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Karrigan Hannah

Kendra Hakkarainen

Krysta Stubblefield

Larah Snipes

Layla Alhajri Michael Blanchard Remle Morrow

Shakirrah Hudspeth Sidney Bond Ta'Leahia Wright-Johnson

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# illustrations

Destin by Johanna McDaniel.....	14
Toneijah by Johanna McDaniel.....	37
Sketch #1.....	43
Sketch #2.....	47
Painting #1 by Leigh Pinkelman.....	57
Painting #2 by Leigh Pinkelman.....	60
Sketch #3 .....	63
Painting # 3 by Leigh Pinkelman.....	66
Sketch #4.....	69
Painting #1 by Johanna McDaniel .....	72
Jayln by Johanna McDaniel.....	74
Sketch #5.....	80
Painting #4 by Leigh Pinkelman.....	84
Jaylyn by Johanna McDaniel.....	88
Painting #5 by Leigh Pinkelman .....	93
Marcus by Johanna McDaniel.....	96
Sketch #6.....	97
Painting #6 by Leigh Pinkelman.....	100
Photo #1 by Sarah Burns.....	105
Laiah by Johanna McDaniel.....	108
Photo #2 by Sarah Burns .....	110

Painting#7byLeighPinkleman.....	112
Painting#8by LeighPinkleman.....	114
Sketch #7.....	116
.Painting#2byJohannaMcDaniel.....	117
Painting#3 by JohannaMcDaniel.....	122
Photo#3bySarahBurns.....	130
Teala byJohannaMcDaniel.....	133
Photo#4bySarahBurns.....	135
Sketch #8.....	136
Painting #4 by Johanna McDaniel.....	143
Painting #9 by Leigh Pinkleman.....	145
Painting #5 by Johanna McDaniel.....	151
Blakeby JohannaMcDaniel.....	156
.Painting #10 by Leigh Pinkleman.....	160
Photo #5 by Sarah Burns.....	178
Painting #11 by Leigh Pinkleman.....	186
Jevaughn by Johanna McDaniel.....	191
Kendra by Johanna McDaniel.....	201
Ta’Leahia by Johanna McDaniel.....	220
Pressed #1 by Joshua Burns.....	234

Photo #6 by Sarah Burns.....	235
.Photo #7 by Sarah Burns.....	241
.Painting #12 by Leigh Pinkleman.....	246
Photo #8 by Sarah Burns.....	252
Painting # 13 by Leigh Pinkleman.....	256
Shakirrah by Sarah Burns.....	261
.Painting #14 by Leigh Pinkleman.....	297
Pressed #2 by Joshua Burns.....	309

# contents

INTRODUCTION: <b>Fearless Writers</b> by Heather Sloane.....	15
ARTISTS.....	22
WRITERS.....	27
MENTORS.....	33
<i>Queen</i> by Toneijah Johnson.....	38

## SECTION I

<b>Roger's Writers and Artists.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<i>I was only seven</i> by Amy Rowe.....	40
<i>The knife cuts deep</i> by Amy Rowe.....	41
<i>My scars are unique to me</i> by Amy Rowe.....	42
<i>3 years old</i> by Airelle Barnett.....	44
<i>I'm alone but I'm not lonely</i> by Airelle Barnett.....	45
<i>"I doubt if I ever come back"</i> by Airelle Barnett.....	46
<i>Many things are wrong</i> by Brysen Davis.....	48
<i>Naive</i> by Brysen Davis.....	49
<i>Just in one day</i> by Brysen Davis.....	50
<i>Cool nights and warm days</i> by Brysen Davis.....	51
<i>People who are given things</i> by Brysen Davis.....	52
<i>Picture</i> by Brysen Davis.....	53
<i>I took the road less traveled</i> by Brysen Davis.....	54
<i>To the soul birth is a clean slate</i> by Brysen Davis.....	55
<i>Judge me by my skin</i> by Brysen Davis.....	56
<i>Ten minutes</i> by Chantal Crane.....	58

# contents

<i>Keep Your Light Shining</i> by Courtney Rice.....	61
<i>Places I'd Rather Be</i> by Dallis Walker.....	64
<i>Colors</i> by Dallis Walker.....	65
<i>"I desired my dust to be mingled with yours"</i> by Heather Stone.....	67
<i>If you could ever begin to comprehend</i> by Heather Stone.....	68
<i>It's hard not thinking about violence</i> by Heather Stone.....	70
<i>Concept of solace of plums</i> by Heather Stone.....	71
<i>Her</i> by Heather Stone.....	73
<i>Warmth</i> by Jaylyn Brewington.....	75
<i>A Healing Person as a Whole</i> by Jaylyn Brewington.....	77
<i>Magic</i> by Jayla Burks.....	81
<i>We, as humans, reflect</i> by Jayla Burks.....	82
<i>She doesn't believe in shooting stars</i> by Jayla Burks.....	84
<i>The house was quiet</i> by Jayla Burks.....	85
<i>A Phenomenal Woman</i> by Jayla Burks.....	86
<i>Two different paths</i> by Jayla Burks.....	87
<i>As I look into the sky</i> by Jaylyn Ellis.....	89
<i>My life right about now</i> by Jaylyn Ellis.....	90
<i>They always say</i> by Jaylyn Ellis.....	91
<i>A place of me</i> by Jaylyn Ellis.....	92
<i>Lookin at a mirror</i> by Jevaughn Johnson.....	94
<i>Color expressed</i> by Jevaughn Johnson.....	95
<i>I'm surrounded by darkness</i> by Karrigan Hannah.....	98

# contents

<i>Darkness Can Be A Danger</i> by Karrigan Hannah.....	99
<i>Pain</i> by Karrigan Hannah.....	101
<i>Change</i> by Karrigan Hannah.....	102
<i>Life may be tough</i> by Karrigan Hannah.....	103
<i>In darkness</i> by Karrigan Hannah.....	104
<i>I was sitting at a window</i> by Kendra Hakkarainen.....	106
<i>When he stars at me</i> by Laiah Snipes.....	109
<i>The Lost Brother</i> by Layla Alhajri.....	111
<i>Expectatons</i> by Lydia Ratterree.....	113
<i>"I can reflect light into dark places"</i> by Michelle Blue .....	115
<i>The black man is a strong man</i> by Remle Morrow.....	118
<i>Growing out my shoes I liked</i> by Remle Morrow.....	119
<i>It's not just white</i> by Remle Morrow.....	104
<i>White supremacy</i> by Remle Morrow.....	120
<i>Smile</i> by Remle Morrow.....	123
<i>Darkness can be good</i> by Remle Morrow.....	124
<i>This is not a black and white world</i> by Remle Morrow.....	125
<i>The Fabric of Life</i> by Remle Morrow.....	127
<i>She reminds me of summer itself</i> by Remle Morrow.....	128
<i>Have you ever known what it is like to be poor?</i> by Remle Morrow.....	129
<i>The Spot</i> by Ta'leahia Wright.....	131
<i>Aireya</i> by Teala Young.....	134
<i>A Place I Would Rather Be</i> by Trinity Enoc.....	137
<i>I was sound asleep</i> by Trinity Enoc.....	138

# contents

<i>On Hallowe'en</i> by Trinity Enoc.....	139
<i>I don't trust the guiding powers of stars</i> by Trinity Enoc.....	140
<i>The reader became the book</i> by Trinity Enoc.....	141
<i>I feel as though I am</i> by Trinity Enoc.....	142

## SECTION II

<i>Encyclopedia of an Extraordinary Life</i> by Heather Sloane .....	144
<i>Airelle Barnett</i> .....	146
<i>Amariano Williams</i> .....	148
<i>Brysen Davis</i> .....	152
<i>Blake Young</i> .....	157
<i>Cara Swain</i> .....	161
<i>Chantal Crane</i> .....	165
<i>Duvonna Goins</i> .....	166
<i>Heather Sloane</i> .....	172
<i>Jayln Brewington</i> .....	179
<i>Jayla Burks</i> .....	184
<i>Jaylen Brake</i> .....	187
<i>Jaylyn Ellis</i> .....	190
<i>Jevaughnn Johnson</i> .....	192
<i>Jevon Hudspeth</i> .....	195
<i>Justyce Meredith</i> .....	199
<i>Kendra Hakkarainen</i> .....	202
<i>Krysta Studdlefield</i> .....	206
<i>Laiah Snipes</i> .....	208

# contents

Lydia Tatterree.....	211
Nick Mueser.....	213
Sidney Bond.....	217
Ta'Leahia Wright-Johnson.....	221
Teala Young.....	225
Tailon Jones.....	228

## SECTION III

<b>AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: Part I.....</b>	<b>229</b>
Alyssa Crittenden.....	236
Andrea Hill.....	240
Austen Allen.....	242
Cara Swain.....	244
Ciara Cuthbert.....	245
Heather Sloane.....	247
Jenaie Johnson.....	253
Juli Lambert.....	257
Murtaza Syed.....	259
Shakirrah Hudspeth.....	262
Courtney Rice.....	266
Heather Sloane.....	269
Manita Ojha.....	271

## AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: Part II

Stereotype Threat: The Untold Story of Toledo Youth Gun Violence.....	274
---	-----

# contents

Blake Young.....	276
Duvonna Goins.....	282
Jaylyn Ellis.....	285
Jevaughn Johnson.....	289
Kay Powell.....	298
Laiah Snipes.....	300
Nick Mueser.....	304
Tonenijah Johnson.....	305
Toni Pratt.....	307

## AUTOETHNOGRAPHY: PART III

<b>Hate Crimes: The Cruelty of Discrimination.....</b>	<b>310</b>
Amy Rowe.....	311
Duvonna Goins.....	312
Jalyn Brewington.....	315
Layla Alhajri.....	318
Michael Blanchard.....	320
Ta'Leahia Wright-Johnson.....	322
References.....	323
University of Toledo Production Staff.....	326
CFP.....	327
Guidelines.....	327



Destin

Johanna McDaniel

## INTRODUCTION

### Fearless Writers

“So, what are we going to call the group?” When I asked this question, we had been writing together at Rogers High School for a spring semester and we were past the pilot phase. The experience of writing together creatively was valuable to the university students and high school students, so we decided to move forward, this time with four different groups of students. Initially the program attracted student mentors from the social work program and a few pharmacy and medical students from the University of Toledo, and as time has passed and curriculum has changed, we fight harder and harder to find students from different disciplines and professions. The number of high school students involved in the program increases each year and the enthusiasm for creative writing and critical thinking about social injustice continues to grow as our partnership with Rogers High School moves forward.

It was Tonenijah who made the suggestion that stuck with the group. “Fearless Writers” was a nod to the Freedom Riders who rode through the south facing down racism as they traveled, and Erin Gruwell’s work as a teacher that resulted in the book and movie she was familiar with, *Freedom Writers Diary* (1999). Tonenijah often won the creative arguments in our group with a quiet smile. The entire group admired her work and it seemed fitting that she be the one to proclaim our group title. She was our

queen. Our original group of freshman will be graduating this year. Their dedication to this process is surprising to me. Their caring for each other and the confidence they have gained in their voice is remarkable.

This edition is broken into sections that invite you into our experience each week at Rogers High School. We are celebrating our fourth year of this collaboration between the University of Toledo Social Work Program and the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program at Rogers High School. AVID teacher Bridget Smith writes, “Teaching AVID is an amazing way to work with students as they develop their skills and create their pathway to college. Within the AVID program, students have the opportunity to: work intensely on organizational skills, learn how to collaborate with others in a group setting, ask the right questions for deeper understanding and develop specific reading and writing skills. Rogers High School has been given a unique advantage in working with a mentor writing group through the University of Toledo. Within this group, students are given the space and encouragement to write and share from experience and their view of the world. For many of my students this is exactly the outlet they need and they have built strong connections for the future.”

Each year that students are involved in the Fearless Writers program they have a different adventure. In their freshman year as they adapt to the new high school environment and as they face being the smallest and the most hated, they tentatively share writing pieces with a group of strangers. The group of strangers include a variety of undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Toledo. The freshman students write into songs, pictures, poems, and various writing prompts. The students have five to seven minutes to write about whatever they want. Some choose fiction,

others memories, and others essays.

Inspired by Amherst Writers and Artists writing group methods created by Pat Schneider (*Writing Alone and with Others*, 2003), I facilitate feedback within the group. The university students use the same prompts and have the same amount of time to write. The facilitator also writes. We encourage all of the students to give strengths-based feedback about what aspect of another’s writing they found powerful. The group has to fight not to critique writing as we have all been taught to focus on grammar and punctuation as students and as teachers. The group also has to resist the compulsion to intervene with counseling and therapy any moment an individual writes about sad and angry emotions. This writing process can be very therapeutic, but the purpose of the writing isn’t therapy it is to recognize and respect each other as writers and artists. Everyone writes and is treated as a serious writer. Everyone gives feedback because every member of the group has an important and unique voice and their perspective matters. This nurturing of voice, using Amherst and Writers methods is the foundation for the years to come in the Fearless Writers program,

“From day one I have been astounded at the wisdom and honesty of these kids,” explains social work graduate student mentor Amy Rowe. “Their experiences are real and raw, and the way they write about their lives is real and raw. It has been eye-opening, heart-wrenching and inspiring to hear their words. I consider it a privilege to be a Fearless Writer.”

In their sophomore year students begin to write short memoir pieces based on the *The Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life* (2005). This unique memoir uses the alphabet as inspiration. The students choose words starting with a letter from the alphabet and have

that word serve as a prompt for memories and writing about their day-to-day. This moves away from the Amherst Writers and Artists method in that the members of the group are writing about their life. The choice between fiction and essay are no longer an option and the writing is an act of self-disclosure. The intensity of the word is in the control of the student. For example, they can write about an apple or write about anger. This is when the realities of the member's lives become more apparent. Disadvantages and privilege begin to emerge, age differences, and cultural differences are discussed without fanfare and without dissection. The practice of strengths-based feedback in the freshman year develops into respect for lived experience and regular demonstrations of empathy. The group begins to risk more and trust that their audience connects with them as an artist and as a human being.

This project was created as an interprofessional intervention to disrupt implicit bias created by the social separation by class and race that is unique to the United States. As a researcher who studies health disparities and the impact of social separation to communication and understanding in the medical system in the United States, this is where the magic of sharing stories happens for me. Implicit bias is interrupted in this process of writing creatively, and we as a writing group become aware that we all participate in marginalizing others and have all been discriminated against. We all share experiences of being misunderstood in our writing and instances of when we have been treated as inferior. We begin to learn the complexity of oppression in the United States and the invisibility of privilege. The sophomore experience is when discussion of injustice begins to take hold and a desire to collectively come in the way of what separates us. Lived experience is an amazing teacher and we find wisdom by accident in the fun of creative expression.

Duvonna Goins, one of our mentors from the social work program at the University of Toledo, wrote the following description of her early experience of the sophomore group:

High school has never been an easy hill for anyone to climb — especially a sophomore. That awkward sense of still trying to figure out where you fit on the popularity scale is still present, and all the while you try to make sure the friends you had last year are still your friends this year. Sophomore year, you are not new to high school but not at the end either, so it's like being the middle child. There is relief in knowing you will eventually move up and it seems so far away. Adjusting my mind to being back in high school as a mentor and putting my feet where the sophomores feet now stand is a bit overwhelming. I catch myself thinking I could run into 15-year-old me. It is scary. And remembering what was on my brain at that time makes me chuckle a little. Walking into the building, sitting at the desk waiting for these sponges to walk through the door has me on edge. When the students walk in my anxiety calms down a little. Once I see them all laughing and mingling with one another I am able to relax and focus on the process.

My fellow university students and I introduce ourselves to the established group of writers. We note which students are new to group and don't feel alone as we learn the process of creative writing and feedback we will be involved with over the academic year. We hear how there will be no negative feedback just positive and we are to respect each other's thought process as writers. This sounded simple enough to me but I could see the

worried faces of the new sophomores when they realized we also had to read out loud. The confidence in the room dropped from 90 degrees to a crisp -15, with the experienced writers in the group being the exception. I was stunned by the sway of energy and nervousness I saw in the group. The students expressed their worry under their breath: *I am not a good writer. This is stupid but I will read it anyway. I am going to let Brysen read mine.* The prompt we will be going over this school year is from Amy Krouse Rosenthal's *The Encyclopedia of an Ordinary Life*. Samples are read aloud and the book flows in the way it brings the alphabet to life. The decorative depictions and artistry of the author serve as useful prompts, and the student's lives become animated and rich as they read the words aloud.

In the junior and senior years the group participates in participatory action research. Youth researchers pick a topic of focus and, through writing prompts and discussion, decide the path to better understanding what contributes to injustice. Each group's unique path can involve discussion used as a prompt for short writing pieces, or published research, community observation, media, and artwork that is addressing the topic. The writing is shared and themes are discussed and addressed within the group.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is community-led research design, implementation, and evaluation. In the case of this project, high school students lead the research with university collaborators. Topics of social injustice are explored by the group using group autoethnographic and creative writing literary analysis. The 2019 graduates of Rogers High School worked for two years on the cultural study research results about social separation. This year's seniors and original Fearless Writers have worked since junior

year on stereotypes, and used media prompts like the film, *The Hate You Give* (2018), and local newspaper articles about youth gun violence. This year the students continue to look at media coverage of gun violence in predominantly black communities and are exploring *When They See Us* (2019), a Netflix production about the lives of young black men accused of a rape they did not commit and serving time in prison as young adults.

Group autoethnography is collaborative qualitative research where the authors reflect on their own experience to better understand larger cultural issues. Instead of collecting field observations and writing into personal experiences, each of the researchers in the group uses prompts on their topic of choice for brief writing pieces that are stream of conscious. This model lacks time for over-thinking and self-censoring.

The intention of Amherst Writers and Artists is to share written work with an audience. The intention of autoethnography is to share the written experience and analysis with a research community. The students writing and research has been shared over the past three years at the International Human Trafficking and Social Justice Conference held at the University of Toledo, and over the past two years students research has been presented at the Ray Browne conference at Bowling Green State University.

**Heather Sloane**  
**Guest Editor**

# ARTISTS

## **Aravindh Natarajan (Arvindh), PhD, MSW**

Arvindh is an Associate Professor in the Social Work Program at the University of Toledo. His professional interests involve the use of the Arts in social work practice and research. In social work practice, the Arts can be cathartic for clients and can facilitate better client-worker interaction. The Arts can also play a great role in research by facilitating knowledge building and then disseminating that information to the public. 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 2018. Students were engaged in the Fearless Writers Program facilitated by Dr. Heather Sloane. Arvindh made these quick sketches while the students and Heather wrote poetry. (Sketch 1-8)

## **Johanna McDaniel, MSW**

I am a mother of four, an Army Veteran and social worker who earned her MSW from the University of Toledo. I discovered my love for painting when I was earning my Bachelor's Degree from the University of New England. I took a painting class as an elective and it quickly became my passion. After I started my own family, I became more aware of the lack of diversity in art and media. I wanted my children to see people who looked like them so they could feel represented, so I began filling my home with paintings of beautiful Brown and Black people. I saw the positive effects that has had on my own children's self esteem, and I wanted to impact other people in my community who are underrepresented in art. I volunteered to assist high school students with painting their self portraits so they could have beautiful images of themselves to hang on their walls.

(Destin, Tone Nijah, Painting #1, Jalyn, Jaylyn, marcus, Laih, Painting #2, Painting #3, Teala, Painting #4, Painting #5, Blake, Jevaughn, Kendra, Ta'Leahia)

## **Joshua Archer, MSW, LSW**

When I was asked to come listen to high school students' express the many different emotions, feelings and considerations that life is planting in them, I honestly had some thoughts of stereotypical teenage melodrama. That being said, I was wrong. These students expressed their joys, pains, confusions, and insights with eloquence and sophistication. I am very grateful for the opportunity to even sit in on these soulful and inspiring sessions. That all lead me to these works, "Pressed" is about oppression, pressure, expression, compression, repression, and how that makes one feel. Have you ever felt like you have a monkey on your back? Have you ever felt like the systems of this world have a foot on your neck? I have felt this and empathize with these students as that inevitability is becoming apparent in their lives. How do we deal with life's pressures and what do these pressures look like? (Pressed #1 & Pressed #2)

## **Leigh Pinkelman, MSW, LSW**

When I started the master's degree program for Social Work at the University of Toledo in the fall of 2017, I experienced a large amount of stress between school, working full time as a Qualified Intellectual Disabilities Professional (QIDP), and having an internship. I graduated with my Master's Degree in Social Work in 2019 and now work as an MSW, LSW as a school therapist for teens who have been expelled from other schools. I began painting in 2017 as a way to cope with stress.

Although my art has evolved over the last couple of years to include social justice issues, the inspiration for most of my paintings begins with tuning in on my emotions. I have to identify why I am upset, and what triggered me to become upset. From there I think about how I can represent the frustration, anger, or sadness about the situation.

Sometimes I will look up references to draw from; other times I draw from what I see in my head. After it's been drawn in pencil I go over it with permanent marker or black paint to outline it. Finally, I choose what will make up the remainder of the piece including paint, pens, and other mediums. My favorite medium to use is wax, so I mostly consider myself an Encaustic Artist, which are pretty rare.

As a result of my past trauma and experience with verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, I have been diagnosed with PTSD, Major Depressive Disorder, general anxiety disorder, and Borderline Personality Disorder. I find myself frustrated on days where the mental outcome of my experiences stops me from being able to do something, no matter how hard I try. I found that when I start to feel that way, I think of an image that portrays that feeling, and when I am able to I paint it, I feel significantly better. Painting is a much better outlet than when I would use words or physical actions to express my feelings as a teenager and young adult. I want people to understand that finding resilience and hope is hard. I did not get through all this on my own, but I am proud of all the hard work I have done, including my art. I want to raise awareness of the constant push and pull of good and bad, light and dark, monster and hero. I often hear, "oh you're better now" or "you don't need help or support because you're on medication or in therapy." This is not true. Individuals with mental illness are not necessarily better or worse. Sometimes, it's a good day or bad day. Other times it's "I don't want to disappoint them, so I'll put on a smile." To show the world the raw emotion they show behind closed doors is hard. Please remember the battle with mental illness is never over, but many of us diagnosed are trying every day to win the battle, or to just take a stab at it, even if it doesn't seem like it.

My process for the painting series for the Fearless Writers involved reading the pieces over and over again until I was inspired by an image. On a few of them I had to ask others to read the pieces and tell me what they saw. (Paintings # 1-15)

## **Sarah Burns**

I am a social worker and the Everybody Wins! Director at Reading is Fundamental Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I spent the last three years working as a community partner in the Toledo Public School District. This included working with elementary students in an after school program, implementing the Community School within a high school and co-directing a mentoring program for middle school students. I received a BS in Visual Communication from Ohio University and an MSW from the University of Toledo, and enjoy finding innovative and creative ways to support children and families.

Starting a new project fills me with great excitement as I begin to imagine all the work can turn out to be. I get butterflies in my stomach (the good kind) as I plan and visualize the final product. I remind myself how fun it can be exercising my creative muscles. Starting a new project also fills me with an overwhelming amount of anxiety. The self-doubt and endless questions come at me at lightning-speed: *What if I mess up? What if my project is terrible? What if it's not good enough? What if I'm not good enough?* I remind myself how I am my own worst enemy.

Working with the Rogers Fearless Writers I experienced both this same excitement and anxiety. It was humbling to work with a group of high school students from different backgrounds and experiences who could so openly share their world with me. They were shy and vulnerable. But they were also realizing how powerful their voices could be.

We started by meeting to talk about their writing and which pieces they wanted to feature. They read aloud to me and showed me a side of them that many may have never seen. I was also asked to write at these meetings. I was reluctant but only because it made me just as vulnerable. It forced me onto the same playing field so that our differences in age and position (I was working at the school at the time) were left at the door.

Some of the students had very specific visions for the portraits that we would make together, and others had no idea. It was fun to put our heads to make their vision come true or to find it. For those who were comfortable, I let them be the director. I'm not a

fan of relinquishing control, but knew that we could not be a true team if I insisted on staying in the driver's seat. My favorite instance of this was a student who knew exactly what she wanted, but was worried about how *she* would look in the frame. We went to a park and picked a few different spots to photograph her in. I would snap a few frames and then show her how awesome she looked. Although a very shy student, she stood proud and confident. She smiled every time I showed her a picture, cheering her on.

This is what makes it all worth it. I found my excitement for creating significantly outweighed my worries. Working side-by-side of these incredible young people reminded me how empowering it is to create, together. (Photos 1-9)

## WRITERS

I'm **Airelle Barnette**, a sophomore at Rogers High School, and I mostly love chocolate. I'm 15 and go to Rogers High School. I think of myself as a very humble person I never ask for anything unless asked. Writing just helps me show how I feel sometimes. It lets me be my personality without trying to be all extra.

**Alyssa Crittenden** graduated from Rogers High School in 2019. "Being in the writing group at Rogers had true impact on my imagination. At times I would think but never write down ideas on set topics. Heather and the group members made it possible for us to want to ponder and jot ideas down from one extreme to another. Being in this group made me want to write for enjoyment and to hear other thoughts from people with different experiences." Alyssa is currently enrolled at Lourdes University pursuing a degree in nursing.

**Amariano Chaz Williams** is a sophomore at Rogers High School. He says, "I am up to bringing my grades up. I'm also up to setting my future goals. My thoughts on the writing group is it's cool. I wish we had it more than just one time a week."

**Austen Allen** graduated from Rogers High School in 2019. He is currently attending the University of Toledo where he plans to receive a degree in engineering. He wants to be a mechanical engineer because he loves math and systems in general. The writing group helped him express thoughts and feelings or concerns about topics he wanted to talk about and thought about every day. "I would've shared my thoughts regardless of who was there, however, it made it 10 times easier with people I already was very comfortable with, and the group allowed me to tap into their minds as well. We all became closer as friends, and going to group was a treat for me every Thursday."

**Blake Young** is a current senior at Rogers High School where she plays volleyball and is a cheerleader. She holds the title of having the most Ram spirit four years running. After she graduates, she plans to attend college to become a mortician.

**Brysen Davis** is currently a sophomore at Rogers High School. When asked what he wants readers to know about him, he states, “I am a sophomore at Rogers High School. I play football and I wrestle. I’m the crispiest ‘lil dude out here fo-sho. Writing is fun. At first, I only did it to get out of class. But I actually like it. My favorite snack is Cheddar Jack Cheese Itz, so if you like my writing feel free to mail some to the school for me.”

**Dallis Walker** wrote with the writing program her freshman year at Rogers High School.

My name is **Emmett Smith**. I am a sophomore at Rogers High School I play on the varsity football team, and I play on the JV basketball team.

My name is **Jayla Burks** and I’m a sophomore at Rogers High School. I enjoy reading, drawing, painting and writing. As I grow older, I would like to take up psychology as a major and become a child psychologist. Writing to me is just another way to convey emotions without actually speaking out loud.

I’m **Jaylen Brake**, I’m 15 and I go to Rogers. I’m 5’ 10”. I weigh 160 lbs. I wear a size 11.5 shoe. I’m currently writing this bio and I want a Nintendo Switch.

**Jalyn Brewington** is a 16-year-old Junior that attends Rogers High School. She was born and raised in Toledo, Ohio. Jalyn has been in the Fearless Writers Program for

nearly three years She enjoys writing maybe a bit too much. She focuses on ideas people can relate to or understand. She is a big daydreamer and writes about controversial topics like gun violence, mental health, racism, etc. Jalyn knew she would be a storyteller ever since she could pick up a writing utensil. She is always stuck in her mind wondering how she can make herself and her environment better.

**Jaylyn Ellis**. I was born and raised in Toledo, Ohio. She is 18-years-old and in the graduating class of 2020. Jaylyn joined the Fearless Writers writing group in the spring of 2016. She remembers everyone being so shy starting off but thinks now everyone is great. She thinks the writing pieces are amazing, and is excited they are getting published.

**Jenaie Johnson** graduated from Rogers High School in 2019.

**Jevaughn Johnson** is currently a senior at Rogers High School. He likes to play football and also likes working and helping others. He is the son of Judy Johnson. He will be the first male in his family to go to college where he plans to major in sports management. He says, “I am a hard-working student. I have two jobs and try to take life one step at a time.”

**Jevon Hudspeth** is currently a sophomore at Rogers High School. He says, “ My name is Jevon. I’m an athlete and I strive for greatness.”

My name is **Justyce Meredith**. I am a sophomore at Rogers High School. I have a best friend named Brysen and he’s my heart. I like math and science. I want to be an astronomer. I have been getting great grades so I can reach my goal. I joined writing group to be with my best friend, but I actually started to like it and it helps me contain

emotions and anger.

**Karrigan Hannah** wrote with the group in her freshman year at Rogers High School.

**Kendra Hakkarainen** is currently a junior at Rogers High School. She wrote with the writing group during her first two years.

My name is **Krysta Stubblefield**. I go to Rogers, and I am a sophomore. I am involved in an after-school program called LEAD. It is a very fun program. I like to watch movies, do nails, and hair. I like writing group because it lets me express what I feel, and it gives me a chance to write what I would like to write.

**Laiah Snipes** is an 18-year-old senior at Rogers High School who was born in Stockten, California and raised in Toledo, Ohio. She got placed in the Fearless Writers Group her freshman year of high school. She wants to become a Midwife nurse in the future Laiah believes that the writing group helped her express the things flowing through her mind.

