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THIRD EYE



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We dedicate this journal to the students of the world. We are holding one another.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover Page and Closing Page Art, *Rain Vigil*

INTRODUCTION

Why We Teach, *Dr. Mantz* 4

POETRY

| | | | |
|--|----|--|----|
| A Vision, <i>Luis Figueroa</i> | 4 | Anxiety, <i>Alyssa Diaz Vargas</i> | 16 |
| We Are Told, <i>Christian Anderson</i> | 5 | Nothing Yet, <i>Alyssa Diaz Vargas</i> | 16 |
| Fleeting Future, <i>Christian Anderson</i> | 6 | May Is..., <i>May Echols</i> | 17 |
| Rebirth, <i>Christian Anderson</i> | 6 | Matter of Fact, <i>Kimberly Gomez</i> | 17 |
| El Partido, <i>Miguel Angel Michel</i> | 6 | Machismo, <i>Kimberly Gomez</i> | 18 |
| Flew Away, <i>Miguel Angel Michel</i> | 7 | To Her, <i>Issac Hernnandez</i> | 19 |
| La Verdad, <i>MiguelAngel Michel</i> | 8 | Chance, <i>Jose Magana</i> | 20 |
| Through the Stars, <i>Miguel Arias</i> | 8 | Snakes in the Grass, <i>Ezekiel Mata</i> | 21 |
| Anxiety, <i>Anonymous</i> | 9 | Pyramid Quads, <i>Daniel Martinez</i> | 21 |
| Just Because, <i>Anonymous</i> | 9 | Love, <i>Mista</i> | 22 |
| Offering, <i>Anonymous</i> | 10 | Trapped, <i>Mista</i> | 22 |
| New Beginnings, <i>Anonymous</i> | 10 | New Beginnings, <i>Mista</i> | 23 |
| Proof, <i>Raydel Atoigue</i> | 11 | From the Ashes, <i>Issac Ramirez</i> | 24 |
| Football Fingers, <i>Robert Avalos</i> | 12 | Memories, <i>Issac Ramirez</i> | 24 |
| Self Love, <i>Robert Avalos</i> | 12 | Written Victors, <i>Natan Rodriguez</i> | 25 |
| Autumn Leaves, <i>Excell Ceballos</i> | 13 | Death of Mad Dog, <i>Natan Rodriguez</i> | 25 |
| Poet of the Hour, <i>Excell Ceballos</i> | 13 | Different People, <i>Josiah Anderson</i> | 26 |
| Love Soulmate, <i>Madelene Cervantes</i> | 13 | Herself, <i>Orianna Ruiz</i> | 26 |
| Nana, <i>Shadow Coli</i> | 14 | Hopeful Pieces, <i>Orianna Ruiz</i> | 26 |
| Dear You, <i>Katherine Corona</i> | 15 | Complicated, <i>Marlene Zaragoza</i> | 27 |
| Ropes, <i>Malina Cunningham</i> | 16 | More Than, <i>Marlene Zaragoza</i> | 27 |

STORIES

| | |
|--|----|
| Gratitude Gifts, <i>Andrea Alcantar</i> | 28 |
| Two to Two, <i>Aaron Arellano</i> | 29 |
| Forgiving Blood, <i>Hannah Artiga</i> | 29 |
| A Day in my Life, <i>Raydel Atoigue</i> | 30 |
| Thrills and Bills, <i>Erik Ayala</i> | 31 |
| Chilling Snow, <i>Excell Ceballos</i> | 32 |
| Tough Game, <i>Jeremiah Garrett</i> | 33 |
| Times with Mother, <i>Jesse Martinez</i> | 33 |
| Grilled Cheese, <i>Mista</i> | 34 |
| King Grandpa, <i>Alexadra Ramirez</i> | 35 |
| Merging Horizons, <i>Bradley Rico</i> | 36 |
| Invincible, <i>Natan Rodriguez</i> | 36 |
| Know True Love, <i>Paris Solis</i> | 37 |
| Made Anew, <i>Guillermo Verduzco</i> | 38 |
| Beginning Myself, <i>Rain Vigil</i> | 39 |

ESSAYS

| | |
|---|----|
| Change, <i>Christian Anderson</i> | 40 |
| Different School, <i>Mauricio Fregozo</i> | 40 |
| Uncaring to Caring, <i>Fatima Fuentes</i> | 41 |
| Let It Go, <i>Stephanie Guerrero</i> | 41 |
| Rocks, <i>Edward Jimenez</i> | 42 |
| New Beginnings, <i>Elias Lopez</i> | 42 |
| Catching Up, <i>Gabriel Mejia</i> | 43 |
| Truth and a Lie, <i>Mista</i> | 44 |
| Overthinking, <i>Selena Morin</i> | 44 |
| No Longer, <i>Bryan Ocaranza Mendes</i> | 45 |
| My Journey, <i>Valeria Ortiz</i> | 45 |
| Finally Will I Be ME, <i>Ale Ramirez</i> | 46 |
| Watching, <i>Betzaida Rodriguez</i> | 47 |
| Healing Life, <i>Orianna Ruiz</i> | 50 |
| Graduate, <i>Natalia Obregon Valverde</i> | 51 |

ART and PHOTOGRAPHY

| | |
|---|----|
| Relax Ruby, <i>Rain Vigil</i> | 7 |
| Roblox, <i>Rain Vigil</i> | 11 |
| Date Night, <i>Rain Vigil</i> | 12 |
| A Second Chance, <i>Isaac Ramirez</i> | 52 |
| The Choice is Yours, <i>Isaac Ramirez</i> | 52 |

INTRODUCTION

Why We Teach

By Dr. Jacqueline Mantz

Students faces bright with enthusiasm
gold such a hard due to hold, some days
learning bright,
brave students take what we impart with
humble hearts

Engaged in the art of creation without
reservation,

inclusion within our union
striving, failing, rising, pushing
past fear of struggle to find success

This is why we teach
to reach out with our best selves
finding our way day by day

our stories, their stories
we are all connected

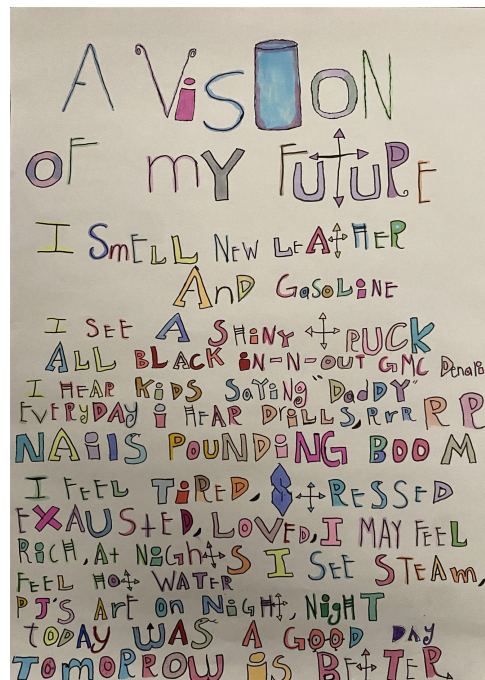
This is why we teach
all students will learn if only
we support, unite

May we remember why we have teachers
why we are teachers

May we remember students are teachers,
teachers students

We can create a world of peace, knowledge,
creation and elation, a shared communal
understanding
where all students are capable and flourish
over and over.

A Vision



By Luis Figueroa

POEMS

We Are Told

By Christian Anderson

We are fed these “Truths” as kids
that the place we call home
was founded by a white man from the
1400’s
who lived thousands of miles away.

We are told these lies by the very people
who rule us
that unless we bite our tongues
fall to our knees
and pray
we will burn for eternity.

We are fed these lies in place of “Truths”
We are told that wearing pink or blue
suddenly subjects you to a gender
that men can't cry or weep
without being shunned
that women can't dress nice for themselves
without being told they're doing it for
attention.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident
that all men are created equal”
we preach that we are all created equal
yet the rich and plenty
flaunt their wealth in our faces
in the form of neon colored carbon
emissions
and Gucci leather.

While the majority kill themselves
on the daily for a drop of water
death on our water fronts caused by
White men from centuries ago
problems lay on our shoulders that we didn't
cause.

Our lives filled with “Truths and Falses”
worried on what we should believe
We are fed these “Truths”.

