

Poetry from residents of Cyndi Taylor Krier
Juvenile Correctional Treatment Center



WHAT I CARRY

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Student work has been edited as lightly as possible in order to honor their original voices.

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CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
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Foreword

What I Carry is a collection of poems, the result of Gemini Ink's Partner Classes Program workshops in Fall 2020 and Summer 2021 at the Cyndi Taylor Krier Juvenile Correctional Treatment Center. Here you will find the powerful voices of youth striving, hoping, learning, listening, reaching out, from lives derailed. Hear their words: what they know, what they've seen, where they've been. And hear where they're going, what tomorrow holds. Working with poets Erica DeLaRosa and me (Jim LaVilla-Havelin), first via Zoom in the fall of 2020, and then live for nine weeks in the summer 2021, these young writers worked to remember, respond, and shape their voices and their visions.

While lockdown is a term that means something different at Krier, the pandemic lockdown and its challenges could have put a hold on an almost 20 year program of collaboration between Krier and Gemini Ink. Bexar County and the whole Enrichment Team from Krier, and Gemini Ink's committed staff, kept this flame alive, distant, hard to connect. And then happily returned to contact in the Summer of 2021. At Krier, Jessica Maupin, Jayme Lyon, Joslin Rice, Jennifer Fowler, Megan Badoni helped make this work blossom. And at Gemini Ink, Florinda Flores-Brown, Anisa Onofre, and Alexandra van de Kamp, made Erica's and my work possible.

What joys there are in this collection – Alex A. who tells us “I promise to keep going” and “You can't cancel me,” or Hailey O.'s “I want to continue to bloom” – affirmations that don't come easy. T.Y.'s realistic assessment in a five-word poem entitled “Yesterday” – “Can't change/make/ tomorrow better,” pretty much sums it up. When Anthony S. reminds us “Where I'm from/you would try to scratch it out,” we can only hope for change, empowerment, or as Christian C. ends his e.e.cummings inspired poem “Perhaps” simply with, “perhaps / we share” Erica and I want you, the readers of *What I Carry*, to hear their voices (remem-

ber Aslynn D. who asks pointedly, “How do you silence a Siren that was built to scream?”). Know their lives, listen closely, when Joseph C. says “Everything changes when you / take the first step,” we know he is talking about you, your consciousness, your reaching out, too.

Jim LaVilla-Havelin

Gemini Ink Teaching Artist

2021

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ACROSTIC

doesn't like
j ail. Thinks about diving
for the
o cean, and taking a
s wim -
h eading for the land
u p to home, across with peace
where my family is at
until I get
a rrested again ending up in
jail again
in more trouble
leaning back around
that road.

PROSE FORM

Joshua doesn't like jail. Thinks about diving for
the Ocean and taking a Swim Heading for

the land up to home across with peace where
my family is at Until I get arrested again ending
up in jail again in more trouble leaning back around
that road.

FROM MY BOOK OF HOPES AND DREAMS

A good dream is one where I am home.

What I want most is my freedom.

The best thing that could happen to me is
getting released.

Years from now, I know I will change my life style.

Everything turns out ok and I feel ok.

When I'm happy, I'm happy because it's a new day

I'm sitting in placement, on a chair.

After Krier, I see home.

My future looks bright when I change.

Even now, I know, I can try to change.

When people get to know me, they will like me.

The day after I leave Krier, I will
not come back.

FROM “MAYA WONDERS”

Josh thinks he needs to go home

Josh doesn't like talking to mom on screen.

He thinks he needs to go home, but

he doesn't know

if he's ready.

Josh thinks and thinks –

if he's ready, and

if he's not, he will be up the road again.

But if he is,

he will succeed and continue

with his life.

I WANT, I NEED, I GOT

I want a job.

I need my freedom.

I got a choice.

Really, all I ever wanted was to go back
where I got caught up,
and now I really need
to be home.

But, just what I've got is my family, and if
I could just have one thing,
I'd want my freedom.

You know what I need is my letter, so why is it
That I've got no letter.

I remember
when I was younger
I wanted to be a
basketball player

now
I just want
to go home, and
I'd be ok if I got
my freedom.

I have enough choices
I know I need a choice
Wanting and needing only ever got me
Caught up.

JOE B.

ACROSTIC

Justice
Over
Everything

FROM MY BOOK OF HOPES AND DREAMS

A good dream is one where I was outside.
What I want most is a car.
The best thing that could happen to me is to win the lottery.
Years from now, I know I will be successful.
Everything turns out ok, and I am ok.

When I'm happy, I'm happy because life's good.
 I'm sitting at Krier and writing.
After Krier, I see a good life.
My future looks bright
 when I do right.
Even now, I know I can
 Do right.

When people get to know me,
 they will like me.
The day after I leave Krier, I will go eat.

As _____ **AS**

sometimes I am a cold dead speaker
but most of the time
 I am a hot speaker –
with
a lot of emotion built up, and
my temperature
 always rising
so I will not pass
a covid test

WHERE DOES HATRED COME FROM?

After viewing "City I" by Vincent Valdez

where hatred comes from is deep down.
so far I forgot where it
started
I still have it in me
 it doesn't leave
 it just goes back down
 and comes up
 when it pleases

MY ENEMIES:

The enemies are a bad thing to me.
I keep them closer than I keep you to me.
I value them and they value me –
 in plain sight as clear as can be.
I don't know why they hate, and
 why they hate on me.

IGNACIO G.

ACROSTICS

Imagine

Going

Nowhere

After-life

Comes

Invisible

Out

I'm

Going

Nowhere

After

Cindy Taylor Krier

I'm

Out

AS _____ AS

As old as the birds
They still fly young

FROM “MAYA WONDERS” (*PRAYERS TO THE SKY* / 2020)

Ignacio wonders what he will be in life.
Ignacio wonders what will happen in a couple of years.
Ignacio thinks different from others.
Ignacio should be at home.
Ignacio made mistakes.
Ignacio is not a bad kid.
Ignacio is very loving
Ignacio is born in December
 Ignacio wonders and wonders.