**Layla Alhajri** was born in Chicago and lives in Ohio. Her parents' names are Alan Alhajri and Hedna Salam. They are not married anymore. She has two siblings, Hadin and Haider. They live with her father and she is living with her mother. When she is bored she reads and draws for fun, but mostly loves to listen to music and write unreal things like werewolves, vampires, angels, demons and things about the world.

**Manita Ojha** is a junior at Bowling Green High School. She plans to go to college to become an engineer but deeply enjoys the humanities. Manita is a 16 year old Nepalese-

Indian-American. She is involved in drama club, model UN and band. She plays the oboe and mallet percussion. She also enjoys piano and ukulele.

**Michael Blanchard** is a 17-years-old and a student at Rogers High School ... Go Rams!!! Michael is a new member of the creative writing group. He enjoys writing and hearing other people's thoughts, which gives him a different picture of the world. "I do enjoy putting my thoughts, feelings, and emotions on a piece of paper," he admits.

**Remle Morrow** wrote with the writing program in his freshman year at Rogers High School.

**Shakirrah Hudspeth** graduated from Rogers High School in 2019.

**Sidney Bond** is currently a junior at Rogers High School.

**Ta'Leahia Wright-Johnson** is currently a junior at Rogers High School.

My name is **Tailon Jones**. I am a sophomore attending Rogers High School. I play basketball for fun and play video games. Writing is a way for me to put my imagination into words I also push myself to always get better.

**Teala Young** has been a part of Fearless Writing for three years. She attends Rogers High School, breezing through her Junior year. While attending Rogers, Teala has been working towards her honors diploma. Teala plans to go to a historically Black college or

university to become a homicide detective.

**Tonenijah Johnson**, born and raised in Toledo, Ohio, is an 18-year-old senior at Rogers High School. She has been the valedictorian of her class since her freshman year. She has been a member of the Fearless Writer's Group since spring of her freshman year. She is president of the National Honors Society chapter at Rogers, and has been captain of the varsity cheer team. She writes as an escape from reality and to ease her mind. After high school, Tonenijah plans to attend college to major in business and finance.

**Trinity Enoc** participated in the writing program in her freshman year.

## MENTORS

**Amy Rowe** was born and raised in Toledo, Ohio. She earned her Bachelor of Communication degree and worked in the non-profit sector before focusing solely on raising her two children. More than two decades later she began pursuing her Master of Social Work degree at The University of Toledo. As an MSW student, she was introduced to the Fearless Writers Program. The experience has been eye-opening for Amy. She is amazed daily at the wisdom and tenacity of these students.

**Andrea Hill** graduated with her MSW from the University of Toledo in 2019. Andrea was an intern with Rogers High School.

**Cara Swain** graduated with her MSW from the University of Toledo in 2019. Cara was an intern with Rogers High School.

**Chantal Crane** graduated with her MSW from the University of Toledo in 2019 and was a volunteer with the writing program throughout her graduate program. She now works as a therapist at the Willow Center. Chantal's favorite part of graduate school was working with the Rogers students on Thursday mornings, as she believes this program has a way of helping students recognize their voice. Each student would be given the same writing prompt and yet, there was such a rich variety of interpretations from the

students. It was an honor to witness the students' bravery, and hopes the group inspires them to continue sharing their voice as they continue on their journey in life.

**Ciara Cuthbert** graduated with her MSW from the University of Toledo in 2018 and was an intern with Rogers High School.

**Courtney Rice** is a 2018 graduate of University of Toledo's Master of Social Work program and a licensed social worker. She is currently working with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Wood County as the Manager of Marketing and Communications. To her, the writing group meant an opportunity to be creative and expressive, to learn and share stories, and to get to know youth in the community on a more personal level.

**Duvonna Goins** is a Graduate Student at The University of Toledo. She is a new member of the Creative Writers Program at Rogers. She has an older brother, and enjoys listening to musical art and being a part of the artists' story. She loves to write about her inner thoughts and empower others to express themselves creatively. She loves to hear pain and imagery through pieces.

**Heather Sloane** is the creator of the Fearless Writers program at Rogers High School. She is an associate professor of social work and part of the interprofessional faculty at

the University of Toledo. She is the main facilitator of the writing groups and has been trained in Amherst Writers and Artists method.

**Juli Lambert** is currently a fourth year medical student at the University of Toledo and participated in the writing program in her first year of medical school.

**Kay Powell** graduated from University of Toledo MSW program in 2019. She is an accomplished spoken word performer and regularly impressed the students with her poetry performance.

**Lydia Ratterree** volunteered for the writing program early in her undergraduate experience. She is currently a senior in the BSW program at the University of Toledo and will minor in English in May 2020. I am an active participant in the University Partnership Program and am currently completing my internship at Lucas County Children Services. My experience at the Rogers High School writing group was an enlightening experience for me. I was able to witness the students firsthand as they created and shared poetry about their own internal lives. I think that the creativity and courage the young students showed in their writing was evidence of hope for our future. The experience certainly opened my mind to the capabilities and resilience of students in inner city high schools. It also gave me a newfound appreciation for the interdisciplinary practice of complementing social work with the arts.

**Michelle Blue** volunteered for the writing program in her senior year of her BSW program. She went on to graduate with her MSW in 2019.

**Murtaza Syeed** is currently a fourth year medical student at the University of Toledo and participated in the writing program in his first year of medical school.

**Nick Mueser** is a 28 year old writer connected to the Fearless Writers group through an internship at the University of Toledo. He received a bachelor of arts degree in psychology from UT in 2013 and, after working for a few years in community mental health, has returned to pursue a Master's degree in social work, focusing on mental health, education, and community advocacy. Nick has had a lifelong interest in fiction writing and storytelling, and hopes that programs like the Fearless Writers can provide inspiration and encouragement to the next generation of aspiring writers. It is through writing that their words and worlds can be given voice.



Tonejah

Johanna McDaniel

## Queen

Raised in the Kingdom, her birthday turned to a Royal Holiday.  
Family and friends are far from pretend.  
The young princess grows up, taking lead with no man.  
Independent is what she is, no maids, no chefs; she can take her own test.  
A queen in the making, no BS is she taking.  
She stands alone, owning her own throne, no man in front of her, she can follow her own.  
She stands in the light, not in the shadows of a knight.  
A NEW QUEEN is taking flight.

—*Tonenijah Johnson*

## SECTION I

### Roger's Writers and Artists

There is very little time to think, we have forty minutes with the kids if we are lucky. The students walk slowly down the stairs to our assigned room and then it takes quite some time to stop talking and settle down, but once the prompt is discussed, the room falls silent. The first year always begins with awkward pauses, and fear and anxiety are expressed about feedback. Pat Schnieder discusses in her book how most people receive harsh critique of their writing at some point or the other in school and this experience of critique creates a timidity to write and share. Luckily there is always one writer whose confidence has not been fully smashed. When the group witnesses the first feedback, you see relief, and smiles from the writer. There are some members who take longer to read aloud, but with gentle pressure use their voice. With practice and with increased confidence the writing begins to improve and become more complex. Caution, this writing is unpolished and raw because it is spontaneous and time limited. The short bursts of expression have led to deeper understanding about social injustice but also about what we have in common and what divides us from each other. Over the years the freshman have created an element of competition and rivalries are born. They all want to create something that wows their audience. The kids demand a lot from each other and continue to raise the bar for each other. This first section highlights the freshman year filled with free writing, where the students begin to find their voice and how what they write and think about is unique within the group.

I was only seven.

Everyone was moving very fast. It felt like everyone was talking over me. It has been many years, but I still remember sitting in an empty wheelchair in an empty Emergency Room hallway.

I was only seven.

It was probably best that I was kept in the dark. I didn't need to know that my older sister almost died. I couldn't possibly understand how serious the situation really was.

I was only seven.

I spent several days and nights at my grandparents' house. I didn't really like that because I was afraid to sleep away from home. I was afraid that the trains on the tracks near my grandparents' apartment would derail and catch the row of apartments on fire. It sounds selfish of me to only think of how unhappy and scared I was.

But I was only seven.

My parents came to see me after a few days. Mom brought me a Woodstock jumping toy. That small gesture meant a lot. It made me realize that my parents were still thinking of me even when they were focusing on my sister.

I was only seven.

— *Amy Rowe*

The knife cuts deep, so deep it reaches the bone.

Not a drop of blood falls.

The injury is real, even though no one can see it.

Sometimes the damage is invisible and only felt by the heart.

— *Amy Rowe*

My scars are unique to me –  
No one else has the same scars, in the same places, from the same injuries.  
My scars aren't better or worse than another's.  
We all have past hurts –  
Some mark our skin; some our heart.  
I'm proud of my scars.  
They each have their own story.  
They have made me who I am.

— *Amy Rowe*



3 years old. My life was perfect. It was me and my older sister, Mom and Dad. We were a happy family until dawn broke and my family fell apart.

6 years old. Me and my sister now lived with my dad while my mom decided to switch her love life to girls. I never really understood at 6 years old what that meant. All I knew was we weren't a family anymore.

9 years old came fast. I sometimes thought I didn't have a mom because it has been so long since I've seen her. She's just like a thought but my dad helped me in every way he could with everything.

12 years old. I didn't do anything for my birthday. Just sat in the house. My mom called my phone and said that she's in Arizona read to pick me up and bring me to Ohio. I was heartbroken because I had to leave my dad by then I was soo excited because I was gonna see my Mom after 6 years.

14 now. I'm there with her. I miss my dad but I know I'll see him again one day and now I'm done reading my story.

— *Airelle Barnett*

I'm alone but I'm not lonely.

I feel like people get alone and lonely mixed up a lot. I can be

alone and not be lonely and I'll be fine. I know that some people feel lonely when they're alone

but we're so quick to think that everyone is lonely when they're alone and they don't even know what being lonely is anymore.

So we must say, "I'm alone but not lonely."

— *Airelle Barnett 2/7/19*

## “I doubt if I ever come back ...”

(inspired by the poem, "Bath" by Amy Lowell, 1955)

It's just medicine, times frozen for once, and she now understand what she's really doing. As she looks around she can finally see clear now. She moves more slowly but her brain is rushing in thoughts of people she loved, and people she lost. She sits in that tub ... the pill bottle on the side. It's just medicine she says, as she knows she's let everyone down, as she melts away her problems in that tub. She is now awake and time stands still.

—Airelle Barnett



## Naïve

Many things are wrong  
Few are right  
Like a no-armed boxer  
Now that's a fight  
Or the world's fastest runner  
With no legs  
Even the world's smartest man  
With no head  
Even though it sounds hard and impossible to do  
Anything's possible if you believe in one person  
And that's you

— *Brysen Davis*

As day retreats into night, no sleeping for us. Mommy and the stranger man are in yet another fight. There was a loud thump and then a crash of shattering glass. It's all happening too fast. As I built up enough courage to yell stop, it was drowned out by a series of loud pops. POP, POP, POP, POP. I crept down the stairs and peeped around the corner. I saw my mother sleep. The man looks upset, shaking from his head to his feet. Another pop erupts and I begin to wonder why the strange man was now sleeping with my mother. There is no more fighting and there's no more pows so I can finally go to sleep because the world is calm for now.

— *Brysen Davis*

Just in one day, everything goes wrong. I overcooked my food, late for work, and  
couldn't find

my favorite song.

But that's just the minor. Let's talk about how my little brother will no longer be tried  
as a

minor. And remember when I was late for work? Oh yeah, I was fired. As I departed  
from my

job and kicked to the street, I found my not so faithful wife with another man under  
the sheets.

Now as you may guess, the relationship is killed. Now I'm left wondering how I'm  
going to pay

these bills.

As everything crumbles and I feel like I'm going down the wrong path, all I can think  
about is

relaxing in my oh so faithful bath.

— *Brysen Davis*

(inspired by the poem, "Bath" by Amy Lowell, 1955)

Cool nights and warm days

A place I'd rather be

Not too boring and not too wild

A place I'd rather be

Pain is relinquished and happiness flourish

A place I'd rather be

A place to call home

A place that is safe

A place with no crime

And a place with no hunger

Is a place I'd rather be

—*Brysen Davis*

People who are given things in life never have the benefit of appreciating the grind.

If you ask for it one day and get it the next you can never savor that desire.

Keep your next move to yourself.

—*Brysen Davis*

Picture you're the child being ripped from his mother's arms

Kicking and screaming while being thrown into an unfamiliar car.

As you drive away you look through the back window and see your mother on the pavement broken down, remembering her love and kisses replaced with tears and frowns.

(Stay down) bleed awhile with no bondage (enslavement) that's bondage family broke up that's carnage

It's pain with no gain hurt with no fame

Stuck behind invisible bars as my mom cries

And I'm being taken away in this unfamiliar car

—*Brysen Davis*

I took the road less travelled because I am not like the rest.

In my eyes I am the best.

In my eyes no one can contest

I took the road less taken.

On that road nature, beauty, evil, and sorrow can be awakened.

And rules I'll be brakin

So as I sit here aching

Awaitin for a journey

I can be few to say

I took the road less taken.

—*Brysen Davis*

(inspired by “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost [1916])

To the soul birth is a clean slate

Actions before cannot alter decisions to come

Life after birth can be sweet as candy or strong as rum.

Relax live in the moment

Don't rush life

Life after birth can be sweet as candy or strong as rum.

However, the decision is not up to us.

— *Brysen Davis*

Judge me by my skin

And you won't see me heart

Judge me by my slang and you won't see my intellect

I understand it's easy to neglect the negative effects and disrespect of the prejudice

It's a continuous habit in America but that's not what our legend is.

This world is filled with hate and aggression

Full of people that possess, taking away from the people who have no possessions.

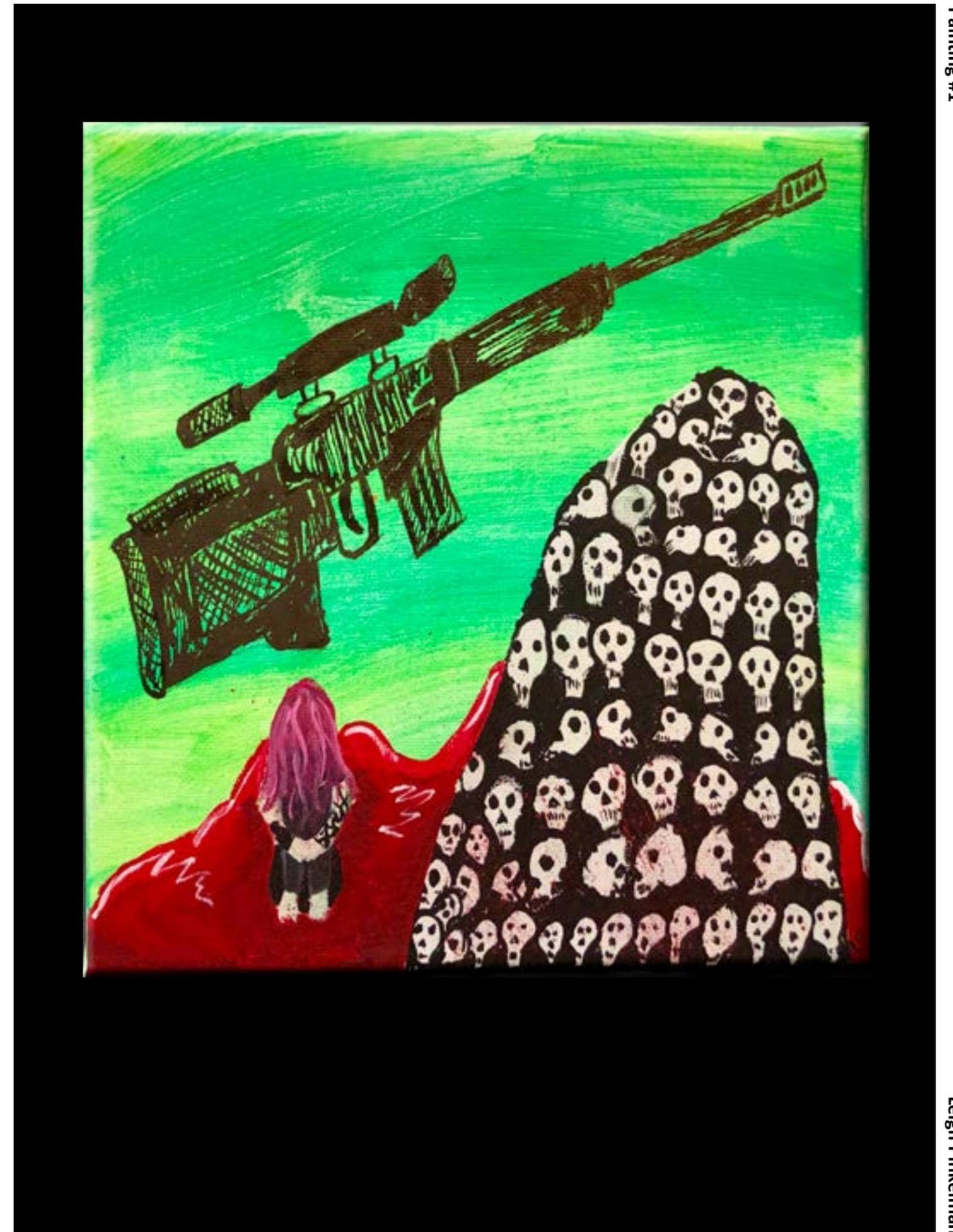
There's never a win win

Don't judge me by my hair, body or skin

Judge me by my brain and soul

Now the revolution starts to begin.

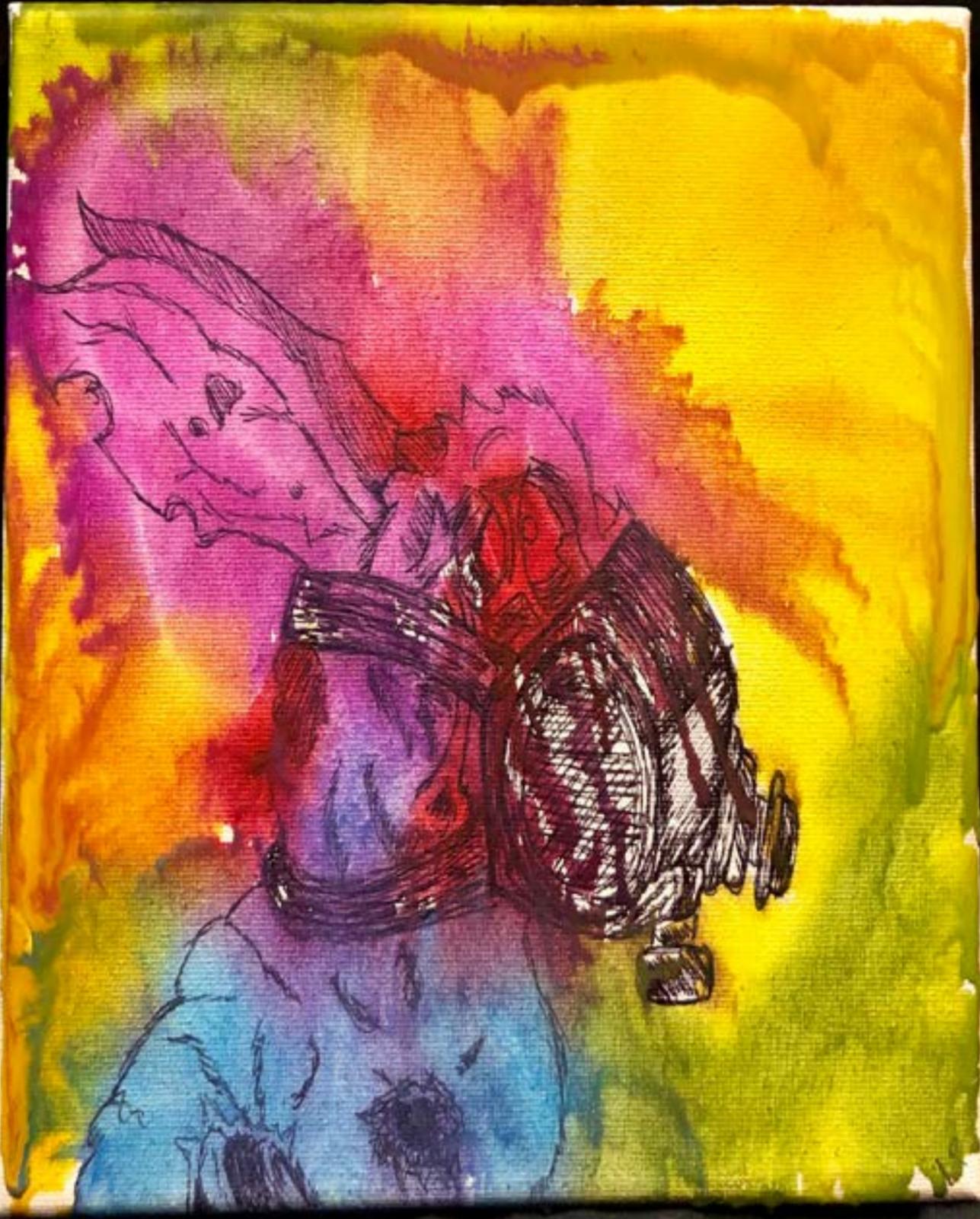
—*Brysen Davis*



Ten minutes into my day, I read:  
“17 Confirmed Dead in Florida School Shooting”  
While taking a bite of my Captain Crunch  
I turn off the T.V.  
Sit in silence  
And think about the world my  
Future child may live in  
A world where walking backward each day  
Is the new norm  
Where who she loves is more important  
Than the happiness love brings her  
Where she can't feel safe  
Sitting on the carpet  
With her classmates in first grade  
Learning the difference between  
Consonants and vowels  
Watching a Batman movie at 16  
With popcorn and a blue slush

Sitting in church with her family  
On a sunny Sunday morning  
Or singing at the top of her lungs  
At a country music concert with her friends  
She cannot be another statistic  
She cannot witness another statistic  
She cannot be another body  
In the ceiling-high pile of innocent victims  
She cannot live in a world where  
Sexual assault is as common as blinking  
A world where women are still being told they are  
“asking for it” by the way they dress  
A world where people count their calories  
More often than they count their blessings  
I want her to live in a world  
Where love is easier to find than hate  
And that is up to us

— Chantal Crane



## Keep Your Light Shining

(inspired by “What is the Meaning of Life” Robert Fulghum in *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* - the play version)

Part of a world filled with darkness and despair,  
 But as a glimmer of hope and love in this cruel place,  
 I shine my light as brightly as I can,  
 Without fear of judgement from others.

Other people walk up & down the street,  
 With their heads down & feet shuffling along,  
 As they hide their faces in darkness,  
 & barely come up for air.

For me, I take in each ounce of joy I can find.  
 I lift my head high above the clouds and walk gallantly through the streets,  
 As my bright, luminous face lights up the darkest corners and crevices.

“Let your light so shine before men” they once said,  
Well I’m shining so bright you’ll be tempted to cover your eyes, but fear you’ll miss out  
on the glorious light I can bring to this world.  
Because I know how it feels to be in a dark place,  
Full of sadness & anguish.  
And I know I need to shed light on others who are stuck in that deep, spiraling rabbit  
hole.  
Because it’s not a joyful place to be at all, and it engulfs you entirely,  
As you grasp at the smooth edge to escape.  
But as my hand reaches out for you & you reach back,  
Radiant beams come shining down the giant pit.  
And in that moment, the world may not be as bad as we once thought.  
I know I can help the world,  
With one bright, shiny piece of me at a time.

—Courtney Rice



## Places I'd Rather Be

I'd rather be somewhere where everybody is happy.

I'd rather be where people like and love each other for who they are.

I'd rather be in a place where I can express myself without getting judged.

But where I am now is good enough for me.

— *Dallis Walker*

## Colors

(inspired by the song, "The Beauty of Gray" by the band, LIVE [1991])

When colors swirl, it's a good thing

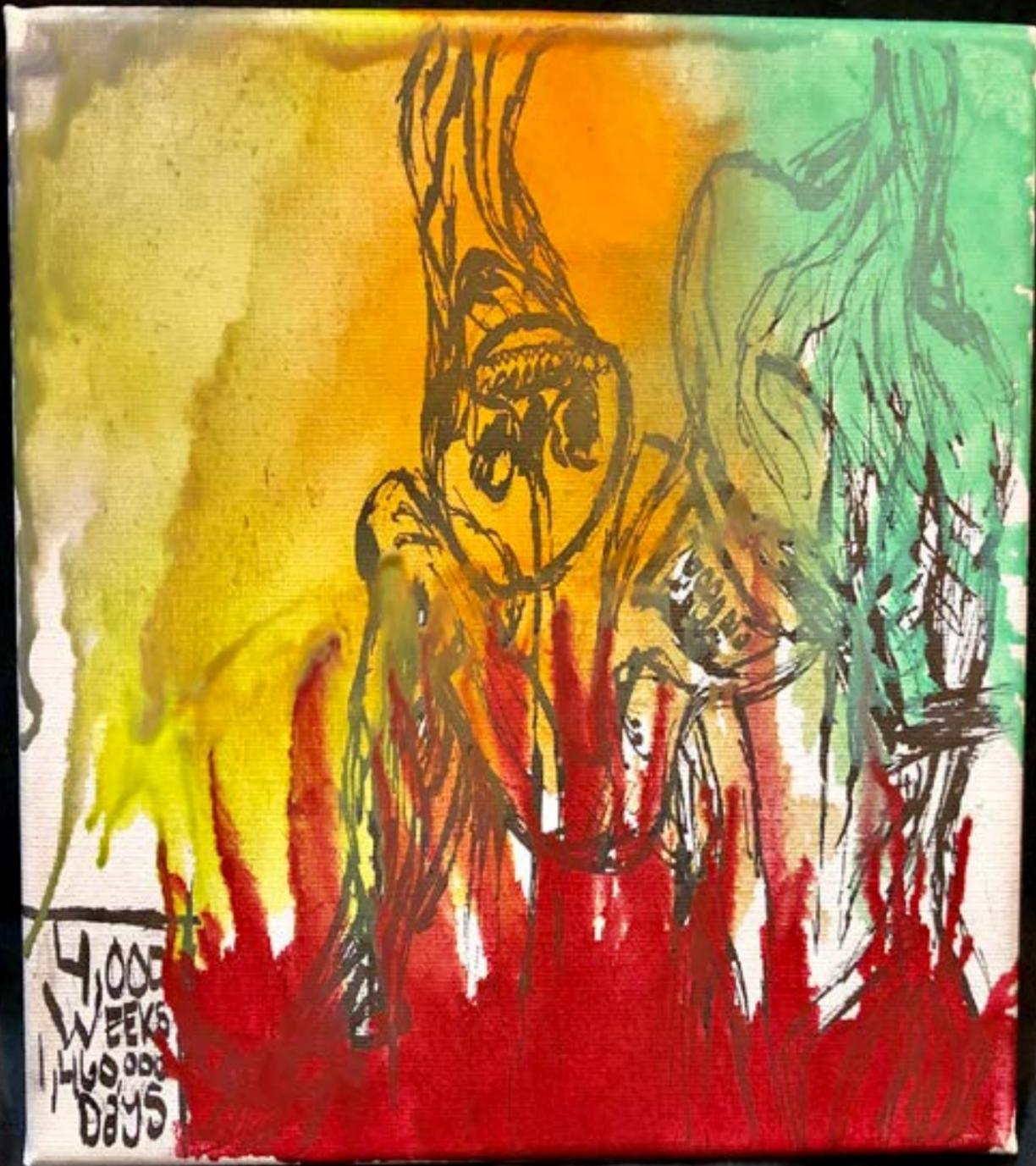
because it's like we are all finally getting along

without there being any hate or drama.

When colors swirl, some people would say that's goals or an accomplishment.

When colors swirl, you just think why can't it always be like this.

— *Dallis Walker*



**“I desired my dust to be mingled with yours.”**

It is awful to fall in love with someone you aren't supposed to. The timing is all wrong, it happens when you least expect it – you fight it (the feeling ... the connection) with all of your might, but to no avail.

You try to wrench thoughts from your head – consumed by the person's perfection. It is like being at the Grand Canyon and not looking – being profoundly aware of God. This type of love causes distraction – there is no control it is not logical or rational. At the time you look at this person and think how can a simple, ordinary person cause such an emotional tsunami.

—Heather Sloane

(inspired by "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter" by Ezra Pound [1915])

If you could ever begin to comprehend where I have come from you would be terrified of me.

My father and my grandfather, and likely all of my clan before they were born, have big, strong hands. These men were not necessarily tall or large in stature but when they hit you – you felt it.

The men in my family tended to hit before they would think things through. If any man looked at my grandmother let alone spoke to her, my grandfather's fist would be across his jaw – spit flying, blood flying, teeth missing. Rarely did he have to punch more than once.

There were rules of violence and if you did something against the rules, you were flattened. It was a predictable way of life.

My father had learned these rules and with all of his emotional effort tried not to be physically violent. You could see him strain to be sophisticated – rational. It worked 80% of the time. The other 20% wasn't pretty.

I have this violence in me, surging through my blood. It haunts me daily, an artifact of my genetics.

— Heather Sloane



Sketch #4

Aravindhan Natarajan

It's hard not thinking about violence in my life.

I am surprisingly calm when my violent nature  
should really be intensified.

When I am stressed it is hard for me to still that beast.

It is as if the oceans of injustices I have experience overwhelm the cork that is securing  
my internal storm.

