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Introduction

The theme of this journal is love and hate. We decided on this theme in order to align with the, "PSUSD Stands Up to Hate" initiative by the Palm Springs Unified School District. This initiative's aim is to combat hate speech and promote inclusivity. Inclusivity is the ultimate expression of LOVE. We are all within this circle.

My Why

By Jacqueline Mantz Rodriguez

Note: Names and identifiers have been changed in this piece.

"Remember, hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies."—Stephen King

As I walked out of the continuation high school, I saw Ophelia in a bright pink sundress, long eyelashes, and dark curly hair standing outside the gates, texting on her phone. I smiled and waved. "Bye, Ophelia. Come to school tomorrow, okay? We need to get you caught up. Finish reading about the First Agreement."

"Hey Miss, thanks for loaning me that book to take home. I'll bring it back, I promise. I know I've been missing lots of school, but I have to take care of my sister. She's sick," Ophelia explained softly.

"What's your sister's name?" I asked.

"Paulina, but we call her Polly." Ophelia smiled, showing me a picture of a young Latina girl around eight years old with a huge smile, big brown eyes, and the same curly hair as Ophelia.

"She has cancer, and my mom takes a lot of time off work, but sometimes she can't get the day off. It's hard making it to first period because I need to help her shower and feed her breakfast."

"Tell Polly she has an amazing family. Just keep talking to me, and you can work with me at lunch if needed. I'll bring those Takis I see you eating all the time," I joked.

"Thanks, Miss," replied Ophelia. "I'll bring some pozole."

"What? You know I live to eat. It's a plan," I said. Ophelia's mom drove up in a gray Honda Civic, and I waved as she got into the car. Polly waved from the back seat, holding a small stuffed animal. I teach because of students like Ophelia. As a teacher, I have the opportunity to help change lives. Just like people helped me.

Poetry

How to Communicate By Kaiden Ankney

When you are upset at your man tenderly talk to him about the problem say what made you upset without talking back and with an attitude

Listen. If not, a red storm appears flying winds of words, crossed arms Leave your hands on your side mouth closed as they speak sit in a straight position eyes focused on them

Come with shoulders down, face relaxed show how caring is listening, listening caring breathe air in and out, listen a flowering peaceful peachy mind

Love N Hate Obsessions By Kaiden Ankney

Like to draw Betty Boop

Obsessed with my red hair

Very in love with my boyfriend

Expensive taste in clothing, but Amazon will do

Nags about folding laundry

Hanging out with my boyfriend, then he leaves, and we argue

Always thinking about my future job, but think I won't become successful in that field

Tired of negative people trying to control me

Excessive work annoys me

.

Ode to the Beach By Kaiden Ankney

I love the beach listening to waves crashing feeling the warm sand my safe space

Running down to the cold water screaming of joy smelling the salty sea feels good running back to the sand hearing Bad Bunny on the speaker the sun hugs me

I lay down
my skin goes crispy
my hunger speaks
I run toward the water
my body cools
I return to her
I play with the sand
picking up seashells for memories
My mom packs up
I smell the salty sea
I walk away
feeling happy and refreshed

Sunset

Kaiden Ankney

Pink purple sunset sun dramatically goes down sitting near trees shaded breeze

Blissful Ignorance

By Zaniah Bougerios

As my mind consumes the knowledge I've now received longs to leave my mind.

Gg's Ode

By Zaniah Bougerios

My heart aches and yearns
when I think of you, my stomach churns
as their engine roars, the only thing left of you is a corpse.

Was it fate, Destinee?

Now you rest heavenly, under layers of earth.

Now my only hope is that you will be rebirthed.

Hadn't you gone so fast, I know we'd have a blast.

Now I'm stuck in the past, wishing it could last.

How to Overcome the Demise

By Zaniah Bougerios

- Step 1: You'll need 2 cups of disbelief and an endless amount of nostalgia
- Step 2: Pre-heat the oven at 400 degrees, and season with spice pain, along with a dash of heavy heart.
- Step 3: After about fifteen minutes, take it out and throw on bitter-sweet sprinkles
- Step 4: Cut into small portions and serve with an ice-cold lemonade, to wash down the lump in your throat.
- Step 5: Finally, reminisce about all the time you spent baking, you've eaten it, and now it's finished. It's now in the past tense; only memories remain.

Recognition of Pure Consciousness By Zaniah Bougerios

A feeling of listlessness and pure consciousness arises from within me.

I recognize the worth within my soul,

a deep, intuitive realization of my inner self beyond just my physical or conscious being. Shock waves move through my body as I see my life switch from playing checkers to chess.

Afraid, because I know no one makes it out of life alive. So what do I do within this stamped time frame? Be afraid? Or live?

Subconsciously, my mind restricts positions and predicaments. Lost within the waves of life that are neverending, trying not to get sucked into the rough currents. I must learn to navigate in this pessimismly world without loading the weapons given to me by society.

The Weapon Of Melanin By Zaniah Bougerios

As the color of my skin becomes a weapon, nonconformists of its power and great danger. As melanin comes and goes, its features remain. As we spend our lives running and fighting for justice and peace, and never-ending war is brought upon us. Guns loaded with hate, and spite, but when we fight the fight brought on us, we are seen as aggressive, dangerous, and a target

As the ones who give us the tools to injustice, once it doesn't work, suddenly we're a threat, and action must be taken. Fighting back won't work; science must be their answer. As Rosa Parks stood

silently and physically against their words of discrimination, against their racist beliefs, and against all odds for black and brown people. I would have thought silence would be the key, However, it just won't work. They aren't completely wrong, we ARE different, we all have different

backgrounds, but that's exactly what makes the euphonious blend of mixed new cultures.

Love N Hate

Josue Corral Moreno

Love is powerful and magical

Originally, it can be good to love

Varies ways to love are used

Every time we love, we become good

Not loving can affect

Hate it's not good

Air feels wrong

Tears start to drop

Everything doesn't feel good with HATE

Hard Haiku

By Josue Corral Moreno

Some things might be hard But they're not impossible So why give up quick?

Ode to my Accordion

By Josue Corral Moreno

Oh, dear accordion, you help me express myself with your notes.

I love learning new songs and just have to have you in my hands,

I hate not being able to play you all the time.

I wish I can make it to a stage with you one day.

You're half of my life, without you I'm nothing and feel empty because I love making music with every button of yours.

You're my favorite in this universe.

I would choose to play you in every life.

.

50%

By Jennifer Davila-Mazariegos

I don't understand much humanity they judge innocent people, men and women judge people who may even be better than one but people can't forgive unfaithful people

Mistreatment, humiliation, abuse and above all addictions but they can't respect or accept or understand men and women who are different who like their own gender or at the same time they don't like their own gender but they are straight

Sometimes there are men and women who are not sure if they like their own gender or at the same time they don't know if they are straight people accept the bad things about humanity but they can't accept that men and women are different

They have to hide what they are above all, what they feel while other people's illusions, they play with feelings only have an adventure because they can't accept that they are 50%.

Antonio's Name By Antonio Dimas

Always has a positive mindset

Never says anything bad about anyone

Thinking of others before himself

Only does his best

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Never gets too mad

Is kind to everyone he can

Overworks to achieve his goals

Dreams big and works hard to get there

Inspires others if possible

Makes everyone accountable for their actions

Always goes for excellence in everything he does

Shows up regardless of the day

Haiku Trees

By Antonio Dimas

Green leaves softly sway

Sunlight dances in the dark

Nature's peaceful scene

Change?

By Fabian Guzman

First one asleep.

Anytime listener.

Brown and proud.

Intermediate student.

Another name.

Never been changed.

Genuinely Myself.

Underrated, ultimate.

Zelous still.

Made to overcome anything.

Another name.

Never going to change.

How to Game

By Fabian Guzman

Turn on the TV, a gate to somewhere new.

Settle in, planting yourself comfortably.

Grab a controller, cause you can't go alone.

Choose your game, each a new experience than the last.

Just press start, and you're ready to begin.

Play it alone and push yourself.

Or gather some friends, sharing your journey.

Mic up, for words hold your might.

Drop in with randoms, encounter new faces.

With titles like these, you're connected like the servers you play on.

Run, jump, duck behind cover.

Save, load, continue, retry.

Each match a memory reprised.

The skill you can always upgrade.

Any day, any age, we can all play.

To game is to breathe the art of play.

Ode to Romelia

By Fabian Guzman

I know my mom is the best mom.

She's as generous as a saint.

Her love is like rain, plentiful drops of affection I can't live without.

If you were to listen, her voice could soothe a day's worth of stress.

Her resilience, her courage, her effortless ways of making me smile.

Oh, Romelia.

My mom, my best friend.

The one who took in a baby you had no relation to.

•

The woman who made three boys' lives so much brighter.

I write for you, for you to know your love wasn't lost on me.

You will see me graduate.

My Music

By Fabian Guzman

Final like a storm.

Abnormality overlooked.

Burning away the silence.

Into yourself.

A tune on repeat.

Next track.

Gaining security.

Unpacking every unknown.

Zenith to be reached.

Maybe new is scary?

Again, that song's on repeat.

Next time, I'll finally listen to you.

Squabble for Scraps

By Fabian Guzman

Towering skyscrapers that puncture clouds.

Like eyes of God judging our streets.

Windows hiding men that watch us squabble for scraps.

Every protest, every march.

Fall upon their ears like a sadistic symphony.

They run our supermarkets, profiting on our hunger.

Pushing their taxes on cart pushers and grocery baggers.

They grow, they expand.

But McMillion won't spare you a quarter of his 27 million.

Not even the lint off his back.

•

People packed into project housing like mice.

Meanwhile, Musk is arranging a trip to his new High-Rise,

Mothers scrounge for nickels and dimes.

While his pie multiplied by a trillion times.