Fleeting Future

By Christian Anderson

Light flashing through
the sickening smell of perfume and flowers
dirt piling on
sounds of sorrow
tears and music
no more
fleeting breaths
rain drops crashing
darkness once again
Full Cycle

Rebirth

By Christian Anderson

Darkness in light
Cold in warmth
Pain in joy
Love in hate
Dusk to dawn
Minutes to hours
Days to weeks
Weeks to months
Rebirth

El Partido

By Miguel Angel Michel

Smell of fresh cut grass
step onto grass,
it's time
kick the ball, goalie dives
misses block
Score a goal, like in life
down 2-1
Don't give up
Don't give up
the game ends

You lose
failure doesn't stop you
Try, try
Try again

Flew Away
By Miguel Angel Michel

At sixteen I flew away
a plane or a bird
from the person who raised me
the mother that cared for me
I flew away

I wanted to grow
seven hours away
where my dad stays
a friend I've known my entire life
I flew away

Closer to my mom
further from my dad
stricter dad
cooler mom
But yet, I flew away

Relax Ruby



By Rain Vigil

La Verdad
By MiguelAngel Michel

As lo que quieras
Un Rey
Di lo que quieras
Defiéndete
Verdad entre mentirá

Eres único cómo nadie
Tú apariencia es tuya
Luz en un cuarto oscuro
Especial
La verdad

Envidia es veneno
Interés llega a la ruina
Rico o Pobre

Through the Stars
By Miguel Arias

When I look in the future I see stars
stars that are brighter than the sun
those stars helps me guide my way
through my successful future ahead

Vamos al mismo lugar
Respeta pa ser Respetado

The Truth
Do what you want
A king
Say what you want
Defend yourself
A truth within lies
You are unique
Like no other
Your appearance is yours
A light in a dark room
Special truth
Envy is venom, leads to ruin
rich or poor
respect to be respected

seeking my path to success
Bumps like being in a 64 Chevy, ups and
downs on the way to a successful life,
challenges to defeat going through the stars
to my vision of the future.

Anxiety

By Anonymous

A big factor in my life
a big yellow yield sign,
be careful what I do
What will be the outcome?

It comes and goes like a wave
never know when it will clash
one day is horrible
I feel sick to my stomach
everyone talks but it's background noise
my mind fogs up
blocked by my overthinking

Just Because

By Anonymous

Someone could say,
"I love you, I care about you."
"I could never hurt you."
"I would never hurt you."
But no matter what they tell you,
It won't matter because they've already hurt you before

Why wouldn't they do it again?
Just because they keep repeating it to you, doesn't make it true
"I love you, I care about you."
"I could never hurt you."
"I would never hurt you."

Offering
By Anonymous

Hearing the familiar flick of the lighter,
trying desperately to spark a flame,
just to feel that familiar burn in the back of her throat.

She accepts the kind of love that is toxic like smoking a cigarette,
because that is the kind of love she was taught to receive and accept.

Yelling and insulting your child does not make them tougher,
It makes them believe that that is the kind of love they deserve and should accept in future
relationships.

It makes them look for that kind of love in others.

They don't deserve it, but it's all they know.

It's all they know.

New Beginnings
By Anonymous

I sat there for so long, waiting for you to hold my hand. Why didn't you hold my hand?
You said you didn't know I wanted you to hold my hand, but I didn't understand how you could
have not known when I had my hand on top of yours waiting for you to hold it back.

You said sorry but no matter what you said, I wouldn't believe you because I had already
convinced myself to believe that you simply didn't want to hold my hand.

Why didn't you just tell me? Did you not want to hurt my feelings?

Hurt me. I just want to know the truth. I tried to move on but I missed you.

This time you left, and I miss you, but I'm learning to love myself and be on my own,
without you, without anyone.

Proof

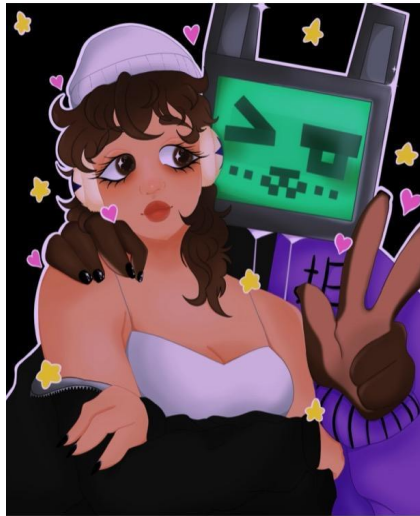
By Raydel Atoigue

Start off doing things for me
not letting people get in my way
doing things I want to do for myself
not caring what anybody thinks about me
how they see me.

Time to focus on myself, think about my future
some friends may not be in future
past in the past moving on to better things
trying new things I would never try.

Complete school work to graduate to prove
people wrong, proving people wrong.

Roblox



By Rain Vigil

Football Fingers
By Robert Avalos

Sunday Afternoon I smell salmon cooking
lemon burning like the sun
laying on my sofa like the soft beach sand
Cowboys, Blue/White star uniform
collectable card in my drawer
sticky fingers, lemon & chamoy
chips and lips puckering,
Dad screams when they lose.

Self Love
By Robert Avalos

I see wind blowing through curtains
make a snack with piña, cherry, and mangos
watching TV, my cat “Halloween” laying by my feet.

Waking up like winning the lottery
vibing with myself
blessed to be me.

Date Night



By RainVigil

Autumn Leaves

By Excell Ceballos

As autumn leaves swirl in a breeze
my heart dances with the same ease
I see you there
with your hair in the wind
and my heart skips a beat
I find myself lost in thought
her eyes like a river
a peaceful state of mind
a melody that rings so pure and true
but with each note
I hear so vividly
my heart strings ache and sing
a requiem for you.

Poet of the Hour

By Excell Ceballos

In a room filled with pens and blank pages.
I stand alone with unique stages.
My words flow like a river so true A better
poet compared to all of you.
My rhymes are crisp, my metaphors bright
leaving all others in the
shadow of night.
No one can match the beauty I bring to
the page.
Where my thoughts take wing.
I paint pictures with each word I write.
So listen closely, to every line, and witness
the power that's truly mine.
For I excel, the poet of the hour.
A better poet than the whole human tower.

Love Soulmate

By Madelene Cervantes

Your beautiful long eyelashes, and pretty brown eyes, like Hershey's chocolate,
leave a trail of butterflies and happiness, and your soft hands, rub my face,
take away all the darkness, while the air smells of harvest, pumpkins, and cinnamon,
all these people I hear, but you're the only one near, the way your lips taste of rainbows,
And skittles, I could be here for years
Love, Soulmate.

Nana

By Shadow Coli

Long gray braided hair
tan skin from being outside all the time
wrinkles decorate her face
tiny scratches and cuts on her hands
all those cuts from taking care of her farm

Waking up before the sun can shine
unlocking her front gate for her grandkids
getting food ready for her animals
rinsing all the buckets
making breakfast, huevos hamon y tortillas

She waits and listens, hearing the kids
scream
“NANA”
sand and rocks grinding on shoes
her grandkids go inside her kitchen
she smiles as brightly as the sun
hugging and kissing her grandkids
handing them plates of food sitting and
eating together

Once the sun starts going down
she makes dinner

enough to feed the whole street
perfect amount for her family
her kids arrive with her grandkids
To others, it looks like complete chaos
to her, she sees an ordered line
all working together
her putting food on plates
parents grabbing tables and chairs
teens grabbing hot plates of food,
setting them down at tables
children grabbing cups and bottles of soda
and handing cups out
all talking and eating as kids run around
playing

Once it's dark and mosquitoes come out
they know it's time to leave
everyone says goodbye and leaves

She locks up, showers, gets ready for bed
braids her hair and prays before sleep takes
over
waiting for the next day to start all over
again

Dear You
By Katherine Corona

The sound of the heavy door closing on itself,
how strong the silence of the classroom was
but when I saw you there wasn't enough room for
one million sweet thoughts I heard in my head.

Those magical green eyes,
others may say they're green but I'll always say they're blue,
and how they change depending on the shirt you wear,
the new haircut you make sure get before Thursday,
always falling in love the way you comb over your fluffy hair.

You smell like detergent and softener,
such specific scent to you, like mimicking cologne,
but between us and unbeknownst to others, you don't wear cologne.

When we are apart all I can think of is you,
how we caress each other is a whole different type of love story,
my head is touching the clouds, the euphoric feeling,
as if I were soaking in the taste of pot liquor,
how delicious it is, how I would never take it for granted
or be greedy to eat two pots at the same time,
I'll take it slow and steady with my first instead.

Even while we're in a rough patch, the careless things we say hurt
feel like there is no end, as lovers we reach to one another and
to our love darling, it will only extend.

Ropes

By Malina Cunningham

They always seem to tear apart. As they are old and no longer want to be held together. Grabbing a pair of scissors, cutting the rope, watching it slowly fall to the ground. A feeling of regret, the sounds of crickets, pain and the feeling of a waterfall hitting. Seeing images flashing in your face, but knowing holding on would have destroyed you, having never ending rope burns from trying to keep it alive. But closing your eyes one last time knowing that you'll find stronger ropes that'll last a lifetime.

Anxiety

By Alyssa Diaz Vargas

We all have anxiety
we can't escape it
like having to breathe
anxiety comes with life
had it since I was a kid

Seeing people around me
getting anxious knowing what they've done
to me and the people around me
but I know how to control it
breathing, focusing on gratitude
we all have anxiety
We can't escape it

Nothing Yet

By Alyssa Diaz Vargas

13 years of school yet, not prepared
for what's next I'm more lost than before
does anyone know, I feel like
the only one that's not prepared

everyday's the same
wake up, school, go to sleep
how do I go from doing all that
for years to nothing yet
striving to be the best of my class
Will I see any of these people again?

