

Flight / 2015



Flight

2015

An Anthology of the Written and Visual Arts

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Jessica McMeans / Love Languages

Open letter to a poet:

I do not hate you with precision;
I place you in the category
of bishops and senators
and other men who think that reality
flows from their pens like manna
from heaven.

Your words resemble me
in the same way that heart-shaped
candies resemble
the fist-sized organ pumping blood
through my veins—

I am not an abstract
representation of romance,
and similes cannot sanitize me.
I am immediate. I am raw.
I am not safe for public consumption.

and I am not made of paper—
you cannot trim and fold me
into the shape of something you could love.

If you cut me, I will bleed.

Putting marks on my skin
will not make me a canvas,

and regardless
of what you may think,
nothing you have written
is about *me*.

***Cody Rukasin* / Footsteps to a Dancefloor**

Changes imperceptible:

by means of halted feet;
at special-needs prom, my rap
got crap from Danny and Zeke.

No, my middle-toes don't
quite touch the ceiling,
and heaven—
remnants of secrecy.

These footsteps though,
a dance churning in infinity.

Amanda Ryba / Orderly

For many years I thought my hobby
Was pinning pieces of life down
Like so many exotic butterflies
Fastened to cork board. Each
In its own glass case for
Further study. As if somehow
They would reveal their secrets
To me if I held them—inanimate.
Today I sat down to study my
Shining collection—only to realize
That all of my cases were empty,
And I had never had anything
Pinned down at all

Kaitlyn Fields / The Telltale Photograph

I found myself in the basement of the home belonging to my best friend and her family. I had been living with them for longer than I can remember, and realized that I had never actually been in this part of the house. Carl had asked me to get a spare light bulb, as one of the ones in the kitchen had gone out.

I looked around at all the boxes that were stacked up, as if they were the proud buildings of a city hiding away underground. Holly never wanted me to go in the basement, and she never explained why. But I was in her debt for allowing me to live with her family, and I never disrespected her wishes. However, Carl asking me to come down here was exactly what I needed to justify my exploration.

I was able to spot the box of light bulbs; thankfully it was not in one of the box towers, but sitting on a nearby table. Noticing that the box had only one bulb left, I decided to be helpful and take up the entire box so it could be disposed of properly. When I lifted it, however, the most peculiar thing occurred: a photograph flew out from underneath. Curious, I set the box down to examine it further.

I squatted above the concrete floor and stared at the photograph. It depicted a bride and groom, neither of whom I recognized, yet I had the strangest feeling that I knew them from somewhere. The bride had black hair arranged neatly in a bun above her head, chestnut eyes, and pale skin. Her groom was black, bald, and had a round mustache that was about the length of his upper lip.

I grabbed the photograph and stood up with it in my hand. The more I looked at the people in this picture, the more confused I grew. I had no memory of these people, yet I was still burdened by the nagging feeling that I not only knew them, but I knew them intimately. I flipped the photo over and saw in Holly's handwriting, "Regina and Roman's wedding: July 9, 2023."

"Regina..." The name sounded so familiar, yet it meant nothing at the same time. As I looked at her, I couldn't help but feel how familiar she was, almost as if I were looking at my own reflection.

"Lana!" I looked up the staircase alarmed, and saw Holly

standing in the basement doorway. She frantically ran down to me, yelling “You shouldn’t be down here, it’s too dangerous! I don’t know what Carl was thinking.” When she arrived at my side, and saw the picture I was holding, her face drained of color, and she looked at me as if she were awaiting my commentary on the piece.

“Who are they?” I asked.

Holly looked into my green eyes hopefully. “You don’t recognize them?”

I shook my head.

“Right! Of course, how would you recognize them? They’re old friends of mine, no one you would know.” Holly reached out to take the photograph from me, but I pulled it away. I was not satisfied with Holly’s response.

“But I do know them. How I’m not sure, but they seem so familiar to me. And you know!” I accused.

“It’s better if you don’t know, Lana! Trust me!”

“Why? Who are they?”

“Criminals!” Holly shouted, almost as if she were excited to share the fact. “Yes! You probably saw their faces on the news. Well, he’s not, but she is. He was just on the news too, because of the whole harboring a fugitive thing,” she said nervously.

I looked at the photograph again. “But these people don’t look like criminals.”

“Well, that’s probably where you saw them. Now if you don’t mind, I’ll just take that back.”

Holly reached for the picture, but again I moved so that it wouldn’t fall into her hands.

“How would you have met a criminal?”

“School. We met at grad school,” she began slowly and painfully, looking right into my eyes. “She conducted some illegal experiments. I didn’t know she was doing them until they were already done. The police came after her, and she took her family and fled. They lived in exile for a while before they came back without her.”

“And she was never caught?”

Holly didn’t answer. She avoided my gaze, and looked as if she were about to cry.

“Can we please not talk about this?”

As I looked at the photograph, I found my focus purely on the woman. The more I looked at her, the more familiar she became.

My head started to hurt, which made me absentmindedly pull at my blonde hair. My instincts screamed at me how I knew this woman, but I wasn't ready to accept it. I ran past Holly, up the basement stairs, past Carl and towards the mirror that hung near the front door of the house. I held the photograph up to the side of the mirror, and looked back and forth between it and my own reflection.

Holly ran up behind me, and I turned to her angrily. "You work for the witness protection program! You know how to change everything about a face!" I screamed as tears began to outline the scars that ran down the side of my head.

"Oh God, no," Holly said. We were both crying at this point.

"I know you can rewrite memories as well! You told me so yourself!"

"Lana, please understand-"

"That's not my name," I said. "I know it's not."

"Lana..."

"Say my name. I want to hear you say it!"

"...Regina."

Nichole Newlin / Night

If the night were to have a song,
It would sing real softly and the moon would hum.
Every sleeping soul would be filled with peace,
And all that lay down will rest with ease.
Children will dream of playing and laughter,
while young girls dream of their happily-ever-after.
The sound of crickets chirping silences the mind.
Oh, the beauty of the night is so wonderful, so divine.
Lovers lay low upon the grass,
gazing up at the sky, waiting for time to pass.
Admiring the stars, twinkling bright, moments like this
make everything feel right.
The wind with its cool breeze, rustling tree leaves.
Destroying all signs of sorrow,
bringing back hope for tomorrow.

Vern Boggs / Standing with Kings

Just west of the city of San Jacinto lay a small range of mountains. These hills are swathed in an ocean of vivid hues of yellow and orange that is broken only by the gray and black boulders that pepper the landscape. Overhead, California's deep blue sky stretches for as far as the eye can see and fills the valleys of the range with an image that can be mistaken for cauldrons of brilliant blue water overflowing their brims. Nature's intrigue fueled the imagination of my childhood. As a boy, I would stand atop the peaks of this range and admire the prefect squares of brown and green that checkered the farmland below. The view was nature's epic game of chess, and I stood atop the kings.

The air is dry here. Swirls of coarse dust and dry grass whirl on the morning breeze as pockets of warm air, fueled by the sun, begin to heat the landscape. Standing at the base of these hills, and staring up at their peaks, is enough to inspire awe into a child so young. The first challenge to scaling these monsters is to make it through the deep sandy silt that surrounds their bases. Unlike the coarse sand that you might expect to encounter at a beach, this is desert sand: dusty, soft, and deep. It is this sand that will fill the air with every step, and stick to the moisture on your skin like sap clings to a tree. This sand stands as a symbol of the massive boulders that were crushed as they fell to their deaths. As you begin your morning ascent up the mountains, you begin to feel a sense of awe and wonder about the adventure you are about to encounter. A quick look around and you immediately notice the colors of the wheat and barley grasses that grow wild. Stones and boulders grace the landscape all around, and make for a mildly difficult trek to your destination. By mid-day the air and land have warmed enough that the creatures begin to emerge from their hiding places. The golden brown scales of slithering creatures disappear upon approach, and strange scraping and the slightest rattle can be heard coming from

an unseen location. What mysteries do these hills hold, what beasts lay waiting in the shadows, and most importantly, will you survive? These were the questions that a ten-year-old imagined in his mind.

