

# Spring 2020

## Virtual Zine



# Podium

# All pieces collected from weekly virtual programming in Podium's own hosted programs!



## *Alumni Section*

**Contracted**  
**Kavin J.**

### Chapter 1

The last time I saw her, she was lying face down in a ditch off the side of the road, three years ago, cold and lifeless, and now, she's sitting across from me, sipping on a cherry coke in the New Hop Dinner like it never happened. I just stared at her in disbelief, someone who I watched die is in this old run-down dinner.

"I loved this place as a kid! Brings back so many fond memories. The strawberry cheesecake here is to die for, and the chocolate cake is not too shabby eith..."

"Why... h-how are you here?" I cut her off, shocked to see a dead person walking again. "You died.... I saw you die!" My mind was racing but my training only let my voice stumble for that moment. She let out a slight chuckle and smirked at me.

"Wow, it's so great to see you, Carmen. It's been nearly three years since I last saw you."

"That would have been nice to hear before you started with all the questioning, you know. But then, you were never a person who wasted time. Straight to the point and always have been. That's one of the reasons I like you." She sighed and adjusted herself in the booth "Well, to make a long story short, I have some unfinished business that needs attending to." As she said those words, her left eye flashed with a dull, red glow.

"What happened to you? Why did you come to me, Carmen, after all these years? How are you even alive? I don't even know where to start." My mind ran faster than I could keep up with. She's alive and here, how? Why?

"You really thought a bullet could kill me?" she said with an air of confidence as she leaned back in her seat and took a sip of her drink.

"Considering it was a shot to the head... Yes, I would think a bullet would kill anybody in front of it."

"Oh please, Jason's little friends wish they could kill me that easily, and they are already on my list." She laughed

"I hope I'm not on that list. I was forced there and couldn't do anything."

"Oh, I'm well aware of your involvement in all of this. You are not an easy person to find, you know? I had to see a lot of people before I could even figure out where you were hiding; otherwise, you would have been the first person I paid a visit to, Sawyer."

"Yeah, I made it that way on purpose. So, what do you want with me? Are you going to kill me? Go ahead, do it! I have nothing to live for anymore anyway." I swirled the black coffee I barely touched.

"I'm not going to kill you, that would be counterproductive. No, no, no, I need you for a far more important task." She lifted up my head and stared me directly in my eyes "You're going to help me kill the person who tried to kill me."

I was stunned, did she really just say that? "You...want to kill Jason?!" Her playful demeanor changed to that of a dictator who wasn't taking no for an answer. She held my gaze for a few seconds, then she leaned back, ran her fingers through her hair, and said, "Come on, lighten up a bit. We have so much to discuss."

### ***Untitled Progression***

***Kavin J.***

My feelings were locked away in a chest, chained by the fear of being hurt again. But you wouldn't know that just by looking at me. I walked with confidence, my chest held high, looking like I knew I was a bad chick, but on the inside, I was hollow like the tree in my backyard. I felt like giving up all the time, with my heart too heavy for my chest. I couldn't carry it anymore. But you helped with the rest of the weight, and I thank you.

### ***Reflection***

***Kavin J.***

I heard an urban legend from a friend that if you look at your reflection at midnight on the 13th of the month with the moon in view, you'll see a vision of your future self and what your life will turn out like. Of course, I didn't believe this dumb rumor. It was spread over the web to trick people into believing in a lie, but I guess that's all rumors. Even though I didn't believe in this fairytale at first, something did happen. I woke up from my sleep just a few minutes before midnight to a mostly clear sky. At midnight it would be the 13th and my birthday. I walked into the bathroom, used it, and washed my hands. I briefly looked up in the mirror, and I'm not sure what I saw. It was like a dark shadow looming over me, so I jumped back.

The light dimmed a bit, and when I looked back at the mirror, I saw something that definitely wasn't me. It looked like me and moved as I did, but whatever that was, it wasn't me. I stupidly moved my face closer; it just felt like I was being drawn towards it. A chill ran down my spine as it shoved its hand through the mirror, shattering it, and it grabbed me by the throat, trying to pull me in. I woke up out of breath and nervous about what I had just seen. The time was 11:52 p.m.

My curiosity got the best of me, so I recreated what happened in my dream. But when I looked up at the mirror, it was like time stopped and everything turned gray. The walls were cracked. I felt cramped and could barely move. My reflection stared at me. It felt like hours had gone by with it just staring at me. Whatever was in the mirror wasn't me. It couldn't be. Not anymore. It cocked his head, sneered at me and said, "This will be fun. We are going to do so many things together." The lights flashed, and I could finally breathe, but I was terrified. "I haven't slept in days, Doc." Those words just circled around my head. "What... What do I do?"

"I think it's important to start with what we know. Tell me do you believe ghost stories? Because you might be in one."

## ***Slam Poetry***

***Kavin J.***

Hi. My name is Kavin Jackson, K.A.V.I.N. Jackson, and I don't do slam poetry.

### **Reason Number One:**

I don't write poetry; I write short stories. Poetry weaves the beautiful words of song that dance around the inside of my ears and change my heart from one emotion to the next. Twist and pull my mind, creep on my old dreams of nothingness, and make me lose again to a part of me. I've thought I had the upper hand but I guess not. Well, screw that. I'm not dealing with that emotional wreck; that's a problem for me to handle in style.

