

# Summer 2020 Virtual Zine



# Podium

# Teen Programs 14 - 19

## A Space Scene

RaJahne H.

“RaJ, what the hell are you doing?” Kavin shouts.

“Hey don’t yell at my girlfriend,” Tristan retorts. “But, uh babe, what are you doing?”

“I’m fixing the space ship, idiots,” RaJ yells back, flipping her afro. “Do y’all want to die?”

“Uuuuh, not really,” they both reply in unison.

“Then stop talking and let me save us. You men are so stupid, especially when it comes to money,” RaJ says, getting back to work.

“What does money have to do with it?” Kavin asks, looking confused.

“Money has everything to do with everything.” RaJ replies snarkily.

“And that, my friends, is what we call unchecked capitalism,” Tristan chimes in.

“Okay Tristan, instead of starting this conversation again, make yourself useful and get me some ice cream,” RaJ replies.

“Is that going to help you fix the problem?” Tristan asks.

“No, it’s going to help my stomach and my taste buds,” RaJ replies with a head snap.

“Well, shouldn’t you fix the problem first?” Tristan asks. RaJ simply turns her head to Tristan, and he responds “Okay, okay fine I’ll get you ice cream,” He knew there was no way to win the fight so he obeyed.

“Whipped,” Kavin responds and Tristan flails around like a duck because Tristan is weird and does weird things when embarrassed.

“He better be, if he knows what’s best for him,” RaJ says, flipping her hair again even though it does not move. “Guys!”

“What, what’s wrong,” Tristan says, running towards RaJ.

“I beat the expert level in Sudoku!” RaJ replies, holding up her phone with amusement.

“Really?” Kavin responds, “You ju-,”

“I’m so proud of you babe!” Tristan interjects, cutting Kavin off.

“It only took me 35 minutes this time! Sudoku is really the best medicine for the brain!” RaJ says excitedly.

“You are so right my love,” Tristan replies.

“Sooooo, what have you been fixing this whole time then?” Kavin responds.

“The problem. I was fixing the problem,” RaJ says, feeling attacked.

“But for the past 35 minutes, you’ve been playing Sudoku, so you haven’t been doing anything other than that,” Kavin says.

“Kavin, you should...”

“SO YOU DON’T THINK I’VE BEEN WORKING?” RaJ yells, cutting Tristan off.

“I tried to tell you, Kavin,” Tristan whispers.

“IT SOUNDS LIKE I’M NOT BEING APPRECIATED,” RaJ screams at the boys.

“Sweetheart, everything is okay. We both know you run this whole operation,” Tristan says, reaching for a hug from RaJ, “Right Kavin?”

“Yes, I am so sorry I didn’t see it before,” Kavin says.

“Let’s talk about something else,” Tristan says desperately. “Climate change?”

“NO,” RaJ replies.

**Nightlight**  
**Kavin J.**

The dark was always too scary to be in because that's where all the bad things happen. So, I try to stay close to the light on the candle. He is my friend, and he makes me feel safe. He says his name is Pyo, and that there's something in the dark he needs to find, but I'm scared. There are things that move in the dark, and noises that shake the ground. You can only see their eyes. Big, bright, yellow, and scary. Pyo said, "It's okay. He can keep me safe, but can't stay here. We can keep each other safe." I was scared. Everywhere is darkness, and I can't breathe. It's so cold, I can't stand it. But, his light is warm, and it's nice to see.

**I'm a Black Woman**  
**RaJahne H.**

I am a black woman.  
I'm strong,  
Powerful.  
My tongue can cut you with ease.  
I won't break a sweat,  
And I won't regret  
Tearing you to shreds with my words.  
I am a black woman.  
I have to be strong.  
I have to be powerful.  
If I don't cut you with my tongue  
You'll walk over me.  
My words have to kill for them to matter.  
I am a black woman,  
And I feel like I don't matter.  
If there is a strong woman behind every man,  
Then who is behind me?  
Who will be there for me when my shield is broken?  
I am a black woman,  
And I'm tired.

