

December 2022

THIRD EYE



WRITINGS

Literary Journal of Edward L. Wenzlaff Alternative Education Center.

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*A special thanks and a big hug goes out to Brenda Gunderson for adopting our class. We are grateful for Sue Emery's editing eyes. A special thanks goes to Donna Myrow for her input.*

*We dedicate this journal to the students of the world.*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover Page and Closing Page Art, *Rain Vigil*

### **Introduction**

Genesis, Dr. Jacqueline Mantz 5

### **Biographies**

7

### **Poetry**

The Maze, *Ezequiel Benitez* 11

Why I Don't Understand Why I'm So..., *Shadow Coli* 11

Frost, *Katlin Cunningham Carbajal* 12

Tragedy, *Sadie Flores* 12

Losing I, Me, Us, *Tyanah Lewis* 13

The Teenage Heart, *Melissa Robles* 13

Reoccurring Game, *Melissa Robles* 14

You, *Melissa Robles* 14

Candlelight, *Melissa Robles* 15

"Mom", *Melissa Robles* 16

Can you hear me?, *Melissa Robles* 17

Stone on the Road, *Natan Rodriguez* 18

I Mourn, *Isabel Rosas* 19

Tired, *Isabel Rosas* 19

Anxiety, *Orianna Ruiz* 20

No Escape, *Jhoanna Sanchez* 21

Already Have Fallen, *Victoria Session* 22

Third Eye Writings, December 2022

2

|  |    |
|--|----|
| A Mouse and the Rock of Society, <i>Rain Vigil</i>       | 22 |
| Complicated, <i>Marlene Zaragoza</i>                     | 23 |
| My Flowers, <i>Marlene Zaragoza</i>                      | 24 |
| You, <i>Marlene Zaragoza</i>                             | 24 |
| <b>Stories</b>   |    |
| The Saturday of Flying Tires, <i>Christian Anderson</i>  | 26 |
| A Road Trip, <i>Shadow Coli</i>                          | 27 |
| Severed Trust, <i>Edward Jimenez</i>                     | 28 |
| Lost and Loved, <i>Tyanah Lewis</i>                      | 29 |
| Happy Memory with my Grandfather, <i>Dylan Mondragon</i> | 30 |
| Death on a Loop, <i>Isabel Rosas</i>                     | 31 |
| <b>Essays</b>  |    |
| School Of Winners, <i>Dulce Alvarez</i>                  | 33 |
| Changes, <i>Ezequiel Benitez</i>                         | 34 |
| Unconditional, <i>Dominick Burdin</i>                    | 35 |
| Communication Rethinking, <i>Shadow Coli</i>             | 37 |
| Oxygen Dreams, <i>Blanca Garcia</i>                      | 38 |
| If I Don't Who Will?, <i>Kaylee Joya</i>                 | 40 |
| Never Give Up No Matter What Happens, <i>Elias Lopez</i> | 41 |
| Close to Success, <i>Jose Magana</i>                     | 43 |
| Worth it in the Final Round, <i>Dylan Mondragon</i>      | 44 |
| The Mountain I Climbed, <i>Melissa Robles</i>            | 45 |
| Stepping Up for Myself, <i>Isabel Rosas</i>              | 46 |
| Third Eye Writings, December 2022                        |    |

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Quiero Ser Algo Grande, <i>Yamilet Rubio</i>                           | 47 |
| The Modern Stephen King: A Normative Critique, <i>Victoria Session</i> | 49 |
| Impeccability, <i>Marlene Zaragoza</i>                                 | 52 |
| <b>Journals</b>  |    |
| Push, <i>Katlin Cunningham Carbajal</i>                                | 54 |
| My Progression, <i>Edward Jimenez</i>                                  | 54 |
| Writing, <i>Melissa Robles</i>   | 55 |
| Sharp Change, <i>Natan Rodriguez</i>                                   | 56 |
| Time, <i>Natan Rodriguez</i>   | 56 |
| The Dream, <i>Natan Rodriguez</i>                                      | 57 |
| Betrayal, <i>Isabel Rosas</i>  | 57 |
| Hope, <i>Marlene Zaragoza</i>  | 58 |

## Genesis

By Dr. Jacqueline Mantz

We sat in a circle and sipped our camomile tea; five females bound together by a love of the written word. We smiled at one another as we ingested warmth and prepared ourselves for the day's writing workshop class. All of these young female writers were students at Edward Wenzlaff Alternative Education School, otherwise known as a continuation school.

Their journey to this moment was a result of suffering. I was no exception. My own struggles during the time of Covid brought me back home to teaching. To find one's purpose is everything and worth it all. Students in this class were all once at the comprehensive high school but during Covid many of them failed classes. So here we were, all together in this lavender scented room. I had a coffee cup heater plugged into the wall and I put my scented candle on it. The candles lasted forever this way and reminded me of the way beautiful teaching bends time.

We came from different perspectives and realities but the one thing we all had in common is we chose this class. We chose to write. The premise of this weekly one-hour and a half class was simple. We met every week for nine weeks. We drank tea, meditated, studied a topic, and then responded to a writing prompt. The goal was to write weekly and by the end of the course edit one piece for submission to a literary journal.

Some classes such as this felt magical as if I dreamed into being such a group of sensitive souls able to wield a pen like a sword; cutting the many layers of their experiences into bite-sized sounds and images. These fellow women of the pen made me proud to sit in this room with them and guide them through the experience of writing.

During the silent writing portion of our class, Lana Del Ray's voice played in the background. Some of us wrote as we sat on our mats and others sat at their desks. Students went

to warm up their tea without a word. The goal was to free students of the constraints of this teaching institution, to make them feel like they were coming home when they wrote, a precious sacred space within themselves.

That day we studied self-compassion and we serendipitously all hand wrote letters to ourselves. We wrote of our greatest suffering and wrote words of comfort as if we were our dear friend.

Our suffering has led to empathy thus we listened with attentive ears and eyes as each writer read their letter. We snapped our gratitude. Those letters, those lovely heart-breaking letters, I cannot read to you made me clear my throat and heave a deep sigh within.

That day was such a challenge as I read of my greatest suffering. To be vulnerable and authentic with one's students is to feel as if one is climbing up the tallest tree in the wind. It has made all the difference in students' decisions to be their authentic selves in their writings.

If this was any other day, I would have asked my fellow writers to type their pieces. That day I did not. These letters were sacred and belonged solely to each writer.

"Find a safe place to keep your letter," I said. None of these letters may ever be seen or heard again. These letters may be too bright with pain for others to see or they may someday be uncaged to fly out again into the word sky of the writer's world.

Last year the Third Eye Writing class, composed entirely of female students, wrote many powerful pieces that were never published anywhere but on the walls of our classroom. Thus, the seed was planted for the Third Eye Writings Literary Journal. The writings found in this journal are from students in the Third Eye Writings elective class and from other students who submitted pieces who attend our school. May you read their poems, stories, and essays and understand the truth and power of students' voices.

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Shadow Coli**

Shadow Coli is seventeen years old and lives in Desert Hot Springs. She loves animals and owns four dogs, two turtles, twenty chickens, five ducks, four turkeys, and two roosters. Shadow wants to have a career as a dog trainer or to work on *Broadway*. She also likes to help animals, take them in, nurse them back to health, and helps them find a loving home or sets them free. She visits family in Mexico often. She is an aunt and has five older siblings. Her hobbies are baking, making crafts, writing, drawing, and singing. She is currently a 12th grader at Edward Wenzlaff Education Center. When she goes to college she wants to major in animal health and behavior. She likes horror movies and fictional stories.

### **Katlin Cunningham Carbajal**

Katlin Cunningham Carbajal started going to the gym at the age of sixteen. Katlin is on her way to graduating from Edward Wenzlaff Alternative Education Center, a continuation high school in Desert Hot Springs. The first thing Katlin plans on doing right after graduating is focusing on her fitness journey and becoming a Fitness Personal Trainer. Katlin has been training for two years now and can't wait to be able to help others. She is currently bulking and getting ready for next summer's cut. Katlin enjoys working out because it distracts her mind and helps her stay fit. She currently lives with her older sister who supports her a lot and wants her to achieve her dream.

### **Edward Jimenez**

Edward Jimenez is a teenage student who has put himself through many difficult times, only because he doesn't understand the importance of things. Edward always had a hard time with school, he never got promoted from middle school. He attended high school the next year



and continued to make the same mistakes. The pandemic was a big deal for Edward's whole family as everyone *but* him tested positive.

Last year, Edward was given the news that he had been accepted to a new school. When Edward went to his new school it was shaky at first, but Edward started to appreciate the teachers and education he was being taught. Edward is still having trouble to this day with life, but he enjoys watching films of any genre and it eases his mind.

