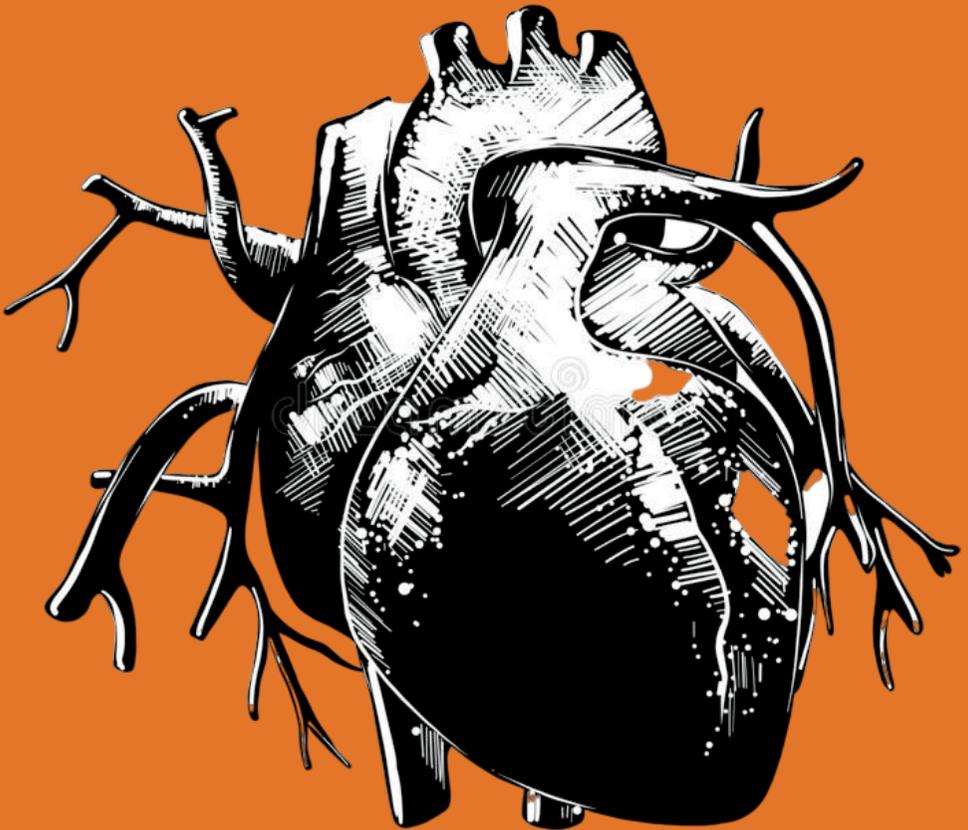


POEMS FROM KRIER

WHISTLE

RATTLE SONG





*Keep it,
for one day when you need it.
You gone' remember me
when life lets you down,
when 'dis streets call you,
just know,
I got you,
because I love you.*

*From Because I Love You
by Ashlyn S.*

WHISTLE RATTLE SONG

This project was made possible by the Bexar County Juvenile Probation Department, City of San Antonio Department of Arts & Culture, HEB, and the Shield-Ayres Foundation.

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Images courtesy of Canva.

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

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SHIELD-AYRES
FOUNDATION



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
DEPARTMENT OF
ARTS & CULTURE

FOREWORD



What you hold in your hands is a collection of poems by youth at the Cyndi Taylor Krier Juvenile Correctional Treatment Center in San Antonio. It is, in many ways, something of a miracle. Through the late fall of 2021 and early winter of 2022, poet Erica DeLaRosa and I ran writing workshops with students at Krier as part of Gemini Ink's Partner Classes program. We were the first enrichment program allowed back into Krier in person after the pandemic lockdowns, and it felt like starting anew.

Helping youth find their voice – that's what we're here for. And for many of our students, that really just comes down to listening to them, honoring their words, and opening doors to the work of poets they may never have heard of. All this voicing, within these walls, pushes at the edges – and it should.

This work of ours, and this work by our students, is part of a 20-year collaboration between Krier and Gemini Ink! It's work made possible through the remarkable Enrichment Team at Krier – Jessica Maupin, Joslin Rice, Jennifer Fowler, and Jayme Lyons. And from Gemini Ink – Florinda Flores-Brown, Anisa Onofre, and Alexandra van de Kamp. (It DOES take a village.)

In the strength of their voices and the power of their hopes, these students continue to inspire me. There is no shying away from the hard realities of their lives. Still, their writings are filled with a joyful tangling with language, meaning, and making selves! Erica and I celebrate them and are deeply grateful for the chance to share the journey with them.

