



**WHEN
THE
STORM
IS
OVER**

POEMS FROM KRIER



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IS
OVER**

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the Bexar County Juvenile Probation Department.

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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

The poems you hold in your hands are pieces of the lives and times of young people at the Cyndi Taylor Krier Juvenile Correctional Treatment Center and Bexar County's Community Classes. They come from creative writing classes Erica DeLaRosa and I taught from fall 2023 to spring 2024 as part of Gemini Ink's Partner Classes program. Even though I have taught these classes for over a decade, I continue to be awed by these young writers' honesty, fury, self-study, and hope.

We began this year with Gwendolyn Brooks' "To the Young Who Want to Die," a poem remarkable in its power and its healing words. Brooks says, "You do not need to die today." And it was in a spirit infused with that vision that Erica and I proceeded: we introduced the students to works by Martín Espada, Carmen Tafolla, our new San Antonio Poet Laureate Eddie Vega, Etheridge Knight, Charles Bukowski, and Lucille Clifton. And they wrote.

This year, we had two teaching artists visit our class: Chibbi Orduña and Joyous Windrider Jiménez. These teaching artists offered new voices, performance, and perspectives that opened our students' ears and eyes. And the students wrote. And while they sometimes wrote of the horrors behind them and the caring safe haven that is Krier, they also wrote of grievous loss out in "the free" and the simple odd joy of bringing words together in something of a song.

If the poems in these pages are at times raw, it is a reflection of the writers' lives. If they focus again and again on who is out in the free, it is because they hold vigil for them. And if they circle back to darkness, it is because through darkness is the only way to some light. But through it all, they wrote.

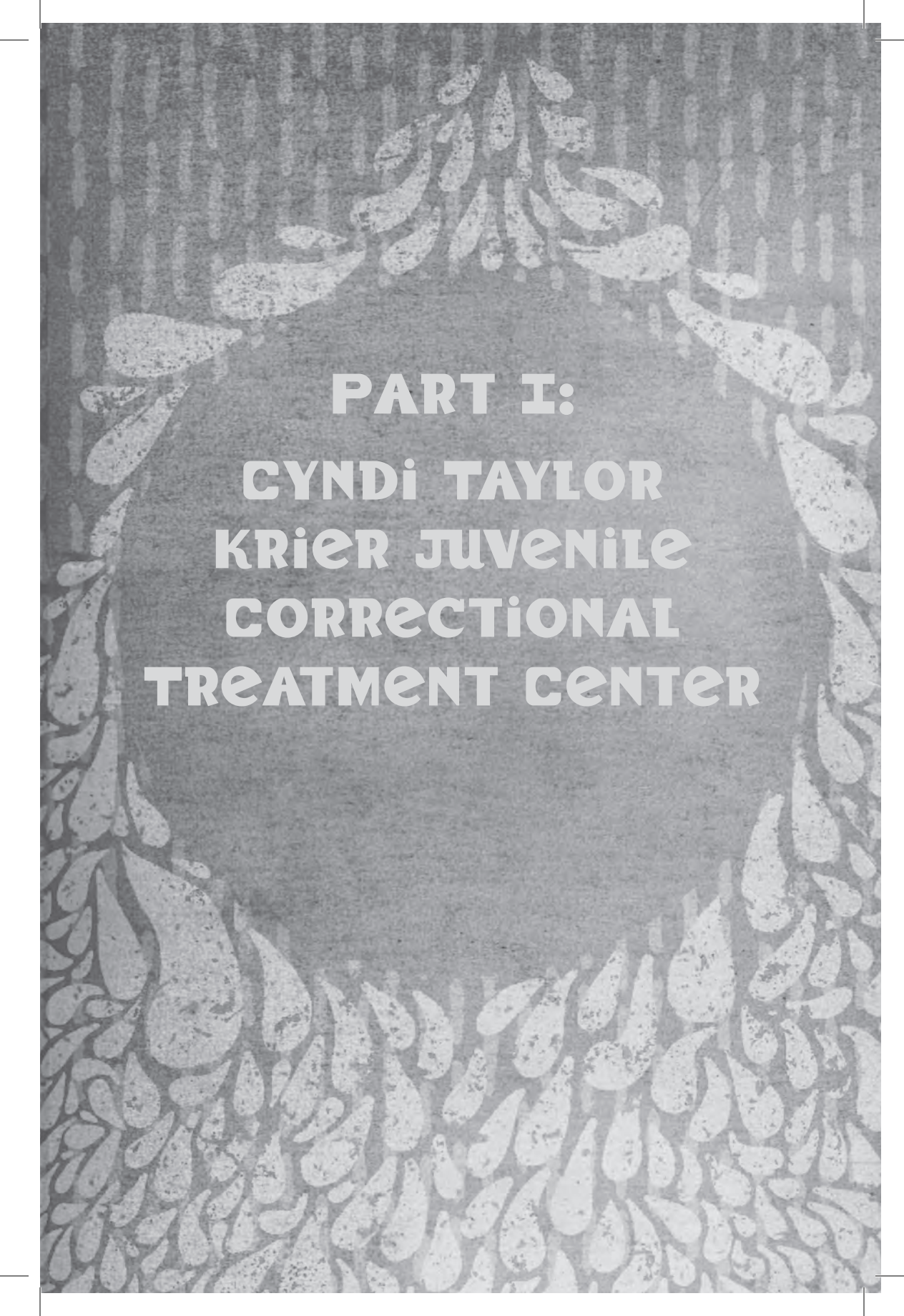
Whenever I read my poems in public I always read a poem or two by these writers. I do this because they cannot, and because they are crucial voices, voices that need to be

heard. You hold this book of their lives in your hands. They ask only that you know them.