May Is...

By May Echols

May
is kind, caring, loving
loves dad, friends, scary movies
is good at singing, drawing, helping
feels not good enough, useless, worthless
needs hoodies, food, water
wants dad's love, acceptance, a real friend
fears being alone, fireworks, dad dying
likes to eat candy fruit, vegetables
watches Scream, TCM, Silent Hill
is a resident of: California, Desert Hot Springs
Echols

Matter of Fact

By Kimberly Gomez

Your words don't hurt me,
nor do your actions
they used to
but not no more.

All that's disturbance to my peace and mental health has come to an end
what a relief,
what a relief that I don't have those words rushing through my head anymore

I don't think about everything you've done to knock me over anymore
You tried.
but I'll rise everyday just like the sun rises after dawn
my light is brighter than yours
matter of fact,
your light doesn't even shine in my world.

My peace will from not be damaged by anything
grown mentally
trained myself to rise and rise and rise
You don't get to paint me
I DO.

Machismo
By Kimberly Gomez

TRUTH

Machismo is an issue in Hispanic society
Hispanic women are raised with the same idea engraved in their heads,
mom and grandma say,
“Learn how to cook and clean for your future husband.”
“No one will want to marry you if you don't know how to be a good wife.”
“You're gonna have to do everything for your husband.”
Why is this okay?
Because everyone is used to it, we let it be normalized.
We need to speak up.

Every woman aspires to be a housewife.

FALSE.

Every woman needs to stay home and care for the kids and husband.
men need to be out working while women are at home
False

False

False

A woman CAN stay home and do these things if that's what they wish,
a choice not a demand

Women can work, men can stay home and look after the home.

Me though?

I WILL influence my children and grandchildren to do what they desire,
make a change.

To Her

By Issac Hernandez

When I look into my future I see you

just the glimpse of her can make any man drop

like a rose in the desert

a light in a world full of darkness

the sight of you leaves me in awe

Your soft silky hair

Your eyes, easy to get lost in

your smile that can say a thousand words

your beauty is like no other

The sound of your voice and the words that you say to me are enough to make my heart melt

Your sweet and rich aroma reminds me of that of a vanilla orchid in the spring

A bouquet of fresh flowers in the summer

I marvel at the way you make me feel

like a prince to a

Stunning

Enchanting

Elegant

Princess

I LOVE YOU

Chance

By Jose Magana

New beginnings happen when you click, “new game”
stressing and struggling working 9-5 everyday
working everyday just to survive
don't even feel like you belong in this society
never get out or have fun on your days off.
A friend that I've known since elementary
gives me an opportunity to change my life
have to learn to keep building my income
can't go back to that bad path I was on
I had to change my thinking, motivate myself.
It's crazy how money has that much control over us
without money, the world would stop spinning
only two types of people in the world, buyers and sellers
either spending your money or making money
Some buy everything they see.
Money makes people stab their own blood.
Crazy how people with money have the power to change
or help someone and still don't,
How do they sleep in a house that has so many rooms?
Now I have changed my life, I have the chance to change someone's life
I will.

Snakes in the Grass

By Ezekiel Mata

It's confusing trying to figure out who
lies or tells the truth nowadays

you can't trust anybody whether it be your friends, family or the
person you love the most, whether it be politics or your teacher you have
to beware of what you say, how you look at people and how you
treat them you can never be too safe.

I am not gonna lie people are not what they seem you reading this right now how can
you trust what I am telling you
right now.

You can sometimes tell when someone lies just look deep into their eyes they will fear if
you know the truth.

I myself lie, I ain't gonna lie, everybody lies, it's just the nature of the human mind, be
careful of choosing your friends and loved ones

don't let nobody bring you down, keep a good mindset, be kind to
others, just watch out for the snakes.

Pyramid Quads

By Daniel Martinrez

quads

Loud fast

Driving steering shifting

Where are you riding?

Love
By Mista

(Disclaimer: This is fiction! Topics of domestic abuse)

Love comes in many forms
some soft, some hard
soft butterfly kisses across the face,
cuddling covered in fully blankets.
hard punches, black eyes.

“I love you so much”

I love you too

“Don’t love me too?”

Yes of course.

“Are you comfortable with this?”

Yes, with you I’m comfortable with anything.

“Shut up and take it.”

I’m sorry.

Your eyes are filled with such admiration,
sometimes it feels like you’re not looking at me.

Why would someone look at me the way you would?

His eyes were filled with a mixture of sickening emotions, he looked at me as if I were an object.

This is all I’m worth.

How could you hold me knowing the filth I carry?

How could you live knowing you dirtied me.

I’m safe with you but I can’t help the feelings of fear when you suddenly grab my shoulder

You only wanted to tell me something

I was never safe in his arms, I feared when he would suddenly grab me with enough force to bruise me for weeks. He meant it.

You are my new beginning

Trapped
by Mista

Trapped, I am trapped.

This human does not allow me to leave this big cage.

They call it a “house”, oddly enough my own smaller cage is shaped like said human house.

Everyday, wake up at 8:00AM.

Every night, go to sleep at 9:00PM.

When I try to sleep I can hear the human laughing, but at 11:00 pm they fall asleep. I hear them snoring.

I smell spices being cooked, the spice is almost suffocating. The human seems to dislike the smell as well.

I grow angry when the humans come near me.

But, I can't seem to hate them forever. When my human comes home from "school" I can't help but rush to them.

I sit on their shoulder as they feed me leafy greens and give me head scratches.

Even though I am forever stuck with my human . . .

I love them.

New Beginnings

By Mista

My beginning is something I have forgotten very long ago yet even with this lack of memory I cannot help but feel plagued by the darkness of the unknown.

The future is a void of possibilities, my past is a list of acidic dreadful memories that I was forced to forget.

But after all these grueling years of fighting a war that should've ended eons ago , I grew tired. I had enough with the constant battle to simply breathe. It was either take the easy way out or become something better. Something I can be proud of.

I shed my past the same way a snake sheds its skin , I shed my worries like a butterfly emerging from its cocoon, the same way a bird loses its feathers and grows them back.

I shed my past and emerge as a new person, a better me. I am free, I am free to choose my right path.

From the Ashes

By Issac Ramirez

From ashes to new life
Reborn like a phoenix
Rising from the past
With strength and grace
Each step is a journey
Each breath a new start
Leaving behind the old
And embracing the heart
With eyes open wide
And dreams in our mind
We take on the world
With a new spirit to find
For in rebirth
There is hope and light
A chance to be better
And to take flight

So let us embrace,
The change that we see,
For in rebirth,
We are set free.

Memories

By Issac Ramirez

Gone from sight, yet not from mind,
a cherished memory of a loving kind,
with every thought, a pain untold,
the emptiness that cannot be controlled

Eyes that sparkled, laughter so bright,
the way you smiled, oh, what a sight.
but now the tears won't cease to fall,
with every breath, I miss you more and
more,

In quiet moments, I hear your voice,
a gentle whisper, a soothing noise,
and though you're gone, I feel you near,
a comforting warmth, that wipes away my
tears,

So until we meet again my dear,
I'll hold you close, I'll keep you near,
for in my heart you'll always be,
the missing piece, that completes me.

Written Victors
By Natan Rodriguez

History is written by the victor.
Biased history only told from their point of view and ideologies.
Maybe they won for what's right,
but we'll never see their atrocities and the crimes they committed for victory

Death of a Mad Dog
By Natan Rodriguez

Once a dog so loyal now left to rot
a dog who would've fought to the very end
a dog so foolish and naive
trust no longer remaining with the dog
filled with hate and anger
distrust in those who offer their hands
anger remained for the dog never forgets
even when the dog doesn't remember why
his hate and anger will continue to burn

But this old hound seems to have grown weaker
what will his death bring about
will this death blossom into something beautiful
or will this death be filled with hate and bitterness
the mad dog knows one thing
that is this journey has to be completed
no matter the outcome

Two Different People

By Josiah Anderson

Are people what they say they are?
People can be cool, next min, they are a whole different person.
You can tell when they tense up.
Loud, screaming, notice a different person, to the quiet one.
They think. They think about everything.
The ones that are quiet think about what you did.
How you did it. They try to figure out why.
They try to figure out everything.