### **Dr. Jacqueline Mantz**

Dr. Jacqueline Mantz became a teacher through providence. Jacqueline nearly dropped out of high school but graduated with the support of her family and teachers. She returned to college at the age of twenty-four after a mentor and peace officer told her she had potential. Jacqueline has a B.A. in English, two Master's degrees, and an Educational Doctorate. Jacqueline's philosophy of education is simple yet deeper than any ocean. Teaching is an act of love and courage.

Jacqueline volunteers for the Prison Education Project (PEP) teaching courses on autobiographical writing, forgiveness and healing, college and career readiness, and Shakespeare. Jacqueline co-wrote a book with a woman currently incarcerated titled *Embracing Dawn* under her pen name Marie Rodriguez. She is currently assisting another individual, who is incarcerated, in publishing her memoir. Jacqueline is currently working on a memoir of her own about her teaching experiences.

### **Samuel Micholson**

Samuel Micholson was born on January 31, 2006 in San Diego, California. Samuel moved to Desert Hot Springs about two years ago, when quarantine started. He loved to call his friends every day and play games with them. Because of this, Samuel did not balance his school

life and personal life and ended up failing his sophomore year. Samuel transferred to this continuation school and plans to graduate this year. He has turned his life around, and has big dreams. Samuel loves to write and draw, so he plans to one day create a comic book series.

### **Melissa Robles**

Melissa Robles is a seventeen year-old student at Mount San Jacinto continuation school. She lives with her mother and younger brother. She has a white fluffy dog named Palomo that she loves to play with all the time. In her free time she likes to crochet and talk to her friends. Melissa is very talkative and makes friends easily. After graduation, Melissa plans to attend college and study psychology. Melissa's poems are being published in a chapbook by the Riverside County Office of Education.

### **Natan Rodriguez**

Natan Rodriguez was born and raised his entire life within Desert Hot Springs. He is currently a part of the Desert Hot Springs High School's marching band which is directed by Mr. Rodriguez. Some of his interests involve music, the *Dark Souls* series, and *Berserk* by Kentaro Miura. Natan plans to further his education in music after high school. Natan is currently attending Edward Wenzlaff Alternative Education Center in order to make up credits so he can graduate in 2023.

### **Victoria Session**

Victoria (Azyah) Session is a seventeen year-old female who is a senior at Edward Wenzlaff Education Center in Desert Hot Springs. Victoria has been obsessed with horror and music since she was an infant. Her favorite movie since she was five is the original *IT*. She grew up on classic horror films such as *Jeepers Creepers*. Victoria is fascinated with space and natural disasters. She loves a wide spectrum of music.

### **Rain Vigil**

Rain (Ashley) is a senior at Edward Wenzlaff Education Center in Desert Hot Springs. Rain's passion is art in its many forms. Rain is the president of the Gay Student Alliance on campus. They plan to attend college and study art. They hope to become known for their meaningful art.

### **Marlene Zaragoza**

Marlene Zaragoza is seventeen years old, and the oldest of four children. She is from Desert Hot Springs. Marlene is very open minded and adventurous. She hopes to pursue a career in real estate. Her motivation will always be her family, especially her little brother Max. One thing she enjoys is writing poems in the rain. Marlene wants to be the best version of herself for her family and to keep succeeding in school and life. Her spoken word piece, "You", received an honorable mention from the Riverside County Office of Education.

### **Isabel Rosas**

Isabel Rosas grew up in the same home since she was two. Isabel loves cats, sculpting, and reading. She has two sisters and one brother. She has one parent, a lovely hardworking mother. She has wanted to be a writer for the longest time and is now finally pursuing her dream.

## **POEMS**

### **The Maze**

**By Ezequiel Benitez**

Why am I so furious? I feel like boiling water ready to pour over.  
Feeling lost in my thoughts like if I were to be in a maze,  
wondering who or where I can go is just laying in my thoughts.  
Day and night pass by and somehow I'm still awake.  
Can't seem to find the fire that burned deep within my heart.  
Feels like a pit in my chest, that the fire that use to burn has now turned into ash;  
I go days not feeling like this but I go weeks feeling like this but I still try to find that spark  
to ignite my fire.  
I'm still fighting this war with myself.  
I know I will see the light of day in this war.

### **Why I Don't Even Understand Why I'm So....**

**By Shadow Coli**

I go out feeling like an animal in a zoo every movement being watched  
feeling like every mistake is being watched and written down in case I need to be removed for it  
I might not be watched but my brain tricks me  
Tricking me into believing I'm being watched  
Every imperfection I see everyone sees because the brain is awful and tricks you into thinking  
you are being watched for those mistakes  
Every whisper, conversation, and laugh your brain turns into them talking about every  
imperfection you have every mistake you do, and how you aren't doing something perfectly

but perfection doesn't exist it's just what your brain wants you to believe  
you should be like people never stare and judge you  
if you think something is going to bring you attention because you see it as that  
This feeling makes you feel like you are on display with people paying to judge you  
People paying to see an animal on display and has to act perfectly or they will judge you for not  
being a perfect example of this word of perfection and here is when I think more about it and ask  
why I don't understand why I'm so socially anxious

### **Frost**

**By Katlin Cunningham Carbajal**

Winter,

blue, dark

freeze, chill, cold

Jack Frost nipping your nose

Freezing

**Tragedy**

**by Sadie Flores**

Blessing waking up being able to be seen again-  
When you blink all you see is the World Trade Center being hit  
You gotta admit it created terror-The North Tower Collapsed  
2nd hijacked plane attacks, terrorists begin to overpower,  
they still managed to strike toward the Pentagon-The group of terrorists named Al Qaeda  
Osama Bin Laden who led others to tragedy  
Killed around 3,000 people on 9/11

**Losing I, Me, Us**

**By Tyanah Lewis**

I lost me as a person  
I lost my happiness  
The happiness I had when I attended Fruitvale Elementary  
It got snatched away  
As time is passing by  
I myself Tyanah is still trying to find  
That little happy inner child  
A part of me is still suffering seeking out  
For help trying to remove myself  
From this dark hole  
It feels that I end up back repeating the same cycle

**The Teenage Heart**

**By Melissa Robles**

Love is the teenage heart  
it stabs you like a stake  
chokes you until you lose every bit of air in your lungs  
but tucks you in at bed and kisses your forehead  
love is the teenage heart  
it is all it wants at least  
it can give at this point  
turn your back on it but it is still there  
a companion in denial  
in denial of the injustice it receives

confused on what love is  
got a bad demonstration of it  
creating its own definition from trial and error  
try again and it will burn you alive  
defense is on the tip of my tongue  
accepting no hugs  
love is the teenage heart

### **Reoccurring Game**

**By Melissa Robles**

For my own sake I must stop  
stop this fantasy from comforting me  
stop enjoying the thought of it  
hoping it will end on its own  
feeling like a child unable to identify right from wrong  
yet holding on because I know the true comfort is gone  
pleased by reminiscing the past  
I think I am a horrible person for that  
letting go is the mind game driving me insane

### **You**

**By Melissa Robles**

You are everywhere and nowhere to be found  
you are my dream, my sleep and everything I eat  
feeling like a clown when I frown, in tears I drown

in your arms I drown  
I see you in the park, I see you in the cars that pass by  
life without you except you never left  
sometimes I wish you did, but really it is a pain I enjoy  
going insane, looking at myself wondering if I still have a brain  
I wish to be independent, free space for my mind to think of anything besides you  
Is it you? Or is it me?  
I wonder if you also see  
see the way my body still melts at your touch  
hear your voice saying "I still love you"  
smell your sweet scent in the bear I hold each night with much care  
you are a burden I love to carry

### **Candlelight**

**By Melissa Robles**

How long will you stay?  
Today I bought a candle  
because it smells like your hugs  
lavender, our color, it defines you  
How long will you stay?  
Going to get tea, hoping to see you  
looking out the window with a tearful view  
you cannot light up my world anymore  
but you can light up my room



with this candle I still have you  
How long until you decay?

**“Mom”**

**By Melissa Robles**

Clean, soft look of her face  
warm sun kissed skin  
she soothes my soul when she speaks  
her hugs heal me so deep I'm weak to my knees  
oh how beautiful this would be to actually see  
mother I want, mother I need  
I know you're there  
just let her out please  
she brushes my hair  
she never swears  
she's always there  
but I am in despair  
letting her in doesn't bring me a grin  
she's the mother I wanted, mother I needed  
Am I silly for not believing?  
Believing she is a mother  
mother I always wanted  
scared of what's inside, in her head  
Is she serious? Does she really love me now?

Do I finally get my crown?

