



IF I WAS A BIRD

Poems from Krier

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

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Foreword

I've been working with young writers who are residents of the Cyndi Taylor Krier Juvenile Correctional Treatment Center for ten years now. Dreams and hopes and aspirations balance with nightmare, trauma, and hopelessness. Erica DeLaRosa and I have shared poems, prompts, templates, conversations, and stories with our students.

There are some stories, hurts and horrors, furies, and disintegrations that must be told. Held inside with no expression they are corrosive. They are self fulfilling and self condemning. Giving expression to the full range of rage, joy, self, loss, grief, memory, and sometimes even hope, the work of these writers is nuanced, thickly textured, and filled with slow dawning of knowing, understanding.

These are voices we all need to hear. These are poets who affirm their lives even as they mourn their losses. And if they are, at Krier, "inside just as happy," as Elijah puts it in his acrostic poem, it may be because someone listens, cares about them, and struggles with them to ready them to go back into their world.

In my world what I can do is work with them, read to them (Langston Hughes, Martin Espada, Nikki Giovanni, Robert Hayden, Lucille Clifton, Carmen Tafolla), and whenever I read my own poems at readings in "the free," read one or more of their poems aloud so everyone can know their voices, their lives. And I can return to them.

None of this would be possible without the caring help, support, and belief in our program on the part of Jessica Maupin, the Enrichment Team, everyone at Krier, Gemini Ink's Partner Classes Program, and the whole Gemini Ink staff. And certainly none of it would have been possible without our students – willing and reticent, angry and demanding, filled with tales just waiting for someone to listen.

Jim LaVilla-Havelin

Teaching Artist

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I AM WAITING

GROUP POEM / FROM FERLINGHETTI

I am waiting to be successful in life.

 You know I'm waiting for some plays.

I am waiting to be free from
 the system.

In the dark, I am waiting on the devil.

Without a sound, I am waiting to creep up and blow.

Against all odds, I am waiting to see
 the better me.

Along with everyone else, I am waiting for freedom, and
 I haven't stopped waiting for hope.

Day after day I wait for tomorrow.

Each day I wake up and wait for my brother in heaven
 to come back.

I am waiting for real love.

In the dark I am waiting for guidance.

We're all waiting to enjoy life.

I am waiting for my day to come.

...and I will be waiting for me to make six figures.

Against all odds, I am waiting to make it to the top.

I am waiting to get my freedom back,

 still waiting
 for
 my freedom.

I am waiting to graduate and
 be
 something in life.

Patiently, I wait for me to change my ways.

THE MITCHELL AFTERNOON CLUB

A GROUP PIECE written from the responses of the individual prompts

By: Daivior, Carlos, Miley, Tomas, Mario E., Mario M., Genesis,
and Davonta

DAVONTA:

I am ...

MILEY, DAIVIOR, TOMAS, MARIO, MARIO & DAVONTA:

FUNNY.

CARLOS AND DAIVIOR:

Outgoing...

TOMAS & MARIO:

Chill

TOMAS:

& cool

MARIO:

Loyal y Mejicano

GENESIS:

At times grimey

MARIO:

Relaxed

GENESIS:

Light & independent

DAIVIOR:

Careful

DAVONTA:

A Lady's Man

ALL:

INTELLIGENT.

ALL:

WE LOVE...

DAIVIOR:

My People &

DAIVIOR, TOMAS, CARLOS, DAVONTA:

MONEY

MILEY & MARIO:

CAKES.

MARIO:

& soda

MARIO:

Cars...

& Family

GENESIS:

Makeup and

Jay.

DAVONTA:

Travel

DAIVIOR:

Who fears...

CARLOS:

Being broke

MILEY:

Not getting cake

TOMAS:

Rats

MARIO:

Nothing.

GENESIS:

No one

DAIVIOR:

The police

DAVONTA:

The pigs,

The Jakes

And all the snakes

ABRAHAM F.

POETRY

What is it?

So many things to say.

It makes so many different emotions zoom through my brain.

Joyous, Sad, Happy, Mad.

It can make me feel many ways in just 2 lines.

It hits my soul like a jolt of lightning.

It confuses my mind like a maze with no end.

But I still run the maze, because I love the words

it likes to play.

