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Anna Schramm

Arvindhan Natarajan

DaMarco Hill

Gerald Natal

Tim Sanderson

Lori Lux

Amanda Kerkenbush

Aniyah Powell

Lori Wilson

My'lah Hamlett

Savana Uzoigwe

Alivia Morgan

Brandon Payne

Cameron Jones

Deja Lewis

Emmanuel Coleman

Hanah Gardner

Josie Quick

Libby Barnett

Mishty Woof

Anna Stuchel

Ariana Flowers

Ashten Banks

Denejah Bailey

Haider Alhajri

Mitchell Pei

Abigail Burlingame

Arya Nair

Barbara Murphy

Chantal Crane

Chelsie Baylor

Cornelius Fortune

Demetrius Wyatt

Javana Joyce

Savana King

Skye Sloane

Tamara Peacock

Victoria Starnes

Heather Sloane Cleary

Abigail Hernandez

Clare Scantling

Emiko Mar

Maggie Nigro

Julia Sayger

Tulani Black

Duvonna Goins

Mary MacDonald

Arya Nair

Brad Higgs

Nyreisha Tevis

Dai'ja Banks

Javion Finn

Ke'ira Daugherty

Liana Robinson

Lukes Hardy

MacArthur Johnson

Madelyn Page

Sydnee Savage-Utley

Te'Corea Dotson

Dakaisha Jones

Dalliss Lothery

Dimitri Horn

Anonymous

Justice Rose

Josh Cunningham

Joshua McKinney

Le'Bron Jones

Lilly Swagerty

Lydia Scott

Marionna Mays

Masao Thaboun

Naujae Stone

NyRena Barber

Royale L. Williams

Ryson Lawrence Washington

Shanice Gardner

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INTRODUCTION

Fearless Writers Take Two

We are grateful for this opportunity to publish the work of the students and mentors from Fearless Writers a second time in *the quint* (first publication Dec 2019 12:1). This is our seventh year writing together with the students at Rogers High School in Toledo, OH both in person and virtually. This continued collaboration between the University of Toledo Social Work Program and the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program at Rogers High School continues to evolve and change as the needs of the students shift with the changing times. We continue to be indebted to AVID teacher, Bridget Smith, who makes space for this writing experience in her classes. We are also grateful to Mr. Pitzen, Ms. Utter, and Ms. Reiter the other AVID teachers in the building who lend their students to us once a week. This was our first year writing with Mr. David Johnson's class, a non-AVID class with "at-risk" students. These students were a joy to work with and we look forward to returning to this classroom in the fall. Fearless Writers continues to be inspired by Amherst Writers and Artists writing group methods created by Pat Schneider (*Writing Alone and with Others*, 2003). This method allows for youth and adults to write together to risk sharing raw bits of writing created in 5-7 minutes, and to give strengths-based feedback about what is powerful and strong about each piece of writing.

Fearless was created as an interprofessional education intervention to disrupt implicit bias created by the social separation by class and race that is unique to the United States. Discriminatory housing and banking policies from the 1930s and 1940s in the United States called redlining continues to disadvantage neighborhoods and maintains segregation (*The Color of Money: A Forgotten History of How our Government Segregated America*, Rothstein, 2017). Bringing students together who were brought up in different neighborhoods and providing space for them to share their stories creates valuable connections. These connections are necessary for better understanding of differences created by oppression. The hope is that implicit bias created by segregation is interrupted in this process of writing creatively, and we as a writing group become aware of the cost, we pay for not growing up together and how systemic disconnection plays a role in continued oppression in the United States.

As high school students progress in the program, Fearless Writers becomes Participatory Action Research (PAR) (community-led research design, implementation, and evaluation). High school students lead the research with university collaborators. Topics of social injustice are explored by the group using the raw bits of writing and creative prompts as poetry-informed, group, autoethnography (Poetry as Method Faulkner, 2009). Group autoethnography is collaborative qualitative research where the authors put larger cultural issues into personal context. In this issue gun violence, rising rates of depression in young people of color after the COVID-19 shutdown, Human Trafficking, and out writers' experiences of COVID-19 (all through the lens of US experience) were explored through this method of inquiry.

The intention of Amherst Writers and Artists and autoethnography is to share written work with an audience and to share analysis with the community. Fearless Writers has benefitted from two local conferences to share their work (when accepted) The International Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference held at the University of Toledo annually, and Bowling Green State University's Black Issues Conference. The Congress of Qualitative Inquiry Conference at the University of Illinois has also served as audience for university student and faculty presentations involving Fearless Writers. An article entitled "Building a Creative Community: Lessons Learned from Efforts to Expand Youth Social Justice Writing Internship in a Pandemic" is in press with the journal *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*. Fearless Writers has included interprofessional students from its inception and has benefitted from ongoing partnerships with the Center for Interprofessional Education at the University of Toledo where Dr. Sloane Cleary serves as a faculty steering committee member and facilitator.

Because Fearless Writers creates a space for important ideas to be generated from the community about how to increase equity, Dr. Sloane Cleary has also benefitted from her new role on the board of the Health Equity Research Center at the University of Toledo. The University of Toledo has also recognized Dr. Sloane Cleary with the Edith Rathbun Outreach and Community Engagement award for her work with Fearless Writers.

This edition is broken into sections that highlight the high school writers, mentors and internship teams who have been an active part of Fearless Writers over the past three years. As you may guess COVID-19 had a huge impact on the program. Our seniors this year were freshman the spring COVID-19 shutdown occurred for public schools in the

United States. The students had just started writing and their notebooks, tucked away in a cabinet in a computer lab perished in the closing and reopening of the high school. For the following fall and spring our writing groups were strictly virtual. The teachers were in the building hovering over their computers instead of facing the classroom. On occasion the teachers gave up precious virtual time with their students to let us jump in and talk with students in their new home, google classroom. Our regular Fearless Writers group of students rarely joined us with increases in caregiving responsibilities, working to support family, virtual exhaustion, and tech and internet barriers coming to writing group became complicated. When we returned Fall of 2021, it took us some time to get back into the swing of things. When we discussed research topics, the students were tired of thinking about injustice. The joy of free expression and creative writing became a requested outlet from increased anxiety and pressure brought on by a pandemic. We started a new project in 2023 to blend in-person and virtual opportunities to write together and to open up the writing groups to retired members of our community. This was a time limited group that we called Community Empathy Write. Our first topic was women's experiences of COVID-19 activated by the poetry of Emily Dickinson. We hope you enjoy this selection of writing pieces that we have created together as a community and that the words of students, mentors, interns, community members and faculty serve as a catalyst for change.

Heather Sloane Cleary
Guest Editor

Artists

Aravindhnan Natarajan (Arvindh), PhD, MSW

Arvindh is an Associate Professor in the Social Work Program at the University of Toledo. He uses photography, painting, sketching and other art forms to explore issues of social and economic justice. The images in this issue are photographs of live pen and ink sketches made at Rogers High School in spring of 2023. Students were engaged in the Fearless Writers Program facilitated by George Thompson retired social work faculty, and Arya Nair undergraduate intern. Arvindh made these quick sketches while the students and Fearless Writers team wrote cards to the graduating seniors. (Sketches #1-#29) Arvindh also has a poem that introduces the high school writers' section of this issue.

DaMarco Hill

DaMarco who goes by Marco, grew up in Detroit, Michigan. He earned a BA in Psychology from UToledo. He is a recent graduate of the MSW program at UToledo. "When I was in high school, I was good at writing/ELA but did not really enjoy it. I am the type of person that has a hard time writing my thoughts because I always have so many. In my undergraduate studies, I wrote poetry as a hobby. I joined DEEP poetry and did a few events with Slick Talk Poetry as well. I also took many poetry/creative writing courses." Marco also has experience with being a paraprofessional for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade ELA. "I think creative writing is a healthy and a good way of expression/

advocacy/empowerment.” Fearless Writers was an opportunity to “reignite” his “creative/artistic flame along with helping high school students find or strengthen their own.” DaMarco was the 2022 recipient of the graduate College of Health and Human Services Dean’s award for outstanding diversity advocacy. We are proud to highlight some of Marco’s visual artwork in this publication. (Marco #1-Marco #7, & Marco Collage).

Gerald Natal BFA, MLIS, AHIP

Gerald is an Associate Professor and Health and Human Services Librarian. Gerald has coordinated the Health Science Campus student and faculty art exhibit. He authored the following article in 2023 on importance of art to library learning: Natal, G. & Remaklus, D. (2023). The library is my canvas: Art and experiential learning in an academic library. *College & Research Libraries*, 84(2), 169-179. <https://crl.acrl.org/index.php/crl/article/view/25807/33738> Gerald has worked for over a decade in various staff positions in public libraries. He began his professional career as a librarian at The Toledo Correctional Institution, Toledo, Ohio. Gerald was a Visiting Instructor of Information Literacy at The University of Toledo, then hired as Digital Services Librarian at UToledo’s Raymon H. Mulford Library.

Tim Sanderson

Tim is the College Computing Administrator for Health and Human Services. His office is covered in artwork he has completed while taking studio classes at the University of Toledo. Tim can also be found playing frisbee golf in the HHS building where he uses a soft frisbee to go and see various faculty members and spread joy and laughter. Tim was

an early adopter of a skateboard to get about campus. We are grateful for his time and talent on this project. (Afro, City, Drive By, Drum, Hands, Needles, Powerlines, Tim – Racism)

Lori Lux

Lori recently graduated from the Masters of Social Work program at UToledo. Originally from Toledo, she lives near campus with husband Tucker, five kids, two dogs and one cat. Lori loves to cook, read, stare out the window at nature and wander through Metroparks. When the world is not in a pandemic, you can find her and her husband using date nights to enjoy live music, usually in Ann Arbor and Detroit. Lori and Dr. Sloane Cleary are writing partners on an article inspired by Emily Dickinson, which was the catalyst for the Community Empathy Write featured in this issue. Lori runs grief support groups for children in Toledo Public Schools. (Paintings #1-#8)

Projects

Black Toledo

This project was inspired by Fearless Writers' attendance and presentation at the Black Issues Conference at Bowling Green State University February 2020 right before COVID-19 shutdown. We were hit by a snowstorm that Feb and only two juniors (Jalyn Brewington & Layla Alhajri – see *the quint 12.1* edition for writing from these students) were able to attend. Our seniors who had participated for four years were unable to attend (Blake Young, Jaylyn Ellis, Jevaughn Johnson, Tonerijah Johnson, and Laiah Snipes see *the quint 12.1* edition for writing from these students). The interns (Amy Rowe, Nick Mueser, and Duvonna Goins – see *the quint 12.1* edition for writing from these mentors) had fought hard for BGSU to sponsor transportation so that all the students who wanted to present at the conference could attend. The seniors work on gun violence was inspiring and continues to influence our participatory action research and engagement in the community. It was months of planning. Hearts broken, those of us that could reach BGSU enjoyed our time with participants and the students that presented left empowered and excited by the prospect of college. Bobby Seale gave the opening speech which had us curious and inspired to learn more about the Black Panther involvement in Toledo.

In February of 2020 we had only started to hear the rumors about COVID-19. Occasionally the students would bring up fear of the virus coming, including farfetched myth that would continue to plague Black communities. We left for spring break with no idea when we would ever be able to return to the high school. Internships became remote, complicated, and exhausting. We had a front seat view to how COVID-19 impacted neighborhoods differently. The book *Black Toledo: A Documentary History of*

the African American Experience in Toledo was used as inspiration for prompts and assisted a new team of Fearless Writers (Dai’ja Banks, Lori Lux, Tulani Black) in discovering artists and advocates from the area. Changing to a virtual format during COVID–19 restrictions allowed the project to expand to other high schools. Bringing high school students together from different neighborhoods was an early hope of Fearless Writers as the project has a commitment to raising awareness about the impact of redlining and neighborhood segregation (*The Color of Law*). We had very little involvement sadly from our original school. Many of our in-person students had increased responsibilities and technical difficulties that prohibited their involvement. We continued to reach out and include all students but Amariano Chaz Williams (see *the quint 12.1* for this student’s writing) was the only student from Rogers High School to join us regularly. Our small group of high school students were dedicated to the project. The virtual opportunity did however support the project in finding loyal, creative mentors and interns from the University of Toledo (Emiko Mar, Mitchell Pei, Clare Scantling, Maggie Nigro, Skyler Myers, Abigail Hernandez, and Julia Sayger are featured in this edition).

Together we explored the Harlem Renaissance and how the artists from New York impacted the Black community of Toledo. The Harlem Renaissance movement paralleled the discriminatory policies of redlining. We could see the two steps forward and one step back of that time and the devastation of these housing and banking policies was difficult to swallow. We also looked at the Black Arts movements that were companions to the Black Panther movement. We also looked at Black Utopia. The social work interns were intimately involved in the writing prompt development, and each owned an aspect of the journey. Inspired by the work of the Black Panthers in Toledo, we began a tradition of ending the year with a social justice community event. For our first year, inspired by the Black Toledo project, we invited representatives from Black Lives Matter (Community Solidarity Response Network) and *Guns to Garden Tools* and began to learn more about a spoken word project for teens in Toledo, MADD Poet Society. The following year we invited the Black barbers in Toledo who had been a part of the script writing and production of the short film, *SONS OF TOLEDO*, as well as the violence interrupters from the Save Our Community program run by the city of Toledo. This initial screening

led to several other screenings including a high school summit bringing Scott, Rogers, and Early College high school students together with adult leaders involved in violence interruption, gang violence, representative with the fire department, and mental health services. This project continues to inform all other Fearless Writers projects, which emphasize the poetry of writers of color, with a special emphasis on elevating the voices of women of color.

An article is in press involving this project for the journal *Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping*, “Building a Creative Community: Lessons Learned from Efforts to Expand a Youth Social Justice Writing Internship in a Pandemic” (Heather Sloane Cleary, Duvonna Goins, Amy Rowe, Nick Meuser, Dai’ja Banks, Lori Lux, and Tulani Black authors)

Teacher Retreats

As part of academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 the Fearless Writers Mentors noticed the fatigue of teachers in the Toledo Public Schools. We wanted to do something to support their mental health as they struggled through the unpredictability and the silent classrooms. We wanted to create a moment of relief for the teachers continually facing students out sick or not attending at all. We ran teacher writing retreats with a mix of teachers from a variety of Toledo Public Schools and grades represented. The social work interns developed the retreats, which focused on mindfulness and relaxation. Participants were given opportunities to write about anger and frustration and encouraged to consider life beyond the pandemic. Bill Weaver is the field director for the BSW program at the University of Toledo, a huge fan of the Beatles, and has served the Toledo community in various community mental health roles, including a long tenure at Correctional Treatment Facility. His poem is featured at the beginning of the “Projects” introduction.

Rising rates of Depression for Young People

When Fearless Writers returned in-person at Rogers High School (after the shutdown) in the fall of 2021 we attempted to go back to our old structure. First-year and sophomore students were engaged with less structured creative writing with a mixture of prompts from poetry and song to artwork and objects. Juniors and seniors were nurtured through a social justice research process. Our juniors began brainstorming social justice ideas but as we began writing, the students were not feeling excited about the project and demanded we go back to writing into joy, mystery, anything but sadness. The students were unanimous in their exhaustion with heavy topics. After a small amount of debate amongst the mentors and interns, we agreed that having mindful, creative time in the COVID-19 era was what was needed.

The juniors and seniors did agree to write for a month about the rising rates of depression and anxiety for young people, particularly young women of color. You will find this writing in the sophomore, junior, and senior writing in this edition. The students would like to remind readers in the United States of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, which has recently changed to 988. In this project we learned that there are mental health benefits to creative writing. Creative writing allows the writer to release emotions, is a place to be brave and share stories instead of keeping them in. Writing is a reliable coping mechanism in tough times and when nurtured can be a lifelong support. Writing is a place where young people can take safe risks and create a moment of excitement and thrill when life is stressful. Writing is a way to be valued by peers and adults and can build self-esteem. Writing is a way to contribute to your community and foster a sense of pride. Writing communities model positive feedback and create a culture of positive regard. Writing communities create space for different perspectives and belonging.

We also learned from this project that depression looks differently in the Black community. It does not always appear sad. Often people wear a brave face. This toughness has been passed down from generation to generation, an artifact of historical trauma. There is a history in the United States of the helping professions dismissing and not

believing women of color's pain both physical and emotional pain. There is a heightened sense of grief in Black communities in the United States because of the larger impact of COVID-19 on communities of color, police brutality, and rising gun violence in communities of color since the shutdown. Sadness and hopelessness may be emotions that children and parents keep from each other to protect each other from further stress.

. NAMI of Toledo featured writing from this project to raise awareness about mental health concerns for young people of color on their social media summer 2022. The information below was explored in creating prompts for the students and for presentations and exhibits featured at Human Trafficking Conference at UToledo and the Black Issues Conference:

- Black teen girl suicide:

<https://time.com/6046773/black-teenage-girls-suicide/>

- Suicide of Cheslie Kryst

<https://time.com/6144974/cheslie-kryst-black-american-suicide-misconceptions/>

- Student mental health decline

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/03/31/student-mental-health-decline-cdc/>

- Growing mental health crisis among teens

<https://www.npr.org/2022/04/17/1093240526/new-cdc-survey-warns-of-growing-mental-health-crisis-among-teens>

Powerful prompts used by the internship team to inspire writing and discussion:

- Taraji P. Henson – Rethinking the pressure of “strong Black woman”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iNNXnrZlsOA>

- Animated affirmations:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWDc6cYi3pU>

- Crows in a Strong Wind by Cornelius Eady

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48368/crows-in-a-strong-wind>

•Mental health barz – by Ebony Stewart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIGWWPwJlNY>

Human Trafficking – 11/28/22

We were excited the senior girls wanted to explore and learn more about human trafficking prevention this year. Celia Williamson and Anna Schramm (Coordinator of the annual Human Trafficking and Social Justice conference at the University of Toledo) joined us from the Human Trafficking and Social Justice Institute to write with the students and teach us about sex trafficking. The young women involved in this project wrote several pieces that will be entered into a poetry contest sponsored by the Human Trafficking Coalition in the Toledo community. Aniyah Powell, Lori Williams, Amanda Kerkenbush, My'lah Hamlett, and Savana Uzoigne writing will also be highlighted at the twentieth anniversary Human Trafficking and Social Justice conference in September 2023 in a youth exhibit emphasizing the power of art to raise awareness about injustice. The senior girls also assisted in building writing prompts and information for teachers in the district interested in learning more with their students about human trafficking and the prevention of victimization. Fearless Writers benefitted from a bachelor's intern in public health spring semester 2023, Arya Nair, who worked on pulling inspirational quotes from the classic book *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* (Pipher, 1994). We noticed in our writing from these prompts inspired by human trafficking, that the young women would write about being mistreated and misunderstood, to empathize with those in their community who fell prey to trafficking. Many considered the reasons they had been spared and what has helped them to stay resilient and aware of potentially dangerous situations in their community. If you are interested in receiving information on the prompts and human trafficking training and resources, please reach out to Dr. Sloane Cleary at heather.sloane@utoledo.edu.

Encyclopedia of an Extraordinary Life Continued

As mentioned in *the quint* Dec 2019 edition (12.1) “It was my stepmother, a retired high school writing specialist and facilitator of writing groups, who lead me to the Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life (2005) By Amy Krouse Rosenthal. A desire to write memoirs of your life is common among adult writers but to encourage memoir writing with youth writers seems odd. The book is used by sophomore writers as an example of how a simple prompt can spark so much thought. Ironically, the students have only lived for fifteen/sixteen years and are still at the beginning of their lives, but their life pours out on the page all the same.” Coming back together after the COVID shutdown, this project was helpful to share light-hearted stories. This project has remained popular with the Fearless Writers. We now begin each letter with a game where we think of all the words, we can with that letter in 30 seconds. You will note we did not get through the alphabet due to testing disruptions and our sophomore writers are broken into two groups (boys and girls), which means we have them every other week.

Why Not Joy?

A good amount of the writing you will see highlighted for each writer is silly, fun, beautiful, and full of imagination. We are beginning to learn about adversity and grief as a writing community. The high school students we are serving are facing regular adversity and trauma. This is also true for many of the first-generation university students who have gravitated to the Fearless Writers project. The young people involved in this project are also grieving the loss of loved ones to a virus and to gun violence. We are learning about protective factors and ways to nurture resilience. Fearless Writers plays a part in building Benevolent Childhood Experiences to counter Adverse Childhood Experience (Ungar, 2023). Fearless Writers gives students an opportunity to make friends, adults care, it is fun, it is a part of the school routine, it is a part of what students like about their school. Writing prompts and the Amherst Writers and Artist (Schneider, 2003)

process promote mindfulness and stress reduction. Fearless Writers was picked to lead a healing coalition with other community school partners, to consider the ways in which community members can better support students, families, teachers, and staff during this time of stretched resources and political tension in the United States.

Neighborhood Segregation Revisited

As mentioned in the introduction to this edition, early work in Fearless Writers looked at the impact of redlining policies on social determinants of health and wellbeing. By purposely segregating neighborhoods by race and class neighborhoods were set up for failure and struggle. Housing and education are two key components to social mobility. Labeling neighborhoods desirable or undesirable had a direct impact on generational wealth. Some experts posit that neighborhood segregation is the “fundamental cause” of health disparities in the United States (Kramer & Hogue, 2009). As a writing/research community we have started to look back at the early writing Fearless Writers did on neighborhood segregation. In this look back we decided to have mentors from the university write about their experiences in their childhood neighborhoods and their experiences in our predominantly white institution to gain helpful insights into the challenges of segregation to higher education. A selection of those stories have been included in this edition.

Community Empathy Write

Emily Dickinson’s poetry was referenced regularly during the shutdown surrounding COVID-19. Scholars called her the “patron saint of isolation (Roy, 2020).” Her writing inspired the public, shut in as the result of a pandemic, to consider what we take for granted. Apple TV released a three season show named *DICKINSON*, which was a queering of the myth surrounding her poetry and personality. This renewed fascination

with a loved American poet had Dr. Sloane Cleary wondering about the lost stories of the pandemic, particularly for women in our community. Fearless Writers continued to face obstacles in bringing university mentors to the high school. The timing that worked for the high school students did not work for the college students. Fearless Writers Community Empathy Write: Discovering the Impact of COVID-19 on Women Inspired by the Poetry and Life of Emily Dickinson was designed to work with a writing group in-person, virtually, or independently to accommodate all schedules. We also started to include retired members from the community whose schedules were more flexible. As an interprofessional and interdisciplinary project we were becoming more aware of Narrative Medicine as an exchange of writing between patient and physician to increase empathy and understanding. We also started to learn of our place within a vibrant community writing movement within the United States, which includes New York Writers Coalition, New Orleans Story Project, Mighty Writers, and Louisville Story Project. Because of these projects we wanted to consider what could be learned about healthcare disparities by bringing the community together to look more closely at experiences of a pandemic to see what important ideas may be generated from this shared writing experience. Excerpts from this project are shared in this edition.

Complicated Origami

Smoldering emotions, welling up, burning bright, they ignite a might in me that might be angry, or it might be sad, or mad, or glad.

To let them be is what I need, but sometimes I don't want to let them free, so I fold them like paper to try to conceal.

Create a complicated origami that keeps me safe.

But that's not how emotions work, so the spark that I was trying to repress comes back and ignites me again.

Maybe a better choice would be to write them down then burn them out until they no longer shout in my head.

—*Bill Weaver*

Care

How can we convince people to care?

Most people will say they care, but are their words enough?

What does it mean to care about something?

Is it just “thoughts and prayers”?

Is that enough or does it even make a difference?

“Care” is a verb, meaning there is an action associated with it.

If you care about something or someone, for example, you show them you care through actions, like listening to them when they need to talk or bringing them their favorite food if they’ve had a bad day.

So then, to care about someTHING also means we need to act.

For some (or most) they aren’t driven to action until a certain issue affects them.

But why must it come to that?

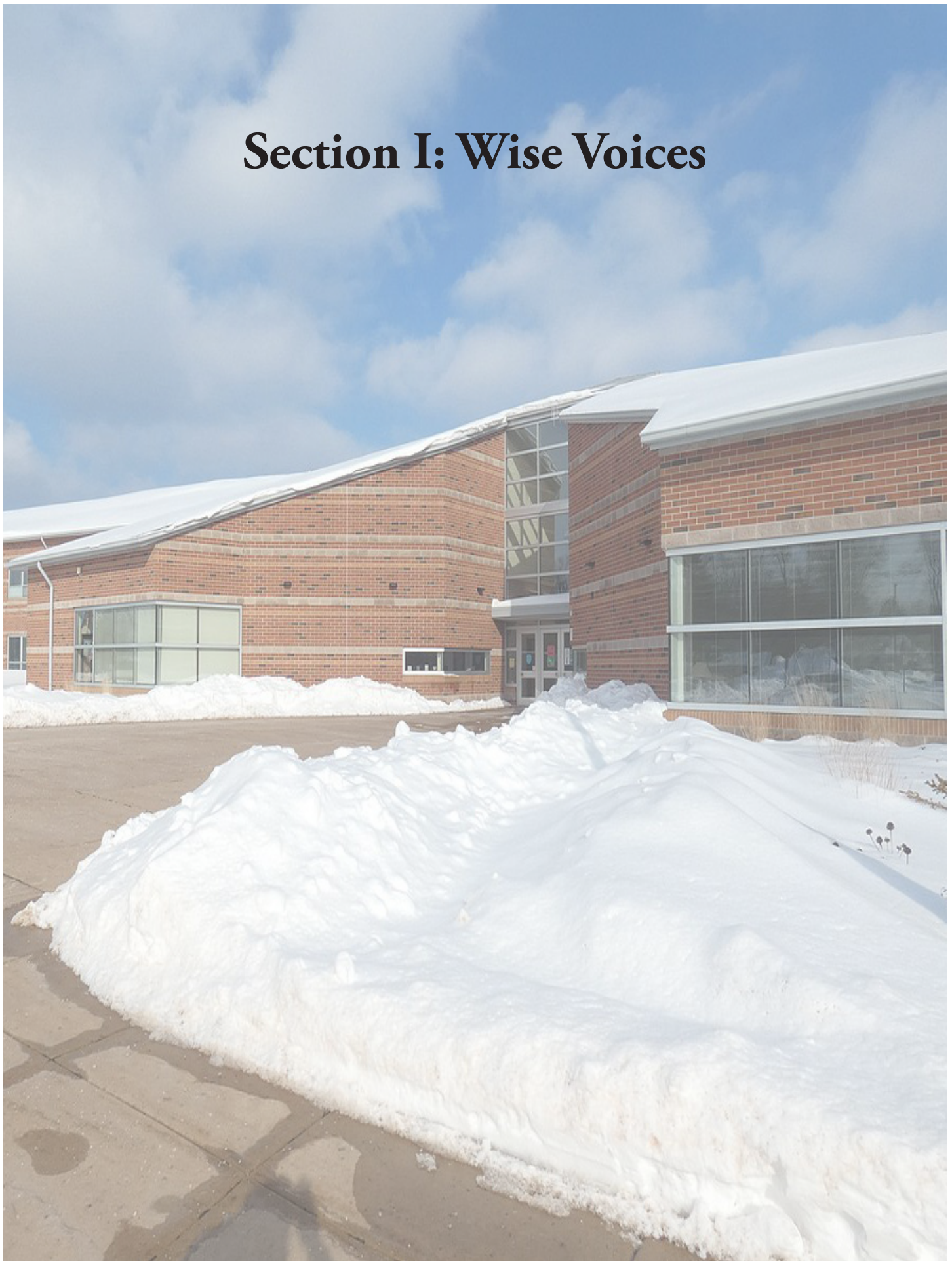
People always say they care and want to do something, but then life gets in the way.

So how do we convince people to care?

Because we won’t make progress if we don’t act.

—*Anna Schramm*

Section I: Wise Voices



Keep the Pen Moving: Ode to Writing, Social Justice and Creativity

“Keep the Pen Moving”

The advice given to people who want to write,
holds good for sketching as well:

I sit, captivated by what I see –

young minds writing about Social Justice; living in challenging times;
graduating from high school

As students share their sense of joy and loss,

I sketch - rapid gestural drawings

I want the essence of this moment in pen-and-ink

“That looks like me!”

“Am I in there?”

“Yeah! There I am!”

They recognize themselves in the sketches.

I smile –

I recognize myself in these students

Our pens

have done the talking:

moving poetry and line-drawings

capture the spirit

of the moment

we were privileged to share

—*Arvindhan Natarajan*

Part I: High School Writers Seniors

If I were to describe the young women graduating from Fearless Writers in 2023, I would use the word LEADERSHIP. This group gained and lost members over the years and were always welcoming to new members, new mentors, and new interns. Lori, My'lah, Amanda, Savannah, and Aniyah were never afraid to tackle the hard stuff. They enjoyed the playful prompts and were quick to blend romance with horror. They were also willing to write about depression and human trafficking, gun violence and COVID-19. They were not intimidated to write beside great writers like Emily Dickinson, Maya Angelou, Langston Hughes, Amanda Gorman, and all the other poems put before them to consider and to masterfully weave into their own thoughts on the page. Their smiles, their words, even their grumpy moments will be missed. We thank Celia Williamson and Anna Schramm for making special visits to write with these young ladies. We also appreciate Davion Williams (https://news.utoledo.edu/index.php/04_20_2023/english-professor-led-graduating-senior-to-discover-passion-for-writing) coming to share his spoken word performance with us.

Amanda Kerkenbush

Amanda is a senior at Rogers High School and a four-year member of Fearless Writers.

Depression is real

Depression is real.

“You need to socialize more.”

“Smile,” It’s not that serious.”

Then why does it constantly feel like the world is weighing down on me, leaving me curious.

“Go talk to someone,” “what’s wrong?”

“All you do is frown.”

Well maybe if someone understood I wouldn’t be so down.

“You’re not depressed,”

“You laugh and smile all the time.”

Well maybe that’s a cover up so I don’t show what’s on my mind.

Depression doesn’t have a certain look, so tired of the judging.

It eats and tears you apart until you are left with nothing.

The question is why?

The question is why, but there is no answer, there is no answer that could satisfy or leave me at peace, 4, 13 or even 22, they don't care.

They don't care about your innocence, responsibilities, or dependents.

She was 4, just innocent and pure of heart, playing outside spreading her spark.

She doesn't have the knowledge, so young and naïve, events progressed she couldn't believe.

Her size and ignorance usually make people happy and adore, but to the wicked and sick they see it as more.

They took advantage and left her stripped of her purity.

Now this is all she knows; she has no security.

Going to a get-together with someone she trusts, just 13 and living she was unaware of their lust.

“How could they, I trusted them,” was her withering words, betrayal and heart break swarmed her like birds.

Screaming, pleading and tortured, she was in disbelief, sexualized, violated and used, she felt while in grief.

Two Men Tabling at a Coffee Shop

As we're sitting down for a cup of tea, we are talking about numerous things.

Likes, passions, struggles, strengths, fears.

In the beginning I'm thinking to myself “I wish he would wrap his lecture up I'm bored.”

Yawning in my mind everything is going one ear out the other.

He starts telling me all the expectations he has for me, life lessons and all these other things “old heads” normally say.

Being the stubborn man, I am I ask, “why are you telling me all this useless information?”

As our eyes are darting at each other he responds, “Because I don't want you to give

these lectures to others when you're my age."

I think to myself "wow, he's not just saying these things and lecturing me because he thinks he knows everything or just being a typical old head, he's been through everything he's preaching at me.

My perspective and outlook on all of my elders are different now.

Recent Act of Kindness

Me and my boyfriend were on our way to the zoo, and I saw a man sitting on the side of the street with his daughter holding up a "family in need" sign. They looked tired, hungry, and helpless so we pulled over and I gave them \$40. Also, I was out eating at Texas Roadhouse, and someone paid our bill.

Who really has the control?

Who really has the control?

Power & control

Something most can't handle and don't deserve.

These "leaders" we're supposed to look up to are the ones who truly

Don't care.

So, what are they the leader of?

Guiding us into what they want the world to be.

Leaving us astray into their Netherland

Who says their vision is right?

Who says that their actions are pure?

Their care for society is as big as their open-mindedness.

Tell them their wrongs, it goes one ear and out the other.

Who are we to stop it?

According to them we don't have the power nor control, they do.

But who gave them this control? WE did.

We as a whole allowed the ignorant and unhinged to manipulate and control us

If we don't like it any don't we just change it?
It's not that simple and easy, but it is not impossible.

“Don't look for what isn't there”

“Don't look for what isn't there.”

It's like searching for the sun in a sky full of stars, urging to find a Greenleaf when the city is covered in white.

It's not there.

Looking for support and care from someone who doesn't hold those characteristics.

Making a mess in your mind to find out there that care may be in them.

It's not there.

Just you wondering upon their thoughts is all you want right?

All you want is for them to consider you as a person instead of a character.

Searching for the feeling of being acknowledged.

It's not there.

So when will it ever be?

It will never be there.

So instead of looking there direct your mind to a new scene.

I am an upstander

An upstander I am.

Not allowing myself or others to accept the degrading heat of slander.

Not letting others be in charge of me and manipulate.

I am the commander.

Commander of my own thoughts, actions, and views.

You must decipher yourself from negative influence and be you.

Acknowledging the wrongs of others.

Calling them out and educating them too.

Do not follow those who are ignorant, be taught and influenced by those who are diligent.

Songs by Nina Simone

I wish I knew how it feels to be free. Although the laws say that we are unbound and gave all the rights to our will, I still feel strained. Society is tied up in metal chains. I wish to be free from overthinking if I locked all the doors in my house, I want to be free from only feeling safe going to stores in the daytime, I wish to be free from being afraid to turn down a man in fear of my life. I don't want to feel like my stomach swallowed my heart every time I see a tinted-out van. These are fear most women and even men endure. I wish I knew how it felt to be free, but will we ever?

You go outside

You go outside, look at the street and see tons of cars passing by. I know we think of them as just cars but each one of those cars has people in it with a story, dreams, and a destination. The Lamborghini is probably rich and successful with a happy life, the Camero is well off and stable, and the 2001 Nissan is struggling to make ends meet. All judgements on appearance and not through a deeper take. The Lambo is rented, and the driver is suffering through the hardest time of their life, the Camero is a debt and is on their way to work to scrape up some change, and the Nissan, is going to their high-rise apartment where they have saved up \$200,000 for their dream home and a new car. They all have a story, but you never really know which one fits.

But why?

The question is why, but there is no answer. There is no answer that could satisfy or leave me at peace. 4, 13, or even 22, they don't care. They don't care about your innocents, responsibilities, or dependents. She was 4, just innocent and pure of heart, playing outside spreading her spark. She doesn't have the knowledge, so young and naïve, events progressed she couldn't believe.

Her size and ignorance usually make people happy and adored, but to the wicked and sick they see it as more. They took advantage and left her stripped of her purity, now this is all she knows, she has no security.

Going to a get-together with someone she trusts, just 13 and living she was unaware of their lust. “How could they, I trusted them,” was her withering words, betrayal and heart break swarmed her like birds. Screaming, pleading, and tortured she was in disbelief, sexualized, violated, and used she felt while in grief.

Walking around downtown

Walking around downtown half naked and seductively, I am judged and mocked. I am not viewed as human. Torn down and tired from hearing about how I have no self-respect, I am worthless and nothing but an object, dirty, and money hungry. I have no control over myself, I am a pawn being played & manipulated. A random person who doesn't even know my circumstances critiquing me you are. Behind this half naked and desperate girl is a group of careless, cash obsessed, pervy manipulators. They are an evil cult who creates these women you call sluts and whores. Never judge, just get involved and be the change so you will no longer see the women desperate for money and sex on the streets. The truth is they aren't desperate for money they're fighting not to be killed.



N. Aravindhan

28 APR 2023

Aniyah Powell

Aniya is a senior at Rogers High School and a four-year member of Fearless Writers.

Amanda Gorman - Ted Talk on poetry is political

Your voice and actions are the most important things in life. Those two things reflect on everything whether it's answering a question, standing up to someone, it's anything in today's generation people depend on a voice. People demand to be heard. There's so much negativity in this world. That I'm starting to realize that everything matters it doesn't matter if its small, big, or enormous. I want to make a change. I want the guns down; I want everyone to know we are all equal to each other. I want to make everything better but I'm just little ole me. I need everyone to pitch in. I want everyone to know it's okay to voice out your opinion. It's okay to let people know how you feel. It's okay to stand your ground.

Honestly

Honestly, I don't know if I like this quote, "Finally I was able to see that if I had a contribution I wanted to make, I must do it. Despite what others said. That I was okay the way I was." This really spoke to me. In my experience I always cared about what others thought about me such as how I looked, what I wore, what I liked, what I did. It's one of my insecurities I'm working on and getting better at it.

I get up in the morning and tell myself good things. I am taking my esteem back from the people who took it from me. I always give people a positive compliment cause one small thing could change someone's day in a heartbeat. I don't want anyone to feel as I once did. I want to be that change.

“Love builds”

“Love builds” this two-word phrase
Can mean so much without even explaining
To me this phrase means once you love something or someone
It can build you to be a better person or to do something better
Love builds relationships
Love builds our life
Love builds the community
Love builds the earth
Love is the one of the strongest powers
Nothing can win against love
But you also have to be careful with love
Love can also put you in dangerous places
Love builds
Take that phrase and make the most of it.

Your voice and actions are the most important things in life.

Those two things reflect on everything whether it's answering a question, standing up to someone, it's anything. In today's generation people depend on a voice. People demand to be heard. There's so much negativity in this world. That I'm starting to realize that everything matters, it doesn't matter if it's small, big, enormous. I want to make a change. I want the guns down, I want everyone to know we care, all equal to each other. I want to make everything better but I'm just little ole me. I need everyone to pitch in. I want everyone to know it's okay to voice out your opinion. It's okay to let people know what you feel. It's okay to stand your ground.

Sons of Toledo is a good thing

Sons of Toledo is a good thing in our community with all the violence going on.

The violence in Toledo is sickening.

I wish there was more for me to do, or I should say, us.

It's sad that there is so much Black on Black crime.