Fast forward to 2005; I had returned to my hills. Looking up at them, they were no longer a daunting mountain range, but just hills. I began to climb these hills with the same adventurous mindset that I had once held as a boy. The tall yellow grasses danced in the breeze as I navigated the river-like paths between the cobalt gray boulders. Sweat trickled down my forehead. I looked up to view three red-tailed hawks circling a summer updraft, elevating them higher and higher into the sky. Apart from the breeze gently tickling the landscape, all was quiet. I wiped my brow and continued my ascension up my hill, pausing from time to time to observe a sunbathing lizard scurry away as I approached. As I neared the top of the hill, I gazed upward in search of my majestic hawk companions; they were gone, probably searching for field mice to feed their hunger. I took a few more steps, and I had achieved what had escaped me for more than ten years. Once again I stood amongst kings.

It had been more than ten years from my last visit to my next, and everything was how I had left it. Despite the explosion of housing and commercial properties that had sprung up all around my hills, my hills remained my hills. To this day, any visitor can be awed by the endless blue sky, shades of dry grasses that seem to dance on the wind, and mysterious creatures that hide in the shadows. It is a place of peace, serenity, and one of the ultimate places to forget about the urban world. While the checkered landscaping has transformed into the epitome of urban progress, the hills themselves have maintained their majesty.



Daniel Biggs / Beach Splash



Jennifer Todaro

Shani Anderson / **Big Eyes**

I would empty the thoughts
that ruined your mind

I would chase the nightmares
that kept you alive

I would hunt the madness
that took your life

I would pray for happiness
that your soul survived

I would dream the fairy-tales
that you once believed

I would change the silver-bells
so that you could be Queen

I would rewrite your story
so that you'd get your happy end

I would change this world
for you to live in.

Jassa Rae / The Storm

There's a storm inside of me
Dense with clouds, where eyes can't see
Lightning licks the ground below
Where thunder still has yet to grow

There's a storm inside my heart
Tangled deep, not known to part
Roses planted through the years
Burn like candles from love's spears

There's a storm inside my head
Sparked by sorrow when I said,
"The clouds won't thin, they will destroy
Any sweet amount of joy."

There's a storm inside of me
Voices whisper, "Set me free"
Seasons pass and fade away
I feel it grow each passing day

Dace Cross / Dreams Are Reality, I Can Prove It

Have you ever wondered what would or could happen if you dreamed something, and then went in search of it once you awoke? If you followed the signs your own mind has provided for you, and instead of looking at the objects as they are in the waking life, you take a step back and understanding what they meant in the context of your dream; they may be worth paying attention to, your dreams may be pertaining to a scenario that will happen in your waking life. I have a theory, I also have tested this theory. Something very personal has happened to me regarding my dreams and their power in my waking life that will truly surprise you. I hope to bring you understanding of how dreams work and how to use them the way they were meant to be utilized by sharing my experience with dreams and their role in real-life situations of my life.

The First Dream:

I have been asleep for hours now. I recall, blurrily, my boyfriend coming into the room late at night after his insomniatic, restless walks. He lays down in bed with me, he puts his arm around me, I feel his warmth and I go back to sleep. We have been having really bad problems in our relationship before I even had these dreams. Once I am back in the dreamscape, I end up on a street in the city I am currently living in. I see a street sign, I force myself to remember the street, I know it's important and relevant to my waking life. I make a right on this street, in the dream, and I keep walking. Somewhere on this street I find a young woman. She is petite, Hispanic, with long dark hair and pale-ish skin. She is beautiful. I take her to the place I am currently living, with my man and his family. I am lucid once I reach the sidewalk that runs right next to the garage. I recall sliding my hand across the paint-chipped wall and then feeling the big, green bush that was juxtaposed right next to the garage wall. I am inside the house now. She is with me, she is trying to be my friend, I almost let her in, to become my true friend. Until she

is introduced to my man. I see them staring deep into each other's eyes. They are lost within the look they are giving each other. I am not even noticeable to them. After I see this, I walk through a door, and I realize I have left the garage side door and ended up on the side of the backyard. I pull out my wax pen and start hitting it. I'm upset. I'm not alone for more than a couple of minutes and she comes out. I try not to show or let her know that I'm jealous and that my heart is broken. It works, she hardly notices me, like she is preoccupied, looking for something. I follow her back into the garage where he and she have their shoes and hats on, getting ready for a walk. They are talking to some man that I do not recognize. I remember my man saying to her, "My mother said your shoes are the best in this house." When he said this he looked at me in my eyes; I looked away and walked away.

Awakening to Reality:

I wake from this dream heart broken and betrayed. But another feeling also arose within me. I thought to myself, 'We are having a terrible relationship. What is the lesser of the two evils; Find this woman and bring her to him so he can live happily, or keep him to myself and let him be miserable forever?' I love him more than he realizes and I would selflessly give another, more deserving woman a chance at happiness with him, and for him to be happy for once, than to be selfish and keep him unhappily in this relationship with me. So, I got my clothes on, and started walking the road that I saw in my dream. I walked for an hour or more, calling her in my mind. I knew she was there, but I was not supposed to be walking that street at that moment. I had to walk down that street every day until I found her, that much I knew. I had a strange feeling at a certain corner on this street. My hand started pulsing with energy, as if something warm was wrapped around it. Almost the feeling of someone's warm hand holding my hand. I walked back home, unable to be around anyone. The feelings I had were good and bad because I was jealous and envious of his new love to be; and because I was hoping to find her for him, I knew he needed her more than I needed him. I was dis-

appointed when I got back home. I was hoping to find her and not only prove to myself that I wasn't crazy or just feeding into my own bullcrap; but so starting that day, he could start his happy life with his new woman. But I was not fortunate enough to find her that day.

The Second Realization:

I believe in signs manifesting themselves in our dreams. Symbols that mean something will show themselves in unusual ways, and mean something else when they are in our dreams; unlike the things they represent in real life. I believe it is a catch in the way our dreams work, to make our brains analyze what it was that we dreamed. To not give us the answer directly, but to make us work for a destiny that we desire, or to make us learn how to change our path from a bad one to a good one. We do have control and insight into our future through our dreams; some of us don't pay attention or even really care. But I have seen things that have happened in real life, through my dreams before the real-life scenario happened. They are not exact, but the symbols that my dreams showed me meant something that meant the same thing in reality, although they were not the same specific objects or scenario. But the end results have been the same.

The Correlating Second Dream:

It's her again. I must find her. She is calling to me. I know I am the only one who can find her. He has looked and looked endlessly. With no results. I can feel her, I can almost hear her. I have to find her. It is my destiny to find her and bring her to him, just as it his destiny to be with her. I am over my useless feelings of jealousy. All I want is for them to be together and to be happy. And I know I can't stay after she arrives. I can't even be his friend after this. I am running, running fast as the wind. It is dark, cold and windy. The wind bites my face hard, tears run down my cheeks. I feel lost and hopeless, I have to find her, it's the only thing I can't mess up, the only thing I am on this earth to do at this moment. I start to slow down, I'm walking slow now, feeling hopeless, that I'll never find her. I hear a

voice from my right. I'm on the same exact street I saw in my first dream, the same street I walked in real life. I found her. She emerges from the darkness. We are on a railroad track. We start walking side by side down the tracks. We are silent, a comfortable kind of quietness. My heart still aches for my own pity and sorrow, but I know that once I give her to him and this scenario is over, once I finally leave, I can get over myself and this situation. We seem to walk for miles, never getting tired and not saying a word to each other. We seem to acknowledge the pending circumstance that is to come. No words are necessary, we each know our place and what to do. A vow is made by this silent acknowledgment, to accept this and go with it.

The Dream Manifests into Reality:

I wake up startled. The truth has slapped me awake. I run for my clothes, and fly out of the door. I am walking the same road again. It is dark, I see a figure in the distance. It is her, I can feel it. We are face to face, finally, here in reality. I am sad, but I get over it. The time has finally come. I smell change in the cold wind that scorches my face. We walk down the railroad tracks, just like we did in my dream. The vow of acknowledged silence hovering between us. I take her home with me. And I relive the first dream that brought me to her, and her to him.

Marisa C. Ament / Perspective of a Disability

Have you ever been labeled disabled by a doctor, a family member, or a friend? I have. I have grown up with a learning disability. I have trouble seeing well. The poor sight adds to my clumsiness. This issue has made me physically limited in my everyday life. I would not call it a physical disability per se; however, I have friends that are physically disabled. I am able to relate to their obstacles. That is the label prescribed to us, disabled.

