

PODIUM TOGETHER We Rise!

Curated by Richmond students in 2017



JOURNAL 9

Let me extend a gigantic thank you to everyone
For bringing Podium into your fun.
What's this group all about? Just wait.
The words of Podium youth will make you shake
And the ground across Greater Richmond quake.

Once the bell rings afterschool,
That's the time for Podium to rule.
Empowerment through words and speech,
Writing and communication are what we teach.
Middle and high schoolers are who we reach.

The written word helps us to prepare
Tantalizing, fantasizing tales to share.
Youth in Podium create poetry and prose,
Personal narratives, science fiction, and rows
Of research to debate their greatest foes.

Leading journalistic investigations on the biggest 'it,'
Performing outlandish skits from original scripts.
Youth practice different forms of communication
To take charge of their literary education,
A critical step for successful future creation.

Healthy expression and positive outlets are key
To being who one truly wants to be.
The connection between wellness and being prepared
is clear, so youth create plans for college and career
And with these, stomp out their future fear.

Work is published in quarterly zines
Showcased during open mics, videos, and via other means.
Youth meet weekly with mentors all year long
And in the summer, professional development is what our
teens work on. Programs all work together to build confidence
in oneself and one's song.

From us all, we hope you enjoy the poetry and fiction
Created by the best youth writers from across Greater Richmond.
And now, without further ado,
Let us introduce you to
Podium's Journal #9, and our schoolyear in review.

- Vicki Yeroian, MSW
Podium RVA Programs Director



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Reciprocity

Irene Andrade
Huguenot High School

There's a push and pull,
a wave of embarrassment,

and I - uhm- just don't know
how to explain myself anymore.

But you're so calm
and so accepting.

Maybe, just maybe,
you'll accept me.

Grand gestures just
don't seem like you,

And I know, I know,
I may not get it right,

but I want you.
And I think you'll like me too.

When You Believe

Cordasha Pontee
Armstrong High School

Many times we pray
with no proof anyone will know.
In our hearts, a hopeless soul
we barely understand.

Now at this table, I stand.
Although y'all know I have much fear,
I'm still in control
like the band that still stands.

There can be so much hope
if you believe,
just know there is faith
in everyone.

Purity of Flesh

Cloëy Hagins
Thomas Jefferson High School

She knows her body will get her in trouble. Everyone told her she needed to chill out with what she's doing. You try and try to help her, but she uses her flesh to cultivate her voice over the ones you love so deeply. Trying to protect someone who doesn't protect you from society hurts.

Now, you only want it to be you and the stars because they don't talk back. They just listen and let you be who you truly want to be. Here, you can say how you feel without being targeted. Words mean more when you have a heart so pure, but it can be taken so soon.

Where will you drift, beyond what is placed in front of you? Life will always be there, and it's your gift to create another aspect of this world.

My Bumps

Da'Quon Stith
Huguenot High School

Since I've grown an interest in love, I grew bumps. Ironic, right? Back then, I wanted everything to be perfect about me, so there would be little reason for rejection. Later, I found out there's always something new, always something going wrong that I can be rejected for, like friendship, love, or equal rights. Instead of giving up on the lost causes that my demons love, I started changing to their liking, as if I were a chameleon. I saw doctors and dermatologists. I used Proactive, black soap, white soap, and even Dove soap. I did everything I possibly could to make myself better, more likeable. But recently, I gained the bullet-resistant confidence to be comfortable in my skin, even if it's not popular or safe to be.

I was so confident, I had Force-like powers when it came to my anvil acne. Then, I met a force as powerful as Affirmative Action and as beautiful as abstract art. Someone unbelievable, who created brainstorming for me and had me feeling, "Mayday! Mayday! I'm losing all control!" My defenses were down, so the yellow pests I harvested rose like I was the Candy Man being punished by his peers with bees, and all for loving where he doesn't belong.

See, it's hard to convince your executioner when they're also your jury: "Skin, I am sorry. If you would listen to me, you would know how much we belong together. Skin, you should understand you are a part of me." As I break out of my protection, she sees me clench my eyes and wait for her to strike like a cobra.

Instead, she rubs me, rubs my speed bumps as if they were as genie lamps. She performs no sorcery, but that moment is magical. As I stutter over every word, trying to understand, she just closes her eyes and says, "Love is blind, that's why I don't dislike your bumps. They're like braille to me, your body speaking words that your mouth can't quite form."

I realize now those speed bumps don't hurt me; they help me. They slow me down. They remind me that most details are seen under the speed limit.

I Wrote Your Name

Elizabeth Salinas
Armstrong High School

I wrote your name
in the sky,
but the wind blew it away.

I wrote your name
in the sand,
but the waves washed it away.

I wrote your name
on my heart,
and forever it will stay.

Bird On a Streetlight

Hannah Clark
Thomas Jefferson High School

A safe haven
in the unknown night,
a single feather
falls from flight.
The glow holds steady
as the sun goes down,
the shadow illuminated
by a golden crown.
The elusive apparition
catches its breath,
as the cloak of night
welcomes the kiss of death.

Days Away

Ty L.

Richmond Community High School

Who are we people? Faith be colorblind
and have no clues.

We all just gaze at light, and all we
see is navy blue.

It's heavy, bad enough, why must this
big promotion be but to
beat the body up and drop it
into the ocean?

Now, I'm losing everything, but I'll never
go insane. Because the thing I'll
always treasure is my brain.

Just days until I'm pushed away into outer space.
Just days away, and I'm
the biggest joke and disgrace.
When I cry, fear bleeds through my eyes.
Just days away until you say it to
my face.

Before I step down, I take a bow, have a kneel.
I'll look to god as if I am the banana, and he is the peel.

Days away until my strength falls apart.
Just days away until poison takes my blood and
bleeds my heart. It's happening fast, coming
quick, but I feel no pain.

Because the thing I'll
always treasure is my brain.

Through the Cloud

Amaya Branche

Open High School

My eyes and throat burned as I passed by you. Leaning against the brick wall of
a small coffee shop, you took a deep breath before blowing a cloud of smoke into my
face. I coughed and looked at you with squinted eyes and a frown before continuing on.

As I made my way down the busy sidewalks, irritation still clear on my face, I
thought about how rude you were. I thought about your dirty shoes, messy hair, and
the way you looked at me so unapologetically. I thought you were disgusting and an
idiot for doing something that is clearly destroying your lungs and will eventually kill you.

When the image of your face popped into my head once more, I immediately felt
ashamed of myself. The way you looked at me wasn't spiteful, it held no emotion at all.
Your eyes were adorned with dark circles, and your lips were chapped from breathing
in chemicals and cold air for so long. There are reasons people do things.

You know that habit will lead to your demise. But maybe that's exactly why you
do it, and it's because of people like me.

Awakening

Justin De Valle

Armstrong High School

What is this feeling inside that I'm trying to hide? To really understand, you have to know what's best in hand.

Last night, I cried because of this feeling inside. Only looking through the keyhole, seeing what I can explore, nothing more.

Is that too much to ask before I cut this fool in half? Is that too much to ask, before I start to laugh and stop being so sad?

You see, faking a smile is so much easier than explaining why I'm sad. Somehow, I don't feel as bad because I fake a smile so often, I don't know if they're real or not.

Trying to see if this key I have fits or not. Learning there is nothing for me on the other side of that door; encouraging myself to explore and adore who I am a little more.

Learning what it means when you say certain things to give people a hint, and the only thing can they say back is "all right" and "okay." Is that a sign, meaning you don't approve, of me, or is it you?

Drawing

Anna Vescio

Thomas Jefferson High School

Scratch, scratch, scratch.
I hear the pencil moving across the paper.

Art has always been just something we did in school during free time.

I never thought of it as something I could do simply for me.

But when I saw you, it was amazing. The way art can be anything you want.

Abstract or realistic. You can use paint or pencil, it doesn't matter.

You taught me all about it, and now, art is one of the most important things about me.

Indebted

Jennifer Garcia
Huguenot High School

Best friend,
I think it's safe to say
a simple *thank you* is not the same.
For all the tears and laughs we've shared
all the hugs and talks we've had,
for the past four years we've shared
a simple two words isn't fair.

I never thought I'd get to know
a beautiful girl with many forms
being so smart and creative,
goofy but mature.

I'm proud of what you have become.
After all the hardships thrown at you
as a child to current day,
a responsible and respectful young lady,
educated and focused on her future.

Must I say,
I never thought I'd become this way,
being so social and outgoing,
allowing my crazy self in front of people,
to let loose and relax.

So I *must* say,
thank you
for being my friend,
for helping me find me,
for encouraging me, and
for being there for me.

I owe you, my dearest friend.