### **Reason Number Two:**

I write stories from my imagination, the combination of both sides of my brain working in harmony to tell my stories. Tales of tangible yet unbelievable sights. But to me, when I tell them they seem to be heard by those who can't see the images, or they can't follow the storyline. Should I read them slower? Should I read with more enthusiasm? Word. Wait. No. The more words might confuse you and me. Should I tell a simple tale? Why should I? I write my stories for an audience to read and hear, but if you can't understand, then you're not my audience.

### **Reason Number Three:**

My stories aren't painful. They don't make you cry. They can make you laugh. They are not from my past. Of parents who cheated on each other, lost custody of their kids, got divorced, manipulated family members to have each other, and of poverty, while I was caught in the crossfire of both ends, taking on the bullet wounds from people trying to win me over, like I'm the last place they need to get



this monopoly. I'm an entertainer, a jester for your amusement. I have to put on a show. The people in my heart who are gone but would be proud of me. To hear my stories of love and wonder, magic and creativity. To see them smile from a story that warmed their hearts with anticipation as I leave them wanting more with a cliffhanger that make them the same. Darn, not again! So I'll take my scores of 4, 5, 6.3, and 7. Oh, and thank you for your time.

**Crit**  
**Destiny H.H.**

If you are going to art school  
and your skin is darker than the canvas you paint on,  
there are five rules you should know before you go.  
First rule of being brown skinned in art school is to close your mouth.  
Utter a peep,  
utter a stutter,  
and those white, woke kids will be all down your throat.

Rule two: A critique will be your lynching.  
Make sure you don't tie the noose for them.  
Stay quiet.  
You will hang like your piece on the wall, and they are all taking snapshots.  
You are a trophy.  
Your hands are too aggressive, calm your strokes.  
Make it seem like references to water doesn't trigger you.  
They don't tolerate a slave narrative.

Rule three: don't mention slavery in any piece you do.  
You make everyone uncomfortable.  
Tell them you felt it was right.  
Tell them you read it in a book;  
you'll seem more educated that way.

Rule four: you'll always have a resting bitch face.  
A professor will ask at least five times in three hours if you are okay.  
Are you upset?

Rule five: restrain yourself from beating the crap out of your professor.  
Especially when they seem to know your story better than you do.  
You'll hear the white kids talk about cultural appropriation like it's a new iPhone update.



You'll get tired.

Your mouth will start to curl, and the wooden paint brush you grip so tight between your fingers will crack, and you'll stand straighter.

To be a black artist is to draw a dart board on your back.

Students will hurl words like darts

upon impact. You might bend,

but remember, this is what you signed up for.

Our hands are made to do only a few things, and art ain't it.

My grandmother tried to warn me.

Told me to have a backup,

take up journalism.

I didn't realize any job I get will seem like I'm the only one in the room.

Art school wasn't made for us pieces of art.

I have tried to fit in.

I have stretched a white canvas so far over a brown frame until it tore, exposing the wood underneath.

I have been meaning to get back to my roots, to paint with the blood of artists before me, but for some reason, I can't shake this noose.

There's always white around.

No color.

It's a quiet abstraction.

Each brush stroke adds more white.

It bleeds onto the gold,

covers the red, and

silences the black.

It was never good at keeping still.

I put this piece up for critique

My piece was torn apart, but they dared not come closer when I told them I made it for them.

It's ironic how much you get away with when you are the artistic black.

The weird black.

The quiet black..

And for the first time in my life, I felt like the creator of my painting.

Only this time,

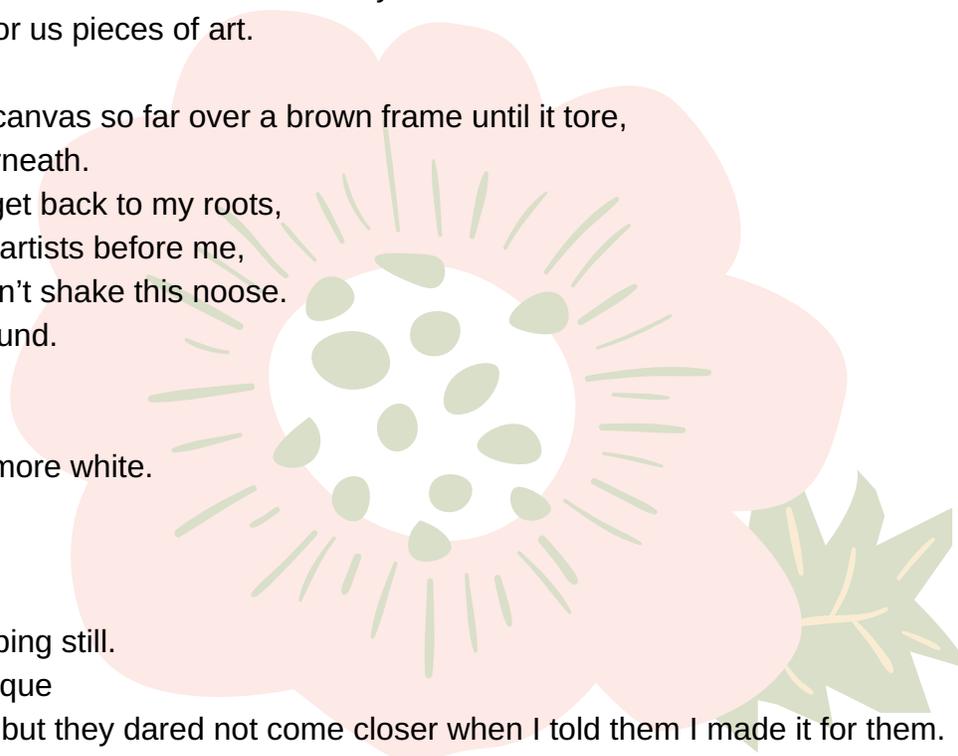
the white of my canvas was forced to watch as it was now the one being critiqued.

