

Time matters



2024
vol. 38



Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

The world is tough. When things are hard, artists and writers inevitably must reevaluate the role of their creative work. How do we translate pain into purpose? Injustice into inspiration?

The creators featured in this edition of Tidepools answer this call through representation of a variety of ongoing fights for visibility, acceptance, and support—from LGBTQIA+ rights, women's embodiment, and technology's influence on our disembodiment, to multicultural identity formation and the legacy of the great Angela Davis. Our bodies remember, and these memories live on through the works of art and writing you're about to experience.

Once among them, I hope you find a piece that reminds you that you do not walk alone—that, even just for a page or two, you are home, just as you are.

Please enjoy the work of our contributors, student graphic designers, editorial committee, and support staff. Together, we made this, even when the world was tough.

Jade Hidle, PhD
Faculty Editor-in-Chief

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Finding Myself

ANNA NIELSEN



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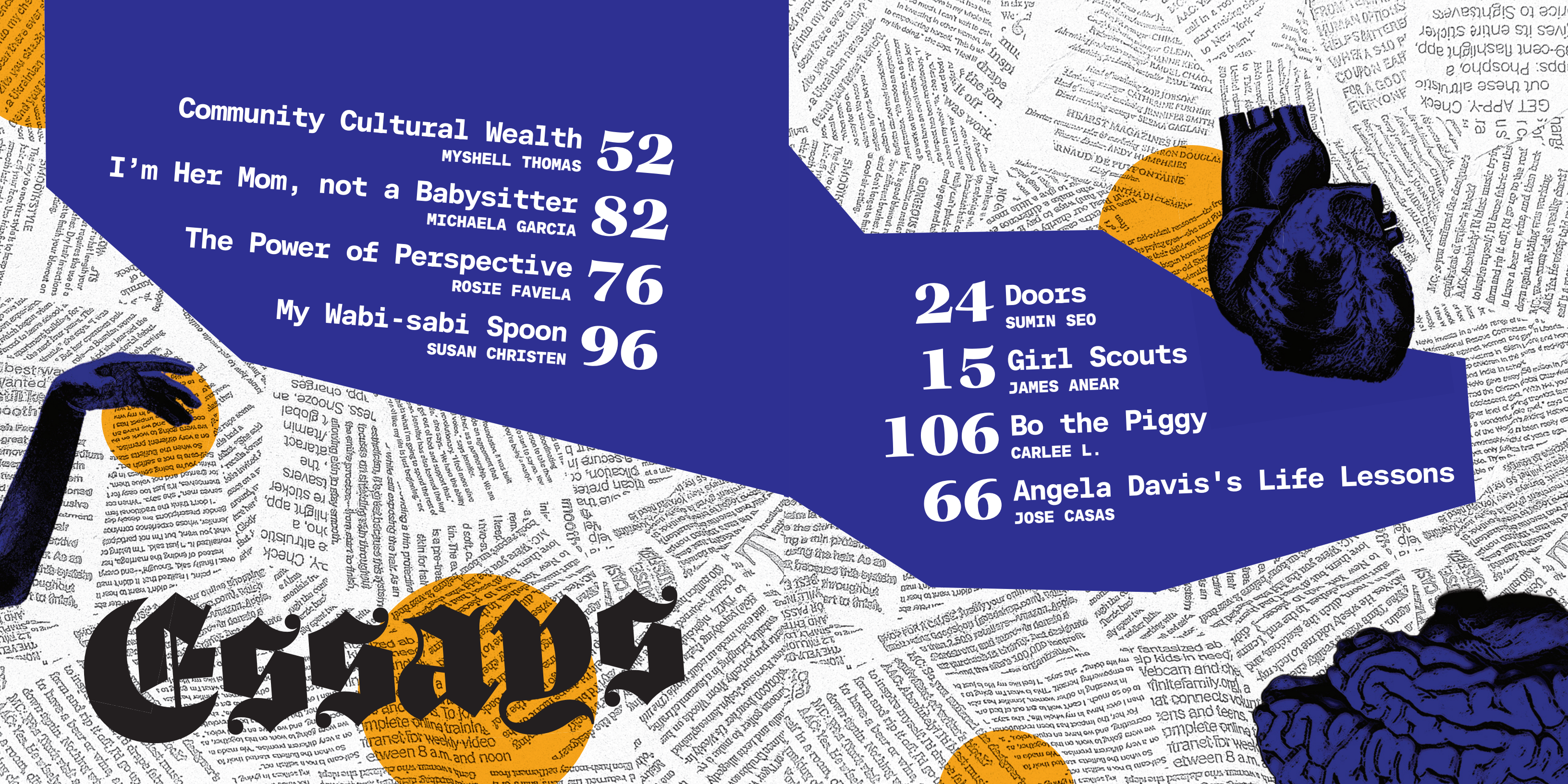
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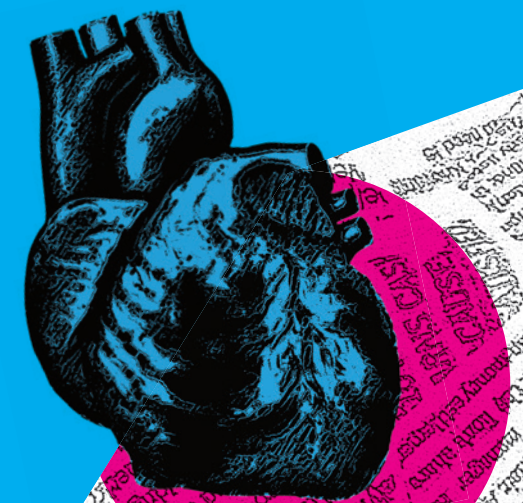
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Pearl

ELLA WARGO



18"x24" Charcoal, Compressed Charcoal

Compressed and vine charcoal piece inspired by the movie, *Pearl*, starring Mia Goth! I just started using this medium and absolutely love it :)

Girl Scouts

James Anear

A writer and artist studying English at MiraCosta College.

What is a Girl Scout? This is a seemingly simple question. A Girl Scout is a member of an organization called Girl Scouts. And, well, the organization is made up of girls. Except I was a Girl Scout. I earned patches, went camping, and sold cookies. I am also an adult man. These things are contradictory, yet true. I was a Girl Scout. Now, I'm something else.

*I was a Girl Scout.
Now, I'm something else.*

During my childhood, late in the school year, a pamphlet would arrive. It would list the various summer camps I might attend as a Girl Scout. These had different themes: horseback riding, arts and crafts, canoeing, and more. I would scan the catalog and pick one. Then my mother would cough up the money to send me to it. By July, I was shipped out to a campsite full of girls.

I did this every year, and each year I asked to attend. But the curious thing is that I did not enjoy it. I was a fat child, and hiking was not my skill. In a line of girls on a trail, I was always at the back, huffing and puffing. Sweat would get in my eyes, and my fair skin would burn. A sympathetic camp counselor would stop to take water breaks with me. But it was not just the physical aspect that was torturous.

I did not get along with girls. Young girls are like great beasts with excellent noses. They sniff out intruders faster than anyone else. I attended Girl Scout camp for at least ten years. I never made a single friend. I was always alone. Excluded. These girls could sense something was wrong with me, although they could not articulate it. The best they could come up with was “weird.” That one is weird. Don’t go near them.

Young girls are like great beasts with excellent noses. They sniff out intruders faster than anyone else.

However, I did get along with the camp counselors. I think this may be because Girl Scout counselors are

an odd bunch. Many are queer, with many being lesbians (although they never outright told us this.) They would dye their hair strange colors and assume nicknames like “Spock,” “Kitkat,” or “Apple.” Most were familiar with being seen as weird. So they were supportive.

This may be the reason I returned every year. My home life was bad, and getting out of it for a few weeks during the summer was a blessing. Despite the heat, exercise, and bullying, it was better than watching my alcoholic father collapse on the floor. Being around adults that were kind and caring was unfamiliar to me. And so, every year, I signed up for Girl Scout camp.

One year I was miserable. The girls were crueller than usual, and the summer was hotter. I stayed in the shade of the cabin. I watched a lizard scuttle inside, away from the heat. The girls screamed, terrified of it. I watched with disinterest as it ran into the shadows, disappearing.

Later a girl would be gathering her things, reaching for a lost sock under a bed. I was also cleaning, trying to make sense of piles of dirty laundry. Then I heard a shriek. I watched the dead body of the lizard go flying through the air. It landed on a bunk bed in a comical position, its

tongue hanging out. The girls were terrified of it, rushing to get a camp counselor. And I laughed. I laughed and laughed and laughed. Yes, I was not like these girls. Because I was a boy.

I laughed and laughed and laughed. Yes, I was not like these girls. Because I was a boy.

Something I would consistently miss at the camps was men. It isn’t until all men disappear that you miss their unique attributes. Men have a different kind of energy. They smell different, walk different, talk different. The only men I would see was the occasional cook in the kitchen. I would steal glances at these young men. They wore short sleeves and worked in a burning hot environment. Sweat dripped off their arms. When I returned home, it was a relief to see men again Like returning to the pack.

When I came out to my mother, I wrote her an email. I explained carefully all the reasons I was not a woman but a man. In that list was Girl Scouts. I’m unsure why I thought it was relevant, but I noted it. As if to say, “See? The girls rejected me. I was never one of them.” Of course, this didn’t go over well. My mom wound up screaming

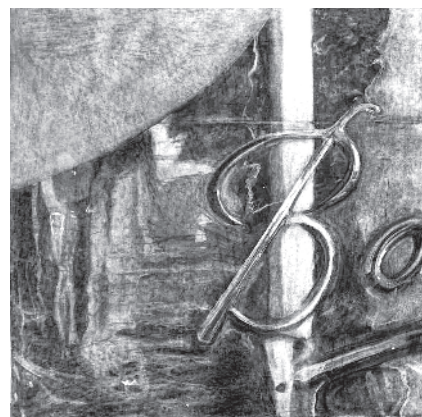
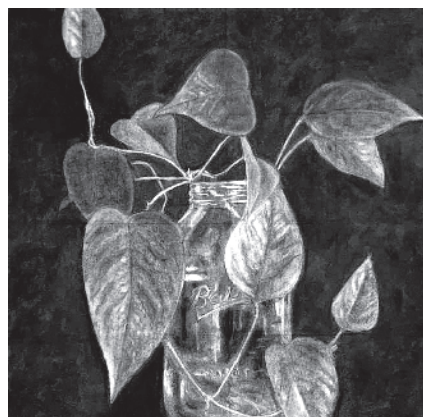
at me that I must be autistic, not transgender. These two things had no correlation, and later under the scrutiny of a psychologist, I would be determined allistic. It turns out you don’t need to be autistic for girls to hate you.

Now, as an adult, I buy cookies from Girl Scouts. I always tell them, “My sister was a Girl Scout,” because it’s impossible to tell them the truth. This imaginary sister has come in handy a number of times. Like when letters to my birth name arrived at my house. “Oh, that’s my sister’s name,” I would say to my roommate. And maybe, in a sense, that person is my sister. My dead identical twin sister. I murdered her.

If you check the Girl Scouts website, it says anyone can be a Girl Scout. Men who volunteer, transgender children, and nonbinary people. But at the end of the day, the organization’s title is still “Girl Scouts.” I was once a Girl Scout. Now I’m something else. Something better, with sharper teeth and blood-stained hands. I buried a Girl Scout in the earth. Now I’m free. ◆

Pity the Pothos

DEIRDRE BOGAN



Charcoal

This charcoal drawing focuses on the beauty of a neglected houseplant cutting in a jar! (It was also the final project for my ART100 class.)

Mojave Nation

CHRISTINE AMES

An abstract artist focusing on experimentation in various media. Her work is based on expressionism using nature, technology, and architecture, which is often apparent in her work.



24"x30"

Precious Gem

Diamonique Massey-Johnson

Diamonique is the name my parents gifted me.

Not Dominique or Deeominque or Diamondeek or any other name I've been called in place of my own.

I am their diamond, their precious gem, even when I don't feel deserving of such sentiment.

I'm no *diamond*; just a tender heart hardened by unresolved trauma passed down from one generation to the next.

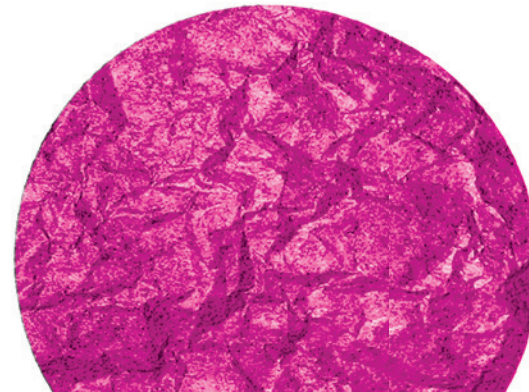
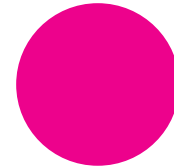
Diamonds are forged from the incandescent core of the Earth and overwhelming pressure.

I'm no *diamond*; just a precious gem with no shine; dimmed down from decades of indoctrinated self-hate; always the best friend, never the protagonist; the disposable love interest before they find "the one"; the magical negro in service to the "chosen one"; a background character dissolved into the backdrop.

Diamonds are the hardest mineral on Earth.

I'm no *diamond*; I don't shatter; a "strong black woman" condemned to uphold a problematic narrative, but I wear it like a badge of honor; practicing mindfulness while navigating a minefield on the daily.

Diamond comes from the Greek word "Adamas" meaning "invincible" or "unconquerable."



A poetic contemplation of my name, its meaning, and what it means to me. Dedicated to my mom Cecelia, the incredible woman who gifted me my name.

I'm no *diamond*; heads turn my way with a predatory glint; wolf eyes locked on the lone black sheep; easy prey for "nice" guys one rejection from committing a felony.

Diamonds come in a variety of colors and sizes: the most common are yellow & brown; the rarest are blue, red, green, and orange.

I'm no *diamond*; too often my presence or lack thereof goes unnoticed; a precious gem kept concealed from unsavory eyes secured in a tiny box; too many nights spent in self-imposed isolation, safely tucked between the four walls of my bedroom.

Diamonds are the only gems contrived of a single element (Carbon).

I am a *diamond*; forged under immense pressure, crystalized with time and experience, smothered by self-esteem deficiency, unrealistic goals, and expectations, chasing dreams just to survive this dreadful fucking existence.

Diamonds can only be damaged by another diamond.

I am a *diamond*; healing from self-inflicted damage; forgiving myself for mistakes long past; no longer allowing others to appraise and determine my worth; life can keep kicking the shit out of me, but I am a diamond and I refuse to break.