MESSAGE TO MY ENEMIES

you think I'm behind you,
but maybe I'm not. Maybe I am. I keep them
close.

Maybe they think we're close.

I walk up behind
because I know their every move.

They didn't see it coming
but I did.

WHEN

When I see you again - would I ever see you again?

Maybe. Maybe I won't. Hopefully I would.

I hope you have a good life and I hope the best
for you.

& maybe when I do see you again
hopefully we'll talk.

I WANT, I NEED, I GOT

I want food.

I need to get out.

I got four months left.

Really, all I ever wanted was to learn my lesson.,

and now I really need my level

but what I've got is just ok,

and if I could have one thing

I would want to go home.

You know that what I need is impossible at this moment.

So, why is it that I've got nothing?

I remember when I was young I wanted to be rich,

now I just want to go home

and I'll be ok if I got it.

I have enough of being locked up.

I know I need to behave.

Wanting and needing only ever got me

nowhere.

FROM MY BOOK OF HOPES AND DREAMS

A good dream is one where I wake up and tell it to my family.

What I want most is honesty.

The best thing that could happen to me is to become what

I always wanted to become.

Years from now I know

I will change a lot.

Everything turns out ok, and I will do

what I've got to do.

When I'm happy, I'm happy because everybody gets along.

I'm sitting at placement, in building B.

After Krier, I see success.

My future looks bright when I set up goals –

even now, I know I can do it.

When people get to know me,

they will know the real me.

The day after I leave Krier,

I will go to sleep, then wake up to a new day –

the next day.

GROUP POEM

I AM WAITING

Based on "I Am Waiting" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

I am waiting for freedom.

I am waiting for home.

I am waiting for success. I am waiting for happiness.
and I am still waiting for my freedom –

I'm waiting and waiting.

I am waiting to turn 18.

I'm still waiting for my dad
and I'm waiting for dinner.

We're all waiting for something.

You know, I'm waiting for my family –

I am waiting to hug my mom.

Each day I wake up and wait for a new day.

And I, too, am waiting to get out.

Hopelessly, I am waiting by myself.

Tirelessly, I wait for a better me.

I am waiting 'til I get there.

Each day I wake up and wait for
another day to pass by.

I am waiting to see you.

I wake up and wait for you.

I am waiting to hug you.

Day after day, I wait to hold you.

Patiently, I wait for you to hug me.

Tirelessly I wait for you to hold me.

Without ever giving up hope.

I wait for us to be together.
I sit at the doorway and wait for you
to come home.

I am waiting for mail
for a phone call
for a visit
for my home pass.
Without giving up hope
I wait for my release date.

I am waiting to hear your voice
for you to call
for your car in the driveway

In the dark, I'm waiting for your headlights
I am waiting for you to answer
Against all odds I am waiting for you to forgive me.

I will be waiting for
ever.

I AM FROM

I'm from a state with a Lone Star.

I'm from a city with many tourists , and traffic,
even if you aren't driving.

I'm from a city that holds the Alamo, where soldiers fought for dying.

I'm from a place where leaves fall off the tree,
even in the spring
even if Mother Nature is trying.

I'm from a place where music defines who you are.

I'm from a school that's based off a president, where dropout
and graduates might be.

I'm from a street that has more cracks in the concrete
than on anyone's phone.

ACROSTIC

A Athletic

I I

D determined

E everlastin'

N never give up

PENCIL

You have the power to abuse my stress,
You, not only a piece of wood,
But a source of sociability,
Small,
Sharp,
Without your best friend eraser
Mistakes wouldn't be mistakes
But permanent,
Giving whoever takes control
The ability to write
Without your best friend,
Me,
You would be in use,
Pencil.

I am the one sitting on your school desk,
not alone, but in your hand.
I am born from trees of nature,
Cut down to the size of my friend pen.
I am used now or later.
Without getting held, I can't stand.
With a point and no face,
not only do a write,
but I do erase.

I'm not always perfect,
but I try my best.
I want you to see life more clear –
so you don't stress your head.
Eyes squinting,

Headaches,
Blurriness,
I'm tired of it all.
I don't have enemies,
but I guard your eyeballs.
Keep me with you.
Just keep me with you
and you will see
 that there's blurs in lights
 without me.

JACOB

FAMOUS

After Naomi Shihab Nye

as famous as
the heart is
to the
mind

JOSEPH C.

JOSEPH WONDERS

After "Maya Wonders"

Joseph wonders
 when life will be better
 for him.

He wishes dreams can
 come true,
 and for a better
 future, too.

Joseph knows
 he has to
 keep trying
 and maintain
to become a new him and to have
 a happier life.

FAMOUS

After Naomi Shihab Nye

WATER

Water is famous
to the clouds.

Water is also famous to the plants
And dirt that lays beneath us.

PENCIL

Pencils are famous to the left and right hand
of my body.

and
pencils are famous
to the paper
we write on.

RAP

momma told me
don't stress, but
I didn't listen.
I was tryna be the best,
addicted to success.
I'm on a mission
I got's to finish
It the best.
I can not worry
about them. They took
me for granted. These
people was fake to begin
so F*** putting trust in
a friend. I put all my
trust up in God, and these dead
benjamins.
solo dolo til the end
I keep it so real
I can't sit back and do
The pretend
I'm an hustle till I push an
benz ain't stoppin' for no one
boy, watch how I touch on
these m's

TURNING THE PAGE FROM THE BOOK OF DISAPPOINTMENTS TO MY BOOK OF HOPES AND DREAMS

All I ever hoped for was to make myself proud
and just what I got was the opposite.
At the beginning it looked like I was going to succeed,
but now it's clear it's all just my decision making.
When I looked for good, all I ever found was bad.
I hoped for the best, but prepared for the worst
and got the worst.
For no good reason, there is always hope, though.

In Chapter One of The Book of Disappointments
I want better.
Sometimes I wish for sunny days, but know
there is nothing but rainy days
in my world.
When I'm alone I know I can be the best, until I realize
I'm going to try and try.
What I lost was my freedom.
No one believe that I
can do better.