I could see the black seeping out from under the white.

It reached out to me.

After the critique I had it framed.

It's untitled.



## ***White Wakanda***

***Destiny H.H.***

I had a dream of a white wakanda.  
I woke up in a timeline where Martin and Malcolm were silent.  
One where black progress took a back seat to the colonizer.  
In this white wakanda,  
black people thank the colonizers.  
They apologize for the 401 years of strife we caused them.  
We whip ourselves.  
Chains hold us to our desks as we listen to white professors outside of classrooms.  
In this white wakanda, slavery was an inconvenience  
A misunderstanding,  
A Christopher Columbus misstep into a new world that was never supposed to be discovered.  
In this white wakanda, Harriet Tubman gave herself up and  
Apologized for the underground revolution that resulted in freedom.  
Freedom can only be a construct by black unruly rebels.  
In this white wakanda, I bleach my skin,  
I make sure to let my classmates know I'm not a threat,  
I point a gun at myself to show my humanity,  
My hands bound behind my back.  
I'll let you beat me  
If it helps to show you I mean you no trouble.  
In white wakanda,  
the black panther isn't here to help us.  
In this timeline, the confederacy won the civil war,  
And we've been slaves to the system ever since.  
We've never had rights;  
We don't need them.  
Don't speak up,  
Massa might whip you.  
Don't make eye contact,  
Massa might whip you.  
Don't acknowledge emotions,  
Massa said emotions lead to uprising,  
And uprisings get you whipped.  
Be a good slave.  
Be tolerant.  
Watch as they drag your children,  
Your mother,  
Your father,  
the love of your life away.

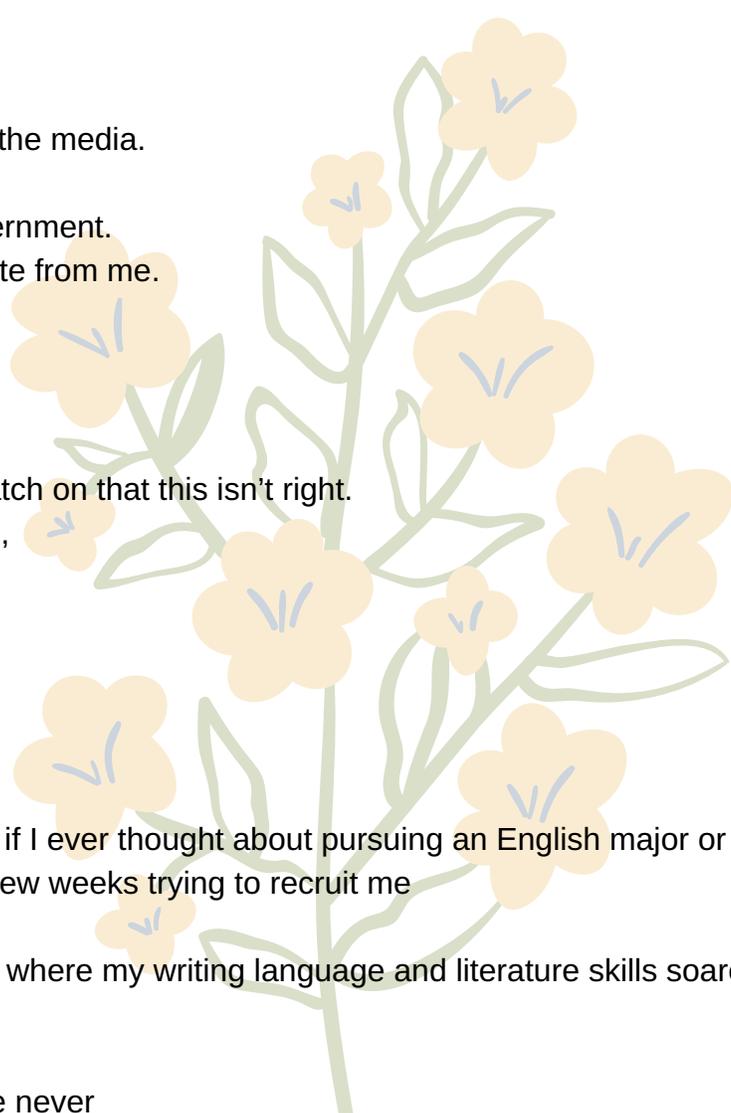
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This dream...  
I've had for days..  
I wake up in the middle of the night  
with cold sweats,  
crying .  
The sound of protests and unrests as my people are being beat in the streets like some damn  
disobedient slaves.  
And to the white man,  
Have we ever stopped being slaves?  
Have we stopped being the white man's footstool in the eyes of the colonizer?  
In class, I raise my hand.  
The black students in my class feel uncomfortable talking about race relations.  
"Can we divert from talking about race?"  
they say.  
I tell my professor, the second deadliest disease to a black person in America is 2020 is their white next  
door neighbor who wants to stay "neutral"  
On topics about race.  
I don't think the white wakanda is a dream.  
They shoot us with their poison dart guns  
and feast on our flesh for the world to watch in the media.  
In white wakanda, we are a third world country.  
The rich aren't really rich but slaves to the government.  
My mother, she's tried her best to shield the hate from me.  
But I've caught on. I've been enslaved as well.  
And everytime I wake up,  
I feel like I broke the timeline.  
Because the more I wake up,  
the more the black people of white wakanda catch on that this isn't right.  
And they are intrigued at the fact that in this life,  
Black America has built its own wakanda,  
And it's ever growing.

