

HOPE
WORKS
MARRIAGE COUNTS
2022



Cultivate
arts magazine



Cultivate

youth arts magazine

2022

HopeWorks' mission is to support and advocate for people in Howard County affected by sexual and intimate partner violence and to engage the community in creating the change required for violence prevention.

"One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen, can change the world."

- Malala Yousafzai

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Vanita Leatherwood
MANAGING EDITOR

Victoria Rain
EDITOR

MC Carey
Suzanne (Sue) Geckle
Sandra Price
Erin Reid
Yunling Ying
EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

HOPEWORKS

9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Suite
300
Columbia, Maryland 21046
Phone: 410.997.0304

Hours

Monday – Friday
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Web

HopeworksofHC.org

Facebook

www.facebook.com/HopeWorksofHC

Twitter

www.twitter.com/HopeWorksofHC

24-Hour Helpline

410.997.2272

COVER ART: PAPER PLANES BY YAN YU LI

DISCLAIMER

The artistic expressions in this publication are those of the individual authors and artists and do not necessarily reflect the philosophies, position or policies of HopeWorks.

Cultivate grew out of years of inquiry: who am I, where does violence come from, what is my role in creating a world where everyone is safe and valued? What do I have to offer?

The questions came from participants in the HopeWorks' Youth Leadership Project. Since 2011, high school students involved in the Project have been asked to question the status quo, to reflect on the people and the issues that are important to them. They learned about the journey and power of finding their own voice.



Now, 10 years later, it seems natural to evolve and offer a space where youth can be expressive, reflective, and connected. What better vehicle than the arts?

Creative approaches to empowerment are timeless, accessible, and healing. The artistry offered in Cultivate is heartfelt, curious, honest, and courageous.

Congratulations to each voice presenting itself to the world in these pages.

Vanita

Vanita Leatherwood | Director of Community Engagement
HopeWorks of Howard County
vleatherwood@hopeworksofhc.org

HOPEWORKS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Maureen Evans Arthurs
Michele Beaulieu, President
Gabriella Colarusso, Secretary
Dana Covert
Suzanne (Sue) Geckle, Vice President
Julian Greene, Treasurer
Arielle Karp
Paul J Mccourt
Faye McCray
Ainy Haider-Shah
Marcia White
Phyllis Yigdall

HopeWorks is Howard County's sexual and intimate partner violence center. We are here for our clients completely. And we are agents of change. Hope builds momentum and momentum creates change...when we work together.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Title	Page
Air is Not Needed by Danny Jordan Softly Striking by Danny Jordan	3
Rainbows by Sophia Chudnovsky Together, Forever by Sophia Chudnovsky	4
Social Justice by Jack Porter A Colorful World by David Okonkwo	5
Still Going by Shirlena Chen	6
Today's American by Bethany Vickers	7
Parasitism by Yan Yu Li	8
d'horreur by Danny Jordan Breaking Point by Shirlena Chen	9
Rose to My Daisy by Bethany Vickers Reaching for the Star by Sophia Chudnovsky	10
Play this Song at My Funeral by Zoe Brookbank Snowflakes by Sophia Chudnovsky	11
Paper Planes by Yan Yu Li	12
A Walk in the Park by Sophia Chudnovsky I Say by David Okonkwo	13
Maybe I Have Writers Block by Sarah Pan Burned Out by Sarah Pan	14
Blind by Zoe Brookbank	15
Hygge by Shirlena Chen	16
From a Child's Eyes by Zoe Brookbank	17
Self Portrait by Yan Yu Li A Blank Piece of Paper by Sophia Chudnovsky	18
Healing by Jack Porter Hope by Jack Porter	19
Tomorrow by Bethany Vickers Mountain by David Okonkwo	20
Sand Scribble by Sophia Chudnovsky	21
Artists' Bios	23
Article: Love Radically	24

AIR IS NOT NEEDED

BY DANNY JORDAN

Waking up next to someone once
After waking up to no one
Hundreds of times
Is indeed not like a breath of fresh air.
Honestly it feels like drowning.
Your heart starts beating erratically,
And you try to breathe
But there's just not enough air around
For the both of you.
And yet,
As you sink to the bottom,
No air left at all,
You know you'd drown over
And over
Just to wake up next to that person again.
To feel their body next to yours,
To feel their heat and yours floating;
Surrounding you both.
You'd breathe each other's air because
You enjoy the way it makes
Your lungs scream just a little bit.
And amidst the brutality of it all,
Air is not needed.

