

THIRD EYE WRITINGS

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Introduction

This is volume five of Mount San Jacinto High School's literary journal. The theme of this journal is, *Where are you from?* Within this journal, we seek to dissect all that lies within. The poetry, stories, reflections, essays, art, and photography are deeply personal and highlight our origins. It is an honor to curate our students' writings. My poem below uses the voice of Mother Earth. I wrote it while listening to Nina Simone's classic, "Feeling Good".

I'm Not Feeling Good

By Jacqueline Mantz Rodriguez

Birds low in a smoky sky, turning circles

know how I feel

bees in trees with no flowers to see

know how I feel

Scorched cracked earth

fish swimming through debris

know how I feel

garbage and gasoline scents

you know how I feel

All our children and doggies won't have a place to be

leopards, gorillas, elephants all be but a memory

There is no freedom without me

you know what I mean

There may not be
 a dawn, a day, if you keep
 killing me
 killing me

Poetry

The Destruction of Me

By Kaiden Ankney

I provide oxygen and new life
 Why do humans destroy me?
 Forest fires murder wildlife
 Summer time I burn
 each fire, life goes away
 left burnt and dead
 In the next generation, less trees
 each destruction hurts the life I began
 The destruction of me.

Un Guapo Mariposa

Anonymous

Niño nonato
 Tanta felicidad ya
 Mi chico guapo

Un Guapo Mariposa (translation)

By Anonymous

Unborn son
 So much happiness already
 My handsome boy

Baby

By Anonymous

Baby
 Cute, new
 Loving, crying, learning
 Unborn, but already bringing immense joy

A Young Girl

By Anna

Looking for closure
 On my first day of school, I have this nervous feeling
 To comfort me I paint
 An innocent body
 I find myself anxious with other human bodies
 An innocent feather
 Will I forget my innocence?

I go home to paint

And meet the peace that brings within as I brush swiftly

I learn about the feeling I get as I paint, the peace

Now comes the time of faith

Where I'm From

By Yareli Armendariz

I am from Food, TV and Toys.

I am from El Pais.

I am from the soil, mud, hibiscus

I am from Recalentado, and white,

from Maggie, and Alejandra and, Gema

From “si vas a jugar te vas aguantar” and “Did you pray?”

I am from la tierra de tijuana

I'm from Fort Worth, Texas, the food of birria.

From the edgy, bumpy roads

To the family hug after surgery

and the exciting moment of receiving another animal into the family

I am from a clean, loud/funny, amazing home.

Never Enough

By Isaias Artiga

Standing six feet tall

living in Africa

rolling in the mud
searching for plants
grazing on grass
fearful of being hunted.
Why am I endangered?
Is it my horns?
They never get enough of me
now we're almost gone
please just be done.

Gunshots in the Air

By Gaby Avila

My baby's first meal, on a sunny day
gunshots in the air, worried and scared
running for our lives, nowhere to hide

Hearing my baby's cries as they yank her from me
fighting these hunters as they throw me to the side
beaten and abused, I remember my baby's teary eyes

Will you leave us our trees and let us be in peace?
What will we tell our future generations,
when they ask of the long ago great apes?

He Didn't Do Anything

By Ramon Barajas

Last week of school

this guy who we'll call Adrian.

would always get made fun of for everything

nobody said anything

He had been getting bullied since 3rd grade.

last week of school

We're about to go back into the locker room

I saw Adrian to my right

being picked on by a few guys who were in a grade above us

we were in 6th grade at the time

pushed him and shoved him into the fence behind him

"Leave him alone, he didn't do anything," I said.

Alex was the type of kid who always got in trouble

and caused drama and would always pick on people

I said again, "Leave him alone, he didn't do anything."

Security came and broke it up

Alex was suspended

But Adrian was still bullied.

An Innocent Lost Soul

By Margarita Briones

A young female student and daughter.

Looking for a way to be stronger.

On my first day of school no mom to be found.

To comfort me when I'm feeling down.

An innocent girl who just turned 17.

I find myself living in a daydream.

An innocent little girl who once was.

Will I forget where I came from?

I go to MSJ to pass.

And meet Alondra who fills the void in when I'm sad.

I learn about friendships, history, English, and so much more.

Now comes the time I learn to be on my own.

I Am

By Margarita Briones

I am Margarita

I am smart and pure

I wonder what old me thinks of me now

I hear an angelic hum

I see the bright side

I want to make my dad proud

I am Margarita Briones

I pretend I am strong

I feel very weak but bounded to something so strong

I worry I will fail my dad and leave him alone

I cry when I'm alone with my thoughts

I am Margarita Briones

I understand things will always work out and be okay

I say god put me through it and will get me out of it

I dream of the day I repay my dad for everything

I try to keep myself here for my dad

I hope to make it out of this war going on in my mind

Real Predator

Margarita Briones

As I lie with my baby, I protect with my heart and soul.

What would happen if I was ever torn from my whole world?

Vicious predatorlike seeks to strip my baby away.

Stabbing, hitting, and hanging me as I'm trying to get my baby away.

My baby in a cage locked away and gone,

Will I ever see my baby again or when I'm gone?

I know they are taking my baby to a lab, and I watch them leave.

Taking my last breath, I weep.

Why? There are so many of your kind.

I see all these predators with their creation, treated with peace and kindness.

Why can they have their kind but I can't?

Why take my baby for your kind to be entertained and to care for mine?

Yet, if I were to take your baby, I'd be the vicious predator.

I never took any of your kind, don't take mine.

I fear your kind.

I fear those with warm blood but a cold heart.

I fear your kind.

Humanity.

Now I ask you, who's the real predator

Me or you?

Where I'm From

By Julais Brown

I am from fishing rods,

from Jordan and

PlayStation.

I am from playing basketball outside my house with a hoop out in the front

I am from the rivers

The palm trees

I am from a lot of respect for old people, and nine-night

And very good food from Jamaica

From my Granny

and my mom and

My Aunt Grace with her jerk chicken

I am from the being strict, on praying before eating

And cleaning

From getting called chunky monkey as a baby

My aunts always say I am an old man cause I act like my grandpa

I am from the first Baptist church

I'm from Palm Springs, but my grandma is from Jamaica: Seafood and brown stew chicken

From the playing chess and,

The times all I'd do is watch car movies like Fast and Furious

and the times I'd play video games with my older cousins.

I am from my Aunt Jean's where everyone used to go to for vacation cause it was a beach house in San Diego and all the memories I've made with them

Old Times

Yasmin Cabera

There were 9 of us, All younger than 18

We didn't know it was gonna end the way it did

We enjoyed going out to play not caring about life problems later on

We all would leave our house after 7 pm and play outside

We wouldn't be back until we heard all of our parents calling us to come back home
 We played kickball, cops and robbers, football games
 We made a lot of people mad when we would be loud or hide behind there back yards
 They didn't know it was just 9 little kids enjoying time
 No technology just each other
 We even enjoyed each other's time together no matter the weather, cold, hot, humid, or
 rainy. We were always just there, playing until we finally grew up.
 Begging our parents to let us out more, crying to them when they said no, no one was left
 behind
 Until everyone grew up and left.
 We all still live in the same trailer park, but not even a hey
 Like the times before were just nothing.
 Now it's just two of us, sometimes 3.

We're Done

By Yasmin Cabera Hernandez

I am a polar bear
 I'm supposed to be extinct by 2030
 Why us? Why should people's problems be ours?
 Why can't humans keep the fossil fuels in the ground?
 We lose our breath, We drown, we are Forgotten
 We fight over, over, over again
 People don't care about us but this is our home
 We don't want to keep fighting

We're tired of fighting

We're done.

Brush Off

By Chris Campos

If I speak will you hear my story?

If I speak will you believe me?

Covered in red

sitting at the wooden tables

biting my nails until I start biting my skin

wondering why the lions see me as the prey

I sit as a puppy cowering

while the lions invade me

I walk home with a drained mind

sit questioning my life

I sit through days being invaded by lions

make my decision...

my heart isn't strong enough for what I go through

Sadness and depression drain me as I walk through the hallway to my room

I tighten the rope to my ceiling light

CRACK.

A Hope For Peace In Future Days

By Chris Campos

A hope for peace in future days
 in a land full of dust where echoes sound
 BANG, BOOM, noises echo around
 as bodies fly and fall to the floor
 Air filled with dust
 buildings fall apart
 families and towns broken down
 Crash

An Innocent

By Leslie Castillo

A young Latina female,
 Looking for her confidence,
 On my first day of school, I feel ugly,
 To comfort myself I wear makeup,
 An innocent girl who's insecure,
 I find myself staring into the mirror,
 An innocent overthinker,
 Will I forget how insecure I am?
 I go to my room,
 To meet peace,

I learn about new insecurities when I look at myself,
Now comes the time I let them go.

An Innocent Girl

By Patricia Ceberos

A young kid.
Looking for someone to turn to.
On my first day of school eyes are on me.
To comfort me but no one.

An innocent teen.
I find myself lost.
An innocent girl.
Will I forget my anger?
I go to open arms.
And meet my happiness.
I learn that everything is okay.
Now comes the time to spread my wings.

An Innocent Artist

By Remy Castillo

A young girl,
Looking for a way to express herself.
On my first day of school, I doodle.
To comfort me in the moment.

An innocent young girl is now 17 years of age.
 I find myself reminiscing on the days.
 Where an innocent girl put confidence in control.
 I hope she never regrets the freedom it makes her feel.
 I go to the ends of the earth to relive that once more.
 And meet that power being I once felt.
 I learned that these creations take work.
 But now comes the time when a new creation takes my eye.

Ashes and Darkness

By Fabian Cornelio Cruz

Trees stand tall and leaves are bright
 but the fire is brighter, the wind cries for help.
 No one listens. Oh atmosphere how clean you are
 yet, each spark ignited makes you more polluted.

Grass how green and soft you are
 but now just ashes and darkness
 a story is told with each branch that falls
 if only they would listen, I just want peace.

Situation has a Warm Sticky Taste

By Jose Corona

Chaotic waves surrounding the builds
 air polluted, dust in the air

screams of families receive shambles with tears
short people running, a fright demure

Power lines falling around the city
leaving the poor scared community
heavy doubts of fears.

Like a vanilla ice cream sundae
the water swirls us apart

NOT like cheese to a rat trap
BUT a warm cold touch of milk to cereal

They stick stuck together
reassured come comforting one another

A Poor Man

By Amira Crawford

They never looked me in the eye
because if they did, they would see me as human

Look at me
see that I bleed like you
that I hunger and weep.

Am I nothing but a begging dog?

That if you feed me or quench my thirst

you fear that I will follow you.

Is your treasure more important than my agony?

I will not accept your payment of guilt

the worthless donation you give

that makes you feel generous and sanctified

they are worthless to me.

My soul knows gratitude

yours is sick of greed

Is it me who has nothing?

My soul refreshes in the rain

My body is at ease with a small meal

but you pigs eat your vomit

nothing satisfies the pit of your soul

Look at me

See we are equal as man

Look in the eyes of Hades

See that he shows no favor

Where I'm From

By Sandra Flores

I am from a big backyard.

from Shopkins and Tide.

I am from a happy, loving, chill home.

I am from the palm trees, all the different colored flowers, and the dirt in the big backyard.

I am from Quinceaneras for all the girls in the family and attending church every Saturday.

from Brenda, Roberto, and David

I am from the apple and cinnamon smell and watermelon.

I'm from, "There's food at the house."

And "money doesn't grow on trees."

I am going to church every Sunday.

I'm from Palm Springs and Guanajuato, Mexico.

Tacos and Tamales.

From the time my brother Roberto hurt his knee his senior year at his senior game.

He couldn't play for the rest of the season.

My mom and dad were really worried because they thought he had broken his knee.

I am from me and my family going to Mexico every summer and going to see my grandparents

Going to Mexico is our favorite thing to do every chance we get because we love visiting my

grandparents.

To Strive in the Pride

By Luis Garcia

Hidden in sight hope, I can make it tonight

I'm like a forest being burnt by the fires
 sometimes in cages where we can see the wild
 killed for the claws on my body
 Used to be 40, down to the 12 of us
 reaching near the end
 next generation might be dead

I roar out my yell hopefully we make it out well
 Seeing the back of the barrel
 held by a man trying to live by the fur on my skin
 hearing a loud bang
 Now there's 1 less within the pride

Journey

By Genesis Arias



Where I'm From

By Aline Hernandez Gaxiola

I am from Barbie dolls,
 from Fairy Tails and Tres leches cake.
 I am from a great place called my grandma's house.
 I am from the flowers,
 The tall tree
 I am from Thanksgiving and Christmas,
 from My Grandma and Mon and
 My uncle.
 I am from the "Don't trust strangers."
 and "Always treat people how you want to be treated."
 From "Words Hurt More"
 and "Money doesn't grow on trees."
 I am from my hometown church.
 I'm from Palm Springs, Chips and freshly baked cookies.
 From my grandparent's beautiful home, I grew up in,
 the big house buildings,
 and the playground with my friends.

An Innocent Soul

By Cassedy Hernandez

A young quiet girl,
 Looking for new friends,

On my first day of school watching from the outside,
To comfort me nothing but the lonely class walls.

An innocent girl,
I find myself isolated,
An innocent young adult,
Will I forget that cold feeling?

I go to a new school,
And meet a true friend,
I learn about friendships and sisterhood,
Now comes the time to make more friends,
But this time I'm not alone,
My one true friend helps guide me through,
No more will I watch from the outside or feel those cold lonely class walls.