Poetry, so many things

that I can say,

but the bolt of lightning is like adrenaline

and I'd like to feel

that feeling for just another day.

ACROSTIC

Anxiety, all I'm having behind these cells.

Buried beneath these walls, all alone.

Roommates trying to support me, get me through my time.

And I still feel all alone.

Hatred for myself for the choices I have made.

Although I am wondering if change is what I can do.

My thought is that the end is always the same—is this
my last time behind these walls.

AIDIN S.

WHAT CAN POETRY DO?

I have no clue
that's why I'm asking you.

Poetry helps me write my journey
my journey of danger
my journey of growing up too fast

What can poetry do?
It helps me soothe
It helps me put words to this pain
of my journey, my journey of
losing people I love

my journey of
not being enough
not having enough

What can poetry do?
I have no clue.
I'm just going with the mood
the mood that I'm trying to soothe
but
I don't know

That's why
I'm asking you.

ANGEL M.

इंतज़ार में — **INTAZAAR MEIN***

A poem inspired by I Am Waiting by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

I'm waiting for forgiveness.

I'm waiting for love.

I'm waiting for joy.

I'm waiting for ...Her.

I'm waiting for peace.

**Intazaar mein translates to "waiting" in Hindi.*

ARIANNA B.

FAMILY

My so-called father:

every time I ask to talk
you tell me to leave, walk.

I ask why
you say—GO, bye.

you yell, scream, and fight.

you're big

I'm small

but physically

not mentally or emotionally

don't deserve my love

but still think you earned it

UNTITLED

by the time i'm 10

i'm mentally and emotionally done.

childhood,

such a tough world.

a tough world when your childhood wasn't about being a child

childhood, not playing with dolls, but drinking alcohol

childhood, not going to school, but skipping because on the way

to the bus it was nothing but screams of "HELP."

A childhood that wasn't average, but chaotic.

Now you think,

ADULTHOOD,

is it better or worse?

UNTITLED

Four walls, Razor wire, Only locked doors.

Momma ain't gotta car, can't even see her face.

My mind do nothing but race.

They ask, Why are you sad, why you crying?

but i don't want sympathy.

i'm mad, i'm just sad.

They say, 8 months? Eat it.

So sure as it is,

might as well.

from **TEMPLATE / INSIDE/OUTSIDE**

Inside here, all there is is bugs.

Outside, in the free, I have lashes.

Before Krier I was free.

Now I'm stuck.

The free is full of weird females.

Inside you get

cold food.

Now, I think I'll do this funky program.

Back then, I would party.

Sometimes I wonder what's happening

in the free. And sometimes I

wanna take everything back.

UNTITLED

Three questions I need

to ask myself

when do I get my childhood back?

how will I get home?

and

did I learn my lesson?

AUSTIN R.

QUESTIONS I NEVER ASKED MY DAD

why wasn't you never there
why did you leave me
why did you never change
for me, my brother and sisters

I'd like to tell my mom thank you
for never giving up on me

Thank you for always being here for me

Thank you for supporting me

Thank you for teaching me everything
nobody else would

Something for my brothers and sisters

I'm thankful for you being on my side

I'm thankful for you helping me with
emotional problems

To my older brother

thank you for teaching me
what our dad is supposed to do

Long Live my Brother Ruben

see you when it's my time to go.

DOING IT FOR YOU

me and my brother and friends having
a good time when we heard

SKRTT

and a car coming with headlights off
my mind is puzzled when I heard
pops that sound like loud fireworks
when I see my brother ducking and firing
when I hear swoosh like a bug
past me so fast and
sounding like New Years all over again

till I see my brother fall
my mind so cluttered of thoughts
when I run to my brother I see blood
coming out of his mouth
and head

I'm so angry like if I'm the devil
all I can see is hate
revenge feels like a waterfall
coming out my eyes

can't hear nothing but my thoughts
asking

why my brother
why him

then it's all over

using pills to numb
the pain
telling God to take care
of my brother
and the answer I get is
he's in
a better
place

til I see him again
long live Ruben

from **TEMPLATE / INSIDE/OUTSIDE**

Inside here, all there is is time.

Outside, in the free, I have everything I needed.

Before Krier I was

thuggin' and slidin'

and now

I'm locked

in a box.

The free is full of hate.

Inside you get bored and tired.