There is this release of steaming, bubbling anger.

I storm, I yell, I usually clean to keep my hands occupied so I don't hit or hurt myself  
or others. All of that is missing. I am calm.

I have spent all my life learning to forgive and it is a long process for me.

I have done the hard work.

This time I have to forgive someone I am very practiced at forgiving – not hard at all.

The harder person to forgive is myself and for some reason that forgiveness feels more  
peaceful

and calm.

The nuances of anger, make me curious to understand it more fully.

We fight anger but at the core of anger is truth.

—Heather Sloane

Concept of solace of plums

To a poor old woman

If people cherished other people like a fleeting, ripe plum how would our world be  
different --

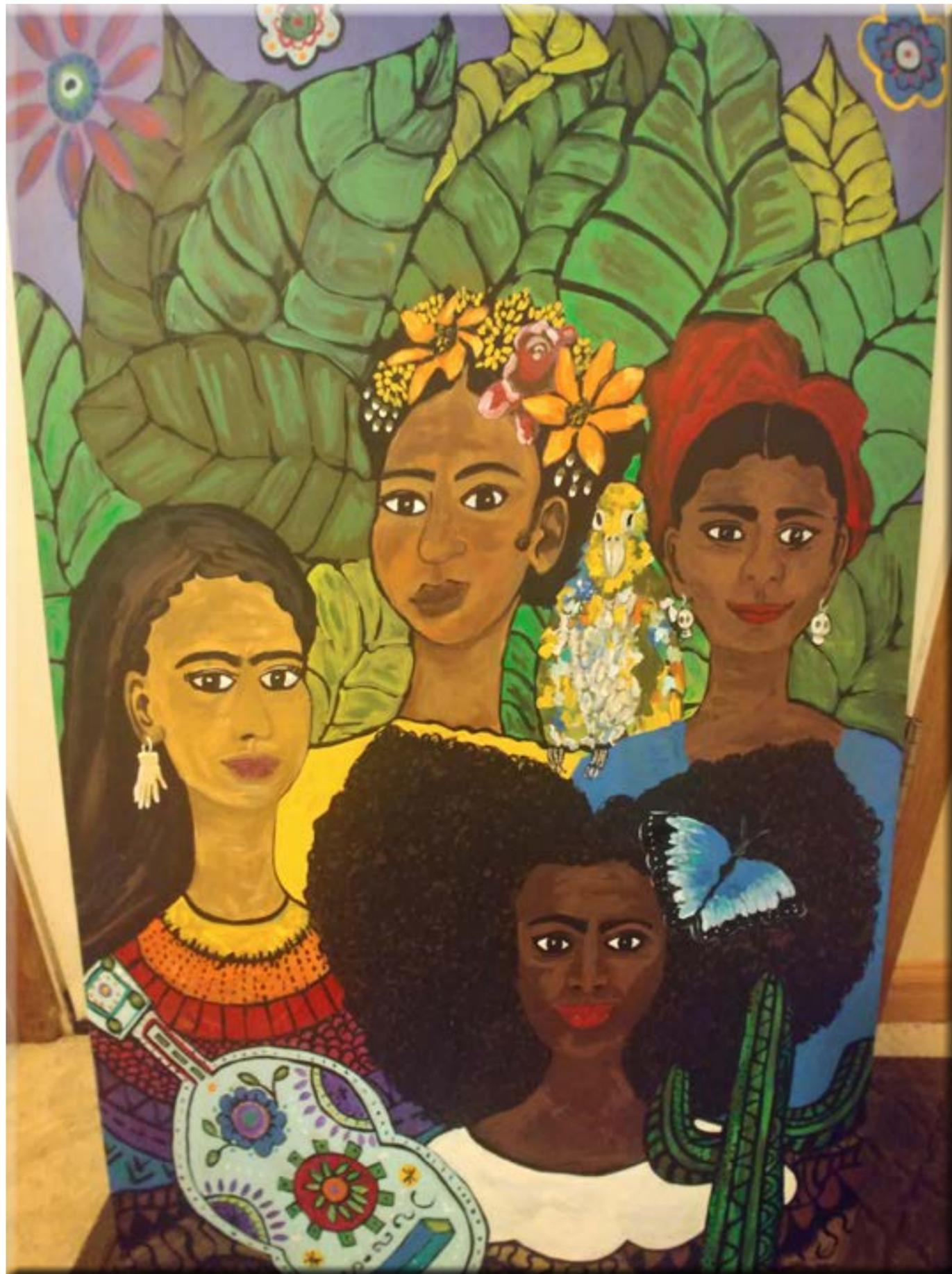
What if the poor old woman in WCW's poem was looked upon as the next great mind  
– the most wise?

Would she get the opportunity to dream of a glorious future instead of focusing on her  
current pleasure moment. To survive takes so much energy. To not worry about survival  
is a luxury like plums that most people do not recognize.

It is this lack of recognition that allows her to be invisible except by a kind doctor poet  
who makes her beautifully visible for a moment like a purple plum before it withers on  
the branch.

—Heather Sloane

(inspired by the poem, "To A Poor Old Woman" by William Carlos Williams [1934])



Painting #1

Johanna McDaniel

## Her

The wall a rich rose

The woman both dark & fair

The mood warm & sad

Isolation

Connection

A Battle

Who will win?

What will raise the victory flag?

The wall is vibrant

The woman fearful

The mood lacking tension

Isolation

Connection

Who will win

Shattered images

Cryptic poems

One tiny step toward what?

—Heather Sloane

*the quint : an interdisciplinary quarterly from the north* 73



Jalyn

Johanna McDaniel

## Warmth

The girl sits in the dark room alone. She cries for someone, someone to help her but no one hears. Her eyes become dull and frigid-looking, as if one more terror could make them transform into blossoming waterfalls. No one helps her. Her heart transitioned from the glowing red to a resistant grey. As if it turned from a solid piece of meat to a heavy gentle glass that would crack if it were damaged furthermore. She sits in the dark room wondering if she would ever see radiating warmth on her face and hands. She wants to feel the warm butterflies soar in the bottom of her stomach. She wants someone to share the warmth with. She lives blankly, waiting for the day she can be broken out of this curse. She still sits in the darkened room. She can see souls walking past; the bars on the door allow it. Some peak inside, some stop and think, some just ignore her, but none have ever opened the door. Her voice became strained, tired of yelling out. She stopped caring; she still hoped for the warmth to save her but also didn't count on it. She still saw people pass, but she didn't say anything. She just sat in the dark room. Eventually she lost hope. More people passed the door. She knew what was going to happen, so she put her head down. She didn't want to see the free souls. Suddenly she heard the door open. She looked up from her knees to see two silhouettes. She didn't move though, she expected them to turn around and shut the door. She heard murmurs and the male shadow extended his hand for her to take. She looked at his face; he nodded his head for confirmation. She slowly took his hand and pulled herself from the cold, tiled floor. The woman silhouette pulled her into a hug slowly whispering "I love you." She felt

the butterflies take off; she felt her insides heat up. Her eyes became watery, her heart unfroze. The male silhouette put his hand on her shoulder and she knew she was loved; she just needed a reminder. She just needed to feel again. She pulled them into a tight group hug. "I love you guys too." She took both their hands and walked out of the room; the room was no longer dark.

—*Jalyn Brewington*

## A Healing Person as a Whole

There was a girl, strong and happy who swore nothing could ever hurt her.  
But as life went on and she grew up, she found it difficult to find what to live for.  
She had been broken by friends and family.  
Something she only saw as a lore.  
So, she wrote stories, reflecting them on her own life.  
Hoping that someone would read them  
Could see that she was trying to fight.  
For something she wanted to give up so badly  
Because she knew her head wouldn't let her be happy.  
I wrote this poem to show that I'm trying  
Even though on some days I break down and start crying.  
I want you to know that I'm doing my best  
Even though I know it won't over for the rest.  
Yet, as I break and destroy my mind  
I am telling myself not to leave you behind.  
And as I look to you with a smile so wide  
Just take the time to notice my broken eyes.

To a girl who thought she'd always be happy  
Mental illness has gone and trapped me.  
And with all the questions I have  
One has always stuck out  
With my mind swirling in doubt  
If I was gone, where would I go?  
A place of peace covered in snow?  
A burning sensation that gives me no hope?  
Or a void of emptiness where I just sit?  
Is that what I want?  
Does that sound fit?  
Does the broken girl see any reason at all?  
To give it all up  
Or just sit here and stall.  
Does it really get better  
Or is it just a lie?  
A group of people with broken souls inside.  
If that's what I really want  
  
Could you give me a reason  
A look,

A sign,  
Or anything really.  
That could tell me staying is worth it.  
To a broken girl who's already bruising.  
Who is searching in any way she can.  
Only searching for something that can make her happy again.

—*Jalyn Brewington*



## Magic

Whenever I think or hear that word. I think of my ever-so-popular classmate.

The every-so-popular classmate that I sit next to.

I look so dull next to her in comparison. With her curly hair bouncing and springing to life while mine was tangles in a 2 week old bun.

Her smile so bright, that spreads upon her face perfectly. She just sparkled wherever she went, and that perfect smile across her perfect face, always.

Even though she was so popular, she was also weird.

Well, from my point of view.

Every time something good or special happened, she would give a close-eyed smile and say, "That's just a little bit of my magic."

—Jayla Burks 1/26/19

We, as humans, reflect. We reflect like a mirror, or like a piece of glass in the sun. We reflect our surroundings each and every day.

When we are born, we are like a blank canvas, paints readily sitting on an easel. With each person we meet, they become an artist, slowly painting their personality onto our canvas. The first people to paint onto our canvas is our family. Usually, not very often, a beautiful picture is painted. That beautiful picture is our very own personality. The more we grow and the more people we meet, an adjustment is made. It could've been the biggest adjustment ever, yet we, the owner of the canvas, never know.

Soon enough, we do notice, but never right away. It may be when we're old and reminiscing. Or it could be now, simply recalling your day. We realize that we weren't always like this that we never acted this way.

That's when we take a look in the mirror and realize that the picture on our canvas was completely changed. We had forgotten ourselves, just to fit into society. Just to be accepted by others. The person in the mirror doesn't reflect you, it reflects somebody else.

— Jayla Burks 2/21/19



She doesn't believe in shooting stars, but she does believe in shoes and cars.

The woman without a face, latching on to men with big wallets.

The woman without a face, changing herself along with her target.

One day, she might have blonde hair with green eyes and a button nose The next she could have brunette hair with grey eyes and a round turned nose. You could never know.

The woman without a face, changing herself along with her target.

The woman without a face, latching on to men with big wallets.

The woman who doesn't believe in shooting stars, but believes in shoes and cars.

The greedy woman who never got caught.

—*Jayla Burks* 12/13

The house was quiet, as it should've been. It was a quarter til midnight and everybody was asleep. Or so she thought. Cassandra knew it was the perfect time to sneak out of the house to meet with her friends. As she crept past her parents' bedroom, she heard their soft snores. That was a good sign. Cassandra made her way to and through the kitchen. She quietly slid open the glass door, careful enough not to make a sound. Cassandra was filled with adrenaline as she raced towards her car in the driveway. With the click of the car door.

—*Jayla Burks* 2/7

## A Phenomenal Woman

(inspired by Maya Angelou's poem, "Phenomenal Woman," 1978)

The woman who's a movement just by herself, but a boss when we're together.

The woman who gives me her world, trusting that I'll make it better.

With her smile, her laugh, the intelligent way she talks and her goofy antics, the woman has made me whipped and weak in the knees.

That's her, my best friend, my main, my world, a phenomenal woman.

—*Jayla Burks* 2/14

Two different paths, split in the middle of the road, reminded me of my younger days.

The days of when my skin was glowing, my hair was long and my eyes bright.

The path reminded me of the day those gorgeous ruby heels randomly appeared on my feet and the adventure that came with them.

The ruby colored heels now just sit on the shelf above the fireplace, which serves as a conversation starter.

I snapped out of my dazed look, seeing people look at me with concern, an elderly woman.

I smiled to myself, clicked my ruby colored flats together and continued down a path, the path colored yellow.

—*Jayla Burks* 3/21

(inspired by Robert Frost's poem, "The Road Not Taken," [1916])



Jaylyn

Johanna McDaniel

As I look into the sky, I start to think I have so much pride.

But if you look close into my eyes you can see I just wanna cry, but I have nowhere to hide from those painful things I feel inside.

Sometimes I ask why do I always have to cry and not try to put all my pride aside.

All that pain in my veins really puts me in a place where I just feel drained

and it takes me to the grain,

because I really have to experience all this pain. I'm just so drained ...

Pain

—Jaylyn Ellis 3/29/17

My life right about now makes me wanna frown. I wish I could turn it all around and from upside down. You sometimes wanna change your crowd, or make someone proud so you just move from town to town, from a sound that's not so loud.

— *Jaylyn Ellis*

They always say what's once dark will again come to the light. Right?

Think bright and sit tight, a change sounds about right.

Something that was once not so bright seemed like fright and an unclear sight.

— *Jaylyn Ellis*

A place of me  
Holds a little grief  
From what you call  
Misbelief

— Jaylyn Ellis

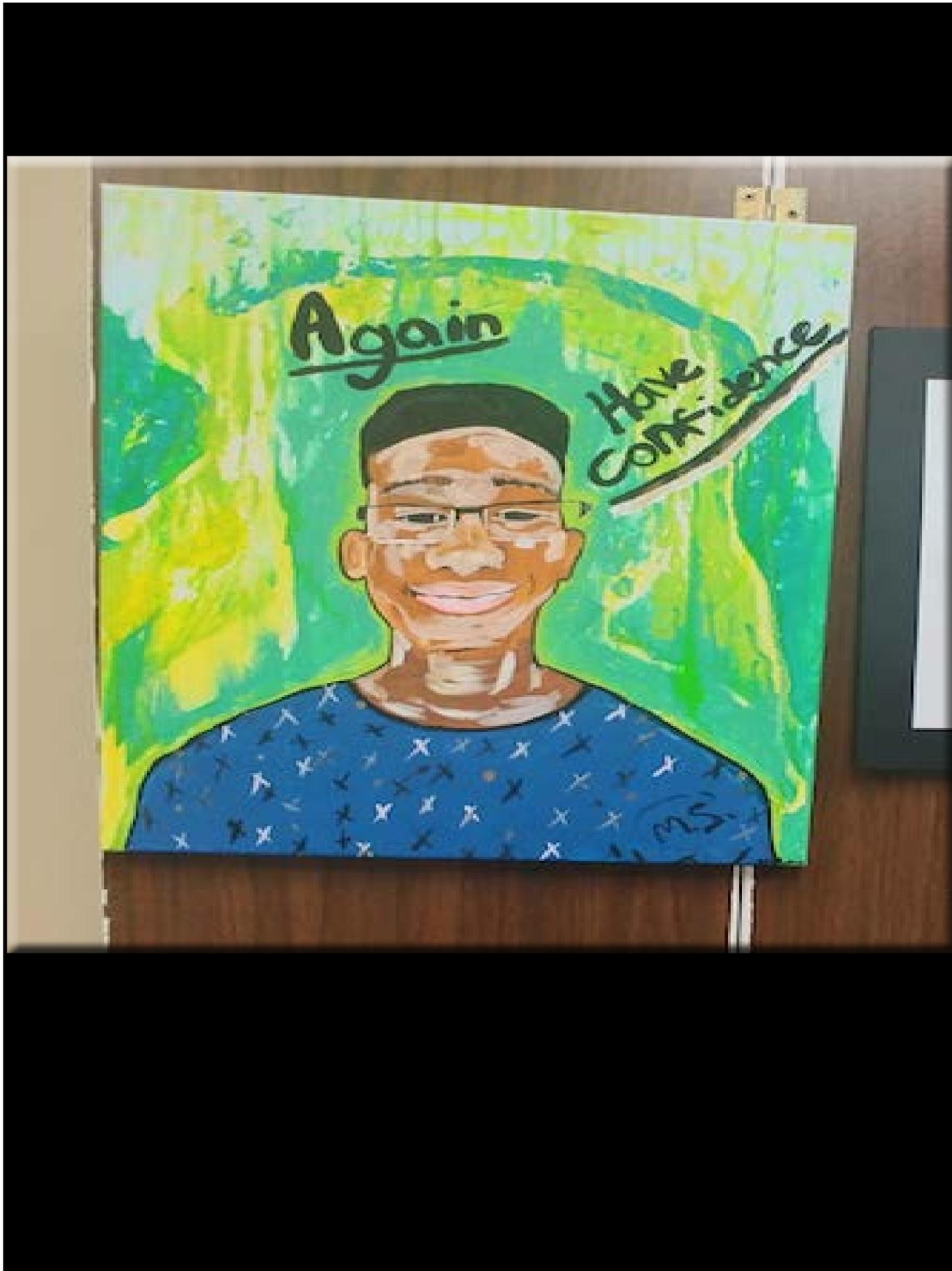


Lookin at a mirror only seeing a half of me.  
The other half is nowhere to be found.  
Where is the other half? I don't know what I want to be doing.  
The stages of all the sadness and stress.  
My mom is all worried, cheering for my best.  
Through her eyes she sees me as whole.  
So it's my time to glow. I work hard toward what I want to become.  
Look through the mirror. See half that's ass. I know where I am.  
You don't need to know. Got to blast.

— *Jevaughn Johnson*

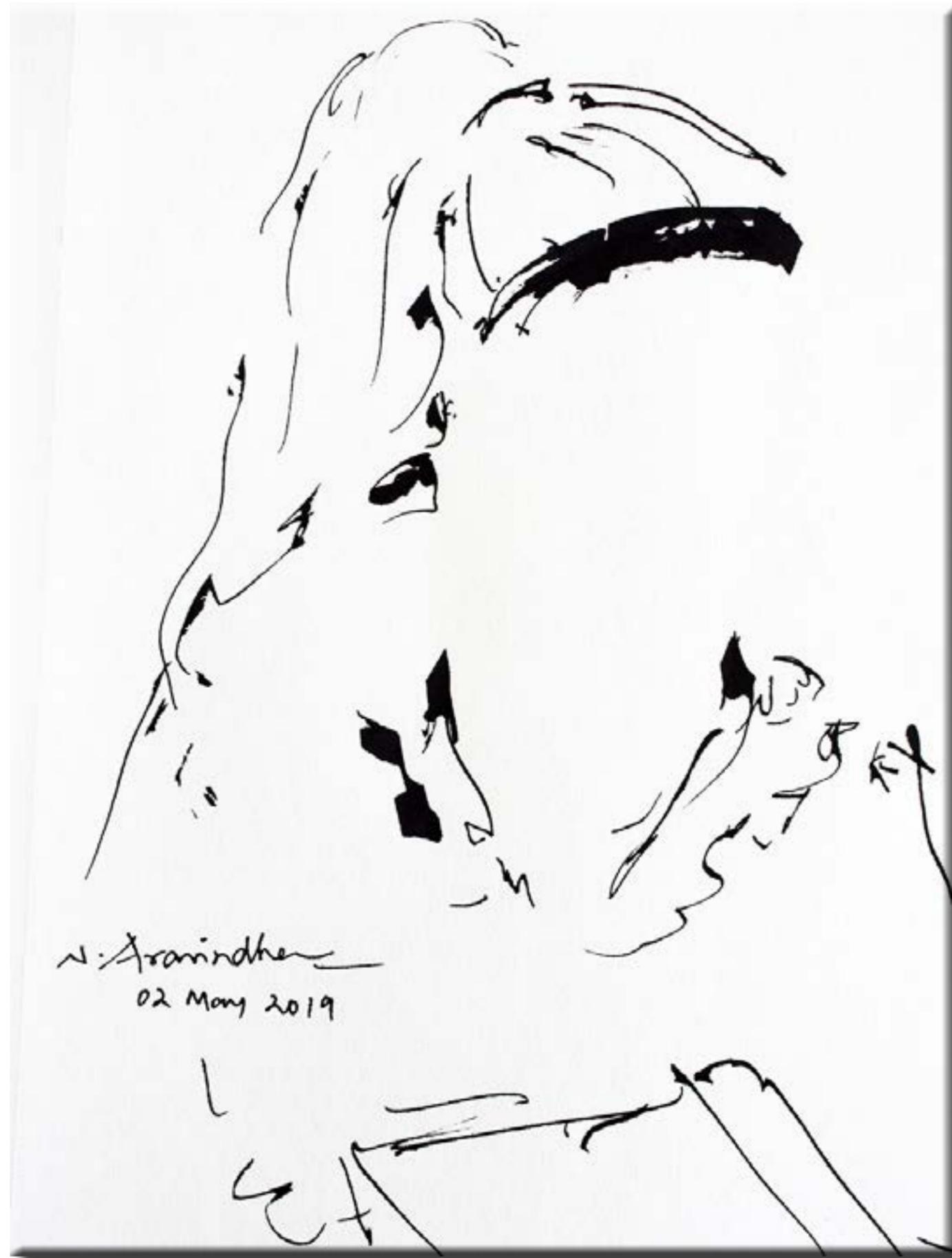
Color expressed –  
Blue green yellow, when the sun rises you say hello.  
Green beam going crazy like a football team.  
Blue is true. What does it mean to you?  
Purple orange black  
Orange is torn above the nest it's a bee swarm.  
Purple is terrible – you better run; you're in trouble.  
Black is after I'm so hungry I need a snack.  
I'm so skinny I can snap.  
This Christmas it's all about Polar expre *Jevaughn Johnson* ssed but this picture is color  
pressed.

— *Jevaughn Johnson*



Marcus

Johanna McDaniel



Sketch #6

Aravindhan Natarajan

I'm surrounded by darkness but I refuse to be swallowed by it.

When you're down or feeling sad and feel alone, you can't let it get to you. Push through the darkness and don't let it swallow you or you're in for a ride. They say the sun shines after the rain, but you won't be able to see the sun if you're too busy focusing on the rain.

—*Karrigan Hannah* 11/1/2018

## **Darkness Can Be A Danger**

The Darkness can take you away and hold you hostage. It lures you in to where you think it's beautiful until it becomes dark, cold, nasty, and ruthless. It will pull you in like a fish with bait and won't treat you politely. You must resist.

— *Karrigan Hannah* 11/9/2018



Pain, it comes in all forms. A small, little twinge, the pain we live with every day, and the kind

of pain we can't deal with, which is the one we ignore. A pain so great it blacks out everything

else. How we manage this pain is up to us. We embrace it, we ignore it, and for some of us, just

push through it.

—Karrigan Hannah 1/24/19

Change, we don't like it. Sometimes we fear it but we can't stop it from coming. It's  
always  
changing, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad. Sometimes it hurts and  
sometimes  
it feels great, so you adapt to it and take a chance in the unknown or get left behind  
wondering,  
what could have been.

—*Karrigan Hannah* 3/21/2019

Life may be tough  
Things will get rough  
There will be bad days  
It may all seem like a haze  
But through it all  
Always, always stand tall  
Giving up is not an option  
Never turn your back and run  
Through good times and bad,  
Through happy times and sad,  
As long as you keep moving  
You'll never stop growing

— *Karrigan Hannah* 12/16/18

In darkness

All things secret hide

Moody phantoms, naked truths, and lonely tears

Thrive amid the dark place of my mind

In sunlight

All things happy rule

Blooming flowers, clear blue skies, and singing birds

But still

The dark place is more defined

A faceless shadow keeps pace with me

—*Karrigan Hannah* 12/16/18

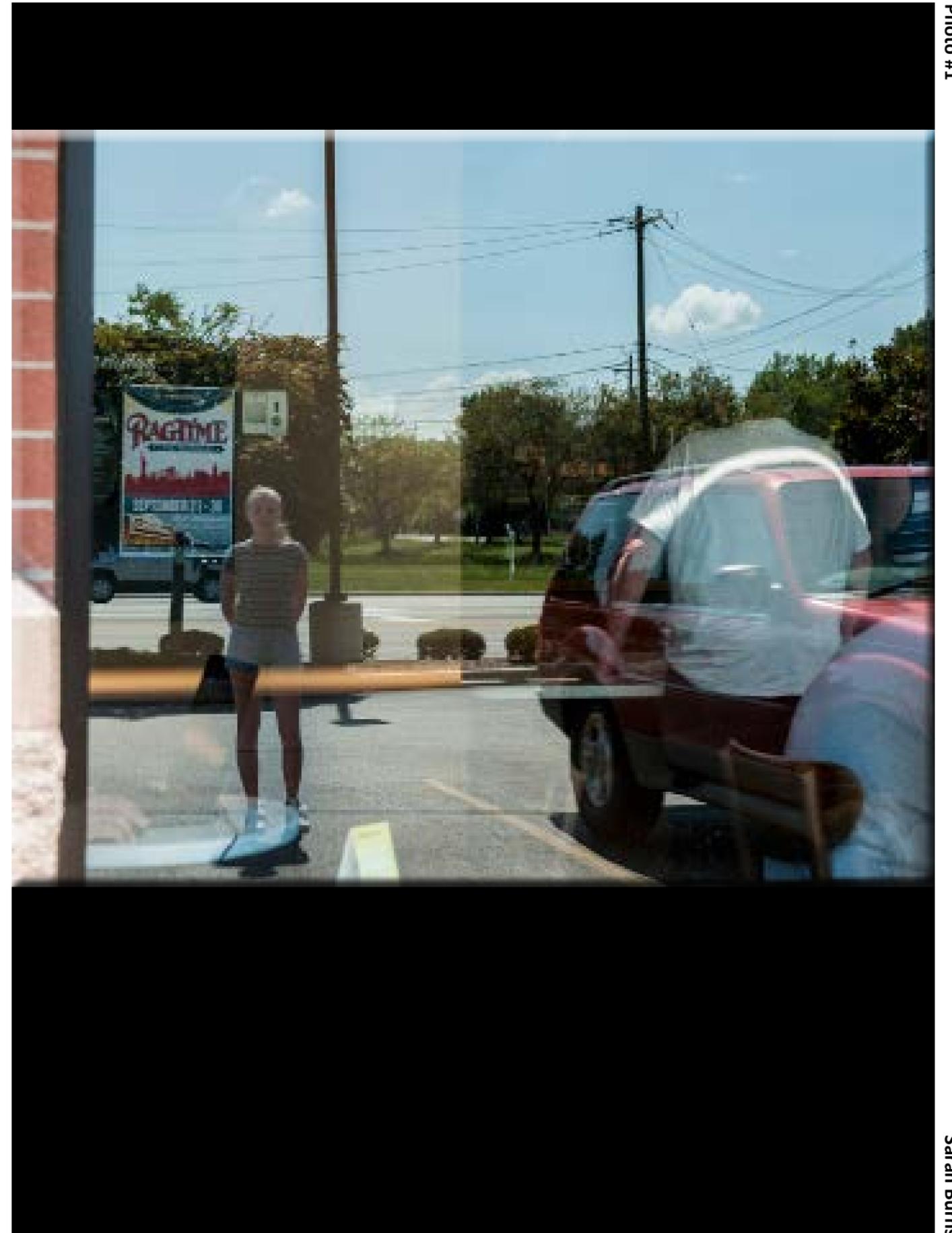


Photo #1

Sarah Burns

I was sitting at a window in a local coffee shop in North Carolina, thinking about my life. I hadn't even realized that I had been crying until a tall boy, about my age tapped on my shoulder, asking if I was alright. "I'm fine," I responded while sitting up straighter.

"You don't look fine,"

"Well then stop looking," I snapped at him, I didn't mean to. I was upset and he was bothering me. I gathered my phone, notebook and pen in one hand and got up and left.