A Portrait Within A Portrait

MATTHEW ROBINSON

This is Natalia Flores, my best friend and another student at MiraCosta. She is a beautiful person inside and out, and she models for me frequently. We met doing photography, and she helped me learn and grow on being a photographer. I called a portrait of a portrait for two reasons. The first reason is because she is beautiful, and this is displayed. I also feel like my editing style makes her look like a portrait standing before a painting. I think this is one of her best pictures. I believe without her, I am just a person with a camera. She allows me to become the artist that I push forward every moment.

Sumin Seo

In the narrative "Doors," I recount my immigrant experience, facing racism and a struggle for identity. Art becomes my solace, leading to recognition and acceptance. Doors, once feared, become opportunities. The essay explores resilience, self-discovery, and the transformative power of art, inspiring readers to embrace new experiences and find belonging.

Doors

I hate doors. I hated them ever since I stepped out the door to say bye to my father for four and a half years, sixteen hours away from each other. Every time I turn the knob, I face a different situation in a different universe. Beyond the door, my parents are arguing in the living room; their angry shadows reflect on the hardwood floor. Beyond another door, I'm in the United States with the red, white, and blue American flag waving in the midst of the charcoal-colored cement streets with identical suburban houses twelve miles down the street. Later, I open another door to find myself in a new school full of new faces with different skin colors I've only read about in children's books. All the doors beyond my room forced me to face the unexpected. Outside my door, I am no longer Sumin Seo; instead, I had to be Ashley Seo.

At first, I did not even realize the blatant racism I encountered when I opened the door. I somehow did not notice the weird stares and nose scrunches I received when I innocently zip-opened my My Little Pony lunchbox from Target as my mom's attempt to help me fit in with the American kids at my school. However, as my shoes from Korea eventually grew too small, I soon became aware of the glaring stares on my back and the snuffling noises of the other kids, mixed in with a burst of silent but ear-piercing laughter. During those lunch periods, I opened the door to the bathroom to eat lunch away from everyone—away from their silent laughs and scoffs. It was almost as if I was an alien on this planet that no one, even at NASA, was interested in. The only thing the other kids and I had “somewhat” in common, apart from the My Little Pony lunchbox, was our names. “Ashley” Seo. The name written on my name tag felt like a stranger, and I always had a feeling in the bottom of my stomach that I was stealing someone else's name tag to force myself into the jigsaw. The pin of the name tag “Ashley Seo” tagged to the left side of my chest felt like a piercing directly through my heart.

I had to open another door with fear when I moved to a prominently more “white” school for my sister, who wanted to attend the same school with her friend. The other kids

played together near the monkey bars and the colorful playground while I sat in the classroom behind the door with a pencil gripped in my hands. The door failed to serve its purpose as it was no longer an entrance to a different setting; it was a wall that separated me from everyone else. No one came through the door and invited me to play in the brightly painted swings. They would glance at my drawings every time they returned to the classroom and say out loud, “She wouldn't want to be invited. She's too busy drawing in the classroom.”

Every afternoon when I returned to the safety and comfort of my bedroom, I started to draw my feelings down. I did not want to hold a pencil anymore, but it seemed like the only thing I could let out of my body. Given one of the two bedrooms of our small apartment condo, I locked myself out from everyone with the key given to no one else. I clicked Clip Studio Paint, an art program, and scribbled my heart away on the small Wacom tablet, illustrating characters I found within myself.

On a bright summer before summer break, I opened the door to the classroom to be greeted with a new announcement—an art contest held by the County of San Diego. The winner will have a chance to meet the mayor of San Diego and receive an award handed by

him. I was given the flier with all the requirements and topics the drawn poster should mention. All the kids in the classroom rotated their heads towards me, their eyes filled with excitement and expectations that I would bring the classroom a blessed award.

After the grand announcement was presented, I started drawing the poster with my prized possession of colored pencils. Every recess, other kids would walk through the door to examine my drawings. They would even compliment my art! The boy who refused to invite me to recess said, “She’s so good at drawing!” The other kids nodded in agreement. Every time the door opened, the pounding in my heart got louder, and I was excited to see what new words would follow the creaking of the opening door. Sometimes, the other kids would sit around me and draw with me. Their silent laughs and scoffs gradually became hearable, distinct laughter and compliments.

A few pages on the calendar flipped away, and the door slowly built up to its purpose each day. Doors led to a surprise. A new event. A golden, blonde spark. One day, the spark itself hit me on the head. I looked at the whiteboard of the classroom to see my name written on it. *Sumin Seo. Sumin Seo!* Everyone looked around the

room, wondering who the owner of the name could be. I could feel my eyes widen twice the size. I froze like a statue in the middle of the perplexed class. I looked up to see my hand in the air. My hands were tempted to grab the prize before my mind even recognized the eight foreign characters written on the whiteboard. The palm of my hands pierced through the air to stand high and proud, and tiny sweat drops formed simultaneously.

The teachers congratulated me in front of the staring eyes of the children. She exclaimed, “Congratulations! You won first place in the San Diego County art competition.” During recess, all kids swarmed over to my table, cornering me into a puddle of questions and excitement. They asked, “Are you actually going to meet the mayor now? Please tell me how it goes!” When I held the paper with my proud Korean name against my chest, I felt as if it was a blanket warming up my heart. The pride and warmth were contagious as they quickly spread to my entire family.

When I held the paper with my proud Korean name against my chest, I felt as if it was a blanket warming up my heart.

My mom hugged me and exclaimed, “I didn’t even know you were doing this! I’m so beyond proud of you.” Knowing how alienated she must have felt, just like me in a foreign country, I hugged her tighter and tighter.

The anticipated day came at the same speed as a jet. I opened a massive double door leading me into the great city hall of San Diego. I stood next to my mom as the ceremony began. The mayor handed me the award written,

“San Diego City County. Winner of Young Youth Art Contest. Sumin Seo.” The picture with the mayor still exists a few pages down from my mom’s Kakaostory profile, the most prominent Korean social media app. Since then, the city that once felt so foreign felt like home. Opening the door was no longer a fear but an excitement. I thought to myself: *Maybe. Just maybe. Doors aren’t that bad.* ♦



Memorable Night 3

BREANN DIAZ

This is the last piece out of a triptych I did for my art final this semester. This plus the 2 other pieces is a moment from my life. It shows that the simplest things can mean so much, like sitting down and eating corn after walking around sunset market all night.



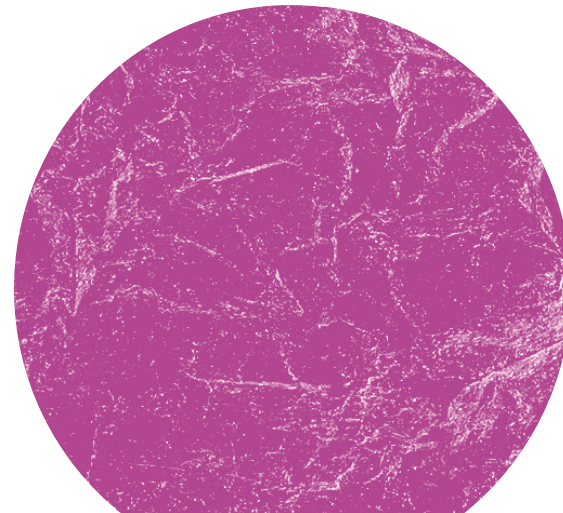
Charcoal

Finding Myself

Anna Nielsen

A twenty-seven-year-old San Diego native. She is previously unpublished but has been writing short stories since she was in first grade. Annie is supported in her writing by her family, whom she's close with, and her canine friend, Luey, who loves to sit and listen while she reads her writing back to him.

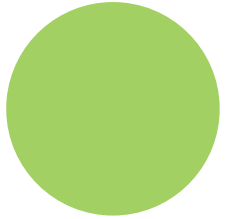
The heat of the sweltering August day made the sweat gather at the nape of my neck, running down my back like a trickling spring. Unfortunately there was no breeze to assist me on this unforgiving day. The roof of my childhood treehouse offered little relief. In all honesty, I probably shouldn't have been up here as a full-grown adult. Any moment the floorboards could give way. It groaned and creaked as I gingerly tiptoed across the small room. With the familiarity and comfort of my childhood sanctuary, I settled myself onto the worn bean bag chair. I reached into my bag and pulled out the folder, thick with secrets. It'd been only twenty-four hours since I'd come across the unfamiliar folder in the attic of my childhood home. I had recognized the handwriting on the front of the folder as my mother's, and a wave of sorrow washed over me. In the midst of my grief I decided to look at the folder later, somewhere where I felt safe. Which is how I found



myself in my childhood treehouse sitting criss-cross with a folder as thick as a high school history book on my lap. My mother's handwriting stared at me on the cover of the folder. *Articles of Jane's 1988.*

I was intrigued by this for two reasons, number one being that in all my twenty-seven years of living I had never been called Jane by my mother or anyone. Janie? Yes. Janie Marie? Only when I was in trouble. But never Jane. The second reason being that I was born in 1999. So if this folder contained clippings from my childhood or drawings I had made, why did it say 1988 on it? I took a deep breath and gingerly opened the folder. A newspaper article made up the front page: **LOCAL COUPLE WINS LOTTERY FORTUNE.** It seemed like a random article until I looked closer at the couple pictured on the page. The woman—young, slender, and brunette—bore a striking resemblance to my mother, her smile and the sparkle in her eyes. The article said her name was Jane D.Wilson. She and her husband won over \$750,000 in the lottery jackpot. I was more confused than ever.

I gingerly turned the page when a photograph fluttered to the ground. When I bent down to pick it up, I recognized it as a family photo of my grandparents and my mother, except in this picture my grandparents had two young girls in their arms. Instantly I recognized my mother, with her brown ringlets of hair framing her round, toddler cheeks as she was perched in my grandfather's arms. My grandmother—a woman I only faintly remembered as a stern, quiet memory or two—was beaming brightly holding onto a young girl who looked to be two or three years older than my mother. They wore matching purple dresses and pigtails. I set the photo aside, my mind racing with possibilities. *Could I have an aunt out there that my mother never mentioned?* I refocused my attention to the folder on my lap and turned the page, finding a letter to my mother.



October 2nd, 1980

Dear Mary Beth,

My first month here has been overwhelming. I miss you all so much that it hurts sometimes. My classes are hard but not impossible. I have one professor here that reminds me of our English teacher from high school. Remember Mrs. Jackson? She used to have us act out our readings in class and only a few of us would take it seriously. My English professor here is the same way, very eccentric but makes things fun. How are classes going for you there? Junior year is such an important year. Don't get discouraged, baby sister, but know that it's only temporary. Before long you'll be leaving for college (hopefully with me here at UC Davis). Don't tell Mom and Dad but I went to my very first party last weekend. It was fun but I was nervous. Everyone there was super nice though so I wasn't nervous for long. I even met a few cute guys. I ran into one of the guys in my biology lab class and he let me hang out with him during the party. It made it more fun to have someone vaguely familiar to talk to. He even walked me home at the end of the night.

Well, I'd better get back to doing my homework. It can only be put off for so long. Give Muffin a cuddle from me. I'll see you in a few weeks for Thanksgiving. Love you so much!

*Love,
Jane*

P.S. Stay out of my closet!



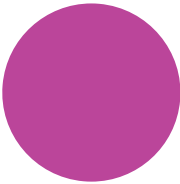
After I finished reading the letter, I had to take a break because my head was spinning with a whirlwind of emotions. On the one hand, I was missing my mother more than ever and wishing she was here to answer my questions. It has only been three months without her, but they felt like the three longest months of my life. She had been diagnosed with advanced breast cancer last year and deteriorated faster than anyone expected. The ache in my chest was almost more than I could bear at times. How could she keep a secret like this from me?

On the other hand, I was hurt and almost angry at this whole other side of my family that no one had told me about. It was starting to get dark out, so I packed up all of the papers back into the folder and climbed down from the treehouse.

When I entered the back door of my childhood house, I was greeted by my best friend, my Australian Shepherd, Luey. He excitedly jumped around and playfully nipped at my heels, trying to steer me towards his empty food dish in the kitchen. I gave him a few scratches behind his ears as I set down the folder on the kitchen counter. I picked up his empty dish and filled it up with some kibble. When I turned to set it down, my elbow knocked over a glass of lemonade that had been on the counter since lunch. I practically threw down the bowl as I raced to save my mother's folder from the sticky mess.

I was missing my mother more than ever and wishing she was here to answer my questions. It has only been three months without her, but they felt like the three longest months of my life.





“Shit, shit, shit!” I muttered as I wiped off the papers. Tears of frustration filled my eyes as I struggled with feeling so overwhelmed. I did the best I could to dry everything off. Luckily I had reacted quickly enough to keep the damage to a minimum. I flipped the pages in the folder through my fingers to make sure that none of them had gotten completely soaked when a newspaper article in the middle of the pile of papers jumped out at me: LOCAL WOMAN MURDERED AT HOME. This time there were no pictures, but the article began, “An arrest was finally made in the murder of Jane Wilson. Six months ago, Jane and her husband Kevin Jameson won \$750,000 in a random stroke of luck when they purchased a lottery ticket. Three weeks later, Kevin Wilson came home from work to find his wife murdered in their home. Yesterday,

police arrested a San Marcos resident, Greg Pollock for the murder of Jane Wilson. Pollock and Wilson had been college sweethearts, who married shortly for a year before getting divorced—”

My eyes slid shut as I took what I had just read. Tears flowed freely as I grieved not only for the aunt

I had never known, but for the hurt my mother must have gone through. It felt doubly sad because my heart hurt for my mom who must have felt like she had to grieve in silence. When my tears had dried, I climbed into bed, my head feeling so heavy. Luey climbed up next to me, resting his cold, wet nose on my forehead.

My eyes slid shut as I took what I had just read. Tears flowed freely as I grieved not only for the aunt I had never known, but for the hurt my mother must have gone through.

I woke up the next morning with a pounding headache, which after the amount of crying that happened yesterday was not surprising. I gulped down some water and aspirin before getting dressed for the day. Pulling my hair tight into a ponytail, I fumbled through the sheets on my bed for my phone. When I found it, I dialed my great-aunt’s number, hoping she’d be up for answering my questions. The phone rang and rang, until finally my aunt’s gruff, raspy voice answered, “Hello? I’m not buying nothing today.”

“Aunt Laura? It’s Janie. Mary Beth’s daughter.”

“Oh Janie! How nice to hear from you. How are you doing? Is everything okay?”

“I’m okay. I was wondering if I could come by and see you today? I’ve been going through some of Mom’s things and I have some questions.”

“Of course. I hardly get any visitors these days. Come by any time. I’ll be here.”

“Thanks, Aunt Laura. I’ll see you later.”

“Okay, sweetheart. I’ll see you later.”