Trans-flirtation

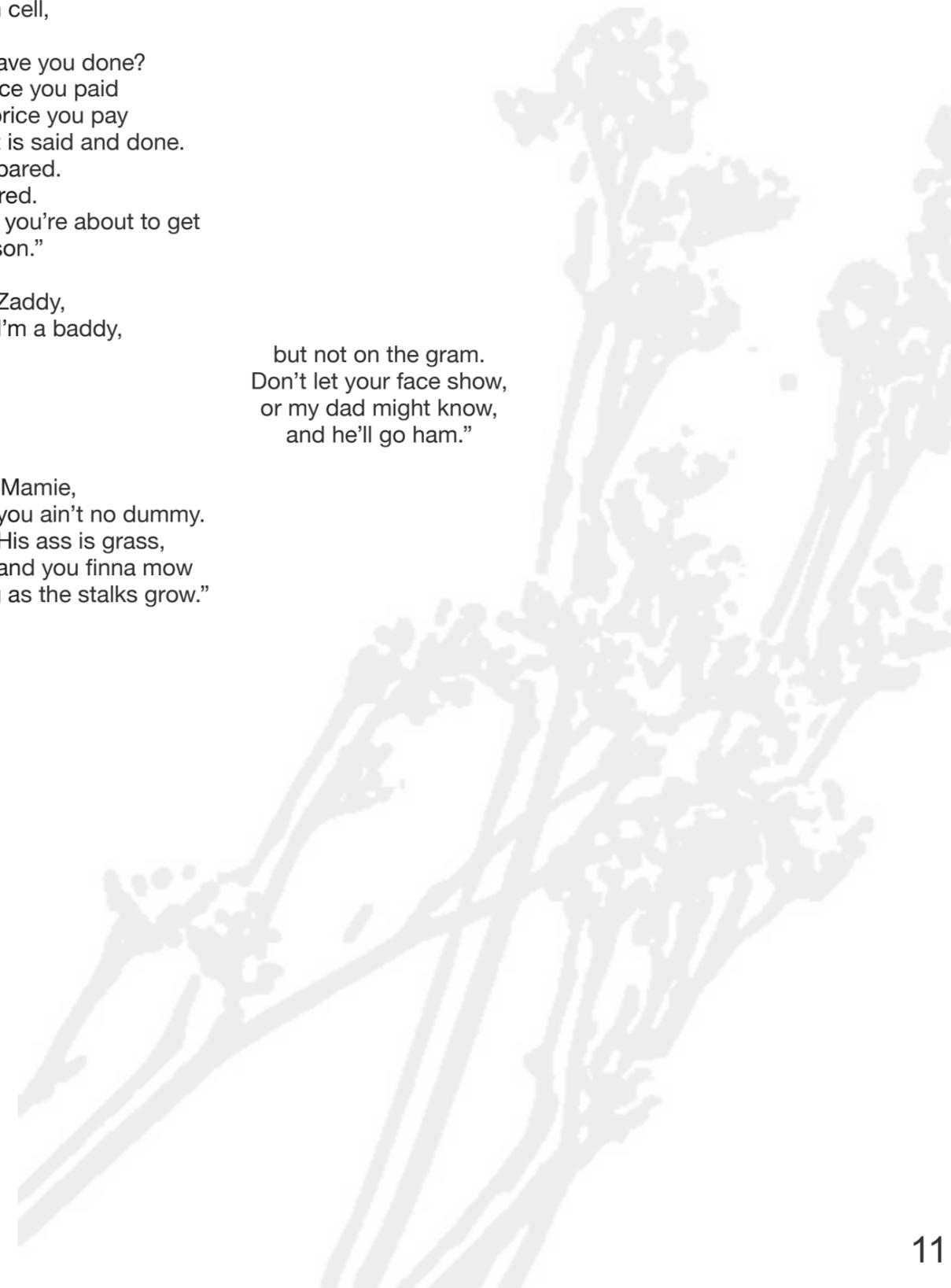
Aaron Johnson
Thomas Jefferson High School

"Prison cell,
do tell:
what have you done?
The price you paid
is the price you pay
when it is said and done.
Be prepared.
Be scared.
'Cause you're about to get
done, son."

"Zam, Zaddy,
I'm a baddy,

but not on the gram.
Don't let your face show,
or my dad might know,
and he'll go ham."

"Ay' li'l Mamie,
you ain't no dummy.
His ass is grass,
and you finna mow
as long as the stalks grow."



Many Moments

Destiny Hall-Harper
Richmond Community High School

Your baldness blinds me in ways that I can't even handle. My little friend, do you ever tire? Learning the ways of the world can be difficult, but you have so much future ahead of you. I cherish the lessons that you taught me. You always were my best friend.

Another world of adventure is what I found with you. As it drew to a close, I told you to go home, but I never could ride my bike to the moon after you left. When you left, you took a piece of me. I told you to be happy, and I loved you enough to let you go. We are always together.

Sweet as can be, always a place in the hearts of everyone. Cavities are essential when it comes to you. I never understood my addiction.

Always looking for clues, I never thought that you were crazy. No one understood you. Moriarty was always trying to destroy you.

Children always dream of far-off places. When I think of here, I think of home. It's my home. A mystical wonderland for youths of every age. I never believed you.

I always felt sorry for you. You were the classic rags to riches story. Your heart forever intertwined with mine.

My comfort snack of choice. You made me feel better. I always ate too fast, never savored.

Me and you, coincidentally, neither of us thought we made two. Sometimes, I wonder how this came to be. We were like sisters from different misters. You were my fashion guru. And also the toy chaser.

The ascot complimented you. You were always the hero in my mind.

B_oken Keyboa_d

Tristan F.
Open High School

An arm flies by
with a painful hit.
I am knocked to the floor
like a sheet of glass.

I felt something missing.
Did a pa_t fall off?
Eve_ybody sta_es.
Yet my head is neve_ bent down.

I'm a blind man missing a finge_.
My wide, b_ight face can't see.
I stay at an obtuse angle,
like a chunk of metal t_apped in its body.

I am told to spell wo_ds:
“_epeating,” “_eluctant,” “dest_oyed.”
I hea_” “The ‘_’ key is missing.”
“A_e you su_e about that?”

Eve_yone is laughing.
I am su__ounded
like a wounded gazelle.
The_e's nowhe_e to _un.

True Love

Tatiana Vasquez
Huguenot High School

I am a girl in high school who is trying to succeed and reach my goal to become a nurse, a very talented Registered Nurse (RN). Life is too short to complain. Explore what's around you and just appreciate the little things. You must forgive and forget because overcoming the past and looking toward your future can carry you far. I am an intelligent girl who can achieve her goals, and I am glad to be here.

Our generation is like a yin and yang, but it's out of balance. People focus on the things that don't matter, such as making materialistic things worth more than affection or making technology seem worth more than interacting physically with friends. No one is stupid; however, they are afraid of being themselves. Life is a challenge that not many of us survive, and when it's all over, only love and happiness will be our prize.

True love is never forced, it just comes naturally. It's very hard to forget the one you sincerely cherish and love to be with. For a better relationship to happen, all partners must understand each other and be ready to sacrifice to protect their relationship.

No love is random. It comes from hard work and commitment, so guard your love genuinely. True love doesn't have a happy ending because true love doesn't end. Love is when two people touch each other's souls. Love is honesty and trust, helping one another, and mutual respect. Love allows differences to be worked out and dreams that can be reached together.

Glass

Savon Thompson
Thomas Jefferson High School

A day in the park.
Lollipops after dark.
Zebras in the zoo.
Happy years, with always something to do.
Every moment encased in glass.

I will never forget how our life went so fast!
More or less, you made my life heaven,
even when I tried and failed a few times (or seven).
Grandad, awesome is always what you'll be,
and someday, I hope you'll remember me.

In the Middle of a Field

Felix G.
Open High School

In the middle of a field stands a green door,
but where the paint chips, the wood is black.
The door sways in the wind, creaking.

As you approach the door, you see it has no frame or hinges.
It stands on its own and rocks
Back and forth.
It starts to rock faster, swinging farther out, until the door is spinning
Around and around.

The wind picks up, suddenly, so loud
That all you can hear is a ringing inside your skull.
Your vision begins to blur, and your body thumps against the hard earth.
You wake up, and the door is gone.

Scene: Discontinued

Kapri Robinson

Armstrong High School

Skylar, sleeping in her queen-sized bed. Allstar enters stage and sits on the side of the bed with a cup of coffee in hand.

Allstar: *shaking Skylar.* Love?

Skylar: *rubbing eyes.* Hmm?

Allstar: *offering Skylar a steaming cup.* You want some coffee?