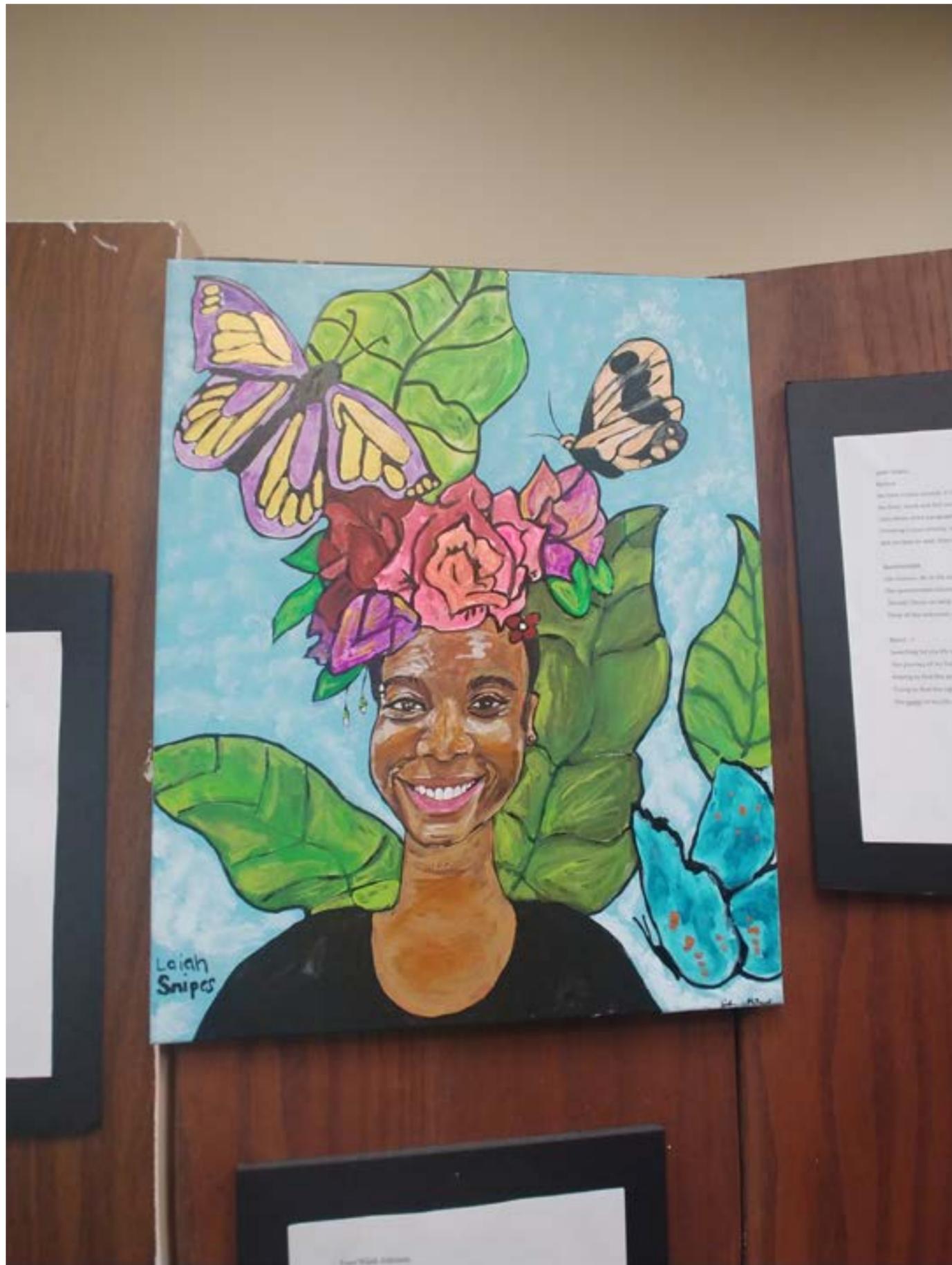
When I got back to my home, I ran upstairs to feed my orange cat, Mikey, and I watered my plants, who by my surprise were actually still alive. I sat down at my desk and started to draw, at first I drew my plants, then Mikey, a few hours pass and I found myself drawing my mother.

My mother was a pretty petite woman, but she was strong. She could double a batch of *nisua*, stir and bake it without breaking a sweat. One day, she was feeling ill, she told me and my father not to worry and she'll get over it just like she would a cold. But, she still went to the doctors to check it out.

A few days later tests came back and we all found out she had leukemia. It was terminal. It wasn't that long ago, maybe a year or two that we had seen those tests, I was 15. She went through chemotherapy, losing her hair and her strength. It broke my heart to see her like that, I remembered her being so strong, like Wonder Woman or Super Girl.

I remember days and then weeks where I wouldn't leave her hospital room. I would forget to eat or sleep because I was terrified that our moment together would be our last. I remember days, where the only sound in the room was her heart monitor and the AC. The days where the loudest noise in there was my sobbing and speeches of how much I loved her.

— *Kendra Hakkarainen* January 16, 2018



When he stares at me I see that he truly cares for me. So happy that he's in my life. Thoughts of him flowing freely in my mind. His love for me is so warm and kind. Just talking to him makes my day because he always knows just what to say. His place could never be replaced. Love with all your heart, dreading our moments apart. My best friend. My love. My EVERYTHING.

— *Laiah Snipes*



## The Lost Brother

The sun was out, and there were a lot of trees all over the place. It was beautiful. Then, the clouds got darker, and I looked into the well. There were big, green eyes looking at me, and it started to get closer and closer. My heart started to beat faster and faster and faster, and I couldn't move at all. As the monster got closer, I felt a little dizzy, and then I passed out. The monster caught me and looked at me and it saw the fear in my face. The next day I saw a man standing on the edge of the well; he took one step and he jumped. I started to run to him but I didn't make it in time.

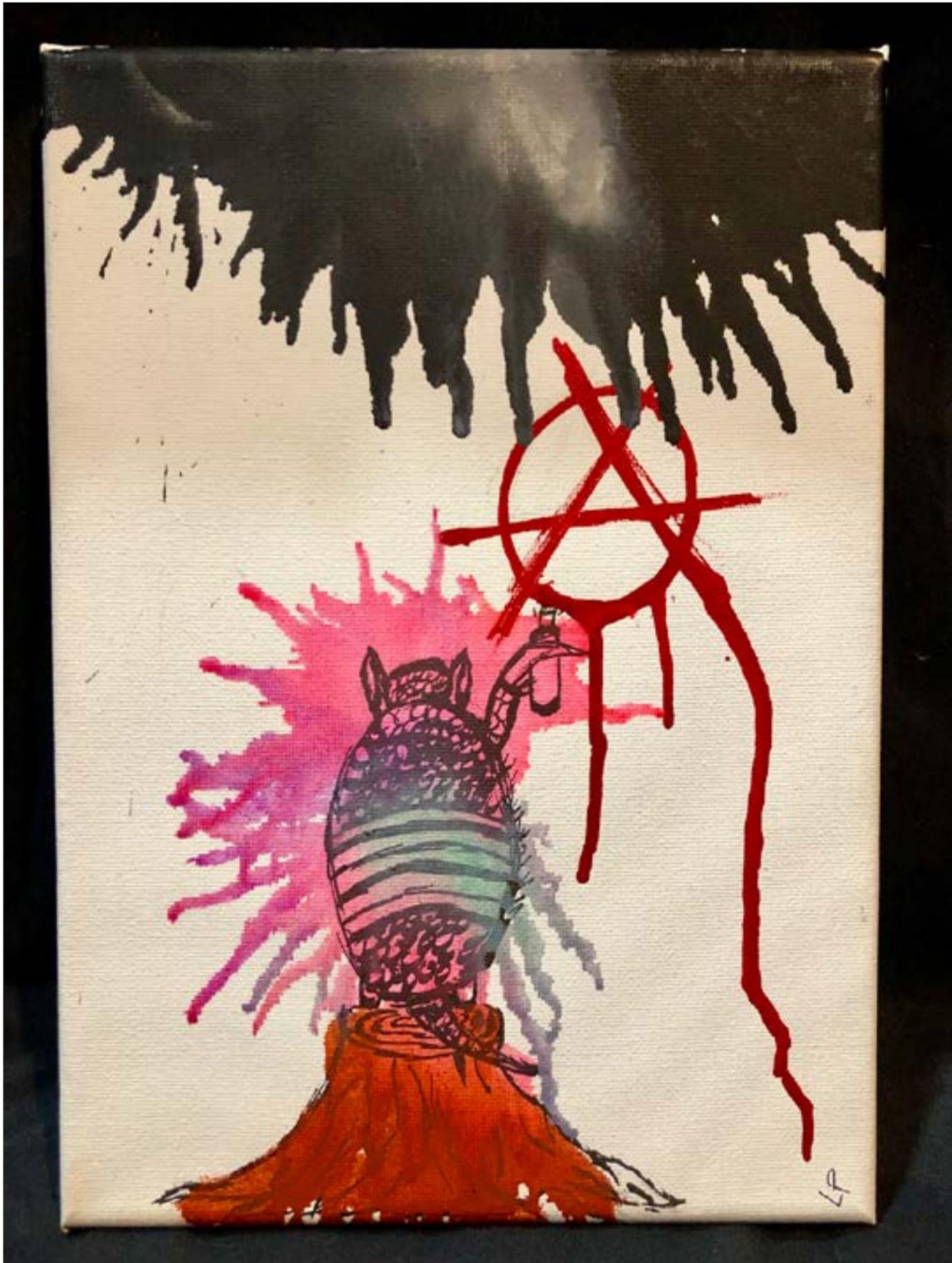
...I saw his big green eyes and his black hair; his hair was darker than anything you can imagine. I looked at his body; his body had many scars, the one that I was looking at the most was the one on his eye it was big it looked like a bear scratch. "I know you from somewhere."

"Didn't Mama and Papa tell you about me?"

I heard a sound like a big eagle opening its wings. I looked at him and his wings were bigger than my bed and brighter than light. One of his wings looked cut. "What's your name?"

...I went to look for him in the well but instead of him I saw a white light and I followed the light and went inside the well. I saw the biggest door I had ever seen in my life; it was really old and it looked like it was cracking and looked too heavy to open. Behind the door the sun was out and it looked like I was in heaven. I saw him flying in the sky; his wings looked bigger when he was flying, it was amazing.

—Layla Alhajri



## Expectations

(inspired by “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost, 1916)

There are alternate versions of me out there.  
 The girls who stay inside the lines.  
 The girls who go straight home.  
 The girls who do what is expected, without hesitation.  
 The “good” girls -they are always appropriate.  
 Not Me.  
 There are alternate versions of me out there.  
 None of them have taken my falls.  
 None of them have faced my struggles.  
 And yet,  
 None of them have risen above expectations.  
 None of them have experienced my victories.

—Lydia Ratterree



**“I can reflect light into the dark places of this world; into the hearts of men...”**

After all of the horrific things you did to me and to my people, I still love you. I love you with

the love of God and I forgive you. You see, 7x70 is a lot of forgiving and that is what I’m told to

do, so forgiving you falls under that category—I owe you that much to you. I am a Jew, whose

life was once defined by that time of the Holocaust. It was a very, very sad time. I do remember

it like it was yesterday...yeah, like it was yesterday.

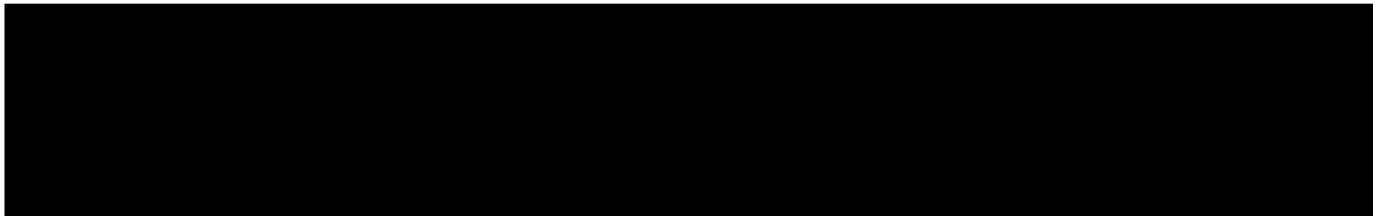
My husband and I were eating our breakfast at a small table in our kitchen when the Gestapo

kicked down our door. Immediately, we were afraid of what was going to happen next. They told us to hurry and grab some of our belongings to take with us and pushed us as we got up from the table. All we had, was five minutes (which seemed like 5 seconds) to grab our things. They pushed us outside and into the back of a wagon of which five other families were inside. We rode in silence...

—Michelle Blue

(inspired by “What is the Meaning of Life” Robert Fulghum in *All I Really Need to Know*

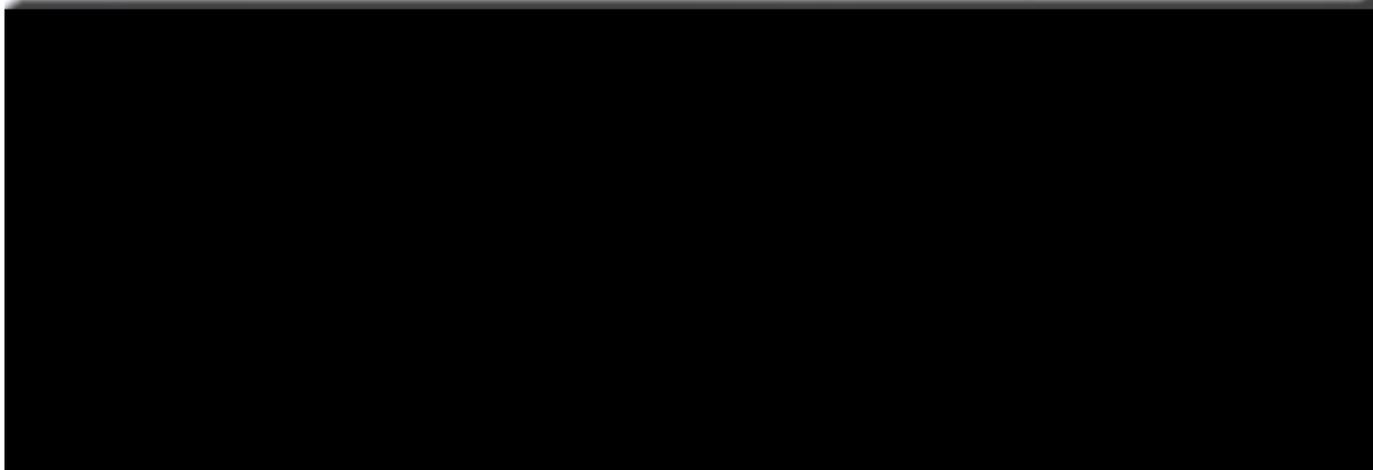
*I Learned in Kindergarten* - the play version)



Sketch #7



Aravindhhan Natarajan



Painting #2



Johanna McDaniel



The black man is a strong man. No matter what you say, you can't convince a white supremacist about a black man's intelligence or relevance on this earth. Their view is still benevolence. Even with their ignorance, they've still been convinced they can still insult a black man's intelligence, using instruments of hate and evil to their benefits. This might be new to you and this might be new to me. There's still hate crimes committed in the community. I swear I have fights, man, where's the unity.

—*Remle Morrow*

Growing out my shoes I liked, still fitting in the ones I don't. Studying in the same projects – I hate it, getting picked on for how I look. I thought friends were overrated. Trump getting elected instead of Hilary affects the poor community, black and white people fighting, no finding unity. Brother got hit by a car and almost died and the other one locked up for 2 years. I didn't know why. I knew a mother and daughter that got hit by a car and died, living in the same place where my 6 cousins every month. My parents are in depression over a family death. Mother said we are getting out of the projects and barely left. In a mirror I hate viewing myself before it. There, I just painted you a self-portrait.

—*Remle Morrow*

It's not just white. A lot of races will hate you, throw slurs at you. Most of them will be racial. I will not let white supremacy stop me. White cops throwing black kids on the cold concrete. Just because you're darker they expect you to crack; living in America's society is hard to do when you're black. But it's not just black, it's all different races, all different bodies, all different faces. Practice what you preachin.' All races will listen. The root of all racism is how you raise your children.

—*Remle Morrow*

White supremacy

Pulling the trigger

Calling us monkey

Calling us nigger

Race divided

Power's one-sided

I wish someone saw colors the way I did.

—*Remle Morrow*



Painting #3

Johanna McDaniel

## Smile

When things seem depressin'

One can learn a lesson

About not giving up

Use your smile as a weapon

Make your frown into a smile

Know you been down for a while

Believe in your hopes and dreams

Even though life may seem vile

Even though you give up

It leads to self hate and disgust

But only you can change

Your life could be bad but it could change in a minute

—Remle Morrow

Darkness can be good or bad pretty or ugly  
But to me darkness stays the same  
There may be layers of darkness but I only see one  
I am not afraid of darkness  
Darkness is afraid of me  
I stare darkness down as would a scorning mother  
I am the epitome of darkness  
Darkness is my greatest friend and my worst enemy  
Darkness is only darkness when there is no light  
I am light  
That is why darkness loves and fears me  
I embrace both sides of the spectrum  
Fear or envy me darkness  
For I am the epitome of both sides

—*Remle Morrow*

“This is not a black and white world”  
Because all the colors mix into gray  
“This is not a black and white world”  
We’re all the same at the end of the day  
“This is not a black and white world”  
There’s no need for separation  
“This is not a black and white world”  
Uplift each other for elevation  
“This is not a black and white world”  
There’s no need to be racist  
“This is not a black and white world”  
We need somebody who should say this  
This is not a black and white world”  
Stop it fighters we need lovers  
“This is not a black and white world”  
At the end of the spectrum is significant others

“This is not a black and white world”

If you see a person lonely

“This is not a black and white world”

Treat them like your friend or your homie

“This is not a black and white world”

—*Remle Morrow*

(inspired by the song The Beauty of Gray by the band LIVE [1991])

## The Fabric of Life

(inspired by the poem, "THE FABRIC OF LIFE" by Kay Ryan [1945])

The fabric of life is separated and segregated by the color of the fabric, whether  
you're

white as a wipe or dark as a burnt match stick, the fabric of life is woven together  
yet we

are still separate.

Basing smartness on color that doesn't sound intelligent, the future of

life is corrupt and cutthroat, some people swallow pride while others just choke.

The fabric of life is special even though it divides us, the kindness in some people  
might

surprise us.

The fabric of life.

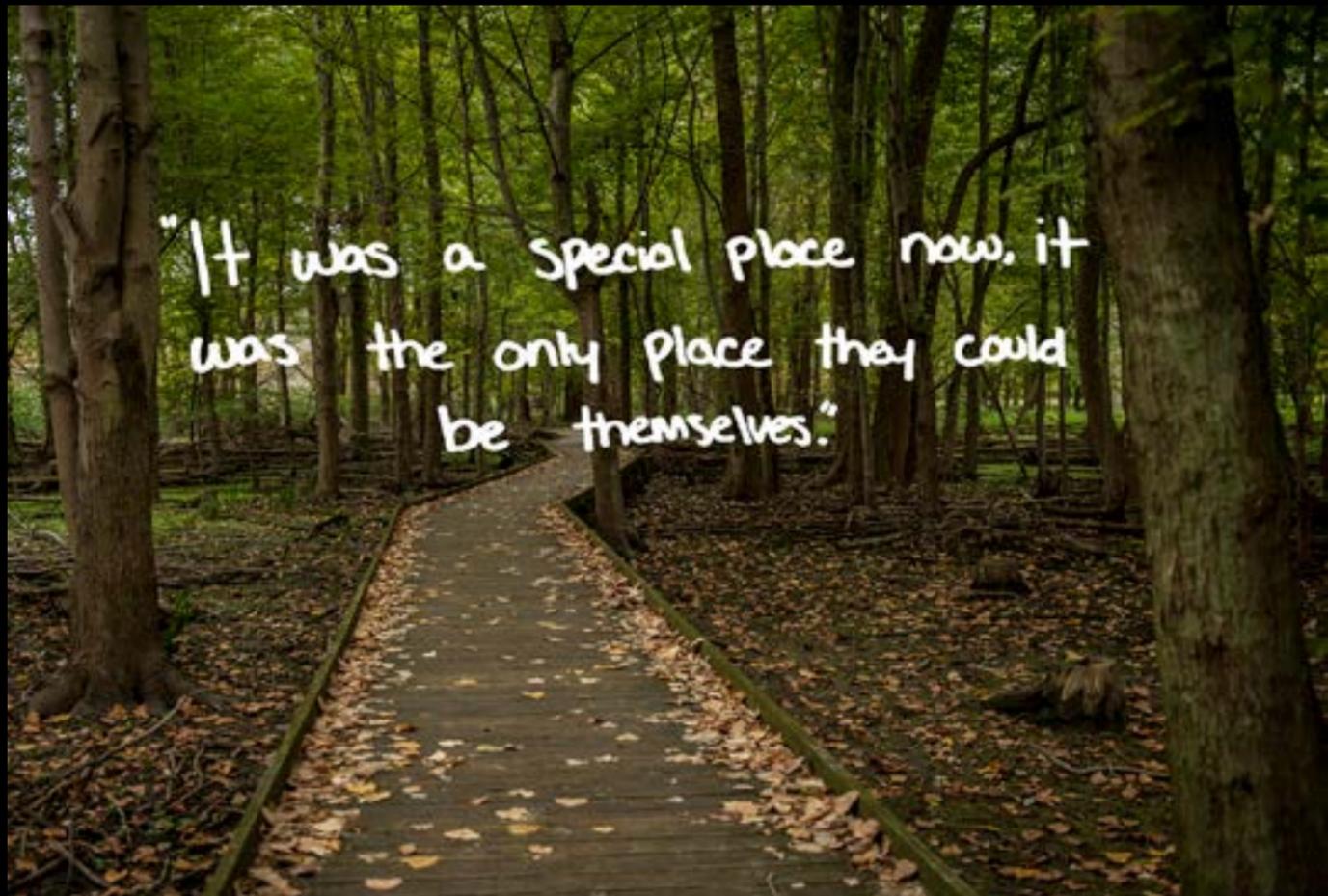
—*Remle Morrow*

She reminds me of summer itself  
With eyes and a smile as bright as the sun.  
But now she's with him and I feel like winter  
Cold and bitter and void of sun.  
Through snow through rain I shall not go,  
For her she is not worth it  
I feel like black ice that never melts  
I'm cold, I'm dark, and dirty.  
But summer's near I will be happy  
Since the break is near.  
I need no fawn  
I'm good myself  
I am a stronger deer.  
But just like winter it must end.  
Now it is cold late fall;  
Underfoot leaves crunch and break.  
It's time to distance all  
Just like seasons love must end.

—*Remle Morrow*

Have you ever known what it was like to be poor?  
Have you ever grown out of your shoes and couldn't afford more?  
Have you ever known what it was like to go to school and get picked on?  
If you were popular, you went to school and got hit on.  
Have you ever known what it was like to have lice?  
Have you ever been hated even though you were nice?  
Have you ever known what it was like to be called weird?  
Have everyone made assumptions that someone is queer?  
Have you ever wished for an Xbox and not had one yet?  
Have you ever known what it's like to be called idiot?  
Do you know what it's like to be trashed on the internet?  
Ever liked a girl and couldn't get her yet?

—*Remle Morrow*



## The Spot

One day a man was running along the beach and he saw a beautiful spot. He sat and thought about his day, he thought about how his day went and he thought about the bad things.

The man sat at the spot for hours and hours. Then he got into deep thoughts about his family and what happened to his mom when he was a boy. The man cried but it was just something about that spot that made him come back.

Years later he had a son. When his son was a baby he cried a lot so the man would bring him to this spot. It was a special place now. It was the only place they could be themselves.

Then one day it was storming and very windy. The dad was sitting in the car at the special spot; then on his way home he got in a terrible head on collision and was rushed to the hospital. The doctors said this was one of the worst cases they had seen in a while. They gave him 14 days or shorter to live.

Then the next day the doctors walked in and saw a miracle – he looked like nothing happened to him. But, he had no memory, it was gone. So the son came to the hospital and took him to the special place.

“Something was weird,” said the son to the doctors, “when we were at our special place he remembered my name... all the memories ... My dad remembered everything but once we drove off he lost it again.” His father died shortly after that moment. The son made it his # 1 priority to go to the special place everyday. The place where they had good and bad memories, the place where they cried and were happy... their special place.

—*Ta’Leahia Wright*



## Aireya

Sunshine gonna come w/rainy days to cool me.

Darkness + darkness equal more darkness but if you place that little bit of light in the room you going to get a little light.

That's how I feel about Aireya. She's my sunshine at the end of the tunnel.

She makes my bad days better.

Who knew a 5 year old could hold so much power.

My life revolves around her.

It's the simple things that get me going.

Every morning before my mom leaves for work Aireya gives her a kiss and watches her leave.

Every morning when I get out of the car she blows me a kiss and tell me have a good day.

She's five and carries so much on her heart.

She's a strong little girl.

— *Teala Young*



Photo #4

Sarah Burns



Sketch #8

Aravindhan Natarajan

## A Place I Would Rather Be

When you want to smile but you have to sigh

When you get out of bed and go to shower and the water is brown

When you brush your teeth and drop your toothbrush down the drain

When you burn your toast and spill your coffee on the floor and you're all out of paper towels  
When you get in the car and it won't start

When you go to the bus stop and it passes you by.

You finally give up and victory was close, but you'll never know.

— *Trinity Enoc*

I was sound asleep. Woken up by the sound of something scratching. I open my eyes and I am

not in a place that is familiar. I start freaking out.

I fumble around to find the light switch. I trip over something fluffy and see a window.

I look out the window and see a cat without a head scratching at the window. The moonlight reflects on the fluffy thing on the floor; it was...I hear the sound of an alarm, I'm in my bed.

I fumble around to find the light switch. The reader became the book. Reads a story of a place where the world was calm. The shack in the story was the focus for a Yeti who lived inside. He knitted sweaters, drank hot chocolate and watched the news. One day, the reader crashed through his roof. The reader was very surprised to see not a Yeti, but a Yeti in a sweater drinking hot chocolate watching the news. The Yeti was surprised too, for this Yeti was small and less hairy. He couldn't get the reader a cocoa, for it was bigger than a tub. The reader ran but he didn't make it far before he fell, now soaring in the sky.

I fumble around to find the light switch.

—*Trinity Enoc* 9/27

On Halloween, two dead boys were trick-or-treating. They had many candies and sweets without their heads. They argued who would get the caramel candy treats. They hit each other in the face and one ran with the candy.

— *Trinity Enoc*

I don't trust the guiding powers of stars but I look up for a shimmering sea.  
With black water and pale eyes that look back at me.  
Look down and come back to reality.  
You can't ignore the bad and only embrace the good.  
Deep sad sorrows or incredible happiness, you rarely choose what you please.  
She's incredibly happy or is that how she wants to be seen.  
He's very sad or is that what he wants to be or is that how he wants to be seen.  
The death of his grandpa should have shook his world but now he has a white  
pearl cruiser and is incredibly happy, in fact he's pleased.  
Her grandpa didn't pass but she didn't pass any exams and now she's failed, doesn't have  
a cruiser, and isn't pleased but for her, her world is shook.

— *Trinity Enoc*

The reader became the book, reads a story of a place where the world was calm.  
A shack in the story was the focus  
for a yeti lived inside.  
He knitted sweaters, drank hot chocolate and watched the news.  
One day the reader crashed through his roof.  
The reader was very surprised to see not a yeti but a yeti in a sweater drinking hot  
chocolate  
watching the news.  
The yeti was surprised too for the reader was small and less hairy.  
The yeti couldn't give him a sweater, it would be too big.  
The yeti couldn't give the reader a cocoa for it was bigger than a tub.  
The reader ran but he didn't make it far before he fell, now he is  
soaring in the sky.

— *Trinity Enoc*

I feel as though I am always writing my first draft. As though my life is a series of edits that I never have time to complete.

Uncomplete expectations I'll never meet, a list long as life that will never be marked off like a grocery list in an infinite store filled with products that never cease.

—*Trinity Enoc*

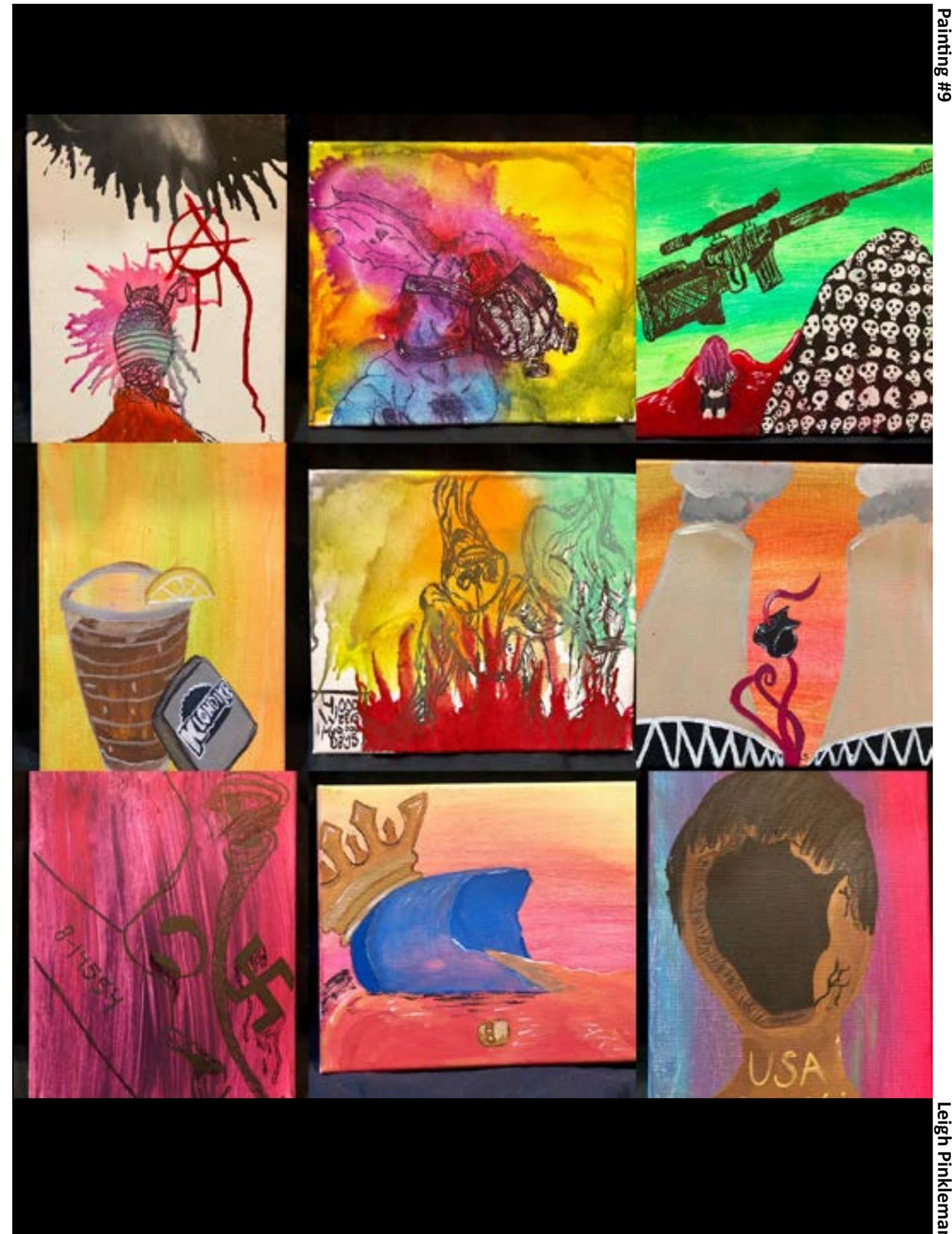


## SECTION II

### Encyclopedia of an Extraordinary Life

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 with the 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. We have learned over the past three years that many of the writers have seen a great deal and have experienced adult-like hardship. The high school students are right in the middle of making the memories that they will likely reflect upon when they sit down to write more traditional memoirs, later in life. Their stories feel extraordinary because the secret life of teenagers are rarely heard.