This work would not be possible without the unwavering help, support, and belief in our program on the part of the Bexar County team, including Jessica Maupin, Joslin Rice, Jennifer Fowler, the Enrichment Team and everyone at Krier. Thank you to the Partner Classes program and Gemini Ink staff—specifically Catherine Burianek, Florinda Flores-Brown, Alexandra van de Kamp, Anisa Onofre, and for her brilliant design and execution of this book—Cloud Cardona.

And none of this would be possible without our students sharing their words, their lives, their losses, and their dreams. I thank them for sharing their time with us.

Jim LaVilla-Havelin
Gemini Ink Teaching Artist



PART I:
CYNDI TAYLOR
KRIER JUVENILE
CORRECTIONAL
TREATMENT CENTER

ABRAHAM

UNTITLED

I was disappointed

in myself

the day I got caught

& got on lock

I was sabotaging

myself for

something

I just could put on pause

for the love I didn't receive

& the greatest I couldn't achieve

I was disappointed

but that something

I had to agree

I have hopes n dreams

that I hope

I can succeed one day

I'll overcome
everything
n I got all that I need
I don't got
the support
but
I'll push thru by
any means

HURT

I don't know why I haven't wrote

It feels like I had a stroke.

I've been all in my head,

kinda hard to go to bed.

My brother

been in dem streets

wondering if he got

somewhere to sleep.

Momma struggling—

I wish I could hug her

& tell her it's ok.

I miss my sister. I pray to god

to keep her safe,

rest in peace, A

& I know that she

straight.

We been cut up with the guys

screwing, f the other side

I look forward to strive

hoping I don't die.

Been acting stupid but don't nobody

know I'm deep into it

don't judge a book by its cover

who knows

you might love

un puro fool

I laugh when they get disrespected

I remember getting back-stabbed

from someone who I thought

was my friend

whole time they was a frenemy.

My trust is lost

my feelings unspoken

& my heart is broken

& that's how come I haven't written.

UNTITLED

Abraham remembers the neglect & disrespect
all the nights where he hadn't slept
Abraham wonders when he'll go home & move
from all the wrongs going down
but hoping not to fall
Abraham wishes he hadn't got that call
but everything happens 4 a reason
He just prays to god
everything don't fall

UNTITLED

1. I'm hurt
been mistreated & back stabbed
yet I still stand tall
looking back at myself in these walls
tryna figure how I
made it thru it all. How this gon go
when everybody against
me. Holding up in detention. Waiting on my
suspension.
2. I say to myself I'm good, knowing
I'm in pain. I say I'll
get thru it knowing it's a struggle
in the rain. I see
black & white tryin' to figure how to
change. No matter what I do I feel
I'm going down in the drain.

LIFE IS LIKE BASKETBALL

it's like you

have to go around obstacles
even if someone or something blocking you
you gotta stay focused and maintain
to get to the end of the chain.

It takes
work & effort as long as you change
to get better. I wonder why we are
at war with each other. Why we take &
why we hate while we debate as we
looking for an escape. All we got
is each other so why have it as bate.
I'm a go as I reach my goal
ain't gon stop till I make it to the top
all I got is time
ain't gon do none but grind, and that's
my passion in life
ima go get it
till death is on line.

UNTITLED

say ion know what I be writing how I feel
on a piece of paper

when later it's gon be
in the dump

i rather make some band
than sit here
lookin' sad

ima keep it pushin'
by any means

i just hope
my sister n my granny
@ peace

I MISS YOU

I think to myself, why you
gotta go. crying on
the palm of my hand. trying to
let it go. I got
the call when I was all alone.
Mom got worse, but
you know how that go. Now I'm full
of anger, not knowing it's
depression. I'm stuck. What do I do?
questioning myself, every second.

I'm stuck behind doors
Looking at these walls. I'm so lost
determining what I should
do next. I say I'm done with the bull
but I'm back at it again.
How do I change? It's hard with
the temptations...but I live &
I learn as I give & observe. So much hate—
but I eat it like it's cake.

AVIANA

UNTITLED

I'm going home n
when I say that
I don't just mean "soon"
I mean I'm really on my way home
just thinking 'bout it give me the chills
feeling anxious n fearful
wishing I could just stay here
cuz at least here I am loved and taken care of
although that might be hard for some to understand

but you just don't get it to be a girl
lost in this world
not knowing who she is
not knowing which way she should take
not knowing how to act
not knowing who to trust
cuz she never knows who will be fake

I'm a little confused

I'm a little bent outta shape

cuz I feel

just to be a 15 yr old

I just got too much on my plate

too many worries

too many sorrows

too many things I don't know how to handle

When will I feel loved?

When will I feel safe?

When will I be able to rest,

to just finally take a break?

LIFE

Life is a school that never stops.

Life has never-ending problems
that we have to solve everyday.

Life is like beauty n the beast
because this world is so beautiful but also so ugly.

We make life how we choose it to be.

People pay for the storm to stop,
but I pray for me to get through the storm.

We wouldn't grow n have wisdom without the storm.

Take every struggle as a blessing.

Take every struggle as a lesson.

Take every struggle as an opportunity—
to be a stronger, wiser, a better person every day.

Life is beauty n happiness,

Unless we make it misery n ugliness.

DREAMS

Dreams that haunt me in my sleep

Constant reminders of my past

Dreams I can't get rid of

I wake up shaking, sweating, n crying.