Does she really care or will she brush my hair?

oh I am scared

I no longer want to cry

no longer want to fear

mom please tell me you're here

### **Can you hear me?**

**By Melissa Robles**

If I speak will you listen?

if I cry will you care

would you notice the wounds in my heart if I sit alone

in the back of the class with the same shirt with holes

holes in my eyes I poked from seeing such monstrosity in the mirror

at least that is what mother thinks of me

lost in my own skin

where the world around me is nothing but grins

thin as air

holes make it easy to see right through me

no one will ever know

they never bothered

listen to me, ask me, see me, notice me

I want to fit in, let me

my holes are wide open but you are closed in

in your own world, in your own mind

what was I thinking

this is your life, not mine

I can wipe my own tears

close my holes

I rather not speak anymore

### **Stone on the Road**

**By Natan Rodriguez**

It didn't hurt.

I picked myself back up again and just kept going.

I knew I had to even if it was on my own.

I left looking back only to think about the stone on the road.

If I hadn't fallen, I wouldn't have realized I was even on the wrong road.

Falling

Made me see the beauty of my surroundings, appreciating small details I only notice now.

Though I continue my journey onwards, bruised, I won't let it be an excuse to quit.

I cannot allow myself to quit on this road

Sooner or later

I will accomplish my goals in life.

## **I Mourn**

**By Isabel Rosas**

I remember when we used to walk home from school together.

Do you remember it too?

I remember when we used to play together.

Do you?

You were my favorite person.

We would fight but the next day we were okay.

I used to look up to you, my big brother.

You had all the answers.

We had a bond that no one could break.

But you somehow did.

Wanting to play but you would yell at me and throw things.

I used to look up to you but instead, I feared you.

Now I mourn.

I mourn a bond that was lost.

## **Tired**

**By Isabel Rosas**

A night full of rest but I'm still exhausted.

Days I just want to sleep but I lay awake.

Getting told I'm just lazy but knowing it's something more.

All these things bunched into one mind itching to get out but not knowing how to.

Roaming around with a feeling of numbness wondering if it will ever go away.

Getting told, "You look tired".

They don't know how right they are.

I wonder if an eternal rest will end this feeling but being too scared to try.

Knowing all I'll leave behind is pain. Maybe some things just are.

So I ask this question over and over.

When will it end?

## **Anxiety**

**By Orianna Ruiz**

Why am I so anxious?

feeling restless

uncontrollable shakings

twirling my hair

Anxiety dominates

Anxiety makes everything feel strange

Anxiety some days leads to depression

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

feeling strange

panic attacks

sweaty hands

dizziness

intrusive thoughts

head foggy

thoughts never finish themselves

Spacing out

observing yourself from outside of your body a sense that things around you aren't real

depersonalization of myself feels like my head is wrapped in cotton

aches and tension

shaky voice

Anxious, I AM.

### **No Escape**

**By Johanna Sanchez**

Walls are closing in

Can't breathe. No escape. Pressure and stress rising

I'm trapped with nowhere to run

They want out. But there is no exit

Fire boils alive burning my flesh inside out. I want to scream and make it stop. But the chaos has already begun. The fire has been fed with angry wicked thoughts.

Tears running a marathon down my face. Competing for first place. So many overflowing tears I can drown in them.

I feel at peace. Lights shining brighter than ever. The pain and sorrow from within locked up and hidden away. Nowhere to be found in the dark abyss.

They keep me locked up like a prisoner in a cell. They want perfection. But perfection is nowhere near me.

Feeling like a lab rat being poked at and provoked.

Inspecting, observing, wanting a reaction. They get none. Thorns pricking my skin every second but all that's left is a body but no one inside to respond.

Just like leftover remains all emotions are left nonexistent.

Like an exploded balloon without oxygen. Why am I so emotional?

### **Already Have Fallen**

**By Victoria Session**

I looked at you, not your face, or anywhere else,

but your eyes. Then you looked back.

I stayed staring for two seconds until I decided to move them away.

There was something about you I wish I held longer,

but there was something telling me to look away before

it got deeper and even though I looked away.

It was too late.

I was already falling for you.

### **A Mouse and the Rock of Society**

**By Rain Vigil**

I don't even understand why I am so misunderstood.

I make eye contact, even when it hurts.

I try to explain how I feel and think in the simplest way possible.

And yet, people still don't understand.

It's like carrying a huge rock on my shoulders, a rock of expectations.

Everyday it's getting harder to carry.

Feeling like a tiny mouse when it comes to expressing my feelings.

A mouse who no one notices.

How can a mouse do anything in human society?

It can't. That is why mice are outcasted.

I wish humans could understand how mice feel.

Understand the hurtful things they do to mice and putting a huge rock on our backs.

Why am I so misunderstood?

It gets so hard, I'm going to hide away forever.

### **Complicated**

**By Marlene Zaragoza**

I feel my mind spinning

Body standing still

Loop after loop stop

Just answer give an answer

Unexpected drops many decisions

YES or NO

Many emotions

Mad sad confused

Frustrating tearing myself down

Tearing through my skin and thoughts

Riding this never ending roller coaster

Why am I so complicated



## **My Flowers**

**By Marlene Zaragoza**

The greatest responsibility my parents gave me was to love and protect my younger siblings

Not only do I provide love but I absorb the pain

I carry my family, being the oldest is like being a stone pillar

But with this responsibility you give up freedom

You give up the love you receive so your siblings receive it all

At the end my siblings will have a better childhood than I did

I wish I had an older sibling with the same responsibility

I'll be the soil for my flowers

I protected my flowers when there was conflict and arguing

Times consisting of pain

The yelling banged into our ears, how the fist would bang on the walls

I grew up watching and hearing the arguing

I told myself that my flowers would never go through this storm

I created a shelter at home

They'd come cuddle up and watch movies while the storm raged outside

## **You**

**By Marlene Zaragoza**

You, glancing at you

Any chance I get, missing how our eyes would meet

Like the stars met the dark sky, missing how you loved me

But the lies ruined us, wanting to talk, and have you back

Lost in the dark sky without your love

Searching for the stars to guide me back

You locked them up

So I'd be lost without you

Without the love and attention we crave from our significant other we are lost

We become nothing even if we were imperfect and hurt

IT can never happen again

We don't listen which caused this mess

So without you I am lost in the dark sky until I find my stars

# STORIES

## The Saturday of Flying Tires

By Christian Anderson

I see a group of spare oily tires. My poor baby blue church shirt is going to suffer for this act. The black grease stains may never wash out no matter how much I try. The tires (basically as big as me) stare hauntingly at me. I attempt to lift them and obviously fail. Each tire weighs like 100 pounds! A great pain strikes my back as I drop the tire.

I begin to cuss at myself before thinking up a new idea. *Okay. I can roll it. Carefully though. I mustn't rush this. I live on a long sloped hill. If I were to lose my grip on the tire, it would surely roll all the way down and kill somebody.* And just as I imagine, I lose my grip. The tire begins to fly, ever so elegantly. As it does I yell, "Oh God no!" I stand frozen as I watch the tire roll. My jaw greets my feet. Before I know it, the tire is halfway down the road.

I hold my tongue, trying not to yell as I run down the street, A trail of fire is left behind as the tire rolls, going exactly 88 miles per hour. It's a miracle Doc and Marty do not appear. Come on, we all know the movie *Back to the Future*. I run behind the tire, harnessing the wind, using it to lift me off my feet, hoping it will grant me the ability to fly. I run and run and run, and then I eat it.

I bleed all the way back down the road looking at the carnage the tire leaves in its wake. Dozens of mail box carcasses litter the ground. I nervously walk the remaining way home, expecting to be killed by the white folks in the area. I run to the tire before I grab hold of it, cussing at it, "Fucking stupid tire, why the crap would you do that?" I don't expect a response.

## **A Road Trip**

**By Shadow Coli**

I packed my clothes and necessities for a road trip I was going on with my friends. When I finished, I sent a text to my friends letting them know that I would be leaving soon to go pick them up. As I set down my phone to grab my keys my dad banged on my door, “VAIDIS WHY DIDN'T YOU TAKE THE TRASH OUT?” Just by his slur you could tell he was drunk out of his mind and when he's like that he doesn't care what or who it is he will lash out on the most ridiculous things ever. That's why I always keep my door locked. I grabbed my bag, keys, and found my pack of cigarettes and left through my window knowing very well that my dad would end up getting tired of banging on my door and just go to bed. I got into my car, put my bag in the back and connected my phone to the radio and started playing music. Then I texted my friends. I left to pick up Hannali first. I got a cigarette out of the box, lit it and took a few drags of it while driving. I knew I shouldn't have been smoking but with all that goes on at home, it distracted me, a deadly distraction.

I finally got to Hannali's house and texted her I was there. She came out of her house and headed to the car and threw her stuff in the trunk and got into the passenger seat. When she got in and sat down I knew something was wrong. She was wearing a sweater and baggy sweatpants in hot weather when she normally wore crop tops and skirts. Her left cheek was also swollen so I asked about it.

“Hey Hannali what happened here?” I pointed to my cheek she replied, “My mom started drinking again yesterday and if you couldn't tell she spiraled out of control. When I told her to stop, she slapped me across the face.” She took my cigarette out of my hand and took a long drag out of it. Hannali never really liked smoking or anything that involved drinking and drugs.