If it's not deductible, his empathy is implausible.

Though I still dream, I still have hope.

We can't proceed with this blatant greed.

No more drops into their buckets.

The economy doesn't fall like rain.

Let profit sit on the back burner, and care for the people again.

Wind in the Desert Haiku

By Fabian Guzman

Sand blown in hot wind

Crowding up my drive back home

Now it's in my shoes.

My Fight for Love

By Jennavecia Hernandez

So when I die, let my dad lower down my coffin.

So he can let me down one last time.

So he can bury me beneath the dirt he dug out of the ground.

So I can finally feel free.

The truth is, I love my dad and always have.

I've fought to be heard by him.

I've fought for his attention.

I've fought so hard for him, I've harmed myself and others in the process.

But when will he fight for me?

When will he pick me up when I'm feeling down, as I did for him?

When will he answer my calls and or texts whenever I need him?

•

When will he listen to me like I did for hours on countless nights when I should've been asleep?

My mom left when I was 12, left him all alone, and who helped him cope?

Me.

Now, when the guy who I consider my first love abused me, who helped me cope?

Me.

I know my dad loves me, and I know he means well,

but when will he show up for me as I have for him?

Now I fight for love from other people.

Other people who don't deserve my love.

Other people who I want to fill in the grave my dad dug before I lie in it.

But in the end, I know he will be the one lowering me down.

Into an even deeper grave than now.

Because the more I fight for love, the more the dirt disappears.

DIY NOISE SCENE

By Isaiah Jimenez

The spot hums with broken amps
Feedback shrieks like a wounded siren
This is where the lesson starts
DIY means no permission needed

The floor, a grave of cheap beer cans

Weed smoke, suffocating the air

Balloons limp from the temporary high that fades fast

Every hit borrowed from tomorrow

The bands. Thirty seconds of war Cranked drums beaten into blastbeats Guitars shredding into pure static Vocals like a wound torn open

•

The pit of violent dances

Kicks and fists of anti

Running blood baptized in sweat

A community of open scars

Cops knock, the power cuts

The night left ringing in your ear

Don't let it own you

Let it teach you

Karnage

By Isaiah Jimenez

Blast beats pound like storms

Stench of death and cheap beer mix

Boots stomp through the filth

The Land, Not So Free

Isaiah Jimenez

You hear our cries from broken families

Our land of freedom and liberty, yet you take away the chance

You see our community grow weaker without those who benefit us

You'll taste the dull flavors of our dishes

The aromas of our culture will echo in memories.

You'll feel the void of our absence

Ice Knocks at Midnight

Isaiah Jimenez

I.C.E. knocks at midnight

Boots heavy like chains

Papers flutter like torn wings

Families split in chaos

His black magic drips like venom

Painting us as strangers

In the land we've paved

•

Our sweat watering fields Our hands building cities

They call us illegal

But how can roots be illegal

When they've grown deep

In this soil and city streets

The big man with an even bigger blade
Cutting memory from the future
A cage around possibility
Yet even in sorrow
Our voices bloom

In September we rise
Hispanic Heritage Month
A drumbeat of ancestors
A chorus of resilience

We carry our abuelas recipes
Our abuelos wisdom
Our culture burning bright
Like the fires on our land

They try to erase us

But we are carved into this land

Etched in resilience

Painted with pride

We are not shadows We are the sun itself

Warming this nation
They say we don't belong to
Yet we remain.

Ode for Norma Isaiah Jimenez

The selfless lady who gave me life your name forever scarred on my skin the messages of love I never responded to

I should have sung those songs for you

I miss the warmth n comfort of ur presence your energy that filled the voids you asked me what my favorite flower was

I now stand at ur funeral
I can't help but keep my eyes on the lone-single sunflower
in perfect bloom among hundreds of other flowers

How to Get Over Guilt Katia Martinez

Step 1: Face yourself
Look in the mirror,
see the heavy shadow under your eyes.
Guilt grows heavier when ignored—
name it,
say aloud what you've done.

Step 2: Listen
Hear the echo of your own apology,
spoken softly but true.

Let silence answer back, reminding you that mistakes are not life sentences.

Step 3: Breathe it out
Smell the air of a fresh morning,
open a window,
let the world remind you
that time still moves,
and you can move with it.

Step 4: Feel release
Lay your hand on your chest,
feel the heartbeat steady,
not broken.
Forgiveness is not a gift from others alone—
it is the soft hand you place
on your own shoulder.

Step 5: Begin again
Walk forward,
light as rain washing streets clean.
Carry the lesson, not the weight.
Guilt fades,
but wisdom stays.

Ode to My Father, Carlos. By Katia Martinez

Oh Carlitos, Mi papi it feels like forever since we last spoke, te extraño mas que nada, like a song, I can't stop humming, like the air, I forget to breathe.

They try to paint you in shadows,
to make you a man I do not recognize.
But, I stand for you,
I saw your sonrisa
I felt your coraje,
I knew you amor, aunque nadie más lo entienda.

I remember your laugh loud like thunder your hugs, warm as the morning sun.

I remember your hands, tired but strong.

Papi, you are flawed, but so am I, I am your reflection in a mirror stubborn and angry, but hurt.

And sometimes I'm angry at you too.

For leaving me alone.

For making me carry this silence.

Now I walk this world without you, your name heavy on my back, like a sin I did not choose.

Your memory burns,

A torch that refuses to go out.

Oh, Carlitos,
though the silence between us is heavy.
You're now just a man I share a last name with.
Third Eye Writings, Volume 7, December 2025

Although the memories are bittersweet, they hurt to keep, para siempre, tu princessa.

Sculpted in Hate By Katia and Mari

You made Me this way a shadow of myself, a monster who hates. I loved once, before you.

You carved pieces out of Me
Until I didn't recognize the face in the mirror.
You planted your thoughts in my head
and called them my own,
You said it was Me.

Me?

It was Me who opened the door,
Me who mistook your poison for love,
Me who stayed when I should have ran.

And now

It is Me who carries the weight,

Me who can't forget,

Me who wishes I'd never met you.

She Speaks in Ash By Katia Martinez

She doesn't beg the night to end, she walks it barefoot, calls it friend. With eyes that cut and silence deep, she learns the cost of what we keep.

They call her too much when she gives, then vanish from the life she lives. She builds from hurt, thread by thread, a palace made of things unsaid.

Her love was armor, bent and bruised, a gift they wanted, then refused.

She fed their storms, then watched them drown, while she stood still, but never down.

No fairy tale, no saving grace, just truth like blood across her face.

A mirror cracked, a voice grown cold, she is the story never told.

A Story To Tell By Katia Martinez

They told me silence was safer,
but all I ever did was suffer.
"Not all women," but 99% of women I know have a story to tell.
Being a teenager and a woman in a cruel world
keeps you in fight mode,
never sure when or if it will happen.

Statistics say most survivors are between 11 and 17, but what about the children younger than that, the ones we forget to count? At five, he took my innocence, something a little girl should never have to lose. Someone meant to protect me became the one who destroyed my safety.

10-31% of rapes happen in the victim's own home.

43% of girls are hurt by someone they know.

80% of assaults are never reported.

One in three women will experience some form of sexual violence in her lifetime.

Nearly one in six boys will too, but they rarely speak,

because silence is taught young.

I fall under those numbers.

A brown girl, a statistic.

Whispered into the margins of reports.

44% of Hispanic women experience sexual violence in their lifetime.

Most of us never see justice.

Only 5 out of every 1,000 perpetrators ever see a day in jail.

The rest go home,

sleep fine,

live normal.

Fuck Them.

Anger is something victims feel,

I was a little girl, who didn't know right from wrong.

But what I did know was anger,

anger at my mom for letting him in

anger at him for even looking at me

anger at myself for staying quiet.

But I was a child,

and children are taught to stay quiet.

To smile, to forgive, to move on.

To act like pain doesn't shape them.

"Llores y te pego" my mom would say, "Eres dramática."

That shit hurt and cut deep.

Now, I am not that little girl anymore.

The one who thought silence meant safety.

Now, I speak softly,

but every word carries the weight of what I survived.

Healing is not loud,

it's the quiet decision to keep living,

to keep loving,

to keep becoming.

I still see her sometimes,

the five-year-old who lost too much, too soon.

I tell her she is safe now,

that her voice was never too small,

and her story,

it's still being written.

Butterfly Mornings & Wildflower Afternoons By Valeria Medina

In my wildflower afternoons, I ponder mortality

All I do is let go

I crave something real and enduring

Life, youth, beauty, and love are all so fleeting

And I can't help but wonder if any of it is worth the pain of letting it go.

I dream of a sweet power

To breathe life back into everything I miss

Like the dry bouquets that drape down my bedroom walls

Given to me by a young man who used to be mine

Or my father's hair, now speckled with gray

How I wish to see it dark again

I think I miss my grandmother's beautiful face the most

•

I never met her young, but I am told that she looked just like me Now, time is running past me, and I can't let her go just yet

But powers aren't real, and nothing endures time's sorrowful passing So for now, I'll be In butterfly mourning

September 1st By Valeria Medina

The eclipse wasn't partial
It blinded our sights
My father's voice, soft and slowly breaking
"Ya murió mi mamá," he said

A night full of sorrow turned into a day full of rain

As if the clouds themselves cried for her, mourned for her

But the sun showed itself eventually

Evaporating tears and shallow puddles

Opinionated, self-assured, and vain
I got my best features from her
The universe consumed her, became her
You can see her in everything beautiful

Think of Them By Valeria Medina

Fall into gracious arms, take a deep breath Inhale soft pine and cedar wood It will bring you to tears

Feel the warmth of their arms

A comfort you've never felt before

A comfort you cannot replicate

When distance interrupts your conversations

Think of them

When resentment interferes with clarity,

Cry in their arms and

Wish a sweet farewell

Think of their smile

A smile that always sets the sun

In your prayers,

Never let them go

Cloudy Beach Day Haiku by Kanielu Omeli

Cloudy waves roll in Seashells hide in damp seaweed

Lifeguard scans the shore

Justice's Border

by Kanielu Omeli

The border remembers the footsteps of those who carried hope in their hands, and stories on their back

They call us "illegal" but we are human and families with love stronger than the borders

We carry papers that decide whether we are welcomed or not, as if humanity can be stamped or denied

Hope travels in the shadows of chains and cages, remembering that not even Alcatraz can hold an alligator forever

The walls cannot hold tomorrow, for we are the voices that rise and the future that refuses to be caged.

