

The Mind Blossoms as Days Pass

Poetry by Healing Minds

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Foreword

I remember the first time I picked up the book in the corner of an office shelf. It was neatly placed among other piles of documents. I was fortunate to count myself among the newly hired management at Founders House of Hope. Part of the day's task was to familiarize myself with the staff but not really have any direct contact with the residents as I was part of the team from the background. I had some time to myself and before I realized it, I had cracked open the book and was scanning through the pages of *My Voice Counts*.

Greeted by wonderful pieces of words of poetry, prose and art, I assumed that the book was one that belonged to the residents, held and ready to be handed off when they come to pick it up. As I closed it, I read the name on the cover, 'Elijah Levy'.

Soon I was informed that the book was a collection of these works by Founder's residents. I flipped through the pages once more and found that each piece was written or drawn by a resident, both current or at some point in time.

Since then, I had found myself interacting with these very people that the facility cared for and looked after. I have witnessed Elijah extend his help and talk with them, hear them, all in a safe space. I've heard their stories. The burdens they carried, the regret, their struggles and their hope.

It was one thing to make sure that the workings of a community stay within optimal range of care and operation, but to be present and involved, directly or indirectly, as their lives improve was a special experience. We move through our own lives so quickly that these people are easily overlooked. And they face their choices every day. Their stories are a reflection, more familiar to us than we'd like to admit.

There is power when a voice is heard. And these problems people face are no different from our own, except that these residents have learned to own them, wear them and shed them. The task itself is not easy. And sometimes, all that's needed was a hand to guide them through their steps, and have their words be heard and be known.

The answer to the 'why' was written in these pages. And I've begun to perceive it as the business of

hope. These are lives that are suffering, are mending, are trying, and to ultimately come back from the fringes of society.

It is an incredible privilege to be a part of the rehabilitation of these lives. So, when Elijah Levy announced another publication of a new collection of works, I had offered to write this foreword with no hesitation.

Because the choice to have their words shared, their pain expressed, and hope be heard is a brave one. And I hope it inspires those who dare to pick this up and flip through its pages, even by accident, like I did.

Mark Cruz, Regional Business Office Manager

Acknowledgment

A year ago, the residents at Founders House of Hope and I agreed it was time to publish our third anthology of poetry. We published our first anthology in 2014, our second in 2022 and we decided it was time to revive our collective, spirited and creative voice. This project demanded a year of sustained effort to produce a meaningful, insightful and intimate collection of free verse, narrative and prose poetry. The poems contain imagery, symbolism and narrative accounts of life as experienced by loving souls living with severe, persistent mental illnesses such as Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder. The creative and healing properties of writing poetry serves to reduce self-stigma, and it transforms shame into artistic, vibrant expression. Poetry reflects the voice of the soul and mind. Figurative language adds to the emotional appeal of the work.

The themes include love, life interrupted by mental illness, family, self-reflection, friendships and how God inspires hope, optimism and strength to pursue recovery and meaningful living. The poetry here expresses the raw, intimate insight generated by living with a mental illness and how the confessional voice can aid the healthy minded to empathize with depth of suffering and internal, psychic struggles of the mentally ill. I am eternally grateful the residents wrote and experienced how therapeutic and

liberating the creative writing process could be. The process engendered self-discovery and illuminated once dark passages to bright landscapes containing nurturing, fertile soil.

I have been at Founders House of Hope for 30 years, and it has been my eternal true work. I must express my deep appreciation to the Bolong family for their enduring support of my work at Founders. I am empowered to implement our recovery program so the residents can achieve their recovery and rehabilitation goals. I have the resources to support each resident's path to reclaim their lives, imbue their life with meaning and pursue self-determination. We have attained impressive program accomplishments at Founders House of Hope and will continue to inspire residents to achieve worthwhile goals. All the employees at Founders, from our administrative team, housekeeping and dietary department care deeply for the residents and are invested in their well-being and recovery.

Undoubtedly someone needed to type the manuscript which was handwritten by the residents. Debi Klement dedicated countless hours typing everyone's poetry to create the manuscript. We are so grateful to have Debi support this project and she understands how the publication of this anthology champions the march toward recovery for

our residents. Thank you so much Debi for the ongoing care you express for our residents.

Elijah Levy, Ph.D.

Matt Casias

I grew up having a hard life. I was in group homes foster homes and lived with other people. My mom was never around. I liked to play basketball and handball as a child. I played one year of JV basketball in high school. I also played one year of baseball and one year of track and field. I wish I would have played football in high school and enlisted in the service. I went to Fullerton College but dropped out of most of my classes. I got a 3.1 GPA when I graduated high school. I was born in Anaheim Hills and was raised in Riverside, San Bernardino, Orange County and Los Angeles. Writing really helps me to get things out and takes a load off my shoulders. It shows me that things aren't as serious as they had seemed. I started drinking alcohol and smoking pot in the 12th grade. My mom didn't like it because it made me think unreasonably. So, she gave me an ultimatum to leave or to enroll in treatment. Rehabilitation didn't work out. I went back and forth never finishing it. Now I'm a born-again Christian getting my life together here at Founders House of Hope.

I dedicate my poetry to all the people that have a hard time in life, and who are striving to do better.

I REMOVED MY CLOUD OF DOUBT WHEN

I was all alone rain drenched, splattered scared confused and decided to get help. July 19th 2023 is the date that I did this. I was homeless with nothing going on in life. Now a year and seven months in I have hope. A successful functioning member of society is on my list of goals. I see clear now I'm excited to get my life together. I find joy without drugs and alcohol. I'm finding peace in a clear mind I'm loving life sober. I know this is my life to become successful and get my own place to live. I'm certain I can be a mature man. So much hope for a successful future. God is in my life and He's shining bright I know I'll never go back. Goals broaden my horizon give me hope for a new future. No more excuses I'm certain God is keeping me in line. I don't want to displease my father. I'm glad I hit rock bottom. Everything is working out. I can't wait to see myself in five years.

I WAS ON SHAKEY GROUND MOST OF MY LIFE UNTIL

July 19, 2023, when I decided to get my life together and be congruent with my self concept. I never really had a friend that I shared personal things with. Now I look forward to making a best friend a Christian brother. To work on my social skills. I don't rely on the bar to meet people, and I have a good Time. Alcohol was always a part of me to be social with others now it's the Bible. I must get to know the Bible to be able to share it in my new future relationships. Being social was always a big fear in my life never succeeding but since I decided to get my life together it's helping all my self-concept theories.

The light from the lighthouse was dim. The ship of my soul couldn't reach shore. Sharks were lurking. I could see their fins I was scared in the dark. All alone circumstances were grim. I was homeless and addicted to drugs and alcohol filthy rags. I needed a strong light from the lighthouse to guide me to safety. Things needed to change, strike fire to increase the light beam. I wanted to see the sun. Stars shining in the night I had to start to fight. Like everything in life, I couldn't let this win. Something had to change I could use the wind to get me through the rough sea. I wanted to find harbor I finally see the light. Now my life is much better and the light from the lighthouse vibrant and leading me to a successful future.

FRACTURED

My whole life was fractured. I was a walking skeleton, broken bones. No help in my eyes. No family on my side. A broken bum on intoxicants. I thought everything was fine but what could I know. I had no concept of right or wrong.

My broken self was living to die. What could I care. I was fractured anyway.

Walking as a Corpse.

I needed a splint and crutches. Something had to change. I'm not just hurt but entirely fractured.

BLEMISHED

I was pure as a child. Needed no cure. So much hope I needed to pull on the rope.

I started to grow shy and quiet. It started to fade. I never thought I'd have to pay for my choices in life.

I was getting bigger the role was becoming clear. I was imperfect and life was hard. I couldn't see far bumps in the road.

I messed up never thought I would fail. Now I'm here the blemish is making me be clearer.

Still spotted but the spots will heal.

IN MY REARVIEW MIRROR I SEE

Stuck in reverse

Bound to moving on

Blemished

A strong wind in my face Bound to moving on

I was stuck couldn't jump laying on the ground

I could get help to get on the track

I jumped at the chance to move on

I was a truck

I had enough of being lazy to just stay

With all the things holding me down now off

I know I could run to a successful future.

With leaps and bounds I could run like a leopard

Nothing holding me back

There's nothing that's going to stop me from
becoming successful

I don't need a ship I could jump over oceans

I'm so excited I could touch the moon

I'm going to make it forward no going back

I am pushing forward to the goals ahead

I'm bound to moving on

DEAR MOM

Dear Mom,

I want you to know that I don't blame you anymore for what I thought you wronged me with while I was using drugs and alcohol. You wouldn't let me come home when I desperately wanted to. I had a hard time living homeless, but I was crazy and better off left to my own demise. You gave me the option to go to a rehab that was Christian. I'm glad you did because now I'm a Christian. This has stuck with me I am now a born-again Christian thank you. I realize now that I was entirely crazy while high and drunk and deserved your strictness. This has helped me to get my life back together. I thank you for being strict to me and no longer hold that against you. You saved my life I'm doing good and I'm going to make it, being a functioning member of society.

DANCING WITH A PENCIL THE UNTOLD STORY

The pencil said I want to dance with you
I told that pencil don't dance
You're making this hard for me
I'd be doing all the leading
I can't lead I don't know that much about dancing
You have no arms and legs
How would I support you on the dance floor
How would you move
This would be really hard for me
You can't stay in rhythm you're stiff as a rock
This could be really bad
I'm not that even good at dancing
You sound like an expert
But I can tell you don't dance
You're a pencil
You write stuff down
You could help me with that
The pencil says you need to just try

THE SHADOW OF UNIFORMITY/THE COMING TIMES

I was walking in the cool of the day. My shadow wasn't following what I was doing. I wondered why, it was scary. Like a ghost following me. I didn't know what to think. I couldn't come up with any explanation. I started to think that it was telling me I'm out of harmony with myself. I was moving down a bad long and windy road. I thought it was telling me I was in trouble. Maybe going back to my old ways. I didn't know what to think. What is this that I should believe. I thought I was doing good. So why am I seeing this? Am I imagining things? What's going on. The shadow is reminiscent of a lazy clown a mime. A tree in the wind. It's making me really question my behavior. I thought I was doing good in life maybe that's it. I am doing good. This shadow isn't a bad omen. It's getting me to think again about my day's walking in the cool of the day. I now see the birds in the air feel the wind on my skin and have a chance to let everything back in.

MY MIRROR SAID TO ME

I see a beautiful complexion. You see the things you think are flaws which aren't. I see the progress you're making in life. You look more and more successful day after day. You are trying hard. I've noticed big changes in you. You are putting on new clothes that show you're becoming successful.

I see you smile as bright as the sun it's amazing. Your hair style is flawless.

I like the way you're shaving. You can tell things are looking up in life.

I noticed three different outfits on you throughout the day. You got a job. I see the work clothes.

I notice keys to a car it looks good on you.

The space around you is vibrant. I know you've worked hard to look the way you look.

Good job. You're keeping the mirror clean so you can see yourself clearly.

I appreciate that. You're taking care of your hygiene and staying clean.

You're looking good. I really see big changes in you.

Keep it up.

I'm glad to be a mirror and seeing you utilizing it.

You really care about your appearance and I'm glad to reflect you.

A LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

I know you regret the way things went in your life up till now.

We've made a lot of mistakes. Had to pay the consequences for a lot of stuff.

This had held us down a lot, some regrets weren't even made by us that we've

had to do. I know you regret not going into the army and getting straight A's in school.

Life has been hard I know that you blame other people for some of this.

I remember how you gave up in basketball, and your mom was upset.

Even though things have been hard. I like the way that my life is turning around

And I'm getting it back together.

I am a stronger person for all the hard times that I've had.

And I'm really loving life. We have God in our life and I'm grateful for that.

Becoming a public defender is a perfect moment. It gives me so much hope and satisfaction thinking about this in my future. It helps the day to go by smoothly. Shades of gold like from the sun glistens and lighten this goal. I taste. The sweetness of apples getting this goal done. I feel like I can't lose. Everything is right and put together like a puzzle. I really want this. I'm going to get this done. I've always been a quitter but I'm going to finish this. It seems just perfect this goal. It goes against everything I've done. This is perfect like the scene in a well taken picture. I see all the details joy next line in my mind. I can't wait for this to happen. It all started with wanting to quit drugs and alcohol. Almost didn't. I'm glad I decided to get clean.

Everything is coming together.

MY FAVORITE PLACE

Under the sun-stained glass windows pews
Where I go to reach serenity
Wide open spaces
Take time to get on my knees to pray
Hear a sermon
The pastors in here
Feeling safe
Open the Bible and read a page
Sing songs to him
Always on a specific date
Things I need to do
I once again dedicate my life to feeling like I want
to give a shout
I come here to feel free from all my troubles
I remember scripture from the bible
I feel hope and joy. This is like home
I get in the zone Let it all go
Not blood relatives but family members
My favorite place to go is church
I feel I'm going to make it this time

I'm fortunate to have my poetry in this book.
I dedicate my poems to all the people that suffer
with schizophrenia and thought they could never
amount to anything.
Who struggle with going outside and are scared.
I dedicate this to any youth whoever has been in
foster care.
I know how tough that is to not be with your
family.
Things will get better period your family cares for
you and so do I.
I dedicate this to my mom who I always thought
was never there for me but helped me to become
a mature man.
Your strictness when I went crazy with drugs and
alcohol it paid off in the long run.
I'm really appreciative of the man I am today.
I dedicate this to everyone that never had any
goals.
Make some and go hard after them.
This is very important in living a good life.
These dedications are all very close to me and my
life.
Good luck and God bless you.

Almost wet as dark as the sun was from my grand
attitude

I couldn't see like about still moving around and
It was lost and not found

The sun went dark things were grim
Bumping into walls why couldn't I get happy to
stop hurting myself

The moon was eclipsing
The sun not even a glimmer of a ray of hope
Walking in the dark is hard and scary
I want out of this

Got to get light in my life I'm getting cold and
alone

Things get better why am I so grim
This is all my fault

I'm going to give up on being grim and turn my
frown upside down

Sun tell me what to do to change the grimness in
my life help me to get light from you

I've been in the dark for so long things are so
grim Turn this around I'm going to get happy life
is better with the sun in my life

Shaking and shivering from the darkness I'm
coming out of what's not making me happy and
walking into the marvelous light

What's the brand of this tasty candy
Wonka, Hershey's, Mars or Little Debbie's?
It doesn't matter it all tastes good
I'm not biased
I love candy
You could buy it anytime
Make sure I brush my teeth at night don't want a
cavity
My teeth need to be strong to eat more sweets
Where's the cookies, chocolate chip are my
favorite
I feel like a little kid as much as I love sugar
It makes me feel silly giddy and funny
It tastes so good I got to say yummy
I'm 37 but I love candy like a baby
This is my absurd side
Yummy to my tummy!

July 19th, 2023, I decided to check myself into the hospital. I didn't want to.

I was scared about what I was doing. No one was helping me make

This decision. This is the last time I had done something for myself. I never thought my life could change so much. I'm in a very different place

It was a year and seven months ago. This ignited a big change in my circumstances.

Have a nice bed to sleep in warm exudes as I sleep with the covers.

I got food in my stomach help. I'm usually full to eat more. I'm clean

I got a shower and I'm nice and clean. I'm not craving drugs and alcohol.

Things are going well. I'm working towards a career. About this decision

To check myself in the hospital. I wouldn't be excited about going back to school

to become a public defender. This goal is massive and the fact that I have helped myself

Out by making this decision. I'm glad and happy.

I helped myself out and everything is good

Helpless against the time
There's a long road between us
The clock hands move about
They don't stop
They're here to help
I must grab this
I should apply myself to do good
Can't stop time, I'm helpless
Raise my head to volunteer
Like the clock's hands at noon
This will be over soon
On my way to recover as time resumes
I'm here I might as well try to do good
There's no stopping this
The alarm buzzer another day
It never stops
Fight hard
Bring in the time to be on my side
As I look outside the sun moves like a clock
There's no stopping this
Must make up my mind to do good
This is the way it should be
It doesn't end when I get out of here
It just begins

THE MAN I USED TO BE

If my mental illness was a person, I'd tell it
Why do you have to give it to me
It's OK
I can hear you talking
I don't believe the things you tell me
I'm getting better
I'm moving on this won't last
I have the remedy
The medicine helps me out
I'm in control of my mind
I'm doing a lot better
I don't even remember what you said
I got my life lined up two good things
It's OK that you choose me
I'm better for it now
I'm in rehab, where I thought you left me
I'm standing strong
This isn't going to stop me
Even if I hear your voice again
I won't be confused

I know your secret
Past present and future
It's all OK nowadays
I hear you talking but I'm not fazed by it
I'm going to be a functioning member of society
Schizophrenia won't stop me
I got the tools to fight
I can't lose

DEAR MOM

Dear Mom,

I know that I haven't treated you that well. I was addicted to drugs

And alcohol. And I went crazy in the mind. You gave me an ultimatum

I'm planning to go to rehab or leave your place. I went to rehab.

I thank you for that because it always stuck with me. I am now a Christian. After going to the rehab, I still was using drugs and alcohol.

So, I kept on going back and forth to the rehab you gave me an option to go to

And living homeless. I used to be very mad at you that I had to live homeless.

I remember a couple of times I asked you if I could come home and you said no.

He's living outside. It was the most miserable thing I ever had to do.

I really resented you for that. But now it's a blessing.
I completely

Forgive you for that. I now have an ambition to
never not have a place to live.

I forgive you for what I thought you were wrong for
and I'm now getting my life together next line to be
a successful functioning member of society.

Thank you for dealing with me and the way you did.

Hi God, can we go for coffee and talk about
puppies and how they like to
play at the park. The puppies love to jump around,
bark and chase the balls.

The puppies like to lick people and let their
tongues hang out.

The coffee is steaming off the top tastes good
black strong. God has the same
drink coffee black no sweetener. He tells me
puppies are like children sweet and cute.

They are pure in their minds. He said that they are
a very good thing to play with. If I was to have fun
bring a frisbee. The puppies love to
bond with their owners, so keep close to them.

Train them while they're puppies it's
easier to do. As we're sipping on our strong black
coffee I asked him, what kind of puppy should I
get. He tells me he knows the perfect kind of
puppy he can get me.

He tells me it's a poodle puppy. So, I say that's a
great idea. I'm going to live with
puppy that's hyper wild and bouncing off the walls.

Train it well and enjoy the company of the puppy.
God tells me to get a female poodle too. I will
love you more he tells me. We are done with our
coffee then he asked me if I want a bagel the next
line and another cup of coffee. I say yes. I'd love
to and this will give me more time to hear from
God. Take the puppy to the groomers once a
month it will love you more if you keep it clean.
They love pouring out attention to their owners.

Play with them and enjoy a long time with them.
And he told me to name the puppy Cinderella.

I HAVE JUST ENOUGH TIME TO

On the subway at night with my pin
The hidden light
I won the lottery
Wind chime in the city

I have just enough time to become a functioning
member of society.
The brink of time came and almost knocked me to
the ground
Took all the time right from me almost took the
little bit of hidden light right from me
My pin was about to write my eulogy
I was so close to never winning the lottery
The sliver of hope was with me too just enough
like a twinkling star in the sky
It was guiding me to where I am now
I'm on track to be able to have my own place to
live.

Have a car and choose to jump
I almost didn't make it but I did

I'm realizing that I'm the one responsible for
almost having just enough time
Get a job as a public defender get a car
A nice wardrobe and a home church
I can become happy
Be cheerful and joyous
Give God all my heart
I feel like my time is doubled
I just had enough time now it feels like it can't
end

WITH MY PEN

With my pen I could move a billion pounds right
off my shoulders
Bring peace to my mind
Calculate the time
Be at ease with the multitude of ills I brought on
me
Build my future
See what I was thinking in the physical realm
It turns into an Angel of light
My pin is magical it moves by itself
I'm not controlling this
It's light as a feather it makes me feel so light
It's good to get this stuff out
It's the color of a shadow
I swear it has a mind of its own change my sweet
release
My head is configuring with the rest of my bones
my pin is its own physician
It's powerful it can move cities
this is beyond me

This is what I have been taught
It guides my thoughts
Tells the time on my wristwatch
And travel into its make-believe world
I feel swell
The pin is so light, but it could move big weights
Take away hate regret sorrow and much more
My pen is a tool it makes me feel better!

THE HIDDEN LIGHT

Hidden light was guiding me to the right road
It was always there
I never knew it but it's true
I couldn't see it, but it was there
The hidden light was zapping through the universe
I could have been walking in complete darkness
This was still hidden light
it's what helped me to be able to see my path
The light is exact
It was guiding me to where I am not almost in
complete ruin
It was true the light was showing how
Now I know light is more powerful than Darkness
Like a twinkling stars glimmer in the dark that
shines so bright
That's what helped me to not give up on the fight
of life
The hidden light was always there I just didn't
know it

It was hidden but still so bright
I can't give up I just might have
it shines so far it helped me to get here
Powerful is the beam of ray that guided me to sea
after a long time of darkness
the hidden light

Everything's coming together with fluidity
So, adding up to an apex
The door won't be shut
I'm on the bus to school
I know longer live life like a fool
I have a place to live one day I'll own my own
I'm always full of the food we eat
All these things are lining me up to be a
functioning member of society
it's all very nice
My life is coming together
The pieces of the puzzle are fitting
Like a nice Creek of the water flowing
I can hear sweet serenity of my future
I can't wait to become a lawyer
I'm finally off the streets drug free
Feeling great with everything coming together
I'll be able to help people out
The highest arc reaches the height of success on
my road to fluidity
Travelling down the road
I'll walk it stay focused I want this

It took a while to walk in this fluidity
But I can see it now all coming together
Fluidity is a flowing path that never ends
With good things happening to me

William Buchanan

[prompt]: Now is the time to... Horace's "Nunc est bibendum, nunc pede libero/"Now is the time to..."

[prompt]: Music makes me... The phrase "Music makes me..." puts me in mind of Shakespeare's "Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy: why lov'st thou that wouldst thou receiv'st not gladly, or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy!"

[prompt]: The Devil terrified me
Propertius' "Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis contactum nullis ante cupidinibus": The person that first "caught"/"captured" Propertius and his whole being was Cynthia In ordinary battle, even the greatest captures are only partial. Propertius magnifies, and doesn't diminish, Cynthia and her love by this martial comparison. The "me" is delimited by nothing except "miserum" on//at that occasion; the following, "contactum nullis...", refers to a//the time before.