Where I'm From

By Gerardo Hernandez

I am from Pearl Jam CDs, from Lunchables, and Capri sun.
I am from the tall wide halls with smoothed-out bumpy patches on the walls.
I am from the mesquite in the neighbor's yard,
the tulips my mom planted
I am from Posadas
and big conversations at night,

from Ramirez

And Hernandez and Casas.

I am from the loud

And quiet.

From “Carrots help your eyesight.”

and “Don’t let the bedbugs bite’. I am from no Christmas.

I’m from California and Aztecs, quesadillas, and menudo

From the words I shouted in the street to kids in a playground, the laughs it gave my family,
and the smiles my Grandma gave.

I am from Camcorder videos

and

Ineffable value.

Draining Storm

By Maya Hodge

Lighting crashes down

Thunder roars deep within me

Rain storms tirelessly

Coral Reefs

By Maya Hodge

Beautiful, but dead

Prettiest when they are sad

Perfectly flawed art

An Innocent

By Athalia Huerta

A young Hispanic girl kind and sweet,
 Looking for comfort and peace,
 On my first day of school, I felt blue, I had no clue what to do.
 To comfort me I need my mom and that will bring me peace.
 An innocent young girl who is fifteen years of age,
 I find myself drifting from success, I must confess,
 An innocent young girl who is now seventeen years of age,
 Will I forget or regret what I've done?

I go to MSJ-EWEC feeling gray,
 and meet my guardian angel Dr. Olvera,
 I learn about numbers in a mystery sway,
 Where algebra comes to play,
 Now comes the time I pay my fine with a heavy line,
 Lesson learned I'll make it mine,
 No more delays, I'll sign in time, and move ahead
 with a clearer mind.

Where I'm From

By Melany Morales

I am from shopkins.
 From pine sol and fabuloso.

I am from the smell of fresh food every afternoon
 I am from the roses that you can smell from afar.
 I am from making menudo every Christmas
 and curly hair, from Solmarena and Mama Chu(my grandma) and Buelna.
 I am from the waking up early morning to drink coffee near the window
 and going camping every summer.
 From “tenemos comida en la casa” and
 “si no te duermes te va salir el monito bailando”.
 I am from lighting a candle every day for San Judas and la Virgencita.
 I'm from sonora and the yaqui tribe, from pozole de trigo and empanadas.
 From the times me and my little brother played in the mud for hours,
 From our faces covered in sand
 and the listening to Mama Chu tell stories about her and my grandpa when he was alive and
 young.
 I am from the blankets I used as a baby and all the memories
 I see my mom get from holding those blankets.

Failed

By Niyssa

Girls and boys

Man and woman

Bang, boom, ahem, bump, crash

Latina female

Curly hair, shy, overweight

White female

Third Eye Writings, Volume 5, December 2024

Popular, skinny, pretty

Students say

She's as big as a house

Students say

She is as light as a feather

Bullying

Bang, boom, ahem, bump, crash

Hurt Latina

Tired

Silenced

Powerful white

Heard Confident

Me

Upset, disappointed, angry

Teachers' ears are closed

Mouth is open

Latina silenced

Brushed off

Agony

White female

Back

Negative

Latina walks off

Home

Crys

Gone.

Teacher

District

Failed

Gone.

Gone the Latina

Failed.

Wonder

Why must people treat others so terribly?

An Innocent Boy

By Govani Osorio

A young growing man.

Looking for a way to grow mature.

On my first day of school scared of a new place.

To comfort me, friends and family.

An innocent ten year old.

I find myself seeing issues at home.

An innocent kid scared of leaving.

Will I forget everyone I know?

I go to high school.

And meet a lot of people.

I learn about living on my own.

Now comes the time to become mature.

Lost in the Fog

DeVaughn Porter

On my first day of school, unsure and shy,

A young teen looking for help to get by.

I wander the halls, lost in the crowd,

Searching for someone—should I ask aloud?

A friendly face approaches with ease,

“Are you new here?” he asks, aiming to please.

An innocent soul points me the way,

But distractions pull me, making me stray.

I slip to the bathroom, my mind in a haze,

Hit my vape, hoping it clears the maze.

But I wonder—will I forget where to go?

Lost in the fog, will my tardiness show?

I arrive at the class, the teacher’s cold stare,

A reminder that time doesn’t care.

The boy who helped stands nearby,

I realize now, lateness can’t fly.

From that day forth, I learned to be wise,

Time waits for no one, no matter the guise.

With every step, I plan ahead,
No more lost moments, no more dread.

Where I'm From

By Giovanni Portera

I am from lost TV remotes,
from Sweet Baby Ray's Barbeque Sauce and Glad trash bags.
I am from cramped apartments with cold tiles, broken thermostats,
and loud cars going across the streets.
I am from the cactus in a pot, the cool winds, and fresh air.
I am from homecooked griddle breakfasts on Sunday
and hard-working parents,
from Jason and Andrea and The Porteras.
I am from the loud laughing after 9
and the need to clean every day.
From "No"
And "Go ask your father."
I am from Sunday Church and Christianity.
I'm from Mexican immigrants, tacos and enchiladas.
From the bloody thumb of my father after his mandoline accident,
the rush to the doctor,
and the fear and panic of my mother.
I am from the garage and boxes that store our history
and countless priceless memories that can never be recreated.

Can you hear me buzzing?

By Mikalah Rivera

I'm up in the trees or down in the grass.
 Can you see me? I help the plants grow.
 Can you see the berries and the peas?
 As busy as a bee can be. I'm making honey.
 Honey for a few. Honey for you.
 Put it on your toast or in your tea.
 If you know I'm there don't step on me.
 I have a stinger to poke people with if you scare me.
 I am made to help and meant to share.
 So please lend me your love and gentle care.

Blu

By Camila Rodriguez

I never knew my beauty was a curse
 when I fly freely in the sky
 targeted
 gone in the blink of an eye.

Oh, how I roam freely
 in my beautiful home
 now a show
 in a place, I don't know.

Humans gain worship and praise
 as they seek to catch me
 but for what I'm worth
 my feathers, bread-winning makers at work.

Is this my life?
 To please the money makers?
 To be taken and “admired”?
 To flee from the destruction of my home?
 What do I do?
 Where do I go?
 I'm stuck
 stuck dreaming
 not of what I haven't done
 but what I used to do
 and what was taken from me.

Overcoming Flesh

By Camila Rodriguez

You may think it's pretty cliché of me to start by saying
 I've watched romance films, read books, and even heard true stories of love
 I may be young but I consider young love the most important experience
 to have been blessed to go through I am 17 only had one love in my life, and so far

Enter my mind, knowing every ugly, beautiful, challenging, lowest and highest part of life
 one thing all stories have in common, there's always one who loves deeply and loves hard
 ends up being the one to hurt and mourn the most in and after the relationship
 in my story, I was in that position, so I believe

The one to have so much love for someone it's consuming the love you have for yourself
 loving someone so much your love supersedes their faults and actions
 we will never know both sides of the story, hope you will take my side
 absorb every bit of it, understand and considerate how much one can have going on
 no matter how much they speak, they never feel heard, so far

He Didn't Want to Hear It

By Richard Rodriguez

My teacher, Juan Martinez, was always mad.
 30 years old, Mexican with straight black hair
 tall and skinny, he always wore jeans and Polo sneakers
 2019 at 10:30 a.m
 a very cold winter day.

I was already having a bad day

He brought up his mom.

“Oh yeah, my mom was never there for me...”

So I brought up my mom, I was thinking about her.

“My mom was great to me. She tried her best to raise me right.

She was always there for me. Whenever I was unhappy,

she found a way to bring back my smile...”

He raises his voice, he puts his hand up.

He didn't want to hear it.

Hurt and disappointed

I told him, “Don't do that ever again.”

“Shhhh,” he said.

He didn't know where I came from.

My mom had been gone for a year.

I wished she was there but she died

but a year ago from stage 4 cancer.

It started with painful kidney stones

she went through chemo trying to stay with

my two sisters and me and all her grandkids.

At the hospital she said,

“Be careful son, take the right path. Make me proud.”

She passed on a Sunday.

Saturday was the last day I saw her.

So now you know where I come from.

Do you understand where I am coming from?

An Innocent Soul

By Matelyn Sanchez

A young girl, looking for someone to care. On my first day of school, the halls are filled with chatter. To comfort me, the sweetest girl says hello An innocent fragile girl, I find myself in the middle of a fight with my mom and stepdad.

An innocent girl witnesses tragedy being struck between both parents. Will I forget these awful memories and sorrows of the past triggering events? I go to meet the one who caused the pain that hurt my stepfather and meet my mother alongside. I learn about the state of forgiveness and healing. Now comes the time I let go and break free from pain.

Pacific Garbage Patch

By Matleyn Sanchez

My beautiful waves roar in desperation.

Why do you people harm our beautiful mammals?

Debris and trash swallowed in my waves.

Tears upon Tears are shed.

Baby turtles in my water, dead from garbage in my intestines.

A sickening realization, our pleas and suffering will never end.

But within my cries, the next generation of life sheds hope.

We deserve solitude and peace.

Help me, Help us live.

Where I'm From

By Zoe Sanchez

I am from shopkins,

from Takis and

Hot Cheetos.

I am from the loud and chaotic.

I am from the red hibiscus flowers,

the sharp aloe vera plants

I am from partying every weekend

and dancing

from Zorina

Raul

And Gus.

I am from the blunt

and honest

From stop being loud and be nice.

I am from believing in yourself

I'm from Mexicali

tacos and conchas

From the adults fighting and running,

The smart mother,

and the spiritual father.

I am from the beach shore and

filled with important people.

If I Speak Will You Listen

By Julian Torres

Have you ever felt ignored or not cared for by a teacher?

I have before it feels so degrading getting ignored for trying your hardest

From the very same person who's supposedly dedicated to helping his students turn his back on you.

You ask a question hoping for the answer and get nothing but stares and silence

I failed.

That's why I am here.

C School

Continuation School

Have you ever felt seen and appreciated by a teacher?

Having your teachers here who care and want you to succeed.

Being told that you can do it.

My teachers here do everything to help me in my classes.

I passed.

That's why I AM on track to graduate.

Class of 2025.

Sharks

By Julain Torres Encinas

We move in a pack we just want a snack.

We go to the top and go for the grab.

My friend got snagged.

A net around his neck.

I got a mouthful of plastics and metals.

Why? Why?

Why are we struggling and struggling?

All we got, trash.

A Letter To My Ten-Year-Old Self

By V.

I remember you taking care of your brother because he was high on drugs. I remember him laying down hugging you crying and feeling his teardrop hit your cheek. I acted like you were asleep knowing you wanted to start crying knowing he was hurting and wanting to be happy.

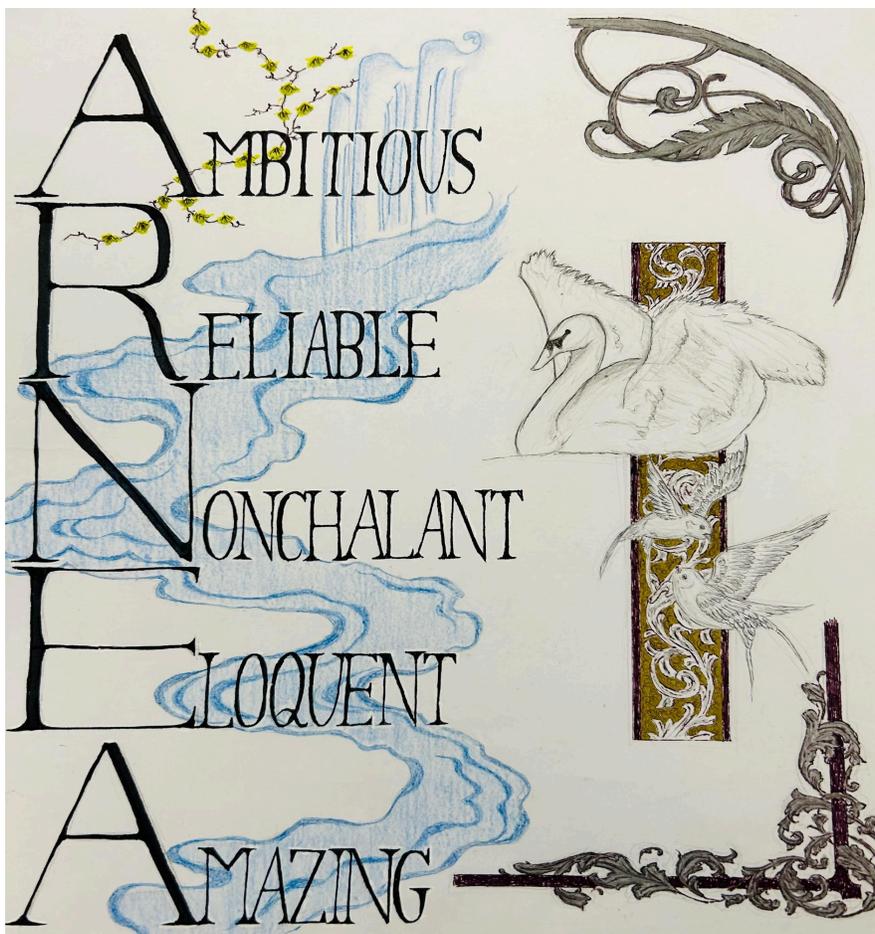
He would hear voices and ask if you heard them so he wouldn't think he was crazy. You just really wanted him to get better. You remember him trying to fight my stepdad, you remember my mom kicking him out, and you remember when my older sister took him into her

home. His making mistakes, knowing that we loved him very much, and seeing him like that always broke my heart, but he got better on his own.