Now I think I'll end up

dead

locked up

or

just can't be found

In the free I think of my homies and my family.

Days and days in Krier

what I have is time—

it never ends.

Sometimes I wonder, what's happening in the free,

And sometimes I want to go

back to the free.

Getting from then to now, I had to go through

struggle and sacrifice.

UNTITLED

Freedom is like money because it's hard to keep it.

Money is like freed, because I sometimes lose it

Freedom is like one because some people have a lot of it

and some people don't have none of it

Freedom is like money because some people just want to

waste it.

Money is like freedom because you need it to live.

A 180

I went from living in a really bad place &
the very long sad nights of crying & screaming.

Being hurt,

being left out,

bullied,

stepped over & lost my friends and family.

Seeing my mother cry

to making money;

living a better life;

being no one's door mat;

and having things I've never had before.

Doing things I've never done before; making better choices and
relationships.

Basically, trying to be a better me.

POWER

I believe

I believe in the power of the words

I speak.

I pray to God, myself or my grandma.

I pray when I'm grateful or need to talk to someone.

I hope that when I pray,

whatever I pray for

can happen.

Once a week, I pray a cluster of words linked together with intention.

Last Friday, the sun was rising as I spoke.

Not just one but several voices invoked

for safety on the

upcoming journey—

no accidents or

negativity.

GRANDMA

Not a day goes by...

that I don't think about you.

More and more I have to accept the truth

and honor your legacy to the youth.

Grandma, you're still with us,

but not literally here but in our hearts.

SOME PEOPLE NEVER CHANGE

life goes on
day by day
starting from a baby
then a successful adult...maybe
but there's only one thing...
some people never change
started when you were 14
in and out of juvie
hoping things get better
but not trying surpass
the past
some people never change

now you're 34 in the same boat
trying to self improve
but not actually striving
all these lies
all these broken promises
even after your own mother dies
some people never change

CARLOS R.

CARLOS

...myself

who feels...

nothing

who fears...

nothing

who is

a resident of San Antonio.

THE BEAST IN ME

As I, Daivior, sit and stare at the light in the sky

I wonder who understands me?

Who sees me?

I feel as a shadow when I pass

No one sees or hears me

As I pass.

I feel it's just me against everyone

In front

As my body shakes in fear

As my next battle steps up

I'm shaking,

Scared,

Wondering ...

if

I will fail.

THE MAN INSIDE

lights are flashing
people are yelling
I just wanna get away
from it all
I close my ears
& my eyes
in the zone
and imagine a place
I wanna be

I beg
and tell my scared body
it's okay
keep moving
as the men behind me attempt to slay me
no one's tryna
pay me
I feel as if they're
tryna play
me

the man inside me
keeps me calm

as I fight and try to get solved
I try not to get involved
body shaking
blood racing
feel like they're
chasing me
I don't know if it's tryna make me
I really feel it wanna break me
as I move fast
it sticks my back
I got fast in
try to get pass
trying not to crash
tryna put it in the past
I sit
and wonder
where I'm at

DANNY M.

A SON OF MARS*

I'm the son of Jesus and Lupita...

un diablito chaparrito

intolerant and chill at times.

I'm about the outdoors, ball and my brothers.

Most times I feel okay

but please keep away

those tests.

I'm M. like my Dad and Mom.

**M. is a derivative of "Mars," the Roman god of fertility and war.*

Surname origin: Spanish.

CONFESSION

I don't pray.

It don't got power.

I don't believe in words spoken

and poof

they're awoken.

Nothing happens.

One time a year,

on my birthday,

I speak one word

out

if I'm alive.

LEO

RIP Leo.

It's been a minute since I've said "hi"

You're at your grave.

I hope you're doing good up there.

Leo, I miss you.

You're still in my heart.

You took care of me when I was a baby

right from the start.

You're in a better place now.

Rest in peace always.

SPACE

*As I, DavontA,
sit and stare
at the light in the sky.
I wonder...
...who understands me?
...who sees me?
I,
like a dog
I like to maintain my business
and I'm scared of heights
and I got a lot of
fright.*

#2

Music
Water
Book
Phone
Drawing board
& airpods.
My backpack would hold all these things
there is no book
that describes me
because can't nobody feel
and do exactly what
I'm doing or working on.