Skylar: *sits up.* What are you doing up?

Allstar: The nightmares.

Skylar: Which ones?

Allstar: The explosion at base.

Skylar: Why didn't you wake me up until now?

Allstar: You're already going through enough stress. *Allstar puts a hand on Skylar's stomach.*

Skylar: Still, you could have woken me up.

Allstar: You looked so peaceful.

Skylar: What?

Allstar: Even if I have the dreams, I can't wake you because you look like an angel that fell to Earth to protect me from my inner demons.

Skylar: Al.

Allstar: *cupping Skylar's face.* I love you.

Skylar: I love you too.

Allstar gently pulls Skylar into a kiss. The lights go out briefly, and when they come on, Skylar is lying on the bed. After a few seconds, Skylar opens her eyes. She looks around before laying back down and sighs. She turns to face the moonlit window and places a hand on her stomach.

Skylar: I wish you could have met him.

A Masterpiece

Olman M.

Huguenot High School

A masterpiece, look at his eyes,
his back washed with the hum of their voices.
His hand rose and fell softly
with each precious breath.
He pushed away the plastic tarpaulin
and raised himself in stinking robes and blanket.
He looked toward the east for any light,
but there was none.
Nights dark beyond darkness,
and each day becomes grayer
than the day before.

His face was dark.
Twisting his hands unconsciously,
his voice rose, "As long as there's light..."
A point of gold appeared above the sea,
and all at once,
the sky lightened.



Red

Micaela Willoughby

Richmond Community High School

She looks at me, and I stare back. A soft, loving gaze with softer eyes. She tucks a strand of hair behind her ear. I wonder if her blonde tendrils are as soft as they look. Her gray eyes are unwavering, only flitting to the side for seconds at a time, and she's humming under her breath, pretty pink lips shaping lyrics I've never heard. She leans in close, closer, eyes lidding to a squint. I wish she could see me.

Her breath ghosts over the glass, emphasizing the thin barrier between us. On one side is my home, on the other is her bathroom. I always come back to this house. I always come back to her. A voice pierces the air, cutting off her singing to pull her away from admiring herself in the mirror. Sometimes, I like to imagine she's admiring me. She's gone from the bathroom soon enough, dainty hand switching the light off before vanishing out of sight.

"Kate." I say softly. Her name is sweet on my tongue. Minutes tick by, and the bathroom remains vacant. The blue tiles glint in the thin strip of light that trickles through the cracked door. I've grown used to the silence of empty bathrooms, with an occasional drip off the faucet. The silence is interrupted by giggling, creaking floorboards, and excited steps as the light from the hall blinds me— though, I can see through a window in the hall that it's night. I feared the night, once.

She's returned! My Kate, with a huge smile on her face. She isn't alone; a taller, stocky girl closes the bathroom door behind them. I see a candle in her hand before the darkness swallows all three of us.

"No." I whisper. *They can't hear me.* A match is struck. Their giggling faces are illuminated as Kate lights the candle and shakes away the match's flame.

"Is this a good idea?" her friend asks while still grinning.

"Shut up, it'll be funny. Plus we can totally say Eddie was lying after."

If I still had a beating heart, I'm sure it would be pounding in my ears.

"Kate!" I cry, but it doesn't work. *They can't hear me. They never do.*

"How many times do we say it again?"

"Three? I guess when she shows up, we'll know." Kate laughs now for the last time, a spark of anticipation in her eyes. They look onyx in the dim lighting.

"Alright,"

Please, no.

"Ready?"

Not my Kate.

"And..."

The bathroom is silent again for a moment. The silence breaks, and a tear slips down my cheek, crimson. Their voices ring out in unison, "Bloody Mary. Bloody Mary. Bloody Mar— "

She looks at me. I stare back.

She can see me now. I never thought she would.

For a moment I'm happy. Then, all I see is red.

The Point of Dreaming

Jaymesha Richardson

Thomas Jefferson High School

You asked me, "Why are you always so tired?"

I could have given you the easy answer: I stayed up late again.

But, I guess it was time for you to know the truth

because instead I said, I've been thinking about you.

All day and all night. I can't sleep because I'm too busy thinking about what I'd do if you were right here with me, too busy thinking about what it would be like to make you mine

and for you to do the same with me.

I can't sleep because I dream of you.

As happy as those dreams make me,

I always cry when waking up. Knowing that's all they are tears me up inside. It kills me.

So I stay awake.

What's the point in dreaming, having an escape, when it hurts more than the reality that you'll never be mine ever could?

Revelation

Vinny Greene
Open High School

Reality comes back every night
like an everlasting hideous blight.
Through the pain and torture and loss,
feeling as if I am pinned to the cross,
raised up as a higher being
with a view that prevents seeing
all the misery of my fellow man,
that all they do is what they can,
yet they are left near death,
waiting for their last, aching breath.
Here I am, aware of it all,
and refusing to answer their call.
Some say it is for my own good
not to help even if I could.
Yet in my mind I ponder,
what would change if we were fonder
of those above us, better off?
Not to disregard and scoff
at those who are no better off
because the difference between us and the devil
is that we don't mean to do his evil.
Rather, it is only up to chance
that we doom someone to dance
with the demons and Hell-spawn,
to be forever his pawn.
We as humans aspire to be higher,
but then realize we are all liars,
and that we are closer to Hell,
we are all angels who fell,
and the only way to go from here is down.
We all were meant to drown.
The fact that we are even alive
is a Testament that we are meant to die.

Modern Machines

Tristan Wynn
Thomas Jefferson High School

Automatic machine guns fire
inside an institution where jailbirds live,
an illusion of freedom.

Trapped within the cage we build,
poisoned, stung, and broken if we attempt
to leave.

Breathe in.

Breathe out.

Breathe paced.

Breathe slow.

The guards of social constructs know:
Whether you breathe with the group or solo,
prison wardens pretend not to know
what goes on under their nose.

Currency as Slavery

Mikayla P.
Huguenot High School

I own you and your home.
I am the thing that makes you believe you're harder than a garden gnome.
(Standing in the snow, without even a phone)
I can ruin your life within a year,
Have you crying and fading Washington's portrait with your tears.

I control your life and make you "happy,"
Just continue using me, and I'll keep you snazzy.
Once we're finished, you'll probably be dead.
Then, I'll ruin your children's lives
With my George Washington head.

Face it, you need me, so don't be surprised
When you're outside on the curb in need of some wine.
(Which you can't afford because you don't have me)
Just become a legal slave,
So you can be happy.

The Clothes on My Back

A.J. Goodwin
Armstrong High School

My skin color does not define me.
My tears do not make me weak.
This tape on my big, blushed lips
does not stop me.

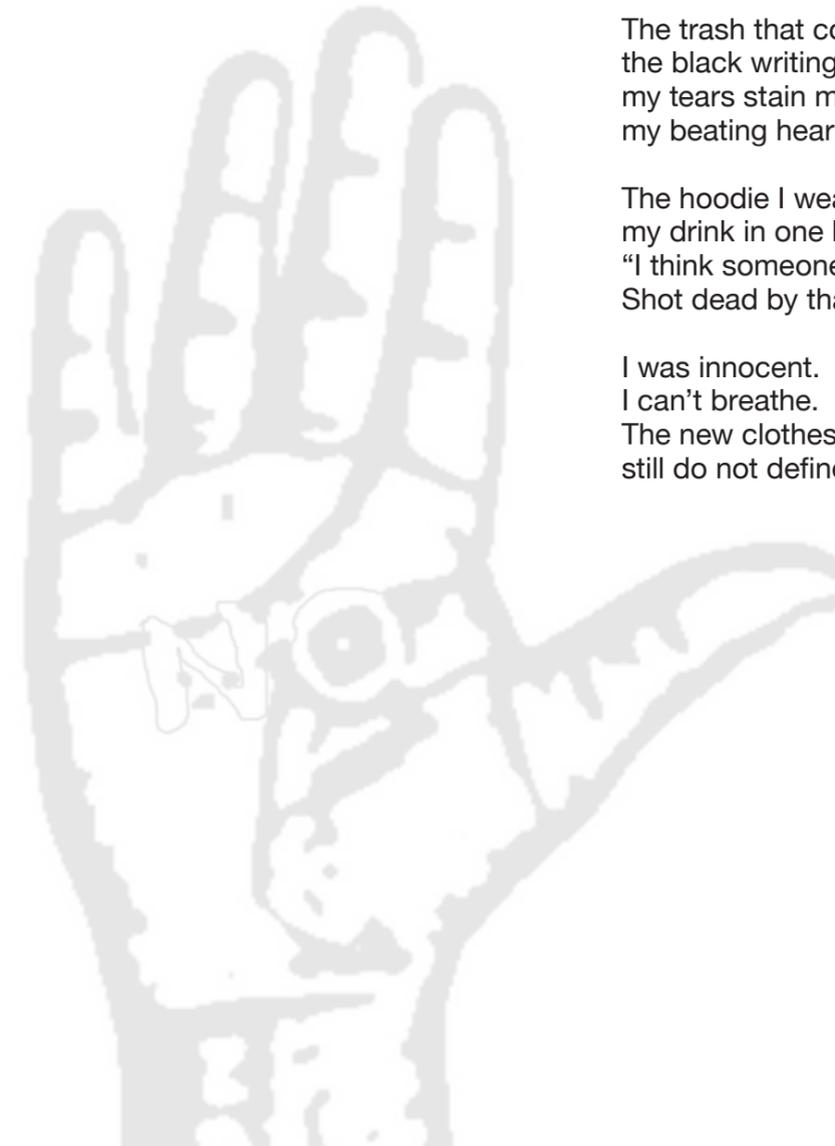
My thick hair is not "nappy."
My eyes have seen the truth.
I was young, naïve, and happy,
but the world is so cruel.