He stopped doing bad things, started working, and took care of his kid. I'm so proud of him. He always tells me that I'm his favorite sister. He loves me so much, and I love him a lot, too. We have a bond that my other siblings don't. I just hope he doesn't do anything like that again.

Girl in the Mist of the Whispering Truth

By Arnea Velasco



Waste Management

By V.Z.

I'm everywhere just lying there

everyone sees me but doesn't do anything to help me

I'm just trash and I'm everywhere

You caused all this mess

but you won't take accountability

you think so less of me and even try to pretend I'm not there

you say you will help clean me up or u will another time

but you never do, I just stay lying there all around like trash

Anchor of Hopelessness

By Valentina Torres Encinas

Honors Integrated 2 Math, sophomore year

every day every day, I am ignored

WAAAAA...all I hear from my teacher.

I feel ignored and hopeless, passed by

call out her name, and she sails my way

“I will return.” She never returns.

I am shipwrecked. I am a wrecked ship
 the masts of self-esteem lowering.
 the weight of the anchor of hopelessness
 weighing my grade down, D or F. I don't remember
 All I remember is being ignored.

Goodbye To Our Home

By Valentina Torres Encinas

STOMP STOMP, heavy feet run in panic
 Running from the heavy machines and humans
 Thrashing side to side, craving for a bite
 We just don't understand why
 They take our home to build theirs
 We just don't understand why
 We run and run as the trees fall down
 Dirt and sand fill up our eyes
 I lost my baby in the struggle
 I saw the humans drag her down
 Even our large and heavy bodies could not save our home
 We just don't understand why
 Our large herd is now so small

Now we wander in search of a new home

For now, goodbye to our home

“Why Doesn't My Mami Love Me?”

By Valentina Torres Encinas

Little Mexican Flora

Bright Flower Soul in a large family

Smart and always followed the rules

One day

She went to school and didn't follow the rules

She kept speaking out of turn and earned a call to home

Odd

Flora would do her best but it wasn't enough

Not enough for her mami, she thought

Countless Awards and Ribbons

“Still not enough”, Flora said

Flora wanted what others had

Balloons and presents from their parents who actually cared

She just wanted her mami's attention

When she was finally home

Her Mami was confused and kept asking her countless questions

“Why have you been such a troublemaker lately?”

“Why have you been so sad?”

Flora looks up from the ground to her mami and says

“Mami, do you love me?”

Her mami hugged her and said

“Of course I do, I always will even if I don’t always say it to you

Flora was so happy and hugged her tighter

“How about we go and get some ice cream together?” says Mami

Both Flora and her Mami went to get ice cream at a local store

Now that memory will always be with the now not-so Little Flora.

If I Speak, Will You Listen?

By Philip Valle Preciado

As a young man, I would believe to make friends you’d have to fit in

Looking back, I realize, I couldn’t have been any more wrong.

I took everything personally and would always wonder

whether or not I was the potential problem.

I drowned myself in waves of uncertainty and fear.

And this only fueled my misery and isolation.

But as I matured, I often pondered to myself

Coming to the realization I worry myself too much for my good.

I worried too much, too often, just about things

Nature Flourishes in the Dead Cold

By Philip Valle Preciado

Each day, I walk alongside my cubs

our pearly white fur blends into soft crunchy snow

our huge stomps scare critters away

We are one of the biggest, most ferocious predators
 an understatement, God himself sent a vigorous force to humble our presence
 days pass, snow grows wetter by the day, and ice grows weaker

Blowing wind wouldn't be as cold, fur heavy
 hunting is a struggle, less to hunt; the youngest of my cubs passes on
 now just me and my last offspring wandering
 in desperation to find home
 free from this wrath of nature

Generational War

By Leo Vaquero

Drug stores around every corner
 Liquor stores down the street from school
 Drug addicts roaming the streets
 Kids taking guns to school
 Young brothers and sisters dying
 This is what they wanted
 We kill ourselves
 And we kill each other
 But who always stays on top?

They separate us from them

They separate us from each other
They took our land and claimed it theirs
They build cities on our land and make us pay for it
They make us work for their corporations
They took our culture, our history
And yet, they still write our history books
They tell us where we come from
How could they know if I don't?
They still control us
They rule our governments
They enslaved our ancestors for years
And still, we are their modern-day slaves

I AM

By Layla Zamora

I am Layla
I am strong and happy
I wonder about life I hear whispering voices
I see his angel pass by
I want success
I am Layla
I pretend that we're together again
I feel his warmth
I touch the heavens

I worry that they're not proud

I cry for them

I am Layla

I understand how I should feel

I say that we're ok

I dream about our future

I try to help

I hope they're happy

I am Layla

Waste Management

By Veronika Zepeda

I'm everywhere just lying there

Everyone sees me but doesn't do anything to help me

I'm just trash and I'm everywhere

You caused all this mess

But you won't take accountability

You think so less of me and even try to pretend I'm not there

You say you will help clean me up or u will another time

But you never do, I just stay lying there all around like trash

Stories

Aurora's Anxiety

By Allison

Aurora lives in Fairbanks, Alaska Aurora's mom Laura named her after the Northern Lights. Aurora's dad, Arthur, got to choose her middle name, Guinevere. Aurora feels numb. In December, Fairbanks Alaska is around negative five degrees Fahrenheit. The sun is only out from 10 am - 2:45 pm. She doesn't know why she feels weird.



Aurora's in the 4th grade. Aurora doesn't want to go to school. She feels anxious about walking into class. Her heart feels like it's beating out of her chest and her hands start to shake she's trying to stay in class for as long as she can without panicking. After a while she can't handle it anymore so she asks her teacher if she can use the restroom.



Aurora calls her mom in the bathroom to tell her she's not feeling good. Her mom thinks she is lying so she has to stay at school. After her mom hangs up, Aurora starts to cry and break down. She waits in the restroom until she calms down. At the end of the day, Aurora's mom picks her up.



As they're driving home they are sitting in silence. Then Aurora's mom starts to talk about the Aurora Lights.

"There's this legend that suggests that the lights are reflections or glow from the shields and armor of female warriors," Aurora's mom tells her.

“Can the lights protect me?” asks Aurora.

“If you believe they can, they will,” says her mom.

That night Aurora is anxious about going to school the next day. Then she looks out her window and looks at the lights. She starts to feel calm and like everything is going to be okay because she has the lights to protect her.



Pop Goes the Day

By Dayra Alvarado

It was February 9th, 2024, and my family and I, Dayra Alvarado, were on the way to Olive Garden in Palm Desert. It was my nephew Manuel’s second birthday. In the car were my mom, my dad, my two sisters, my nephew, and my boyfriend. Manuel was fast asleep in the car. That day we took my mom’s car which was a 2013 Toyota Highlander. We took her car because it had the most seats, which was seven seats, but whenever it wasn't being used it would be parked in our garage which is a mess from my dad's tools to old things.

Usually, we would take the freeway east when a destination was further away. But this day my dad decided to go the longer way, none of us were sure why. We drove down Gene Autry to Highway 111. While on the way there we listened to various genres of music like Reggaeton,

Banda, and Corridos. I vividly remember that around a mile before entering Highway 111 my dad said, “Me agarraron los escalofríos.” Mind you, my whole family, especially my dad’s side of the family is very superstitious. But I wouldn't say I am that much but I do believe some. So when he got goosebumps we all knew what it meant, except my boyfriend who was clueless. In our family goosebumps mean negative things, like something bad is happening or something is going to happen.

My dad kept driving but he was trying to be more careful because he didn't want anything to happen. I then had to explain to Josh, my boyfriend, what it meant to us because he was very confused, he and his family aren't very superstitious and don't believe in it much. Right after my dad turns onto Highway 111 we hear it. The tire popped! He pulled over next to Vons, me and Josh, and my dad had gotten off to go check it out, while everyone else stayed inside of the car. My dad checked it and said, “ Todos bajen del carro ya valio verga.”

The tire was completely flat. Thankfully my dad knew how to change tires since he was young because in his household he was considered the man of the house. He quickly changed it with the help of my boyfriend but while changing it he was also telling me step by step what I would have to do if I got a flat tire in the future. Since we were already so close to the olive garden we decided to still go on with the spare.

We got to Olive Garden in less than 10 minutes and got seated quickly because of how slow it was that day. My dad and I got the Tour of Italy which is both of our favorites and everyone else had gotten some type of pasta. When we all finished and headed straight home. But, thankfully because of the flat tire we got I now know how to change a tire.

Graham Crackers with Grandpa

By Kaiden Ankney

How did my favorite childhood memory of mine start? Well, it all started on a hot summer day when my mother and I went shopping at Vons. As we were shopping grabbed Chips Ahoy cookies, Hershey chocolate bars, and graham crackers. Each time we got graham crackers I would eat them because I loved them a lot when I was little.

As we got home my mom went to get ready for work while my dad was coming home from his job. No one was at the house other than my grandpa and I. My grandpa had blue eyes and blonde hair. He was a very outgoing person. We put on a show that I can't remember and he showed me how to dip my graham crackers into milk. I didn't like it but he did. He would grab the cookies, one or sometimes two. We would sit and eat while watching the show. I can't remember what shows we watched. But I remember my grandpa sitting on the couch with me. We talked, ate our graham crackers, and watched our shows.

Enchiladas Alright

By Ramon Barajas

I am a junior at C school. I have to do a lot of work here. I am a junior now but started when I was a sophomore. The school is chill. I took an Ethnic Studies class. One day at the beginning of the year, Mr. Vargas announced to the class, "We will be recording a video of making any kind of ethnic dish that you and your family eat."

The class groaned. I was like, "Oh God!" Not only that but we had to cook the food and submit the video to Mr. Vargas. I was nervous as I rarely made videos and never before with food. I wanted to do well as it was a big part of our final grade.

I decided I was going to make chicken and cheese green enchiladas. At the end of the day, I told my dad about the project and he said, "Yeah I'll be glad to help." Then, we went to Stater Bros and got some Las Palmas green chili sauce, some more corn tortillas, a Mexican cheese blend packet, and a medium container of Daisy sour cream. We then took the ingredients and laid them out on the counter. We first discussed how we wanted the video to start and what we had to do throughout the video. We then rehearsed it a few times until I felt confident enough to start recording.

When I told my dad to record we already had our first problem which was that my phone camera was facing my dad and not me. I immediately said "Stop Stop Stop!". I then showed my dad where I wanted the phone to face to get the correct shots and how to start and stop recording. I then gave my dad the go-ahead to start recording and I began explaining what I was making. My dad then slowly showed the ingredients we were using all laid out on the counter. We first got the tortillas out placed the chicken and cheese inside the tortillas and rolled the tortillas up until the tray was filled up. On top of the tortillas, we sprinkled a lot of cheese and put a good amount of green sauce on top. We then placed the enchiladas into the oven for about 20 - 25 minutes and laid them out to cool for 5 minutes once they were done. We then showed what they looked like when they were once out of the oven. My dad recorded one last part of me tasting them at the very end and I said "Bussing". We ended the video there.

I then sent all the clips we took to my computer. I began merging all the clips cutting all the unnecessary parts and adding transitions some background music and a few tweaks. I then took one last look at the whole video for anything that needed to be fixed and I was really surprised because it came out good. I was feeling very confident and proud and submitted it to Vargas. When I submitted it I was nervous about getting a low grade. When I went to class

Vargas said “The enchiladas looked good” and I ended up getting an A. When I told my dad he was very proud and said, “Alright!”

Forever Found Love

By Margarita Briones



3 inseparable friends with an unquestionable bond

Coco, Estrella, And Luna.

Friendship like no other, friendship that meant like family,

Friendship that would last an eternity as one.

Coco, Estrella, and Luna travel to see each other,

to fill each other's hearts with joy

to fill the void inside when they're alone and apart.

As Coco lingers through the halls, tiptoeing as light as a feather

In between the silence, she hears a faint giggle

Estrella under the blanket trying to keep her laugh in

“BOO! I found you!”

“Aw dang it, I suck at this, have you found Luna?”

No, she's a sneaky little piggy

Let's go find her!

Coco and Estrella roam the rooms, up and down

They hear a squeak and a creak,

“EEEEK”

Luna is in the cabinet and found!



The Book of Firsts

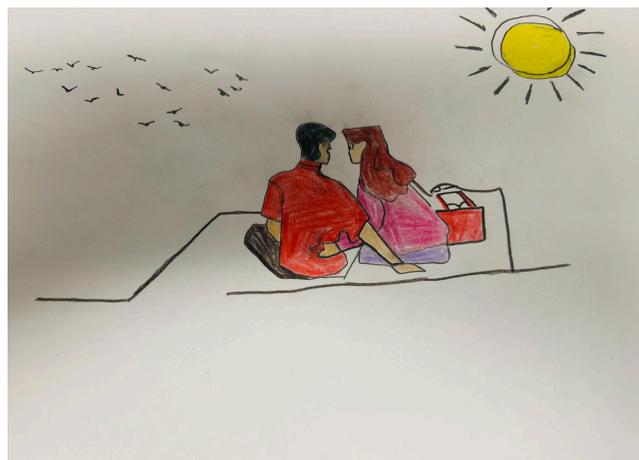
By Chris Campos

An elderly 80-year-old man named James sits alone on his porch on April 7th this year. He is sitting down on his wooden rocking chair in his house with an open rocking chair next to him that belonged to his wife who had unfortunately passed away in Yucca Valley, California the

year before. He sits alone at 7 pm rocking on his chair in the chilly spring weather. He reminisces about the first moments he had when he was a little kid that he took for granted.