**English**  
**Destiny H.H.**

My university recently sent me an email asking if I ever thought about pursuing an English major or minor.  
This is the third email I've received in the past few weeks trying to recruit me  
into the English department.  
Coming from a college preparatory high school where my writing language and literature skills soared, I  
couldn't say I felt humbled.  
The resident caucasians took notice  
that the one black girl out of many talks like she never  
used Ebonics in her life.  
Talks like a whip was taken to her tongue.  
Articulates like she has never uttered an ain't in her life.  
I'm quite familiar with many classic works of literature.



For instance, Holden Caulfield in *Catcher in the Rye* considered the majority of human kind to be phonies.

He stated that he was the realest in any room.

I think the word he was looking for was silent.

I think the word he was looking for was silenced.

Notice the verb tense.

I am well educated on my verb tenses.

I am going to die, present tense.

I cannot breathe, present tense.

He could not breathe, past tense.

Will we be able to breathe, future tense.

George was here, past tense.

Breonna was here, past tense.

Eric was here, past tense.

Sandra was here, past tense.

Black people used to be left alone...

Never a tense.

This melanin shows that black bodies have been left in the past tense for way too long.

And I ain't gotta open a Merriam-Webster dictionary to know that black and survival ain't on the same page.

Black,  
characterized by the absence of light.

Black,  
reflecting or transmitting little or no light.

Black,  
served without milk or cream.

Black,  
thoroughly sinister or evil.

Black,  
connected with or invoking the supernatural and especially the devil.

Black,  
not associated with any context relating to survival or peace.

Peace,  
An illusion.

Illusion,  
white educators shielding the heavy blow of racism from African American students so as to not cause uproar or unnecessary violence.

Violence; associated with Police, see brutality on page May 25, 2020.

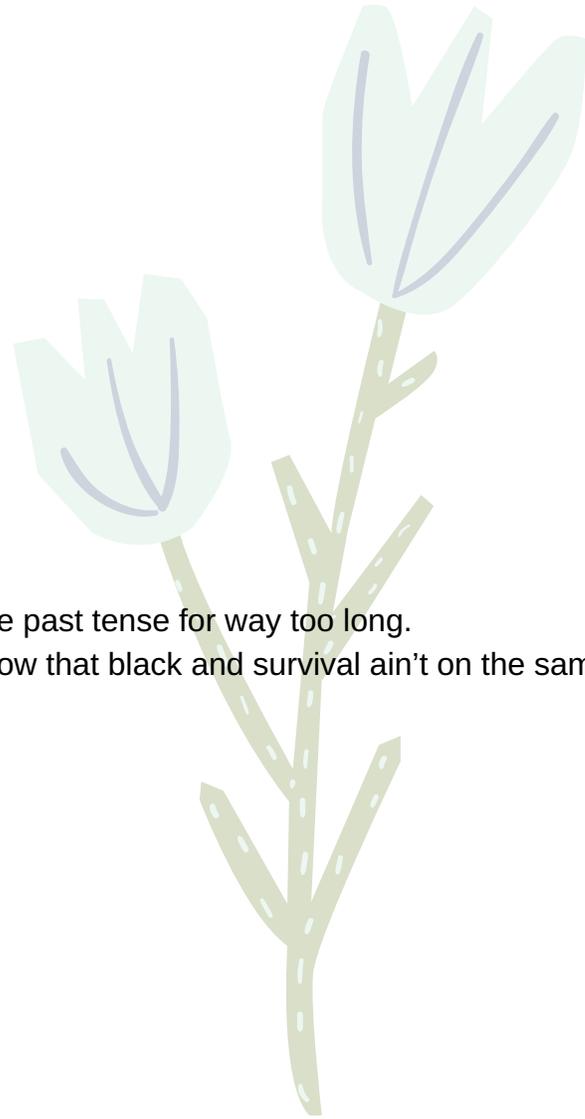
Tell me again how an educated black woman has her melanin erased  
Solely because she knows the proper usage of their, there, and they're.

Examples:

White woman calling the police announces "they're attacking me."

Proper Usage: they are.

White woman caught in the car with black men with pounds of marijuana,  
Says "that's theirs"



Proper usage: T H E I R.

Police indicate a residence of interest, “unknowingly” targets a POC household,

Proclaims: “they live there.”

Proper usage: T H E R E.

There denotes place.

A space.

A belonging to somewhere.

Blacks Belonging.

An Oxymoron.

Because black and belong can't happen at the same time.

So to the blonde haired, white woman at my university who told me to consider an English major or minor,

Nah fam, I don't know the first thing about English.

### ***To the Moon***

***Tristan W.***

I was so ready to go to the moon if NASA told me. I had to gain their respect.

I was always so ready to tell them the secrets they told me, while she cried late at night.

As if that would even have a chance to hold me.

I was so ready to blast off to the Moon and never return to the ground below my feet, no matter how devoid of life it was.