© 2022 Danny Jordan

SOFTLY STRIKING

BY DANNY JORDAN

Her hands are warm.
Almost inviting, like a hug.
She loves like she kisses,
Mean and nasty,
Full of fire.
You'd be a fool not
To fall for her.
She's sweet, and
Soft, alluring.
She catches you
With little stolen glances,
Brings you in with whispers
Of fate and forever.
And far you fall,
Unknowing of the
Overwhelming mercy
You'll soon beg for.
Time will pass,
Days aging into years,
And you find yourself lost.
Stuck.
For she's case herself on you,
Bared you down to skin
And bone.
And now,
For you,
There's nothing left of what used
To be.

© 2022 Danny Jordan

RAINBOWS

BY SOPHIA CHUDNOVSKY

Rainbows will greet you
As a brand new beginning
Your future is bright

© 2022 Sophia Chudnovsky

TOGETHER, FOREVER

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY SOPHIA CHUDNOVSKY



© 2022 Sophie Chudnovsky

SOCIAL JUSTICE

PHOTOGRAPHY

BY JACK PORTER



© 2022 Jack Porter

A COLORFUL WORLD

BY DAVID OKONKWO

Our world is filled with color,
Not just the green on the trees,
Or the blue in the sky,
Or the yellow on the bees.

There are many people in this world,
But no one looks the same.
Some are darker, some are lighter
But no one is to blame.

Everyone has value,
No matter the race.
Everyone is important,
No matter the color on their face.

This world would be boring,
If I looked like my friend.
We both may be different shades,
But it doesn't matter in the end.

So when I say, Colorful World
I am talking about the human race
Because this world is amazing
because we all have a place.

© 2022 David Okonkwo

STILL GOING
VISUAL ART
BY SHIRLENA CHEN



© 2022 Shirlena Chen

TODAY'S AMERICA

BY BETHANY VICKERS

In Today's America
our 'Star-Spangled Banner' itself questions how much we've really changed.

They say the blue stands for justice
but we don't see much of that.

We learned to see blue as an intensified color,
intensified like our borderlines.

Don't forget the stars and stripes.

The stars stand for our fifty states but now we have stars kneeling at football games;
big thanks to racial profiling.

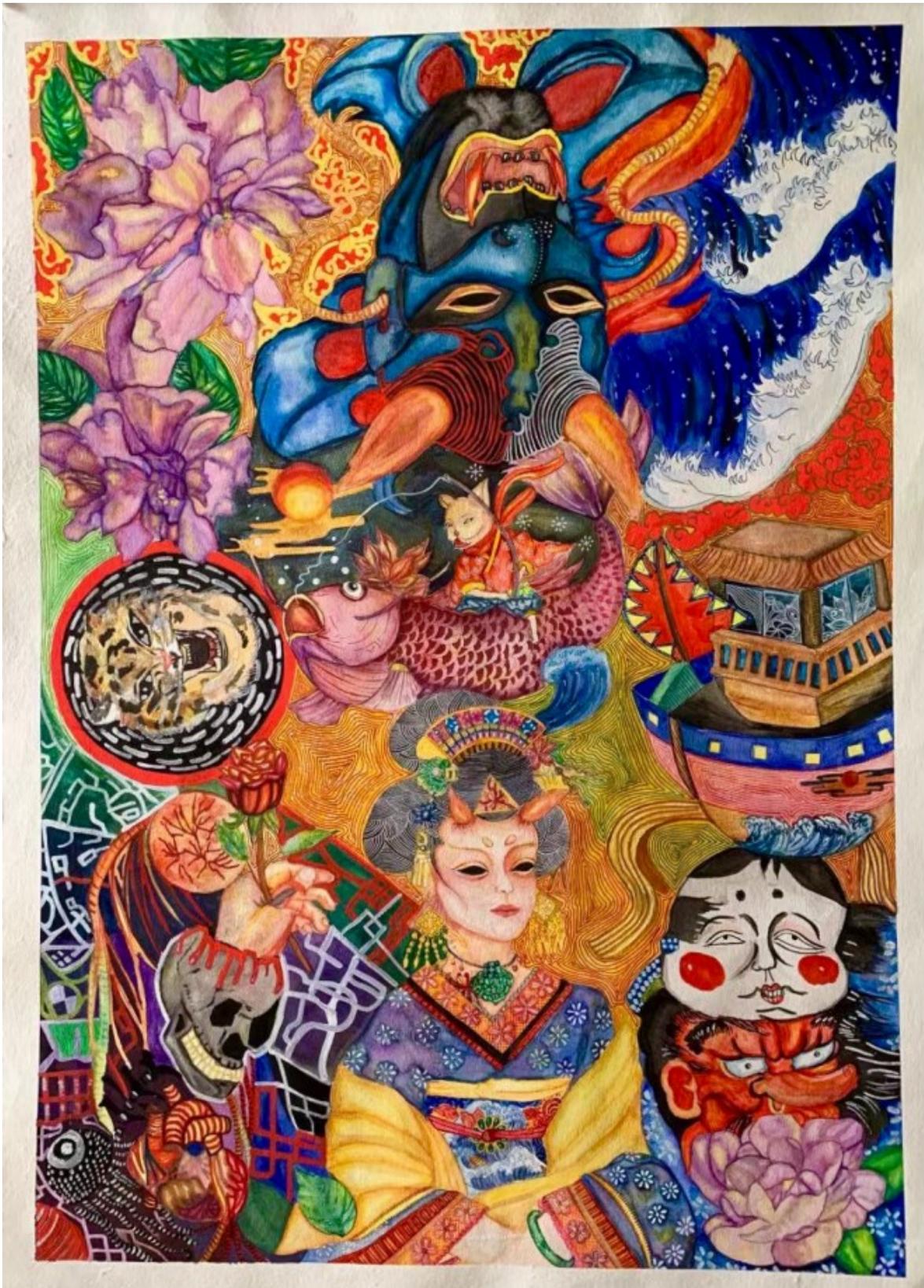
I would like to say I see the stripes the same
but as I studied our flag from my kneeling position
I noticed how it ended in red,