James was known as a hardworking man who never wanted to fail his family. He was a construction worker and it tore him down as he aged. James is the father to two of his kids, Charles and Billy. Charles is forty and Billy is 39. They both have started their own family. While Charles and Billy were growing up their father worked hard and always made sure his kids had everything they needed. James & his wife Juliette had a relationship that people could only wish for in life.



James and his wife Juliette had a healthy and bright relationship. They would always have dates while younger and never leave each other's side. As they got older, they had their two kids, Charles and Billy, who impacted their lives as they weren't financially stable enough to have kids. But they would both work hard for their kids. Juliette was a cook at the same restaurant, Olympic Flame, for twenty years. James worked for the same construction company, High Voltage Builders.



Charles and Billy grew up and left home to start their lives. James and Juliette grew older. When Juliette was 65 years old, she started getting sick & she had to quit her job. She had heart issues, and James retired to be with his wife and support her while she was battling heart issues. As well as her kids who took a short break from their jobs to spend time with their mom. Juliette's heart was failing and one day, as he sat by her side, she closed her eyes and slept forever. Now James sits alone on his porch in his brown wooden rocking chair looking over to his wife's chair that sits there empty, thinking about all the first moments he had with her.



James reminisces and remembers seeing the first steps of his kids.

He hears his children's first words, Mama and Dada!

He feels the quiet of the kids' first school days and the pride of his kids' getting on the honor roll.

He remembers being nervous watching their first bike rides and their first jobs.



James is lonely but right then his family all comes driving up in their car. His sons and daughter-in-laws, and his grandchildren run up and give him a long hug.

Mimi Time Story

By Danny Gonzalez

When I was younger, growing up in Mexicali and The Coachella Valley my mother would always put me to sleep with a bedtime story. My mother, Angela Rubio, often told me a story to go to sleep, because as a kid I was very hyperactive and struggled sleeping. Her voice brought me peace and her smile would enlighten me with the purest joy. She would calm me down with her just being present, and I love her to death because of it. My favorite story that she would tell, would have to be my mom's version of The Little Red Riding Hood. I often asked for the same story nightly and I know for a fact that she would get tired of it, but the way she would tell the story was the most memorable and enlightening experience of my life.

"Mami, can you please read me that bedtime story?" I asked.

"Again? I read that to you last night," my mom replied.

The story began with a little girl from a small town, her name was Little Red, she had a mother, as well as a grandmother. Mother was informed that grandmother was sick and needed some medicine muffins especially made by her own recipe. She prepared the muffins and sent them on the way with Little Red. Grandmother's home was deep in the forest, and on her way there she came across a wolf, which was rather friendly but had bad intentions. The wolf asked, "Hi Little girl, what's your name?" Little Red responded "My name's Little Red!" The wolf asked, "Hii Little Red, where are you heading?"

Little Red, being the innocent child she is, told the wolf exactly where her grandmother lived. The wolf was a sneaky and untrustworthy individual, he knew he could get the information from little red and take advantage of the delicious opportunity.

The wolf said his goodbyes and hurried along, with a vicious plan in mind.

Little Red shortly arrived at grandmother's home, opened the door and greeted what she thought was her grandmother, but in reality it was the wolf in the grandmother's clothes. grandmother had been eaten. Little Red put down the muffins and talked to grandmother but she noticed some odd things. She asked “Grandmother, why is your nose so big?”

Grandma wolf replied, “It's so I can smell you better.” Little Red asked, “Why are your eyes and ears so big?” Grandma Wolf said, “It's so I can see and hear you better.” Finally, Little Red asked her last question, “Grandmother, why is your mouth so big?”

“IT'S SO I CAN EAT YOUUUUUU!!!!!!” Little Red was no more, she was turned into a full course meal.

My mother always attacked me with tickles at the part where Little Red was eaten, it was one of the reasons I loved the story. If I could go back and relive those moments I would, but life does not work like that, I had to learn that the hard way. I lived a happy childhood because of my mother and I am truly blessed, happy, thankful, and honored to have someone like her as my mom. I wouldn't want life any different and in the end my momma was always there, ready to tell me my Mimi Time Story.

Salsa De Pato with Mom

By Briana Lopez

My name is Briana, my story is about when I made salsa de pato with my mom. Me and my mom always like making homemade salsas. The first time we made salsa de pato was when we were at my grandparent's house here in Desert Hot Springs. It was on a hot day in summer when I was about 14 or 15. We decided to make salsa de pato because it's a very simple and easy dish to make. I wanted salsa de pato for dinner because I was craving it desperately. This other time we bought the salsa de pato at the market. I and my mom didn't want to wait for

a process to make the salsa it's a lot of peeling and boiling the tomatoes and onions. For this type of dish, my mom always told me we just needed four ingredients to make this simple dish.

We needed tortillas, salsa de pato, eggs, and queso fresco ranchero. Don't ever forget the salsa. It won't taste good without the salsa. It's a very simple dish but it is so delicious. For the first step, my mom likes to use a pot for the salsa. We opened the can first with a can opener and then we poured the salsa inside of the pot and added 1 cup of water. We left the salsa on medium heat so it won't burn or get clumpy. We let the salsa boil but always keep an eye on it because it will burn and taste nasty. We moved on to the eggs. My family likes their eggs fried so we do fried eggs for every plate they complain if it isn't done how they like it. We put the eggs inside the pot with the salsa. As the eggs were being soaked in the salsa we moved on to the tortillas. I like my tortillas toasted and crunchy. It gives a lot of flavor. Many people don't like them well done but it's one thing I always love and crave. But, my family likes them not crunchy. My dad and mom like them well. They love how the salsa comes out because it's done with lots of time and love. This dish made me and my mom bond and it made me so happy to see her smile and laugh.

Jr. and His New Friend Goes for a Swim

By Richard Rodriguez

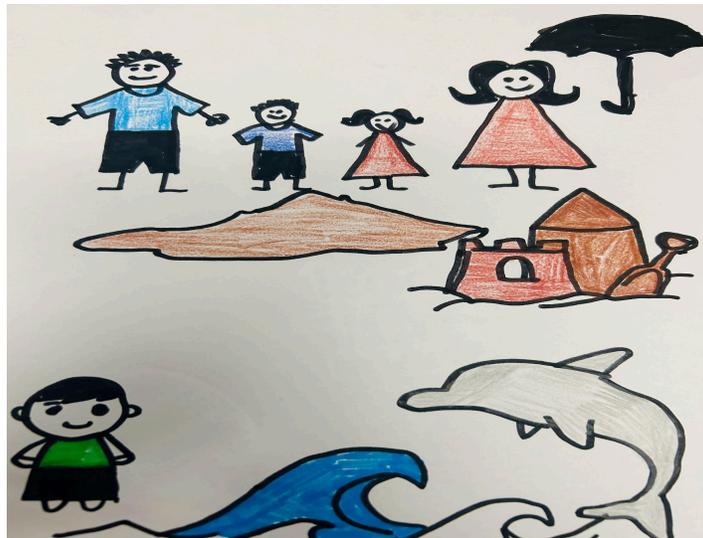
One day a boy named Jr. went to a special place with his family. It was June. Jr. had just finished school. He finished 3rd grade and was going into 4th grade. Jr. was eight years old. His family was celebrating his success and vacationing. It was his first time going to Newport Beach. His family walked down the sidewalk to the sand. Jr. saw the waves splashing the shore. Jr. was always afraid to go into the water.



Jr.'s biggest fear was drowning. When he was six years old a bully held his head down in the water in the toilet—after sitting down Jr. noticed the dolphin in the water. The dolphin looked happy. His gray skin glistened in the sun.

“The dolphin was calling to him, “Don't be scared, come in.”

Jr. hesitated but trusted his gut, He touched the water with his hands.



The water was warm and fresh, It smelled salty, He jogged into the water. The dolphin swam around with him in the waves. He was in the water for hours.

Jr. ran back to shore and saw his family lying under an umbrella. They were eating Ruffles.



Last of Her

By Matelyn Sanchez

My grandmother was a very bold soul. Her sweet vanilla smell aired out in the room we were in. Till her last breath, my grandmother was working as she was a strong educated woman. Nothing let her down. Her warm breath was bold. The smell of her McDonald's coffee coming from her mouth was a strange yet comforting smell. We had a little secret about me and her. She had pinky promised me she'd get me away from the situation I was in and unfortunately we never got to fulfill the promise.

I remember this like it was yesterday. The last memory I had of her was her waking me up as my body was shivering. Her sweet scent smiled at me as she kissed my forehead and told me, "Mija go mimi's ya te amo."

That was the last time I saw her alive. She was put on dialysis a month later and then passed away in the hospital. I will never forget the beautiful woman my grandmother once was and how much I cherished her.

The Fisher

By Cameron Solorzano

A lonely fisherman wearing a mask was doing his normal night fishing routine outside the city at the river bank when suddenly he felt something pull on his fishing rod. Excited, he hurriedly grabbed his rod and pulled and snagged with all his might. As the battle ensued, the Fisherman was getting tired, but he didn't give up because this one felt different, this one was heavier and was a fighter. He was determined to get this pull. Whatever it was pulling his rod down, was fighting back.

"This one is going to be the death of me!" the Fisherman yelled.

Suddenly, the creature, or thing gave out, and happily, the Fisherman reeled it up and was disappointed.

The fish he was fighting for, was simply a magnet, and that magnet was getting pulled down, and down, and down because it came into contact with parts of a robotic samurai ninja warrior.

"What in the world is this?" the Fisherman asked himself.

Suddenly a giant squirrel walking on its hind legs says, "Oh that's Yamaha, he's some crazy psychotic robot samurai ninja warrior assassin, you'll be fine, only four strikes of lightning can power him up, and what're the chances of that happening?"

KAH-CRACK! KAH-CRACK!! KAH-CRACK!!! KAH-CRACK!!!! Just as Squirrel said that four lightning bolts hit Yamaha's parts, and as Squirell explained to the Fisherman, the parts started shaking, and they connected one by one. Finally, with a loud rumbling from under the river, his samurai gear flew out of the water, and Yamaha slowly came to life, walking over and putting on his armor.

"Who dares wake me from my slumber?" Yamaha bellowed.

“He did!” Squirrel screamed as he pointed at the Fisherman.

“I did?” questioned the Fisherman.

“I’m going to tear you to shreds, then put you back together, just to tear you to shreds again, weak human.” said the menacing robot killer.

“That sounds painful.” the Squirrel said.

“AND FOR YOU PATHETIC LITTLE RODENT, I WILL MAKE YOUR FRAIL EXISTENCE MISERABLE, I’LL CUT DOWN ALL THESE TREES, SMASH ALL THESE ACORNS, JUST TO MAKE YOU QUESTION YOURSELF, YOUR STUPID LITTLE RAT BRAIN ‘WHY YAMAHA?! WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE THIS?!’” Yamaha mocking the Squirrel.

Yamaha unsheathes his gigantic flaming sword with turbojet boosters strapped onto the blade.

“YOU’RE GOING TO EXPERIENCE PAIN SO SEVERE, YOUR STUPID FURRY BODY WILL LOSE ALL ITS NAPPY HAIR AND-”

Suddenly a bright red laser beam lit up the night sky and a huge explosion caused the Fisherman and Squirrel to go flying.

Slowly getting up, Squirrel groaned “Woah, what in the world was that? Hey fish man, did you see that? Some saint sent a beam straight to Yamaha’s power cell!”

As he looks all over the crater, he cannot find the Fisherman.

“Fishman? Fishy? Fish Lover? Weird Masked Man Who Fishes But Summons Ancient Robotic Ninja Samurai Assassin Killers where are you?” he echoed.

Squirrel then sees the Fisherman’s gas mask, torn to shreds, scorched.

“Oh no! Why him ancient Gods? Why couldn’t it be me instead? He was such a nice guy although he almost killed us both, but anyways, why him?” he wept.

Then a noise was heard, like someone was rummaging through leaves.

“NO I WAS KIDDING, DON’T TAKE ME ANCIENT GODS!” the Squirrel yelled in fear.

“Calm down stupid animal, it’s just me, and my name isn’t Weird Masked Man Who Fishes But Summons Ancient Robotic Ninja Samurai Assassin Killers. It’s Fisherman,” he said annoyed.

“Okay cool whatever, what in the world is THAT?!” the Squirrel points at the Fisherman's forehead.

“It’s just my Neuro-blaster Ultra-Violet Radium-Uranium Laser Decimator 3000-B, it’s pretty neat, all it takes is some fiber-”

“BOOORRRINGGGG,” the Squirrel yells, “Anyways, I’m hungry, I’ll see you around Fishboy.”

And with that, Squirrel skips off into the distance, whistling a tune, without a worry in the world.

A Snowy Day

By Julian Torres

This story took place around seven years ago. It was during the colder season our dad finally had a day off so they decided to take us to Big Bear Lake to the snow. It was my mom, Dulce, My dad Emmanuel, and my siblings Vicky, Vale, Jesus, Alex, Fabian, and me. We drove up towards Big Bear but we stopped like two times because I used to get car sick a lot and had to throw up.