I am not speaking for every disabled person. I am speaking for myself and those willing to listen. What I say here may relate to you in one way or another. It might not, but it is about time that this is said. It is about time a voice is heard. There is a perspective concerning people with disabilities. It is rare, but it is there. The perspective is simply how you look at your own disability. If you have the capability and the time to think then now is the time. Have you been labeled as disabled, disadvantaged, or limited? Do you accept this label? Do you use it as an excuse? Or do you look at your own situation and say, “I have the upper hand here, I have the advantage?” It is important that this perspective I am sharing is clear and understandable.

Allow me to elaborate. A disability is something that one allows to hinder himself or herself. I am not one to be hindered by this label. I see things differently. I see what I can do and how I can push myself. I might struggle compared to others; however, I excel by my own standards. I do things differently. I make an effort and yes can I get lazy. Everyone gets lazy from time to time. It is human nature. What matters is I work hard through my struggles. I try not to let my limitations stop me. Due to my “disabilities” I have learned to adapt

to each situation and those around me. This has made me a creative, strong, capable, independent and proud young woman.

Even though society has compensated for my disabilities, the people I am around every day have not. They do not always have the capacity to accept my perspective on this subject. I feel that I am not the only one in this situation. I see this attitude everywhere. We with disabilities do everything we can to be just like everyone else, sometimes to no avail. We do this so that we fit into our given label, prescribed by society. We have to put in twice the effort or more and we do this without complaint. We move on from day to day compensating, adjusting, adapting to the people around us as if they are the disabled ones. I have this view of my disability. It is an attitude about being disabled that I am proud of. I am proud of the way I think and how it makes me feel. I love to share my views and my experiences about my situation. However, people do not see it the way that those like me who are disabled do. It is a constant battle.

When most people discover that I have a disability, they refuse to move past it. They tend to linger on my prescribed label. They refer to me as “That crippled kid.” They say things like, “She’s a little different,” and “She thinks a little slower.” It is quite sad that this is all people can think of me. They don’t realize that this is only my outer shell and not my inner personality. There is so much more of me that they could know, but refuse to accept. They try coddling me, helping me, or keeping me from doing things that they assume I cannot do. There are things they do not know I can do. If only they gave me half a chance. They never get to know the real me. They refuse to know what is going on under my skin. They do not take the opportunity to see what I am capable of.

What I see, what I feel, and what I know, it is one thing society sometimes fails to recognize. It is not from a lack of trying; they are relating to what they see on the outside. What they believe to be me is not who I am at all. They fail to recognize my view of life. They fail to see through my eyes. They fail to be empathetic about my experiences. A person that has been labeled this way knows exactly the attitude I am speaking of.

If society would take a little time to listen and open their eyes we all could have a whole new world open to us. Until then one can only hope. This is just a perspective in hopes that it could change some hearts. I share it with you, because this is a part of me. It is something I can never change. It's not something I would ever want to change. Being in a situation such as mine, it puts life into a different perspective. I have so much more to offer. Even if only one person is willing to listen then I have said what I needed to. I refuse to listen to those who say, "You cannot do that," or, "Hey why don't you just do this instead." No! I refuse to listen to the naysayers. I will only listen to those willing to understand me. I am not saying I do not listen to the people that care for me. However, I am saying, "Just listen to what you know because you are not limited, you set your own limits."

I believe that with the right kind of attitude, no matter what I think will hold me back, I can do just about anything I put my mind to and what I accomplish. Whatever goals I wish to attain, I know that I did it despite the hand I was dealt... This is my upper hand. This is my advantage. This is my disability.

William Daniel Trujillo / Paranoid Poem

They're everywhere! You've seen them!

They're in the shadows, they're in the light.

They're out in the day and in the night!

They see things we don't see, they hear things we don't hear;

And above all things most of all they're the biggest thing I fear.

They've been beyond the moon, and to the bottom of the sea.

They're everywhere and nowhere; perhaps they're after me.

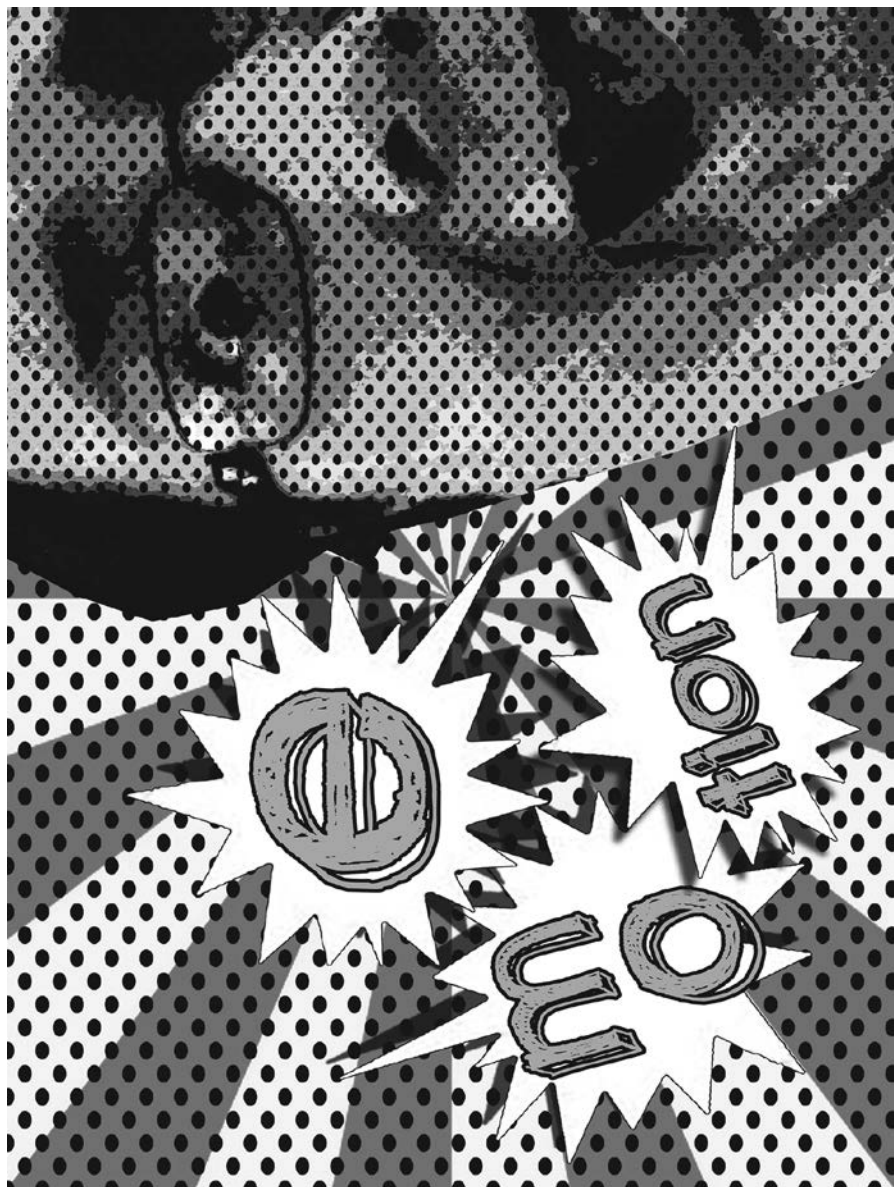
They think things we don't think, they do things we don't do.

They can be anyone;

Perhaps they're even you...



Joseffyne Robinson / Sad Nick



Tommy McCardle / E-MO-TION

Sean-isaac McGoldrick / Limbo

Falling like a stone in space.
I'm shut out and misplaced.
Passing islands in the sky.
Never ask how.
Don't ask why.

An island taunts.
The other misleads.
One depicts a good deed.
The horizon shows a life unfair,
Unable to worry, nor do I care.

Memories of love and regret.
Look back and forget.
I feel estranged and in fear.
That's okay,
People know me in here.

An island of beauty.
I don't care, I'm impaired.
An island ghastly.
That's okay,
I'm not scared.

The freest prison I have been in.
It's a piece of heaven suspended in sin.
Though it is an amazing sight,
There is always a hidden fight.
You must beware.
I can't wait to see you there.

A voice calls out, “You think too much.”
Through my hair, a Demon’s touch.
Gravity loosens as I fall.
I did not realize I was thinking at all.
Here I’m trapped, but I’m not dead.
The place called limbo,
is a space inside my head.