ELIJAH A.

from TEMPLATE

I want freedom
I need some help.
I've got a lot of time.
But I really want
 less time locked up.

All I need now is a chance.
I've got some money and more rank.
Sometimes I know
 that what I want
 is not good
 for them.

...and you tell me you think I need help,
but I've got locked up.

If I had everything I want,
I'd still want
more money.

I guess
 for the future
I need
 a clock
 time
 and
 walls
but
officers is all I've got.

Wanting only ever
got me
 locked up.

ACROSTIC

Elijah

Left

Inside

Just

As

Happy

WHERE DOES HATE COME FROM

In response to Vincent Valdez's THE CITY

hate comes from people see u winning and they want
what you got—so they hate

if people had everything you had they'd probably
still hate.

when i was in them cars
people were sliding
trying to put me away.

now that I'm in jail and put away
people still wanna hate.

but I guess the life I live is built with hate.

guys fighting with guys, that stuff is really lame.

when I got shot—
that's when I saw real hate
I was in the hospital bed wailing
looking at the clock
and people came, and locked me away.

From TEMPLATE / INSIDE/OUTSIDE

Inside all there is is time

Outside, in the free, I have clips
hanging off my waist.

Before Krier I was hospitalized; Now I'm locked Away.

The free is full of hate. Inside you get rank.

Now, I think I'll be locked away.

Back then, I would not be put in this place.

In the free I think of sliding in the day.

Days and days here in K, what I have is
time and days.

Sometimes I wish I wasn't put away.

Getting from then to now

I had to go through
struggle outside

in the rain.

A SIMPLE PRAYER

I pray you get out soon, brother.

I pray that you're okay inside.

I'll be waiting for you *in the free*.

PRAYER #2

Cuz,

I hope you're okay.

I hope you didn't suffer

the day you left us.

Most of all, I hope you're in a better place

up there with God.

ENRIQUE M.

KIKÉ

Enrique

caring,

funny,

and annoying.

A son who loves his dog, Bruser.

Who gives food to those who need it.

Who fears heights.

Who would like to see...too many things to name.

Who longs for space with his thoughts, alone.

Resident of the Westside.

From TEMPLATE / INSIDE/OUTSIDE

I want to go home.

I need bbq.

I've got 4 days left,

but I really want a pancake plate.

All I need now is food.

I've got some hours left and more

food to eat.

Sometimes I know

that what I want is an

OREO

cake.

And you tell me I need to not

think about food,

but I've got a lot of food

to eat,

soon.

If I had everything I want,
I'd still want
a McGriddle and hash brown
with jelly.

I guess, for the future, I need
to think before I do something,
and not
just do it.

My family is all I've got
Wanting only ever
got me
locked up.

UNTITLED

Poetry helps me say what I
wish I could tell my father
but why bother, no one has been
in my shoes or these chora blues.
All I feel is blue, numbness and emptiness
Maybe if he was here, but he ain't so till
the day we meet again, I shed these tears
And all I can hold onto is our memories,
till we meet again. You'll wipe these tears.

GENESIS—IN THE BEGINNING

Genesis

Independent, peaceful, active, light

Sister of my siblings

Who loves makeup, food and sleep

Who feels annoyed, tired, nosey

Who needs nothing

Who gives too many chances and nothing

Who fears crocodiles, snakes and bugs

Who would like to see Hawaii, the whole world and... myself.

Resident of San Antonio.

THE WAYFARER'S INSTRUMENTS

This hand
carries a bag
with clothes to move
and at times food & make-up
and music to groove.
Sometimes heavy like a sack of sand.
The perfect pack for a wanderer.

GYPSY T.

ON STANDBY

a poem inspired by I Am Waiting by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

I am waiting for the day of the demise
the day I can stop time and realize what is and isn't mine.
I am waiting for the day when the chaos goes silent...
no commotion in sight
tryna fight
for what's right.
But, what if what's right isn't really right?
Full stories are never told.
Easy to preserve and believe what you're shown.
This world is dark and cold.
Always love you.
You'll forever be alone.
Are you gonna be the normal font?
Or are you gonna stand out—BOLD?
Work a 9 to 5
and do everything you're told.
Sometimes it's okay to break the rules
But it's never okay
to
cheat
the code.