## **Hollowed Symphony**

**Kavin J.**

This empty place used to hold the most wondrous performances, filled with sounds that moved hearts and became cinema reels in the memories of the audience. These broken walls built by old songs and voices. The lights now faded, dim, and the wood floors cracked. The stage set for the show that would have wowed the crowd, leaving them stunned with raving reviews. Their voices ranged through, where instruments could be heard dancing their melody and props stood tall, providing a life outside of this one.

But now, they're just echoes of lost souls, scattered scenes, and empty sounds. This place, these sounds, and the memories shared are woven into the curtains. The life breathed into this place has finally reached its climax, and now, the show has ended. The curtains have been called and have now fallen. They've taken their final bows, the lights turned off, and clapping fades out. My performance is over. My symphony, hollow and empty, and my curtain called.

## **A New Form of Therapy**

**Kavin J.**

No, the pills haven't been working.  
No, the breathing exercise hasn't been helping.  
And no, I still haven't caught a shiny Eevee,  
Wait...no... wrong conversation, sorry.  
I'm always angry, and my life feels like it's falling apart.  
Aside from you, it just sounds like I'm complaining  
About everything when I should be happy.  
I should be happy right?  
I've been losing motivation for a while,  
And we can't  
I can't  
Keep going on like this.  
I feel like I took the best drugs but only got the side effects and withdrawal symptoms.  
Was life always this hard?  
Why is it so hard to remember the fields of rosemary and lilac I used to play in?  
My memories are shot with no hope of recovery. Is it time already?  
No wait, please, just a little longer. I need to talk more.  
My friends feel like strangers.  
I feel so dragged down I don't want to say bye. Please tell me why I feel like this, please.  
Please, new exercises, ne-new medicine, new anything, please...  
I don't want to feel this again.