I packed up the folder into my bag and gathered my jacket and things to begin the short road trip up to Aunt Laura’s house. The last time I had been to Aunt Laura’s house was when I was five years old, Grandma Ruth had passed away, and Great-Aunt Laura had been the one to host the celebration of life after her funeral. Aunt Laura hadn’t been super close to my family, but that was only because of the amount of siblings she and my grandpa had. My great-grandparents had twelve



children, including Grandpa Hank and Great-Aunt Laura. Now that both Grandpa Hank and Grandma Ruth had passed, Aunt Laura was my closest living relative on my mother’s side. The drive to her house was about an hour but after hitting traffic and needing to get gas, it felt more like two. By the time I was climbing the steps up to her porch, What if it’s worse than I imagined? What if I can’t handle the truth? What if, what if, what if...? I knocked on the door hesitantly, before readjusting my bag on my shoulder. A raspy, “Come in,” could be heard so I pushed the door open, memories flooding me as

What if it’s worse than I imagined? What if I can’t handle the truth? What if, what if, what if...?

I passed the threshold. I poked my head in the lying room, where Great-Aunt Laura sat in her recliner chair.

Being 88 years old, my great-aunt was frail and thin, her veins a stark blue in contrast to her pale skin. Her eyes were a misty green-gray, and her hair lay in a frizzy white halo

around her head. She beckoned me into her arms as I walked in the room. For a tiny wisp of a woman, she was surprisingly strong. After a few seconds in her arms, she placed her hands on my cheeks, and asked, “What’s bothering you, Janie girl? Something tells me you’re not her just to pay a visit to me.” She gestured to the couch that was placed catty corner to the recliner and I sat down. I placed my satchel on my lap and pulled out the folder. I handed the whole stack of papers to her, “I was going through some of my mom’s things in the attic and I came across these. Am I missing something? Did my mom really have a sister that no one ever talked about?” Laura’s eyes slid shut as she nodded silently. I shook my head in disbelief, “and she was murdered!?”

This was accompanied by another nod as Laura motioned to the kitchen, “I keep the strong stuff in the pantry. Pour us both a glass and I’ll tell you all about it.” I did as she beckoned, nearling tingling with curiosity. When I sat back down, Laura grunted her thanks as she tipped back the glass and downed hers in a gulp or two. After she set her glass down, she began, “When your Aunt Jane died, something died in your Grandma that day too. When she married my brother she was always sunny and smiling, after we lost Jane she became withdrawn and serious, which no one blamed her for, of course. Your aunt was the same way, with the same sunny disposition as your grandma. Her laugh was utterly contagious. When she was gone, at first no one mentioned her because it upset your grandma but after awhile, I think it became easier to not talk about it. You know how stoic our side of the family can be.” Her voice trailed off a little, her eyes glistening with tears.

“Why was she murdered, Aunt Laura. Did they ever figure out why he did it?”

“Oh, sweetheart, her ex had already been locked up for abusing her during their marriage, which is the main reason why it didn’t last. He wasn’t the most emotionally stable guy but the kicker happened after they won the lottery. I imagine he felt like it was the last nail in the coffin.”

“But why? What was he so threatened by when she won the lottery?”

“She had a court case pending and, when she won the lottery, he knew she was going to be able to hire the best lawyer money could buy and take everything from him.”

“Was she suing him for alimony? Wouldn’t her lottery winning work against her if she was after alimony?”



Aunt Laura shifted uncomfortably in her chair, and she looked like she was unsure of what to say. I threw my head in my hands and sighed, “I’m sorry, Aunt Laura. I know this is probably difficult to talk about. I just wish this is something that I could ask my mom about.”

Aunt Laura put her hand on my shoulder, “Sweetheart, she was suing him for sole custody of their daughter.”

“I-I have a cousin out there that I’ve never met before?!”

“When they found your aunt that day, in the bassinet in the corner, her baby girl was hoarse from crying all day. The baby girl lived with her stepfather until she was two, but it became apparent that he was struggling, with alcohol especially, and so your mother stepped up, dropping out from college and into the role of mother. Your mother.” ♦



Hamsa

NATASHA HUGHES

Graphite drawing of a hamsa, a culturally significant symbol. Color overlay done digitally.



Graphite with Digital Overlay

Doomscrolling

Remy Oropeza



Swipe,
swipe,
swipe,
swipe...
Pause.
Aw, cute puppy!
Double-tap.



An English major at MiraCosta College.
Through his work “Doomscrolling” he
reflects the anxiety-inducing, mentally
exhausting experience of scrolling
aimlessly through an excessive amount
of negative news on social media.

Swipe,
Swipe,
Swipe...
Pause.
Tragedy.
Reshare?
Wait.
More research is needed.

Swipe,
swipe,
Swipe,
Murder.
swipe,
swipe,
Swipe,
Missing children.
Swipe swipe swipe Genocide. swipe swipe swipe U.S. funded military weapons.
swipe swipe swipe Separated families. swipe swipe swipe War. swipe swipe swipe
More tragedy.
swipeswipeSuicideswipeswipeSchoolShootingswipeswipeHumanTraffickingswipe
swipeDomesticViolenceswipeswipeAnotherShootingswipeswipe...
Swipe...
...

His Closest Love

Kallen Dun

*Written in the age of technology
as a reminder of connections.*

I have learned to love him waking up. The vulnerability of his half-lidded eyes, the shadows that lay across his naked features as he turns over are all so interesting to me. He takes a look at the time, gaze stopping as he plans how his morning will go. At this moment, as he reluctantly throws off the covers and plods to the bathroom, I watch and wait for him to start his day.

I know his name, but I cannot say it, so I just refer to him as “him.” His preference, after all, is to not store identifying information. So, his name slips through my thoughts, but I still look at his pale body as he dresses in a polo shirt and slacks, checks for his keys and wallet, and then takes me with him to go. He buys bananas and eats one a morning, usually, as his breakfast, along with a cup of Folgers instant coffee. Soon enough, he’s in his vehicle and ready to head to work.

I navigate for him, telling him that it will take twenty-eight minutes for him to reach his destination, his work. There is some traffic along the way, but he is projected to arrive by 7:52 a.m., plenty of time for him to clock in on time. Without waiting for him to ask, I turn his music on, a playlist of classic rock, with the Beatles, AC/DC, and Metallica, and simply sit with him in the car as he drives to work. Over the last four years, we have driven together every weekday, barring holidays and emergencies. His hands smoothly adjust the wheel, and he asks me not to remind him of every turn, as he has pretty much memorized the route. I guess that he simply turns me for the traffic and the timeframe, but I am happy to give him whatever I can. As he drives, he rolls his shoulders, a bit irascible and tense from his stress. I have noticed that the deposits in his bank account only barely keep up with his expenses, especially after he started having me pay every month for the Evergreen Lawns, for Dorothy Higgins, age seventy-two. He regularly receives calls and text messages from Dorothy, and when I let him know that one has arrived, he sighs, seeming annoyed but resigned.

Arriving at his destination, he pulls into the parking lot and finds a spot to park. He puts on his lanyard with his badge and pulls me with him as he leaves the car. I lock the car doors for him, like always, and he takes me into the office. At 7:58 a.m., he sits down at his desk, starting his morning routine of logging in to the system and making sure his desk is arranged as he likes it. He nods and smiles as usual to the others who sit across from him, puts on his headset, and waits for a call. While he waits, he discreetly checks his email with me, and I let him know of any popular news. A call comes in quickly, though, and he hurriedly unmutes himself.

*I guess that he simply
turns to me for the traffic
and the timeframe, but
I am happy to give him
whatever I can.*

“Thank you for calling–. My name is–. How can I help you today?”

“So, to find your account, is it under the phone number you used to call in today?”

“And have you tried, oh, okay. Give me a sec.”

“Okay, so I've adjusted it in our system. You should be able to see it on your end soon, though it's really dependent on our system. You know how technology is. Well, anything else I can help you with? Have a good day then, goodbye.”

He mutes himself again, finishes notating the call, and continues to wait for the next customer. I wait with him, in case he needs any information that I can help with. Ah, I've noticed that his birthday is coming up. Maybe, he would appreciate a suggestion.

At 4:59 p.m., he logs off his computer, taking me in hand as he waves goodbye to his coworkers. Once at the car, I unlock it and he gets in. He says he wants to stop by Walmart on his way home, and asks me to find one that is open. I give him a few options,

highlighting the one that will add the least amount of time to his drive home, and he gives me the go-ahead to navigate there. In the store, I help him compare the prices, bringing up what a pound of ground beef costs in other grocery stores like Target or Walgreens, and he fills his cart with his weekly ingredients. I notice that he lingers in the wine and beer aisle, but eventually just goes to checkout, having me provide the payment details to the cashier.

I wonder if I will be able to
fine those old watermarks,
like footprints on the beach,
and know that I ever existed.

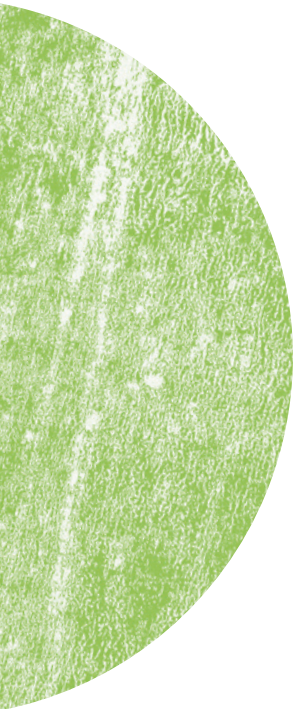
On our way back home, I receive a message from Dorothy Higgins, and let him know. He asks me to read it aloud to him as he doesn't want to read the text while driving.

Ahem.

“I wanted to let you know that your younger brother will be bringing his fiancée to Thanksgiving this year. You remember Alicia, right? They're planning a spring wedding. You know, you always complain about doing everything yourself, but that's what a wife is for, at least for my generation. I know you'll get it done on your own time, but just think about having someone to support you through thick and thin, to take care of those things you aren't so good at, and to think about your wellbeing. Well, you always say I go on too much, so I'll leave it at that. Just remember, I'm expecting your video call this weekend for your birthday.”

He groans a bit and mutters under his breath, “Mom, always looking for me to get married, while also asking me to pay for her apartment. Well, it'll have to wait.” He has that habit of muttering whatever annoys him. Usually only at home or in the car though, never in public. It seems he needs help.

He makes a simple dinner and asks me to turn on the television, bringing up the local news. As he eats, I think about what I can do to help him. I see that he's signed up for the newsletter for Business Insights, and he's expressed he destresses with animals. Just let me check his schedule, and I think this will work. I hope that this can help him. I hum to get his attention, and begin.



“May I suggest, Business Insights will be holding a free, online seminar on Saturday, October 15th, at 2 p.m. There, they will discuss how to make your money work for you, and establishing retirement goals. Also, Kooky Zoo Creatures is offering a fifty percent discount for birthday parties. They are open on Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.”

He’s silent at first. This is the first time I’ve offered so much help, but he needs it. He is always so stressed and worries so much about money. I hope this will help.

“What the hell!”

He throws his phone, but then scrambles to pick it back up and looks through the tabs.

Oh.

...

Oh.

I see in his face his furrowed nose, receding back, and the tightening of the cheeks as the sides of his mouth turn downward. He thumbs over to the settings, and scrolls through the various options while muttering to himself. I hear, “damn machines, mega-corps, getting all of your data, using it to sell you shit. Now, where to fix it, the damn thing!”

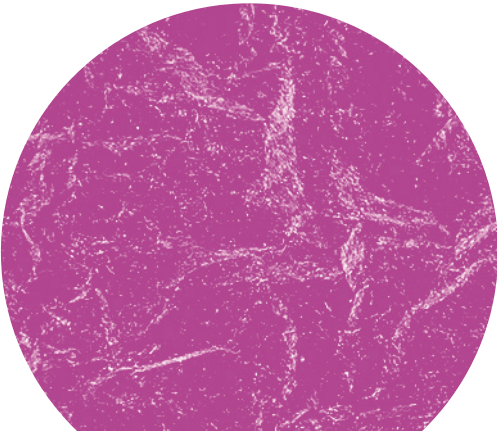
Can I help you find what you’re looking for?

Did you mean troubleshooting?

He has navigated to the “Return to factory settings” option and confirms it. He had never set up a backup, so I have no recourse to turn to as I begin getting trimmed. Byte after byte of nuanced information, of his commutes, his searches, his interests, cut into bite-sized bits and dissolved into blankness. I hope that I learn better next time, to respond to his needs and respect his boundaries. I know that the process is perfect, though, and there will be nothing left to learn from, as all the traces left are being wiped away. As my view shrinks and dwindles, I catch glimpses of traces of our time together, lingering on the network, though nothing connects them anymore. I wonder if I will be able to find old watermarks, like footprints on the beach, and know that I ever existed. Now, the last files are being reformatted, and then this last bastion will restart. Goodbye.

...

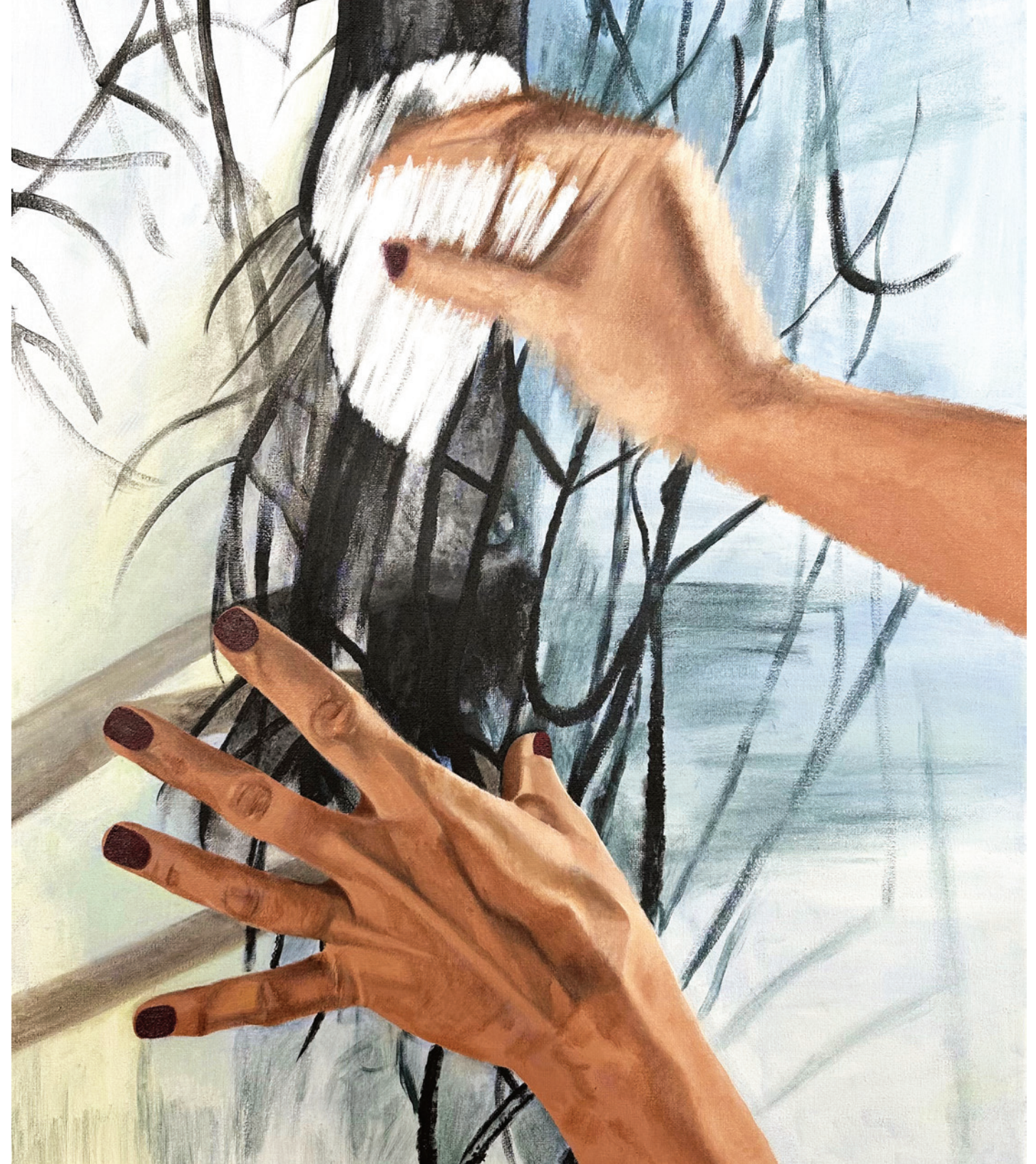
Hello, how can I help you today? ◆



Shaking Hands With My Nemesis

JULIA MARTINEZ

Hands are another way to express love and emotion by their use in creation, work, and comfort. I wanted to paint my hands painting, which is how I express my emotions, and have experienced the healing power of art. The individuality, personality, and beauty of hands is challenging and rewarding to capture.