Love for the Beach By Kanielu Omeli

Love the scenery of the beaches

Observing the flow of waves

Vegetation hidden deep in the ocean

Every breath feels like a dream

Nature's beauty is like a piece of art

Hate when it's time to leave

Angry waves crash like salty fists of rage

Tides pull me deeper as if im being swallowed

Echoes of waves bring me peace

Ode to my Brother

by Kanielu Omeli

Oh, Brother, how I miss you so much.

Your bright smile that can lighten up any dark room.

Your laugh that made me forget when the world feels upside down.

Your love for snacks instead of a real meal.

The way you would always get snacks when we would go to the store.

Your fresh buzz cut after having long straight hair.

I remember your jokes

The way you would make everyone in the room laugh, no matter the situation.

I think of you everyday.

Tall, smart, funny, responsible.

You were all of those

But most importantly, my brother.

I can't put this loss into words

But I miss you everyday

Love you brother.

Ode to Math

By Michelle Sanchez

Oh, Math

You are like the rain

,

Frustrating like my mother

Serious like Dr. Olvera

Calming like my brother

Simple

When I see you, I light up

When I hear you, I perk up

You smell of old warm gym clothes and ancient back rooms

You taste like pure fresh Mentos

You feel like an awakening slap in the face

Somber Rain

By Michelle Sanchez

Rain, a somber cry

Peaceful, hurtful in a way

Rest in peace, my friend

Homerun

By Edward Silva

I get to the plate.

Plant my feet. Make sure my left foot is aligned with the front of the front plate and my right foot is aligned with the back of the plate. I get a firm grip on the bat. Put my elbow up. Stare the pitcher down.

He gets into place. Puts his foot on the rubber.

He throws the ball. I see it coming closer. It's spinning.

I swing as hard as I can with all my mighty power in me.

The ball goes flying with a fiery flame trail.

The ball is going through the air.

Everyone is looking at it, trying to catch up to it. I'm running.

I am running past 1st base and hit a sharp turn.

٠.

I'm running to 2nd base and see my ball almost go over the fence.

Everyone is cheering. I smell popcorn in the air.

Smell sunflower seeds.

Running past 3rd base, my fastest.

When I step on home, I feel the joy and excitement rushing through my body.

We Are The World

By Edward Silva

They came for me even though I have papers.

My only crime was my skin color.

I left home to find safety, but instead found myself in the back of a van.

They put chains on my hands that had only ever been used for hardworking.

I am more than the papers they demand. I am human.

Fear knocks on the door when they ask for your identification.

Children cry because their parents get taken away.

The truth is, I worked too hard to go back in time.

Do not call me a criminal, when all I have done is provide for my family.

If freedom lives here, then why are we scared to go out? They arrest people with no criminal record. Facilities nationwide have complaints of inhumane and cruel treatment.

We are the world.

Ode to Adrian

By Edward Silva

The memory of you will never fade.

You made me so happy.

You made my childhood.

I simply miss the conversations we had.

When I see you, I think of that promise

you made me to always be there for me.

When I hear you, my heart aches.

U smell like your Dior Sauvage you always had on.

•

We always used to order a happy meal from McDonalds.

When I play Call of Duty, I feel your presence.

The Breeze Haiku

By Katelin Stewart

Underwater, rain

Ocean, rainbow, strawberries

jellyfish, cookies

Ode to Nachos

By Katelin Stewart

Nachos are like cheesy love, soft and soul lovely

melted steamy nacho cheese,

crispy ends, delicious golden corn

When I eat you nachos, my belly feels nice and warm

you make my ears ring

ooey gooey melted cheese meal

like sunshine in a bite

Together Alone

By Katelin Stewart

Long dark nights

Opposites of each other in

Very different ways

Even through the

Nights that are cold

Here I stand with

A special person

Together

Even when things get hard

.

Writings

Of the Sea



By Mari Aleman

My name is Marina, and it means "of the sea". I feel whatever about my name because at least it's not some basic Mexican name. I'm a Pisces, so it's even better. They both have to do with the ocean, and growing up, I wanted to be a mermaid, and I enjoy swimming.

I got my name from mi padrino. I was told it was the name of one of his ex-girlfriends. It's funny to me, and I don't know why, but it just is. My name connects me to my family because mine is Marina, and my padrino's two daughters are Maria and Carina. All of our names end with an "uh" sound.

I have the same name as a famous singer! People love her music. One of many nicknames I had growing up was "Chona" and "Chucky." The nickname "Chona" was given to me by my family, and they got it from a song called *La Chona* by Los Tucanes De Tijuana. The nickname "Chucky" was given to me by my cousin Carina. I'm not sure why she gave me that nickname.

Be Impeccable with your Word By Mari Aleman

Negative words can change a person or the world for the worse. Don Miguel Ruiz says that people who use words negatively sin and spread poison. He tells a story in the book about a girl calling her own friend ugly. "The girl listens, believes she is ugly... That is the spell she is

under" (29). This quote makes me feel like I'm setting myself into a negative mindset when I think negatively about my future or myself in general, and makes me feel like I'll never become a better version of myself, no matter how much I try.

Positive words can cast a positive spell on a person or the world. In the book, Don Miguel Ruiz states, "Then one day someone hooks your attention and, using the word, lets you know that you are not stupid. You believe what the person says and make a new agreement. As a result, you no longer feel or act stupid" (30). This quote makes me feel like I can make new agreements with myself. Being impeccable with your word will help you love yourself, and in turn, you will love the world. For example, "If I love myself, I will express that love in my interactions with you, and then I am being impeccable with the word, because that action will produce a like reaction. If I love you, then you will love me. If I insult you, you will insult me. If I have gratitude for you, you will have gratitude for me. If I'm selfish with you, you will be selfish with me. If I use the word to put a spell on you, you are going to put a spell on me" (32). A moment when someone was impeccable with their word towards me was when Ms. Mantz & Mr. Martinez complimented my poems and told me that I'm a good poet. This made me feel seen & heard without having to say too much or too little.

Always Do Your Best By Alex Barrera

The fourth agreement is, "always do your best." According to Don Miguel Ruiz, doing your best means trying your best because you want to, not only because you need to. Ruiz states on page 79, "Doing your best is taking the action because you love it, not because you're expecting a reward." He also states that your best is inconsistent, but that's okay. On page 75, he says, "Keep in mind that your best is never going to be the same from one minute to the next. Everything is alive and is changing all the time." It's only natural that our best changes over time because everything else in life changes as well. When we try our best, we can't judge ourselves because we know we tried as hard as we could, no matter the outcome.

A time when I did my best was when I performed at the winter showcase here at school last year. I agreed to perform really late, only a week before, which didn't give me much time to practice. Not only did I have to decide what song to play, but I also had to learn how to play the

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whole song on guitar and make sure it sounded good. I tried the best I could, and after picking the song *No One Noticed* by The Marías, I was able to learn to play it on guitar as well as sing along while playing. Once I finally performed the song, I felt really happy because most people enjoyed it. The performance turned out really well because I tried my best.

In comparison, I was not trying my best when I went to Desert Hot Springs High School. Pretty much every day that I went to that school, I would ditch around half of my classes, and in the classes I actually did attend, I would do practically nothing. Not trying at all led to my parents being disappointed in me and also caused me to fail my classes, forcing me to come to C school to get the credits I needed. Ever since then, I have tried my best in almost everything in my life in order to avoid making the same mistakes.

Doing your best in everything you do comes with many benefits. One of the best benefits is that you will live a much happier life. Ruiz states on page 77, "By always doing your best you will break a big spell." Some people may wonder what he means by a spell. The way I interpret it is that the spell is more of a curse. The curse affects you by giving you doubt in yourself and causing you to not try hard enough. When you don't try hard enough, you fail a lot, and if you don't try to overcome that failure, you'll start to see failure as a dead end. When you try your best, you break this curse and start to see that you can do almost anything you want, as long as you try your hardest and put in enough effort. Ruiz said in an interview with Oprah that this is his favorite agreement, and on page 82, he says, "I do my best in everything I do and feel." If Ruiz didn't follow this agreement, he may not have written this book or even become who he is today.

A True Zaniah

By Zaniah Bougerios

Zaniah is the name my dad gave me; my name was initially going to be Jaylie. Zaniah's more me. I'm glad I'm not Jaylie. I don't look like a Jaylie. Zaniah's more firm, more serious Jaylie seems careless and audacious, although I have my careless moments. That's not Zaniah.

As my parents sit in a phone booth divided by glass, which not only divides them but also divides my name. At my dad's house, I'm "Zoom ridda" to him and Zoom to our family. From a commercial I've never even seen. While at my mom's house, I am "Ni" to her, I'm my mom's

closest kid, her favorite kid, and her first. All three, the cause was "here". But to me, in my mind, I'm Zaniah when I think of myself, I think Zaniah, not Ni, Zoomie, or Zoom ridda.

However, I got my middle name, Marie. That was the name that my grandmother and my mom had, and passed down to me. Honestly, Marie is a very common middle name, but the life living behind it is different from any other Marie. The life behind this Marie wants to be a forensic scientist/psychologist, and wants to build a business, my very own lab. For something that she is passionate about. I'm sure all Maries have plans to succeed and go further than my crazy grandmother and my graceful mother.