These ongoing cycles need to end.

Make it stop!

It is sad that everyone knows how it feels to be numb.

Everyone feels like no one understands or knows what it feels like, but we all do.

We need to care together.

We need to change.

Dark girl city, the city couldn't hold

The city evolves around you

Your dark chocolate skin, dark brown eyes make the scene at night

When you walk in the room you take away the gloom.

The room stares maybe even some glances.

The city couldn't hold you even if it wanted to.

Nina Simone song

I wish I knew how it would be to be free.
I wish I could break all the chains holding me
I wish I could say all the things that I should say
We wish, we dream, we imagine
Why don't we use the things to change
People don't realize we are the future
We hold back the things that should be done.
Feeling trapped in our same ways that should be changed.
Our voice is the change
If we don't speak up it will stay the same.
There is no more could, should, would've.
Can't wish or imagine
We can do it and it will be done.

Most of us don't think about it till it happens

Most of us don't think about it till it happens
Walking to school passing the same raggedy house on my street Mr. Poppins house.
At another family reunion not wanting to be there. I'm very antisocial. I stay in my room
and never come out.
At the gas station at the counter paying for my gas, he comes up to me very aggressively
talking to me.
I try to ignore but he waves it off. I look down at my clothes and don't understand, why
me?
He follows me to my car. I'm thinking of how to get him away from me. I'm alone, just
me and him.
I'm underage, he doesn't care. He comes up to me, I can smell the alcohol on his breath,
I'm scared and don't know what to do.

He's drunk

He doesn't stop
He doesn't know the word stop
That's his excuse
I'm drowning, it hurts

Sitting in front of the fireplace watching the fire burn

The paper and wood thinking about the memories we had
Tear by tear comes down my face slowly. I didn't think I would come to this
My friends think I am obsessed, but they don't know the love we had.
You are my peace

Lying on the couch

Lying on the couch in front of the fireplace, lying on your chest
Hearing your heartbeat, I don't think you understand you're once my peace and other
half.
Your presence gives me peace.

Ophelia Rising

My secret scars my imperfections
My weakness my flaws are what make me
It makes me hate myself, it makes me wonder why I can't be normal.

Why can't I be perfect?

I hide myself from the whole world because of how insecure I am.

Why did God make me this way.

I hide everywhere I go because I feel so alone.

Why doesn't anyone notice I'm slowly dying?

Am I not important?

I look around and see everyone jolly and happy, then there is me.

Why can't I be like them?

I try to fit in it just makes me embarrass myself more than I already look.

I want to be happy; I want to be normal.

I wonder does anyone else feel like me?

Does anyone else want to feel normal?

Laying in the sand

Laying in the sand watching the sunset letting the water hit my feet.

I lay here searching for something to worry about.

My mind won't let me.

This was my mom's favorite spot and I always wondered why.

It feels like I'm not in reality

My problems just went away and I'm not looking forward to facing them.

I feel at peace, I feel calm.

Watching the sun go down slowly made me worry about what I will do?

Why can't the sunset be around all day?

I wondered what it's like to be the sunset - is it just as calm and peaceful as it looks?



N. Arvindhan
28 APR 2023

Lori Wilson

Lori is a senior at Rogers High School and a four-year member of Fearless Writers.

poetry is political

(inspired by Amanda Gorman - Ted Talk)

“Those shoes are too ugly,” “these clothes are too cheap” all things that don’t matter to me.

People stop and stare and judge what you choose to wear, even how you wear your hair and yet they’re going nowhere?

A piece of cloth on my arm or the sole of my shoe does not change or make me what I want to do but the question is do you let these people change you?

You go out spending your whole check too unstable that you’re feeling about feeling worthless

Hoping someone notices that you’re just like them.

Do you want to be like them?

Or do you wanna make a change?

Everyone doing the exact same thing doesn’t that feel strange?

So no, they won’t influence me.

I want to be different; I want the world to be different by doing that I don’t focus on the materialistic.

Every day

Every day I dread waking up.
Sick of making and breaking up.
The past may hurt.
And the past may burn.
But it is up to you to live and learn.
Are you gonna let this stop your next endeavor
Or will you use those bricks to help you rise higher than ever.
The past may have you tired, and the past may have you beat.,
But I promise God would not put you through it if you were weak.
Stay strong!
You have to focus on what you are!
The present and the future.
Your past doesn't define you; you do.
You shouldn't judge you because the end will be a thrill.

Being the author of my life

Who am I with no regrets or uncertainties?

The ideal life that my mind has created for me is a life without problems and betrayal.

I've spent way too long depending and waiting on people to do right by me.

I've spent way too long trying to live up to the expectations people have of me.

I finally said enough is enough.

I'm tired of being lied to, I'm tired of being betrayed.

I'm tired of giving my all to the wrong people.

I'm tired of feeling like I'm not enough.

I am tired and for the first time ever I feel like I'm enough.

I learned to live up to MY expectations only.

And if that's letting my curls run free while walking barefoot on the beach then so be it.

Taraji P. Henson Strong Black Woman

It's OK to not be OK!!!

Everyone depends on you.

Everyone goes to you.

You check up on people, but who checks up on you?

Your mind is racing with the thought of not wanting to be here anymore.

The reality is you're already dead inside you're just forced to live with other people.

Here's everyone piling their problems on you not knowing your body is like a cement wall being hit with a wrecking ball.

You can't really be mad at them because they don't know.

But you check on them why couldn't they do the same for you?

You never hesitate to pick up your phone and text them and call them.

No matter what you go through nobody is there for you.

Nobody ever will you have to be that person for you.

You have to love you.

If no one cares, you have to forget what they go through to be there for you.

It's ok to not be ok!

It's ok to want a break, everyone makes mistakes, it's up to you to go or stay.

The Strong Friend

“No one can tell I'm doing bad but me”

I can pick and choose what I want you to see.

When I'm down, you see me up.

Not because I don't think your genuine but because I want you to see me up.

Sometimes the bad outweighs the good but It's OK.

No, not at all but I'm going to tell you that it is because as “the” strong friend, what would I be if not strong.

Everyone expects you to be OK all the time and I'm pretty good at hiding it most of the time.

I'm the friend that puts my things aside to help or even watch others shine.

Look out for people's feelings but why?

They don't look out for mine.

Because I'm “the” strong friend.

And as “the” strong friend I'm getting weaker and weaker, sadder and sadder and this is depression.

Yeah, it's getting deeper, lonely nights you have nothing to do but drown in your sorrows but I'm fine how about you?

We are women

Women have to deal with a lot of criticism especially from our own kind.

Safe to say we are our worst critics.

We always want to be what someone else is and we always want to have what someone else has.

We think that we lose sight of what we already have so much.

As women we need to focus on loving ourselves and the skin that we are in.

We need to learn how to stop putting each other down and stop fitting the stereotype men give us.

We are strong, powerful and beautiful. We are women.

Waiting Room

Shaking, sweating anxious

The time on the clock moving slower and slower

Pacing back and forth

Other families doing the same

Head pounding, hearts racing, waiting to hear the results.

I hang my head low praying with my fingers. The doctor comes in and everything goes blurry

I couldn't hear anything but the lioness roar of a childless mother

Dressed in red

Dressed in red from her head down to her feet, eyes filled with spirit to become who she's destined to be.

My admiration for her blinded me therefore I could not see, the person she wanted to be like was just like me.

I humbled myself as I broke her out of her shell, the shy little girl was excited to jump and yell.

So very excited she showed her gratitude with a grin.

Words can't explain how it feels that I helped her be comfortable in her own skin.

I disagree

Many people believe that you get in life what you have the courage to ask for.

I disagree. If you walk through life silently following the rest, you'll get only what they think you deserve.

If you walk through life silently leading, you never need the courage to ask the rest;

You get it on your own.

There are very few leaders today because many are lost, confused, and probably afraid to step up.

It's so unusual for people to "lead" now but while they dwell on building courage to eat at someone's table, I'll be making my own.

"Build your own table, so people can't ask what you're bringing to theirs."

"Yet the fact is I can touch a wound"

Lost in my mind and the light in my thoughts.

Questioning my integrity and what it is I've brought.

Losing my passion for all just doesn't feel right.

Through it all my happiness was my biggest sacrifice.

Forcing myself to love things like I did once before.

My cup of love and care is almost empty looking for no one but me to represent me.

Ready to leave it all and walk out the door.

Where I would go, I don't know hoping to know soon.

But no matter where I go, I'll still be able to touch my wound.

Shine so bright

Standing there letting the sun glisten and gleam.

Holds a melanated woman with a demeanor so mean.

She planted stories and lessons with just little seeds.

Telling the world how heavy she bleeds.

She spends her time meditating, forgetting the pain.

Especially when her childhood was taken away too fast.

When he touched her, it put her life on hold.

But developed her a personality so bold.

She stands outside letting nature shine so bright.

Being independent and strong is only right.

17 miles

(inspired by Nina Simone)

Don't tell me you understand until you've walked 17 miles in my shoes.

Along the journey my heart has been beaten, battered and bruised.

Only to feel one feeling...used.

"I wish you could know what it means to be me."

Just trying not to disappoint and be who everyone wants me to be.

"I wish I could share all the love in my heart" without feeling that my love and trust is drifting apart.

Who you want me to be is not who I want to pursue.

"Though I'm way overdue "I'd be starting new."

Steps

1. Don't look. Eye contact shows interest. You're not interested. I wonder if I don't look can he smell my fear.
2. Look less attractive. No one addresses a less attractive girl. Maybe he'll use the fact that I'm timid to his advantage.
3. Don't tell anyone. No matter what you say or how traumatizing it is it's your fault. Your perfume was too loud. Your clothes were too distracting. Your face was too beautiful. He was going through a lot. You shouldn't have been there because running out of gas on the side of the road at night is the safer option. Your hurt but it doesn't matter you've ruined this man's life because of your stupid inconsiderate need to be pretty.

You are left with the thought and the desire to cover your beauty because he couldn't control himself. But just follow those steps. You'll be fine.

Build a love within yourself

An overthinking mind that is taking in negative comments from misinterpreted signals.
Thinking of how you can change their mind.

A waste of time.

Build a love within yourself to not care about other opinions positive or negative.

Fulfill your goals the way you want without the thoughts of offending someone.

Stop restricting your knowledge so the next can understand.

If they don't already understand they never will.

Know your intentions.

Know your ethic and know your worth.

“Cozy”

You are my cozy. My safe haven, my routine.

When I'm not with you I'm alone.

I never thought love could be a person until I met you.

When I'm with you I'm my happiest, calmest, warmest self.

I haven't been able to do the things I love the most because I was depending on pain to give me motivation.

I realize toxic motivation is just a wall standing in front of you blocking you from letting go and stopping me from seeing that the only person hurting me was me.

All the things I want are starting to happen all thanks to me, but your love, appreciation and support plays a BIG role.

“Black mail,” “favors, and owning”

You sought me out at my weakest moment.

You offered a favor that made me feel bad to refuse.

It had not dawned on me that you would use that as a scapegoat to get what you want from me.

The sickest part is that you knew what you wanted from the beginning but like the

narcissist you are you pretended.

Now I am in a hole, and you are making it hard to get out of.

You contend your favors and mine as if our friendship was a fraction equation.

Why did you offer?

Why did you offer something as if you were a businessman and not a friend.

Why would you offer?

I did not ask you to make it like our friendship was an app.

Silly me for not reading the terms and conditions.

“POV human trafficking scene”

Panting Hello, hello? Can anybody hear me?

Shh, Shh I don't want them to hear the fear in me.

O God how did I get here?

I should've known he wasn't tryna be nice just came out of nowhere.

Take your mind off it someone will come soon....

Breathes I CAN'T I'M trapped in a dark room, the floor is as cold as the system and these chains are as tight as my wallet.

I'm mad at the government

I'm mad at the President

I'm mad at the store... NO NO NO...

I'm mad at my outfit...NO my outfit is cute anyone could wear it...

I'm mad at my mother.... She's responsible for my looks.

I'm mad at my ancestors because who said it was fair to not let black crack.

I look innocent and scared, curvaceous and beautiful and 12...

I'm 24...I'm 24 cold scared and alone in or out of this room I'm alone I blame the absence of my father.



N. Aravindhan
28 APR 2023

My'lah Hamlett

My'lah is a senior at Rogers High School and a four-year member of Fearless Writers.

“Rest in the Morning”

Waking up without a life to live, things to do promises to keep.

Living a day-to-day life you have to stay on your feet.

Waking up with things on your mind, you keep going. Stay on your grind

You didn't plan on being stressed; you have to go on striving for the best.

Although you think the worst you have to be thankful, you're not lying in the back of a hearse.

I know you are hurt, I feel your pain, things never stay the same.

You lie down with things on your mind and receive strength every night.

On a breezy Friday

On a breezy Friday afternoon in October, I sat on my nice fuzzy couch with the windows open with a candle lit slipping a nice warm hot chocolate. As time went by in the blink of an eye before I knew it, it was dark and then I remembered. At 10 pm, me and my 3 friends had plans on going out. Since it seems that we are always so busy with work to do so around 9:30 I texted the girls that I was not up to par with the idea of going out and after that I went...

In the middle of me sleeping peacefully I hear a knock at the door, I look up and check my phone, but no one has left me a message. I double looked and saw it was 10:30 so no one came over this late at night. So, I go to the door and open it with curiosity and anger. But I was glad to see that it was my 3 friends, they surprised me. Everyone came with cozy pajamas, blankets, and smiles. We didn't make it to go out, so we had a night in with joy. Snacks, lit candles that smell amazing and of course all the Halloween town movies.

Suitcase

I see this black and silver suitcase and I think of myself about 9 years ago and waking up around 8am on a sunny yet chilly Saturday morning using the restroom and brushing my teeth. After being in the restroom I walk downstairs to the smell of a lit tropical breeze candle mixed with carpet freshener and that fresh vacuum smell with a hint of cleaning products. When I hit the bottom of the steps, I hear my dad's old school hits getting louder. I bend around the corner and see my dad, his barber chair, his smack, and I see a suitcase. He pops the locks open, and I see all his clippers, guards, brushes, oil sheens and other tools. As I am standing there, I hear a knock on the front door, my dad opens it and it's his first client, the young boy sits down, and my dad gets to work doing what he loves.

Mental Health as a Black Child

You cry, you scream, you rage, you break. On the inside you just break.

We put on this smile, this laugh, these feelings, not wanting questions but wanting progress, not wanting attention but needing help. Feeling these feelings but nowhere to go. You get the courage to speak out, we address how everything is becoming dark but all you get is “ain’t nun wrong with you” or a “you was just with yo friends laughing” you try and try to explain these things but instead you just bashed , bashed by the ones who you thought you could trust most. You don’t want to go to your friends. They’re all facing something 10x worse, so you smile, smile until you can’t anymore. The dark takes over you, you feel numb and have this cold shoulder, cold heart you give up but you’re still here, a young black child who once had dreams, now facing a world without this one thing. This one thing is feeling something you no longer feel but you have things to do and no time to heal. So, cry, scream and break. I know it may sound dark to some but like I said you no longer feel.

[This response was Featured in the Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference 2022 and utilized by NAMI Toledo summer 2022 to raise awareness about rising rates of depression for young people of color.]

Positive thoughts

Positive thoughts, positive feelings, positive rumors, positive dreaming, to have a positive life try to think of all these things.

Don’t be mean, but be positive and see green, money, life, grass and trees.

Your only focus doesn’t have to be money but think positive and have motive.

Enjoy life and make memories, but don’t forget you have enemies.

They may not show it but let’s not forget everyone has motive – good or bad, doesn’t be sad, just get up and make the world mad.

BHM

Today is Feb 1st the shortest month of the year. I'm honestly confused as to why justice is barely here. Yes, my people are free, but c'mon let's be honest everything is not peaches and cream. They say hard times doesn't last long in which I believe but life is short, when am I going to get peace. Now back to Justice. Black mothers can barely sleep knowing that having a black son isn't for the weak.

They kill, blame, lock up and seek, these poor ole boys who just want peace.

The cards

The cards you were dealt in this life of sin are the cards you must play hand by hand.

There is no plus two or draw 4. It's simply, keep playing or use the door.

It's no extra cards in the deck you gotta keep playing, no reason to suspect.

Don't be curious about what the next person has, it causes jealousy, and it could get really bad.

The game never waits, everything is day to day. So, use your hours, minutes, seconds to choose your card because what's behind that door doesn't get you far.

Yes, it's scary and it's not fair but like Ebony Stewart said, "check on your strong friends" even if it seems like they don't care.

Act of kindness

Giving back/blessing others is a love language of mine.

Minor, major, small, big, accepting and acknowledging touches bases with giving back, at least in my opinion.

Acts of kindness aren't something I do once in a blue moon, they're daily and it's something that everyone defines differently.

“You get in life what you have the courage to ask for” – Oprah Winfrey

(When you are born)

Life doesn't come with a handbook, as new lives begin, old one's end. People are born every day and as you grow you realize everyone doesn't get the same hand dealt, poor or wealthy on the outside looking in you may think it's not fair, but you are playing those cards, you have to go get what you want, if you have the courage to think it then you have the courage to achieve it. Write your own handbook of your life, it will never be another you!

Being strong

It's okay to be strong, but it's important to acknowledge hurt.

It's okay to distract your feelings, but it's important to feel them.

See I am a person of all thee above, not all at once though.

I was strong, then it was changing me mentally and not for the best.

So, I acknowledged and voiced my hurt, so I distracted my feelings

And it was only for so long that I was able to keep that up.

Now I'm in the “It's important to feel them “stage and honestly as a beginner 0/10 don't recommend.

“Let's all remember until justice becomes clear among us”

Justice.

Justice is like a million light feathers blowing in front of a powerful fan, you catch it when you catch it.

It's very rare that we can.

We wish and wish, pray and pray, hope, and hope that justice will become fair, but it won't.

As the cycle of life continues the justice system seems to get worse.

One day though, whether it's today, tomorrow, or 1,000 yrs. from now, it'll become clear amongst us all.

At peace, no stress, just sea

At peace, no stress, just sea.

Vacation to some but this is me.

Flowers, fresh coconut, the hint of fresh lavender slowing by as I walk.

It's 82 degrees but the wind covers the heat.

Sand between my toes, with the scent of my pina colada and salt water.

The island you dream of, just peachy, but once again this is all me.

“I wish I could say all the things I should say”

(inspired by songs by Nina Simone)

Say what you feel, feel what you want, think as you please, be as you be.

No one knows how to be “you better that you see the world will never cater to just you.

Today we as humans have normalized biting our tongue and expressing our feelings more generally than what we feel, as time progresses that built up feeling of never getting to say what you should grows and grows and becomes unhealthy.

So again, say what you feel, feel what you want, think as you please, and be as you be.

“Cozy”

Cozy. Rain, ice, sleet, snow.

Please no, no, no, no.

Freezing in below 0 weather as an anemic I'm thinking when things will get better.

Heat so warm and cozy, hoping it will last until it gets warm outside, but I know this heat is only inside.

As I'm drinking coffee, I think about getting up and grabbing my toast, but I can't move because elsewhere is frosty.

So today I say yes to cozy and as always, we say not to it snowing.

Secret scars

Secret scars are not so far.
Pain and anger are close by.
Reality and judgment so far apart
and it is okay to always restart.
You always judge but it is never too late
To apologize and get things straight.
Though I'm hurt that you always assume
But I won't let hurt consume me
I shall bloom, bloom, bloom.



N. Aravindhan
28 APR 2013

Savana Uzoigwe

Savana is a senior at Rogers High School and a three-year member of Fearless Writers.

Music is this man's only peace

In the evening he goes to relax on the subway. Bringing his guitar along with him playing music because it keeps him at ease.

Playing tunes throughout the night while putting his feelings on mute.

Music is this man's only peace.

As the night goes by the music continues to still guide the night.

The sun begins to rise and the windows gleam with light.

But the man doesn't mind and still goes on by playing his guitar into the next night.

“Speak the truth”

Speaking your truth means you stay true to who you are whether it's your feelings, opinions, or morals.

You should stay true to your own opinions and voices, no matter what anyone else may think.

While it's easier said than done, you won't regret speaking your truth.

A Disability

(inspired by Ted Talk – Amanda Gorman)

A Disability will not hold me back.
A person will not either.
I will speak freely with my own will.
Nothing shall stop me or put me down.
I will continue to go forward.
Pushing myself to do what I want to do.
Being myself and not living in someone else's life.
Chasing my dreams and making sure they come true.
A disability will not hold me back nor a person.
Using disability as an excuse isn't important.
Pushing yourself because of it is a good cause
Going forward on my own making sure I don't fall.
Being myself and living my own life.
Despite the negativity I will still fight.
Positivity is the only thing that comes to light.
Chasing my dreams and making them come true.
Accomplishing my goals is the only thing I want to do!

It's the 1970s on a breezy fall evening

(inspired by Andrew Wyeth's *Monologue*)

It's the 1970s on a breezy fall evening, at once we thought everything was at peace, but it wasn't.

Grandpa sat all his grandchildren around to tell us about African history. He told them about slavery and racism. Grandpa grew up around that time, but racism was still going on. Segregation, police brutality, protest and people fighting for our rights. After the story time, grandpa sat there thinking about life after racism. Will the future be different, or will it change?

Locked in the castle

(inspired by Kara Walker's *Theatrics of Power*)

She was locked in the castle
For years and days
She wanted to get out
But her mother made her stay
Years went by and she prayed for a knight
To come and save her in the day light
One sunny day she saw a guy creeping by her castle in the night
He said he was there to save her day
He also helped her slip away
They ran through the woods so she could escape
All these years she did have faith
That a shiny knight would rescue her life
The only thing she had to do was hang on tight.

Equality

World equality?

Look for it

But you won't find it.

But look for racism, your gonna find that.

People around here saying that it's not fair that they can't have something when people beyond that aren't complaining that they can't provide for their family because of their skin color.

Why is this?

The lamp

The brightness before my eyes

Who shines through day and night.

Who fulfils my life with greatness from first
Sight.

The person who makes my pain fade away.

Who clears my dark thoughts throughout the day.

The words I would say to describe why I feel this way are impossible because you are the person of my day.

My lamp, my brightness & story of life.

Halloween

As the wind blows, the leaves sway

In the night and throughout the day.

Brown colored leaves fall from the sky.

Pumpkins sit out on the porch tonight.

Lots of sweets for the children to eat.

Scary costumes that make them compete.

While ghosts float in the sky

It's finally Halloween tonight.

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BOO!

Here you are dressed up for the night
You knock and knock hoping to fright
Instead, I am dressed up too
I give you a fright when I yell BOO

Losing Time

“Loving the wrong person will steal your time and strip you of your youth.”
Being focused and giving all your time to a person
Who isn't giving the same energy is not worth it.
Teens now days like looking for love but are so young and end up wasting all your time
on a person who didn't love you as much as you loved them.

Winter Vibes

The snow falls from the sky
As the cold air blows by
On the ground is where the snowflakes lie.
The white brings out the brightness throughout the day,
As time goes by the snow begins to melt away.
Hot chocolate by the fire is the place to stay.
Lights on the tree that flickers through the night.
This type of feeling gives me winter vibes.

Mentality

You are not a burden.
Mental illness is not a death sentence,
There is a life beyond a diagnosis.
You are more than your lowest moments.

Deciding to recover is an act of courage.

Deciding to grow and flourish is a state of happiness.

Act of kindness

Being kind can make the image of yourself look good.

Always having positivity and good energy.

Treating others like how you
would like to be treated.

Having respect for adults

And to always be around a good environment so that your kindness can rub off on
others.

Leadership

Being a leader is a big role.

Taking on various responsibilities might be a big toll.

Inspiring people throughout your life.

Helping them out and showing them right.

Reaching out being a helping hand.

Letting others give you a chance.

Being a light throughout the night.

I am a leader who must do what's right.

Contribution

Adding your thoughts to a topic might be hard.

You will probably be scared of how other's opinion are.

Ideas floating throughout your mind.

Thinking of when to speak on the matter at the right time.

Giving your input could make a change, instead of having things stay

The same way.
No matter what speak your mind,
No matter when, no matter the time.
Adding your contribution can mean a lot.
Don't ever be scared & don't ever stop.

“In my memory it hurts, therefore it's true”

Remembering the past is something I'd do last.
Remembering the pain and asking myself, “what did I gain from overcoming my thoughts that I seem to drown in?”
Why does my heart always seem to win?
Weeping thinking of the memories I had.
Where did I go wrong, what really went bad?
Thinking about it is a lot of work because in my memory it just all hurts trying not to believe can cause more pain.
I hate being stuck in memory lane.

I am an upstander

Having a role model in life means a lot.
Encouraging you to keep going and to never stop.
Being thankful to have someone there,
who will guide you everywhere.
Through all your wrongs, through all your rights,
who will stand close and hold on tight.
Showing you not to follow but instead to lead.
Speaking your thoughts aloud freely.
Don't be afraid to set yourself high standards.
You could end up becoming a new upstander.

Fall is Here

Being in the wild sets a tone.
Having freedom and being alone.
Your thoughts are going throughout the air.
Standing outside is something to bear.
Feeling the breeze hit your face.
Having complete control of your own space.
Watching the leaves hit the ground.
Seeing fall take over town.
Going outside to feel the air.
Reminding me that nature is everywhere.

The 70's

Back in the 70's was a time to live.
The music was great, the dancing was cool.
The way we dressed may have seen that we looked like fools.
Afros all out.
Jerri curls so smooth.
Dancing throughout the night making sure your moves are tight.
Living it up under the disco ball each night.
Having many friends and fun activities to do.
I wish I could travel back to the 70's, how about you?

Being a young girl is hard

It always seems like you're the shiny star.
The star that sparkles in an older man's eyes.
Looking at him, wondering if he's a bad guy.
He watches your moves and likes the way you dress.

I guess I've never seen this man before.
So why does it seem like he's following me from each and every store?
My heart is pacing, my legs are sore.
From running from a man who seems to want more.
In the blink of an eye, he grabs my arm.
I'm fighting so hard, trying to remain strong.
Next moment I know I wake up undressed.
Already knowing what is coming next.
I am in a ring that includes other men involved.
I start to panic and can't remain strong.
I am being trafficked and it's not a test.
My whole heart is now in distress.

Trafficked 2 Myth

Being trapped in a van.
Being grabbed by a strange man.
Being tied from my arms to my feet.
Thoughts rambling through my head feeling down beat.
Riding in the van for hours.
Knowing that this strange man has so much power.
Finally reaching a stop.
My stomach starts to drop.
Blindfold covers my eyes.
I'm in my head wondering if I'm about to die.
Being placed in a dark room
Knowing that my time is up soon.
I know as a woman I've appeared so attractive,
I finally started to panic, realizing that I was being trafficked.

Cozy Winter

I open the window and get hit with light, something on the ground that is white and bright. Feeling the breeze flow through my nose, watching the sidewalk get drowned in snow.

Turning on the fire since it's too cold, baking up cookies and playing with snow globes.

Warming up hot chocolate with marshmallows.

Having a blast with friends and family, snuggling under the covers getting cozy you see, the most enjoyable season of all time can be winter sometimes.

Child labor

They wake up every morning before the light of day.

Having to go to work with no time to play.

They are being treated unfairly, being paid low wages, paid less than adults due to their small ages.

There is no time for school, they do not have an education, don't know their ABC's, what a frustration.

These unfair conditions not suited for kids, should really be stopped but the law doesn't forbid.

Suicide?

When I'm hurting inside,
All I can do is cry.
And lay in my bed,
Watching the time pass by.
Crazy thoughts flowing in my head,
The gloomy mornings start to dread.
Ignoring all of my friends,
As if I were dead.
What do I do?
Who could I run to?
Wanting this feeling to go away,
Imagining if I ended my life today
Turning to God, not knowing what to say
He read my mind, telling me "Suicide isn't the way"
That is the day I turned my life around
Starting by turning my frown upside down.
Looking at the brighter side,
Thanking God that I'm still alive.
There is always a different ending of a story
I just filled mine with glory.

What is trafficking”

What is human trafficking?

Being young and vulnerable is very noticeable.

Being used as a toy is so gullible

But this is exactly how traffickers see,

They only want 1 thing to do with me

The human trafficker sells your body and your soul

Having you completely under their control

To them your nothing but a piece of meat

For humanity to sit and eat

The younger victims seem easier to control

By the time they reach teens their spirits become cold

No longer will they have the strength to fight

It just becomes their way of life

Many are bought and put on streets

If they don't do as told they don't get to eat

The ones who get sold privately

Are the ones you'll end up never seeing

Most are girls but there are boys

And they all get used as sexual toys

We have to speak up to let our countries know

That human trafficking has to go.

Lifting my head

Lifting my head up, looking at the sky.
Thinking of all my thoughts, that seem to pass by.
Remembering the good, forgetting the bad.
Why doesn't all great things seem to last?
Rising up, being a leader.
Not a follower nor a receiver.

Being positive throughout the day, can make an impact and come a long way.
Being a listener and hearing what others have to say.
You can be a leader starting today.

Part II: High School Writers Juniors

This is our first inter high school Fearless Writers group. These students are partially from our year on-line in a virtual writing room Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 (Deja, Josie, Libby, Mishty). The rest of the students participated in person at Rogers High School Fall of 2021 and afterward (Alivia, Brandon, Cameron, Emmanuel, Hannah). This group of students were robbed of rites of passage once common in the United States where young people moved from kids to young adults from middle school buildings to high school buildings. Some may say they were spared the embarrassment of in-person freshman hazing. Others may say that this group has not fully embraced in-person high school. Students wrote about and discussed their experiences of COVID-19 with vaccines and without. At this point not a single student has been spared the discomfort and often tragedy of the pandemic. These students participated in the Black Toledo, Rising Rates of Depression, and Why Not Joy? Fearless Writers projects. This past year the juniors at Rogers High School were actively involved in the discussion about gun violence prevention and were in part the inspiration for the forming of a Rogers Community Hub Healing Coalition. From the film *SONS OF TOLEDO*, the students were also inspired to consider the importance of city pride and leadership to ending gun violence. We looked to Michael Strasner's book *Mastering Leadership: Shift the Drift and Change the World* (2018) for prompt inspiration.

Alivia Morgan

Alivia Morgan is a junior at Rogers High School. This is her first year with Fearless Writers.

Two Men Tabling at a Coffee Shop

Nothing comes to mind but coffee.

Dark coffee, vanilla coffee, caramel coffee, and mocha frappes and cappuccinos.

Two people meeting for a cup of coffee catching up with a couple laughs here and there. At a colorful café smelling like coffee and tasty pastries.

Challenge

I'm glad I'm someone who was able to challenge this person. I always try to challenge myself to become better and to be able to do that for someone else is very heartwarming to me. Although I don't know if it was bad or good either one teaches someone for the better so I'm glad I was that challenge to this person.

“Resilience”

A time where I was resilient was when I had gotten behind on schoolwork so bad that I had like

6 assignments from each class.

I had to remind myself that I needed to buckle down and complete my work to catch up, so my grade card wouldn't be bad.

I needed to get A's and B's.

So, I buckled down and did it even though it was extremely hard.



N. Aravindhan
28 APR 2023

Brandon Payne

Brandon is a junior at Rogers High School. This is his first year with Fearless Writers.

One topic

One topic that hit me the hardest is me being an inspiration towards others because that shows me that people admit what I do and that I show good examples, I have encouragement not to only me but to others as well. It shows that I am a good leader and willing to be successful. I'm glad people can see something good in me and can use me to help them out. I feel like I could also benefit from them as much they benefit from me.

Numbers are Everywhere

The number I will be choosing is number 7 because it has a lot of expressions like being a lucky number and being the number of God. I feel like the number 7 really fits my personality the best and every time I think about the number 7, I think of the casino. I like having money and, in the casino, you spend a lot of money on games and other fun activities you can do there.

When I think of 7 I think of 7:00pm because that's usually when I eat dinner. I love eating because it enlightens my mood, and it gives me a boost of energy. I feel like eating is a really important part of life and I think we need to all cherish every bit of it.

Sons of Toledo

I think the film was effective, it showed pictures and examples to give us an idea of what the purpose was. One of the examples is the kids putting mud on their face, this

shows the struggles they had to go through. The video kind of had a sad tone too, it was inspiring because you see people cutting hair, talk in general changed over the period and we need to make not only Toledo but the whole community a better place.

“Snowman”

Once upon a time there was a boy who was made out of snow. He had candy canes for his arms and coal for his eyes. His nose was made of an icicle and had a upside down frown which made him look like a clown. “He’s the first snowman we’ve ever seen” said the children who made him. They joined hands and danced around until their father called them in for supper. After they got done eating supper, they went into the living room to go play chess. Father immediately said “go clean your mess now” with a provoked tone.

“5-10yrs?”

In the next 5 years I am going to be doing my major and finishing college. I am going to accomplish my goals and to be a successful student. I am going to try to get a house and probably travel outside of the US. So, I can achieve higher goals and be more successful.

“Limiting beliefs”

When people are down or insecure about themselves, I make sure to tell them and say that everything is going to be okay and that you are going to push through it. I say that I am here for you if you need. My goal when someone is down like that, I try to make them feel safe, comfortable and I try not to pressure them to say something they don’t want to say. Everybody has bad days but when you try to end your life or give up it’s not okay. No matter of the situation you should always have a sense of hope and pride.

“Resilience”

On January 1, 2022, I got Covid for the first time. It was a rough time experiencing it because I had never had to deal with something so extreme! I can remember the day

like yesterday. It took me 3 ½ months to recover from Covid. I lost weight, muscle, smell, taste and my sleeping schedule was messed up. School and track were going back in session when I was 90% well. I was good enough to go to school, but my body was telling me it wasn't ready yet. All I was doing was sleeping, drinking water and going to the bathroom. That's all I could really do, I couldn't really get up and do anything fun, I barely did but I knew in my brain that I had to consume something. I still had a fever lol, I could not get that fever down it took a month to get it to 100. Lol might seem high but when Covid was active throughout my body it was at an astonishing 104.5. I never knew my temperature could go so high, my body was just shaking, and I was just completely horrified if I was going to be okay. A couple months passed by, and I got stronger, I worked out and I made sure I ran every day to build a good immune system. I just kept getting stronger and stronger, winning meets, winning champions and even making it to the junior Olympics.

“Values”

I think my work ethic, leadership and determination plays a big role in my everyday life. My work ethic involves everything I do like running track, playing video games, schoolwork. I always try my hardest no matter what it is. My leadership/guidance to others showing them to keep on going and steering them to the right direction. My determination to get anything done, saying that I'm about to do it and I do it instead of hesitating and not doing it.



Cameron Jones

Cameron is a junior at Rogers High School. He participated in Fearless Writers in his sophomore year only.

Teapot

Hot steamy tea extra sugar
Is what I think looking at the teapot.
I think of a cold morning with a warm blanket
And a cup of hot steamy tea
Or a rainy day
not too cold
not too warm
but just right tea with honey
Instead of tea.

It is okay not to be okay

“It is okay not to be okay”, a quote that means so much. A lot of people brush it off and keep it pushing with showing no emotion. Me, I am that person. I show little emotion to things people would usually cry about. But I was always told to express, it’s always been an option. I could always talk to someone about something that bothers me, but I never do. I’ve always kept a lot to myself. I don’t think I’ve been depressed or extremely sad about anything, but I always put myself first. Self-care is important to me. I put myself first in every situation.

Some people call it selfish; I call it careful.

A letter to the previous generation

Gen Z is not the best generation by far. In gen z Slang “we fell off” which means we are terrible. There are good topics like technology and self-pride but there is also bad topics like bullying and gun violence. Technology has the biggest cause in everything. Tech has become the most everyday thing for some people. Kids nowadays can’t stay off their phones and electronics. It’s become a point where people make money from online and have actual jobs that pay good. But tech was also a downfall because of the problems beer and cyber bullying. This all became a problem when cancel culture became a thing. Cancel culture is where you take someone’s opinion that you don’t like and stop supporting that person because it doesn’t relate to the majority’s opinion. Which is wrong because everybody goes about things in a different way so canceling someone off an opinion is soft in my opinion.



N. Aravindhan
28 APR 2023

Deja Lewis

Deja is a junior transfer to Rogers High School. She participated in Fearless Writers as a freshman at Early College.

Little white star –

here is nothing better
Then the feeling of the snow
with it gently falls on your face
And the breeze tickles the fur on your coat
There is nothing better
Then the cold blue sky
And the thick white layer of snow
On the ground it lies



Emmanuel Coleman

Emmanuel is a junior at Rogers High School. This is his second year with Fearless Writers.

Two Men Tabling at a Coffee Shop

Art – a visual object or experience consciously created through an expression of skill or imagination. Art can be a getaway for me. Art is an escape from reality. It takes me into a void of happiness so I can escape from reality it takes me into a void of happiness so I can escape the depressed cruel reality of our home we call earth.

“Limiting beliefs”

The only mistake you should be scared to make is listening to someone who points out any possible mistakes they think you would make.

“Values”

God is always first; sports is what I live for, and Family is my #1 supporters.

I also value trustworthiness because lying is pointless.

Loyalty is also important because it takes too much to be unloyal.

And being respectful because that’s how I was raised.

“Resilience”

One obstacle I overcame was during winter break as the first semester of the school year was coming to an end my Ap English teacher started grading work. At the time my grade in that class was a D because of all the work I had missed. A little back story to the problem is that it

was a few days after the new year I had been telling myself that I was going to do the work and turn it in, but it never happened. But one day I was at work, and I just happened to get a notification on my phone that my teacher was grading papers. I had got a little nervous because I knew I had missed work, but I also found out my classmates also had a few things to finish so the teacher gave us an extra day to turn in our work. So, after I got off work, I went home and did some stuff around the house and then started doing my assignments. I started at about 8pm and finished at about 1:30am. One lesson I learned from this experience is to do my work and turn it in on time. I ended up turning my D into an A.

True Feelings

Today I am writing about the little story.

A lot of people hide their true feelings and emotions, so people don't worry about them or they don't think bad things about them.

About 90% of the time, I hide my feelings/emotions because I don't want any sympathy or people to worry about me, so I enclose my feelings and wear a smile.