Dreams where I wake up feeling like I'm dying.

Dreams that make me feel like I'm reliving my past.

Dreams that make me feel small—

as if I mean nothing at all.

Dreams that make me wanna get high

so I don't have to remember

what I feel on the inside.

Dreams that make me feel insane

make me wanna get rid of

all this pain.

Dreams I just wish would go away

so I could have a calm

peaceful day.

UNTITLED

I have guilt for all the things that I've done
sometimes I feel I don't deserve to be in the sun
I have caused pain
I have caused suffering
not just for me
but to everyone who cares for me
I have caused disappointment
n shame upon myself
I ask for forgiveness from god n those that I've hurt
but really I need to forgive myself

I can't change the things that I've done
but I can change the things
that I do

I am stronger
I am wiser
I am better
I am new

UNTITLED

Avi regrets

tryna control

the things

she has no power

over

UNTITLED

A says,
blamed her for most I went thru
might seem messed up
to blame yo lil sis for your own problems
but she's always been a common denominator
in everything I do

she thinks that she has it hard
but she doesn't know how it feels
to be a boy with no guidance from a male
to be a boy who sees shadows in the dark
to be a boy who feels that the devil's tryna get him
every turn he makes

I blame her
for always being the thing that triggers our mom
to start acting crazy on us
when she was just calm
she doesn't understand how it is to be a boy
living in a house full of girls

UNTITLED

I'm going home in a month

and nothing has changed

got a reality check today

showed she still the same

I'm scared to go back

but there's no changing

I'm leavin'

I feel as if I'm leavin' my home

to hear that I call this place my home

might sound stupid to some

but they don't get it

to get locked up

and finally start to feel loved

I gotta face my fear

there ain't no mo' runnin'

this is just the life that I have

think it's time for me to accept that

CHARLES

LIFE IS CRAZY

You could do so good
But the moment you do one bad thing—
 takes away all the good.
That's the truth to life.

The truth to life is a lie.

People work paycheck to paycheck,
while people are so rich they don't
 even know what to do with it,
there's people that are so broke,
 that can't even eat.

That's
the truth to life,
no lie.

UNTITLED

When I was a kid, Dad was never there
People would argue saying—their dad’s this
their dad’s that.

But I never had a dad
to argue about.

Sometimes I think
If dad was here
would I be sitting here?

Now I know it was nobody’s fault.
Nobody made me do what I did
to get here.

So I can’t blame Dad
I can only blame myself
for what happened.

I thank god though,
thank him for the 2nd chance,
thank him for what happened,
thank him for making me want
to change.

So know that I love you.
You say it was the drugs,
but only you know what it really
was.

But deep down, I know my one and
only. Shout out to Mom.

UNTITLED

FROM "THE CITY" BY VINCENT VALDEZ

Hate comes from where you're raised

Hate comes from being afraid

Hate comes from within you

Hate comes from disliking a person

just because of who they are.

Hate comes from wanting to be feared

Hate comes from jealousy

Hate comes from wanting someone dead

Hate comes from nowhere

Hate comes from anywhere

Hate comes from everywhere

THE BOOK OF HANDS

Basketball you gotta shoot the ball
Shoot the ball but make it to the hoop

You do everything with your hands
They help you make your form
They help you get by

They help you get open when you dribble

You need your hands
You need your hands with life
I need my hands to eat
I need my hands to play ball

We need our hands to get by with life

TODAY WAS COOL

But everyday cool to me
When you locked up
just gotta have a mind set like that.
Can't let it overcome you.

Today is another day—
 Closer to come home.
 Closer to be free
 Closer to be with Ma.

We're all waiting to come home.
We're all waiting to be free
 but I'm waiting to be
 with Ma.

Told Ma,
 wipe them tears.
 Yo baby boy—almost home.

I'm gon get us that house on the hills
I'm gon take care of all the bills.

THOUGHTS

I wait til they set me free
I wait to be with Mom
I wait to eat that good food

I'm gon do better
I'm gon live life
I'm gon change

I feel like it been forever
I feel like she did me wrong
I feel like my sis need me

I know, I need change
I know I'm locked up
I know I'm almost home

That's just my thoughts
That's just on the daily
That's just the facts

UNTITLED

Charles wonders, what's after death?
What's you gon see on the other side?
Are you gon be in heaven?
Are you gon be in hell?
Are you gon be a bird?
Nobody knows, but you can dream.

You can dream about heaven being glorious,
can dream about eternity.
You can imagine hell, but do you want to be in
hell?

You can imagine being a bird—
fly high through the sky.

You wish to avoid hell.
You wish you go to heaven.
But I wish
to be free like a bird.

What do you wish to be?
What do you wish happens after death?

FAMILY NAME

I'm from the family where Dad ain't there.

I'm from the family where they ain't had nun.

I'm from the family where I had to take care
of my bro plate.

I'm from the life where people die on the daily &
don't live to see 80.

I'm from the 1400 block.

I'm from my mom that's my day one.

I'm from family.

I'm from where grandma cooks very good meals.

I'm from "you're just like your dad."

I'm from a family that uses hard drugs.

I'm from a dad that hurts women.

I'm from a family of arguing.

I'm from the mom that has 5 kids.

I'm from a family that are dropouts.

I'm from a family that says your name
means you'll be the same.