## **I Know You Can Hear Me** **Tristan W.**

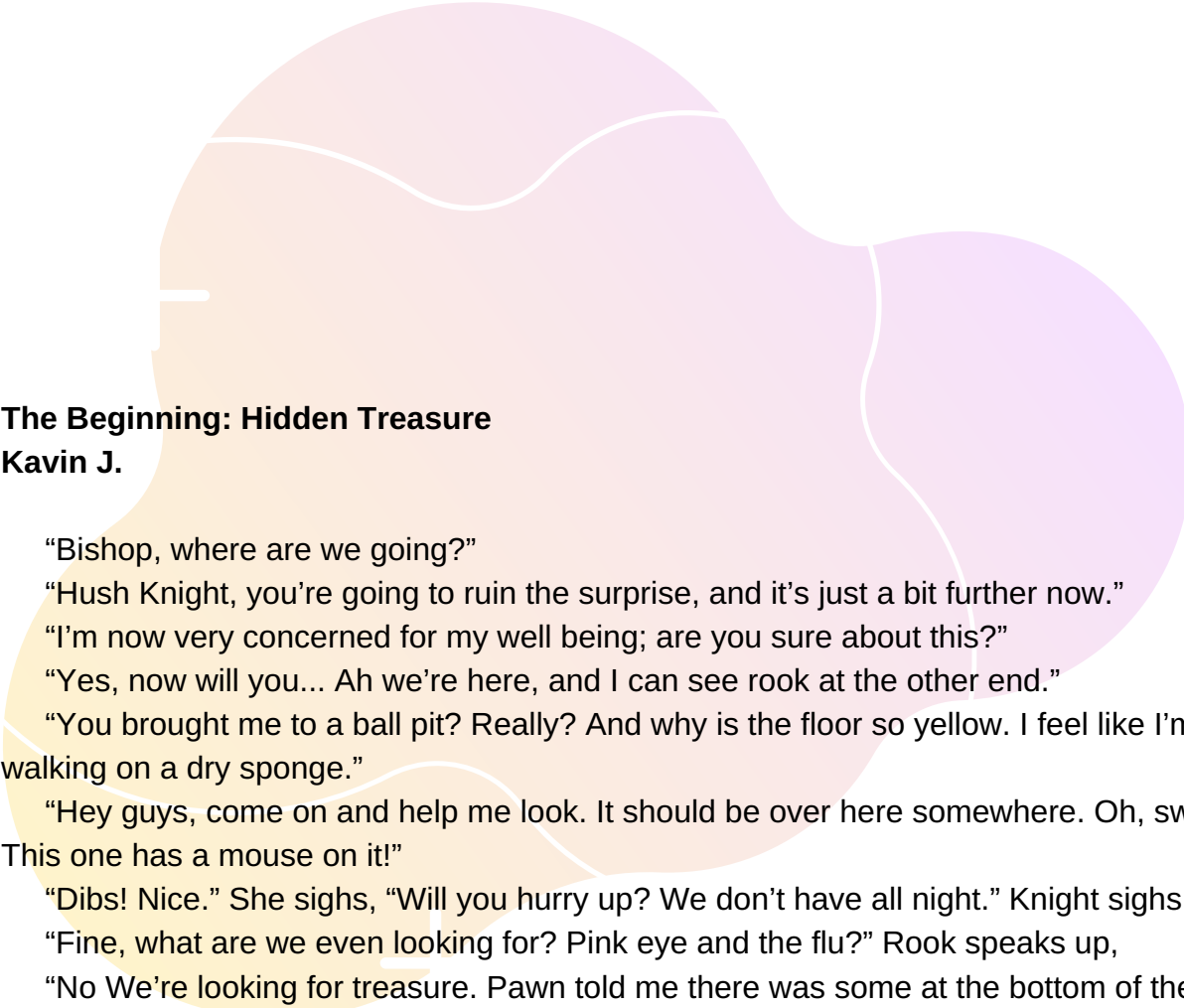
I know you can hear me.  
You may be trying your best not to listen, but I know that you're in there.  
I know your thoughts better than you do sometimes,  
so I know you can't resist looking at me.  
I know you hear the words I'm saying.  
The emotions flowing off my tongue.  
And for whatever reason it may be, for me, responses you have none.  
I'm sorry you don't want to talk about emotions right now.  
But that's just the mood I'm in.  
So, I promise to bring them up later, my love, as they're part of who I am.  
And you want to know me better than anyone ever can.  
I beg of you to please talk to me,  
So that I might hear your voice one last time.  
As this night draws on, I can feel myself fading.  
I need to let you know one thing.  
I love you more than anything, and I want you to be able to love me.  
I want to make you feel safe and warm, and to worry about nothing.  
I want to be our protector, though, I'm not very strong.  
I will love you in my dreams  
and continue when I wake at dawn.  
I am sorry my love,  
if I have upset you in some way.  
And I'm sorry I'm like this all the time.  
I just want to talk to you tonight before we have to go to sleep.  
I miss you.  
The past couple days have been full of drama, and I don't want to run from it.  
I want to fight it as hard as we can.  
Because I want to be yours and only yours.  
I want you to be happy in my arms.  
I want you to be happy and safe for as many of your days as I can make them.  
Because you are mine.  
I know you can hear me asking if you're okay.  
And I know you might not care,  
but all I want is for you to know I'm just right here.  
I know you can hear me say, "I am right here."

**Nye**  
**Tristan W.**

Every day goes by the same.  
I'm scared. He's so far away.  
What if it doesn't work?  
What if I can't look at... him.  
What if he can't fix it?  
She won't let him out.  
The world is dark.  
I can't breathe.  
I miss my life outside.  
It's getting harder to feel.  
My mind is foggy.  
I'm shaking.  
I miss... him.  
Eight miles is too far.  
Can we do this?  
I'm angry that he can't be here.  
I'm so stressed. And angry. And tired.  
I'm. So. Tired.  
I'm tired of being this way.  
I'm tired of being me.  
Another night of melatonin,  
And I'll wake up alone.

