

*"You never know what you have until it's gone. My sister touched so many."*

Kadija Bateman

## A SISTER REMEMBERS

### Tragic end to a very special life

By Kadija Bateman  
Honorable Mention  
Opinion Writing  
Division: High School

*The writer's sister was a Richmond police officer who was shot and killed in Fairfield in November while attending a funeral. Her former boyfriend has been charged in the slaying. The article was originally published in the Rodriguez High School student newspaper, The Stampedede. — Editor*

These past few weeks have been the hardest days of my life. Knowing that my sister is not coming home is something that I can't really deal with. From seeing someone every day to not seeing them since Nov. 24 has been so hard.

My sister Kaliah enjoyed her life and also had a great 28th birthday two months before she was killed. We had celebrated my birthday 10 days before her death, which was really fun. She bought me so many presents — things I didn't even ask for or even would have thought of. She just cared.

The next day, I scared her half to death when I called her screaming that I had been accepted into Cal State East Bay.

She was so happy for me, and told me that she would do anything to help me stay in college and have an excellent college life.

Nine days later, I woke up to find her on her way out the door, heading to a funeral. I told her goodbye. She had a new haircut and she looked so beautiful.

That was the last time I saw her alive. A few hours later she was shot and killed.

I never had someone that close to me die before. She was all I had. We used to have these long talks — Kaliah, my mom, and me.

I learned so much from them; they taught me everything.

You never know what you have until it's gone. My sister touched so many.

She was someone who really



Reporter file photo

Kadija Bateman put the grief of losing her sister into words in this award-winning article.

cared about her job and the community she served.

All she wanted was the best from me.

So, my mission now is to make her proud. I suppose it was just her time to go, as it will be for all of us at some point.

I have taken a lesson from her death. That is this: If a relationship doesn't feel right, get out of it.

I also learned that everyone deserves to be loved; so did my sister. But for her, things just went too far.

Also, I learned that tomorrow is not promised for anyone.

*The author was a senior in Becky Bowen's class at Rodriguez High School in Fairfield when this entry was submitted.*

## Sending the wrong message

By Camella Southward  
Honorable Mention, Opinion Writing  
Division: High School

I need to lodge a grievance against popular culture. The other day I found myself without an impending deadline of any kind and therefore with nothing to do. It was absolutely unnerving.

I decided to sit down to watch a movie. I flip through the OnDemand movie menu and noticed the astounding lack of quality movies offered (remind me to ask my parents why they waste money on this useless service).

Finally I settled on "The Lake House," a movie I didn't know much about. I chose it for a pretty stupid reason, actually. The synopsis said "Sandra Bullock plays a doctor ..." and that's all I needed to read. I thought, "Oh! Woman doctor ... sounds good." As a young aspiring professional, naturally I would want to watch a movie about a successful woman. I figured it would be endearing and motivational. I was mistaken.

"The Lake House" followed another plot formula that I have been noticing more and more lately. Maybe you have too: that of the successful, intelligent, attractive young woman who is utterly single (but cutely neurotic!)

In the "Lake House," Sandra Bullock is all of the above, a beautiful, smart, high-achieving doctor who lives alone and whose only real relationship is with her dog ... and Ben and Jerry when she's depressed about being alone. It's almost as if the movie is suggesting that her success and achievements are what led her to be alone in the first place. No, I take that back. That's exactly what the movie says.

"The Lake House" isn't the only movie to bring up this social conundrum. In "Just Like Heaven," Reese Witherspoon is a beautiful, successful doctor who can only meet a guy when she is in a coma.

In "City of Angels," Meg Ryan plays (you guessed it) a beautiful, successful surgeon who has a great relationship with her dog, but not a real person. In the film "In Her Shoes," Toni Collette plays a lawyer who can't hold a relationship but channels her frustration through shopping and compiles a massive collection of Monolo Blahniks (just to give you an idea of how frustrated she really is).