William Buchanan was born in Los Angeles, California in 1988. With his parents, also originating from California, and his sister and his twin brother, he moved to Gig Harbor, Washington. There he first acquired a love of reading and of learning broadly. His natural predilection made entrance into top schools for his bachelor's a real possibility. When it came about, he chose Princeton University. Initially, as an undergraduate intending to join the math department, he settled on Classics, a major devoted to the study of the Mediterranean, especially when it comes to ages before our own. Leaving his senior year, he's lived a quiet life at home; his intermittent experience with mental health and its treatment has increased his quality of life, provided real material and therapeutic support when that mental health flagged, and contrary to the isolation usually associated with its symptoms, and in the face of it, has made available a connection with both the community at large and the wider network of sufferers, particularly among authors active both formerly and now.

Dedication: To Jim Schrede, KUSC host. One evening he recited something attributed to a featured composer: "The Devil can play it; I can't!"

Heidegger's "He lived, he worked, he died," Nietzsche's view that philosophers' lives were complicated, even when the consideration is restricted to Publicity, and more complicated than some such united front or screen projected against the world on the one hand and inner unresolvednesses on the other. Did anyone disagree at the time and was anyone projecting that simplicity Nietzsche's insight would only be useful if these things happened, the apparently conclusive reduction "I was lied to!" and "Don't be deceived!" are sadly otiose, to say nothing of the fact that had Nietzsche cited the specific proponents that had detected both the screen and what was behind it, his ire would have been, if not more successful, then in any case more real. Heidegger inherited Nietzsche's desideratum of brevity that in his zeal he'd discarded

so was put in the position of defending the uncontroversial Horace's "mox daturos": At risk of

Branding slaves not to humiliate, pragmatically stock, physically hurt, but to discredit. We have in this corroboration that American black slaves were prisoners of war. Solzhenitzyn.

Autonomy. Autonomos. Irrational belief that something desired won't work. Ironmen, or the hyper responsible self-reliance individualism. Self-confidence I'm expected to identify with a people that don't identify with me. When it comes to my health, I'm expected to be self-supporting; when it comes to my work, it's available to the chance comer. For God's sake. Seventh Day Adventists. "Maybe just take it, maybe you'll change your mind." Disappointment is rude. Open ended questions versus close ended questions. I can't breathe. ISIS. If you're closed to the bad you won't be open to the good. A rule and a fact, not protreptic. Barry's Auction. Autonomy/ autonomos/self-governing, used as a demographic or political category by as distant an authority as Arrian, specifically in his account of an expedition of Alexander the Great.

Kecia Brown

I was raised in Inglewood, California. My work experience in the field of Higher Education has fueled my storytelling, while grounding my work in clarity, compassion and love. I have been blessed to write six books: 4 volumes of poetry, a children's book and a novella. Currently, I live in Los Angeles, California and am the proud mom of an amazing "Theater Kid" and her hyperactive dog, Leo.

All of my poetry is dedicated to both my late mother, June Marie Nicholas and my daughter, Makaila Imani.

MY TRUE SELF

My true self has taken some time to reach me
I have run from her for so long
And hid behind so many masks
for family
for school
for work
for relationships
Masks that were suffocating me
But my true self rescued me
Removed all of the masks
And has taught me how to breathe again
Live again and love again

THE DIVINE LIGHT IN ME

My soul dances in the moonlight
Moving in rhythm with the
Divine music of the ancestors
God in Her infinite wisdom
Knows me and loves me enough
to speak protection into my beingness
She specifically crafted this
Beautiful Soul that lives within me
Assigned my ancestors and they sang
Rejoicing in not only
the beauty and power bestowed
upon me by the Most High
but in the heart mind that
accompanies my soul on
This journey: A journey of
remembering and re-memembering
A journey of unlearning deceit
and hate and the lie of unworthiness
Yes!

My Beautiful Soul knows that
“Worthiness” and Love
are at its foundation
A foundation that is unshakable
an unshakable gift to serve

The living and the non-living
Dancing with their Beautiful Souls

“Bless the Lord
oh my soul
and all this is within me
Bless Her Holy Name”

Johnny Martinez

I was born in Los Angeles and following high school I attended California State University Northridge for two years. I worked as an usher at a movie theater and have been at Founders House of Hope for one year. I enjoy playing basketball.

I dedicate my poetry to my family and my friends.

WHAT HAPPENS TO OUR SOUL

My soul makes me a better person.

I try to be polite and respectful to every human being and animals, without being angry upset or violent. My soul guides me to become a better person. My soul guides me to have relationships with family and friends.

My true self?

My true self is polite and heartwarming.

I respect others as long as they respect me.

YOUR FIRST EXPERIENCE RIDING IN A CAR

The first time I drove my car was fifteen or sixteen years old, a Suzuki Sidekick, gray/silver. I drove to my apartment and to school at Belmont High School inside the parking lot.

EARLIEST MEMORY OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

I remember that I was like 5 years old and I went to Betty Placentia Elementary School.
My teacher was Mr. Growl.
I learned English in the first grade.

Heidi Aichinger

I was born on January 19, 1959, at Saint John's Hospital in Santa Monica, CA. After graduating high school, I worked in a hospital as a nurse's aide. I also did babysitting. I am a resident at Founders House of Hope in Artesia CA.

I dedicate my poetry to everyone, especially my family, friends at Founders and Dr. Levy.

I remove my cloud of doubt
When I get myself out and walk
I also do morning stretches
and I go to daily support groups

My philosophy of life I want to make my cross my
pride and joy
I want to save others and myself.
Along with this I want to mind my own business
and exercise.

Darryl Bryant

I was born in South Central Los Angeles and lived with my mother and father, and I was one of nine; three sisters and six boys. My single mother raised all nine of us on welfare. When I was 10 years my mother was living with cancer. She died when I was a senior in high school. I graduated from Centennial High School. I went on to Compton High School for 10th and 11th grade. I went to work at Edison doing insulating attics for two years. My older sister died from an overdose. I was diagnosed with Schizophrenia at age 19 and had hospitalizations. I was married at age 27 for three years and have one daughter who is 32 years old. I see my brothers and sisters, and they pray I stay sober. I want my own apartment in Ventura. I came to Founders in March of 2024

My poetry is dedicated to my mother who had nine kids as a single parent.

My soul guides my worth and values
and makes me a better person
It calls me to prosper
My soul rejoices in the Lord
It inspires me to seek heaven

MY TRUE SELF

My true self is a work in progress
It values the whole world and is unique
It will be worthy on judgment day
as a reward in heaven
My true self apologizes for all
The mistakes I have made
My true self is very loving and kind

Light is right and tight
No need to fight
Do it with all your might
Trust the light
No need to fight

IF I WON THE LOTTERY

If I won the lottery

I would donate half my money to the less

fortunate

Family and friends

I would put the rest of the money in the bank

Also, I would want a fresh wardrobe

A couple of houses in Hollywood

I would also like to go to Africa

to feed the poor people

I would buy a Rolls Royce

and a 1964 Chevy Impala white ivory color

I would keep money in my pocket to give away

I was a great person early and late stages
I was helping a lot of people, also taking care of
my family
Preaching the word of a God-fearing God and
loving people
because they bring out the best in me
My younger self made me so special, and I
deserve a break And I want to thank me
Peace out Much love

I HAVE JUST ENOUGH TIME

I have just enough time to stay sober
Get a job
Spend quality time with my loved ones
Watch my nephew play football
for the Kansas City Chiefs

Anthony Carias

I was born in 1972, September 22nd and I lived in Los Angeles until 1979. I went to school in Southgate; went to junior high in 1984 and high school in 1988. Before I went to Jordan High School, I went to El Sereno Junior High. After Jordan high I went to school in the valley in Reseda.

I dedicate my poetry to my family, especially to my beloved father.

When I was young my parents did most of the
things for me
But some stuff I would do myself
When people help you do things, it'd different
But when you become older things change and
you do things for yourself
It feels good when your parents do things for you
But when you become older it becomes different

BEING OF SPIRIT

For me going to church is not the only thing
I tend to be very close to God
I tend to lean on God when things are not going
right
Sometimes I feel like I can do things on my own
but sometimes I just can't do it alone
Sometimes I feel like we should do things alone
but not true
But I believe that we have free will but sometimes
you need God

TAMING MYSELF

Sometimes I'm kind of hard to get along with
Sometimes I get into people's space, and I get in
trouble for it
Sometimes when I need something I tend to ask
too many times, and it bothers people
Most of the time I can control myself but not all
the time. I think that if I controlled myself things
might be better. Sometimes I tend to bother people
because I really need something and sometimes, I
just don't need it

NOW IS THE TIME TO

Right now, I'm in my early 50's
I should do things before I get older
I think I can go to school still
I might still be able to get my high school diploma

MY CAT AND I

My sister complains that Benny has an evil stare
Benny sometimes comes back after going
somewhere for days
But Benny is a cool cat
I like him

When I was in Jordan high school there was a
beautiful African American girl
She was good, she once called me at home, but I
did not know how she got my home phone number
I then found out she went to my school counselor
One day I was going home and I did not know she
was behind me with friends
She was only one year ahead of me in high
school

MY LIFELINE IS

My brother who helps me out a lot
Sometimes I tend to talk to him too much he tells
me not to worry too much about stuff. He
sometimes will ask me how I'm doing and I must
answer
My brother is very good when it comes to things

My secure emotional base is Dr. Levy
He helps me out a lot.
Sometimes he wants me to do things, and I can't
say no.
When I do things in group things are good.
There are times when in the hospital he brings me
food and I'm very happy.
My mom she will bring up things she sees in me
and asks me questions about it.
My sister Karen when she sees something wrong
with me, she will bring it up and asks me stuff
until I tell her.

If I wanted something, what would it be?
I would like to visit Mexico because I have not
gone there in many years
But if I go, I might feel a little different

I liked to make faces when was in the first grade.
I put my fingers behind my friend and got me
busted for doing it

THE LAST TIME I DID SOMETHING FOR MYSELF

The last time I did something for myself I filled out
the jury duty papers
I like to build models and paint them
I also like to watch military movies

THE SUN GOES DARK WHEN THINGS ARE GRIM

When I'm not doing good, I tend to give up
But I'm able to do things
Sometimes things look bad, but I will not give up
In my past I've been bad but I'm able to get
through

I REMOVE MY CLOUD OF DOUBT WHEN

I would like to move out of Founders
But I'm scared of moving out I think I can
It makes it easy by older people moving out like
others
The past when I would go from place to place

If I had graduated from high school, I would have been able to go to college I think that I would have been good. The only thing is that I'm mentally ill. I think I could have done it. I think I could have done it because I know most of it.

At times when something happens different it tends to make me feel strange. My brother just tells me not to worry which helps a lot. Then things start to get better. I've had the problem for years I get used to things and then it changes.

I HAVE JUST ENOUGH TIME TO

I have just enough time to do the things that I would like to do on earth before I pass away. To get my high school diploma. I would also like to see my nephews and nieces before I get too old.

I ONCE IMAGINED

I would have liked to finish high school
If I did, I would have gone to college
Most of my friends did
I think that is what kept me from going to college
It was my mental illness

The first bike I got was for Dec 25th in Los Angeles.
I rode it with training wheels. The color was black it
was awesome. My dad helped me put it together.
When we moved to Sout Gate I was already riding
it without training wheels. One time the wheel went
bad, so my dad took me to the bike shop. One time
I ran into a light post.

When I was in kindergarten we would play duck duck.

I had a great time. I think I was in Kindergarten in Los Angeles in 1977.

I went with my class to the old Amtrak Station. Sometimes I would get picked up by my mom and sometimes I would walk home by myself.

Brenda Kiszonak

Brenda was born in Morgan County, Ohio and lived there until the age of 12. Her family moved to Anaheim CA where she attended Anaheim High school. Brenda enjoyed English Literature and Journalism courses and was editor of the school paper called Anaranco. she attended Abilene Christian University for two years and enrolled in Mass Communication courses and Broadcasting. After graduating she interned at KtXs-tV as a sports camera person for a year. she then relocated to Fullerton CA and got a job at Government Channel 3, City of Fullerton where she was a live camera operator for the city council. she was employed there for a year while living independently at the time. Brenda is currently at founders and enjoys working with Gary Gabriel, Ceo of V-Matrix PR. Brenda began creative writing while in high school and enjoys writing today. in the future, she would like to run her own company offering tv production and film.

I dedicate my poetry to my family and friends.

Meditation is a place of serenity and induces a mode of consciousness to peace of mind.

Our higher power of spirituality reaches us in the most influential ways.

The wonders of the dolphins is the spiritual sense of nature.

Love is a strong sense of self, where hate is selfless.

Beware of the eyes of the beholder, for the ways of all eternity leads to the cross of changes in the prism of life.

The mystic spiritual self is a universal paradox of the known and unknown.

The world of good and evil spirits, influential spells are to our Shaman.

In all of us is strength never to fail.

NATURE

On a bright, sunny day, the sun is so bright.

At nighttime,
the wind cools me.

The trees sway.
What a beautiful night.

My Life

Yea, once criminal, dangerous minds.

I was wrong, I was right. Now I'm in it for the fight.

Been used, abused, and scorned. Been down that road.

Around the world.

Got my life back. Dreaming of a good life.

I am made for love. Love is free.
Don't disrespect me.

Wouldn't you know it.

I got it right.

THE DREAM

Dedicated to my colleague, confidante

and friend. The dream.
the journey around the world.

no regrets do not look back.

The awakening.
Breath, back to life, without you or with you.

Keep it real.
Do not give up, do not let yourself down.
Seen this before.
Celebration, raise your glasses and meet me
halfway.

Never as it seems. Believe. Love. Peace. Harmony.
Hero. Miracles. seeing is believing. i like it. I love
you.
I am in love with you.

Stop and stare. it is my life.
Goody two shoe. Just a slow dance. Right now.

Age of innocence. Chances are hoping to be.
I just want to be; finding you; finding me and do
not let go.
Speak no evil. Hear no evil. And from the start find
out what it means.

Soul sharing our love grows.
Awaken -- I am a woman. you are a man. Awaken
us from our dreams.

Asking why. Only God knows. Bridge of dreams.

Dreaming miracles. sleep.
Awake.
It was only a dream.

Amy Deliganis

My Name is Amy I was born and raised in Texas. I've lived in various cities including Pittsburgh, Pa. and Columbus, Ohio. I have three years of college in graphic design. I am a 1993 graduate of the Art Institute of Pittsburgh with 1 year of college at the Columbus, Ohio, College of Art & Design. I went to school to be a graphic artist. I got to do jobs in that field that also included a lot of proofreading. I worked for a Health & Fitness magazine, ad agencies and was a Jr. Art Director that worked with a Sr. Art Director. I currently live in Southern, Ca.

I dedicate my poetry to my mother and family.

My Unlimited Possibilities

My unlimited possibilities would be in my attitudes which seem to be half of life in the way I look at things; coping skills and feeling good in the little things that there are every day. Being physically unlimited is something to also be happy for. Having an unlimited attitude and health can help overcome where I am limited materially and financially. I can have a little and be a happy person. I can be open to every day not being physically handicapped and with ailments. These things going for me help me to feel like I have unlimited possibilities.

In my Moments of Silence

I am glad when it's quiet.

I don't want them to be really long so they don't turn into unwanted silence.

I sometimes use the silence to think about nothing and it's also useful for getting things done.

I feel most times that there is enough quiet in my life.

I would not want to constantly need quiet and never get it.

I would not want to live in a deserted area or a first floor apt in New York City.

I would say most of my moments of silence are therapeutic and I am glad I have them.

What Types of People Bring Out the Best in Me and Where Do I Find Them?

I usually never know who it will be to bring out the best in me.

It seems to be life and God.

All types of people have brought out the best in me such as kindness, compassion and generosity.

I don't know why people so similar can bring this out except to feel that is their good or bad energy and sometimes for no reason.

Homeless people for example have at times and not all times brought my kindness, compassion and generosity.

Some I've helped and some I kept on walking by and they aren't that different.

Some animals have brought out the best in me
and they are very similar such as a litter of
identical white kittens

all seeming the same and you don't know how to
pick which one.

Since this is good, I would say it's God and being
spiritually led.

I don't seem to find them; they seem to find me.

What Drives my Curiosity and Makes Me Want to Learn More

What drives my curiosity and makes me want to learn more

would be life happening every day and the people I meet.

Watching TV and seeing advertisements anywhere drive my curiosity and make me want to learn more.

Going on the computer drives my curiosity and makes me want to learn more, also looking for new diamond painting pictures.

There are a lot of subjects to be curious of to do a picture of and learning how to make them.

Have I Been Asking Questions That Matter the Most to me in My Life

Two of the biggest questions I always have are do I like where I am living and for how long does it seem like I'll live there.

I have been feeling good about where I am living at Founders House and it seems long term to me helps me feel better.

It is my 4th place to move to in a year and a half and it is stressful moving around. I had three interviews and then I got to choose which one sounded the best.

The other two places were 14 months.

Founders was the one out of three that gave longer term living than 14 months.

I grew up in the military where my stepdad worked for the Pentagon in DC.

I have moved around all my life and hardly believe it whenever I have to move again.

I don't have a lot of questions.

Where will I be in two years?

I think I will still be here and doing ok.

Questions of the longer term than that seem to have no answers

that come to mind, where will I be in five to ten years I don't know.

I could still be here and doing ok.

The Irony of My Life

One was that me and my sister were supposed to grow up healthy and happy and then something happened to my sister when we were young and playing with a boy in the back of a station wagon.

While we were playing the little boy threw a pen where I ducked and it hit my sister in the eye.

It punctured her eye and blood came out.

She had four surgeries on her eye and lost her eyesight when the injury happened.

She did somehow get a driver's license when she was older and has always looked normal with no cataract in it.

She got grants given to her for a high-grade average and went onto several years of college.

The good things that happened like her license, grade average and grants were ironies unexpected.

The message also is to not throw pens as it can really take someone's

eye out, always get up and walk over to hand it to someone.

The Spice of Life

The spice of life could be one but for me there are several.

I would say cinnamon helps everything to be better as it's not too light and not too harsh.

Cinnamon to me is like putting the color pink on everything where it adds kindness to everything.

Red pepper flakes are what I add to situations in amounts needed to help things be better and less boring. You can put them on almost anything and it will never cause upset of too much used.

Jalapeños can be added to the red pepper on occasions or by themselves to make things more exciting and used only in moderation.

Last but not least is sugar needed to make things sweeter and elevate your mood.

If you are sweet you can have sweet come back to you.

The Fertile Soil of My Heart

The fertile soil of my heart helps me to do life better than

if I was too detached and critical.

It is just a better way to be.

It helps me to see more sides of people and things than if I were too critical.

It feels better than being a mean person going through life.

It can show me where there is other fertile soil in things.

I want to be involved in and places to live.

Fertile soil in my heart makes me grow instead of being stagnant inside.

Fertile soil in life around me also helps me grow, where both in

and out helps me get more out of life.

I've Been on Shaky Ground

I've been on shaky ground, and it felt terrible.

Five years ago, and now currently I seem to have
Equilibrium, steadiness.

It happened while I lay in bed.

It happened three times this past weekend.

I have had it while I was sitting up.

It's just something that comes and goes away.

I could have had it as I did this past weekend,
and it will be

five years again before it comes back.

I will be looking around, and the room will spin
and then it goes away after a few seconds when I
sit up in bed.

Those few seconds seem to last a long time where
I worry about throwing up and falling.

I hope it's not an issue the whole month of
Christmas or ever.

The whole room doesn't just spin in a circle it
spins

from the bottom to the top and back down.

All I know to call it is an equilibrium problem that I
don't know

how I ever got.

Tasting the Rainbow

Tasting the rainbow is knowing the storm is gone and everything has settled down to peace and quiet.

It feels like a bunch of different colors of lights.

It doesn't have any flavor just colors and light.

It only comes when everything is ok, so you don't have to worry of leftover clouds.

I have also seen double rainbows.

The last one I saw was two years ago.

Rainbow colors that give you energy that you want to travel to the top and reach for the light above and around it.

You will feel less worries and problems being on it and go back to your life feeling better.

I Am the Architect of My Life

I am the architect of my life.

I choose the best plans where.

I found them and joined them together.

I found school to the furthest I could go.

I chose friends that seemed best for me.

I chose apartments close to school as I could.

I always went home to visit my family when

I could connect with them and to help

me feel stable.

I had jobs that helped me a lot and pets that

helped me a lot.

I used to be big into having aquariums cause they would calm me down.

I had long tail angel fish in different colors such as black, black silver, calico and pearl scale.

I also later had Oscars in a five-sided aquarium that showed them from every angle.

They got to be seven by six inches, and I had them for years.

I tried to have the best I could in every area and put them all together so that I would be successful academically, socially and what would help me mentally.

My Ladder to the Sky

My ladder to the sky would help me have more insight,

and be a place where I could go and hang out.

I could look at places with a bird's eye view watching people and places from above.

I would come back down to my life and see how things could be better.

In My Buffet of Life

In my buffet of life, I pick out the things that help me out.

I like to pick out things to do and things to drink.

I like to make pictures out of tiny plastic pieces that make

up a shiny picture called a diamond painting.

I like to drink coffee.

I like to drink it from Starbucks, McDonalds and most anywhere.

I also like to make instant coffee and sometimes decaf is ok too.

I like to get enough sleep, so I don't drink too much coffee.

I pick sleep to help me out in my buffet of life so that I stay stable minded.

I take meds to help me sleep and then get up early every day.

I don't sleep all the way during the day as it can give me nightmares for some reason when I wake up.

This doesn't happen only if I sleep at night.

I always have a roommate that sleeps throughout the day and stays up at night while I am the opposite.

I would pick this out from my buffet of life to keep having roommates like this.

There is less noise to deal with this way.

My Greatest Accomplishments

My greatest accomplishments have been graduating high school,

doing three years of college, having a large sized freshwater aquarium.

I had fish that were almost eight inches from when they were

babies which took a lot of dedication over a few years.

Other accomplishments were having lots of jobs in high school, college and afterwards.

I learned a lot of different things.

One of my favorite jobs I had was a part time job while in college in Pittsburgh, PA.

I was a runner that delivered graphic projects to downtown only buildings and I walked.

I got to see some of the neatest offices and buildings ever.

I got to go to the PPG building several times which is one of the best ones of all.

It is a building made of black mirrors that is in the image literally

of a very tall castle in downtown Pittsburgh.

Everywhere you look on the building is black mirrors and they have a restaurant there.

There were other neat buildings, outside and inside and at Christmas

time everything was really decorated.

There are department stores with big windows for Christmas displays

with fake snow and small moving decorated trains to watch.