N. Aravindhan
28 APR 2023

Hanah Gardner

Hanah is a junior at Rogers High School. This is her first year with Fearless Writers.

Song by Nina Simone

“I wish you knew how it feels to be free.”

When the song started to play for some reason, I imagined an old middle-aged man walking down a busy sidewalk in a busy city singing about his hopes and dreams.

“Sons of Toledo”

The film shined a lot of light on the gun violence issues and how it affected the city. And when the man went to cut his brothers hair and saw how many other young men were lying dead everywhere, he knew about gun violence felt real.

“Snowman”

Hanah! Hanah! Hanah! “I hear coming from my bedroom door. From the cheerfulness of my little brother’s voice, I could tell that a blanket of snow had covered the yard. As I arose from bed my brother spoke again “can we build a snow man”? Moments later we went outside, using our bare hands we gathered snow and created a short and stubby snow man.

“Resilience”

An obstacle for me was when I went to take my driving exam and I failed the first time but passed the second. The first time I took the test I failed because I hit a cone backing up. This discouraged me a little but as I kept trying my confidence behind the wheel grew so by the time, I tried to take my exam again I had enough confidence that even if I had an intimidating driving instructor I got in the car and I wouldn't be scared. That's how I overcame my fear of failing the driving exam twice.



N. Aravindhan
28 APR 2023

Josie Quick

Josie is a junior at Toledo Tech. She participated in Fearless Writers her freshman year.

Where Do I Belong?

Sometimes I sit and wonder about how I came to be
I think and I think about who the world wants me to be
It seems as though everyone has this ideology
Ideology of me
Telling me what I'm meant to be;

But none of them, not a single one, can tell me the truth
The truth behind all of it
The truth of my youth;

You see
My father left me when I was a child
For years now he's been gone
But it did leave me questioning, where do I belong?
If my own father did not want me
Is there anyone who ever will?

It's this pain that leaves me yearning for a friend
As desperate as I am, I just want to fit in
I tried to be cool, I tried to be funny
I tried to fit in, I really did
There are these neat little boxes with everyone in their place

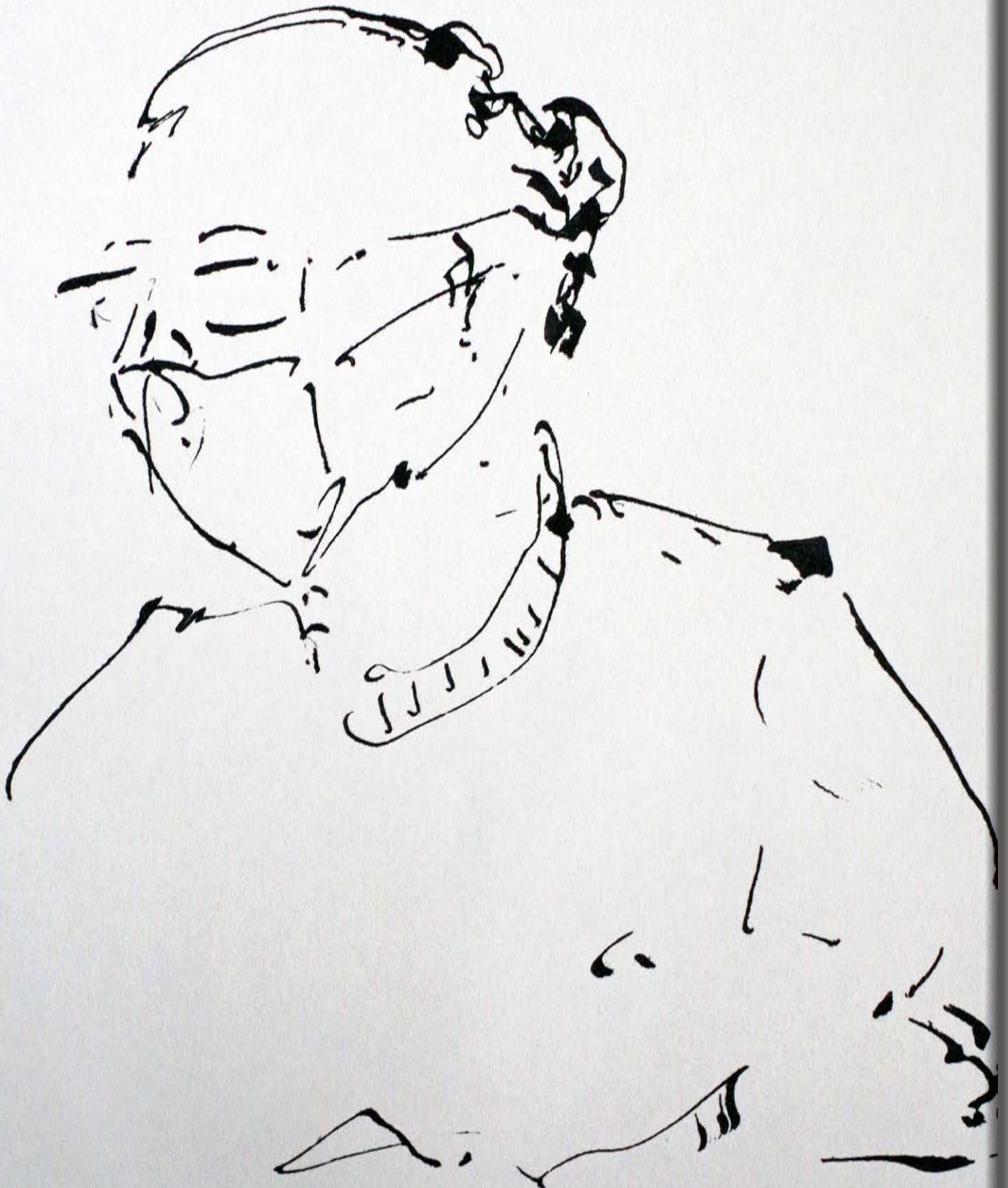
Where's my box, you ask
Oh, it's right over there
There in the corner, dark and alone
I sit inside of it, for I have no other home
I fit nowhere else, so I have a box all to my own
I decorate it to my liking
It's weird and it's exotic
It reflects my personality, though no one seems to notice;

At night I lay awake
I stare up at my ceiling
I wonder when I am to begin my healing
My healing of the pain
The pain I hide behind my smile
I smile and I laugh
Yes, this is true
But don't be fooled by my charm

On the inside I am breaking
Crumbling
Ripping

I smile as I wait
Wait for the moment I tear
Tear at the seams so everyone can see
See I'm broken and filled with anxiety
When will I have my next panic attack?
Will it be at school?
See I'm filled with depression
Why do I hurt myself?
Why do I cause myself to bleed?

But I keep this all inside
I have no one to tell
This is because I do not belong here
Nor do I belong over there
Don't you get it?
I do not belong anywhere;



V. Aravindhan
28 APR 2023

Libby Barnett

Libby is a junior at Bowling Green High School. She participated in Fearless Writers in her freshman year.

Woman

For too long, my hands have been tied.
For too long, my eyes forced closed by the Lions around me.
For too long, my tongue overwhelmed by the unrelenting beatings
Men have taken control.
I struggle against the currents that seem to envelop my words,
My head, slowly sinking under the water,
And yet I continue to shout, “Equality now!” “We are just as good as you!”
“Down with the glass ceiling!” But the Lions seem to feast on my cries,
Their lashes, beating me down,
And my voice seems lost, floating away,
Into this empty space we call the world.
I am ignored,
I am unheard,
I am not going to stop trying.
Why?
Because I am a woman.

The Light at the End of the Tunnel

My world is a sure thing,
Explored and known,
With helping hands to guide me on a road,
To which the destination has always been clear.
My mind was sure of its path.
But then,
The hands slip away,
The road becomes rocky,
The world begins to dim.
I scramble through a growing darkness eager to consume me.
My steps are unsure,
My head, an ocean vast, with waves lapping, washing away my mind.
Trip.
Cry.
Scream.
Help.
Waterfalls as eyes.
Clarity and truth are past memories,
As I stumble through a broken reality,
Then stop.
On the cold and painful ground, I lie

Something is shining in the distance,
It is warm, it is real, it is bright,
The light at the end of the tunnel.

Clarity

From an early age our teachers tell us things we know are true.

1+1=2,

Don't throw food,

raise your hand,

Use and inside voice.

We follow along unquestioning, muddled, and happy.

But it is when we look out the window that we realize,

What we know is nothing.

War,

Famine,

Pollution,

Death,

our minds are overwhelmed.

“Go back!” we scream,

“Turn away!”

“Leave the anguish behind!”

1+1=2,

2+2=4,

We chant, we repeat,

we are chained.

We cannot turn away,

For the world is calling,
Uncensored and unafraid.
We step into the light, cautious, but now sure,
Into a new world,
Of clarity.



Mishty Woof

Mishty is a junior at Bowling Green High School. She participated in Fearless Writers in her freshman year.

Another day spent being useless

Another day spent being useless, another day without noticing the clock moving faster.
Another day where the desire to be distracted overcomes any sense of sanity.
Time slips away from me as the fresh flowers in the crystal vase on my desk did.
Once offering a feeling of content, they used to branch out of their jar, their stems green,
young and cold.
The flowers chatter amongst themselves.
Always plastered with a smile, busting with color.
Lost in thought, caught up in the wild imagination.
I blink once again, look up once again, take in bright colors once again.
Blink.
The flowers are gone, the clock has moved, the day has changed.
Blink.
Friendships gone.
Blink.
I can't let more time deteriorate.
Blink.

This will forever be a burden I carry.
All I want to achieve.
Relationships I want to strengthen and pursue.
Plans for the future.
My plans for the future.
How can I do this when I never have enough-
Blink.
Another day, no more time.
No more time.

Part III: High School Writers Sophomores

This group of students always feels a year older to me. They are close to each other. Mr Pitzen sends them down in two groups – all girls and all boys. On occasion the entire group works together and the dynamic shifts noticeably. We have powerful writers in this bunch. Their thoughts; wise beyond their years. This group participated in the tail end of the Black Toledo project, embraced the look at depression, and have spent this year writing into the alphabet. The force is strong with this group. The strong personalities, the resilience, and leadership in this group are remarkable. Their words speak for themselves.

Anna Stuchel

Anna is a sophomore at Rogers High School. She is our romantic and writes with courage and passion. She has been writing with Fearless Writers for two years.

Your adventure is your own

Take the world by arms, ravish in the greatness it brings, feel the sorrow; the happiness; the amazing love.

Start your own adventure, you don't have to be somebody big in the world.

Just do what you love.

Be happy, be free.

Do great things.

Be you love who you love and don't listen to anymore else

The weather

It depends on the day,

I could be a radiant beam of sunshine

Or I could be an on-going rain of hail

My personality isn't just one thing

It is constantly changing

Just like the weather

I could be as bright as a rainbow,

Or as dark and deep as a thunderstorm.

Heliotrope

It is so beautiful
My perfect heliotrope daydream
So vibrant and dazzling
If I could be embraced in the warmth I feel
Every time I see this radiant color,
I'd never leave its grasp.

Adore

I adore him. I adore him because to me, he's everything.
Life, love, happiness, every single good thing in my life, has to do with him.
It feels like breathing, existing is so much easier with him around.
I adore him with every beat of my heart, and I will forever.

Boys

Never taught to keep their hands to themselves.
Girls, taught to cover up, hide from wandering eyes.
No shoulders, no thighs, no mid-drift, no legs, and for what?
"Boys will be boys."
Maybe instead of teaching girls to cover up, teach boys that no means no, and that women are not "distractions," or just something to stare at.
Women are beautiful, strong, amazing, and they can be anything a man could be, if not more.

Cradle

Cradle me within your arms but know that I feel as if it may never be enough.
Maybe I get that from my mother, who seems like she has never had what she wanted in life, or maybe I get it from my father, who never stays in one place for too long, as he

never seems satisfied.

But cradle me in your loving arms and it'll be enough.

Enamored

Enamored when he does small things,

Like holds my hand, kisses me, hugs me

I love laughing with him

It feels as if it bonds us closer as lovers.

His rants, eyes, laugh, smile

Everything about him

I am completely infatuated

One day

When we are brittle and old

Maybe we can remember these small things

And still be as in love as we are now.

Fault

Always the blamed

Never the responsible

Who's fault, if not mine?

You're constantly breaking my heart

Only to make me pick up the pieces all over again.

As if you weren't the one who ripped it out and

shattered it into a million pieces.

Ghost

I am a ghost of myself.

No longer recognized by myself in the mirror.

A former shell of who I used to be.

Now torn and broken
Left to pick up the pieces and glue them back together
But I can no longer be that girl,
I am not sure how to.
So, for now I'll silently sit
And be a ghost of the girl
I used to be.

Hideous

I tried loving you.
Blindly looked past everything wrong with you.
All your deep-rooted parental issues.
I was willing to do anything for you.
Maybe being loved scared you but it wasn't fair to me.
Your malicious intent was too much for my heart to handle.
Trying to love you.
Your hideous actions, cruel words....
It was never worth all the pain
You so happily put me through.

Impatient

Impatient minds, impatient eyes, impatient hands.
You didn't like waiting, my every excuse shut down because you wanted it.
You wanted me. But my walls were too far up to let you get the one thing you wanted.
You changed. Broke me down until I gave in.
Gave you what you wanted because love is blind,
Only this was never love.
It was your ignorant impatience...
and I was your unsuspecting victim.

Lights in the night sky

Often remind me of him
The feeling of being surrounded by darkness
As if being gently embraced
It is hard not to remember him during every little thing
Every small task
Every accomplishment.
If his memory starts to fade
When I get old and grey
I know that I can look for lights in the night sky
And everything will be okay.

“Michael”

He didn't stop
His rough callous hands grasped her neck
Lifting her up before the thick handled knife came down
To end the last seconds of the once young babysitter's life
A piercing screech left her now pale lips
The life slowly draining from her eyes
She was dead
Laurie was gone
It was over
40 plus years later.
He's the only one left standing
He was the boogeyman
He was Michael Myers.

Pissed

I am angry

Pissed

Everyone always has an opinion

And they always feel the need to voice it.

Sometimes people need to learn

How and when to shut their mouths

And move on with life

It was never that serious

You backstabbing serpent.

Radiant

“You are radiant”

At least that is what I tell myself

When I feel too down.

Or my insides hurt too much from constant hunger pains.

“You are radiant”

I repeat in the mirror everyday

Never liking what is staring back

“You are radiant”

Even with a mess of mascara

Running down my cheeks.

Maybe one day

I won't say to myself

“You are radiant”

Maybe I will just be.

What you say and how you say it

“I love you”

You can whisper in my ear while lying in my arms and I’ll feel special.

You can say it any time of the day, it doesn’t matter as long as you truly mean it.

You say it with such an adoring look on your face that I can tell it is genuine.

Those three simple words have such a tight hold on my heart that it is almost a relief hearing you say them.

What you say and how you say it are both equally important.

Unspoken

Unspoken, all the unnecessary pain and crying.

Was this your plan all along?

To cause me hurt?

Break me down?

Why?

Have my actions caused you to react this way?

What happened to us?

Missing you is one thing, wanting to understand why you felt it was alright to hurt me and play with my feeling is another.

But for now, all of this will stay unspoken to you.



Sketch #3

Arvindhan Natarajan

Ariana Flowers

Ariana is a sophomore at Rogers High School and a second-year member of Fearless Writers. She is in the marching band and plays the trumpet.

One thing

One thing to always remember is when you're having a bad day it can have a huge impact on your life, and you can have big changes depending on your choice in things. It can be times where you're a motivator and times you can doubt yourself.

I believe

I believe that how you say something is more important
If I'm saying something to that person, then I would want myself to be heard and I mean it.

I am not just gonna lie because that is not who I am.

I am neither a liar nor a fake.

I keep everything 100 with the person I'm talking to.

I think we all have our different ways of speaking to people.

No matter how wrong it might sound.

Bad day

One thing to always remember is when you're having a bad day
It can have a huge impact on your life and you can have big changes.
Depending on your choice in things.
There can be times where you're a motivator
And at times you can doubt yourself.

Afraid

I've been afraid of most things.
Afraid of being alone.
Afraid of being taken advantage of.
Afraid of being rejected and assaulted.

Anger

Growing up, my whole life has been filled with anger.
I spent most of the time blaming it on others, without actually speaking my mind or how
I really feel towards them.
Everything just makes me feel a certain type of way.
And I can't help it.

Ball

There was a time where my brother and I were outside playing with a ball.
He made it into the basket with two jump shots.
Then we played one-on-one with the same ball.

Creative

This word can mean a lot of things.
It means that I'm battling to be the most creative person I can be.

It has a meaning that I'm willing to share with others and hope to know other creative people.

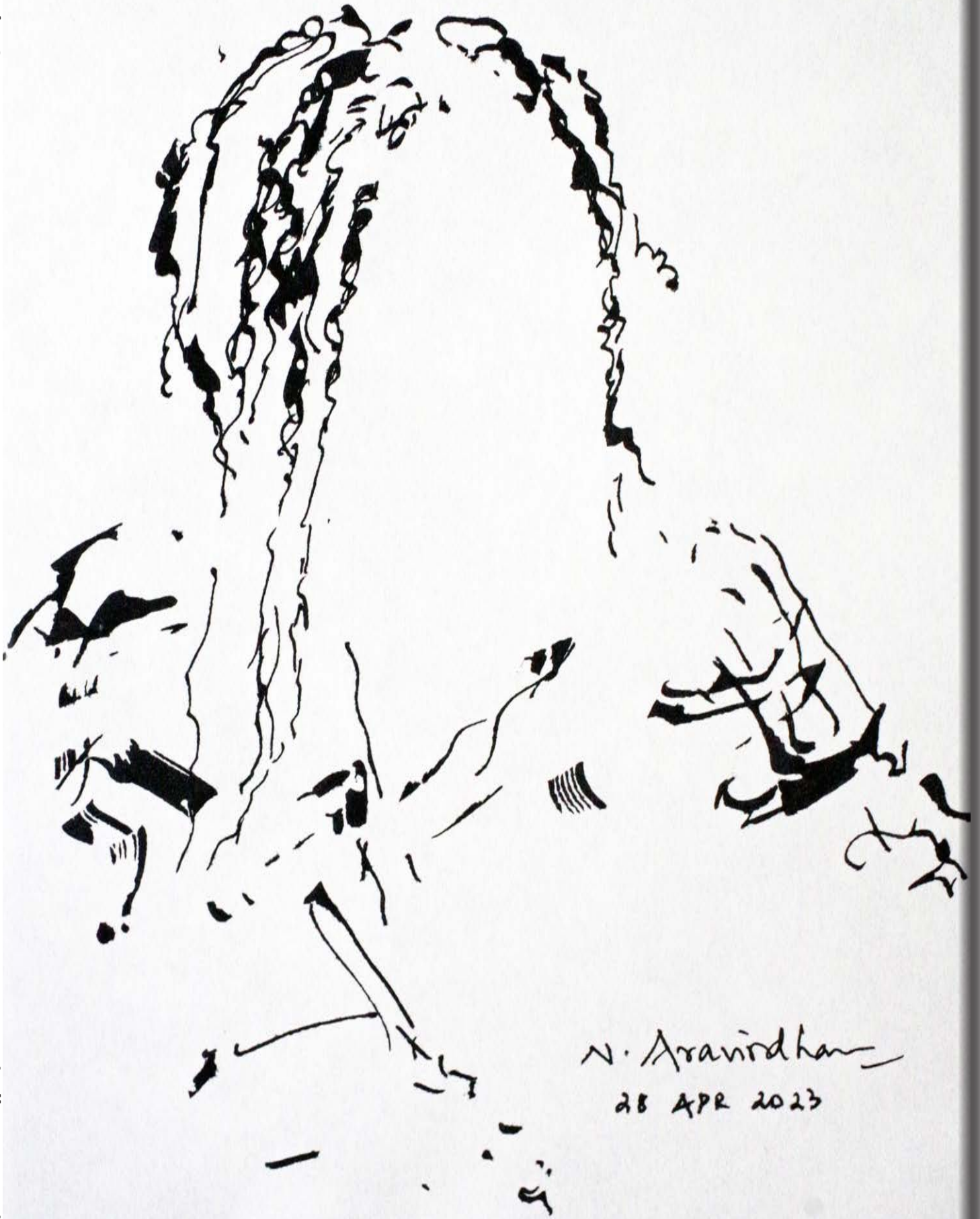
Dream

I remember as if it were yesterday that he was calling my name....

I could almost imagine what his face looked like.

It was almost as if I were thinking about the color of his eyes.

Very dark blue and pretty, and I could almost tell I was dreaming.



N. Aravindhhan
28 APR 2023

Ashten Banks

Ashten is a sophomore at Rogers High School. He is a basketball player. This is his second year writing with Fearless Writers.

Dream

I feel that dreams are a preview of your best or ideal life and if you work for it, you can achieve it. When you let go or give up on a dream you put yourself on a strange and unfamiliar path

Strong Black Women

When black women are identified as strong black women it dehumanizes them. It makes it seem like black women can handle anything like some superhero. As if black women can't be weak and express their emotions because their "strong."

Why is there an if?

Why is there an if in the world?

The reason there is an if is due to the lack of confidence and trust.

For example, I'll play my game if I get my work done.

Instead of just saying I'm gonna play my game after I get my work done.

Describe who impacted you greatly

My dad impacted me the most in my life.

He always tried to keep our family happy.

Even when he was hurt, he never showed it because he wanted to keep us happy and

allow us to smile.

RIP

Action

The reason I chose the word action is because everything on Earth revolves around it.

Action is the most important thing in life.

If you never acted in life, you would never accomplish anything nor would you enjoy life itself.

Basketball

The reason I chose basketball is because it's my life.

If it wasn't for basketball I don't know if I would be motivated to do anything.

I say this because basketball motivates me to workout, to stay in shape, and even to go to school and do work, it allows me to be healthy mentally and physically.

Chapter

The reasoning for this is because, like in books, life is full of chapters.

The chapters are very intriguing because you don't exactly know where they end until you are at the end.

When you finish the chapter, you know you have completed something and become relieved to know you learned and can move to a new chapter, repeating the process until the book is finished.

Judge

Ask yourself, what would the world be like with no judgement?

How would you judge the world then?

Do you think others would judge you based on your judgement?

Would their judgement make you judge them?

A flock of sheep

A flock of sheep in one area makes me think of a street crowded with people, a flock of birds in the sky, a school of fish in the sea.

Although these types of life forms are different in different environments, they all tend to do similar things it must instinct or is it something different that we just can't figure out?



Denejah Bailey

Denejah is a sophomore at Rogers High School. This is her second year writing with Fearless Writers.

“Free the people with love”

“Speak the truth to thy people”

These quotes stuck out to me

To me it seems like the poet is looking for an equal relationship

Between blacks and whites

Looking to free the minds

To spread out the love

To speak of how they deserve love

Free mindsets

I'm assuming

Cause it is just my opinion.

A castle

I notice a castle all by itself

Only surrounded by fog and trees

Not wanting to be with others

Just sits all alone

Looks kinda spooky

But in reality, it's just the surroundings

Anxiety

Anxiety is my weakness. Anxiety is my stress,
Anxiety puts pressure on me and that's something I can't express.
Anxiety makes me feel down and it makes me feel less strong.
But these are feelings that I don't want to continue to string along.

Why?

Have you ever just asked why?
Why does anxiety interfere with lives?
Why?
Why does anxiety not show its nature?
Why?
Why does anxiety make people think and feel down about themselves?
Just why?
I sit back at home in my bed, and I just ask why?

The object

The hard crystal rock
Has a blinding crystal shock
It's shining all around
And makes a hard crystal sound
I experience joy when I look
The crystal has me shook

What is your favorite color?

The soothing sky where no stars shined
The small empty room where no light appeared
I swear the light just disappeared

But be careful my color is nothing to shine but I can be good for the midnight sky.
I might just be good for a background, but do you know what color you found?
Midnight blue

Lights in a night sky

Lights in a night sky
Is something I would love to try
Just imagine a little spark of light
As the night sky shines so bright
Close your eyes right then and there
As your imagination takes you everywhere.

Slavery

Some of the Blacks did not last
For some have changed the past
While some are scared and stutter
It is mainly about your color
To this day we still stay strong
Why is slavery being strung along

What is more important?

You can say what feels right
But you may not sound delight
Your words can be soft and kind
But your tone might be rough & tied
Your words can sound like a dream
Your voice can be so mean

Alone

Being alone is when you are upset.

Being alone is you and only you nobody by your side.

No one to check on you.

Just you and your thoughts.

Betrayed

Betrayed isn't when someone says you're not pretty.

It's when you're lied to,

feeling as if everything is breaking down or falling apart.

Betrayed is when someone does the opposite,

breaking their promises.

Creep

When I think of creep,

I'm thinking about you and me.

How could any stranger have been a creep just thinking about you and me.

Complicated

When I hear the word "complicated",

I think about struggling.

The ups and downs here and there.

Danger

Danger is more than just a gun or a kidnapper.

Danger is fear.

The trapping you in thoughts

The overwhelming pain

Nothing by darkness
That is my danger

Gorgeous

Gorgeous is not a girl
Or a boy's eyes
It is not a women's hair
But it is unique
It is a person's inside
And a choice of heart
That defines gorgeous.



Haider Alhajri

Haider is the team captain of Varsity wrestling. He enjoys video games (Roblox). He also enjoys sleeping. Haider is a sophomore at Rogers High School. This is his second year participating in Fearless Writers.

Teapot

The tea pot, smooth and delicate
Round and subjected
Opens with steam and heat
And pours with tea
Handle like an ear
And top like a nose
That is the brown tea pot

Nurture the brain

A sea when born
Knowledge like water
Influence like sun
Body like ground
Let your seed grow and
Turn into a great rose.

Geod

Great crystal bold and sharp
Boring on the outside
But mesmerizing on the inside
Sharp crystals shimmer in the inside
But hard rock on the outside

Dragon Egg

Building on you louder than sirens.
One day to a respectable dragon
One day a friend to have
One day a dragon whose dream lives for him.
One day a dragon who has peach of mind and
One day to a dragon who cares for all
One day I'd hope to hatch from my rock.

Strong, Black Woman

With the strong black woman stereotype
It feels as it is very important to understand we are all human through and through
And being a black woman doesn't change your strength and mental and physical and that
goes for white women too.
What I am trying to say is nobody is going to have the strength potion to drink when
things get tough.
Sometimes it is alright to take a step back and talk to a therapist and please don't bottle
things up.

I'm fine

I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine

We lie and lie but why?

Do you even care enough to hear?

I'm not going to bore you with my petty tears

Or are you gonna ask me and say everything is fine

But is it all a lie that everything is just fine?

Let go of the weeds before they choke you

And lie and say everything is fine.

I want that feeling

I want the feeling of diving in a super cold pool.

I want the blank mind when you first jump in and connect.

You shut down for just a second.

That second is what I want.

That feeling of nothingness is what I want.

Haider

We love to see him.

Haider, smart, talented, funny, helpful, a great friend, and very handsome.

He speaks his mind, and his mind is spoken.

He gets it done and lets it go.

He works toward his goal,

And his goal works for him.

Special life

As her body is outlined with special things,

Special life

The glare in her eyes
The strength in her hair
The strength in her shoulders
Her face reminds me of the ocean line
As her eyes of the sky.
One glare and your blown away with an ocean breeze
One whisper and your sound asleep
As if swept off your feet.

Apple

A rich of flavor.
A time in my life when an apple was the only thing there was to eat.
Then apple pie came to eat them since a bright aroma was the dessert.
A sweet apple for a sweet time.

Because

A word that allows one to explain themself.
I am happy because ...
I am hurt because ...
I am sad because ...
It is great because
I chose the word because
Well, just because.

Catastrophe

Catastrophe means chaos, destruction, hardship
But with interruption and perseverance and with that can become
Better times or even more catastrophe.
All you can do is move on and adapt.

Dread

Dread- the feeling of loss.

Loss and sadness impose doom.

The feeling of something bad, a shiver of dread.

The death was so dreadful.

I'm dreading my death.

Dreadful means to wait or to anticipate something fearful.

I dread the thought of future failure.

Escape

The feeling of being trapped you might feel this in a relationship and how you escape

You escape your thoughts or escape reality or escape the bad in your life or how the good escapes you.

You can escape to a better place or bad place.

Escape to relieve yourself of being trapped or enclosed or restricted or a barrier,

Or you can escape your entourage (joke based on other student's e word)

Forget

To not remember something in terms of it being absent in thought

I find that forgetting is frightful.

What facts of flashbacks one fails to forget of flashbacks that feel fabulous of flashbacks that feel familiar

Why forgetting is frightful is faced on fact of forgetting your family or your fire that fabricates your drive.

Grounded

Grounded – to be on the ground in mind, in thought, and maybe physically.

To be grounded means to me to be focused and to be real

Be real in the sense, to know where you are at.

To know your place.

As a person to know your role.

To be grounded is to be real.

I chose the word grounded because when I see a child misbehaving

And I think back to myself and realize the ways I've grounded myself

And how I was like that kid.

And how I have worked to be grounded or real.

Infer

To use context or to conclude or deduce information from other information.

I infer those around me.

I infer the text in my passages.

I infer the thoughts of those around me.

The thoughts that inform me change.

I infer the state of the day.

I infer the things I say, to write, and deduce

To gather and judge to deduct and abduct

Thoughts to one's words

I infer my thoughts to words and write.



Javion Finn

Javion is a sophomore at Rogers High School and is a two-year member of Fearless Writers. He is a very intelligent young man. He is a member of Varsity football and made All-city, all-district linebacker. He is Class of 25.

The man in the dark and quiet room

There is a man all alone in a dark stairway playing his guitar. The image makes me look at him as a sad or depressed person or he's playing a sad tune on his guitar. He seems like he wants to be isolated from the rest of the world. He maybe can feel his music flowing through his soul peacefully in the very quiet and dark stairway

Humorous, kind, and smart

If someone was describing me, they would describe me as humorous, kind, and smart. I think this is because I try to be as nice as possible to everyone most of the time. People almost never see me mad or crying, they always see the happy side of me - me laughing and smiling. I also think people view me as smart because I have all honors classes and people usually come to me for help with something.

Afterlife

I think every single person thinks about what it will be like in the afterlife. The thought of not knowing makes some people scared, and some people excited.

The Clay Teapot

As I sit and stare at this beautiful piece of art, I think about how carefully structured and precisely shaped this work of art is.

How the human hand can create something with such elegance

The soft brown color gives the teapot a soft calming look.

The seed being planted in her head

Represents a goal that is being set

She didn't let anything stop her from achieving her goal.

Through all the challenges she faced and overcame

She kept pushing to reach her goal

Black Women

I feel like you shouldn't have to be called a strong, black women for someone to know that you are strong

But everybody goes through situations where it is difficult for them to be strong.

Women have to deal with way more stuff than men.

Like carrying a baby in their stomach for nine months then having to push it out and take care of it for the next eighteen years.

Some women have to deal with these problems alone.

So, I feel it is important for us as men to do our part and what we are supposed to do to ensure that our women can live less stressful lives.

Ifs

I feel like ifs are what strives people to do something in life. For example, people may have a mindset thinking that if someone else can do it they can too. If is an influential

word. It is also a very powerful word because there is an if to everything in life. You can use if to refer to actions you took and think about what would happen if you did this differently.

What I want most in this world?

I want a lot of the things in this world but the thing I want the most is what keeps me going. The thing I want the most eventually leads to wealth, but it takes time, effort, and most of all patience. From a little boy all the way to a full grown up. Hard work and dedication is the key and to never give up and always try your best. All the studying and learning will pay off someday, it just takes a lot of patience.

I am fierce

I am fierce. I am strong. I overcame battles I never thought I would. I've been through some very rough times. I didn't let these battles bring me down; instead, they made me more powerful, more confident, more courageous. They made me the woman I am today. Every time I think of those battles, they encourage me to keep going and to live life every day to the fullest.

Two Men Tabling at a Coffee Shop

Two artists on a bright sunny day sitting at a table drinking coffee and discussing potential art projects, or new ideas. The older man seeming more wiser and is educating the younger man.

Brain

I think brains are important.

I think brains are the reason why the world is what it is today.

I think brains are the reason for success and I think brains are the reason for memories and relationships.

I think brains are the reason we are able to have fun and the reason why we don't.

I think brains are the reason for every decision we make.

Without a brain we would be nothing.

This world would be nothing.

Confidence

I am confidence.

I help people to feel absolutely sure about themselves and their ability to do certain things.

I also help people feel like they can't lose, which turns into motivation.

I am the certainty that everyone on this earth feels every once in a while.

I am confidence.

Determination

I am determination.

I am the fuel to the fire.

I am that feeling everyone has that tells them not to give up.

I am determination.

Entourage

If I was in the army, I would have an entourage of killers

If I was in the mafia, I would have an entourage of drug dealers

If I was in the medical field, I would have an entourage of healers

But I am in none of these things so instead I have an entourage of strong believers.

Firm

When I think of the word firm, I think of something that is strong or unbreakable.

I feel like you have to be firm in life in order to succeed.

A firm person is a determined person.

Grateful

Being grateful means being thankful for the things you have instead of complaining about what you don't have.

Gratefulness shows appreciation and value in a person.

Learning to be grateful can shape you into a great person.

Gratefulness is very important in life.

It keeps you humble and not greedy.

If the whole world was grateful the world would be a drastically better place.

Intellectual

Intellectual is a word that describes a person with an intelligent mind.

Being intellectual means, you are powerful, clever, and confident all in one.

A person who is intellectual can't be beat.

Being intellectual allows you to accomplish what many others don't.

It separates you, makes you stand out.



N. Arvindhan
28 APR 2023

Ke'ira Daugherty

Ke'ira is a sophomore at Rogers High School. This is her second year as a Fearless Writer.

The speech

The speech makes me feel like it is about slavery and back in the day.

We need to be free.

Our minds need to focus on things that are important

We need a better nation

Speak the truth and don't make up anything

Just tell the truth

The poem makes me feel calm and confident.

Anxiety

Anxiety makes you feel some type of way, especially if you don't have friends.

If you feel alone and don't want anyone bothering you,

Talk to people

Make yourself fit in

Or at least try so you won't go through anxiety on your own.

Summer

Summer represents my personality because summer brings out positive vibes and not negative.

The sun is my smile and summer makes the day brighter.

What you say or how you say it?

What I think is more important is what you say
Because some words are offensive to others
And not saying those words will prevent problems
Because of what you said to somebody or behind someone's back.

Love and Hate

I think love and hate are the same
Because love hurts
When you love somebody, it can hurt a lot
Because you really care about the person you love
And you worry if something is wrong
Love and hate feel the same.

Foot in the Sand

The print of the foot in the sand makes me feel like somebody with a big foot is maybe making a footprint so they can have a memory. So, they can remember the enjoyment that they had.

The image makes me feel inspired and proud of myself. It makes me think to be happy and to promise myself that I will have confidence in myself and be strong and to never give up. Just look at yourself and tell yourself that you got this and don't worry about stuff that's not keeping you motivated just have faith in yourself don't put too much pressure on yourself

Alone

Being alone helps you think more and learn more about yourself and it helps me to have more positive thinking and I like being by myself because it's less problematic and you don't have to hear your name being brought up a lot.

Broken

Broken is a very strong word to me. I don't think a lot of people know what broken feels like or how it can cause people to be broken.

Dear

Dear myself

I want to forget the negative things in my life

And start having more positive things in my life

Also, I want to succeed

The most important thing in my life.

Equality

When I think of equality, I think of community.

Forgive

I feel like you should forgive people who do wrong things sometimes.

Because, if you just forgive blessings will come your way

And you never know that person could change one day.

Girl

I feel like I used to be a quiet girl
Until I started talking to a lot of people
And now, I feel like I'm not the same girl as I used to be.
I'm not quiet anymore
I'm sometimes loud

Heaven

Heaven is a peach and quiet
No sounds, no madness and sadness
Just the beautiful angels resting in peace
With no distractions
Just some time and forever
Time resting in peace with a pretty blue sky
The big white peaceful clouds
No sounds but hummingbirds singing to the angels
That is resting in peace
Heaven to me sounds so peaceful it makes me think of happiness
And no loneliness
Just me and a beautiful sky with beautiful singing.



N. Aravindhan
28 APR 2023

Liana Robinson

Liana Robinson is a sophomore at Rogers High School transfer from Scott High School. She has just joined Fearless Writers.

Dark Nights

Dark nights are scary when you are alone
When you are with a friend you will feel better
At home dark nights are beautiful
But not alone bring a friend along
With the scary stories at night
Despite the nightmares
The best nights are when the stars sparkle
And the wind blows
I love dark nights, just not alone.



N. Aravindhan
Features Writers
Toledo Public Schools

Lukes Hardy

Lukes is a sophomore at Rogers High School and second. He is intelligent and tall. He is top ten in his class. He is a wrestler and an AP student.

Some would probably say I'm annoying

But once you know me you get used to my humor and things.

I'm a genius people just don't know yet.

I am smart.

I like math.

I say I'm a genius because I just be knowing things that I've never seen before.

And my memory is pretty above average.

A rock

A rock full of crystals is what you will see.

Shiny but fragile

White like snow

Except it shows

Depression 2022

The person is saying that if you keep being quiet and pretending to be ok you will never be ok and keeping these feelings inside will make you more and more depressed and could lead to self-harm or other as represented with the weeds in the garden.

I feel the word “if” has more to it than just its definition.

I feel like the word is an emotion.

Like from the Wizard of Oz when they kept saying if I only...

If can be used to show a way you're feeling

Like for example if you say, I wish I had a million dollars

But the word can also be used to say what if I had something that everyone else had?

Example, if you don't have happiness but want it.

If only I had happiness.

A woman staring

A woman staring back at you like she was ready for anything.

Scared but fierce like waves of muted emotions as if there were different traits of animals inside.

Fierce and strong like a panther ready to strike without hesitation.

But scared and cowardly like a bird ready to fly off if there was any sign of danger.

But also, ready to come back and attach from any angle.

Two Men Tabling at a Coffee Shop

Sitting and talking in chairs, having a conversation about whatever it is.