Sergio Saucedo

Patricia Ellis / The Woman on the Corner

The woman in her mid-sixties, always and forever a red-head, now has platinum hair. At about 5 foot tall she weighs somewhere in the vicinity of 160 pounds. Although the weight is fairly evenly distributed, the belly fat seems to have collected where she once held her babies. Being outdoors is essential to her. On a daily basis she feeds and shovels the manure of her two horses and the pony she has for her grandchildren. Several times a year, she rides one of her horses on camping trips lasting from three days to about a week. Additionally, the need to tend the acre homestead helps her maintain a very strong and sturdy build. She moves with a purpose.

This woman is definitely an A-type personality. Being a heavy smoker and constantly on the move attests to this. Her world revolves around her family. She lovingly cares for her elderly mother living with her. With two young children, her daughter lives in an apartment above the garage in back. Her grandchildren adore her and spend a tremendous amount of time with her. Even to the point where you might think they live with her rather than their mother.

Highly competitive by nature, while raising a family and holding a full-time job, she bred Rottweiler's professionally. Many of the ones she personally showed became champions. Today dogs from her breeding line are still winning in the ring. She was also showing her vintage Datsun 280 Z car. Learning to ride her horse for show occurred next, when she owned a horse boarding ranch. The two of them won many ribbons together. Concurrent with this she had chickens and a few roosters on the ranch. Naturally, she and her daughter showed some of them. It's not surprising that they won a number of ribbons in these competitions. A couple peacocks also lived on the ranch.

One of her longtime friends from the dog show days, who continues showing them, now also shows cactuses. Recently, the

woman went to one of these shows with this friend, who, understandably, won a few top ribbons. Of course the woman being described bought a few cactuses at the show. Her friend has since sent her several more. The burning question is — Is this new hobby going to ignite her back into competition?

The life of this woman is overflowing with love and care. There seems to be a constant juggling act of caring for the people, animals, and plants she loves. Did I forget to mention her dog, cat, bird, and beautiful roses? Yet, somehow she seems to keep everything spinning round. Personally, I don't know how she does it. A clue might be found in her mantra, "It is what it is."

Simply stated she loves people and being surrounded by them. To wit, her mother says that just like her father, the room lights up when she enters and everyone knows she's there.

John Mohler / An Irish Lass She Be

An Irish Lass She Be
Hair Red Stolen From The Sun
Eyes Green Borrowed From The Sea
Her Soul High As The Mountains Of The Emerald Isle
Her Words Move Me Forward Like The Wind At My Back
Her Looks The Ground Of Which I Walk

Along Side Me She Be
While The Sun Reflects Her Beauty
How I Long To Wait
To See The Reflection Of The Moon In Her Irish Eyes
How Long To See The Fire in Her Hair

Irish Eyes Shine Brightly
Her Spirit Soars High Above
Her Heart Beats With The Waves Of The Irish Isle
Skin Soft Like Clouds Against The Irish Skies
Flash Those Irish Eyes
Crinkle That Irish Nose

Bite That Bottom Lip
Exhale Softly
Blush Those Rosy Irish Cheeks
I Ought To Be Dead . . .



Edie Schmoll

Daniel Silva-Valencia / Between the Walls

Ignore the signs and hold your load,
Don't let badges stop you cold.
Invisible is how to cross danger,
They see you and see a stranger.
Hold the hand of Mom and Dad,
Very tight and you'll be glad.
Crawl between very small spaces,
Don't get caught for the time races.
Avoid the light or game is over,
Use the plants and find some cover.
Allow the moon to clear your path,
Or you will feel their angry wrath.
Prepare to run and be very silent,
Speed and stealth is your intent.
Don't look back you're almost there,
A victory sure is rare.
Your new life a few feet away,
A new flag is the only way.
This is not a dream it is quite real,
Pain is normal and it will heal.

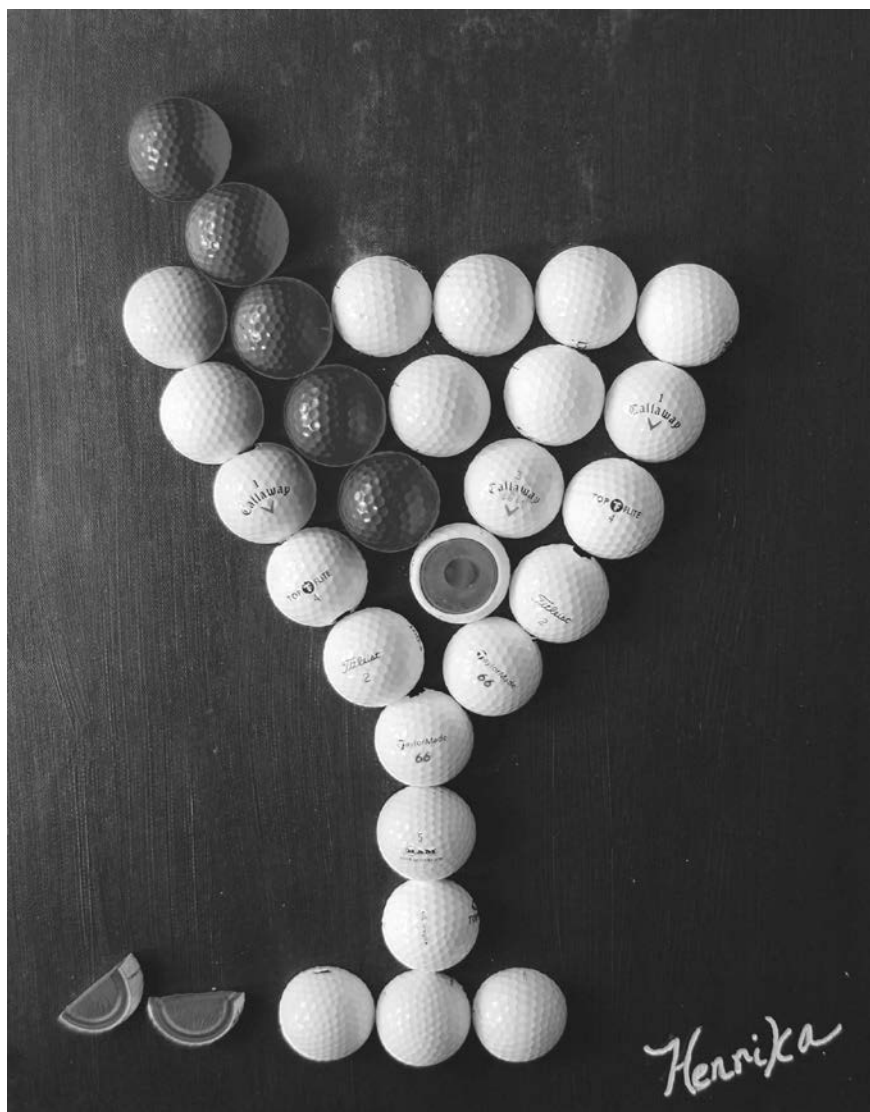
Feel the soil of your new home,
A new place where you shall roam.
Nothing can steal your freedom,
And never forget where you come from.



Soledad Carrisoza



Lidia Melaku / Eye Sees You



Stella Prescott / 19thHole



Jennifer Penaflor / Jack's Hands



Prudence Detzel



Shani Anderson / The Ask



Jocelyn Sanchez



Aleta Meeker



Breanna Vince



Daniel Biggs / San Clemente Barrel



Ahjile Miller / Victoria Beach

***Kathryn Flores* / The OH Generation**

For all those who feel that they need to desperately stand up for what they believe in. And for those who are in need of a friend to get through a rough patch in life.

One

Anxiety. Depression. Wanting to speak your mind, even though everyone around you tells you to shut your mouth? Feeling as though you should hurt yourself, yet in your heart you know you shouldn't. You know that feeling? Well, I've got that in spades! Or at least I once did. My name is Maxwell Sumner. And this is my story. How I became part of the Once Heartless (OH) Generation.

It all started when my father died only a couple years back. Nothing much to go on, except that he had that damn disease: cancer. God, I hated it when Mom and I received the diagnosis. Even with the knowledge that my dad wasn't going to be in my life for much longer, I had no idea what it would put me through. I began to shut down emotionally; I for the most part isolated myself from the rest of my family. I had problems in school due to this, so I took the semester off. I drowned myself in books, television, and music. Running a hand through my loose auburn curls I wrote every few days in a journal. I was so angry I wrote word after word in a sentence or two. That's all that I could write, on account of the thin page blurring through my tears. I even began to crawl deeper into a ball, crying my eyes out until I could barely speak. Did my family become aware of this? Not really, because I felt that they were not, all attention focused on my father. Dammit, I. AM. ALONE. Who the hell do I turn to help me? I really don't care for this . . . emptiness I feel inside. My mom and my older sister have told me that's because I'm only focusing on one thing: the depression; maybe I should take the focus off, concentrate on something else, but what?