MY BOOK OF HOPES & DREAMS

The first hope is to be set free.

A good dream is one where I'm doing better, getting to the bag.

What I want most is a good life.

The best thing that could happen to me
is overcoming my fears.

Everything changes when you take the first step.

Years from now I know I'm going to be better.

After Krier, I see myself getting to the bag.

Everything turns out ok, and I achieve my goals

My future looks brighter when I'm at home.

The day after I leave Krier, I become a new me.

When people get to know me, they fall in love.

Hoping is hard after losing so much, but I hope
for love and loyalty.

Tomorrow will bring better days.

My way to succeed
is to set goals.

The way dreams and hopes become realities for me
is never give up
and chase and chase.

Sure, there's doubt and fear, and memory, but in my book of hopes and dreams
all those things
just make me still want to try.

The world I wake up into is full of
hope and
disappointment

HOME

There's no place like me.
I come in many different
 shapes and forms.
Come to me, and I will
 comfort you at
 any given time.
I have been around long before
I was given a name.
Come inside; I'll protect you
 from the dangers
 outside,
keep you safe and make you
 smile.

Who am I?

A safe place I feel I am untouchable at –
I run back to home when I'm scared,
but houses break down.
It doesn't mean we can't build
 another one.

My right to free will was taken
when I came to jail.
Now all I think of is home.
I had a chance, but I blew it.
I should've gone home.

FIVE WORD POEMS

IF

This
could've happened.
Next time.

TIME

eleven months wondering,
why me?

PENCIL, PAPER

Pencil, Paper
felt like all I had for eleven months
Incarcerated.

Pencil, Paper
tells all my thoughts. When I talk
don't have much to say.

Pencil, Paper
My way out the ghetto, tragic life
they
gave me.

Pencil, Paper
The two things I had after everyone
left.

Pencil, Paper

FEELINGS

Thoughts, let me pour my feelings
on this paper.

It's harder for to speak,
but when I show you,
it's amazing.

That feeling that I give you
when I'm talking,
tell me about it.

You like me, or you hate me,
It's all love. I'm the same
without you.

PRACTICE

New day, but you weren't expecting a call that
Yo brotha died from gun violence a weapon what
They labeled me in court cuz I'm a convicted felon.
I got potential, and I'm hard workin', striving for better.
Steady, callin, textin, No response. Ain't getting
No answer, Heard her youngest son with
SAPD just got arrested. I walk in the courtroom
In shackles hoping god heard my blessing
blessing lately it's been storming. I
been trying to clear up the weather.

Steady, callin, textin, no responses, ain't
getting no answer
And I love you so it's hard for me to
tell you the truth.
I don't want to hurt you, so I lie, thinking
Which one to choose
If you just answer one more time
I promise to leave you never.

CHRISTIAN'S FUTURE

Christian's future:

Is it dark, or bright?
His future has memories.
He hates the present.

Christian's future:

Is it jail or is it free?
His time being away is done.
Future is
close, family support.
Now
Christian waits

Til his day

Christian's waiting
for a different day.

FIVE WORD POEMS

TIME

Clock is famous to life.

REMEMBER

Don't forget, think –
memory is
key.

SLEEP

Bye!
See you in
7 hours.

NEVER

Don't give up.
Push
Forward

TURNING THE PAGE FROM THE BOOK OF DISAPPOINTMENTS TO MY BOOK OF HOPES & DREAMS

All I ever hoped for was a life full of success, and
just what I got was a life full of mistakes.
At the beginning it looked like a rainbow not going away,
but now it's clear it's all just wet and dark.
When I looked for a new beginning all I ever found was
pain and anger inside.
I hoped for the best when days were hard and got a life in jail.
For no good reason, there is always a way to think positive.

In Chapter 1 of the book of disappointments, I went
from heaven to hell and back.
Sometimes I wish for an ending coming to an end, but I know
there is nothing but
a never-ending story.
When I'm alone, I know I can do better and keep trying
until I realize being alone brings
more thoughts.
What I lost was my motivation and hope.
All that's left is anger and anxiety.
No one believes I can be
the person I once
was.

TURNING THE PAGE TO MY BOOK OF HOPES & DREAMS

The first hope is life with no trouble.
A good dream is one where I can be a better person.
 What I want most is
 support and power.
The best thing that could happen to me
 is becoming a dad.

Everything changes when your child is born.
Years from now I know I will stop and focus.
After Krier, I see a bright and new future.
Everything turns out ok, and I will do what's best
 for me.

My future looks bright when I decide to change my ways.
The day after I leave Krier I will help and give advice.
When people get to know me, they think I'm not
 the person everyone says
 I am.
Hoping is hard after losing so much,
 but I hope for not losing the people I love.

Tomorrow will bring a new yesterday.
My way to succeed is to
 start asking for help.
The way dreams and hopes become realities for me is
 to focus and try to make them become true.
Sure, there's doubt and fear and memory
in my book of Hopes and Dreams
but, all of those things just make me
 a better and overcoming fear
 full of success.
The world I wake up into is full
 of noise
 and distraction.

NIGHTTIME, HERE, KRIER, REMEMBERING

here
all starts here
a place, a program, a memory
bad times, good times, Krier
remembering the nighttime
thinking
 regrets
 motivation
Krier
here is passion for success
here
is remembering vibes
freedom, success, doubt, challenges,
 complete

THREE WORDS UNLIKELY TO BE USED IN A POEM:

Watermelon
Slug
Cardboard

YOU KNOW I AIN'T LOSING

stop throwing
dem slugs, stop hating
on me –
came up from cardboard –
we call dat de mud.
you my day one
you forever da same
you
like my watermelon
in my garden
up front
you pop
out
so people throw slugs
dey just mad
so let em be dumb

PERHAPS

(from a look at e.e.cummings)

perhaps
we could change
see a different
 path
choose wisely
good, bad

perhaps
we can
provide shelter
hunger, care

perhaps
no more violence
come together
perhaps
 we share

A LETTER TO MY BROTHER

brother important part
of family, older, younger
older we look up to you
you push me to do better
younger i make sure you're
on the right path. you
support me like the
bricks for the house.