But the one thing they don't notice is the piece of artwork right next to them.

Made with the precise artist's hand upon which he used to create something that not everyone can understand.

But the artist knew exactly what he had in his mind, and he let his creativity do the rest. His hands painting what he's never seen before except in his own imagination.

Apple

A is in apple. I learned this when I was young. I also have eaten an apple before.

Book

A book - such a common word and object, yet the truth to education is without books there would be no way of telling what is or isn't true. For example, how would we know what it was like in the 1300s if it wasn't written down then put into books for you to read and learn about so with no books there would be no understanding.

Cat

How I would strangle a cat.

Always wanting attention, food or whatever.

Then when you want to stop petting them, they scratch you.

I hate cats, dogs are better.

Dice

Oh, how random they are.

Six-sided object numbered 1-6 with dots, to represent.

Dice can be used in many ways.

The simplest way is to play games such as Yahtzee or monopoly and much more.

But it's not so easy to use dice because there is only a 1 in 6 chance you will get the number you want so it's really up to the randomness of the die which number you roll.

That's why I like dice so much, because of the randomness.

Extraterrestrial

Extraterrestrial of or from outside the earth or its atmosphere. When you hear this word what you think of first if not all would think the most obvious answer aliens. What you wouldn't think of off the top of your head is the sun, mars and just everything outside of the earth's atmosphere, even the moon is considered extraterrestrial according to the definition of the word. The definition is so broad the percent of actual terrestrial space AKA earth is so small that it's practically non-existent because of how big space is. Yet some people refuse to believe in aliens. What I don't understand is how us as humans are practically nonexistent and still refuse to believe in all of space that there are some other life forms.

Fair in accordance with the rules or standards

Fair can mean many things depending on the situation. It could mean having the same chores all the way to communism where everything was shared between people and run by government, making everything fair when really it wasn't. Fair is a very broad term used to try and make a point about how something isn't fair which usually causes your parents to say, "Well life isn't fair so live with it." Which isn't really fair because there will always be someone who uses it for an advantage - making the world no longer fair and how dystopian. A utopian society will never exist because of this.

Good

Good versus Evil what do you choose when you see the two?

Example, Batman and Joker.

Sometimes we pick both because sometimes you really like the protagonist, such as superman where he has these really cool superpowers.

And other times we pick the bad guys because sometimes the bad guys are way cooler than the good guys.

But how can there be the good and the bad when some see your bad as good and others see your good as bad?

Heat, hot, high height

Height

Height is a very common fear for most. But what I wonder is if it's the height that people fear or the death that is caused by that fall. This is one of the fears that people can overcome. By skydiving for example when you go skydiving you jump out of a plane which is thousands of feet in the air which is high but a fun experience for minutes that you are in the air for wondering if I open the parachute will it open or will I die or will the cords be tangled. You are now overcome by fear. The thing you wanted to overcome has now overcome you. But when you pull the cord, it opens and you land safely and you say to yourself see there was nothing to worry about, which is an absolute lie. But if the parachute did get tangled you have the rest of your life to fix it.

Indigo, I, I've, is, important

Try to remember back when you were an **infant**, try as hard as you can. Can you remember when you first spoke or walked, chances are you can't. But now, even as early as 3, you just talk each day without even noticing because it's something you've only been doing your entire life. Same goes with walking and the only reason you know how to do these things is because you were taught at a young age. Another thing that you do without ever even knowing or trying to do is breathing. Now that you're thinking about breathing you've probably manually breathing, and you might've tried to hold your breath. But what if your body wasn't programmed or told to breathe without your constant needing to. Imagine if you needed to manually breathe your entire life you wouldn't be able to sleep and to be honest, you'd probably die at a very young age. So good luck with your manual breathing for the next couple of minutes.

Joy

Joy is something you feel when you are happy or excited or when something just goes your way but how joyful can you be when you have everything in life?

How joyful can you be when you have all the money to buy anything you would ever

want? There is no joy in this because it's not something you have to work hard for. I believe this is the deeper meaning behind the saying money can't buy happiness.



MacArthur Johnson

He is very curious about a lot of things. He played basketball - city champion 2021/22. He plays varsity football defensive line. He runs 200 and 4X1 relay and 100. He is not a bad cook. He likes to cook native/African foods. He is creative and ambitious. MacArther is a sophomore at Rogers High School. This is his first semester with Fearless Writers.

Glorious

Glorious a very unique word

It describes something as amazing.

For example, I had the liberty of witnessing a fine piece of art

And the only word I could use to describe it was glorious.

As that word stood out from other positive words.

Honest

Honest, the act of opening up to another individual or group of individuals with morals that correlate to what happiness.

The ability to express or say what was hidden.

I feel as if such a word could change the world as some might take the truth and others may not.

I feel if others were to use that word and speak the truth, we would be able to understand one another much better.

Improvement

Improvement a very humbling word to me improvement.

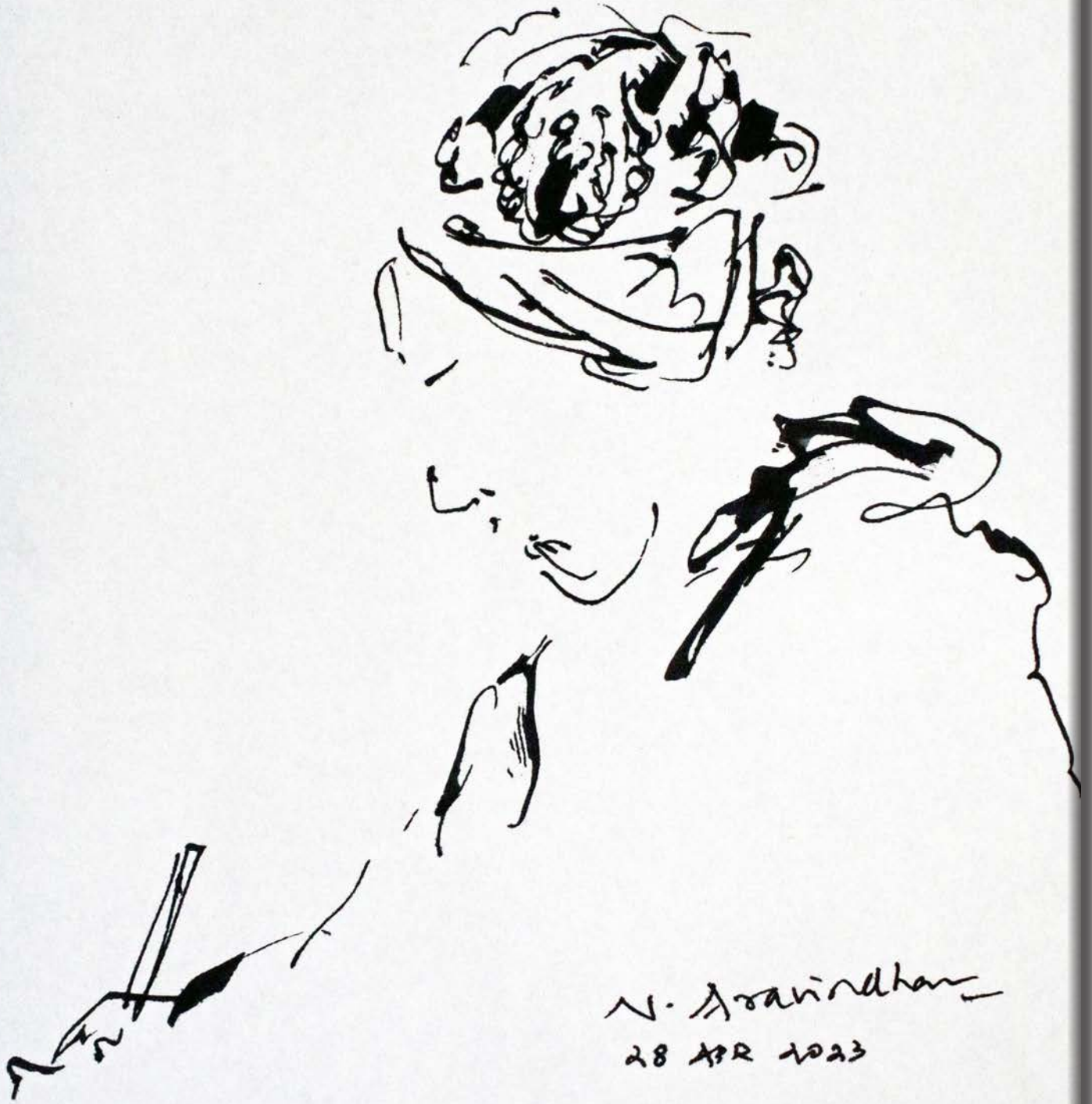
When I think of this word it's more on the lines of self-improvement, becoming better than your previous self-adapting, changing for the better whether it is obtaining new skills or ensuring those current skills get better.

Improvement has always been a word on my mind as I wake up, I think about becoming better than I was yesterday, improving on my prior knowledge that I am aware of, or just becoming a better person in general.

Journalism

The word journalism, the act of documenting or recording one's life, including what situation they were in, how they got there, and what they did.

The word goes back many, many years ago when people were traveling all over the world recording what they had recently just discovered.



Madelyn Page

Madelyn is a sophomore at Rogers High School and a two-year member of Fearless Writers. She is in the national honor society and Toledo Excel.

The man

The man sat on the stairs
Quietly and softly playing an instrument
Brushing his fingers slowly and carefully across the stirngs

“Speak the Truth to People”

This line stuck out to me mainly because I believe the statement.
The truth should be spoken to me and the people of America.
If we aren't being spoken to with the truth, why are we being spoken to at all?

Anxiety is something

It is not the best feeling
You constantly feel the need to be sorry and anxious
You doubt yourself
You have some type of conscous
Anxiety can be much more than you think
And it can do more than you might think
Anxiety can't always be avoided

Crystal

As the crystal glistened

It made me think

It gave me a piece of mind

Footprints in the sand

I feel as if that footprint in the sand was meant to be there.

A memory, something that's not permanent, but there for the time being.

If I was mayor

If I was hired as mayor in my town there is a lot, I could address.

I would maybe address the poverty rates in areas of Toledo.

I feel like that topic isn't really paid attention to.

3 things I cannot live without

In my life the only sources of happiness come from my phone, friends, and boyfriend.

Yeah, I know there are other things that I need in my life, but those things mean the most to me.

Love versus Hate

I think that hate is much stronger.

The meaning of hate, the way it makes you feel and what it can make you do shows that hate is stronger than love.

Picture prompt

When I look at this I think of conversation.

Not just any conversation, a meaningful one.

A conversation that thought was put into.

Anxious

When I'm alone for a long period of time. I start getting anxious. Not only that, I start thinking of the worst scenarios ever.

Considerate

Being considerate doesn't mean just being nice. Considerate is going out of your way to do something. Brothers. Considerate could be picking someone's things after they fell over, or even as simple as putting a smile on someone's face. You never know what somebody's going through. So doing something that wasn't asked of you can make someone's day.

Life is frightening

Life is frightening. Being alone is frightening. The world is frightening. Losing somebody is frightening

Today

Today is the day.

Today is the present.

Today is my life.

Today isn't promised.

Anxious

When I'm alone for a long period of time.

I start getting anxious.

Not only that, I start thinking of the worst-case scenarios ever.

Considerate

Being considerate doesn't mean just being nice.

Considerate is going out of your way to do something. Brothers. Considerate could be picking someone's things after they fell over, or even as simple as putting a smile on someone's face. You never know what somebody's going through. So doing something that wasn't asked of you can make someone's day.

Dare

A dare is when you are forced to do something random, do it or don't.

Hate

I hate people.

I hate this generation.

I hate how our world is.

I hate how we can never have anything.

Hate might be a strong word, but it's what I feel towards a lot.

The way people act and present themselves to others makes me hate them.

I hate our generation

“Picture prompt”

In this picture, it looks as if the kids are in the comfort of their home.

Home is such a safe and secure place for most people.

Home is where people unwind and get comfortable,

but not in everyone's case.



N. Aravindhan
28 APR 2023
Fearless Writers
Rogers School

Sydnee Savage-Utley

Sydnee is a sophomore at Rogers High School and a two-year member of Fearless Writers. She is a cheerleader and a member of the National Honor Society.

Found poem / Mari Evans

“Free the people with love and kindness”
To identify the enemies is to fee the mind
To build a strong black world
Speak the truth to people
Free the mind
Freedom, freedom

I was once a princess

Living in a large castle.
Everyone wanted to be me.
I would wake up every morning beings served breakfast
People dressing me
I never had to do anything on my own
But the princess life isn't for the weak
I couldn't choose my own friends
I could never be alone.
I never could be alone.
So, I ran away

Brain growth

She plants the seed for her brain to grow

Brain growth

She waits and waits for brain to grow

She goes through challenges to help her mind grow

Brain growth

She's finally on the last stage before she gives her knowledge

She's becoming wiser

Brain growth

She's finally able to share her wisdom

Brain growth

She is drowning in her thoughts

She's drowning in her own thoughts.

While everyone else is having fun she's stalling in a dark place

Drowning in her thoughts

She watches as everyone around her has fun,

She drowns deeper and deeper-

Her beginning.

Life Story

You control your own life story

You write out how your life will go

Warm outside

I feel like when it's warm outside the weather is more like me

Warm not too hot but not too cold

A nice, sweet temperature

The way you say

The way you say something can change the way the person interprets what you say
If you say it rudely, then the person will take it rudely. If you say it nicely then the person
will take it kindly.

Anxious

There was a time in my life where I had no idea, I was anxious.
When it came to talking in front of strangers, I never got anxious
But when in unfamiliar places I became nervous and scared.
For a while I avoided being in an unfamiliar area

Bond

From the time we were born we have created some sort of bond with your mother.
Some of your bonds that you have created might have been broken, some have lasted.
Bonds come with a lot of happy fun memories, but in all good there is bad sometimes
we argue with people we have bonds with and it's okay.
If the bond is truly meant to be there you will fix it, if not just let it go.

Comfort

A state of physical ease and freedom from pain or constraint. When in the state of comfort
everything should be at ease, you can be at comfort in the shower or while lying in your
bed. You can find comfort in a person. I find comfort in shopping. Shopping can become
a bad addiction. All of my worries just slowly go away, and I become more relaxed the
further I look

Daughter

A mom's child
born as a girl.

Develop

Over time you begin to develop, starting in the womb you start as practically nothing to develop into a tiny human. Once you get there you begin to develop in many ways. You get taller, you grow hair, but there are many nonphysical ways, but mental ways as we get older the more our mental capability develops you become more and more wise.

The sounds I hear are very eerie and remind me of Halloween

It was the night of Halloween
I broke away from the group and ended up in a wooded area
My phone is dead
I try to find my way out
Noises are coming from everywhere
I get this very eerie feeling
I begin to run faster and faster
To the door of the haunted house.

Ear

Ear the organ of hearing and balance in humans
The ear might be one of the smaller organs, but it happens to be one of the most important organs
You hear with your ears
Your ears carry you through life
You hear all the sounds around you
Hearing is one of the first things you develop
From such a young age you hear all sorts of sounds

Flight

People tend to interpret the word flight with being in the air

When really flight can mean all the dreams you worked for finally taking off

Flight the action or process of flying through the air.

Grudge

A persistent feeling of ill will or resentment resulting from past insult or injury

A grudge a lot of times

We hold grudges against people who have hurt us

We never forget what that person has done to us

WE also hold grudges because we believe that we have something to prove to that person

When really holding grudges hurts us more than it hurts them

Remind yourself to let those other grudges go

And just remember what type of person that person is

Hello

Hello, a general greeting term

People around the world use this greeting word.

Hello, my name is Sydnee

Hola mi llama es Sydnee

In different languages the term hello remains a general greeting.

A simple hello can make someone's day.

A hello can change your perspective of someone

So, the next time you say hello,

think about the actual importance of such a short word

Hello.

Inhale

Inhale to breathe in, when you were first born you took a large breath you inhaled oxygen for the first time.

That inhalation gave you life.

Before giving a speech, you inhale to get all the nerves out.

You inhale to relax yourself.

You are inhaling right now as you hear me reading this inhale to breath in.

In and out.

Inhale.



Sketch #21

Arvindhan Natarajan

Te'Corea Dotson

Te'Corea is a sophomore at Rogers High School. This is her second year writing with Fearless Writers.

Rainstorm

In my opinion my personality is a rainstorm
When you think "rain," you think gloomy and depressing.
But that is not the way I see it.
I see rain as unique from the other weathers
Different and at many times calming
But there can't be a storm with not thunder

Side by Side

Where there is no light,
It is your smile that shines bright
Side by side,
My brother and I
Wept have I for you brother of mine
Most nights I wonder the choices
Mom could've made to leave us
Side by side

My favorite color

My favorite color is the color stars are depicted to be.

The color of happiness and confidence

My color is the brightest you can think of

It is seen mostly in the summer

But if you own an animal

You will be seeing it in the snow too. 😊

Love and Hate

You may hear people say that hate is a strong work, which it is

But to me love is stronger.

When you hate something, you feel one emotion, anger.

When you love someone, you feel every emotion.

Love is not just saying “I love you” it is your actions.

When you love you are willing to do anything just to make sure that the person never frowns.

You open your eyes and the person you love is the first thought.

It is when you make sacrifices for another and put your feelings last.

It is when you cry and there is only one person who can make it stop.

It is love.

Love is stronger than hate.

Men

Money, otherwise known as the root of all evil.

Man known as the superior gender

Men who do what they please

Attracted to beauty

Men

Sometimes seen as the strongest of all

Takers and troublemakers

Lechers of joy

Men

They stand tall as if they are the lion in a field of deer

Though underneath their mane is a dam holding a hurricane

Men

Givers of nothing but heartbreak

They hold so many hearts in their palms

But treat them as though they are pennies on the sidewalk.

Men

The root of all evil

Who invalidates

Who takes what does not belong to him

He doesn't understand consent only "continue"

Men

He who disregards any feeling besides his own

Who releases his anger on impulse

Men.

POV

It's October 31, you and a group of friends decide to explore an abandoned circus considering it's Halloween and horror excites you all. When they arrive at the circus everything is normal for the most part.

Rides and games covered in dust.

Popcorn and cotton candy are most likely decades old.

Empty ticket booths with light bulbs on the verge of death.

You eventually grow bored at the lack of terrifying things.

You all decide to explore what seems to be a tunnel previously used for a haunted house.

As soon as you step foot inside, your neck hair stands up and you instantly feel chills.

The room is pitch dark and the flashlights from your friends' phones have vanished.

The paranoia begins and you yell out to your crew

Only to receive a loud horrifying laugh in return

You are all alone, only you aren't exactly alone.

Now you must escape, but how?

Euphoria

The feeling of euphoria is almost exhilarating.

You feel your troubles and anxiety exit your body

Suddenly you are on a cloud, and it is whatever color you desire.

Euphoria brings an intense feeling of happiness.

Heart

The heart is one of the most valuable organs

Beat...beat...beat

The sound of living

The pattern of life

Beat...beat..beat

Though when the pattern halts

Are we merely a vessel for our hearts?

If so, why do we ignore it?

Allow it?

Conquer wraths for the mere desire of affection?

The heart is the most valuable organ

Why?

Beni

The end of March
The death of me only
No one cried over the loss of she
Accusations as dangerous as
A dog and a flea
Why did you lie?
How can you cry?
When you are the mother of my pain
Hate
Never felt before
As I sob on the floor
I can only feel hate
Forgive me for I carry such hate
Burden to bear
Times of despair
Hate.

“I”

What is normal?

Normal is a concept

One that differs between opinions

Crazy?

No insanity

Doing the same thing over and over

Yet still expecting a new result

Say I am insane

For we all are

Every morning we open our eyes

Expecting new opportunities

Insanity

For we are all “insane”

Reworded

You're the only one in control of you

If you feel as though all is failing

Don't fix a temporary problem with a permanent solution

Keep pushing

There's always the option to give up, make the better decision and
continue

Fight your way to the light at the end of the tunnel for
darkness is not eternal

Do not exit this earth with a story of agony and sorrow Instead of story of your will

Remain Strong Be Proud

“Picture prompt”

Where there is no light there is your smile that shines brightly.

Side by side, my brother and I

Wept have I for you brother of mine

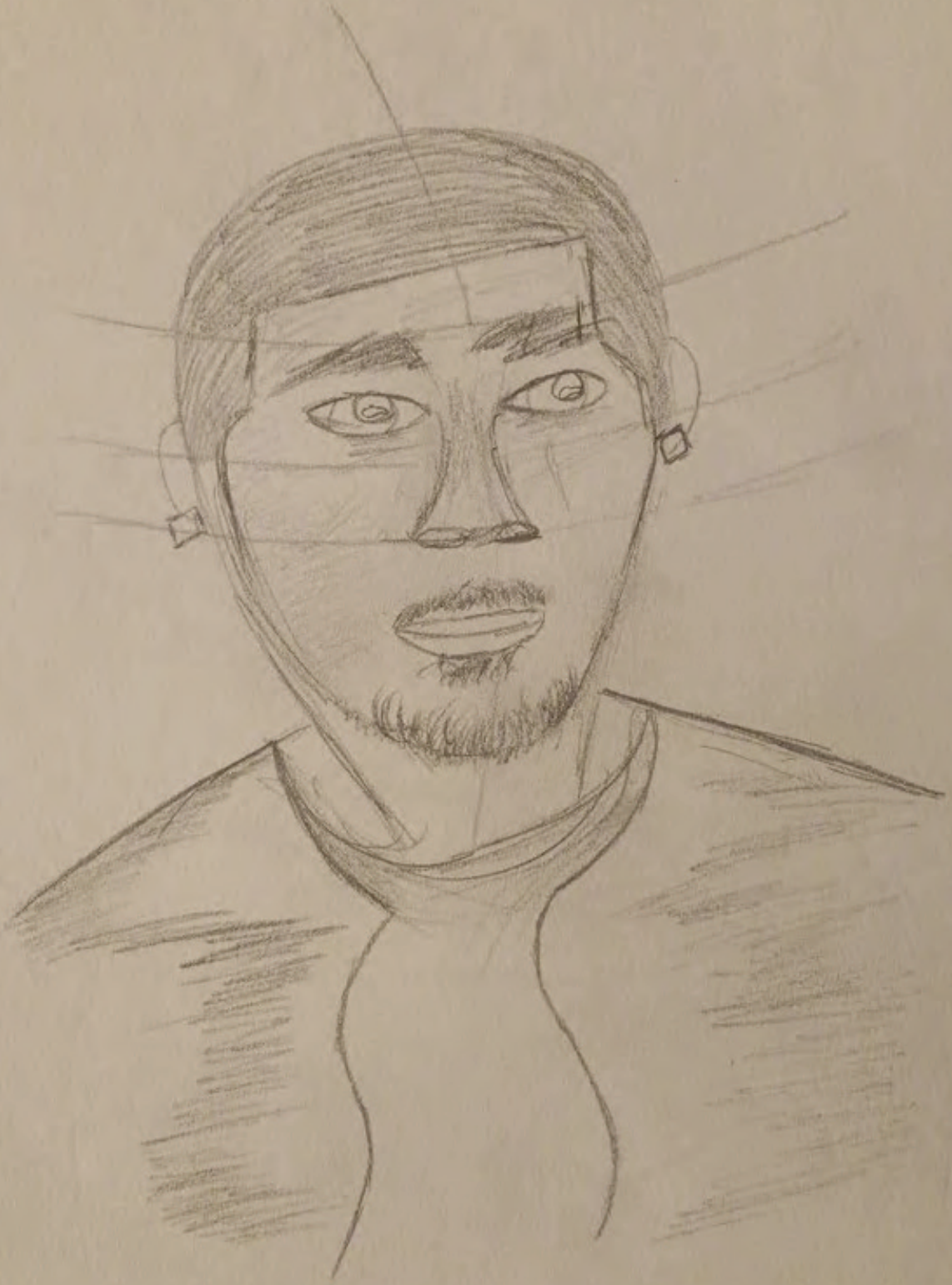
and most nights I wonder the choices

mom could've made to leave us side by side.

**GALLERY:
DAMARCO HILL**









human
heart
7/17/15







Section II: New Voices



High School Writers Freshman & Mr. Johnson's class

Each new batch of first-year students at Rogers High School is an adventure. It takes a full semester and a half to warm up to Fearless Writers. At this point, we understand this is normal and do our best not to take it personally. Students choose the high school from all over the city. The majority of students are meeting each other for the first time and there is pressure to be cool and tough. Writing vulnerably and sharing raw writing seems the opposite of cool and tough. We are grateful to Kayleen Powell for coming and sharing her spoken word with these students. Her performance in the class shot the coolness factor up 200 percent. We only had an opportunity to work with Mr Johnson's class for Spring of 2023. We focused on leadership and gun violence advocacy. Brad Higgs, an MSW intern with Fearless Writers asked for an opportunity to work with kids at risk of detention, suspension, and expulsion. Based on his own experiences in high school he wanted to have a writing group that encouraged leadership and emotional expression as a way to lower tensions and stress after two students died from gun violence after the new year. The students involved in this group were terrific. It was easy to recognize their leadership and their concern for their community.

Dakaisha Jones

She is 14. She likes to paint and draw. She likes Anime.

A plan

A plan is something you have to come up with and it has steps to it.

A dream is something that you envision.

When I was younger, I had a dream that when I got older, I was going to make a lot of money.

I still have this dream.

Dalliss Lothery

She is a freshman at Rogers High School.

Stingray

My sanctuary is my peace

Water

The way water flows is so peaceful to me.

Water relieves me from my thoughts and stress.

To watch the waves flow reminds me to sometimes take a breath and flow.

My spirit animal is a stingray

The way stingrays carelessly float brings me joy.

When you flip them over, they have a natural smile.

I can tell they're happy in the water.

So, my sanctuary is my freedom, my peace, my stingray.

Dimitri Horn

He has a big smile and is a loyal friend

In my opinion

In my opinion the world needs to be a bit safer.

Because all of this killing is bad, and they need to stop.

It is not cool or fun.

It is damaging the community and it's disrespecting the law.

The world needs to be at peace not war.

So, this is my opinion on the question about gun violence.

Anonymous

Untitled

I feel that trying to talk to someone about their personal problems isn't always the way to go. A lot of people get through things in different ways as far as music, drugs, and games and other things that help them cope.

Most important fact is males hold onto and deal with a lot more than females. And it isn't easy to vent about our problems.

This generation lots of teens have been killed in Toledo and I lost most of my friends to gun violence.

I get through everything with music or writing songs.

Females have deep problems too and us men can't feel what they feel, and it is vice versa for them.

It is always good to have someone there by your side just to know you are not alone.

Holding things in can lead you into a darker situation.

So, it is better to let it out and stay focused to feel relieved.

Anonymous

Untitled

As I grew up, I was always told if I want the right bag, I need to have motion.

Motion means to be wealthy and set up for life, when you put yourself in position to build an empire more motion will come.

Examples like more money, exposer, and more things that will put you on track to help others.

All the advice I took made me look at things differently, made me want to work harder and grind for the things I want especially when you come from hard times.

Save and invest in yourself and you will have big motion.

Justice Rose

He is very excited to have this piece published.

Sons of Toledo

The one part that got me is the people talking about how young people/kids are dying because of suicide, which is very true because kids go through a lot with being bullied in school and then going home crying and having thoughts go through their mind every night. I'm not just making it up I know because I've been there. I've been bullied my whole life. I know what it feels like. The fact that us teens try to show signs, but nobody notices but then when a young person completes suicide adults are like, "aww I wish I knew." Us teens try to show adults. Gun violence is sad because these kids get into gangs, or you don't even have to be in a gang. You can just be hanging with the wrong person. You can say something and get shot. That is why I am careful about who I hang around with.

Josh Cunningham

He enjoys football. He played on Varsity and Junior Varsity as quarterback and safety.

Every morning

Every morning at 5:00 am my dad takes me and my sister to the beach. He brings his little radio, and we play until the sun is fully up.

Joshua McKinney

He cares deeply about gun violence in the city.

Losing kids

Losing kids or grown people is hard.
Because these people have loved ones
You have to get up everyday
Thinking about that person who is gone.

I like talking about my feelings
But I need to know that person enough too
Where I can open up to them about my feelings
And sometimes when you open up to the wrong person
They sometimes start going around
People talk about you with others
That's what makes you hold your feelings inside
And stop talking about them

Le'Bron Jones

He enjoys the free food at school.

Pick a number

It's 9am, I've just woken up and checked my phone today's date is October 13th my 13th birthday is finally here.

My mom woke up, got dressed, and took me to school. It was odd because she didn't say anything to me this morning, just got up and drove me to school for 10 minutes.

I got to school my classmates wished me happy birthday and got straight to work.

After school, I got home and opened the door to my family, surprising me with a party that I never expected.

13 is also my favorite number because of a New York player Odell Beckham Jr.

Lilly Swagerty

She is a big fan of unicorns.

I think people with children

Should not have guns because they could hurt themselves
Or other people.

I think that there should be more gun laws.

I think people trying to ban drag shows

And trans people

Trying to stay away from the fact that guns are more dangerous.

I also think that parents with guns should give them up

When you have children, you should at least lock them in a storage unit.

Until the kids reach a safe age for them to be around guns.

People who have guns should take classes to protect children from guns.

Lydia Scott

She runs track. She competes in the 100 and 200 meter races.

If I went on a road trip

If I went on a road trip I would first pack everything I would need.

For example, I would bring food/snacks for the drive there and back.

I will bring a blanket and pillows.

I don't know where I will go yet.

I think I would go to Columbus because

It is not too far but it is still going to take me about two hours to get there.

I love listening to music in the care because the sound is louder

So, I feel like it would be a fun car ride.

If I decided to bring someone, I would bring my friend Kennedy

I call her Kenni.

We get along well.

I think that we would have a lot of fun.

Marionna Mays

She is 15. Her favorite sport is volleyball. She likes to dance and watch tik tok.

Today I learned

Today I learned that being determined puts you on the verge of doing something great. If you keep pushing yourself even when you want to stop once, you get so far it is inevitable.

Don't let anyone push you from doing something that makes you happy.

Keep going even when you get frustrated.

Masao Thaboun

He is a freshman at Rogers High School.

Night

One time it was nighttime, and it was windy and storming
There were trees falling down; leaves everywhere
It was raining, dark outside
You couldn't see anything
Except for the street lighting

Naujae Stone

She is 16 years old. She has been a free, creative writer since the 3rd grade.

I would say

I would say when it was the 4th of July, and I was with my siblings. We had fireworks and it was late at night like 1-2 in the morning. So, after we did most of the fireworks and went into the house but one of my friends needed clothes to stay the night. So, me and my sister and brother left the house without telling anyone because little did, we know one of the neighbors called the police, and we didn't know this. So, when we were walking back, we seen the police car in front of the house, so we ran and kind of lost each other. Long story short, we had to walk through the door with the police in the street, but we didn't get in trouble.

NyRena Barber

She is a junior at Rogers High School.

In the evening the city goes to bed hanging lights above their heads

Our city

I feel our generation didn't come with enough discipline, and that is why kids are dying young,

Mental Health

Your mental health is one thing you should always protect

Going through relationships and friendships

You should always make sure you live by your rules

And anything to keep you at peace.

Keep Going

Positivity is key! Never let anything negative in life stop what you have going on. Don't compete with anybody but the person you were yesterday.

Royale L. Williams

She is about to turn 15. She is very artistic. She has lived in Ohio for three years. She is originally from New York.

Real life Halloween

I woke up to the TV on loud, it felt like it was on a high volume.

I turned it down whereas the news channel revealed itself.

On the news: “Young girl Emily, found dead in father’s apartment.”

Wow, I feel so bad for this Emily girl.

My nose started to tingle.

I could not feel my feet.

The kitchen is a mess!

Pastries and baguettes on the floor.

I reached for the fridge door, but I just couldn’t feel it for some reason.

This place I was in made me feel dystopic.

I looked in the kitchen window and that’s when I realized I was Emily.

I am Emily!

It just hit me, I’m dead.

I am dead and I am trapped but the only way to escape is to find out how I died.

Boy, was I in for a treat – to unlock my greatest mystery yet.

Rysson Lawrence Washington

He is the number one writer in the class. He is very creative and imaginative and a calm talker.

Boring

I think the picture is cute since there are a bunch of adorable girls blowing bubbles.
But for me the boy lying on the floor is a little funny
Because I would be doing the same thing.
The boy might be thinking “why am I here” or
“Man, this is so boring.”
I can relate to this kid because for me
Nothing to do is horrible.

Shanice Gardner

She likes math. She is a straight A student.

Our lives are filled with joy and sorrow

Our lives are filled with joy and sorrow.

These two are the feelings people express in our daily lives.

When we experience these feelings without any emotions or reasons attached,

Pure joy and sorrow are possible.

If not, it is impossible.

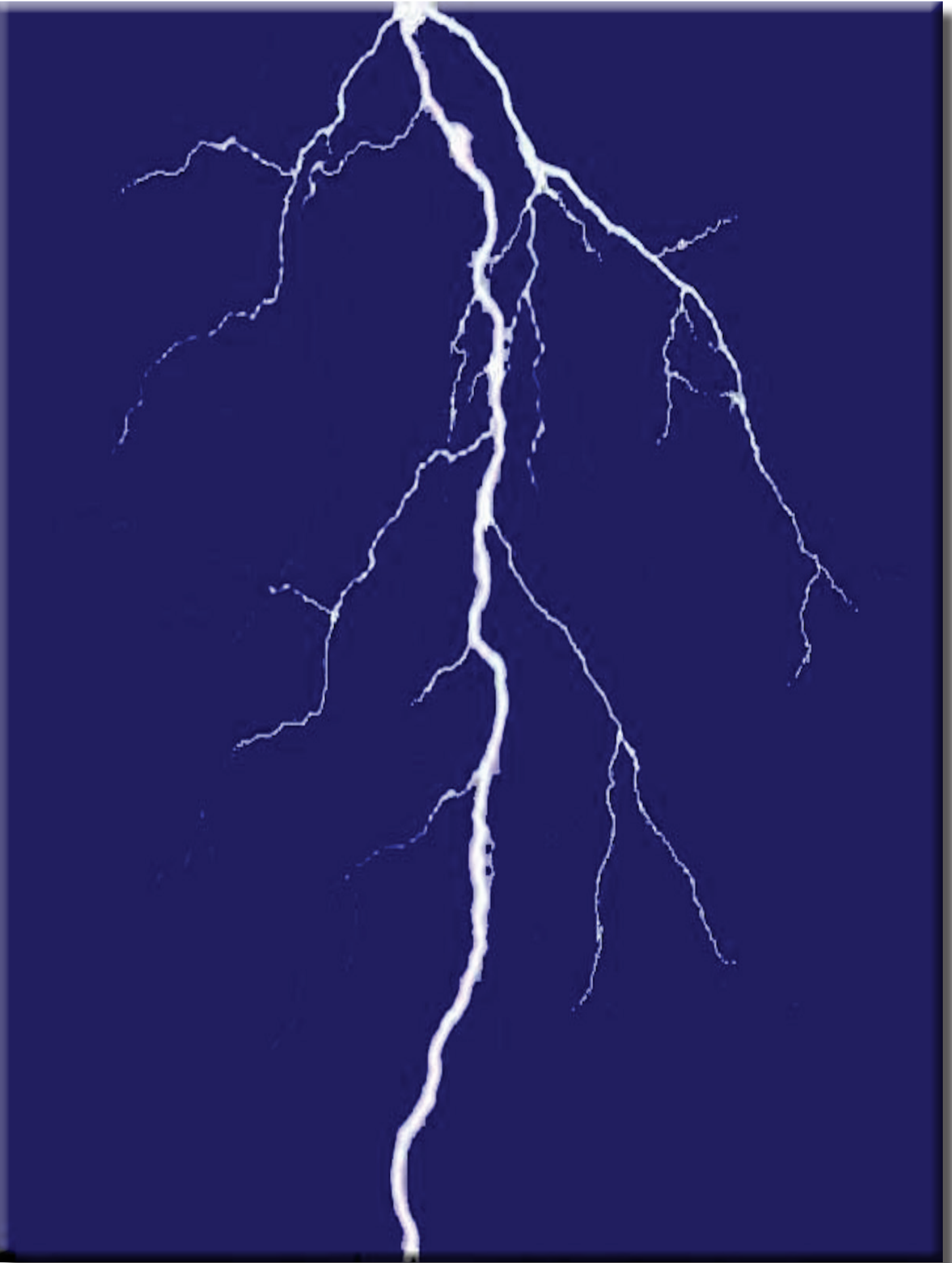
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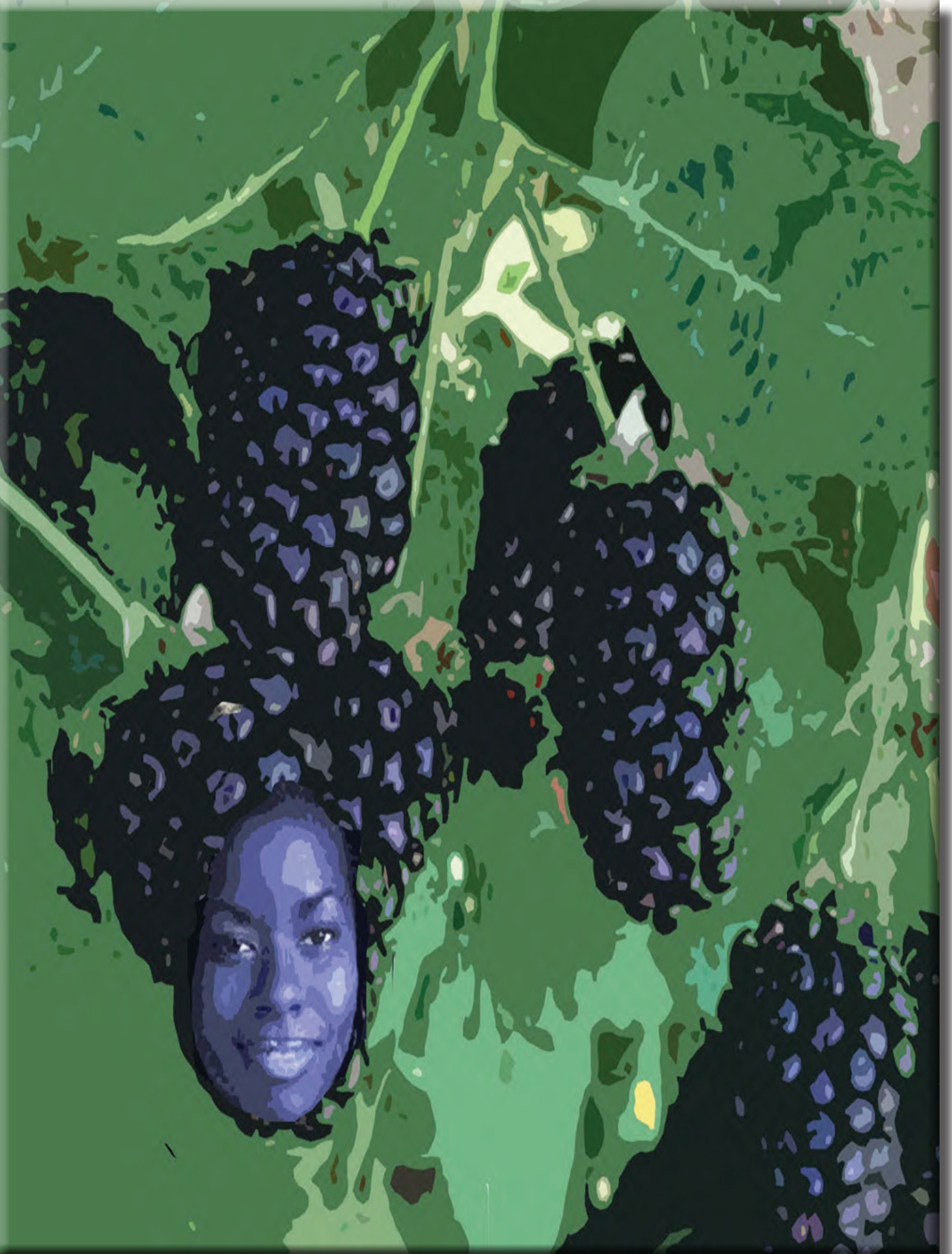














Section III: Teamwork



Interprofessional Teams

Fearless Writers was always an opportunity for interprofessional university students to volunteer to write with young people in the community. It has also always played the part of an internship for health professions to get experience with community organizing, program development, and arts-based participatory action research. Prior to COVID-19 shutdown, Fearless Writers was an internship that students requested and was in high demand. After COVID, this has started to shift. The demand for mental health professionals and the increases in salaries for social workers in private practice has made attracting students to a public high school HUB difficult. After several attempts to get grant funds to have monetary incentives for the internship, Fearless Writers and Rogers Community HUB have finally started to receive funds to support students in completing internships with underserved youth in Toledo.