Jim LaVilla-Havelin
Gemini Ink Teaching Artist
2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FROM JIM LAVILLA-HAVELIN'S WORKSHOP

Kay Veon.....	7
Daniel.....	11
Richard.....	19
Fable.....	25
Johnathan.....	33
Marcelo.....	34
Group Poems.....	35
Jim LaVilla-Havelin.....	38

FROM ERICA DELAROSA'S WORKSHOP

Lidia R.....	40
Emily G.....	44
Ashlyn S.....	46
Atarah H.....	50
Angela F.....	53
Orlaysia.....	57
Adreanna C.....	60
Julie M.....	63
Arianna B.....	68
Jonathan H.....	71
Ethan A.....	72
Gerardo S.....	74
Group Poem.....	76
Teaching Artist Bios.....	80



LOVE OF TOMORROW

Tomorrow I love you
Tomorrow I hug you
Tomorrow I kiss you
Tomorrow I miss you
Tomorrow I am without you!

PLACE AT NIGHT

Nights of... peaceful night people
Night where no night and
A lot of light!

YES

Yes, I believe
Yes, I have a knowledge
Yes, you knowledgeable man
Yes, you can

UNTITLED

When bacon is cooking
I hear the sound of oozing, oily juices
on the pan.

Smells so good you become hungry
to the point – will be
hungry like crazy,
you and my friend.

Meaty strips and pancakes
with all the biscuits
and you craving
the gravy
with a side of grape jelly.

The place you take it
is the dinner table
to face it and
taste it while you
digest it.

PUSH BACK

I'm so tired of disappointment.
I've had more than enough of bad fishes of the sea.
You can stop now with your constant struggle.
Give me a break from the struggle of love.
Just stop! Taking from me and my family.
Let me go for love, forsaken God.
I really don't need any more chains.
If you're finally finished, just let me say, this stay is insane.
In the end, I want you to think of me like this –
 Big fruit of sweet trees.

POEM OF DANCING IN JAIL

I was shakin'
and chanting new faraway languages
I want to make it
into dance get to the
peak of the talent of
us. To get famous I
chase it. Then I've been
chasing the fame
of all my day. It's the basic
thing, all normal – to let us make
and keep on chasing for a luxury place.

UNTITLED

I'm from a place
where only one
can shine
everybody hates
when you're on
your grind

I'm from Mexico
where food
is the best
but everybody
struggles to get
a check

the streets where I live
are dark and cold
I'm from a place where
home is the tone

PUSH BACK

I'm so tired of time.

I've had more than enough of time
to think about why

You can stop now with your constant – WHY DID YOU???

Give me a break from a cell.

Just stop! No, I won't tell.

Let me just stay to myself

I really don't need any more time. It just feels like hell.

If you're finally finished, just let me
say this to my mom.

In the end, I want you to think of me like this –
person who came up
from the wrong.

UNTITLED

On my last day here

I will tell me bros

I love them.

Hopefully

they make it

out the gutter.



UNTITLED

I wait in line for my tray-
it's the same every day
some of us come from
the dirt
some have been here for days
and for some of us
home
is coming our way

WHAT'S POETRY FOR, ANYWAY?

What's poetry for? What can it do?

Teach you.

Can it

Change you?

Or can it make you?

If it doesn't

set you free,

What can it do?

Can it keep you in?

MIRROR

Every morning I come in and
look at you, you look at me
back

and you show me
how I look.

You point out the little things
that I might
not see.

You might look at other people,
but you
reflect
me.

MIRROR IN THE DARK

You might feel alone as you
 look at the dark.
Only the light you can see from
 under the door.
Your room is so quiet
 with no one around.
You get happy as voices come
 closer and closer.

RICHARD

UNTITLED

Momma, forgive me. I know I'm wrong.

All I put you through, I know it
takes a toll.

I know you want me home,
I do too.

But I'll think about how to make up
for all I put you through.

I know I ain't perfect but
hopefully this time away
makes our relationship better

So I can make up for all the bad
with remorse

and our new relationship can
take course.

PUSH BACK

I'm so tired of waking up, seeing bricks.
I've had more than enough of these walls
to know I'm good enough.
You can stop now with your constant disrespect.
Give me a break from these staff and kids,
JUST STOP! Before I spaz out.
Let me go home to familiar faces and love.
I really don't need any more time behind these walls.
If you're finally finished with me,
just let me say this –
I ain't ever tryna see y'all face again.
In the end, I want you to think of me like this:
NOTHING if you ain't family
So I can leave this and go on
to the life I deserve.

WHAT'S POETRY FOR ANYWAY?

What is poetry for? What Can it do?
Can it help me graduate school?
Can it help me stop actin' a fool?
Or go home to good food.

If it doesn't set me free, what can I do?
Nothing.
It's just sum to do.