When we finally made it we were on a little hill with the tubes going up and down the hill. It was funny because when it was Fabian's turn our dad was distracted by the phone and he slid all the way under the truck and got stuck. It was hilarious. We ended the day by going out to eat then we drove back home.

Tamales with Nana and Tata

By Valentina Torres

The day before Christmas Eve was a tradition me and my grandparents never missed out on. I would always go over to my grandparent's house the day before Christmas Eve to help them make the tamales that our entire family eats during our Christmas Eve party that we have every year. My job was to fill the husk with maza while my tata filled it up with carne, papas, and olives and my nana's job was just to sit there and watch us work while throwing in a joke now and then, that's how we would spend that day, December 23, each year.

Being there in that moment, in that kitchen, and with the people I love and care for the most is a gift and the greatest memory to be able to cherish and hold with me forever. Every year, warm smiles, and cheerful and lively laughter fill the house while the warm and yummy smell of the tamales and posole fills the kitchen. Y si quiere dios, this year we'll create even more memories.

A Day With My Parents

by V.Z.

It started on a weekend when I was around 13. My dad came to pick me and my mom up from our place. We never lived together, so he'd always have to come to us. He picked us up that day in his Gray Rolls Royce. My mom always had to come because my dad and I had a language barrier. He spoke Spanish, and I spoke English. We were both trying to learn it, but I never really tried, just every once in a while.

Looking back I wish I had tried harder, but we were off to Boomers and I was upset because I just wanted my dad's attention to be on me instead of my mom. My dad never stopped loving my mom. Well on the way to Boomers, he would ask about me and my mom and my mom always answered for me because she assumed everything and understood him better than I did due to the language barrier. We finally got to Boomers and I got in a bit of a better mood because I was excited to play the games with my dad, we got to play but it was mostly me playing well, My parents talked. We got to go on the go-karts and I went first on my own which was fun. Then I wanted my dad to go with me so we went together, after a bit of hesitation on his end. We both had fun playing till it came to an end.

So we went back inside to talk about what we wanted to do. I wanted to still play with my dad but my parents decided it was time to leave and find something to eat or something else to do. My parents decided on getting dinner and I got to choose because they didn't want me to be in some type of mood. So I decided on where to eat. We all ate at a Mexican restaurant. I think I got a torta. Then we had to go back home because it was late and my mom had work the next morning. I was a bit upset due to wanting to spend time with my dad. Looking back, I was always in some type of mood with my father. We never really understood each other but we understood that we were there for each other or so I thought. I wish I could of told him how I truly felt but I was just a troubled kid who just wanted it to be my way and only my way. Knowing what I know now, I wish I could have appreciated the time we had but now it's too late.

Our First Day!

By Layla Zamora

Today is the first day of school!

You should feel happy and excited but that's not always the case.

Some puppies are so sad or very anxious.

But today is a very special day,

You get to learn new things from different teachers and make new friends.

Every day you'll be able to go outside and play with those friends.

Then after all that you get to come back home and do it all again the next day!



This puppy wasn't happy to start school today.

All he kept saying was that he was sad and didn't want to leave his family.

His mom tried to convince him that today would be so amazing and that he would make so many friends.

Once he got to school he was so scared!



As he was walking into his class he noticed that there were so many different things and kids. He sat next to a little girl and she was so energetic and happy. As she talked a bit more he felt so much calmer.



She invited the little puppy to play soccer with her once they were to go to recess. Although he was a bit shy he still agreed to play with her

He didn't expect it but he had so much fun playing with the other puppies!



He realized there wasn't much to be sad about and when school ended he went to tell his mom all about his amazing day...

She was so happy for him and congratulated him.

All he could talk about was doing it all over again tomorrow!

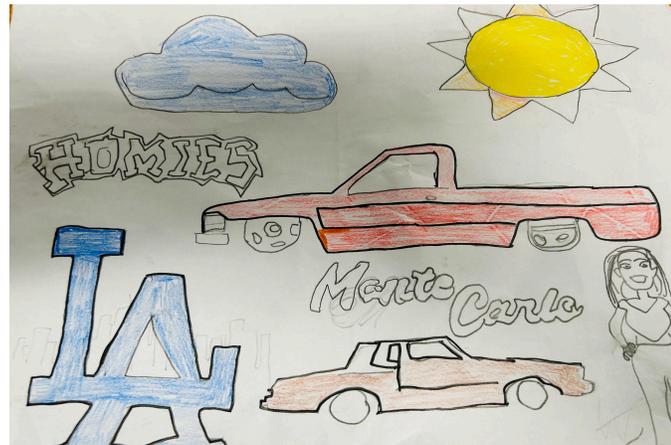


BIG BOB

By Mayla Zamora and Richard Rodriguez



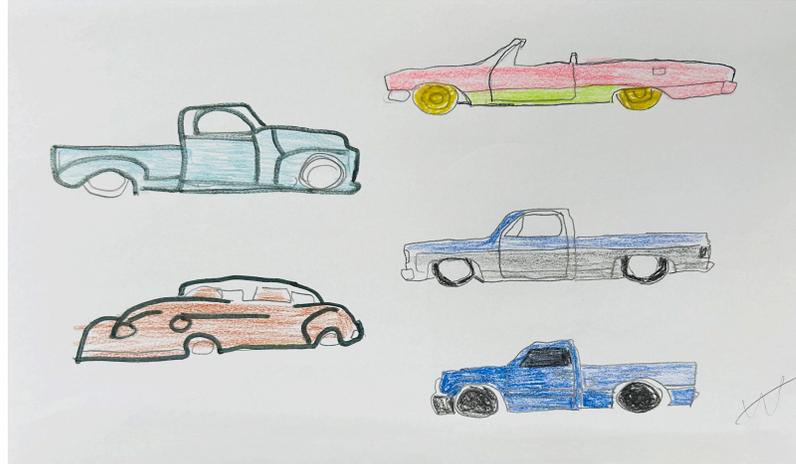
Big Bob lives in Los Angeles. He is candy green and has a thick mustache. Big Bob's dad calls him chubby. Big Bob's dad's name is Little Rob. He is candy red. Big Bob's mom drove away and never came back. Her name is Carlita. She is a brown Monte Carlo.



Big Bob is at truck school. A group of cars and trucks make fun of him. They call him fat. Big Bob drives away and hides at Chicano Park. There he sees a group of old trucks.

“Where are you from and why are you sad?” asks the group of classic trucks.

“I ran away. They called me fat,” says Bob. It's good to be a big truck. The bigger you are the stronger you are,” the classic trucks say. They all drive with him back to school. All the lil trucks and cars see them.



“Woo Woo, wow, orale,” cried the little cars and trucks! From that day Big Bob was never made fun of again!

Reflections

My Name

By Veronica Martinez

My dad ended up naming me. He named me after my aunt, who sadly passed away. I always wondered how they landed on the name Veronica, until I was told the reason behind my name. My name originates from Latin and signifies “true image” or “she who brings victory.” It’s a name with a rich history and significance. My most common nickname is Vero, a pretty obvious and common nickname for people who are named Veronica. I actually love my name, especially my nickname.

My middle name is Karol. My sister actually chose it. She told me the story behind it. One day, she and her friend were walking, and she knew my mom was pregnant with me. She started thinking of names, and she fell in love with the name Karol. She suggested it to my mom and they thought about it and ended up putting it as my middle name. Not a lot of people call me

Karol except my family. The name Karol means “free man” or “strong.” It’s a name with Polish origins and carries a powerful and independent meaning. Sometimes, I wonder how they actually decided on Veronica Karol Martinez instead of all the other options they had for me.

I wouldn’t change anything about my name, though. I actually like it a lot and feel like it fits me, maybe because it’s obviously my name and always has been, but I really like it and wouldn’t change it at all. It has meaning behind it.

My Names

By Starlene Reyes

“It’s from your great-grandmother. Be grateful for your name.” is something I was always told. I was named with somebody else in mind; I was supposed to be the reminder. It was a sweet gesture. When I first found out. But I genuinely felt like anybody else but me. I had the same curly hair as my great-grandmother, the same face, the same eyes, and the same laugh. I felt like a replica.

So, I tried using my middle name, Madeline. That was good for a while Until everyone started making fun of my middle name. And the origin of that name? A shoe. And it was also the name of a sweet treat, which was honestly cute! I loved the idea until people made fun of the name and compared me to other Madeline’s. I got frustrated. There wasn’t a name for me, not for ages. I was stuck with my birth name.

I then started experimenting with names I wasn’t given. A funny, small experiment. It wasn’t

going to be huge, just something small on the internet, so I can just... figure it out. From something as simple as the name 'Jennie' to now my usual name. 'Starlene'. I felt like Starlene wasn't common; it stood out, just like how I see myself. I never really fit in with the crowd, So maybe that's why this name stood out to me. It was a name almost nobody heard of, A name so unique. Whenever I was on stage, people usually complimented me on my stage performances, which is also why I liked the name. I was always a star in some cases: There were compliments on my name, people adoring it, it felt new. I still go by my birth name for my family. Maybe all three names aren't so bad.

My Name: Laylonni

By Laylonni Simpson

My name is Laylonni. My name is originally from Hawaii. The meaning is "heavenly garden of flowers" and "royal child." Many assume it's pronounced differently because of the different spelling than the original spelling, "Leilani," the Hawaiian flower, but it's the same.

My mother decided to spell it differently because she said, "I knew you'd be different." My name has been a sure thing since she was in her teenage years. She always admired the name Leilani and knew her first daughter's name would be just that. Many nicknames have come about from my name. Lala, Lonni, and Laylay are the ones most coordinated with my name. Others are more personal nicknames.

My middle name "Neveah" is also a name my mother admired at a young age. Its origin is American and means "heaven" backward. My middle name is mainly used by my father's side of the family or by my mom when I'm in trouble or in a serious situation.

I do question why, out of all names, I got such a unique one. To me, it's a name that isn't so unique. However, I accept both my first and middle names that were chosen for me. I do like them, and I think both the pronunciation and meaning are beautiful.

I wouldn't like to change my name. But I always thought names that start with the letter "R" were so pretty. So maybe that'll be my future child's inspiration for a name.

Essays

Into the Wild

By Gaby Avila

Have you ever felt like starting over and leaving your present life in the past? In this essay, I will be comparing and contrasting my and Chris's lives, and how they are alike and different. Discussing how I would like to live my life after graduating from school and my perspective on living life freely. Christopher McCandless decided he wanted to live a free life and decided to abandon his wealthy life to escape from reality. Chris was a very smart young man who died of seed poisoning, alone in a bus in Alaska, at the age of 24.

Christopher McCandless grew up very different from how I grew up, he lived a wealthy life and belonged to an upper-class family. I grew up in a working/middle-class family who didn't always have it easy and struggled at a young age. Growing up in a middle-class family compared to an upper class can make you realize how much money makes a difference in lives. My father worked in construction and my mother worked in a beauty salon. However I always had food on my table and what I needed, Chris' father worked for NASA. Growing up with

money made Chris not value it or consider it to be important, he even thought of it as a problem, but as a person who grew up wishing to have money and seeing my parents stress over it, made me grow ambitious to have all that money one day. In the story, Chris burns his money after ditching his car. I once ripped a dollar bill by accident and taped it back together to have enough for my meal. I think I could never burn my money because I have to work for the money I carry in my hand. Chris was born into money and was given so many opportunities, not only because he was so smart but also because he had the money and didn't have to stress over being able to or not financially afford it or qualify for a scholarship. I plan to go to college after graduating, but I know I will have to work hard for it even if that means getting two jobs. I believe your upbringing really can define and influence who you are as a person.

In the story McCandless talks about his relationship with his family, but mainly his difficult relationship with his father. I can relate to Chris in various ways with this topic because I too struggle to have a relationship with my father and mother, but I love my siblings and find peace with them like Chris did with his sister. My father growing up was aggressive as well and had a very bad temper like Chris' dad, they let their anger blind them and weren't able to control themselves. For my dad it has always been a struggle for him to show emotion because of how he was raised, I've never gotten told I love you or a hug. The most I got was a pat on the back. I understand Chris's reasoning behind his anger towards his father for having another family. When my mom was pregnant with my older brother, my dad was having an affair and got his lover pregnant as well. My father missed my brother's birth to go be with the other woman, it took me a long time to forgive my father for that. My parents always argued as well and got a divorce when I was three, it was very hard on me and my siblings. Just as Chris' parents did, they would constantly talk about getting a divorce and make us choose sides. I was always a

daddy's girl from a young age and would've loved to live with my dad but he got incarcerated right after their divorce. However, even after all the things my parents put us through, I knew I had my siblings and they had me. Just like Chris had his sister, who he loved the most and understood him.

Mine and Chris' definitions of freedom are somewhat different from one another. In the story, Chris wants to escape reality and even decides to get a new identity. To him this is the only way to escape from his family and not be traced, he threw his phone away and even abandoned his car. I have also felt very overwhelmed at times and believed the best thing to do was run away and start over, however, I feel like I could never just throw everything away as if it were nothing. I believe I could still live in society and have my family around, just finding peace within myself and living the life I want to live without caring what others have to say. Chris was simply just tired of living the life his father wanted him to live from an early age and felt trapped, because of his childhood it made him have a certain perspective on life and what it would be like to have freedom.