A FIRE BURNS WITHIN

I'm ticking...

waiting to explode.

Sadness inside me turned

Into ANGER and RAGE!

I've seen many fall in

just

one

day

Should I hate myself for the things I have done?

Is there really a man up above?

And if so, who am I not to be crucified

...for all the times I have lied

...for all the times making Mommas cry

I'm from Rain City.

The streets raised me in so many ways.

Momma, I'm the one to blame for

letting cut my sadness in rage.

I have blood on my finger tips.

My time will come

so if there is a god...

I will not be sent up above,

PROOF.

JAELEEN D.

I AM JAELEEN

I'm that curly haired, short but sturdy build with brown eyes
that can give mean shade.

I'm the sister of Anique and Makayla;
who loves calabaza and feels at peace with family.

I'm about unconditional love and fear of losing anybody else.

Who longs to see her fallen ones "one more time".

I am a resident of El Paso, Tejas.

UNTITLED

Poetry can help me
think, and
feel, and
see, and
hear, and
burn lead, and
twist, and
turn, and
snap, crackle, pop, and
it tastes like rice krispy treat, and
I miss those. I used to eat them with my mom and
my sister in 2013, and
2014, and
2015, but
not 2016, or
2017, and
especially not now because
It's been 10 months with no
mom and no
sister and no
rice krispy treats or
pulp fiction or
pineapple soda

UNTITLED

Justice is not served in the Jesters Court.

Air-tight cells are no resort.

Death delivered, baby stork.

Illicit drugs, and 2 Newports.

No return and No remorse.

TRUE STORY

people ask me why I'm [REDACTED]
and people ask me why I'm made

See—I was riding around with goof,
plus me and my brother was moving loose.
It was early so I thought we was straight.

Too sad we didn't peep the play—
shots going off
blood splashed
on my face

My cousin wasn't moving,
blood spilling
out his face.

My brother
out the window
thank god he straight
then he fell in my lap

Brother, you straight? He was bleeding man,
my brother got shot.

It wasn't over; they still sending more shots—

Man, I guess that's it.

This is where we die.
Let me just send some back
one more time.

Then it got quiet:
my brother in my arms.

Omar told me he love me
stay strong
then
he stopped
breathing.

I couldn't believe it.
My brother was gone.
Man,
this crazy, my
brother
just
died
in my arms.

IF I COULD CHANGE ONE THING, I'D...

If I could change one thing, I'd
change how I be feeling
all day every day
I just feel sad and so much anger
and I can't control my temper
I be ready to use my gun,
but never ready to use my brain
ever since that day everything changed

people say I'm who to blame
like, damn, that was my blood
that was my dawg, that was my twin
my best friend

and people acting like they hurt
and talking 'bout they sliding
it's been 6 months going on 7
and nobody died yet

but it's cool they just don't know
I'm on my way, I'm coming home

free me mr. walk down complete
the mission.

UNTITLED

Poetry is how I speak my mind
and talk about my life
 so much things I've been through
 that's hard to think about
 but poetry helps me talk about it

Sitting in my room writing poetry
I just can't put my pencil down
It's like dem blacks I can't stop smoking
 and when I'm thinking bout my brother
 is when I really speak my mind
 cause I'm locked up all alone
 and have nobody to talk to

And when I do talk to staff
I feel like they don't listen
 but I met poetry
 and started writing
 bout how I be feeling

INSIDE CTK

inside here, all there is is time being wasted
and good people like mrs. frye and mr. castillo
who wanna see you do good

Outside, in the fest, I have family and friends,
and the devil and his demons after me

Before Krier I was one of those demons
now I'm a youngin tryna make it
and play ball

The free is full of death and hard times
Inside you get anger, hurt and
more problems

Now I think I'll just make it to play ball
or make it in the rap game
and set my family for life
and shout mrs. frye and mr. castillo
out on tv
show them that I made it

and thank them for those talks
we had
pay them back with lots of money
or put them on a house
on the hills

Back then I would spin and get revenge
or maybe throw my life away
by being dead or in jail

And

I pray I can make it to the top
cause I really just been going through
a lot
I got
put in this cycle—

It's bout time I break the mold.