The Golden Clippers
By Carlos Boyzo



Once upon a time, in the year 2025, there was a barber who had gray, cursed clippers that made him mess up people's hair ever since he started cutting hair. But one day, all of the bad barber's clients got fed up with getting bad haircuts. So the barber became depressed because he wasn't getting any clients at his shop anymore. With no clients, he couldn't pay for rent, so he fell behind on rent. His barbershop also had only one-star reviews.

One day, when he was in the shop, sitting there in sadness, he decided to go for a walk to get fresh air. On that walk, he came across a dark, sinister, and mysterious alley, and something was pulling him towards it. So he decided to walk down the dark alley, and he ended up leaning against a wall, closed his eyes, and started to tear up. Then he heard a glimmering effect. He opened his eyes and saw a small gold fairy hovering right in front of him. He crumbled to the floor in shock, not believing his eyes. Then the fairy asked him, "Why do you look so sad, young man?"

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He remained quiet for a bit, then decided to answer. He said, "It's because my business is going downhill and I'm running out of money. I just don't know what to do."

The fairy responded, "What do you think the root of all your problems is?" The barber replied, "I think it's these gray, cursed clippers that I have. They always make me mess up my clients somehow. Sometimes the guard will pop off, or the lever will close on its own and make me give my clients bald spots, so I don't know what to do." The fairy said, "I think I may have a solution for you and your problems. Close your eyes, young man."

The barber closed his eyes and heard that same glimmering effect from when the fairy appeared. Then—boom!—he opened his eyes, and golden clippers appeared on the floor in front of him. He picked the clippers up and felt a burst of energy rush through his body. He walked back to his barbershop, and a client walked in. He gave him the best haircut he had ever had. From then on, the barber became the best barber the world had seen. He became rich from barbering, and he lived happily ever after.

Free Man

By Carlos Boyzo

The name Carlos means "Free Man." It is also an evolved name from Latin and Portuguese. I got my name from my dad, someone I have a lot of respect and appreciation for. His middle name is Carlos, but his full name is Juan Carlos Boyzo, and that's where my name comes from. I'm glad I got the name Carlos because, although it is common, I believe it is a name of true leaders. My nickname is Barlos. I got that nickname through cutting hair. When I first started cutting, I made my Instagram name "Barlos Blends." I came up with it on a FaceTime call with my cousin while we were brainstorming names. I told him I wanted "Blends" at the end, and he told me I should put "Barlos Blends." Over time, as I started cutting more people, everyone began calling me Barlos. Now that I'm more established, most of my friends and clients call me that.

If I could change my name, I would change it to Michael, after Saint Michael. When I was younger, my parents always told me that Saint Michael would watch over me, and they gave me a small statue of him. Because of that, I would choose the name Michael if I could. I don't

think I would feel any different if I had a different name. The reason is because I have confidence in myself and in my name.

Home

By Charlie

"I just want to go home," I thought to myself as I lay in my bed, encompassed by a familiar yet suffocating surrounding. After a long, dreadful day of overbearing anxiety—so debilitating that it felt as though there were moths in my stomach trying to rip their way through my upper abdomen—and random waves of depression crashing over me like a relentless tsunami, all I wished was to go home. I did not want to be where I currently resided; I wanted to go back to my home, somewhere I felt at peace.

While I may have been at my house—the place where I eat and sleep—I was not at home. I was lying on a bed in a room enclosed by four walls and a roof. I had my phone, my clothes, my TV, my makeup, and my shelves full of craft supplies, but even though my possessions and I were there, it wasn't somewhere I felt I belonged. I wanted to go home—a place I hadn't visited in ages, a place where I once felt safe and free to be my true self.

Home was being at my grandmother's house, when we would stay up late baking cookies and enjoying each other's company; when I would lie on the couch with my dad at night watching our favorite shows, and as I started to doze off, he'd cover me with a blanket, give me a kiss on the forehead, and tell me, "Goodnight, sweetheart. Dad loves you." Home was waking up to the smell of a fresh pot of coffee and eating breakfast with my family at the table, talking about our plans for the day, and laughing at Dad's dumb jokes.

I hadn't been home in years, and I wanted nothing more than to go back, but I was unable to; there's simply no home to go back to. It was destroyed long ago—so terribly that it is nearly impossible to mend it back to what it once was. A small part of me still has hope that maybe one day a miracle will happen, and things can be fixed and possibly go back to the way they used to be.

Although I still hold a shred of hope, I have learned to push that hope to the back of my mind and think more rationally about life. I've learned that it does not matter how much I want things to go back to the way they were. Because no matter how badly you want something, no matter how much you hope and pray, sometimes things are just not meant to be. Sometimes the cards aren't in your favor, and you have to learn to accept that.

I realized that in order to grow and move on with my life—in order for me to be happy again—I have to let go and stop yearning for what once was, because it no longer exists. I cannot wait around for the slight chance of getting my old life back, and I cannot spend the rest of my life sulking over things I simply cannot change.

Instead of living a life full of agony over my past or worrying about what will happen in the future, I need to live life in the moment and focus on the present. And the only way I can do that is to keep reminding myself that "you have to let go to grow."

Don't Make Assumptions By Asod Dorn

Don Miguel Ruiz believes that, "The problem with making assumptions is that we believe they are the truth" (63). Assumptions are like a lethal, emotional poison and it tends to ruin the bonds and relationships of many people. For example, I remember when I was in 9th or 10th I made an assumption about one of my friends spreading a rumor about me and one of my other friends, but once I confronted him about it he told me he didn't even know about the rumor and it turned out someone else with the same name as him started the rumor instead. As a result of me confronting him in the way I did, we stopped being friends entirely.

I feel like Don Miguel Ruiz would've told me not to confront him and to let time take its course because eventually the truth will come out rather it be a person who speaks up about it or God reveals the truth. I also remember back in 9th grade, I found out one of my friends had feelings for me and she made the assumption that I had feelings for her as well because I was extremely nice to her at the time. Once she asked me out I told her I didn't feel the same way and I explained to her that I was just a really nice person and friend and after that conversation ended, I walked away because I felt extremely awkward about the whole situation and we slowly stopped talking to each other entirely.

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A few ways I could work on not making assumptions about people or certain situations could be asking questions and doing research or talking to someone who knows the entire situation. This'll improve communication greatly because you'll be able to communicate about the way you feel about certain situations and voice your opinions on it without making an assumption on it. It'll also have a great impact on communication in relationships due to both people in the relationship actively communicating with each other about something or a certain situation and asking questions instead of assuming the worst.

It'll change the way you view the world because you'll be able to have clear conversations and even better communication about situations. You'd slowly stop making negative assumptions about yourself such as "I can't do this." or "This is too hard, I'll never be good at this." Those assumptions will fade away and be replaced with peaceful thoughts and positive emotions. For example, in the Bible it states in Mark 9:23, "'If you can?' Said Jesus. 'Everything is possible for one who believes." This verse could reflect the mindset of those who don't make assumptions and tend to have a more positive attitude and a more positive view on the world.

Don't Take Anything Personally By Danny Gonzalez

Don't take things personally. Now, why does that matter? According to Don Miguel Ruiz, taking things personally means agreeing or believing what a person has to say about you. For example, a time I took something personal was when my own people didn't invite me to a pizza place in Downtown Palm Springs. How did this affect me? It affected me by making me feel left out and depressed. In this case, Ruiz would suggest not to take it personally, that it's not about me, it's about them, and I'm not at fault. In the book, Ruiz says, "You take it personally because you agree with whatever was said. As soon as you agree, the poison goes through you, and you are trapped in the dream of hell."

I myself have said things that I didn't mean, but have made another feel some type of way. One day, I said something to my mom because she didn't know whether to leave my dad or stay with him. It was an endless cycle of a back-and-forth situation. I was tired, I was over it. I

didn't realize until hours after that I had made her overthink, I had made her question herself. I didn't mean to, but I regretted it. I wish I had just stayed quiet.

Don Miguel Ruiz believes we shouldn't take things personally because most times it's not about us. A person could be having a bad day, in need of a hug, but no one to run to. People's negative comments could be them trying to release that stress, them trying to feel whole again, or them trying to feel human. Taking things personally spreads the negativity; it causes hell in one's mind carried on from another. It causes destruction, but letting the negative comments flow past you instead of taking them in reveals and gives you the opportunity to help that person in need. It keeps the peace and allows you to potentially spread that peace and love, rather than hate and destruction. In the text, Ruiz says, "Humans are addicted to suffering at different levels and to different degrees, and we support each other in maintaining these addictions. Don't take things personally, because by taking things personally, you set yourself up to suffer for nothing.

"I Really Want to Stay at Your House" By Fabian Guzman

One of my favorite songs comes from the video game turned anime *Cyberpunk 2077*. Its title is "I Really Want to Stay at Your House" by Rosa Walton and Hallie Coggins. I chose it because not only was it in my top five on last year's Spotify Wrapped, but every time I listen to it, it brings a wave of emotions. From the synth-pop instrumentals to its melancholic lyrics, I can say with full confidence that this song is easily one of my favorite tracks.

There are three significant reasons why this song resonated with me so deeply. The first is simple: I watched the anime first. The show follows two characters, David and Lucy, a couple who build their chemistry with every episode, growing more intimate as the series goes on. However, the show ends with Lucy being saved by David—who sacrifices himself in the process. What kills me every time is that at the end, as Lucy imagines David on the moon with her, this song plays while the episode fades out. "I Really Want to Stay at Your House" was practically their theme song, playing almost every time they were on screen, which made it stick with me even more.