Herself

By Orianna Ruiz

She made herself
trained herself to look for answers at eye level
they were lower, changing all the time
there are thousands to tell you it cannot be done

Yet, hope again
the cap the gown
true greatness after all
may the happiness you feel today
be a feeling you keep as you go on your way

Hopeful Pieces

By Orianna Ruiz

No hurt can last forever
perhaps tomorrow will bring relief
open your heart to happiness
taking away my complete loneliness
giving me back all the happiness
Everyone is searching
for something to heal themselves
when the world comes crashing at your feet
it's okay to let others

help pick up the pieces
If we're present to take part in your happiness
pushing you to a paradise of smiles
look at you, love
still here and hopeful
after it all

Complicated

By Marlene Zaragoza

I feel my mind spinning
Body standing still
Loop after loop stop
Just answer give an answer
Unexpected drops many decisions

YES or NO

Mad sad confused
Frustrating tearing myself down
Tearing through my skin and thoughts
Riding this never ending roller coaster
Why am I so complicated

More Than

By Marlene Zaragoza

Love is a myth, something you only witness in fairytales. It's not like when Cinderella lost her shoe to find her true love and lived happily ever after. I have to take off more than a shoe to be shown a replica of love. This love that's only interested in my body, not my heart or smile. There is no prince gently watching how beautiful and delicate his princess is on snow white gathered flowers. It is how I gathered my clothes as I am watched, I am prey. It's not how the prince extended his hand for Princess Jasmine to help and guide her. Love is hands extended in lust, feeling every curve and crease like I'm nothing besides a body.

STORIES

Gratitude Gifts

By Andrea Alcantar

March 2, 2023 was my birthday. First I opened my birthday gifts and then I decided to go to Starbucks to get my free drink. I got a pink drink with vanilla cold foam. It was my first time trying it and it reminded me of strawberry ice cream. After I got my Starbucks, I went to the nail salon to get my toes done. When I got there I saw all the nail polish colors, it was a hard choice to make but I decided on white. Once I left the nail salon I went home to get dressed. I couldn't figure out what to wear for the day but I finally chose a cute top, jeans, and some sparkly sandals.

After I got dressed I was on my way to downtown Palm Springs, it was a little later than expected but it was fine. I first went to Sephora and I got the Fenty skin tint which I had been wanting to buy for a while. Then I went to Free the People and I bought some cute rings, they were gold with pink crystals. My mom and I then went to Felipe's to get a churro cart that I had seen on TikTok, it was Bad Bunny themed and it was so cute. Once we were done at Felipe's I went home and got ready for the night, at this point it was already seven pm which was way later than I was planning on leaving but it all worked out.

For my second outfit I picked out a pink sparkly dress with a beige jacket and some cream colored platform heels. After I changed into my outfit I went to pick up my friends. I first picked up my best friend, Diana, who got me a bouquet of flowers and a cute gift basket. After leaving her house I went and picked up my other friends; Nat, Brenda, and finally Hannah. My friends all sat in the back seats so they were a bit squished but it was okay because it was a fun car ride, we were all talking and singing, We had originally planned on going to a restaurant in Palm Desert called La Katrina but when we got there it was closed so we went to Cheesecake Factory at The River instead. When I got there I took a few pictures with my cake, then my friends and I went inside to eat. We got pizza and fries. Once we were done eating we asked for candles and a lighter for my cake, my friends sang for me and took pictures. Once we stood up we realized we were not only being loud but we were also the last ones to leave which was a little embarrassing. We went outside and took some more pictures while we waited for my mom to come back to pick us up. When my mom picked us up it was my four friends in the back

again. At this point we were already very tired and just wanted to go home. Once we finally got home I put all my stuff away and got ready for bed. It was such a nice way to spend my birthday with my friends and I was so grateful to have them.

Two to Two

Aaron Arellano

It was September 2022, I had a tournament in Los Angeles. It was a quarter final game and it came out as a draw, two to two. We went into extra time but still no result. Penalties it was! Now there was so much going through our minds, we could feel the pressure. Each and every one of my teammates had gone to go shoot and now it was my turn. I said, "It is now or never." I stepped up to the spot and the keeper was trying to get in my mind by talking and looking me straight into the eyes.

I showed no nerves, I was somewhat experienced with penalties so I didn't really mind. The referee blew the whistle and I shot it and banged it in the net. I dropped to my knees. I was proud of myself for really overcoming the pressure I had on my back.

Forgiving Blood

By Hannah Artiga

Today I will be talking about my journey and the struggles I faced coming to forgive my mother. My name is Hannah A. I am a seventeen years old senior in high school. Six years ago my life took a turn seeing as my mom had found a new interest in drugs. She has changed and as an eleven years old girl seeing her mom constantly put random men above me and my siblings was confusing and hurtful. I built up so much anger over the years and was filled with questions like, "Why aren't we enough and what did we do to make her leave?"

When she got arrested for the first time I was scared out of my mind about her getting hurt or just simply having a loved one in a correctional facility is not a great feeling. I remember as bad as I felt for her I was also so mad at her, how could she be so reckless and do something like this to us? A year passed and they had transferred her to an immigration facility with the intent to send her back to Guatemala. This was a real eye opener for her and made her realize that this wasn't the life she wanted to live for the rest of her life. She tried her hardest and finally got released late last year of 2022. She was hellbent on making amends and simply repainting

her image. She had burned so many bridges and said many hurtful things to people she deeply cared for.

When she apologized to me I had to also keep in mind that my mother did not have it easy in her childhood either. She was also a small girl with a mother that was not fit to care for her whatsoever. She was a young mom who had been to foster homes with my older sister at the ages of sixteen to eighteen. I took into account that she had no role model to teach her how to care for her children because she had never received it. I had also apologized to her for giving up on her so many times after I thought she would never change. Despite all her obstacles she has shown her growth not only as a person but as a mother.

All in all, my mami is my blood, I came to forgive her and continue to forgive her to this day. At the end of the day there will always be that little girl inside me that needs and wants her mom. Because of this I have matured as a person and have learned that anyone can change if given the opportunity.

A Day in my Life

By Raydel Atoigue

On July 16, 2020 my niece was born. She is the most adorable thing in the world to me. When I saw her for the first time I fell in love with her. She is my heart, she is the one that gives me the motivation to do better in school. All the things I'm doing are for her because I want to give her the best and never let her down. She is three and her spirit is so amazing. She has a sweet heart but she is bad. She tells people no and tells them what to do. Her favorite person she loves to run to when she gets in trouble is me or my dad which is her *Papa*. Her name is Lai'ane, she also has two little brothers, Roe and Anu. When she is with them she has the time of her life she loves being with her siblings. When they are together they are unstoppable; they love each other to death.

One of my favorite moments with my niece is when we were laying down watching a movie and she said, "Uncle Ray Ray," for the first time. When she said that, it melted my heart to hear her say my name in her little voice. The reason why this moment is so special to me is because I have seen my niece grow up to be the little three year old she is today. Her favorite color is pink. She is in love with that color. My niece is a handful but I love her with all my heart.

Thrills and Bills

By Erik Ayala

On Thursday afternoon, we went to the Date Festival in Indio. It was windy and some of the rides were closed due to the weather. The lines get longer to the point the lot is filled with people. The lines started to get shorter because people got impatient and left. After entering the fair we had to buy tickets to go on the rides, so we brought the bracelet for unlimited rides for the whole day. The bracelets were light blue, they cost thirty-nine dollars each. It cost us \$155!

The lines for the rides were about thirty minutes for like each ride. We went on the Starship first and it made my head dizzy. After the Starship we went on a ride called an Orbiter that swings you sideways in the air. Natalie, my little sister, and I went on the bumper cars. It was fun bumping into random people. A couple hours passed by and my little brother Luis wanted his face painted. He got an orange and black tiger painting on his face. After his face painting we went to go get a family picture. It cost about twenty dollars for two pictures. After the photos were taken we had to wait about two hours for them to get printed. My siblings and I went on rides to wait for the pictures to be taken.

There was this ride called Hawaiian Express that goes fast forward and reverse. There was also music while we were on the ride. While me and Nathi went on the Hawaiian Express my little brother Luis went to the fun house, my mother told me he ran into the reflection and bumped his head and fell down, he didn't cry he started to laugh and went again. I went to the Fireball, the Fireball is a roller coaster that goes in circles and stays upside down for like a minute. I went alone because my sister couldn't go on it because she was short. It was weird sitting next to a random person. After the Fireball my head started hurting I took off my bracelet so my mother could go on the rides with my siblings. My mother went on the kid rides with my little brother while my stepdad Luis went with my sister. They took turns so we could stick together so my little siblings wouldn't get lost. We heard monster trucks so we went and paid to go in, it was crazy they were ramming into each other the one I was rooting for got knocked it was called Grave Digger. It was black with green flames and a little bit of purple. It was like two hours.

After the show we went to go pick up our photos and went on a few more rides before the fair closed. We got on the swings that went up in the air. It was scary because it was high above

the whole park. After we went on the ferris wheel it was slow but the view was beautiful. Before the fair closed we got some corn on the cob, I got mine with hot cheetos. We left the fair. It was still windy. We got hungry and saw In-n-Out on the way and decided to get it. I got a Double Double with fries along with a 7-Up. My parents got the same, while my younger siblings got a hamburger with nothing on it. After we ate we went home because we were exhausted from being at the fair the whole day.