Everyone wore nice clothes, nice coats, shoes and bags.

Another accomplishment I did one day I put art into an art show

called the Houston Bayou City Art Show, with my mom.

It was fun and an expensive accomplishment.

I got to sell one thing, so it was good enough for me. A great accomplishment I had was having a cat for 17 years. She has been the greatest love of my life and helped me be a nicer person as well as life being more interesting.

The Relentless Pursuit of Happiness

The relentless pursuit of happiness led me to discover that

happiness came to me most when I shared my life with my cat.

She has passed on after having her 17 years.

She was a long haired white Turkish Angora that I got in college in Ohio.

Sharing your life with a pet or a kid for some people can make

life more interesting, amusing and a great learning experience.

I had her half of my life from age 22 to 39.

She died nine years ago from old age peacefully.

She was a white angel in my life, and I am glad I had her.

My Steel Toe Boot

Is not something I would trade as they are part of
a pair that holds

the memories of traveling as a truck driver meeting
friends along the way on my trips.

Seeing farm animals, all kinds of sceneries.

Seeing all kinds of seasonal changes over the
trees of mountains

as I passed them by in the spring, summer, fall
and winter.

Life is Like a Rubber Band

Life is like a rubber band being stretched with meaning

and purpose.

It teaches you a lot by stretching,

by showing you that

you can learn, endure and experience more than you thought you could handle.

This helps you become more well-rounded and a learner of patience from certain experiences.

It will stretch me to show me other ideas, people, places, things that can help make me better.

God is My Choreographer

God is my choreographer because He is bigger all knowing what is best for me, a source that guides directs me through a lot of times giving me choices along the way.

It is best to have a guide of all knowing knowledge who knows ways and makes way when there seems to be no way.

God is supposed to never give us more than what we can handle when we go these ways that he makes for us.

How My Life Has Changed Since the Pandemic

My life has not changed that much since the pandemic as

I have been in lock up facilities.

I feel bad for people on the outside going through it.

I live with the same threats of what if it got worse like outside people, just in a more protected environment.

Where I was before they restricted visitation from people as well as you could not walk to stores anymore to spend money.

They also started bringing our food to our rooms to eat instead of going to the cafeteria.

I did not and still do not have any visitors at this time.

I was not able to have SSI to go anywhere to spend it.

I finally did get it and got some needed things from Amazon instead.

Where things have not been big changes for me I feel bad for people whose life got severely affected such as their job, where they live, landlords that did not work with them, people who got sick, and people who died left behind their animals and their kids for other people to take care of all over the world. There would be nothing worse than having Covid-19 as well as anyone you know getting it. My current setback threats are to not go on convenient walks to get things on discount when I need them. Depending on how long this lasts can cause this to be depressing as well as things planned instead to come from online. My hope is for everyone to stay healthy here, so everyone does not have to pay prices for what someone else has. I hope the vaccine happens as soon as possible and it works for everyone.

Life is Good Because

Life is good because I live in a secure environment with most of my needs and wants met.

This has been continually happening for 18 months.

I live with other people in the same situation as me.

It is good because it is long term where I get to feel safe and secure thinking of my future.

I Own This Road

I own this road I am on that has been given to me with decisions I've made as well as the universe and God has given me ownership.

There are signposts along the way where I can choose negative or positive.

I have felt at best for 18 months on the road I have been on with the four facilities I have lived at and choose positive signposts.

I have met a lot of nice people and decent circumstances of living.

I feel I have only positive signs of direction and feel ok with everything.

I plan for this road, and the sign posts I see to be of stability, consistency of good for me, and meeting helpful people.

The Camera, Paint and the Pen

With my camera in my hand, I would go against injustices I see.

I would use it to take pictures of mistreated animals and stray animals they could be picked up and relocated to their possible owner.

I would have to be careful of the abusers being around so that

I did not endanger myself and instead that it was done successfully.

I was looking at geckos one day because it is something small and low maintenance to take care of.

I went into a store that had reptiles where they were trying to feed a live rabbit to a snake for the public who walked in to see.

The rabbit's leg was also bleeding from being given an injection and it was scared huddled up to the wall of the snake tank.

It was so horrible to see, and it made me feel desperate for that little rabbit that everyone was supposed to watch being eaten.

If I had a camera that day, I could have sent the picture of it and the name of the store to Animal Rescue and Rabbit Rescues.

I hope that this snake never cared about the rabbit, and it seemed like it only halfway cared and that they took the rabbit out before it died.

I went home and was very sad that day as it was too gruesome for me.

I stayed sad for over a week.

I have put time into reading on rabbit rescues with good endings of other rabbits being saved.

It Can Take More Than a Lifetime Just to Get to Know Yourself

This is because you change, and things change around you.

Things that you liked when you were younger are not the same as when you are older.

There is new technology new inventions that come out, as well as new foods, new people to meet.

It can be something you look forward to if you remember you will like some of the new things you learn to add to knowing yourself.

Recently in the past year I've gone back to liking wearing jeans

a lot, having hot sauce on more of my food, learning books. I like to color in and plastic beaded type art called diamond painting.

The Points of Interest on My Map

The points of interest on my map are a variety of things!

One major point of interest is drinking coffee.

I like them all regular, decaf, Starbucks and McDonalds.

At Christmas I like holiday flavored coffee such as a pumpkin latte and peppermint coffee.

Celebrating the holidays is a point of interest for me as they only come one time a year and should always be celebrated.

I like the food at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

I like Easter and the 4th of July.

They also help to keep things from getting too boring.

Trying to do interesting things with my time is also a point of interest.

I try to do a hobby as much as I can when that's called a diamond painting which are shiny beaded pictures of things that people like and inspire them.

My second interest is coloring flower Mandela designs that are in a circle with flower themes in mind.

Richard Miller

I was born in Long Beach; CA and we moved to Huntington Beach when I was one year old. I went to Circle View Elementary School then to Spring View Middle School in Huntington Beach. After that I went to Marina High School, home of the Vikings. I played soccer, baseball, badminton and football when I was young. I enjoyed cycling and construction work. I also surfed and boogie boarded sometimes. I tried to stay active most of the time. I like to fish in Sitka, Alaska and hunt in New Mexico. I also like to fish in San Diego and local lakes. I also like to surf fish in Huntington State Beach.

My poetry is dedicated to my close friends and family. They are always there to take care of me and always have time and space for me.

MY IDEAL WEEKEND

My ideal weekend would be to travel to a new shoreline.

Making a cast with a new fishing pole. Traveling with my parents or close friend, more family than friend.

Or maybe take a surfboard or boogie board zip up a wet suit get on a board in the outside surf line making a new friend of two.

Fire up a barbeque, cook some hamburgers or hot dogs, even some carne asada tacos. Sun bath with mom and dad creates bonds and show care and love back and forth.

MY PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

My philosophy of life is to be a good self-starter.

Stay determined not fall off track.

To be outgoing and not to fear outgoing times.

To be popular and get along with others.

Treat others how you would like to be treated.

MY LIFELINE

My lifeline is selfcare and exercising in pleasant weather.

My lifeline is love and happiness and good distance with family and friends.

I TURN TO MY SECURE EMOTIONAL BASE

By doing a brief breathing exercise or spending time with a partner or close friend or near family working.

On a clean job site or pleasant site.

I SAW THE MOST BEAUTIFUL PLACE

When I was home in New Mexico or fishing in Alaska.

Even swimming around the pier was great and had a lot of positive ending.

I ONCE IMAGINED

I once imagined that I was living in Alaska
I imagined that I was running a private charter
boat, and fishing charter boat.
I imagined I had a log cabin in Alaska.
I also thought I had a nice pretty wife.
I imagined I was living next to all my friends and
living a very sober life
I imagined I had very wealthy retirement and had
a very healthy family with much happiness.

SPREAD MY WINGS WIDE AND FULL

Spread my wings over the ocean and glide
I fly over fish and land on a rock gliding over
temptations Spread my wings full and fly over
islands. Avoid my temptations and evil things

Spread my wings wide and soar over fish and mountains.

Staying away from bad things and harmful people.

Spread my wings full and fly over valleys avoiding devils and drugs spread my wings wide and soar over forests landing on pine.

MY DIVINE LIGHT

My divine light involves happiness, love and peace.

Searching for the right type of love or friendship.

My divine light involving nature and happiness with friends.

My divine light involving family and care and love.

MY TRUE SELF

My true self is always giving and sharing with others

My true self is always outgoing and loving

My true self is giving love and love to my family

My true self is watching and giving help to my friends and family

THE SOUL LIVES IN MY CONSCIENCE

My soul lives in my conscience and ends with politeness and happiness. My soul lives in my conscience and is always nice and has a big heart

My soul lives in my conscience and has a lot of care and love for others and family. My soul lives in my conscience and is always aware of bad things and sorts out the good things in life

To be courageous
Is to be contagious
Oh, so brave
Not living in a cave
Be fierce like a lion
Take on negative ions
Put away your frustration
This is not the occasion
Like a breath of fresh air
Follow your heart till you're bear
It's like freedom for your mind
When you take on mankind
If you're struck in the dark
You can still make your mark
It starts with a step
You can move right and left
It will fill your soul
And get you out of the cold

FRACTURED

The closet I have come to a fracture is when I was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder. With this condition my mind isn't always sharp. I hear voices and feel touch that is not there. To me this condition is like a fracture because in way I am broken. I have learned to live with this condition due to medication and with help from people who understand the disability.

THE PERFECT DAY

The most perfect day would start with me waking up next to my husband. It would be about 10am and our 2 kids would be hungry for breakfast. After my husband makes breakfast, we would leave for work. We are flight attendants and today we are flying to Paris. Once we arrive, we would spend the day shopping, sightseeing and eating. Not too long after arriving we would leave to go back home and see the kids. We would eat pizza and play video games until it was time for bed.

Dear Mom,

There is a long road stretched out between us. We used to spend a lot of time together. I remember waking up early to watch you get ready for work. We would pick out an outfit, and you would style your hair then you would take me out to breakfast. Once a week around lunch time we would meet at your work to go to lunch. I miss these days so much because you're a great mom and I love spending time with you. These days the road between us is much longer. I live across the country and have only seen you twice in the last 5 years. We talk on the phone once or twice a month, but it will never measure up to all of the birthdays, shopping and lunches we did together when I was younger. Maybe one day we'll find a way back together but until then just know I love you and I'm really proud to be your son.

THE FRAGRANCE OF LAVENDER

The fragrance of lavender makes me think of bales of hay on a farm. Like when I would visit a friend who lived on a farm. We would ride on 4 wheelers and jump off the hay. We would swim in her pool and eat cheese and crackers. The fragrance of lavender also makes me think of when I would garden at Founders. We planted lavender in a planter, and you can smell it when you pick a few of its leaves. The smell to me is clean and earthy. It makes me feel good and I want to pluck more and more leaves so I can keep smelling it. Lavender makes me think of money and how the scent is a luxury. I miss my mom and how she would take care of me. I am glad that I have the scent to remind me of her.

IN MY FREE TIME

In my free time I like to spend time with my dogs. They get really happy. Their tails wag and they lick all over my face. Sometimes I like to cuddle with them on the couch. This isn't always possible though because they are picky about who they spend their time with. They like my parents more because they are the ones who take care of them. In my free time I like to exercise so I am not being totally lazy. I like to sleep a lot and watch tv. My favorite show is Criminal Minds. The rest of the time I like to spend at work. I like my job and how they split my time between stocking and cashiering. I like to go shopping to buy clothes and shoes, but I don't do it as much anymore because I am saving money to get more tattoos. I want to get at least one tattoo on my right arm, so it doesn't look so bare compared to my left arm. One day I would like to get my whole body tattooed. It might take some time to save up.

Derek Schultz

I was born in New York City and moved to Los Angeles at age six. We lived in Malibu, and I attended private schools. In high school, I worked at age 16 at Haagen Dazs then I worked for our family business, which was filmmaking, doing the behind the scenes work as an editor. As I got older, I attended Howard University for two years, then transferred to New York University for one year. At age 22 I enlisted in the US Marine Corps and was given a medical discharge after two and a half years. I am currently enjoying script writing and photography. I also enjoy studying insects and am currently living at Founders House of Hope.

I am dedicating my poetry to everyone at Founders.

I once imagined that the clouds and the sky could
cry for us.

Their expert tears carousing a complicated answer
and fleeting anger.

And as they move intently across the languid skies
Bouncing white cotton given substances giving us
the end of a trial.

Dreamy instances as she, our mother nature weeps
Tears in glimmer of lament once told

A giver with spent moments who call for the
answers of the dark.

As the sun always comes in the end and shining
through.

A battle fought against a course of action given in
a reluctant way

Miyan Gant

I was born in Lakewood Regional Hospital in 1977. I attended Collins elementary School until 6th grade followed by Mayflower High School.

My poetry is dedicated to my dad, entire family and my friends.

My dad taught me how to ride a bike
It was hard riding the bike straight
I don't remember having a car before
I like to ride bikes too.
Riding a bike is faster than walking

3rd Grade

My earliest memory in elementary school. I remember vaguely taking
A picture by my classroom. My mom took the picture.
I remember sitting on the ground or the carpet with
squares on it.
Lots of coloring, ABC, and simple addition probably
I don't really remember.
I took a picture with the teacher, and my mom still
has it.

I'VE GOT JUST ENOUGH TIME TO

Deepen my relationship with God

Get my GED or high school diploma

Go back to school

Tell my parents I love them

John McNerny

I was born in Fresno, CA and my father worked in insurance. I attended Carlsbad High School and graduated in 1981. After high school I went into the recording industry, working in management promotions at RCA records. I spent four years in this industry. I then sought work for the next 20 years in the motion picture and television industry in crafts services. I enjoy writing poetry, surfing and cooking. I am also a chef. My family lives in Los Angeles and Orange County.

THE SUN GOES DARK WHEN THINGS ARE GRIM

Clouds create as the misfortunes in life develop as the darkness looms, a break in the clouds is inevitable.

Sunny skies will prevail.

THE LAST TIME I DID SOMETHING TO HELP MYSELF

I restarted to consolidate storages. While it is an entire family's belongings, it is certainly overwhelming. It will be a relief when I size down with all the items for a smaller storage unit.

MY ABSURD SIDE

I have been inclined to partake in calorie foods. While I have a culinary and nutritionist background. I fully intend to reduce my carbohydrate intake thus diminishing my waistline.

During my residency at Founders I have at least lightly touched on all components of the self-concepts. While not complete congruency is established yet. I fully intend to delve in all five of the concepts. I should work on emotional concepts to begin with.

BLEMISHED

I liken my blemished self-concept to a seasoned condition kind of like an old vintage bicycle with patina. Fortunately, it shows for most of us as opportunity as kind of character.

IDEAL YOU

While each day is usually not necessarily perfect, with steadying the future, one life can become more aligned with a true ideal of you. Contact with old and new friends and associates can assure long lasting ideal life.

THE DANCING OF THE SHADOW

The dancing of the shadow is created by the sun
A great shadow caster is the sun
The shadow moves on down
Changing its shape continuously
Its shape and form ripple from the sun

AFFIRMATION LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

To my younger self is a note of acceptance,
acknowledgement,
Judgement, spirit, correction, agreement and
celebration.
It is a letter that says many with plenty
consideration.

MY MIRROR SAID TO ME

Each day each look is a new perspective
They have meaning to define.
It might be the same picture
within a new frame, the mirror speaks volumes
in a moment of time.

THE LATE 70'S

My favorite decade was the 70's. I excelled in football and track and field. It also was my favorite decade and time for music. There were many of my friends about with many great times.

A POSITIVE MOMENT

The entire family got together when we were younger in the summertime. At the beach in Oceanside surfing and catching the perfect wave. We enjoyed dinner together and went home. This memory brings me fond times of my younger years.

I am influenced to write due to my father and uncle.

Inspired by my dad to his elegance and articulation.

He was an insurance underwriter that required writing in detail.

My uncle was inspiration due to his encyclopedia knowledge of many subjects.

I was successful in writing eulogies for both and intend to further this exercise.

Generalized anxiety involves a steady stream of reflection and angst. It is continuously strong and cunning. Within reason it is not uncommon and is certainly a daily being.

The challenges in life equal a kind of blessing regarding this condition.

HI GOD, CAN WE GO FOR COFFEE

It was good having coffee with you this morning reminiscing about the past, present and future. I would like to know and talk to you more often with time that will certainly be achievable. We will talk about my family and brothers who know you well.

CHILDHOOD PET

Molly was an adorable young puppy. She was very rambunctious as a young puppy. Born with a white patch on her chest area. Her lineage consisted of labrador and poodle, very typical of a enthusiastic water dog. She had a great appetite that involved the devouring of a homemade gingerbread house, it was a very amusing event.

ON THE SUBWAY AT MIDNIGHT

On the subway at midnight there is a multitude of passing by sounds. Some are passing by like the street crossing bells, the city sirens and the clatter of passengers. The hidden lights are exposed as the trees pass by or as the cars come around the bend. I have just enough time to get to know some of the conversations with my neighbor passenger's stories, some of them trivial some of them interesting.

On the subway at midnight there are just a few riders. The hidden light appears as the stops go by. I've got just enough time on board to write family and friends with my pen. With each passage come more perspectives.

Windchimes in the city are among the dogs barking, the rustle of the trees and the city sirens. Also, the windchimes make their way through the bustle of the city.

I have my philosophy in life including that truth prevails.

To be kind and respectful to others, always be listening
to what everyone has to say with acknowledgment.

AN IDEAL WEEKEND

Would be to finish a strong and full week of work, along with an early full Saturday of West Coast College of football possibly attending one of these games.

Amanda Jones

I was born in Fairfax, VA. I'm the oldest of three girls. We moved around a lot. I coped with the instability by writing and journaling. I got good grades in school and went on to college. I got a bachelor's in psychology. After earning my degree, I took time to work. Later I got my masters in curriculum and instruction. I enjoy nature and reading. My goal is to work as an instructional designer. I hope to design effective training for companies.

I dedicate my poetry to my nieces, Alayna, Rosie and Evie. Despite our rough up bringing, my sisters are raising beautiful girls to have the life we never had. Here's to breaking the cycle and moving forward. They've inspired their perseverance and self-reflection.

I REMOVED MY CLOUD OF DOUBT WHEN

I began answering phones at Founders House of Hope. It proved to me that I am capable of communicating well with others. It is one step before I get my career going. I didn't think I'd be able to work without bad anxiety. By facing this fear, I have reduced my anxiety and feel excited about my next role.

I plan on fixing up my resume and applying for Instructional Design roles in the future. I feel more confident in my abilities after stepping out of my comfort zone!

When I was a preschool co-teacher, I had a lot of congruency in my self-concept. Upon finishing my undergrad, I felt like my social self-concept changed. I was trying to find a job in my field, but wasn't landing any interviews.

I tried applying to be a preschool teacher instead. I got a job at a fancy private preschool and renewed congruency within my self-concept.

FRACTURED

Through the years I've learned a lot
The present moment is all we've got
These cracks are where worry grows
Anxiety is all she knows
A fractured mind cannot rest
Each day we do our best
Despite the worry she moves forward
In the game of life, she has scored

BLEMISHED

I've found in life, pain, blemishes I must sustain
Youth and innocence no more
On some paths you slam the door
The next chapter in a book
To learn from mistakes of old
Build a path of pure gold

BOUND TO MOVING ON: LOOKING FORWARD

Now that I am stable, I can set my eyes on the horizon. I see many opportunities in my future. I can tame the beast that is anxiety focus on my accomplishments. So far, I've gotten my ID, Birth Certificate, and social security card. That has opened many doors for me.

Now I can clean up my resume and look forward to applying for jobs in Instructional Design.

TALKING WITH MY SHADOW

I was on a lovely stroll when my shadow asked to
know where we're headed

I said, "don't worry old friend, we're on our way
home".

My shadow replied, "I like being outside where I
can turn and dance alongside you."

So, I told my dear shadow we could skip and
dance the rest of the way home.

And with that compromise, we headed inside until
we could dance again tomorrow.

I SAW A FISH ON LAND

He said, "Hey! Give me a hand!"

So, I walked over to find a little fish and do as he wished.

He wanted to see the highest mountain.

So, I picked him up and with great luck we made our way to the mountain range.

MY MIRROR SAID TO ME

Why do you look so lonely?

Because life has let me down.

That is why I frown.

The mirror replied "Well what now"

To that I raised my brow,

Perhaps I can seek a new happiness.

And look in the mirror with a sense of bliss.

A PERFECT MOMENT

The day I met Alayna, a miracle of life
This little rainbow baby
Showed no signs of strife
I held her on my hip
She looked into my eyes
This little angel baby
My sister's new life

MY FAVORITE DECADE IN LIFE

From my 20's I became independent
It felt good to drive and to college
Everything was fun and new
I enjoyed all the energy I had
Responsibility was a positive challenge
Meeting new people and earning my degree
Oh, how fun It was in my twenties

THE SUN GOES DARK WHEN THINGS ARE GRIM

Where had the light gone?
These bad habits I fall upon
Trying to find my way
Looking for the light of day

Searching for the light of hope
From dread I will elope
I seek a break in the clouds
For hope has been allowed
Finally, I find my way
In the bright light of day

THE LAST TIME YOU DID SOMETHING FOR YOURSELF

Tired of the same old food
I decided to skip meatloaf
Instead, I got 3 yummy tacos
I enjoyed the flavor and texture
And the sweet drink I got. It was a nice treat

MY ABSURD SIDE

My absurd side,
Yearns for a wild ride,
Where my sisters and I ,
Abandon all responsibility,
And drive across the U.S.
Building memories without stress.
Free to sing and shout
As we travel all about,
Yelling at the passersby. All about our wild ride.

IF YOUR MENTAL ILLNESS WAS A SUPERPOWER

Anxiety can make you more alert and notice things other people don't. At a healthy level, anxiety serves to keep me safe.

It encourages planning for the future to avoid undesirable outcomes.

If your mental illness was a person.....

Tall and looming, this person silently judges. They make you feel less than and always ruin your mood.

Staring silently, their glare makes you uneasy. You try to talk some sense into them, but they keep on disapproving.

Eventually they go away and leave you feeling confused.

WHAT MAKES ME HAPPY

I enjoy spending time with family
Whether in writing or on the phone
I get to see my nieces get big
And reminisce with my sisters
I'm happy when I finish my work
And see my goals progress
Spining time makes me smile
With all the new life about
Sharing nature with my family
That's what makes me happy!