JACOB

UNTITLED

I wish I could have wrote my brother

I wish I could have got out and talked to 'em

I wish we never got locked up

back to back

I wish we spent more time together

being cool, then always mad

I wish you never got addicted to them drugs

I wish I knew why

why you left this world

I remember the memories

I remember the tough love

JOE ANTHONY

UNTITLED

Tomorrow's another day
 today feels like yesterday
all alone in dis cell
 Mama going through hell
wit ah 5 to 10 min phone call
 ain't ah thing I could feel

 baby girl wondering where her daddy's at
 telling moms not to tell
 I'd be dam'ed for her to see what I'm
 on

UNTITLED

Mama's crying through that phone

telling me to come back home

too stuck in my ways

hanging off that dulce

Not knowing what's coming all

to hear is music thumping

flashing lights, females & hips

jumping

Too late to hear the ring through

my phone. Wake up the

next morning

to find my brother gone!!!

long live K

TIME

Time—all you ever have is time

put in a position like mine

There's not a sight you can find

Fighting your thoughts

fighting your mind

Still thinking to yourself—

What's out there

to find?

6 to 9 months still away, still fighting

my time. Is time moving slower, is

time moving faster?

Who knows,

it's like someone's

controlling my time.

UNTITLED

September 15, 2021

the day you were born
not a day goes by when you're not on
my mind I made a mistake
I committed crimes now I'm out
serving my time wish I was still
home so I can see your pretty smile.

mama's crying through the
phone praying I make it home it
breaks my heart knowing how
long I've been gone missed seeing
your first steps ask god every night
if I can get that chance back.

but time's flying today feels like
yesterday although I put in my
mind that it's just another day closer
to that gate.

True story.

FLY HIGH

Told my big brother, fly high.

I know you been gone for ah lil minute
think about you while I look up at
the sky. Been 4 years since you
been gone. Wish I ain't jeopardize
my time.

Times flying, got a baby girl—
wish you were here to see her lil smile.

Mama still stressing wondering
how she gone make it through
my time.

Oh, I ain't tell you, but I'm away
fighting my time for some
crimes. I know you gon be mad, but I
luv you big brother.
I hope you
flying high
in the sky.

UNTITLED

I remember

I remember them nights having to watch my back.

I remember them tryna chase me a stack.

I am from the streets with kidnaps and murders.

I am from the east where people die by the burner.

I am from waking up wondering if pops coming home.

I am from long nights tryna survive on my own.

UNTITLED

Joe Anthony wonders how life is going to be

trapped in a world where you think

of who you want be

but now it's too late

cause I'm locked up in detention

sitting alone in a cell

tryna see my own reflection

JOSH

UNTITLED

Yesterday, today, tomorrow

Yesterday, I was thinking to myself,
why won't they let me go
today? I'm thinking to myself,
am I going to make it
past 17?

Tomorrow I'll be thinking to myself,
I really hope I make it
past another day.

Yesterday, today, tomorrow

Yesterday I was thinking to myself,
damn, my days are over.

Today, now I'm thinking to myself,
should I pray to a god in the sky
to keep me safe?

Because

tomorrow will be the day
they keep me from my family.

UNTITLED

Night at Krier

means I'm waking up know I'm
on my own.

Night at Krier means I got to wake up
knowing I'm not free.

Another day waking up to people telling me
what to do

Another day in this cell
knowing this charge ain't going away

Another day knowing I gotta wake up
knowing I'm doing time.

Another day knowing these days ain't going by
fast.

Another day knowing if they let me free
My days are going to be over

Why wake up?

KAYLA

FAMILY

What does family mean to you?

To me family don't mean they
blood or that they gotta be related
to me.

To me family means some 1
that I can trust.

some 1 that I can rely on for good
support & give me
some good advice when
I need
it the most.

Some 1 that has been by my side
thru all da tuff times
N stayed, even thru da arguments,
N love & accept my flaws for
what they are &
not use my personal stuff

against me if they mad
or if they don't love me no more.

Some 1 that keeps your secrets
& their promises

that's what family
means to me!

What does family mean to you?

LOYALTY

Recently

I was asked,

How can someone be loyal to you, or

how can you be loyal to someone

if you can't

even be loyal to yourself?

It really got me thinkin',

What is loyalty?

To me, loyalty is someone bein' there thru your

ups n downs n love all your flaws

who also wants the best for you N helps

you down the right path

also to always

have your back.

But you need loyalty for yourself, too

in order to get loyalty from others.

What is loyalty to yourself look like?

To me it's by respectin' my own flaws

my own mistakes N
also to do better & want better
for myself.

To always have my own back,
mainly to pick my own
self up
when I fall
and tell my
self—

good
job...

DEAR BIG BROTHERS.

I just wanna say I luv y'all

n I really miss you.

I wanna see y'all make it, but

I know y'all got some demons.

But I'm done seeing y'all leavin'.

I still got hope for y'all n

I hope y'all know I really mean

it.

Mom & Dad said they love us, but

I ain't ever seen it.

I know I did so much dat y'all really

don't believe it,

but I'm gon try to be dere as much

as I can cuz I know how y'all be

feelin'.

Sometimes I just can't believe what

I be hearin' bout him—

N just know I

really miss him...

UNTITLED

Death is just down the street
— you're at da edge staring
at your feet late at night when
it's hard to sleep sometimes
it's even hard to eat. Feelin'
your thoughts drift that's when
when Da Devil Creeps.

LEANDROS

UNTITLED

A year past

And almost every day

I spent

thinking about you.

I understand you probably HATE ME

for the way that

I did you—

No girl makes me feel the way I feel

when I KISS you.

If the roles were reversed,

I probably wouldn't forgive you.

A THOUSAND years could PASS,

I still wouldn't forget you.