Living a nomad lifestyle led Chris to end up living in Alaska in an abandoned bus, where he'd eventually die alone. Even though I do believe this really can be an escape from reality, I don't think I could leave my family or simply disappear, leaving them worried and not caring how that would make them feel. Being protected his whole life, living in a bubble, and having everything handed to him made Chris desire danger and struggle. Although Chris did work for some time on his journey, I feel like he never really understood what it felt like to struggle. As someone who grew up knowing what it's like to struggle and worry about small things, I can say it would have been a blessing to be born into money. However, I understand that he felt different because he faced a different reality and lived a different lifestyle. Parents can be controlling and

want their children to live life a certain way “for their good”, but they have to understand that their children may not want to live that life and want to simply be happy.

In this essay, I discussed the similarities and differences between mine and McCandless’ life. I concluded that my and Chris’ definition of freedom is different in the way that he wants to escape reality to be free, and I believe that being free is doing what you love and not caring what others think. Mine and Chris’ upbringing was very different in the way that he lived a wealthy life and belonged to an upper-class family, I grew up in a middle-working-class family who worked hard, in the sun and struggled at some points. Having different upbringings and living different childhoods does build different types of characters and shapes people differently. McCandless and I did have similar relationships with our fathers in the way that we both struggled to feel love or affection from them, having built up anger towards them for their mistakes in the past. Having a similar bond with our parents helped me understand Chris’ reasoning for wanting to escape and start over. Reading this story and learning about Chris made me realize that happiness is only true when shared. Sometimes our anger and impulsive ideas blind us and make us not realize what we have until we lose it. I want to travel like Christopher McCandless, but I do plan to continue my studies so in the future I can travel.

Wild Discovery

By Margarita Briones

Have you ever felt like your freedom is being obtained or taken away from you? As the feeling of being trapped in a world where you're supposed to feel free. Would you go to an unthinkable extent as you risk your life, wealth, and education, erase any source of identification to cover your tracks, and leave your entire family and friends without them knowing just to find the definition of freedom?

A book published by Jon Krakauer in 1996 titled “Into The Wild” is the story of Christopher McCandless, a young man who had abandoned his stable, wealthy life to pursue an adventure away from the world and self-discovery in the wilderness of Alaska. McCandless had gotten rid of any form of identification, or possible trace, donated his entire savings of \$25,000 to a charity, and did not inform any of his family nor friends what he was planning. He started off his journey and throughout it all he faced many obstacles, meeting new people along the way and abandoning his car in a ditch. Throughout hiking into the wilderness, he met a variety of people and he later parted ways with them leading him to fend for himself, tragically leading to his death which is still questioned and conclusion to how he died. Throughout his journey Christopher defined personal freedom as the discovery of one's true self, believing this will be found by separating oneself from society, government, and people to get a hold of wilderness not worrying about the risks involved.

In the book “Into The Wild” McCandless states multiple times that his journey in the wilderness is to find his definition of personal freedom, being a very life-changing event to self-discovery and a disinterest in following society's rules. On page 56 of “Into The Wild,” McCandless wrote a letter to Ronald Franz who was introduced in chapter 6, and in the letter he expresses to Franz “the very basic core of a man’s living spirit is in his passion for adventure”. By evidence, we can infer that McCandless truly believes that for one to define their freedom takes to be in the presence of nature and explore it, he is pursuing his admiration to nature being an escape from all reality. Even then on page 163 chapter 15, on a note McCandless had left in the bus, he was living in while in Alaska wrote, “I now walk into the wild” symbolizing that he wanted to explore nature and embrace the standard free life in the wilderness, leaving behind all of societies standards, laws, etc to find the true him within himself. As he leaves behind the life

he once had, he also wants to have his life in control of his matters and not in the hands of society along with the government. In a conversation Chris had with people he had met along the way he stated on page 197, "I would rather die in the wild than live a life that is not true to myself." This is Chris inferring that before entering the wilderness he was living a life that wasn't his, that wasn't in his power, nor that he had zero freedom of it. Chris was so dedicated to finding the answer of personal freedom that on page 60 he stated, "The joy of life comes from our encounters with new experiences." which emphasizes the true definition of personal freedom is found within one exploring the unexplored. Through all of Chris' experiences, his definition of personal freedom was having the ability to live sincerely and independently away from society, government, rules, restrictions, expectations, and materialistic things.

As we have an insight of Chris McCandless's definition of personal freedom, I questioned what my true definition of personal freedom was and what it meant to me. In McCandless's words, personal freedom is one living sincerely and independently away from society, government, rules, restrictions, expectations, and materialistic things. I started to wonder if my definition differs from his. I believe that the definition of personal freedom is living a pure life, with the beliefs of one's god, and religion, and having no one around them hold them back from evolving into a better version of themselves. One does not need to isolate and escape from the world necessarily by erasing any trace of identification but to take a break away from any media, toxic environment, and places they are not benefiting from. One can find personal freedom and find their true self by taking some time away from people, and environments, and go to a temporary placement but recover and come back stronger, better, and healed. My definition of Personal freedom differs a lot from McCandless's definition of personal freedom simply because he feels that for one to find their true self and obtain personal freedom they have to isolate

themselves completely, lose any trace of contact, And Escape Society entirely by entering the weirdness but my Definition of personal freedom is one taking a break or departing themselves from certain situations or people to evolve and better themselves to find personal freedom and find their true selves.

As we cover the topic of Chris McCandless's definition of personal freedom and how my definition of personal freedom differs from his, I want to go over what Christopher was willing to sacrifice and leave behind to find this so-called personal freedom. Along his journey, Chris had shown a lot of his willingness to sacrifice anything and everything he had or once had, and was also willing to leave behind a wealthy, accomplished, and succeeding life to go explore the wilderness. McCandless speaks in regards to cutting off his family, on page 59, "I want to be free." reflecting the choice he made, he was willing to cut ties with his family after having to suppress so many of his feelings, growing up being held from doing certain things, and grew up in a toxic environment. He was not once second-guessed, completely cutting ties and any form of communication with his family because he was so dedicated to finding his freedom. As he was willing to give up any form of communication with his family he was also willing to give up all of his dreams, academically, career-wise, and any of his plans to find himself as he prioritized that more than anything as he states on page 56, "I want to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life" meaning he wants to get away from any traditional expectations being set within his family and normality of pursuing an academic career. He wanted to shift the perspective everyone has and escape any sort of standard being set because although he cared for his academic career he cared more for himself living a true and pure life he felt happy with and not held back with rather than living one he wasn't fulfilled with. We can see he was willing to give up anything on the timeline of his journey. Chris had abandoned his car on the stampede trail in

Alaska after getting stuck in a ditch on page 27, "I had to leave the car." shows he could've asked anyone driving past or called for any sort of help but since he had cut any form of communication with anyone and left his cellular device he decided what felt best for him was to abandon the car and continue his journey on foot, destined to find his true self. Throughout the book "Into The Wild" Chris shows his integrity by leaving anything and everything to find freedom in the unknown by donating money, getting rid of identification, cutting family off, parting ways from those he met, and denying any form of help from anyone he met along his journey. McCandless was so dedicated to doing this journey on his own that it sadly led to his death which is still inconclusive but he had passed away happily knowing he found what he was looking for all along and that was personal freedom.

Although Chris was willing to sacrifice a lot to find personal freedom it made me wonder what I am willing to sacrifice to obtain personal freedom. I admire McCandless's work and ability to just leave everything behind so willingly but I don't think I'd be so easily to up and leave everything. I only say I wouldn't be able to have the courage to sacrifice a certain thing being a form of identification and communication with family because for me family is all I had and have at all times. Along with my identification, it is the only thing that can be helpful to find me, locate me, and have a form of information about me. Materialistic things for me have no value nor losing any social status or friends because those things are always temporary and never last forever but family will always last forever because in my opinion family will be there at all times and at times "Friends" fail to be there because no one will have your back like family does. I'll be willing to sacrifice what is temporary and no money can buy rather than giving it up along with the most valuable to me.

In summary, the definition of what personal freedom meant to Christopher McCandless was having the ability to live sincerely and independently away from society, government, rules, restrictions, expectations, and materialistic things. Along with what the definition of personal freedom was to him the things he was willing to sacrifice were communication with the world, friends, family, an academic/succeeding career, and the wealth he had. Chris was very dedicated to finding his true self away from everyone in a very nomadic way rather than a present-time form. Although I and Christopher McCandless have different definitions of personal freedom and differ in what we are willing to sacrifice, we relate in one thing and that is to find yourself you have to be your true self but away from people who don't grow you or benefit you in any way. Time will heal, solitary and loneliness are possibly the best answers to finding yourself rather than being accompanied by what will only hurt you.

Different Lives

By Gustavo Carmona

I read *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer. In the book, the character Christopher McCandless goes to Alaska and dies in the bus. In my essay, I will discuss how Chris and my dad's life are kind of similar. The only difference is the choices.

Chris left to travel and to find himself. My dad left his parents to gain more money to help his parents. My dad saw that he knew that he was not going to get much money from where he worked to help his parents so he took it to his own hands to help his family. At first, it was hard because he was still a child so many people would give him a chance until he showed them all how good he was. Chris's story was that no one cared about what he did because they thought he was a joke and the things he said they didn't believe in him. So then Chris wanted to prove them wrong but he never got to because he had no connection to the people he used to talk to.

When Chris was in the wild he did some things that nobody would do but that how determined Chris was he burned all the money he had he also burned his ID which for me was all dumb moves but he did what he did what he thought was right. When my dad left his parents to work more He didn't have a phone as a way to talk to his parents so he had connections with other family and friends so that was how he kept in touch with his family. My dad and Chris are so different yet so similar in life experience decisions.

When Chris was hungry he would hunt and kill but he would feel bad for that animal and he didn't know what to do with all the meat he had so within just a couple of days the meat went bad and he lost so much food. And then when he went hunting again he didn't want to hurt the animal so then he didn't hunt the animal anymore. So then he was just eating fruit like grapes and mango or coconut. My dad would take care of the animals and he never liked to kill an animal and he would treat the animals like human beings. My dad had horses donkeys chickens dogs and many more and he learned a lot from my grandpa.

When Chris was eating he didn't have much. So slowly he was dying by the day and then he got food poison by eating something that for the long term took him down. He ate what is called potato seed and they are not good for you so he did what he was eating. But with my dad from a young age, he was learning how to survive by himself so he knew what to do and when not to do. My dad knew what was good to eat and what was not good to eat. My dad never forgot. My dad never went to middle school or high school. He never even finished 2nd grade because he decided to work and not waste six hours in a classroom. He learned most of the things that he knows from my grandpa.

When Chris was in any sort of trouble he would always try to get out of trouble by himself and that was because he would rarely see anybody. After all, he was always by himself

so all he had was himself. My dad was the same. When my dad would get in some sort of trouble he would always sort things out for himself and never try to get people in his mind. He would never blame other people for the things he did. People would blame him for the others people's mistakes, to the point now, he doesn't even help his own family because they broke his trust some many times and he could take it no more.

What Chris tried to do in the wild he probably didn't expect to be that hard in his mind. The whole time he would try to find within himself and not suffer from the world of people. With my dad, he was always ready. He was never scared to face any challenge that the world would bring him. He would always face them and always knew what to do. With Chris, he never knew what to do. So then that is what I think that got Chris killed and he sadly lost his life because he was unprepared for the world.

Into the Wild

By Remy Castillo

Have you ever felt trapped by society? Are you willing to sacrifice comfort for personal freedom? Well, Christopher McCandless felt trapped by society and wanted to feel free. He ventured all around the U.S. and eventually reached his dream Alaska. He sacrificed a lot to feel free, he gave up comfort to be free in Alaska. In this essay, I will discuss how I felt like Chris, what I am willing to sacrifice for freedom, and what freedom means to me.

Christopher gave up a lot to feel free. He donated \$24,000 to Oxfam America, a hunger relief organization. He left his family behind, he didn't even tell them. He just fell off the side of the earth and did so with no warning or signs, nothing just dipped. Chris also abandoned his car in the middle of an abandoned road after it flooded. With Chris's last bit of money in his pocket, he burned it and left things he found unnecessary to carry in his car. Honestly, I do not know if

I'll ever burn my money, but I would donate my money to a charity. If I were Chris I would've told my family that I was leaving, but I wouldn't let them know where I was because I needed a break from them. Sometimes they're very loud and obnoxious.

Chris left and abandoned his family because his dad was a bigamist. His dad had a whole other family and married another woman while still married to Chris' mom. His dad was also pressuring him to make career choices that he didn't feel like making. I understand how Chris feels towards his dad. My dad was also an interesting character. My dad was an alcoholic who didn't know how to take responsibility for his actions. He also cheated on my mom and put me and my sibling through a bunch of crap. Grateful I got away, but at the end of the day, I still love him because you know he is my dad, but I don't like him well. I do not appreciate his actions.

Chris was passionate about adventure and exploring what the world had to offer. He even wrote Ron a letter saying "The joy of life comes from our encounters with new experiences, hence there is no greater joy than to have an endlessly changing horizon, for each day to have a different sun." That's the most real thing I've heard in a while. I love exploring and going on adventures. It's very relaxing. It helps get my mind off things and be at the moment. Even just sitting there and watching the wildlife around me go about their day, just observing everything life has to offer.