I was always so ready to sacrifice everything. Friendships, family, everything I had, for just one chance to go to the Moon.

Since I was young, I had always been fascinated by the wonders of outer space, and it was a damn shame that my first mission was to land on the moon.

Its core is nothing but a little dust and iron.

So barren and empty, yet everyone is so fascinated with its face all covered in craters.

I used to love the Moon, but the more I learned, the sourer it grew for me.

I wish the Moon was made of cheese, just so that I didn't have to look up at it every once in a while.

Even now, it calls to me, and I want to answer because I've stared at it since I was 11 years old.

I used to play games and have so much fun with it because the moon was my best friend.

But like most friendships when we are young, we just had to grow apart because nothing can ever be simple.

It couldn't just be simple.

I didn't think the Moon could hurt the Sun so badly, but it did some damage.

I always loved the Sun too.

I had been captivated by it since I was eleven, just like when I found the Moon.

We knew each other.

We helped each other...

I just couldn't pick one to love.

The Moon had major sway on the tides of my opinions, and I grew to despise the Sun, even if she was the only thing keeping me alive, while he was siphoning my energy.

AND GOD DO I HATE THE MOON.

Everyone always thinks it's so cool but no, not the Moon I know.

Il it ever did was pull my tides in ways they shouldn't move naturally and cause the Sun to flare up and damage me.

After all this time I can finally say I've gone to the Moon and back, and honestly...  
It ain't all it's cracked up to be.

## ***Jewels and Roses***

***Tristan W.***

Oh boy! You've done it now, you stupid boy.

You know why you did it, but that doesn't mean it was okay.

Be honest with yourself. You used her as a rebound and in the process, convinced her you really loved her.

I can't tell if you're a manipulative bastard, or if you were just heartbroken and wanted an escape from your mind.

Did you just want to replace the value of the roses with brand new glittering jewels?

You've never liked jewels; they've always been secondary in value to you.

That's the REAL reason why you called her Sprite.

Not just because she reminds you of a forest fairy, but because she was your second choice.

Just like the soda, you only noticed her feelings when the roses were gone and you missed them.

Stop lying to yourself and saying that you didn't do anything wrong

You chased the shine of "diamonds" when all you wanted was a bouquet of roses, and you knew, the whole damn time you knew,

but you still stole the diamonds from her and made her chase a ghost she could never catch,

All because you wanted some roses to be there in your arms.

So what if they have thorns? At least they feel alive,

Even if they may look fragile, they're strong.

Stronger than the "diamond" you stole just to make yourself feel better.

Once you were done with the "diamond," what did you do with it?

Sinking and dissolving like the spoonfuls of sugar in the tea I've made

Just to keep my head above the water at night.

Water, oh yes, water, is the bane of my existence

But something that has fascinated me since I was a child.

And we, water and fire, just don't mix, but without the two, the fine goods we dine on

Every day would not even be possible.

And oh boy, oh boy, do I love steamed crab-legs and pasta!

I'm tired, oh so tired, of trying to fight the crashing waves, but if I don't,

My fire will go out. And the wave machine will be upset with me.

So I say, "Woe is me," as I open another can and add to the endless sea of red beside my bed.

This truly is a twisted cycle I'm in, and yet I absolutely love it.

Mmm, oh how sweet your kisses are, Doctor.

Take me away from my thoughts with the sweet love you give to me.

## ***I'm Not Enough***

***RaJahné H.***

Why can I never be enough? It feels like nothing I do is enough. I just want to be useful, to be seen as important, good enough. When I try my hardest, it seems like I mess up more. No matter what, something or someone is neglected. I have given all I have, and I don't have any idea what I'm doing wrong. I feel like a foreigner in my own body, and I'm letting myself down.

Will I ever be what I want, what everyone else needs me to be? It feels like I'm stuck in the darkness, like there is no light, and no way out of this misery I feel. The hatred I feel inside boils, and for some reason, my prayers aren't working. I'm losing faith, or did I ever have faith?

Then, the Sun comes out. The cold feeling slowly melts away. I can hear the sun telling me everything is going to be okay, and for some reason, I believe her. She looks like nothing I've seen before. She shines in ways I didn't know I needed. Her rays find their way into every inch of darkness. "You are enough," she tells me.

If someone this powerful, this amazing can see it, it has to be true. Maybe, just maybe I am missing something about myself. She sees something I can't see. With her energy, I have the strength to get up and try again. I may not be perfect, but I'm going to try. Wrapped in my blue armor, I will fight, and I know I won't lose.

## ***Dystopia***

***RaJahné H.***

It's dark.

We are stuck inside, away from the light, and packed in like sardines waiting for the okay to resume life.

People are breaking rules,

fighting the power,

screaming to be let out of this prison.

Slowly the can is opening.

People are running out and

the world is opening.

I'm crumbling.

I'm spiraling.

People are asking for me to get back to life.

Is it safe?

Can we live, will we live?

Is money worth the risk?