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT KRIER

After Wallace Stevens

1

anything can happen
be glad the next
step is home

2

time, obstacles, family
thinking about a
change

3

a different path
to succeed in life

4

memories have a
big part in life
move one, just
change

5

look, see, be 1 step
ahead, don't look back

6

program to make you
a better person, don't
fight it. go with the flow.

7

what's your goal, tell us
what you want to
we'll help

8

stop being quiet you
can't get help without
words

9

lost and found first
you're lost, then you're found

10

stay focused behind on school
no worries were here

11

becoming mature

12

stop
you needa think
before you act

13

you came a long way, you're
free use dez to stay on track.

**EKPHRASTIC POEM FROM VINCENT VALDEZ'S
"I'M YOUR BRUTHA FROM A DIFFERENT MUTHA"**

here i'm all alone
full of energy and fight
no more wars let me
peace let me relax and
wish i was free.
lying down with a
gun and a frown no
light just grass to feel
relieved now i stare in
the sky full of stars
wish i was free
so skydreaming
and feeling the breeze
no one around no
noise in sight
crickets chirping like
they see birds creeping
at night let's skydream
of us being free.

GROUP POEM

I AM WAITING

After Ferlinghetti

I am waiting for that day
 when the door buzzes
 and I am released
 from CTK.

And I'm still waiting for the day I am successful.
I am waiting for an education, and I'm still waiting for an
 Educational career.

I am waiting for the day I don't have to struggle no more.
And I'm still waiting for the day I make my people proud.
It seems like I'm always waiting to become a better person
 but still stay the same.

This waiting is like a prisoner waiting
 on Death Row.
Day after day I wait for murder to leave my brain.
Along with everyone else, I'm waiting to receive
 the sunlight
 on my
 skin.

I am waiting for my brother's death to be avenged.

This waiting is like
never ending
rain.

I haven't stopped waiting for freedom.
I am, yes, I am, waiting for
 You
while I'm locked away behind
these walls.

Without giving up hope, here I am
waiting for
support and
motivation

I haven't stopped waiting for the day I'm free.
I am waiting for money to grow on trees

Day after day I wait for
better days to come
You know
I'm waiting for home.
It seems like I'm always
waiting to become free.
I haven't stopped waiting
for my time.

I'm waiting for the day that
I'm free and happy.

Without giving up hope
here I am waiting
for love and trust
Wait here with me,
we'll wait until
dark falls and
the stars rise

You know I'm waiting for time to stop ticking.
Will it be worth the wait? I've waited so long for
stars to fall from the sky
and I
continue, all through the night, just waiting for

morning, just morning
I'm waiting to hear about life on air...

Without giving up hope
Here I am
Waiting for the cell to open
and to hear
my name called.

It seems like I'm always waiting to be
in a better environment.

This waiting is like oil mixing with water.

Along with everyone else, I'm waiting to find out
the purpose of life.

To See What We Could See

all these years
up Farm Road, passing the dead trees
climbing structure
always
the first view

*

I asked
what he could see
from the top

he replied
“Everything”

*

sometimes it feels like Farm Road goes on forever

*

one of their peers
spooked at the top
had to
slide down
the ropes

rope burns on his arms and legs

*

accomplishment, stamina,
trust, and maybe even
a smidgen of freedom

what they learn

*

forever is too long
everything is too much

ALEX A.

I PROMISE MYSELF

I promise to myself...

I promise myself,

that I won't change for no one except for myself.

I promise to keep it real because I'm not fake.

I promise to myself, that no matter what I go through...

to keep the faith.

I promise to keep going.

I promise to not let my life go to ruins.

OLD/NEW ME

To do all this time
because I know
I did this crime.
To get out and fight the changes
so I can go to a better life.

To stop being the
old me
and fix
the *new me*.

People I use to hang out with
will say they used to know me.
They like the *old me* but not the *new me*.
I don't care.
It's my life.
You Can't Cancel Me!

FIND, CHOOSE & OBSERVE

We use it all the time...

at school...

at home...

at the office.

They are multicolored.

Most are yellow and sharp.

It can be seen as a weapon.

It creates expression.

It is freedom.

It is something I can not have unless given to me.

Its purpose grows

as time swells

behind these walls.

It can break and snap into two.

It is something I took for granted

And something I never knew

I wanted more without limitations.

It sits in a bag,

in an empty room,

waiting to be useful -

picked up and ran beyond its purpose.

HAILEY O.

SO MANY PROMISES

I have so many promises
When they're broken my __petals_fall.
I was once bright red
Now I'm full of hard, darkened __petals.
My petals are
almost
all
gone.
I want to continue to bloom.
I will not let any more petals fall.
It will be a bright shade of red
Strong and pure like pumping blood.
Full of life and purpose.
I will not let anything decimate me
I will keep these promises.

OBSERVATION

I move to vibration.

I move to movement.

I'm clean.

I can also be dirty too.

I am clear.

I can be foggy.

I'm fluid.

No shape,
some sound, and
no smell.

I'm 71, 97, and 3 percent.

I am in so many places
and yet so many not.

I'm useful.

I am necessary.

I fill a human need.

I define life.

SEEING RED

I see red,
whether I'm **ANGRY** or *passionate*.
ANGRY red like hot fries.
Or light and *blissful* like strawberries.
I SEE RED.

Beautiful and *vibrant* like a sunset on a crisp, autumn, October day.
Whenever I see your face, I see red.
Like a *fire burning bright*,
my anger ignites and sparks hate.
It turns my heart dark as night.

MY MOM

I wish I could give you up.
I wish I could give you a different mentality.
Everytime I see you, you look so pale.
Looking at you gives me anxiety.
I know you've lied &
every night I've cried.
You had my brain fried.
All I wished I could do was hide.
I'm going to put my pride to the side.
I forgive you,
but I won't ever forget.