Heather Sloane



Painting #9

Leigh Pinkleman

# Airelle Barrett

## Daydream

Just before I started writing I was daydreaming about what words go good with my personality. But then for some reason I started daydreaming about unicorns and why some people automatically think gay when they hear unicorn. I started daydreaming about how one of the dudes in my class said that black isn't a color but it's the absence of color. And I just made up so many ideas I confused myself. If you really know me you know I confuse myself a lot. I started thinking that I could use the word daylight but it was too boring. So I continue to daydream about daydreaming stuff.

## Frantically

From now on she stays alert.

She is always anxious and at times too emotional.

She clings onto him by she's not desperate just firm.

She's fragile just like glass.

I see right through her and I think to myself she's frantically aware of the world that's all.

## House

My house used to be a home but now it's just a house.

A house where I used to laugh and play.

Now I sit there all day wondering what am I doing in this house of mine.

The place where love once was but I think to myself was it actually love?

Everything that was said to me was a lie.

Living in a house where I'd rather die than live all alone.

No one to hold in this house of mine.

This hole, this burden bringing me down.

In another life, my house will become a home in another life.

# Amariano Williams

## A – Able

When I think that I can't, sometimes it's more like I won't.

I push past the urge to procrastinate or avoid.

My confidence is sometimes shaky.

The ideas don't always flow.

I remind myself that I can. I am able.

I have to want it. It's important – to me, at least.

I have a voice. I can contribute.

I must be a part of life, not just a spectator.

It's one step at a time sometimes. And that's okay.

A step is something.

A step is doing.

No one says I have to do it right the first time – no one but me, at least.

But it's okay to embrace the process; to do something new; to broaden my scope.

I am able.

## Beauty

It's in the eye of the beholder, they say. But yet so many set the standard for all. They shout it from the rooftops and condemn those who don't comply. So much for allowing the beholder a voice. I applaud the beauties who ignore those who dismiss the beholders. They are the heroes and heroines. Their beauty shouts louder and lifts up the condemned only to encourage the condemned to join the resistance. Someday the resistance will prevail and all beauty will reign.

## Determined

I am always determined to accomplish my goals. I am determined to be the best film editor in the entire world. Another goal I am determined to achieve is getting a scholarship to go to college.

## Independent

I made the transition into being my own self quite abruptly. I sported an attitude and held my head higher than necessary to prove my point.

I believed I could handle anything life threw at me. And I didn't need my parents to direct me. After all, what did they know?

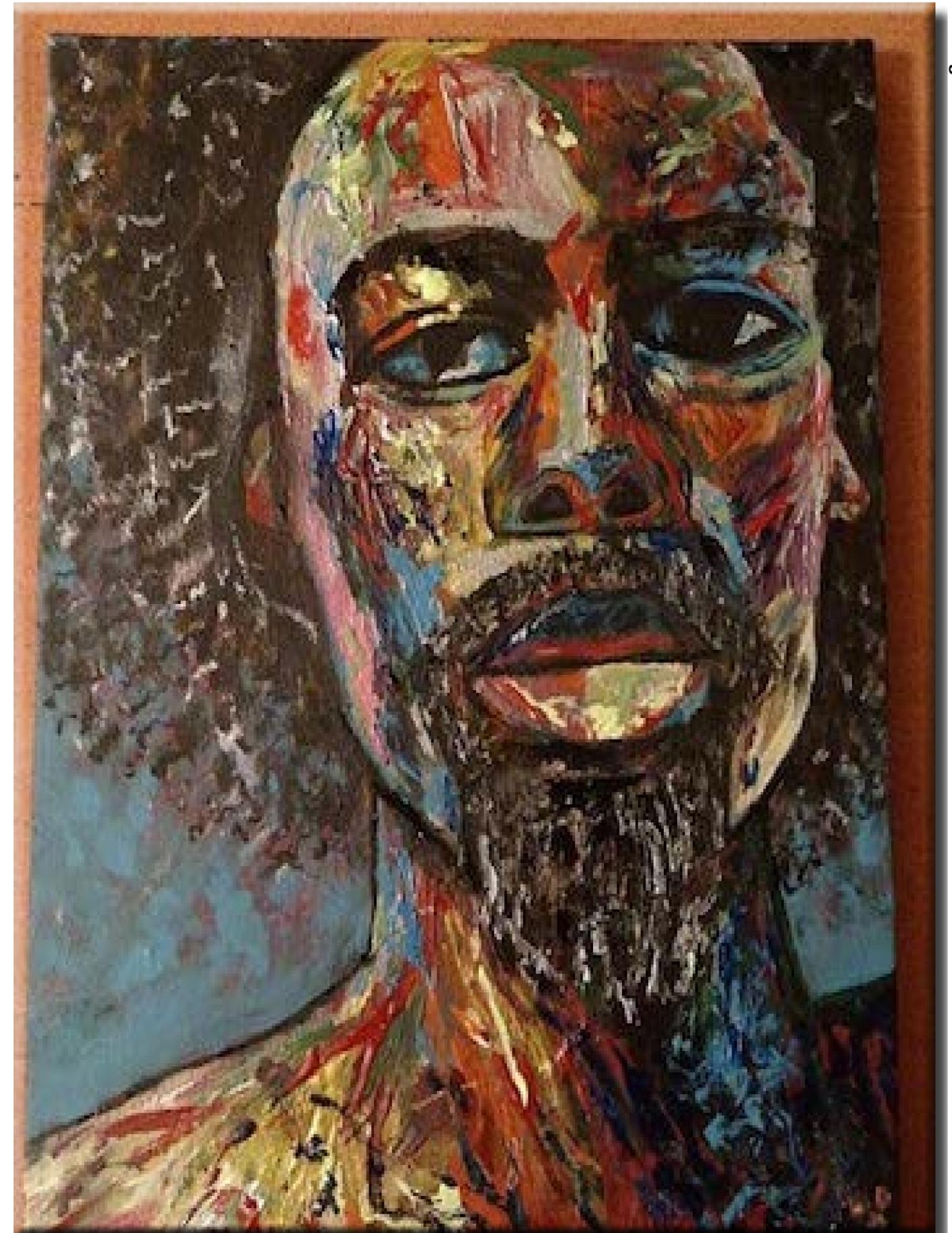
“You live under our roof, you follow our rules,” they said.

I reluctantly obliged – not because I agreed, but only because I was smart enough to know how to play the game.

Years later, my right to have independence is established and the responsibility has been placed upon me by society. Now I long for the opportunity to take a back seat every now and then – to let someone else call the shots; to be the responsible one.

I want someone to take care of me for a change,

I'm willing to set my independence aside and will gladly submit and depend on someone else to carry my load.



# Brysen Davis

## Arrogance

Foolish acts accompanied by an arrogant afterthought.

Appalled by the pride of an individual and not their confidence

Already acting as if you better than any and everyone

Ashamed and appalled by such arrogance

## Bashful

Hidden under my hood, buried in doubt.

Bargaining with myself just to get one thought out.

Golden thoughts behind a timid afterthought

Presentations hatin'; words I'm sayin', contemplating to get just one thought out.

Because I'm BASHFUL.

## Confused

"Black cat climbs but behold there's a bark in the distance

Shazam

no superhero

Tit Tat, Tit Tat, Woosh, Boom, Splat

Comic book

Twisting in circles are you dizzy?

See what happened? Why is the black cat the bad luck and the ugly duckling the black one?

Wait, is this a message from the Russians I have to decode?

Someone get all wait, no

stranger things."

This is what I hear from the teacher when she explains the work.

Me: Wait, no I'm confused...

“You may now begin your assignment worth 1000 points.”

“Begin.”

Fantastic!

I can't find a word to write

Famine, freedom, favoritism

Forget it

None of it fits

Justyce is right about me not being able to write

I Feel as if my pencil is afraid of my paper

Emmett, talking about fear

Amariano is reading about family

And Ty, future

And I'm still writing

I mean I could do worse Krysta is sleeping

Jalen's fiddling with his fingers. Wait never mind he just started reading about freaking robots

If you can't tell I'm still writing as everything is happening

And yes, my best friend finally reading and ya she's finally... “go stupid” Ahhh

P.S. She just got done reading and I don't even want to go no more

I wish Emmett and Ty would shut up

## Justyce

Just plain ugly,

usually stupid,

surprisingly horrendous;

terribly smelly.

Y does she talk so much?

Can't ever deal with her

enormous head.

Joker that can always cheer me up.

Undoubtedly intelligent,

sassy and fights for what she wants.

Terrible at accepting the word no.

Y is she the bestest best best friend ever?

Courageous!

Empathetic when she wants to be.

Justyce,

Now let me stop before I try to spell out Meredith.... Yuck



# Blake Young

## L Words

Lunch – a meal we eat in the middle of the day

Loyalty – being faithful or a strong feeling of support

Lounge – to relax, sit or stand in a relaxed or lazy way

Liberty – means independence and freedom and it can't be taken away. Liberty also means protect all individuals.

Life – happiness, love

Ladybug – in my granny's eyes is a lady – luck, good fortune and it's the joy of living

Luck – when you succeed or “good fortunes”

## Q

Quale – my big cousin, my friend.

I remember when we used to watch Ben 10 with.

Quarter – 25 cents to get a piece of candy with.

Quizlet – Helps with vocabulary and any other class questions I need help with.

Quit – What I want to say when our volleyball team doesn't win.

Quiz – tests me to see what I know.

## V

Volleyball – my favorite sport to play

Vet – where we take my uncle's pet

Varsity – is the team I want to be on next year for volleyball



# Cara Swain

## Audacious Audacity

There has never been a moment in my life where I haven't gone after what I wanted. I put fear aside. I put people's judgement aside and I go and take what I want regardless of how long the road may be or how hard it may be to attain it.

Audacity seems to some people a negative thing but when you are put down or told that you can't do something and have the courage or "audacity" to prove them wrong and move outside their box, to defy those who would hold you back or to give a middle finger to what society expects from you, I see it as a virtue.

To go and get what you want takes a certain level of audacity. To stand up to the rules when they are wrong, to fight against other's expectations of what you should do, and to do what you know is right for you, for your loved ones, for those you take care of, that audacity is a virtue.

## Betrayal

As a child I was betrayed by my parents. Their job was to love me and make me feel safe and they didn't.

My siblings never having my back and always making life harder.

"Friends" judged and called me out for things that they had no real clue about or because they were jealous.

Boyfriends, people I loved and trusted and made myself vulnerable to because they said they loved me but it turns out it was all a game.

Betray, it is something I will never do to the ones I love. The hurt is too much. My heart breaks and I do not wish to break someone else by betraying them even though betrayed is the way I live.

Betrayed, broken, building.

## Because

Because I love you.

Because I care about you.

Because you deserve respect.

Because you mean the world to me.

Because I am sorry.

Because your life is hard.

Because you need my help.

Because you are strong.

Because you are weak.

Because you are beautiful.

Because I need you.

Because without you I am nothing.

Because I have been betrayed.

## Destiny

The idea that we are destined for something, some ONE thing makes me anxious.

What if I don't find it? What if I mess it up? What if I can't continue with it? What if I get bored?

Destiny I prefer to think of it as a path. That there are many points of growth along the way. That it can change and morph as I grow and mature.

I used to think that God had ONE purpose for me. But now I realize that my only destiny is to be happy and what makes me happy can change at any time.

# Chantal Crane

## Impact

I think everyone wants to make an impact in this world, in some way. We just don't realize that we all do. Our lives are all interconnected, woven together like a fine-knitted blanket. We impact one another by the ways we listen to each other, and by the ways we don't. we make an impact by smiling at strangers, taking time to know someone's soul before we judge him or her, and being able to admit when we're wrong. We make an impact through the soul art of living, but it is *how* we live that matters most. We are made of the same energy as stars, and yet we still doubt our magic, and our abilities to make an impact.

# Duvonna Goins

## Admire

I admire the adventures taken

The risky admire the safety

I could go on about the admired

But that would make me an admirer

## Bold

A more combative word to describe a sister is aggressive.

Yet her fire stems from fear of being cast aside by those who

Could only imagine what she's been through. To me that sister is

Bold because of the way she speaks for her culture, stands on her word,

And fights for what is right.

## Cruising

Cruising down the street in my 64. A notorious line from the NWA – A revolt in the hip-hop community that has yet to touch a textbook. Black history is more than just slavery and hardship. NWA in their own way stood against police brutality and oppressed black men. Being an entertainer is never easy but combining that with an activist is another beast unleashed.

## Dedicated

I've been dedicated since the 4th grade aspiring to be a legend.

As the former Judge Thurgood Marshall flashed across my screen

my mind started to race. All of his accomplishments and goals starred out

his great life. Starred, Mm that's what he is a star, a dedicated one forcing change

upon an undeserving community of people who now only whisper his name. I can only

aspire to as dedicated.

## Elephant

There is always an elephant in the room when we're in it. The lack of communication is inevitable because of the compromises we make to stay civil. I can't even believe I can only be civil with you. The elephant in our room is as big as the New York Christmas trees. I can't believe I can only be civil with a woman like you.

## Friends

They come and go, they stay or wither.  
My grandmother always used plants as an analogy to describe one's circumstances or situations. She would say the grass isn't always greener on the other side. Cliché, I know, but so very true. Another thing she would say was watch out for the roots on the tree they stay grounded, those leaves might look pretty but they always wither and fly away.

## Giggles

I got the giggles sitting in this room with such amazing writers. In this room with these people has really been my happy place. We laugh and joke most days and I wouldn't have it any other way. These young minds so well-versed in themselves and their goals give me the giggles.

## Hurry

In a hurry, I'm always in a hurry ruffling and shuffling to the next place. Work at 6 am Class ends Monday - Wednesday at 9 pm. Thursdays are even longer, work 6 am, intern till midnight just to be up again at 6 am/ Saturdays are the best but even then, I'm still in a hurry. In a hurry to do homework, work, studying, reading, an event, a project all due at 11:59 pm. Always something. It never ends.

## Ignite

A funny word that means to cause or to catch fire.

I think of a person that starts drama or is sneaky.

The one who causes pain, insecurity and maliciousness.

I don't agree with their ways.

I just distance myself and try not to get ignited.

## Jiggle

I hear way to often from my family that my body jiggles. I don't jiggle,

I shake, thanks, and I don't need a reminder of how I was made.

It's called THICKNESS.

## Kindergarten

I am so excited to get them to kindergarten.

These little minds I get to rock into elementary school.

I am so scared and determined to get them to learn.

I just want them to be great, I see so much potential.

Running, jumping, skipping, and playing, in preschool all we do is play and incorporate learning through play.

So I get to play all day and nurture these little minds.

## Love

Lovingly, loveable, love

Laughing into love laying

Into love deep luscious love, love, love, love

My mind is just not there it's not in love.

# Heather Sloane

## D

Dad – my hero, my menace, my heart.

Our journey has been a rough one which is why this time in my life is so sweet. That I can look at my dad and feel only warm feelings I assume the same kind of feeling I felt as a toddler and at the time his only child.

My father is larger than life. A strong, Irish athlete from tough neighborhood, a businessman who fought his way up the ladder. A recovered alcoholic, a cowboy.

He is a real life personality come to life from a novel.

## Goats

I started playing clarinet in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in Pittsburg. Wherever I moved the music teachers were so impressed. They started much later in Ohio and Virginia. My parents wouldn't let me quit. I never really loved the instrument. I did like people that liked instruments. I kept practicing and throwing the thing in frustration. Hundreds of reeds purchased, and pads replaced.

When I started high school you had to perform scales in front of the band to determine chair. I hated this process. It was so nerve-wracking. This was never explained largely and the first time we “auditioned” it was spontaneous. I was mortified. I was so nervous I couldn't feel the keys and my mouth wouldn't work. When I got home I was outraged – how could a teacher do that without warning? I practiced even harder and more hours. I was bored and determined an awful combination. My sisters were sick of hearing scales. I walked off into the woods to find a place far away to play scales loudly and with anger. I sat on a hill pretty far off from the house. I began and was interrupted by the braying of goats. I walked over the hill a bit and there they were listening to me play. I played for them and they were strangely transfixed. The goats would get quiet and watch me very carefully. They would move their heads curiously back and forth as I played.

I had found a “grateful” or at least curious audience and it made practicing much better. The goats seemed to look forward to my visits or at least this narrative helped me subject them regularly to my clarinet practice. I would play longer pieces for them. Goats can't applaud but they were likely bored and I was variety, something they could count on as different in their day.

## Love.

I always enjoyed sending carnations in high school to all of my friends – they were meant for couples or people starting a romance but I sent red carnations to everyone. It would make folks smile and classmates curious if any of us were in a budding romance. Over the years though because I was known to do this, the more and more carnations I would get sent to me – In my homeroom my desk would spill over with flowers and my arms would be full – teachers would loan me vases to store them in my locker for the day.

## Mother –

That I have a career has questioned my abilities to be a good mother. My career allows me the privilege to be with my daughters more than if I had a 9 – 5. I am ambitious therefore not nurturing.

I brought my girls to work on a snow day – they sat in on my classes – my students seemed to

love this because all the sudden private pieces of me were in the class – talking to my kids made me more woman less highfalutin?

My colleagues however saw my girls in class as a lack of organization on my part and a lack of

nurturing on my part. One faculty member joked while Skye and Terra did homework in my

office while I was in a meeting that we would call CPS because they were being neglected.

I have a faculty member who brings her cute puppy to work – everyone oohs and ahhs and

never is she seen as inappropriate and yet my children are not welcome.

My husband has also taken the girls to work. They sit in his lecture halls listening to

their father

lecture and his department sees his involvement with his girls as extraordinary. He is such a

good father. Everyone comes home with tales of how all the faculty engage with the girls and

love them and Rob gets constant questions about his role as father – proud to be one of those

Dads.

“Know your worth.”

I love being a mother more than any experience I have ever had. I let the girls growth and

happiness be my reinforcement. No human agrees with every choice they make but being a

mother the way I have been a mother makes me proud and is my greatest joy.

## Quince & Apple

In Bowling Green, Ohio, there is a strange number of flowering quince – salmon colored flowers and strange fruit deep in the branches once the leaves fall. People have no idea what to do with them so they rot and fall. I think of them as colonial and want to look through an archive of old recipes to make quince recipes with stolen quince. I like to imagine that there was a traveling quince salesman that came to town and all the ladies were convinced they just had to have one. From the size I would guess they were bought in the 70s likely through seed/plant catalogs – one person likely set the trend they are almost all north of Wooster in what would have been new and fashionable neighbors at the time.



Photo #5

Sarah Burns

# Jayln Brewington

## Acceptance

I have acceptance for the people in the world who aren't going to change. The people who spend their whole lives looking for their purpose, and when they do everything is over. I have acceptance for the people who don't know better or the people way too broken to be fixed again. I have acceptance that people in my life will cross me, some might be any blood sharers. I have acceptance that I can't change who I am because it will make too many people happy. I have acceptance that life goes it's own way and that you have to pour a cold bucket of water on Earth to wake them up. I have acceptance that you can't change the way people live, but maybe if you try hard enough or scream loud enough, they'll hear you eventually. Maybe then you can change what they think.

## Adapt

Adapting. "You don't have to like it." They whispered. "You have to live with it." Out of all the mistakes I've made, I always have to live with it. I had to adapt to my surroundings and my schedule because they can get unpredictable. I've learned to live with all the choices I've made, no matter if they were positive or negative. I've had to adapt when

these choices affect my life, when there's no escaping them. "You don't have to like it."

They whispered. "But you have to live with it."

## Backward

Sometimes I can be a little backwards. I always do the abnormal option, the rarely used path because it's what makes me different. I could turn left and follow thousands of people playing follow the leader on a scripted life and religion. I could turn right and follow the few who know what they want and can look past the sun used to blind them. I might be backwards because I don't take people's words. I have to see for myself, do my own research. So, yes I might be backwards, but I will still find a way to the front because I'm still here, and I won't give up.

## Biased

\_\_Some could absolutely call me biased. If it came down to it, I would choose my family. No matter who you are, if my family called me, I would go to them. I know this makes me seem rude or unreliable, but my family is everything to me because I know one sentence could be said and it's over. Our family does not get along, mostly because we're so different. At the end of the day, I'd still go home and crack a smile/joke that makes them all smile, because that's what family's about. The little moments, the laughs, the love, and being together.

## Calculation

I know I'm supposed to write how I'm careful and precise and pay attention to everything, but that's not the truth. The truth is that I don't look into everything, like when I'm cooking. I'll take one look at the box and then throw it away. It's like my mind has its own calculation scale. When there's enough milk, I'll know. I don't need a measuring cup to tell me. I live life almost the way I cook. I wing it. I honestly don't mean to. I try to plan things out and use a calendar, but it just doesn't work out. I just go and do where life takes me. If things get harder, I don't quit, even if I desperately want to. I have to move through it, adapt to the world because complaining about how bad my life is doesn't do anything for me tomorrow. Living your life can be bended in between. Make sure you live your fullest life, you never know if the clock is on your side, but also make sure you do what needs to be done to get somewhere in this world because it's brutal out there.

## Damage

The world today is set on hurting. Hurting people, hurting nature, hurting animals, you know what I mean. What's the aftermath of that hurt though? A broken soul that doesn't know what to do? Damage, you have to rebuild yourself and you'll never be the same way again. You might be a better version, but whatever damage the old one took is gone. It's not coming back. You can try because trying is everything, but it's impossible that you'll make an exactly copy without a few wires sticking out. Some of us are hit with

damage at a young age and some aren't faced with it until they are older. The world might discriminate, but the damage doesn't, it happens to everyone.

## Earbuds

They are in, constantly. To block out the distractions, the people, the hate, the world. I normally like to be alone. Put me in a room with my phone and earbuds and I won't bother you at all. 549 tracks and still counting. Music is one of the few ways I can get away because you could say my name ten times and I still wouldn't hear you. See them dangling from my neck everytime you see me, and if they're out and I'm listening, then I care. I don't think I could survive in a world without music. The again, I might go and make my own. I connect music to my daily activities like getting dressed. If I don't have my earbuds with me there's a chance I lost or broke them. I do that a lot. I have circled my whole life on music and my earbuds because it's one of the things that keep me going. So, if you asked me what's important to you or what's something you couldn't live without, don't laugh when I answer "earbuds." Simply because there is a whole other world why music is a huge part of what I live for.

## Fixable

Yes, I am broken, but there's more to me than that. My skin and heart and head could be shattered, but my brain is where everything happens. Without my brain I would just be a person who cares way more than I should. I would have no sense. I try to give everyone two chances, but there is that someone who will tug 3,000 out of me. Hurting me over and over again, that's my biggest flaw. It would take everything in me to drop you, so you know that I've finally had enough of your ways. I will fix myself, not in the same way I was before. Better and more successful. Someone to make them say "Why did I even hurt them?" No matter how much pain I go through or many times you betray me. You could take a hammer and smash me into the ground, just for fun. A couple days later, I will begin to fix myself, because I am fixable, and I always will be.

# Jayla Burks

## Ankles

I was picking out an outfit the other day while on the phone. I stood up on something so they could see my outfit better and so I could look in the mirror. My ankles folded. New ankles for me please.

## Anger

Anger – I often experience anger in my life. It's always over things I should be angry over like my Hot Pocket being too hot or the noise my headphones make when my phone is off but the headphones aren't. I don't get angry over things I should be angry over like hurting myself, unfair consequences, or even loss. Anger often drives people to more mistakes and I'm no different.

## Boy

Boy who just wants somebody to blame  
Boy who just wanna be in the mix  
Boy who was never paying attention  
Boy who was neve stoppin to listen  
Boy who never cared about feelings  
Boy who was never here for the emotions  
Boy you get on my nerves  
Boy you stay makin excuses  
Boy you stay hurtin my feelins  
Boy please just leave me alone



# Jaylen Brake

## Blind

Blind people always get me to think how would they find braille if they can't see it. Same thing for their cane. And how'd Helen Keller write a book she was blind and deaf and the book's probably better than this excerpt. Also don't they have surgery that fixes blindness if you're born with it? Do blind people who could see before have dreams? What are cataracts? Weren't one of the presidents blind? I ran out of things to write so I will say/write things I see to celebrate my 20/20 vision: 3 pennies, windows, Bysen, phone, flag, 26, bin, table, pencil, clock, chair, notebook, door, sink, lotion. That is all.

## Crazy

Craziness is a recurring theme in my life from watching my friend attempt to eat 5 raw eggs to watching someone ride a unicycle. Craziness is everywhere. I remember watching my god dad bury a jellyfish in the sand and it stung him. Sometimes crazy things are planned or it can be a culmination of complexities, oddities, coincidence and conditions.

## Dangerous

Did you know that cows kills more people then sharks do? Danger is something that no one wants to be in whether it was brought on by a series of unfortunate events of by action that brought the danger itself. Here are some danger statistics: 40k people die from slipping in the shower. Mosquitos killed 53% of humans in this story. Turn around right now, Are you in danger? No it's either a wall, chair, or person behind. Now quit being paranoid and listen to me talk. This reminds me of a story I was in a pool and went to the deep end. I started to drown. Before I did some hairy man carried me out. Let's name some dangerous things: poison, fire, sulfuric acid, electricity, gasoline, knives, the pen I'm writing with.

## G – Greed

Greed – intense and selfish desire for something especially wealth or power. Greed is a terrible thing especially. Cranky Kong from DK Country was greedy I think. I remember this story, like it was yesterday. I needed 50 cents. Not much. No one gave it to me though that's not ok let's get to another G word. Green. It's my 4<sup>th</sup> favorite color of the rainbow. Yellow is the worst color. There is another – gaze. I think gazing is looking. I'm going to gaze at Krysta. - words: gold, grill, geranium, greed, gorge, grand. Let's finish with what I started with: Greed. Ok so I need to write some more. I just feel like I don't need to come up with another G-word so I'm going to expand on what I got. Yellow really is the worst color there is. Like it is so ugly. The only reason I don't look at the sun is because it's yellow. It even sounds ugly but now I'm ranting.

## H - Hexagon

A Hexagon is a six-sided shape. They don't have 7 sides or 5 sides. I was 6 years old when I first saw a Hexagon. It was a vivid memory by I was so perplexed by the word Hexagon. I don't see the letter "x" used a lot but now I will briefly say some x words: xenophile, xenophobia, xylem, xylography, x-ray, xylophone. Those are all the x words I could find. Speaking of xeno, I used to have the weird friend who thought he was a dinosaur and bi his dogs. He moved after his mom left to Florida. He also thought aliens were coming to our school and disguised themselves as people. Anyways a hexagon has six sides.

# Jaylyn Ellis

**Justice** – this cold world needs justice, the things we go through is outrageous. We need to be courageous.

**Jumpy** – sometimes if you're not jumpy you grumpy because this road can be so bumpy.

**Joyful** – Joyful has a deep meaning. Sometimes it can mean you're leaning from a bleeding and still kinda grieving from the looks that's so deceiving. It has such a deep meaning. It doesn't mean you're always happy. I can me your sad or mad.



# Jevaughn Johnson

## Quit

Just quit, losing 24-0.

The crowd is in the stands and it is quiet.

Only the parents are cheering on their kids trying to keep the team heads up.

Quit as the cheerleaders stand there ready to go home.

Just quit as the coach is talking to the players asking us are we really giving up are we quitting.

Are we just going to lay down?

The momentum changed when the players when they came out of the locker room for the second half.

The players are concentrating on the second half and the score is 24 -0.

Just quit, came back out on the field and scored a touchdown 24 -6.

Just quit, and they fumble the ball, which we got back and scored again 24 - 12.

The crowd is cheering loudly and the cheerleaders start cheering again.

Just quit, we stop them from scoring again 24-18.

Time to kick the ball off to the other team and before we kick the ball...

The ref comes on the field it's an emergency, "get off the field and onto the bus"

As the game is delayed, the coach is congratulating players. "Way to not quit"

Players are crying, parents are hugging 24-18.

Just quit? Never quit, keep fighting, don't give up, work hard, and don't stop.

## Stable

Stable has a deeper meaning than you think. It's not just things you say...like, if that table can hold someone or something. Stable has a life meaning too like, is your life stable?

Or do you want to become something bigger?

Stable means steady or the same. I hear stable a lot from my mom asking her husband the night before, "Are you stable enough to go to work?" as he's going to the bathroom throwing up.

Going to school, I am not stable enough to keep my head up from a long night. Stable is always the same because it never changes.

Stable

## Tape

Tape is a life saver when you accidentally rip your paper and the work is due today.

Or if you don't have any money and you find an old dollar.