**Inspired by M.  
Destiny H.H**

My sculptor placed my shapeless body on a pedestal.  
He kissed my curves with a chisel and hammered out my imperfections.  
He carefully carved out my breasts making sure they were how the creator intended.  
Imperfect but beautiful.  
A bounty that provides more than it takes.  
My sculptor knew me before I even knew myself.  
He carved ears to make sure I hung onto every word.  
He whispered the universe into my body, traced the systems into my skin and blew butterflies into my stomach.  
He left my heart for last, placed a piece of his soul in the marble and he wished love into the small of my spine.  
When he was done, he put his chisel down and stood back and admired his work.  
He cried.  
Turned me around on the pedestal and looked me up and down from every angle.  
He smiled.  
He held my hand and lifted me off of my feet.  
I was his creation, a mold of what he was to become.  
I was his future.



## The Beginning: Hidden Treasure

Kavin J.

“Bishop, where are we going?”

“Hush Knight, you’re going to ruin the surprise, and it’s just a bit further now.”

“I’m now very concerned for my well being; are you sure about this?”

“Yes, now will you... Ah we’re here, and I can see rook at the other end.”

“You brought me to a ball pit? Really? And why is the floor so yellow. I feel like I’m walking on a dry sponge.”

“Hey guys, come on and help me look. It should be over here somewhere. Oh, sweet. This one has a mouse on it!”

“Dibs! Nice.” She sighs, “Will you hurry up? We don’t have all night.” Knight sighs,

“Fine, what are we even looking for? Pink eye and the flu?” Rook speaks up,

“No We’re looking for treasure. Pawn told me there was some at the bottom of the ball pit here, so start digging, Sir!”

“This is very childish and immature behavior. We’re too old to be doing this, and...” He sighs, “Alright, move over.”

Both Rook and Bishop scream, “Yay!” Knight hushes them.

“We have to be quiet or will get caught,” he barks.

“Sorry,” they say with their heads down.

Bishop perks up, “What have you found so far?” Rook shrugs,

“Just an empty bag of Chex Mix and this bicycle.”

The ground shakes. “What was thAAAAAAAAAATTTTTTT!!!!!!!”

They fell through the bottom into somewhere unknown



## **The ABC's of 2020**

**Savon T., M.J. P., Tristan W., Kavin J., RaJahne H., and Destiny B.  
Teen Professional Conference**

Almost a world war. Avatar. Australia wildfires are over.

Bubble baths, please.

COVID-19 and RIP Chuck E. Cheese.

Donald Trump, DooomsDay is near, but Dean's smile is here.

Elevated anxiety, evictions,

Friends, friction, and fiction.

Ghosts and Geopolitics everywhere.

Hazard pay? The new Hitler? Healthcare?

Impeachment and ICE raids.

Justice?

Killing of unarmed black people. Kim Jung Un. Karens, Kanye, and Kavin's beard.

Lines at Walmart.

Murder hornets and Mask wisdom.

No justice, no peace, no income.

Optimism? Old people fear.

Podium here with virtual programs, a form of positivity.

Quarantine silence and stirs.

RaJahne quit Shoneys, and

Savon and Tristan turn 19.

Tik Tok takedown of Tulsa.

Unity? Unchecked politics.

Virtual world explosion. Vaccination?

What, Winter? When did that happen?

Xanthan gum makes smoothies thicker, and X box Series X is released.

Yoga is dope, so are yoga pants, and

Zoom is now how we meet.

# Youth Programs 10 - 13

## **The Scientist**

**Brianna G.**

**Nextup RVA: The Steam Machine**

Once, there was a scientist who wanted to be scared in real life and not just by movies. He created a disease to make people turn into man-eating zombies but soon regretted it because it went too far. People turned into zombies at night, and only adults turned into zombies. All of the kids lived in a giant mansion with everything they needed. Some of the adults lived in the mansion to stay human.