Your MOMS took me IN when my popz
kicked me OUT.

Was told 2 KEEP IT IN THE STREETZ!

Don't bring it to the house.

You gave me chance after chance

Sorry,

I let you down.

UNTITLED

He closes his eyes and sees dead people's faces;

thinking back on his past

he wishes

he could

erase it.

UNTITLED

they tell me be myself

but when I do they say I'm glorifying

he had a hole in his face

that was horrifying

I'm still alive but on the inside

girl, I'm sort of dying

you wanna talk about dead friends

I lost bout 4 of mine

WHAT'S A 9(2)5

What's a 9 to 5?

What's working half of your life

Just to enjoy 9 years before you die?

What's breaking yo back 4 a job

Just to get fired for not showing
up on time? What's retiring and buying

dat brand new car, if in another

5 years you're too old to drive?

What's giving yo life 2 yo job

If a job stop you from living

Yo life? What's putting more money
in a millionaire's pocket just to

barely afford to put food in yo little kids'

mouth? People so rich they can't even
count their own money.

But people out here so broke they selling

they body just to make money

N you wonder why these prisons is

so full, an inmate doesn't have to

pay taxes or a water bill, or worry about a student.

An inmate doesn't have to break

his back to barely afford to

put a roof over their head

So....b-4 you clock in, n, n before u

go back to living yo boring life,

ask yo self,

WHAT'S A 9(2)5?

I UNDERSTAND

Damn, bro, I want the best 4 you

U got to slow down off them drugs b4

they kill you.

I know you close to given up, believe me when I

Say I feel. They say it's temporary but the

Stuff we faced gon stick wit us 4eva.

You turn to drugs and cut off all your

friends with the hope it gon get better.

I know that death been calling and

it takes everything you got not to answer.

I know dat you feel dead inside,

Depression kill you slowly like stage 4 cancer.

Everybody go through pain but it's about

how much pain that you can manage.

I know you act like you don't care,

but deep down it left you damage.

They telling you they love you, but

deep down they neva meant it.

The day I get the news you

died, I swear to god I might just end it.

LOST CAUSE

I hate being here
but I don't know if I want to go home
because home doesn't really feel like
home. Popz barely answer my calls,
But when he does he spends
the full five minutes yelling @ me
through the phone.

He use to be my dawg. Damn,
I'm still trying to find out where
we went wrong.

Our relationship ain't what it
used to be. Nowadays we don't
ever get along.

I hit the road for hours @ a time
looking for some I couldn't find
@ the crib folks who ain't neva
been in my shoes trying to tell me

How I should live.

I prayed to God, asking for him

to forgive,

and a voice came to me in my sleep

and said,

God doesn't forgive people

for what all that I did.

MATTHEW

UNTITLED

FROM A POEM BY GWENDOLYN BROOKS

“The gun will wait”

The money

will wait.

The question is, is my girl gon wait?

I hope so.

I hope it ain't for fake.

I hope I can make it home.

I was sitting in the penitentiary all alone.

Momma, just know

in a couple of months

I'll be home.

I hope you're waiting outside them gates

I been tryna chill

Been tryna get out

and run up a mill

I been tryna work on me.

I been tryna work on my self-control.

You been doing what you want.

I been doing what I need

So when I go home

Am finna leave you alone.

UNTITLED

When I was in the free

I thought I was a hotshot

I thought I was people's

nightmares

I thought I was handsome.

But reality, my pride

Be getting the best of me—

But it's all good

Because I am learning from my mistake.

THE BOOK OF CLOCKS

Clocks is time

Time is some you can't get back

Time is something you can't buy

Wish I never spend a long time locked up

Wish I can get my time back

Clocks ticking—my life is run out of time

Time is never gone stop

Time is gonna keep going

Time is never gone run out

Question is, when is my time gone stop?

NATALIE

UNTITLED

Remembering is like getting
a paper cut
It's like getting hit by a gust
of wind out of
nowhere, full of dust & lust
& even complications.

Remembering is like
stubbing your toe
in the middle of the night,
trying to sneak snacks at
3 in the morning.

It's like
running straight into
a tornado.

UNTITLED

Sleep is like
tacos in a bed of tortillas.

It's like flavors
all in your mouth
like a bunch
of pop rocks
pop pop popping
in
your
mouth.

UNTITLED

FROM GWENDOLYN BROOKS

“you do not need to die today”
you don't even have to live today
as long as you try, you never know
what life is gonna bring today.
It's February 5th 2024 & I'm trying
my best to live today.

UNTITLED

Until yesterday I could

meet him

but today

he is gone

like clouds over

the mountain

' he has been

wafted away.

UNTITLED

I am from a place where drugs is your food.

I am from a place with boarded up and
shattered windows.

I am from a place I don't feel like
should be called a home.

I am from a place where I had
to do it all on my own,
like a homeless puppy in those
lonely nights.

UNTITLED

Natalie wonders
when her family is
gonna get sober

she wonders
when the light will shine
for her
at the end
of the tunnel

she's thinking
where
did it all
go wrong

she wonders
what it's gonna
be like

outside
these
bars

SAUL

TIME

Time

Something

You can never get back

I never realized that

until...

I got caught up servin' them packs.

Now

I write my wrongs.

A year later...

It's time

to touch back.

Ain't no more rolling the dice

After all the times I done took the risk

I finally

turned to Christ.

I thank Him
for forgiving me
all them trials
and tribulations—
I call them
Soul ties
that's what helped me
see the world
through my 3rd eye.