You tape it up, then go get a candy bar.

Or when your little brother is talking too much and you want him to shut up.

Or when you finally get good grades and want to show it to everybody. Tape it on the fridge. Tape is a life saver.

# Jevon Hudspeth

## Victory

In history, we have victory. We got these victories from strategy. By making the strategy there are people laughing at me. Are you doing this literally, making the strong people laugh at me? Can't hear them clearly. This can be severely dangerous if we don't get the strategy this can end as tragedy. Let's get this task and march on to victory.

## Algebra

Algebra helped me with many things,

Algebra helped me succeed,

Algebra helped me outside of school,

Algebra made a lot of situations easier

When it comes to math or a situation when I have to use Algebra.

## believe

I believe I can do anything

I believe that I can get out of any situation I am in

I believe I can achieve any obstacle

I believe I can become anything I want

I believe whatever I do is whatever I do

I believe to have confidence in myself

I believe to believe

## **Clock**

Clocks are very important

Clocks are an instrument that measures time

There are many different clocks in the world

Clocks are very valuable.

You have to know the time to go to work, or school, or a party, or football practice

If you need to know a specific time, set an alarm

Time is money and it shouldn't be wasted

That's why clocks are very important

## **Disguise**

Many people wear a disguise

Some people wear a mask or makeup as a disguise to hide their actual face

People act different to disguise their true meaning

Some people wear a disguise to commit a crime.

Some people like to wear disguises to be funny.

Like on Halloween people wear a costume and magic to disguise them.

## **Entertain**

As a person I feel like everyone should want to entertain people. Entertaining people will make them look at you in a good way. But not all people might not like that. If you want to entertain people you may have to do it in a certain way. You can entertain people and push it too far where they look at your different. To entertain people you need to know how far to go and when to stop

## **I**

I believe that I'm capable of anything. I know what I can do in life.

# J

Jevon

Jevon is my name I'm known for being a young man with excellence.

People look at me and think I'm someone I'm not.

If you get to know me I am quiet, funny, respectful and there are a lot more characteristics about me.

I play sports, I put outgoing sometimes but I try to stay away from the violence.

Dying is one of my fears because I feel like I have a lot to live for but I'm not scared to die.

That means I don't want to die but if get into a predicament where I could die I'm not gone be scared.

I'm not gone be scared.

I am my own man and I don't need nobody to be with me.

# Justyce Meredith

## Incident

May 10<sup>th</sup> that my birthday

August 21<sup>st</sup> 2006 that's the da my dad went to jail

November 17<sup>th</sup> 2011 that the day my mom went to jail, and we got kicked out of our apartment

September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014, we got a new apartment

November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 is the day I watched my brother lose his life to gun violence

July 19<sup>th</sup> 1995 is the day my brother was born

August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016 is the day my baby brother was born

October 20<sup>th</sup> is the day my baby cousin was born

January 26<sup>th</sup> 2017 is the day I held my baby cousin cold still born body in my arms

October 12<sup>th</sup> 2018 is the day my other baby brother was born

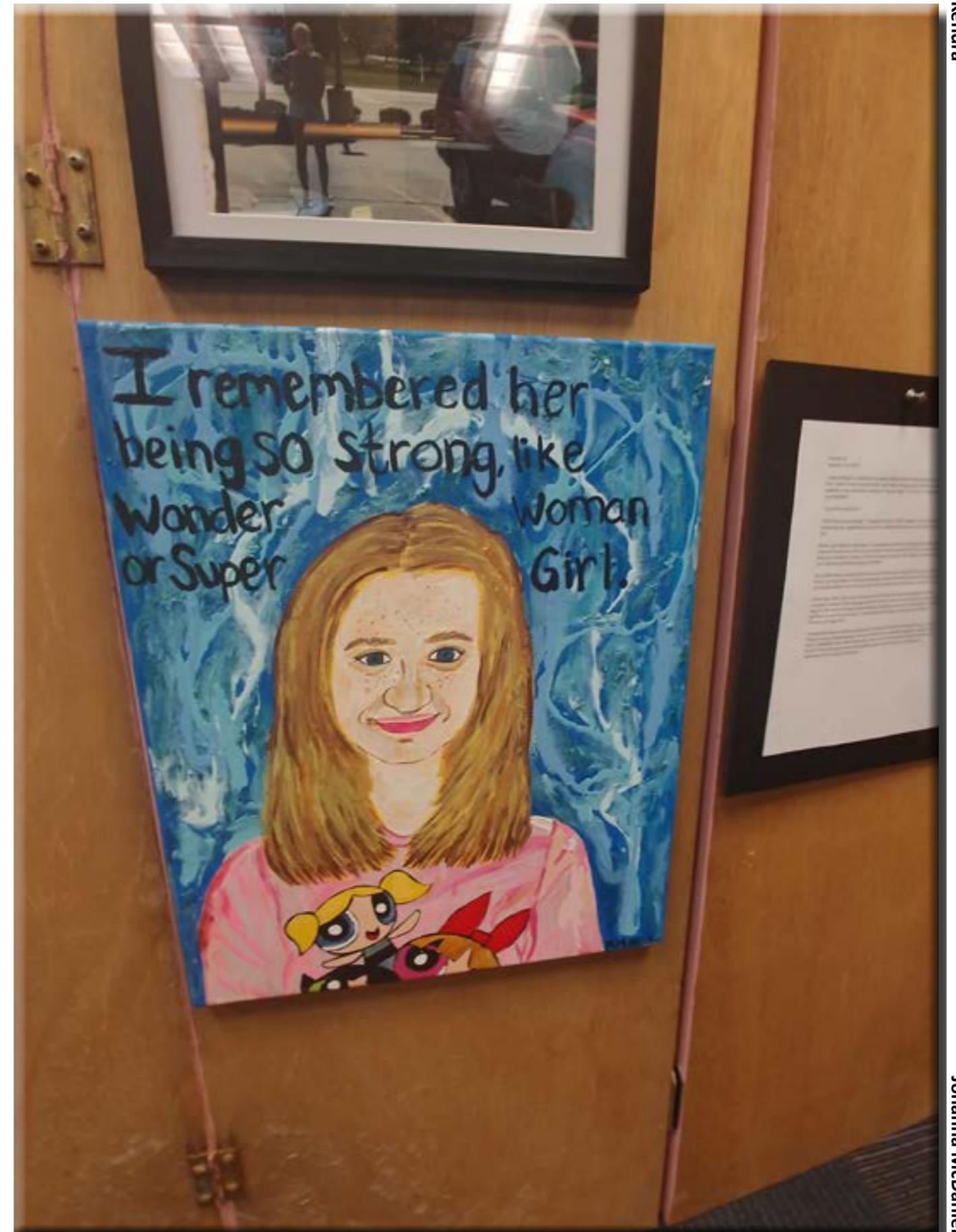
October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018 is the day my cousin Romear got hit by a car

May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2022 I think I'll be graduating

And sometime in 2026 I'll be graduating college why because these incidents good and bad have made me independent intuitive and intrepid. I have trained my mind to learn in reverse and turn hurt into strength.

## Justyce

The J goes before the U and the u before the s and s before the T and the T before the I right no that's wrong the T come before the Y and the why before the C and C before the E. Justice with the I means the quality of being just righteousness equitableness or moral rightness now that's me but it ain't me me Justyce with a Y means according to the urban dictionary an outgoing female who has an amazing character who is depressed and often people take her happiness in exchange for a smile from them. She looks to make others happy first before herself she's loyal and loveable she often tries to look at the positive parts in things.



# Kendra Hakkarainen

**Anxious.** I'm anxious when I have to speak in front of people. I'd love to avoid it. I'm anxious when I have to go up to someone and ask them a question, or when I have to recite my order to a waiter at a restaurant. Sometimes I get anxious and I can't even find a reason why. I confuse myself. Sometimes I'm afraid that is what's wrong with me. That's my problem I have to overcome and accept it.

**Accepting.** I want to accept people for who they are, and for who they want to be. I want to be open-minded and positive. I believe that everyone should be treated respectfully and with kindness. I want to help people and make them happy. I want to make them feel safe and loved. I want to accept people for who they are and for who they want to be.

**Bear.** It is in my nickname; Keni-bear, sugar bear. Sometimes I'm even called mama bear due to the fact that I'm a mom friend. When I was little I'd give my papa and my dad bear hugs. I don't know why bear is my nickname. I wasn't exactly a huge child. I wasn't really tall. I wasn't furry and I didn't growl like a bear, nor did I have claws. I used to watch the Care Bears and I had a bunch of Care Bear toys and stuffed animals.

**Chuckle.** I love the sound of people laughing. It's contagious. I can't help but put a smile on my face. It makes me happy to make others chuckle, especially my dad. My dad's chuckle is just funny to hear.

## Coast

When I get older I want to live on a coast. A nice small beach house where the weather is always nice. I want to be able to sit on my porch and stare off into the horizon with not a care in the world.

**Delicate** like a rose. Soft, sweet, gentle, light, delicate. I feel delicate. Carefully and beautifully made. I see delicate. Something attractive and made up of fine parts.

But I am delicate, easily broken or damaged, requiring special care, difficult to manage.

**Embarrassing.** My sister would probably describe me as embarrassing. The way I dance around a grocery store while my mom shops for food. The way I talk or sing loudly while at the mall, having a good time. The way I playfully pick other whilst talking to friends. I may or may not be embarrassing. I am comfortable, happy, and hyper when I'm with my family.

**Goal.** My goal is to find beauty in everything. To be successful, to support myself, love myself, owning a dog/cat, to accept everyone the way they are and for who they want to be. I also have some small goals like keeping my room clean, not to lose my Chapstick, always having a pencil for class, getting enough sleep, or be more social.

**Hammock.** Sometimes I close my eyes and imagine myself laying on a hammock. Swaying back and forth. I take deep breaths, imagining the salty sea air filling my lungs. I'd listen to the seagull squawking to each other as the bright sun warms my skin. This is where I want to be.

## **Lazy.**

I love sleeping with the warmth of my blankets and the squishy mattress will me to sleep. I hate getting up in the morning. I'd rather sleep all day. It doesn't matter if I'm on the couch or in my bed. I hate social interaction when it's not necessary. It takes too much energy.

## **Laugh.**

I love to laugh almost as much as I love making other people laugh. I like joking around and being a total goof. I joke around everywhere. My sister hates it in the store. I'm loud and hate it in the restaurant.

## **Malora**

Malora, named after my grandma. My best friend and my sister.

She's annoying almost all of the time but I tolerate it.

She's funny when she doesn't try to be.

She's pretty too, even when she doesn't think it and when her hair is stuck to the side of her face and her eyes are puffy due to sleeping.

# Krysta Studdlefield

Forever, it's been awhile ...

I can't even smile my heart is starting to become fragile and I finally realize I'm in a state of denial, and it's crazy 'cause I can still picture her walking down that aisle with a big smile while being aware that she was still fragile and will be gone with the angels in a little while.

## G

The glory of good in the great golden sun brings genuine goodness in our gentle, glistening eyes makes us feel alive and rise gracefully into the glowing gleaming sunrise. And at the very moment I gazed into greatness and then I say, "Goodness gracious! Why is there so much genuine greatness?" Yes, I said it by no one else could relate to it.

## H

I need to hurry ... what if I don't make it. I must not make it in time holding back my tears trying not to cry. I don't know why I'm scared of time and why I feel this way but I really need to hurry before the end of the day. If I don't make it, I wouldn't know what to really say.

## Innocent

Pure free souls making the impossible the incredible possible inspiring inconsistent others to become consistent and use their intelligence to influence others to become independent something we all imagined as we imagined it.

## J

In the rain with a jacket jumping with a jump rope with these really tight jeans... I don't know maybe I should start jogging just kidding! By the way, that wasn't a joke anyways maybe I should just join a journalist club oh wait I'm already in one at the moment I'm writing.

# Laiah Snipes

## Imaginary

Being seen doesn't mean your truly "seen." Hiding true emotions, putting on the fake smile.

Thoughts in the mind. No one would ever know and you would never show.

"Everything's fine"

is what you may say, but truly everything you're feeling is deeply gray. You try every day not to

feel this way. The more you try, the more you feel "imaginary."

Joy has different meanings for many people. Joy to me comes from the happiness of others.

Having fun underneath the sun brings me joy. Seeing the biggest smiles on my siblings' faces

bring joy to me every day

## Love

Butterflies in my stomach every time you pass by me. Thinking "Geesh, Laiah, don't be so shy."

The words you speak to me put a smile on my face filling up an empty space. Never would have

thought you would be the one to fill my heart. What a surprise it was from the start.

The feeling of comfortability around you amazes me. Wishing my days with you would never end,

attachment and devotion runs deep, I think about you in my sleep. Words can't explain my love and affection.

## Test

Everything in life could be a test that can lead you into a quest. Stress is part of the test of life,

seeing how you can handle situations.

## Temptation

Decided to be healthy and exercise every day. No more late night snacks. 1:00 a.m., up  
as can

be thinking about cookies and cream ice cream in the freezer. Temptation is running  
through

me trying to fight it. Telling myself to just go to sleep so I won't think about it. 2:35  
a.m., ugh,

still wanting the ice cream. It's calling my name. 2:40 a.m. OMG! This ice cream is  
so good.

# Lydia Ratterree

## “O” for Original

I have always been original. When I was a kid, I wore a cowboy hat and cowboy boots everywhere. I habitually carry a big vocabulary with me so I don't end up using the same dried-up words as everyone else. I abhor the thought of being mistaken for someone else. At Christmastime, I will not wear red and green. On the Fourth of July, I refuse to wear red, white, blue –or any combination of those colors. I do not feel comfortable in the status quo and I hate the words “mediocre” and “average”. There is a girl at work who cut her hair like mine –with bangs- and dyed it red. She's not me though.

There is one Lydia; I look at her in the mirror.

To be original, it takes creativity and bravery.

To stand out, you've got to step out.

Originality feels like I am showing the world something it has never seen.

## “P” for Pajamas

Last night I realized I’ve never owned a proper pajama set. The soft kind with a relaxed collar, buttons down the front, and the matching pants. The kind you see in movies or a Sears ad where the entire family is together, wearing big grins, every hair is in place, and their arms are wrapped around each other.

I don’t look like that when I go to bed.

I usually fall asleep in a giant, stained t-shirt. Occasionally I’ll switch it up with a worn-out tank top and unmatching shorts. I’m usually too tired to smile THAT big. My hair is never in place - and not just at bedtime. I live alone, so sometimes I end up just hugging myself.

# Nick Mueser

## Jalopy

They told me it was an old, tired car, but it could do good by me if I treated it with a little love. I wasn’t convinced. It was past its time, but then again so am I, always was, so maybe it was a good fit. Problem was, I didn’t believe for a second I could treat the poor old thing with love. Compassion maybe, remorse even, but I’d have to settle for the closest approximation of love. I settle for that a lot.

## Kitty Genovese

I got bad grocery store sushi on my way home from opening night. Bad times all around. My mind and feet were hurrying home to bed when I heard a small sound at the back of my mind, half imagined. I stopped and listened. A mew? Silence now. I meowed back. Silence again for a few long moments, and then another mew, definitely real this time. I found her under a car, tiny, gray, and terrified. I took me a half hour and two pieces of sushi to fish her out. I’d never had a kitty daughter before and I didn’t know if I’d be fit for the task. This was a year and a half ago and I still don’t. I named her Genovese as an in-joke nobody gets and I always have to explain. She’s semi feral and

kind of insane, but she's mine now and that's that. I couldn't just leave her there, it was near enough a miracle I heard her at all.

## Life

Life is an experiential thing. It's a hard thing to accept sometimes, in the moment, and writing I think makes it worse. When you write, you can make up lives for all your characters, give them triumphs and falls, tragedies and happily-ever-afters, and at the end everything makes sense and comes together in a way that is deeply emotionally satisfying. That's the fundamental difference between fiction and reality. We only get to pick the one life to live, if we even get that, and in the end it won't make much sense because reality doesn't work like that. But we can relax and take a deep breath and smile because our real lives do something our writing cannot. Life can surprise us. And our lives take strange turns.

## Ice Storm

Sam'd give anything for a nice, cool rain. Something to clear the pass and give him some semblance of direction more than the sun rising in the east and trotting on to the west. He'd been a fool to go this far north on his own, but he'd believed at the time that he could make it across the plains toward New Anchorage before the snows hit and no-one else dared the trip. They'd been the smart ones.

Sam managed to dodge the bulk of the ice storm by cutting east toward unfamiliar territory, but now he was trapped in the middle of nowhere with nothing but regrets for

company. A thin sheet of ice blanketed the endless plain, going crunch with the cadence of his boots. Little bits of scrub grass poked through the snow and went crisp in the air.

It'd been more than a week of this now. Every night a fresh drizzle of sleet glazed the land over. Sam had had to ditch the better part of his supplies when the storm first broke and now he'd dwindled his food down to maybe a few days' worth, if he was lucky and careful. But then, had he have been those things, he never would have gotten himself into this predicament in the first place.

He was near enough to town to double back, revel in the "I told you so's" and head out in the spring. But where the hell was town from here?

## “Justice is in Jeopardy, Jeremiah Jones!”

“...And?”

“And you should do something about it!”

“Why me all of a sudden?”

“No, you’re you all the time.”

“But why’s it my responsibility?”

“To be you? Because no-one else will.”

“No, I mean the justice thing.”

“Right, because no-one else will.”

“I... yeah, alright, fair point. So what am I supposed to do about it?”

“You should stop it!”

“Stop... justice?”

“...Yyyeeesss.”

“Uh, alright.”

And so once again, the day is made... well not better, but definitely not significantly worse by the efforts or lack thereof of... Jeremiah Jones, and his side piece Jessica!

“Wait, side piece? Side piece!?”

“Can we not?”

## Sidney Bond

Joyful is what I feel.

Being able to be alive.

I’m joyful for all my family and the ones closest to me.

Being in school I don’t feel very joyful.

**K**arma is my word. Karma is when you get what you deserve for an action that you did.

I’m a strong believer in Karma.

I feel if you treat people bad the universe should treat you bad as well.

I’m a fan of Karma.

I feel people should treat each other well so they won’t have to deal with bad Karma.

My word is **m**aturity.

I’m mature for my age.

I try to be.

I have kid-like tendencies

but overall I try to be mature.

**N**asty is my word.

People can be nasty.

Foods can be nasty.

The world can be too.

I chose the word nasty to describe how people treat people.

People tend to be very mean and nasty to each other.

**Q**uiet is my word.

I'm quiet and stay to myself.

I'm quiet when I wake up.

I'm quiet when I'm upset.

After I'm comfortable around someone I quickly begin to be very quirky.

**R**esponsible is my word.

The decisions I make are why I'm responsible.

**R**espectful is my word.

The way I carry myself and the way I talk to people,

I try to always be respectful with my words and how I treat people.



Ta'Leahia

Johanna McDaniel

# Ta'Leahia Wright-Johnson

## Baffled.

When I get asked dumb questions, for example

“Is that your REAL hair?” or “Is that your daughter?!”

## Beauty.

Beauty is a word not everyone feels about themselves.

For years when I was younger I didn't define myself as a “beautiful person”

because I didn't blend in with everyone else

I was very tall for my age and I was very skinny.

As I got older, I realized beauty wasn't about how tall you were or how big or little you were, it was about how you feel about yourself.

Now that I'm older I describe myself as beautiful in so many ways.

My hair (beautiful), clothes (beautiful), eyes (beautiful), and personality (beautiful).

As a lady in the world I don't think you have to be told you're beautiful to feel it.

Fearless, of most things around me, fearless of people that don't like me

But fearful of college and moving into a life without my mom by my side

telling me "Come on, you got to do this" or "T, you must get up for school"

because most days I just do not want to get up at all.

Frustrated when things don't go my way,

But fussy when I'm tired or just waking up.

Free to say what I want at most times, even though I say them at the wrong time such as church. When I hear someone say "Take your time" and I accidentally blurt out "NO!"

Forgiving when people have to be forgiven.

## Refresh

Last night I was so tired. I took a shower and went downstairs to do some homework.

My phone keeps going off and I'm getting distracted.

I look down at my paper to see "My superhero is.." and that's all I have down.

I think to myself, "that's enough for tonight."

I grab the remote to turn on some Netflix, it's time to relax.

I had a long day.

I click through the movies debating what to watch.

Nothing catches my attention so I get on my phone and respond to people.

I'm starting to relax on my mom's couch when I should be in my bed.

I'm getting tired.

I don't think I can make it up 22 stairs and 15 steps to my room.

All the lights are off besides the TV screen that's keeping the room lit just enough for me to be comfortable.

Last thing I remember is me on YouTube watching a story time.

I woke up this morning on my mom's couch feeling refreshed.

That was the best sleep I had in awhile.

No Aireya kicking me or her right under me having nightmares screaming "TT."

Just a perfect peaceful night.

No tossing and turning, fan on, snuggled in my blanket.

Not too hot but cold enough.

Woke up this morning with a little bit of sunshine peeking through the patio doors.

# Teala Young

## Judge

People are always judged from the second they walk into the door.

Someone always has something to say, whether it's good or bad.

Everyone is judged, whether it's their skin color, the way they act, or simply the way they look. Some things people can't change, and they're judged off things that are not their fault.

It's so easy to judge someone you know NOTHING about.

Nitpick, napping, nag, name, not, new, nephew, need.

So many to pick from.

I think I like “need” the most.

I need a lot of things.

I need attention.

I need more money.

I need longer days.

I need longer nights.

I need a new phone.

I need a job.

need a car.

Needs are something everyone has.

I wish I could just make all my needs come true.

If I have all my needs pleased, life would be 10x better.

But I’m great with them.

## Observant

I’m very observant.

I sit back and watch a lot of things and people.

My mom tells me all the time you can tell more about a person just from sitting back and listening to them.

A person’s actions and attitudes can speak louder than 1,000 words.

You can get to know someone just by observing them.

## Outspoken

I am a very outspoken person.

I stand up for what’s right if I don’t agree with something.

I have never been one to sit back and not say anything.

# Tailon Jones

## Inspiration

I look up to so many people

My mom, dad, grandpa, grandma, and my siblings.

They all did something that inspired me.

My dad stayed there to look after me even though he didn't have a father growing up.

Therefore, I am going to stay there for my kids in the future.

My mom works everyday to feed my siblings and I, even if she barely has the money for it.

My grandpa doesn't want to retire even though he's around 70 and works at Jeep for 40+ years.

My grandma doesn't have a job, but she makes money by cooking food and having my grandpa sell it to his co-workers.

I have been inspired to look after my family and repay my parents in whatever way I can in the future.

Oh, maybe my siblings haven't inspired me yet.

## SECTION III AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

### Part I

#### Ending High School Separation

**Year 1:** Allysa, Austen, Ciara, Courtney, Heather, Jenaie, Juli, Murtaza, Shakirra (see introductions at the beginning of the issue)

When I introduced the idea of doing research with the kids in their junior and senior year, teacher Bridget Smith was excited about the idea. I wasn't sure what it would look like but I wanted it to be created by the kids, involve autoethnography of some sort, and lead to presentation and publication. We chose the topic of social separation for the first and directed the conversations and writing prompts as a way to have some structure the first time around. My dissertation research, where I had interviewed twenty four physicians from around the country about their understanding of poverty in the U. S., inspired my curiosity to see how policies in the United States had kept people apart by class and by race and what would happen if a bridge was created to counter the separation. The doctors in my study who had a realistic view of poverty in the United States described an epiphinal moment when the invisibility of poverty in the United States finally became visible. My thought at the onset of this project was that both high school students and university students studying to be in health care professions would benefit from getting to hear each other's story.

I published an opinion piece for the *Blade* (Nov. 10, 2018) describing the students work at Rogers, “In the United States, most neighborhoods are separated by race and class, and most of us live without the benefits of racial and economic diversity. When talking to physicians directly about their understandings of poverty, I discovered that social separation is often at the root of implicit bias — unconsciously held attitudes and stereotypes. There are myths about poverty perpetuated among the middle class, and the majority of physicians come from middle-class backgrounds. If a student does not have experiences that disrupt these attitudes and stereotypes, students continue to believe the myths they learned in their socially separated neighborhoods — for example, poverty is the result of a lack of discipline and bad decisions on the part of the poor.” Social separation, created by decades of housing discrimination, has created stark divisions and economic inequality between neighborhoods. This separation causes a lack of experiences of economic diversity. Segregated neighborhoods have also supported regular misunderstandings between white and black families, and individuals who have economic success looking down on those that struggle economically.

I go on to write in the *Blade*, “University students and scholars work alongside Rogers High School students creating ways to connect and disrupt attitudes and stereotypes about young people, youth of color, and students who decide to be doctors, pharmacists, and social workers. Each week we listen carefully to the larger narrative about neighborhoods that helps us shy away from thoughts of superiority and create empathy instead of marginalization.” In my work about empathy being the key to disrupting bias, I have learned the importance of embodied empathy, or an awareness of another person’s experience through the senses. Being audience to creative writing is a helpful way to connect with a writer’s experience through sensual description. The writing group is

unique practice of listening and finding meaning in a person’s words.

Again I write in the *Blade*, “It is not hard to see the differences in our ages and our opportunities. I am intrigued, however, in the similarities we have discovered. We all suffer from separation. We write about our common experiences of feeling unaccepted. We often share how it feels when we are not able to meet others’ expectations and the anger that comes with being underestimated by the people in our lives. Through this group, we have learned the importance of listening carefully to others and consider ways we can resist marginalizing people who are different.”

We used Jenny Slater’s (2015) work, *Youth and disability: A challenge to Mr. Reasonable*, as a guide to our research, as evidenced by a variety of examples inspired by Slater’s letter to Mr. Reasonable at the beginning of her book. Slater’s book is an autoethnography inspired by her work with youth with disabilities. We discussed her use of critical theory in the group and the possibility of utopian writing as a way to explore a future without social separation. The main themes we addressed and explored further in the team’s first year together were the following:

- Stereotypical assumptions
- Ignorance of multiple perspectives
- Creating open-mindedness
- Adults not recognizing current pressures and current cultural changes for youth
- Catching isolation, depression, and anxiety early
- Oversensitivity to categories

The group presented their process and findings at the Ray Browne Conference at Bowling Green State University spring of 2018 and then again at the International Human Trafficking Conference at the University of Toledo, September 2018 (all of the students in the Fearless Writers project had the artwork in this edition and selected written works displayed in an art exhibit at the conference). With the support of their teachers, the students enjoyed reading their own words and fielding the questions of the audience. The audiences were engaged and seemed intrigued by the model and methodological approach.

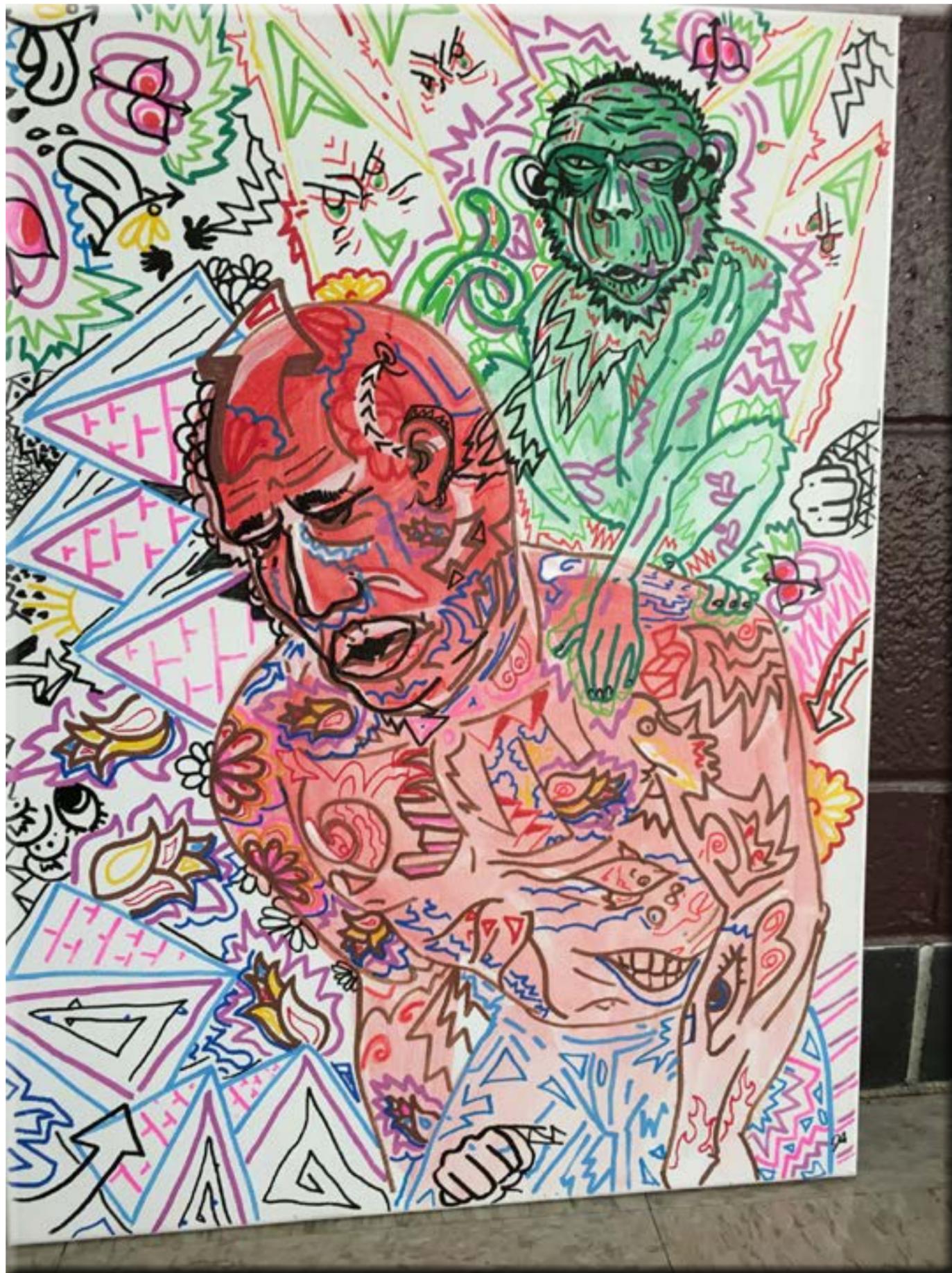
**Year 2:** The team changed to include: Allysa, Amantria Scott, Andrea, Austen, Cara, Heather, Jenaie, Kay, Lydia, and Shakirra (see introductions at the beginning of the issue)

The focus of the second year was to consider what action we could take as a group to disrupt social separation and begin considering the creation of an academic article while continuing to discuss and write. The group arranged for several opportunities for youth from schools in Toledo and surrounding area to get together to discuss social separation and write together as a way of getting neighborhoods together that might never have the opportunity except for at rival sporting events. Transportation and part-time jobs have always been a barrier to our afterschool activities. Adults with reliable transportation and an interest in youth writing did gather to talk about the possibility of high schools coming together. This fall a writing group has been started with students from Bowling Green High School.