Every person Chris met on his adventure had a different experience with him, but they all had positive feedback on him. They said Chris was an interesting character and that he was a very memorable person. He connected with every person on a different level. Before he died, I believe he wrote in his book that you need people to be social to live. I believe he meant those people, so they could help him in a way or form, and he helped them without even knowing it. I

always get told I'm unique and that I have a memorable vibe/personality. And I like people, especially people who hold a conversation instead of being dry.

In this essay, I discussed how I felt like Chris, what I am willing to sacrifice for freedom, and what freedom means to me. Both Chris and I have felt and had similar experiences. We both live for adventure and seeing what the world has to offer. I believe Chris would've been a great influence on society. He had more to offer this world than what he put out. *Into the Wild* was a very self-reflecting book to read. It makes you think and make connections.

Death by Belief

By Amira Crawford

Would you die for your beliefs? I think we say we will a lot but if we were faced with the impending choice to die with our selfies or to live against our true being. I know what you would choose because we as humans are selfish at birth. Trying to save the life that is bound to die one day. For what? A little longer in *Into The Wild* by Jon Krakauer goes over the story of a young man who died by his beliefs. Separated from the popular opinion I would too. Christopher, unlike me, lived a privileged life, a blessed prodigy. Who am I to be compared? Struggle after struggle is all I knew in my life with moments of bliss. Who is to say that just because a man is rich means he doesn't know the word pain? Maybe that is all a man who is blessed with objects knows. What is the worth of things that satisfy the flesh and eyes if it is cold to the heart? Passion ignites the heart when it wakes up in the morning. Fulfillment is what we strive for all our lives.

What is living if we are simply living? This is where me and Christopher are alike. We burn with a hunger that's more the success than surviving and "making something of ourselves". We, after following society for so long, have strived for something greater, something more

powerful. Isn't a degree more than a thin paper that shows what we have accomplished after twelve or more years of hunching over a desk? Your possessions are few and your fulfillment is more empty in space. When you live alone and you decorate your walls, will you be able to fill them with pictures of you truly living or will it have a plain simple degree? Then will you truly see how pathetic your life is? Now here is where Christopher and I share one mind. Breaking the chain of society and finding dependence in ourselves. Finding everything in nothing. To live is to die and to gain is to lose.

Christopher and I reject society for something greater. In the story, we follow Christopher's journey as he leaves society and in a sort of way restarts his life with nothing. We then see how he travels not only physically but mentally. We scratch the inside of the deep thoughts of his head that we will never know. I started in a way with nothing when I started finding my way to Christ. Everything I held onto for most of my life I had to let go of in a matter of weeks: Money, music, shows, people, and enjoyment. All was gone with my new sense of self which left me empty searching for a new sense of fulfillment. I walked in darkness for a while questioning if my ideals were truly the way. Then I realized things outside my desires, we as humans have swallowed the keys of the chains we say we wish to break. That is when I deleted all social media. I used something other than the one I use for communications. I deleted the games that gave me enjoyment. I talked to and let off the people who were damning me secretly. I set boundaries and let myself do the things I would be ashamed to do before. I stopped letting the opinions of others control me like a puppet. They bleed just like how I bleed. They are just as mortal as me so why would I treat them as gods greater than me? Society is an opinion that gives people a sense of meaning and belonging. The shackles that bind them do not bind me for I have

thrown up the key that once made me ill. While fools search the ground with their head down low, wandering the land. I looked up and saw the light with a straight path.

Execution means two things; a plan or death, but for some, it leads to both. Christopher and I differentiate in the manner. He left everyone without a clue, empathetic of the burden it would cause. A man's ego will drag him to the grave. Even if Christopher thought he would return to his family at the end of his journey there will always be a possibility. More than 8,000 thousand people a day die. Do you think they thought that day was their last day? We forget every day that we are mortals and death shows favor to no one. Who am I to walk about thinking I'm promised even another second? If I had to leave all I had for my morals I would tell everyone I love them. I would hold them as if I truly never wanted to let them go. They say grief happens when someone dies. Grief can happen when you miss something so much your heart turns heavy. You can grieve someone still alive and I would try to take as much of that grief away from my family as I could. I would even try to keep contact if possible but to leave my family without a clue would make me feel more guilt than I can bear. Yet if I was forced to go without reason or explanation I would even if it would pain me. However, that's one case scenario that I wish to avoid at all costs.

What drives Christopher and me are our beliefs, yet our beliefs are different. He is driven by philosophy. He wanted to break free from society because of his morals. He saw flaws in his family and in society. As a result, he ventured out and to his liking as a protest and rejected all he knew. I am driven by religion, specifically called Christianity. The rules I have made and the morals I follow are all driven by a higher being. The Lord Almighty the creator of everything there is, was, and is to be. The body is mortal but the soul never dies. I strive to live a life plan as the Lord's will and his law. I believe that if the world let go of their meaningless belongings and

relationships and followed the way of the Lord the world would be in harmony and in balance. Sadly, the heart is born evil, and no matter how hard we try we are driven like a moth to a flame. Not understanding the danger of our sins till we are burnt to ash. The truth is I will never truly know what Christopher's true morals are but I know me and him are set apart. He wishes to break the rules and I wish to follow them.

How far would I go for the sake of my beliefs? The gruesome lengths I would go may be too much to speak of. So let me explain in a simpler manner. There is a verse in the Bible, "...to die is gain." Why should I fear death? We must all come and meet the eyes of hades. Why would I abandon what is true in my heart to have a few more miserable years in my life. Not even the rich can escape death. Many people have grown soft. Once it took an army to break a man but now the sword of the tongue can bring waste to an army. Why is it that we cherish things and people that will be forgotten for years and years to come. Only a few make it into history books but realistically the chances of it being any of us is few. People waste their lives trying to be remembered. Generations go and generation comes, and as each one is born the memory of another dies. So why don't we focus on the true goal in life. The life that comes after this one. I see this life as one big test that we fail or pass. We have been given the rules and how to study and execute. If you think for even a moment I love anyone greater than God you are foolish. If you think I will spare your ego or character out of pity then again you are wrong. My morals wake me up and lay me down. My aggression is a non-perishable flame. Argue with me. I will love to bring you down, battle with me and see we both bleed. Why should I fear someone who can die as I can die and hold no true power. Yet I only fear the one who can toss my soul into hell. So why would I let man made values rule me? In order to save my life? Take me life and

my father will favor me for my commitment and give me the privilege of showing my father my devotion.

This is where me and Christopher are alike. We burn with hunger that makes us look crazy. We are told by people that we are wasting our lives following false hopes. We, after following society for so long, have strived for something greater, something more powerful. We both have and would do things unacceptable to most to prove our morals.

Manifesting a Peaceful Life Essay

By Iriana Gonzales

In The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz he discusses The Four Agreements which are being impeccable with your words, not taking things personally, not making assumptions, and always doing your best. Don Miguel Ruiz is a writer but he also studied to become a doctor but never fully went through it. “We tend to make assumptions about everything”, Don Miguel Ruiz stated. This personally relates to me because I tend to just make assumptions. For example, I was talking to this person and they seemed close with their best friend and I believed they had more than something other than just being friends just by making assumptions. I let it get to my head and I just ended up letting that person go without any explanation to them, and just letting the assumption get to my head/ I will be talking about how I will use these agreements to improve my life in all aspects, being mentally happy, stable, loyal, and my health by following the four agreements.

First, I will discuss how I am impeccable with my words. A way I’m impeccable with my words is thinking about what I'm saying and how would the other person take it and they might have a bad reaction. So I think about what I say before saying it. Don Miguel Ruiz states, “Through the words you express your creative power. It is through the words that you manifest

everything.” This is a reason why you should be impeccable with what you say. Your intent manifest through expressing words of what you are feeling to what you really are will all be manifested. When I'm impeccable with my words for example my little sister is very sensitive when it comes to her self image, I can be impeccable, by not speaking with hurtful words or anything to speak with negative intent because if i don't have anything nice to say i shouldn't say it at all. I am Impeccable with my words because I speak with integrity and truth when needed most of the time. I mean most things I say with a positive attitude.

I will discuss how to not take things personally. Don Miguel Ruiz states, “Don’t take anything personally because by taking things personally you set yourself up to suffer for nothing.” Taking things personally of what someone has to say about you. It's just a reflection of themselves. A time I knew not to take anything personally was when I was just starting high school I used to get picked on a lot, every chance someone was able to comment on my image they would take the chance to bully me I used to think everything they used to say was true but I knew deep down I'm not that bad of a persona and as time went on I realized they just weren't happy with themselves. I will not take things personally because I live a stress-free life and not worrying about what people have to say about me.

Next, I will discuss how I will not make assumptions. Don Miguel Ruiz states “We create a lot of emotional poison just by making assumptions and taking it personally because usually we start gossiping about our assumptions.” When I was little I was very sensitive in my elementary school years. I grew up getting bullied because I was more on the chubby side as a kid and as I got older I would make the assumption that when someone would look at me i would think that they were making fun of me and my looks from my past history of getting bullied I started having emotional poison towards everyone and even myself. I will not make assumptions

because you end up suffering and creating emotional poison for yourself and all I have to do is be brave, ask my questions and ask for what I need so I can be heard and there are no assumptions.

Next, I will discuss how I will do my best. In the book Don Miguel Ruiz states, “Under any circumstance always do your best, no matter and no less. But remember that your best will never be the same from one moment to the next.” I’m starting to relate to this quote because I used to never try for school I was three months into my first year of high school because I lost hope in myself but here I am today and I try every day to come to school on time and come for a fully week I know that there's going to be days that I'm late or I end up not coming to school I'm not going to let it knock me down so I'm just going to push forward and keep doing my best even if it isn't better than the day before I will just try my hardest I can. I will do my best: "Doing your best is taking action because you love it, not because you're expecting an award.”

In conclusion, following these agreements will help me become a better and happier mature person and I will stop taking things so personally. This will help me reach my goal of becoming a better person, making my life easier and my mind at peace. I can manifest these Four Agreements for a peaceful, loving life that I can enjoy to the fullest. I will focus on getting money and becoming the family mom I dream of becoming.

Freedom’s Sacrifices

By Fritzi Guerrero-Navarro

In the book “Into the Wild” by Jon Krakauer. Christopher says “The core of man’s spirit comes from new experiences.” It emphasizes the importance of stepping out of our comfort zones and trying new things and how they can shape who we are and how we see the world. I

will compare and contrast my views on freedom and Chris's views on freedom. What Chris sacrifices for freedom, and what I am willing to sacrifice for freedom are very different.

Chris believes freedom is abandoning his identity. He burns his ID and gives himself a fake name, and social security. He abandoned his responsibilities to his friends and his family, Chris thinks freedom is wild and adventurous, and no responsibilities.

My views on freedom are very different from Chris'. I have the freedom to express myself and my opinions. I express myself through my clothes, my thoughts, and my hair. I have the freedom to voice my thoughts. Self-expression is my freedom, and I'm very thankful to have that privilege. My views on freedom, at the end of the day, won't and haven't cost me my life.

Chris was willing to sacrifice his life for his freedom. In a postcard, Chris wrote to Wayne Westerberg he said "If this adventure proves fatal and you don't ever hear from me again I want you to know you're a great man. I now walk into the wild, Alex." Chris' adventure did prove fatal.

Unlike Chris, I am not willing to sacrifice my life for freedom. Or rather, my views on freedom don't require me to sacrifice my life. I'm willing to sacrifice my comfort to try new things. My sacrifices are not fatal to me or my well-being.

What Chris sacrifices for freedom and what I am willing to sacrifice for freedom are very different. Chris was willing to sacrifice his life to express his views on freedom and my views on freedom don't require that. It took Chris' death for him to realize "Happiness is only real when shared". He realized that his views on the freedom to find happiness weren't true and that his being 'free' didn't have to cost him his life.

Four Agreements Essay

By Cassedy Hernandez

My name is Cassedy Hernandez, I am seventeen years old. I have had quite a long journey with many rough patches along the way but I'm finally at a point in my life where I feel at peace and in a new school that I arrived in, earlier this year in March. I will discuss a Toltec wisdom book called, *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz. Don Miguel Ruiz was born into a family of healers, and raised in rural Mexico, and a near-death experience changed his life and he dedicated his life to sharing the wisdom of the ancient Toltecs. Practicing the four agreements will drastically improve your life and how you view things.

First, I will talk about how I am impeccable with my words. I am impeccable with my word by being considerate and looking at things from not only my perspective but the other person's perspective. Not too long ago I used to struggle with seeing things from both perspectives and coming to a realization that what I say is not only affecting me but could also affect the other person in ways that I'm not aware of. In the book there is a quote that speaks to me and fits perfectly with what I'm trying to say, it reads, " Like a sword with two edges, your word can create the most beautiful dream, or your word can destroy everything around you" (pg.26). I often got into disputes with my sister and we would fight every day. I just couldn't come to accept that she was going through something and just taking it out on me. Not only did I make her situation worse, I also caused myself so much emotional stress. I am impeccable with my word because my word has destroyed things and I would rather prefer if my word were to bring comfort and joy instead.

Furthermore, I will discuss how to not take things personally. Taking things personally is misinterpreting someone's thoughts and words and believing them to be about ourselves. Taking

things personally is one of the worst things you can do to yourself because it can cause you to feel insecure, ashamed, or inadequate. I will not take things personally because I usually do take it personally and the “mitote” in my head whispers to me that what they are saying is true and when they comment on my appearance. Listening to that voice in my head just tears my self-esteem apart every time and causes me to hide certain aspects of myself. I will not take things personally to finally allow myself to be blissful. In Don Miguel Ruiz’s words, “ Don’t take anything personally because by taking things personally you set yourself up to suffer for nothing” (pg.56).