The spit that covers my face
the line of blood on my cheek
the dirty clothes on my back,
none of them define me.

The trash that covers my doorstep,
the black writing on my shirt,
my tears stain my caramel complexion,
my beating heart now hurts.

The hoodie I wear at night,
my drink in one hand,
"I think someone is following me."
Shot dead by that man.

I was innocent.
I can't breathe.
The new clothes on my back
still do not define me.



Another life is stolen
because of what they see.
Gay, young, black, Latin,
would they shoot me?

We live under a dictator
who wants to see us bleed.
Strength. Pride. Unity.
To fight, that's all we need.

My brothers feel the pain,
my sisters have a name,
and being who I am,
I speak with a silent hand.

I stand barely off the ground
young, but old at heart
with bloody clothes on my back.
Hate's easy. Love is hard.

The Difference Between Being Black and Being Black in America

Shakirah Jones
Open High School

I shouldn't be afraid of the cops. And I shouldn't see many brothers and sisters being slaughtered by the cops broadcasted on the news either. But hey, that's the consequences of being a Black person in America, right? I want to go outside and see the beautiful things that my life has to offer without having to worry whether my time will come or not. But I can't stop worrying, can I?

I want to be that Black girl you see meeting President Obama. I want to be the one you hear about making a difference. But instead, I'll be seen as a stereotypical troublemaker because that's what I'm perceived to be. I'm tired of turning on the news and hearing that another Black man or Black woman has been killed. "All Lives Matter" and "Black Lives Matter" are not the same thing. It has never been.

A white man that shoots up a church and kills a group of innocent black people and gets acquitted, yet a Black man gets pulled over, shot, and killed for nothing. Since when has it ever been equal? It seems that all lives matter except black lives.

My life is worth more than what it's made out to be. I'm more than what I'm perceived to be. Jail is not where I will end up. No, I will not drop out of school. I will exceed the expectations of those set by people who think that I'm bound to fail. Yes, I'm Black. Yes, I'm a Black woman in America. But I'm not a Black woman in America who won't be someone. Yes, I have goals. Yes, I have dreams. And yes, I'll be someone.

The only problem is that I'm scared. I'm worried that either myself, someone I love, or someone I know will get shot and killed. I'm scared of going outside, other than going to school. I'm really, really afraid of the police. I'm tired of everything that black people go through being brushed off like dirt in the wind. I'm Black and I'm American, so what is really the difference between being Black and being Black in America?

I am Black, I am Black

Joelle-Marie Obi
Huguenot High School

I am BLACK, I am BLACK.
Does that make me a target?
Am I a target?
I AM BLACK. I AM BLACK!
I SWEAR THAT I AM!
Cross my heart with a sword, or I shall die!
Or is it with a gun?

Will I die from the hands of the sturdy pink man in this uniform?
As he stands proud and tall, shooting his firearm towards me,
Each bullet plunging into my flesh, cracking my bones?
No! I am BLACK. I am BLACK, though!
I am very distinct from my own.
They say we all look the same.
They say we all run around these streets,
So each one of us gets the same treatment:
Bullets for everyone.

1... 2... 3...
Do you think that's enough? Oh no, gee!
But I laugh at you!
You are so naive.
From 4... 5... 6... to 1,001, to infinity!
I AM BLACK. I AM BLACK!
I SWEAR THAT I AM!
I am full of color
With an abundance of culture.
Our Kool Aid jugs are flowing over,
Why?

Because WE ARE BLACK, WE ARE BLACK.
WE SWEAR WE ARE BLACK.
In God we trust
But this nation is whack.

We are as black as the Underground Railroad tracks.

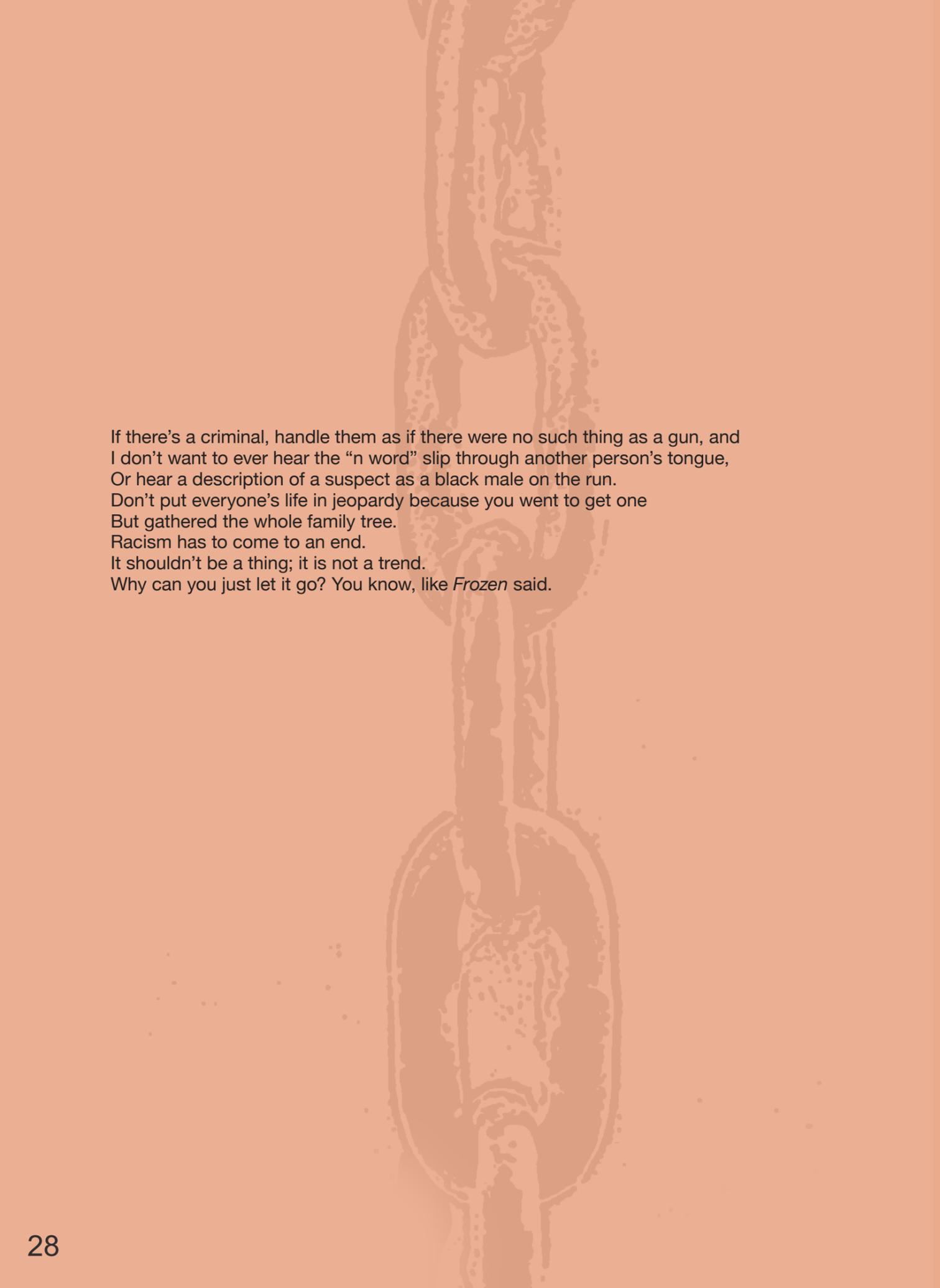
Trigger Warning

Chloe Murdaugh
Armstrong High School

Love a brother hard.
Use your words; don't use your guns.
Love me or hate me, but
Forget my race; just see me as one.
One of the bros, one of the girls.
I'm not a b**** or a n****.
I'm not a thief or a thug.
I don't want you to pull the trigger.
We already have disease taking so many lives.
We don't need to kill each other: Black will not die out.
You'll still see it, despite your attempts to shoot before you shout.
As long as we are here, we will chant, *I'm black, and I'm proud!*

You love your skin, and we love ours, but
Some people try to wash their color off in the shower.
Don't, my babies, you don't have to do that.
There's absolutely nothing wrong with being black.
When they hate on you, you pray; don't attack.
After all, you know that white comes from black.
They say our ancestors were slaves, but we no longer live in those days.
Yeah, we may remember them, but some things have changed.
Don't forget the difference
That we are not living in chains.
Now, we give and demand respect.
Put some respect on my name.
Put some respect on my race.