Part I: The Troublemakers

Josh Davies

Director

Rogers High School Community Hub

Josh is the director of Rogers High School Community Hub. Josh led Dr. Sloane Cleary to Rogers and the AVID teachers. Josh has joined the group off and on for years and facilitates the group when Dr Sloane Cleary is off on other adventures. We are honored to share some of his writing.

Say her name

The blue line appears thin in the distance, but we know what lays in store
They lie, say we're violent thugs but we know what we're marching for
As we advance shoulder to shoulder, their batons are at the ready
All together now, advance, let's go, keep moving, slow and steady
We move closer and their line turns to a mountain insurmountable
But we won't back down, we'll keep our nerve, we must hold them accountable
For George Floyd, Emmett Till, and for Breonna Taylor
If you get scared take a deep breath, then I want you to say her
Say her name say her name, her name is Breonna Taylor

Climate Justice

Granddaughter and her friends
Islands in South Pacific
Native/Indigenous
Salted fish
Long lost family
Blessing
Outside looking in
Tokenizing
3 months of rain in 48 hours
Digging in the sand, plastic instead of tua tua.
Can't relocate grandparents' graves
Salmon dying of heatstroke
Whitening > suits and ties meet fruitless lies
Article 6 > carbon credits
Youth can't be heard
Songs of ancestors
Our embers don't fade, they start fires.
Slow lament for a dying planet
Sung at the funeral pyre
As we douse it with gasoline
And throw in the match

I've fallen

I've fallen and I can't get up.

Year after year, I stayed strong, never gave up.

Walk straight on by, won't put a dollar in the man's cup

But now I feel I'm done, so it's time to throw my hands up.

A stranger walks by, grabs hold and helps me stand up

"You seem troubled, he says, why don't you tell me what the hell's up?"

I'm a man I say, so I'm gonna keep my mouth shut.

Something is wrong, but idk how to describe what.

I've been struggling too long, but alone learn not to stand

Admitting I need help doesn't make me any less a man.

I need to talk to someone, someone who understands I'm in therapy now, it's the mother fucking jam.

A tree without roots

A tree without roots collapses from a small breeze.

A tree without roots is unable to survive the deep freeze.

The roots didn't vanish, they were hacked off by white men in white hoods.

But also, by white men who thought that what they did was good.

What they didn't know is this tree's strength runs deep

Sleep with one eye open, you see them when they creep.

The roots of this tree can be regrown

By studying the past and the example we are shown

Don't believe their lies and stare right into their eyes.

Tell them since birth you've known your God given worth.

And when you do that, you'll notice growth in the roots

Because the antidote to bigotry is always the truth.

She

She had an eating disorder, and I didn't notice.

She had anxiety and low self-esteem, and I didn't notice.

I was young and assumed our lives were the same, our experiences parallel, but I was wrong.

What messages do our sisters and daughters hear, and more importantly, what do they hear from me? What do I let slide among my friends because I don't want to be the odd one out?

Not as much as I used to, but still more than I should. Some men only claim to realize the humanity of women when they have a daughter or sister. People talk about the brotherhood of man yet wonder why women are so upset.

Fighting is not a love language.

The screens we live on poison our minds, warping our sense of self and our ability to recognize humanity in others.

The world is trying to kill my sisters, yet I am a part of the world. Whose side will I be on?

Heather Sloane Cleary

Social Work
University of Toledo

Heather is the Coordinator of Fearless Writers. She has been part all of the teams and participated in all the projects. She writes poems almost daily. Each of these raw pieces is the result of a collective, not possible without the souls around her, laughing, crying, yelling. She admits that it is difficult to use her voice which is why she delights in others using their voices to surprise themselves.

Cut into my flesh

Cut into my flesh
I am not enough
I am not right
I am odd
There is not place for odd
And so I stay outside
Of what is
Acceptable
I stay outside of

Particular kinds of love
Seeking those
That understand the
Lies and try to live outside of
Them
I am not sure I can find
The truth but who can?

My sisters

My sisters
Layer after layer of
Hurt- unthoughtful
Words and actions
Free
Free
What would my mind take up
Where would my thoughts
Travel
Rain-soaked streets
Music lingering in the air
Of ancient hope
Bright sunshine blinding
My sight
Enabling me to feel
My way through life
aware of the slightest
Change in temperature
To be free
To be free

Life outside of the light

Fractions are messy - overwhelming
Loud and large

It can't be captured
Like fireflies in a
Mason jar

Life through a camera
Comes in the way of
Surrender- to gaining
practice at the waves
Of existing - sorrow, sadness
Anger, fear can be avoided and
Not embraced
Filtered with smiles, hugs
And fuzzy kittens

Glistening clean lives of
Black and white.
What are you hiding?
What is not captured
Within the margins.
Heather Sloane
Dangerous & Daring

Something unique my words can become
Dangerous & Daring
The character in a novel
Always goes against the grain
in the way
she speaks, moves, writes
All eyes are on her
because she lives life
dangerously breaking the rules
all eyes are on her
because she dares to be undefined.
The world wants to be like
Her to live dangerously to
be daring but instead those
around her set up obstacles
set up road blocks secretly
hoping these rules placed in
her way will slow her down
will tame her make her reasonable
but her audience knows
she will blast through it
all shining even more brightly.

I walked up the spiral

Staircase anticipating
it falling to the ground
but it supported my ascent

Upstairs the rooms were
Preserved as if the family
Had left for vacation and never
returned.

I opened drawers to find
Folded clothes- I stared at
Pictures – small toys,
Jewelry- each piece
with a tale to tell.

Overwhelmed I sat down
on a green fainting coach and
cried so sad about the lost stories
of this place.

Lemons fallen

Lemons fallen
On the sidewalk
I have never lived
Where lemons grow
And the shock of bright
Yellow falling from the tree
Is a delight

I am in a warm place
For a change instead
Of cold

I gathered as many as
I can in my t-shirt
The sunny smell my perfume
For the day

I cut each lemon
And press the juice out
Loving labor
I put thyme – growing wild

I will gather my things
And head out to the
Ocean but for now,
I let myself be lazy.

My favorite things

Cobalt blue glass

White bed linens

Copper flecks in anything

Terra napping with her computer still going.

Misty sitting in the sun under the dining room table

Yellow teapot

Skye on FaceTime zooming in and out- close ups of her lips, her eye- the one blue with a copper fleck.

The overrun garden in need of mulch.

The golden pine needles on the neighbor's tree.

The muffled sound of Max calming families grieving.

Ash curled up in the bottom sock drawer, his striped snake-like tail, the only clue to his presence.

Dream Dust-

Dream dust-

The sand man is greedy with his dream dust these days.

I get warm in bed convinced I will fall deeply-but up pops a thought and another until
a hornets nest of worry keeps me alert.

Dark maze misleading

Dark maze misleading path of nature sounds

It is not necessary to green the heat.

There are those I love who are convinced life is a struggle

They wear their emotional scars like decorations from a battlefield

They feel struggle is necessary to nurture a wise soul

I wonder if this is true

I wonder what our world would look like where there was space to let imaginations run
free

For deep breaths

For leisure

Pain is a catalyst to art but is peace also a nurturing space for art

I would prefer to fight for room for space to grow unincumbered by suffering

Held up-

Again

A free mind is ready for the better things
How do I open my mind?
Free my mind
To detach my thoughts
From expectations
To allow red anger
burning bright like a
Hot ember
How do I free my mind
And express sadness?
The sorrow given to me
As a gift I continue to
Unwrap from my parents

The sting in my chest

(inspired by Amanda Gorman)

The sting in my chest
It drips like a leaky faucet
I try to speak
My words like gravel in my throat
My voice stolen by monsters
Under my bed
By big voices
Powerful hands
I try to take it back
To sing proudly
I get tips from everyone
You should do this
You should do that
The sting in my chest reminds me
Drip, drip...
The fear bloomed
So early it roots so deep
I live with the sting

Keep opening my mouth
Ignore the gravel
And fight in moments in the past when I would give up
When I would be broken
I keep trying
There is a victory in
The trying.

Speak - she said

Speak with anger spitting
Her throat tight
Partially choked with rage

Speak
She dares me to
Unload my feelings
Years of politeness
Bubbling into my chest

Speak
The battle in my head to
Tell the truth
To divulge the abuses
The slights the meanness
That has gone unrecognized

Speak
Arms flailing in my face
Speak
Speak
Her hot breath assaulting my face
The power of silence in heated moments

Just like the moon

Just like the moon,

I control the tide.

I can wash words,

looks, and cruelty from

my skin.

I am the water crashing against the rock of injustice.

Slowly sculpting, ripping away at it with salt and tenacity.

I can be counted on to storm and thrash into fear.

I cannot be killed by hatefulness.

Just like the moon

I control the tide.

Don't be fooled by my stillness, my calm, or moments when I appear defeated.

It is but a moment.

My rage will build into waves and waves into torrents.

My voice and actions will take their toll.

The past is the past

The past is the past so easy to say much harder to do.

Our past is only there to teach us lessons in how to overcome obstacles.

The present is a gift to fully appreciate. Do we reject the jewels put in our path each day?

Or do we reach down to collect them, fuel for dark days when sparkle is harder to see.

Being fully present is difficult; grappling for every opportunity is brave.

Letting the past come in the way of the future is what is considered normal.

A tree cemented in time and space

A tree cemented in time and space

The rings bulge

More for rainy seasons than for dry

The upmost leaves see a different sliver of sky as they reach upward.

The roots make friends with new worms and moles as they dig gently outward.

Many spring buds have bloomed.

Winter drifts of endless snow

Sleepy summers with cricket orchestras

The fireworks of full color

Repeat and rewind

All leading to this moment when I have walked too far

Day dreaming

My way out of the wood through a meadow to a magnificent

Elder

We hum together for a while alive, one so brief, one so ancient.

Two men talking at a coffee shop

I feel bad I am staring at the painting above two men talking. I come to this coffee shop just for this view – although I prefer where they have roosted.

One white, one black, both passionate about whatever they are discussing.

They lean in throwing their hands about but all curiosity and smiles.

I can't hear them just a dim tenor and baritone

The red leather chairs

My preferred spot

Makes it nearly impossible to type on a computer but I try

Regularly I get lost in the images – calling back to

Ancient wisdom

Animals and symbols

Colors, from clay and blood, smashed plants and coal. There is a wax over it scraped away to reveal layers

Shadows, time, crows and arrows, turtles & foxes a story where I don't know the language

The perfect escape for a mind drowning in the present – swallowing gulps of cultural poison regularly unable to breathe.

I stare at the blank document

I stare at the blank document on my screen

Why can't I start

I have at least five writing projects going

And yet the cursor throbs on the screen – nothing is coming to me.

The more I panic the blanker my mind.

Deep breath in

Deep breath out

Just get some words down

Any word like a pen whose ink needs friction to warm and spill into the texture
of creamy whiteness and faded blue lines

The morning

The morning has been hectic
Didn't like the first dress I put on
Spilled tea on my books
Received text messages from every direction
By the time I got in my car there was a bee's nest of worry and concern
Buzzing in my head.
I picked my daughter up – running late, still sleepy.
I focused for a moment on her - “be here with her.”
Thoughts are still stinging in my head. The smell of coffee hit me as we pulled open the
heavy door then wafts of old books. My heart calmed
We stood in line for something warm- found a quiet table and then revisited our old
conversation.
Even though our last talk was painful for me, I was excited to begin again and turn a new
page.
Reconnecting and connecting in new ways we never imagined
We talk about propaganda, social media, how the individual target creates a culture of
self –beat-up and judgment which bellows divisiveness
She the philosopher fine with leaning into conversation
Me the social scientist wanting something practical to come from the inquiry
Unsure, unresolved feels awful for me
Stuck in the empathy is as possible as objectivity
Impossible

I come to write

I have come to write to be in a quiet space but not too quiet

I get my coffee

Open my computer

Today is going to be the day I finish the article

Make full professor

And roll around in money

I start off well

Sentence after sentence

Tip tap tip tap

I look up and think for a second and that is when it went wrong

The picture on the wall, the conversation next to me. Everything more interesting everything grabbing my attention.

Numbers are an important part of our life

For the life of me I can't remember this number this year after I reminded myself daily from 8/20/22-9/7/22. I got caught up in my Thursday. My husband who spends time on Facebook reminded me. Sent a "Happy Birthday Mom" the family thread – first message at 7pm. My youngest sister started with the excuses. Hope didn't say a word. "Alexa call Mom's devices"

Ring, ring, ring, ring, finally she answers. Happy Birthday – turns out not a good day she fell into her rose bushes, which she reminds me was a birthday present.

Friday, we sat outside listening to music under fairy lights, a fire, and sangria – still not enough. At the art festival I bought her a print I thought she would like – still nothing. She is down seventy-seven, it is just not going to be the best birthday it turns out.

A myth

A myth

I am always calm & peaceful

I never get upset

I was trained to appear so

To hide violence

To hide addiction

To present as normal

To protect my father

To protect his income

Without income

There is no warmth

Only hunger, fear and suffering

So, I learned to

Keep up appearances

To save my family

To save myself and

Now this mask of calm

Doesn't always serve me

It is impossible to be perfect

All the time and the façade cracks

And my health dwindles

Ankle

I kept placing 1 & 2 at each meet
And no one was more surprised than me.
I had never high jumped before this season.
My coach would have us practice after school.
I would do anything to avoid the antique medal pyramid bar he insisted we use
That would leave welts on my back if I landed on it.
It was raining that day they moved all the track equipment indoors.
We were doing so well as a team we had a shot at winning districts.
The basketball gym had been refinished and was still tacky
On my first run I planted my foot, twisted and my foot delayed in leaving the
Sticky floor. The popping sound echoed, and I could feel the pain shoot up my leg.
I didn't want to cry or call attention to my injury, embarrassed by the presence of all the
spring athletes.
He noticed – right away
Which made my heart stop
The one person I didn't want to notice and really wanted to secretly.
“You, okay?”
He looked down at my swollen ankle slowly turning purple like ink on white paper
soaking my foot in pain; throbbing
He ran and got my coach insisting I should go to the ER. He went to the office to call
my parents.
It seemed certain my hope of districts and regionals were crushed.

He was hinting

He was hinting

Didn't want to stay

But wanted to spend time together

I got the hint

Even though I felt obligated to stay

I left to eat lunch with a student

He was crowded by fraternity brothers at the elevator

I took the stairs

Followed by a PhD student

Wanting to work with me

His car parked beside mine

I had not really noticed what he was driving, he had noticed my car from all the weeks parking beside me.

He talked about his daughter, his classes it was nice catching up, taking time

He is enjoying the semester so far

We hugged

He drove away

My mind onto the next think

Two women waiting online to discuss poetry

And all the things

Sons of Toledo Dreams

I dreamed he had Mud dripping down his face.

So kind he was

So determined

So smart

So insightful

Did he ever have a chance?

Tall and strong

They would approach him regularly

Threaten him because he looked

Powerful

I dreamed of him on a white table, a white sheet over his face

The tears come easily

He inspires most everything I do

His kindness, his leadership, his gift

I dreamed he was a headline

“Young, black man dies of gun violence”

Insinuating foul play

I scream knowing he did everything in his power to stay away to make a life

I dream of his mother and brother crying

Heads bowed

He was their world

And now ...

He had Mud dripping down his face
His life swallowed by the swamp
Without a sound without a notice.

Flame

It is one of those nights
When like a moth I meditate
On the candle flames
Dancing throughout the house

My mind drifting, missing my person
My mind thinks back to all the best moments
Baking that feeling into the pit of my stomach

Missing, yearning, aching
Nothing really describes
The salty sweet of happiness and sorrow
Feeling weak and powerful
That comes with certain kinds of love

He was my flame and now
Something more permanent, stable, safe
But in moments when I am able to be still the tick tick
Hum can be found lighting me up warming my life like a flame

Zipcodes – Redlining

I liked to step into warm tar as a little girl -
The molten smell of it, the dark stickiness.
When they would pour our road each summer,
My dad would eventually find me and scold me.
Getting the sticky tar from my feet was not easy.

We played in my neighborhood.
All the moms watching out for us
But also, not watching.
This was passed down.
First time stay at home moms
Playing house, performing what it was like to be at home with kids.
Even though, they didn't have examples.
Most of their mothers had to work outside of the home.
Paid someone to watch their kids.
Always lots of kids fending for themselves.
I did not know any difference.
I knew my neighborhood -
All the names, all the pets,

All the shop and bar owners.
Now, people would think my life was
Dangerous, my parents neglectful.
It was just the way of things.

Part II: Mentors

The Mentors involved with Fearless Writers came from many different educational backgrounds. All were students at the University of Toledo representing social work, medicine, physical therapy, and English. The recruitment process for these mentors involved reaching out to the inter-professional education program, Health and Human Services College, at announcements to Arts and Letters. The mentors in this section were involved in the virtual writing groups made available during the COVID shutdown. Each mentor brought a new lens to the project which has strengthened the process for all students.

Abigail Hernandez

Physical Therapy
University of Toledo

If you make yourself

If you make yourself a strong believer,
they will believe.

Make yourself a strong believer,
and they will listen.

Become a strong believer
and make yourself believe.

It starts from within

From the fire that fuels you.

“if you can believe it, you can achieve it”

And so she did.

Flirtatious

Let's be bright and colorful. Who knew yellow was so telling. This color is bright yellow and ripe like a mango. It brings light into the room and a smile on my face. It's a new favorite of mine. It may be flirtatious like sweet and sassy. It could even be soft and kind. It's not too harsh, but it makes a statement. It's a friendly color. I could have chosen its neighbor, but it's not bright enough. I want to be noticed, I want to be present. I want to be like this color, drawing more people in.

Community

My parents have instilled strong sense of community within me. And for that I am grateful. My parents love to feed others and make sure they are well. From them I have learned what it's like to be a good host. I'm grateful for the community my parents have built for me. This community has brought me more Filipino culture into my life than I would have discovered on my own. This community teaches me tradition and feeds me traditional foods. This community supports me and cheers me on in my greatest achievements. I hope to learn from my community-- and to bring this community to others. To be sure my guests are fed and happy. I want others to feel supported and invited to explore diversity and culture. I want to make a welcoming community.

A free mind

To have a free mind is to be open. I want to know the truth, I want to hear the truth, but my mind must be open. "a free mind is ready for other things" I'm ready for peace, I'm ready for new opportunities in this life. Some are just ready for breakfast.

hey, do you have a free mind today? My mind is jumbled with anatomy, worries, exams, but I wish to be present. Ready to know the truth and hear the truth with a free mind.

Clare Scantling

Medicine
University of Toledo

who; a remembering

shapes and colors and me and you
creating what we can't think our way through
could you pick up your laundry off the floor? i grumble
what's for dinner tonight? your grumbling belly wonders
here, why don't you help me stir the pasta
where are we off to today?
a walk, the lake, arts and crafts, an adventure
is there anything we're really here for
but to "love, anyways?"

you taught me how to see
showed me the who i want to be
soft and strong; present and attuned
my first taste of authentic community

of a life lived in techno-color
with one big hug, you invited me in,
twirled me around, melted me down,
built me up, and blessed my going
to carry you
here.

where community from scratch
has been shaped person by person
by day by week by month by God
and has called me ever-new to learn to love again
anyways, these wacky, confounding souls placed
in my path with purpose, with meaning,
with love, with mystery

why?
what am i seeking?
who am i to see?
who am i to be?
here.

A project for the way home, I note

Glowing beneath the blue of my surgical mask,
I'm humming to myself, swaying in my clogs,
thumbing the two green hues with soft, bare palms.

Almost aloe. Donegal.

My eyes gently close and try to imagine –

Donegal, maybe. The land of my kin.

Pubs: dark, wood, loud, smoky. Fiddles: folk, laughter,
hearty, soothe. *Almost like aloe* – just what the doctor ordered
to heal a bad burn: dry, sun, sand, water, clear skies, blue.

Blue: the color that always calls out to me. But today, hues of green.

The green of Ireland. The place I was to go this summer.

To live and to build community. To sit in the earth.

To heal division through encounter. To the land
my spirit claims home. To where I feel the balm of aloe,
nourished and replenished.

Holding warm tea cupped by my soft, bare palms.

The wandering green landscape, the gray misty sky hugging it.

No sun or sand or blue or burn in sight.

Donegal – where love and rain and moss seep
into my bones.

Where we can sit wake together through the night,
warmed by the yellowed light and infused with tea

to fill the bony cavities the love and rain and moss exposed,
as we stitch together the fragments of our mourning bodies,
storytelling about the human we just lost –

“What are you hoping to paint, ma’am?”

Another cup of tea, please?

imparting

how do you see?
the angle of a clothing rack
the elevation of her arm
the color of my skin my hair my clothes?
with gratitude?
in protest?
together, different.
each to each.
we mattered.
no, we *matter*.
do you see me?
we cry we leap we stumble we sing
hear our tunes
hear the marching of our feet
our vibrance our grief; together each
have carried us far
– we have swum with sharks
and waded in still waters –
can i trust you to hold?
that we have held utter heart-sinking tragedy
with ferocious empowerment

together in the same breath, in the same body
together with depth.
there lingers a frog in my throat
a gaping hole in my chest
a glimmer in my eyes
dear child, there is still time

three to get married

the birds swoop as the snow trickles
the beat of their wings interrupting
the stillness of the winter woods

i catch my breath as the snow and wings
dance together miles of untrekked forest in front of us
we've barely scratched the surface together
i'm moving slow; you're eager to go
God watches over every sparrow,
how much more does He love us!
i turn to smile at you as we try to set things right
and the birds skip from branch to branch
delicately accompanying us, almost
as if they thought we didn't notice
we will not let the blustery wind reduce us
this is the fight we want to be in the crisp air fills our lungs
and the snow-capped trees our child-like imaginations
the dance of this landscape
elevates our hearts as we trek
to return to each other --
how much more does He love us

Emiko Mar

Physical Therapy
University of Toledo

Phenomenal woman

Phenomenal woman

The product of my mother who always fights for the community and justice

Phenomenal woman

Molded by the hardened and wrinkled hands of my grandmothers

One, who took a new name just to live in this country

The other, who endured living in a camp just for being her

Phenomenal woman

I absorb the sacrifices of the women before me

Their blood, sweat, and tears

Engrained in my being

Through them

I continue to amplify this line of

Phenomenally Asian women.

Waiting to be free

The freedom to be your true self is a challenge

Do I dare step out of the box, ruffling the feathers of social norms?

Or do I take the easy way out?

Lay low in the comforts of my personal bubble

Keeping my thoughts and expressions tucked away in a box, in the back corner of the closet

It's so easy to say, "Just put it all out there, take a chance! Show your true colors! It's so liberating!"

But deep down, I am my own worst enemy

Keeping my colors hidden away

In a box in the corner of the closet

Waiting to be freed

She took a seat

She took a seat on what looked like an ordinary bus
But that bus,
The vessel that carried travelers to and fro
That bus was clouded with in unseen evil
An evil filled with a hateful and prejudiced darkness
She took a seat on that bus
And the light that powerful light that emanated from her being
Pierced through the darkness
Like thousands of tiny swords
Fighting for freedom
The majesty of her will power sustained her through the battle
Refusing to budge
Showing the world what was rightfully hers
She took a seat on that bus
Because she was tired
But her iron will,
Allowed us all to sit together

America the beautiful?

America,
The land of the free
This is something we hear over and over and over again
But how is this possible
When we are not all truly free?
Destructive cycles of oppression
Specifically designed
To tear down the ones blessed with different shades
Is this why my grandma told me to stay out of the sun?
Our schools, the very places where our children learn
Continue to perpetuate the broken history
Telling them that this is the way
White murderers, terrorists
Defended
“He had a bad day”
Children
Locked away in prisons for crimes they didn’t commit
We long for a country of freedom
But freedom can’t come from keeping our heads down
We need to be angry
We need to fight
For America to truly be beautiful.

Utopia

Take me away

To a place free of fears, worries, and regrets

A place where every being lives in unity

Were the word fight doesn't exist

It will be sunny

Dogs barking, birds chirping, ocean waves crashing gently on the rocks

Beautiful smells fill the air filling our nostrils with joy

Take me away

To a place where we are at peace with each other

And more importantly,

With ourselves

Hope

Believe in hope

Standing up on our tippiest of toes, arms stretched out

Reaching for this thing that gets closer and closer

Our fingertips inch forward

And in instant, it slips just out of reach again

We fall

Shake it off

Get right back on our toes

Because the hope is right where we left it

The Storm

Sitting alone in my apartment
The skies are dark
Clouds filled with impending storms
Outside, tree branches swirl to the beat of the breeze
Leaves tapping violently against the window
I look out with longing
But the biting cold keeps me in
Rain starts to fall,
Right on cue with my darkening mood
I've been here before
Eyes closed; I inhale deep
With my exhale
I see a glimmer in the distance
A calm washes over the gray
I know this soon shall pass.

Maggie Nigro

Physical Therapy
University of Toledo

January 23

(inspired by Coretta Scott King)

When we share with each other, we learn about each other. We become raw & vulnerable, yet beautiful & strong. Letting our heart talk truly connects us to one another. It allows us to connect as human beings. It takes us into new dimensions as we learn about another's home. Sometimes I wonder why it is so hard to talk about our feelings and to have deeper conversations. But I also know that it can be scary and uncomfortable. When we share from our deepest levels, we grow closer together and truly learn from each other. And from there, We find out that we really aren't strangers after all.

Silence is violence

Silence is violence. I've heard this a lot lately. I never used to associate those words together. Silence is violence. Now, I understand why this is true. Silence is violence. Why do people turn away when they see something cruel and unjust going on right in front of them? I often wonder how they would feel if that was their daughter? Or their father? Martin Luther King Jr once said that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere". Why look away? Why pretend everything is okay? Injustice anywhere is truly injustice everywhere.

Julia Sayger

English
University of Toledo

Slow Morning

I begin my day like any other, a reach for my alarm and a scroll through social media.
My cat would desperately try to get me out of bed...
When I finally decided it was time to start my day, I would get up and stretch the sleep
from my bones.
Every joint in my shoulder, back, and arms would crack.
As if my skeleton needed some grease in its joints to begin functioning.
Hamilton would always come first, weaving in and out of the kitchen for food.
His little purrs while licking the stirring spoon always makes me laugh.
I'd comb my schedule and look for any moments of rest, an opportunity to breathe
amidst a busy day.
My day would progress like an old film projector, ticking through the glimpses and shots
of my life.

Freedom in Flight

In order to fly, one has to fight against the wind
It cracks open your skin and rips away loose feathers
Some stay behind, unable to bear the torture
Push against that force and break the mold
The pain is worth the view
A beautiful sun ripples against a rainbow sky as far as the eye can see
The damp clouds twist between your fingers
Air opens your lungs and fills them with exhilaration
When freedom comes, the wind will guide your flight

Fearless Writers Meeting

An English Major's Dilemma

'Oh, you are an English major! Do you want to teach?'

No, I don't want to teach.

I want to build a group of writers up, up, up from the ground

Watch as they craft their stories

Build worlds beyond belief

Craft simple words into complex believable characters

I want to watch as they spread their wings and take off

Reach for the stars and catch the light between fingertips

Dreams are attainable with my help

We grind, sweat, and cry into the books we create together

Physical copies are distributed into the world for people to enjoy

Watch as their creation becomes realized in the hands of children, teens, adults

As the hard work is paid off and do it all over again

I want to watch as a writer becomes an author

'Oh, you are an English major! Do you want to teach?'

No friend, I'm a writer who wants to help other writers achieve their dreams.

—

Beauty Is In The Eye Of The Beholder

When a bad day rolls around— throws my thoughts in a jumbled heap I have to untangle

Which could take me a day to a week

Instead, I play a little game

Opening my eyes to observe those around me

I pick out small things I like

One girl has beautiful eyes that lock onto your soul as they pull at the edges into a smile behind her mask

One has great style that obviously took time to curate

He has beautiful hair that looks soft and gentle as a warm blanket fresh out of the dryer

I play this game to distract my thoughts

It helps me note the people around me, how they each probably struggle with their own intrusive minds

They deserve to be told that beauty lies within themselves

Even though they may not feel it

Summon Spring

The smell of rain never changes
I step into a new day, and I know it waits for no one
Pure, clear, a new start—
Throughout history, it has always been a sign of good fortune
Crops would finally grow, restored to life by the tears of clouds
Budding flowers puncture the dirt and bring forth new colors of spring
Hydrangeas, begonias, hyacinth, and roses
Their colors fill my mind and I simply rest, allowing myself to be content
But instead, when I wake, it's snow instead of rain and my thoughts of spring shatter
When will we reach those rainy days that will summon forth spring

Untitled

When the warmth finally touches the frozen ground
My mind begins to fill thoughts of sunny days and endless smiles
The workload has ceased— at least for the time being
Wisteria, bougainvillea, and daylily
—
Seasons never ceasing their endless turmoil
Spring has slowly mixed itself with winter; hail and snow have somehow become a part
of March

Mitchell Pei

Medicine
University of Toledo

Gentrification is violence

Gentrification is violence. I drive past the store with the iron guarded windows. I drive past the houses on their last limb. I drive past the fire station with barbed wire fencing. I drive past the government subsidized housing with a police car on every corner. I drive past and yet this setting is only found within a couple mile radius and found nowhere else.

Black graffiti

As you walk around the black graffiti of someone's name. As you walk around the graffiti someone's large, lettered art. As you walk around and look at the countless hours people have spent on their art. Yet in all of this, you see the beautiful pillars, the intricate molding, the beautiful brick, and the large stone blocks, there is beauty in the eye of the beholder.

It's too political

We were always taught to be silent because it's political. That we shouldn't speak out if its too political. That we shouldn't write because it's too political. That we can't say or do things because it's too political. Yet, pandemic is political, healthcare is political, government mandates are political. Everything we touch and feel around us is political. We shouldn't be afraid of something political. We shouldn't stay silent because of it.

Skyler Myers

English
University of Toledo

The feet of the dancers,
tapped softly against the ground.
I've been told to mind my manners-
when the dancers come around.

Their dance is oh quite funny;
their legs bounce as they twist!
They look at me all chummy,
then grab onto my wrist.

They pulled me to the dance floor;
then swung me all around!
i listened to the crowd roar,
as my feet tapped against the ground.

The beat contorted quickly;
made passion with its pounds.
The wind then followed with me,
in its soft and soulful sounds.

Dreams are bright yellow flowers,
amidst the new grown month of may.
Revived quick after the earths showers,
swing with the breeze but never stray.

Dreams are like soft woven clouds;
guessing what animal they might be.
When dreams grow strong they hang so proud,
far above our old oak tree.

What is a dream if not a bird-
grazing along with wind in the sky?
Dreams exist within strong words,
did they learn to walk before they fly?

Part III: Interns

Looking back at all the writing and creativity of the interns over the past three years of Fearless Writers, the Rogers HUB Community has lucked out. It is easy to see from the writing what a brilliant, talented group of young adults we had the honor of sharing our time with. It is often difficult to feel the impact you make on teenagers. The moment the interns are done with their internship, Dr Sloane Cleary hears the real story. How much the high school students miss the interns, what they really valued about each and every one of them. Having caring adults engaged with youth is essential to resilience. Getting to give feedback to adults every week is like witnessing a unicorn. Knowing that a young person has taught an adult something valuable is a gift. University student writing inspired by adolescents is magic.

Team Black Toledo



Dai'ja Banks

Social Work
University of Toledo

Flirtations

Something about the sun, it just brings out the wild in me. Is it because my seasonal depression is gone or the fact the days are a little bit longer so I can actually enjoy it. I don't know what it is but I love it. As I begin to take in the rays of the light and my feet are planted on the ground. I begin to feel whole and complete, it's just the earth and me.

Yellow Slices of Happy

I finally got my own slice of happiness.

It's finally all mine.

It wasn't given to me by anyone, so nobody can take it away from me.

My own slice of happy, it feels too good to be real.

My own slice of happy, could it be that I'm finally healed?

I don't want to rush because it could be too good to be true, but I finally have my own slice of happy.

How about you?

Friend

I'm your friend. I have nothing against you. We may look different but I only want the best for you. Please just see me for who I am and not what I may look like. I'm your friend, not your enemy. I promise to teach my children to love your children.

“Community”

Bring everyone that you can, get everyone together. Everyone is welcome to join. The broken, whole, used, abused, loved and unloved, just bring them all. Gather everyone you can so we make each other whole again. Feel the love that we have to offer each other. Make this a celebration where all hearts gather together and become one.

Lori Lux

Social Work
University of Toledo

Today, again, I noticed the surplus of signs

(inspired by “Freedom” by Olive Runner)

Today, again, I noticed the surplus of signs
advertisements, machinery, shops
less and less
and still
less grass
and breeze
less stars at night
sacrificed for blinding billboards
capitalism suffocates me
the same way an elevator catches
my breath in my chest
how I long for space
a long, winding empty road that leads

to lush green paths
early morning silence met at my window
instead of the neighboring security lights
there seems to be freedom
hidden in carefree places
on lonely country roads
on hidden beaches
and river gorges
though as I get older
I realize freedom happens when I let go
so tomorrow
each sign I see
each brightly lit advertisement
I will let go
with my out breath
and choose to be free

Each year we start seeds in the house

(inspired by Langston Hughes' "Freedom")

Each year we start seeds in the house
lifted upon a stool to reach the morning sun
through the window
seeds are not easy to nurture and grow
especially when little feet kick the stool
or cat paws pad over new sprouts
but we continue the fight
studying seed catalogs and crossing our fingers
for more and better than last year
disappointment looms when
in late July
we still have yet to see a ripe tomato
why do we work so hard
why do we dig until our hands crack with dirt
and our knees remind of age
why do we wake early
coffee in hand
to water and pray over our sacred seeds
it must be hope
hope that the fight is worth the cost
hope that our hands can bring forth life
and stand tall on the Earth

Untitled

I wonder often
of community
and diversity
inside our home
are seven lives
creating amongst ourselves
connection
communal meals
arguments
and joy deep in our souls
but I worry
at the thought
of our former life
in a charming home
which is code for old
where children diverse and unknowing
flocked to our yard
where I passed out cookies
and tea with lemonade
wondering
where are your parents

the little boy who asked for a banana
when I arrived home from the grocery
hungry enough to lack self-consciousness
this does not happen in our neighborhood now
but the community is alive
we walk and wave
and once upon a time
would pet each other's dogs
the man who stops to take
in the notes through the window
as the kids play piano
and the woman who crouches
near the front yard garden to watch the pollinators in action
"I love when they sleep" she tells me
I think of those kids often
and long for them even
but community lives where we are
and we are here

Hallowed Hush

This morning the moon was still
in the sky
shadowed by clouds
and early air.
Had it been full all night?
Did it forget to hide its
brilliance in the hush of dawn?
Or was it waiting
alert and vibrant
ready to illuminate
another day.

I'm not one of those people

(inspired by Fall Photo Prompt)

I'm not one of those people who loves Fall.

It tends to be a rude reminder

of uncomfortable cold toes

and the need for socks

and the looming winter ahead.

I drink hot water and feel mildly annoyed

all day when the temperatures change.

But I love the colors.

The drive for school drop off

is beautiful this time of year

and we often detour through Oak Openings

so, I can open the windows and breath

in the trees.

I love bonfires and Halloween

but fall also reminds me the warm summer days are closing

and it comes with grief

It feels ironic that my birthday falls on the Autumnal Equinox.