just like too many disagreements between black and blue.

The flag doesn't stand with the true meaning
so I'll stay kneeling until there's justice for me and you.

© 2022 Bethany Vickers

PARASITISM
VISUAL ART
By YAN YU LI



© 2022 Yan Yu Li

D'HORREUR

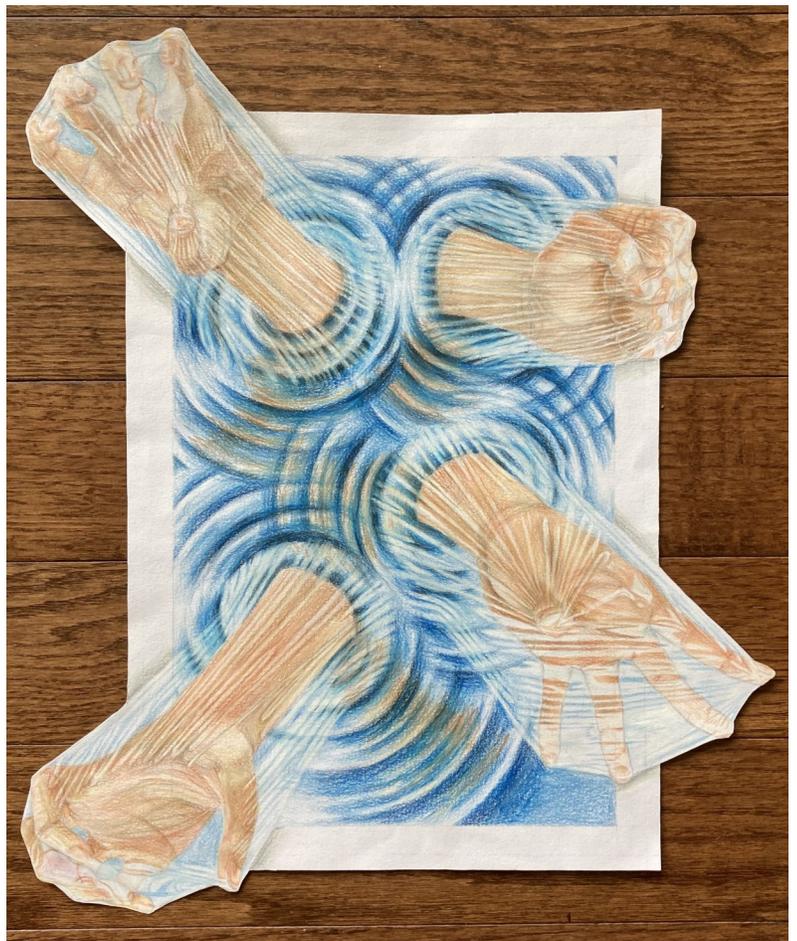
BY DANNY JORDAN

The feelings attack my skin.
I can feel whispers of a hand on my hip,
Gentle breaths of his fingertips on my shoulder,
Quiet words spoken against my ear.
The smell taunts me,
His cologne beating strong on my sweater.
My nostrils flare in protest as the smell swiftly
Crawls it's way down my throat and settles like a brick
Sitting in my chest.
All I can feel is heavy, *heavy*, **heavy**.
I feel grotesque in a way I've never felt before.
The shower I took that night was one that tore his smell
From my skin, and my skin from my bone.
I'd let nothing sit on my arm before I let him rest there.
I'll knock the walls of my skin down just to tear him off
Of me.
I'll make myself lighter, *lighter*, **lighter**, before he can
Weigh me down with the whispered touches, and
Breathing fingers, and quiet words.
I'll build walls around myself that break and crumble at
The faint smell of him,
But they will hold against his touch.
And I will break and crumble at his touch
But I will hold against his smell.
I feel him again, against my side
Pressed up in front of me,
Holding me close.
I shower, and I scrub, and I tear
And just like that he was never there.

© 2022 Danny Jordan

BREAKING POINT

VISUAL ART
BY SHIRLENA CHEN



© 2022 Shirlena Chen

ROSE TO MY DAISY

BY BETHANY VICKERS

“He loves me.”

“He loves me not.”

If I pick the petals off a daisy
one by one
there is always a chance
“He loves me not.”

That being said daisies are weeds
so today I’m buying myself roses

and even if
“He loves me not.”
I rather have a centerpiece of roses than weeds.

© 2022 Bethany Vickers

REACHING FOR THE STAR

PHOTOGRAPHY

BY SOPHIA CHUDNOVSKY



© 2022 Sophia Chudnovsky

PLAY THIS SONG AT MY FUNERAL

By ZOE BROOKBANK

Highway wind and wet hair.
Drive the miles away.
People tend to stop and stare.
But we've never cared.