Come on Mom, come inside.
Let's conceptualize your life,
brighter.
When you feel like giving up,
pick up the phone.
I'm on the other side,
"be a stronger fighter".
Come on Mom!
You're almost there..."let's take it home".

MY TONE

My voice sounds like a kettle
at 100% boil.
Like a screeching tire and
sometimes as soft as a stuffed animal.
Low like an air vent's hum but
still a little rough.

FREEDOM, HONESTY & RESILIENCE

I want freedom.

I need honest, genuine love.

I've got nothing but daydreams to keep me going.

I am resilient.

I wish I could change the past and predict the future.

I dreamed of my little brother's smile.

I saw a bird land on a razor wire fence.

I wonder how it feels to not exist at all.

I want freedom.

I need honest, genuine love.

I've got everything I need to survive, right here.

I hope I have really changed.

I thought I knew everything.

I knew nothing.

I remember only the bad.

I am so broken.

I really want to be fixed.

ASLYNN'S WORLD

I am from 6th Street's drunken crowds on a restless Friday night.

A regular to Terminal 6 and *Ojos Locos*' neon lights.

I am from Metropolis where you can find a way to be happy, when you are poor.

I shop at *La Tienda*, the one with the shattered glass door.

I am from *mi Abuela's cocina* where she taught me to make her *dulce y picoso mole* and her thick, saucy, bone-in *menudo* on a cold day.

And when it feels like I can't breathe from all the pressure, I go to that little, yellow house to pray.

I am from Kapcity's empowering protests and loud parades.

I am from miles and miles of pavement covered with violent stains.

I am from darts, spades, and throwing dice to double my money.

I find consonance in Gardener Betts and ISC guaranteed safety and security.

I am from candy painted cars and old Mustang shows.

I am from odd styles and unique souls.

We Keep Austin Weird,

at least we say we do.

But to be honest, my city is just the same,

as your city is to you.

THEY TEACH US

They teach us,
“Stand up for yourself!”
They teach us,
“Turn the other cheek.”
They teach us,
“Act accordingly.”
They teach us,
“Be unique!”
What exactly
would you like
to see us be?
Sweet,
Contradicting,
Irony.

THE REAL YOU, A HAIKU

Two somber toffee moons...
You.
A perfectly chipped tooth
the real you.

DEAR HEART OF HATRED

Poor,
adrenaline fueled heart of hatred.
Your boredom and energy are everlasting.
But I know of your true intent
and I experience your
doubts, fears, and worries.
There's no fooling me.

WHISPERS IN WINTER

Whispers in winter,
a brick fireplace when
it's cold.
Bundle me up,
like the softest wool blanket.
And promise me that Summer is coming soon.

TRUTH IN A SHADOW

Two silhouettes,
a shadow's projection of reality
follows us as we walk in the night.
I watch them with suspicion.
We are
hand in hand,
and yet,
they are not connected at all.

ANGELS AND DEMONS

Hell
is
so close to
Heaven.
We are
all
Angels
and
Demons
alike.

HOW TO SILENCE A SIREN

Power off.

No!

Shut down.

Nope!

Kill switch.

Nothing!

How do you silence a Siren that was built to scream?

BEYOND

if you

hold your head

low

exactly low enough

and allow the overwhelming waves of a
painful present to flow

I have found that

it is possible

to see

beyond

the blur of unwelcomed tears

DREAMING A MANTRA

You were angry.
There I was,
caught in your crossfire, once again.
Never did I stop trying to love you.
No
I held you closer than I ever did,
as you kicked and screamed.
Only did you stop, when I
kissed the top of your head.
Repeating the words, like a mantra...
I will not let you do this to yourself.

YOUR SONANCE

The sonance of your voice is
like shallow breathing,
like footsteps wondering,
like jingling keys,
like winning Reno machines,
like screeching tires,
like boiling water,
like glass shattering,
like drywall cracking,
but your voice could never be comparable
to the wind that runs alongside me.

IF I...

If I give you my time,
it's because I see potential.

If I give you my smile,
it's because you found a way.

If I give you my heart,
it's because you've earned it.

If I give you nothing at all,
it's because you broke it.

MY VOICE

My voice is like
Hot cocoa on a windy day
Like medicine for your sickness

My voice is like
the wheels to your car
Like the umbrella you use
To keep the rain from getting you wet

My voice is relied upon.

TIME

My first day...
I thought time was never going to go.
It felt like *it* was forever.

My first month...
it felt like time was going fast.

My third month...
I felt relief 'cause time flew by.

On my last day...
I'm gonna bless everybody
and
leave.

I AM FROM

I am from San Antonio
A place you wouldn't want to go
Kids dying everyday
Kids who don't talk
But have a lot to say
You can't trust your fam
You can't trust your friends
Only thing you *can* trust
Is 50's, 20's & 10's
Look around all
I see is red, no trust, no love
Not even any loved ones
To give me a hug
Most of my fam
Either dead or in jail
But that gives me
Strength and helps me strive
To prevail
I am from San Antonio
Where most people
Say they got you
But really want you
To fail
I am from San Antonio.

RED

Red
it comes out of nowhere
without control
fear of what
he might do
he doesn't know
he's been betrayed
left on a closed path
with nowhere to go
well at least
that's how he feels

Red
nowhere to loom
nowhere to run

GOOD NIGHT

I believe in god and know he puts me through
certain things for a reason
to make me stronger
but sometimes I feel like
I'm getting... weaker.

PUSH/PULL

I want a million dollars.

I need my fam.

I've got nothing but money on my mind.

I am loyal.

I wish I was at home.

I dreamed I was successful.

I saw my Mom on Sunday.

I wonder if people feel da' same way I feel?

I want to be rich.

I need my loved ones.

I've got everything I need.

I hope I go home in 6 months.

I thought today was Wednesday.

I knew I was getting my level dropped.

I remember my mom telling me to "chill" before I go back to jail.

I am the realest person you'll meet.

I really want to

go

home.

I PROMISE

I promise myself I will do better than
before

And I promise that my family
Won't be poor.