HI GOD, CAN WE GO FOR COFFEE AND TALK

Why must people chase clout. Are they not
satisfied? That they must scream and shout
Attention for that they've lied
If only they could see
The beauty of honesty

THE FRAGRANCE OF MINT MAKES ME THINK OF

Candy canes on a Christmas tree
The freshness of toothpaste when brushing
A garden with a pond from my youth
Some candles burning for the holidays
Mit Chapstick stocking stuffers
Aroma therapy misters, essential oils

WHAT I'M GRATEFUL FOR

I am grateful for a roof over my head,
And 3 meals a day.
I'm happy to be in touch with my sisters.
And getting to see my nieces grow.
I'm thankful for warm weather in Ca.,
And the view of the mountains in the distance.
I'm grateful for the friendships I've made,
Both new and old.
I'm glad to be here writing this poem.

MY PHILOSOPHY ON LIFE

Be kind to one another,
You never know what someone is going through
Don't be idle, keep it moving
Make conscientious choices,
Reach out to loved ones,
Take care of the planet.

YOUR PERFECT WEEKEND

My perfect weekend would be sleeping in before
having brunch, going to a lush park to have lunch.

I SAW THE MOST BEAUTIFUL

I saw the most beautiful sunset,
While poised in the sand,
Relaxing at the beach,
Watching the colors dance across the clouds,
Blues, purples, pinks,
Painted across the skies,
As the sun hides behind the horizon,
How beautiful it was!

A TIME I FACED MY FEAR

Public speaking is my fear,
The anxiety builds when the crowd is near,
Communications class required this skill,
So, I faced my fear and said I will,
Many hours of practice,
Helped brazen this novice,
I delivered my presentation,
Without any reservation.

IF ONLY

We had a 4-day work week
I'd get so much done,
At work and at home,
We'd have more time to spend with family
Or alone in a book. More time to spend with
friends. Or pursuing passion projects
If only we had a shorter work week

AS AN OCTOPUS

As an octopus I would crawl around the sea floor
My tentacles searching for little morsels
I'd propel myself from place to place
At times I'd hide on rocks near the shore
Enjoying the summer sun
Oh the carefree life of an octopus

OH, MY CAREFREE LIFE

How I yearn to release my responsibilities
To sleep in everyday
To let my favorite music play
To hang out with friends all day
Play video games
Go on nature walks
To be free of work
What a carefree life!

AT TIMES I FIND MYSELF

Yearning for the freedom of youth
To run all day in the sun
With neighborhood friends
I miss summer vacations and sleepovers
If only I could be young again
Carefree and fun

NOW IS THE TIME

To reach out to old friends
And live life to the fullest
To meet new people and
Try new things
Now is the time to take charge
To live out my dreams and
Grow as a person
Now is the time

I ONCE IMAGINED

A life free of restraints,
Full of independence,
Success and ease,
A family of my own,
Now, those feel so far away,
Only time will tell.

AS I GROW OLDER

I find that I am bolder,
Experience allows this strength,
I no longer go to any length,
To people please and abandon myself,
A new confidence better than wealth,
I become free and spread my wings,
No longer will I sweat the little things.

MY DIVINE LIGHT

Illuminates a path for me,
My future, bright and steady,
I see a family of my own,
I see struggles to overcome,
I see divine love.

My divine light
Guides me through life,
To see the positive,
To overcome strife
To experience love and togetherness
A bright path ahead of me.

SPREAD MY WINGS FULL AND WIDE

To glide to my goals,
While up high I look below,
I see my workplace with my dream job,
As I soar on, I see my family,
They wave as I float by,
Then I see my future home,
Cozy and simple,
I glide on and see more,
I pass children playing in a field
Then I see families going out to dinner,
From here I can see my future,
Bright and hopeful.

MY SOUL

Yearns for connection,
Keeps hope alive in me,
Guides me to give love and compassion
My soul enjoys justice and peace
It tells me when I'm ready. To dive in and help
others. I'm inspired to find the positive,
My soul brings out life in me.

MY TRUE SELF IS

Bound by empathy,
Recognizing how we're all connected,
My true self fights for what's right,
Bringing myself closer to others,
Eager to help and connect,
My true self values compassion. For others and
me, Slow to judge, quick to listen, my true self is
love.

I HAVE JUST ENOUGH TIME TO

Make a difference in the world,
Through kindness and compassion,
Acting as a role model,
Emulating love,
To push away hate,
I have just enough time to be a good person.

IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

I remember a boy,
Who would tell scary stories,
We would listen on the playground,
In eager anticipation,
To hear what would come next,
When we tired of this,
We would play tag and run around,
Sometimes pretending to be dinosaurs,
Running in the jungle.

David Navarro

I was born in Huntington Beach and attended Fountain Valley High School. After high school, I attended the Art Institute in Santa Ana for two semesters. I then worked as a dishwasher at Cheesecake Factory at Fashion Island. I also worked at Gastro Pub Haven in the City of Orange as a dishwasher. I spent time in sober living programs and am currently a resident at Founders House of Hope. I began learning to play the keyboard six months ago. I am grateful to my family for being so supportive and accepting of me.

I dedicate my poetry to my loving family.

MUSIC MAKES ME

Music makes me alive. Hit me to my heart. When I listen to music it inspires me to play. I love learning or playing drums. Piano is very beautiful which is why I want to learn how to play my first instrument. I'm open to any kind of music. When I feel challenged it's frustrating. I feel satisfied when I learn.

NOW IS THE TIME

Now is the time to go to groups and express my feelings and learn a lot about myself. I need to push myself to stay away from drugs. Try to get off conservatorship. Get a job get the proper training. Other jobs didn't really train me that well. I was scared to ask questions. I feel my confidence has go up. I wanna learn everything about piano and music. Excited about going to piano classes. I will continue playing piano until I become a song writer, even cover songs.

AS I AGE

As I age, I've learned a lot. I'm not always right, better to just listen. I got more tools to stay sober. I've learned that I shouldn't care how people think of me. Since I've been sober, I'm not lazy, violent, or intolerant. I play music better sober, learn easier.

WHEN I WAS 12

I would tell him not to do drugs. Stay away from the "cool crowd" because they will hold you back. School is very important focus on your studies and take guitar seriously. Quit football I don't like it. Play video games very lightly. Stay in shape. Don't be afraid of girls. Family loves you.

One day I want to get a gym pass. Trying to lose 10-20 lbs. I want to lift weights and work on my body. I could eat healthy. Make a routine. I want to be more friendly. Take a class at Cerritos College. Talk to people that have same interest. Go to AA talk about my addiction with alcohol.

A PERFECT DAY

I can be independent. Go to the beach with my mom. Walking along the beach. Getting some food after the walk. If I could make music. D.J. at a party. Hangout with my brother. Have a talk about life. Show my brother some music I make. Work on my set.

MY MIRROR

My mirror said to me I'm a changed man.

I am happier and full of life.

The mirror said I am a handsome man.

I make faces in the mirror, it says I have a sense of humor.

You have a big heart. Very loving, honest man.

I have my independence back.

My hair gets messy I don't like the way I look.

The mirror said I look fine.

The mirror said, "looks like you're ready for the next step in life." You have more self-confidence and passion to work hard.

HELPLESS AGAINST TIME

I enjoy my life and live life to the fullest. Time does not affect me because I use it wisely as I age, I take care of myself, it makes me happy.

I want to do more constructive positive things with my time.

Staying busy can make me be not as helpless.

I see my family.

I like to save money to enjoy my time.

I am willing to put time in the work force.

If I could grow up in a different time it would in the 90's.

The music was very good.

I would want to be in my 20's.

I would buy a car like R34 Supra, R-X7

and some more JDM cars

Go to a lot of concerts.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE CARTOON CHARACTER OR COMIC STRIP

Love to watch all sorts of cartoons, Looney Toons, Marvel and Disney.

My favorite character is Mickey Mouse.

I like Mickey because its entertaining.

I think Mickey's energy makes people happy.

I grew up with Looney Toons.

It's very funny.

Music from cartoons is inspiring.

Gianna Munoz

I was born in San Antonio, Texas but was raised in St. Louis, Missouri. I studied hospitality at Missouri State University in Springfield.

I dedicate these poems to all those who have treated me with such kindness. All of you have brightened my days and healed my soul.

I REMOVED MY CLOUD OF DOUBT

I removed my cloud of doubt when my sister told me to be confident.

I was 14 when this happened and I realized I was worth listening to, worth living, worth loving.

She showed me that I was beautiful.

I want to spend more time building my emotional self-concept.

If I could do this, I could start a new relationship.

In the past I have been immature and not taken relationships seriously.

If I could do this, I will be ready when the right guy comes along.

This would give me lasting happiness and boost my self-confidence.

I plan to do this by listening in my emotions instead of ignoring them.

I have ignored them in the past because they were hard to deal with.

By opening up to the right person I will have a stronger emotional self-concept.

To be courageous
Is to be contagious
Oh so brave
Not living in a cave
Be fierce like a lion
Take on negative ions
Put away your frustration
This is not the occasion
Like a breath of fresh air
Follow your heart

It's like freedom for your mind

When you take on mankind
If you're struck in the dark
You can still make your mark
It starts with a step
You can move right and left
It will fill your soul
And get you out of the cold

BLEMISHED

I am blemished because I am not perfect. I strive for my best, but I still make mistakes. For me to expect anything else is unrealistic. At night I lay awake wondering what I can do better, and this makes me a stronger employee, partner, and friend, but it does not ensure that I won't still make mistakes, I have learned to accept this because I am only human.

Fractured

The closet I have come to a fracture is when I was diagnosed with schizoaffective disorder. With this condition my mind isn't always sharp. I hear voices and feel touch that is not there. To me this condition is like a fracture because in way I am broken. I have learned to live with this condition due to medication and with help from people who understand the disability.

THE PERFECT DAY

The most perfect day would start with me waking up next to my husband. It would be about 10 am and our two kids would be hungry for breakfast. After my husband makes breakfast, we would leave for work. We are flight attendants and today we are flying to Paris. Once we arrive, we would spend the day shopping, sightseeing and eating. Not too long after arriving we would leave to go back home and see the kids. We would eat pizza and play video games until it was time for bed.

Dear Mom,

There is a long road stretched out between us. We used to spend a lot of time together. I remember waking up early to watch you get ready for work. We would pick out your outfit, and you would style your hair then you would take me out to breakfast. Once a week around lunch time we would meet at your work to go to lunch. I miss these days so much because you're a great mom and I love spending time with you. These days the road between us is much longer. I live across the country and have only seen you twice in the last 5 years. We talk on the phone once or twice a month, but it will never measure up to all the birthdays, shopping and lunches we did together when I was younger. Maybe one day we'll find a way back together but until then just know I love you and I'm really proud to be your daughter.

THE FRAGRANCE OF LAVENDER

The fragrance of lavender makes me think of bales of hay on a farm. Like when I would visit a friend who lived on a farm. We would ride on 4 wheelers and jump off the hay. We would swim in her pool and eat cheese and crackers. The fragrance of lavender also makes me think of when I would garden at Founders. We planted lavender in a planter, and you can smell it when you pick a few of its leaves. The smell to me is clean and earthy. It makes me feel good and I want to pluck more and more leaves so I can keep smelling it. Lavender makes me think of money and how the scent is a luxury. I miss my mom and how she would take care of me. I am glad that I have the scent to remind me of her.

IN MY FREE TIME

In my free time I like to spend time with my dogs. They get really happy. Their tails wag and they lick all over my face. Sometimes I like to cuddle with them on the couch. This isn't always possible though because they are picky about who they spend their home with. They like my parents more because they are the one who take care of them.

In my free time I like to exercise so I am not being totally lazy. I like to sleep a lot and watch tv. My favorite show is Criminal Minds. The rest of the time I like to spend at work. I like my job and how they split my time between stocking and cashiering. I like to go shopping to buy clothes and shoes, but I don't do it as much anymore because I am saving money to get more tattoos. I want to get at least one tattoo on my right arm, so it doesn't look so bare compared to my left arm. One day I would like to get my whole body tattooed. It might take some time to save up.

As I have aged, I have noticed that I am a lot more careful. I used to make crazy decisions like getting drunk every day and using drugs. I would skip class and go out to party. I now have a stable job, and I also have a better relationship with my parents. We used to butt heads and argue about the silliest of things. Now I accept the differences we have and try to remain polite and friendly. This also applies to my relationship with other people and the world. When something bad happens, I say “oh I must be someone else and turn to have it easy.” When something good happens I say, “thank you God for taking care of me”.

Erika Sierra

Erika Sierra is a mother. She grew up in the San Fernando Valley. She was really great at school she got straight A's in middle school and she loves to read. She was diagnosed with Huntington's Disease. She is currently 42 and she used to work in human resources. She loves Asian food.

My poetry is dedicated to my family. My family comes to see me and inspires me.

THE FIRST CAR

My first car was a Toyota. I got it really cheap, and I used to drive and feel really happy I got it. It was independence and freedom. You can use the car to go everywhere, and the possibilities are endless. I love driving free. I like to take my car to school. The first car means you need to be responsible and had to take care of your car yourself. My first car means freedom. I still remember when I financed the car. It was good on mileage.

MY FIRST SCHOOL MEMORY

My first school memory is about my favorite teacher who was Mrs. Spenager.. She had me do a reading quiz on the first day, and she helped me be educated. I loved recess and I loved would go out and play on the swing. I loved to read in English, and my favorite teacher helped me become awesome. Il would do science trivia and I would win.

SPREAD MY WINGS

Spread my wings to fly. I am looking for a mountain to glide on. I would love to glide to the beautiful, I would love to retire and then glide to the beach. The water is the perfect blue, and I love watching the waves. I long to glide to a mountain and then to a rainbow. I would love to travel to Europe. Europe has the most beautiful beaches. I would also love to glide by a sunset and all the pretty colors. I love the beautiful mountains and the redwood trees.

MY DIVINE LIGHT

My divine light is positive and holy, and it shines right through me. It is created inside of time. My divine life is powerful. It is patient and kind. My divine light is a holy sign that helps me act right.

MY TRUE SELF

My true self is focused on her health. My true self is a person who loves music and used to work. My true self is on vacation in my mind. I am living a good life trying to be healthy and my true self is uplifting and kind. Everyone loves my true self. I have faith in my true self. My true self is warm on a rainy day. And loves to be truthful. My true self is kind and patient. My true self is full of hope and encouraging.

MY SOUL IS A PART OF MY CONSCIENCE

My soul is positive, and my soul is a part of my conscience. My conscience is both light and darkness. It helps me volunteer when I can and it lets me make good choices that I make every day. Every day I am conscience of my actions. I love my soul. I am proud of myself when I make the best choice, and my conscience fights me when I make bad choices.

I'VE GOT JUST ENOUGH TIME

I have just enough time to focus on my health.
I have just enough time to spend time with my family.
I have a relationship with God, and I will have more faith. I got just enough time to improve my relationship with God. God will be pleased with my mention of his name. I have just enough time to be free. My relationship will inspire with God

A TIME I FACED MY FEAR

A time I face my fear is every day. I am faced with my fear all day and that is dying too early. I face my fear daily and I try to be positive about it. I am faced with my fear daily and I use my courage to face my fear. I also try to read positive affirmations to deal with my fear. I also talk positive words to myself to keep my fear from happening. That is how I faced my fear.

I SAW THE MOST BEAUTIFUL

I love the sun, and I saw the most beautiful sunrise. I love the beautiful colors, and I love nature. I love to travel a lot, and the most beautiful sunset was at the beach in Ventura Canyon Beach. I think sunset colors are a beautiful way to see every day. I love the sky and space. Sunsets are a beautiful way for the day to end.

HELPLESS AGAINST AGING

When I have helplessness against aging it has been something

I hate thinking about aging, and I can't do a lot of things.

I going to get to a place where time speeds up.

When time flies, I hate that because I feel like I am stuck and cannot enjoy growing older, but you can get happy to age.

Also, you can't stand the way you act as you get older.

I used to be young and confident.

I am also ready to get older and wiser.

I have that fear myself.

IF YOUR MENTAL ILLNESS IS A PERSON

Dear Mental Illness:

I am putting my health first and you are annoying me. You have been taking up space in my mind and time. You also make it difficult for me to sleep and I worry about you. You can be annoying sometimes when I get mad you take over me, and you tell me to do bad things sometimes. You also take my confidence and voice away. I know not to give into my needs and get myself free with daily affirmations. You always try to turn my day to a dark night instead of a bright day. You also make it hard for me to concentrate sometimes.

HI GOD, CAN WE GO FOR COFFEE AND TALK

Can I talk about my disease. I am having a hard time getting up out of bed. Can we talk about my family. I want to spend enough time with them. I know every day I wake up and feel happy, and I enjoy the sun when I go outside, and I know it is magnificent. I want to smile every day. Can you make me win the lottery too. And thank you for having fun with me. Thanks for creating restaurants and family time. I am thankful for being alive and visitation time.

WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY

I am happy when I see my son, he is 12 years old and when I am with him, I feel complete. We had a full life before I ended up here. We love amusement parks and visiting the farm. We love Asian food, and he looks just like me. He is my everything and I feel happy when he is with me. He is in elementary school, and he loves water. So, we would go to the beach or the pool at our old place. He hates school and how he looks usually like me. I finally saw him on Saturday. I am happy.

I HAVE JUST ENOUGH TIME TO

I am going to die eventually so I have just a few things that I want to do before I die. I tend to be a person that does not communicate well. I close and don't talk about it. I am sick I have Huntington's Disease, and I am putting my health first. I have enough time to laugh and smile with my family and have enough time to enjoy the little things like days when I wake up. I am looking forward to not doing anything anymore. So, I have enough time to retire and be alone so now I am in retirement mode.

WITH MY PEN

With my pen I can write stories and write paragraphs that are entertaining. I can write anything with my pen. I can write paragraphs and paragraphs and with my pen the special words come to me into my head. With my pen the words come out right. With my pen I can do anything and create stories. With my pen I can have courage when I write with my pen.

IF I WON THE LOTTERY

If I won, the lottery I would buy a house.

If I won, the lottery I would give money to other people and share with my family.

I love plants so I would donate money to nurseries.

I love to bake so I would buy expensive equipment like a mixer and food processor.

If I had won, the lottery I would go to Disneyland and get season passes.

I would buy books for my family members and put some money away for retirement. Money like in a 401k and IRA.

Go to museums and use some money to go to fancy restaurants.

Jasmine Tate

I was born on January 22, 1990. I grew up in Long Beach California. I lived on Lemon Ave. with a lemon tree in the back yard. It was a yellow house. I went to school at Buttler Middle School. I was a straight A student with one or two B's. I went to school with my sister. We are five years apart. We took care of each other we had each other's backs. My favorite subject in school was mathematics and P.E. I am now 35 years old a mother of one sone who is now 16.

LONG ROAD STRECHED OUT BETWEEN US

In life there are some ups and downs. We may not agree the same things each other is thinking. When we do everything becomes peaceful and there is no one to blame after a while. We can go on family nights and spend time together go to the movies. But all I want to hear from you is I love you. Other people may be jealous of our situation that is going on little do we know is that it can be our own family member that can deceive us from being in that type of bonding relationship at we both wanted in the beginning. One person can tell you something that you might not like. You take it out on me that bond between us is very long because you decide to hold back what you wanted to say to me. We can talk to each other like normal people. I've been wanting to talk to you but let's not let our roads be stretched out. Instead let's get onto a quick path. It does not always have to be long road between us.

IF MY MENTAL ILLNESS WAS A PERSON, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY

If my mental illness was a person, what would I say? I would confront the mentally ill person right away. What's up? How come every time I get up in the morning and get ready for the day you are always trying to stop me from doing what I have to do. Isn't there anything better for you to do or somebody else you can pick on instead of me. Because I'm the type of person who loves to relax after a long day or work. In the sun drinking a cold iced lemonade. I'd say mental illness aren't you tired of all the things you are trying to make up for me to just be agitated. How would you like to mess with someone your own age or condition. Why put it on me. I'm just a normal person who loves to not be bothered by something ill. Dear mental health, maybe someday you can think that everyday on a daily basis. I somehow do the same thing repetitively. It's like when I'm not doing anything you come like a thief within the night,

Khalid Schultz

MY FIRST BICYCLE

My first bicycle my dad bought me I had to learn to fall off. It wasn't an expensive bike, but I got around on it. Kids had nicer bikes back then. I wanted a better bike, but my dad wouldn't let me.

In preschool I remember learning to count with my fingers one to ten. I took addition classes. I learned the alphabet. I learned how to read. I made friends. We went on lunch breaks and we played outside.

MY DIVINE LIGHT

My divine light guides me when there's darkness around me. I always count on the light to free me from loneliness and help me find good friends.

SPREADING MY WINGS

Spreading my wings full and wide to stay sober and make a decent income and get a nice cozy apartment. Then I'm ready to fly to another location. My soul is filled with compassion for my friends and loved ones. I love to hang out with my friends.

At the calm lakes in New Mexico, we used to go fishing. Sometimes we would pack a lunch and go eat there. Those were the good times. Riding our bikes to lakes and the rivers. We would fish for salmon with our brothers and family.

My Grandma used to send us twenty dollars on most of the holidays. And on our birthdays, she sent a hundred dollars. If only I could get a chance to see her again in Illinois. She turned 95 not too long ago. I love her so much.

I once imagined I climbed Mount Everest with a bunch of climbers. And we stayed there for a week, and we went back to America.

OH, MY CAREFREE LIFE

Oh, my carefree life living day by day nothing to worry about as a child. Playing with my friends playing sports. Eating dinner with my family. Watching cartoons in the mornings. Repeat the next day the same.

I"VE GOT JUST ENOUGH TIME TO

I've got just enough time to cook dinner for my family to set goals for myself. To get a promotion from my boss. To be at peace with my family and friends.

My hero is Jet Lee's Kung Fu action movies, like Romeo must Die and Kiss of the Dragon. In his movie hero perfected his swordsmanship and martial arts. He tried to assassinate the King of China. But he got away.

I wanna be a giver
I wanna be a doer
I wanna live life to the fullest
I wanna be kind to people
I wanna share my things
I wanna be close to my friends
I want to experience love
I need a beautiful family
I want to be caring
Making a good future for myself is important
Being healthy is what I want

HEY ITS ME

Lean on me being of spirit
Hi old friend we used to be best friends. Hanging
out at the old diner.
We haven't seen each other in a long time.
I really missed you, but I'll never forget you.
Till we meet again.