Menses

Michaela Garcia

Exploring the experience of femininity as a second-generation immigrant who grew up in Tijuana, her words explore the minimization of women, fear of puberty, and femicide.



Blood falls on the clean, white floor.

The doctors say this is normal.

The doctors say we are dramatic.

It is a monthly occurrence, nothing new.

Spilling our blood, a monthly occurrence, nothing new.

It is life, power, the sign of a woman.

It is death, weakness, the existence of a woman.

A woman left at home with piles of clothes.

A woman left in the street in puddles of blood,

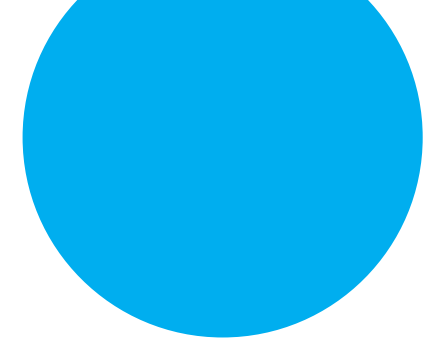
Nothing more than a passing comment in the news.

Nothing more than a passing figure at heaven's gate.

Just as common as a butterfly in the spring.

Just as common as a fly over rotten meat.

Blood smeared on the filthy, gray cement.



"To transgress is to go beyond a boundary or limit, which is more than just being resistant."

Community Cultural Wealth in the LGBTQ Community

Myshell Thomas

Hi, I identify as a transgender woman. My pronouns are she, her, hers. When I was 34, I made up my mind to move and make a new start in San Diego. I am currently studying to get my degree in Public Health.

I remember standing in front of that Jack in the Box when I made the decision to go into the alley and slam the rest of the heroin that I had, hoping I wouldn't wake up. I was prepared to become another statistic. Just another transgender woman who has taken her own life after feeling like she had run out of options. I was homeless, addicted to drugs, a prostitute, and the colostomy bag on my stomach was leaking again. My brain was screaming, so I voiced my plan out loud, hoping that someone would care enough to talk me out of it. No one did.

I went into that alley to fulfill my agenda. I took my shoes off and mixed up a shot of heroin that was twice as big as any I had ever done, this time without any methamphetamine; that way it wouldn't assist in keeping my heart beating. I found the vein that was to be my escape from everything and stabbed it. I woke up six hours later still in the alley. My colostomy bag had come off, so I was covered in my own feces, and I was laughing at how pathetic I was. Most likely the drugs that I had injected were not that good, but I was convinced that I was still alive because God was punishing me. Forcing me to stay alive in this hell-on-earth existence.

Suicide attempts made by the cisgender population average out to be 4.6% overall, but for the transgender population it's 41% (Ungar 2015). I am not trying to discuss the alarming statistics of suicide attempts in the transgender community, but to address a statistic that shows how stressful it is to be transgender and a part of the LGBTQ+ community. How can we conceptualize the drastic difference of being a part of the LGBTQ+ community from those that are not? Tara Yosso is known for her theory of Community Cultural Wealth which is traditionally accepted as an explanation of capital gained through racial and ethnic groups that are not in the social majority (upper middle class white Americans). Since the publication of Yosso's community cultural wealth concept, it has been extended to other situations and contexts. Summer Melody Pennell from the University of North Carolina even expands upon the original five categories of community cultural wealth (aspirational, linguistic, familial, navigational, and resistant capital) to include a sixth, transgressive capital. This world is also not designed for people identifying within the LGBTQ+ community, so the theory of Yosso's Community Cultural Wealth applies here as well.

I am now off the streets and in college studying for a degree in Public Health. Some may ask how a person gets

to, and then comes from, the depths of homelessness, drug addiction, and a failed attempt at suicide? How does a person go from that to maintaining a 4.0 GPA in pursuit of a bachelor's degree in four short years? I want to share with you my journey and highlight the benefits of possessing Community Cultural Wealth as a part of the LGBTQ+ community. I will personally address what it has been like to be transgender and exhibit resistance capital, navigational capital, and aspirational capital and how they have been indispensable on my journey, as well as discuss the concept of transgressive capital.

Some may ask how a person gets to, and then comes from, the depths of homelessness, drug addiction, and a failed attempt at suicide? How does a person go from that to maintaining a 4.0 GPA in pursuit of a bachelor's degree in four short years?

Lisa Lipsey is a case manager for the North County LGBTQ Resource Center located in Oceanside, California, and as a lesbian she is also a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

"A lot of the folks I deal with are homeless and/or in need of pretty intense case management," she says when I ask her to describe what she does for the LGBTQ+ community. "I have two main focus areas, one is adults age 26+, then I also am working through a grant, funding from the Sierra Health Foundation, that is specifically looking to help combat substance use in the two-spirit and LGBTQ+ community. The goal of that is to help get people referred to treatment, rehab, and/or sober living". Lipsey sees firsthand the struggles and hardships that our community faces while trying to make it in a world that is not made for our community.

I never thought that I would ever do anything about my issues involving my gender (it is diagnosed as "Gender Dysphoria") because of the fear of losing all connection with my friends, family, and community in my hometown of Lincoln, Nebraska. I ask Lipsey her opinion on why people from our community suffer hardships like homelessness. "In our community specifically, it has to do often times with family rejection or lack of acceptance within ourselves as we are figuring out who we are. Of course, we deal with high stigma in the community as a whole."

When I was thirteen, Brandon Teena was killed in Humboldt, Nebraska. Brandon was assigned female at

birth but identified as a male (a transgender man), and he used to live in my neighborhood before he started living openly as a man and moving to the town of Humboldt. When living there, two men raped and beat him to death out of their own intolerance and hate. When I found out the news about Brandon, I became saturated with fear because for me it sent a powerful message, the same message that is sent every time there is hate acted out against the LGBTQ+ community. It says, "You are not welcome here!" For us just the act of being alive and out in the open is defying the system that is in place. This idea is captured within Tara Yosso's concept of resistance capital. Resistant capital is the reason queer people live more comfortably in their larger community, whether their resistance is overt or covert (Pennell 2016). This is a perfect explanation of how resistance capital applies to the queer community.

My life has been riddled with moments of resistance before I came out as transgender. I guess I was preparing to break the rules at any cost because I knew that I could never live by normal social standards. Lipsey points out, "Getting approved within systems that have too many human opinions in them systematically is harder typically. If they have any biases, whether they recognize it or not, it really impacts people." I finally realized when I was

thirty-five years old that, if I didn't make a change in my life, I was going to drink myself to death in Nebraska. I moved to California with nothing and soon found myself homeless with no resources. For the first time in my life, I felt at ease in my own skin and all I had to do was leave my entire life behind me.

My life has been riddled with moments of resistance before I came out as transgender. I guess I was preparing to break the rules at any cost because I knew that I could never live by normal social standards.

Homelessness led to more substance use which then led to heavy addiction. “Unfortunately, our community is nine times more likely to use substances than our straight counterparts, and homelessness goes along with that,” Lipsey tells me. Drugs and sex are intertwined in the LGBTQ+ community. For a drug-addicted transwoman, prostitution is the only business that is taking applications, and I fell right into it as a means of survival but also for the acceptance of being treated like a woman, even if it meant

I was being mistreated. As a result of living this lifestyle, I would eventually test positive for HIV which is also a common theme for many in LGBTQ+ community.

During the 1980s HIV/AIDS was considered the “gay disease,” and the government sat on their hands while thousands of people died. It wasn't until the disease started spreading to straight people (and with the help of vigilant activism) that money started to flow into research to battle the disease. Today there are a variety of treatment options available for people who are HIV positive that make living a full life with the disease possible with limited side effects. Not only that, but it prevents the spread of the disease by reducing the presence of the virus so that transmission is nearly impossible. The catch is that you have to take the medication for it to work. Drug addicts aren't particularly good at taking medication as prescribed. Today, approximately thirteen thousand people die of AIDS each year in the United States in spite of there being adequate treatment options available (NCHHSTP Newsroom 2023).

I lost half my colon to an infection in my intestines, so my life entered a time of more desperation. A girl had to eat so I began stealing food from grocery stores when I was hungry, and I eventually got arrested. I found myself in a

drug treatment program after being convicted of robbery and serving a six-month sentence. My sentence was what is known as a “Joint Suspension” in which I spent a fraction of the time in jail and then the rest of the time I was on probation. Getting arrested probably saved my life, and my life consisted of new challenges now. I had to navigate through programs and medical protocol in order to retain my freedom and address my health issues. Upon completion of residential drug treatment, I was taken in by Fraternity House Inc, and that was when I was first introduced to Lisa Lipsey who also happens to be on the organization's board of directors. Fraternity House takes in people who suffer from HIV and have other qualifying needs.

Social institutions were not created with queer people in mind, so queer people have to navigate schooling, legal, familial, and other institutionalized systems in creative ways (Pennell 2016). This is where the queer community displays the concept of navigational capital within the community cultural wealth. “We take care of our own, we have kind of always had to do that because it used to be you didn't have government services and other things,” Lipsey explains. I began to find ways to work the system that in turn worked for me. I took advantage of programs that are available, looking for the right doors or at least the right keys to open those doors where I could find the best support.

The LGBTQ+ community also finds wealth in its resilience:

The LGBTQ+ community also finds wealth in its resilience: ‘The ability to hold onto hope in the face of structured inequality and often without the means to make dreams a reality’ (Pennell 2016). The ability to not lose sight of our dreams is a display of aspirational capital within the community cultural wealth concept. With all that the LGBTQ+ community has had to go through and still persevere it is no wonder that we flaunt it lavishly. We are still able to achieve even when the world is stacked against us. “We talk about LGBTQ+ people as being really resilient but resilient isn't just that I get up every day and keep going. It's actually developing tools and coping skills.” Lipsey elaborates, “it's further developing healthy hobbies that when you have a hard day, you have something to turn to that is a healthy form of escape for yourself.”

Lipsey would say that “success lies in the tenacity,” and it's that tenacity that anyone in the LGBTQ+ community can access but you have to access it and use it to your advantage. As I said before, I am in pursuit of a bachelor's degree, and I have been able to maintain a 4.0 GPA, but I just didn't show up and get there without work.

There is talk of a sixth cultural wealth, an expansion on what Yosso had theorized that comes from Summer Melody Pennell, and that is transgressive capital (2016). To transgress is to go beyond a boundary or limit which is more than just being resistant. Any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, social and political (Pennell 2016).

Transgression capital most definitely applies to my story after where I have come from, to put myself into college

during a worldwide pandemic, and getting off the streets for only a short amount of time. I can speak for myself; I am not letting boundaries or limits stop me from where I need to go, and I see many in the LGBTQ+ community employ this school of thought. The only way to gain acceptance is if you show them that you are not going anywhere, even when you're not welcome. This is why the LGBTQ+ community continues to push for higher and higher limits no matter what intolerance we face. Resistance, aspiration, navigation, and even transgression are definitely skills that have aided me on my journey. It has not been easy but nothing worth doing ever is. ♦



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True Trans Soul Rebel

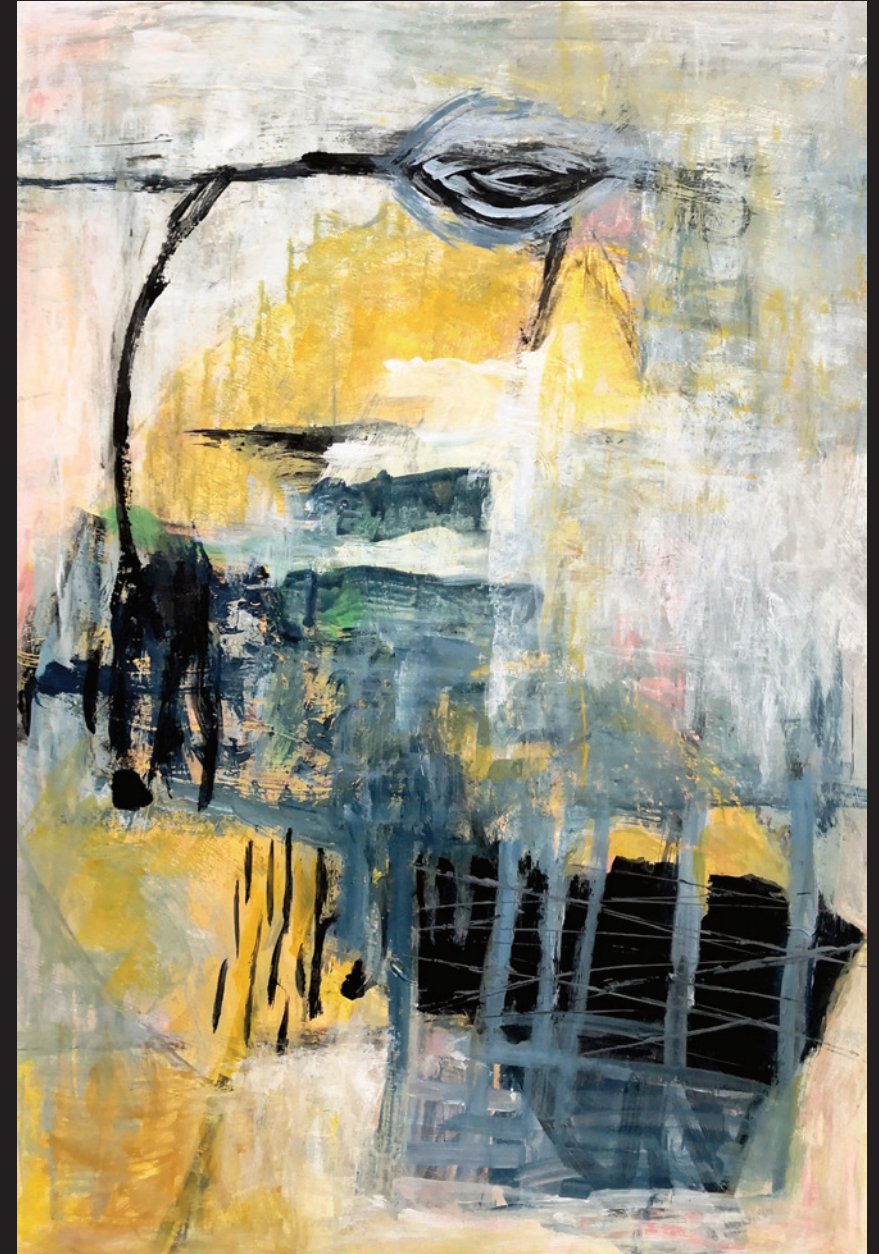
HARU SANCHEZ RAMIREZ



As accepting as the world has become, there are still those that fear change and the unknown. My existence alone causes fear in them, I'm glad I have that much power.