I promise I'll try to make the most money
So my siblings could have anything at the store.

I promise I'll be a friend
And promise to my friend,
I'll love them till the end.

I promise that every time we are together
That it feels like it just began.

LIFE

I am from a poor place,
where almost everything's a race.

I am from a place where family is important
and charging to war, for them, is worth it.

My favorite childhood memory is piercing my ears
and yes, there were lots of tears.

Although some may say, Elmo or Left 4 Dead,
my favorite toy was a little yellow car,
it made me feel like I could go very far

Dear Momma by Tupac is my favorite song.

"huggin on my momma from a jail cell...I hope forever and always my momma
will be well...Dear Momma" because Afeni and my mom are strong.

My greatest joy was when my mom came home
and reminded me I wasn't alone.

My older sister, Gracie Rose
is my favorite person
because she never folds.

My hair is blooming,
vining strongly,
each curl reaching to be kissed by the sun.

Dang!

My hair is getting long & it has me stunned.

I LOVE YOU...FOREVER

I offer you this poem,
since it's all of me.

I love you.

It's all of me and what
we could be.

I love you.

It's love and it's like you put no one above me because
our love is true.

It's like *forever* even in good or bad weather.

I love you.

It's a crime.

Me, I'm willing to do the time.

It's me believing there could be a
we.

I love you.

You could love me the same way
and everything would be okay.

You have a key to my heart
never will we be torn apart.

I love you.

Take,

read

& digest

this to know

that *I love you*

and it's always been...

you.

CALM

Focused,
calm,
and quiet
I'm the one that is silent
when there's a riot.
Calm at night,
different when it comes to a fight.
I'm an owl
focused,
calm
and quiet.

HOME SWEET HOME

Home
where I'm always alone.
When I think of home,
I think of all my feelings turning into stone.
Hard to come out
and all I have is doubt.
When I'm home I lose all thought,
it feels I've done nothing
but I've been caught.
I'm there...
but nobody comes.
Sadness
I feel and it
sucks because it's
real.

HEADSPACE...FAR AWAY

I want to go far, far away
I need to go and to stay
I've got nothing but to be okay
I am not free till May.
I wish I was FREE
I dreamed of living happily
I wonder if I'll ever be free.

I want to be hugged.
I need some love.
I got everything but a say
I hope I will be free one day.

I thought it would all be fine
I know that this problem would be
untwined
I remember being FREE
I am broken.
Pleading, "I really want to be awakened."

REVISITING

My first day was okay.
It went by fast.
I knew that day would never last.

My third month came by slowly.
It really made me think, “woe is me”.

My last day was okay
but when I was at home
I decided not to stay.

My time at Krier
I met a lot of liars.
My life at Krier wasn't the best
but maybe because I'm not like the rest.

CONSTANTLY

Sad, mad
honestly everything but glad.

Stress running down my eyes
like tears and
I'm scared of what comes
next
maybe my worst fears.

I've got to stop
living in crazy fantasies
and forget all the
bad memories.

I'm trying to find a way
OUT
but to now, I've only
gone through the wrong route.

I'm trying to be strong
but everything I do is
wrong.

Feelings are no where
to be found,
and now there's
no one around.

LOVER

When you come towards me
I get butterflies,
trust me being by your side
is one of the best,
like a skyscraper - sky-high.

I love that we
got the same last name
and in my heart,
you'll always remain.

In the game of life,
there's no way to win,
but it's crazy
Because being with you-
I feel like the biggest Champion!

I can't explain how I feel,
all I know is that it's
truly real!

MICHAEL L.

AZUL

Blue is like the color of the ocean
Blue is the color of the sky
Blue is being happy rather than feeling sad
Blue is the emotion I felt last night.
When I think of blue I see the sadness
When I think of blue I think of isolation
When I think of blue I think of my father
When I think of blue I feel depression
When I think of blue I think of winter
When I think of Blue I think of December
The color blue to me is the way of expressing
My daily struggles and emotions
Blue is light and
Blue is dark
Blue is the color of the emotions
I feel in my heart...sincerely

THE LIFE I LIVE

I'm from San Antonio
Where not everything
Is okay
Where I'm from people
Get shot for having the
Wrong look on their face
It's ridiculous how one day
You can be face-to-face with
Someone
Then the next,
You're looking down at their grave.
Every night I lay awake in my bed
Staring at the ceiling
Thanking the Lord
For blessing me with another day
Because my life is like a tornado
Crashing down on
 An old
 Family
 House
sweeping it off the ground
it's like seeing a baby dog
struggling to escape a wild house fire.
My life is a real strain
and so is everything else in it.
I come from a family that
battles to keep the demons away.
From a family that is constantly
locked in a cage
or buried in a grave.
Where I'm from, we never had toys or video games.
All we felt was physical and emotional pain.

When I look back on all the things I've done
and been through it makes me think & wonder
how the hell am I still alive?
Like seriously...*what's keeping me here?*
I feel like a lost soul that's
searching for a body to enter.
Like a lost pet,
searching the streets for its owner.
I swear, I've been living
this life for so long,
it feels normal to do the things I do
when in all actuality it's not.
No matter how much
help I get or how hard I try,
I can never just turn and walk away
from the evil spirits that are frequently by my side.
I feel like Satan's prisoner,
being guarded
by his wicked Hellhounds
keeping me from escaping his layer.
Sometimes I can't help to think, "what is it like to live a normal life?"
without the violence, gun's and losses.
I question, *what is the Lord doing?*
As I'm

down here waiting
for him to answer my prayers.
I swear this life is a never-ending cycle
of jealousy, betrayal, and defeat.
No matter how tough you are
this life,
will always
knock you
off
your feet.

MY WANTS & NEEDS

I want to be free.

I need my freedom.

I've got nothing but myself.

I wish I never went down this road.

I dreamed about seeing the father figure I once had.

I wonder what the world's like now?

I want these chains to be cut already.

I need to reunite back with the world.

I've got everything I need except my freedom.

I hope that I'll be cut from these chains soon.