FREEDOM BOOK

sitting in my room
thinking about my freedom
on how it got taken away
and as time flies by
It's 'bout time I touch down

and I been nervous, but I'm ready—
ready to see my people
and ready to visit my brother
to tell him how things been going
and how hard it is

without him

and how sorry

I am

But, it's cool
I know you straight
and I'm gon always keep
your name alive

Yeah, I'm always going to be hurt
and I'm always gon have anger
but I pray I don't
slip up
or let my anger take control
and end up in the feds.

but it's time I shack right back
and put my family
on the map.

JAZIYNN R.

EAGER

a poem inspired by *I Am Waiting* by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

I am waiting for my probation to be over with.

I am waiting for school to be over too.

I am waiting for summer to begin!

I am waiting to graduate.

I am waiting for my last report.

And I am waiting to go home and go to sleep.

JULIAN F.

UNTITLED

Just cause the sun shining
Don't mean that it's ok outside
Just cause you see me smiling
Don't mean that I'm ok inside.

Going at it all wrong
Can't remember when it was alright
Momma crying, telling me—son, change
Yo _____ing life.

Knowing I can't sleep at night
knowing that my momma crying

UNTITLED

if i was a bird i would fly so high
just so I can forget the pain
i have inside

if i was a snake i would curl up
in a ball
just so i can leave all the
problems i've caused

sometimes i wish i was locked
in a cage
just so i wouldn't bring
any more pain

sometimes i wish i was far far away
just so i can live day by day
but the life i live day by day
is the life i will not be
able to change

UNTITLED

when i first came to Krier
i thought it sucked
i'll rather be at ty than here stuck
but the longer i been here
i realized it's not so bad
they're just tryna give me
a life i never had

teach me right from wrong
an' put me on the right track
just so i can grow up
an' be better than my dad

the time here at Krier
goes so fast, days come an' go
so i gotta think fast
what i wanna be in life
an' nothing that's bad

so thanks to Krier
I'm back on the right track

UNTITLED

Why did you leave me

when I was a youngin

You should of stayed

at the crib instead of leaving

with yo homeboys

Know that you're dead

I wish that

you wasn't

UNTITLED

lil bro
got locked up
gave me time to think
started hearing in the free
my little brother tryna be like me
asking my friends for guns and weed
my friends told me

Damn, that shit hurt me.

They told him no,
but he said he just tryna be in the gang like me.
Damn, what have I done to him—
he's tryna keep guns with him.

Just like when I was a little kid.
Damn, I have to change. He can't be like me.
getting in shootouts and selling weed.
That's why I got locked in.

I don't want him to be like me.
I gotta change
 before he follows
 the same steps
 as me

UNTITLED

Poetry is different for everybody

people think it's a game

but it's not a game

it has a lot of meaning

to it

you just gotta open your head

and your soul

just let it make you feel

some type of way

KEVIN R.

ANTICIPATING

A poem inspired by I Am Waiting by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

I'm waiting for my hours to be over.

I'm waiting for MY LIFE to START

...and waiting for my car.

I'm waiting for my check to come in.

And I'm waiting for mere work.

KIMBERLY R.

FROM HONDURAS TO ANTARCTICA

Red, black and white

I am the sister of Nuan.

Who loves her phone, music and makeup.

At times I'm confused and give undeniable chances
to many who do not deserve them.

Heights and bugs are
not my chums.

Food, friends, and family
are in my top three that mean everything to me.

My roots extend from Honduras to, one day, Antarctica.

But for now,

I call San Antonio home.

A BIG POCKET

Pockets

to put your hands in when you're nervous

to carry a little pebble found on a beach

to place my phone and airpods in

or the small vial of perfume I use only on special occasions

a place to hide my piece of gum for fresh breath, a charger

or lipstick.

the spot that speaks poetry when unknown treasure is found

after months of searching

LILY M.

SCHOOL ANGST

A poem inspired by I Am Waiting by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

I am waiting for the kids at my school
to stop calling me **emo**
just because I wear black everyday.

I am waiting for my anxiety...

... **to stop**

so I can eliminate inappropriate drawings to spur from my hands.
drawing things
that many would deem inappropriate (a bloody knife).

I am waiting for the kids at my school
to stop laughing at unbecoming words
in a different tone of voice.

I am waiting for the snitches to stop talking
and for ...
silence
to ring throughout the hallway
at school.

WHAT I SEE

HEB Graffiti

& houses that don't look pretty.