The second reason is heartbreak. I had a crush on a longtime friend of mine, going back to sixth grade. She had invited me to be her chambelán for her quinceañera. This was at the height of my crush, when I hung on every text she sent. But my expectations were crushed that night. While I hoped to dance with her and maybe even ask her to be my girlfriend, she introduced me to her boyfriend instead. I didn't dance at all that night. When I got home, I felt terrible—and before I knew it, this song was on repeat for a week straight.

Lastly, this song reminds me of a time when I was far away from my family, during one of the scariest periods of my life. I was living with my previous guardian, and we were struggling with rent. Eventually, we got evicted and had to stay in a few motels for about a week—six people and a dog crammed into tiny rooms. To make things worse, my guardian told me every day that I would never be allowed to see my mom again. Why? I still don't know to this day. The Wi-Fi in those rooms was terrible—bad enough that all I could open was Spotify. Once again, the main song I played was "I Really Want to Stay at Your House."

The chorus has a line that echoed in my head every time I heard it: "'Cause I really wanna stay at your house, and hope it all works out." That line made me think of all the time I spent with my mom, and how every time I was at her house, I felt safe.

Be Impeccable with Your Word By David Hanson

In *The Four Agreements*, Don Miguel Ruiz explains four important lessons: be impeccable with your words, Don't Take Anything Personally, Don't Make Assumptions, and Always Do Your Best. These agreements have influenced my life because they helped me realize a new way to think, speak, and exist in the world. They reminded me that I have the power to rewrite the rules I live by. *The Four Agreements* go against many of the agreements we have learned throughout life.

Ruiz says that the power of negative words impacts a person by bringing them down. It belittles their spirit and makes them sad, making them feel like they are not enough. Don Miguel Ruiz states, "By hooking our attention, the word can enter our mind and change a whole belief

for better or worse" (29). Ruiz also tells a story about a daughter whose mother was very mean to her, causing negative thoughts. This shows that words with bad intent can have a lasting effect.

One time I was spoken to negatively was when I was told I wasn't worth it and would amount to nothing. This made me feel uneasy and uncertain of who I really am. Ruiz explains that we are poisoned by such words. On page 37 he says, "Gossip is black magic, and we call it gossip." Gossip is powerful because it puts negative energy into your mind, creating terrible thoughts and untrue images of yourself. I will use this knowledge to be kind with my words and impeccable in how I act toward others.

The power of positive words casts a spell by lifting someone's spirits. This is beneficial because it gives them confidence and uplifts their belief in themselves. As Ruiz says, "When you are impeccable with your words, you feel good, you feel happy, and at peace" (44). One time, I told someone they looked great, and it changed their spirits because they had been told otherwise.

When you are impeccable with your words, you say nice things. Being mindful of how you speak is crucial to making sure you don't say anything out of line or rude. This helps the world by positively impacting peers and strangers alike. It is important to be impeccable so you can help others feel valued. Ruiz says, "If I can be impeccable with my words, why not you?"(45). This shows that if it is possible to be kind, why not just do it?

Davis

By David Hanson

My name is David. I feel neutral about my name because I don't dislike it nor necessarily appreciate it. It was given to me and passed down in my family from my grandpa, uncle, etc. I feel neutral about my name since I don't have any past trauma related to it. My name isn't unique, but it describes me and who I am.

The name *David* means "beloved" in Hebrew, derived from the Hebrew word *dod*. It's a popular name of biblical origin, most famously associated with King David, the second king of Israel. I am David because my mother decided it was best for me.

My middle name, *Kyle*, comes from my uncle Kyle, who lives his life beachside somewhere out in the bay. I like my middle name because it's so stereotypically white, and it's always made into a joke. The name *Kyle* means "narrow strait" or "channel" and comes from the Scottish Gaelic word *caol*. I don't mind the jokes made about my middle name because that's just who I am—and I live by it.

My last name, *Hanson*, has been passed down for generations in my family. The name means "son of Hans," derived from a patronymic tradition in Northern Europe. It originated from Scandinavia and Germany, where "Hans" is a short form of *Johannes*, a version of the Hebrew name *Yochanan*, which means "God is gracious."

Don't Make Assumptions By Jennavecia Hernandez

Don Miguel Ruiz, the author of *The Four Agreements*, states, "The problem with making assumptions is that we believe they are the truth" (63). He means that assumptions aren't true, so we shouldn't believe them. A time I made an assumption was when I assumed my best friend Marina stopped loving me. I started to avoid her and even stopped coming to school. We talked things out after a little while, and I realized she didn't stop loving me—but she did stop trusting me because of one of my actions. Ruiz says, "It is always better to ask questions than to make an assumption, because assumptions set us up for suffering" (65). I assumed she hated me, and I hurt my own feelings more than she ever did.

A time someone made an assumption about me is when my ex thought I was cheating on him when I went to the park with my guy friend. I felt embarrassed because he said something to my guy friend, and I also realized he didn't really trust me, even though he said he did. It changed my relationship not only with my boyfriend but also with my friend and with myself. I thought I was an untrustworthy person and tore myself up over it. I also blocked my friend, so we weren't talking anymore, and my boyfriend at the time stopped trusting me.

You can work on not making assumptions by using clear communication. What I mean by this is asking questions, having deep conversations, or anything that will help bring your mind clarity. Ruiz says, "The day you stop making assumptions you will communicate cleanly and

clearly, free of emotional poison." My boyfriend and I talk about our trust issues a lot and how we aren't going to betray each other. I talked about him in one of my other paragraphs because he left me to talk to his ex, but he called and apologized, which helped me stop assuming things I was thinking. By clearly communicating with me, we repaired our relationship and are continuing to grow.

Always Do Your Best

By Isaiah Jimenez

Miguel Ruiz describes doing your best as not doing too much and not doing too little, but taking action. To do your best means to work hard and put in effort. Your best will never be the same since we live in different scenarios daily. This is backed up on page 76 when Ruiz states, "Everything is alive and changing all the time, so your best will sometimes be high quality, and other times it will not be as good."

A time I've done my best is when I performed live in LA with my band. I gave it my all while playing guitar, and in return, the crowd showed their love for our music. This made me feel very accomplished in my creation. A time I didn't do my best was prior to LA, when we did a show in Riverside. At that show, the bassist and I didn't practice the setlist together, so our time signatures were different. This made me feel less confident and anxious that we wouldn't sound great.

When you always do your best, you are rewarded with freedom from guilt, blame, and self-judgment. You will live productively and feel immense happiness. Always doing your best will help you practice the other agreements by keeping you free from self-harm, since at the end of the day, you tried your best. This is Ruiz's favorite agreement because all the other agreements work only if you try your best, as he writes on page 85: "The first three agreements will only work if you do your best."

Overall, reading *The Four Agreements* has helped me reflect on my negative energy and has motivated me to grow and further my Toltec wisdom.

The Magic of Teamwork

By Aubreyanna Jauregui



Once upon a time, in the land of New York City, where skyscrapers sparkled throughout the whole city, there lived a witch, some villagers, and one queen named Chelsea. She was brave, clever, and beautiful. Every day, the villagers picked magical flowers and gave them to the queen so she could stay beautiful and have her magical powers—until one day, something changed.

The morning started like any other, but then the air shimmered, and a broomstick zipped through the air—the witch appeared. All the villagers yelled, "The witch is coming!" Everyone panicked and tried to hide the queen and the magical flowers in the underground cave. But the witch used her magical wand and found the villagers, the queen, and the flowers. Soon, the magic began to fade when the queen and the flowers were gone, so the villagers knew they had to get them back.

The problem grew worse when they realized they didn't know where to find the witch. Still, they refused to give up, because if they did, the village would rot away, and everyone would die. After hours of searching the big city, they searched through a big forest. They looked up and saw a big castle glowing on a distant hill full of rocks and bricks. With bravery and hope, they decided to fight the witch with all their might and rescue Queen Chelsea from her cage. The queen used her powers to freeze the witch, trapped her in a big wishing well, and used the wand

she had stolen from the witch to turn her into a frog. When they returned to the village, everything lit up again.

"We did it!" shouted everyone in the village as the world around them shimmered with golden light—proof that magic still lived in their hearts. From that day on, they remembered never to give up on something good. The adventure taught them that the queen was valuable and should never be taken for granted. Sometimes, the greatest magic of all is teamwork.

Natural Ruler By Aubreyanna Jauregui

My name is Aubreyanna, and it means "grace" or "natural ruler with a strong sense of self." My name comes from old German roots and is popular in German and English cultures. A memory connected to my name was when my mom told me I was named after a singer named *Aubryanna*, but she added the "e" and also added "anna" because her mom's middle name is Anna. She wanted to include something from her mom's name and my dad's mom's name. My middle name is Mayte, which was my dad's mom's nickname—her real name is Maria. I was surprised when they told me this because I thought my mom had just come up with the name or seen it somewhere.

I like my name because it sounds unique, and no one else really has it. It's a mix of two names, "Aubrey" and "Anna." I also like it because my mom knew what she wanted, and it's not as bad as some other names she could've picked! Another reason I like my name is that it comes from my family and has meaning—it's not just a random name like some people have. I also like that it has a built-in nickname, *Aubrey*, which is shorter and easier to say than my full name. Overall, my name is unique and creative, and I thank my mom for that.

A Gift From God By Jazlene Leticia Gutierrez



My name is Jazlene, and it means "a gift from God." I feel proud of my name because it's a beautiful name. One memory I have about my name is when I found out that my mom got my name from my cousin. My name connects me to my family and culture because it's a Mexican name.

Sometimes I wish I could be named after my mom. Her name is Priscilla; she has such a beautiful name. My last name is Gutierrez. I got it from my dad, but since my parents got married, I got it from both my mom and dad. My middle name is Leticia. I got it from my mom, so my whole name is Jazlene Leticia Gutierrez. But sometimes I wish my name could be Priscilla Gutierrez Letica. Sometimes I get called *Jazzy* by my family, and I really like that name because it's short and cute—that's why I love it.