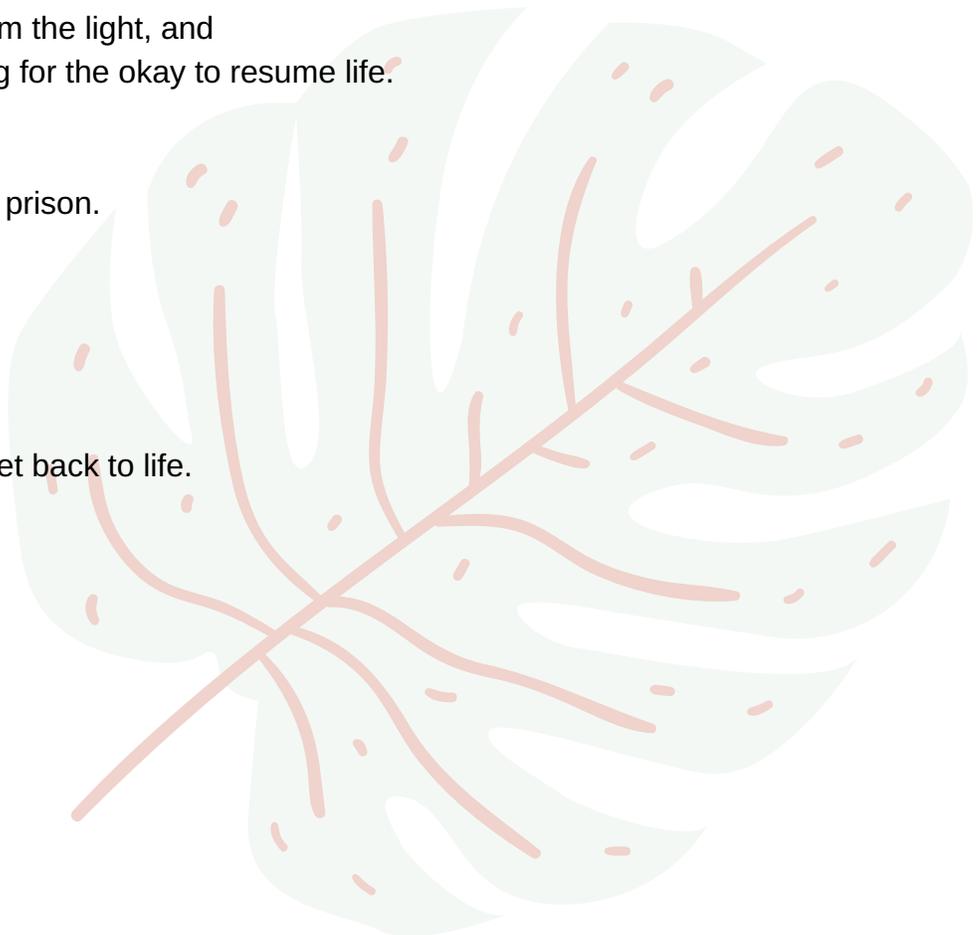
Anxiety is rising.

I can't breathe.

## ***Sugar***

***RaJahné H.***

The taste of sugar  
is on my mind; need candy  
to stay alive, ugh.



**Burning**  
**RaJahné H.**

From my view, the world is burning.  
The street I once walked down is lit up by police lights and fire.  
My city, being broken, burned.  
I'm proud of my community; standing up is hard.  
I'm too afraid to fight.  
I'm too tired to fight.  
A part of me thinks it's useless.  
I'm tired of screaming and not being heard.  
My voice isn't loud enough,  
Isn't strong enough.  
I feel small,  
Unimportant.  
Surrounded by hate.  
Social media fuels my anxiety.  
It makes the scary things bigger, and  
I can't hide from it.  
Everywhere I turn, a body falls.  
They all look like me, or like my brother.  
I'm scared.  
My body can't articulate the fear.  
It shakes,  
Becomes numb.  
Rinse, repeat.  
I should be used to this feeling.  
How terrible to think that I should be used to this,  
To the disappointment,  
The fear,  
The hate.  
It's insane that the color of my skin will be the reason for my downfall.  
I never noticed how ugly I must be,  
Maybe how terrifying I must look.  
The fact that I could never hurt a fly, but a lot of people fear me.  
It must be scary to hear my brothers crying for their mothers,  
Struggling for air.  
Seeing them struggle,  
Trying to cling on to life,  
Trying to make it home to their kids, to their mothers.  
It turns them on to see us hurting.  
They get off at my worst fear.  
I just want you to know,  
When they've killed me,  
I'll finally stop fearing myself.





## *High School Section*

***Philophobia.***

***Niles W.***

Why am I so scared to fall in love?  
Why do I get scared to go into a relationship after so many failed ones?  
Why do I feel moonstruck after talking to a guy who might date me? We're just friends.  
Why am I so scared to get hurt again?  
Why do I have these urges to find the **one**, and then never speak again?  
Why am I so scared to experience a "normal" emotion?  
Why can't I think right when I'm in love?  
Why can't I be happy?  
Why can't I live in the moment?  
Why must I be so scared to open my heart to new people?  
Why do I fear getting hurt?  
Why do I fear love?  
Why do I fear falling in love?  
Why do I fear everyone who claims that they "love me"?  
Why am I scared of everything that has to do with love?  
Why can't I be normal?  
Why can't I stop being scared?  
Why must I live in jealousy and pain over those who have found the one,  
when there's no one for me?  
Help me.  
Someone. Somewhere.  
Help me break this curse, and let me experience happiness again.

***We Need Positive Student Stories on the News***

***Ka'mariya T.***

The news should have more positive things on it instead of just the bad things. They should show how some places in the U.S have money raised, but that may not be everywhere. They should show the teens who are graduating at 15-years-old because of their GPA. Some students should be recognized for the good things they do. Mostly, the good is not being recognized enough around the world.