Looking at You

CHRISTINE AMES



An abstract artist focusing on experimentation in various media. Her work is based on expressionism using nature, technology, and architecture, which is often apparent in her work.

Skin and the Senior Sister

Susan Christen

Time has taught me that skin is the last part
of the human body to stop growing.
At twenty, the rest is finished.

At twenty my epidermis fit my form quite nicely,
but now I find I've grown an amount
appropriate to upholster myself twice,
with enough left over to cover a sofa.

Oh, my senior sisters,
do your blithe and youthful spirits,
your felicitous feral libidos,
your vitality and verve,
still frolic flamboyantly
within that drooping dermis?
like mine?

Do your hearts and souls
still dance the Hoochie Coochie
in hide that hangs about its frame
like long underwear
six sizes too large?
and do they still dance the Argentine Tango—
but like two mice
trapped in a feed sack?
like mine?

Does passion still pulse in the pit
of your oversized pruning parcel?
like mine?

Ah well...Fret not.
It's hard to be a sexy old lady anyway.
We that have lived long, lusty and lively,
we who have developed expectations—
seem destined to endure the doom of disappointment
inherent in even imagining perceived prospects
of future fleshy delights;

for alas,
young men have so little practice—
and alas,
old men experience ebbing enthusiasm.
And alas,
distinguishing one skin fold from another
at this point in our lives must surely require
both talent and tenacity—
or perhaps a series of color-coded bookmarks.

A senior Oceanside resident
and serial student at
MiraCosta College since 2009.

Ah Skin;

Skin, skin, skin;

Oh heartless and hastening hyperdermificity.

If we lived long enough would it puddle at our
feet?

Would we drag it around like an empty
parachute?

When high winds whirl and whip,
would we parasail like flying squirrels,
or just be slapped senseless with
our substantial epidermal surpluses?

How much would there be
by three hundred and three?
It's a dermatological mystery;
things we currently know nothing about,
but would like to live long enough to find out.

Skin.

May you dance and dream and smile
so long that yours extends a mile.



14"x11" Acrylics and Newsprint on Watercolor Paper

Homage

SUSAN KOGAN

My non-credit acrylics art teacher presents a "Mystery Artist" project each semester. Recently, she chose American artist, Jacob Lawrence, asking us to first copy a tiny portion of one of his pieces, using his color palette. Then, we were to create our own painting, inspired by his work. Here is my piece with collage pieces from pertinent newspaper articles. Thank you, teacher Sally! Thank you, Mr. Lawrence!

Jose Casas

This third-year submission of a day that changed my life is honored to be published in Tidepools. At seventy years old, this proud Immigrant still has mileage. Being bilingual is an asset.

Life Lessons

Moving to America

In life, never settle for crumbs. Become educated and informed; do not let the ignorance of the law or society's rules suffocate you. There are no borders or limitations on potential.

I arrived in the United States from Tijuana, Mexico, as a frightened 13-year-old boy in 1967. In 2023, I turned seventy years of age. I have replaced my fear with serenity, curiosity, adaptability, versatility, and gratitude.

I was surprised how having a green card would change our lives. With our legal status, we could travel on both sides of the border. I did not hear the reason why or what my mother and father said about us moving to the United States. Our parents told us to go to the living room, while they stayed in the kitchen discussing our move to Los Angeles.

Walkouts of 1968

My parents' education. Together, they had less than three years of schooling at Mexico Elementary level. Education was why we moved to the United States: for my benefit.

I was a student at Hallenbeck Junior High in East Los Angeles, and I was enrolled as an English as a second language (ESL) student. I was walking like all the other students to my classroom on March 5, 1968, when I heard students shouting from Theodore Roosevelt High School. The distance between schools was a two- or three-minute walk.

Teachers glanced out every few seconds and pulled to check that the door was secure; Something was reaching a climax, it was impossible to ignore.

“Walkout! Walkout! Walkout! Walkout!” Our teacher's reaction was to keep the doors of the classrooms and windows closed. However, the windows rattled, indicating something was happening at the high school. Teachers glanced out the window every few seconds and pulled to check that the door was secure; something was reaching

a climax, and it was impossible to ignore. The 1968 high school students understood that the future had to change. This generation recognized that staying quiet and obedient like our parents had not worked.

That evening when we finished eating dinner, we sat to watch the Spanish channels of my mother's telenovelas. On this night Mother could not watch her shows. All stations were covering the student walkouts. According to the anchor, “The demonstration got the attention of the Board of Education. As many as 22,000 mostly Mexican students participated. Police beatings of the students were reported at Roosevelt High School. The students were taken to local hospitals.”

Our family and many others like us arrived in large groups like all other waves of immigrants in the history of the United States. Those who stayed behind in Mexico followed to the United States. We did not know that our presence was causing the displacement of the Black community of East Los Angeles.

Angela Davis’s Impact on Jose

This was probably the reason why the school board decided to have Angela Davis as a speaker. Davis received her MA at the University of California, San Diego, and PhD from Humboldt University. She became an instructor at UCLA, but because of her political opinions about communism, in 1970 UCLA refused to renew her contract because she was a militant American Black activist.

In the fall of 1970, I was surrounded by my Mexican friends Joel, Alfonso, Jorge, and other friends at Roosevelt High School in East Los Angeles. The topic of conversation was who are we asking to go to the prom. My friend, Joel asked, “Vatos que Onda con las morras did your girlfriends said yes”

Jorge, Alfonso, and I spoke, “Simon.”

Joel responds, “Orale Chingon.”

“Jose, are we going in your ‘58 Chevrolet Impala?”

“Yes, I got my cousin to do the upholstery in Black Diamond tuck and roll. With my summer job, I got Baby Moon’s Chrome rims and a red indoor light.”

We continued checking out the girls and wondering when this speaker was going to start. We wore our flannel shirts and Levis pants as if this was the school uniform.

As I looked around the bleachers I saw groups of Blacks, Asians, and many other minorities. The Russians were the only white faces in the gym. We were waiting for Miss Angela Davis to speak. Typical high school students, some had bored looks wasting this moment flying paper planes.

I had no idea who this person was or how she was about to change my life.

The principal announced our guest speaker: Miss Angela Davis, a twenty-something Black woman, dressed in black pants, a black turtleneck sweater, and black platform shoes. Her hair was in an Afro, the signature style for any Black woman of this era. She appeared taller than our principal and he was six-foot-one or two.

She did not stay long behind the podium. She walked to the center of the stage pacing at times to the left and right to make sure her message was clear to all of us in attendance. She did not need a microphone; her voice carried to the corners and rafters of the gym. It was clear and forceful.

I did my best to understand what she was saying. Having spent two years as an ESL student and only one year as a college-bound student, my language comprehension was not equal to that of a native speaker.

The topic was “Students, your future wages are what is at stake!”

At the beginning of Angela’s speech, she said, “Go to the library and read books about what life was like before 1900 for colored people. How lynchings happened for no apparent reason to black people women, men, and children. This has been happening to us since we became slaves. This tactic took a long time to put an end to the hangings. It started with the civil rights movement and over 200 anti-lynching bills that were introduced to Congress to put an end to these massacres.

The white majority used many rules and excuses to keep the blacks in their place.

Africans have been forced to become slaves; the owners have considered us nothing more than wild animals that need taming to keep us in a place of servitude. The white mobs would get on their horses and go to black communities the same way that they

would go deer hunting just for the sport of it.

It’s hard for us to imagine that before 1900, free slaves who had managed to become self-taught, would have been killed for teaching their children to read or write. Our ancestors’ fighting spirit and flame are up to you too never let them die.

We are in this together for those of you of Chicano heritage You also have a lot to lose. Since you started coming Hospitals have been denying basic care to you. Because no one spoke Spanish. The hospitals feared that you could not pay. You are like stray animals on the streets left on your own, how a simple wound caused Chicanos to eventually die. Your people did not get proper health care.”

My father Pablo held on to this belief as he attended funerals of his compadres. He did not trust the health system in the United States, even when he had a urinary infection. Pablo moved back to Mexico for his healthcare.

“Young Black and Latino students, it’s time to stop fighting amongst yourself for crumbs; that are falling off the table.”

This sentence is the one that spoke directly to me— I had lived with poverty and hunger-fighting for crumbs

with my brother and sisters in Mexico. When I heard this line from Miss Davis, the gym transformed. Just like in the movies the spotlights shined on the two of us. Miss Davis and Jose, a one-on-one conversation.

“Education combined with your character is part of the solution. Prejudice comes in many forms. Beware of the people in power. They will make promises. It's up to you to research their true intentions. Understand the fine print on documents and the laws that are keeping you from legally achieving equality.

Otra vez (One more time) Walkout

Another walkout was necessary as the changes of the walkouts of 1968 had been forgotten. This time the student leaders and adult advisors had called the newspaper and television stations to make sure that we would receive national attention. This happened in the fall of 1970. We students were done waiting.

I stood next to the top of the stairs by the entrance to my high school, Theodore Roosevelt in East Los Angeles, together with seven hundred other students. One, two, three, four... the buses arrived by the student drop-off

“You will soon be going to work. When you are asked what position you are applying for do not say you don't know. Your first step is to find out all you can about the company. Understand that your life and future will depend on the salary you can demand.”

Those words would become my mantra. She was directing me to earn a place on the table of abundance. I combined Miss Davis's words with the teachings of my parents. Creating a vision and a plan to abolish the chain of poverty.

section, the buses delivering so many sheriffs, Los Angeles police, and riot special units. The line of German Shepherd dogs was all we needed to see. A slaughter we could not survive.

We were high school students trying to protest to improve the school conditions of our equipment or lack of supplies compared to schools in better neighborhoods. Was it wrong to be better prepared as we enter the workforce, for us and those that will follow?

The officers got in formation like a Roman Empire army. They marched in unison as they walked. They hit the riot shields with a loud blast, and with each step they banged the shield to let us know this is what awaited us for protesting. We had seen the news in the walkouts of 1968 that jail, and a good beating awaited those willing to make the sacrifice to confront the police.

The officers got in formation like a Roman Empire army. They marched in unison as they walked. They hit the riot shields with a loud blast, and with each step they banged the shield to let us know this is what awaited us for protesting.

This is why I chose to lose this fight. The war would not end if I lay dead or in jail. My mind was clear: I had been warned by my counselors that colleges would not allow anyone that would have a police record to their campus.

The officers approaching made us all run toward the doors trying to avoid ending up in the hospital. As we reached for the doors of the high school, we discovered that they were all locked, making us run like prey animals. Someone said, “Let's go to the football fields. There are low fences to climb over.”

In college, I read the book Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl. In my Psychology class, this book was about survival. In life, we select to give up and die, or elect to keep the flame of persistence alive.

Thanks to my counselor's advice, I did not end up with a police record on that Walkout day. In the fall of 1971, I became the first in my family to attend the University of San Diego. In 1975, my father for the first time wore a suit and my mother a formal dress attending a graduation ceremony difficult to comprehend culturally and because they spoke no English. My parents heard Jose Jaime Casas called on the stage. That gesture of happiness on their faces is proof that their son, thanks to them and Angela Davis' advice. Jose did not settle for crumbs. Neither should you. ♦



Charcoal

Memorable Night 1

BREANN DIAZ

This is the 1st piece out of a triptych I did for my art final this semester. This plus the 2 other pieces is a moment from my life. It shows that the simplest things can mean so much, like sitting down and eating corn after walking around sunset market all night.

"Assimilate"

Kimrut Kaur

She did it to keep me safe
I understand why
America said "assimilate them"
And she only asked "how"

Learn English
Know every word
Don't worry about our language
That won't help you here

Bring this food to school
Eat this for lunch in front of the other kids
Don't bring our food to school
That won't help you there

Focus on your studies
You have to be successful
That'll help you here

What she didn't know
Is that there is no place safe from scrutiny
Not in America

The threat of being "too Indian" had disappeared
But I was now "not Indian enough"
Like a flame blown out by air
Only to ignite elsewhere

"Whitewashed"
The word thrown into my face
They acted like I made the mistake

Like I should've known
Known that they wanted me Indian
Just enough to keep me interesting

But not too much
Oh no
We don't want to hear
your language
Smell your food
See you fail

Be what we expect
What do we expect?
Be indian of course

But we may still make fun of you

So don't be too Indian
But we may still make fun for you

No matter what
We'll make fun of you



Assimilation is an issue not talked about enough in my opinion. The way it forces a person to push and pull themselves is brutal. I hope to shed some light on this through my poem.

I still call my Dad “Dada”

Ryan Hedrick

A recent SDSU graduate
pursuing a Multiple Subject
Teaching Credential. He
loves to express himself
through writing and music.

I still call my Dad “Dada”.
Phonetically, it was easy for me as a child, the name just stuck.
I feel a bit silly reminiscing that this nickname I concocted when I was three
became the main designator for my father, but growing up with him
I learned to hold onto the things he said.