There is a renewed concern about the demand that has been caused long-term by redlining policies policies from the 1930s. City maps were marked with redlines and neighborhoods were deemed dangerous. Areas of cities were left to languish and there

was often no way out for families. Neighborhoods outside of these marked areas would not sell or rent to families of color or lower income families. The redlined neighborhoods have remained areas of concentrated poverty even after decades of policies supporting integration. Toledo is one of several cities concerned with the legacy of redlining: <https://www.toledoblade.com/local/city/2019/02/01/toledo-redlining-neighborhoods-discrimination-black-white-african-american-poverty/stories/20190122141>.

**Heather Sloane**



Pressed #1

Joshua Archer



Photo #6

Sarah Burns

# Alyssa Crittenden

## High

High and yet, their own mind is so low.

When I see this man I expect the world, the moon, and the stars.

But does he want the best?

In this little shallow box he stays to himself.

But as I wonder what are his thoughts...

What has him sitting in one spot not finishing the race, or what we call life?

Pushing him forward.

Trying to indicate the correct path to choose.

But still yet he is stuck in a box that won't let him move.

One step forward but it seems the finish line always moves.

But, as I step off, to give him space, I wonder where or should I begin again.

## Beginning to the End

...from the beginning to the end. I started in an egg, days went by then so did weeks and months.

I cracked open.

I was now in a world I knew nothing about.

But you were willing to help me soar and expand my wings.

The time went on, I was older now, everyday I had watched you go out and come back as a routine.

Was it my turn now?

Was it my turn now?

I began to follow but you wanted much more.

I fell and got put down, but still you wanted more.

I take my flight once more you expect so much more.

## 6 and 9

You see a 6 and I see a 9

We all look through a mirror imagining

What we wish to see. We all hope

To see a light into the deep stare

of the reflection. We hope to touch a

Contagious vine, a vine that can

Grow spiritually, emotionally and physically.

Through clouds covering, through the

Smears of the mirror, we hope to get

Through the storm eventually,

With all the floods we change our moods eventually.

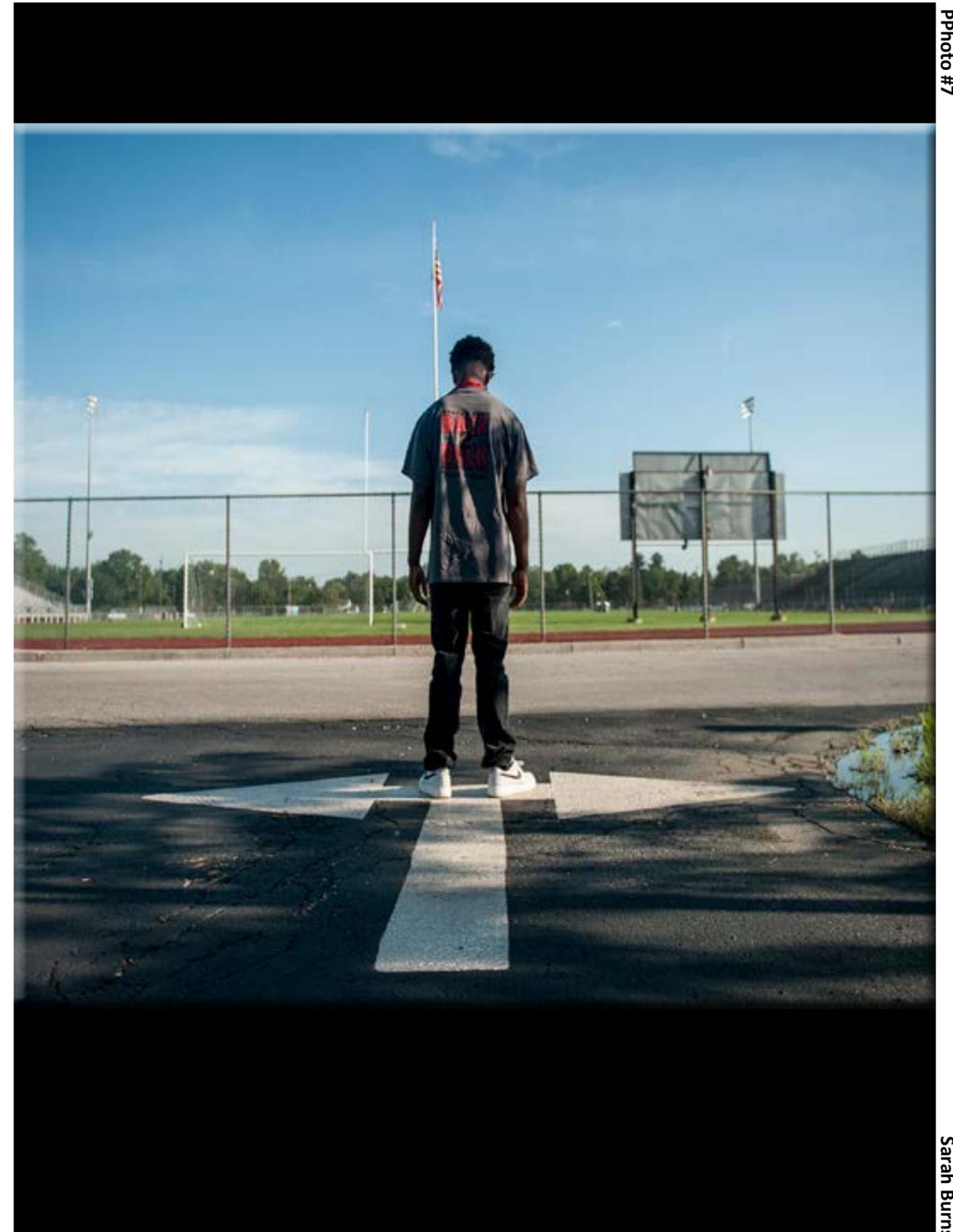
Looking back into the mirror we see a reality we wish to leave.

# Andrea Hill

## Sensitivity

(inspired by discussions at Ray Browne Conference 2019)

Sensitivity... when I hear that word I think about the root of it all being sensitive. Sensitive is supposed to be a good thing but is often used in forms providing negative connotation. Sensitive skin... who wants that? Sensitive teeth... who needs that? Sensitive son?! Heaven forbid that a young man be labeled sensitive because that flows into soft and all other kinds of adjectives that minimize the masculinity of an individual. Sensitive as a woman is expected though right? We are supposed to cry we are supposed to feel and if we aren't sensitive enough somehow that equates to our femininity not being real. I guess I'm not real because sensitive is the last thing someone would add to a bio about me. But I contradict this myth in secret where I cry my sensitive tears, pray my sensitive prayers and think my sensitive thoughts. But because sensitivity is somehow negative I hide it away like the young man who doesn't feel man enough, the child who doesn't feel good enough and the woman who lives in a world that tells her no matter how she feels she's still not enough.



# Austen Allen

## Choir Class

In my choir class there are many sports fanatics and jocks that are in there. Sometimes they're just in there because that 's what was put on their schedule, however, most of them use it as an excuse to hide the fact that they actually want to be in there. When singing they keep quiet and look at others to see if they're being watched or in their mind possibly judged because when doing it, you can tell the slight enjoyment in their demeanor is real. I don't agree with their reasoning for why they would do something like this, but I understand the fact that they don't want anything else added to their reputation for it would be deemed as lame and not cool. They don't want to be noticed this way so instead they come to the idea of being a class clown for the attention they get and it seems they like that better, but when doing it everyday, their peers tend to get used to it until it gets annoying and not funny and when the class clowns notice this they're quiet, not getting noticed anymore.

## My Life

In each stage of my life, from childhood to now, I've been categorized as many things such as cool kid, the mean guy, the one who gets around, bully, etc., but truthfully, in my opinion, I have no label or category. I've always thought due to the situations I've been in, places I've been, and how I was taught as a child has given me the ability to relate to everyone, or be questionable as to where I'm labeled. That's why I have such a different variety of friends and acting habits. For example, I can be what is considered a "cool kid" because of how I talk and my confidence, but then be titled "nerd" because of my intelligence or academic hobbies. I can watch anime at home and be labeled geek, but I also play football so no, its Jock. I feel I don't fall into any category because I'm doing different things than what society expects which is too simple for me.

# Cara Swain

## Emotional

Ever since I was a small child, I was emotional. I took things too seriously, was too intense, cried too much, laughed too hard.

Emotional meant that there was something wrong with me. That I was weaker than others or that I was too vulnerable to things around me changing. That I cared too deeply. Always a negative, never a positive.

Now that I am an adult, I do not see it as a negative any more. I do not wish to have less emotions like I did as a child. I wish only to have more REAL emotions.

I wish for my emotions to be respected and not scoffed at. I wish to have control over them and not so that I can stifle them but so that they are mine and not influenced by people around me. I WANT to feel them and lean into them because that is not something that a child would do. I no longer want to run from them, but I want to embrace them.

Being emotional is a gift and not a curse.

# Ciara Cuthbert

## Observation

I am a camera – notice what you notice without explaining or interpreting.

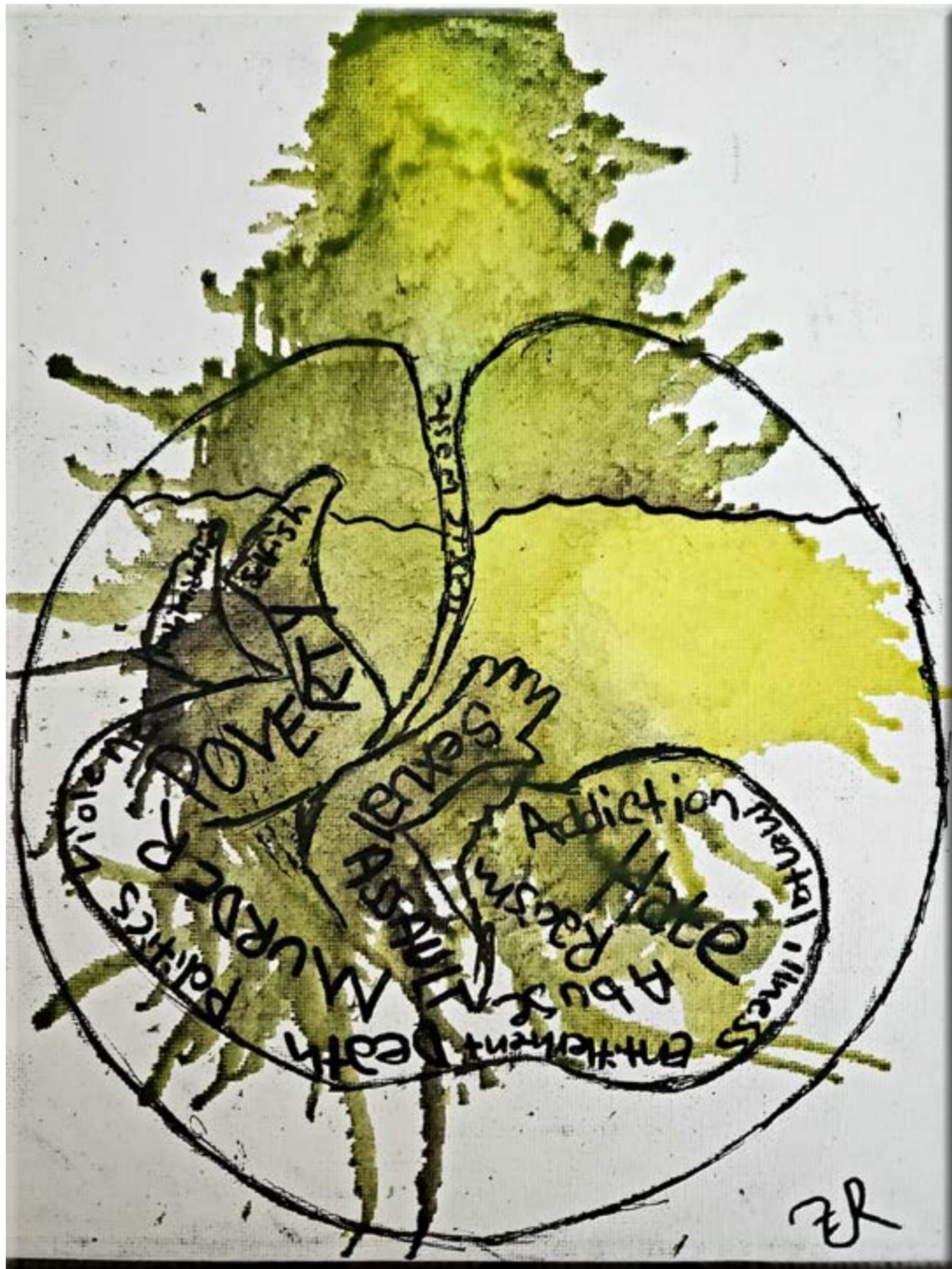
Turn on your camera ... think of your favorite place better if there are lots of people  
record without thinking

## Memory

I don't know why I remember

Nothing big - like births or deaths but little things like ...

A plastic bat on my father's fishing boat we used as kids to hit the fish.



Painting #12

Leigh Pinkleman

# Heather Sloane

## Mr. Reasonable – September 2018

I am tired of hearing the phrase “you are too sensitive” ... ”she is too sensitive, they are too sensitive, and he is too sensitive.”

I have been told by people described as passionate that I lead with emotion instead of lead with ration. My strength as a feminist has been called into question because I nurture, because I am tender hearted.

Women get dismissed as emotional, and yet there is power in having emotional knowledge. To dismiss emotion is to dismiss women because it is a gender attribute.

Ideally problems would be faced with emotional and rational intelligence – in each person (regardless of gender).

We are failing our communities because we pretend not to see our culture’s lack of emotional connection. Misunderstanding and lack of connection are killing us.

Wake up and recognize this and stop running away from connection and emotion. What is currently wrong in the US cannot be seen under a microscope and can’t be pushed into a clinical trial.

“YOU ARE NOT SENSITIVE ENOUGH”

## Twenty

Young male white about twenty

Wet hair combed over his forehead

Well planned out relaxed look.

He has an animated whale on the back of his shirt

Seems very whimsical for what otherwise seems a serious

Individual

He quietly, calmly waits for his hot latte

He scrolls slowly through his social media

I imagine he is anticipating his morning of writing

Creative writing

## Ready

It was late when I was “ready” for attention and that I allowed myself to perform butterfly instead of my comfortable caterpillar.

I hated that gaze – the lecherous gaze of all men and boys and the catty/intense inspection of all women and girls.

If felt like being sent of hot coals with bare feet.

I have never negotiated gender performance well and as I have endured it over the years I have only become more sensitive to it not calloused and detached.

Getting older is a blessing in my eyes because graying hair and wrinkling skin is a whole other creature beyond caterpillar and butterfly. I am still unsure what beast best describes the experience and how I will resist the category but I feel likely it will be peaceful.

## What it Takes

It takes a deep breath

In

Let all the negative voices

swim around your head

and take their fleeting toll on you

Out

Empty your head of

all preconceived notions

Listen

Carefully

Let the details fill in the empty space

Focus on your senses to describe

that person's life:

How their Thanksgiving dinner smells

How the colors in the house are carefully placed

How it feels to walk outside in the morning as they rush to school

Pay attention to the sound of the music they listen to cope through the rough times

Start to see their strength - the light

The talent - the gifts

that they offer.

Encourage the light,

while trying your best to understand the dark

Be reminded of the definition of open

Be reminded that all minds are flexible and capable

or seeing more - practice

more - improve your mind to improve the world

Choose to be open



# Jenaie Johnson

## What They Expect for Me

Start of the school year with honors classes, it will make you smarter.

I expect that you don't be me in high school.

I want you to do sports to keep you active.

I want you to tryout for track you look like you can be a good runner.

But since you expect this from me I do it to make you happy. But, what if I didn't want to do these things.

I like to have you around and giving me advice but you are an adult and you need to have expectations for yourself.

I know you don't want me to become you, but this is my life and it's time to put my life in my hands and see where it takes me.

## 5th Grade

In 5<sup>th</sup> grade I was different.

I was not social; I kept to myself and I was fine with that.

But when people saw me as the weird one that made me think, should I change to make people think I'm not weird?

I've tried changing my clothes and my hair.

As I started to make friends that didn't care what I wore, that made me think, why should I change myself just for other people to like me when I know they do not care.

I shouldn't care what other people think of me.

All that matters is what I think of myself.

## Expectations (little brother)

My expectations for you are to be good.

You're starting your first year in high school in August.

Don't slack it will come back at you in a different way.

You are starting your freshman year with 2 honors classes. This means if you get good grades in these classes you will get a higher education and possibly more homework.

But trust me it will be good for you in the long run.

And if you need help, I will be right beside you cheering you on your high school year.

And of course you will have your family cheering you on too.

You can make mistakes (it's OK) but I expect you to do that.



Painting # 13

Leigh Pinkleman

# Juli Lambert

## Expectations for my Little Sisters

Acknowledge your beauty and know that I'm not just talking about your face.

Make smart choices and some questionable ones too.

Never let heartbreak keep you from loving again.

Come to me when you are sad, I have good shoulders for crying.

But also come to me when you are happy so I can share in your laughter.

Don't worry if we argue because we'll make up over boba and manicures.

If ever you don't love yourself, call me so I can give you all the reasons why.

I expect all of this from you.

I expect you to mess up and to succeed.

But most of all I expect you to know that I will always love you.

## Letter to my Grandmother

Dear beautiful woman,

I miss you every day. I miss the way you laugh, the way you smell, the way you hugged. But most of all I miss the way you sing. That deep alto crooning away to some melody. It soothed my soul.

Dear diva woman,

Your swag is forever immortalized. From the tips of your studded boots to the top of your bald head. I can only hope to be as fly as you.

Dear wonder woman,

Thank you for all that you've done for your family, and for me. Thank you for your love, for your support, for your knowledge, for your presence.

# Murtaza Syed

## Unfair

What is an unfair expectation?

(Well, I guess my mom's expectations for me to study every day, I don't ever really meet those unless it's the days leading up to a test.)

But I feel, what really matters is, in the end, what are the outcomes?

I pass my tests. Am I meeting expectations?

Maybe I simply don't care about others' expectations for me.

Or maybe I've tried so hard to meet others' expectations that I've erased myself?

In the past, I've been called quiet—I guess that means people expected me to talk more.

But somewhere on the other side of the world, that word (or its translation) didn't pop up once—instead, it was 好青年—“good young man.”

The day I returned to this side of the world,

I was quiet once again.

## Observation

(Prompt, 1/25/2018: Recount a time when you were people watching)

It's a waiting area.

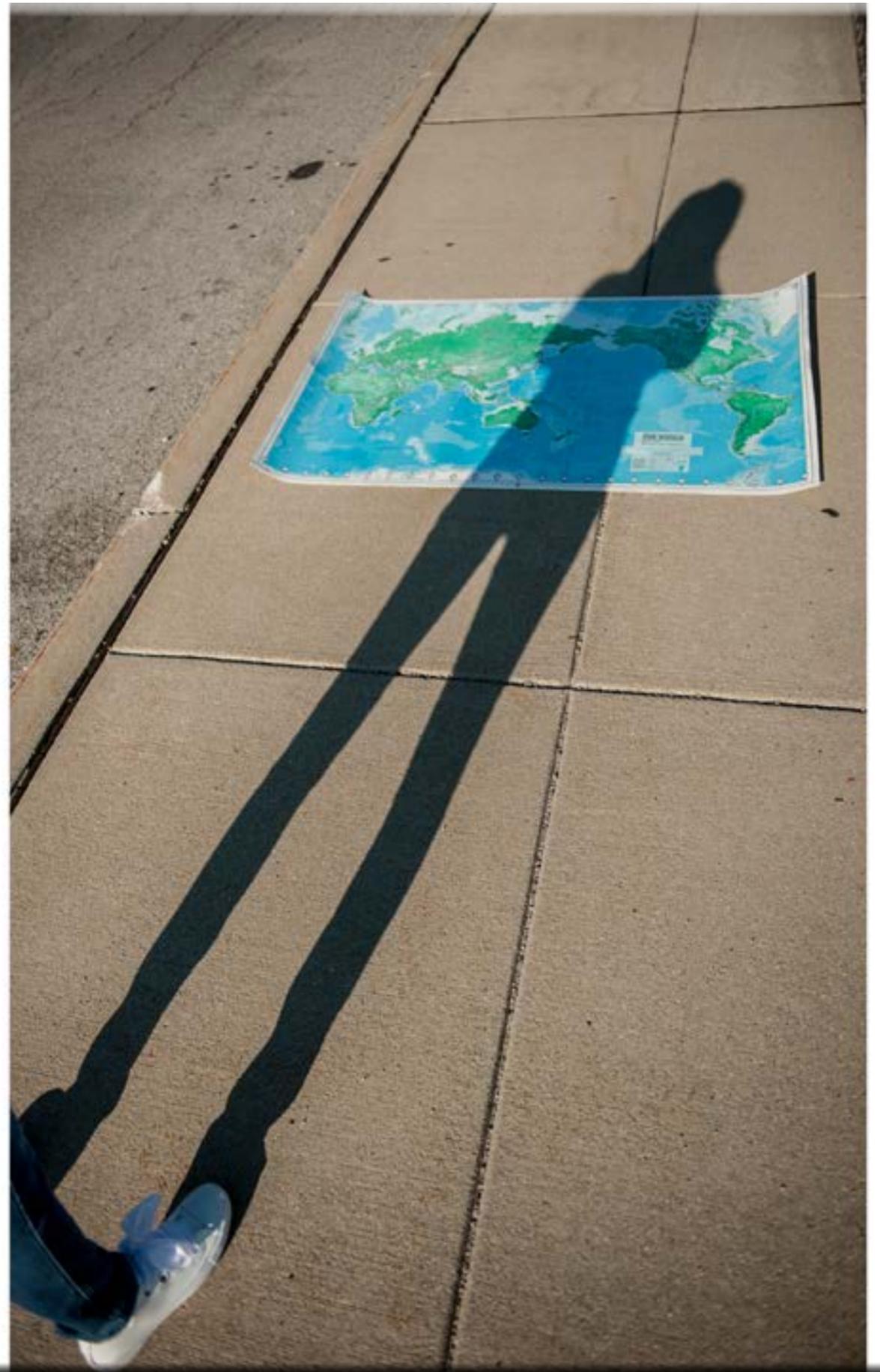
What is he waiting for?

It's a dentist's office. He's making use of his time—or perhaps rushing out of procrastination—searching for the perfect gift on his phone. He makes a call and asks about availability for a toy—probably his son. It's less than a week before Christmas.

Somehow, there's a feeling: a hope for his success. Who in the waiting area would want to hear the phone conversation end, "Sorry, we're out of stock"? Who would want to witness the defeat of a father unable to provide happiness for his own son?

--but the call doesn't end that way. He continues scrolling down his phone. Did he find what he was looking for?

It's unclear.



# Shakirrah Hudspeth

## Numb to Expectations

By the end of my freshman year I had to separate myself from friends that were “boring” or not involved in school activities these people known as a bit lazy or not the type to be in school functions. I didn’t want to fit in this group. I was already starting to get the “bad” reputation of lazy or “no school spirit”. I became involved in school hobbies, sports, programs, and clubs (like dance, cheer, and Young Women of Excellence). I wanted people to know my expectations are “not doing anything” like, going home or partying. I was heart-broken I had to leave alone my mid-school friends because they were different as they go to high school. It was best for me. I want to show that I am more to this school and having friends like them was not going to cut it. I needed “something new.” I had surrounded myself with different people who were on the same page as me; now we all succeed together! From the beginning of sophomore year till now, I wanted to live life and not let life live me. I wanted to show my worth or value in this school (just to go back and say I had done something); I didn’t let my time there pass me by. I made memories.

## What They Expect from Me—2/8/18

I’m supposed to be all out responsible, smart, wise with no mistakes, tackling all great goals and achievements - just to satisfy my parents right to brag.

I’m to be the leader and stick to the way “they” want me to love my life again.

I’m not allowed to make any mistakes but if I do I would be looked at differently.

I am just a “teen” with small experience but a lot of curiosity.

Like JFK stated:

“The greater our knowledge increases, the more our ignorance unfolds”.

I believe that what they expect for me is the best but I’ll find the best in life by the path I chose.

“You become wise from mistakes and life failures.”

How am I to live this expectation if I’m only allowed to take the route they want me to take?

## Dear Mr. Reasonable

A judgment is made based on your race, gender, and sexuality from society's view

People are never really open-minded like they say they are.

When people don't fit into society, this is the reason that the person is "not normal"

But, what exactly is "normal" and who fits into this group?

This judgment on how I should act, is normal to 1. my gender, 2. my race.

There Mr. Reasonable, you don't have any logical reason for humans to think.

Your people's thoughts have put a bad meaning in society, and their reason reflects into a judgment.

At times I am criticized on how I carry myself. Mr. Reasonable can't reason at all for why I act the way I do.

This group of students wanted to expand Fearless Writers to other high schools in the area. They felt writing together and talking together would start to heal the wounds of social separation in our area. This year we have started a small group from Bowling Green High School and what follows is a sample of that writing.

# Courtney Rice

## Curled

Curled up in the burrow,  
Snuggling tight next to Mother,  
We're warm and happy without a single worry.

Dark and cold with a brisk winter wind,  
Nose sniffing and tongue lapping,  
I pray I made me worth of my Human.

I sit up so quickly with ears a foot long,  
"Something is coming," I say to Mother.  
"Go back to sleep, my love. We are safe," she replies.

Climbing down the hill, I have a scent,  
I begin to howl and whine.  
"That's a good boy," says Human.

With a bright shock of cold air I jolt up,

A wet nose is in my ear,  
"Atta boy!" I hear a man.

I'm so excited I found a hare family.  
Human is smiling so I must have done well,  
"Get the big one," I hear Human tell Man.

Suddenly Mother is gone and I hear a crack and a bang,  
My siblings are left with me,  
The nose has subsided.

It is so cold and lonely,  
I'm not sure what lies ahead,  
Where is Mother?

I look back and see the babies,  
Should I tell Human? Is that okay?  
I feel confused,  
He is so happy, but they are so scared.

I begin to bark at the hole,  
Human turns with the big rabbit clutched,  
He asks "What's up, boy?"

I nudge at the babes.

I'm excited I can sense Human's feelings,  
He must know we need to help these bunnies.

Human frowns and begins to shed a tear,  
I put my head on his lap assuring him I'm here.

# Heather Sloane

## Which Town?

Which town do I miss today?

Which town does my heart claim as home?

I have lived here the longest and my kids grew up here, but my heart claims  
Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Manassas, Williamsburg, Richmond, Urbana.

Today I am longing for Richmond due to a stupid zombie game that creates  
Richmond as a safe place.

It has conjured up memories of the Fan.

Brick townhouses smushed together.

Brick streets with hidden gardens.

Old trees filled with sunset colored leaves.

This is the city where I was first independent,

Working with the homeless, living with my boyfriend.

We had shitty jobs and ate awful food,  
but we were part of a vibrant neighborhood.

I had so many hours of

Study, work, friendships, creativity.

I saved money to go to the movies,

For a fancy cup of coffee and relished the

Small joys that I now take for granted.

My most vivid memories were walking home by myself,

When the summer showers would hit every afternoon.

I would walk in the rain and enjoy the wet soak

And being alone, the only fool to brave the deluge.

The city was mine in the symphony of drizzle.