But right now, in the midst of high anxiety

and a pandemic, those wooden chairs atop still water look pretty inviting.

The bag was heavy on her hip

(inspired by Langston Hughes' "Dream Dust")

The bag was heavy on her hip.

As she stepped it banged and bumped
reminding her of her journey.

The dust was ever changing.

Sometimes light as a blue jay feather
or heavy as the book of magic she wrote her spells in.

Her father told her – walk south until you can no longer.

How long had she been going?

Hours had melted into a puddle of days, and she knew it had been nearly a fortnight on
her way.

Up ahead the moon was rising slow and bright on a backdrop of burning stars.

Along the horizon she sensed movement.

Was she nearing her destination?

Here I'll show you

(inspired by Langston Hughes' "Dream Dust" [Part 2])

Here I'll show you
the bits of yourself
that you left behind
never knowing you
leave a trail of stars
along your path
for the next person
to stop and notice the shine
pocket the star
and walk on
it reminds you of that moment
Ash Wednesday
knees to the rail
as the priest dips her fingers
and claims you with Earth Dust
of palm leaves
only to connect you then to the person on you left
ashes to ashes
finger to forehead
to neighbor

Buried in Stars

We are made of magic
Buried to our necks
Covered in stars
Glittering from head to toe
Praying to the moon
Begging for a dream

She stopped on the corner

(inspired by 70s photos of African Americans)

She stopped on the corner
and checked for traffic
ran across the street
straightened her belt
as she hopped the curb
heart pounding deep and loud
in the back of her throat
she felt her feet on the pavement
and listened to the gentle tap
heels click as she walks
her first protest
her palms were sweaty
and she stopped
wondering if she should turn around
was she safe
would it be worth it
she lifted her eyes
and saw the building
mural painted side
vibrant, swirly colors
surrounding the outline of a face

it vibrated with life
her heart slowed
her breath followed
she straightened
wiped her palms
and felt her power

Once upon a time a young girl kept a notebook

(inspired by Art as Social Action)

Once upon a time a young girl kept a notebook
Full of secrets and questions
Longings and swear words
She carried a piece of Harriet the Spy deep inside
And would sink down between the twin blooming lilac bushes
Sweet and full
Whisper notes to her paper
About the neighbors
Or the Catholics walking to mass next door at the big church with the Holy
Water
She wondered about countless things
Desperately sought answers but did not believe her voice could be heard
Over the noise of the chaos
So instead, she talked to herself through ink
Put her pet bunny in a doll stroller and walked
Notebook in hand
Pages labeled “inventions” and “stories”
“Poetry”
Told people she would be an author when she grew up
Now, she knows the stories are what she loved
The stories of the neighbors

And the devout
The stories of the drunk stepfather
And the lady who gave quarters on Halloween
The stories of the sister getting ready for prom night
Her hair growing taller with every spritz
The stories of black families losing children
And immigrant babies losing their mothers
The stories of women in prison because they aren't like everyone else
Taking it all in
Her voice finally loud enough to be heard
Her heart finally full enough to believe
It all mattered

How do you become whole?

(inspired by Mari Evans' "Celebration")

How do you become whole?
So often we walk
heads down
eyes shadowed
feeling the weight of it all
and waiting
waiting for someone or something
to make us whole
to make you yourself
but aren't you already?
why do we walk with a limp
as if half of ourselves
were left behind
we were born Good
we were born Whole
we were born to the Music
of ourselves
why have we stopped dancing?

I am not afraid

(inspired by Emmet Wigglesworth & Jeff Donaldson)

I am not afraid

of you

of them

or this world.

I know it looks like we are running

away

but join us

and see what we flee to

where we gather

elbow to elbow

steady

ready

Poised

The maple outside my window

(inspired by Emily Brontë's "Fall, Leaves, Fall")

The maple out my window has spots on its leaves. Reminds me that one day, it will need to come down. We hung a swing on a cold February day, soon after we moved in. "We're flying!" Now there are two swings hanging from mighty branches. One that can clear the neighbors' fence if you aren't careful. Ollie used to run and flop, belly first, head down, feet out. Arms stretched. Noelle wants a slow push. No underdogs. Not too high. Now they push each other or join each other on the swinging net that can hold them all at once. Those swings on that tree remind us we're alive. Spots and all.

We heard the clanging song

(inspired by Wendell Berry's 'How to be a Poet')

We heard the clanging song
of the ice cream truck
during dinner
the kids abandoned plates
dreaded broccoli
to take the stairs two at a time
for pocket change
collected over the summer
the truck was long gone
down Central Avenue
by the time they returned
heartbroken
eyes to their unwanted meals
and contemplated what could be done
our neighbor popped her head over the fence
“ice cream truck!” she said
passing out frozen treats
she has brought over dinner to feed the family
after a birth
has welcomed our kids into her home
her yard

her heart
she is a sacred space
filling herself and those lucky to know her
with a place to belong

There are no unsacred places

There are no unsacred places
fits as I sit at my makeshift workspace
bed behind me
small child watching cartoons
and I write
put pen to paper
allow sacredness to fall
like incense filling the church
high holy days
the birds are rattling
the leaves of the elder maple
creating nests and song
sharing sacred notes
through my window
and today was a sacred day
36 years ago
after my mother heard news
the baby had died in the womb
and yet
here I am

sacred life in a sacred space
writing a poem -

Countless ways

Countless ways

I let my mind become enslaved

often I miss the telltale signs

and time dances away

as I fill the space with unnecessaries

somedays it's worry so real

I could reach out and grab it

hold it in my hands

leave fingerprints behind

other days its lunch packing

and dirty floors and six leaning laundry baskets

pouring unfolded onto the floor

lately it's panic

like a dark storm cloud

I see it coming

Mara was the name the Buddha used

to call the darkness out

on my good days

I lift my eyes

see her coming

open the door wide and allow her space

here you go, come in, have tea

I say
on my bad days
the fear turns my blood icy
my heart pounds my chest
longing to be set free
from my body
I'm frozen
I have to wait
wait it out
let it pass
momentarily enslaved to the hidden spaces
in my mind

Can I look at you and say

(inspired by Mari Evans' "I am a black woman")

Can I look at you and say
you are more than your tears?
more than the pain that comes
brick after brick
building you into a box so deep
you cannot pull yourself out?
Tell me how to make it better.

I am listening.

Can I listen? Cry? Go away?
Do I have a place in your experience?
I am a white woman and I battle
the unfair grip I get to have on my life
my freedom.

You are a black woman.

I see you.

Speak the Truth to The People

(reprinted from *Reflections: Narratives for Helping Professions*)

the truth fell from the cosmos
landed with a glittering crash
on the sidewalks of subsidized housing
in the schoolyards
on the backs of immigrant workers
they felt the impact
grabbed jars and ran
scooped up what remained
holding in clutched hands
jars of sparkling truth
wondering
who let it go
and how do we find all the pieces

Days I hope will come

Days I hope will come
hold health and hope
not squirts of hand sanitizer
and fear
nor lies shouted from the highest peaks
days I hope will come
allow hugs and shoulders touching
at a shared meal
not outdoor, masked conversations
reminding we must be scared of each other
days I hope will come
are full of gratitude
to have made it
past grief and misinformation
confusion
days I hope will come
are real
vibrant
bursting at the seams with life
remembering always
where we've been

Youth is speeding past me

youth is speeding past me
quicker with each white hair
that sprouts on my head
I'm not ready
and yet
I've always been an old soul
one who prefers a quiet solitude
to trampoline jumps and squeals
I worry about dying
I'm not ready
and yet
each day I age
there is no fountain of youth
but remember that life is a rendezvous
I tell myself
and I've got somewhere to be

Tulani Black

Social Work
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Wing flapping

Wing flapping, again and again
Smoothly, gliding through the air
The wind strolling past your beak.
Cutting through the wind

Let it guide you around as directions change
A mix of freedom and silence,

The way you always wanted.

I watched my parents

I watched my parents get up each day more tired than the day before. Every day as a child they told me to grow up to be better than them. I can't help but think of the struggles that they have endured and me in 2020 going through those same struggles. As a child, I remember wishing that I could grow up and be an adult. Now that I'm an adult I see that the system will do everything in its power to keep you from growing. So many people with rich roots will never get to blossom because the system will not give them the nutrients that they need to grow.

Where will you take me?

Where is it that you take my heart on those lemonade days?

To the place where the smell of dirt invades our senses like
earth candy?

Right around the bend of the glistening river, where the grass reaches
for our palms like hungry children?

You take my heart inside every beat of your own...
you see even in our wholeness of self
We are each other's heartbeat, breath, and sigh.

I smile thinking of those lemonade days on white linen by the river;
giggling in the high grass like well-fed lovers.

The Sky is dark today

The sky is dark today, the sun has disappeared.

I'm feeling hopeless, another cause that we've been fighting for will probably be swept under the rug.

It's now storming, the tears of my ancestors pouring down onto the pavement because we could not accomplish something that they've been fighting for.

Feeling down I cry with them.

The sun suddenly peaks from behind the clouds.

Nature's beautiful colors shining on my face letting me know that I have not failed.

I have brought my generation awareness and that's all that I can do.

My ancestors smiling down at me, I feel their kisses through the sun.

Something great is coming.

Look at the line

The line is red

Is the line real or is it all in my head?

The children are separated.

The schools they attend are not of quality.

Books are outdated, old computers, broken pipes, no central air.

Go up the block and you'll see

The finest of the finest students but they don't look like me.

Fair skin and colored eyes.

They were given an opportunity to rise.

Look at the line.

Utopian Series

The spirit calls to me.

I hear it but I am afraid to answer.

Where will it take me?

There's a constant battle that I face every day,

Step into the unknown and tap into my powers or continue to live in an ignorant bliss.

Is it scary? Yes, but all life changes are.

Knowing that I have the ability to do things that others cannot, knowing that I can be a vessel for not only my ancestors but the generations to come.

The spirit calls to me

Everyday I hear the birds, I see the angel numbers, I thank the Earth and give her my gratitude and blessings. And I meditate and meditate until I am ready to answer the call.

The spirit calls to me.

The spirit talks to me

The spirit talks to me,

Don't be afraid.

There is beauty in darkness, step into the shadow and find out.

Who taught you that black was scary, who taught you that light was pure?

Follow me my child,

Follow me into the mystic woods and I'll show you what you're capable of.

Look at how the Earth moves with you,
Look at the trail of gold that follows you as you walk.

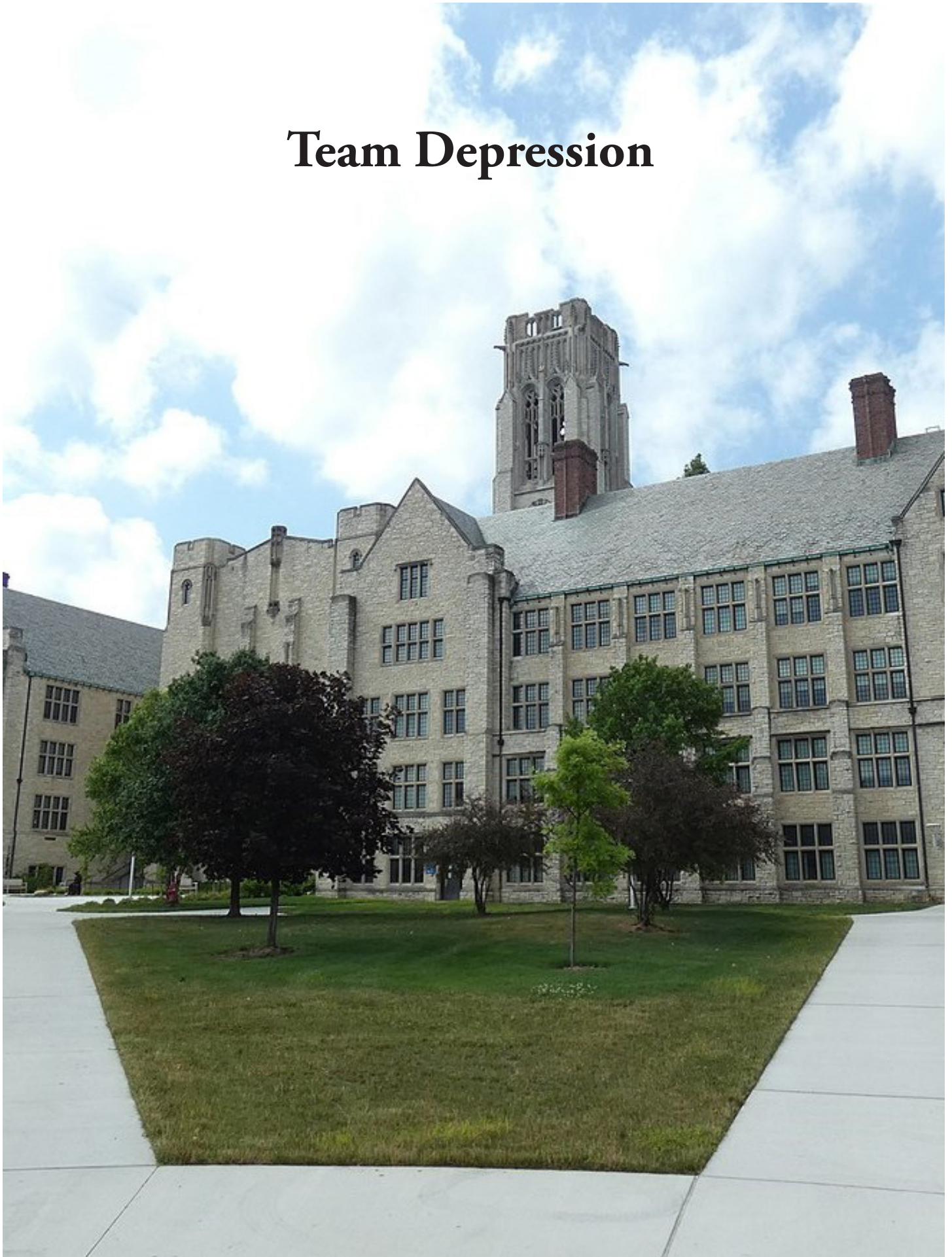
Don't you get it?
We chose you.

Live in your magic.
Live in your magic.
Live in your magic,
Do you feel it?
Feel the spirit move through you.
Tell my story,
Pass it on from generation to generation.
Sway like the wind
Move like the water
Stomp like you are a giant on this earth
Scream as if you feel the fire's rage.
Do you feel it?
Feel the spirit move through you
We choose you.

“black utopia”

We chose you.
We chose you,
The time is here
Everything that you've worked for
Everything that you've manifested
It's here.
Step into the world of knowing
Step into the world of pure bliss
Drink from my magical pond,
Feel the magic that lives in the water move through you.
This is the perfect place for you.
It's what you've always wanted.
Listen to the animals of my Earth
They will guide you.
If you need direction look to the rainbow
Let the colors of nature, be your guide.
You've longed for the perfect world your whole life.
The perfect world was already within you.

Team Depression



DaMarco Hill

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“to the younger generation”

Bridge the gap.

Young and reckless.

Free spirited.

They just don't care.

Or maybe they do...in their own special way.

Our leaders of the future.

We need you to see.

All the problems that need fixing.

I support you.

I am proud of you.

All words us humans love to hear.

Make us understand what there is to know.

Remember to be strong.

Assert yourself.

Put pressure on having a seat at “the table”.

Remember to be strong.

Don't forget to play, dream, and selectively follow.

There is a lot of work to be done.

Do it diligently.

Do it with discipline.

Do it with dedication.

Freshman Year Stereotype Type Talk

Random woman in my dorm room Freshman year at the University of Toledo

“Hi, what’s your name?”

My name is DaMarco, but you can call me Marco.

“Aw, okay my name is *insert random woman’s name, where are you from?”

I am from Detroit, MI. Detroit

“Detroit?”

Yes, the Motor City, Motown if you will. I am here on a scholarship to study psychology.

When she heard Detroit, her first thought was to stay away from me.

I am not the stereotype.

I am allowed to be a scholar, not forced to be ‘a thug’.

I beat the odds.

All I ask for is a little love and some respect.

People reject me, without even knowing me.

“Old School Fidget”

Crank it up, wind it up. Shift my mind, be my distraction, be my peace in a time where there is so much going on.

Crank it up, wind it up. Shift my mind. Sensory overload.

Help me take down this mental load. Everything will be okay.

Crank it up, wind it up. Shift my mind. Take me to a time...when I was young.

No responsibility. When play was play, not work versus play. All seriousness was dismissed.

Crank it up, wind it up. Shift my mind. Alright, now it is time to snap back into reality.

My break from stress is over. My cup runneth over. I am grounded. As I stand tall on my own

two feet at 5’7”, I am grounded.

Dedication to ‘Rose from the Concrete’ by Tupac Shakur

I thought a rose needed soil, sunlight, and water to grow? You can't choose the hand life deals you. Like the rose, you have to make the best of your concrete circumstances and push through. It learned to walk without having feet; therefore, with feet you can really go far. If you are grounded, focused and willing. All those feet, and no one crushed the rose because of its unique beauty I suppose. But who knows? We breathe the same air. We breathe it with intention. So, what is your mission? If you care, you will blossom. Just like the rose. Soak in the light so you can shine. Drink the water so you can be refreshed. Absorb the nutrients in the soil for a long healthy life.

Dedication to *Beginning* by James Wright

The darkness covers the sky. The moon is the only source of light. Maybe the stars will be team players tonight? The environment is so serene. We acknowledge the person hiding, but we continue with our secret meeting. Let the grand oak tree speak. It has been on this Earth the longest. Please listen to the wisdom. It whispers, so listen closely. The beginning can be scary. Trust the process. Sometimes it is dark before the light shines through.

Mud Baby

(inspired by the short-film *Sons of Toledo*)

Mud baby ... cover my skin. Please don't take my life away. Keep me cool, focus my mind. I hate leaving my brothers behind. Those calls make my heart drop. The sirens whining disrupt my peace of mind. Things will be better with time. Mud baby, let me shine.

Casket fresh, I hate to do this ... Mud baby, cover my skin. There is history in this rich soil. Where is the hometown glory? Mud baby ... it's not hard to keep peace, but I feel the pain of all the deceased. Why do we fight each other? You are supposed to be my brother. You know, fight with each other, but still protect and love one another ...

Mud baby... cover my skin. Keep me cool. It bothers me to think about all of my brothers lost, resting in the ground. Every day, I wake up to a new one, a clean slate. A chance to

make better decisions. A chance to have a life experience different than yesterday. I try because I want to do better and see better. If I save at least one, do not call me a hero. I am success-bound, and I would love to take my brothers with me.

Mud baby, shine through the darkness. Mud baby, mud baby, mud baby. Please keep me focused. Mud baby, mud baby, let me shine.

Sista

Sista, you alright?

Let me carry those grocery bags for you. Let me hold that door so you can exit. Just sit, take a break. What other burdens can I take? Sista, you alright? I need you to feel safe. With your fears, I would like to replace...with happiness, less stress, I see the efforts toward your progress. I just want to let you know, that when times get hard, and you are at a low, I will pick up the extra, the unnecessary, the burden weight. So that you can stand tall, and be great...

If these walls could talk

If these walls could talk...they would tell the music man to keep going. It's pretty dull without him. Like the chipped, dusty paint, dirty stains on them. If these walls could talk...they would let him know that his music helps others maneuver through their days...DUM DUM DUM DUH DUM dancing quietly in the corner of his or her brain. If these walls could talk...lyrics would scream towards the music man, "speak life into us, PLEASE!" He would tell them, "No, you know the vibes I give. Lyrics are welcome at your own convenience. *Insert smiley face* If these walls could talk...DUM DUM DUM DUH DUM, DUM DUM DUM DUH DUM, DUM DUM DUM DUH DUM. They would say, "alright music man. You have a mesmerizing sound, continue to captivate.

I can see it now

I can see it now... I hope you can too? Our reputation will be a grand one. This dynamic duo...unmatched. I have you and you have me. I flex your strings strongly; you enhance my ability to create timeless magic for the eager ears to absorb. We keep them wanting more. Let's give it to them. Unapologetically a true artist.

My everything

You are my everything. I owe it all to you. Many may look at my situation and have a different view. You gave me a reason, I had to learn you, but in reality, you taught me life lessons. Through you, I can effectively communicate my message, my thoughts, my feelings. All that pain drove me insane, but you were my outlet. To this guitar, I owe my life. So, thank you, I hope my success one day can repay you.

Duvonna Goins

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Know your worth

Know your worth

Knowing the history tells the stories of warriors

Warriors who knew the struggles of what we experience now and the
Bigger ones they faced back then.

Warriors who bulldozed over mountains of injustices, slavery, Jim crow and
Bias Voting rights.

Knowledge is power and knowing your history will prevent the future
Generations from experiencing similar faults in the corrupted system.

Our generations will see black love, knowledge, and communities

Buildings are strong

Buildings are strong

I bend and I break

I move and I cruise

Do I look like a building to you?

Being a strong black woman is not
the title i was to proclaim.

Resilient sounds more like it because
when I look back over my life and I think things over I can
truly say that I bend and I break,
I move and I cruise.

As a black woman the weight of the world has
always been left on our shoulders

We were thought of as cattle to feed
another women's child as well as their own.

Come in through the back door not able to sit for more 5 minutes

We have had our time to be strong.

But I am done because I bend, and I break

I move and I cruise.

Sorrowful

When I am sad, I have to just let myself be.

I allow the wind to blow on me so I can take a breath.

The elements remind me to do the things I need like breathing, stopping, starting,
pushing.

I have to experience the sorrow because I know after the rain here comes the calm
warm feelings of joy.

So, while on this crazy rollercoaster od emotions the highs and lows, I know I just need
to let myself be.

Football game shooting

[reprinted from *the quint* 12.1 (December 2019)]

It's crazy how much I can relate to the screaming and running.
I never really realized how quickly I could laugh about it after.
Hear the sirens and gunshots running for my life trying to find safe haven.
Fight or flight in overdrive.
God, I hope they make it out alive.

from Mental Health Barz

The journey to being kind is one to fight for,
But what is the definition of kindness? It is to
Bite your tongue so much your head explodes
Or is it to jump down someone's throat when
Your friends' feelings are hurt. Staring down your
Biggest toxic trait and smiling at it like it hasn't
Been hurting you for years. What are we supposed to
Be doing with kindness because it seems like a taped
Up version of submissiveness and that's not the path
I wanna be on. A Doormat I could NEVER. Speaking so
Loud the Whitehouse could hear me. I will be kind when
The time is right but for now I will stay an "aggressive" bad
Ass black woman with loads to say.

Mental Health Barz

Being great and being noticed are two very different things. I don't need to be noticed but I know I need to be Great. Something on the inside that sits and stirs and reminds me that greatness is coming you need to step up out of the depression, anxiety, and extreme versions of that crazy PTSD and be who were meant to be. That building moving wrecking ball that could shake the world if she wasn't so scared to fall. You could be

falling into something more daring with a soft landing so why be afraid to fall? I could be landing on a hard ass ground. Well fall you could learn a lot on that dusty ass ground, and I know once you get up you be falling again. Well, that's not until another fall...

Mental Health Barz Part 2

The It Girl

How does the It girl look to you?

Well for me she's as bold as a fresh

Highlighter full of color joy and muse.

She understands the idea of change and

Easily adjusts like the weather

Mary MacDonald

Social Work
University of Toledo

An apology

An apology to my past self

I stare at myself in the mirror and think

I'm sorry I wasn't ready to give myself the love I deserve, and I let my emotions control my actions

The power of my self-talk was stronger than ever and not in a good way

I'm sorry I didn't grant myself the grace of the present and instead played a movie of the past in my head while the world passed me by

I wash my face and think

Dear past self

It gets better, pinky promise

Bubble

Why are you staying in your bubble of comfortability?

Staying in the thought that you think is a fact,

And that the American dream is touchable

When your family was the golden ladder of success

While most have been battling sliding glass door of generational trauma from the government-funded obstacles

But slap a Band-Aid to cover the bullet wound

Practice what you preach

Say into the microphone, don't be the tape that is stitched into the Band-Aid that holds it over the wound.

Fear

On one corner of the boxing ring

We have 3rd time champion FEAR MIGHTY FEAR

Give it up for fear, the monstrosity

In the other corner, we have a rocky newcomer "you"

"you" have been the underdog competitor for some time

Fear makes the first punch, and you go down 1..2..

Ohh you are getting back up and taking out fear from their knees

This is gonna be one hell of a fight Ladies and Gentlemen

Mental Health Barz

I had misplaced trust in those that would steal my joy

Turn it into their clothing

Started out taking little things a shoe, a sock then I tripped, and my rose-colored glasses fell off and were broken

And the small items were big things like my smile or my happy days

Now I'm starting from scratch with new things. It took a while to get here

I won't let anyone steal my joy and misplace my trust

Love arrives

Love arrives when it should and leaves when it went to

Did we cross paths just to learn something from one another?

I am worth getting to know and there is no need to beg for them to have a position

I stand firm on my now foundation that I have created knowing that I am good enough for myself.

Sit at the table of abundance and pull up a chair to discuss matters that you care about
So really if they decided to leave, then were they really yours in the first place

Wish

Things I wish I told myself in high school

Stop thinking “oh everyone is looking at me” that thought will end the fun that you could have had

Because truthfully everyone is worried about that, the same damn thing

The world is genuinely trying to kill you

The message of you are too ugly you need makeup to cover it up

Be confident put a smile on your face

Grin at those that are envious of your youthful glow

Post your selfie

Also, everyone is on their own path so support other women

Be happy for your sister cheer them on

Triple check

Triple check you locked your door

Make sure you look under your car

Don't leave your drink unattended

Go to the bathroom as a group

Tell your friends when you go on a date

These messages are all around us being told by media, always be aware of your surroundings

When I stop to think about it, it really does feel like the world is trying to kill you

“Kill it back” like the strong woman said

Call out the injustice that women have to face but I still want to say but have mace on your keychain

Mostly help women that scream out that they need help

Hold up your sisters

Granny Smith Apples

I walk through the screen door and smell cinnamon sticks, sugar, and granny smith apples

She said “lil miss mary, how are you doing today” and gives a big hug.

I wash my hands and begin to peel the apples for the pie

She talks to me about her childhood during the great depression and she talks about maybe making a green dress with white lace.

Peacemaker

When emotions come to blister, and words have become unhelpful.

I will be my own peacemaker my own warm blanket

Calming the drums of my heart and listening to the music of my body

By lungs inhaling and exhaling while my heart has the beat that will never give out

Pulling my hand over my heart, the inspiration, my dream, me

The passion will beat on

Rain

The sound of rain soothes me

My loud thoughts and frustrations are quieted by the rain on my windows

I decide to close my laptop and feel a youthful memory

Jump into the puddle

In these moments, I collect those in my jar

My jar is filling up like happiness

Because you can't pour from an empty cup

Sunshine

I want to be considered sunshine
The happy and warm inviting person
The sun beams that push through a window in a dark room.
This is what I'm hoping for but some time i can be a rain cloud
I choose to be very blunt with my words
I'm not raining on your parade but let's look at this logically together
The rains are clearing and cleaning
Helps the grass and flowers grow
Let's look at the forecast for the week sunny and shinning with only a few partly cloudy
60 % chance of rain

Mayor

The first order of business as a mayor,
We will accidentally delete any record of student loans debt
Nooo I'm just kidding but actually
Everyone must work in the food / public industry because the Karens of the world need
to go
The experience from this job is humbling from dealing with men that think they are
funny
Families that can't clean after their kids, the people that claim they know more than you
even through you work 40 hours a week
You can tell who has had these types of jobs
Stacking plates and giving a good tip
The simple manners of please and thank you go pretty far
Everyone starts Wednesday

ME

What's the most important relationships

Me, not with the selfish connotations but -ME

The ne person that could never leave and stuck with till I am hopefully old and grey

Day in and day out,

Do you feel like you can go home to yourself figure out what sparks your fire

And what makes you want to go for a walk

Can you tell the tree from the forest?

I am special with my own path and self-discovery

We aren't going back to level 2 when level 3 is more difficult with new characters and villains and friends

So, yea my relationship with me is important

Band-Aid on a bullet hole

I decided to stand by what I believe in, when the weak little apology was given like putting a Band-Aid on a bullet hole.

It would have been easy to cave in, to neglect your own wants and needs in the relationship

Easy .. question mark? Then hours later

Lying in bed staring at the ceiling wondering why you feel sick to your stomach

I drew a hard line in the sand

Starting the journey which can be lonely because really no one can go through it but you

Shadow self-sitting at the table your future, desired self

And I'm still sitting at the table working on it and proud

How it feels

How it feels to share in the group

Staring at the words written in my notebook. I feel my cheeks turn tomato red but hidden under my mask

When I have to speak what is written on my notebook, I tried not to write too deep that

I'll have to dig myself out

Now winter has turned to spring and there is a sense of freeing myself from speaking my written, chosen words

My red cheeks have turned into peach, not so red

Sharing my thought and feeling have been more confident

Fourth quarter

It's almost the fourth quarter

You are about to graduate with your second degree

I need to take a deep breathe right now because I know, you forget it, breathing

The paper is going to get done

Just find some time and crack it out

Make sure your room is somewhat clean if your room is messy then your brain will be messy

Keep pushing and on your car is gonna stall out before your graduation make sure you have a card

Girl boss

Change it up, boss up girl!

You got this!

And he hid his face amid the crowd of stars and never thought to count the moments in his life that he was truly happy.

This allows for the moments to be free in your mind without a box to confine them to

The shadows are the golden glimmers of life.

The complexity of life is not to be questioned with your hair full of grey and loud joints that need some grease.

He is sitting with his thoughts as a old man.

He is glad he didn't flee from love and decided to stay.

Coffee cup

Are you wasting time or spending time?

Like Trying to collect moments like droplets in a cup and never spill them.

Or does your cup seem to be overflowing with time?

Fill up your cup!

Don't ever beg for the bare minimum when there is someone out there who will fill up an entire pool with love and affection.

Know when it's time to take back your power

Don't be the person holding out your cup hopping for a droplet of attention.

Like the hourglass, time will flip again but this time there will be your own personal swimming pool.

Rose in the Concrete

Rose in the Concrete

How did you get here?

The less than positive conditions to grow.

A pretty pink rose in the uneven cracked concrete

Maybe one night the perfect amount of rain drops fell on top the small seeds form a wheelbarrel of flowers from the florist that lives downtown.

And the seed fell into the crack of the concrete

And now there is a beautiful rose on my walk.

It makes me think of those who have been through the worst and continue to be beautiful and kind.

Page 48

Rudy's insight for winning in life book page 48

“How can you direct your anger in a positive way to get results?”

Anger is an intense emotion that increases drive dedication, that is anger for the right reasons, of course.

I think that in our world today, a person's message doesn't get across unless one is angry and tears in our eyes.

Anger will make you irritable and bitter if you bottle it in internally

It's not other people responsibility to know why you are angry if you don't share

Be direct with your words and how you feel.

Double edged sword -

Do I only share how I feel when I'm angry or do people only listen when I am red in the face and express my anger?

Rocks

"No more rocks, we have too many to have to take back to the house" my sister said to me.

"Okay but look at this one. I don't have one like this, and I found some more sea glass!"

I said with a giggle.

"Your suitcase is gonna feel like you are carrying a dead body" she said with a funny look on her face.

Later that day, after walking back to the cottage with a handful of rocks and a little sea glass, I began to work on my art piece. She used the objects found from the beach to create a colorful landscape from the green, brown and dark tones.

Snowflakes

When the first snow drops, I think of those that call home their only warmth from their coat.

Snowflakes, it's so pretty outside

Snowflakes, oh no I can get into this shelter for the night?

It's a privilege to not have to think about survival through a Midwest ohio winter.

I think of this when I am driving my usual routes and don't see a familiar face at red light with a homemade cardboard sign.

I hope they find some warmth and hot soup.

Snowflakes 2

The memories of laying in the snow after falling off the red sled.

The layer of snow almost mutes the outside world with people with their hurries

I think about being able to hear your heartbeat in your ears and saying, “it’s so cold i can see my breathe.”

One of my core memories in the snow, my mom took us kids to the neighborhood hill to go sledding. She watched us go up and down the hill in the red sled and she would “keep track of time.” When it was time to go home, I begged my mom to go down the hill in the sled. She went down the hill so fast and sped right into the freezing creek at the bottom of the hill. My mom had to walk to the car with soaked pants. My 8-year-old self-thought it was so funny, and I remember telling her “Mom I tried to catch you before you went in the water, but you were so fast”

Dreams

Hold fast to your dreams when you feel like someone has clipped your wings.

When you feel like every step feels lost with no direction.

Keep your head up and feel the bright sun on your face.

Life is full of obstacles and seemingly large mountains

Hold tight to your dreams like a football player running to make a touchdown

Keep going, I’m rooting for you!

The possibility of light

I embrace the possibility of light.

Seeing the light in a different sky with fresh eyes, a new day

Maybe squinting a little bit since I’ve been walking in the dark for so long. Its an adjustment for me.

I am reminded that every feeling is fleeting, when things are bad “this too shall pass”

When you feel like you are untouchable

“This too shall pass”

“Crows in the strong wind”

How embarrassing is love when it goes wrong

Red tomato face with glaring eyes

Next is letting go because you must

It's easy to stay in the memories, the good ones at least

When you are stuck in the past, time moves around you, while you stay stuck with elmers glue of your thoughts.

You see time do a seamless dance and taking a breath before joining the dancers and forgetting the embarrassment of past and maybe catching the eyes of someone new with brown eyes

Strong black woman

Superhuman and strong

Shes so strong

Strong black women have been silenced by the mantra

Being told to not show that life's troubles has been hurt by heartbreak

Not allowed to show anger or sadness

Its impossible to be strong and tough all of the time

The mantra dehumanizes and numbs, separating the event from the person and its effects

It's okay to feel

To feel and then be resilient

More like Resilient Black Woman

Relax and recharge

I walk down to the end of the wooden dock where I will be sipping sweet iced tea and listening to summer music.

The fun activities of the day have been finished and the party has dispersed from dinner

Some like to go inside to watch tv

Some like to go for a sunset boat ride
Some are trying to find wood and newspaper for the bonfire for later that night
I am tired and sunburnt but content
I can feel my body's heat from forgetting to reapply the sunscreen
-Kaching - photo snap
Taking a mental photo of feeling calm and safe
Deep breathe in and deep breathe out

Birthdays and bloody noses

You've made it through from birthdays and bloody noses
The celebrations of friends and your life accomplishments, graduation passing a test,
new things
Some birthdays remind you of the bloody noses when you have been knocked down by
life
The difficult lessons, where you didn't trust your gut, or you went just plain stupid
I think the monkey for the Lion king said the past can hurt but you can either run
from it or run through it
People are made from birthdays and bloody noses

Boom, Boom, Boom

Boom, Boom, Boom

No justice, no peace

No justice because our system lets rapists and corrupt policemen go but if you aren't a "Cookie-cutter white man" in the wrong place at the right time

The justice system will...

No justice, no peace

No peace because we have the power of social media to be heard and get bigger in voices

Boom, Boom, Boom

The police are using force when we are protesting police's excessive use of force

Ohh the sad, unavoidable irony

There is no turning back

Can't unring the bell, people have shouted for change

And now we are marching in the street to be heard

It's the sound of community with homemade signs and chanting about those that have been

Silenced and oppressed

The police presence doesn't bring about a feeling of safety but uncertainty of unequal power play

It makes me think about how it takes 6 years for a doctor to be able to cut someone open as a doctor, but police officers take 6 months to earn a badge number. There's no turning back but can we progress forward?

Tired eyes

Tired eyes

Rundown eyes

Eyes are the window into the soul

She's just going through a rough patch

Others say she's always going through a rough patch

But really, she just doesn't share as much, expect when bad things happen

She expects it to happen

The bad things to pop up

Waiting for the other shoe to drop like holding her breathe

Because things weren't too bad right now

Stand your ground

Stand your ground

Move when you are ready

Take your time

I know it's exhausting feeling like you are enemy to your own thought box

The world will still be there when you wake up tomorrow

One bite at a time if it feels all too much, focus on yourself

Take a nice warm shower and wash out the draining feeling of the day

Spend some time with people that make you feel like breathing again

Save the "money moves" for when you are ready

Why an if?

Why is there an if in life
If the what if separates the thinkers from the dreamers
If I had done that differently
If only I could just get up and go
The word if can be very dangerous in one's hands.
The word if also makes me think about "almost" like
She almost made it and that sounds devastating
Almost, but never really there
Almost a 90%
Almost running on empty
If Life had almost stopped for a second so I can think
Sounds like the word id is more hurtful without a question mark

Such a funny dance

Such a funny dance she did
Swaying back and forth in the decision
Palms sweaty with parched lips, ready to say that feels like the world will change
To go wholeheartedly into something for it just not to workout
She was hoping for something different
A mentor asked "what if it works out better than you thought"
She was always asking a different question "when it go wrong like I know it will"

The girl sat on the stairs

The girl sat on the stairs in the dark

The only light that is on is the yellow light on top of the stove

You can hear the window curtain flowing back and forth from the autumn breeze

The girl is tired with her thoughts

Its caused tired eyes

The thoughts stumble and roll in her head

She struggles with the idea of imperfection

She's clumsy

Her hair is never right, and mascara is clumpy

She sits on the stairs while the world is asleep

Tired but still awake

Buckle up buttercup

There's a saying that's been said too many times

“Buckle up Buttercup, there's no time to cry about it”

Filling every moment with tools and things to do, a distraction

Do your makeup and do your hair.

Scroll through social media.

Doing these things, so no one can question if you're not strong enough to handle life, whatever happens.

Avoiding the grieving process because it's so hard and you don't want to feel the same hurt again.

What if you are strong because you allow yourself to feel all of your feelings without a second thought of being seen as weak?

Crying it out,

Talking to a friend,

Having these moments of strength but also having moments of anger, sadness, and joy.

Being able and allowing yourself to feel, IS STRENGTH!