And when you see my face, see a human, not a race.
We all are working for happiness and success,
So don't try to single me out, stopping me from taking the next step.
I said, hands up, don't shoot!
I know I'm black, but I'm a person too.
If you have the heart to kill me, your mind's not right.
I'm waiting on you like some fruit,
You're just not ripe.
Your mind is so corrupt.
Sometimes, I wake up in the morning feeling like I'm stuck
In between your stereotypes and my dreams,
But you won't put me down.
You're just a bee that stings.
There needs to be a day when we say enough is enough.
Without the weapons and armor
You're not all that tough.



If there's a criminal, handle them as if there were no such thing as a gun, and
I don't want to ever hear the "n word" slip through another person's tongue,
Or hear a description of a suspect as a black male on the run.
Don't put everyone's life in jeopardy because you went to get one
But gathered the whole family tree.
Racism has to come to an end.
It shouldn't be a thing; it is not a trend.
Why can you just let it go? You know, like *Frozen* said.

Irony of Humane Immigration Policies

Sabiya D.

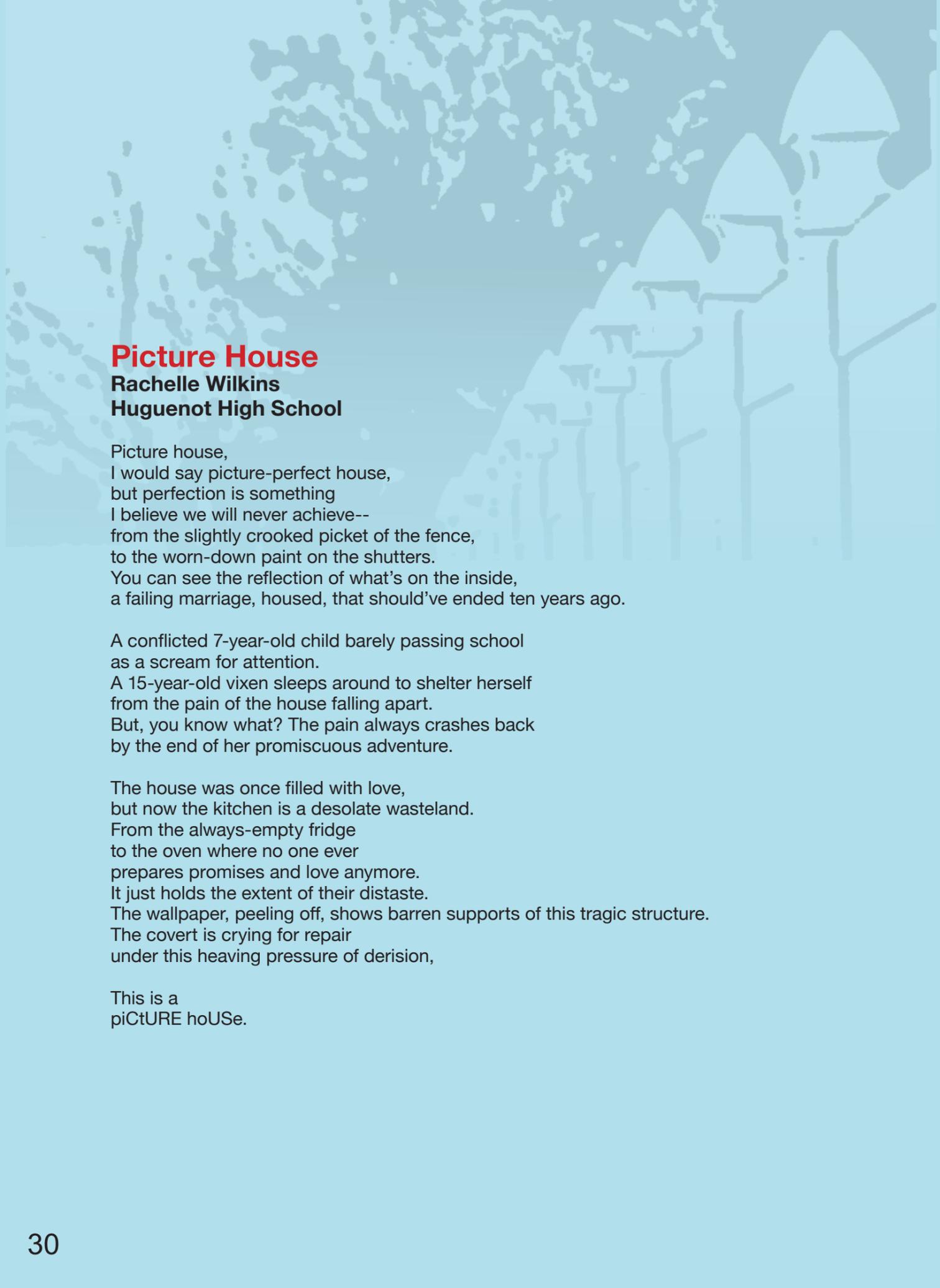
Open High School

The United States remains
a rich and stable neighbor,
more than capable of
helping desperate
youth, crossing the
border without their parents.

Instead, agents seize
students at home and on
their way to school.
Kimberly, arrested on her
way to school. Yefri,
arrested at his school bus
stop. Locked up while
they appeal deportation
orders. Students who pose no
threat of violence or flight.

The administration,
supposedly fighting to protect
a humane immigration
policy in the Supreme
Court, must work to
protect the lives of
traumatized immigrants.

But instead, it places
them in misery and peril.



Picture House
Rachelle Wilkins
Huguenot High School

Picture house,
I would say picture-perfect house,
but perfection is something
I believe we will never achieve--
from the slightly crooked picket of the fence,
to the worn-down paint on the shutters.
You can see the reflection of what's on the inside,
a failing marriage, housed, that should've ended ten years ago.

A conflicted 7-year-old child barely passing school
as a scream for attention.
A 15-year-old vixen sleeps around to shelter herself
from the pain of the house falling apart.
But, you know what? The pain always crashes back
by the end of her promiscuous adventure.

The house was once filled with love,
but now the kitchen is a desolate wasteland.
From the always-empty fridge
to the oven where no one ever
prepares promises and love anymore.
It just holds the extent of their distaste.
The wallpaper, peeling off, shows barren supports of this tragic structure.
The covert is crying for repair
under this heaving pressure of derision,

This is a
piCtURE hoUSE.

Join Them

Zora Burrell
Open High School

He sat on the roof of my apartment building. I'd been going up there for months, and I hadn't seen him until then. His legs draped over the side of a worn-down plastic chair. Pale skin contrasted with the rest of his appearance. Amber hair caught underneath a fist pressing firmly against the side of his temple— *was he sleeping?* Curiosity got the better of me as I tiptoed forward to answer my question. I'd almost gotten a glimpse of his undisturbed face, but before I could, his head whipped in my direction so fast that it surprised both of us. I jumped back at the same time he fell out of his seat. When he tried to stand up, the chair fell on him. I couldn't help but laugh, and he gave me one of the deadliest glares I've seen to this day.

Attempting to gather my composure, I introduced myself. At first, he had some snarky remark, but eventually he told me his name. After that, Max and I became friends.

I didn't know many people in my apartment building, and Max was the first person I met around my age. He was fourteen; I was fifteen. I'd never been great with socializing, but if he was going to continue coming to the roof, I had no choice. Our building had four or five floors, so when you looked down, it felt like you were looking down on the entire block. Whenever I came up, it made me feel like a spectator to a world unbeknownst to me. A world with no strings attached because I had nothing to be attached to.