I have seen poetry sometimes work as a way to
speak your mind
and other times it just sits there and
and doesn't give you time.

It helps me remember my past, and I'm go home
and share my feelings.

Is poetry a net? NAH
a friend? Maybe
a color? NAH, a sound? yea!
Is poetry an animal, like perhaps
a pet cat?
Sometimes I wonder
about poetry.

WHO I AM

Who I am is why I keep making mistakes
but I want to give up because
I got what it takes
takes to be successful.
I'm gonna take myself far, far away
from the fake, the fear, and the violence
because I know who I am

and I'll end up back at the bottom
and it brings the fear
fear I'll end up like my dad

I myself am a dad
so I promise myself I'll give my daughter
my last
so I gotta be successful
because I see the look on people's faces
that don't care where they end up
and I know that pain

So Ima make it outta the ghetto
and be my own man
who I am is a person
who learns from his mistakes

UNTITLED

I was born in San Antonio
as a baby my momma said I was a crybaby
I grew up taught respect by the women
and how to hold up my chest by the men

I first witnessed death when my sister's dad
was put to rest. We mourned his death and
I had to see my momma depressed.

Having to see my momma trying her best
only wishing her kids the best
while supporting us by working and
coming home tired – my momma knew
I was trouble, but having to watch my
momma struggle –

I didn't think much about it.
I got taught new things and quit
school to join the hoodteam.
I was thuggin' to come by money,
that life

came to an end quick when
my girlfriend became my forever
and love
and she became the mother
and me the father
to our beautiful daughter
M.

GOD KNOWS

God knows I'm trying
trying to make it home
home where my family is
family that I would do anything for

God knows I made mistakes
mistakes that make me want to be saved
saved by God and be a better man

but God knows

FABLE

UNTITLED

ima always be on go til the day
that I'm gone

too many days I been in dat cell, yuh,
I been in that cell
don't know how but you come to my mind
I been thinking bout you every day and night
I been needing you, girl, right by my side
back & forward like some tug of war
when I'm in dat cell
she gon have her fun, but when I touchdown
we gon 1 on 1
wishing you hold it down til the day I arrive
always missing them days when you call me
like her window is tinted
cause she did me shady

yuh, I'm tryna find where her love at
she blockin her heart like a goalie acting
like she ain't even know me
like, dang, girl
who is she screwin'?
pick up the phone, what you doing?
like, dang, that's the way that you moving
I can't even lie
we need a sit down & talk
cause we started rough from the start
just give me your heart
let me know what

you got my heart beating, skipping lines
missing them days when you on my line

but in thankin my momma
she stay rockin thru the rain
& thunder

If I say that I got you
then you is my brotha
just know that I love you
like you is no other

they take one of mines
in these streets you gotta
survive,

you gotta play the right cards
gotta choose heads or tails
when you flippin the coin &
I'm chasin big dreams, yuh
I really been snoring
no father figure
I stood like the man in the house

& I had to get up & go get
it been locked in that cell
getting criticized when I'm
in the courtroom, yuh
I'm labeled a menace.

this is a story bout my pain
ion know if you feel the same
I'm only 15 tryna change the game
& chase my big dreams –
 ain't feeling what I'm sayin?
 then you ain't ever felt the pain

but look
yuh, mmm
see

it's the life I was raised
witnessed many things
my whole life
been ambition
15 years old on a mission
I been gone for a lil too long
 everybody just moved on
 they don't write me or nothin
 they all went ghost
 all of a sudden

I done took so many losses
I can't afford another one
locked up way too long
waiting for my release date to come
child protective services
took me away
from my loved one

I was color blind – I couldn't
see who was real and who
was fake
so I opened my eyes
remember them nights sleeping
sweaty, momma, ain't
had enough money
to go pay the lights

I done been thru the struggle
too many rainy days
me & my brotha
walk thru them puddles findin ways
to survive
12 years old, hopped off the porch.

NO ONE SEES ME

No one sees me because they can't hear me, and
people don't hear 'cause they can't
see me

No one can find me, because no one is looking
Hear me.

Listen to me,
and maybe you'll understand.

Here I am.

I see you.

Now, remember me as somebody.

FROM A LINE IN A POEM BY JOY HARJO

“Someone is always leaving and coming”
Like inhale and
exhale.

AFTER “FAMOUS” BY NAOMI SHIHAB NYE

I want to be as famous as music is to people’s ears.
I want to be as famous as the clothes on people’s backs.
I want to be as famous as oxygen.

TELEPHONE

You help me communicate with voices
that are familiar.
You may pick up, you may not.
Between me, you & the person
on the other line –
you're the first one to hear
what comes out my mouth &
the first one to hear
what I'm told.