If I ever have kids, I would name my daughter Priscilla, since I couldn't have that name myself. If I ever have a boy, I would name him Juan, which is my dad's name. My dad's name is part of my Mexican culture, and I love my last name, which is Gutierrez. I just feel like it's a really nice last name and represents my Mexican culture.

Two Elements

By Danielle Lopez

My name means "God is my judge." It originated in the Middle Ages as a French variant of Daniel. The name comes from the Hebrew name *Daniyyel*, which combines two elements. I got my name from my dad—his idea was to name me Danielle since my first older brother was named Daniel.

My nicknames are DeeDee and Day-Day. My dad calls me Day-Day, and my family members call me DeeDee. If I could change my name to anything, I'd probably change it to Diane because it sounds pretty. But even if I gave myself a new name, it wouldn't change who I am—I'd still be the same person I am now.

My name has never gotten me into any kind of trouble, but it did because a few arguments between my mom and my dad's mom. My dad's mom wanted my mom to name me Daniela, but my mom refused and still chose Danielle with my dad because they both liked the name and how it matched my older brother's name, Daniel. Whenever my mom and dad visited my dad's mom, she would always say "Daniela" on purpose in front of them. My parents corrected her over and over until they both became so frustrated that they refused to visit her for any family events or holidays. It stayed that way for a long time because I never once met my dad's mom.

The Ghost of Greed By Danielle Lopez



Once upon the year 2025, in Cabazon, California, in a small apartment building, a grandmother lived by herself. Every evening, Grandmother Nina would sit in her favorite yellow rocking chair by the window and watch her reality TV show.

One night, as the moon rose high, she began to feel sleepy and drifted to sleep, sitting in her favorite yellow rocking chair while her window was still open. Suddenly, a soft flutter echoed through the window, and a black crow flew through the open window. The crow's feathers shimmered against the moonlight. The black crow held a big, colorful, shiny seed in its beak. The crow flew over to an empty flower pot that had soil. The black crow dropped the colorful, big seed into the pot before flying out the window.

The next morning, Grandmother Nina stirred awake. She was shocked to wake that she was no longer in her apartment. She was in what looked like a garden—not just any garden—delicious food and desserts on plates attached to the vines, thriving everywhere she looked. She whispered to herself, "Holy moly!"

But just as she was about to get off her favorite yellow rocking chair, once again the black crow appeared. The bird looked panicked, flying in circles above her, trying to warn Grandmother Nina of some sort of danger. Unfortunately, she didn't understand the black crow's cawing. Instead, she stood up, walked over to one of the vines, grabbed a fistful of apple pie, and stuffed it into her mouth. She continued to feast and feast. While she did, she paid no attention to the black crow, still trying to warn her.

Suddenly, the magic faded away, and the food and desserts started to disintegrate slowly. Once it did, Grandmother Nina watched her life crumble around her. Previously, never-ending food sources turned to dust. She immediately looked up at the black crow, which had stopped cawing and flying in circles above her head. Grandmother Nina sounded heartbroken when she said, "What happened to my food?"

The black crow slowly retreated away from the sudden disappearance of her food source. The black crow flew off and left Grandmother Nina to deal with the results of her greed, which led to her demise. Her growing love for food had blinded her to just how much she was taking for granted.

Grandmother Nina's family was notified of her disappearance, leading them to investigate. Upon their arrival at Grandmother Nina's home, there were no signs of her other than the family exploring her home and the surrounding area as best as they could, but they did not find anything useful.

Grandmother Nina was trapped in her own home, turned into a ghost as a result of her greedy behavior. She had to find a way to communicate with her family and tell them that she was okay. However, no matter how hard she tried, she could never reach her family members, since she was the ghost of greed.

Like Love By Lucero

The power of words is a huge matter; words do hurt as deeply as a sharp blade. They can cause some people to take their lives. Words of kindness very much matter—they always matter—as well as your actions, which always speak louder than your words. In order to receive kindness and respect, you must give it first.

One time, I had someone who disrespected me by harassing me at the bus stop because I am a girl. They acted like they had never seen one ever in their life, which was a bad time for me, and they wouldn't leave me alone. They just kept continuing to bother me over and over again until I got on a different bus and never saw that dirty man again.

I am impeccable with my words by always staying truthful to my word, as never being impeccable with my word is harmful. Don Miguel Ruiz stated, "When you are impeccable with your words, you feel happy and at peace" (44).

Like love, for example, love is expressed through words and acts of kindness. It's almost as amazing as they say—you keep falling in love with someone over and over again in a positive way. As Don Miguel Ruiz stated, "Use your words to share your love" (44). This shows how amazing words are when used to show love and kindness, without expecting anything in return.

Honorable Crowning By Valeria Medina



My name is Valeria Estefania Medina. My first name means "strong" and "healthy." It comes from the Latin name *Valerius*, derived from the Latin word *valere*, meaning "to be strong" or "to be healthy." My parents named me Valeria because they thought it was a pretty name. I think it sounds a lot like the word "valor," which means value in Spanish—or in English, bravery.

I go by many nicknames, commonly the classic "Val" from friends, teachers, and even strangers. I prefer to go by "Vale," but people who don't speak Spanish struggle to pronounce it; they say it like *pale*, which sounds ugly compared to the simple *val-eh*. Most sweetly, my name becomes "Valerie" to my siblings, as if they can never erase the memory of their baby sister from my face. I can't stand being called that by anyone but them. And finally, there's a simple "Va" from my mom, who seems to regret naming her youngest daughters Vannessa and Valeria—after

mixing up our names so often, she shortened it to something simple and always right. I love my name, and I wouldn't change it.

My middle name is Estefania, meaning "crown" or "garland." It's a Spanish feminine name derived from the Greek name *Stephanos*, associated with royalty, honor, and victory. My mother named me Estefania after one of her uncles, whom I've never met. I love my middle name; I think it's very feminine and soft. It sounds so pretty with my first name, and I love that it's uncommon. It's hard to pronounce—it feels like a mouthful, like you can't get too close to me without effort and practice.

Valeria Estefania Medina. I resonate with my name wholly. I was named by my mother, who didn't know what the names meant literally, but I now take them as a prophecy—to be healthy, brave, and full of honor. My last name was passed down from my dad's dad, the most incredible man I've ever met. A name of Arabic-Spanish origin with a deep history—a name that makes me wonder where I came from and who came before me.

Bob the Builder By Eric Mendoza

My name is Eric, and it means "eternal ruler." It originates from the Old Norse name *Eirikr*. I like my name because my dad picked it out and really put a lot of thought into it. When he named me, he felt proud of it—and I like that. The only thing I don't like is that it's hard to do my signature with the "E" in my name.

A memory connected to my name is that my parents were originally going to name me Roberto. But after thinking about it, they decided that name didn't really fit me. So they started brainstorming and came up with *Eric*, and it just stuck.

My name might have affected how people see me, but I've never had a problem with it. My friends actually gave me the nickname "Bob the Builder" because whenever they had a broken bike, a messed-up scooter, or anything that needed to be fixed or built, I always knew how to handle it. That made me the "smartest" person in my group, and they'd always call me whenever something needed fixing—shouting, "Bob the Builder!" Growing up, I also had a

friend named Eric who shared my name. They used to call me "Eric Number 2" and him "Eric Number 1" because he was a year older than me at the time.

The Quest to Teach a Lesson

By Eric Mendoza

Once upon a time in the year 2025, there was a kid who loved to eat. He and his friend Billy went to steal some food from a grocery store. They ran in, grabbed what they could, and ran out. The security guard had always wanted to catch them and teach them a lesson about never stealing again, and he made it his mission to find out where they lived.

On his way to check the security cameras, he was met by a magical griffin. The griffin gave him a choice: Go on a quest to find the kids and teach them a lesson about stealing, and in return he would receive all the money in the world. The security guard accepted the quest and continued to the back room to check the cameras. On the footage, he saw that one of the kids had a phone with his home address on the screen. The security guard looked up the address and saw that the kid lived just five minutes away.

After his shift ended, he drove to the kid's house. He knocked on the door, and the kid's dad answered. The security guard explained that the boy had been stealing food from the market. The dad became very angry and scolded his son so much that the boy apologized to the security guard. The guard also learned where the other kid lived because the first boy told him, and that kid got into even more trouble.

The kids later split the cost of everything they had stolen and paid it back from their savings. The magic griffin kept its word and granted the security guard his wish, but the guard saved the money and continued working at the store. He soon saw the kids come in regularly and actually buy their food this time. Over time, a friendship formed between the security guard and the two boys. From then on, the guard was happy, and the kids never stole again. The moral of the story: Don't be stealing.

Flowering Name By Lili Pinedo



My name is Liliana. I got this name because when my sister heard they were going to have a baby sister, they got so excited that they wanted to name me. They begged my parents to let them name me, but my parents already had a name in mind. The day of my birth finally came, and my sisters were so excited to finally meet me. And when they went to visit me at the hospital, my parents told them my name was Liliana Vanessa.

My parents named me Vanessa just because they liked it. My family always calls me Vanessa or Vane, which is short for Vanessa, while in more professional places, I go by my first name, Liliana. I don't really like the name Liliana since I associate it with more serious and professional occasions.

My friends know me as Lili because they call me that because they know I don't really like Liliana, and they told me I look like a Lili, so I have just loved it ever since. It is also my favorite name to be called because it suits me the best, and my favorite flowers are lilies. I have a nickname that I used to be called a lot as a kid, and that nickname was Bolita, which translates to little ball in Spanish. My family called me this because I was very chubby and because I looked like my grandma, and my grandma's nickname was Bola, so they named me after her. But now no one else calls me that but my grandma, since I'm also her goddaughter.