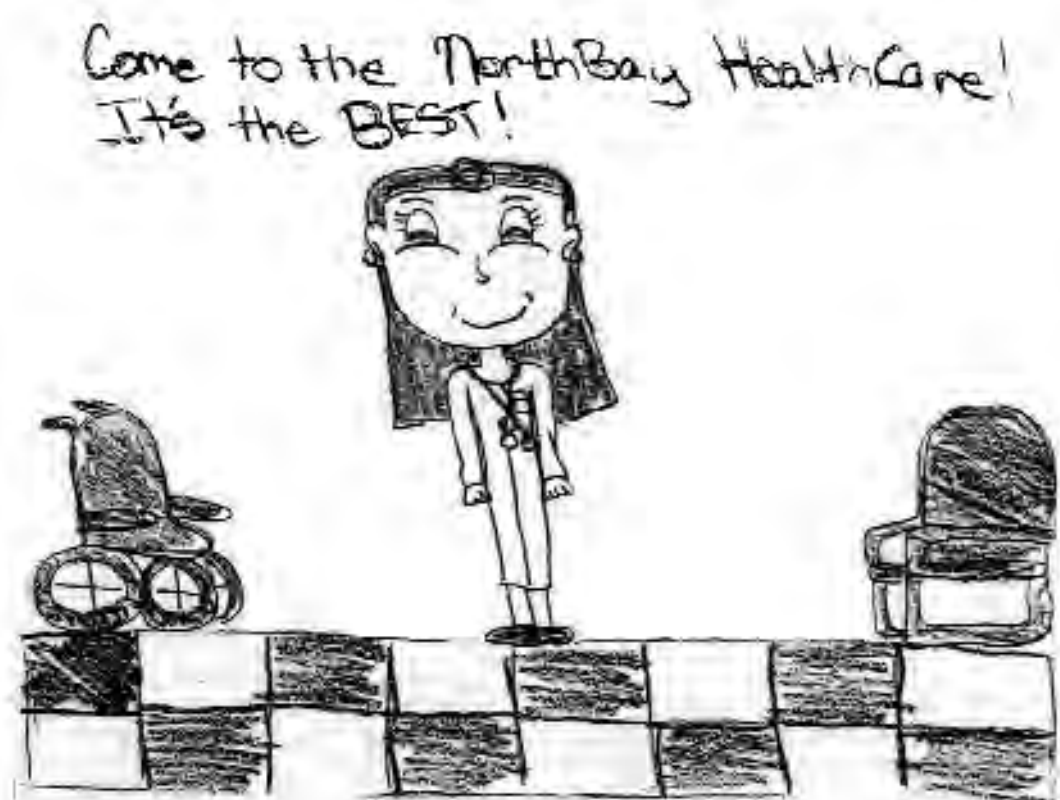
The stereotype even pervades television. On "Sex and the City," all of the girls are unabashedly single, but the only lead who credits her career for her lack of a mate is Miranda, the litigator who is a proud member of Mensa and a graduate of Stanford Law. Let's not even get in to Ally McBeal's relationship dilemmas.

What's going on here? Why is it that in movies and TV, men can be young, attractive professionals with either a steady relationship or a slew of women vying for their attention but their female counterparts are perpetually dateless? Is this an accurate portrayal? Is Hollywood intentionally trying to say something about the downside of the working woman's dream?

Either way, I'm getting tired of it. It seems like such a terrible message: "Hey girls, listen, if you want the career and the prestige you need to forget about a relationship, don't even think about it ... unless you find yourself in a coma sometime soon, of course."

*The author was a senior at Armijo High School in Fairfield when she submitted this essay.*

### Design-an-Ad winner



Jacqueline Brezenski earned an honorable mention in the Design-an-Ad category of The Reporter's Campus Star student journalism competition. Jacqueline was a sixth-grader at Fairmont Elementary School in Vacaville when this entry was submitted.

### Opinion cartoon winner



This cartoon by Kayla Barley earned her an third-place tie in the 4-5 grade division of the opinion writing/editorial cartoon competition of The Reporter's Campus Star student journalism contest. Kayla was a sixth-grader in Peggy Stone's classroom at Tremont Elementary School in Dixon when she submitted this entry.