MEMORY SANDWICH

I remember when my mom made me a grilled cheese sandwich.
I was sitting on my bed looking out the window
 at all the kids playing outside.
Two pieces of wheat bread,
 slathered with bacon and melted cheese
then, the grilled cheese sandwich garnished
 with bacon and egg.
I had Kool-Aid to drink.
Outside the window, all I could see
 was kids playing.
Inside the kitchen, I felt a nice beautiful smell.
I ate and drank and said
 Amen.

JOHNATHAN

ACROSTIC

Journey
Of
Holy
Nation
Always proud
To
Have
Amazing
Name

Brunswick
Brunswick

when I hold you you feel heavy and hard
when I put my fingers in you
it feels fitted
when I give you a spin
you look colorful

when you go down the lane - you glide

when you hit the wood
when I release you
you make a bang

when you spin into the pins
you go in strong
look strong

you're very fast
in the lane



I AM WAITING

After Ferlinghetti

I am waiting for my release date.
Here I stand, just waiting for me to go home.
 I'm still waiting until they let me
 go home.
Will it be worth the wait or will I waste my time?

I wait for home and home waits for me.

If I didn't have to wait anymore, I could move on.
In line here, waiting is like waiting
 for years.

I can't wait for when I make it rapping.
When I get to become famous, will it be
 worth all the waiting?
 You know, I'm waiting
 for cheers.

When I get to the very top, will it be worth
 all the waiting?

Every day I wait for another chance.
We're all waiting until we're full with riches.
You can just keep on waiting for more money.
 Waiting until my come up
 So tired of waiting
 till I touch down.

I can't wait for freedom.
And then, I'm waiting again, for

the final stage –
I'm waiting for better days and
I am waiting for love and
I'm still waiting for the day I'm home.

And I'm still waiting for my release date.

Here I stand, just waiting for my freedom.

HOPE IN HERE

When you lose hope you lose faith.

Hope in here? Hope is hopeless.

Be hopeful and you will be happy.

What hope can do is nothing.

When you lose hope you lose hope.

There's always hope and dreams.

In the darkness my hope is for being with my family.

In the darkness, my hope is for light to come.

Day after day I remember my baby girl's face.

Each morning I wake up with hopes for a good day.

What hope can do is help you, and if they're not high hopes
they can at least be low.

Be hopeful and you will be a better person.

In here, I hope for home and hope home hopes for me.

Day after day I remember when I lost hope, and each morning

I wake up with hope that I'm still alive.

Hope in here comes down to your being successful.

You can hope, and you can dream, and you can wish

all you want, but in here you just die inside.

What hope there is

I find in that the person I love stays alive.

Day after day I remember how much my family loves me.

If you don't have hope you just have yourself.

Hope in here - hope is to get out of Krier.

Staying free is my last hope.

**WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM MY STUDENTS
IN JUVENILE DETENTION**

something about fairness, though I'm not exactly sure what
the impenetrability of language for some from whom
 voice has been stolen
anger the fountain of words
arbitrariness and the fury it engenders
how kindness and caring become part of the place's
 mixed message
how my flag of solidarity waving from the sixties tatters
 in the face of this
some students' unbending sense of self
and some destroyed
that the whistle rattle song of the razor wire is not one
 they hear or listen to, no matter
 how vivid it is to those of us
 who walk out under it
nine years long enough to be meeting the younger
 brothers and sisters of
 my first students
and finally, finally after all this time, the bridge of
 sitting
 WITH
 them



LIDIA R.

PURPLE

Purple is the color of reminiscence.

Purple makes me happy.

Purple makes me sad.

Purple is my girlfriend.

She's magenta when she's happy.

Plum when she's sad.

I see orchids when she's anxious.

I see lilac when she's sleepy.

Purple is pain.

Purple is bruises and scabs from family fights.

Purple is love, sadness, and happiness.

Purple isn't my color,

but purple does all these things.

OUR EYES

Your eyes and my eyes are similar but so different.
Mine are dark black and brown.
Yours are a bright emerald green with light blue rims like the world.
My eyes are big and alive.
Your eyes are low lidded and sad.
My eyes hide emotions.
Your eyes express everything you feel inside.
My eyes and your eyes see the world as blurry
but we see each other clearly.
I see the pain in your eyes that no one else can.
You see in mine the words my mouth won't speak.
I see you and you see me.

DON'T BREAK ME

I offer you my heart.

There is not much left to give.

Don't break me.

Hold it like a butterfly, fragile and beautifully soft.

Keep it like a promise you'll never break.

It's a locked door I'm giving you the key to.

Don't break me.

Use it like a flashlight to see in my darkness.

Use this to understand the words I can't say yet.

Don't break me.