Two

It took me a while to get back in the swing of things as far as school went, but I managed. The one thing, really the only thing, that got me through were books and music. Especially music. I was one of those people that have music playing constantly; it makes me feel so alive and vibrant. Anyways, the sheer power of music is something I can't even begin to understand... Until I became acquainted with a coworker of my mother's. Her name? Cordelia Jacobs.

Three

How in the world can I describe Cordelia? Tall and thin, with long dirty-blond hair paired with kind green eyes at times peering out behind black-framed glasses, she's been quite a friend to my mother and I, as well as growing fond of my father before he died.

For a few months to almost a year she was teaching my mother to play piano, though my mother hasn't played since before Dad got sick. It hurts my heart to not hear her fingers tickling the smooth ivory keys while my father would be in the living room, eyes closing while some show, usually *Law & Order*, plays in the background on the TV. The piano lessons were at Cordelia's house, for she had a baby grand in an area off to the side once you enter her house. Wood floor, two large bookshelves filled with sheet music, books of music, plus a few fiction and nonfiction titles interspersed, large window with thin blinds making horizontal stripes across the shining instrument during the daylight hours.

It was the music of Cordelia's piano, plus other music she introduced to Mom and me that would beckon me to crawl out of the hole that I dug for myself when my father became ill and eventually went out of my life. She told me of music having healing qualities; at first I couldn't comprehend it, until I lay my fingers atop the keys. Lightly tapping the ivory bars, their slickness felt good under my hands, the notes making my heart swell up in my chest so I almost cried.

For a few weeks I played, even though my mother didn't have the heart at the time to continue. I feverishly enjoyed attending

the recitals Cordelia would play at, closing my eyes and letting the music take over my mind. Mom would do the same. I grew attached to Cordelia; she sort of became my second mother, even though she was a good friend. She introduced Mom and me to the music of Max Richter, Tori Amos, Nirvana, Sting, and The Police. Out of all these wondrous musicians, it was Sting that “spoke” to me. His sensuous jazz vocals resonated with and soothed my anxiety. Where had this music been when my father was dying and I felt in danger of crumbling into pieces? I had become especially enamored of his songs “Shape of My Heart,” “Russians,” “Fragile,” and “Englishman in New York.”

I related my love of these songs to Cordelia: “Yes, Maxwell. I have you listen to these artists because they are just as gifted and eccentric as you are. I told you that you would fall in love with them.” Taking her hands and entwining her long fingers in mine, that gesture melding into a hug of sheer gratitude, I nearly wept out “Thank you, thank you, thank you! For bringing me back to life. I adore the music; please let me play for you.” She graciously answered “Yes” to my request.

Sitting down at the massive piano, I looked to Cordelia, her legs in black shorts demurely crossed, slender hands clasped at the knee facing me, arms hidden in the bell sleeves of a red peasant blouse. Grinning to her, I started launching into “Shape of My Heart” that I had transposed for piano.

As the notes filled the room, I could feel tears welling up in my eyes. Tears releasing all the pain of the last couple years. Tears for my father who would never physically hear this music. Tears for my mother who tried her best to make things comfortable for both of us. Tears for myself, for all those times that I felt hopeless; for all the moments when I wanted to say something to my siblings regarding our father or their treatment of me; for every person throughout my life who has pushed me down and told me to shut my mouth, not say a word on my behalf; for the past loves that are lost to me.

Dear Elizabeth, wherever you are, I love you so much, darling.

I rolled on with the music, tears falling and splashing on my skin and the ivory and black keys. Looking through the window and open blinds, I saw something exquisite. A large butterfly, wings an ornate blend of yellow, black, sky blue, and orange

perched on a nearby leaf. Somehow that image registered in my mind as a blessed sign from my father, that he had indeed heard the music and wanted to watch me perform it. Inspired by the sight, I drew forth the last notes of the song. *This is for you, Dad.*

Cordelia rose from her seat to put her arm around my shoulders, asking me: “How did you feel, Maxwell?” I answered, “Alive.”



Prudence Detzel / Take Off

D'Angelo Harlston / The Street Warrior

He glides with the air, unhinged by stress
Swiftly disposes his foes with one fell swoop
Without hesitation
Without a mess
He holds life in highest regard
Yet wastes enemies of Mother's health
Keeps his blade ready
Never lowers his guard
His methods, unconventional
His words, unorthodox
His mind whirls around Mother
Others are boxed
Things they can never understand
Judging, assuming, laughing
They do not know what power he possesses
For they are quick to disown uniqueness
He lives for tranquility
They live for anarchy
"Mother is dying," he proclaims
"She still lives for us," others say
The end will be nigh
And it will be too late for salvation
For the street warrior is a savior
But not to all . . .

Arnetta M. Steptoe / The Dove

I hear the faithful song of the dove

He sings his mournful song on the rooftop

Every day he coos and cries to show his faithful stance

To let me know he is there and to give me solace in my state

Always in my mind, he is there for me to hear his mournful cry

Is it sadness? I cannot know

I am to listen, for that is why he cries

To show his faithful stance

Payson Schacherbauer / A Brief Lapse in Sanity

Let me tell you a story, a story about a man who went looking for ghosts and a man who would find them.

Amidst the fiery spitter-spatter of the cold rain walked this man, his face pale, his eyes like emeralds, his gaze affixed downwards towards the hard cement bridge on which he strode. A cavalcade of cars, like a neon kaleidoscope, zoomed past the man intermittently splashing him. The man did not care. Within the river that flowed beneath, a body, bloated with black holes for eyes, drifted to the surface. And then another and another until the river crowded with the dead. The man paid no heed.

The man continued down the walkway. Sketchy shadows of people passed him by, their arms dripping with their blood, their eyes nonexistent. The signs and light shifted to grotesque images: people with only half their face, people coughing up their blood. The man ignored all of this.

The man turned into an alley leaving the shadows behind him. As he continued to walk down the hallway, he noticed the floor at his feet changed from the cement that he was used to to a hardwood floor. His eyes moved from his feet and he found himself in a hallway. He turned around and saw nothing but a blank wall from which he came. He looked down the hallway. It was a normal hallway, doors lining the sides with a door at the end of it.

As he walked down, a door to the left of him slowly creaked open to reveal a person with a blank, featureless mask hanging from thick ropes. The man continued down the hallway, doors creaking open left and right with each step he took until he reached the end. And then, his curiosity without bounds, he opened the door in front

of him. Within the room was what was in every other room, a hanging body no more distinct than the others were. The man was perplexed. *What was the point of this all?* thought the man.

And then the door behind him slowly closed and the mask fell from the hanged man's face. Behind the mask was a face, a pale face with emerald eye, a face rapidly rotting before the man's eyes. The man turned to look for an escape only to find none.

One cold, cloud-covered morning, the residents of the fourth floor awoke to the screams of a woman. When they went to find out what was wrong, they made a discovery that left them aghast. Hanging in the apartment room at the end of the hall was the pale man, his dead emerald eyes affixed to them all. No one knew this man nor did they know where he came from, but they all felt that this was a man that went looking for ghosts and found them.



Vincent Ramirez



Suzanne King

***Ashley Ullrich* / Light at the End of the Tunnel**

Exercising is a major aspect of my life. I have played sports since I was three years old, starting with T-ball, then hockey, basketball, track, and finally soccer. Being active was always part of my life, but mostly for the fun of the game and the desire of competition. As I got older my responsibilities changed from playing sports to having a job, and my activity dwindled. The purpose of exercising changed for me when I turned 21. Ever since then I viewed it not only as a thing to do in my spare time but a mandatory part of my day. Exercise has saved my life and to truly know to what level, we must start at the beginning.

I grew up in a very traditional happy home. My dad worked and my mom stayed home with me and my brother. We had a wonderful family unit and looked like the typical American family, even with two dogs and the white picket fence. We took family vacations to Hawaii, Yosemite, and the Pacific Northwest. People looking in would have thought we had it all, heck I thought we had it all. But when I was six years old that picture-perfect life was changed forever.