Carrying Pieces

By Danielle Perez



My name is Danielle, and it means "God is my judge." I never knew this until I looked it up. I was shocked because I never knew the meaning behind my name. I only found out because I did some research, and finding out the meaning behind my name made me genuinely like it.

I feel pretty good about my name because of the meaning it has behind it and the way it connects to my family. My name connects to my family because of my middle name. I got my middle name, "Marie," after my aunt. I'm not the biggest fan of my aunt, but I do love her, and I'm glad to carry a piece of her.

One story I have about my name would probably be when my mom told me how I was supposed to be a boy and named Daniel, but around her eight-month check-up, she found out she was having a girl and changed my name to Danielle. I got the nickname "Ladybug" from my grandma and grandpa, and ever since then, it's stuck.

A Pibble of Truth

By Ruby Pio



Once upon a time in the year 2025, there was a teenage girl named Ruby. Now, Ruby is not one to steal, but she seemed to have gotten herself into quite the situation for it.

"I know you're the one who took it!" yelled Ruby's mother.

"What's going on?" questioned her father.

"Ruby stole twenty dollars from my purse."

"No, I didn't!" shouted Ruby.

"Then how do you explain yourself?" her mother said.

"I...I don't know," Ruby stuttered. She really didn't know who took the money; she just knew it wasn't her. She was lost in her thoughts until her mother interrupted, "You're grounded until further notice." Ruby stopped cold and looked at her mom. "What?" she said. Her father responded, "It's what you deserve." Ruby quietly took herself to her room, saddened by the events that had occurred. She slowly drifted off to sleep in her bed, lost in thought about the next day. Her alarm woke her with a startle. She got up and got ready for the day. She arrived at school and, with each step, she walked toward her boyfriend Vincent excitedly. With his hands behind his back, he greeted her.

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"What's behind your back?" Ruby questioned. Suddenly, with a swift movement, he moved his hands to show her. In his hands was a fluffy, chubby, white puppy with the most adorable eyes Ruby had ever seen. She squealed in excitement and hugged him once more.

"I got you your very own Pibble to keep you company," Vincent said.

"Thank you so much!" said Ruby, her smile growing with each word. She took the Pibble from his arms and continued the school day as usual. When she got home, she fed the Pibble and gave him water. The puppy was very fond of Ruby. Later that night, Ruby got tucked in with the Pibble, making sure he was nice and cozy. While asleep, the Pibble had a dream—more like a vision. By touching Ruby's skin, he was able to envision her memories from the day before: how she got wrongfully accused of stealing the money and how she got grounded. The Pibble knew this was wrong and felt a sense of justice building inside. He rolled off the bed and landed on his paws, determined to use his new power to find the truth. He walked around gently, exploring the house with his paws, when he saw Midnight, the Doberman—her parents' dog. With the gentle touch of his paw, the Pibble saw Midnight reaching into Ruby's mom's purse and grabbing the twenty-dollar bill with her sharp teeth, only to chew it up! With a quiet gasp, now knowing the truth, the Pibble returned to bed with Ruby and fell asleep, waiting for the sun to rise so he could reveal the truth.

"Good morning," said Ruby, greeting her parents, the Pibble's tiny, fluffy figure following closely behind her. Suddenly, the Pibble crawled onto the table between Ruby and her parents, putting his paws in the air. Confused, her parents questioned what was going on. Suddenly, a vision as large as a TV appeared, showing Midnight stealing the twenty-dollar bill. Everyone saw it. Ruby's parents gasped and apologized quickly, officially ungrounding her! She knew the rest of her day was going to be amazing. Ruby scooped up the Pibble in her arms, gently squeezing him in a hug as he licked the side of her cheek playfully.

"I love you, Pibble," she said, smiling, and they all lived happily ever after!



Red Gem
By Ruby Pio



My name is Ruby Marie Pio. My first name comes from the beautiful red gem, the ruby. This jewel is known to be symbolic of passion, protection, and prosperity. It has been valued greatly since ancient times. The name was made up from the Latin word *ruber*, which means red. My middle name derives from my mother's middle name, which is the same as mine, and my last name comes from my father's family, which is Finnish.

My first name has many variations in spelling, such as Ruby, Rubie, and Rubee. I am fond of my name. I think it suits me very well and is special to me. It's also particularly pretty to me because my favorite color is red, like the beautifully unique jewel. A specific recollection I have connected with my name, Ruby, is the memory of me when I was young, competing at taekwondo tournaments and hearing my mom cheer for me on the sidelines and yell my name, "Ruby!" Hearing her makes me feel very encouraged and loved.

A nickname that I value as much as my regular name is Rubio. It was given to me by the staff at an eating disorder clinic I attended for a long time. It's very special to me because they were the first people to give me a nickname—and also the only ones who called me it.

My name is also connected to my family through my middle and last names. My middle name is my mother's and grandmother's middle name, and my last name comes from my Finnish family. Overall, I am very grateful for my name and the uniqueness it gives me. I can't imagine myself being named something else, because Ruby has a nice ring to it.

Don't Take Things Personally By Lindsay Rico

In the book *The Four Agreements*, Ruiz says, "You take it personally because you agree with whatever was said. As soon as you agree, the poison goes through you, and you are trapped in a dream of hell." To take things personally is called personal importance (page 48). A time I took something personally was when I was having a discussion with someone, and they told me that I never take anything they say seriously. That made me feel emotional because the person who told me that was someone whose feelings I really validate, and I didn't want them to assume that I don't care. Ruiz would suggest that I should not take it personally. On page 51, Ruiz says, "Others are going to have their own opinion according to their belief system, so nothing they think about me is really about me, but it is about them."

When I was younger, I used to tell my younger brother that our mom didn't love him as much as she loved me. I remember he was crying and so upset. I used to tell him that because I wasn't the youngest sibling anymore and was jealous that he was and got more attention than me. Ruiz says, on page 58, "Your anger, jealousy, and envy will disappear, and even your sadness will simply disappear if you don't take things personally." I know our mom loved us both equally, but I was simply taking my mom's actions toward my brother personally.

Ruiz believes that we should never take things personally because it's a negative mindset for ourselves. On page 56, Ruiz stated, "Don't take anything personally because by taking things personally you set yourself up to suffer for nothing." Taking things personally doesn't satisfy you

or anyone. When you stop taking things personally, you don't give your trust to other people and what they have to say about you.

Always Do Your Best By Jesus Rivera-Aragon

One time I did my best was when I first came to this school. It made me feel like I actually had a chance to graduate. One time I didn't do my best was during freshman and sophomore years. I didn't care and it made me feel lazy because I wasn't doing anything. As Don Miguel Ruiz says, "Everything is alive and changing all the time, so your best will sometimes be high quality" (76).

The benefits of always doing your best are that you can accomplish more and improve at things. Doing your best could also help me practice the other agreements by encouraging me to apply them consistently. It's favorable because it pushes people to not just do better, but to do their best. "When you do your best, you don't give the judge the opportunity to find you guilty or to blame you" (80).

According to Ruiz, "Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you're healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance, simply do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret" (76). Some people can't do the same best as yesterday. Today's best could be better or worse, depending on stress, fatigue, or how you're feeling. "Always do your best to keep these agreements, and soon it will be easy for you" (91).

I learned that by following the agreements, I can become a better person, a better version of myself. I also learned that it doesn't just affect me—it affects the people around me too. Following these agreements will make me a better person and help me feel more joy, happiness, and energy. These agreements can change a lot of people's lives for the better.

Always Do Your Best

By Leyonna Singleton

According to Don Miguel Ruiz, doing your best means not giving up on yourself when things get tough. Being sick or sad is not an excuse to give up on yourself or to judge yourself. Of course, you won't be as athletic as you were before your injury, but does that mean you are now unable to be as good as you were? Obstacles are not forever. Another way to do your best is to practice activities and hobbies that you love and enjoy what you do each day. If you are doing something knowing it's not what you want to do, you're hurting yourself. "They work so hard all week, suffering the work, suffering the action, not because they like to, but because they feel they have to" (79).

A time I did my best was when I came to this school and got A's in all my classes. I usually just forget about my work, don't do it, and go to sleep after rehearsals, but now, since I'm doing my work in class, it's easier. Though it's easier, I wish I could go to my school, yet I can't. I feel happy but sad at the same time. I worked so hard so I could go back, just to be told I can't. A time I didn't do my best was when I got mad at myself for not automatically being good at Tarot reading. "But if you do less than your best, you subject yourself to frustrations, self-judgment, guilt, and regret" (77). I was upset that the meaning of the reading didn't click with me, and I felt hopeless. However, I try to practice as much as I can so that I will improve my Tarot knowledge.

In your life, once you begin to always do your best, you will start to realize you're no longer tired, drawing and "just waiting for it to end." You start to love your life, your job, and everything you used to hate about yourself. By doing your best, you're automatically practicing the other three agreements. For example, when taking something personally, you absorb all the negative energy you have in that moment and how you're sad or mad, and can only think of what you took personally. It is impossible to be happy with your life while also using black magic on others. This is Ruiz's favorite agreement because he states in the book, "When you practice giving love to every part of your body, you plant seeds of love in your mind, and when they grow, you love, honor, and respect your body immensely" (87).

Overall, reading *The Four Agreements* has helped me catch myself before I fall. It has taught me to love myself more and not stress over unnecessary things and drama, especially if I'm the only one thinking about it.

Be Impeccable with Your Word By Andrew Souza

The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz is a book about how to live life. The first agreement is about being impeccable with your words and understanding the weight they carry. The harmful words we use can unknowingly spread curses, leading to insecurities and deeper wounds than what someone on the outside might see. For example, the words you hear growing up can alter your perspective of reality and how you view yourself. A brief thought pattern can grow into a deep-seated insecurity that follows you your entire life. In this chapter, Don Miguel Ruiz gives two examples of the negativity we can spread with just our words: Hitler and a loving mother. While one knowingly chose to spread curses, the other did so unknowingly, not realizing the impact her words would have on her daughter for the rest of her life. Hitler used this "black magic" to persuade the masses into a deeper level of hate, transforming their reality into hell.