Now I learned my lesson
sittin' there thinkin'
I could get it back.

DREAMS

Ballin'

Not the game

But

That bank

I want

A 100 million dollars

Not

Life in the Feds..

You see

I'm tryna change a double R

Like I'm

Really

Rich..

I might mess around

On the mic

N be like

Roddy

Rich..

I feel like the motivation

When I say

Chasin' these M's

Way more gangsta

Than

Fighting these charges

I just want my people

Away from them

Carbons

I told them

Reach for the stars

Cause

When it's all said and done

This world gon be

Ours

HIM

Yea, you heard of him

Me

Saul

Always involved in some shi

You wouldn't know

What he's on

He's out there

Partying

having

fun

living lavish

They wanna

hang with him

But...

Where was they at

When

He was down

Tryna come up

off a round?

When he put himself on the map

Them folks

Ain't know how to act

They thought

They could just come back around

Now I think

that's pitiful

But that's what makes their world

spin

Now they tryna get me mad

But

Some shi just can't

Phase YOU

When

You

Been

That

COUNTIN'

There go Saul
Leaving in 25 (days)
He been gone for a year
but he's back
In the new 24
That boy been waiting for the day
to walk through them doors
He's thinkin' about 23
wondering what Jordans
he's gonna wear
when he's set free.

Now
He got 22
Time been sittin' there
like it ain't got none to do
Day by day
He been checkin' them off
feelin' like he gon be 21
By the time they let him on.

UNTITLED

L

Lost N Thug, Thug Life

O

Oh, I'm the kid that they don't like

V

I be the kid that they victimize

E

Everything's ight, we living twice

GROUP POEM

Yesterday I was going through a lot of pain.

Tomorrow I will make a change.

Here I am.

There I go.

Here I am today, one step closer to home.

There I am

finally out those

walls.

You are the light to the dark.

Me and you should be forever.

Yes, I need you. No, I'm not okay.

With or without—no one.

Without God

I would be stranded.

Never give up. Always push forward.

First you gotta change. Last,
I have to get up.

Some things I just can't understand.
None of my mistakes define me.

Here I was
all on my own.

There I was wishing
I was home.

Yes, I'm 17, yet there's a lot to overcome.
No I ain't gonna fall just cuz you
wanna see me down hall.

Sometimes risks is all we got,
None is what we NOT gon have.

With my soul I can live
without my soul
what's left?

Never jeopardize your time—always have love on your mind.

Then

I was lost.

Now

I got God.

You can be mine.

Me—can I be yours?

Remember, there ain't no other me—

forget the past.

You = things I wanted.

Me = mistakes I should've neva made.

With you, I have my doubts.

Without my mom

life is

worth less

First off, them people died for what they said.

Last Christmas I gave you my heart.
Remember when they said I wasn't anything?

Forget
all the things
that have cause me
pain.

Here I am
Locked up.

There
You are.

Someone has life behind bars—
None of these people gotta know.

YES I wanna change.
NO, I don't wanna commit crimes
with you I can be myself
without risk you can't be rich.

Sometimes I want to give up. No-one perfect.

Never give up, always remember—there is hope.

Yesterday I wanted to give up.

Tomorrow I want to be better.

Then, I was havin' to do it all on my own.

Now I got Christ & I can't give up.

Here ain't nun fair, there ain't no love in these streets.

Then I hit the road, and Now I want to get rich.

Then we was broke, now we

a lil closer to getting rich.

Here I go.

There's always homeless people.

Remember them days locked up.

Forget all the things I had to accept.

Remember dat ex that told you, you was gon

make me forget the things I remember.

Here I have

Only myself.

There

always hope.