Chilling Snow

By Excell Ceballos

It was a cold Sunday morning in Yucca Valley, and I had plans to work on a home renovation project with my dad and brother. We were going to prepare a room to be sprayed with white paint and install new flooring. Despite the snowfall and chilly weather, we were eager to get started. When we arrived at the job site in pioneer town, we noticed a lot of people outside walking despite the weather.

The smell of BBQ filled the air, making our stomachs grumble. We knew we had to stay focused. We entered the house and began preparing the room by clearing out all the furniture and fixtures. We removed the old flooring and prepped the walls for painting.

It was a tedious process, but we worked efficiently and progressed well. Once the room was ready, we began to spray the white paint. It was a messy job, but we were all experienced and knew how to get the job done. As we waited for the paint to dry, we began to install the new tile flooring. It was a fun task and we worked together like a well-oiled machine.

We cut the tiles to size, applied the adhesive, and carefully laid each tile in place. The room was starting to take shape. Throughout the day the cold snow continued to fall, but we didnt let it slow us down. We worked tirelessly taking only short breaks to warm up and refuel. As the day drew to a close, we stood back and the room looked incredible, and we knew that the homeowner would be thrilled with the results.

As we packed up our tools and said our goodbyes, working on a Sunday may not have been the most exciting way to spend my weekend, but it was definitely worth it. And as we stepped outside into the chilly snow-filled air, the smell of BBQ still lingered, reminding us that even on a cold day, people still found joy in being outside. Despite this shivering weather all my mind could think about was how beautiful the snow looked.

Tough Game

By Jeremiah Garrett

Tonight is a tough game. Are we ready to play? I am trying to be hopeful, but I hear what people say about us. We didn't win much last year, and it is a fact. Let's choose to rise above our past and dare to hope. This season will be different, we'll do more than cope with disappointment, injury, and attitudes times ten. We can do this, we must do this, play this game like men.

Times with Mother

by Jesse Martinez

BOOM!!!! Another strike by me, the one and only bowling champion. I was beating everyone in the arena, one after another. Then my mom arrived and was on fire. Nobody was able to stop her, not even me. After five hours of consistent rematches I only beat her twice. She wouldn't let me win whilst she knew it was my day. My birthday, the day I was born. We were getting tired so we went to a buffet to fill up in Palm Desert. HomeTown Buffet smelled like heaven. They had all my favorite foods: Sausage pizza, chow mein, orange chicken, and a sundae station.

I was truly happy at that moment, spending time with the person I love the most, My mother. Her and I filled our faces with our favorite foods while laughing and had the best time of our lives. After we filled up on food we went to the arcade at the movie theater. There was no way she was beating me at technology games. Technology games are my jam. There was no possible way she could. We first went against each other in Duck Hunt. Phew! She almost beat me but I won. We ended up staying there for hours and not once did she beat me. I was proud of myself because we were talking smack to each other. She got super confident, OUTTA NOWHERE!!!! She wanted to play one more and bet money on it so I was down to do it. She wanted to bet \$100. I was not about to lose that much money. Sure enough I beat her over and over HAHA!!

But at the end of the day it was all love and fun and games. It was coming towards the end of the day, it was getting dark outside so we went to the theater. Of course I paid for everything with the money I won from her. We watched Avengers End Game and we were so excited to watch it together. My mother and I are big fans of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, "MCU"!

We were in such shock after watching the movie. It had to be our favorite MCU movie. Thanos was such a pure evil villain. He killed his own daughter. By the time the movie was over it was 11:00 PM so we went home with joy. I hardly spend time with my mother so it was my favorite day ever. Nothing can ever compete.

Grilled Cheese

By Mista

(Calling his sister “he” is intentional)

The morning is always cold, my mom dresses me up in warm clothing and drives me to school. I never see my sister in the morning, he’s always sleeping. Once a week I have cooking classes, and my mom helped me sign up for them. I was excited because I like doing things on my own. I want to cook for myself. I sped through the school day and rushed to the cafeteria where the classes were. That day we were going to make grilled cheese, one of my favorite foods; I almost started jumping up and down in joy when I heard the dish's name.

The chef helped us spread butter on the outside of the bread slices, the side that would touch the stovetop. I had put the cheese on the bread before the chef took the uncooked sandwich and put it on the hot pan. All of my friends waited for our food to finish cooking. I could already taste the cheese.

Finally, we were all told to sit down at the tables, the chef gave us all paper plates and put our grilled cheese sandwiches on them. We all ate them. I ate a whole grilled cheese and asked for another. That time I paused, I was really proud of that moment. I wanted to tell my mom about it. But I wanted to give her a grilled cheese that I made because I wanted her to know how much I’m growing. I ate half of the second grilled cheese. I was still hungry. It wouldn’t hurt if I took a little bite out of the sandwich right? I took a bite and saved the rest on a plate while I went to go play with my friends. I waited until it was six and my mom came to pick me up, I saw my sister in the car too. I ran up to the car and got into the back, I spoke up.

“Mom, I have a surprise for you.” I smiled as I saw my mom turn her head to look at me, she asked me what it was and I took out the grilled cheese slice. My mom and sister stared at it for a second before she took it and thanked me. She said I was thoughtful and nice about this. My sister was laughing a lot though.

In the end I was proud of my creation and my mom liked it too! When we got home she heated it up and ate it, we even got to make more grilled cheeses. It was a good day.

King Grandpa

By Alexandra Ramirez

Well I don't know where to start. Let's just say I was not ready for this day to come. My grandpa was an awesome, wonderful man. So many words can describe him. My grandpa was the most respectful person you could ever meet. I will always cherish the moments I shared with my grandpa, from going to the store to sitting on the couch watching t.v.. I have always heard little stories like when I was little I would lay in the middle of my grandma and grandpa. My grandpa was a father figure to me. He told us stories about his mistakes that he made. I am going to miss him waking up and saying, "Sophia or Arlene help me make the bed." I will miss him telling me, "Ya esta mi agua caliente lista para el cafe y dame el pan."

I'm even going to miss saying, "Goodnight grandpa I love you," and when he would say it back. I just am going to miss seeing him out on the yard watering the grass or always making friends with the neighbors. Papash was always wanting to help you. Then he would go into the house, get a snack and sit down on the couch watching *Caso Cerrado* and fall asleep on the couch. I will miss all the road trips he used to take us on like when we went Sedona camping and fishing. Those are the moments I am going to miss him the most. I will miss Papash taking me and the girls to the swap meet. We would only walk to the fourth line because you would say, "Mira a grandma ya no puede caminar." Then we would go home and eat.

I will definitely miss grandpa taking us to church and getting menudo after or carne asada. Summer was my favorite time because that was the longest I was with him. He was always putting the shade on top of the pool so we wouldn't get burned. He always cared about us and that is what I am going to miss. My grandpa was always doing something if it was fixing his pants to shining his shoes. He was always making sure they were just right from painting or fixing little things in the house or even my necklace. He would always make fun of grandma because her pants would never fit. She was short and my grandpa would always tell the funniest jokes. Who knew he could speak so much English? He was always trying.

Well grandpa, thank you for everything you did for us. I am going to miss you grandpa but I know you are pain free, probably teaching all the angels how to fish. This is definitely not a goodbye but it's a see you soon grandpa. I love you forever and will miss you.

Merging Horizons

By Bradley Rico

It's a Sunday morning. I get up out of my cozy warm bed and I go to the restroom. After that I make myself some breakfast, oatmeal. The oatmeal tastes bland but then I add some sugar, it now tastes way better. After breakfast I go on my phone and scroll through like what seems like an eternity, next thing I know, It's now noon.

I go for a bike ride, as my peddling speeds up I can feel the breeze of the air hitting me. It's a nice feeling, but not as nice as the view I'm looking at after biking up a large five mile hill. The view is one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen. The blue surface of the sky consumes the horizon, I see the birds flying high as the clouds. I feel how warm the sun is against my sweaty tired skin. I stay and look over the view for a few hours, watching the sunset. I see the beautiful color of the sky yellow, red and purple merging with the darkness of the night.

Invincible

By Natan Rodriguez

As we watch the sun set, we're left with our thoughts unfiltered and free flowing. While life surrounds us as we talk before the setting sun, all I can manage to think about is the bitter end. Death consumes my mind faster than any drug ever could. Death isn't a bad or even the end of something but my mind always likes to wander to the topic. I tell you of all of this while you stand there listening intently, having said nothing. I prefer this over someone trying to stop my mind and thoughts from thinking. Although I understand that life and death coexist with each other being two sides of the same coin, it doesn't stop my ego from wondering what's next after all this and if it's even worth it. Attempting to accept life and the way it runs while also attempting to be in tune with life and death is hard. Trying to become a strong and kinder person has truly been a challenge. With my realization of what's to come and what's still unknown for the moment made me notice how much time I've wasted. It sounds bad, but I don't view it completely as bad. If I would've never realized I would continue to waste my time until it was all

too late. Of course I wish I was more careful and mindful with my time, I can still pursue my dreams and soar higher than the sun itself, higher than I ever imagined.