## **My Superself**

**Journey W.**

**Podium Virtual Program**

In a small town, I came upon a hurt superhero. She heard of me in the news because a reporter recently came to my school to interview children about what super power they wanted to have. The hurt superhero was named HR, short for human remote. HR said to me, "Take this necklace, this is my time remote. I heard of you from the news." I put the necklace on; then, my clothes changed to a superhero suit with a clock on it.

## **Pets Can Talk**

**Destiny D.**

**Nextup RVA: Teen Scene**

Pets can talk but only when humans are not around. I know they do because dogs are really smart. They understand when you are about to leave the house, getting ready to grab something to eat, using the bathroom, etc. My dog seems like she can talk because she makes a lot of weird faces. Also, when they bark, it feels like they are telling us something.

**Murder Mystery**  
**Sahara W.**  
**Podium Virtual Program**

“Oh officer, thank goodness you're here! My wife has been murdered! I had just gotten home from work, and from the moment I walked in, I knew something had happened. The furniture was smashed and all of our valuable decor was gone. I thought it was just a robbery, so I waited to call the police until I had inspected all of the damage. I went upstairs, only to find my wife lying on the ground dead with a knife in her back! I called the police immediately. The cameras outside don't show anyone breaking in, so I know the only people who could have done it are the cook or the maid.”

“Thank you Mr. Robinson. I will now question these two suspects.” The officer turns, “Chef, where were you when the murder took place?”

“I was downstairs cooking dinner, just after I brought Mrs. Robinson her tea. I heard someone making a lot of noise in the living room, so I ran outside. I couldn't call 911 because the phone is inside. Once I thought it was safe, I ran inside to check on Mrs. Robinson and the maid, only to find the maid in the room with the dead Mrs. Robinson!”

“Thank you, Chef. Maid, where were you?”

“I was cleaning the spare bedroom when I heard the chef go into Mrs. Robinson's room with tea. Not even 10 minutes later, I heard a ruckus in the living room. I was about to run downstairs, but I thought better of it. I ran into Mrs. Robinson's room instead, and there she was lying on the floor dead! I bolted the lock, so I wouldn't be murdered too. That's why you found me in there when you got here.”

“Thank you, Maid. Now, I'm going to go examine the body. It appears that the knife is the same as the ones stored in the kitchen. The tea is on the desk beside her, untouched. Well Mr. Robinson, I who the murderer is. Officers, arrest the chef!”

## **A Walk in the Jungle**

**Raniya K.**

**Nextup RVA: STEAM Machine**

When I was in the jungle walking through every bush, I did not notice a cobra in one of the trees. It tried to bite me, and I tried to fight, but it was too late. It bit me before I could stab it. I had to call for an emergency, but I forgot there was no signal and couldn't. Then, I remembered I had this cream in my backpack. I put it on my arm and stayed alive.

## **Hiding Spot Diary**

**Sahara W.**

**Podium Virtual Program**

*Day 54:* I've been hiding in this old janitor's closet for two-weeks now. This morning, another human came in here with us. Her name is Cassie, and she's only 14-years-old. Lincoln, Bex, and I got quite a fright because she didn't knock or anything; instead, she just burst in. We thought the school shelter had been overwhelmed by the robot army.

I'm glad I'm in a safe spot, but if the human army doesn't win soon, I think I'm going to go insane. The rations today were 6 saltines, 3 sticks of jerky, and a can of sardines. I wish I could go home. We found a deck of cards on the highest shelf in the closet. They're pretty beat up, but anything helps.

## **Should Middle Schoolers Get Recess?**

**Khamani M.**

**Nextup RVA: Teen Scene**

I think middle schoolers should not have recess at all. At Henderson Middle School, where I graduated from, they don't deserve it. Students have gym throughout the day too, so that's their recess.

**The Bunny Story**  
**Journey W.**  
**Podium Virtual Program**

Once upon a time, there was a little bunny. She had a big bunny family, and one day, she went bunny shopping with her mom. They went to Bed, Bath, and Bunny. She got lost in the store and could not find her mom. The little bunny was scared, so she went to self-checkout, and to her surprise, her mom was right there! When the little bunny caught up with her mom, she was so happy. She said, "I need you to stay with me in stores, okay?" Then, they went to Red Robin for burgers and shakes.