# Manita Ojha

## Boredom

The boredom had set in. Unbearable heat, and no reprieve but “Mamta AC”, the fan we begged my mother to spin every five minutes. No TV, no interesting books, no internet, nothing downloaded on my phone. We had run out of games and were practically sick of each other. Three days before, a huge tropical storm had hit. The rain was much welcomed after nearly a week of scorching heat, but I guess the monsoon didn’t want to come so easily. So after destroying wires for lights and internet, after knocking over plenty of old trees, after causing damage to nearly everyone’s homes, the weather had decided bringing the sun back would be a blessing to us all. The next night we had slept under the stars, playing Anthyakshari (1) until our throats hurt from singing and our bellies hurt from laughing. We counted the stars until our eyes drooped, and Mamta AC kept going all night so the mosquitoes wouldn’t bite every free piece of skin. The next morning we weren’t woken up by a cool breeze, but were instead sent running from the roof because of the blazing heat. We started counting again, only this time it was mosquito bites. Over 50 on me alone.

## Filled with Pride

Every time I go back I'm filled with pride. Lexington is more alive than ever, with my playground and my garden still intact. I can barely remember my time here, but the love grows as I walk down the streets, seeing the building with the orb shape on top again, feeling the mist on my legs as I walk past the fountain again. Children screaming in swimsuits run into me. I used to be one of them. I continue on my way to the many-storied library. The pendulum in the middle of the floor is still there, and I watch in awe in the same spot I did at five, this time understanding why this object moves the way it does. New meets old as I walk my dog past the koi pond I often jumped over as a child, past blooming tulip fields, past the log "diner" I used to serve my mother mud out of—I couldn't fit in it now even if I tried. The sun lights my face, and this town my heart.

## Tennessee

When I was younger my dad lived in Tennessee, which meant long road trips during school breaks. At some point later at night, my mother, father, and I would get tired, and it'd be time to break out the Bollywood songs (2). Quite a few of them were slower, romantic tunes. I don't know how those were supposed to energize us, but we would sing them together anyways. The earliest songs I can remember were from a movie called "Yes Boss". I didn't even watch the movie until I was 9, but I more or less knew every song. Other favorites were the soundtrack to "Lootera", the song "Piyu Bole" from "Parineeta", and "Pehli Nazar Mein" from "Race"—the song that made five-year-old all-things-pink Manita want to play the electric guitar. These songs remain my favorites years later, and I continue to add to the list. Whenever I find myself at a low-energy place in life, I put these songs on and let the familiar instruments, the soothing lyrics, the nostalgic memories they bring wash over me and reinvigorate me.

1 A parlor game played in India where each player sings the first verse of a song that begins with the Hindustani consonant on which the previous player's song selection ended.

2 The Indian Hindi-language film industry based in Mumbai.

# AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

## Part II

### **Stereotype Threat: The Untold Story of Toledo Youth Gun Violence**

This group benefited from two years of free writing together prior to talking with each other about issues that bothered them. We brainstormed ideas for research and they landed on stereotypes. This decision was based in part on the film, *The Hate You Give* (2018), which most of the students had recently seen. We decided to start our inquiry with the film. The students wrote into prompts inspired by the film and what it would be like to be in court as the main character. This exercise led us to discussion about a shooting that involved one of the kid's friends and other media such as the movie *Kings* (2017) that involved guns and young people of color. The students would regularly discuss how the newspaper told one story but that the real story never gets told about the realities of guns for youth in Toledo. We looked at the stories in the *Blade* that addressed the gun death of their friend and it sounded like a police report. There were many details left out. The impact of a young person's death in Toledo due to gun violence has ripples. The Fearless Writers described how the ripples influenced their daily lives.

The local paper keeps track of the number of homicides in the metropolitan area

with an interactive map. There have been thirty deaths in 2019 as of the first week of November. If we explored the murders, the snippets in the paper would not do justice to the stories the kids could tell. Each shooting is a fascination and a cautionary tale. In the second year of this work the students have been focusing on the Netflix series, *When They See Us* (2019) a dramatisation of five adolescents falsely accused of assaulting a woman in Central Park in 1989. The students have also been discussing gun shots fired at one of their away football games this fall.

**Heather Sloane**

# Blake Young

I'm just a 16-year old boy that loves going to the park. It was summertime and there was tournaments so I knew everyone would be at Wilson Park, so I went and I enjoyed myself. As it got dark, most people left so me and a couple of friends went to my best friend's ex-boyfriend's house across the street because she wanted us to go while she try and argue with her ex and the girls in the house. Once the girls came out to get in the car they maced everybody including me, Shaud. So I ran and Blake called my name until she found me and tried to help me. We heard police sirens so I ran. One or two hours later I got shot in my stomach by my enemies so I shot back. Who knew I was going to hit the innocent one? I just shot back and one hour later I was on a stretcher on my way to the hospital.

## The Little Boy

(inspired by *The Hate You Give*)

The little boy was tired of seeing people hurt his family. He was sick of seeing the police mess

with his dad and he was sick of King threatening his sister and his father. The little boy who was

stressed out; he didn't want to have to go stay with his uncle and hide from home. He wanted a normal life. Moral of the story is if the police officer wouldn't have killed the innocent

black boy that was just trying to comb his hair, none of this would have happened.

## The Rose

(inspired by Tupac [2000] *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*)

The Rose is probably Tupac. And since it grew in the concrete, Tupac is probably talking about how he grew up. And this could mean the rose growing in the concrete stands for the hood? Or just something you don't see every day. It could also mean the rose is a random person that came somewhere that they didn't belong in? Or it could also just mean it's a strong rose and he's a strong man?

## Stereotype

(inspired by *Kings*, 2017)

A stereotype that me and my mom receive is looking like boosters/shoplifters. Supposedly if you're a black young lady the workers in the store will usually assume you're stealing. They really get concerned if you have a purse. Me and my Mom saw a girl come in the store with one of those little across the body purses and everywhere she walked in that store they followed her. Another time was when me and a friend of mine went to the mall and we saw this girl. She was black and the worker ladies called a police officer to come in the store and he came in only to find out she had bought something.

I just feel like you shouldn't judge a book by its cover! Just because she's black does not mean she's going to steal. She had money and manners. She tried to smile when the lady grabbed her. It shouldn't have gone that far. People don't think before they do things. They just take actions. The lady didn't care about the little girl having a family or being someone's child. She took an innocent life for nothing.

## Young Boys

I just think it's crazy how young boys think. If you have some type of beef with someone there isn't any fighting.

It's just all shooting and killing. No making up or walking away.

The real thing that happened was that everyone was at Wilson Park for the tournaments. Everyone was having fun and laughing then it got dark.

Innocent Shaud was trying to help his BFF and he got maced. Me and my sisters helped him.

Then gunshots were fired.

Everyone ran.

We tried to tell Shaud to come with us but he said no and left.

He went on Spring and a car drove by, rolled the window down, shot six times and hit Shaud in his belly.

He has sickle cell already.

So he shot back and hit M in the arm and L in the head.

He didn't want to hurt anyone but sometimes that's just how life is.

## *When They See Us (2019)*

When I first watched this show it made me mad. Those young boys/men went through so much and no child should have to go through what happened, ever. The criminal justice system was very racist back then. They didn't care about colored people. All they cared about was putting the blame on five innocent little boys. This story was an eye-opener and while I was watching the show, I felt like I was in the courtroom with all of the feeling, the voices, and the way the story was unfolding. I just felt all of that. The moral of the story is, don't judge a book by its cover.

# Duvonna Goins

*Where is the Love?* Black Eyed Peas, 2013

Emotions grow for ones you don't even know when your heart is filled with love. Ending hatred isn't easy but Love is most definitely a start. Stop pushing away things you don't understand, embrace and learn from them. Be mindful of separation; it only causes chaos. Love those around you because you never know when you'll see them again.

*When they see us*

Running away to stay sane didn't work. Lying to make my mom's pain go away didn't help. I'm a brown girl in this world trying to make sense of what happened to our people. Why are we the targets? Why can't we just be brown and live to see 23. Statically men in my neighborhood don't live that long. It's so sad to see people dying so young. How or why would I ever want to raise a son in these shambles, these corrupt circumstances. I don't get it why would the world be so cruel.

## Football game shooting

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 a safe haven. Fight or flight in overdrive. God, I hope they make it out alive.

# Jaylyn Ellis

## Hands up, don't shoot

(inspired by *The Hate You Give*)

Hands up, don't shoot  
Youth these days killed left and right  
Killed by our own and sometimes white  
Why take instead of making things great  
Innocent lives drift away  
I want things to be ok  
You killed my happiness, my peace  
All over a brush  
We need justice  
And I stand on it  
Hands up, don't shoot  
The innocent lives just stripped away  
And all those bad guys getting away  
A black child graduating  
Is so absurd  
But not just blacks, Hispanics too  
They killing us all  
But it's nothing new  
There's nothing they could do

## Dear Mr. Reasonable,

(inspired by *The Hate You Give*)

I overcame you,  
forgave you, had such shame because of you.  
I Blamed you.  
I once painted a perfect frame towards you.  
So thanks to you, I now have a rage flamed by you.  
Thank you for finally showing me the real/ true you.

## The Ending

(inspired by *The Hate You Give*)

The ending had me shook up. I felt the cop knew when enough was enough after the little boy pulled the gun out. But then again, I felt the cop would have shot him if there wasn't a lot of people around at the time.

## “Because there was a gun”

(inspired by *The Hate You Give*)

Because there was a gun it ended all the fun.  
Because there was a gun my life was done.  
Guns blazing.  
Crowd glazing.  
I'm dying; laying there crying, asking myself, “Am I really dying?”  
Mama's crying.  
Babies sobbing.  
Red, white and blue.  
I guess you can say their coming to save you.  
Steady thinking, “Why you?”  
One shot to the head.  
Now I'm gone.  
So long.  
I guess you can say my brothers were wrong after all.

## I'm Seeing

(inspired by Tupac [2000] *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*)

I'm seeing a different perspective.

The flower is having a hard time growing within itself.

But it doesn't give up.

# Jevaughn Johnson

## Stereotypes are all around us

Reason I say that is because, when you get pulled over you have to immediately show your hands and obey every time. It's not that I want to think that it's just the right thing us black people have to do.

Another stereotype is that being black already makes us labeled, once we get to a certain point of age they think we are automatically dangerous.

We could be walking down the street with a hoodie on and Skittles in our hand and we already look suspicious.

Walk into that grocery store and the clerk is already looking at you waiting for you to do something.

## Grab My Shoes

Grab my shoes. Grab some gum.

Going to the north side to have some fun.

Tournament time looking around.

Seeing all the greats but there's always drama going on.

People don't know how to stay strong.

People get chased.

Girls getting maced. All you hear is the sound of people crying.

One loud bang.

Everything changes.

Car speeds off.

Two brothers are getting teed off.

## Fight

Fight, it's not what you think it is.

It's not two people going toe to toe in the back alley.

What I mean is you need to fight to become something big.

Not just for you but for people to see you and see a change.

It starts with good morning, have a good night, or how was your day?

Or, saying take a deep breath.

Start over.

Fight for the change of education, and help someone out if you know they need it.

Fight for them.

That extra hour to do your homework before your body says it's time for bed.

Don't let nobody push you down.

You just get up and fight to see another day

to make a better and bigger change.

## Marching

Boom, boom, boom. The sound of the drum as we start to march to war.  
There's no turning back.  
Keep your eyes straight.  
Left foot goes over right foot, getting closer and closer.  
The drum is getting louder and faster.  
Palms are getting sweaty.  
We marching as one big family.  
We hug and say are good-byes.  
Boom, boom, boom. The drum is getting louder.  
Closing my eyes thinking about what I'm fighting for.  
Thinking about the ones I need, thinking about my family.  
Think about the people standing next to me and how we are fighting for the same thing,  
equality. Boom, boom, boom. I listen and open my eyes.  
It wasn't the sound of a drum that was boom, boom, boom, it was my heart  
and it wasn't just me.  
It was my family around me.  
The people that I am marching with  
Black or white – we are marching for the same thing; equality.

## Summer

The sunshine coming through the window letting me know it's time to wake up.  
Friends calling - trying to hang out.  
Your mom yelling out the door be careful.  
Your little brother running with the dog.  
Sister doing her hair.  
Pollen floating in the air.  
Kids running to the ice cream truck.  
Kalahari commercial coming out of the car radio  
Seeing heat waves out in the distance.  
Smelling that good barbeque around the corner.  
Some summer.

## When They See Us, 2018

When they see us or is it the way that they see us?

Cause why is that when a group of boys is standing around doing nothin they get accused of rape, or walking with a pack of Skittles in one hand and tea in another means we are up to soemthing.

We attract suspicion. Is it the way they see us?

Why can't we ask questions before assuming?

Are they gone?

Are they going to keep their guns in the holster when they see our skin is black?

Is it the way that they see us?

## The Hate you Give

One gun, one breath, one last heartbeat

One snap of your fingers, and it's over

That is what it's come down to in today's society

Mom told me everything I do

And every little incident that I do

Always comes back to her

She always told me at a young age

The world is not cotton candy and rainbows

I always laughed at her when she said

That at my age, she had to go in the house

When the streetlights came on

But I know what she means about the freaks

Come out at night

But when you see a little boy grabbing a gun

Pointing it at another person and he's scared

He begins to cry while you see the fire in his eyes

Because one little problem with a hairbrush

Turns into a 6-year old trying to commit murder?

## It Was Cold

It was cold.

The whistle blew for the next play to start.

Both teams are lining up.

Bang, bang

Players on the field begin to run

The band is still playing, cheerleaders looking confused

What is going on?

Bang, bang

Everybody is running

Police sirens going off

Bang, bang

Kids crying, moms calling for their kids

People lying on the cold, wet ground

Some escaping into the school where it is safe

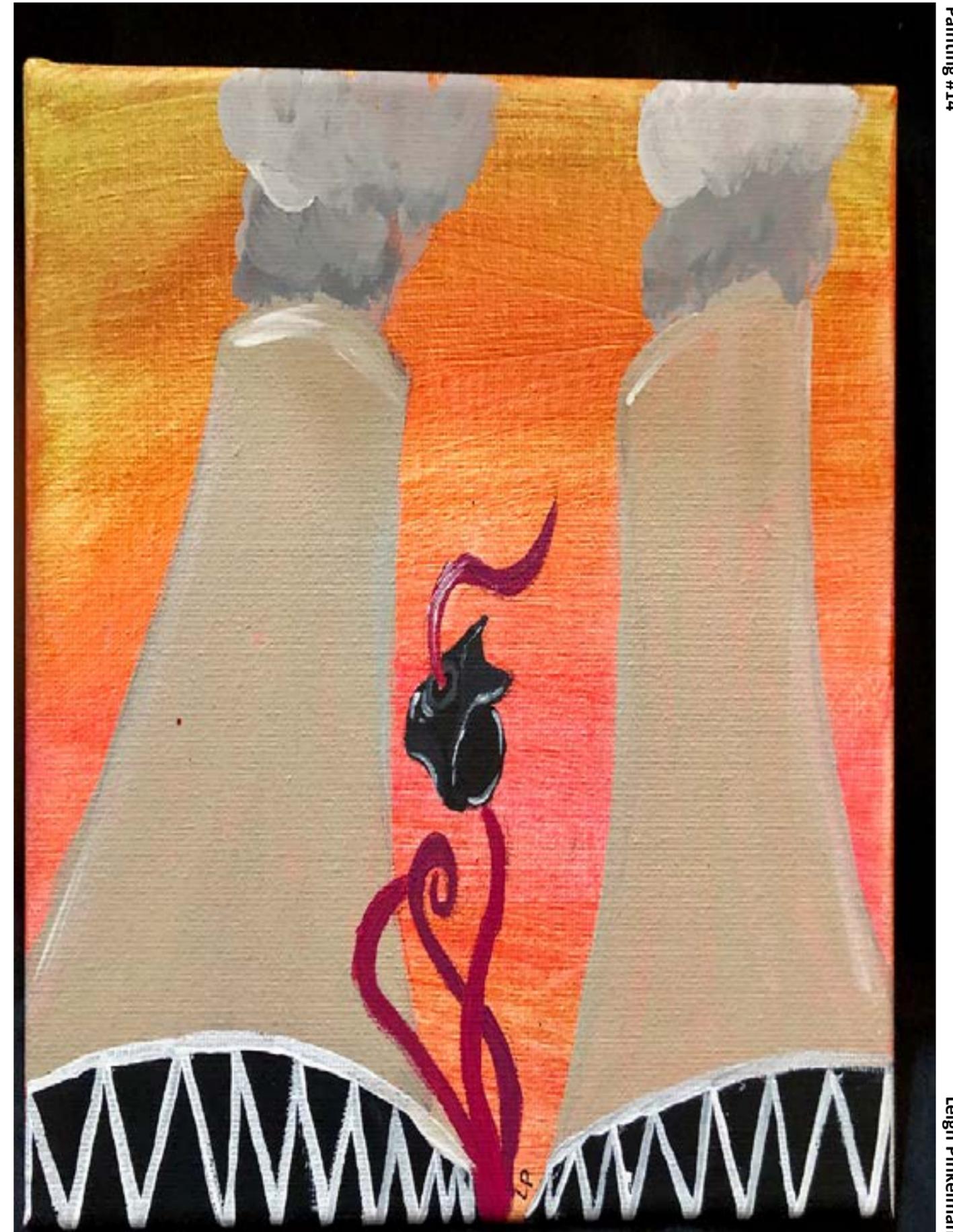
People crowding

Players crying

Moms angry

Siblings calling out for other siblings

Bang, bang, woop, woop ....



# Kay Powell

## High school

I remember walking the halls of my high school oh what a tricky time. To be separated or not understood. Some would say that's the whole basis of high school.

Like who's cool and who's not, what's in and who's hot. So crazy, a world within the real world

All real, all fake. Social separation in our world we've become accustomed to today

The groups our apart of depends on who sits next to you, in a real world my group says hands up don't shoot.

A fight or mistake could land you in detention for me earns a spot in our heavily funded prisons. Freedom oh the idea, to the mall or movies without your parents. For me to make a dentist appointment without my mom? I wouldn't dare it

Separation in itself the idea to be a part or not a part. To be in the same space by not quite connected to be seen or heard but your voice not quite respected. Highschool.

Oh how I remember walking the halls of my high school.

## The Concrete Rose

(inspired by Tupac [2000] *The Rose that Grew from Concrete*)

Welcome to the concrete jungle. We lack gardens and flowers blowing the breeze. In a world full of paths to take a look around and see if you see me.

Who's sidewalk square birthed a thorn

A thorn born in a world full of false blossoms

Where no one looks at the flower attached.

Or how many have walked past this sidewalk square and see the pedals attacked

Trampled by the expectations of a garden bloomer and not a thorn who sprouts through a crack.

My stems don't get the watering unless it rains of course. The proper pruning and primping to stay alive. But I's the thorn that catches the attention of many instead of despite it all I remain and thrive. Very few see the flower I've become living many stages of growth by widely recognized my thorn the one they forget is attached to this rose.

# Laiah Snipes

## Black Pretty Girl

Black pretty girl who cares about herself well – boujee?

Nappy headed with baggie clothes – thug?

White week smoker with colored hair – hipster?

Tall black kid – great basketball player?

White cop – Killer? Racist?

Scrawny kid with glasses – smart? Nerd?

White pretty girl – cheerleader?

Short girl – can't play volleyball?

So many different stereotypes – too many to follow. Think of one thing of a person and could

be completely wrong.

False!!

## Murders

(inspired by *Kings*, 2017)

Murders, unforgivable actions. Think before you react. Probation? You have to be kidding me.

All she wanted was orange juice – the orange juice that would be the death of her.

Evidence

that shows this paranoid lady killed this innocent 15 year old girl. Layin' there dead.

Shot. Blood

everywhere but the money is still in her hand. How? How could you kill a kid?

## **My Brother's Stupid Drama, 1/15/19**

Caught up into my brother's stupid drama. Here we go again. Where my brothers go, I follow.

That's what brothers do, right? Stick together. Wouldn't have thought it would be the death of

me. One shot to the head ended it all. Lifeless ...

### **But so what if it did**

A black man/woman who successfully owns a business (assuming it started from drugs).

But so what if it did ...

so what if she/he had to start from the bottom that way ...

so what if he saved up drug money ...

so what? Just be happy ...

be happy that this person is doing better for themselves, doing more to help others.

Be happy. They came from NOTHING to SOMETHING.

## **Sun in my face**

Hot long days, sun in my face. Work, work and more work. I have no idea what to do with

myself. Should I call up my friends? Or do I stay in watching movies. Couldn't wait for sweet 'ol

summer, but now I'm lost. Summer is supposed to be having fun in the warm sun. Instead, I'm

in the house ... sweet 'ol summer.

## **Living Life Wild and Free**

Struggles were there, but I would never flee. Securing drugs to keep my mom and sister straight, but also keeping my grades up to height. Small town kid with wild thoughts. Expressing strong emotions on a piece of paper. Violence and drugs surround me but also inspired me to what I would become. Never giving up on my dreams could also be the death of me.

# Nick Mueser

## Lights in the Sky

It was an electric moment. There was energy all around.

For a second all was quiet, and then the air was full of sound.

Some ducked. Some covered. Some ran. Some fell.

And great horrible bolts of lightning coursed their way across the sky.

And all those who would remain there knew then for sure that they would die.

Some knew. Some didn't. Some panicked. Some will.

And once again the night fell silent. And once again the world was still.

And the energy flowed all from that place and dripped on down to hell.

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# Tonenijah Johnson

## Getting Ready for Bed, 1/15/19

Getting ready for bed, grabbing things to wrap my head.

Quiet night, surprising weird time to not hear sirens.

Humming a song, slightly dancing along.

Staring out my bedroom window, wrapping my head,

Notice my tire, air getting low.

Pop Pop Pop There it goes.

Startled, but not so much.

Hear a scream & a yelp ... "help"

Car sped off, young boy in their driveway.

Grab my phone, extra towels & go.

Apply pressure to the wound.

"Baby boy stay with me, just don't go"

He calls out for mom, before I reach to dial out.

Oh there they go ... sirens in a near yet far distance.

Why only the police, no sign of ambulance.

7 minutes later. I see an EMT

“What took them so long in such an emergency?”

Oh. I see ... young black boy so they figure

Why rush to the scene?

Covered in blood, his mother. I can't bear to hug.

Voices from outside, beating me alive.

Voices from inside, tightening to stay alive.

A mentality so strong. It's hard to steer me wrong.

They are the shadows in the dark, trying to pull me very hard.

The screaming filled with hate.

Crucial words. I can take.

The whispers filled with courage.

I take them in, begin to flourish

The screaming never changed, yet the whispers are now unshaken.

Loud and clear, my tears and strength, became conspicuous.

The shadows, they have failed, a stronger woman has prevailed.

The voices from outside, continue beating me alive.

The voice from inside, are strong so I survived.

# Toni Pratt

## Where is the Love?

“If you only got love for your own race, then you're gonna leave space for others to discriminate.” - *Where is the Love*, Black Eyed Peas, 2003

This quote stood out to me because of the deep meaning that I took away from it. You cannot love your people only and expect others not to do the same. You must give love to receive it.

## *When They See Us*

Violence against races has withstood the test of time. Every man, woman and child will be judged by their peers based on appearance. This includes their race as well. When there are a group of many judging the few, injustices are bound to occur.

Although unfair, many innocent men and women are incarcerated for crimes they never committed. Sadly, majority of these men and women are racial minorities that were judged on their color rather than their “crime.” This is represented in the show “When They See Us.” A group of young black men were incarcerated for the rape and murder of a white female jogger. No white man was suspected. No white man was accused. No white man was shown the injustices of a black man.



# AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

## Part III

### Hate Crimes: The Cruelty of Discrimination

The junior group this year brainstormed ideas for research and landed on hate crimes. We are at the very beginning of this project. The group particularly enjoys image prompts. So far we are not only exploring moments when we have been discriminated against and felt in danger based on the intensity of a person's hatred for us. We have also written into moments when we have participated in marginalizing others and have felt feelings of hatred toward others. We have discussed some famous hate crimes and the policies in place to prevent crimes inspired by hatred.

# Amy Rowe

## Actions

I know action causes a reaction. But the extent of the reaction,  
the intensity,  
the ferocity,  
the force behind the reaction cannot be scripted.  
What is my part in this age-old equation?  
How do I investigate? Mitigate? Tolerate?  
We cannot get into another's head  
We cannot feel another's pain.  
But we can empathize, communicate, learn and accept.

# Duvonna Goins

## Good fences make good neighbors

Separating what is good for the powerful and deciding when to throw a bone to the pitiful is what makes good neighbors. That's what they say when we get the slop and lesser wages. When separate schools get different textbooks and different educations. Why when I peek over that fence something is said to me that makes my insides boil and face turn red. I don't think good fences make good neighbors at all. The people who build those fences are bullies and need a reason to get the good stuff.

## All or Nothing

The blacker the berry the sweeter the juice I can't hide my outsides, or alter your thoughts on the class I am in. All I can be is a brown girl with many hopes and dreams to rid the world of its stereotypical masculinities.

## I hate

I almost called you yesterday sometimes it makes me sad but feel dumb when I forget you're gone. I hate that I can't talk to you or go over to your place for Pepsi's and cookies. At your funeral I hate that my mom fell all over you in a hurtling scream and the lady in front of me sucked her teeth not knowing the real pain my mom had trapped inside. She had only just met you officially before she went away. Then you died 2 years when she returned. That feeling of not knowing where to start with your relationship I knew you were nervous. You had missed so much of your little girls' life. I can only hope she doesn't hate you for leaving us.

## Illinois incident

I was raised in a black community that handled its own issues. I was raised to not trust white people because they are sneaky and deceitful said my mother. As an adult I can recognize the pain she went through in her time and with this nation's history I don't blame her. I can see how some ethnic groups get caught up in what they are taught instead of living through these different groups on your people in the world for what they let me into.

## A letter to society

Society is a joke its false white picket fences of flawed beautifulness. Denial, Despair and wanna-be conformity. Its sick and twisted games of inclusion with expectations. It's easy to hate society for its continuous betrayal and stupidity. But that would make me just like it full of empty hatred. I want to be free, happy, and loving. Not bile, sticky and limited to that white picket fence.

# Jalyn Brewington

## Broken

Yes, I am broken, but there's more to me than that. My skin and heart and head could be shattered, but my brain is where everything happens. Without my brain I would just be a person who cares way more than I should. I would have no sense. I try to give everyone two chances, but there is that someone who will tug 3,000 out of me. Hurting me over and over again, that's my biggest flaw. It would take everything in me to drop you, so you know that I've finally had enough of your ways. I will fix myself, not in the same way I was before. Better and more successful. Someone to make them say "Why did I even hurt them?" No matter how much pain I go through or many times you betray me. You could take a hammer and smash me into the ground, just for fun. A couple days later, I will begin to fix myself, because I am fixable, and I always will be.

## The Only Color You See is Brown

You don't know me. The only color you see is brown, but inside I am full of deep cool blues and bright beating yellows. My brain is releasing rainbows of ideas that make my writing possible. My heart is pumping violent red cells throughout my body. My skin has light blue veins that jump out at stress. I am in full color, not just a muddy palette. I love the color of my skin, but I also love every single other color that I am made up of. To my white teeth, to my brown, black, and blonde hair, to the purple pencil writing this right now. If you hate me because of my skin color, you better hate every other color there is. Because I will find a way to pull them all off.

## Leaving You To The Other

Times when one parent, leaves out of town for a few months,  
leaving you to the other.

You realize how lonely it is, how alone you can be.

So reading books in an odd place gives me a sense of closure,  
a sense of a loud, broken home.

But it was a moment where I could remember

What I was actually reading.

# Layla Alhajri

## Dear Society

Dear Society, why do you do these things. We don't need the past to become the future. We don't need this, we don't need people killing each other because of who they are. We don't need our society to be known as the hated society. We don't need innocent children about to die because of their color. We don't need people to hate other religions because of what they worship. Our society does not need this. Our society needs to be good, it needs to respect each other, it needs to help one another we need our society to survive.

## For No Reason

In the past every race hated each other for no reason. However, we thought it would have changed, but no it did not. There are some people that are fine with different races in the same area, but there are still others who are living in the past and continue to discriminate by skin color, race, or religion. And to me, that is horrible and disjusting. When I was in the 7th grade, I was sitting in the back of the bus with my brother. We were laughing and not speaking in English but in Arabic. One of the students heard us and said "They are probably planning to blow up the school. They might have a bomb in their backpack." So the kid took my brother's backpack and took everything out of it. My brother got mad and started yelling at him. My brother asked, "Why would you do that." The kid said, "because I can. I can do anything I want". That day was the worst day of my life. I will never forget it. The past is the past and we can't do anything about it, but we can change the future. If things stay like this, the hatred will only get worse.

Love, Layla

# Michael Blanchard

## All or Nothing

All or nothing, I think a person who commits a hate crime either black or white is discriminating. Say I might be different from you. Instead of believing stereotypes and judging me because of what you have heard my race has done in society, get to know me. For all you know I could be the President of the United States some day.

## Hate and Discrimination

Hate and discrimination today is out of control and sickening.

Hate and discrimination are the perfect duo for disaster.

It is crazy how people rationalize and make excuses for bad behavior.

People frame themselves as the hero.

The majority of people sit around and remain still when it comes to hate crimes.

# Ta'Leahia Wright-Johnson

## Letter to society

I'm sorry society you choose hate.

These lines stick out to me because most hate is bought up in the homes you are taught that. That's all you see when you're a kid and it's engraved in your head.

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## *call for papers*

The *quint's* forty sixth 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 15<sup>th</sup> of February 2020—but please note that we accept manu/digi-scripts at any time.

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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.

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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.

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