When she took a drag of my cigarette I knew it was worse than what she was leading on but I didn't want to push on it so I left it at that and didn't say anything else other than a simple, "I'm sorry."

We ended up going to pick up Andras next. His folks and I don't get along very well. The last time I went over there I accidentally burned down their shed. Luckily nothing else caught on fire. I ended up sending Hannali to knock on his door and get him while I parked on the side where they couldn't see me or the car. A few minutes later I heard glass shattering and Andras' parents yelling curse words out at him, and then the slam of his front door. Moments later, Hannali and Andras walked to the car and got in. Andras said, "Don't ask, just drive." You could tell he was pissed off.

We then picked up the twins (Hadeon and Kiora) and Cecily as they live next to each other. We were in the car not talking with the music barely noticeable and me driving the car on the freeway. One of the twins asked, "Where are we even going? Our folks don't want us going back for the next few weeks?" I looked in the rearview mirror and said, "You won't have to worry about that, we will go wherever it feels necessary to go if that's fine with you guys."

### **Severed Trust**

**By Edward Jimenez**

It was a sunny and bright day. I was with my good friend Johnny. He and I were good friends for four months. Johnny, my friends and I would all hang out together for hours on hours. At the time I was in possession of two iPhones but I was not using the second phone. One day Johnny expressly asked if he could use my second phone for a couple of days, and I trusted Johnny so I impulsively agreed. A week later, I had offers for the second iPhone, so I texted Johnny for the phone back. As the day went by I got no response. There was word from his

family member that his grandma was sending him back to Las Vegas. I was eager to get my phone back in my possession. As days went by I got confirmation that he had left Desert Hot Springs and went back to Las Vegas. I reached out to him and asked him why would you do such a thing, he reacted to my message by “liking it.” The word trust was severed from my vocabulary that day and I felt lost and betrayed. I learned people will do anything for self pleasure.

### **Lost and Loved**

**By Tyanah Lewis**

My name is Tyanah Lewis. I'm sixteen years old. I want teens and adults to know that it's never too late to overcome any obstacle. Everyone is lost at some time or another. I say this because as a teen or adult you may think about giving up sometimes or you may have a time in life where you don't care about anything and think it's too late to achieve your goal. Just now I've thought about giving up many times, and it's okay. I know times may be hard and you may feel lost but you have to push through for the better of yourself.

Let me tell you a fairytale about a girl named Jill. Once upon a time, Jill considered herself lost in a deep hole. When she was in middle school Jill got bullied which made her feel less about herself. It got a little worse when she got to high school but that's normal because high school students tend to be a bit more harsh. Or at least that is what Jill told herself. Jill started to hate herself because she always listened to what other people had to say. Jill started to starve herself because she got weight-shamed. She didn't have much energy to do anything, not even brush her teeth. She started to fall behind in school because all she wanted to do was sleep.

One day she thought, *No prince is coming to save me so I have to save myself. This has to come to a stop and I have to find myself all over again.* Jill started to love herself more, she started eating more without stressing the fact that she was going to get weight-shamed. Jill even

got up every morning to start brushing her teeth. She has now gained her confidence back and is staying up to date with school. Jill is now a senior and wants to graduate early. I hope Jill's story pushes teens and adults to overcome and realize there is a solution. Jill's happily ever after is her being able to graduate early and loving herself today.

### **Happy Memory with my Grandfather**

**by Dylan Mondragon**

It was 6:00 am in the morning when I got ready. My grandfather picked me up and he yelled out the window, "apurale!" laughing out the window. I entered the car with joy to see him. He wore his dark gray hoodie with a blue shirt, jeans, and his bright blue Nikes.

"A dónde vamos, Abuelo?" I said.

"Vamos a los Estudios Universales," Abuelo said.

"O que padre," I said as we went on our way to Universal Studios.

"Cuál va a ser la temperatura en Hollywood?" he said.

I told him, "Dicen que va a estar lloviendo." We sat and just drove.

"Quieres ir a San Pedro," he said smiling,

"Si vamos pa San Pedro," I said.

"Vamos a dar un paseo en bote," he said

"Ok Abuelo," I said as he looked at me with this big smile.

We rode the boat for two hours smelling fish and seeing the beautiful ocean smiling and laughing through it all. We made it back to the pier.

"Aver busca un lugar que tiene birria. Busca este lugar El Perico."

"Si abuelo yo lo busco," I said. I finally found where the restaurant was. "Abuelo ya lo busqué!" I said.

“Aver a donde está,” he told me. As we’re driving and talking about what we’re going to eat we got lost and it wasn’t the right restaurant

“ Chale Abuelo," I said.

“Esta bien,” he said with this look of sadness. We finally found the restaurant and ate fresh tacos and a big molcajete. Everyone looked at us but we didn’t care.

“Comiste bien,” Abuelo said.

“Si Abuelo,” I said. We went on to the movies and Abuelo dropped me off at my mom's work.

“Bye mijo,” he said.

“Bye abuelo, te quiero,” I said. This is the happiest memory I have of my grandfather and a story to continue telling for a lifetime.

## **Death on a Loop**

**Isabel Rosas**

Wind blows my long blond hair in my face as I walk home through the lonely dirt road surrounded by woods. I curse myself for not bringing a jacket to school as my mom told me. As I near the end of the wooded section I see a figure dragging something into the woods causing me to stop. I bunch all my hair into one hand and pull it to the side to get a clear view of the moving figure. *Could it be the mysterious killer everyone has been going on about?* I chuckle, “*Yeah right there is no killer, people will make up anything.*” I continue my walk thinking about the missing teens.

I wake up the next day with a stuffy nose. After getting ready, my mom drives me to school. “Did you hear they found a dead girl in the woods?” my mother asks me. “What, really?” I respond with shock in my voice. “Sadly they did. It was one of the missing teens who



disappeared while walking home from school,” my mom says. I begin to fidget with my fingers. She continues after a pause, “They found the body just at the edge of the woods. It was very graphic. Please, love, don't go into those woods anymore. I will try my best to pick you up from school going forward.” A shiver runs down my spine.

At school everyone is talking about the girl in the woods. As the week goes by more bodies are found in the woods yet no killer, grieving mothers and fathers are seen on the news, people advised to stay home. I toss and turn in bed having the same bad dream I had these past few days: a girl with long blond hair running from someone in the woods. When I wake up it's dark. I feel something cold and wet beneath me. I realize I'm in the woods. I get up in a panic covered in dirt. That's when I see it, the dark figure in the distance dragging something into the woods. I crouch down behind a tree and I see a big tall bald man with an apron covered in blood.

*He's the killer.* I look down and see his victim, her blond hair, dirty, bruised up, missing a shoe, covered in blood, and clothes all ripped up as he drags her by the ankle. I notice she looks very familiar then I realize she is me. I continue to replay my death in those woods, stuck, bound to this earth like an anchor at the bottom of the ocean.

## ESSAYS

### School Of Winners

By Dulce Alvarez

I sometimes consider myself a failure, and a winner at other times. My name is Dulce Alvarez and I am in my last year of high school here at Edward Wenzlaff. It's different from a regular high school. My mom has a tendency to call it the school of losers. Continuation school (C School) is for students at risk of not graduating; it's for credit recovery. I wasn't doing well in high school. I was really laid back for someone with twenty missing assignments and failing all my classes. I guess I followed my sister's steps the wrong way. My sister Vicky was here in C School before me. I didn't want to end up like my sister.

It was the start of school and I tried my best to keep up but my laziness got the best of me. It wasn't until September when they called me up to the office at the regular high school to tell me I would be going to C School in October. I felt shambled, but what did I expect? I was failing my classes. In the beginning of school when they let us choose our seats I went and sat with my friends, which was the worst decision. I couldn't stop myself from talking to them and goofing off. The missing assignments soon grew in number when all I was doing in class was messing around. I knew something had to change.

I started paying attention in class, focusing on what I had to get done. I started asking for extra credit assignments. I was tired of always looking up my grades and seeing Fs and Ds. I wanted to see something more than that. I then passed the first quarter with Bs and above. It felt great. I felt like I had finally accomplished something with my effort and time. I always do my work now. I don't always turn it in on time. I should fix that habit but my grades have never been

better. I'd like to disagree with what my mom said about C School being the school of losers because now I can't help but feel like a winner.

## **Changes**

**By Ezequiel Benitez**

My name is Ezequiel Benitez, I am a senior in Mt. San Jacinto Continuation School (MSJ) campus. It is a friendly school where everyone seems chill. My favorite thing about this school is I get respect from the teachers. I didn't have any good grades by the time I was a junior in Desert Hot Springs High School (DHSHS) where I was failing. I got sent here and I have been able to get all my grades back up and pass my classes that I failed. I never was one to like going to school because I felt like it was a waste of time at one point. So I was constantly ditching my classes and school, had bad attendance and that was also the reason that I was sent to the MSJ.