Team Human Trafficking Leadership



Arya Nair

Public Health
University of Toledo

Idiocy

Idiocy is subjective. It feels like I encounter it the most when I'm driving. The lack of turn signals, the poor driving skills, the painfully slow driving. Maybe idiocy is objective. Maybe I'm the idiot for driving.

Luxury

As a kid playing outside was a luxury money couldn't buy. Looking back, those times were the ones I look back on most fondly. And one random day it was the last time I ever played outside with my friends, and I didn't even realize. I didn't even get to say goodbye.

Brad Higgs

Social Work
University of Toledo

“resilience”

He was almost killed as a baby due to child abuse, dad's not around, mom's addicted to drugs and alcohol, foster care, and everything that comes from that, adoption and everything that comes from that. Gangs, drug sales, crime, jail, probation, prison, parole, marriage, divorce, there has to be more to life than this! Society has written him off and he has agreed with society's view of people like himself until he began to think outside of society's box... then he began to educate himself....he has children, gains employment and establishes his career.

“Human trafficking victims”

The victims of human trafficking are individuals who (in most cases, not their own fault) lack self-identity. When a person doesn't know who they are, it's easier to become victimized by other individuals who lack self-identity. Victimization is not about age, it's not about gender, and it's not about geographical location, but it's about knowing who you are! It's about being empowered in your abilities and staying true to yourself. And it's about having a plan for your future and making it manifest for yourself.

“5yr plan”

I hope to be overseeing the operation of a juvenile halfway house along with a detention center and treatment center. I hope to be counseling/speaking to whole families in a way to transform the dynamic of the family system.

“limiting beliefs”

We all deal with limiting beliefs in one way or another. I personally struggle with limiting beliefs, because I too was raised in a system that values one group of people over another group of people. A system that values money over basic human decency. A system that rewards the same words and behaviors that it condemns. But I am maturing to the point of silencing societal and my own personal limiting beliefs

“the I game, include”

Include. That’s a word that’s guarantee’s the presence of another. It’s a tasty word when desert is included with dinner. It’s a fancy word when dinner is included with the purchase of a movie. And it’ll save you a ton of cash if the movie included snacks. Happy Valentines Day!!

“Values”

Value. Values are what keeps one grounded. Values keep us true to life whereas integrity keeps one true to self. Values help us navigate life from a strength-based perspective of life in general. When you have values, there’s things you won’t do and places you won’t go due to violation of your values or what you find valuable in life. I value truth and I value speaking life to young people in a way that will change their futures.

“picture prompt, sheep”

A father says to his son, “son, what do you see”, the son replies, “I see sheep father”. The fathers say, “yes, but now I want you to be creative in your thinking...now tell me what you see”? Jumping up and down in excitement the son began to say, “I see clothes when I’m naked, I see a coat and gloves when the weather changes, and I see a blanket when it’s a little bit nippy inside”. Jumping up and down in excitement the fathers begin to say, “there you go son, now you’re walking in your dominion.”

Demetrius Wyatt

Social Work
University of Toledo

Two Men Tabling at a Coffee Shop

I just want my coffee. Hey man, it's been a while...I just want my coffee. I've just been working a lot since...I just want my coffee. Did you hear that so and so...I just wanted my coffee. What about you? How are you...I just want to drink my coffee. Well, it was good to see you again. Thank God, now I can drink my coffee.

Myths

A myth about myself is that I am cold, uncaring.

That life doesn't affect me the way it does others.

Every decision I make, cold, calculated.

Not cold, calculated, but precise and to the point.

Not rude, but not without careful consideration.

To cut my emotion from me without my consent is the same as the myth that I have been labeled with.

Assumptions

You assume to know my character, but you've never even met me.

You Assume to know my thought process, but you don't know how I think.

Confrontation isn't my strong suit.
But I don't let my truth be silenced.

Numbers

I don't much like numbers.
I'm good at math, but numbers are just numbers.
I've tried having a favorite number, but it never works out.
78. Month and day, but it's an ugly number.
Number 3, but I fixate on the shape and obsess.
26, just looks cool but not my favorite material.

Beyond

Beyond my understanding.
Concepts, break down so that I can understand.
Beside myself when I can break down the concept and explain it myself.
A truly joyful feeling.
Although, there lie questions and concepts in my mind that I can't answer myself.
Blocked by a wall of my own misunderstanding or just questions that I am not yet brave
enough to truly answer myself.

Beauty

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.
But that same beauty can be called subjective.
Based off of one's perspective, everyone's opinion is subject to criticism.
Believing in one's perception of beauty is brave.
To put yourself out there with the confidence to stand above the criticism is a brave and
beautiful thing.

Going on a trip alone

Self-Care – I've had enough.

I don't often make these decisions lightly but this time, forget it.

I've had enough.

I grabbed all my savings.

Liquidate my bank accounts.

Grab my stuff, it's time to go.

I jumped into my car and just drove.

I don't know where I'm going, but I'll know when I get there.

As I hop onto the highway, I roll down my windows and stick out my arm, feeling the wind on my skin and bursting into the car.

I flatten my hand like an airplane wing and let myself think childishly as though I were the plane. There's a certain freedom in the choice and I allow myself to relish it feeling the dark storm cloud in my mind start to dissipate.

This is good. T

his is what I needed.

This is my new start.

This will be fun.

Comfort

Being completely comfortable is difficult for me.

My consciousness gets in the way.

Everyone has a voice.

But I listen to the voice they can't hear.

The voice of true intention.

The voice that I make up in my head.

Because I can't just ask for intent because it would make me look weird or desperate.

So, I guess I take the most comfort when there's no room to second guess.

Beginning Break

I want to take a break.

But I just started.

Everything assigned seems to pile up and I've only begun.

I want to take a break.

But I know myself.

Beep. The PS5 comes on.

Beginning my break.

Just as soon as I begin, time flies, looking at the clock saying, "Oh, just a few more minutes." But I know just as soon as I begin. Nothing else was going to be done.

Shouldn't have taken a break at the beginning.

Creativity

Creativity is a storm.

It comes without warning.

It leaves just as soon as it comes.

Therefore, creativity is fleeting.

Creativity is comforting.

Being able to express what I can't express in words.

Color, music, technique, skill. Tools at my disposal, to speak for me.

Tools at my disposal to keep my energy from stagnating.

Constantly

Constantly thinking.

Never ending stagnation.

Contradictory to my true emotions.

A roadblock to being truly alive.

There exists a separate me that stands behind me always.

Contradicting. Annoying.

Who asked you?

Cringe, why are you doing that?

Cringe, why do you like that?

Do other people like that?

Does it matter?

It shouldn't matter.

Constantly at war with myself.

Constantly stopping myself.

Constantly struggling.

Constantly in my own way.

Constantly.

George Thompson

Social Work (Retired)
University of Toledo

Daylight

Daylight, the city stretches as she gets out of bed.
Plenty to look forward to.
People will fill the streets as morning peaks.
The day is full of happiness, despair, joy, success and failure;
Life goes on.
As quickly as it began it slowly comes to an end,
With lights providing the blanket of security needed.

Upstander

Powerful term using the definition to help little kids understand the importance of how we treat others.
More importantly, helping them to recognize when someone else is being taken advantage of, not being treated fairly, or singled out because they are different.
Once you recognize this pattern of behavior, how do you react?
Do you take the safe way out, remaining passive/silent, not become involved?
Or is there something inside of you saying that's not right, what should I say and do?
If you take the position of feeling the need to address it, you have taken that initial step in becoming an Upstander.
What an inspirational thought.

R. W. Emerson

Trying to find a starting point is challenging.

Every thought marinated with me.

Laughter is the key to maintaining sanity in an insane world.

Without humor one can find themselves having a dismal view of life and the world at large.

Any time you can laugh, if only for a moment, whatever your mood, if only for a moment negativity is put on hold.

The closing line regarding people reminds me how we can be impacting others not having any notion your words or deeds can make a lasting impression.

Reminds me to try and leave a positive thought whe you are thought of rather than a negative.

Road Trip

I would like to get an early start leaving home around 7 in the morning.

My goal would be to drive 5 or 6 hours with no destination in mind.

Within that timeline I would start looking for a hotel that has something of interest to me close by.

Depending on my story, deciding to continue or spend another night would be an option.

After a few days heading nowhere I would start my return home using the same agenda, carefree.

Belittle

People often use this tactic to put others down.

Why does this happen?

It could be to build themselves up, to cover their own insecurities, or pure ignorance.

The result is they are self-centered and don't take into consideration how hurtful it is to be the recipient of their actions.

Comfortable

When I have the opportunity to associate with individuals who share some of my interest or point of view

An open, unpretentious conversation is priceless.

To be placed at ease when a person comes across with genuineness and sincerity is a joy.

Nyreisha Tevis

Social Work
University of Toledo

Two Men Tabling at a Coffeeshop

Jeremiah is visiting his sister in a small quaint town of Yellow Springs, Ohio. Every time he comes to Yellow Springs, he enjoys the town; it seems like a tourist town filled with coffee shops, antique stores, and even a goat farm. Nothing but greenery and flowers covering nearly every surface in the town. While Jeremiah's sister loves Yellow Springs, he doesn't think that he could live here. Jeremiah loves his small towns, but he is more of a remote location, one stoplight in the town kind of guy. AKA not a tourist town.

On his way out of Yellow Springs he stopped at a small coffee shop. Very vibrant and it had a lot of colors. There is an abnormally large painting, and it's not a nice-looking painting. In fact, it's a really ugly ugly painting, however Jeremiah tries not to judge.

After paying for and receiving his coffee, and almost walking out the door, and older Black man stopped him. "Hello sir, I think you dropped this." Jeremiah looked down and saw a \$100 bill. While it was tempting, it wasn't Jeremiah's. "I'm sorry sir but that isn't mine". "Are you sure? You're the only one in the store right now". "Well, if I was lying, I would be crying. But in all honesty sir I wish t was mine but it's not. If you can't find the owner of the money I would tip the workers here, they deserve it! But have a great day".

As Jeremiah turns around the older Black guy puts his hand on Jeremiah's shoulder. "Sir, I want you to have this". When Jeremiah looks down, he sees 10 \$100 bills. "You could've taken that \$100 but you didn't so I want to bless you today, have a great day". And then he left leaving Jerimiah with \$1000.

Myths

Mean – I'm not mean. I would give the clothes off of my back to help someone.

Attitude – I'm passionate, I don't have an attitude.

Selfish – When I put myself first, I am told by my family that I am selfish. But I'm not. I just have to put myself first.

Accomplice

A person who joins with another in carrying out some plan; partner in crime.

Tiara Lee Gay, my little sister. She means the world to me, and anything that do's and anything I do we will always do together. If she's stepping, I'm stepping with her. If she needs me, I am always and forever going to be with her. My mini me, my home slice.

14

I hate the number 14. My birthday is on the 14th of February, and I hate that too. I know a lot of people love their birthdays and enjoy the day where we grow a year older, but me personally it's just another day where God woke me up this morning. Arguments, fist fights, and police, that's the gift I get on my birthday. Those who surround me making it about them instead in remembering who its really about. Inconveniences that happen left and right that just honestly makes my birthday not a special day. Just a regular day in the chronicles of Nyreisha's life.

2

My favorite month of the year is the 2nd month of the year. And yeah my birthday is in

February, and I do hate my birthday but I do love the month. Why? Because it's Black History Month. Although every month is Black History Month in my eyes, I enjoy 28 day month because of what being Black means to me. I love my culture, my history, my skin, my hair, the way I speak, the way I dress, where I come from, and just all of the above.

Beyonce

Beyonce is very much overrated, and no one is going to change my mind about that. Now don't get me wrong, I'm not coming for quality of work, because she is a great performer, and she puts her all in her craft. However, she is a subpar actress, she did not write songs for Black people until *Lemonade*, and the album was essentially about trashing her Black husband (even though he cheated, she need to keep that business under her roof like she does everything else), not to mention the only good songs on that album was *Formation* and *Freedom*, the songs that are actually about Black people, and lastly an argument can be made that Kelly Rowland is a better singer than her. Kelly Rowland gets no love because she is dark skin Black women, while Beyonce is light skin with big hips (is her but big? Or does she look big because of the shape of her hips.) I rest my case; I'll argue with anybody about this.

Billionaire

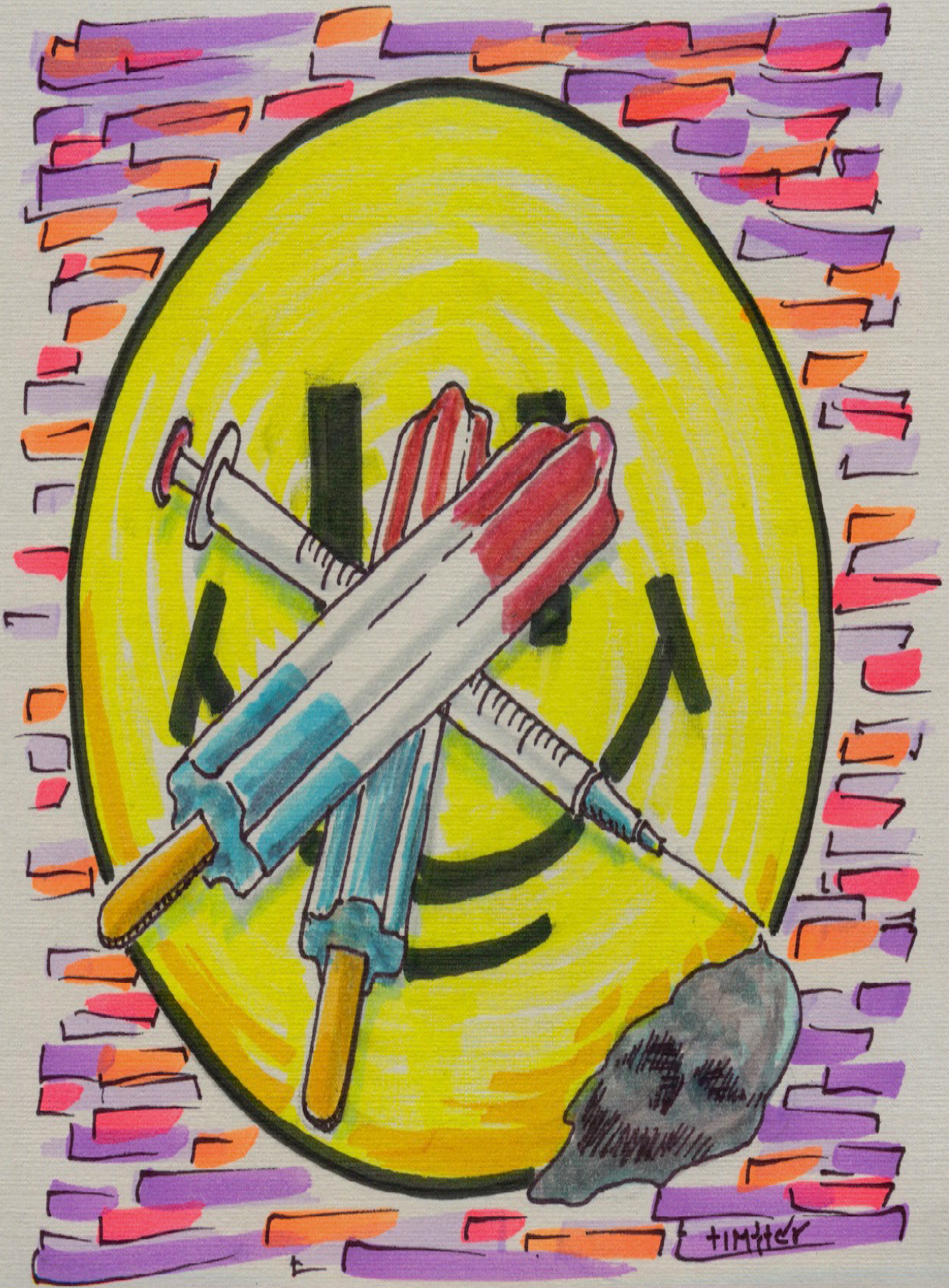
One day my boyfriend, aka future husband is going to be a billionaire.

He's going to break barriers through both music and poetry.

He's going to be up there with writers like Toni Morrison, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Maya Angelou, and Nikki Giovanni; and with rappers like Kendrick Lamar, J. Cole, Ice Cube.

**GALLERY:
TIM SANDERSON**











Section IV: Neighborhood Segregation



Neighborhood Segregation

After the blur of shutdown and the exhaustion that followed coming back, we decided to look more carefully at the published work of Fearless Writers in *the quint* 12.1 with fresh eyes. When looking at the Fearless Writing pieces generated from discussion and prompts inspired by research on social separation we wanted to see if particular themes rose from the text that would have us better understand the impact of social separation. We built a team of DaMarco Hill, Dr. Erica Czaja a public health policy professor at UToledo and Dr. Sloane Cleary. Dr. Sloane Cleary being the only person who was part of the writing process and knew the writers. The identity (high school/university; gender; age; race) of the writers was hidden away from the reviewers. In the initial discussions there was mention of Du Bois and double consciousness. That youth of color must negotiate the White expectations while staying true to Black culture. Oddly, it was the first time Dr. Sloane Cleary considered how one positive of redlining is sparing young people from double consciousness but also how segregation does not prepare you for the feelings of double consciousness when entering a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). The high school students had yet to face this, but the mentors and interns were actively going through it. We discussed fresh writing on the topic and the following pieces are the result.

Dai'ja Banks

Social Work
University of Toledo

Growing Up

Hmm who can I talk to too?

I was never good at making friends or even blending in.

I was too black for the white kids and not black enough for the black kids.

Maybe if my skin was two shades darker or lighter...growing up wouldn't have been so awkward.

I would watch all the other kids fit in with their other social group, go outside and play every day but nobody ever knocked on our door to see if we wanted to come out and play.

Not too many friends growing up...maybe that's why I am so big on togetherness.

I know how it feels to be left out ...excluded but still longing just for someone to say "Hi."

PWI

Everyone knows each other it seems like.

It's big groups of people however it's subgroups for everyone.

There is someone for everyone...someone for us all to talk, hang and even be friends with.

All the colors of the rainbow.

We all fit in together.

People had friends of all different colors and social status.

We all just fit the puzzle perfectly.

First Gen

I have no idea what I am doing ... what am I even doing here???

I knew I wanted to start over and get away but what am I supposed to do at college??

None of my family has ever been, do I even need to be here?

I don't even have a major pick out yet, my family can't help me out with these loans...
what am I even doing here?

First time being independent from parents...I didn't even remember to feed myself
without my mother telling me to do so, how am I going to make it 3 more years?

Who even knew I needed a reminder to even eat... lets see how far I make it.

Hello, my name is ...

Okay ...I can do this it's a Meet N Greet.

These people are literally ALL freshmen in college.

All I have to do is say Hi ...it can't be that hard.

My hands are wet, my heart feels like it can fall out of my chest and at any moment I
could vomit like the exorcist all over myself.

Whew ...it's a bunch of people here, why does this school allow so many people in at
once??

I get a tap on my shoulder and suddenly I'm back down on earth, I can hear the music
and games and people laughing in the background.

I turn around and I'm greeted with a smile & something I just been longing for .. "Hi".

DaMarco Hill

Social Work
University of Toledo

75 South

Step outside...What do you see?

I hop on 75 South, and I am in a whole new world.

What do I say? What do I do?

I chose this because I needed to get away.

If it is not reality, then why do it?

I can't cheat myself.

It is crazy that I had to go away to see different people.

It is the way my cards were dealt, something that I couldn't control, nor help.

My PWI opened my eyes.

Black is not just Black, there is depth in such a color.

All I really had was the stereotypes, biases, and experiences talked down to me from my mother. Uncomfortable, to say the least.

I have to prove myself, constantly.

This is draining.

I feel unwelcomed.

Excluded.

I would never want to make anyone feel this way.

No empathy, no understanding let alone a care.

I knew it would be this way.

I was just hoping that you would prove me wrong today.

Deep Dive

I was willing to take that deep dive into what makes others different, without even being able to swim. In this sea of white, I am not minute. I must think this, and never behave in a way that proves it to be true. I used to go outside, because I wanted to grow. That vitamin D helps my shine glow strong. Why can't we all just glow (and grow) together? I am who I am, so I want you to be you. It is deeper than just me, there are other people in this world. Let's jump in this pot together, but I want to be able to see you in this mix with me. You bring your flavor, and I will bring mine. Doesn't diversity taste great? The pot tastes better when it is not homogeneous.

Personality

Personality 1: Black man around people that make him comfortable.

Personality 2: Black man around people that make him uncomfortable.

Personality 3: "Don't be scared of me, please don't judge me. I am a great person. But you have to take the chance, and maybe be uncomfortable to see."

Personality 4: Guarded me. You will NOT hurt me. I know you are probably wondering, and the answer is no, I don't have DID (Dissociative Identity Disorder). Why can't I be just me? It's hard being the one that always works the hardest just for it not to get you anywhere. I know I don't know everything, but I want to be the only person to call myself ignorant. Because I am the only person that can fix this. If I don't put myself out there to learn, then how will I every know. Yes, I am a character, I know. I am not crazy. Spend a day in my life, so if I "act different", you will know why.

Duvonna Goins

Social Work
University of Toledo

Three besties from alternate worlds

Three besties from alternate worlds
Different languages cultures and backgrounds
2 more intertwined by their heritage and culture
Differences made aware with the
Types of words floating around their heads
Our neighborhood is split down the middle
Us on one side and them on the other
Black and brown but different in culture
We all go to the same school
The school down the street
Where everyone looking like me, beads, ballies and braids
I like it here safe and secure.
Seeing the kids that don't look like me live
At the hospital because they don't live near me.
Or near my cousins at all.

PWI

I did not have a moment of less diversity until I got to college. Coming to the University of Toledo on my first day of class I experienced a complete culture shock. I had never seen a university that looked this nice or even had people skating along the streets. I felt like I was on a tv set especially with it being so much green all around. I almost got ran over because I was in such a daze watching them all. I couldn't believe I had just walked into this life of being at a Predominately white institute (PWI)

Shaking I was shaking

Shaking I was shaking I couldn't believe this amount of freedom
Walking around on the first day without anyone questioning
My whereabouts I like this. I needed this I wanted to do this
I am going to thrive I just know it. Oh, shit where are the Me's
I see not one person with my skin tone oh my goodness I feel the stares
Every class I walk into they stare in fear or in out of uncomfortability
I feel so out of place. I saw a me I saw one I see a group of them
They walk into a room I see the sign BSU. What is that a Black Student Union
That place saved me I had finally found a small home.

Yes

Yes, I can't show just anyone all of me I am supposed to sound and be professional for certain groups of people. I hate it here in the world where I have to play different charters to get ahead in life. I just want to be real, raw and cutthroat like I really am. But I always have to appease the masses and be cookie cutter. I dislike that character that character is so draining but in order for me to pursue my purpose I have to pretend to be a perfect shape. I have to be that character because you get more bees with honey.

Mary MacDonald

Social Work
University of Toledo

Neighborhood segregation

Nostalgia takes me back to my childhood home and memories

Echoes of young, belly laughs

Running through the house and into the street with the neighborhood boy

Hide and go seek between the maple trees.

My mother is tending to the garden in the backyard and is keeping an eye on her daughter, who is playing around, and the big brother who is learning tricks on his bike in the street.

Midsummer afternoon sweat from playing in the green grass yard.

Blessings and privilege that come from the feeling of nostalgia

A father that drives to work and comes home to eat a meal that was prepared

A mother who has a summer off from teaching at the local school.

Equipped with Research

I think I act very differently than those who from my hometown. I am equipped with research, personal experiences, one degree, and data to support my beliefs. I do not listen to a particular tv show which is so crazy that it will leave my blood curdling and I have to take a lap around the kitchen before I go back to the family room. This is frustrating since I am the “odd man out” but I experience this still with white privilege since some have always felt left out or suppressed by the majority thought/vote. I used to hold my

young, when I came back for break since I struggled to select my words wisely but with silence, comes a witness to fight and not telling the teacher.

College was so different

College was so different from my high school experience.

Besides not having to deal with the emotional matter of my parents

I can decide what to do, what to wear and even if I could take a shower at 2am if I just finished my freshman English paper.

College wasn't like the movies, making friends is a lot harder than a stranger coming up to say hi.

There was so much diversity and being able to experience different cultures was new and exciting.

There was the frat and sorority clubs' flyers in the freshman dorm hallway, but I knew that wasn't my scene.

I felt a bit overwhelmed with all the people at college. I struggled to say HI to a big group of people. My voice was shaky, but I kept pushing through and talking to new people.

I learned my way and did have a sense of belonging.

Women's March

There was a particular time that I pushed myself to do something outside my own comfort zone. I participated in a women's march in Toledo back in 2018.

This experience discussed how feminism has whitewashed women's marches. I was aware of how racism has played in this movement, but it was a personal account that has left an impression on me that will last a lifetime.

Mitchell Pei

Social Work
University of Toledo

Bridge

In college, there was a bridge. We called it a bridge of gentrification. A redlining bridge per se. One side was the city jail, the project housing complex, the police station, and really nothing more. On the other side of the bridge were the banking districts, the college, the restaurants, and more. I don't think that there is a better redlining definition than where I went to college where a literal bridge separated by a highway defined the status of a person or the quality of schooling a person would receive. I think growing up and going to school in a city really defined that truly equality does not equal equity. Just because someone has access to a school doesn't mean they have the same resources. Just because someone has access to a library doesn't mean they have the same resources. Just because someone has access to a grocery store doesn't mean they have the same resources. I truly believe that redlining has created my ignorance on what others face and the hardships they can have that I never experienced. Attached is probably one of my favorite depictions of this.

One Life

We only get to live one life. It's like riding a roller coaster. Before you know it, it is already over. However, we can ride a dull, repetitive coaster or one with many hills and dives. Pushing ourselves out of our comfort zone is the hills and drops that we live for. Pushing ourselves to experience the culture of others and embracing our unique differences and appreciating them is truly the hills and dives of life.

Good people

We all like to think that we're good people, me included. I think that my opinions are moral and that I would always do the right thing. Treat everyone equally and do everything for the common good. I think that I don't act differently around different groups of people in my life, and I truly wish it was like that. However, I don't know. Of course, I can goof off at home or with my friends and act professionally in front of teachers, but I don't think that is what this question is asking. And to answer it, I truly don't know.

GALLERY: LORI LUX

















Section V: Community Empathy Write



Discovering the Impact of COVID-19 on Writers Inspired by the Poetry and Life of Emily Dickinson

Why Emily Dickinson in a project that has had a focus on Black writers and Black activism? Raising awareness about the health and mental health consequences of redlining is a conversation that needs to be in all neighborhoods. Segregation caused by redlining creates blinders to people's living conditions, struggles, realities. The motive of this project was to bring people kept from each other together. Friendships across class and race are one of the main predictors of upward mobility (Chetty et al., 2022). We provided flexibility for very busy schedules, particularly for the medical students involved. The writing was beautiful and the attempt at a community giving regular feedback had flaws. These are writing pieces the writers chose to include.

Abigail Burlingame

Nursing
University of Toledo

A failure by society

A failure by society
Won't you celebrate with me?
An absence
Wont you celebrate with me,
My connection and awareness
To myself and my nature
A failure by society
My connection and awareness
Causes an isolated celebration
In a failure of society

Undone things

Undone things

Sorrow left behind

Shoes untied

Undone things

To these add one:

The tide will rise and fall

Response to Emily Dickinson

The setting sun passed us
On that beach I have been before
The setting sun passed
As you asked me if this
Moment was yours
The setting sun passed
As you wanted everything for yourself
Including me
The setting sun passed
And you almost devoured
The moment and my heart with it

Amanda Kerkenbush

Rogers High School
Toledo, Ohio

“Death sets a thing apart”

Death sets a thing significant... the messes you made and left behind angered me until now, the unwashed laundry left for days never made me cry until now. The hair left in the bathtub and sink upset me until now. Your life, scent and scraps never meant the world and more to me until now.

If there be sorrow

If there be sorrow don't put it against yourself. How were you supposed to know? You did not know that they were being mischievous, you did not realize that they were putting you down, you did not fathom they're underlying motives. Don't feel sorrow for things out of your control, don't feel sorrow for abandoning something that is doing more harm than good. Don't feel sorrow for things you could not realize, take that and learn or else it can lead to self-demise.

“Leaving behind nights of terror & fear I rise”

It's one thing to hear about it, but to live it is even more horrid. Having to experience it once then it goes through your mind at night in orbit. Trying to shake away the little episode of fear and fright, I can barely push through although I'm using all my might. Crying, scared, and weak I felt reliving every second, minute, and hour, out of control I

am, who really has the power? Allowing it to consume me will lead to self-demise, having hope, and leaving behind nights of terror & fear, I rise.

Hope

Hope is something most rely on, and their only liability

That's the wrong direction to turn, instead of hoping try doing.

By that you have a better chance at receiving.

Don't leave it up to others, don't leave it up to a higher power, leave it up to yourself and act on those hopes and dreams.

Just thinking about it gets you nowhere.

Applying action and abiding by yourself can move you farther than you could ever hope.

Aniyah Powell

Rogers High School
Toledo, Ohio

I might rise but it doesn't mean I'm over it.

I love you but I'm going to love you from a distance
I put on this nonchalant act, so you won't hurt me
Instead, I end up hurting you to protect me
I don't mean to nor want to
I'll rise still I rise
I might rise but it doesn't mean I'm over it
Your words kill me softly and slowly I try and make something good out of it but it
hurts every time
I think about it, I make myself forget about it so we can move on
But it always comes back you know what you're doing
You hurt me because you know I'll forgive you because I love you.
I told you everything, you were my everything.
I try to tell my friends, but they don't understand.
They don't understand the love I have for you.
I can't get over you.
I know once I'm over you, I will still think about you, because I love you.
I want to take your hateful words to my happiness.

Hope is the thing with wings

Your wings are your strength, confidence, emotions, mentality.

You can only determine if hope or that thing with wings will be successful.

Just because your hope stops doesn't mean you should give up.

Keep trying till them wings work again.

“Blazing in gold and quenching in purple”

The sunset

The peace and the harmony

I look at the sunset my problems go away

I wish I could stay here and stare at the sunset all day

I feel peace.

Arya Nair

Public Health
University of Toledo

Poetry

Poetry is gentle and grateful. It's often a woman in her room with a pen. Her pen is loud, and her paper hears her voice. Poetry is gentle and graceful, but her pen scrapes her paper as it bears the burden of her anger and frustrations. The world may overlook her but back home in her room, her pen and paper are there to listen.

Pure sorrow and joy

“Pure and complete sorrow is as impossible as pure and complete joy”

My friend lost his parents to domestic violence and suicide. He turns to me and asks me to look at how beautiful the moon looked.

My cousin had a healthy baby girl. His wife told me how difficult the pregnancy was.

Sunshine

The sun shines on me as I step out of my house. My heart does not race, my palms are not sweaty. My mind is no longer clouded by tasks and to-do lists. I make my way to the ocean. The waves kiss my feet as I walk closer until I am submerged in the concerningly murky water. I feel healed.

She is beautiful dark

She is a beautiful dark. She doesn't know it. Her skin gleams and beams and doesn't stop glowing.

She is a wonderful dark. Her ancestors paid with their lives for it.
She is an indomitable dark who will never stop growing.

Barbara Murphy

Retired Community Member
Toledo, Ohio

Saved and put aside

(inspired by Emily Dickinson's "Death sets a thing significant")

My house shelters things grandmothers put on shelves. I know of 15 of my grandmothers. There are things 4 or 5 generations saved and put aside.

I came upon them when I moved to Ohio. I upheld the tradition and added my "can't part with" things.

I should sell them or give them away.

I could throw the dilapidated ones away; like the three old teddy bears that my brother and I had as babies or my granny's powder puff that smells like her.

As I unpacked them, I realized I could still honor them, so I put them on display. I want to honor them and add to them and leave them to the granddaughters to ponder their destiny.

I know they are insensate objects, but my fingerprints are added to the rest, and they are part of my legacy.

At first

At first, I thought she was describing fall
Leaves falling no, tall flowers no, now I see a sunflower, no its her view of a sunset
Nature is always there ignored, taken for granted,
The sun sets every night

Sunflower blooms grows tall and falls every summer
The leaves descend in fall
Emily begins to make time for her (nature)

Changes

(inspired by Langston Hughes' "Dear Lovely Death")

So many changes. Some engender gratitude, some beg to be forgotten.
The future will bring more. Some looked forward to with cheerful expectation, others
with dread. All are unfathomable today.
We all must see the inevitable end, but no imagining can answer this question. We must
wait sometimes fearfully at times impatiently or pious expectation.
Death is the last earthly conscious change. No, it continues ... see Genesis 3:19

Chantal Crane

Children and Adolescent Therapist/ Fearless Writer Alumna
University of Toledo Medical Center

“Death sets a thing significant”

“Death sets a thing significant”
bringing to light the invisible ones
who spent their lives under the radar
a casket the only marker of their worth
Why do we only notice things when they are gone?
Giving more voice to a ghost
than they were ever given in life
They lit up a room
Their laugh was contagious
She had a smile like no other
Funny, she never heard those things before
Perhaps life makes us a stranger to ourselves
And death does the introducing

Amanda Gorman

They buried us, but they did not know we were seeds. Knees scraped and hands charred, we dug from the graves of our grandmothers and resurrected their words to make them our own. In us, they are living, their grit flowing through our veins, pulsating us toward a version of this world where we do not have to scream to be heard. We are the echoes of the ancestors whose shoulders we stand upon. We have made them proud, and we are not done yet. For a woman's work never is, right?

“Because I could not stop for death”

We passed the school where children strove
and I found my fingers interlaced
Clasped in prayer
that death *would* know his haste
I prayed death could simply sit back
and see the beauty in a child running down her
driveway
to hug her sibling goodbye before school
I prayed it could see the value
in her morning hug with Mom
Lucky Charms with Dad
The innocence of childhood
coated in the opportunity for adolescence
for messing up
for heartbreaks
for good news and bad
We cannot stop for you, Death
But could you stop for her?

Chelsie Baylor

Medicine
University of Toledo

“Perks of being a tall flower”

A tall flower is one that grows above the others
Seen first, and most likely to be plucked.

It stands out, doesn't fit in,
No matter how much it wants to.

Its movements are observed most often
And its reactions remembered.

There's no hiding in the masses when you're a tall flower.
But tall flowers get to see the world clearly above the rest

The sun and rain reach them first
And when the wind blows, the breeze feels most divine.

Maybe it isn't so bad to be a tall flower.

“A date with death”

Death, the only thing that the living ever share
Conflict in life but in death united

Death, the only certainty to face
Whether it be old or young, they will walk us to our next resting
place

Fear, powerlessness, and anguish
The feelings associated with death

But if death is the absence of everything,
Isn't life the real pain to live?

Except being alive is our gift
And all the emotions are a privilege to have

The real torture is being forced to leave them behind
When death stops in his carriage asking us to join.

Paths

A dream undreamt
A reality unrealized what holds us back?

Is it weakness?
Fear or are we confused?

Will we ever know we did it right?
This short life we live
To which we give our fight

How will I know if I'm on the wrong path?
Do I just keep walking
See how long I last?

What if there's a fork in the road?
Which side do I take?
I may never know

What if I can't see the other paths at all?
All the people on them trying to call

Are those paths undreamt, unrealized, unpursued?
How will you know the right path to choose?

Cornelius Fortune

Cultural Studies
Bowling Green State University

‘Too Much Isolation’

It’s perfectly sane to
carve out some space
for mind and body –
to read alone,
to eat alone,
to be alone in the
interstices of deep reflection

eddies of gathering mists,
clouding the mind,
reverting it back to
factory settings
social creatures
forced to be socially inept

in cramped spaces, alone
together
In a world that made you
feel both crowded and
isolated, equally – you either
felt too much space
or not enough of it
to go around
 a round-robin on
a perpetual spin
 a calamitous half-dance
across the face of a half moon
just slightly out of focus

“Even as an introvert, there’s
 such a thing as too
 much
 isolation”

Is there ever such a thing as
too much isolation? All
our desert island metaphors

Went crashing into the sea
of bodies, stranded in a
COVID malaise – experiencing
(from an introvert’s perspective)
too much of a good thing
too much of your partner/spouse
too much of your kids
too much of the same day,
much like the previous day,
exactly like the next day,
ad infinitum

Tik Tok taught us how to smile
again, but now, even it has an
isolating quality, warping
our children’s minds further
from the material world,
video killing, for the second,
third, or fourth time, the radio
star, *tick tock tick tock*

During COVID
time slipped
away

(tick tock tick tock)
the devastation wrought
by it has ripple effects,
impacting
time, space, and relativity

As with CE (the Common Era) and
BCE (Before the Common Era)
COVID marks time and places
us in relation to epochs, epics,
events, and human evolution
stalled and stammered
we still fail to fully communicate
whether it was positive or negative
slouching towards a silver lining
still obscured by the unexamined life

March Emily B.I.G.A.Q.I.P.

Blazing before her eyes,
the fire burnt away all
she had known up until
that very point. Finding little
comfort in her mother's words,
as they waited in the cold
(the kind of cold that tightened
skin and made it crack)
for the police and fire trucks
to arrive –
“Those things can be replaced,
but not you, little owl. You are
irreplaceable.”

In the moments before her father
left (for good), digging in his
suitcase, looking for the thing

he had gotten for her back in
Mississippi, “O” shaped
like artificially sweetened
cereal, it had her initials,
dangling from one end.

“*Gold,*” her father said.

“Keep it safe.”

And then, months later...

1.

Quenching her thirst from the
water bottle, drinking wildly,
unapologetically – she was
so very thirsty. The way a vampire
might quiver from the moment
the lips touch the vein, she quivered
the moment the cold touched
her mouth; the liquid comforting
and cool; invasive and welcoming.

“Water hits different when there’s so much heat around you,” said the policeman with the shiny bald head. His dark skin stretched into a smile ... at least one of his teeth was gold, surrounded by purple gums.

*

Into the night, she crept, a thing on two legs, stumbling as if she were accustomed to four, and was abruptly anthropomorphized. It was true what the legends said about “grandma’s house.” Her own grandmother’s house had a haunted quality about it – stiff like starch, it crumbled under the pressure of the high, insistent winds.