An example of negative word use is Adolf Hitler. He exploited the rising hate in Germany to further his own goals and shape the hell he was living in. This led to the Holocaust and countless years of suffering that still stain Germany. This example is unnerving to me because *The Four Agreements* explains our mind as a fertile garden that can grow whatever we plant in it. If we unknowingly plant hate in that garden, it will grow and prosper until we decide we no longer need it.

Another example is that of a loving mother who unknowingly cursed her own daughter. On page 37, Ruiz tells the story of a mother who came home from work exhausted and with a headache, unable to tolerate her daughter's singing. Her daughter was in her paradise, yet the mother's words acted as a curse that followed her for life: "This little girl grew up, and even though she had a beautiful voice, she never sang again. She developed a whole complex from one spell (35)." The scariest part of this agreement is that a single moment of misused words can follow a person for the rest of their life.

A personal example for me involves trying to support others wherever I can, using words that might make their lives better. Someone I knew was struggling deeply, trapped in their own hell. I would call and try to aid them, even when it was uncomfortable. Eventually, it seemed to pay off. I watched them grow into a better person, leaving the hell they were trapped in by having someone to talk to and listen. This also gave me the confidence to ask for help when I needed it.

While words can be used to spread hell and drag people down, they can also raise people up and break long-standing curses. The key part of this agreement is recognizing that we can make our own—and others'—reality either a living hell or a paradise. A personal example of this in my life is when I was met with love and acceptance, instead of anger and resentment. This allowed me to continue on the right path instead of spiraling deeper into my own hell. It helped distance me from the curses I was under and gave me a version of paradise that I hold very dear.

Don't Make Assumptions By Brandon Valenzuela

Ruiz believes making assumptions creates problems within our lives, showing examples in the book like how Ruiz writes, "We make an assumption, we misunderstand, we take it personally, and we end up creating a whole big drama for nothing" (64). One time I made an assumption about someone was when I lost someone talking about me. So I started to say many negative things to him. I later found out that they were talking about someone else. I felt so dumb and wanted to say my bad to them. The outcome was I was wrong, and I should know what people are saying before making assumptions. Ruiz would suggest I just don't take it personally and walk away.

A time someone made an assumption about me was when a kid thought I was messing with him, but I was talking with my friends. He said things that I didn't like, so I started to say things back to him. It made me mad because he made an assumption about me that was not true. I stopped talking to him, and now he just looks at me. One way I can stop making assumptions is by just managing my own business. It will improve my communication skills by showing me that not everything is about me and making me a better person. Ruiz writes, "If we communicate in

this way, our word becomes impeccable." This means to me that our words have a big impact on others.

Don't Make Assumptions By Carlin Velazquez

Ruiz believes that making assumptions creates problems because, "All the sadness and drama you have lived in your life was rooted from making assumptions and taking things personally" (64). A time I made an assumption was when I thought my boyfriend was ignoring me, but really he was just doing his chores. Since I made that assumption, I was upset, and it caused me to have a bad mood with my family. Ruiz suggests, "The whole war of control between humans is about making assumptions and taking things personally" (64).

A time someone made an assumption about me was when I was told I wouldn't graduate high school. At the time, this made me feel like it was true, but since I transferred schools, I realized that it is possible for me to graduate. It changed my relationship with this person because it changed the way I viewed them and showed me how they viewed me.

One way I can work on not making assumptions in my life is by asking questions and, "Make sure the communication is clear" (72). This can improve communication because, "There would be no violence and no misunderstanding" (73). Clear communication in your relationships, "Will change completely, and your relationship will no longer suffer from conflicts created by mistaken assumptions" (72). Having clear communication in your relationships will help your relationships improve.

Photography

Bottled Love's Flight

By Daryadna Alcantar and Saul Jimenez-Martinez



Hand to Heart By Kenneth Duran



Love's Shadow By David Hanson



Art

Monstrous Energy

By Alexander Barrera



Pinch of Love By Carlos Boyzo



Monstrous Hate
By Leah Baumann



Stay Woke

By Alex Carillo



Love By Meleny Cortez



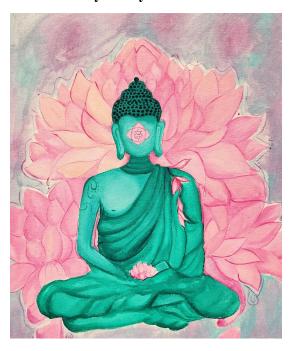
Love's Promise By Jennifer Davila



Moon's Purr By Jennifer Davila



Love By Avery De Leon

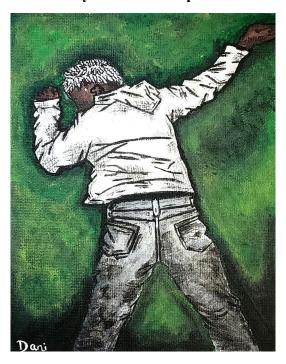


Butterfly Ride By Julian DeSosa



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Love
By Daniela Enriquez



Love By Daniela Enriquez



Hate By Heavenly Garcia



Love By Marco Garcia



Love By Diana Gastelum



Love By Seth Hovey



Locks of Love By Joseph J.



Colors of Love By Saul Jimenez



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Sweet Love By Mariah Maldonado



Love's Fist By Mari



Culture's Face
By Fernanda Morales



Dark Inner Eye
By Fernanda Morales



Ancient Pyramids

By Josue Moreno Corral



Love By Nedel Obeso



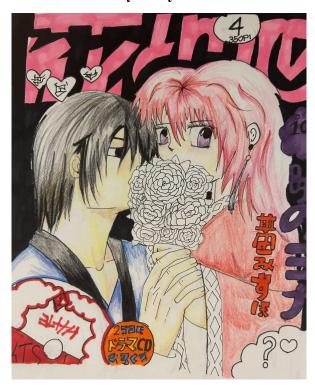
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Purple Heart

By Anthony Palacio



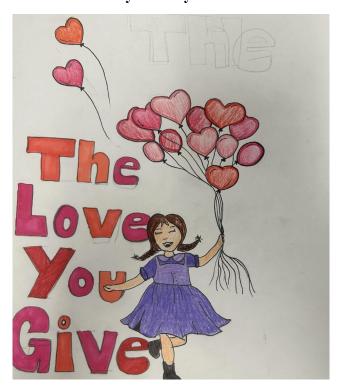
Hidden Love By Ruby Pio



Pop of Love By Lili Pineda



The Love You Give
By Lindsey Rico



Echoes of the Heart By Mario Rivera



Love By Zoe Sanchez



Equality
By Ricardo Torres



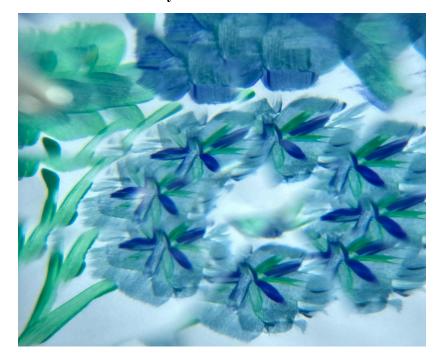
Muah By Stephanie Walcott



Toltec Warrior Princess By Stephanie Walcott



Flowering Greens and Blues
By Michelle Woods



Love's Inner Eye By Michelle Woods

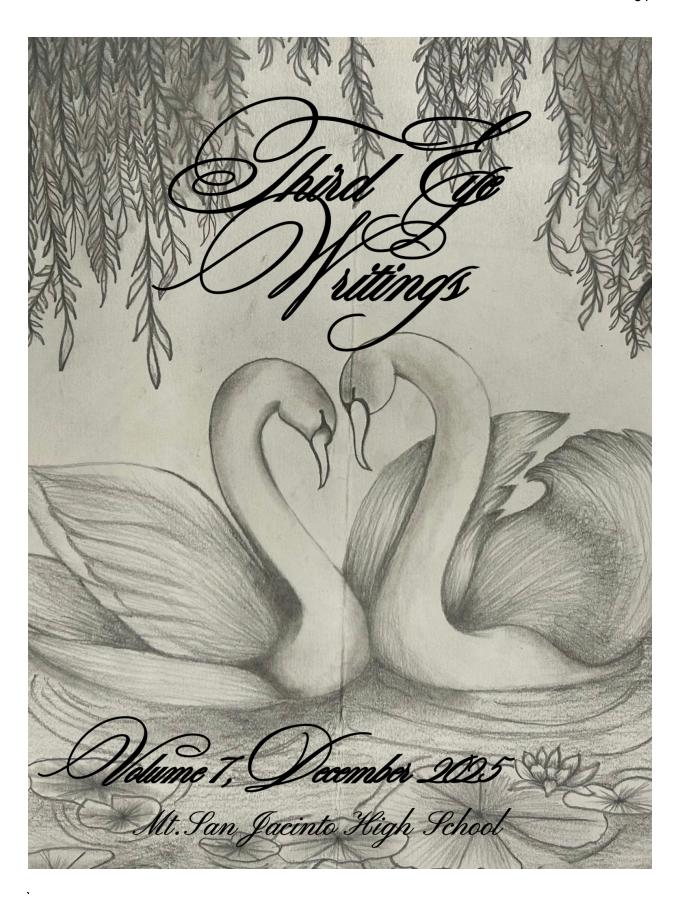


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Everyone has a story and our students' varied experiences lie upon these pages. May you be well and know you are loved,

Dr. Jacqueline Marie Mantz Rodriguez



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