Additionally, I will talk through how I will not make assumptions. I know almost all of us make assumptions and struggle to stop making assumptions because it seems impossible or we are too lazy and could care less. I struggle a lot to not make assumptions about most things because I try to protect myself from the unknown. We assume to try and attempt to outsmart a person or situation to keep us from getting hurt, we tend to think of the worst and sometimes distance ourselves or detach ourselves from the situation or people because of these assumptions. Don Miguel Ruiz’s view is, “Because we are afraid to ask for clarification, we make assumptions, and believe we are right about the assumptions, then we defend our assumptions and try to make someone else wrong” (pg.64). It will be hard but step-by-step I will stop assuming and just ask for answers and seek clarification to questions I have and take it as that because all I'm doing assuming is creating a lot of emotional poison.

Similarly, I will talk about how I will do my best. Doing your best is not being dishonest, untruthful, or sacrificing your joy to succeed in something, when you do that you get frustrated, you judge yourself, you regret things, and you feel guilt, most people just do things to seek out the reward at the end and that is not doing your best. Don Miguel Ruiz strongly argues, “Doing

your best is taking the action because you love it, not because you're expecting an award” (pg.79). Your best is always changing, it's never the same, doing your best is living life passionately, loving, being good to yourself, being productive, and just being happy. I will do my best by only doing things that make me happy and that I want to do, and I will practice not expecting to succeed all the time but rather to make sure I'm doing my best.

In conclusion, following these agreements will help you achieve personal freedom. Practicing the four agreements has not only helped me become a better person but has allowed me to be more happy and at peace with myself. When you practice the four agreements you allow doors to be open to possibilities of ending emotional pain, suffering, and chaos. Following the four agreements will help you view things differently and is the best way to achieve a better life.

Imagine

By Sebastian Lopez

Imagine venturing into the unknown land of Alaska with little experience of survival but drive to do it, what would you do? In 1992 GPS was not available like today but McCandles didn't want GPS or a map he threw away the map and wandered into the unknown for a new life as Alex. In this essay, I will compare Chris and my Dad's life to each other.

The relationship between McCandless and his father was complex, to say the least. McCandless was deeply affected when the discovery of his dad's double life with another family was uncovered. He felt betrayed by his father and his lifestyle with high expectations, this played a huge role in his journey into the wild. My dad was raised by his mother pretty much but even then not much because of her working and stuff, his dad never really was around to raise him like a father so he was by himself and roaming the streets and wilderness also hanging around adults

That caused my dad to seek out how life is by venturing into the world. Life during school for McCandels was good; he was successful in it and graduated with honors in 1990. For my dad, on the other hand, was different. He used to ditch school a lot and go around sometimes just going back home on a tree. He never graduated but was very good in math and other stuff. But McCandless changed after he noticed the materialism and hypocrisy in society that also contributed to his journey as well.

McCandless' mistakes were not preparing or the lack of it, underestimating nature, isolation with no escape plan or plan B. Those were his mistakes in his journey my Dads mistakes were living too free without caution. Now he's changed but he's told me stories of his past mistakes. Most are car crashes and driving fast with zero caution like one time he crashed on Highway 74 and fell 50 ft down the mountain with cactus and sharp rocks. He somehow survived a lot of similar experiences close to death but he changed for the good. McCandles unfortunately passed away from his mistakes along the way although his vision was good his execution was not, he just wanted to live free.

My dad also wanted to live free but he started a family, he worked hard to support his family he would work hours per day with little to no sleep to this day he does not sleep well but he tries. McCandless was also a hard worker but he didn't have a family of his own he worked for his new life and eventually decided to explore and he ended up in Alaska where his final days were near.

The final comparison is their philosophies are pretty much the same like "Simplicity". McCandles liked the lifestyle of a simple life away from the complex desires of modern society. My dad is the same way but he understands to succeed in this society is to go along with it but live free in his way or for anyone. Another is Anti-Materialism, my dad likes some stuff that has

value but finds value in nature and life way more than anything, on the other hand, McCandless did not like any materialistic items or stuff like that he rejected material wealth and social normalities, he believed that true happiness came from life experiences rather than items. That also drove him to seek a new life of solitude in the wilderness. Unlike my dad, he learned from valuing life and experiences to a certain extent he also values creations, but most of all they both were equally spiritual McCandless's philosophies remind me of my Dad quite a bit. "Happiness is only real when shared," is a quote by the author John Krakauer which I think applies to my Dad and McCandles. They both like to adventure alone but they both don't value sharing it.

Art

Mountain Pose

By Damian Acosta



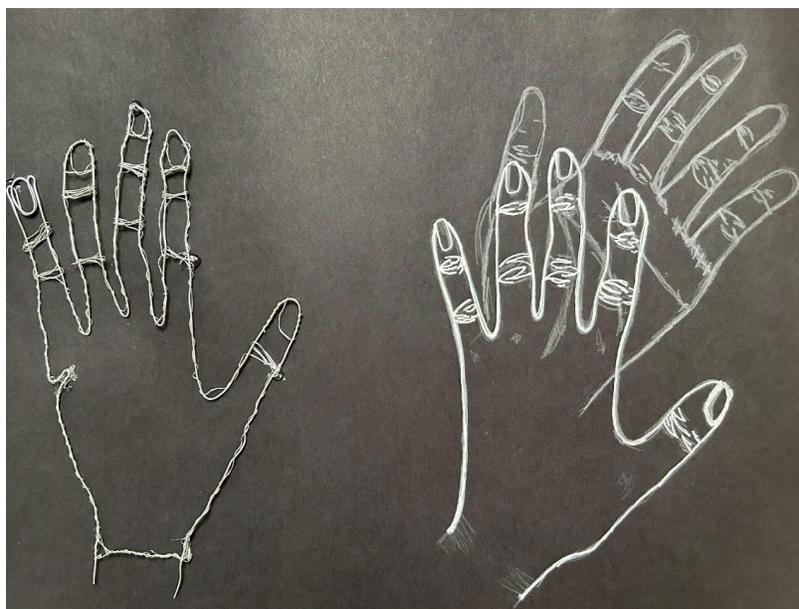
Toltec Warrior

By Ramon Barajas



Tin Hands

By Remy Castillo



Joshua Tree Daze

By Remy Castillo



Your Eyes

By Remy Castillo



Car Wash Stance

By Ivan Colin Miranda



Where Land Meets Sky

By Amira Crawford



Skull Thoughts

By Daniela Espinoza



Chalk Love

By Samantha F.



Hojalate Mexican Tin Art

By Gilberto Flores



In the Clouds

By Adam Gaona



A New Pair of Glasses
By Pablo Gamora-Garcia

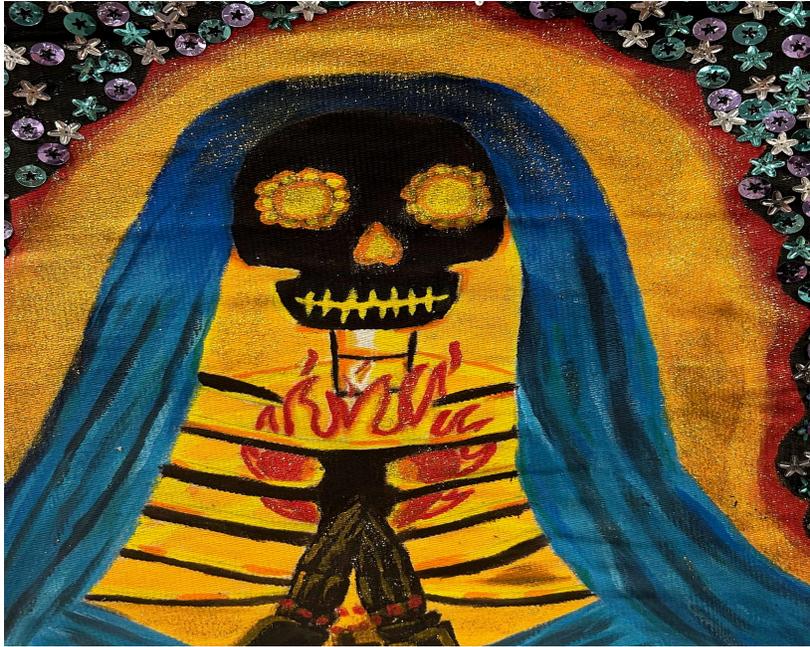


Goddess Warrior
By Cassedy Hernandez



Heart of Fire

By Cassesy Hernandez



Wings

By Daniel Herrera



Super Latina

By Athalia Huerta



Hojalata Mexican Tin Art

By Octavios Landaverde



Hojalata Mexican Tin Art

By Joanna Linares



Go Toltec

By Briana Lopez



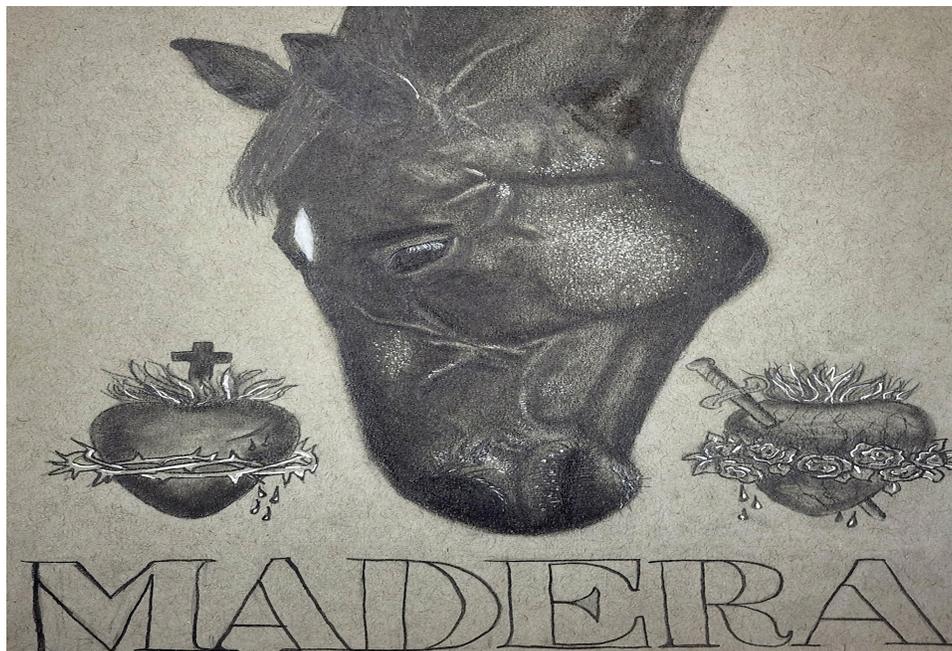
Tornado Skies

By Briana Lopez



Downward Heart

By Dulce Madera



Sunset at Newport Beach

Gabby McLain



Powerful Weapons

By Katherin Morales Reyes



Underneath the Skin

By Katherin Morales Reyes



What Do You Believe

By Stan O'Neil



Claws

By Tristan Reina



Believe

By Mikalah Rivera



Purple Thoughts

By Jacqueline Tapia



Smile and Bones

By Mayla Zamora



Butterfly Eyes

By Isabel Zermeno



Photography

Leaves of Light

By Perla Espinoza



Gated Flowers

By Layla Hovland



Walking Away

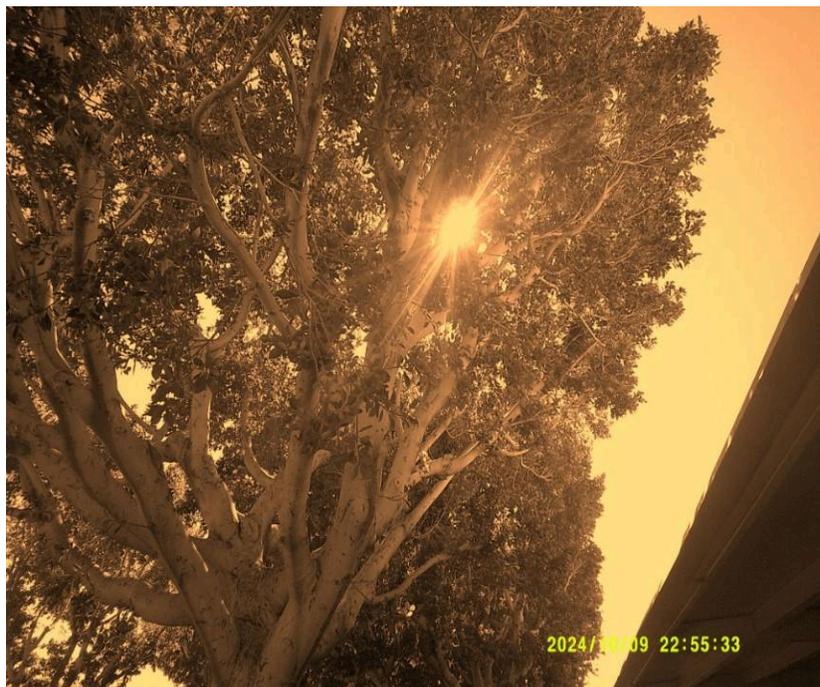
By Elijah Montes



Hidden Nature
By Serenity Peralez



Sepia Skies
By William Rucker



Dia De Los Muertos
By Associated Student Body (ASB)



Starry Eye
By Cathalina Yee



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