I thought this life would give me anything I want.

I knew that there would be downfalls.

I remember when I was free.

I am constantly looking over my shoulder.

I really want to leave this life behind.

WHY?

In this life, we live,
it's scary how you can wake up one day
with a dream, you want to fulfill
just to have it cut off
because of the color of your
skin or the country you're from.
I stare out...
I feel nothing
but hatred for the way
the border is patrolled
space once traveled freely,
now
a destination
where death
visits frequently,
encompassed by a desert
nopales,
tierra,
and
the spirits of those who have come before.
All I can ask is...

Why?

AN OFFERING OF WORDS AND DREAMS

I offer you this story.

Don't judge a book by its cover

Isolated like a dog without its owner.

Respectful like a gentleman.

Loyal like a wolf to its pack.

Don't judge a book by its cover

People see me and

think I'm a bad person.

But the thing they don't ask themselves is,

"Is he really a bad individual?"

Don't judge a book by its cover

LOBO

I'm like a wolf,

loyal to its pack.

I'm like a wolf,

never alone.

I'm like a wolf,

I howl at night when there's nothing I can find.

I'm like a wolf,

leading

the

pack.

I'm like a wolf,

I fight side by side, in the fleet.

Dutiful, devoted, and unwavering.

I'm like a wolf,

loving but vicious,

when I need to be

I am like a wolf.

ONE DAY

One day in this life,
I will be free.
I will be back with
the people who love and care for me.
When that day comes,
I will do my best to stay away
from the people who are nothing
but trouble for me.
I've done so much wrong
that I don't even know what's right.
Some of my sins still
haunt me at night.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

I look at the faces of my loved ones.
I think to myself, “what have I done right?”
I have caused a lot of hurt towards my loved ones
and
because of that,
I now carry a huge amount of
emotional weight on my shoulders.
Every step I take
feels like the world is
 CRASH
 ING
 down
 on
 ME.
I’m trying to hold it up.
Prevent it from swallowing me
WHOLE.

INTROSPECTION

My 1st Day at Krier
was like walking into a room filled with people.
I don't belong.

In my 3rd Month,
a C.T.K. felt like I had just run a whole marathon,
needing those
couple
more
steps
to reach the finish line.

I envision my last day at Krier,
to be momentous like I just conquered the world!
I want to make not only my daughter but my family,
proud.
I thirst for a new beginning,
to turn my life around,
like a wander in a desert spotting a mirage.
I desire to make something of myself
but all can only be done with time.

MY GIVINGS

I'm giving this poem to you,
Whether you want it or not.
Keep it safe, I'll keep it true,
Whether it's locked or not.
It's mysteries mixed with theories,
Whether it's true or not.
Use it like you're talking to Siri,
Whether she answers you or not.
whether you tried again and ...
not.
You'll need it when it's time to dream,
whether you believe in them or not
whether you remember your dreams when you awake
or whether you truly believe all hate
comes from love.

I am offering my wisdom to you
Since there isn't anything else to take.
Use it to become successful,
Use it to make a cake.
It's knowledge and brain cells,
Also can be late-night fairytales.
You can use it when you're falling behind,
You can use it any time.
Use it when you're taking a test.
Use it when you need it best.

Have this poem that I give,
Even if I no longer live.
It's like something you'll never see -

maybe like lunacy,
Or quite possibly
even outside of this planetary - spectrum
Like a faded rainbow...barely seen,
An arrested development,
Everyday people, lost in Tennessee.

I'm giving this poem to you,
whether you accept it or not.
I owe you none!
Not even a pun!
So we had our fun,
Now, it's done!

I'm giving this poem to you.
My soul lies between the lines.
The essence of my being lies within the black and white.

WHERE I'M FROM OR SAFE LESS

I'm from da' South of Texas
where things get reckless
like family separation.

Where I'm from,
you would try to scratch it out
like when you get temptations.

Where I'm from,
people sell their bodies
(to the highest bidder).

The things you'll see
let your imagination go...
it will make you sicker.

I'm from a place
where not everything is great.

Where I'm from,
not many people can relate
but instead, hate.

The life that I live isn't safe.

I'm from voices that are broken records.
I'm from a game of checkers.
I'm from a place where you get killed for love.
I'm from a place when they hustle cloves.
Every night,
I sleep.
I dream.
and upon my eyes shut,
all I can see is
my own homeboy, shot
in the face.

Every day I wake,
I wish I could have
gone back and change
the events of that day.
Where I'm from,
you'll pay in cents.
And like Tupac and Hornsby say, "that's just the way it is".
I'm from all my boyz.
I'm from zero toys.
I'm from any type of chicken.
I'm from a little girl waiting for her father to get out.
Where I'm from,
our blood is thick and thin throughout.
I'm from seeing fake stuff through a blindfold.
I'm from broken hearts
that can also be
ice-cold.

CRAVINGS: THINGS I TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT

I want a pen.

I need a drag.

I've got nothing but a pencil.

I am young

I wish I could disappear.

I dreamed about pills last night.

I saw a saint.

I wonder... if I'll stop this?

I want to go back home.

I need to go back home.

I've got everything that I don't need.

I hope to get everything I need.

I thought I was untouchable.

I knew I wasn't...

I remember my little girl.

I am getting older.

I really want to see her.

A SECOND CHANCE

My little girl,
my little world.
One day she'll be grown
and have children of her own.
Sometimes, I think, she may be better left alone.
I don't want to cause any problems,
just want her to know,
I love her,
from a distance.
I think of her every day
as I continue to learn how to live straight-laced.
I don't want to disrupt her life and
bring on more disgrace.
Perhaps one day I'll have another?
Find a person
that'll love me
and not judge
my past life.
One who will be my soulmate.
One who will be my match brought by fate.
One who believes in second and third chances.
One who believes in forgiveness.
One who believes that even I,
deserve this.

ESPERANDO

I am waiting for the 23rd to come.
I am waiting for a letter.
I am waiting to hear my daughter speak her first words.
I am waiting to get off probation.
I am waiting for the café to start.
I am waiting to see my brother.
I am waiting to eat Golden Chick.
I am waiting to hold my little girl.
I am waiting for Jesus to come back.