Michelle Tran

With a heart full of melodies and a soul that sparkles with creativity, California's Michelle Tran is a magical force in the modern music and art scene. Michelle is an author of a children's book about a bipolar bear, "Beethoven the Bipolar Bear." She used her creative writing skills to inspire the world to have empathy toward mental health and end the stigma around people diagnosed with a mental health condition. She sees her sadness as her superpower. Like Spider-Man, she views her bipolar disorder to be both a blessing and a curse. It's not a curse but only so because of the stigma around it. Michelle also has music published under the creative name Princess Milly Mercury. As a singer, songwriter, author, poet and all-around creative fairy, Princess Milly isn't here to follow trends, she's here to sprinkle love, light and a little bit of rebellion into every piece of art she makes. Her work is a celebration of softness, strength and being exactly who you are.

Dedication

I feel honored to have my original poetry in this book. I would love to dedicate my works of poetry to my mom and dad. I'm grateful to my mom for her unconditional love and support, she is my biggest cheerleader and always gives me the best advice. She is my best friend. I am lucky to have my father's artistic genes. He is a creative genius, and I am so proud to be his daughter. I want to thank them both for the patience and support they gave me when I was experiencing mental health challenges and am forever grateful for their love for me.

FORGIVEN

You were my first friend
Our relationship I'd like to mend
My childhood memories are shared with you
You hurt me multiple times, I was bullied by you
I'm in no contact with you right now
I wish I could apologize, I don't know how
You hold a grudge, there's a restraining order,
given by the judge
I need to forgive you to set myself free
You are my brother, you mean a lot to me
I forgive you, my brother for not treating me well
Perhaps we will make up, only time can tell
I love you, my brother, though I never say so
I need to forgive you, and I need to let go

BLEMISHED

I tend to use filters when I take photos of myself. Filters are a way to make myself feel more beautiful. The filters hide my blemishes and make me feel confident.

I met a guy and I remember one day he asked me to send him a photo of myself without a filter.

I was so scared to take a picture of myself without a filter that I started to cry.

I told him of my insecurities, and he told me that he likes me for me and not the filter and he wants to see the real me.

I sent him pictures of me without a filter, and he said I look beautiful.

Today I can take pictures without a filter and I feel more confident.

UNBLEMISHED

We came into the world unblemished and pure
We were perfect creations, we were cute and
demure
The older we got, the more we sin
The human condition, nobody wins
Unblemished we are not
One life to live is all we've got
So live life full of blemishes and mistakes
Because a life worth living is better than cupcakes
Cupcakes are cutesy but they are frosted and
sweet
Human beings are imperfect, yet we are complete

FRACTURED

I went to a garage sale in San Clemente.
I saw a babydoll that belonged to a girl.
The cheek of the babydoll was fractured.
The left cheek of the doll was cracked.
I felt the imperfect doll symbolized how I felt about
myself at the time.
I felt like a cracked face babydoll that was
formerly
loved and now seen as imperfect and unwanted.
I felt like a beautiful doll that was broken.

I REMOVED MY CLOUD OF DOUBT

I removed my cloud of doubt when I let Jesus into my heart.

My life changed for the better.

I started to love myself more and slowly felt more beautiful from the inside out.

I have a strong relationship with Jesus.

For the past seven months, I've attended church every Sunday consecutively.

People always comment that I look and seem younger than my age.

That is because I'm a child of God and am young at heart.

I thank Jesus

for my gift of divine creativity and I am very grateful.

I spent my twenties clouded by insecurity and mental illness triggered by drugs.

I am now happily sober, and I am confident and am not affected by the judgement of others because I am unconditionally loved by God and I love myself unconditionally.

I understand that my gift of beauty can ignite jealousy from those around me but

I will never dim my light because I know I am special and favored by God.

I love you Jesus.

You are the best thing that's ever happened to me.

LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

Dear Little Michelle,

I want you to know that you are not tainted. Your imagination is wonderful and you are so talented. I want you to hug our grandpa really tight and tell him how much he means to you.

You love him a lot, show him that and don't be a brat. You are so special and kind. Your brother is not the kindest. Just kick him where it hurts most he will stop picking on you. He is insecure that you shine so bright. I love you so much I'm so proud of you. Keep singing. Don't let your mom's criticism bother you. She's doing the best she can. Love yourself because when you start loving yourself you start a romance that will last a lifetime.

Love always
Older you

MIRROR MIRROR IN MY HAND

My mirror said to me that my hair is getting long
My mirror said to me that I should sing a song
My mirror said to me that I look pretty today
My mirror said to me that I look pretty everyday
My mirror said to me I'm doing a great job too
My mirror told me what I'm supposed to do
My mirror said to me my hair is turning grey
My mirror said to me that I'm gonna have a good
day
Mirror mirror in my hand
Who is the cutest in the land
Me, of course because my heart is made of gold
My style is adorable and my personality is bold

SHADES OF GRAPHITE

You will find in human nature
There is no pure good nor pure evil
Even angels are not 100% pure
And devils are merely fallen angels
If angels have the potential to fall,
They are not everlastingly good
We were all born pure angelic babies
Parents try their hardest to protect a child's
innocence and virtue
But every child becomes gray
Some shades of gray are darker than others
You can smear the graphite to make the gray
darker or lighter
Your shade of gray is in your control
All decisions you make;
Every thought, every action, is gray
The rare ones shine a pretty silver
AG is the symbol of my love
He is silver and I am gray
The world we share is gray
For nothing is just black or white
Even the black and white movies,
Are made from different shades of gray that come
together on a silver screen

INNER BEAUTY

In the past I have struggled with my physical self-confidence.

I've always had trouble with my social and emotional self-confidence.

Once I renewed my spiritual self-confidence the other aspects improved.

Reading self-help books have helped me with understanding myself better.

When I practiced my listening skills, my social self-confidence improved.

I used to only talk about myself when talking to others, but I learned to be more interested in what others have to say rather than only relating what they say about myself.

I started enjoying learning about others and asking better questions. When I strengthened my relationship with God, my inner beauty shined outwards. Self-love was the key to my beauty. I learned that being beautiful is not just about looks, it is a vibration along with attitude and posture, how you carry yourself. Happiness is beautiful.

Happy people are more attractive than depressed people.

When you build your self-concept you start having respect for yourself and therefore you command respect from those around you.

To love yourself is to know yourself.

PINKY

Today I went grocery shopping at Trader Joe's
Something happened that inspired this prose
I bought a dozen eggs; they were expensive I
suppose.

When I arrived at home, I put my groceries away
I inspected the egg carton, and found to my
dismay an egg in the carton was moving around
To my pleasant discovery, I found
a chick was hatching; how can it be?
From an egg carton from Trader Joe's it surprised
me when the chick finally hatched, I heard chirping
sounds.

The chick was pink, its head was round.
What an adorable and fluffy discovery I found.
Then the pink baby chicken started talking.
It said I was lucky to find her.
The chick chirped a cute little song.
I chimed in and started singing along.
A singing and talking pink chick, oh my

I can't tell anyone about this, I might lie.
I have a new pet! I proclaimed.
Now I must give you a name.
I will name you Pinky, because you're pink.
You're a special little creature I think.

SWEET NOTHINGS

Your compliments mean nothing—
Sweet nothings
Your sweet nothings whispered in my ear
Give me your worries, do not fear
Your answer to the nothingness is here
I love the way you hold my hand
I love the ways you understand
You may not know the meanings of the universe
Or decipher the patterns of the stars
But the sweet nothings in those verses
Make me smile in delight
For sweet pea you are quite the sight
And I love gazing into your green eyes
Those eyes that could melt my insides
Those eyes that pierce into me
They see me for who I really am: beautiful
Your sweet nothings helped me see
The beauty in me
So therefore, I'd rather have
Your sweet nothings
Than nothing at all. And if I had to choose
Between you and a song. I'd write a song about
you. So I didn't have to choose at all

LIGHTHOUSE

My soul is courageous like a light house.
When I'm feeling lost, I can look within me and
find my way to my life's purpose.
The light in my light house is bright.
It leads me toward my true north.
The Holy Spirit inside of me is a light house that
guides me toward my path in life.
The light beam from the light
house gives me hope.
My heart belongs to the mysterious
and wavering sea. When I feel lost, I can close my
eyes and find
the light that emits from my soul and find my way
back to God.
God gives me courage, and his light will never be
extinguished.

IN MY REARVIEW MIRROR

In my rearview mirror I see a younger me
I see a girl with starry eyes
In her own world, head in the skies
She had trouble understanding her own mind
When I look back it's like pressing rewind
I see a girl with a big heart
She loves music, writing, and doing art
I want to hug her and tell her it's going to be
okay
That yesterday is gone, tomorrow is a new day
I want to tell her how much I love her
Besides God, I don't place anyone above her
I'm proud of the younger me I see
She's beautiful, creative, and free
She is still a part of me
I want to make her proud of me
I'm going to do so by being the best me
I love you, you silly girl
You are a diamond in this dark world

HOPE IS A BUTTERFLY

Hope is a butterfly
Starts out as a fragile caterpillar
Living in nature, scared to die
Sleeping in a cocoon, lonely and gray
In deep slumber, not knowing what day
What day the slumber ends
And when the transformation begins
Perfect chrysalis, knowing no sin
Hope is a butterfly
When finally released from its cocoon
Can't wait to open its wings to see the world soon
Delicate and beautiful, colorful and divine
Life is short, the span is fleeting in time
Butterflies bring good luck to the beholder
Before you know it, it's life is over
How magical and radiant, soaring high in the sky
My oh my, hope is a butterfly

GREEN EYES

Gazing into your green eyes
Makes my heart skip a beat
It's with you where my loyalty lies
I surrender, I accept my defeat
Call me a masochist darling
I'm a romance fiend
The desire to become yours
Makes me blue
I still love you when you're mean
Green eyes
Green eyes
You stole me, you've stolen my heart
You're hot and cold
You act so coy
Confusing emotions
Feelings I despise
For the cause of my joy
Is the root of my demise
Green eyes

You stole me, you've stolen my heart
You're hot and cold
You act so coy
Confusing emotions
Feelings I despise
For the cause of my joy
Is the root of my demise
Green eyes

LOVE LETTER TO THE MOON

Beautiful sphere in the sky
Your beauty makes me sigh
The tides follow your moonlit pull
Up in the clouds you rule
This is my love letter to the moon
I love watching you, listening to tunes
You remind the world of magic
When other lives seem tragic
My middle name means admirer of the moon
I hope to see you full and round soon
When a sliver crescent shines
Your beauty I can't describe in a rhyme
I love you moon you are true perfection
I look at you in quiet reflection
I share the same moon with the one I love
I know we see the same moon above
Pink moon, yellow moon, orange moon, red
Luna, I love to look at you, in my bed and in my
head

SILLY MILLY

My friends call me Milly
I'm a bit silly
I like to create my own words
Some may think that's absurd
I like to write rap songs
I think it's weird when sandals are called thongs
I like to write poetry that's silly
About a whale named Willy
I like to dance when nobody is watching me
I like to feel wild and free
My words are good
What would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck
could chuck wood
That's a cliché that's quite absurd
I like to play with words
I like to play with words
I don't care about the game "Simon says"
Who is Simon and why would I care what he says
This silly poem is now over so I'll take a silly bow
TTFN.. ta ta for now!

Today I saved a caterpillar from drowning,
It was caught in the spray of a sprinkler.
I lifted it gently and set it aside,
Its body was tiny, its spirit much simpler.

I saw that same caterpillar twice this week,
Each time I thought it was sweet and cute.
But later I found it crushed and gone,
Its life made silent, its song made mute.

Someone had purposefully squashed it,
Its poor guts smeared on the ground.
I felt devastated in my heart,
By the cruelty that I had found.

Someone stole its future flight,
Of being a radiant butterfly.
I burned with anger for the hand,
That chose to make it die.
Why did they kill the caterpillar?
It was harmless, soft, and small.

I wanted justice for that life,
That never got to live at all.

If I could face the one who did it,
I would give them quite a shout.
How can people be so cruel,
To snuff a tiny being out?

Rest in peace, my little friend,
I pray you fly in heaven high.
The butterfly you never were,
Still lingers in my eye.

But then I learned the hardest truth,
The culprit was Katie, my roommate.
She confessed with guilt and shame,
Her choice sealed the caterpillar's fate.

"What a terrible thing to do," I cried,
"To take away a life so new."
She had no excuse, no reason to give,
And yet I knew it was true.

I read my poem of grief aloud,
And she admitted with a sigh.
I asked again, she said once more,
Yes—I was the reason it had to die.

I told her that I forgave her,
Though hesitation held me still.
For she had taken her anger out
On a creature with no will.

Now I hope her conscience whispers,
And teaches her a lesson deep.
That every life, no matter how small,
Is a promise we must keep.

MY KIND OF BEAUTIFUL

My kind of beautiful is from the inside that reflects
outwards

Beauty, unlike the cliché saying,

Actually, is not in the eye of the beholder

There's a beauty in a woman getting older

Beauty is beautiful, even without someone
claiming it to be so

Therefore, beauty is not in the eyes of someone
else

it exists without proclamation of it

A rose is still beautiful without an admirer

If you say I'm not beautiful, I'd call you a liar

My kind of beautiful is when I'm happy or when I'm
sad

I'm a sensitive soul, I cry easily

There's beauty in sadness

There's beauty in hope and there's beauty in aging

I feel more beautiful now in my thirties

Thank I ever felt in my twenties

I'm more secure in who I am now

I've got a glow from the holy spirit
I've got the Jesus glow
When it comes to life and beauty, you reap what
you sow
Beauty is a forgotten book left unread on the shelf
The book is still beautiful, even when not
appreciated

MY MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

Many people would say my mental health condition is a curse.

I say my bipolar disorder is my superpower, a blessing in disguise. I call it my sad superpower. I'm a sensitive soul. I feel emotions deeper than the average person. I cry easily. I use my strong emotions and turn it into creativity. I unleash my emotions and create something beautiful, whether it's a song or a work of art, I'm always surprised by what I create. I love to interpret my feelings and point of view and create art out of thin air. I believe that the closest thing we have to the divine is artistic creation of

any kind. Humans need to be creative for survival
and every human
is an artist who interprets in their own way with
their own senses
and ideas. I love to be inspiration to any beholder
by creating art
through as many outlets that I can find. I like
putting labels on
myself because it helps me define myself through
words and
affirmations. I like to remind myself of my given
labels because
I want to entrain myself consciousness to love
myself and see the
beauty in myself so that I can reflect it back to
others and show
others what is beautiful within themselves. Crying
isn't a bad
thing crying relieves stress, helps you sleep better,
and releases
endorphins. I want to be a creative voice for
others struggling with
mental health and make a difference in the world.

HELLO GOD, CAN WE GO FOR COFFEE

Hi, God can we go for a coffee and talk about
how much I love
you and am grateful for you. You have blessed my
life in a
tremendous way. I wonder everyday how I can be
a good person
and how I can be more like you. I was gifted a
vintage key chain
from a nice man at church that says WWJD. I'm
excited to praise
you in worship by singing a song at church. Thank
you for protecting
me and watching over me and keeping me safe. I
would love for you
to bless me with a great sum of money, maybe 1
million dollars. I
would use it to go to a festival in August located
in Cleveland,
Ohio. I want to ask you to re-unite me with my
twin flame, Colson Baker

in August. I would love for you to bless our relationship and protect our love. I also would like for you to bless parents, lastly please beautify my singing voice. Also, please allow me to lose weight and become my most fit self. I love you so much. I will pay for our coffees. Thank you for everything. You are the best Heavenly Father ever.

Love,
Michelle Tran

POWER OF WORDS

Imagine a world without violence
Where protesters aren't silenced
Imagine a world where everyone is safe
Instead of feeling out of place
Imagine a world where no one goes to bed hungry
and cold
Where children in the world aren't sold
Sold to trafficking and danger
A world where you can trust a stranger
We need to stand up and be world changers
I want to leave this world leaving an impact
I want to manifest my destiny and attract
Attract positivity and start a movement
I want to help with the world's improvement
How can I do it alone?
I don't want to do it on my own
I want to inspire others because we are strong
together
We can build wings with many feathers
Use the power of words because words are spells

With my words I can create a heaven in this
current hell

Call me crazy for dreaming

Listen to my words while this is streaming

What can we do today to make a difference

Don't just stay quiet and be indifferent

The future depends on what you decide

Too many people have died

Or are fighting to survive

We need to raise our voices for change

Now.

Be the change you wanna see in the world

him again. I dream about him every single night.

I'm going to

prepare for this important day and pray things will
go just

right. I have no expectations, but I hope for him to
see me in the

crowd and recognize me.

IF I WON THE LOTTERY

If I won the lottery, I would put aside the right percentage to payment portion of taxes. After I deduct the taxes, the fun begins I would book a flight to Cleveland and a hotel for the month of August. Then I would go to Tiffany's and buy myself a pink diamond necklace. I would go to the Chanel store and buy three Chanel purses in red, black, and pink. I would then go to the salon and get a makeover. I would go to the mall and buy new make-up from Dior and other expensive brands. I would then go to a car dealership and buy a pink Bentley. Then I would buy a beautiful mansion with fountains,

Greek Sculptures, and an infinity pool, and a gym.
The next day I will
Go to Rodeo Drive and go on a designer shopping
spree. Then
I will throw a fairy princess themed party and invite
my friends to
my new mansion.

PUPPIES

Puppies are angels sent from heaven to bless the world
with pure joy and innocence. Puppies are adorable and
funny. They love you unconditionally. They get excited when
you come back home, after being gone for hours. They wag
their tails in excitement and give you doggie kisses. Puppies
will lick your tears when you are sad and crying and will
cuddle with you when you feel lonely. Puppies are the rare
glimpse of magic left in the world.

DREAM DRESS

I saw the most beautiful dress in the window of the couture shop when I was in Rome, Italy with my ex-boyfriend. The store was named Dolce & Gabbana. The dress was blush pink, with a corset on top and the bottom of the dress is made of tulle, a longe tulle skirt that went down to my ankles. My ex-boyfriend took a picture of me and the staff in the store let me wear a gold crown of blue, pink, and white flowers made of diamonds. I felt like a pretty princess. The dress cost \$8,000.00 dollars. I know that I couldn't afford it, but I really wanted to wear it to take pictures. I felt so beautiful, and I felt like royalty wearing the beautiful dress and crown I will always remember that day.

THE MAN GOD HAS FOR ME

The man God has for me is strong mentally and physically.

He is well disciplined in his day-to-day life. The man God has for me is attractive, yet he doesn't brag about it.

The man, God has for me is Christian and practices his faith

every day by building his relationship with Jesus.

The man God has for me is tall and muscular and he loves fitness

and being in nature. The man God has for me has a beautiful singing voice and he is creative and talented musically.

The man, God has for me is emotionally and mentally intelligent.

The man God has for me will love me for me and will be my

biggest supporter. The man God has for me is romantic

and he is a great listener as well as a great communicator.

I will wait with patience until I meet him, when God knows

I'm ready. I trust in God's timing and know that he will

protect and watch over our relationship. Until then, I will

work on myself so that I can mirror the traits of my soulmate.

Just how I'm excited to meet the man God has for me,

I know he is excited to meet me too.

AS I AGE

As I age, I've grown to be my own best friend. As I age, I've grown to enjoy my own company. When you fall in love with yourself, you begin a romance that lasts a lifetime. Nobody in the world will truly understand you, but if you start to look inward, you can learn to understand yourself your desires and dreams and your boundaries. As I age, I learned how to respect other people's boundaries, as well as expressing my own. I've practiced being a better listener. I realized that people love talking about themselves. When you listen and treat the other person as more interesting than you are,

you'll develop better friendships. I learned as I age that you only get opportunities that you are brave enough to ask for.

Also, failure and rejection is redirection. Failure is a negative

State of mind. Failure makes you a step closer to success.

Thomas Edison invented the light bulb. He went through a

Lot of trial and error and each failure led him closer and closer

To the right one, and finally he created his masterpiece.

Vincent Van Gogh said "when I catch myself saying, I am not

a painter I paint and then that voice goes away".

True North

In the ruin land of the new millennium, after the fall of the Elusive Empire, Adeline, a dreamy twenty-three-year-old daughter of a blacksmith and a peddler, finds herself singing in the halls of what's left of a destroyed emporium. Adeline sings a song that tells the love story of her ancestors. "Crimson lips, a gentle kiss, forbidden yet bestowed. My hushed lips they do not speak of my lover's hidden woes."

Adeline finds a delicate necklace hidden underneath a velvet chest. The necklace has a charm in the shape of a heart. When Adeline opens the charm locket, all the compliments that once belonged to the wearer of the necklace melodiously plays. This is a special enchanted necklace that holds the fanciful compliments that people give. When the necklace charm is open, the fragile heart locket sings of all the amazing qualities you have that others have noticed and thought of to compliment you with. Every wearer of the necklace holds different compliments, each song unique to the dear beholder.

This unique musical necklace is gold plated with a pearl drop accent on the heart. The compliments sing in repeat until you close the locket. The voice that sings sweet nothings in your ear is angelic, serene, and melodious like a siren. The effervescent compliments hypnotize a few into a fragile and quivering frenzy where they begin to have lucid dreams about their future ideal selves but when they awaken, they feel numb and lonely because they don't believe that the words are true.

The charmed locket reveals that Adeline is a kind gentle soul whose beauty is swan like. She is graceful and her chosen words are eloquent. Adeline is a belle that follows her True North. She blooms in the springtime along with the tulips when she dances in the fields of pink Gerbera daisies. Her figure glides through the snow in the winter in circles she pirouettes like an ethereal swan. The compliments in Adeline's locket are evanescent like her memories.

Adeline hides the dainty necklace in her bosom while she hurries back to her home. On the way home, she runs into danger. A penniless robber

attacks Adeline and holds a knife at her throat. "Give me all your valuable possessions!" screamed the filthy young robber. "I only have this necklace," replies Adeline. Adeline takes the necklace from her bosom and holds it out for the thief to grab. "What value is this necklace to me?" asks the thief. "It's made of gold for you to trade for food and it also sings," says Adeline. "It sings? Bah! You think I'm a fool to believe that the necklace sings!" yells the robber. "I'll prove it to you. Here open the necklace," says Adeline. The robber opens the heart shaped locket and hears nothing. No music plays. Just silence. "You lied to me!" yells the thief. He angrily throws back the necklace and disappears into the corridor. "Why did he throw it back? And why didn't music play?" Adeline wondered.

Adeline opened the heart locket and out sings a sea shanty that puts Adeline into a reverie. The song repeats and repeats. "That song sounds so familiar to me," thought Adeline.