In my eyes, that was our biggest flaw: getting attached too quickly. When old stores are shut down, you reminisce on the things you used to buy. When people move away, their relatives or close friends express how much they are going to miss them and will visit soon but are devastated when they can't visit as often as promised. Attachment damages people: it severs more relationships than it builds. I went to the roof because there were no attachments. Up there, I could be whomever I wanted. I could choose to focus on everything or let my mind run blank. Up there, I was detached from society; nothing was expected of me. Maybe, that's why he went up there too.

From the moment I met him, we had all kinds of conversations, about hobbies, philosophical things, and even the weather. It was nice to have another spectator watching the world with me. One day, as we watched businessmen waiting at a hot-dog stand, I asked him why he came. Something was different that day; maybe it was the weather or the comfort I found knowing I had someone to talk to, but the question flowed out of my mouth faster than I could comprehend.

"Why do you always come up here?" I asked, watching the glazed sunset turn into midnight paint.

"The same reason as you, probably," he responded, never looking away from the cart.

"Do your parents know you're up here?"

His eyes fell to his lap as he played with the hem of his shirt. "They work late during the week."

"Is anyone home when you get back from school?" It seemed like I was prying, but I was genuinely curious.

"I'm homeschooled. We also have a nanny." He seemed a bit tenser than when the conversation initially started. I thought I was hitting a nerve, but the thought quickly subsided as I continued to pry.

“Homeschooled? And a nanny? Isn’t it a lot more work than regular school?”

“Yeah, it is, but I don’t really have a choice. My parents don’t think it’s good for me.”

“Why?”

“They say I’m sick, but I feel fine.”

Sick? He didn’t look sick. “Do you have immunodeficiency or something?” I honestly didn’t know what else to say. I didn’t want to say the wrong thing. After all, we’d just become friends, and I didn’t want to scare him off.

“I have Leukemia. But honestly, I’m fine, see?” He flashed me a toothy grin, the one toddlers have plastered on their faces in a candy store. His smile was so big that his eyes nearly disappeared. I studied him; he was awfully pale even though summer had just ended. He was undeniably skinny too. I hadn’t noticed before.

I sat in awe, not knowing what to say. I didn’t know how to treat delicate situations, and the last thing I wanted to do was offend him. I guess he saw my hesitation because he took my loss for words as a cue to speak.

“Seriously, it’s fine. Don’t change how you treat me now that you know. My entire family coddles me. The nanny doesn’t know what to do except shove all these meds in my face. The only place where I’m not looked down on is here.”

I was still speechless. I wanted to speak, but my mind couldn’t formulate any words. I didn’t want to appear too sympathetic for him, but at the time, I couldn’t dismiss what he just said. I had stepped into uncharted territory, and it felt as though our friendship would end if I said the wrong thing.

“I have seasonal allergies, if that makes you feel any better,” I said, not cracking any austere expression.

Surprisingly, he laughed. He actually laughed! For some reason, it felt like he completely understood me. Only someone with my sense of humor would find what I said to be funny. Instinctively, I relaxed and started to chuckle with him. I didn’t want to dwell on the topic at hand anymore. If he wanted to keep things the same, then so did I.

The next day, we talked as if our prior chat hadn’t occurred. “It’s true! Even though they’re made for kids, the movies are still really good!” I was trying to get him to see my love for Disney movies, but to no avail. After a while, our conversation died out, and a comfortable silence flowed through the air.

“Hey, could you do me a favor?” He asked. His stare was so inscrutable I thought my eyes had turned into lodestones for a brief moment.

“What is it?” I questioned, expecting it to be something important.

“Could you get me one of those hotdogs from the stand down there?” He pointed to the cart outside of our apartment. In his lap was a small Polaroid. He’d brought it up to the roof so we could take pictures of the sunset.

“Sure,” I replied, brushing it off like he’s just asked me the time of day. Although he didn’t smile, light was practically beaming out of his eyes. Why would anyone get excited over a hotdog?

The sun hadn’t completely set yet, but the streetlights were beginning to turn on. My mom disliked the idea of me staying out late, so I had to be quick. The wait was a little longer than I thought it would be. I guess that was a good thing because I finally felt what it was like not to be a spectator, to actually be a part of the world. He looked so small from down here, and I realized how miniscule we must look to others watching us from below. It was strange, being on one side, when I felt destined to live on another.

I ran upstairs, gave him the hotdog, and we said our goodbyes. I knew my mom would be upset, but it was worth it.

The next few weeks were drawn out and mundane. I wasn’t able to go up to the roof due to schoolwork and my mom grounding me for coming home late. I’d been itching to get out of the apartment and tell Max why I wasn’t coming up to the roof, but Mom was very heavy-handed when it came to those things. He didn’t have a phone, so texting was out of the question. I’d just have to endure two or three more weeks before I could finally feel the wind whistling in my ears again.

After nearly two months of house arrest, she let me go to the roof. I galloped up the stairs, thinking of all the things I was going to talk to him about: school, our plans for Thanksgiving, how he’d gotten me in trouble over a hotdog (of all things). *The next few days*, I thought, *are going to be the best I’ve had in a long time.* I pushed open the metal barricade that separated me from the second abode. Sunlight engulfed my entire body as the wind whispered everything my mind wanted to hear. I looked around with a grin on my face so big, I couldn’t get rid of it if I tried.

I saw his chair but not him. *That’s weird*, I thought to myself. He told me he was here every day, even the days I couldn’t make it.

My hope of seeing him faded as I ambled back to my apartment. With my shoulders hunched, I walked into my home and went to my room. *It’s okay*, I told myself. *You’ll see him tomorrow, and it’ll be just as great as it would’ve been today. Then you can really tell him off about getting you grounded.* I mentally laughed at myself, instantly lightening my mood. Tomorrow, it’ll be better.

For the next few days, I kept checking the roof. First one day, then four days, then a whole week went by, and he still hadn’t been there. I figured, his parents caught him up there, and that’s why he hadn’t come. I wanted to go by his apartment, but it seemed a little drastic. We’d known each other for almost a full year, but I assumed it would be weird to come by his apartment unannounced. Another week went by, and I couldn’t take it anymore. I walked into the hallway and up one flight. *372? No, 373.* I tried recalling the apartment number he told me. I settled on the latter and raised a shaky hand to the door. A few minutes later, a woman, who looked to be in her late 40’s, opened the door. She gave me an endearing smile. “Hello,” she said.

“Hi,” I replied, looking in all directions but hers. “Um, are you Max’s mom?”

A pained expression erased the smile on her face. “No, no. I’m the housekeeper. Did you need something?” A little Chihuahua laid behind her, ears reaching for the ceiling.

“No, um, I was just wondering how he was doing. I’m a friend of his. Is he here?” I questioned, playing with the sleeves of my jacket.

She gave me a despondent look and placed a hand on my shoulder. “I’m sorry sweetie, Max passed away.”

For a second, her words didn’t register. How? It wasn’t long ago that I saw him, and when I did, he didn’t look that sick. He *told* me he wasn’t that sick. I stood there, not knowing what to say. Do I leave? Should I sit there and talk to her about it? She was clearly uncomfortable.

“When did he pass?” I asked her.

“A few days ago. Monday, I believe.”

“Ok. Thank you. I’m sorry for your loss.” I don’t know why I said that to her; if anything, it should’ve been the other way around. I turned and started to walk back to my apartment.

“Hey there, wait a second. Does your name happen to be Kaia?”

I froze. “Yes?”

“Ok, wait here a second.”

She came back with a folded piece of paper. “Thanks,” I said.

“Get better sweetie.”

I didn’t respond. *How can you say get better? Really? You don’t have the right to say get better when you don’t even remember the day he died!* I was fuming down the hallway and on the verge of having a meltdown; emotions sporadically bursting inside of me. One minute I was angry, and the next, I was confused. *How, after he’d fought so long and hard, could he die suddenly?* It didn’t make sense.

I went up to the roof to clear my head. Sunshine beamed down on me once again, but it wasn’t comforting at all. I cursed the heat, the dissipating wind, and everything that reminded me of Max. I kicked the side of the tattered chair, knocking it over. I don’t know why, but I instantly felt bad about it, so I picked up the chair and sat next to it. As everything started settling in, the tears started. One by one, they made their way down my cheeks and soaked into the collar of my shirt. I could still see us, talking about stupid things, like the weather, or my favorite Disney movie. I could see him laughing, his eyes disappearing into the folds of his cheeks. It was all too real, too sudden.

I reached in my pocket and opened the paper the lady gave me. A picture fell out, and once I realized what it was, the tears started picking up their pace. It was a picture of me at the hotdog stand. I could barely read the note as salt water clouded my vision.

Join Them, it said.

