When trying to think of a topic, I remembered my two previous life-changing years of History Day. I learned values and important topics, in addition to going to states both years. This year I wanted to improve. Both years, I considered the theme, and I immediately remembered a topic. This year I had no idea what to do, but then I remembered a movie I saw years ago. Hidden Figures. That movie discusses the brave African American female "human computers" who worked at NASA amid discrimination and rose up. Perfect for the topic of Breaking Barriers. I listened to the audiobook of Hidden Figures, whilst learning more about this topic. And I don't regret choosing it as the women are true barrier-breakers.

Research was a battle of finding primary sources, but eventually, I found more than enough sources. My most important source is the book *Hidden Figures: The Untold True Story of Four African-American Women who Helped Launch Our Nation Into Space.* This is the source that spawned all my secondary sources and brought light to the primary ones. My topic got zero coverage before this book. I would also like to credit the University of Connecticut, which I went to on a private research trip. Historians helped me locate articles on my topic. I also viewed NASA's Human Computers exhibit, the Smithsonian Museum of Air and Space, and the Hampton History Museum. Due to the COVID-19 quarantine, I visited these museums digitally instead of in person, but nonetheless still saw their exhibits and got to use their invaluable primary sources.

I chose my category, website, because I had two states-level years of experience. Back in grade six, when I first started doing History Day, I had an interest in computers. I found that the website category played to my interests, so I decided to make one. You don't have to speak to make a website, which is ideal because I have a stutter. And I have always been a kind of taciturn, solitary person. I dislike fights, so I wanted to work alone. I also worked alone in both previous years, so I have experience. Play to your strengths.

This topic connects to the theme in many ways. It seems obvious that the African-American female computers would break barriers. And yes, the fact that they broke the norm of white male scientists does break some barriers. But female computers were already more common than you might think in the time period. What makes it connect to the theme more is their employment after WWII and their contributions to science. The diverse community of female computers did great work for NACA and NASA, and that deserves to be remembered. Despite racism and sexism, they broke barriers and rose up.

I would also like to thank the teachers, peers, parents, judges, and anyone else who helped me get this far. Due to all of your advice and resources, I have learned and grown far more than I would have without.