At least that was her fear –
that the wind would tear the roof off
and yank her into sky, her mother
running into the room and saying,
“Now don’t go too far,
little owl. Stay where I can see you.”

She opened her eyes – and dreamed.

2.

Purple imaginarium of this moment
thinking again of that room –
of that old house, once ashes,
now part of the earth, another
Detroit narrative – a house
abandoned by the molecules
it had once stood on and between,
a vacant lot, visibly scarred:
memory-mirage
lost and
found
simultaneously.

Crisis of Momentum

The lint of dandelions
drift aimlessly through
the air, carrying a message

from the car in the parking lot
to the unkempt hair of the toddler
leaning on a baseball bat;
elusive, it bounces upward
and away from the child's reach.

As journeys go, this one is
frustratingly unclear because
a journey precludes a destination,
yet the dandelions drift
until they can find a place to rest –
to reset, to readdress, to coddle
an existential crisis of momentum.

Chance is the dance of the
multitude – only the few are
predestined and prepackaged
for certainty and inclusion.

Like a cluster of asteroids
in an elliptical dance, spring
finds its perfect expression
amongst the gathering storm
of secret allergen agents.

Demetrius Wyatt

Social Work
University of Toledo

Instrument of Destruction/Maya Angelo Writing

Did you think that was enough to kill me?
I have to laugh, ha ha ha
I am an instrument of my own destruction
Finger to the trigger, always
But I refuse to die
My soul is fragile, but not as fragile as you think
Malleable, yes, flexing, bending
But always reflecting and bouncing back
Did you think that your trials and tribulations could defeat me?
Still, I laugh, but i shed a single manly tear, ha ha ha
Bruised, beaten, but still standing
No weapon is strong enough to make me break
I am a tool of my own destruction
Come at me with any of your fancy tools
I shall not yield.
For I am a tool of my own destruction.

Here Comes the Sun

Here comes the sun
Bright and early
On no one's time but his own
His fiery temperament
Radiating over Mother Earth
That fiery temperament that only she knows
In the blaze, a certain warmth engulfs the robust planet
Enriching the land,
Bringing her to life
With a love so hot it burns
In thanks she does her orbital dance around him
Keeping her grounded in the pleasant cycle
She understands him despite his appearance
And proves that with the captivating performance
Until the day begins to fade,
The dance is done
The sun, satisfied for now
Setting into comfort
Cooling her full-bodied lands
Ready to start the cycle again

Words on the Line

Letters in the words
Words on the Line
Sentences form the page
Setting the stage
A tight rope pulled taut
Hanging on by the letter
Each word a new hurdle
Spectators watching me swing from line to line
Watching me for delectable entertainment
Let's start the fire, shall we?
Arduous, Laborious, Demanding, Abstruse
Each solid word more difficult than the last
Break it up, they say
Try your best, they say
But they aren't apart of this trapeze.
Looking down the line
The end never seems to come
The letters seem to dance, blur and scramble
Possibly a reaction to the inferno below
Swing to the next
Palms sweaty
Slippery, Precarious, Unstable
Reaching for help
But its only me on the trapeze

Duvonna Goins

Social Work
University of Toledo

Grief

She sits on the backs of
so many just to slow them
down.

She brings out the shocked
and strangled hurt just
to resurface in terms of a
fire rage. She settles into
a heart shattering sadness that
turns upside down. She leads you
into the bottom of something
satisfying in order to escape
from the empty hole.

She was just so sweet

She was just so sweet
so loving, never hurt anyone.
I cried so hard when I got the news.
Covid had wiped her out depleted her
of her joy. Her light was dimmed from all of us.
We all miss the woman that she was and her cheerful
bright spirit. She was so young with so much life to live.

Let it be

(inspired by Mari Evans)

Let it sit there for a minute.
Talk to the emotions as they
lay on your chest. Be more
welcoming to the idea that
in those moments you weren't
perfect. You may have projected
your experiences onto theirs.
And remember there is almost
always a solution to every problem.

Sensibility

Sensibility is one of those strong complex's that soars across waves of people.

It's a modality that can only be shared via human interaction. For that loss of human interaction, has me lost to these virtues touch, sight, smell, and all those other very important nuisances. We need to thrive as human beings. Creating those spaces for sensibility to live because that anxiety and depression had us in a chokehold for too long. We needed to create a small utopia even for 1 hour so that making it to the next day was even bearable. We all had to learn how to sit down, shut up, and just listen.

Heather Sloane Cleary

Social Work
University of Toledo

Maya Angelou

“Shoot me with your words”

And I will shoot back

Stand my ground

Not cower at your cruelty

“Past rooted in pain”

I have had time to lick my wounds

Fill my lungs

To roar at the attempts to defeat me

“Just like Hopes springing high”

I will pounce and fell

The enemies in my path

Fulfilled, determined, strong

“Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave”

I will move forward

Despite all the energy thrown my way

I will thrive.

Hope is a thing with feathers

“And sore must be the storm”

They say all day

You should be scared

Worried the world is ending, death is near.

My mind says - “I wished for this” -

Not the destruction and suffering,

But the break, the quiet, the solitude

Time to think, to enjoy rain, snow, sunshine -

The smell of fire in the air

They say nothing will be the same

My mind says, “Thank God”

What has been the cost of breakneck productivity?

Who has been caught in the economic machine for so long?

Pause, reflect, is it possible we are supposed to learn something

From the tragedy?

It felt like a contest and I was the loser

“I think it definitely takes a toll emotionally and mentally when worrying about my siblings who work in environments where many people come and go. There’s high exposure and risks but work continues and it’s something that is constantly on my mind.”

—*A woman, 18-29*

It felt like a contest and I was the loser - the first to get COVID-19 - winter holidays 2021/22

On the zoom calls each family member

Comparing how vulnerable we were

Comparing how likely we were to become sick

Winter holiday 2022/23 one of my sisters finally gets the virus

Still, one remains untouched.

In the zoom conversation I was always perceived as less likely to get it

And yet we were all privileged

Sure, I worried about my family

But I worried more about those I couldn’t see

Did they have the opportunity to reach out and hear from family?

Did their work force them to be exposed

Exposure seemed linked to financial needs

People forced to risk because there was no option

It felt like a contest where the losers were hidden from the public

Numbers ticked upward but the numbers had no faces
Those bearing the weight of historical injustice were asked to bear even more
weight
The ripple of this virus seems impossible to predict
I can't linger on these ideas
It becomes hard to breathe.

Javana Joyce

Social Work
Bowling Green State University

Hope as an optimist

Hope as an optimist is the tune that “never stops at all.”

Even in life’s toughest moments a piece of me holds on.

It’s the flame that never burns out, the thing that must keep going, even when I cannot.

Death

Death, it’s the thing that impacts us all, yet we all interpret it differently. For some it comes way too soon, for others, not soon enough. For some it is a joyous event, for others a forgetful one. Death is personal but can be observed by thousands. The more it happens, the less jarring, the less scared we may be. Unless of course death is a threat for simply being who you may be.

Lori Wilson

Rogers High School
Toledo, Ohio

“That could abash the little bird”

“I heard it in the Childest land”

The silence is thickening as the strange, yet fascinating object stands for show.

Everyone lines up and takes what they want from it.

The strange figure seems to not mind it, so everyone continues to take.

The object appears to be a cup half full, yet still shining bright.

As days go by the cup is getting emptier and emptier the people greedier and greedier

People crave what the cup offers so bad they are blinded from how the cup would feel when empty.

The cup can only rely on hope which hits or misses the point. In this case it missed and the cup is left feeling abashed and silent, empty.

“Because I could not stop for death”

I don't know when death will knock so I live life like it's my last. Life happens so unexpectedly slow or fast I know in my heart I know who I want to be. But I don't get to choose when I stay or when I leave. Death can be both scary and free but don't let it fear you from being who you want to be.

“I’m nobody”

It’s almost impossible to be nobody. If you were born you’re somebody. Feeling less of yourself is normal but not fun. Feeling helpless drowning in the thoughts that’s everyone is better than you. Self-insecurity is something you have. No one is telling you you’re nothing, that’s your brain speaking on your behalf.

“Does my sassiness offend you?” Did you want to see me broken?”

Did you want me to be low so you can step on me and be high?

You want me to cater to you and wave my dreams goodbye?

You like to plan, plot, and scheme while only showing me behind the scenes.

Is it because you know what I’m capable of?

Is it because you know my pretty face is just a bonus?

Is it because you know my words mean something?

Is it because you know people will choose me that you hide me?

Does my intelligence offend you?

Is it the fact I don’t pity you that offends you or is that a woman outsmarted

And overpowered you?

What am I to be doing baking a cake or something?

Are you offended?

Aw

“Death sets a thing significant”

Your hairbrush was just your hairbrush when you were here, now I see the last of your DNA.

Your hoodie was just your hoodie when you were here now it carries the scent that brings back memories that hurt to remember

Your shoes were just your shoes when you were here, now they remind me of all the obstacles we faced while you were here

It's so hard to heal from this hurt when I remember when I used to steal your hairbrush, wipe my dirty face on your hoodie and step on your shoes. Now these items mean more to me than my life and that I regret.

As the sun goes down

As the sun goes down so do the day's problems.

Lying in bed searching for mental reset.

My body craves but I'm left sinking into my sheets in an unwilling daze.

I'm supposed to be asleep awaiting tomorrow's glories but I'm stuck thinking about today's furies day in and day out.

I feel the same my head twirling in circles and my stomach in pain.

Stress causes anxiety and anxiety causes attacks all due to these thoughts that only travel in packs.

“Puff your bright hair when it rains”

“You lean into the evening haunts with your indifferent afro”

Indifferent, that’s what they call us.

Lack of interest and enthusiasm.

I don’t know where they got that from.

There’s plenty of personality in each coil of me.

Just like my afro I am big and full of life.

My personality and attitude towards the world is like castor oil in my scalp to water...Not
mixing.

It’s not mixing because everywhere my curls turn someone is telling them where to go.

Why does my hair dictate my job?

And why does my job dictate where I’ll be in the future?

Each coil is filled with a lock of moisture and love.

No, you can’t touch just admire from afar.

My'lah Hamlett

Rogers High School
Toledo, Ohio

You say you're nobody

You say you're nobody.

I say you're somebody.

You wonder if I'm somebody while you feel that you're nobody.

But you are somebody, you smile, you breathe, you feel, you ache.

You wonder and always affiliate.

Stop doubting.

Stop shaming.

Through depression and anxiety

Through depression and anxiety, I fought through yes, I survived.

Through bright times there were dark times I fought though yes, I survived.

Through facing many deaths, I fought through yes, I survived. Through almost losing my mother she fought through yes, she survived. Through almost dying twice I fought

through yes, I survived so just like Maya yes, I rise, I rise, I rise

Savana Uzoigwe

Rogers High School
Toledo, Ohio

Hope

Having hope is a way to live.
Bringing offerings and having stuff to give.
Never bring yourself down in life.
Lifting your head up & continue to fight
Looking on the bright side to help find a way,
A way to stay positive each day.

Nobody

I'm nobody, who are you?
Looking in the mirror trying to figure out the truth.
Trying to see who I really am.
Figuring out myself seems to be a hard exam.
Life seems to be such a big mystery.
Trying to let my past become history.
It might become a challenge to figure out who I am.
But in the end, it'll be worth it.

Death (after death)

It's finally starting to hit me, and realize you're gone.

Taking life for granted, trying my best to stay strong.

Tears all over my pillow, I can't count how many times I've cried.

Almost like I'm the one who died.

A thousand words won't bring you back, I know, because I've tried.

Neither will a thousand tears, I know because I've cried.

How long will I feel empty, will this heartache ever end?

How long will I have to wait until we meet in Heaven, my friend?

My Flower

You remind me of a flower,
Thinking of you every hour.
Your aura is bright,
So bright that you can see it out of sight.
Your personality is so huge,
Reminding me of a spring afternoon.
Every time you come in the room,
My eyes start to bloom.
Even when you walked through the door,
My heart just dropped to the floor.
My love for you could never go sour,
Because you are my flower.

Savana King

Medicine
University of Toledo

You are the light

You are the light,
Coming between the crumbling skyscrapers.
The moon chased away,
The sky ever so bright.
At midday,
Hungry appendages reach out
Towards you, little light.
Worshiped and prayed to,
The earth begs for your influence.
At night, still here?
A shock.
Bugs dance happily.
The sun, a streetlamp, a light bulb?
Light all the same.
Created, manufactured hope.

Words haphazardly written

Words haphazardly written across a blackboard.

What do they mean?

Instead,

A picture drawn beautifully.

The artist's full intention displayed.

The viewer can resonate,

And even mentally comprehend,

This artist- wherever they may be.

A connection between two people.

So close or so far away,

Who knows?

But add a wire between these two people.

A phone.

The words from the blackboard

Put neatly together into sentences.

Now full sympathy and empathy

Is understood.

A conversation, a poem, a story

When words are organized

They can express more

Than a picture.

Mother

Mother, hold my hand.
I fear what I do not know.
I cannot express
This flurry of emotion.
I want to cry, to scream, to disappear.
Lean down and wipe my tear.
A whisper, an encouragement.
To learn what I once feared.
A breakthrough.
I drop your hand.

Skye Sloane

Fearless Writer Alumna
Toldeo Museum of Art

Hopeless

There have been times in my life when I've felt hopeless. In fact, when i was younger, I don't know how much hope I had. I'd dream about things – goals, schools, careers – but I'm not sure how often I had hope that they'd manifest. I can remember telling one of my seventh-grade teachers about my dream of going to Oxford and negating it immediately - "it's a pipe dream, and i know it's silly."

It was a pipe dream, maybe, and it was silly, maybe, but since then I've learned that hope isn't exactly logical. If i spend time thinking about how unlikely everything is, of course it will never happen. It's hard to have strength to persevere if you're counting yourself out from the starting line.

At some point i just started to hope with reckless abandon. I always try to explain it to people as a sort of "fake it til you make it" mentality. You don't have to know exactly how something's going to happen or not happen to have hope – that's the spirit that propels you forward. The universe is vast and random, and what you have to offer, in the face of that, is your spirit.

Dandelion dandelion dandelion

Downtrodden and overlooked

WEEDS! WEEDS!

Intruders in the garden but

Weren't you here first?

Weren't you here before the mower

And picket fence

And mailbox

And raised bed of perfectly manicured hybrid perennials?

Fluffy and soft like the new gosling's down

Drifting through the air to spread joy

Quietly and calmly on the wind

None of the flowers are quite like you

None of them can make a field into a big cirrus cloud

WEEDS! WEEDS!

They chase you away with chemicals

Not in my backyard, they say

Someone else's, but not mine

Still, dandelion, you persevere

So soft and sturdy

So strong and gentle

You will belong

Long after the fence rots away.

Tomatoes grow to be eaten

Change the death the; tarot card
Jack Skellington dancing through the tomato grove

“I always think of growing into a tomato plant.”

Was my macabre lullaby
Staring up into the void each night
Buring to death in my movie theater hellscape

The dead bird melts into the algae in the river
Maybe just to do that
Maybe it just melts
Maybe it's not anything so juicy or luscious
Just fleshy wet goop.

But eternity is the scary name
Heaven is white wall after white wall after

Tomatoes grow to be eaten
To be taken and made into a spark
All within my body of stardust.

Tamara Peacock

TPS Teacher
Whittier Elementary School

Cheers

The glass clanking
Not breaking
Celebratory howls across the room
Smiles on faces
Dressed to the nines
Bow ties and tuxedos
Ball gowns and updos
Elegant and quaint
Noses at an equal level
Feels elaborate and fancy
The drums best louder
The air is thicker
Making it hard to breathe
Inhale deeply
Exhale slowly

Memories flooding like a mudslide
Spirits speaking clearly
Unable to be seen
Reminiscing about their lives
So desperately needing to be heard
PLEASE.....

Strength

The senses are powerful instruments
The sense of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and speech
Even when a person isn't able to use all of them
The others became heightened
They give us a presence; a stance in the world
Opportunity to create history from our body
Transferred from within to the world
What a powerful tool

To enlighten the universe of your existence
Our perspective, viewpoints, feelings and emotions
Outside the societal parameters
Not confined to the box that many want to keep us in

Individuality and freedom are a fight in this country
Too many want to gag and binding us
Make us pets, servants, and machines
Mindless robots

We are so much more
Afraid of the strength we have
The acceleration of power from people
Who were thought to be less than
Unity encoked
Acceptance promotes love
Love is freedom

The Change

(inspired by Langston Hughes)

The wind whips through my hair
Standing up tall like a soldier in the military
Trying not to blink or breath
For that breath might be my last
Taking in as much oxygen as my lungs can hold
What would my last inhale feel like?
My breathing has changed throughout the years
Fast and furious, as if my heart would jump out of my skin
Short and shallow like I was hyperventilating
More recent, deep, thoughtful, and peaceful
Each and everyday
My respiration can and has been changed
The goal is to find balance and faith in each death.

Victoria Starnes

Medicine
University of Toledo

At recess — in the Ring
We play and dance and sing
Not yet knowing that this
Innocence — no ignorance
Is just a fleeting thing
From the schoolgrounds to the classroom
We grow and change and bloom
But around the corner
Lies adulthood — reality
A feeling of doom
Now working without rest
We try and try and try our best
Knowing that nothing remains
Except impending death

“Still I rise Until I Fall”

There is only so far you can rise before you begin to fall. Surrounded by success and put under pressure, you are told to remain resilient and overcome. But there comes a point where you can no longer “pull yourself up by the bootstraps” and you must take a moment to become whole again. A powerful woman can never break, but what if you are broken from the years weighing on your back. Caring for those all around you and taking on responsibilities not your own. Nothing you do seems to ever be enough, but you are expected to continue to rise above. Connecting with those around you, you have found that you’re not alone at all. We have all fallen a time or two (or a hundred), but the support from another helps us to stand tall, to recognize that it does not have to be all on your shoulders, that you matter, and others recognize it. You just have to find it within yourself.

Expecting a Baby in Isolation

Bringing a baby into this world
Is meant to be something of joy.
With the first breath turning into a cry,
Something new has entered this world.
During times of masks and isolation,
A family event is turned into only two.
Holding each other close, full of fear,
Wondering if it was enough to be in isolation.
Hearing stories of everyone sick in the hospital,
And knowing that in a few months you'll be there
To deliver 7lbs4oz of pure happiness,
And hoping that your stay will be short at the hospital.
A year later, maybe the baby can meet
Grandma and grandpa, auntie and uncle.
They will not have seen the small things,
And to them, you will be a stranger they must meet.

Section VI: References and Production Staff



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Resources

Black Issues Conference https://events.bgsu.edu/event/black_issues_conference_7552

Congress of Qualitative Inquiry Conference <https://icqi.org/>

Human Trafficking and Social Justice Institute <https://www.utoledo.edu/hhs/htsj/>

MADD Poet Society <https://www.maddpoetsociety.org/>

Raw Tools (Guns to Garden Tools in Toledo run through the Mennonite Church – pastor
Joel Shenk) <https://www.toledomennonite.org/staff>

Save Our Community <https://toledo.oh.gov/departments/safety/save-our-community>

SONS OF TOLEDO <https://vimeo.com/657123403>

Acknowledgement

We would like to give a special thank you to Foysol Ahmed for his early help in typing up the high school student writing as a graduate assistant for the social work program. We do not have consistent computer access at the high school, so the students write in notebooks. We type up their writing after each writing group, but we fall behind. To all the Fearless Writers that assist with this tedious task, we thank you.

APPENDIX

Class Dates and Writing Prompts

This appendix contains sample syllabi for Fearless Writers programs: 2020/2021 and 2022/2023. Community Empathy Write Prompts for 2022/2023 also are included at the end of this document.

Academic year: 2020/2021

9/16/20

What does community mean to you? Several pictures of urban communities were shared.

☆☆☆☆☆

9/22/20, 9/23/20 & 9/26/20

How to be a poet – by Wendell Berry <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/41087/how-to-be-a-poet>

☆☆☆☆☆

9/30/20 & 10/6/20

70s Time Capsule – students given images from white and black magazines and music posters and music from the 70s

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10/7/20

Freedom - by Olive Runner
<https://nationalpoetryday.co.uk/poem/freedom/>

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10/7/20 & 10/10/20

Freedom – by Langston Hughes

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/151031/freedom-5d7a48504dcd5>

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10/13/20 & 10/23/20

What are a few of your favorite things?

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10/17/20, 10/19/20, & 10/20/20

Dream Dust – by Langston Hughes

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/150982/dream-dust>

☆☆☆☆☆

10/21/20 & 10/24/20

I am a Black Woman – by Mari Evans

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/i-am-a-black-woman/>

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10/24/20

Halloween Writing Workshop

Multiple Halloween Images and spooky sounds

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10/27/20, & 11/07/20

Speak the Truth to People – by Mari Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMku8IPJA-0>

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10/28/20

Celebration – by Mari Evans

https://www.indianawriters.net/uploads/8/3/7/9/83797058/mari_evans_celebration.pdf

☆☆☆☆☆

10/28/20

Images of artwork from Emmet Wigglesworth & Jeff Donaldson examples of the Black Arts Movement

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10/29/20

Fall, Leaves, Fall – by Emily Bronte

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52330/fall-leaves-fall>

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11/4/20, 11/10/20, 11/12/20, 11/17/20

Rendezvous - by Countee Cullen

<https://poets.org/poem/i-have-rendezvous-life>

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11/14/20

Rainbow Connection recording – by Kermit

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jS5fTzMP_mg

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11/17/20

Discussion of friendship despite neighborhood segregation

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11/21/20

Images of Thanksgiving table settings

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11/24/20

Thanksgiving – by Tim Nolan

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/55881/thanksgiving-56d237e14cbe4>

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12/1/20, 12/2/20 & 12/5/20

The People Could Fly by Virginia Hamilton multiple images of this folk tale.

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12/8/20

What a Wonderful World recording – by Louis Armstrong

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqhCQZaH4Vs>

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12/9/20

Purple Rain recording – by Prince

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TvnYmWpD_T8

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12/12/20

Utopia recording – by Simple Minds

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_nF33on5Do

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12/16/20

Discussion of Ella P. Stewart a famous Black pharmacist a leader in national Black women's association

<https://www.pbs.org/video/women-northwest-ohio-spotlight-ella-stewart-xbqy0s/>

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12/19/20

Tree of Life – Discussion about the Baobab tree and this quote “My life, The leaves are falling one by one from my life.” I said to myself, as I closed my eyes hoping for my life to find spring again.” — Ahmad Ardalan

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1/5/21

“Bloom where you are planted.”

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1/8/21

“We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives.”
John F. Kennedy

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1/9/21

“Every moment is a fresh beginning.” T. S. Eliot

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1/13/21

“This is the beginning of a new day. God has given me this day to use as I will. I can waste it or use it for good.” Heartsill Wilson

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1/15/21 & 2/13

Just for a moment wonder what it would be like to be a superhero.

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1/16/21

Winter – by Billy Collins and winter images

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/57444/winter-56d23af926a87>

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1/23/21

Discussion about White silence and Coretta Scott King

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1/26/21

Biden Inaugural Poem – by Amanda Gorman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZ055iIiN4>

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1/30/21 & 2/13/21

Poetry is Political – by Amanda Gorman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaZBgqfEa1E>

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2/3/21

Discussion of Black Nature and “There are Birds Here” – by Jamaal May

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/56764/there-are-birds-here>

☆☆☆☆☆

2/10/21

Haikus by Richard Wright

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/five-haikus/>

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2/17/21

Discussion of famous Black women from Toledo, OH

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2/20/21 & 2/27/21

Phenomenal Woman – by Maya Angelou

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48985/phenomenal-woman>

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3/3/21 & 3/6/21

Discussion about Ericka Huggins – member of the Black Panthers arrested for crimes she didn't commit. Poem “the oldness of new things” written by her On Sunday, the 13th of December 1966, the New Haven Women's Liberation Rock Band played a concert at Niantic State Prison

<https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/news/2883-not-asking-for-freedom-but-free-ericka-huggins-poems-from-prison>

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3/12/21 & 3/24/21

Discussion of Black Lives Matter and Assata Shakur

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3/27/21 & 3/31/21

Discussion about Angela Davis and Images of Black Utopia

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4/2/21 & 4/3/21

Images of Spring

Forsythe by James Hearst

<https://hearstarchive.uni.edu/poetry/forsythia>

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4/6/21 & 4/10/21

Discussion and Images of Current Young Black Artists

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4/14/21

Abstract images of COVID dreams

☆☆☆☆☆

4/21/21 & 4/24/21

Brené Brown

<https://vimeo.com/31870814>

☆☆☆☆☆

4/28/21

What happens when we turn the next page?

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5/15/21

Learned more about Mari Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cC330W7lpsI>

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5/19/21

Review of images from prompts past

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Academic year: 2021/2022

9/2/21

Beginning - by John Wright

<https://www.poetryoutloud.org/poem/beginning/>

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9/14/21

Black and white photo of a man playing the guitar in a stairway.

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9/20/21 & 9/21/21

Speak Truth to People – by Mari Evans see AY 2020/2021

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9/26/21

Fall images – Black Panther image by Artush Voskanyan

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9/26/21 & 9/27/21

Painting of a white woman with blonde hair laying on a bed of white linens
Magazine picture of a man fishing
Conversations in Isolation - by Harryette Mullen
<https://poets.org/poem/conversation-isolation>

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9/28/21

Poetry is Political – by Amanda Gorman see AY 2020/2021

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10/2/21 & 10/5/21

Image of Andrew Wyeth's painting *Monologue*

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10/4/21

Letter to future generations or from a different perspective
Picture of a spooky castle

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10/11/21

Wooden object with gears “old-school fidget”
Discussion of stereotypes

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10/12/21

Marching by FW alum Jevaughn Johnson

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10/12/21 & 10/18/21

Images of Theatric of Power by Kara Walker

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10/25/21

Clay teapot

Technology picture prompt

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10/26/21 & 11/9/21

Pick any book from the library, open a random page, pick as sentence.

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10/30/21

Halloween images and spooky sounds

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10/30/21 & 11/6/21

Autumn Leaves by W. B. Yeats

<https://poets.org/poem/falling-leaves>

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11/1/21

Polar Bear in the Frigidaire by Shel Silverstein

<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/108665-there-s-a-polar-bear-in-our-frigidaire---he-likes-it>

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11/2/21

Geode Rock

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11/2/21 & 11/5/21

Autumn leave images

☆☆☆☆☆

11/8/21

The Rose that Grew from Concrete recording by Tupac Shakur
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ScYgXAUORI>

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11/8/21

Harmony circle interlocked symbol

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11/9/21, 11/13/21, & 11/15/21

Discussion of Indigenous Youth Environment Activists at World Environment Summit

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11/19/21

Thanksgiving images

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11/29/21 & 12/6/21

Your favorite teacher

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12/4/21 & 12/6/21

Snowflakes - by Emily Dickinson

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49358/snow-flakes-45>

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12/13/21

Winter images

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12/20/21 & 1/19/22

Pick a word starting with the same letter of your first name.

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1/24/22

Dreams by Langston Hughes
<https://poets.org/poem/dreams>

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1/29/22

In what ways is creative writing important?

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1/30/22 & 1/31/22

Images of footprints in the sand

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2/1/22

You are the author of you own story, how would you write it?

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2/5/22

Crows in a strong wind by Cornelius Eddy
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48368/crows-in-a-strong-wind>

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2/7/22 & 2/8/22

Strong Black Women – by Taraji P. Nelson
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z02OKpG0YnY>

☆☆☆☆☆

2/10/22

What do you do to relax and recharge?

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2/14/22, 2/17/22 & 2/24/22

Montage of Disney inspirational messages

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cimAEwQmMiQ>

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2/22/22 & 2/26/22

Mental Health Barz- by Emily Stewart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIGWWPwJlNY>

☆☆☆☆

2/25/22

“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots” by Marcus Garvey

☆☆☆☆

2/26/22

Pretty Ugly by Abdullah Shoaib

<https://thisbugslife.com/2019/05/05/pretty-ugly-by-abdullah-shoaib/>

☆☆☆☆

3/1/22

9 Things I Would Like to Tell to Every Teenage Girl – by Melissa Newman-Evans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELvVZ6sm-88>

☆☆☆☆

3/14/22

What weather best represents you or fits your personality?

☆☆☆☆

3/21/22

Why is there an “if” in life?

If you hosted a podcast what would it be called and what topic would you discuss?

☆☆☆☆

3/22/22

Write about your favorite person.

☆☆☆☆☆

3/26/22 & 4/2/22

Images of spring and “A March Snow” – by Ella Wheeler Wilcox

https://www.yourdailypoem.com/listpoem.jsp?poem_id=1409

☆☆☆☆☆

3/28/22

Write about a decision you are proud of.

Write about 3 things you can't live without.

☆☆☆☆☆

3/29/22

Listened to a video about strangers falling in love after meeting and going through a series of questions while looking into each other's eyes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHhkd2B87Q8>

☆☆☆☆☆

4/2/22

Forsythia – by James Hearst

<https://hearstarchive.uni.edu/poetry/forsythia>

☆☆☆☆☆

4/4/22

What do you want most in this world? Write without using the word.

☆☆☆☆☆

4/11/22 & 4/25/22

Love or hate which is stronger?

☆☆☆☆☆

5/2/22 & 5/3/22

Discussion on Empathy

☆☆☆☆☆

5/7/22 & 5/8/22

“I leave you love. I leave you hope. I leave you the challenge of developing confidence in one another. I leave you a thirst for education.” Mary McLeod Bethune

☆☆☆☆☆

Academic year 2022/2023

8/11/22

“I stand alone by the elder tree” – by FW alumnus Brysen Davis

☆☆☆☆☆

8/29/22 & 8/30/22

Image of two men sitting at a coffee show talking with a giant abstract painting on the wall behind them

☆☆☆☆☆

9/6/22

Words beginning with the letter A.

☆☆☆☆☆

9/6/22

What is a myth people have created about you? What assumptions do people make about you?

☆☆☆☆☆

9/10/22 & 9/12/22

Write about a recent act of kindness.

☆☆☆☆☆

9/12/22 & 9/13/22

Write about your favorite number.

☆☆☆☆☆

9/13/22

Words beginning with the letter B.

☆☆☆☆☆

9/19/22 & 9/26/22

In what ways have you been a leader?

☆☆☆☆☆

9/20/22

You decide to go on a road trip?

☆☆☆☆☆

9/26/22

What is social justice?

☆☆☆☆☆

9/27/22

What brings you comfort?

☆☆☆☆☆

9/27/22

Words beginning with the letter C.

☆☆☆☆☆

10/3/22

Memory of Tlatelolco by Rosario Castellanos

<http://www.revistascisan.unam.mx/Voices/pdfs/10621.pdf>

☆☆☆☆☆

10/3/22

Make close observations of the goings on of the lunchroom, come back and write about it.

☆☆☆☆☆

10/4/22

Picture from a magazine of an apartment building in Brazil

☆☆☆☆☆

10/17/22

Amanda Gorman on being an upstander.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzpnitSjZA4>

☆☆☆☆☆

10/17/22

“What is success?

To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate the beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch Or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded!” — Ralph Waldo Emerson

☆☆☆☆☆

10/18/22

Magazine picture of desert ruins.

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10/18/22

Words beginning with the letter D.

☆☆☆☆☆

10/24/22

If you had a mantra what would it be?

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10/25/22

Spooky Halloween sounds

☆☆☆☆☆

10/31/22

I wish I knew how it would feel to be free -Recording by Nina Simone

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inNBpizpZkE>

☆☆☆☆☆

11/1/22

Tells us about a time when you lived through a real scary story.

☆☆☆☆☆

11/1/22

Words beginning with the letter E

☆☆☆☆☆

11/7/22 & 11/14/22

Watched SONS OF TOLEDO FILM

<https://vimeo.com/657123403>

☆☆☆☆☆

11/15/22

“The greatest revolution of our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.”

William James

☆☆☆☆☆

11/21/22 & 5/10/23

The City – by Langston Hughes

<https://allpoetry.com/poem/14326871-The-City-by-Langston-Hughes>

☆☆☆☆☆

11/21/22

“If people knew how hard I work to gain my mastery it would not seem wonderful at all.” Michelangelo

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11/27/22

Discussion about human trafficking. Video by Celia Williamson

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13pHy2gx88tFDPRL2KqpqpBb2hnYoJKzO/view?ts=5e84c056>

☆☆☆☆☆

11/28/22

Chicago excerpts – by Carl Sandburg

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/12840/chicago>

☆☆☆☆☆

11/29/22

“Treasure the love you receive above all. It will survive long after your good health has vanished.” Og Mandino

☆☆☆☆☆

11/29/22

Write about a word beginning with F.

☆☆☆☆☆

12/5/22

Discussion of redlining and why zip codes matter.

☆☆☆☆☆

12/6/22

Winter images and sounds

☆☆☆☆☆

12/6/22

Write about a word beginning with G.

☆☆☆☆☆

12/12/22

Discussion on setting intentions for what you want in life.

☆☆☆☆☆

1/17/23

“Dr. King gave the I have a dream not I have a plan speech.” Simon Sinek.

☆☆☆☆☆

1/17/23

Write about a word beginning with G

☆☆☆☆☆

1/23/23

Sounds of a cozy cabin

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1/23/23

Image of a snowman

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1/24/23 & 1/31/23

Words beginning with the letter H

☆☆☆☆☆

1/30/23

More discussion on human trafficking and ways to prevent. What is resilience?

☆☆☆☆☆

1/30/23

What does it mean to have pride in your city?

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1/31/23

“Pure and complete sorrow is as impossible as pure and complete joy” Leo Tolstoy

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1/31/23

Write about a work that starts with H.

☆☆☆☆☆

2/6/23

What is your 5-year plan?

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2/7/23

Discussion of the research in *Ophelia Speaks* (1999) by Sara Shandler

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2/7/23

Magazine picture of two girls with their father on a pier.

☆☆☆☆☆

2/7/23 & 2/24/23

Magazine picture of two children at a sleepover talking with flashlights.

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2/13/23

Continued discussion about unhealthy relationships and toxic masculinity

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2/13/23

What are limiting beliefs?

☆☆☆☆☆

2/14/23

Tropical ocean sounds -music inspired by the ocean.

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2/14/23 & 2/21/23

Write about words beginning with I.

☆☆☆☆☆

2/20/23

Picture of little girls blowing bubbles.

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2/23/23

Discussion of redlining and the film SONS OF TOLEDO

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2/27/23

Write about words that begin with T.

☆☆☆☆☆

2/28/23

Write about a word beginning with J.

☆☆☆☆☆

3/13/23

What are the values you live by?

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3/14/23

I magazine picture of a field of sheep.

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3/27/23

What is living a life without regrets?

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4/26/23

Letter to the editor of the Blade suggesting we intentional engage with people around us who are suffering from loss.

☆☆☆☆☆

5/9/23

Write about a work that starts with N.

☆☆☆☆☆

Community Empathy Write Prompts

November 2022

Prompt 1

Hope is a thing with feathers - Emily Dickinson

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42889/hope-is-the-thing-with-feathers-314>

Prompt 2

Maya Angelou – Still I Rise

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46446/still-i-rise>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/10/09/918815890/portraits-of-resilience-how-19-women-around-the-globe-face-the-pandemic>

Prompt 3

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/10/09/918815890/portraits-of-resilience-how-19-women-around-the-globe-face-the-pandemic>

☆☆☆☆☆

December 2022

Prompt 1

Because I could not stop for Death – (479)- Emily Dickinson

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47652/because-i-could-not-stop-for-death-479>

Prompt 2

If There Be Sorrow by Mari Evans

<https://songofamerica.net/song/if-there-be-sorrow/>

Prompt 3

<https://www.pewresearch.org/2021/03/05/in-their-own-words-americans-describe-the-struggles-and-silver-linings-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

☆☆☆☆☆

January 2023

Prompt 1

I'm Nobody, Who are you? - Emily Dickinson

<https://poets.org/poem/im-nobody-who-are-you-260>

Prompt 2

Amanda Gorman

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaZBgqfEa1E>

Prompt 3

Lost voices women and COVID

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/lindsaykohler/2021/12/27/women-were-left-out-of-the-covid-19-story-and-its-hurt-them/?sh=69116b3558b4>

☆☆☆☆☆

February 2023

Prompt 1

Death sets a thing significant – Emily Dickinson

<https://www.poemofquotes.com/emilydickinson/deathsetsathing.php>

Prompt 2

Dear Lovely Death - Langston Hughes

<https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/dear-lovely-death>

Prompt 3

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/how-to-help-families-and-staff-build-resilience-during-the-covid-19-outbreak/>

☆☆☆☆☆

March 2023

Prompt 1

Blazing in Gold – Emily Dickinson

https://www.yourdaily-poem.com/listpoem.jsp?poem_id=1996

Prompt 2

Southern Flower – Yona Harvey

<https://poets.org/poem/sonnet-tall-flower-blooming-dinnertime>

Prompt 3

Jason Reynolds – Optimism

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsQNaSLziGI>



call for papers

the quint's sixtieth issue is issuing a call for theoretically informed and historically grounded submissions of scholarly interest—as well as creative writing, original art, interviews, and reviews of books and films. The deadline for this call is the 15th of August 2023—but please note that we accept manu/digi-scripts at any time.

quint guidelines

All contributions accompanied by a short biography will be forwarded to a member of the editorial board. Manuscripts must not be previously published or submitted for publication elsewhere while being reviewed by *the quint's* editors or outside readers. Hard copies of manuscripts should be sent to Sue Matheson at *the quint*, University College of the North, P.O. Box 3000, The Pas, Manitoba, Canada, R9A 1M7. We are happy to receive your artwork in digital format, JPEG preferred.

Email copies of manuscripts, Word or RTF preferred, should be sent to thequint@ucn.ca. Essays should range between 15 and 25 pages of double-spaced text in Word, and all images (JPEG) and source citations. Longer and shorter submissions also will be considered. Bibliographic citation should be the standard disciplinary format. Copyright is retained by the individual authors of manuscripts and artists of works accepted for publication in *the quint*.

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