My mom had decided that she was no longer interested in continuing her marriage to my dad. After thirteen years she decided to take my brother and me and move into a small apartment. Driving away from my home, my dogs, and every memory I had crushed me. That was when I experienced my first panic attack. My brother and I were inconsolable, we had no idea what was going on and felt like everything we loved was ripped away. About a month later my dad ended up having to move to Kentucky for work. My brother and I were incredibly concerned about our dad and eventually asked to live with him. After about six months living in Kentucky, we returned to California for summer break. Over the summer my mom decided to keep me and allow my brother to return to my dad. To summarize the events, within eight months I went from having

a “happy” home to being a single child and living with a single parent. The transition was not easy to say the least. My mom was busy working and I was often left to myself. At nine years old that is not an easy task, but I couldn’t imagine living without my mom or moving away from the only city I ever knew.

Over the next several years my anxiety grew, and I started to notice that I would crave rituals. For instance, I would wake up every morning, eat the same cereal, at the same spot in the living room, and even watch the same TV show (Golden Girls). If my routine was changed for any reason I would completely melt down. I thrived off repetition and the idea of change gave me cold sweats and physically made me ill. School was not easy for me; I would get so stressed out over the smallest task. In class I couldn’t focus, all I could think about was people staring at me or looking dumb if I asked a question. My only place of peace was when I was home in front of the TV watching my show.

The beginning of my sophomore year I got my first job bussing tables at a restaurant in Murrieta. I would leave school and go directly to work, which usually ended around 10 or 11 at night. Since I was too young to drive I often had to arrange rides to and from work if my mom was busy. Again having to coordinate school, rides, and work increased my anxiety to another level. But instead of using my TV shows to cope, I began to drink alcohol. I had made friends with the waiters at work so getting alcohol was not difficult. I found it a suitable way to calm my nerves and reduce my anxiety. Obviously that was not a great idea.

Eventually school was coming to an end but my stress and responsibilities were not. My mom had a job opportunity in Arizona and needed to move immediately. So I was left to find a place to live and a full-time job my senior year. Going to college was not an option because of my incredibly busy schedule. Because of my lack of education, finding a job that would pay enough for my living expenses was difficult. Sales was pretty much the only job that didn’t need much prior education and luckily I was very good at it. I began to sell cars at a Toyota dealership in Escondido. What I didn’t

anticipate was the incredible levels of stress that a job in sales creates. Again my anxiety level increased to another level.

It didn't take long for the anxiety to slowly break me down. The exhaustion and overwhelming sense of chaos were tearing me apart, both mentally and physically. I was about 19 at that time and remember it like yesterday. I was not sleeping very well and spent the entire night wide awake when my alarm clock went off. I had to get up for work but had yet gone to sleep. My heart started racing faster than it ever had, my thoughts were swirling around like a tornado, I was sweating, my stomach was nauseous, my vision went blurry, and I couldn't breathe. I called in sick and for three days didn't get out of bed. I wanted to disappear from work, my friends, my family, and the world.

After three days I returned to work but again broke down, this time in my boss's office. He instructed me to go directly to the doctors and be examined. It didn't take long for my doctor to diagnose me with general anxiety disorder, depression, and obsessive compulsive disorder. I was written a prescription for medication that covered the symptoms I was experiencing. At first I felt like the medications were working. I wasn't as anxious all the time and my lows weren't as dramatic. But with that, my highs weren't as high either and I felt like I was in a minor state of paralysis. I didn't get sad or scared all the time but that was because I didn't feel much at all. I was numb in a way but at that time I would have rather been numb than anxious so I continued to take the medication.

Within about a year to a year and a half I started to feel like the medication was no longer working. My anxiety and depression returned and I contacted my doctor yet again. Over a few months I switched medications three times hoping to find one that would work. They would either make me feel sick or give me nightmares or not work at all. I was getting so frustrated with the process all together. I felt like a guinea pig and not like a person. After the fourth attempt I had had it! I was done with putting God knows what chemicals into my body and especially into my brain! I knew there was a better way and I was hell bent to find it.

I began to research what alternatives there were, and time and time again the same answer kept coming up, exercise. I was tired of being a guinea pig and decided then and there I was going to make a serious change. I started going to the gym three times a week and would spend over an hour exercising each time. The mornings that I was running late I would still go even if it meant a shorter workout; I figured something is better than nothing. I began to feel and see the results which encouraged me to continue. I had read about classes like Zumba and Body Combat but thought I would look ridiculous and most likely make a fool of myself. After watching the class in passing a few times I noticed the amount of fun the ladies were having and decided to give it a go. At first I looked like a complete mess, dancing in the opposite directions, jumping up when everyone was down, I was beyond confused. But after a month I started to memorize the moves and dances; I started chatting with some of the ladies in the class. I was addicted. Not only was I getting an incredible workout, but my brain was calm, my anxiety decreased, my depression was gone, and I was making friends. I began to make life long bonds with woman who have turned into being not only incredible workout buddies but spectacular friends.

Now five years later, I feel like a different person. Not a day goes by that I don't exercise. Monday through Sunday I wake up and gear up for some type of exercise. Whether that is Zumba, Ultimate Conditioning, Spin, Body Combat, running, or yoga I make sure to go. Some days all I want to do is hide, but I know I am one workout away from feeling better. My body is physically in better shape than it was when I was twenty, my mental health is not perfect but night and day different than it was, and my friendship and bonds with others is deeper than ever. I truly believe exercise saved my life. I remember praying to God to just "take me home," I was tired of living every day feeling terrified to leave my room. I still have bad days but they are nothing like before. I am now able to control my mind better and view exercise as my daily medication.

Andrew George / Eternal

There can be no gods
only kings

Those who feel they can rule alongside kings
 overthrow kings
 become kings
 come to believe they are greater than kings
truly wish to become gods

I dare you

Time the Great
Time the Glorious
Time the God

See how long they stand the test of Time

I will strike them down
for I am the keeper of kings
and I assure you
There can only be kings
no gods
like I

Angie Medrano / From the Eldest

Don't you think that I think about you?

Every day it's more

More

I'm drowning

Burdens pulling me deeper

Into the sea

But it isn't profound enough

To tell you how the waves tumble me

Back to where I once started

Where you shouldn't be

Because I carry your burdens

Carlos A. Poveda / My Love, My Vision, My Story

Heatwave's "Always and Forever," Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger," and Inner Circle's "Bad Boys" lyrics exemplify emotions I embrace, ethics I stand by, and the positive attitude I display. Firsthand experience enabled me to observe individuals violate these standards eventually paying the ultimate price, their freedom! These lyrics connect me with memories illustrating my loyalty to my wife, family, and vision toward success; staying energetic, focused, and overcoming obstacles through turbulence or tranquility.

"Always and Forever" memorializes my encounter with my wife. In October of 1985, I met my wife at a Halloween party in Chula Vista, CA. There, I noted a medium-built female, 5'6" tall with shoulder-length brown hair endlessly staring in my direction. Her hair was wild with bangs similar to 1980's pop singer Tina Turner. She had silky facial features, wearing black mascara and ruby lipstick. Utilizing my peripheral vision, I informed my designated driver I had a possible fan. I premeditated the idea to shock my spectator and took one step in her direction, turning clockwise and fixating a blank gaze. My spectator regained consciousness, blushed, and began to face the floor. I began to laugh, excused myself and walked outside. Later, I returned inside, walked briskly and bumped into my spectator dropping and spilling my beer onto the floor. Embarrassed, I asked this female to dance. She agreed and we headed into the next room. During our dance my observer noted I had been wearing my Marine Corps-issued uniform asking me if I were a Marine? I responded, "Yes." I asked her if she was dressed as Tina Turner; she responded, "No." I smiled thanking God the music was loud to avoid further embarrassment. I attempted to ask what her name was; then she replied, "I like you too" sensually kissing me. Regaining self-control, I motioned to my driver I had a ride home. I asked my companion what her name was: When she

informed me, “Marisela” then I introduced myself. After several dances, a sobbing female approached Marisela and whispered into her ear. Marisela informed me she had to leave. Without hesitation, I escorted Marisela to her vehicle asking for her phone number. Marisela provided me a paper with her number. However, I now realized both my rides had left. I laughed and began my three-mile trek home. The next day I contacted Marisela where we shared the previous events and built a relationship now lasting 28 years and counting. As such, Heatwave’s, “Always and Forever” lyrics are appropriate. The moment Marisela looked at me, the bump and dance, followed by a kiss are samples of: “Is just like a dream to metthat somehow came true.” The phone number and contact, followed by shared moments and building the relationship exemplifies:

Take time to tell me, you really care
And we’ll share tomorrow, together
I’ll always love you forever, forever

“Eye of the Tiger” lyrics represent the tribulations I went through when losing my job at an aeronautical manufacturing company, feeding on positive energy and transitioning from labor to law enforcement. Upon completion of military duty, I transitioned to civilian work at a company known as Rohr Industries. Here, airline parts were assembled, notably for government contracts. I used a “Press” machine, where metal was stretched using mallets and oils to reduce creases in the metal. Work was steady, overtime work was offered, and life appeared good. However, during winter the company began to lay off employees due to work shortages. As such, in late December my number was reached and I lost my job. The loss occurred one week prior to Christmas, after I purchased a vehicle, and my wife was pregnant with our first son (Carlitos). We were devastated! However, remembering an old Marine Corps saying, “No pain no gain and perseverance” reenergized my wife and myself to regain employment, transition from labor to an

administrative position and thereafter to law enforcement. With the birth of our second son (Gustavo) and vision to own a house, I sought higher education and eventually interviewed for a peace officer position. Thus, the “Eye of the Tiger” lyrics are suitable. Completion of military duty, the lay off from Rohr, and the transition from labor to an administrative post exemplifies the lyrics:

Rising up, back on the street
Did my time, took my chances
Went the distance, now I’m back on my feet
Just a man and his will to survive

Expectations of a better future, the need for a permanent home, along with a vision for a law enforcement career fits these “Eye of the Tiger” lyrics:

Don’t lose your grip on the dreams of the past
You must fight just to keep them alive

Finally, the “Bad Boys” (COPS) lyrics elucidate the assignments I held within the Department of Corrections. After the birth of my daughter (Priscilla), I completed my Associates in Science degree in the Administration of Justice, left San Diego and traveled to northern California to live in Correctional Academy located in Gault, CA. Determined to be successful in my law enforcement endeavors, I graduated in the top ten percent of the class. I then traveled to various prisons known as the California Rehabilitation Center located in Norco, California, California Institution for Men, located in Chino, California and Central Training Facility, located in Soledad, California. These facilities served the community as a men’s or women’s medium level I, II, III, IV, Administrative Segregation Unit (ASU), Security Housing Unit (SHU) prisons. Specifically, prison culture can be noted as various types of offenders with life or fewer years to serve. Most level II inmates knew pre-release was around the corner and would not jeopardize their freedom. However, narcotics were widespread with heroin and crystal methamphetamine as the choice of drug.

Gangs play an important role with narcotics introduction, sales, and distribution. Learning this culture enabled me to build relationships and bond to gang members to curtail their criminal activities. In addition, I learned the identification of the “Shot Callers” (the persons in authority) who made decisions on behalf of their respective race (African American AKA: Black Guerrilla Family, Caucasians AKA: Aryan Brotherhood and Hispanics AKA Mexican Mafia) for the purposes of criminal activity. I remember working “Chino” among the most violent individuals (murderers, kidnappers, robbers, arsonists, and sexual predators) with life sentences. Here, I processed information from inmates fearing safety concerns due to narcotic debts, gang ties, victims of assaults, or re-arrests from penal violations. Violence occurs quickly! With this in mind the lyrics to “Inner Circle’s” song “Bad Boys” applies. The rapport I developed and the success in the identification, search, arrest, and validation regarding narcotics and gang suppression exemplifies the following “Bad Boys” verses:

Bad Boys!

What’cha gonna do when Sheriff John Brown
come for you?

When you were eight and had bad trait

You go to school and learn the golden rule

If you get hot then you must get cool!

Nobody naw give you no break

Through perseverance, these songs have inspired me to overcome obstacles and be a better person. When faced with hard times I have found myself listening or chanting these lyrics. I have noted how I have positively affected my children’s decision-making skills with their own children being challenged with everyday life situations or trying to promote a better lifestyle. The morals and values that I have instilled within them will always be a part of me.



Cesia Cano



Sarina Arden / Stare into the Illusion

Desiree Vasquez / The Gift

What is a Gift?

Is it something given to someone on an occasion?

Is it an item or something from within that is given
to someone you care about?

Is a gift truly something that we can actually give
to someone that we love?

Is it anything at all?

Is it something that has value?

Can we actually put a price on a gift?

Is a gift something that can be taken back
if someone doesn't like it?

Can a gift be given back to the person who bought it
for that specific person?

Can love be identified as a beautiful gift?

Who knows?

I know that there is one gift

The most precious gift in my eyes that can be given to someone

But it cannot be given to just anyone

We search for the right one that we fall in love with to give it to

This gift can be given to someone by both Women and Men

The gift that I dare speak of is that of Virginity

Virginity is truly a beautiful and amazing gift
It is something that is on the inside of all of us
that can only be given away once
and only to one person
We cannot ever get this gift back no matter how hard we try
It is a gift that we will remember giving away till the day we die



Crystal McGee / Wolf and Eagle at Night

Tye Williams / Untitled

For Crox

For a day that filled my heart with such gloom, the sun shined perfectly above my head and the heads of people oblivious to it. I embraced the sweet warmth of its hidden shine and swallowed the wonder of its beauty, in hopes to re-quench my thirst for life. Weeks before that day I saw life to be filled with endless rivers of wisdom and streams of truths to be told, but now my days were dry and the sun wringed hope that washed over me with thoughts of a future.

I walked toward the church with the sound of gravel scraping at my boots and the whispers of the people who stood in unison ahead. I searched for familiar faces, but one found me first. “August, right?” a voice rose to my surprise. When I looked up I saw a girl with huge sunglasses blocking her face so I could barely make out who she was. She was stubby with short auburn hair and had a pointy nose in which its long bridge peeped beneath the sunglasses. I nodded my head to give confirmation and she began to speak as if I had known her for years. “I met you downtown one night...” she said after noticing the confusion my face must have displayed. Even after her words of reassurance, I still had no recollection of meeting her before. To avoid revealing my further confusion, I alleviated a quick gesture by hugging her as to say she brought back my memory, although she really hadn’t. I believe the feigned gesture gave her comfort because she insisted I stand next to her and the friends she had been conversing with only moments before. I stood there in their circle listening to questions of “How long until the church opens?” and “Who’s that?” and “Where is such and such” until finally I dismissed myself and headed for the entrance of the church.

I felt colossal, compared to the small church doors. I was Alice in her wonderland of despair looking down on a door I knew was impossible to enter. If only I had an edible treat to shrink me down to size, but instead of entering the door, I would sneak off unseen and back into the life I once thought of being so profoundly oozing with love of a life I once suckled. My revelry was shortly lived as the doors creaked opened and my eyes were drawn up to the usher

signaling for everyone to enter. As I approached the threshold, everything around me went mute as though passing through magically sealed the silence around me. The church surprisingly held a huge internal body and inside it I saw endless rows, beyond rows of seats, with thousands of people filling them. In that moment I felt the colossal antidote going into effect as I became smaller and smaller and could no longer take a step further into the room. People began to stumble over me as I came to a complete halt. I dodged swinging legs and platform heels until finally being able to move to a bench in the back of the room. I climbed into my seat and waited for the ceremony to begin.

All the while I sat there, I reminded myself I would not go to the pulpit. I would not view the torment that had taken the life of me with it. I sat still within the silence of the room whose only company was the rustling of clothes and fabrics of people moving past or adjusting into their seats. When the church was finally filled, music began to play and like me, everyone sat waiting. I watched others' faces. Many were weeping quietly while others just peered out ahead. I watched how uncomfortable some looked as they desperately tried to feign emotion or show no emotion at all. I thought of my own expression and how blank it had been, how pale my face must have looked from the sleepless nights of drunken sorrows. I had forgotten my face altogether, yet one face was still fresh to me and I remembered every curve distinctly. That beautiful face I once knew, I thought. I almost diminished completely into my thoughts when suddenly an abrupt outcry brought me back again. "No! My baby!" the woman's cry echoed through the massive room. She was in the very front row, walking toward the pulpit. "My baby!" she cried out again. People started to surround her and I watched as she was comforted back into her seat. It became apparent to me she had been the mourning mother and I suddenly felt uneasy. My eyes scanned the ceiling and floor as I tried avoiding the yanking hold of my quickening heart. I felt my face getting warmer as I held back the tears that filled my eyes. "If only she knew," I pondered. I hung my head down and stared at the green carpet beneath my tiny feet. I felt smaller than before as I allowed the woman's words to resonate within. My thoughts grew louder, "I wish I could tell her...I wish I could tell her, I was the reason her 'baby' was dead!"