Carry me on your shoulders, hold me on your back.
Teach me to sing when no ones there,
Love the sky, even when it's dark and black.
Create with your heart, not with your brain,
For life is short and sweet.
Never fear, your fathers here.
He'll always save me a seat.

If I played this song at your funeral, don't you think I'd cry?
Words can never describe how hard it is to lie.
A rose on the day of love,
A kiss upon my cheek.
Words of love and wisdom,
I'll never again feel weak.
Simultaneously kicking ass and making peace.
You aren't a superhero.
You're a rock legend and I'm your masterpiece.

© 2022 Zoe Brookbank

SNOWFLAKES

By SOPHIA CHUDNOVSKY

Delicate snowflakes flutter down to the ground
Gathering like piles of lace in mound

Each one is intricate, distinctive, and most of all, sacred
Their journey is mesmerizing, I am captivated

Dancing around, swaying from side to side
Eventually reaching the ground in a swift, agile glide

Their placid path reminds me of the stars
Each one is unique, just like we are

© 2022 Sophia Chudnovsky

PAPER PLANES

VISUAL ART
By YAN YU LI



© 2022 Yan Yu Li

A WALK IN THE PARK

PHOTOGRAPHY

BY SOPHIA CHUDNOVSKY



© 2022 Sophia Chudnovsky

I SAY

BY DAVID OKONKWO

They may say that I am too young to inflict
change,
I say that my spirit is higher than any mountain
range
They may say I don't have skill
I say that the only thing I need is my will
They may say I'm too small
But I say I can do it all
They may say things that will put me down
But it's my choice if I stay on the ground

© 2022 David Okonkwo

MAYBE I HAVE WRITERS BLOCK

BY SARAH PAN

How do I even begin this sentence?

Images ripple across my mind. Each emotion, heightened climax is carefully positioned in its place like wooden blocks. Then the scene unravels, bursting through the darkness.

But the words. What if I create the wrong impression? What if this is a bad sentence? What if these words are empty and over-pretentious? A cycle of doubt, again and again.

And I stare at the blank page, waiting for the words to come. But they never do.

So you want things to be perfect? But what is the perfection you seek?