Know True Love

By Paris Solis

Hi, my name is Paris Solis, I'm a student here at Edward Wenzlaff Education Center. I'm seventeen years old and I'll be graduating this year in June 2023. An event that caused me to grow would be dealing with a person who said they loved me but did not act like it.

Today I will be talking about how a person and an event caused me to grow as a woman. This person claimed they loved me. I know what we had was so different from others and I enjoyed my time with him, but we had a lot of issues during the relationship. Even though I still love and care for him, I don't think we'd work out. It hurts to know we no longer have contact. So maybe I have to learn to be alone with myself. There's a lot I could say but for now I'd say how upset he made me feel. He never understood me whenever I wanted to be understood. Maybe I wasn't enough or we weren't meant to be but one thing for sure is he'll always have a place in my heart even after everything. I still think if I could go back and fix our issues, I would.

What do I want in a relationship in the future? Well, what I would like to have in a relationship is having it 50/50 not having it one sided, I want my person to understand me at all times and I want them to help me understand them as well. I want them to have a stable life and know not to always depend on me. I want communication and love and support, I want a kind of love where we are the bestest of friends and where there's so much trust and communication. I feel so sorry that it wasn't like that with the person I wanted. Maybe one day if we come back to each other I will most definitely try my best to have that stable relationship, I will make sure that I will not fail them.

That's what I consider growing as a woman, to understand more not just for myself but for the other person, and to learn more about life and people, also with being more aware of how a person is. I need a lot of healing, like growing to trying to love myself and set other priorities first then a person, because at the end I'll just have myself, like school is my first priority, although having someone by my side while I heal and do better. I wished to have that person there, but I will not settle for less. I don't care about looks, features, money, none of that. All I care about is that that person will love me and appreciate me no matter what. If I have to deal

with a person that has their actions speak louder than their words, I will not hesitate to leave and just stick to myself, I will not go out looking for the kind of love I want, they will find me, but to the person i thought that loved me I hope you're doing well and I hope you make better choices in the future and change for the better, not for the worst. I wish you nothing but the best.

“Until next time, if there isn’t a next know you were truly loved, goodbye”- Paris

Made Anew

By Guillermo Verduzco

Note: Guillermo Verduzco is a staff member at our school.

My name is Guillermo. I would like to tell a story. When I was a small kid, I used to question everything, my mother and many family members. I wasn't the best son, I used to drive my mother insane. I gave so many major scares in my lifetime.. The older I got the more wrong I did. I did graffiti, I drove at high speeds with friends in my car, I drank, and smoked because I wanted to fit in with my friends. I used to come home at midnight. I never did my school work, all I did was sleep during class. I did all this through high school, until my junior year. That's when I decided to try to finish school. I became a Super Senior, and went off to MSJ in Cathedral City. During all this time my attitude was not the best, I cared about no one, No one mattered to me not even my family.

But around the age of twenty-one my attitude was the same as it was in high school, but before going off to the Army National Guard and getting my GED from them, I met my wife. That's where everything started to change. My wife of eleven years has given me four beautiful children and each one of them is a blessing in my life, and I thank her for everything she has done to help me become the person I am today..

My wife is Christian, and where she comes from they have a strong belief in God. She prayed and pushed me to get closer to people at my church. I didn't want to go. The only reason I did it was just not to hear her say anything about it. I just went to make her happy. In September of 2019, I heard about this church retreat up in the mountains. The reason I wanted to go was just to get away. But I couldn't afford it at that time so my wife gave me the surprise of paying for it. The time came for me to leave, and I remember what my wife said to me before I left, “Te amo amor, que Dios te guarde en tu camino, y que restaure tu vida, tambien que te aga bajar como una persona nueva..Que Dios te bendiga.” (“I love you. May God Keep you from harm on your

way to wherever you are going, may he restore your life, and make you new. God bless you ”)

The experience I had while I was up there was so amazing. When I came back down from that mountain and had my experience with God, I felt like a new person. I felt refreshed, happy, all my stress was gone, and my depression was gone. I felt total peace. It felt like I was born again, and ever since that moment. Till this day even now when I'm speaking to you it has not been the same. I have been made new or I should say I AM NEW.

Beginning Myself

By Rain Vigil

It's kinda dumb, it all started with my favorite game, Minecraft. A while ago I asked my best friend if we could have a talk, they agreed as we have had a few in the past. My mind was angry but my heart wanted to fix these issues I was having with her. I was alone in my big and quiet room, plushies on my shelves and my fairy lights shined bright. My head on my pillow wrapped in silk and I cuddled my favorite plush. The phone rang, I waited to see her face on my small screen. Eventually she picked up and told me

“I'll talk, you listen. Then you talk, I'll listen.”

I agreed as this always helped us get through what we needed to go through. She told me her side of the story, she just wanted to explore the open world game and said she didn't like how controlling I can be.

“I like doing my own thing, Rain. I don't want or like anyone telling me what to do.”

I understood what was said and began to tell my side of the story. With this certain game I enjoy preparing everything before I actually explore. I now realize from this situation that maybe I can be the problem, my obsessiveness and my need to control my surroundings.

“Tiff, I'm sorry. It's not an excuse but I always feel the need to take the role as leader and help guide everyone. All you could've done was communicate with me.” We continued to talk, lots of emotions zooming around both our minds. After our conversation I've decided to change myself for the better of my friends, family, and most importantly myself. My need to control came from me having no control over my childhood, everything was a mess and it made me feel overwhelmed and scared. I told Tiff this not as an excuse but as an explanation. I promised to better myself and will remember that it's okay to not have control.

ESSAYS

Change

By Christian Anderson

I've seen various changes in my way of thinking, and my mental state, but one huge thing I've noticed is my dedication to being the best me I could ever imagine. With the help from my girlfriend and others in my life, I've taken it upon myself to improve upon myself. While I haven't fully improved in certain aspects of my life, I do feel grateful for all of my current progression. Looking back at how much I've done in these past few months I can't help but to stand in awe, blown away by the person I've become. Before I woke up every morning as a mean person, dreading the day ahead, just looking forward to being able to go back to bed and stay asleep for as long as possible.

Now I wake up every morning in the happiest mood, ready for anything the world might throw at me. I'm the happiest I've probably ever been and am extremely grateful for all of my friends and family that have helped me become the person I am today. If it weren't for them constantly nagging at me to get up and get out there I would still be a sour and mean person, absolutely spreading hate and everything else that comes with it. For this very reason I thank everyone that's motivated me and lifted me up out of the hole I dug for myself. I am nowhere near becoming the person I envision myself to be, but after a long and dreadful pause I've finally decided to take the first step, and venture off into the amazing unknown, glad to be alive and breathing, taking it a day at a time, attempting my very best to improve the world and the people around me, one step at a time.

Different School

By Mauricio Fregozo

My name is Maurico. I'm from Ensenada, Baja California, which is a part of Mexico. But now I live in Desert Hot Springs with my mom, sister, uncle, and my grandmother. My favorite sport is soccer. I like school and I'm trying to do my best. I moved to the United States because my father died and my mother had no family in Mexico. It was difficult for me to come to the United States because it was like making a new life, new friends, a new language, and different food.

School was a big problem for me. I came here only three years ago, I knew a little bit of English. At Desert Hot Springs High School, I liked my English classes but I struggled with history as it was a lot of reading and writing. I needed credits so I came to Edward Wenzlaffe high school. It is better, I get more help. I will work on my grades and my goal is to graduate in June.

Uncaring to Caring

By Fatima Fuentes

Hello my name is Fatima. I was born on October 4th, 2005. I'm seventeen years old. The school I go to is Edward Wenzlaff Alternative Education Center (EWEC) which is a part of the Mount San Jacinto campus. Today I will discuss how I struggled with my classes in Desert Hot Springs High School during Covid.

The problem I faced was attending my classes during Covid. Sometimes the teachers wouldn't help me and the internet wasn't that good. Because it was online, the audio lagged horribly and I wouldn't hear the teacher. So I texted the teacher in private on Zoom, but he never saw my comments. That happened a lot of times so sometimes I wouldn't even waste my time and I just stayed sleeping. So I just didn't care. Sometimes I was like, *I like this because my mom doesn't even know if I'm in the Zoom.* But when I saw my grades, I realized I really needed to get in the Zoom. But I never did. I just got lazy. There was another reason I hated Zoom. I would turn on my microphone to talk but I was shy even though people didn't know who I was in class. So I failed all my classes.

Then I went to Edward Wenzlaff Education Center, a continuation school. My first day of school I was so nervous. I saw a lot of people I was friends with so I felt better. I was also scared about how the teachers were going to treat me. I was happy to see the teachers were nice and actually paid attention to me. The days passed and I was comfortable with school. I started doing more work and asking for help. Also, I noticed I had a better relationship with school because my teachers made me realize school can be fun if you try. I care about my grades now and about myself.