To find out more about her new discovery, Adeline walks four miles to visit a psychic medium and asks about the mysterious heart locket necklace. Milana the psychic medium lives in a post war shelter that

is hidden under a cave. Milana hasn't gotten many visitors after the grueling war ended. The times have changed. Milana is a sixty-six-year-old woman who wears the lines of old age on her face and hands.

"I had a feeling I would be visited by you today," whispered Milana quietly as Adeline entered her humble home. "I have a story to tell you about your last life," Milana began. "You were a fair maiden whose porcelain skin and long flowy mermaid hair made you the princess of the village. You were graceful, beautiful, and talented at singing and dancing. You would sing the song "Crimson lips, a gentle kiss, forbidden yet bestowed. My hushed lips they do not speak of my lover's hidden woes." You sang this song every night underneath the moon because you knew that only under the starry night can you share the same moon with the one you love. And you had a soulmate. He was tall as the trees, golden like the sun, and his eyes were beautiful like the aquamarine. His Greek god body and Renaissance mind flirted with you, he made you blush. You couldn't help but fall in love with him. But he went away. His sailor heart belonged to the wavering sea. His heart longed for the muse in you but longed more for the freedom of the

mystical and mysterious waves. So, you waited for him. You waited for your sailor to return to the lighthouse, but he never returned.”

“Oh my,” says Adeline. “That’s the song that the locket sang yesterday. I’ve heard that song many times before in my dreams.”

“Let me tell you of your present. You have just crossed paths with your past soulmate. You ran into him yesterday. He tried to steal your heart, but he got scared and hastily returned it.”

“What?” Adeline sat there in shock. “The robber. He tried to steal my heart locket yesterday. He is...my soulmate?”

“Yes. Charming and mischievous, but he is a sailor who got shipwrecked during the war. He had no choice but to try to steal for food, but instead you were the one who robbed him of his heart.”

Norris Rucker

I am a young African American male who grew up in a dangerous parts south central of Los Angeles California. I was born on October 26 in the month of October. I am second to the longest of four children I am the only son in the family of four children I have three sisters all of which have children I am a uncle and as of this writing i have 5 nieces and two nephews. I attended Raymond elementary school Horace Mann middle school I attended Fairfax High School where I learned the talent of making instrumentals which I plan on making it a hobby unfortunately I was diagnosed with a mental illness which debilitating for me, but I manage and cope with using various methods. Growing up has two summer jobs and attended Los Angeles Community College where I studied IT courses along with few a required academic courses including psychology and economics, I plan on going back to school to study more computer classes with the hops of getting a cerficate in th field.

Mayhem

Looked up to see a helicopter
Bright as day's dawn and nothing could stop her
Mayhem here
Mayhem there
And tomorrow we see the next we pray
So we must prepare for this mayhem day

Speak silently creep up in all this chaos in this
crazy world seeking peace
Catastrophe mayhem be what have we done with
this tool we call a gun
mayhem cry mayhem oh mayhem die
What must we do to see a day without mayhem in
our way. We cry when mayhem comes about
Mayhem what's that story about
We group up to many when it comes about
Mayhem mayhem comes about
Know when it comes, we might see
torture don't be scared
If you do Satan might be near by
Looked up to see a helicopter but it said a cry
Mayhem! Mayhem! Mayhem!

Jennifer Afton Lee

Jennifer was born in Pasadena, CA and grew up in Arcadia with her parents and sister who is three years younger than her. Jennifer went to Temple City High School and to Azusa Pacific University where she earned a BA in Business with a minor in English. She enjoys walking, reading, writing, listening to and playing music.

I want to dedicate my writing to my family. We have been through so much, and they are such a support to me. I want to thank my sister, whose writing ability has always inspired me. I want to also dedicate my writing to all those living with a mental health condition. There is hope.

I REMOVED MY CLOUD OF DOUBT WHEN

I became a Christian again.

I was in a jail cell.

My roommate was gone to court for the day.

I paced back and forth in my cell thinking about God and reading my devotional. I decided that God was good and that I could talk to him. After that, I started praying and receiving answers.

This boosted my confidence in God, and I have been a Christian ever since.

A CUPID'S BOW AND ARROW

Humanity and love are like cupid's bow and arrow. Before cupid pulls back his bow and shoots the arrow of humanity and love into your heart, you take things for granted, like relationships with your family or friends.

You go around not realizing what other people mean to you.

Once cupid's arrow goes into your heart, your life is illuminated; you realize that you have the capacity to love others.

You are on fire with the love that lets you care about others and work hard to have meaningful relationships with them.

You see others with the light of your heart.

IF MY LIFE WAS A MOVIE

If my life was a movie, and it had a soundtrack to it, I know one song that would be included.

When I was going off to college, to live on campus, the summer beforehand, we were selling the house next door to us where my grandpa had lived for several years with care givers. He had passed away in January of that year, 2003.

He was one of my favorite people. Before the house was sold, in the summer, I spent some time in the house alone. I was sitting in the house by myself one night listening to music on the computer I had just bought for school. I listened to the song "This Side," by Nickel Creek. In my mind, "this side" meant this side of heaven. My grandpa was now on the other side. One lyric said, "I don't think I'm scared," and I thought of going to college and I felt like I wasn't scared, even though it was a big deal to go away. I felt close to my grandpa at that time.

THE FISH

I was sitting on the beach the other day then I got up to walk along the shore when I saw something orange flopping in the shallow water. It was a fish, and it said “hello!”

“I’m so glad to be on the shore and out of the deep water.”

I looked around but there was only the fish there, talking to me. “Can you help me buy a surfboard? I have always wanted to surf,” it said,

“Sure,” I said, “Let’s go to town and look inside some surf shops.” So, we did. The fish decided he was too small to surf on his own on the big surfboard. I had always wanted to learn to surf, too. So, I bought the surfboard, and we both signed up for surfing lessons together. Soon we were sharing the board, surfing like pros.

MY SHADOW

It was a calm day, nothing great, nothing unusual. As I walked down the street, I found myself longing for something outside the mundane. I was thinking about everything I needed to get done the rest of the day when suddenly I noticed my shadow was waving frantically to me.

I stopped and looked down, and as I stopped, a car whizzed by me, turning right at a hectic pace, not looking or pausing for a pedestrian. “Thank you,” I said to my shadow, “if I hadn’t stopped to look at you, I could have had a serious accident with that crazy car.”

The shadow motioned to me that she was glad to help. Then she signaled to me that I should stop inside a coffee shop coming up the path. It’s a good thing I did because I met a really nice man in there, and he became my boyfriend. My shadow doesn’t always communicate with me, but when she does, I always feel lucky.

MY MIRROR SAID TO ME

My mirror said to me
I wish I were thinner
I wish I were smarter

I looked in the mirror
and my mirror said to me
You are healthy
You try hard
You're the best you can be
Don't give up don't give in
You can do this you can win
Be yourself, do your best
Just take it from me

THE SUN GOES DARK WHEN THINGS GET GRIM

I wake up in the morning, feeling great. I get up and open the door. The sun shines brightly in through the door, casting bright lights over my room. The light in my mind is bright, rippling through my brain waves.

I feel invisible. As I go through my day things get complicated, obligations run through my mind, all the little nothings of my day get me into a stupor. I start to get discouraged.

The sun goes from yellow to brown, to gray. How can it be? I must remember what's important and not wallow in my sorrow.

The dark is not pleasant, but it allows me to think, in the thick gray mist, uninterrupted. What matters?

I need to think positive thoughts; I need to be a good person. The sun peaks out of the clouds, changing from gray to brown to red to yellow. I say a silent thank you to the sun, for caring about me, for letting me think.

For shining bright after all is said and done.

MY KIND OF BEAUTIFUL

There was a time when everything was gray and black. All my thoughts were ugly. Even my voices tried to help me think better thoughts. I was in a downward spiral.

Now I am 180 pounds, when I look in the mirror, I feel really big.

But my mind is beautiful. Because of the medicine, I don't hear the voices. But I don't need voices to try to help me think better thoughts because I already do.

My kind of beautiful is a positive paradigm of life that I can stand on. One that is solid.

My kind of beautiful is helping others and being kind to people.

Seeing my family and getting along with them.

My kind of beautiful is knowing there is meaning in life and acting accordingly.

I know I will always have this beauty in my life.

IF YOUR MENTAL ILLNESS WAS A HUMAN BEING, WHAT WOULD IT BE LIKE

If my mental illness was a person, I think it would be a little girl. She would be caring of me, because the voices I would hear were trying to help me be a better person, usually. She would be curious because my voices would comment on what I was doing and be interested in my life. One voice was one of my neighbors telling her husband what I wanted to do with my life.

My mental illness would be a capricious child, because my voices didn't care whether I wanted to hear them or not, they just kept talking. My mental illness had the innocence of a child because the voices would respond to me without being overly critical, they would just give their honest opinion of my life.

I couldn't accept my voices as a positive thing because I was paranoid at the time. But looking back on it, they had some positive attributes. I was severely depressed, and my voices were usually trying to help me.

My mental illness was honest and open like a child.

DEAR GOD, CAN WE GO FOR COFFEE AND TALK ABOUT

My future, I don't think so far in life I've met anyone that I might marry. Can you please tell me if I am ever going to get married and please tell me that I won't get divorced because I never want to get divorced.

Will I have kids? I'm almost past the years that I can have kids. Should I adopt, if I get married?

I also want to thank you for all the good things that have happened to me in my life.

Also, can you give me tips to be a better Christian? Is there really a heaven, and is there any chance I can go there? Will I see my loved ones again in heaven?

Thank you for your time.

MY CHILDHOOD PET

My childhood pet was a cat named Whisper. She was actually the second cat we got. My mom is allergic to cat and dog hair, but she really likes cats. She had to give the first cat away because she was allergic, but she really wanted to try again, with Whisper.

We decided Whisper would only live in the linoleum part of the house because apparently there would be more chance for fleas if she was on the carpet, or something like that. I'm not really sure. I was scared of Whisper; she would run really fast and claw onto my sister and my night gowns and hang from our night gowns. My sister wasn't scared of her at all. My mom gave me points every time I was around Whisper without being scared, to help me get over my phobia.

One night my mom had Whisper on her lap, and she was reading a book to her. My mom looked happy.

We eventually had to give Whisper away. My mom was too allergic. The last day we had her we spoiled her and gave her nice food. We took her to her new home. She was finally able to romp on the carpet in her new home, so we all felt happy for her.

THE FRAGRANCE OF LAVENDER MAKES ME THINK OF

My grandma. She loved the color purple. When she was born, her mom was in a hospital and they made her room purple, because supposedly it was calming for her when she was giving birth, so purple is the first color my grandma saw in life. My grandma's mom was a preacher; she was always gone from the home. My grandma made meals for her many siblings and her dad. She swore she would never marry a preacher.

Then in college she met my grandpa, who was going to be a chemist, but then he changed his mind and trained to be a preacher. They were missionaries in India for many years. India was where my dad was born. My grandpa helped build a hospital there and also trained Indian people to become preachers. Then they moved to America, and he was a pastor in Idaho and later in Pasadena, California.

My grandma was tall, thin, and always wore her hair in a bouffant bun. She told us that whenever she passed away, we saw a hummingbird to know that she was with us and looking down from heaven.

My grandpa recorded all his sermon on tapes so that he could send them to missionaries to listen to. This was a novel concept in the 70's. When my grandpa died, my grandma would listen to his tapes as she fell asleep at night. She told us, "He had such good things to say." She always prayed for all of her family; she was a great lady.

DISCONTINUOUS

The light dimmed. My mind cried out for help. I was hearing voices. I was seeing hallucinations. I couldn't distinguish between reality and my hallucinations. I craved the light of truth. What was real?

This situation led me to go to jail. I remember the man holding out the pink liquid solution, medication for me to take. He was so nice. Originally, I didn't want to take it. But he was so nice I couldn't say no. Instantly I felt the difference, my voices faded into obscurity and vanished. My hallucinations were gone. Light descended on me and order came back to my mind. I haven't looked back since.

My condition was discontinuous. My nightmare was finally over.

MY PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

Yesterday I was looking up Bible verses that I like and trying to memorize them. One of the verses is Proverbs 27:19, “As in water face reflects face, so a man’s heart reflects the man.”

In the International version the verse says, “As water reflects the face, so one’s life reflects the heart.” Although I think this interpretation isn’t quite as true to the original Hebrew text, I like the version because to me it represents the concept of karma or the golden rule. Even when I was going through my hard times with schizoaffective disorder, I still believe that if I have a good heart, my life will reflect the goodness in my heart, or vice versa.

Life is a magical thing, steering our actions so we improve ourselves and giving us experiences that we need in order to cultivate growth in our heart, so we become better and better people.

WHAT WAS YOUR FUNNIEST, WEIRDEST DREAM

My weirdest dream happened when I was in about third grade. My sister and I shared a room, and for a surprise my mom had bought matching pink comforters. Weren't supposed to see them yet, but I got in trouble, and my mom sent me to my room as punishment, where I saw my surprise, the new comforters. That was kind of funny.

Anyway, I had a lot of dreams that were very vivid. My weirdest dream was that I was attacked by dogs, and they kept biting me on my side. Finally, I woke up and realized I was having a cramp in my side, a spasm. That was what caused my dream. I still remember how relieved I was to wake up, and that I just had to wait until my cramp went away and then I was ok.

TAMING MYSELF

I am naturally selfish. Trying to correct it is like holding back a tidal wave, but it's worth it because when I overcome my feelings, I see the beauty of what is surrounding me. I feel a connection to God. I'm able to interact with others. I am in my own thoughts, but when I dull my inner voice and am still, the stillness around me is like a friend.

THE LOVE I HAVE FOR YOU

Mom

You and dad were the first people I ever saw, besides the doctor. I was so freaked out when I was first born, and you comforted me. I always felt safe when I was with you. You and dad were my first friends. Throughout my childhood, you always took me seriously, but you could be silly with me too. I wish I had been nicer to you when I was growing up. When I truly became a Christian in college, I could connect with you on that level.

Dad

You were my refuge when I was sad. You would be able to cheer me up. You helped me learn to go down the slide in the park. You would sing my sister and me to sleep at night. You helped us so much,

I wish you could have had more time to relax more after work, but I appreciate everything you do and did for us growing up. When I was little, I remember you were always cheerful. You had common sense solutions to our problems. In college, I could always talk to you, and you helped me with my school projects. You are an awesome dad. I'm glad I'm able to see that now.

OH, MY CAREFREE LIFE

Being carefree sounds tempting at first, but I do like praying for others who are going through struggles. If my life were completely carefree, I wouldn't be worried about others at all. I care about my parents who are getting older. I care about my sister and her husband and my nephew. I care about my friend who has cancer that keeps coming back. I care about my great aunt who just died, who reminded me of my grandma, and how that affects my mom. Care reminds us that we are a part of the human experience.

THE MOON INVITED A CALM IN ME

A full moon on a calm night in the summertime
sitting on a chair on the back porch.

Watching it glide across the sky, enjoying the cool
of the summer night.

Moonlight illuminating the tree, the patio, the roof
and the grass.

Remembering the events of the day, suddenly they
don't seem so big, looming so large.

Bathed in the moonlight they turn from present to
past.

Another day gone by.

IF ONLY

If only my grandma on my mom's side had lived a little longer, it would have been really great to get know her better. Even so, she always prayed to die peacefully, and one day in the early 80's she went to sleep on the couch, and she didn't wake up. My grandpa missed her very much.

She also prayed that I would remember her, she died when I was two. I didn't have any memories of her until one day in college when I was looking over old pictures, I came across a picture of just her feet on the ottoman by the couch. Suddenly I remembered her since the picture was just the perspective I would have had when I was two.

I remembered my mom always looking to her for guidance on how to raise me. I remembered her reading me bible stories. I remembered that I couldn't ever get away with anything with her. She

always knew if I was being bad. If only she had lived a little longer, she had a great sense of fashion, she would have dressed me fashionably. My mom was only 35 when my grandma died. If only my grandma lived a little longer, she would have been a big support to my mom. But I am lucky to have known my grandma when I did.

MUSIC

When I was in high school, I used to listen to a lot of oldies music. Music from the fifties and sixties. Junior high was a hard time for me, I was around a lot of people who were vulgar and obscene in my classes, and by the time I got to high school I liked the oldies because I felt like the lyrics were more wholesome and it transported me back to a simpler time in life, where life was happier and upbeat.

I would listen to K-Earth 101, back when it played actual oldies, before it started playing music from the 80's and 90's. Oldies music has a classic feel to it, it makes me feel calm, inspired and restful. It also makes me feel connected to my parents because it is the music they grew up with. I especially like the Beach Boys.

Music has the capacity to transport us to a different place in our mind, rearranging our emotions so that we are ready to face what comes our way in life.

A WALK THROUGH NATURE

In Monterey, there is a nature walk right by the ocean. It consists of the natural plants that would exist by the water, if the environment weren't built up with homes and hotels. There are brush and bushes; it is very beautiful. There is a little wooden path that goes through it, and you can see the ocean from the path.

I would go to Monterey every year when I was a kid growing up. The last time I was there was when my sister got married, about ten years ago. She wanted to get married on the beach in Monterey. I remember walking the nature walk alone the day after her wedding; my parents had stayed one more night in Monterey and it was a very peaceful and happy time, knowing the wedding went well and reflecting on life and time going by.

RESURRECTING A SILENCED VOICE

When I was young, I had a very strong conscience. My mom taught me to have this. She taught me about the bible and about God. She didn't just let the teachers at the children's church teach me about it. She was a good teacher. She taught grade school for ten years before she had her kids. I had to approve every little thing I did with my conscience.

As I aged especially when I started college, I started to lose the voice of my conscience a little bit. I went to a Christian college, but a lot of the students didn't really act like Christians, at least, my conscience wouldn't approve of some of the things they did. My conscience just got quieter and quieter as I aged. But after I got symptoms of schizoaffective disorder and went through all I went through to get to Founders, I felt like I got a new lease on life. I am resurrecting the silenced voice of my conscience. This has led me to have a better life and be closer to God. It is hard every day to do it, but it is worth it.

MY DIVINE LIGHT

My divine light shines bright within. It has always been there, even before I was born. My divine light is seen by others and leads me to others whose own light within shines and helps to lead me on the right path.

Bible teachers at Calvary Chapel help keep my light kindled and keep me on the right track. Sometimes I can sense what to do and my divine light keeps me going in the right direction. It illuminates my path and shows me where to go.

I GLIDE OFF A MOUNTAIN

Before, I was in a valley. I had many things working against me.

But now I am on a mountain. I am going to glide off the mountain.

I have goals for myself, and I also have places in the world I would like to see.

I would glide off the mountain and land in England, the home of some of my ancestors. I would look at different landmarks and places that different English writers lived and wrote about.

I would glide off the mountain and land in India and visit the place my dad lived in until he was ten. I would visit the boarding school he attended. I would glide off the mountain and land in Israel and visit places that are sacred to Jewish people as well as places that Jesus lived and visited.

MY TRUE SELF

When I make good decisions, it leads me to becoming my true self. God created me to be a certain way. When I live that way, I discover my true self, interacting with others shows me what I want to be and what I don't want to be. I look to others as examples of how I want to act. My struggles help me to be a better person because I try hard to overcome them.

MY SOUL

My soul has no beginning and no end. My soul knows right from wrong. My soul is not part of my body; it is an aura around my body that other people can recognize. My soul is my true self. My experiences shape my soul but do not truly change it. My soul communes with God. It yearns to be more holy to do good here on earth. My soul is connected with others and wants the best for them. My soul is fashioned by the divine; it is beautiful and free.

I"VE GOT JUST ENOUGH TIME TO

Have my family remember me as a good person. Before I was on my medication, I used to yell at my parents and my sister all the time. I was always in a bad mood. Now I have a good relationship with them. I get my nephew presents on Christmas, his birthday, and summer. I try to always be respectful to them. I am very lucky to have them in my life.

Priscilla Rena Torres

My name is Priscilla Torres (pros) My family nickname. I was born into this world at Kaiser Permanente to a handsome Mother and Father Theresa and Gilbert Torres. I had a wonderful childhood. Growing p I had everything a child could want. I even had a brother. As time went by, I was in Jr High on the swim team. My life was great until some girls started bullying me. My mom was always there for me. The bullies stopped. I made it to high school where I was on the drum line and doing well, then my father who we all new was sick, passed away at 40 when I was 15. My life since then has been a struggle. I became very rebellious. Life is strange it can turn on you in a second all I have to say is to be strong and if I can do it you can.

Dedication

This poetry is dedicated to the ones I love, my mother Theresa and my father Gilbert.

I'll spread my wings into the sky to live this new
life Without anger and spite
Reaching the tallest tree
To see the beauty below
I know exactly where I want to go
Free Free Free
It's the most beautiful life I've come to see

My first bike was a four wheel, driving down the street and it was pink. As the years went by, I no longer wanted four wheels. I was ready to be an adult, so my parents got me an awesome beach cruiser. Riding like I was the coolest ever. Well, I ran right into the neighbor's car I was so embarrassed I left the bike in the street and ran to my room.

I remember I must have been about seven when something special would happen that day. We were going to watch the Challenger take off. I was so happy we all were there. The saddest thing happened. Then the space shuttle exploded, and we all started screaming. I'll never forget it.

MY TRUE SELF

I look in the mirror and all I see is a sad individual.

Looking to find me but it won't for I'm a clown
Changing my face everyday

I'VE GOT JUST ENOUGH TIME TO

I've got just enough time to soften my heart and see beauty in people and the world; to be kind each day the way God wants me to be

AS I AGE

As I age, I see my mother in the mirror
My hands can't be any more clear
My laughter is a bittersweet echo
I'm aging gracefully
Something I got from her as well
My mother sweet mother
I still grieve each day, but I'll be ok
I have the strength you gave me
Thank you for being in the sun
And in the breeze
And everything I see

Khoung Nguyen

MY SOUL

My soul is bound with me until death.

My soul gives me strength to live after death.

My soul bound with my God to live forever.

MY TRUE SELF

My true self is a passionate person who loves the world I live in. And the happiness of life has brought to me.

My true self likes to discover the purpose of my life in this world.

MY MIRROR SAID TO ME

I saw the Star Trek T.V. series
Mirror science fiction
I saw William Shatner 93 years old
Star Trek the Next Generation in 1982
1994 George H. Takei as Captain Sulu
I saw Kent Nancy (Takenaga) Keen
Holly Bible, I love Jesus
How are you?
I saw Jeanie (Takenaga) Takakai
A schoolteacher OK I'll cloud a Japanese, Chinese

AS I AGE

As I age, I replace the stamp of approval with a seal of Justice. Giving me an all access pass to that which is never forgotten. A lesson in expression. A serial in investment is an endeavor Stumbling blocks all the way up until you reach the crown of the mountain. Take my time all the way down, rested I will prevail. It's still a journey.