Is it an empty standard, thin as air? An object lifted beyond sight?

And as you rise, you can feel the air wisp and disappear.

The perfect bar will always rise. Higher and higher it soars, above your reach.

Words always tangle like a clogged sink, discarded away before they enter the page.

Spit it out anyway.

© 2022 Sarah Pan

BURNED OUT
VISUAL ART
BY SARAH PAN



© 2022 Sarah Pan

BLIND

BY ZOE BROOKBANK

If only she weren't blind to what she could be.
If only her thoughts weren't lying to me.
She says she's lazy, hopeless, and lost,
Her life pressed into points, but at what cost?
Cloudy vision and snowstorm sight,
Ignoring thoughts from day till night.
Pressing her hand to her eyes the eldest hides,
Her brain edged on and misguides.

Wiser though than her intentions,
If only you could zoom out and see your own dimensions.
Love and hope and care,
Wise and balanced and fair.
Pull your hand from your eyes and place it on your heart,
The beat is there for a reason, don't let it tear you apart.
Let the clouds subside,
Wipe away the tears you've cried.
Rip out the pages you've let get smeared,
Watch as the blizzard gets cleared.

Read my words carved in hope,
Take it one step at a time, try to narrow the scope.
I've never been one for comfort, but I hope you'll be alright,
Just try and open your eyes, I know it's not an easy fight.
See that you're valuable, smart, and kind,
Now how long have you let yourself go blind?

Here if you need, the youngest can sit,
We can take a breath under the night sky, all moonlit.
Let your mind wander and eyes race,
For only the blind can't see the beauty of space.

© 2022 Zoe Brookbank

HYGGE
VISUAL ART
BY SHIRLENA CHEN



© 2022 Shirlena Chen

FROM A CHILD'S EYES

BY ZOE BROOKBANK

How very odd it must be to have a child.
To have one you call your own.
One who can simply smile and leave you beguiled.
For 18 years, you are never alone.

It must be strange to look at a being a know,
Know they came from your own flesh and blood,
To sit back and watch them grow.
Starting as nothing but a flower bud.

How bizarre it would be to see,
An offspring with your face and heart,
Sitting under the shade of your family tree.
Hoping they'll never fall apart.

But one day they may,
They may break bit by bit.
No matter how you carve the way.
Some are just destined to split.

You panic and pulse,
And you hastily glue,
You look upon yourself with a certain revulse.
Wondering how things have gone so askew.

But I just need you here with me,
Sitting by my side.
Adhesive free.
I don't need you to count the times I've cried.
I need the comfort and shade of your very own cherry tree.
And only then will my pieces once again become unified.

© 2022 Zoe Brookbank

SELF PORTRAIT

VISUAL ART
BY YAN YU LI



© 2022 Yan Yu Li

A BLANK PIECE OF PAPER

BY SOPHIA CHUDNOVSKY

A blank piece of paper is an opportunity,
can go one way or the other
but remember, you have the pencil

A blank piece of paper is a crisp, untouched
blanket of snow,
ready to be played on, only you get to
choose
whether your sledding or skiing

A blank piece of paper is an immense drifting
cloud
but instead of following the howling wind,
you choose the path

A blank piece of paper is a message to you
knowing you have the right to express,
as you lead the journey

© 2022 Sophia Chudnovsky

HEALING
PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JACK PORTER



© 2022 Jack Porter

HOPE
PHOTOGRAPHY
BY JACK PORTER



© 2022 Jack Porter

TOMORROW

BY BETHANY VICKERS

What if it turns out better than you thought?
What if the worst thing to happen happens and you're completely okay?
What if it's not the end of the world,
just the end of that and the sun still rises the next day?

What if there's no happily ever after,
just happy to get through the day?
What if one door closed
but you have a key to the one down the way?

They say you only live once
but you live day-to-day
and sometimes things change,
sometimes it feels like nothing is going the right way.

What if that's okay?
What if you'll be okay?
What if it's just a bad day and tomorrow is filled with so many reasons to stay?

