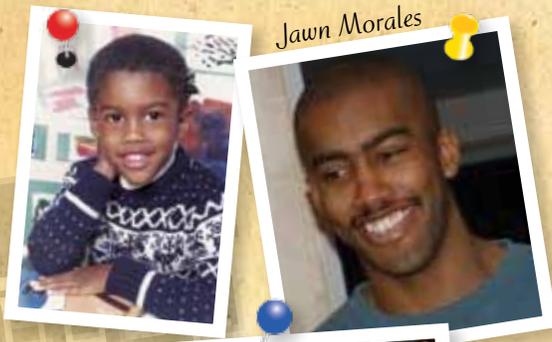


BY TINA CONNELLY
WSMS Parent '90, '96, '97, '00



Jawn Morales



Ben Lyons with
Ron Sopyla



Ben Lyons and
Jawn Morales



Billy Parish and family

West Side Montessori School has been a “great beginning” for literally thousands of children in its almost 50 years as a school. After several years at WSMS, children move to a myriad of ongoing schools, families depart for the suburbs or farther destinations across the country and the world...

Alumni News: Still Friends After All These Years

Four Guys from the Class of '88

Unsurprisingly, many of those first friendships formed at WSMS are relegated to fond memories, evoked by flipping through a childhood picture album or a school yearbook.

We are delighted to report that sometimes those friendships are sustained over the years, or revived by chance or common goals. This is the tale of some of the boys who left WSMS in 1988, have kept in touch, and are presently well established in 21st-century careers. Every one of them credits his early education with fostering his creativity and independence.

Today Billy Parish lives in Flagstaff, Arizona, with his wife and small daughter (who attends a Montessori early childhood program!). A high school semester at the Mountain School in Vermont immersed Billy in environmental awareness and changed his life. He left Yale in 2002 to cofound the Energy Action Coalition and has since become nationally recognized for his success in innovative and energetic efforts involving kids, community activists, governmental initiatives, and “green” employment. Billy says he now realizes that his years

at WSMS, where independent thinking was fostered in a way he did not experience later in life, may have formed the basis for his ability and desire to work outside traditional structures. According to his dad, Michael Parish, even at age five Billy was clear-minded and focused: Given the option of staying at WSMS for an extra year, which would allow him to start first grade as one of the oldest in his class, he weighed the facts quickly but meticulously and replied succinctly: “Stay.”

In 2007 Billy reconnected with Ben Bronfman, who has also made the environment his life’s work. After studying politics and law at Emerson College, Ben pursued a career in music, playing guitar and singing with a band called Exit. But climate change haunted him, and he co-founded Green Owl Records, which is changing the environmental face of the recording industry by using CD trays made of recycled plastic bottles, paper products made exclusively of recycled materials, and environmentally conscious touring vehicles for its artists. Today his energies are focused on Global Thermostat, a carbon capture firm founded by Graciela Chichilnisky (professor of Economics and Mathematical Statistics at Columbia University and author of the Kyoto Protocol) and Peter Eisenberger (physicist and founder of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and the Princeton Materials Institute at Princeton University). Global Thermostat was recently presented at *Time Magazine’s* World Energy Technologies Summit as one of the leading technologies to “change the world.” The first pilot

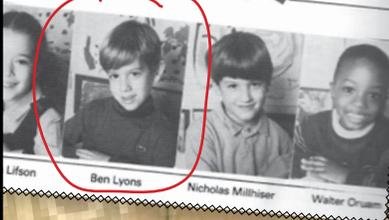
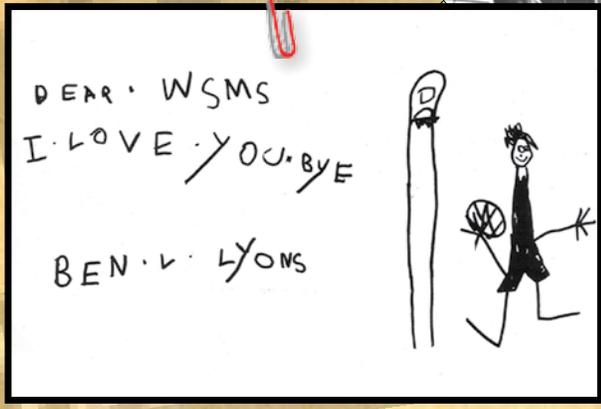
Ben Lyons



Billy



Ben Bronfman
Ben Lyons



plant is set to debut in May at the Stanford Research Institute in California. Now shuttling between homes in Los Angeles and Brooklyn, Ben is the proud father of a new son with his fiancée, singer and visual artist M.I.A.

Like Ben Bronfman, Ben Lyons left college (in his case, the University of Michigan) for the music world. Ben worked at hip-hop music labels Def Jam and Roc-A-Fella, was an associate producer at ESPN, and produced music videos. But the showman evident in 4E was destined to emerge, and the journalistic path of his father (film and theater critic Jeffrey Lyons) and grandfather (newspaper columnist Leonard Lyons) beckoned. Now you can find Ben every weekday critiquing films on *The Daily Ten* (aka *The D10*), an entertainment news show on the cable channel E! You can also catch him in venues as varied as online blogs, *Good Morning America*, ESPN, Nickelodeon, and the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas.

Ben has fond memories of Barry Owens, the school chef and a teacher in the All Day Program (the precursor to today's LAP) during Ben's years at WSMS. Apart from his culinary talents, Barry was instrumental in helping Ben wiggle out loose baby teeth! Ben has stories about Ron (the master puppeteer) and Windy, balloon shaving at the Spring Fair, spending hours on Lego constructions and basketball, and bringing sliced red peppers as the class snack—to the great disdain of his fellow students! Ben has been back to WSMS in a professional capacity: While producing segments for *Hip Hop Nation*, he brought Pharoahe Monch, a popular rapper from Brooklyn

famous for his song "Simon Says," to WSMS to play Simon Says with the kids; and he brought Rahzel, aka the Human Beatbox from the Roots, to come and read with the kids and make animal and robot noises.

Along with Billy and the two Bens, Jawn Morales moved on to the Collegiate School after WSMS. Jawn remembers eating breakfast before school in the Parents Room with his mom; reveling in the Spring Fair on 92nd Street; being in Garden with Ron and Windy; climbing the stairs to the gym and rooftop; and, in his last year at WSMS, hiking every day up to 4W, where he and Ben Bronfman enjoyed their days with Smita. All that physical activity was later reflected in his love of sports: Little League with Ben Lyons, varsity teams in high school and college. Jawn became a star athlete at Wesleyan University and joined CBS Sports right out of college. Today he is the guy responsible for the on-air graphics that help you understand all those statistics in college and professional athletics.

In 1988 these boys were West Side Montessori kids... in 2010 their overlapping careers in the environment and the media reflect a commitment to making our world a better place for the next generation of WSMS alumni.