Once I moved to MSJ, it felt like everything changed because I started to do my work, gave teachers the respect they gave me, and did not give them a bad attitude. I improved my grades as well and got C's and B's. As for my attendance, it could have been better because I really only showed up three times a week or not even go school for a full week.

But this new semester I have been coming to school everyday. MSJ helped me shape into a better student as I feel more confident in my learning abilities. I started MSJ with sixty credits and now I have 185 credits which has given me more confidence about myself. The teachers put their time and effort into working with me. I am grateful for their support because if they wouldn't have helped me when I was behind so much work, then I would be retaking their class. They helped me out a lot.

My goal for the end of the year is to go back to the Desert Hot Springs High School where I will play baseball. I have the biggest passion for that sport. When I finish high school I

should have 225 credits. I want to make my sister and my brother-in-law proud of me. When I go back to DHSHS I would like to do baseball as it has been one of my goals to play for the team. I was never confident in my skills until last year when I did practice and I am more confident now. I can never stop thinking about playing baseball in high school.

As I have started to act better and mature up, all these things that have happened to me have helped me learn more from my mistakes. I will continue to grow. I will keep getting up as this world is full of challenges that I will face and I just have to get up and move on.

## **Unconditional**

**By Dominick Burdin**

It all started in sixth grade when I was still a young boy. I always found guys kinda cute, but by the way I was raised I always thought it was bad. Until one day I met this boy named Jesse and I fell in love and didn't want to admit it so I just played it off like it was nothing. That was until I met Ezmarie. I fell in love with her. Every day after school we saw each other because we had an after school program called ASES. We started talking more and more, playing Minecraft on the computers they had at the school.

One day I asked her to be my girlfriend and she said yes. It all started off very well, we were in love I guess you can say. It took us a while to hold hands. Even so we ended up together in sixth grade. Then seventh grade came and life changed a lot. We were still in the after-school program but this was when my friend introduced me to a K-Pop club. I joined, of course I got judged for it, but I didn't really care. Then my brother started questioning my sexuality and I kept denying everything.

Then the little crush I had on the kid named Jesse came back, and I got so scared. So I did what I had to do, which was to ask for advice. I asked my friends and my teachers but only one

gave me a good response. She told me, “Don’t lead her on, it's only gonna hurt her more the further you continue to date and not tell her. You need to accept yourself for who you are.” I was so grateful. That was all I needed to hear.

The next week when school started, I texted Ezmarie and told her everything. I told her I was bi. She accepted me and we continued to date, and everything was perfect until Valentine's Day came around and she kissed me. You would've thought that it would be a romantic cute thing but for me it felt weird, like I didn't like it. At that time I started to question myself a lot and decided to come to terms with what I was feeling. I came out as gay to everyone but her, because I was too scared. Then I remembered what my teacher told me so I decided to tell her the next day.

I was so scared to tell her so I asked a friend if they could be with me when I did it for emotional support. I then took Ezmarie up to the field near the blacktop and told her, “I'm gay, this is who I am, do you support me?” She then responded with “No” and ran off crying which didn't really bother me. What bothered me was a guy that liked her got mad at me and wanted to fight me for finally deciding who I am. I also felt sad for her and from that day on we stopped talking.

This was when I was the most confused in my life. So still in denial, I got back with her because I thought I was straight but I wasn't. So I broke up with her. Then a couple months later I did the same thing again. It was a bad cycle.

So my eighth grade year started and it was pretty traumatic as I lost a lot of friends due to petty drama. I was getting threats daily that I was going to “get jumped” and even when I went to the counselor for help he called my mom laughing about it. I honestly stopped caring about what everyone said about me, and luckily for me quarantine hit and I was alone.

It was definitely very different from what I was used to as it changed and impacted my world. I lost a lot of friends because they didn't accept it but it also showed me who the real ones were; the ones that stuck with me through that time of confusion and sadness. I then came out to my brother and sisters and they were beyond supportive of me. I couldn't ask for a better family.

By eighth grade I was fully gay but not really out to a lot of people or really accepting it myself so when quarantine hit I had a lot of time to think to myself about my sexuality. Eventually I came to terms with my sexuality and got my first boyfriend. It was more like an online boyfriend and that didn't last but that's okay. Ezmarie and I are really close now and she's my main supporter.

As for coming out to my mom, she supports me. She told me she loves me for who I am. I feel really glad that I have an understanding mother. I know how some kids don't get so lucky and some even get kicked out of the house. My mom let me make my own decision and I love her for that. My grandma already knew and she is super supportive about it as well. At the end of the day you shouldn't hide who you are because who are you hiding from? Nobody, because you're perfect the way you are and if people can't see that they don't deserve to be in your life. You may lose people on your journey and that's okay. That just means they were never true friends.

## **Communication Rethinking**

**By Shadow Coli**

What is communication? The dictionary defines communication as “the imparting or exchanging of information or news.” The definition of communication is different for every individual. When I think of communication I don't think of the positive side of communication, I think of the difficulties that parents have when they try to communicate with teens. Teens

struggle to communicate or rely on their parents because when they do they never listen to them or ignore what they have to say. Parents will say their child tells them everything because they used to when they were younger. As the years go by, parents lose that connection with their child. Their child will not tell them anything.

Parents think the past incidents are stupid for their child to be upset about but that's precisely why they can't connect and communicate with their child. This also leads to kids not trusting adult figures as time goes on. Teens will communicate about how they have a dream to be something. There are some parents that will make their children's goals seem like the worst decision they will ever make and that they should pick something they would have wanted to do when they were younger and never got the opportunity to do. That makes a teen reaching adulthood rethink their decision of telling their parents about their dreams.

Many people have heard this phrase, "You're an adult now you can make your own decisions now." But some will later on say, "You're not an adult. You're not allowed to make that decision on your own." Parents only say this phrase when they benefit from it. When teens do communicate it's usually about an opportunity or something they are proud of achieving. They might get a positive or negative reaction, it just depends on each parent and how they feel about it and if it benefits some of them. Some parents, if they don't like their child's dream jobs will make comments about how they will never get somewhere with that job which just lowers their child's self-esteem.

## **Oxygen Dreams**

**Blanca Garcia**

The year I almost gave up. Like most people Covid hit me hard. My name is Blanca. I am seventeen years old and currently a senior in high school. My sophomore year was my biggest

challenge but now I am in the best mind set ever. I will be talking about the time I faced a challenge and I overcame it.

During Covid, my biggest challenge was school. We switched to online school. It was hard to adapt. As the year went on, I lost motivation and saw no point in school. I stopped waking up for my classes and I gave up on my work. I started staying up later, eating less, and isolating myself. My mother started to slowly realize I was losing myself. School in the past was everything to me. I had big dreams and was so excited. But due to Covid it all went away. All my dreams just started to slowly dissolve. I hated myself for letting things get so bad. I felt like everything was my fault. What I failed to realize was it was not my fault. There was nothing I could have done. Mental health is not really something to control and it is ok to not be ok. One day I decided to finally clean my room. It was a great accomplishment.

As I was cleaning my room I found a book “The Diary of an Oxygen Thief.” I don’t remember when I bought it but it had an interesting title. I decided to read it. When I was reading the book, I didn’t realize I had spent all day reading. When I finished reading I felt more alive. I have no idea what happened but I loved the feeling. I decided to buy more books. Books were just piling up and life finally felt worth living for. I also saw people graduating and it just lit something in me. I felt so much motivation I wanted to be just like them. My junior year came and I had a fire burning inside of me. I was determined to do my best. Halfway through the school year I moved to Edward Wenzlaff continuation school.

Moving to this school felt like a second chance. Not only is the school great for getting credits quicker but the teachers are amazing. They care for us all. They always say good morning or hello. That might not seem like a big deal but to me it is. I just felt like the teachers actually



cared about me. They are amazing teachers and they know how to teach in a way where it's fun and where you can express how you feel.

Dr. Mantz is the best teacher here. She has this child-like humor that is just so comforting. She's always happy and excited to teach. She's a strong woman and has talked about her struggles which I deeply appreciate. It's great to have teachers open up. You see a different perspective of them and you get to understand them more. This school is just amazing and it hurts to say I won't graduate here but at the same time me going back to Desert Hot Springs High School means I'm on track and I will be graduating which is all I've ever wanted. Graduating and walking the stage has been my dream since I was a little kid. I'm finally going to be walking the stage.

I could say Covid ruined my life but it didn't. In a way I appreciate everything I went through because I realized how strong I am. I was able to get out of a dark place by myself. It also introduced me to reading and I love it. The greatest thing that happened due to Covid was moving to Edward Wenzlaff continuation school. This school and the amazing teachers will forever be in my heart. Never give up on your dreams. Fight hard for what you want and you will achieve it. I am on the road to becoming the person of my dreams.