© 2022 Bethany Vickers

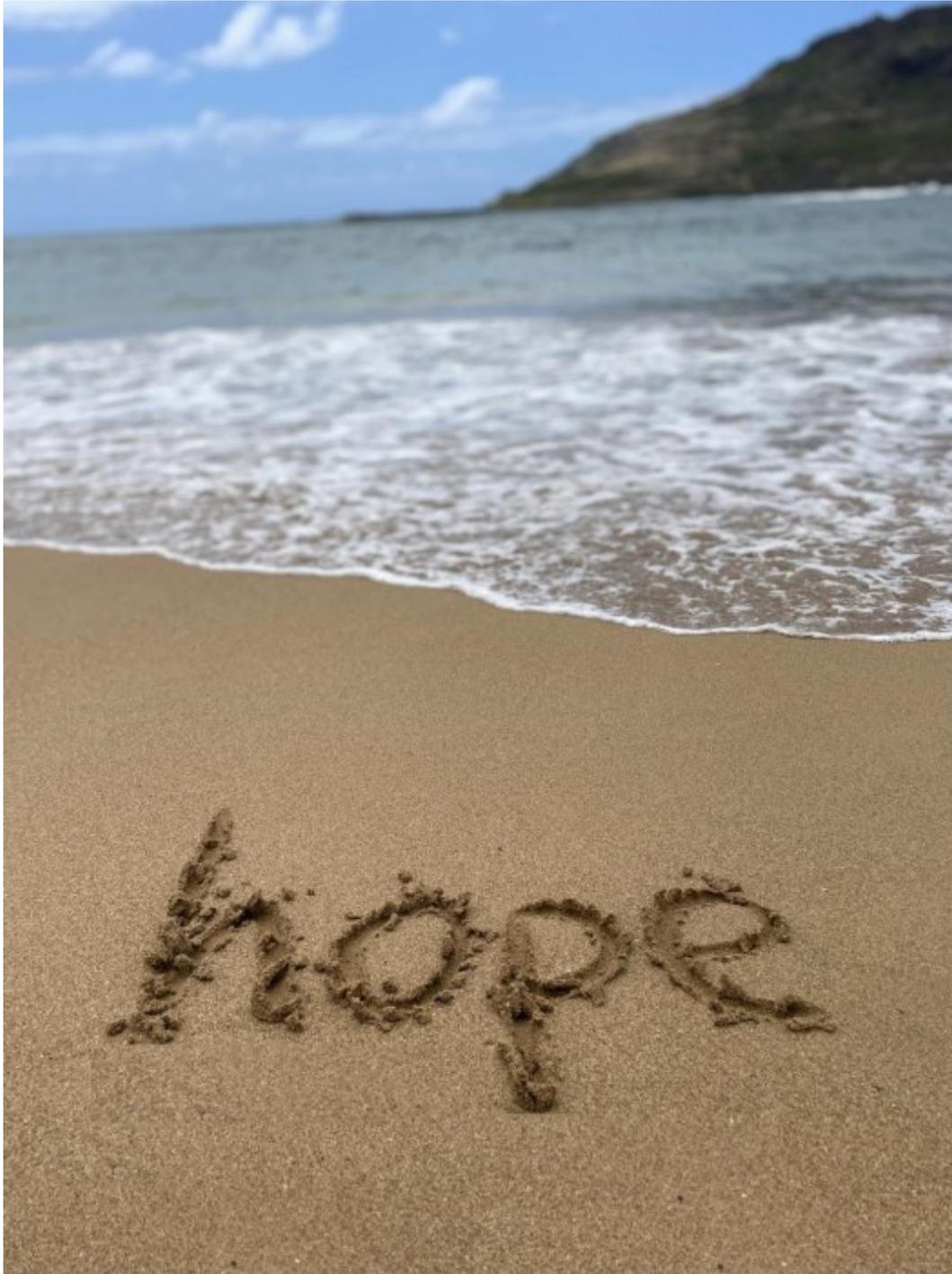
MOUNTAIN

BY DAVID OKONKWO

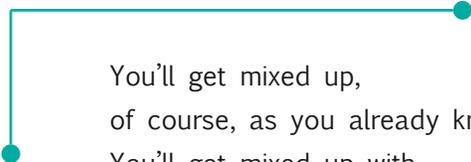
Life is full of ups and downs, like a mountain.
And there is no way to get up this mountain, unless you keep going up.
The only way to overcome the hardships and challenges,
Is to overcome your own insecurities.
It doesn't matter how fast you get up this mountain,
Or how far you have to go,
What matters is how far you've gotten.
And if you're willing to finish it,
And the best way to do that is to not be alone.
And the thought that, at the top, the view is worth it.