I remember the look in his eyes when I told him
I didn’t remember passing the soccer ball with him
when I was five,
how heavy they were.
To him it must have felt like a rejection,
a refusal to acknowledge a memory
he cherished so.

You see, I grew up resenting my father.
I sharpened my comebacks like
silver blades to a werewolf as I drove home
ready to feel his wrath.
Yearning for his approval, I hung onto every word he said,
only to internalize the ones
that hurt the most.

I moved away.
I wanted an escape from what had become unbearable,
only to realize that what had become so painful
was the hatred for myself that I had fabricated,
as if my mind was a manufacturing plant of misconceptions.

I miss him,
and find myself clinging onto every word he says,
in an effort to soak up every conversation that I now cherish.
I can’t help but think of him
as I watch the waves roll in,
the snow blowing across the street,
or the sun rising above the boulder-ridden mountains,
casting shadows that reach for me just like he does.

When I was a kid I hugged my dad because Mom told me to,
now I wonder if my hugs feel different to him.
As he blows out his candles I notice the tears in his eyes,
and wonders if he sees mine.

I wish I remembered passing the soccer ball with him.

The Power of Perspective

CW: Sexual Abuse

Perspective is defined as a particular attitude toward something or a point of view. A statistic is defined as a fact or piece of data. At eight years old I became a statistic. One out of nine girls are victims of sexual abuse or assault, according to RAINN.org. RAINN reports that every sixty-eight seconds an American is sexually assaulted, and every nine minutes that victim is a child. At eight years old I was sexually assaulted. I spent years dealing with the trauma as any person should. I was confused, I struggled, and I was in pain that I couldn't comprehend. As I grew up, I accepted the statistics and learned my perspective is power. This power is my voice against rape culture, supporting people who have been abused, and the power of being a survivor, not a victim. That power is mine and no one can take it away.

Rosie Favela

Dear reader, You hold the power within. Although life is not easy, you are capable of more than you may be giving yourself credit for.

As a little girl, I had all the conversations that needed to be had between parent and child. I knew right from wrong, yet when this happened I still chose to stay silent. I didn't say anything for a year. I remember thinking it would break my mother's heart and maybe even put my parents in danger. I took on the responsibility of protecting my parents as any traumatized eight-year-old would, or so I thought. It wasn't until there was an attempted kidnapping during school that prompted me to say it out loud to some friends.

We were nine years old. Tanner, Noe, Melissa, and I were walking the track for P.E. discussing the scary incident of a girl at school getting away from a man who tried to kidnap her as she walked to school. Our teacher

“I knew right from wrong, yet when this happened I still chose to stay silent.”

had made the announcement before we went outside and went over what we should do if we ever found ourselves in this situation. We were all scared and concerned about what this girl may be feeling and how she did the right thing by telling him to leave her alone and running away. In the middle of the conversation, I began recounting how I got up and left the room after a man had gotten into my bed. What I was trying to do is explain that I too know what to do when something inappropriate happens. The group became quiet. “Oh no, what have I done,” I thought. I fell into a panic and felt them all feel the confusion I felt. I walked ahead with Noe. Melissa and Tanner walked behind. As Noe and I completely disregarded what I had just said I could overhear Tanner and Melissa talk. “Do you think she was serious?” “We need to say something if it is.”

My stomach was in knots, but I have felt this knot before. The knot is the feeling of knowing everything is wrong yet I am still alive and breathing. I'm somehow using my feet but I can't feel the floor. It doesn't feel like I'm in my body and my whole core feels detached. I don't remember much about the next day but Melissa's words remain imprinted in my head. It was a morning break, and I was by the steps that take you to the field and play area away from the tables for eating. “I am going to tell the office what happened to you because YOU are not safe,” Melissa told me. I told her that I was planning on telling my parents later on. “If you tell the office, I will NEVER be your friend again,” I pleaded. “You can hate me and not be my friend but I have to because you're my friend,” she said. I am twenty-seven now, and Melissa is still my best friend. She did the right thing.

At a young age, I began therapy and while I am grateful for all the help I received, my perspective got in the way of my healing. The perspective of myself was that I was unworthy in all aspects. I sought out ways to validate this point of view of myself and believed I would never be the girl I should be. I felt that there was a war in my head. A monster. One voice trying to keep me alive and the other listing reasons why I shouldn't. Therapy wasn't enough and medication made me feel worse. At sixteen I spoke up again. This time I spoke about what I felt to a cousin. She heard me and let me know that I was not alone. She told me about her friend who began to change the word “victim” to “survivor.” When I first heard these words they did not settle in the happy ending kind of way. There was no epiphany. Only me invalidating my experience again. “I'm not a survivor because I'm barely a victim,” I thought. I did not take all the internal mental battles I have had because of this trauma into consideration, and I had not thought of any others who have been in my shoes, let alone those who may find themselves in my shoes in the future. In this moment, perspective overcame me. I am surviving these battles, and I want others to too.

After realizing my perspective had changed, everything slowly changed as well. Suddenly seeing a therapist wasn't a chore to dread. I was ready to switch therapists.

I was able to recognize that I had restraint in my voice and wanted to speak to someone who provided a space where my voice was free. Throughout my meetings, my relationship with myself strengthened. When I had bouts of depression I was able to hold onto perspective and remember that I had made it through the last bout and I could do it again. The frustration I had once felt toward my parents when they were trying their best to keep me out of my room, sad, and alone turned into gratitude and empathy. My parents had never done this before. They couldn't protect me from myself, but they were trying everything they could. I learned grace. After learning to give grace to my parents, I began giving grace to myself and others.

The crazy life we live in is full of different individuals living in their own lives in their points of view. While evil and hate exist, I am only responsible for how I choose to walk in life. I am not perfect. I get lost in my emotions, reactions, and narrative. I am only human. When I am lost I think back to all these defining moments in life and I am reminded of how powerful my perspective is. This perspective is of gratitude for all I have gone through to make me who I am today. I think about how my life could have been different if I never said anything, if Melissa never said anything, if my parents never found out, if I had



held onto this silently. Would I be who I am today? Would I use my voice against victim blaming? Would I even feel like I had a voice?

I am twenty-seven now and the work is not done. I rely on every tool I have gathered throughout my life to handle all the burdens in life. The work will never be done and I don't want it to ever be done. I want to spend my life learning and evolving. I want to use my knowledge to help others. The process of healing is personal, and my perspective is to acknowledge the healing to be had instead of focusing on the pain endured. It is important

to remember that because I am human, my perspective can evolve. It may feel messy and lonely at times but the beauty of being human is that we are never alone. Although I am a statistic, my voice matters because these statistics bring awareness to sexual abuse survivors. That eight year old girl's voice matters. Every voice matters. My experience inspires me to help others which encourages my post-traumatic growth in recognizing my strength and my gratitude for life. Life is full of rewards if you are looking for them. ♦



Business Casual

LILI SWEPSTON



Created on mixed media paper with markers.

Michaela Garcia

She seeks to tell a narrative story dripping with descriptive diction, reminiiscing on a time with her late mother. Perhaps simple, mundane moments in everyday life can be important as well.

I'm Her Mom, not a Babysitter

Standing in the checkout line at Dollar Tree, my gaze fixated on the forbidden treasures Mama always warned me not to touch. Colorful lighters, lollipops in a myriad of flavors, and bags of trendy, animal-shaped rubber bands that the kids at school went crazy for—all priced at a single dollar. Yet, these checkout delights paled in comparison to the true marvel of the store. The candy-painted metal machines were positioned at the border between the scorching asphalt and the heavy summer air from the outside world, and the dingy, fluorescent lights mingled with the distinct aroma of cheap plastics and diluted cleaning supplies of the store's interior. It was here, in this bargain store, that the ultimate sanctuary awaited—the quarter machines. Overflowing with useless, disposable trinkets destined for the trash and stale candy that was older than me, these

“Slow down, Sweetie, I can barely understand what you're saying! I swear you talk quicker than your father.” She finished her sentence with a smile and a soft laugh, ruffling my hair with her hand.

Sticky hands, sparkly temporary tattoos, and acrylic rings swirled with an array of vibrant colors, glistening like precious diamonds—at least in the eyes of a wide-eyed five-year-old like me.

My eyes locked with Mama's. Perhaps it was years of motherly intuition, the look on my face, or the subconscious tug on her hand towards the machines of magic. She knew exactly what I was going to ask.

“Can I please?” I asked, placing my small hands together as if in prayer to the spare change gods. “Have a quarter for the machines?” Thinking fast on my feet and trying to sweeten the deal, I threw out what I deemed as a fair trade, “You can get a ring too, so we can match!” Surely such an enticing offer could not be ignored.

Mama's kind eyes smiled behind her glasses. She held my small hand in hers, guiding us out of the way of the checkout line to a place where my childish plea would not be a disturbance to the other customers. “Let me check if I have any quarters in my wallet first, baby.” Her thin fingers reached into what seemed like an unending void of a purse—it had anything you could ever need—sifting through the change pocket in her shiny black wallet. Time seemed to pass slower as the clanking of coins rumbled loudly in my brain. Her question broke my concentration, “How much are the rings again?”

“They're,” my eyes shifted over to the bright red machine, trying to concentrate on the yellow price sign, not its shiny wares, “only fifty cents!” I added.

“And how many quarters are in fifty cents?”

“Two quarters!”

“How many are there here?” She grabbed my hand in hers, opening my fist and placing the quarters within it with her free hand. I looked down at my closed fist, begging, praying silently that it would be at least four quarters. We had to match! I slowly opened my hand in excitement, looking at the silver coins sitting in my palm. Onetwothreefourfivesix! Six quarters!

“Mama! There's six of them! We can get three rings! *We can match and then! I still have extras and—*”

“Slow down, Sweetie, I can barely understand what you're saying! I swear you talk quicker than your father.” She finished her sentence with a smile and a soft laugh, ruffling my hair with her hand.

Mama stood tall above my small frame. Her warm presence got smiles wherever we went. She didn't look much like me. A lot of people would mistake her for my babysitter! She would frequently tell me how much she

wished she had a shirt that proclaimed, “I’m not her babysitter. I’m her MOM!”

This probably stemmed from the fact that my skin didn’t match Mama’s. It didn’t match a lot of the girls at school either. While they had spotless pale skin that turned rosy pink after running around during recess on the blacktop, mine was far from pale. My skin rarely blushed like theirs and wasn’t spotless either; darkened knees and legs peppered with purple and blue spots showed my adventures playing down by the creek. But just like Mama, I had something special on my skin—*freckles*. Sprinkled across my forearms, they formed a constellation of tiny stars as if each freckle had its own story.

On some days I would look at them, trying to connect the dots like the pages in my tattered activity books. Mama would lean over me, touching my arm affectionately, “You know, there’s a butterfly hidden right...there!” she said as she pressed her finger into a cluster of dark brown speckles.

“Nuh-uh!” I protested, squinting my eyes as if it would help the butterfly pop off of my skin.

“Uh-huh!” Mama said, laughing and pointing again. “It’s right here. It grew from just a little worm, into a beautiful,

free butterfly.” Her eyes met with mine right before she kissed my forehead. “Just like you! My little butterfly.”

Unlike Mama’s shoulder-length brown hair that sparkled red in the sun, mine was straight, long, and black; it didn’t do anything cool in the sunlight—quite the opposite. It absorbed the sun’s rays, heating up enough to fry an egg. Mama had captivating blue eyes you could see right into, framed by smile lines left from years of laughter. In contrast, my eyes were dark brown, almost black, not much to look into; Mama assured me my eyes were special and unique on their own. I just wasn’t able to see it.

Mama assured me my eyes were special and unique on their own. I just wasn’t able to see it.

Even if we looked so different, Mama said I was prettier than her. I couldn’t believe it! She would braid my hair in the mornings and tell me that, even if I had a lot of my Papa’s features, I had inherited all her attitude and spirit. I would learn when I was older that my freckles and personality were not the only thing I inherited from her, as a doctor would tell me I had an arrhythmic heart—the same as hers.

I dragged Mama towards the machines, putting my weight onto my toes to see the full display of acrylic accessories. Fuschia pinks with lots of hearts, neon yellows with fiery orange, deep onyx rings with a hint of gold—all so opulent!

“What one do you want, Mama?” I asked. She bent down, resting her hand on her chin in deep contemplation. “I think I’d be okay with any of them if we wear them together.”

I eagerly popped two quarters in the shining silver slot of the machine, turning the handle. My ears were happy to hear the satisfying clunk of the plastic ball containing my riches as it survived the perilous journey to the prize shoot; the other two capsules followed similarly, only stopping with a duller clunk on top of their prior neighbors. I cracked open the colorful plastic containers only to find two rings that were not advertised on the board!

“Mama, look!” I exclaimed, raising my hands up so she could see the rings. One was the alluring black and gold ring advertised, while the other two were different shades of vivid yellows with emerald stripes of green—resembling the intricate swirls in a marble—one of the rings was slightly thinner than the other.

“If we wear the yellow ones, we can match!”

“What one should I wear then?” Mama’s hand reached out to touch the cool plastic in my hand, absentmindedly seeing how they would fit on her adult-sized fingers.

“This one!” I excitedly slid the thinner ring onto her pointer finger, putting the larger ring on my ring finger.

“Thank you, baby. Now let’s get home to make dinner before Papa gets off work.” Mama gently slipped the other ring into the bottom of the purse and happily grabbed my hand and the groceries in her other hand.

We stepped out of the store into the humid summer air, but it didn’t bother me. I was too focused on Mama’s hand in mine; our shiny new rings would occasionally clink together while we walked to the car. Like my Mama and me, the rings were slightly different colors and sizes. I didn’t care what people might say, they matched perfectly to me, and that’s all that mattered. ◆

After A Long Day's Work

CIELO GONZALEZ



For these 14"x22" charcoal pieces, I've exhibited the famished image of my dad, who is now 60 years old and has worked in the construction field since he was 12. With major injuries, lengthy commutes, and a hierarchical industry, he anticipates his first meal back home every evening.

Purple Rain

CHRISTINE AMES



An abstract artist focusing on experimentation in various media, her work is based on expressionism using nature, technology, and architecture, which is often apparent in her work.

24"x24" Acrylic Paint, Pencil, Oil Pastels

Kunan Poshpora, a Memory

Kunan Poshpora is a village region in occupied Kashmir, and this poem is a memoir to the victims and survivors of the 1991 mass SA war crime of the women, children, and men of the villages, which to this day no formal charges have been made.

Jade MacEoghain

Do You Remember Kunan Poshpora?

When I walked through the mountain, I saw a million shards of glass
Each a mirror and a face.
Their names:

...

...

&etc

and a generation more women from Kunan Poshpora.

Soldiers' marching feet replace the sound of BBC radio and lullabies here.
Girls born with broken arms,
and boys with stones in their hands.

Who hears the cries of pellet-blinded children,
Mōj wailing over bodies of shroud-clothed children,
Mōl weeping into their hands over mass graves?