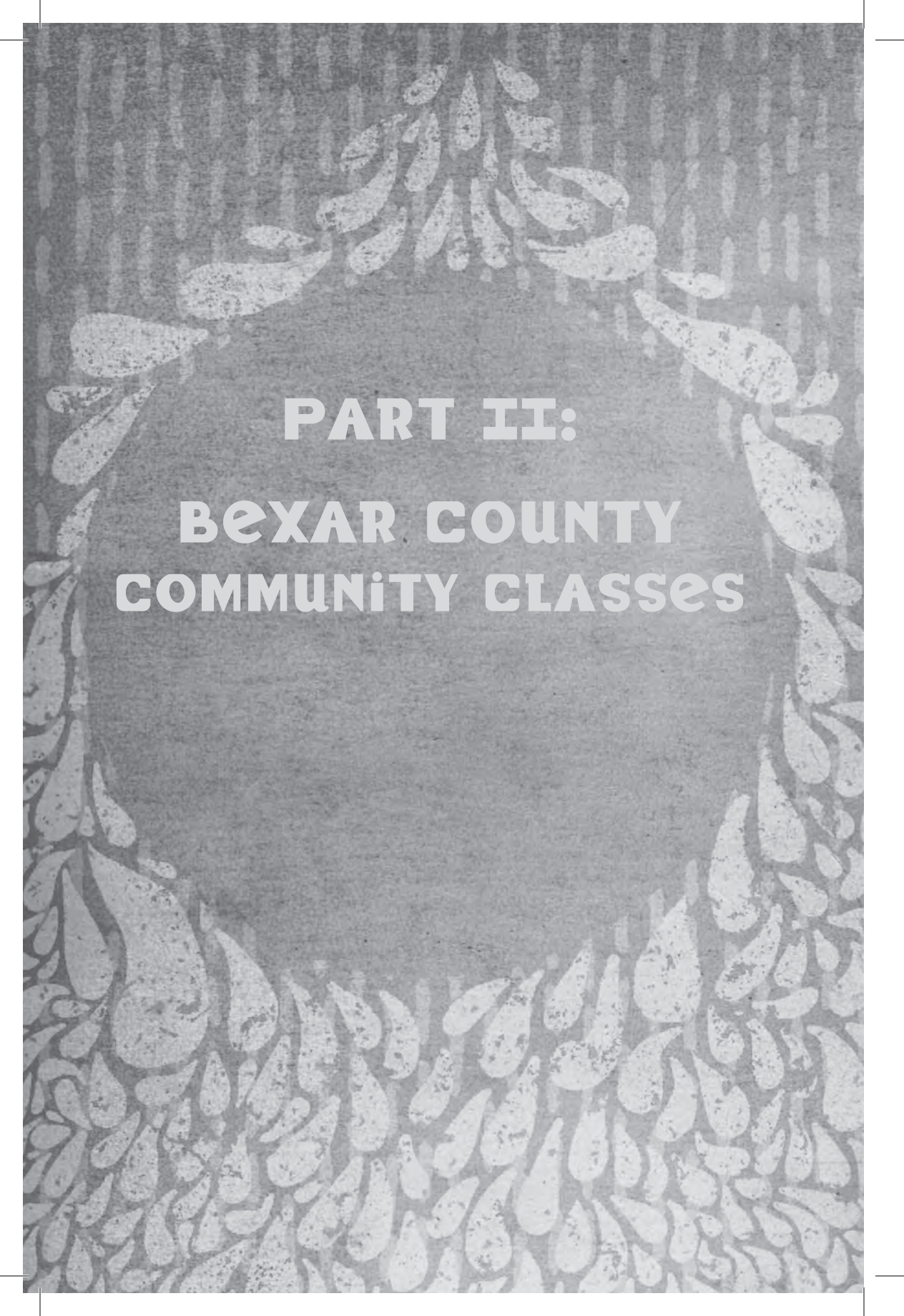
First I make bands, last night was my favorite memory.

Yes, I'm going to try.

No, I'm not giving up.

Yesterday was further from home—

Tomorrow is closer to home.



PART II:
BEXAR COUNTY
COMMUNITY CLASSES

MICHAEL R.

SAN ANTONIO

San Antonio...

the weather is wonderful.

Some days come

and

some days go by.

When it rains,

sky water

hits

the

ground

CRASHING!

Rain slaps the concrete harder,

downpours;

sounds like a

wa-

ter-

fall.

When the storm is over,

the sun peeks through the cotton ball sky.

The rays emerge, embrace, and

greet you with a warm welcome.

BE BETTER

I lived.

I thought I was living “good.”

The Eastside sun rose and

shined on my face.

My solar power drove

my actions.

My mom wanted something better—

a home.

We moved.

I took it for granted.

Never seeing what my actions—

did.

Said many things I now regret.

I need to be

better.

I need to do

better,

not just for me

but for my Mother.

JAYDEN G.

POETRY, WHY I WRITE

I write...

to explain a situation

or a thing

using words

to

provide

purpose.

Ecstatic

crab leg

green

how was your day

love

Baby Sister

I love you

humor

family

A street runner

who speaks on deep thoughts.

TRANSITIONS

Heat and the breezing
cold transitions frequently
Pants, shorts, jackets, tees
transitioning quickly is the key.

My palms shiver;
next is a release of sweat.
My hands in my pockets,
Geesh! What's next?
As the rain plummets from the clouds
its powerful force
RAMS into my windows
and
SPLITS concrete floors,
then suddenly shifts into lava—felt sidewalks
and the sun's fingers brush my face.
Transitioning quickly is the key.

MA'KAI C.

*INSPIRED BY "SWEET LIKE A CROW"
BY MICHAEL ONDAATJE*

MY VOICE

My voice is like
werewolves howling
like the ocean floor—deep
like dogs growling
like a thousand tiny needles
poking into your skin
like an alien running from Area 51.

My hands are blacker than the oil from a car.
My hands are darker than a cool stormy night.
They are moonless and then glow brighter than the early-lit
sky.

My voice,
a dead interlude of bass scaring the afraid,

running away from those who can't see the patterns—
black.

A black man blacker than the oil from under a car.

Black when the words put your hands up are unleashed into the
air.

I pray that my shine is brighter than the night itself.

LILY M.

INSPIRED BY "I AM WAITING"

BY LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI

SECONDS, MINUTES, HOURS, DAYS...YEARS.

I am waiting for my anxiety to disappear.

I am waiting for my hallucinations to stop haunting me, each day.

I am waiting for SNAP Food Stamps to start serving more families in need.

And I am waiting for the wars to end, forever because killing hundreds

of thousands won't bring anyone back together.

I am waiting for less narcissism to stop making this world hungry for respect and for people to feel equal.

I am waiting for my mom's health to brighten.

And I am waiting for the process of healing to start spreading the wings of my loved ones.

MATTHEW G.

11 HARD WORKER

11 Hard worker—

hard-working for better days to come

#11, holding it high with pride 'cause I know

what's best for me and mine.

Being alone, not knowing what's gonna appear

morning till night

because I'm determined to not disappear.

DAISY B.

A BITE OF HOME

The whiff electrifies the tiny hairs
inside vestibules to cavernous cavities.

Sharp, spicy, and from the briny deep.

Hunger aches from deep within
as induced, appetizing waters fill my chops.

Flashbacks of my aunt, and her house roll to the front of my
mind.

She's the only one who knows the secret to conceiving this
delectable divine.