I AM FROM

I am from San Antonio, Texas.

From Jamie and Stacey.

And from summer and spring, where everybody's happy.

I'm from mini tacos, pozole, BBQ, & seafood cookouts
and from pogo stick jumping and wrestling with my brother.

I am from realizing everybody ain't real or loyal.

From trusting the untrustable and being hurt.

I'm about "Live in the moment," "You only live once," and "YOLO!"

And from the power to forgive and love those who've hurt me.

I am from being real, humble and determined.

From wanting to be loved the right way by someone
who understands what I'm worth.

I am from a city that has a river running through it-
San Antonio, Texas.

EMILY G.

LONGING

I am waiting...
for someone to be committed.
for someone to love me, exactly the way I am.

I am waiting...for loyalty.

I am waiting...
to get my own place... with furniture,
a place to sit,
to binge-watch Netflix
and feel independent and...
“like I did it!”

WANTS, NEEDS AND WISHES

I want loyalty.
I need love.
I've got to change myself.
I am a very kind person.
I wish I never used drugs.
I dreamed I was successful.
I once saw myself as a loser.
I wonder if I can make it.

A MOMENT IN TIME

Last night, laying in my bed...

I thought about my family and if I'm going home.

In 3 months, I'll be half way done with my time at Krier.

In a year, I'll be in college getting my degree and receiving my Certification of Cosmetology.

ASHLYN S.

BECAUSE I LOVE YOU

Ima offer
my love because it's all
I got to give
you.

Keep it when
life puts you down and
you gone need it to
pull you back up.
When nobody got you,
just know
I - got - you
because I love you.

I'on got much money
but I got
loyalty
like no other.
I'ma hold it down
when nobody else do,
because I love you.

Keep it,
for one day when you need it.
You gone' remember me
when life lets you down,
when 'dis streets call you,
just know,
I got you,
because I love you.

I'ma be here...
waitin',
I'ma be here forever.
I'ma be here to listen to your pain.
I'ma be here to love you
when...
you hurtin'...
to kiss you...
to give you the attention
you deserve,
because I love you.

It's all I have to give.
I'm here, no matter what,
when the world puts you down,
I'ma be here to pull you
back
up.
I'ma be here
when you need it most...
because I love you.

LAST NIGHT

Last night I stayed up late.
Last night I couldn't sleep.
I had hella thoughts on my mind.
Last night I thought 'bout my boo how he got out.
I'm waitin' to get out 2.
I got 2 weeks left.
Last night I read all my messages, thinkin' 'bout my boo.
Last night.

PRAYIN' 2 GOD

Prayin' 2 God to keep me safe especially at
night when people get hella tight.
Prayin' 2 God to stay clean, it be hard
but Imma be 'ight.
Prayin' 2 God I ain't making da same mistake.
Prayin' 2 God he'll give me another chance.
I know I done made sum mistakes but I just keep
Prayin' 2 God to keep my opponents away.
Realizin' the way I grew up ain't it.
From smokin' 'nd selling dope 'nd slangin' 'nd
tricks just to stay alive.
Prayin' 2 God he keep me safe when 'da
hatin' on me for stayin' straight.
Prayin' 2 God.

I'MA WAIT

I'ma wait for sum soul food.

I'ma wait for dat hot sauce.

I'ma wait for the day my Mama come back.

I'ma wait for a visit I'll never get.

I'ma wait to be with my boo.

I'ma wait on my freshman air force 1s.

I'ma wait for the day I'ma be with my Mama again.

I'ma wait for sh*+ I'ma never get.

I'ma wait to get out, locked up for something

...ain't even my fault.

I'ma wait.

ATARAH H.

RELEASE

I'm waiting to finally be free.
Free from my anxiety
Free from judgment of society
I'm waiting to be free from
this past version of me.



LATELY

Lately, I been thinkin'
Why things had ta be 'dis way
I know everything happen for a reason
I know Imma shine when it's ma season
So many rainy days
I don't know wat ta believe in
Since my baby got locked up
I been feelin' lost
'cause I need him
Siblings need me but drugs
make it hard to see 'dem
I'm hurt, broken, and abused
realizin' how green I was
make me
feel used
Realizin' my reality make my ego
feel bruised
I started out a fool fa love
It is what it is but it's hard
to forget what it was
Lately, I been thinkin' can things change if I pray?
Lately, I been thinkin' why things had to be this way?

INSIDE OF ME

I want love.

I need stability.

I've got a lot of disappointments.

I am determined not to let my past define me.

I wish some things hadn't happened.

My dreams always feel like nightmares.

I see myself as free-spirited.

And I wonder what they see when
they look at me?

TIME

Last night I thought about gettin' out.