### **If I Don't Who Will?**

**By Kaylee Joya**

A time in my life when I faced a setback was my junior year when I got a job and my parents left for six months so I had to provide my own transportation and help with my siblings. This had a big impact on me because I was struggling a lot with school and was also raising my little brother. All these circumstances did not benefit me when it came to going to school and taking care of my mental health. I was too busy making sure everyone around me was okay

before I was. This was stressful because I was also helping around the house and making sure my little brother wasn't missing out on his activities.

During this time I wasn't at my best and I still had to make sure I kept up academically and also that I didn't lose myself in the process of maintaining all my responsibilities. My little brother became my biggest motivation to do good in life. This setback affected me because I went from living a normal life to having to raise myself, a kid, and learn how to drive in order to get things done. All these things shaped me into who I am now. I learned to fight for what I really want and be able to balance many responsibilities at once.

In life you learn to only rely on yourself and mature in your unique ways. As I grew older I learned what having a job will do for you. It will teach you responsibility and time management which will benefit you in the future. During this setback I taught myself how to drive, cook, and I even learned how to pay bills. Although I first saw these setbacks as negative, I learned to benefit from them. One lesson I learned was to never give up on yourself because although I wanted to so many times I always asked myself, *If I don't, who will?*

### **Never Give Up No Matter What Happens**

**Elias Lopez**

Throughout my whole life, I always loved to play soccer. Going pro was always a dream of mine and I think during my middle school years is when I really started to get serious about playing soccer. However, I noticed that the more serious I got about playing, the more nervous and scared I would be. My friends and I would always go to the park and play scrimmages but it's different than playing in an actual game. You can't make the same mistakes at the game that you would at the park. Making mistakes was something that terrified me. Being scared to make mistakes and let my team down was one of my worst fears. I tried not to focus on it but it

affected me for a while. Even worse is when others begin to criticize or try to get in your head. Struggling to play sometimes because people would say things that would just bring down my self esteem or I would just be scared to take risks and play. This sport meant everything to me but the more scared I got, the more I didn't want to play. The thing that put me down was making errors and being criticized for it. Making mistakes was the last thing I wanted to do and being constantly worried about what other people would think. All I could think was, *I hope I don't mess up, they're counting on me.* This went on for around two years. I was always trying to play my best and not make any mistakes. The worst part was the never ending thoughts about how my teammates probably felt. All I could think was that they were all upset with me and probably didn't even want me on their team. The more focused I was on making mistakes, the more mistakes I would actually make. Even thinking about it now makes me feel mad because I put myself down and I let others put me down as well.

This soon changed however when I joined my friend Jose's team. It was a team full of older kids so I was kind out of my league. However, I would see that the people on my team would mess up as well. I realized that everybody makes mistakes and it's part of the game. What matters is what you do after the mistake. Soon after, I decided I wouldn't let being scared and being nervous get to me. I stopped worrying about what others said and I focused on what I was doing. People talk to try to get in your head, but the important thing is to ignore them and prove them wrong. Let them eat their own words. They put me in a couple of games and my confidence slowly began to increase. My teammates also boosted my confidence by always supporting me and letting me know it's okay to make mistakes. I began to play with confidence and I adapted to playing in games without being afraid. I was taking risks and playing how I play at the park. I wasn't scared anymore and I was determined to play my best at all costs. There were countless

times when I could've given up but I didn't. To this day, playing professional soccer is still a dream of mine. I go to the park often to train with my friends and I go to soccer practice at the high school. I'm trying my best and I won't give up until I achieve my dream.

### **Close to Success**

**By Jose Magana**

La familia es todo para mi. My name is Jose Magana and I was born on July 15, 2004 in Palm Springs. I have three siblings. One brother is named Kevin and he is two years older than me. I also have two sisters, the oldest is named Alexis, who is three years older. The youngest is named Ashley, who is two years younger than me. I also have extended family living with me, Uncle Orlando, Aunt Nubeluz, and my sister's daughter Luna. Luna is six. I live with my grandparents, Veronica who is sixty-five years old and Humberto who is sixty-three years old. My Aunt Nubeluz is like a parent to me as we have a close relationship. My biological mother was born in Mexico, at the closest hospital from crossing the border. My father was born in Sinaloa. I am bilingual. Spanish is my first language.

I came to Edward Wenzlaff continuation school last year in January because I was doing poorly in school, and because I didn't go to school during sophomore year. I didn't go to school because of Covid-19. I had to get some more credits before I came here. I was far behind. When I got here I started to go to school more often and do my work. It was hard showing up everyday and doing a lot of work. It was worth it in the end because I was all caught up and didn't have to worry about finals.

After high school I have some goals I want to accomplish. I want to keep working hard to save up money to buy my first car. I'm thinking about being in the real estate business because

my friend just started doing real estate and inspired me to look into that. If I do go to college I will go to study to be a doctor or teacher. I also want to buy a big house for my family and travel.

### **Worth it in the Final Round**

**By Dylan Mondragon**

My name is Dylan Mondragon, I am seventeen years old. I am from Desert Hot Springs, a small town in California. I enjoy writing and making stories. I also enjoy boxing. I am the youngest sibling raised by a single mother. I am Mexican. My father wasn't in the picture growing up, so my mom had to work hard to make sure my brother and I had an amazing life. I go to a continuation school called Edward Wenzlaff Education Center. Going to a continuation school has been an adventure for me. It was a major change compared to regular high school. The teachers here have shown me that school is something incredible. Before going to Edward Wenzlaff Education Center, I wanted to drop out of school and work. But being at a continuation school has taught me many important lessons in life and has made me enjoy coming to school to learn.

During the quarantine, I had loved ones who passed away like many others. The pandemic was a major learning lesson for everyone. At the time I was going to class through Zoom. I didn't feel motivated to continue going to school. I never showed up to Zoom class like many others. I started going to school again and the same day I got a call that my grandmother passed away. It hurt knowing I never met her. Depression felt like a truck hitting me. I stopped going to school and celebrating anything. I stopped caring about school and wanting to graduate. Three months later, my grandfather passed away. It was possibly the worst time in my life. I was depressed. I felt like my father passed away. I just wanted to be away from everyone and everything.

On October 12, 2021 I got transferred to continuation school and it was a different experience. The teachers here were real and they actually cared about me. It started to motivate me to continue going to school. Dr. Mantz was the mentor I had in junior year. She taught me how to write a story and motivated me to continue studying. Dr. Olvera was my math teacher in continuation school. He showed me that it's okay to come from a low end place and that you can still make it in life. Mr. Vargas showed me discipline and to not depend on my phone and that history can really be fun when you start to learn. Mr. Calonne has been a big influence in my uprising to continue studying. Mr. Calonne inspired me to write a fictional story and to even do a debate in English. He taught me that reading books and writing stories can be fun.

Everyone says that kids in continuation school don't ever make it, but being in regular high school was possibly the worst experience of my life. Being in continuation school has truly brought me back into enjoying school. I have one goal in life and I wish to give back to my teachers, friends, and family who have helped me along the way. I want to prove them right and graduate. I want to be a boxer, but educationally I would love to be a teacher at a continuation school. The teacher student bond is the most incredible feeling. It's like the bond you have with your boxing coach. You start to see them as family and you start to enjoy what you're doing. I have many backup ideas which will take a lot of work, but it will be worth it in the final round.

### **The Mountain I Climbed**

**By Melissa Robles**

I am a senior at Edward Wenzlaff and I love to write. I first started expressing my love for writing when I arrived at this school. Since then, many parts in my life have gone up and down. It has not been easy going to school here without my friends. It has been a struggle to reach my goal of graduating, considering my personal struggles as well and my home life.

In the late years of my childhood my parents separated. This became a great dilemma in my life for the years following. Growing up I was always closer to my dad compared to my mom. When my parents separated I ended up moving out with my dad and that caused me to grow apart from my siblings and my mother. I didn't mean to choose sides but at the moment it is what worked best for me because my mother was going through a hard time. This change brought tension between not only my parents but me and my family.

In school I started giving less effort because of how sad I was. I fell into a depression and stopped showing interest in most things. I became very close with my friends and they brought me joy during this tough time. Since I separated from my family I depended more on my friends. I've seen many therapists in these years and I have learned a lot. Learning to connect with my family again was one of the best things that has happened to me.

From being on my own during this journey of mine I grew so much as a person. I feel like the best version of myself and feel like I could not have come this way if this situation had not happened. Although it was tough, I matured and learned independence quickly. Now that I am older I thank these experiences for teaching me so much early on because it makes my life simpler. I struggled so I can shine. I am proud of myself for now being so wise and grown because that means I have less to worry about.