That can be the same

for people too.

The inside doesn't always match the outside.

But we get preoccupied with the two—

smoke & mirrors

thinking they are true.

Instead of getting a clue.

I wished we remembered that

when we think about one another.

A story lies beyond the cover.

MARIO E.

MARIO

Mario

Italian by origin which means “manly”.

Mainly, when I look at my shadow

I think...

Mario...

Funny, rude, anti-social, & respected

Brother to 1 little brother and 2 littler sisters.

Who loves cars, money and sports.

Who needs money, cars and food.

Who fears snakes and dogs.

Who would like to see his coach 1 more time.

Resident of the Five P.

SURVIVAL KIT OF THE FITTEST

To send a text,
Listen to music
or google...my phone.
When I'm missing home...
a pic of Mom
and one of Coach
who gave me a talk
and a note
that I still tote around in my wallet.
My rosary to ask for and say prayers
when I need them.
A charger for the phone so
I never feel that alone.
And money
because it's hard to get around without any.
...Mario's survival kit.

MARIO M.

MARIO

Mario...

chill & quiet

M

LIKE WATER

Music

Water

Family

my phone & charger

gum

in a backpack

held together

like family

...important and vital...

to me...*Mario M*

MELVIN M.

A SHORT PRAYER

Dear Emilio,

How are you bro? It's been a minute since we last talked.

I miss you, fam. I'm doing good now.

There's something that's been on my mind.

I think about it often.

Bro, I just wished I was with you on that night.

Love,

Flaco

A SINNER'S CRY

God,

I'm sorry for the sinner that I chose to be.

I'm sorry for the drugs and the people who
corrupted me.

I'm sorry for the people that I've hurt.

God please don't leave me.

I bow down on my knees.

I know if I repent,

you'll set me free.

COURT DATE

The days go by faster and faster.

May the 2nd approaches and
so does the question of my freedom.

Should I give up?

Or keep on fighting "these neds" ?

They don't care...

to them...

I'm just another criminal.

MILEY S.

MILEY

Chill & short

Sister of Sarah

Who loves social media, going out & food

Who feels calm & tired.

Who needs space & being alone.

Who gives encouragement

Who fears spiders

Who would like to see my friends

Resident of the Northside

M.S.

TO BE ALRIGHT

M.S.'s Kit

music, phone, perfume

airpods, make up & gum.

It may not be a lot to many

or significant to some, but

these are the things I need

to be alright.

IT DIDN'T STOP

Moms kept stressin'

i kept goin'

back to the situation

 back to the cage

 back to the hood

back to the "friends"

 moms thought were

 no good.

It didn't stop

 remember it started

 when I was in fourth grade

It didn't stop.

 remember my first on lock

 i felt my heart drop

 it's crazy when you're

 in your cell

 thinking

what's the time

but when you look at the clock

 all you hear and think is

 tick tock

It didn't stop

SLIPPED

My freedom was in

the palm of my 2 hands

it slipped away

and it all went bad

the voice I keep hearing

tells me to look back

but in my mind

I know that I

can't cuz

if I

look

back

I might

just

relapse.

THE WAY DOWN

The whole way down
I was thinking
one thing
If nothing lasts forever?
then, what can that mean
we can't live
happily
ever
after
in a
dream.

If I wake up
will it
stay
as
it
seems?

My mind keeps racing
I'm surprised
I can think,

And the whole
way down
that was
all I could
think.

WHAT POETRY CAN HELP ME DO

Poetry helps

Poetry soothes the beast
so the beast does not feed
off my anger

the fights, the nightmares
all flow in this paper. My anger
My sadness. I can't believe all this happened—

Locked in the cage
Starting to think anger makes tragic happen
feeling dizzy
my emotions keep spinning
Just like the world.

Now
My words just keep spilling
just like a waterfall
just like the snow
just like the leaves that fall

And trees grow.

WHAT'S POETRY FOR?

It's not a bore,
tells you more
about you
and what you could do
leave your stuff on the floor
and open the poetry door

oh yes, it's not a bore
it lures you in to the very end
your opportunity to make
a new friend

what's poetry for
is it a secret made for keeping
or is it
a voice made for speaking

don't fight it
or hide it

what's poetry for
to understand more

once you open that poetry door

Oh, what's
poetry
for?