Let It Go

Stephanie Guerrero

My name is Stephanie Guerrero, I'm seventeen years old. I'm funny, sarcastic, and sweet. I love to show the people I care about the most love and affection with many different love

languages. A quote I think about when I'm having a hard time with cutting off people is, "One of the happiest moments in life is when you find the courage to let go of what you can not change" (Anonymous). Even though I love to show my love it makes it hard to let go of the draining people and do what's best for me.

Even though it was hard to let go, I had to remember what my friend had done to me like being super rude to me and I would always let it slide because I thought we were playing around until it was extreme. I had talked about my boundaries with them and they kept disobeying and disrespecting the boundaries I had set with them. Another problem was they kept touching me when I had and kept asking them to stop. Over time I got tired of the constant disrespectful attitudes.

All these problems together helped me decide I was so tired to keep going over boundaries just for them to act the way they wanted too. It helped me realize I can't keep people in my life that even respect me and disregard me. I had to respect myself and had to do what was best for me.

Rocks

By Edward Jimenez

To be reborn is to start a new journey to set a new goal, if I were to be rebirthed I would listen to my parents. I need to focus on school and surround myself with smart people. Making the wrong decisions is what makes me who I am today. If I could change some of those mistakes maybe I'd be a different person?

Some people have beliefs that if you have good karma you'll be reincarnated. If that's true I'd wish to be reincarnated as a rock. Rocks may not be living beings but I'd like to think of the idea of sitting entirely still and embracing everything around you.

New Beginnings

By Elias Lopez

A new beginning for me was when I first came to Edward Wenzlaff Education Center. It was a new beginning for me because it was a chance to start anew and to actually focus on school. It was a fresh start and I had the opportunity to meet new people and to start trying new things. At first I didn't want to come here because I wanted to stay at the high school with some of my other friends. However, I was also excited to come to this school because I honestly did

have a lot of friends who came here. I was nervous because I didn't know what to expect either. I realized though that this was a new chance but in a way it was a last chance as well. I told myself that I would try my best at this school and do everything I can to graduate.

When I first got here I was wondering who I knew that was here and who I could potentially meet. I first saw a lot of my friends and met a couple new people as well. Soon after I would look forward to coming to school everyday because there was always something going on. My first day of coming here was softball practice and I felt confident in trying out for softball. I had never played softball before because I wasn't really a fan of trying out new things and I preferred to stay in my comfort zone. I hated getting things wrong but it felt different at this school. I noticed a lot of my friends who never played softball before were also in the team so I was highly encouraged to join. It was a different experience because it was nothing but support for one another. Practice was always fun because we would mess around and I would always enjoy every moment. I felt comfortable and happy to join the team because it was always fun and we always had good times. I had computer gaming class as an elective and it was crazy fun. I was surprised that there was a class where you get to play games for a grade. I had some friends in that class but most importantly I was just happy I had a class where I could really get to have fun. I was able to start a brand new future here at Edward Wenzlaff. I was able to forget but not completely forget my past. I was at a new place so I was able to try new things as well. I had new opportunities where I could really see what I wanted to do after high school. I had friends to support me and I even had some amazing teachers that would constantly help me out. I'm really happy I came to this school because I was able to do what I wanted to achieve.

Catching Up

By Gabriel Mejia

My name is Gabriel, I was born in Indio. I am the oldest out of my two brothers and two sisters, we all don't live with my mom. My sisters got adopted. My brothers and I live with my mom out here in Desert Hot Springs. My dad has been in prison since I was one, I didn't have a father figure but my mom taught me to be respectful, that's all I need. Today I will tell you my struggle with online classes during COVID. This was my sophomore year of high school. I started to get lazy about getting on my computer, I would sleep in and forget about my work.

After COVID I moved schools and switched to the continuation school. Once I switched

I changed my mindset about school and started to do my work and pass my classes. I started with just fifty credits from my freshman year and I passed all my classes junior year. I wasn't caught up, But I knew I could do it so I never gave up.

Now I'm in my senior year. I'm all caught up with 157 credits and I need 200 to graduate. I am proud of myself and I can't wait to graduate.

Truth and a Lie

By Mista

Yes , this is the reality we fail to see everyday. “Your lives matter,” yet our fight is forgotten after the seven day mark. “I stand with you!” While we fight alone in the muddy waters of judgment and pure disgust towards our natural born beauty. “You’re so mature.” No , blissful ignorance was stripped from us at a young age. Life isn’t meant to be taken as a game, it is and always will be a fight for survival.

“Blood sweat and tears were poured into this!” What blood? There was no sweat to be made for you, everything was given to you. Tears? The tears made after a light rejection? What about our tears, the tears that spill after society as a whole rejects us, not from a job interview, not from a sports team, not from a date. No, we are shunned for our appearance, our skin, our language, our culture. You will never understand our struggle yet you dare try to speak on our behalf only to communicate your own personal opinion.

Do not speak of our struggles, issues, feelings and yet you run your mouth like a broken faucet that is left on until the graveyard of our losses is drowned in your words. But yes, this is our truthful lie.

Overthinking

By Selena Morin

What should I say? That I have anxiety and am overthinking? That due to anxiety I have stomach pain, and that when I have all these two things, the only thing I’d like to do is cry and stay alone? I don't know what to do with it. I’m getting to the point where I need help but I just can’t let anyone know to the point where this feeling is eating me alive. It feels like i'm trapped in my head. It feels so suffocating but I just pretend that nothing's wrong. It's hard and tiring, that pain of being aware of the sorrows of your existence but being unable to do anything about it. Good thing is people think I’m happy...right?

No Longer

By Bryan Ocaranza Mendes

I am Bryan, I am eighteen years old. My problem with life has been facing challenges. My biggest challenge has been finding motivation. I've had multiple setbacks throughout my life and multiple learning experiences and lessons. Various failures in life have set me back. I have been affected and I've affected many others in my life story. I had to realize that my actions were affecting me and others and I had to do something about it.

When I came to realization, I had to separate myself from many people. I realized that If I continued doing the things I was doing such as skipping school, not doing any of my work, and not caring about things that were really important I would never feel the feeling of accomplishing school. Ever since I started caring more about my school I realized how good it felt to get things done. I struggled to find the motivation that was necessary to get things done. Talking to certain people helped me out through that.

I decided to take school seriously because from elementary school through some years of high school I never really took it seriously. I was told that I was a very numb person. That triggered something in my brain to make a change. Ever since I've been doing much better. I'm very proud of myself for getting to where I am now. I am trying much harder than before and that is progress for me. Although not many people see it, I've seen it myself and I'm happy with my progress.

My Journey

By Valeria Ortiz

My name is Valeria. I am from West Los Angeles, born and raised. I wouldn't change that for the Lord. My mental state has always been more mature for my age. I was around chaos and fast people so I had to grow up. Having a brother and an older sister helped me with the instability of my childhood. My escape was school.

I was always good at school. It didn't matter the subject. I've always found a way to get good at something new. I was in honors classes in my elementary school and always got high marks when needed, better than my siblings . We NEVER compared what we had towards each other because we viewed ourselves as equal. My father always compares myself with my sister. I was

the role model. That's when I started struggling with my work going into middle school. I was getting F's and not caring about my school work. I was escaping school with friends.

Going into high school I was already terrible at school lugging around bad habits from middle school. Towards the end of the first semester of 9th grade, I got put into a continuation school to be with my older sister. So even with an eye out on me, I was still not doing what I was supposed to do. Then Covid hit, that was when I was especially hopeless

My mother thought it was a good idea to move to the middle of the desert so we moved to Cathedral City and I went to Mount San Jacinto (MSJ). I was not doing so well at all. New environment and new people are not my scene. There was a problem in the house so we moved out to Desert Hot Springs and I switched schools to Edward Wenzlaff Education Center (EWEC).

I can't put whether it was the teachers or the environment but here I felt good here. I feel good here myself where nobody knows me. Along the way I met some people I'm proud to call my friends. I've reached something that I never thought possible. I got all A's. I was awarded Principal's Honor Roll and I got Most Valuable Player of the girl's basketball team. Moving out here helped me change the environment. I've come a long way and I'm proud of myself.

Finally Will I Be ME

By Ale Ramirez

My name is Alexandra but everyone calls me "Ale". I'm the oldest of four siblings in my family. I was born in Orange County but I was raised in Arizona for about ten years. I have always been a go-getter, someone who never gives up and always wants to better herself. I have always been so determined to reach my goals. I have so many goals yet not achieved but that is just a start for me. Everything I do is to make my grandma proud and make my grandpa proud from heaven. My goal was to make sure my grandpa saw me graduate. He will have a front row seat up in heaven. I'm a big family person. My family means everything to me.

There were many challenges that I had to face and overcome but there was this one challenge that has been holding me back. It is unforgettable. My hardest thing was to let my grandpa go to his final rest without me crying day and night for him. I knew if I didn't stop

crying he was not happy and at peace. I had to stop crying and remember he is not in pain anymore.