### **Stepping Up for Myself**

**By Isabel Rosas**

I could lose myself sculpting or reading. The way the clay feels on my hands and the smoothness of it really helps me relax and just let go of my worries. Books let me imagine something great. My name is Isabel Rosas. I was born in Palm Springs but I live in Desert Hot Springs with my mom and three siblings. I like cats, enjoy sculpting, and reading. My cats

helped me through my hard times even though they don't let me touch them sometimes. The types of books I enjoy reading are fantasy or romance. I really appreciate books because to me they are an escape from the real world. All the things I enjoy are escapes from my struggles.

For the longest time, I had a hard time with the motivation to step up and ask for help since elementary school. I was ashamed of the fact that I would struggle with school. I'd worry about what my mom and others would think about my grades. When I got to my high school years it was the same. In my freshmen year, I did okay. I felt better than before. At the end of my freshman year Covid hit. I did worse than ever. I would miss out on class to help my mom work. I'd make up excuses. I'd say the teachers canceled the class or there were wifi problems. I did this so I could hopefully take some of the weight off my mom's shoulders. I later found out I had to go to continuation school. I found this out towards the middle of my junior year.

Finally, I get to the continuation school Edward Wenzlaff and I'm assuming the worst. I thought the teachers wouldn't care and that my chances of graduating went downhill. After the first day, I learned that I was completely wrong. The teachers helped me open up and try my best. I started doing a lot better. I was passing all my classes and earned credits. I was doing my best this time around. It felt nice to finally see a smile on my mom's face when she saw my grades. Or being able to tell her about my day while knowing I did my best. But the most important part is that I was no longer trying to improve myself academically for others, but for myself.

### **Quiero Ser Algo Grande**

**Yamilet Rubio**

My family is from Nayarit, Mexico. My name is Yamilet Rubio and I'm seventeen years old. I live in Desert Hot Springs and go to Mount San Jacinto Continuation High School Desert



Hot Springs campus. I'm a big family person and value time with my loved ones. I was born into a big family. I'm going to be speaking about my life throughout quarantine and how school was during that time. I'll explain how it helped me realize things and how it was good for my personal growth.

Mi familia se acostumbró y me daño. Everything became so repetitive. Every day I woke up at six am to pick up the little girl my “Ama” (mom) was supposed to babysit. Then I logged her into Zoom while making breakfast and waiting on my nephews and niece so their mom could go to work. My nephew was a few months old, my other nephew three years old, and my niece five. Their mom wouldn't come home till around seven pm and my brother would be out with his friends doing I don't know what. As the youngest, I was the responsible one.

I couldn't bring myself to log into my classes. During this time I was at the darkest place in my life. It kept getting worse and worse. I became so tired and mentally exhausted. Never once did I log into my first two periods the whole time we did online school. I worried about it every single day but I knew I couldn't bring myself to do school. Estoy cansada, ya no puedo más.

The day I found out we were going back to school, I felt so relieved. Never have I been so ready to go back. I was ready to get out of the house and away from everyone. My first few days were my best days. I finally felt like myself again. I was in all sophomore classes while being a junior. I became me again. Then, I got too comfortable and couldn't take anything serious. I was so used to not doing anything anymore so I just sat in class, dislocated from everything. My teachers noticed. They would call my Ama and Apa but they didn't care enough to get my focus back in school. I began to ditch classes and stay in my car. I hated that place and everyone in it. I went to school once a week. I thought things would get better going back to

school but I felt worse. I became even more depressed and gave up on everything. Once again, straight F's.

My Ama found out I had been ditching and she had a meeting with my counselor. They told us that they were going to send me into a continuation school if I wanted a diploma. My Ama was so disappointed and so was I. I let my family down.

I thought going into my new school was going to be the worst and I was just going to give up again, como siempre. It became my new beginning, a chance to restart. I knew things had to change for me so I began to do something for myself. I started to come to school more and actually do my work more. I began to care. I realized that my future is all up to me and how I go on about things. Mi apa siempre creo en mí y lo quiero hacer orgulloso. I try to get up everyday no matter how bad my depression is because I know it'll come to an end. I have brighter days now and have lifetime goals for myself. I no longer let my family take advantage and stand up for myself and my future. Quiero ser algo grande en la vida.

### **The Modern Stephen King: A Normative Critique**

**By Victoria Session**

Stephen Edwin King is an American author of horror, supernatural fiction, suspense, crime, science-fiction, and fantasy novels. His books have sold more than 350 million copies, and many have been adapted into films, television series, miniseries, and comic books. King has published 61 novels, including seven under the pen name Richard Bachman, and five non-fiction books. He has written approximately 200 short stories, most of which have been published in book collections. King has received Bram Stoker Awards, World Fantasy Awards, and British Fantasy Society Awards. In 2003, the National Book Foundation awarded him the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. He also received awards for his contribution to

literature for his entire bibliography, such as the 2004 World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement and the 2007 Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America. In 2015, he was awarded with a National Medal of Arts from the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts for his contributions to literature. He has been described as the "King of Horror," a play on his surname and a reference to his high standing in pop culture.

Stephen Edwin King was born in Portland, Maine, on September 21, 1947. His father, Donald Edwin King, was a merchant seaman who was born with the surname Pollock but changed it to King as an adult. King's mother was Nellie Ruth. Shortly afterwards, they lived with Donald's family in Chicago before moving to Croton-on-Hudson, New York. King's parents returned to Maine towards the end of World War II, living in a modest house in Scarborough. When King was two years old, his father left the family. His mother raised him and his older brother David by herself, sometimes under great financial strain. They moved from Scarborough and depended on relatives in Chicago; Croton-on-Hudson; West De Pere, Wisconsin; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Malden, Massachusetts; and Stratford, Connecticut.

When King was eleven, his family moved to Durham, Maine, where his mother cared for her parents until their deaths. She then became a caregiver in a local residential facility for the mentally challenged. King was raised Methodist, but lost his belief in organized religion while in high school. While no longer religious, he says he chooses to believe in the existence of God. As a child, King apparently witnessed one of his friends being struck and killed by a train, though he has no memory of the event. His family told him that after leaving home to play with the boy, King returned speechless and seemingly in shock. Only later did the family learn of the friend's death.

Some commentators have suggested that this event may have psychologically inspired some of King's darker works, but King makes no mention of it in his memoir, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. He related in detail his primary inspiration for writing horror fiction in his non-fiction *Danse Macabre*, in a chapter titled "An Annoying Autobiographical Pause." He compared his uncle's dowsing for water using the bough of an apple branch with the sudden realization of what he wanted to do for a living. That inspiration occurred while browsing through an attic with his elder brother, when King uncovered a paperback version of an H. P. Lovecraft collection of short stories he remembers as *The Lurker in the Shadows*, that had belonged to his father. King told Barnes & Noble Studios during a 2009 interview, "I knew that I'd found home when I read that book." King attended Durham Elementary School and graduated from Lisbon Falls High School in Lisbon Falls, Maine, in 1966. He displayed an early interest in horror as an avid reader of EC horror comics, including *Tales from the Crypt*, and he later paid tribute to the comics in his screenplay for *Creepshow*. He began writing for fun while still in school, contributing articles to *Dave's Rag*, the newspaper his brother published with a mimeograph machine, and later began selling stories to his friends based on movies he had seen.

The first of his stories to be independently published was "I Was a Teenage Grave Robber," which was serialized over four issues of a fanzine, *Comics Review*, in 1965. That story was published the following year in a revised form as "In a Half-World of Terror" in another fanzine, *Stories of Suspense*, edited by Marv Wolfman. As a teen, King also won a Scholastic Art and Writing Award.

The reason I chose to write about The King himself, was because he is very inspirational and I've been reading his books and watching his movies as a kid. It even inspired me to want to write a horror novel. I have a weird thing with horror. It doesn't scare me, it just gives me

adrenaline. I love “IT” but not much of the new one because the original one is the one I’ve been obsessed with since I was about three years old. I read the book at age eleven and still have the original copy now that I still read. I also have “IT” posters all on the walls of my bedroom. Stephen King has a huge part in my life and he's actually really interesting.

## **Impeccability**

**By Marlene Zaragoza**

The Four Agreements, by Don Miguel Ruiz discussed being, “impeccable with your word.” Being impeccable with your word means to speak with integrity, to say what you mean, avoid using words against yourself or gossiping, and use the power of your word to direct truth and love. Being impeccable with your word is important because it can change someone's life drastically in both positive or negative ways. Don Miguel Ruiz stated, “Use the power of your word to spread love and positivity.” In this essay, I will discuss how I am impeccable with my words and also use the word against myself and others. Next, I will discuss how others have been impeccable with their words and thrown poisonous words at me. Finally, I will discuss how being impeccable with our words can create a heaven or hell on Earth.

First, I will discuss how I am impeccable with my words. I try to be positive and kind to others, I don't question or judge others just because I don't know them or their story. A time I was impeccable with my word was when my friend was crying over her ex who talked down to her. I told her she was an amazing person. She didn't deserve to be hurt and she needed to be happy for herself. I am impeccable with my words because I know how it feels when the poison spreads from your toes to your mind so I use positivity to heal. I've used the word against myself

which caused so much pain that is still there but the more I let go and forgive myself, the better I'm becoming.