3 months ago I didn't even see myself bein' locked up.

1 year from now, I'll be worried about a whole 'nother set of obstacles.

ANGELA F.

COMING HOME

I'm coming home to a family of six
that cares and loves me.

I'm coming home to freedom.

I'm coming home to Kane, my fat black dog.

I'm coming home to a soft white bed.

I'm coming home to long relaxing showers and my ocean breeze.

I'm coming home before July 20th, my 18th birthday.

I'm coming home to love.

I'm coming soon.

I PRAY

I pray every day.

Does he hear me?

Does he see the pain I go through?

I ask...why does he do things to hurt me and my family?

Are you there?!

Can you hear me?!

Answer me... please

please.

ME

I want true love.

I need family.

I've got to live life.

I am like a tree.

I wish to have my grandmother alive again.

I dreamed I was free like a bird.

I saw myself as a dead woman.

I wonder if I'll live past 18 years old?

PARTS OF ME IN SIMILES

My hair is wild like a snake.

My eyes are like hot fudge on a sundae - dark, dreamy, and you can dive into and get lost.

The lines on my hands are like vines that grow, grow, and never stop growing.

I'M WAITING

I'm waiting for freedom.
I'm waiting for March 4th.
I'm waiting for the grief to fade away
of when my grandmother passed away.
I'm waiting for homemade chocolate cake.
I'm waiting for 11:00.
I'm waiting for longer talks with my mom.

BLUE

Blue like my cell walls on a rainy day.
Blue,
like when I saw you in your black casket,
in your blue tux looking like you were sleeping,
so calm and handsome,
smelling like sadness and formaldehyde.
Oct. 31st was a cloudy day,
droopy and cold.
Blue like the blue hat,
I hate.
Blue.

APOLOGIES TO MY YOUNGER SELF

I'm sorry you never got to say goodbye to your aunt.

I'm sorry you're a drug addict.

I'm sorry Covid-19 took your grandmother.

I'm sorry you can't trust men.

I'm sorry you're blamin' yourself.

I'm sorry your girlfriend passed away.

I'm sorry you got locked up.

I'm sorry you have bad dreams when you sleep.

I'm sorry you never had a good birthday.

I'm sorry we have a F***ed up life!

WEAK CRIES

My voice is sick
Like the virus that's running
Through my chest.

My voice is a shadow that hides throughout the wind.
My voice is a key to the lock in (surrounding my) heart.

My voice swims throughout the waves and never fails to cave.

WHAT IF

What if I felt love all my life?

I probably wouldn't have a messed up mentality
sitting in juvenile.

When I make it out these shackles

everyone gon' look at me like

I'm a person out of the system.

still...

days and nights I pray to God and ask for forgiveness...

still...

CRAZY WANTS & NEEDS

I want freedom.

I need money.

I've got to make better choices.

I am a person who got labeled as a criminal.

I wish I never went back to the real me.

I saw myself as a juvenile flunkie.

I wonder...would I ever be the same, me.

DA EAST SIDE

I'm from the east where most of my people
come out the mud.

I'm from eggs and bread where
sometimes ain't nothing to eat.

I come from bricks and mud,
That's where I'm from.

ALL I SEE

Red is anger,
hatred
and ugliness.

Red is what you see on my left side.

Red is the blood that runs throughout my veins.

Red is a sickness that nobody can understand why.

My 4 reasons for red.

ADREANNA C.

A BIG MAC, HUG, AND CHISME

I want a big mac w/ extra cheese, mayonnaise, onions, tomato, lettuce, and bacon.

I am waiting for my loving grandma's hug.

I am waiting for warm hugs of protection from my grandma but she'll never return.

I am waiting for a text from Baby Jen for the latest chisme.

I am waiting to be sober.

My struggle is mixed with anger, sadness, and sometimes madness.

TO WANT, TO NEED, AND TO WONDER

I want a new start.

I need support.

I have to push myself.

I am an outspoken person.

I wish I could change my life around.

I dreamed that I was never in this situation.

I once saw myself as a druggie.

I wonder...will I ever make it?

THINKING...

Last night I thought about being safe.

I dreamed about being stabbed

and no one having my back.

It's funny how safety

can be found within four clinically blue walls.

In 3 months, I'll be doing my time at Krier

and I'll be thinking 'bout how I'ma accomplish my goals.

In a year, I'll be 18, in college and with an apartment.

And I'll be thinking about ...

what comes next?

JULIE M.

WAITING FOR THINGS TO TURN AROUND

I'm waiting for da fake to turn into da real
but I know dat ain't neva gon' happen.
I'm waiting for a Big Red and a bean and cheese.
I'm waiting for my charges to be dropped
and not worry about 'em no more.
I'm waiting to go home.
I'm waiting to go make Grandma proud.
I'm waiting for my Mama to love me more...
than she loves the dope.