A way to put these stories on the internet is have a social media page for some of the positive things that happen. For example, if some students have good things going on in school, their school page should put something up for them and their achievements.

The world can have a page called the U.S economy about the money decreasing and increasing, but why? Students don't get seen for the good things in life. Sometimes life is hard, but people don't realize students are criticized by the way we act, and that's a problem.

***Students Should be Allowed to Vote***  
***Shacorie J.***

Students should vote because we have opinions too. We need to share them because our opinions matter. All U.S. citizens should vote about the decisions in the U.S. Even though the U.S. thinks students should not vote, we suggest an age limit to only allow mature students to vote instead of all little children. There should be a maturity test included in the voting process to determine if teens should be a part of the process. Voting impacts teenager life just as much as it does adults. For example, teenagers should have some options when it comes to school issues because they are actually the people in school experiencing it.

Kids are impacted by the election, so their opinions should be heard. Some students actually pay attention and are well informed because they actually worry how our government impacts us. Many pay attention to the news and try to act in alliance to the issues. In conclusion, we are trying to make America better by trying to involve more people in the political process.

***Address Australian Forest Fires***  
***Ashantay C.***

One billion is the number of animals we've lost, and 1,400 is the number of homes that were destroyed in the devastating fires that continue to rip through Australia. If we wait any longer, numbers will be too high to count, and what we once knew as a sovereign country will be no more. What are we waiting for? We made it so far, but it still feels like we're going backwards. What can we do to emerge from what seems like the end of days?

Any small thing helps. Every cent that we donate, every post that we share, and every word that we speak, helps. You don't have to be a multi-millionaire or an A-list celebrity to speak out. No matter where you're from, what you look like or who you are, every single voice matters. If we all work together and use our voices, Australia's orange skies can turn back to blue.

***Climate Change***  
***Maryjane P.***

Climate change is a real thing.  
Why does the school bell ring  
to tell us we're being excused for severe storming?  
Our top worry should be passing class, not getting warnings  
to help us live through the morning.  
It's so hot when I walk home in May  
that I have to change my clothes after the school day.

***Dystopia***  
***Elijah W.***

Dystopia.  
No concrete laws.  
Run by criminals.  
Pollution is rapidly rising, smog.  
Children have no schooling and often become homeless.  
No medical care due to lack of resources.

***Dear Past Self***  
***Shavon B.***

In our future, we will achieve great things, but we will also lose things like our dad, our mom, and our best friend. As we lose things that mean a lot to us, we also gain things that we learn to love, like our new school, and we are happy now. We've also made a lot of new friends and met our old school friends. At times, we have also made a few enemies. I don't like them and they don't like me. When I tried to be nice, they were ungrateful and stuck up the more I tried.

***Global Warming***  
***Kameron B.***

She's crying  
Out and you ignore  
The calls.  
Mother Earth, she's going to fall.  
O' Mother Earth  
God help us all.

Our forests are burning,  
The ice caps are melting,  
And there's nothing saving  
Us from ourselves.  
We're destroying our home,  
The only one we've got.

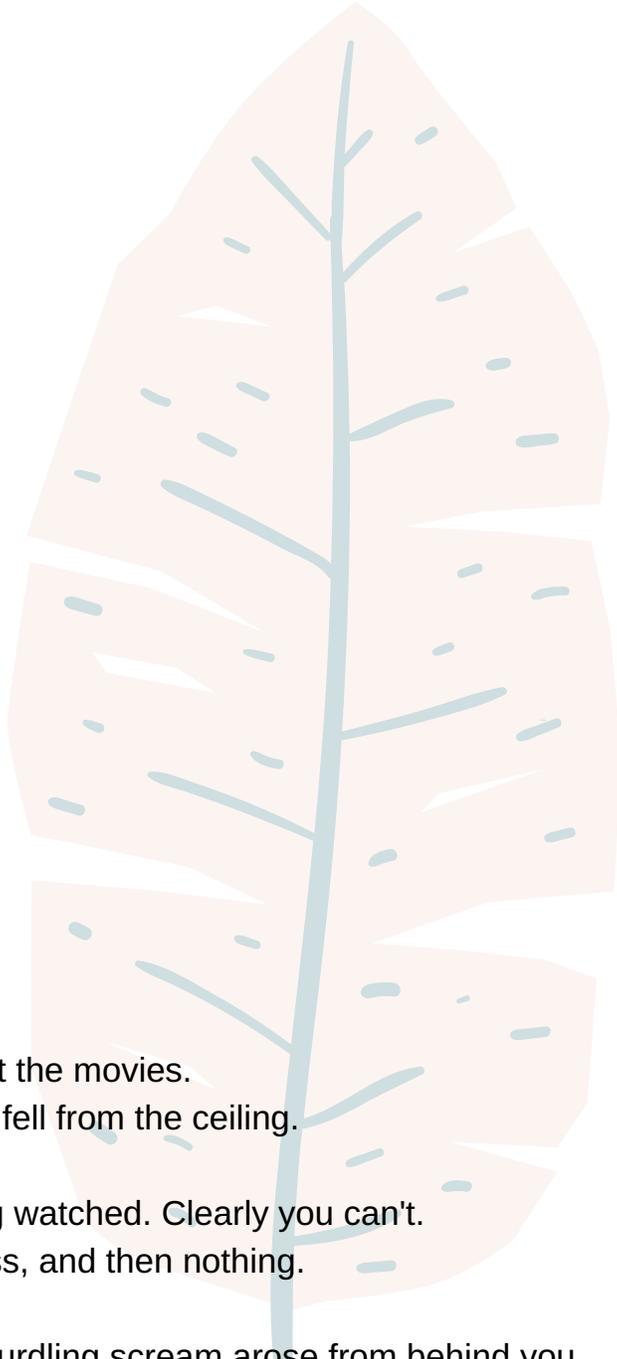
Even if we go to Mars, what  
About our animals?  
Will we leave them here, or will  
They come with us?  
Will they be extinct before we, or the  
Other way around?

