youth Action March was a huge success! On October 7, 2017, at the Boston Commons, I led a strong student showing from Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School at the march. Our unified and amplified voice helped send a forceful message to the local, state, and federal government. The three-hour event included numerous motivational speakers covering a range of topics, including environmental responsibility, immigration policy, and youth political action strategies. The march attracted approximately 130 students, as well as the attention of local politicians and news outlets. More importantly, the march provided an opportunity for students to stand up for what they believe in, and to take the first steps toward getting involved with direct action in a positive way.

The march was empowering and I was transformed by the experience. I am proud that I left my comfort zone to take a huge risk by stepping forward to raise student awareness of important national issues. Success was not guaranteed. I was filled with doubt and fear that no-one would show. My parents and friends helped me realize that, regardless of student turnout, the march was a success before it even began. The success came from the journey and the experiences and education it provided. I learned so much about myself and overcame fears of stepping-up, speaking-up, and taking action. The self-discovery sparked a passion for public service and advocacy that I intend to pursue in college and professionally. I am confident and hopeful that youth can succeed where adults have failed.