Writing Mentorship Project Final Reflection

Destiny Hall-Harper

Richmond Community High School

I decided to be a writing mentor because I thought it would help me get out of my comfort zone. I was determined to do Podium’s summer internship again because I was very impressed by the result of last year at MLK Middle School, and I honestly thought why not again. I have grown as a mentor through watching the reactions of the kids. Some wanted to be there, and others didn’t, but all ended up producing really excellent bodies of work. That made me think I had done a job well done.

As a leader, I have learned it’s best to pull from personal experience. To put yourself in someone else’s shoes and remember back to a time when you had to go through the same thing. To be a leader, I have to be one for myself. What was ineffective to use with the students was giving them workshops beyond their capacity. The students were pretty smart, but we also introduced topics that for some were very new. Empowerment is when you lift up a person or persons to a level that even they didn’t think was possible. With leadership and mentorship, the goal is to empower people who you are trying to help locate a better version of themselves. Mentors shape lives by giving new outlooks. They let you see what they see while also allowing you to make your own connections. They can build futures and, most of the time, even better people. What I hoped to gain from our middle school mentees was that pride of accomplishment. That’s how I was back then. I wanted to be seen through my writing and my art as well. I wanted to be known for more than my student ID number; instead, I wanted to be known for my creativity.

Time management is a person’s ability to prioritize the important things and set aside the others for later. Project facilitation is when a person, a mentor for example, leads a group in a workshop to help them better understand something. Group leadership occurs amongst fellow mentors when they all work towards the same goal of making a difference among the youth. Through being an intern this summer, I balanced work and my internship, although it wasn’t hard since I took off the days for the internship. Nonetheless, it gave me the sense that these responsibilities are my jobs, and I have to do my best at both. Time management really came into play with the workshops. If you hadn’t done all your work, it would have showed through to the youth. Luckily we all did so that was a plus.

Program quality consists of a safe environment, which is a space in which people can express ideas and opinions openly without judgment and without feeling uncomfortable. Supportive environments are those that encourage people to do their best while also giving constructive criticism using the guidelines that we are all trying to get and do better. Interaction occurs when there is a high level of participation and willingness to engage. And lastly, high engagement is when participants are actively listening and show an interest in the material presented to them. Program quality is important for youth programs because it provides a baseline that all mentors should strive to meet, and it also helps the mentor learn from their mentees and vice versa.

Professional language is the use of communication that is appropriate for a more structured setting. We don’t curse in front of the youth or engage in behavior that encourages bad behavior to follow. We use professional language in the workplace and in school, like when talking to a teacher. We use everyday language in talking to our friends and parents. The setting and the people determine how you address them. I learned how to relate to get information you need.



Join Them

To present yourself professionally means to express yourself so that people can take you seriously. Personally, I can distinguish someone who is passionate with what they are doing from someone who is not. Through Podium's summer internship, I can put my experiences on a resume and show that I networked while also engaging in conversation with people in my chosen fields. Ironically, the challenges that still remain for me are talking to people and networking. I want to get myself out there and not be afraid of the internet. Used correctly, it is a tool that can help me achieve my future.

My workshop was facilitated in partnership with another intern where we shared about imagery, personification, and morals. We tied in writing by letting our mentees create backstories behind the objects they picked. In turn, we wanted them to recognize that most of the time, unlike in cartoons, people aren't giving life lessons. Things that don't exist in the real world can still give important advice. Each youth was given an opportunity to share in a space where everyone had a say and interruptions were dealt with.

Self-reflection is the ability to step back and look at yourself from a standpoint of what you did well and what you can improve on. It helps with personal growth; someone who can take notice of things that he or she did wrong, and not just focus on their accomplishments, makes for a mature person. Podium's summer internship did have an impact on my career goals. Now more than ever, I want to write, be a creator through my art, and try to get people to see things differently. I truly want to do this again next year; hopefully, it'll be my third year in a row.



MIDDLE SCHOOL SELECTIONS

Black USA

James Godbold
Henderson Middle School

Black, Black USA! As a nation, we are weak.
We need to get along. The 13th Amendment is
the reason we are free, so I use that
to fly. People like us need life.
White people, just watch me move!
But, as soon as I slip, I fall,
and they call, "All!"
with no hesitation.

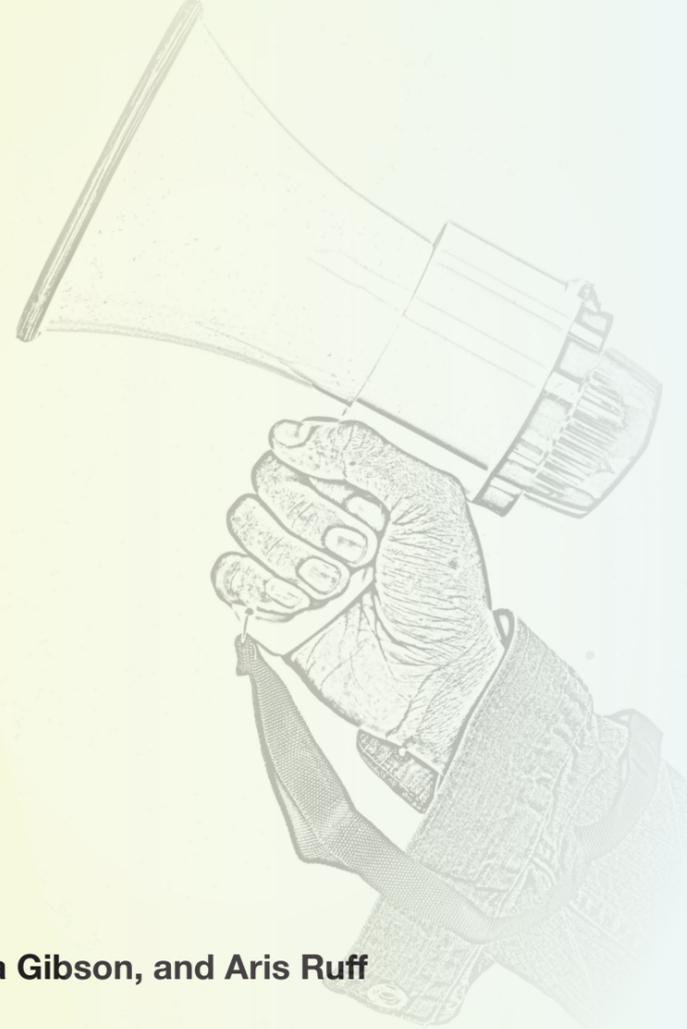
Don't Be Afraid

Sha'nya Foreman, Jasmin Blunt, Kinaya Gibson, and Aris Ruff
Lucille Brown Middle School

Hey, you, it's okay to be afraid,
but don't be afraid of the work you made.
The audience means nothing...
Well, in truth, they partially do. They reply if
they were listening to you,
so let your voice be heard!
I know it's a bit hard when
it shakes with every word.
Once you're done, in the applause you'll bask,
but best believe, questions will be asked!

These things flow in an artist's head.
We get held back but are given the
go ahead again. Audience, please be a dear,
but also, be sincere. It'll make us happy
when you shed a tear.

Artists! Let your voice be heard.
Have the audience on the edge
of their seats with every word.
It's okay to have stage fright,
just make it through the night!



Who here likes to write?
Who has published their writing?
For those who haven't, I was once like you,
scared to show my work, to spread my wings
and talk with people about my feelings.
Now, you must be wondering,
why do I need to share? I'll tell you.
Sharing gives you a voice, a strong, powerful voice
that's ready for the world to learn a lesson.
Sharing, for me, helps my confidence,
sorts out my problems, and shows people who I am.
So help me help you share what makes you happy.
Teach the world a lesson.
You're the key to a locked door somewhere.

Let your voice be heard! Don't be afraid to show
who you really are. Hear what I have to say, for
it may change the way you think. Don't be shy
and keep it inside. Let your light shine.
Think about legends, motivators, and leaders
who have changed the world.
What if they kept their voices to themselves?
Live life with no regrets. Don't wish
you could've said something and just say it.

Being afraid is a door that's locked,
but you are the key, lost in yourself.
You're frozen and can't move,
but you know what's behind that door.
Your life can be better but will have bumps.
Somehow, you're locked in your own cage, your jail, your closet.
You can see through the keyhole.
Your hopes are on the other side.
Your dreams are on the other side.
The experience of taking chances
is past that door,
to experiment with your life is key.

In this room, voices are hard to hear.
Some aren't heard at all.
But voices are important here,
so speak for those who cannot.
Even a small cry can echo
into a roar.



My Feelings

Imani Adewale

Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club

My ankle is like a knife
Cutting me in the dark.

This ice is like cold sherbet
Freezing my legs.

The iceberg takes so long to freeze,
Just like my mom, who takes so long to text me.

My phone creeps slowly to 30%,
Just like a worm crossing the street.