When I was going through all of my emotions, I lost myself. I didn't know who I was anymore. I was struggling to find myself again. This was another challenge for me was trying to find myself again and start being me again. I was always wanting to go out and do active things but now I have been wanting to stay home and just be by myself. Like I said before, I was always a family person. I always wanted to do different things at my grandparent's house.

I was always there with them. Now I can't really walk into their house anymore. It makes me feel empty inside. My grandma is still supporting me but I miss my grandpa. I was always making my family laugh, I just wanted to make everyone happy, even if they hurt me in any way, I would still want everyone to be happy.

My solution is to try to find myself. I will start thinking better thoughts and find things that I really want to do or enjoy doing. I want to spend more time with my thoughts instead of letting them wander off. My solution for missing my grandpa. I was thinking about writing to him every time I miss him. Then, I could put the letters in a box and lock it up. When it gets full, I will go to the cemetery and read them to him. I know it takes time. I am willing to do anything to find myself again, and let me be me again.

Watching

By Betzaida Rodriguez

Hello, my name is Betzaida Rodriguez. I was born in Palm Springs. I only have one younger sister and I live in Desert Hot Springs with my mom. I am a student here at Edward Wenzlaff Education Center. I will talk about a time when I faced a challenge. It was hard. I lost three close people within months apart from each other and I couldn't understand why they were taken from me, so many emotions. I felt sad and speechless. I didn't want to believe it and felt drained. I was barely eating and losing weight. I would always lose my appetite, to this day I still am losing my appetite. Family members would tell me that I was getting skinnier and that I looked yellow.

I first lost my uncle due to his bad decisions. When I saw him in his casket it was hard and touching his cold hard hands was even worse. Five months later, I lost my grandpa. I woke

up and got ready for school and that same morning my grandpa passed away. After I got ready and was about to leave to go to school, they asked me if I wanted to go to Sinaloa. I obviously said yes and I started packing my suitcase in five minutes. After I was done we left for San Luis which is like a three to four hour drive from here. Once we got there we had to take a charter bus to Sinaloa. It took us more than a day to get there. When we arrived at my grandpa's house I started breaking down. Seeing his casket just standing there made my heart break. I went up to his casket and saw his face. He was so skinny and he used to be chubby. My grandpa loved all of us. He always had a smile on his face until he got sick. After he got sick he couldn't remember us. He got so skinny and his smile wasn't there anymore. We buried him next to my grandma (his wife). It hurt me a lot losing him but I had told myself to stay strong and to be thankful that he isn't suffering anymore.

Three months later I lost a friend that I've known since we were little kids. His name was Matthew. One day at school my best friend texted me saying Matthew had died. At first I didn't believe her until I saw people posting about him. I started breaking down and couldn't believe it. Matthew and I weren't on good terms when he passed away. To this day I still regret that so much but everyone was telling me that it wasn't my fault. Matthew had gotten into a car crash and seeing the outcome of his car made me cry and gave me goosebumps. He loved racing, doing donuts, and doing crazy stuff in his car. I know he died doing what he loves but it sucks so much that he isn't here anymore with us. One day my best friend and I had time to go to his crash site. There was a cross with his name on it, flowers, candles, and one of his hats. We were sitting on the grass next to his cross and we were listening to music and cracking jokes. Some of Matthew's good close friends came to be with us. Once his friends came, I gave all of them a hug. We were just standing there talking and playing some of his favorite songs. Then Matthew's dad and sister came. I was standing there with everyone and then I started crying so Matthew's sister went up to me and gave me a hug. She was holding me while she was crying as well. Matthew's dad then took me away from her and hugged me as I sobbed. I was screaming while being held by him. I couldn't breathe after crying so much but his dad was just telling me to be strong for him. I can see the pain in Matthew's dad's eyes but he was so strong.

We all finally went home. There was a car meet for Matthew. After his car meet, we went to his crash site and were just there in each other's company. This is what really mattered.

One day, Matthew's close friends and I were at his dad's house eating pizza and playing card games. After we finished eating pizza we went inside to watch a movie. Matthew's room was there and his guitar he would always play was next to his bed but I didn't have the courage to go in his room. We were all in the living room when his dad came around with the hat Matthew last wore. We were all laughing and cheering each other up. When it was Matthew's viewing, it took a lot for me to see him in his casket. Seeing him in his casket really hit me. I couldn't recognize him. His skin was so pale with a lot of makeup, and touching his hard cold hands really made me realize he was gone. The day came where we had to bury him. A lot of people showed up for him. After the burial we went to his aunt's house and ate. I still text his sister and check up on her here and there. Matthew left us a gift which was a baby boy. He didn't know he was having a kid but I know he's watching from heaven and will continue to take care of all of us. Most importantly, he watches over his son and watches him grow. His baby is named after him, Matthew.

Seeing how skinny I was getting made me realize that I needed to take better care of myself. Losing three people showed me how strong I am. It affected my mental health and was messing with my mind. I can now say I am doing better and I'm not as hard on myself as I was before. I don't let my thoughts get to me or let it affect me as much. Everyday I live life to the fullest because anything can happen in a matter of seconds. I will continue to live my life and get better because I know everyone I lost is watching me and giving me strength. It gives comfort that they are in a better place but it still hurts me that I don't get to spend time with them unless it's in a cemetery. I don't want anyone to feel bad for me because I know that I am all right and will get better each day.

Healing Life

By Orianna Ruiz

I'm Orianna Ruiz. I'm 18 years old. I live in Desert Hot Springs but I'm from Victorville. I have a really big family but we've all kinda separated. As we all got older, we let our differences get in between each other. I have nine brothers and one sister. They are my reason for being. I'm very close with my dad and I'm currently working on my relationship with my mom. I just got surgery so it's given me time to think about life. I think being scared to lose my life made me realize how beautiful life really is; the good, the bad and the ugly, I'm grateful for it all.

I've struggled with my mental health since I was a little girl, as I get older the more I realize why mental health is so important. I've struggled with thoughts that never clear my head, depression also comes with anxiety and it's really uncomfortable. Dealing with mental health has a lot of effects on my life. I get easily frustrated feeling restless headaches and I get really shaky. The older I get the more I've struggled with it. It's hard to explain certain feelings and thoughts because it's very emotional to think and talk about. I'm still learning how to deal with it myself.

I've been working on my mental health. I've been doing some healing with my sister. We started talking again so that's been helping me. My brothers and I have been getting really close again. We are all getting older and we all share the same trauma. So it's been helping knowing that we're all growing up and realizing our issues and trying to heal each other the best we could. We have a lot of work to do but they've really been helping me realize my worth. They treat me like a princess and there's nothing I wouldn't do for them. I've had a talk with dad recently and we're gonna start working on some healing between the two of us. My mom and I have been hanging out more and it's hard but I'm trying to step up and look through things and there's just a lot to work on and not everything is going to be better overnight. You have to work for what you want. Life is beautiful. It's hard to see through the bad things but as long as there's effort being put in that's all that matters.

Graduate

Natalia Obregon Valverde

My name is Natalia Obregon Valverde. I am a seventeen year old senior. Currently, the school I attend is the continuation school in Desert Hot Springs. I love to travel and see new places. In this essay I will recount my struggle with online school and how I overcame this challenge.

My main struggle was school online during Covid. School was hard. I would have internet issues. If I'm being honest it was hard to focus and pay attention and do well in my classes. Knowing I was home I felt as if I could do whatever I would like so I would ignore my classes. Well, doing that I had consequences and failed my classes.

Schools reopened and I had to move schools. I left my friends. I knew it was for the best because it was better for my mom but I was upset but I knew it was for the best. A couple of months later I faced another challenge. I stopped going to school and my grades started to drop really fast. But I didn't really put too much interest in it because I was going through a loss of my grandma and not even a month later my great grandma also passed away. It was a really hard time for me and my family. I wasn't in the mindset to be worried about school work I just really shut down. My great grandma's death really hurt me. I was really attached to my great grandma.

After I took some time to myself I went back to school. I tried to explain to the teachers why I was out so long. Some teachers understood but there was one teacher in particular that I tried to explain why. She took the time out of class to talk to me about what I was telling her. She told me that wasn't an excuse. The whole class looked at me. I was so embarrassed, I wanted to start telling her stuff but instead I sat at my desk doing nothing. I wanted to start crying like a little girl who missed their mom. A week later the counselor called me into her office and she told me that I wasn't able to graduate because I was very far behind in credits.

My solution to my setback was to go to continuation school. By the way, it was one of my best decisions I've made so far. The teachers here are the best. I love it here. They actually care about you when you're talking to them. I am proud to say that after all I went through I just got told by the counselor here that I will be able to graduate. I am caught up with my credits. I really thought I wasn't going to be able to graduate but after all my hard work paid off. I just have to get good grades for the last two quarters and I finally graduate in May.

PHOTOGRAPHY By Isaac Ramirez



"The choice is yours"



"A second chance at love."

Namaste



May we meet again

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