RANDY L.

RANDY

Randy...

short, antisocial, serious yet mellow.

Son of Priscilla.

Who loves basketball, music, and food.

Who feels happy, tired, and sometimes...confused.

Who needs to focus, relax, and “stay in the game”.

Who gives love, honesty, and loyalty.

Who fears losing...and failure.

Who would like to see “what I dream of”.

Resident of the Westside of San Antonio

I AM NOT A DEMON

I am not a demon
Why do you believe what you hear about me?
who you hear it from
aint even
know me

I used to care about what you heard
now you can
believe whatever
you want

I won't tell you about me
when you
already
judgin' me

People have an image of me
and they never
even
met me

RED

Red is the color of my sadness
bleeding through my eyes
my eyes lay low from the tears I've shed

I lead myself down the darkest path of red.
Red is messy, hate, distrust.

I am no longer red.
I now see yellow—it's the light shining
at the end of the tunnel.

from TEMPLATE

I want the best version of me.
I need to be on the right path. I don't wanna go back.
I've got myself thru anythin'
But, I really want my momma back.

All I need now is the strongest part of me.
I've got some pretty looks
and more self worth.
Sometimes I know that what I want is
me living' my best life, no strings attached.

And you tell me you think I need people to support me.
But, I've got myself
that's all I need.

If I had everything I want
I'd still want my momma back.

FOOD 4 THOUGHT

In the end I gained nothing from livin' fast
Stories you hear, pictures you see—
 looks like we having a blast
I'm my own worst enemy, all for sum cash
If bad memories could only disappear like ash.
Forgiveness is for me so I heal from my past
Life keeps going, my teenage years went so fast.
Social media is cap da streets ghetto nasty & it's wack
4 walls, death, regret—livin' fast don't last
My future will not be defined by my past.

UNTITLED

no government assistance you got on yo own
You was going to eat to bring your 2 girls home
Aint no going back 'n forth
 you called that lawyer on the phone

You raised me and my sister alone
My whole life you been on hustle mode
God sent me to love you
 let me be your angel
 and protect you,
 I love you dad.

WHAT'S POETRY FOR?

Speak your heart out loud

I'm in chains; my words set me free

You only see the outside of me

but my words are the realest part of me.

Scared of being unheard, but with my poetry

you can hear me

The words I write are like the sounds of the ocean.

Like 4 walls who keep me closed in

when you read my

poetry

you will see

me fly.

TITAN C.

TWO NAME ACROSTICS

Time goes by
Inside this cell
Thinking about life
Asking myself, What's
Next?

Tall
Into the abyss
To the top
And stay there
Never fall

SAFE SPACE

on that football field
jumping and spinning
blockers as a shield

my intentions are
winning

rolling through that endzone
for the game winner

TOMAS S.

TOMAS

Tomas

chill

cool

fun

TALL

Brother of my sister

Who loves family and money

Who feels tired, annoyed and cozy

Who needs nobody.

Who gives advice and change

Who fears dogs, rats and snakes

Who would like to see the world—travel and space

Resident of the Eastside

JUST TRISTAN

I am the son of Veronica,
who loves pizza, Big Red and basketball.
I'm the tall gentle giant who's chill and yet athletic.
I'm about feeling good and being happy.
My fear of bees is common
like american cheese
and please
don't get me started on needles.
I wished my first name was synonymous with Richman
but it's not... I'm just Tristan.
Tristan who is the son of Veronica.
Tristan who hopes to go see his fave rapper perform someday.
Tristan who's from the Eastside...
just Tristan.

VENICE G.

ACROSTIC

Very

Eager

Needing

Inner me

Causing me

Extra

XAVIER S.

X

Xavier

funny

athletic

chill

short

Son of Charisma

...who loves music, wings, and track.

Who heals, is tired, bored and mad.

...who needs money

...who gives

...who bears the weight

Who would like to see New York...

a resident of 210

ABOUT THE TEACHING ARTISTS

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.

TEEN POETRY

POEMS FROM RESIDENTS OF CYNDI TAYLOR KRIER JUVENILE
CORRECTIONAL TREATMENT CENTER AND COMMUNITY CLASSES

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GEMINI INK
SAN ANTONIO'S WRITING ARTS CENTER

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