Chris Ritch

I was born in Whittier, CA. My first sports were roller hockey and baseball. It was fun, and gradually I would get into skateboarding and surfing more. My life has been so much fun. I sang the national anthem one time for an Angel game. I finished high school and went to college I graduated and earned an associate degree in radiation technology.

I dedicate my poetry to my best friend Chad.

I REMOVED MY CLOUD OF DOUBT

I came from a spiritual background. Every day I miss problems I have to face. I go to church on Sundays.

My pastor supports me. My family loves me. I cherish my bible. It's amazing how Jesus is in my life.

Remembering God!

IF I SENT MYSELF BACK IN TIME

If I sent myself back in time I would go back to a certain date where I got one of the best waves of my life. I got a 3 second barrel. That same day I also got a free skateboard with cool grip tape. It was a gift to myself I had it all together, put the parts and the time in to make it nice.

When I was in 5th grade, I was very independent. I had a broken leg, it taught me how to do things on my own. I had to learn how to walk. I learned how to tie my shoes in kindergarten.

I ONCE IMAGINED THAT I WOULD BECOME

I once imagined that I would become a firefighter or paramedic. I had dreams of working in the position. Growing up as a child my family had many friends that were part of these prestigious job areas. One of my dad's buddies was a firefighter and he went on a ride along and stayed overnight at the station. My dream was cut short due to a deformity of my leg. I was feeling pain in this area during the tryouts, and I gave up. I'm sure I would have been a great firefighter.

HEY GOD, CAN WE GO FOR COFFEE AND TALK ABOUT

Hi God, can we go for coffee and talk about anything. Hey, can you pay for a cranberry scone today? Can we get coffee bean? Can you give me the winning lottery numbers? ABC for all the times I have failed you, you were all about me, and to not go to the carwash to catch me at work. It was only \$5 dollars for one pack of cigarettes from a friend. I didn't have many friends at that time, but I won't give you anything just my love. I have learned a lot about my surroundings to make sure it is not a bad thing just times I had by myself to be cool around some of my friends at that time. I bought a donut and chocolate milk just to say goodbye. My many clouds have rained supreme queen of the jungle. I would work really hard to not spill the coffee.

My real friends call me Ryan my real name is Chris. I grew up in La Habra moved to Laguna Niguel when I was 9 or 10. My family moved because they didn't want me to join a gang or be a drug dealer. Everything good in my life went up because I found this new and exciting way to live. It wasn't music festivals every day. I had lots of fun when we joined the lifeguards and played with new friends. After high school I joined the coast guards but could not complete basic training so I came home it wouldn't be a big deal just every day seeing my eyes open wide and full of life. I got a speeding ticket and almost lost my life. I would like to model my misfortunes of real-life experiences to show my mother and father what I could do, that is what if put forth with me and my best friend.

I HAVE JUST ENOUGH TIME TO

Visit Catalina Island for the 3rd time. I would go swimming and golf cart riding.

ON THE SUBWAY AT MIDNIGHT

I would use it as a drum and be proud of my sounds. And maybe start a song with another passenger.

IF I WON THE LOTTERY

I would buy a very nice boat with skis and a wakeboard. A nice stereo system.

MY OBSCURE SIDE

My obscure side would hang out at a friend's house and play football on his gaming controller. His dad smoked cigarettes so he would get some and we would do that all night.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU DID SOMETHING FOR YOURSELF

I went to the beach that has grassy slopes, and me and my friends would go sledding, it's a lot of fun. It was a very fun time, at the end of sledding and going down the slopes, our clothes were wet and shoes had grass all over them.

THE SUN GOES DARK WHEN THINGS GET GRIM

There is a death in the family A family member isn't doing well You break a leg or arm The waves are flat There is no sunlight only dark or light There are challenges when there is dark People's mood is bad Things aren't going well

I REMOVED MY CLOUD OF DOUBT

When I had a big jolt of self-confidence. I had an awesome gift when I was growing up and had an awakening. My leg was crooked, and I needed surgery to fix myself. I was so nice to find a doctor and I had corrective surgery. It changed my life. I got the surgery and was complete. I broke my leg surfing in some big waves. It helped me to feel a different way when I see people with disabilities. I was very confident my leg was straight. I was very happy.

UNBLEMISHED

I came into this world blemished because I was in a sack and that broke, I breathed air that was not fun from my mother. I also was able to see with my eyes the world.

FRACTURED

I am fractured in many ways. Figuratively and not. I would get arrested for stealing things from stores and getting into fights with my roommates. I am learning to be an unfractured person by ways of my thinking and feeling.

WISDOM & KNOWLEDGE

The light in me is bright
And filled my soul
With knowledge and light
Knowledge can be found in you
Once it is needed if you place it in you
Wisdom is like your body and soul
Growing with help for others
Knowledge is the one apple
Ripening it gets better after some time
I am knowledgeable then I was
When I was younger

MY PERFECT DAY

My perfect day I would like to surf all day
long be in the lineup with all my friends. A
good day of catching waves at the beach.

MY MIRROR SAID TO ME

It said to me that you will have a good day.

You will give your friends money and gifts. It said you are a handsome man, and it is time you got paid well for your works.

It also said you have been working

very hard and I should take a break from work

for a while and may you spend time with

family.

CONSCIENCE

My soul lives in my heart, it is the only thing that goes to heaven when I die. I know that my soul is with my friends. I know that my friend will remember me by the way I surfed. Our style is the part, the way I go down the wave we always remember the way we go down the wave. I think that is the way my soul will be remembered. I can remember the waves I caught by closing my eyes I can see the waves I caught. I think that will always be with me. I pray that this will stay with me throughout my life. I think it will serve the greater good. Prosperity and growth are in my future. Music soothes my soul.

MY TRUE SELF

My true self stays with me; in trying to be it, it is a work in progress. Everybody loves my true self.

Albert Garcia

I was born in Abilene, Texas and came to California as a child with my family. We lived in Lakewood, and I attended Killingsworth Junior High school in Los Angeles and graduated from Artesia High school in 1978. After high school I began working with Way out Ministries – Kids Corner and new Hearts Bible study. I also worked at Peter C. David pipeline as a supervisor and I was there nine years. I then went to Pro Tires and Wheels, and I have been here for seven years. I have been at founders for 15 years and I enjoy founders.

LIFE IN THE INDIAN POW-WOW

I was invited to go to an Indian Pow-Wow in Hawaiian Gardens, then got to spend the night at Fetty Med Junior High.

then I got up and was asked if I would like to go to breakfast.

Usually in the Pow-Wow's there is a fire circle and you can offer up your own personal sacrifice and let it burn.

We have two different types of Indian dancing, you respect Mother earth and remove your hats to show respect to the Indian tribe.

We had all different sorts of booths where you can buy souvenirs.

I got to dance with an Apache girl and I really loved her; this was the highlight of my night.

LIFE IN VICTORY OUTREACH

It was a beautiful sight stepping into Victory Outreach.

I felt empty and alone.

I met someone and he introduced me to a Pastor.

the Pastor is spiritual and is a big help to me.

I didn't have a Bible he generously gave me one.

I looked up different scriptures like John 3:16

Reading the Bible boosted my spirit.

All of a sudden,

I realized Jesus was the only way out! Gradually,

I felt uplifted.

Now i can always depend on my Pastors and leaders of the church.

Life in the Desert

Living in the desert can be fun. I remember when my mom and my dad used to go out to the desert on the weekends. My friend she was very nice. One time she took us to Fort Irwin in Bakersfield. My mom would pick up rocks to paint them. the nearest town is about a mile away. So, I got out of my AtC-110 went to the grocery store KoA. I remember what we also did in the desert was to “moonlight. “Moonlighting” is when we would go to the cemetery and fill up barrels with water. When i was staying in Lakewood, we met this guy out in the desert, and he would show us the property that me and my dad had. Me and my brother went out to owl Canyon and to our surprise, we could see big eagle eggs. I tried to make it up the hill to where my brother was but my hands were too slippery. She took us to Calico Days up on the mountains. I remember I only had \$140.00 in cash for my vacation, and then this lady came up to me and she asked me “can you take a picture of my family?” I took the picture and in turn she bought me a large Pepsi from the Calico saloon.

Isaias Sepulveda

I was born on January 9, 2001, in Carson City, Nevada, and raised in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles. Isaias Sepulveda is a creator whose work is shaped by a lifelong connection to both visual and written art. His natural aptitude for language and expression was evident early on through his placement in AP and advanced English courses—skills that, alongside mathematics, earned him a full-ride scholarship to California State University, Northridge. At CSUN, Isaias spent three years studying Graphic Design, deeply engaging with the balance of structure and visual storytelling. While his academic journey is currently paused, he plans to return to higher education to complete his degree or pivot into psychology, driven by a desire to understand human depth and connection. As a writer and artist, Isaias is defined by resilience and a natural ability to adapt to any environment. Guided by a core purpose to make others feel respected, valued, and happy, his contribution to this collection reflects a blend of sharp intellect, deep empathy, and a distinct artistic vision.

I would like to dedicate this to everyone who hasn't given up on me despite my hard comings as well as everyone who believes in the parts of me that I sometimes fail to believe in myself. Those are the ones who have supported me no matter one

BAGGAGE

On most days, I carry some things that mean
something to me
In my backpack I carry,
My school utensils, such as paper and pencils,
My sketchbook, to express my imaginative mind,
My keys, to go home and now I am safe
On the outside I carry,
A smile to show that I am happy,
Supposed nice eyes to few a people
My rosary so I feel safe
And my hair so I have a certain look

All days, I carry a lot on the inside
In my head I carry,
A positive mindset for a successful future,
A kind nature to keep my friends,
Hope for my family just to be hopeful,
Lessons from the past to never make the same
mistakes,
A time when my family was all together,
Thanksgiving and Christmas with all of my siblings,
My pet cat,
And love for some people no matter what they do
to me My baggage is light,
But my conscience is heavy.

THALASSOPHOBIA

I've been drowning
Hard to let go of ya
Thoughts of you in my mind towering, tall like Yao
Ming
An ocean of emotion, I formed thalassophobia

It seems to me, based off what I see
Is you tryna move on, in hopes to replace me
See, I see a sea of water, which I see you can't
see
Can't see your loves like the tides of the sea
You allow me to get my feet wet, just as does the
sea, you drag away from me

But that tide eventually comes back
My feet weren't all I wanted the ocean to wet
Then you right after, drenching me from my feet
to my knees
Then you go away, returning with your tendencies
to rage
I'm unsure if you'll be back the same
as a small or a giant wave
Wet from feet, knees, up to my back

Our love is like the ocean
Guess the reason behind all the pushing of pulling
Drowning in unbearable emotion
Unable to see your hand pulling
In to pull me out

Hear me out
How would you feel if I said, "I fear the sea before
I'd fear space"
In the sea, you see, we all tend to drown
Space, if only there was air, would I'd be able to
get away
You were the air in my lungs
You were my first & last one
We'd be in space together, on the dark side of the
moon
But I hope you know, I'd never regret 24, on the
month June
God knew what to do when he let me meet &
have you

MOM

As life goes on
and the past is far gone long
It took me years to grasp that you
just like I
are only human
Time goes on and I realize
what I love about you being my mom

I came across an old poem
With words I know you'd love to know

I was born into this world, unaware of this world
You held me in your arms, and from there I
became a huge part of your world
As a single mother, you were always so strong
I would sit in the backseat and jam out to your
songs

You put me on to the classics, to the oldies and
trap classical
You looked so gorgeous with your curly hair and
brown sunglasses
I would draw on the walls, but you believed in my
passion

Look at me now, going to college to take art
classes

You taught me right from wrong and to be
respectful

I know I didn't oblige, I'm sorry for being a handful
Money was an issue, but you always tried to make
things happen

To make sure my brothers, sisters, and I were all
happy

We were your world, but now you're in a whole
other world

You left us in this world and it's an apocalypse
And you escaped from it all, livin on your rocket
ship

I've said some things that I wish I've never said
Cause only lord knows when we all gonna be dead
I guess I don't understand cause it doesn't make
sense

But I gotta sit back and look thru a wide angled
lens

Maybe I don't understand what it takes to be a
woman

Cause my entire life I've seen you as a strong
woman

But even the strongest people have their limit
right?

When I see old images, I might cry
And sometimes I wish my mom was there to hold
me tight

To tell me

"Everything is gonna be alright"

"I'm always gonna be here and I'm never gonna
leave your side"

But now I can't even look you in your eyes
Cause the woman that I once knew before isn't the
same in my eyes

The woman who loved others unconditionally

The woman who put up with my difficulty

The woman who would at times not feel loved,
managed to still let us that she holds

unconditional love

The woman who was there since the sonograms

The woman who loved me for who I am

The woman who managed to sculpt a boy as an
unapologetic man

I am part of the man that I am today because of
you

And I don't say it enough, but I love you
You may be up somewhere else in the stars
But you'll always be in my heart
Always be my mom, always be a strong woman
Things have drastically changed
But my love for you, will remain the same

Some years later
I revisited this precious piece
You chose to still always be my mom
remained to be a strong woman
You made that change you knew you had to
gave the family and I, a great sense of relief
Ironically enough
I did what you did what I'd say i never wouldn't
and inspired me to do
what I could do even when thinking I never
couldn't

I had to feel the high
and for the pain it comes with to understand
What you did wasn't all you
it was the help of a demonic disease
leading you by the hand
But it's also clear for me to see
The strength that made you kill it
is a strength I inherited from you

Sheri Gray

I was born in Deland, Florida with my family. I went to elementary school and bible school. I learned a lot, and we had lots of toys. I like to ride my bike and play on my swing set. We lived in Florida for 6 years then my dad got a better job in Huntsville, Alabama. We bought a really nice home in a cool neighborhood. I made a lot of friends and started to play baseball. My Dad was the coach, and we played every day. We were so good I made the all-star team. We traveled a lot. I had a good throw, and I knew how to catch the ball really well. I played other sports. I also liked to swim and play basketball. I was on the junior Olympics team. I knew how to jump and aim the ball good. Me and my friends liked to cheerlead too. We danced a lot. I had a fun life.

I dedicate my poetry to Christina one of my close friends. She was a dear friend to me. We were having fun writing to one another. We like to throw a party or two. I love to drink a beer, and we would get a basket ready of good food. We liked to ride motorcycles daily. I like to barbecue lots of steaks, and we have desserts. I make a lot of friends that play music. We like to dedicate music too. They play an instrument. Also, we liked to work on cars and bicycles. They have a car wash, and it was really fun helping. She's a nice person and we like to help people. We play dress up with a waitress dress show. We are into fashion. I'd love to stay together. Me and my children come first. I make dedications and Christina is supportive of them.

MY FIRST BICYCLE

I got a bike for Christmas. I was so excited to unwrap gifts and sit on the bike. It was a little big for me, but I felt it would be perfect to ride. I took it to the road that had a hill first. My first experience I held on tight to the handlebars and caught some speed it was kind of fun but scary. I got to the bottom of the hill and thought I can't believe it's my first bike ride. I was so amazed. After that I learned to balance the bike and rode it all over the neighborhood. I look forward to getting another bicycle. They were so exciting. My bike was like no other, I got my children a bike for Christmas.

MY SOUL

My soul is full of questions that I can learn from
I have lots of kind thoughts
I think of fun opportunities to better myself
My mind is full of music and rhythm
I'm a good mother
So, I think of ways to compliment my children
I fill my heart with gladness
My soul is full of grace
And faith of God
I love to help others

MY TRUE SELF

My true self is full of happiness
I like to work hard on activities.
I like to work hard on a job I find.
I'm into fashion and jewelry.
I love children and I'd give them what
they wanted if I could.
I was in love for many years so I'm very romantic.
I love to go to the beach and watch the waves
come in.
I love a candlelight dinner.
I'd have lots of fun boating

A LETTER TO MY YOUNGER SELF

When I was nineteen, I was graduating from high school.

This was such a wonderful time for me. I also was a model

for Fresno California. We took really good pictures.

I got pregnant with my son Austin. I was so excited. This whole year

was just the greatest time of my life. I got my own place to live.

It was a two bedroom with a huge backyard. We painted our house and decorated the kitchen. We had a dog and a cat.

I liked to ride on the motorcycle. I wish to stay involved with fashion

modeling or sales. I like retail and a lot. Having a baby at nineteen

was such a blast. He is so adorable and special.

I was walking past a bunch of stores. I think
there's a hidden shadow
but it's up ahead so I ran past in a hurry.
I was supposing it would follow
so, it wanted my umbrella. The rain clouds rolled
in and we had puddles
of mud to play in instead of a shadow.
We saw a rainbow, and I assumed it was a real
shadow at the end so I
followed it for a treasure. I found gold. I have
feelings for you my
friend I said.
I look to the sky and see purple colors floating by.
This is a magical place for us in the mountains. I
saw this bird in the sky
It stood for freedom. We shared a kiss as it
started to shine down
rays of light.
We shared something special to remember.
The bird chirped and it landed next to the car.
We were so amazed the bird followed us.

I REMOVED MY CLOUD OF DOUBT WHEN

I was a child and moved to California. I had a new home to move into. I was sad because I lost my friends. I cared about them very much.

I knew better though that we could meet new people and start over. I started to join a book club at my new school. We went to a couple of parties, and they were all nice people. We've been friends ever since.

I remember a good experience in first grade. I went to Weatherly School in Huntsville, Alabama. It was a very pretty place to live. I remember my teacher Mrs. Parrott. She was very smart she liked me a lot. I found a boyfriend Jason James in my class. We played on the playground together. I kissed him. We held hands. He walked me home from school and held my books. I had fun playing games with him. I was in the Girl Scouts. I also went to the YMCA. I liked to swim on the swim team. I had a fun year. I learned how to read better. We went on a field trip together.

A PERFECT DAY

A perfect day would be at the ocean. We could start with a sunrise breakfast. We could overlook the water on a patio filled with flowers.

After that we could do some window shopping and look at antiques.

I like to rest by laying out in the sun on a beach chair and look for seashells.

I like to drink a pina colada and snack on chips and crackers. We could listen to music on our boom box. When the sunsets we could go have steak and lobster and walk the pier. This is a fun filled day. I love to ride bikes or go skating. I'd love to spend time with my family.

A CHILDHOOD PET

I got a pet when I was nineteen years old.

He was a puppy named Axel. He had white spots on his feet and was all black.

I thought he was so adorable. I like all the hugs and kisses.

We took him to run on the night school track. We lived across the street, so we went there often. We chased him and played fetch. It was good exercise.

He liked bones and was digging holes a lot.

As he got older, he learned all the tricks and he learned to swim. This dog was so special to me.

My children loved him.

We liked to take a photo.

The lighthouse brings out courage through the
light of my soul that's dim, and as it gets
brighter, you're moving into a brighter space
and not so fearful of being in the dark
"I'm liberated" "I'm free". I could sail the entire
ocean waves.

I stand for hope, peace and courage
I like that there's a special place to go.
The lighthouse brings out the best as it gets
brighter.

I feel free.

My perfect moment was having my son born. I was so excited about the baby gifts. The moment of labor and pushing him out to my boyfriend was a real special time. The baby was perfect, and we named him Austin Russell Sherrell. He has an amazing picture. We played with some toys. He has a beautiful smile. He has a tall body and strong mind; he is a precious moment. I love him very much. We like to cuddle and we'll get together soon. I like my sons laugh and personality. We like to listen to music and draw a picture. I want to keep his perfect moment in my memory forever. His heart is precious his eyes are as blue as the sky. They are so pretty. I love to hold you.

My favorite place is Main Street in Visalia, Ca. They have so many things to choose from. My favorite is the ice cream shop. I like mint chocolate chip and Oreo's sundaes We like the fashion shops. They have many boutiques. We like to try on clothes. They have bars where you can get a variety of beers. Some play live music. We have lots of fun dancing. Then there's the restaurants they have streak and seafood. It tastes good. I hope to go back to visit soon. I'd love to make some homemade ice cream. This is my favorite.

The sun goes dark when things are grim
The sun shines down rays of light at sundown
The sunset is full of dark colors
I see clouds floating by and they turn to rain
I hear thunder and see lightning
We get caught in the rain
And its really dark outside
“Lucky” I brought an umbrella to stay dry
We splashed in the puddles
Me and my children played in the rain
And the sky was purple
I like to light a candle in the dark
Because it stands for peace
I love the moonlight shinning down
When the sun goes dark and things are grim

HELPLESS AGAINST TIME

I'm going to be older this year
I imagine things will be different
My body will feel not as strong
I think positive thoughts
And plan to exercise more
I'd like to sleep more and eat healthy
I like to go to a fancy restaurant
And a nice shopping center for clothes
I'd like to go on walks daily
Because this makes you feel younger
I hope time doesn't go by fast
My body feels helpless turning 50 this year
I feel happy and my kids make me laugh
Time goes by but I can look ahead
With faith and good thoughts and memories

IF MENTAL ILLNESS WAS A PERSON

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO IT

Please don't bother me
Please don't harass me
Please don't rush me
I like it peaceful
I like it without voices
Don't give me a headache
Don't give me anxiety
Don't give me madness
Please make me happy
Please give me joy
Please believe in hope
Please let me be

HI GOD, CAN WE GO FOR COFFEE

Hi God, can we go for coffee and talk about all
the memories

we've shared

I love growing up with my children

I'm so thankful for all the things you've given me

I'd love to go to a coffee shop and talk

I'm thankful for all the places we lived

I have a gift to give you when we get together

WITH MY PEN

With my pen I can be a creative person
I like to color with different gel pens
I like to write a poem
I scribble and draw a picture often
I like artwork
Me and my children like to write each other
I like the black ink pen

I HAVE JUST ENOUGH TIME TO

I have just enough time to go on vacation
We're going to Florida to Disney World
I was making time by saving enough money and
Taking time off work
We plan on staying a whole week
We're going to have so much fun
The roller coaster will be exciting to go on
The food is really good
Me and my children will stay at the resort

I like the fragrance lavender
It makes me think of the heavenly gardens
I love scented flowers and different spices
I like the vases pottery oils and designs
I think the footsteps would be nice to place
In the pathway leading into the garden
Potting miracle grow and planting roses are special
I handed my children flowers
I like vines and pine smell
We could make a tunnel of plants with lighting
I also like a fountain waterfall
Where we could stop and enjoy the love we share
This would be so heavenly
The fragrance of lavender would fulfill your senses
I love to use perfume

THIS IS MY PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

I want to be kind and share with people. I want to be respectful.