**Love BB**  
**Bianca G.**

Dear my middle school self,  
Thanks for helping me get  
To high school even though  
It was hard for you.  
You could have stayed single  
Because some boys just  
Want to play with your  
Feelings.  
You're very good at  
History and math but,  
You should have passed.  
This is okay now because  
You can retake it.  
You could have controlled  
Your temper, been  
Quieter, and also had  
Less friends.  
But always be yourself.

**2 Sentence Horror Stories**  
**ACE Graduation Celebration**

- A - Alex and her friends went to go chill at the movies.
- B- Boom! The lights went out, and bones fell from the ceiling.
- C- Certain people can feel if they're being watched. Clearly you can't.
- D- Didn't turn around, and at first darkness, and then nothing.
- E- Everything went silent. Then a blood curdling scream arose from behind you.
- F- Far in the distance, you see blood spurt in the air.
- G- Get help now.
- H- Harrietta tripped and fell, but we don't see her anymore.
- I- It's coming for us right now.
- J- Just keep running, and it won't catch us.
- K- Killing sprees happen every year around this time.
- L- Lives lost, but bodies found.





## ***Middle School Section***

### ***Less Tests Please***

***Jada F.***

I am advocating for less tests in school. I think there should be less tests especially when they are back-to-back. Tests stress people out because they have multiple things going on outside of school. Teachers and other adults always say that it prepares you for the real world, but at this age, kids shouldn't be this stressed just because of school.

People, like some of my teachers, think the education system is broken, and there are multiple reasons why. I really think that we should have less tests, especially with the stuff we are learning now. Some things we learn, we may forget because we will never need to use it, but there are also a lot of things that are useful in life that we learn in school. What I'm trying to say is that we need to fix our education system in many ways.

### ***Advice to Elementary School Graduates***

***Sydnei J.***

Dear rising 6th graders,

The transfer from elementary school to middle school is tough. You might want to listen when they have Back to School Night, and you can visit some of your classes. You might also want to have a friend group.

Sincerely,  
Sydnei

### ***Getting Lost on the Way to Class***

***Sahara W.***

You should make a route that isn't too crowded and that you will take every day. Then, you will get muscle memory and won't be lost anymore. You should also try to remember what end of the hallway has what room numbers, in case you have to go to some other room. When you're planning your route, try to make it as quick as possible. You should try a few different ways in the beginning to find the best way. Once you've decided your route, stick to it, and you'll never be lost again!  
(Repeat with each grade level.)

***A Family Meal***  
***Journey W.***

One day, a family had their first family dinner in a month. The daughter was busy with catching up on homework, the mother was busy working on an office presentation, the father was working two jobs to pay for the wants of their children, and the son was busy with after school sports. They came together for dinner, and they had shrimp and buttered noodles. The food was so good that it became a family recipe.

***Halloween***  
***Sahara W.***

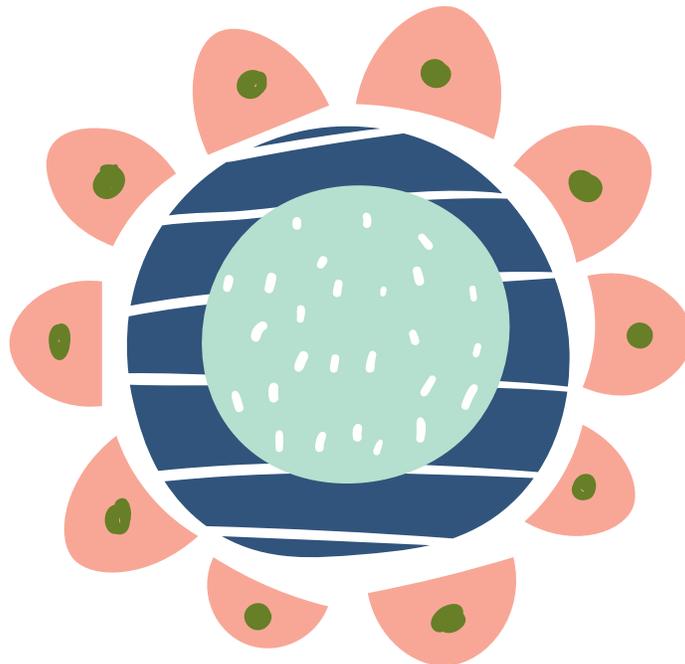
A shadow creeping,  
A jack-o-lantern grinning,  
People running from door to door,  
Their bags collecting more candy with every "Trick or treat!"  
Halloween is a holiday that delights many  
Yet still causes fright.

***Advice to New Students***  
***Journey W.***

Dear student,

There are some things you need to know about going to middle school. Most importantly, you should make a list of room numbers, so you can remember what class you are going to next.

Sincerely,  
Journey



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***Happy reading!***

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