With happiness and mixed emotions, the memory is
bittersweet.

A distant vision from the past.

A family faded to black.

I no longer crave this sweet pleasure.

I avoid similar smells and colors altogether.

ETHAN V.

FRIDAY NIGHTS

Fridays in our home
are for pies with crust and cheese
Fam'ly joined inna circle

RALPH L.

THE STORY OF BIRDY

It feels like ever since my birth
ever since I came on this earth
I've been cursed
b4 it gets better, it gets worse
bouncing around from place 2 place
house 2 house
Paradise, Sufai, Segura
met GC who would tell me
"take care of your brother
and look out 4 your mother"
we goin' thru it on the daily basis
tryna get them dollar-faces
hustling from places 2 places
me and Mom on the grind
bustling all the time
tryna make a dollar out of a dime
even though we was committing crimes
we had no choice
we hadda survive
the Westside raised me,
'n Southside paid me
on the street sh*t gets crazy
out there and
I was just a baby

The struggle...
I hate and love it
it made me
sometimes you just need to throw yo' hands up,
surrender—f*** it

At 15, I lost my father
in-n-out of foster
4 months flew
'n b4 I knew
I was back in trouble like a fool
'n now I gotta PO too

Now, I'm tryna keep me cool
be smart and make my next move
time 2 focus on me 'n, not u
Imma forever be steppin'
this time armed with a paper 'n a pen
till the very end

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

SOFIA F.

INSPIRED BY SANDRA CISNEROS'S HOUSE ON MANGO STREET, "MY NAME"

Σοφία = Wisdom

My name means wisdom; ancient from the 4th century, Greece. One time, I lacked wisdom when I was bleaching my hair to make it pink. Pink. Pink is my favorite color. Pink, was the color of my scalp when it was burnt for leaving the bleach on too long. My hair was yellow and my roots were white. When I eventually added the pink hair dye, it came out fluorescent. I solved the problem by changing the color to red, which looked much better.

Sofia is ancient, first appearing in the 4th century but that is not what I see for myself. I stand out of the crowd. I don't ever want to be forgotten! I'm a dreamer but at the same time, I feel too embarrassed to share them. I want to be married someday. I don't want kids! I want to be happy and live till I'm ancient. My wisdom will run deep in my veins, intentionally and unconventionally.

JOANTHONY T.

INSPIRED BY SANDRA CISNEROS'S HOUSE ON MANGO STREET, "MY NAME"

FULL OF HIGH ASPIRATION

My name is a combination of two put together. The first part of my name means "God will add." The second part means "priceless one." Red is my favorite color because you can't miss it; it's noticeable like my name. Red is like Big Red, my favorite drink, or the color of blood, or my grandma's hair.

My name is a compound concept, like me—cooperative and unmistakable. It encompasses all of who I am—then (Jojo), now (JoAnthony T.), and who I aspire to be.

KAITLYN V.

ROAR

My voice is like nails on a chalkboard

but as dim as a mouse trying to steal a piece of cheese.

My voice is as loud as the voice in my head

but as quiet as the tears falling from my eyes.

My voice is like the music in my headphones with the volume up.

SKYLIER V.

A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING

My voice is as loud as a nuke
like a calming heartbeat
like a narrator talking
like a ball smoothly going into the hoop in the last
three seconds of the 4th quarter
like a chainsaw cutting a tree
like the Kool-Aid Man
like a shallow pool of water

My hands are steel, they feel no pain
My eyes are of a doll's unable to see
My heart is pure, always getting turned around.
My feet - walking, jumping, landing, swimming,
even signaling but not signing

My voice explodes
soothes the child
recounts the details and tells the story
wins the championship
repurposes the resource
Oh Yeah
like a rain barrel catching rainfall to feed the garden

ADRIAN A.

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

I offer you this house

because it's something you might need.

It is your safe place now

or somewhere you can sleep.

It can bring you comfort

like warm socks upon your feet.

Use it for Thanksgiving and somewhere you can eat.

I'll give you this house for a very peaceful sleep.

Now you and your family can finally feel

Free.

STEVEN L. (S.J.)

HOLD YOUR OWN

Eagles beat to the streets
flowers brought to put on a grave
I'm with you when it's time
hope my grandbabies do the same
look in yo' eyes
Mama, you're full of pain
I'm so sorry that I never change
Baby Mama, I'm trippin'
old soul
now can you forgive me
smoke in my lungs
I can't catch a break
I'm wishin' I need the book
that's been written by Yahweh, Matthew, John, Luke, and the
rest of the apostolate
I'm on a quest
they left a money trail
they ain't go to heaven
'cause I'm livin' in hell.
I'm gonna hold my own
fight to make the wrongs

right

hold my head up

brilliant in the light

When it's time to leave

I don't eva want to say "shoulda coulda woulda

gimme one more minute to change"

Hold your own

use the gut and the dome

live to see better

days

Mama, I'm not goin' to waste

this 2nd stage.

KEYMERI C.

DEEP IN LOVE

I can't have a wife

but I can have a girlfriend.

A girl with all the attributes and a personality that radiates echoes.

Who has a snort with a roll around, makes your belly ache laugh.

Who understands that chemistry can take place in the classroom and on a plate?

Not just cooking skills for cooking sake.

Who appreciates the power of food for the mind, body, and soul?

When the search for the creature concludes

I will treat her like a goddess like the Queen she be

And I, her King, in me.

To respect, protect, and honor

the love

she flows in me

and create with my Queen, a family.

LOVE

She and Me.

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

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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