RED

Red is my anger.

Red is the color I see when I close my eyes and I feel like I can't deal

with nothing around me
no more.

Red is the color of my knuckles
when I punch the wall...out of frustration.

Red is the heat that I feel on my face
when I'm tryna eat those bto's and gr's.

Red is my anger,
my sadness,
and frustration.

Red is something I feel everyday.

JM'S 210

I'm from 210 where you hear gunshots at night.
It's a nice place but some people just ain't right.
If you ain't reppin da right side
they might just take yo' life.
My Mama made me an' I thought we was livin' da good life.
One day I looked into her eyes an' even as a kid,
I could get that she had pain that was
building up inside.
I would ask her, "what's wrong?"
an' she would tell me that she's fine.
Little did I know,
she was doin' drugs that was eatin' her alive.
She wasn't there for me.
She ain't even care for me.
She love the dope more than she
loved me.
A dope fiend for a mother
but I still loved her like no other.
Pray that any angels I still have
hover
and shield her
when she's at the end of her road.

MARY

Mary,
you brought me home.
You bathed me.
You clothed me.
You fed me.
You made me feel better when I was sick.
You took me to school.
You never left me.
You loved me.

I grew up... took myself to school.
Got into fights.
Smoked weed.
Ran away.
Robbed people.
Stole cars.
You still loved me.

Got locked up for a week.
Weeks turned into months.
Now I'm almost 6 months in
and still got more to go.
When you need me the most. I'm not there.
I'm sorry I'm not there.

Ima make you proud one day,
Mary.

PRAYIN' WHEN THE END DOESN'T SEEM IN SIGHT

I know I ain't talked to you in a minute,
You watching me and you've seen that I've been sinnin', Grand-
ma.
You used to tell me...always to pray...
so I did.

I talked to you, God, every night an' every day.
I prayed for you, God, to take away the pain
that I was givin'.
Take away the drugs that my mama searched for and kept her
driven.
Why did you let my family get so bad?
Mama in & out of jail.
Grandma stressin'
'cause she may not be able to pay the bills.
Cousins cryin' cause their mama is going through this hell.
I remember that God gives his strongest soldiers
the toughest war to fight.
And the shields provided are not always what they seem
so, I'ma keep on prayin'
that one day he's gon' get us right.

ARIANNA B.

TO BE DIFFERENT

I want to be DIFFERENT.

I need support.

I've got to change.

I am a growing person.

I wish things were different for me.

I dreamed about my sister being okay.

I saw myself as an outcast.

I wonder how things are gonna be when I'm grown?

I AM FROM SOMEWHERE, WHERE LIFE CAN'T COME LONG

I'm from San Antonio, Texas.

From my grandma and my 4 aunts- Desiree, Mackenzie, Chassidy,
& Aubrey.

I'm about Summer, when we don't have to go to school,
and creamy shrimp alfredo, orange chicken, chow mein,
spaghetti, and tuna fish on a tostada with cilantro & lots of onion.
I have to come up from poverty.

Even with the struggle I have to make a living.

From my homeboy BN...he's never given up on me, through thick
& thin.

I'm from my Buzz Lightyear and Twister.

From my confidence and my challenge of forgiving...
it's hard for me.

I am from yelling to the world..."I am enough!"

And from my imaginary superpower of telekinesis- so I can read
how people are really feelin'.

I am from joining the Air Force and moving my family to safety.

LAST NIGHT

Last night...

I thought about how things are going
and how much longer I have here.

Last night...

I was worried.

Are things going to be different?

Last night I was dwellin' on my poor sick sister.

Sister, did you need me

home

Last night?

In three months...

I'll be reminiscing about my momma

thinking about my childhood

without all the drama

in three months.

In a year...

I'll be working,

seeking my growth,

try'na make a way

growing to be the person

I

want

to

BE...

in a year.

JONATHAN H.

SAN ANTO...WHERE I'M FROM

I am from San Antonio, Texas, Methodist Hospital.

From Mom, Dad, brothers, sister, Eddie, Javion, and my girlfriend
and summer because there's no school and longer days.

I'm from cheesy pizza, hot Cheetos & cheese, cookies & cream ice
cream, and cake.

From my PS4 and basketball and if you run don't look back.

From SpongeBob and my loyalty.

I am from the open air and its untouched, undisturbed essence
and the vastness I feel when it hits my chest.

I am surviving...getting my G.E.D. and getting out of my living
situation.

ME

My voice is like a smooth beat

like a warm breeze

like a miscellaneous tone

like a song when I speak

My voice is like capeing water.