**Letter to my Generation**  
**Sahara W.**  
**Podium Virtual Program**

Dear Generation Z,

We need to work together so we are not remembered as the last generation who had a chance to fix the environment. Climate change is going to reach an irreversible point in 10-years, and we have a chance to make sure it doesn't reach that point. We NEED to be the change. Do you want to be the one who kills off all of the adorable baby penguins and polar bears?

**A Spider on the Sidewalk**  
**Leslie S.**  
**Nextup RVA: STEAM Machine**

I was walking down the sidewalk  
when I saw a spider.  
It kept walking towards me,  
and I didn't want to kill it,  
but it kept walking towards me.  
So I just kicked it, and it ran away.  
Spiders are like that.

## **How to Survive a Hurricane**

**David S.**

**Nextup RVA: STEAM Machine**

To survive a hurricane, we would stay in the house and turn the lights off, in case the power turns off. After, we would go downstairs into the bathroom or the guest room to hide. We would also get snacks and other important stuff that we need, just in case it's still going to be going on. My dog would be there too. I would bring something to do because we might get bored and want to play a board game. We need to bring food and water, just in case we get dehydrated, and an extra pair of clothes, in case we stay there for a long time and need to change. It will just be me and my mom because my brother will be going off to college. I hope my other family will be safe. That's what I would do to survive.

## **Weather Alert - Thunderstorms**

**Sahara W.**

**Podium Virtual Program**

When a severe thunderstorm warning is issued, if outside, go to a car or the nearest accessible building. If on a walk and very near home, go back to the house. If at home, go to the basement where there are flashlights and food inside the emergency box. If the power does go out, stay calm and use the flashlights and wind up radio. Neighbors are expected to be able to protect themselves especially since thunderstorms are usually predicted ahead of time. If you see a severe thunderstorm watch or warning, or see storm clouds, **DO NOT GO ON A WALK.**

## **Weather Alert - Landslides**

**Journey W.**

**Podium Virtual Program**

In a case that you get caught in a landslide, here are some tips to use.

1. Go to another level in your house, so the flooding won't rise to that level.
2. If you have something to seal your door with, use that, so there won't be a lot of flood water in your house.
3. If you are not at your house, get to the nearest restaurant, so you are safe.

**Robot Owners Manual**  
**Sahara W.**  
**Podium Virtual Program**

Delitterer 5000 Owner's Manual: The Delitterer 5000 is the best Delitterer in the line yet, with many new features and improvements on older ones! With your new Delitterer 5000, you'll never have to pick up trash again! The Delitterer was designed to always pick up litter you see in public, making following this rule so much easier!

Small enough to fit in your bag, it's easy to take on the go! The high power vacuum pulls trash towards it and holds on tight, making sure it won't drop to the ground again until you find a trash can and flip the vacuum switch off.

Don't want the garbage anywhere near you? The new Delitterer 5000 has an expandable arm that reaches up to 9 feet away!

To use the Delitterer, leave it by a sunny window or spot outside with the mini solar panels facing the direction of the sun. When it is fully charged, the LED light will turn green.

To use the expandable arm, push down on the blue button. To bring it back in, push down on the orange button. To activate the vacuum, flip the purple switch.

If your LED light is red and the vacuum isn't working, you need to charge it. If it starts to heat up, quickly get it into a cool area for it to cool down. If it doesn't cool down or repeatedly overheats, bring it to your nearest litter picker-upper repair store.

**Robot Owners Manual**  
**Journey W.**  
**Podium Virtual Program**

Your robot is used for chores, and here are the instructions. 1. Look on the back. There is a plug, so you can charge your robot. 2. The robot will need to be charged at night, starting at 6:00 pm. 3. This robot has a built in Siri. Here are some things you should not do to the robot. 1. Do not make the robot stressed. 2. Do not get anything wet on the robot. Please handle it with care.





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