Anti-Emotion

Jame' F.

Peter Paul Development Center

Wal-Mart, where I save money,
and I know that I hate honey.
I buy my food for \$16.99,
and I don't waste time.
The sign is blue with a circle.
I used to watch the show with Steve Urkel.
This poem is not how I feel.
I don't like bananas, so I don't peel.
I don't want any friends
because all I want is a Mercedes Benz.
So don't come at my face,
or you will get sprayed with Ace.
This is not a regular poem,
so I take bubbles and I blow 'em.
I look straight up at the stars
because all I do is spit straight bars.

The Caged Bird

Catie Anderson

Lucille Brown Middle School

The caged bird
sings without feeling,
sings because he has to
for people who don't care.

The lonely bird,
alone yet surrounded
all by himself
even in the largest crowds.

The broken bird,
his heart shattered
his spirit destroyed.
His life, an empty hole.

Unable to fly and
unable to cry,
the bird dies in its cage,
surrounded, but alone.

Summer Rain

Niyacie T.

Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club

Drip, drip, drop
as the rain pours and
meets with the beat
of my thump, thump heart
and the bang, bang
of a summer migraine;
although, the tears in my eyes
are now dry.



I Am a Woman

Jasmin Blunt, Shiya Brown, Sha'nya Foreman,
Kinaya Gibson, and Myca Lester
Lucille Brown Middle School

I am a woman.

Author.
Photographer.
Software Engineer.
Record Engineer.
Psychiatric Hospital Administrator.

Women make 75 cents to the dollar of every man.
If it doesn't matter, why hasn't the change changed?
A quarter can help slay the bills we have to pay.
Day-by-day, we work just as hard as men
But in the end, I am still as equal
as a man standing in an unfair land.

Some frail and meek, others strong and powerful,
Being treated unfairly every week
Makes us feel weak.
Weeks, months, years, decades,
centuries go by, but still we try
our hardest to prove we can be something.
I had thought about fluffing, but then I'd be bluffing.
And I would say all our hard work ends in nothing.

How are we supposed to know
that the gender wage gap proceeds to grow?
That lost quarter an hour adds up, you know,
to an \$8,000 loss by women with a higher education,
Plateaued. The higher we climb, the lower we end up
on the cusp of giving up.

I will be an author.
I will be a photographer.
I will be a software engineer.
I will be a recording engineer.
I will be a psychiatric hospital administrator.

We are women, and we will achieve our dreams.

Reflections on Podium

Jasmine Jones
Henderson Middle School

Hello. My name is Jasmine. I am an eighth grader and today, I will talk to you about what Podium means to me. Today, I am here as a leader of Podium. This is my second year in the program. We write skits, poetry, and we learn a lot by getting active and exploring our emotions. We also write stories and narratives about who we are. Writing has helped me improve as a communicator. For example, I can understand my words and the perspectives of others.

My favorite part of Podium is writing poetry. We write about things I like, and I get into it when I can take my ideas and turn them into my own poetry. As a student, what I learn in Podium is important. Communication is important to practice, so you can tell people who you are and what you feel. If you don't want to say things aloud, then writing is the tool. You use writing all the time: for you, as a student, with peers, and in the professional world.

As a friend and family member, communication is important to keeping a relationship. Writing helps me sort through stress or emotions about those I love, and Podium makes me feel like a part of something bigger. Last year, I was a finalist in the Love out Loud competition. Being after-school with Podium helps prepare me for high school.

Youth Program

Participants

Fall 2016 – Summer 2017

Binford Middle School (last names omitted)

Kahlil, Lilly, Manuela, Adaviyah, Yasmin, Kevin, Mavis, Koi, Eian, Agris, and Sage.

Henderson Middle School

Ashlen Bailey, Ni'Yana Briggs, James Godbold, Jasmine Jones, Hezekiah Mombrun, Janiah Spearman, Dasean Teal, Na'vaya Venable, Dayvon Williams, Iaria Betancourt, Donjae Booth, Qwajon Bruce, Andrew Burris, Tiara Faltz, Dryanna Goode, Lavell Hukeless, Madison Johnson, Mahogonie Johnson, Kimontre Rogers, Theron Shackelford, Conald Whitaker, Amelia John, Shikyna Vincent, Darnell Teal, Omari Yancey, and Jayson Dungan.

L. Douglas Wilder Middle School

Tanaya Senior, Erneaja Bates, Marcus Thomas, Jerimiah Henderson, Samantha Merida, Kenya Johnson, Gabrielle Johnson, Isaiah Peyton, Damarion Gaines, and Douglas Anthony.

Lucille Brown Middle School

Catherine Anderson, Camryn Arrington, Jasmin Blunt, Ella Cable, Kinaya Gibson, Julia Hall-Pace, Iceon Hogan, Adrianna Keyes, Myca Lester, Shawn Lewis, Jordan Russell, Annisa Ruff, Sha'nya Foreman, A'Mya Thomas, Destinee Gonzalez, Morgan Johnson, Shkeela Gooden, Cameron Allen, Christen Boyd, Tyeon Easter, Josiah Goodman, Ky'shae Harris, Michael Harris, Haniya Muhammed, Jakyra Peoples, Isabella Reich, Marie Ruffin, Matia Ruffin, Tamera Williams, Faith Wyatt, NyAsia Baker, Shiya Brown, Makayla Cannon, Jaida Earley, Jazmin Gordon, Mya McFail, and Shantalaya Shorter.

Peter Paul Development Center (last names omitted)

Jam'e, Cheyenne, Arkirah, Mathieu, Malik, Lincoln, Lemont'a, Jama, Nyjal, Gejuan, Ti'yaе, Kalijah, Tionte, Paris, India, Alexandria, Suado, Sanaa, Shecorey, Jarla, and Dominick.

Salvation Army Boys & Girls Club

Jailen Carter, David Wade, T'Mya Harrison, Annalise Quentin, Tommy Moore, Emmanuel Seward, Adam Watson, Lanser Lee, Nijel Henderson, Kavonte Isaac, Yazmine Jackson, Xavierre Pena, Cameron Hall, Shalena Walker, Ty'Ana Irby, Rohkim Smith, Kaliyah Terry, De'an Justin, Teondre White, Kecharn Tanner, Tyrell Eve, Lamiya Coleman, Shiloh Payne, Jasmine Payne, Frank Zalhari, Brianna Young, Ashley Rowlett, Aaliyah Kizzie, Jeremiah White, DeSean James, Jaisin Borington, Imani Adewale, Jaiden Brown, Keyshawn Oliver, Kian Mosby, Jenaiya Stewart, Terrel Jackson, Faith Peace-Wright, and Kendell Watson-Sutton.

Armstrong High School

Cordasha Pontee, A'vohn Kilby, AJ Jones-Goodwin, Elizabeth Salinas, Chloe Murdaugh, Justin Del Valle, Kapri Robinson, Lianna Williams, Christopher Bennett, Robineka Johnson, DeJalle Wallek, Shiyun Parker, Rayshawn Pearson, Torey Williams Jr., Nafiece Bailey, and Clin'taya Daniels.

Huguenot High School

Irene Andrade, Ceira Andrews, Jeron Broady, Connor Chance, Saffron Christian, Christopher Davis, Jennifer Garcia, Justin Green, Deshawn Johnson, Tatiana Vasquez, Tyshawn Starks, Rachelle Wilkins, Kandice Wimbush, Zippora Cauldwell, and TaQuon Grant.

Open High School

Jada Keeve, Vinny Greene, Kate Wittich, Hank Blancett, LaJon Singleton, Brittany Spain, Zion Perry, Connor Dunn, Bryan Garcia, Shakirah Jones, Amaya Branche, Tobias Weaver, Jocelyn Saravia, Jasmine Harris, li'Jeana James, Eli Alvarado, Ben Rumsey, Sam Tarasovic, and William Atkinson.

Richmond Community High School

Jennelle Vereen, Jonae Crump, Destiny Hall-Harper, Kaia Jones, Raquel Turner, Micaela Willoughby, Zora Burrell, Emma Doyle, and Caroline Irwin.

Thomas Jefferson High School

Amazin Bullock, Justin Daniels, Olivia Bell Ferguson, Tristan Wynn, Aaron Johnson, Savon Thompson, Tamiya Nickens, Sacora Monroe, TaQuan Grant, RaJahne' Harris, Kamari Branch, Jaymesha Richardson, Amia Graham, Anna Vescio, Mya Fife, Virginia Ramon, Janya Ford, LaToreya Blizzard, Luke Manthey, Marquez Taylor, Hannah Clark, Katherine Hernandez, Paris Callahan, and Leila Moone.

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