My hair is soft cotton on skin

like a long curtain covering my face.

My hands are big as catcher's mitts so they can grip a ball.

Fast like a Ferrari 812 going 211 mi/hr.

My eyes are brown like a football flying through the air making a
touchdown.

Dark like this table I write this poem on.

ETHAN A.

MI VOZ

My voice is like Darth Vader's talking behind a fan
My voice is like sandpaper scratching wood
like a person who has come back from a concert
like a broken down car

My laugh is as loud as a bird's caw
like a car's ignition trying to start
like the innocence of a child feeling joy

ESTOY ESPERANDO

I am waiting to be able to walk the stage.
I am waiting to get my own car.
I am waiting to get back to Reno, Nevada.
I am waiting to get my own house.
I am waiting to see what it's like to raise a family.

THE MEMORY OF CHILDHOOD

I am from SA, Texas, February 15th at 3am.

From my Mom and friends.

From summer because I can go out a lot.

I'm from my grandma's rice and beans.

From Black Ops and toy cars.

From yelling at the highest point, "I made it! I did it!"

I'm from Tom and Jerry but mainly Tom because he was always going thru it.

From waking up to the smell of my grandma's food cooking.

I am from becoming a successful plumber.

GERARDO S.

WAITING...

I am waiting for my girl to come back.

I am waiting to go home and eat.

And I'm waiting for my community service to be completed.

Waiting to get my work done.

I'm waiting to work out

to drive my own car

to hug my girl.

And I am waiting to get school fulfilled

and to start my life again.

MY OFFERING

I offer these thoughts to you
since I have nothing else to give.
You are just like a gift
on Christmas but the best one.

You're my smurf,
my red rose
your scent
your hugs
I love it all...they feel like home.

Take these thoughts and embrace them like a blanket
to keep you warm.
To make you feel safe when I'm not around and it rains.

My thoughts are all I have to give.
I would trade my thoughts
for your touch, your hugs, and your kisses.
Remember...

I love you.

GROUP POEM

by Adreanna, Arianna, Ashlyn, Atarah, Orlaysia, and Emily

TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE

I.

When you take a look at me, tell me what you see?
Is it a picture of what you think,
you may know of me?
Do you think I'm ugly?
I'm a bad person?
Or think, I'm never gonna make it?
If you only knew, **I wished you saw the good in me
and how successful I long to be.**

II.

When you take a look at me, tell me what you see?
Do you see loyalty?
Piercing... me?
Brave... me?
An outgoing and forthcoming... me?
Or do you see?
A guerrera, a warrior
LOUD! wishin' she was quiet
& who's been through a lot
I want you to see the loyalty
that lies within me
and most of all,
loyalty makes a difference to me.

III.

When you take a look at me, tell me what you see?
When you look at me I feel like all you see is a...
an ugly, colored girl.

I'd like to know if you could make
it a day in my world?
Before you say that chu can
I need you to understand
I've been thru a lot.
The inside of me died when my step-
Dad got shot.
I come off as mean
but aggressiveness is just my shield.
Seen a lot of people switch
I stood alone in that field
When you talkin' 'bout me and plantin' that
envious seed
I hope you tell 'em **Imma rare breed.**

IV.

When you take a look at me, tell me what you see?
Do you see an F up in the streets?
Someone who smokes weed?
Or do you see me?
Upfront, roaring, and brilliant.

V.

When you take a look at me, tell me what you see?
An alcoholic?
Someone who's annoyingly brazen?
You may think you know everything about me but who I am is
an intelligent young woman
with a good personality,
who just happens to be candid
like me.

VI.

When you take a look at me...what do you see?

An outcast?

Mean?

Aggressive?

Can't you see I'm very vulnerable and friendly?

Independent and hardworking?

I hope you can see beyond what you perceive of me
and **see the real me.**



TEACHING ARTIST BIOS

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.

Jim LaVilla-Havelin is the author of five books of poetry. The most recent, *West, poems of a place* (Wings Press, 2017) chronicles and celebrates his move to the country, after a lifetime of city dwelling. His chapbook, *Tales from the Breakaway Republic* was published by Moonstone Press in 2022. An educator, editor, and community arts activist, LaVilla-Havelin is the Poetry Editor for the *San Antonio Express-News*, and the coordinator for San Antonio's National Poetry Month activities. He was awarded the City of San Antonio's Distinction in the Arts for Literary Arts in 2019. A creative writing teacher for almost fifty years, LaVilla-Havelin teaches at programs citywide, from the Cyndi Taylor Krier Juvenile Correctional Treatment Center for Gemini Ink's Partners Program, to the Go Arts Program for senior citizens through Bihl Haus Cultural Arts.

TEEN 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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