Cody Rukasin / How Can You Say?

How can you say
the nightly flame
goes out tenderly?

It puts ease to shame
how, across the way
men war for their light!

How can you say
worlds could collide

when kin only abide
by father's tool,
by mother's rule?

Men as man we form today,
but when men portray monsters
then how can you say?
How can you say?

Jessica McMeans / Little Waltzes

The beats of her heart come
three by three
like little waltzes,

and I am imagining
the songs I could spin
from her orchestral curves
and her soft, hymnal hips
and the tense vibrato of her sighs.

Taylor Guccione / Red Splattered Lips

I love this man. With all my heart and soul. I love how his smile pierces me, how his laughter gives me chills. He indulges my fantasy, and looks at me in a way that makes me feel like the only girl in the world. He compliments my hair when I brush it, and compliments my smile when I laugh. But despite these things, he is not mine. He loves another, in a way that I wish he loved me.

On that fateful day, when our paths had finally split, he said the most profound thing to me: he remarked on how beautiful I looked in my red lipstick, my favorite red lipstick. The lipstick I wore the day I met him, and have worn every chance I got to see him. This, of all his compliments, was my favorite to hear, it made me tingle and wish he would take these red lips, for if he desired, they would be his. The red lips that waited for his embrace, every day; they were painted for his affection. Even in sin, or tragedy, I feel as if I'd be satisfied with even one kiss, one moment to prove that everything I thought to be real. My love could be infinite, if only I knew what he thought, if I knew that he desired that which I presented him. As if God had arranged it himself, my questions would one day be answered, for upon a special day I heard the truth in a most unfortunate exchange of words and promises that were allowed by mistake.

As time has passed, I wondered if their relationship was true, and if he secretly desired to love me. I felt that way the last day I saw him. We were driving, I was helping pick out a gift for his... lover. These chores bothered me, but his company enlightens me. I often pretend that he brings me because he wants to buy these things for me. I never truly know what to think, although he shows loyalty, it is days like that day that make me think there's more to these drives. Many say he's just oblivious and doesn't realize what his actions imply, but I don't have that much doubt in his brilliance. He is sharp, and wise, and caring, and wouldn't act without knowing. As we look, we talk about the sky, life, and love. We talk about our

futures, and our pasts. We talk about each other and the things we've done. We talk about everything, from sunrise to sunset. The day is ours to exchange strange words and confusing clues. I see the world blur as his voice rings like an angel's song in my head, intoxicated off the pure delight of fantasy. There is no denying what we've been through, but yet, no saying what we will do. As the hours pass, we delay our goals and miss opportunities but simply laugh it all away; I knew the moment he picked me up this morning that today was about us. Maybe I'm projecting, or I am so scared of being wrong, that I refuse to be. Despite how much I love this man, guilt builds in the form of rhetoric, as papers upon papers stack around me building a prison of thought and emotions. Trapped by the consistent effort to express and conceal my feelings at the same time. To give proof to the world that how I feel exists, but continue to hide them in the cracks of my shattered home. Even as the memories of him shine brilliantly through the veil of my perception, dark mists shroud the thoughts that interpret them, leaving me in a maze of moral quandaries. I have yet to decide who is made victim by this relationship; is it me for being let so close only to be kept aside like an unopened present? Or him for being given a gift he cannot take freely?

It does not matter, for that day I was with him, without the moon or the stars to question my delights, I could be happy. These questions did not need be asked while we basked in a glorious golden sun. No matter what others say, or feel, when I am in his presence, he recognizes me.

We drove the day away as we have always done, laughing at ourselves, and at each other. The moment was to be a happy one instead of contemplative, but fate did not agree. Upon a second of bliss as we exchange affection with stares, but then a reaper arrives as metal breaks from the shell that protects us and our bodies are flung to the mercy of the winds. With seconds passing like hours, a final moment captures life at its extremes, with all my love and hate for the world smashed together by the wisdom and ignorance of man, to create such godly machines to propel us towards death itself by means of a single lapse in judgment. How one mistake lead

to the inevitable collapse of the world's most sacred bond. With no knowledge of when the sun has passed, I see the one I love sprawled across the black carpet of our final moments. I crawl desperately, dragging the limbs that fail me in this horrid hour. As I come upon the bloody scene, I see his solemn face staring blankly at the clouds. I hear screams around me, but only as muted blurs; all my attention is given to him. I pull him into my arms as we stare deeply into each other's eyes and he weakly begins to smile; the dams of my eyes break into a flooded mess across my face as he continues to softly smile. As we lay together he ushers the unthinkable... He whispers his love for me. As the words leave his lips I'm in awe, unable to comprehend what I heard, as he says it again and again. My tears had stopped but my misery grows, as if I had been lifted to heaven without my soul. He asks me to kiss him. I lean in, unsure of what kind of nightmare the world has given me. I finally pressed myself against his bloody lips. Lost in a mixture of his life and my love, I leave a mark of my painted desire across his face, to settle with the bloody trails that cover our betrayal. As the shades of red melt into one another the tragedy ends for he closes his eyes and departs from our world.

Now I'm at his funeral, anxiously cloaked in black to hide what I knew. I saw his family, and friends, and lover say their piece as I stood solemnly in the back. They all knew why I was there, because I was the last to see him. They urged me to speak, but the thought brought my insides to the floor. Only now do I question what I've done, what he said to me. As his lover sat unable to hold back an ocean of tears, I realize what I had stolen from her. My guilt crushed my soul as the ignorant told of a loyalty that didn't exist. After the funeral his lover approached me and asked his final words... I said nothing... For all I could see was our red splattered lips.

William Daniel Trujillo / The Devourers

Way down low under crescent moon,
Creatures lurk with fork and spoon.
Rusty knife and battered tongs,
Turn good things into wrongs.
Sharpened teeth, hidden glance,
Fearful eyes in a trance.
Hissing kettle, spitting pot,
Roasted flesh resisting rot.
Bloodied aprons, reddish pools,
Make tasty things out of fools.

Irene Guerrero / Untitled

Waves crashing against the shore ruining my train of thought.
I'm suddenly care free.
A bitter feeling that tastes sour yet delicious.
The salty mist begins to rise as the wind does,
 caressing my face as I close my eyes and let it
calm my expression against the bright sun slowly setting.
Suddenly I have the urge to truly appreciate
 the beautiful view in front of me.
I step up to the water that is pulling away fast
 as it barely wets my toes.
Teasing me to go run after it.
As I realize the game it's playing, I stand still and wait
 for the water to return and wash over my
bare feet, and slowly rise enough to reach my ankles.
I feel a surge of negative energy release from my body.
The ocean is my cure.
The tide begins to rise, the waves become constant,
 growing in height as my heart beats rapidly
with excitement.
The waves reach to my knees, I breathe in the saltiness
 of the wind so deep my nose slowly starts
to run.
The water calms, and I close my eyes,
 taking in everything at once.
Out of nowhere, a wave comes, crashing against me
 high enough to splash my tummy, then it
happens.
The ocean triggers something wonderful in both of us.
She kicks for the first time.

Shani Anderson / Two-faced Love

I found your heart
buried underneath your pain

Shelved and discarded
like shoes out in rain

Today, I found your memories
wiped from your brain

Tossed and shredded
like bills unpaid

Tomorrow, I'll find your soul
scarred and raged
with love for hatred
and years of blame

But, yesterday I called out your name
to which you seem surprised
I gave you the heart I found
to find that it was mine.

Amanda Ryba / Traveler

Come closer. Let me see you.
Closer still, for my eyes are weak.
Oh! You are much younger than
I thought you to be by the way
You stand stooped as if carrying
A great weight on your back.
What is this you carry? What
Weighs so much that it could
Seem to cripple you so? Seems
To steal away your very vitality...
Why, you seem to be carrying
Around all of your pain and fear.
Come, my friend, and let us go
For a walk down the road a ways.
No, no...leave your burden here.
Where we are going it cannot go.
I suppose you can return for it, but
You will not need it. You never have.