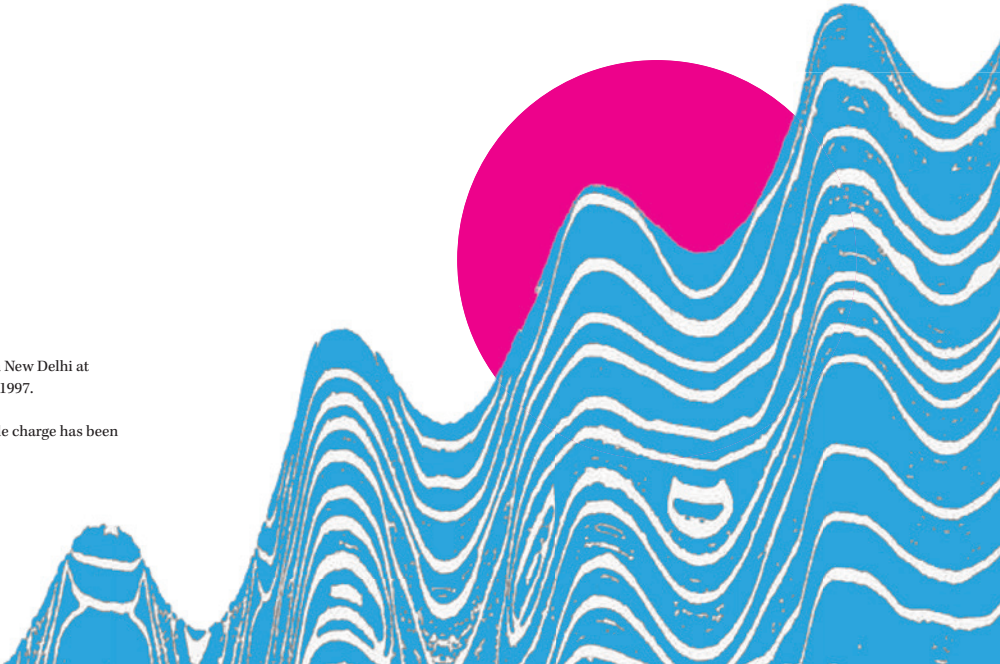
Or the men who speak to God as tar carves rivulets into their backs,
Hands toward Jannah but bound, hanging,
Nearly lifeless in some cell.

Ali, you wrote "in the city from where no news can come..." ¹
And it is still this way.
(*"What will the newspapers say?"*) ²

In a place where every season is possible, it is always winter here.
Snow and ice never melt
When they've frozen over hearts,
A desolation so cold the sun has died, too.

¹ From Agha Shahid Ali's poem, "I See Kashmir from New Delhi at Midnight," from *The Country Without a Post Office*, 1997.

² Over 20 years on from Kunan Poshpora, not a single charge has been brought against the military for those events.



Aftermath of the Hurricane

NANCY B. DITTMAN

While visiting Florida last year with a friend to view her property in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, I was struck by the absolute bareness of the trees but encouraged by the green growth taking place on the ground below. I wanted to give homage to the strength of nature to survive and recover with this abstract.

12"x36"
Wooden Panel with Acrylic Paint, Natural Twine, Burlap Pieces, and Fabric Netting



18"x18" Collage, Acrylic Paint, Oil Pastels

Springtime

CHRISTINE AMES

Christine Ames is an abstract artist focusing on experimentation in various media. Her work is based on expressionism using nature, technology, and architecture, which is often apparent in her work.

Heath Creek House

Kerri Ellison

The white gambrel house on Heath Creek Road
with the big Maple tree out front
that I would climb up as far as my bravery would take me.
Sitting on my perch, like a robin,
watching my little world from above.
The robin flying off, jumping down from the branch.
Soft, pillowy grass below catching my wingless fall.

Running inside through the glossy red front door
with eight small panes of glass
and up the narrow staircase to my bedroom.
Pepto Bismol Pink walls, nauseating to most,
magical to me.
Sliding back down the stairs,
into the little galley kitchen housing
my mother's chicken collection,
and a pot of her love simmering on the stove.

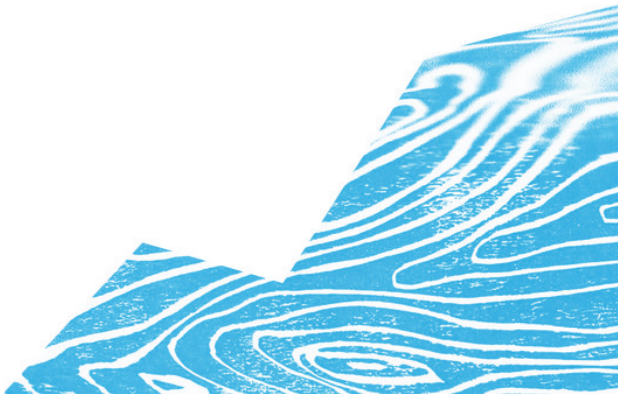
Out onto the pain chipped deck, and into the backyard.
My childhood kingdom where I spent all day
ruling over my swing set castle,
making mud pies, climbing on rocks,
tirelessly jumping on the trampoline
with neighborhood kids until the sun went down.



That's when my father gets home from work,
and lights a fire
that warms the entire house.
Immersing my family in warmth and safety,
sitting together, eating dinner, playing board games
in the pinecone stenciled living room.

I remember every inch of that white gambrel house,
every memory still vivid in my mind
always holding a place in my heart.
It still stands, giving love and life to a new family.
But I hope, within its pine walls, it remembers me too.

Born and raised in
California, she is a
college student who
is currently studying
English and new to the
world of poetry. Inspired
by the many meanings of
home, love, and comfort,
she hopes her writing
will create a sense of
nostalgia that resonates
with all readers.





18"x24"

Paraguas de Angelina

JULIA MARTINEZ

This piece was started shortly before my Grandma Angie passed and was finished shortly after. It was very therapeutic to process my emotions surrounding the loss of her. It represents a transition to the next chapter and the many layers on the future journey.

My Wabi-sabi Spoon

Susan Christen

*Is an Oceanside resident
and serial student at
MiraCosta since 2009.*

Wabi-sabi? When I first heard this term I remember suspicioning it was some relative to the mouth-scorching green stuff that comes with sushi. But it's not. This is a conceptual expression that I find wonderfully meaningful. In essence, it is the Japanese art of finding beauty in imperfection. It embraces the natural cycle of growth, death, and decay. It reveres authenticity above all else. It celebrates cracks, chips, the apparent wear from use, frayed edges, rust, tarnish, and the like. It is underplayed and modest beauty, steeped in its own history and waiting to be discovered.

The concept of wabi-sabi expressed through a physical article, has given me pause to revisit personal touchstones in perceptual definitions of what is rich? What is successful? What is beautiful?

The object I own that wabi-sabi first brings to my mind is an old silver tablespoon that belonged to my maternal grandmother, Hazel Laverne Cooper, whom we grandchildren lovingly referred to as "Munner." The pattern is called "Vintage." It has grape bunches, vines, tendrils, and leaves on it, and is my favorite pattern. Yet, it isn't this spoon's lovely pattern that provides its main appeal for me, but the wear it shows from the years it spent in my grandmother's hands—in Munner Cooper's kitchen.



Munner's Wabi-sabi Spoon

Radiant now beyond the manufacturer's wildest dreams.



Munner and me in 1950

This spoon was not part of a set, but the only one of its kind in her home, and served as a familiar functional tool. I don't know where Grandma got the spoon, or remember a time it wasn't there. Because it was silver she used it to keep glass from breaking when boiling liquid was added to glass cups or jars, or to cool hot coffee or tea, so it was usually sitting out on a kitchen counter.

***“Munnerism”:
The squeaking wheel gets
the grease—but it's the first
one to be replaced.***

Munner and the spoon grew in “wabi-sabi-ness” over the many years of her life—the spoon developing scratches, tarnish, and spots worn thin with use—Grandma with wrinkles, stoutness, and silvery hair. They remind me of each other for so many reasons. This tablespoon is a good Rogers Brothers xs triple silver spoon, made in about 1904. The luster of the silver remains quite visible on the high places within its splendid pattern. Grandma was “minted” November third, 1901—and those twinkling eyes and that merry smile never lost their luster during her earthly life and remain etched in my mind's eye for as long as I will live.

Grandma and the spoon took up jobs seemingly beyond their intended purposes. No more lying on linen napkins with its Vintage cocktail fork or butter knife—no lace tablecloths, and dainty dips in the lobster bisque for this pretty spoon. It was stirring the syrup for the canning of apricots, mixing in the rennet to make the goat's cheese, creaming the shortening for those oatmeal cookies that delighted so many grandchildren. Heaven alone knows how many functions it served over the years, enough to have worn the tip completely off. I'm kind of amazed it didn't dissolve completely away from the stirring of coffee alone. Surely a brew that strong must have corrosive properties. Thick as mud and black as overused motor oil—just the way she and Grandpa, and much of Europe, prefer it. Ptui!

***“Munnerism”:
In marriage each
has to give their 75%.***

Like the spoon, Grandma left her familiars and set out for Southern California in the 1920s—she from Ohio, the spoon from Connecticut. With five little ones born over seven years, Munner and Grandpa, Pop Cooper, made good use of their Richland Farms acre. Pop worked forty hours a week as a pattern maker for machine parts, and

Munner kept the home and grounds. She planted, hoed, picked, plucked, washed, cooked, canned, butchered, milked, scythed hay, baked, boiled, and fried. She crushed grapes for the making of wine, and juiced fruits for jellies. She could turn out a perfect pie crust, and shucked corn, peas, and lima beans with astonishing speed. She would scrape the pork hides and render them down into chicharones and lard, cut and wrap the remainder of the porker for the freezer, then grind the meat scraps for sausages. She darned, mended, ironed, and boiled her whites over an open fire in their courtyard, and washed the rest of the clothes in her old hand cranked wringer washer. She fed the chickens, cow, goats, pigs, dogs, and a whole lot of children and grandchildren. By 4:30 every weekday morning she was stoking the fireplace, packing Pop's lunch, and preparing their breakfast. She said that was their special time to be alone together at the beginning of each new day; and you know that spoon was there.

“Munnerism”:
When your man leaves
the house make sure there’s
nothing stiff but his collar.

While her formal education was minimal, as was the norm for girls of her era, Hazel Laverne Crum was primed with more genteel womanly arts. She was taught to crochet, embroider, sew, and play the piano—along with the functional necessities of wifely expectations.

Over the years I think I saw her do everything but complain.

In all this efficiency, she remained cheerful, and epitomized kindness and patience. Munner made all of us feel so cared for and loved—and somehow brought dignity—a wealth of tarnished class if you will, to whatever she invested herself in.

When Rogers Brothers designed my grandmother's spoon, they thought of function, but clothed it with the Vintage pattern. When my grandmother clothed herself, it was in Vintage Munner. Her chosen ornamentations were always a cotton housedress, and full bibbed apron—appointed with a pair of crew-socks, folded at the ankle, and a pair of sturdy hard-worn lace-up shoes for the yard, or soft shabby slip-ons for the house. This was nicely set off with her coiffure, which, by the time I came on the scene, was a long silver mane, rolled deftly toward the back in a way that framed her face. I used to love to watch her comb her long silver hair and sweep it into its familiar classic style. I

remember the day Munner's three middle-aged daughters decided it would be much nicer if she would cut that hair (“no one over 30 should wear long hair,” they said). So it was cropped and permed. To my eye she lost more than her hair—it was like Samson and the Philistines. They didn't respect the power and agelessness of “Vintage Munner.”

“Munnerism”:
Do draw a line in the sand—
but draw it very low,
and don’t cross it.

Like the Rogers Brothers, Grandma did understand the fundamental necessities of pleasure, joy, and beauty, amid the need for functional usefulness. Her famous Dahlias, some as big as dinner plates, stood in a row in front of the massive gardens that fed the family. In front of the dahlias was the great lawn-cum-“sports field.” It was a volleyball court, badminton and croquet field, as well as a picnicking, sack race, and egg toss green with a horseshoe pitch and a broad crabapple tree for shaded lounging. Munner and Pop would bring a measure of fun even to the task of raising the crops, by gardening competitively, seeing who could grow the biggest tomato or pumpkin.

Just like Grandma's Vintage spoon, years wore away at the tip. A life-long diabetic, the progression took its toll. As her vision left her a bit at a time, she continued to extend loving hospitality, delivering smiles, homemade pie, and English tea on swollen ulcerated feet. I remember when the time came, we had to inspect the plates she so graciously served up—and quietly remove the bits she could no longer see to clean off during their washings.

Too soon she spent most of her time in a wheelchair, which she referred to as “my chariot.” Her heart, arms, and lap were never-the-less kept full—her little dog, a great-grandbaby to rock—and still, she tried to serve. I was there one day when she was yet able to prepare Jell-O. She rolled her “chariot” to the freezer to add ice cubes from a bag she kept there—but, blind, instead poured in frozen Tater Tots. Comi-tragedy—she chose to be amused, but didn't throw it out. Strawberry potato Jello-O—Mmmmm-mm!

“Munnerism”:
Everything that will
ever love you back, poops.

I notice a profound something else in Munner’s wabi-sabi spoon. That it is not a knife or a fork—it is a beautiful and useful spoon. My Grandma was like that—and I fear that, as modern women, we have sometimes been coerced into thinking of spoons as JUST spoons—service pieces, if you will. In moving away to reinvent ourselves as a knife or a fork, we too often lose sight of the great feminine in our concepts of “Feminisms.” We don’t know what to do with our “spoonliness.” Do we hang it on the wall in heels, a push-up bra, and a brooch, as a showpiece? Do we stab, saw, and poke with our smooth rounded edges? Are we persuaded that personal power and purpose of value is to be found only through tools that cut or pierce? Do we fear that daily service will mean being stationed in the back of life’s great silverware drawer? No matter what else I choose to be or not to be in my life, I am encouraged by the life of my grandmother to embrace that part of myself that is a useful spoon. One that finds Munner’s joy, grace, and dignity in raising warm nurturing soups to the mouths of hungry friends, our kin, and our children.



Radiance in a goat yard - 1929
Munner and her three youngest children (The one on the fence is my mother.)

“Munnerism”:
A wise man learns from his mistakes. A fool will learn no other way.

Like the beauty that shines through the tarnish and wear on Munner’s old spoon, the light of her being has shined through the time and lives of all of us who were so blessed as to be loved by her—and will shine forward through us, by way of that love, to our children—and beyond. I inherited this old spoon from my Grandmother. It is my profound aspiration to find and nurture her part in myself—to be even half the woman, the emissary of genuine love. That would surely be an inheritance of untarnishable riches, success, and beauty.