I want to help the homeless, giving to people is important to me.

I want to be a good human being and be nice to others.

We could repair this world. I could help people. Seen as a good human being.

This is my philosophy, I want to be a kind and sharing person. I think being respectful is nice.

I want to help the homeless and

Be giving to people. I want to be a good human being and be nice to others.

I want to repair this world by cleaning up the roadways and recycling. I could help other people.

I'd like to be seen as a good human being

MY FIRST CAR

I loved getting my first car.
I was so excited that day
It was a gold Chevy Malibu
I really liked the engine and the interior
We drove it to the lake and it was in the Sequoia
Mountains
It was a beautiful place to go
We liked to wash our car
And we had special sponges with soaps
I had a nice stereo with loudspeakers
This car was fast and so cool
I ended up selling the car for \$500.00 dollars

A TIME I FACED MY FEAR

I faced my fear of being homeless
I was in a small town in the valley so there wasn't
much I could
find as far as housing. I ended up staying
downtown where the
bars were trying to find a roommate. There were
fun things to do
but I was getting fearful when it reached about 2
am.

A couple days went by and luckily I knew a lot of
people and
My friend came along and loaned me some money.
My mom
moved in with some people that were welcoming. I
don't know
what I would have done.
God was watching over me.

AS A DOLPHIN

I like to swim as a dolphin
We have people swim fast
They swim next to the dolphins
They hold on to their fins, and they carry you
We like Fiji and the scenery it is so breathtaking
They've seen lots of fish
The sky was beautiful
All the different colors of the ocean was pretty too
Being a dolphin would be so much fun

IF ONLY

If only I could go back in time
I would have saved all my money and bought a
house
I want a house so I could live with my children
There are lots of houses in Visalia that I could
afford
I would also worked two jobs
I like the job working with computers
A job with business and administration
My life would be so much better
I could buy the things I've always wanted
I definitely would of bought a new car
A wardrobe, furniture and toys
If only I would have listened or tried harder
Things would have been wished coming true
I have new goals now, so anything is possible

OH MY CAREFREE LIFE

I don't worry anymore. I have no responsibilities.
I don't have to cook breakfast in the morning.
I won't have to take my medication either. The dog
likes
to go for a walk early too. What do you think? is
it fun to skip?
I think we could not do laundry or clean the
house.
I could maybe do my hair on a different day. I like
to do makeup.
What kind of makeup do you like? We could detail
the cars on
the weekend. This is something I'd like to be
carefree.
There are my things to add. I like a carefree life.
Not worry about money.

THE MUSIC MAKES ME

Music is so wonderful, and it motivates me.
I love to follow the rhythm and beat
I feel this gets people more interested in music
I love to shop for a musical item
I like headphones because they're very helpful
And have better sounds
I like songs with lots of lyrics and
Love it with my heart and soul
I care deeply for people
it makes the world a better place
me and my children love to play guitar and drums

NOW IS THE TIME

Now is the time to get a job
I've learned so much at Founders
We've got interviewing skills, groups on social skills
Relapse prevention, symptom management
And we have our resume
I feel there's lots of retail and computer jobs to
investigate
I have lots of skills like being dependable and
being a team player
Great customer service
I think I'll find a good job

I ONCE IMAGINED

I once imagined being a rich person. I would buy a huge mansion.

I would fill it with antique furniture. I would have a pool in the back

yard. I love to go swimming every day. I would have a big garden with

lots of roses. I would have a walk-in closet with a wardrobe of

dressers. Also, would have a game room. It would be so much fun.

I would have a three-car garage with sports cars. I would imagine

driving a different car every day. I would love to spend time

with my children.

AS I AGE WHAT I'VE DISCOVERED ABOUT MYSELF

I discover a different look and changes to my body and face. My hairstyle is different, it used to be long and I could do more things with it.

I used to be athletic, and I could exercise better or go for a long run.

My muscles used to be firmer. My memory was a lot better. I could

remember stories better. I wish I wasn't getting older, and I like to

stay athletic and keep a nice body. I'd like to be young again.

I'LL SPREAD MY WINGS FULL AND WIDE

I made it to the top of the mountain and I'm
ready to glide
Because I'd like to land in the canyons where
there is a beautiful house.
Then I'd like to land in the business area where I
can pursue my
career in computer business and fashion.
I'd love to be where there's fun things to play with
like video games,
playgrounds and the ocean to make good
memories.
I'll glide over the mountain to see what's special.
I'll make it
back with my wings spread to many houses in the
canyons by the rivers.

MY DIVINE LIGHT

Opens my mind and my heart
This gives strength, hope, courage
It gives birth to our creative thoughts
We give to people and we are kind to one another
My divine light shines with beauty and brings out
color
I see a bond with light and darkness

I HAVE GOT JUST ENOUGH TIME

To get a job and get my own place. I also would like to take

a vacation after I get settled in.

First, I would start by handing out my resume or completing them online. I would fill out

applications for a new place. This would take two weeks approximately.

This would not take very long because I'd have just

enough time to do it

I'd love to vacation in Florida and go to some of the beaches. I'd love to make plans with my children.

Sterling Millsap, Intern

MY PERFECT DAY

My perfect day happens quite often. It really doesn't take much; one simple thing is really Seth. My fiancé is just enough to make my day perfect. No fancy dinners, or extravagant activities, simply his company is enough to suffice. His kindness, his love, his humor, his smile is really all I need to complete my perfect day.

FRACTURED

I came into the world without a fracture in my body. My parents nurtured me throughout my childhood to the best of their abilities. When the game of soccer knocked me down, they were always there to pick me back up and help me recover. After 8 broken bones, I finally needed ankle surgery which took me away from a lifelong passion of mine playing soccer. For a long time, I thought my body would never be normal again. With time and dedication, I regained my strength, worked through all my fractures and two years later, I felt like myself again and as of today I have fulfilled my goals and ran 3 1/2 marathons and am less than 2 months away from a full marathon. Although these fractures changed the path of my dreams, it did not define who I am.

BLEMISHED

If blemishes are what you see Shame on you for,
they are not me It's important to look right past.
As what is on the inside that will last

Everyone will age and grow, and life will always
take a toll

Staying true to yourself is the true test and staying
confident is simply the best

So, when you feel down about the mirror
Please remember what really is bigger
Your character inside is what really matters
So turn that voice off and get rid of all the
chatter

Austin Shockey, Intern

I WAS ON SHAKEY GROUND

In the past, I had trouble because I had trouble with incongruence in my emotional self-concept because I was coming to terms with romanticism and did not have anyone to consult about my situation, nor full knowledge of what it entailed. I was able to fully be in congruence after having important discussions with new friend groups who guided me through the learning process and self-acceptance.

I REMOVED MY CLOUD OF DOUBT WHEN

I removed my cloud of doubt when I found my friends in our book club. They taught me valuable life lessons of acceptance, showed me that I was appreciated, and loved for who I am. Not for what people wanted me to be. It was the moment I realized I was trapped no longer.

A PERFECT MOMENT

A perfect moment is a moment that exists only in the passing.

Only in retrospect, with all the card on the table, that you see

this fundamental occasion for what it is. Sometimes it is your nieces and nephews running to you because they are happy to see you.

Others it's the moment your parents say how proud you are for helping people in need. Or it could be when you look at

yourself and see how happy you are or how far you've grown as a person. A perfect moment exists in the past, because there

will always be more to come, in retrospect.

MY FAVORITE PLACE

My favorite place is a bookstore that I have visited for over 15 years. It is an escape from the responsibilities of the busy world, where I rest my heart and mind, enjoying the smell of the café the soft music overhead, and the book in my lap as fantasy takes over.

MY ABSURD SIDE

My absurd side is that I like to try and learn new dance moves, without being any good at them. It's just very fun to practice and move to music. I also like to tease my cat with fake fighting and chase her around the house.

THE LAST TIME I DID SOMETHING FOR MYSELF

The last time I did something for myself was promising to take a day off to visit my childhood lake, where I got to reminisce and see how much has changed. I also got to see a day without my phone or having people around me. Just a moment of peace.

Someone who impacted my life in a positive way, are my friends Peri and Roon. Both were there for me when I was dealing with tough work criticism in my writing, and spent time helping me improve. When I met the couple in Boston, they stuck to me like glue and made sure I always had a friend with me. They are two of the best friends I could ask for!

HEY GOD, CAN WE GO FOR COFFEE AND TALK

Hey God, can we talk about giving us seven-day weekends?

I would appreciate the extra time to sleep in and catch up on my hobbies. I think this would improve our moods considerably!

Imagine all the time I could spend doing nothing! It would really let us enjoy and recharge our emotional batteries.... and also, not make us work of course. And it would be less work on your end! Think about it.

Analia McCoy, Intern

ABANDONED

Hidden Magic...

There's a hidden magic everywhere. Living inside
the veins
of the leaves on the trees, flowing into my lungs
and letting
me live. Illuminating everything the things in my
view bringing
forth such vibrant colors. Breathing alongside the
wind,
caressing my skin. There's a hidden magic living
inside all
of us calling us to love.

TALKING ANIMALS

The squirrels and birds talk all day long. They share stories of their journeys, and they mimic one another.

SPICES

I heard about these spices people are eating that allows you to transcend into another's body. I bought this spice along with a plane ticket to Africa. I drove into the safari until I spotted her. A great big, beautiful lioness. I chew the spice. Everything looks so vibrant. I can smell blood. My legs start moving and the next thing I know I've cleared miles and miles of land. I look down at myself and see a blanket of orange lush covering my skin. My skin. The skin of a lion. I left that helpless human girl in the dust.

In my past, I struggled to bring congruency in my physical self-concept. I wanted to present myself a certain way, but I couldn't because my lifestyle didn't reflect what I wanted people to see. I realized I needed to make changes. I needed to learn how to take care of my vessel nutritionally, because this negativity I felt towards myself bled into my emotional self-concept. I started to go on runs and lift weights. The surges of dopamine made me feel good about myself. I started to look more like how I felt. Happy and healthy. Active?

Absurdly within this modern world. Human beings saw the way the sun rises and sets on the horizon and decided we should all live in boxes. Human beings discovered fields, wildflowers and decided we should work 9-5's until we're too old to frolic in them. Human beings felt the waves melt against their bare feet and decided to make it so that we must always wear shoes. Human beings experienced the freedom this world offered and decided to chain ourselves to things like taxes and insurance. The absurdity of Modern human beings.

THE FRAGRANCE OF LAVENDER MAKES ME THINK OF

All the vast beauty in the world. It transcends me into a meadow.

I'm barefoot and I feel light as a feather. I hear the wind chimes tapping together. They created a beautiful little melody. I chase the mountains in the distance until I get distracted by the graceful presence of hummingbirds. I drop into the flowers at my feet and stare up at the sky watching all the flying creatures and clouds pass by.

The fragrance of lavender helps remind me how free this world is.

An ideal weekend for me would be out in the rainforests and jungles in Bali. I would be playing with monkeys and bathing elephants. Hiking beside waterfalls and swinging in a treehouse and waking up to huge breakfast platters by the infinity pool. All day to do whatever I please.

MY PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE IS

Memento Mori Remember one day you will meet death. Live each day with this in mind. Always be kind, protect people who need it, tell people I love you, always offer help. Be true to your emotions. What do you want to be remembered for? Who do you want to be remembered as? Do that and be that person every day. Be true to yourself and have little regrets.

BLEMISHED

Scars and imperfections on my skin and soul. The remind me where I came from and they can even tell me where to go. If I let them the parts unblemished. I wrote them myself, so they tell my story I'll wear them proudly and you should too. We are all blemished and beautiful.

FRACTURED

Like cracks in a window, waiting for the whole thing to come down. When it does, I can start anew. The cracks

UNBLEMISHED

Like the skin of a baby's cheek? Untouched and pure unknow and full of wonder The world has not met me yet. Who do I want to be? The possibilities are endless.

THE SUN GOES DARK WHEN THINGS GET GRIM

When things are hard, we tend to focus more on them. When things hurt us, we tend to remember them. The experiences we endure can shape us if we allow them but then we darken our souls and thus our environment. When our environment is dark, we may not truly see where we are going or even who we are surrounding ourselves with. It's easy to hide out in the dark. You're free from judgement and many of the hard experiences that got you there. If you find yourself here, look to the sun! Reach out to it and allow it to whisper words of light back into your soul.

It'll tell you that bright light lives inside you and you can access it at any time. It will never be missing as long as you look for it. Your light only goes dark if you let it. the sun only goes dark when you have your eyes closed.

Marleni Sanchez, Intern

A PERFECT MOMENT

Picture this! You're driving down I-10 freeway towards Santa Monica suddenly you make a last-minute switch to I-5 and you just drive without knowing where the road ends. You keep driving and you see nothing but green, it's the mountains in ever green and the air is fresh as you smell the clouds in proximity. You see nothing but acres of land as you approach different garden fields. Once again you drive away and wondering where the road ends. Eventually you make to Sacramento into the beautiful scenery of Folsom Lake. The sunset hits your face as you see your reflection. It's quiet and serene. Suddenly you remember you're in central California and now it's time to drive back to the desert. I finally picture the vision I was looking for!

MY FAVORITE DECADE

My decade as a millennial is the 2000's in 2010's I felt invincible, untouchable and a force to be reckoned with. I enjoyed the party life without consequence. Drinking endlessly without getting sick. My heels were sky high and my cinch waist showing my pieced belly. Luckily my friends and I had a buddy system, and we always looked out for each other. Sad part is I don't know when that came to an end, we all grew up and occasionally hang out to get dinner.

My day begins with Jackie (my cat). Boppin her head on my face as she shrivels up to appear smaller and expands her arm toward my face. That's my indication that she's hungry. I get up and feed her and begin preparing my dogs food. They run with excitement to see me and Faith lays on her side to pet her. I pet her and Tyler jumps to grab my attention as I serve their food. I go to the coral and my dad's ducks and chickens run with excitement waiting for their scraps. I threw them veggie scarps while I go to grab their food. My day is productive as the sun kisses my body while running errands outside. I go inside and my coffee is ready. I grab my cup, and I feel wide awake. My small errands reassure me that my animals love me and I say bye to Jackie and get in my car while I tune into the morning news. The drive is my downtime as I appreciate sights seen regardless how repetitive it is.

THE SUN GOES DOWN WHEN THINGS ARE GRIM

The sun darkens; another cycle is ending. The phase seems eternal like winter snow. It's dark like Alaska time, but even when it seems grim. The northern lights emerge grim shadows bleak even in darkness the light whispers its beauty, When things are grim.

THE PERSON I WANT FROM MY PAST

I want to start off by saying I forgive my dad for not understanding his mental illness, I didn't know he was ill until Danny got sick, I assume he was a drunk. This journey would prepare me for a career in mental health. I forgive my mom; you were just learning to live as I was growing. I know everyone wings it on life and no manual exists on life! Overall, I forgive myself, I was too hard on myself. I'm also learning too! No day comes with instructions, just a guide that tells you how to be modest. The bible!

HI GOD, CAN WE GO FOR COFFEE AND TALK

Thanks for this huddle talk we're having. I have many questions, but I know you're busy and I'll make it short and sweet like the Chai tea I'll have over my flavorless coffee. I love so much but you know that by now!

Hey, why couldn't I be born with loads of money? This struggle in life is too much. I don't like being a warrior, but if I had money, I would help the less fortunate and send my mom away so that she doesn't cry over life. I know, I know you'll say being gluttonous is a sin.

But I'll say thanks for helping one hold on because sometimes I question these battles, but I see the reward at the end. Maybe not the millions but the obstacles that felt impossible at the moment. Last thing, hey you got the tab or you'll use your face card as a freebie for us!

ON THE SUBWAY AT MIDNIGHT

This reminds me of a heartbreak song. I grab my pen and notepad and begin to write the endeavor's I've gone through since the breakup, I thought it was love, but it was an illusion. It's been many years but I'm glad we went our separate ways. Where is he? Don't know, don't care. But it's a reminder that life goes on and becoming busy with my life has been my identity. I didn't focus on the past. The past tried to come back as a peace treaty. I kindly declined because he knows that version of my past. The past paves my future, but he was a temporary stay that taught me to control my frustration. That I'm thankful but, like the speed in the train it was a brief moment in life.

THIS IS HOW I FIT INTO THE WORLD

How I fit in the world? I ask myself that, like a jigsaw puzzle that is complicated to do 1000 pieces. This piece has always had disparities to fit, but the unmatched eventually find its way, just like life, there's many roads yet one to walk on.

Ivonne Pena, Intern

I'm grateful for the experience I gained during my first internship at Founders House of Hope. It gave me the chance to develop important skills in cultural competency and advocacy, which are essential in human services. This placement also helped me grow personally, especially in becoming more confident when speaking in group settings. Dr. Levy was an incredible mentor throughout the process. He consistently went above and beyond for both his residents and his students, and his guidance made a big impact on my learning.

I am taking up my rightful space in the world by believing in equality.

I feel rewarded when helping others.

I am respectful of others' culture and beliefs.

I like to make others feel like they belong.

I do not like to be the center of attention and do not brag about what I have accomplished.

The world would be a more peaceful place if everyone was humble and there was less greed.

MANGO ON A LEMON TREE

You do not belong here, you are too sweet, and one do not mix.

"You are wrong "says the mango,"

I love the sun as much as you do and when paired together, we make a nice treat! Let's get together and make a mango lemonade.

I REMOVED MY CLOUD OF DOUBT WHEN

I removed my cloud of doubt when I started to open up to people.

I sought therapy for my anxiety.

I learned to forgive and look at life differently.

I realized that there are people in my life who love me.

I am very blessed.

I have goals that I have yet to accomplish.

A PERFECT MOMENT

A perfect moment is when I am around my loved ones. When we are sharing a meal. When we watch our favorite movies together. When we reminisce about the past. When we do not argue. When we laugh.

MY FAVORITY PLACE

My favorite place is Puerto Vallarta MX. I lived there for four years as a child. I was loved by my grandparents, aunts and cousins. When I visit, I enjoy my favorite meals, especially seafood. I enjoy the sea breeze and warm weather. I feel free. I cherish the moments I spend with relatives I do not often see. I love seeing the sunset while enjoying a nice drink.

Destiny Rodriguez, Intern

IN MY DAILY PRAYER

In my daily prayer I wish wellness health to all,
those I love and those who need to be reminded
of their strength.

I express gratitude and frustration.

I talk to you, nothing fancy.

I thank you for sleep, living another day, food on
my table and a roof to live under.

I couldn't ask for more.

I embrace the strength you continue to lay on me.

THIS IS HOW I FIT INTO THE WORLD

To fit in the world
What does it take?
Perfection? Likeableness? Agreeableness?
Will I ever?
This world is so unique
But so am I
Nothing will make me get out of who I am
But will you?
Corrupted, unfair, yet so beautiful
Will you take the chances?

BEAUTIFUL

What qualifies beauty, being fit? Attractive?
Does a little excess fat offend you?
I think it's beautiful
Beautiful like a Greek goddess!
There are so many different definitions
Beauty is unique
What will you choose?
Nature, animals, humans
We are all beautiful
Beauty is everywhere

NOT A CURSE BUT A BLESSING

Anxiety

Not a curse but a blessing

It is a survival instinct

Fight, flight, freeze

Fight under attack

Flight when in fear

Freeze in shock

Lay in a sense of unknown

Why go against it, it's who we are

Question, stay curious

Past, future?

stay in the present

Enjoy the fresh air

There is nothing wrong with a little discomfort

Take a deep breath

Simple yet unrecognized

Not a curse but a blessing

It's a fight against time

Thinking in past and future

It stems from our ancestors

Fight, flight, freeze

Why go against it

Take a deep breath

BLEMISHED

Blemished like a scar
Can't take it back but can heal
Oblivious, naïve, confused
Being young can cause lifetime blemishes
Moving forward
Makes blemishes fade but never go away
One day looking back I can remember
Look over how far I have grown
Nothing wrong with a few blemishes
It makes me, me

IF I WERE TO TRAVEL IN TIME

If I were to travel in time
I would apologize to whom I've done wrong
Thank those who sacrificed for me
There is not enough time
Sitting alone while life passes
I know I am not alone

A PERFECT DAY

A perfect day
Is the sounds of the birds
The sound of winds bustling trees
Feeling on top of the world
Nothing better than a bright sunny day
Love in the air
I am free

FRUIT

A strawberry is growing on an apple tree. How can
that be?
Is that apple green, red, or yellow
How about me?
Red with seeds am I an apple?
Move over! This is my time to shine!
You are not an apple, you are red with seeds
How alone might it be being in the wrong tree
It's ok I'm friendly come sit with me
Don't listen to what others say you are with me!

WALKING WITH MY SHADOW

On a bright sunny day walking
I look down and see a dark shadow
Is that me?
It's walking faster than me with quick flow
Why are you running from me
Let's stop and take it slow
What is going on talk to me
Well, you're just too slow
Put some jazz in it make it fun
I want to go dance
I'll start just grab my hand and dance
Dance our worries away

BETWEEN TICKS

Sitting in a room dazed
Trying to think with a cloud on my head
No thoughts just blank
Looking around watching the clock tick slowly
Tick.....Tick
The trees flow with such freedom
I wonder if the winds ever forget their direction
So much and too little and the same time
Just the mind of an unsettling mind

WITH MY PEN

With my pen
Used to create
Whether it's to take notes
Draw, sketch, doodle
So much opportunity
With not enough time
Oh, how beautiful it is
Me and my blue pen

Through sadness, anger and happiness
You have seen it all
And yet continue to be by my side
Blue like the ocean waving bye
What would I do without my blue pen
Blue like the ocean
Full of mystery
So many creatures
Some unknown
Fear of the unknown
So much at bay
Will I ever know
Jump and dive in

The following group poem was written about Dr. Levy by residents who attend his program.

Dr. Levy: An Earth Angel

Dr. Levy wakes us up from our sweet slumber and
we walk into group sluggishly as zombies.

He welcomes us with an inviting grin.

His charisma brightens the room and wakes our
sleepy heads.

The lessons he teaches us light a dark room like
developing a vintage film role into life.

We smell Neil Young every time he walks into the
room.

If Dr. Levy was a fragrance he would be called
“Harvest Moon.”

Because of Dr. Levy, we know that Boise is the
capital of Idaho.

Through rough times Dr. Levy gives us hope.

Dr. Levy puts the hope in Founders House of Hope.

We are so filled with gratitude for Dr. Levy’s
unwavering, loving attitude.