Next, I'll be talking about how others are impeccable with their words. Others try to hurt you with their poisonous words. Yet there are others that try to heal those with kind words. Like when a random person talks to you and tells you that you're doing amazing and to keep moving forward. Hearing words like that really make you want to keep moving forward. Rather than having someone tell you, you're not good enough and you can't do it. Words like that create a dark magic where you're stuck in this mindset that you can't do it.

In the end, impeccability can create a heaven or hell on earth. The white magic that it gives off rubs off on people. When that happens everyone is positive and happy. People's lives will run smoother; they will be mentally better. Poisonous black magic creates hell. It causes suffering. Negative vibes, comments, and thoughts will hold you down. You won't be able to grow and bloom when you're being held down with the poison.

Being impeccable with your word is very important, not just for yourself but to others and the world. Others can be hurt with the words you tell them and they can hurt you. The world can become hateful without the impeccability of your words. It's really important that we think and use our words correctly to not hurt ourselves or others. Being true and kind to yourself can make you grow. We can heal with white magic.

## **JOURNALS**

### **Push**

**By Katlin Cunningham Carbajal**

If you want something in your life to change, you are going to have to take a step forward. You are going to have to pass obstacles that might not feel so comfortable or safe. But that's what life is about, growth. Push past your limits, or yourself. Get out of your comfort zone so you can get to experience new things in life.

### **My Progression**

**By Edward Jimenez**

My name is Edward Jimenez. I am a procrastinator, I get distracted very easily and I only like to complete the tasks I wish to complete. When I'm not struggling to do school work, I am at home locked in my room playing video games. My favorite video game is Rainbow Six Siege. R6 is a realistic player versus player shooter game. The game has a very small population of only 300,000 players. So now you know I'm an avid gamer. This is my hardest endeavor..

The hardest things I had to overcome was myself, my behavior, my mindset, and my thought process. When I was younger I was a very bad child who would not listen. I was very disrespectful to my parents, I would break things, and become overly angry about the slightest situations. Before I knew it I had painted this hideous picture through my actions, and people and family relatives thought a certain way about me.

My junior year of high school was when it really snapped. I started to realize everything I was doing was wrong. Just when I felt like giving up, an opportunity was given to me. I was accepted at Edward Wenzlaff Alternative Education Center, where I was able to start fresh. Being accepted into that school gave me a sliver of passion to actually attend school.

Although I'm still struggling with everything I mentioned, I will try to achieve my hardest goal, graduating high school. After high school hopefully I will be mentally healthy, living a good life and be somewhat financially free.

## **Writing**

**By Melissa Robles**

Writing helped sculpt my life into the safe space I now adore. It gave my life more meaning and purpose. Knowing I have somewhere to go where I am welcomed is why writing made me find the real me.

Such a great feeling to know I have somewhere to go. Writing is my destination, my home. For when there is no room for me, no door open, my notebook waits for me. Although I still have much more work to do on myself, I've come a long way due to this bond I've created with this paper and pen. I look forward to the days ahead with confidence. My motivation has grown to continue to spread these lovely letters with myself and others. Bringing safety and comfort to my heart everytime I hit a key. Home has such a different meaning because I finally found mine, my words.

Updating my way of thinking has helped me grow to be like the strong emotional women I adore. Knowing this secret formula inspires me to continue trying to be the best version of myself. A strong connection with myself saved me. Writing saved me, it can save you, with a pen by its side. A relieving feeling that is harmless to myself and others brings me peace when I am unsure how to cope. Finally someone to talk to and release my worst fears without worry or judgment. So easy to cope through writing in my book.

Not only did I learn how to write, but I learned who I truly am and who I want to be. I connected with myself on a level I didn't know existed until writing played its part.



Understanding how to love myself and care for myself like no one else could was put into such a clear picture through these words I write. Clearing my mind and being alone now is satisfying, no longer fearful. I love each and every day because writing through these pages I have come to understand I only need myself to be okay in life.

## **Sharp Change**

**By Natan Rodriguez**

According to Robin S. Sharma, “Change is the hardest at the beginning, messiest in the middle, and the best in the end.” This quote means that although the process of change isn't an easy path, the end of the path is usually the satisfying part of the whole experience. One moment in my life that I can say I had to take this difficult path was rediscovering who I really am and regaining respect for myself. I forced myself to be something I never was from the start and from that point on was a downward spiral. It took too much for me to realize what I'd become and the mental beatings I forced myself to go through. But one day they did something that I knew would happen a year prior but I had been in denial before it actually happened. In a way it was like waking up but the only thing I could feel from that moment was just pure anger and disgust. I wasn't just angry at them for their betrayal but I was angry at myself because that was the moment I realized how much time I wasted, how much effort I had put in but all at the cost of my sanity. At that moment I needed to change and leave before I was completely lost. I'd say the change was hard but with how sharp the realization was it was just something I knew I had to do.

## **Time**

**By Natan Rodriguez**

Time marches forward indefinitely. Although I might have a moment of rest, it seems as though the day has already started. Even in moments of happiness, time loves to be cruel and out

of nowhere speeds itself up. It's hard to catch up when I don't understand how I even got here or there half the time. Lately, I feel as if my time is nearing its end, yet, I can't do anything to combat its flow. As time keeps moving faster and faster, the only thing I can do now is appreciate the time I have left and love the things around me. It's infuriating, but I can't complain about it now, it would only be a waste of time.

### **The Dream**

**By Natan Rodriguez**

Everyone has their dreams. Some may be smaller than others, while some are giant in size. No matter how big or small someone's dream is, it's still something I imagine they deeply desire. My dream might not be all too possible if I do not put faith in my mind, but I need to try. My dream could very well be the end of me and my mind, but that's what I signed myself up for. I could give up on it and not risk it all to be in my dream but what point is there to life without taking risk. If I gave up I might as well give up on everything else, because nothing else that I can think of will ever match up to my deepest desire in life. I may sound crazy, but I only have one life, so I need to use it right.

### **Betrayal**

**By Isabel Rosas**

You betrayed me. So I ask, If I speak, will you listen? If I tell you it hurts, will you change? You didn't hurt me directly but you might as well have. If I ask, if I speak, will you listen? If I ask you why, will you tell me? If I yell, will you let me? If I throw insults toward you, will you tell me not to? After years of your love, after years of holding your hand to cross the street, after years of thinking you would never hurt the ones I love or me, you betrayed me but the biggest betrayal was for her.

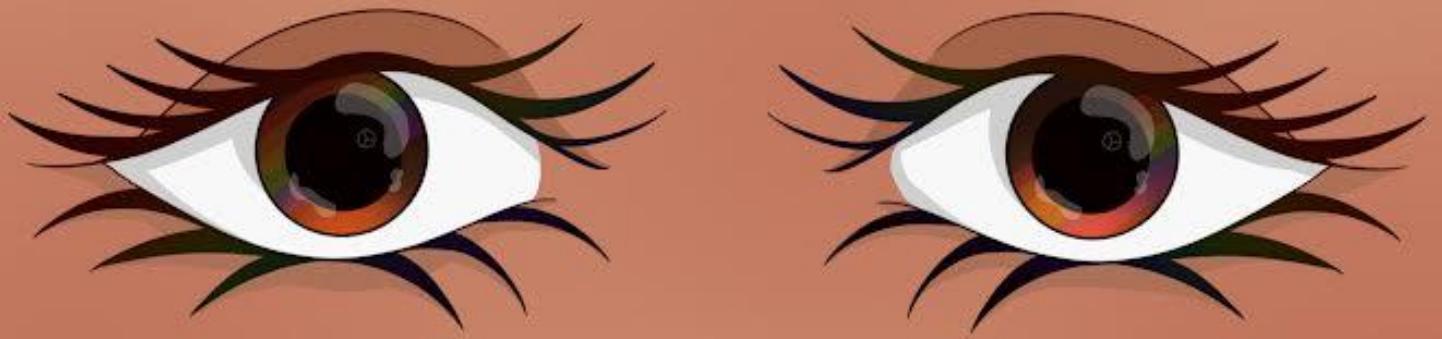
I saw you as a father even though you weren't. I loved you as one of my own even though you weren't. I couldn't wait for after school hoping I'd see you squeezing the straps of my backpack with excitement, just to learn of your betrayal. You are the reason I lost the ability to trust.

## **Hope**

**By Marlene Zaragoza**

I chose the light pink transparent ribbon because it was calming, simple yet elegant. When I opened the envelope I was confused but when I took the key out and read the word I became emotional. My word was HOPE which hit me deep because I've grown up in a complicated tough environment. I always hoped that things would get better. But it's hard when you give others hope and you are running low on hope for yourself.

Namaste



May we meet again

June 2023