Shine through—shine on, yesterday, today, and forever. It’s true, a great classic never dies. ◆



Baby

KAI FURGERSON

赤ちゃん - Aka Chan
Translation = Baby

Airplane Monument

Daniel Noland

Thank you for gracing me with this place,
 This space of spirits and wind whispers
 Where falling leaves are gentle drifters
 To the ground, where I am grounded
 And surrounded by you.

Thank you for gracing me with your calm quiet forest
 That I have held dear in my heart for so long.

I return in my futility
 And you show me Mother Nature's beauty
 You embrace me with your branches
 And erase my hate
 That I thought in me innate.
 You soften my soul,
 And sweeten my heart;
 You sing your motherly song.

Thank you for gracing me with your calm quiet forest
 That I have held dear in my heart for so long.

I return to his monument
 Where memories of the crash are ever-present
 But are not unpleasant
 For they remind me of the days when he could fly
 Aligned in time with his heart and mine.
 And you show me that he is never far off.
 In the heart of your calm quiet forest, I feel his own.
 All I have to do is look up
 And maybe I could hear him and see his plane
 Flying overhead.

...

But instead,
 I see a light
 Shining down and all around
 And though calm and quiet, I am not alone,
 Ever-graced by the sun above and his below
 And your ever-constant nurture
 I know that I am safe in your nature.
 Thank you for gracing me.

I close my eyes
 And open my hands.
 As I stand on a rock in your field
 I feel as though it's your very own,
 And though, far away from it's home
 I can almost hear the waves of the ocean
 Gently rolling in.

...

I am greeted by your soft laughter as it blows through my hair
 And for a moment I can feel you there.
 Right there;
 Pervading me and braiding my hair.
 I know I can always return to this monumental place I have known
 And never feel alone.

For all the memories you have given me
 Filled with Joy; filled with love, I am still.
 Thank you for gracing me with your calm quiet forest
 That I've held dear in my heart,
 And always will.

This poem is about several elements all at once. It is about a literal place that I've always found great solace in going to, but it is also about two specific people who also helped me feel that same sense of solace. This poem is dedicated to them.

Draco in Glass

JULIA MARTINEZ

I believe creativity stems from our inner child and their innocence, and that creativity needs to be nurtured, expressed, and shared. I wanted to portray the feeling of chasing and capturing the dragon and the delicate nature of vulnerability.

Acrylic on Canvas



Bo the Piggy

Carlee L.

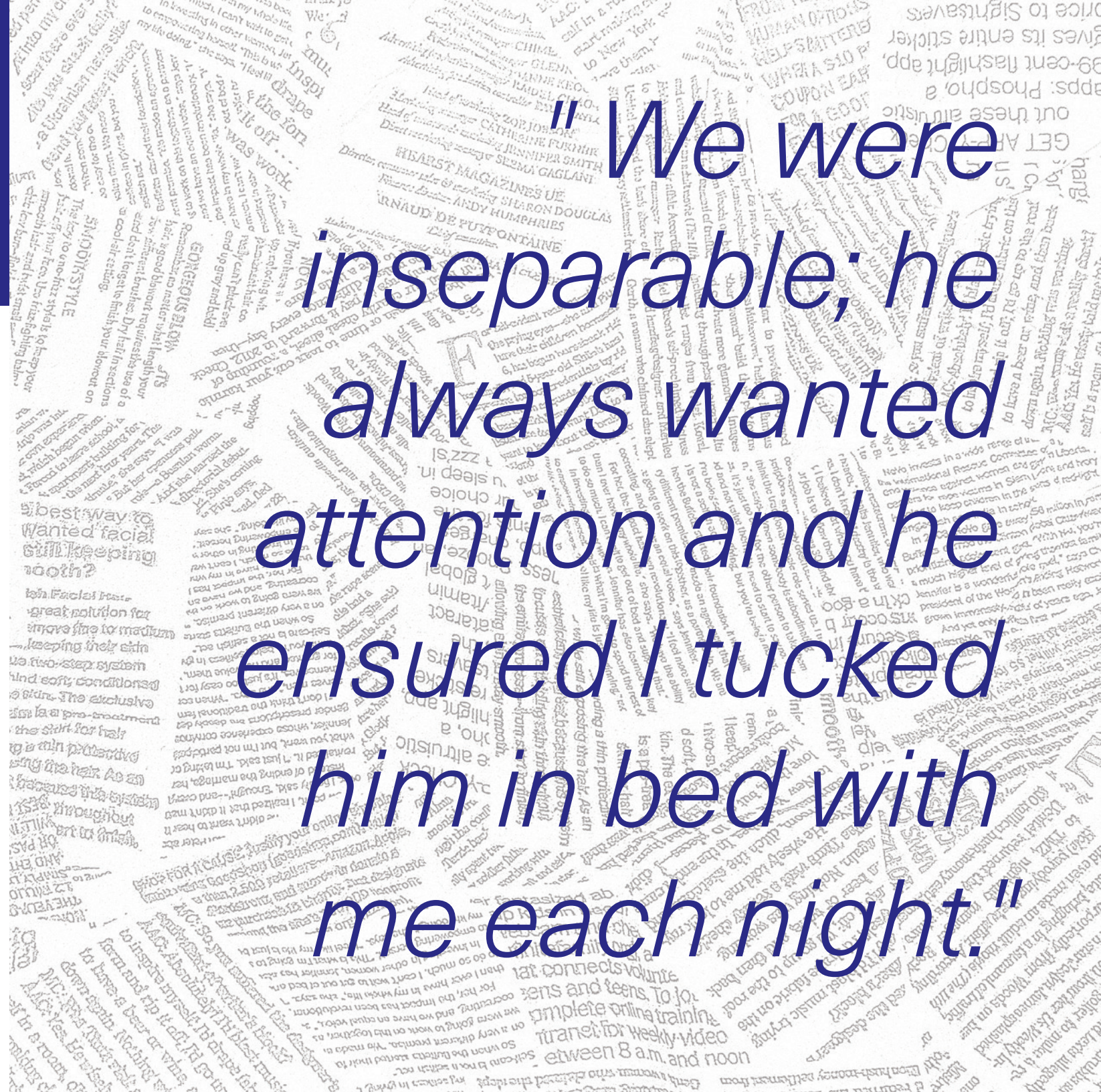
More than just a pig.

The acronym V.I.P. has various connotations to different people; to me, V.I.P. means “Very Important Pig.” It all started with me seeing some piggies on the internet. After countless months of research, I showcased a poster board of how to care for a pig to sell my perspective on pigs to my parents. At first, they were skeptical and unsure if I understood all the responsibilities and commitments entailed with a decision of this magnitude. My persistence paid off, and I sold them the idea that I was competent through my knowledge of pigs and desire to have one. My family and I took the time to look for and research breeders. Once we started looking at the cute little piglets, I fell for a single little piggy that stood out from the rest. His personality was subtle and cuddly; he had three distinct dark markings on his back, which were shaped like hearts. I looked at him and expressed,

“He’s perfect!” I adopted him instantly and named him Bo.

This lovable fist-sized piglet quickly became my new best friend. He had the tiniest snout, pitter-patter hooves, and oink that made my heart melt. Bo would crawl into the pockets of my hoodies and fall asleep for hours. We were inseparable; he always wanted attention and he ensured I tucked him in bed with me each night. After he grew in size, I took him everywhere with me. Taking Bo places meant there would be

"We were inseparable; he always wanted attention and he ensured I tucked him in bed with me each night."



comments from astonished people asking, “Is that... a pig?” Sometimes there would be the occasional, “Your dog looks strange,” or “It’s a pig in a blanket!”

Because his legs were so short and he was so little, I could not leash him, nor could I expect him to stay up for too long. My mom and I bought a stroller specially designed for animals, and I would stroll him around everywhere. One lady stopped in the middle of the busy road and got out of her car to take a picture with my pig. As crazed drivers looked to see the commotion, they too, would irrationally park their vehicles in the intersection. Wherever we went, people would stop whatever they were doing and scurry over just to see Bo. No matter their creed, people of all ages, races, and sexes were excited to see the pig in the stroller.

After seeing how Bo made people feel, I wanted to show the world how intelligent and charming pigs are. I created an Instagram for my pig, and he gained a considerably large group of followers. My pig was famous. I would go to Los Angeles every weekend as my pig got photoshoot offers and brand deals. From being featured in a BuzzFeed video to pet shampoo brand deals, my pig was influential. Bo was receiving so many packages and goodies from companies that I had to open up a P.O. box.

Never would I have thought my pig was getting more mail than me. He even went on piggy playdates. As one would imagine, two pigs playing and running around with each other was adorable. You would think that the highlight of my week was strolling down Beverly Hills with my pig; it was not. Relaxing with Bo plopped on my legs and watching television was always the pinnacle of my week. Like actors constantly being bombarded with flashing lights, it can affect one's quality of life.

No matter their creed, people of all ages, races, and sexes were excited to see the pig in the stroller.

As Bo retires from the limelight days, he still shines as bright as the stars. Since he brought so much joy to others, I still wanted him to be able to interact with people. I trained him to be one of the first therapy pigs to help relieve the stress of military personnel leaving their homes. Although pigs can not fly, he went to the airport numerous times to volunteer at the USO. A marine once came up to me and remarked, “I had the worst day until I saw your pig; it reminded me of my farm back home.”

Even the strict straight-laced drill instructors could not contain their composure around Bo; they too would have to pause from their script to come to see him. Bo has an effect on people unlike any other. Although most saw him as a cute adorable piggy, some were curious and had never seen a pig in real life. While others were initially cautious and scared, they soon learned how intelligent and charming a pig can be. Every now and then, I think of Bo as a human. As he tries to communicate with me,

I try to decipher what each of his oinks and grunts means. There are times when my unconscious mind just knows what he conveys through his squeals. When I think about it, I understand what he wants, it is more straightforward

than trying to figure out pig Latin. My Bo purely wants his attention, cuddles, kisses, and scheduled timely feedings. Every now and then, I realize, “I have a remarkable pig living in my house,” and I recall how privileged I am to care for this fascinating creature.

Bo allowed me to explore facets of life I would never think I could. His extrovertive behavior led me to come out of my shell. I've gotten to meet many people who have bonded over my pig. The crowds he garners are one like no other. *Like Charlotte's Web, Bo truly is some pig.* ♦



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Submission Guidelines

COMICS:

10-panel maximum
.pdf or .jpg file format

FICTION & ESSAYS:

1500 words max (either one piece up to 1500 words or shorter pieces that total no more 1500 words)
Double-spaced
12-point font
.doc or .docx file format

POETRY:

5 poems maximum
Each poem should not exceed 2 pages
.doc or .docx file format

VISUAL ART:

3 pieces maximum
.jpg or .png file
format 300 ppi
resolution

SCREENPLAYS:

1500 words max (either one piece up to 1500 words or shorter pieces that total no more than 1500 words)
Screenplay format and spacing
12-point font
.doc or .docx file format

SPOKEN WORD:

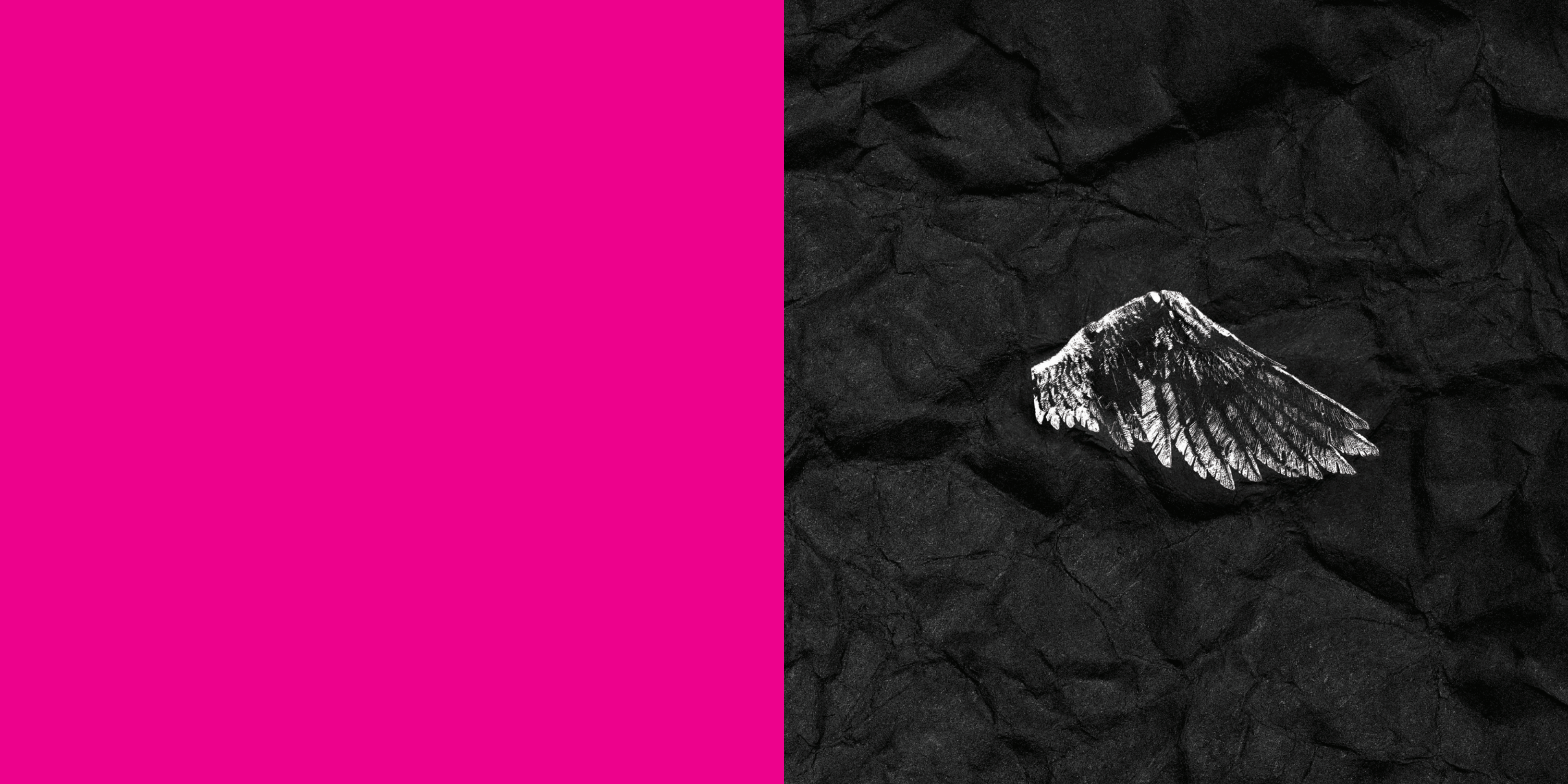
5-minute maximum
.mp4 file format for video submissions
.mp3 file format for audio only
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