MI VOZ

My voice sounds like a laser cutting a rock.
My voice sounds like a broken record.
My voice can sound like an ocean at low tide.
My voice is like a guitar being smashed.
My voice can go deep as the Earth's core.

MY TIME

3 hours to just get in another cell-
hot as hell.
3 months to just have 3 more.
This is not something I adore.
3 hours to just get back in the old cell.
I'll be out anyways...oh well.

ON MY BLOCK

On my block in the East
Where kids are taught to become a beast

A block where you see bodies almost everyday
The only way out was to move like a narc

Playing football and my mom making me think
About my future gave me a spark

On my block where we learn not to play
Where our first thought was to spray

A block where my mom raised 8 kids on her own,
Where half of the time, she couldn't even get a loan

My favorite times were when she made my favorite foods: macaroni and cheese
& bacon and pancakes
with syrup & nutella, fried fish with mashed potatoes with cheese which left me
with a warm feeling, even when I was chilly.

My favorite football player was Bo Jackson
Because the way I've seen him in action
Also the way he gave me the passion
To get off the block I was on

I remember the times I could've been gone
In the sky flying high
I remember when I made my mom cry
Because she didn't know if her son was
Gonna go
Goodbye to be in the sky

On my block
My favorite music was Scarface's "Smile" and Tupac's "keep ya head up"
Because being on my block they taught me
You can still make it out
Even if life
Ain't going good
You live on
Because there's always a time you could.

RANDOM THOUGHTS

I want to make somewhere in life
I need to be calmer
I've got nothing but time
I am someone strong, smart, and active
I wish to make it far and help my mom
I dreamed of one day...I can help others.
I saw violence and crimes
I wonder sometimes... How is my family without me?

I want to become a sports star
I need to have more social skills
I've got everything I need at home
I hope to make it to where I wanna be

I thought sometimes I wouldn't make it
I knew I had it deep down in me
I remember taking my anger out on the field
I am a wise, respectful teen
I really want to make it out of the violence I see.

LUGGAGE

I carry the pain of the lost
But these things happen
For - a - reason
 and
 there
 is
 a
 cost.

I carry my Mom's heart
Because for so long
 we've
 been
 a---part.

I carry the other part of my twin
Because from birth she's had me since then

I carry *my time*
Because life's too short for this to be lost
I carry football
Because It's taught me to be tough
Even when life has been rough

FAMILY

People I can't wait to be with when I go home

Family

The ones who make me smile the most

Family

The ones who want me to make it...in life

Family

The ones I trust the most

Family

DUPLICATE

She's a duplicate of me.

She was made for me.

When I had no one to talk to...she was there,
dealing and listening to my anger and all the pain.

She was made from the other half of my brain.

The one who doesn't want to hurt others.

The one who can't stand to see others suffer.

I've been through so much,

I choose to hurt.

I choose to walk around

ANGRY

in the world.

Instead of learning to be happy
or making something better out of worse.

She was made for me.

CHANGE

When I was younger, my Mom told me to change.
And it took me four years to understand.
I took it as a game.
This taught me a lot,
It really put me to shame
because when you don't look forward to your future,
you start to backtrack from what you wanted,
where you wanted to succeed.
And you don't always have to react
because that's the very thing
that can put you in a grave or in chains.
I'm very glad I was taught
to use my brain.
It changed me for the better-
not to go insane
not to crash and veer into the wrong lane.
Change,
the very thing that can alter your future.
Just like Martin Luther,
change.

REMEMBER

I remember
the things I had and the things I couldn't buy
so I had to go to get it passed down.

I remember
when I had to give up almost everything
so my brother can have the things he wants.
When I couldn't get his things, I'd put mine back
and get his.

I remember
the first time I took things that didn't belong to me.
I didn't have money.

I remember
my first time in a cell.
I turned to the streets and wouldn't tell.

I remember
when I had to sleep outside,
had to catch the bus, or
walk miles because of what I didn't have.

I remember
when my Mom said,
"Be grateful for what you have or get
because it will change."

HEAVY HEARTED

Leaders,
Lost
Maybe even failed
 At something

People
Want them
 To do

Leaders
 Going
 Through
 Things

Leaders
 Staring
 Sweat
 Blood
 A predicament
 Conflict
 Maybe even persecution

In the face
 If
 They
 Don't
 Walk...away.

ABOUT THE WRITERS IN RESIDENCE

Erica DeLaRosa is a co-founder of the performance troupe, Mahina Movement where she has facilitated poetry workshops, produced, and performed on over 300+stages throughout the U.S. and internationally for twelve years. Erica is the founder of & a producing partner with CEIBA Arts Cooperative. CEIBA is a holistic, arts community that focuses on utilizing the arts and well-being education for all communities to promote engagement and sustainability. She serves on the board of San Anto Cultural Arts and is a performer with Poetic People Power in NYC. Currently, she contributes her talents as a Teaching Artist with several community organizations in San Antonio & New York City.

Poet, editor and educator **Jim LaVilla-Havelin** is the Coordinator for National Poetry Month San Antonio and Poetry Editor for the San Antonio Express-News. LaVilla-Havelin's fifth book of poetry, *WEST*, was published by Wings Press in 2017.

YOUTH POETRY

**Poetry from residents of Cyndi Taylor Krier
Juvenile Correctional Treatment Center
In partnership with the Partner Classes Program
at Gemini Ink Writing Arts Center in San Antonio**

Gemini Ink's mission is to teach the craft of writing to people of all skill levels so they can bring their stories to life. We envision a world where all people experience the power of the writing arts. We provide creative writing workshops led by published writers at our offices and in diverse community settings. We also host free public readings by nationally and internationally recognized authors, open-mic nights, and a mentorship program. We believe in the power of the written word to transform lives and are dedicated to nurturing the imagination, building language skills and encouraging a strong sense of human connectedness in people of all ages.

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