© 2022 David Okonkwo

SAND SCRIBBLE
PHOTOGRAPHY
BY SOPHIA CHUDNOVSKY



© 2022 Sophia Chudnovsky



You'll get mixed up,
of course, as you already know.
You'll get mixed up with
many strange birds as you go.
So be sure when you step.
Step with care and great
tact and remember that
Life's A Great Balancing Act.

— Dr. Seuss
Oh the Places You'll Go, 1990

ARTISTS' BIOS

ZOE BROOKBANK: PAGE(S) 11, 15, 17

Zoe Brookbank is a Senior at Chopticon High School. She is a part of the poetry club at CHS and is very devoted to other clubs as well, like theatre and envirothon. She has been writing poetry for about 7 years and though she intends to be an environmental science major, she definitely wants to pursue poetry as a hobby.

SHIRLENA CHEN: PAGE(S) 6, 9, 16

Shirlena Chen is currently a junior at Glenelg High School. She has created art for as long as she can remember, and her cousin has been a great inspiration for her. Over time, art became more than a hobby, it became something she cannot live without. Now, she is always seeking ways for self improvement and strives to be a graphic designer.

SOPHIA CHUDNOVSKY: PAGE(S) 4, 10, 11, 13, 18, 21

Sophia Chudnovsky is an optimistic and extroverted fourteen year old. She loves to snap photographs and compose poems as an outlet of creativity and to spread positivity. She enjoys participating in math competitions, co-directing her school's morning news production, and conducting donation drives and service work within her community. In her spare time, you can find Sophia playing lacrosse, going on nature walks, listening to music, or playing with her adorable puppy, Bella.

DANNY JORDAN: PAGE(S) 3, 9

Danny is non-binary and goes by they/them pronouns. Poetry is an outlet they use to express some of their closest emotions. Enjoy!

YAN YU LI: PAGE(S) COVER, 8, 12, 18

Yan Yu is a 17-year-old college-bound student. In College, she plans to study biomedicine. On the cusp of her adult life, she devotes herself to learning, artistic expression, and bringing joy to her adopted family. She inspires those around her with her motivation to work for a better future for herself and her community. This is the year she found her voice and she will never again sit in silence.

DAVID OKONKWO: PAGE(S) 5, 13, 20

David has always loved writing; but he never knew it as a kid. His teachers encouraged his writing skills; so, he submitted a poem to a Fine Arts Convention three years ago and won the chance to go to Nationals. Now, he writes often. He attends Reservoir high school in 12th grade. He also likes walking, traveling, and reading to relax. He lives with his parents and has one older brother living in Texas.

SARAH PAN: PAGE 14

Sarah is a 14-year-old girl who enjoys creative arts and self-development in her free time. Using writing as an outlet to vent and connect with others, she discovered her love for it during quarantine. In her free time, she enjoys chatting with friends and listening to music.

JACK PORTER: PAGE(S) 5, 19

Jack Porter is eight years old. He lives in Columbia, MD with his mom and dad and his dog Kodi. Kodi is in one of Jack's photographs – he said that he is healing because they have such a strong and established bond. Jack is in the second grade. His favorite hobby is Legos. When he's outside, he likes to play Pokémon Go.

BETHANY VICKERS: PAGE(S) 7, 10, 20

Bethany Vickers is an 18 year old who is in her last year of high school. She has been writing since the seventh grade and is currently working on a book. She has a passion for poetry and enjoys writing poems that get people feeling and thinking. Writing has served as a form of expression for Bethany. She hopes her poems encourage others and give them something to think about and enjoy.

ARTICLE

At HopeWorks, we use the arts in three important ways to accomplish our mission: to support survivors in their healing; as a vehicle to increase awareness; and to imagine creative solutions to bring about social change. Each year we are excited to introduce you to folks who also know the power of the arts.

“LOVE RADICALLY” A CONVERSATION WITH ROBIN SLAW

MC Carey (MC): Thank you for joining us to talk about your role, ideas, and values surrounding healthy sexuality education. As the Director of Religious Education for the Universalist Unitarian Congregation of Columbia (UUC), you are at the head of changing the way kids in your congregation and in the Columbia community talk about sexuality and relationships through an open religious lens. You also are the lead facilitator of the Our Whole Lives: Lifespan Sexuality Education program (OWL) at the UUC. Can you share about the OWL program and why it's important for you, as a religious educator, to have conversations in a religious setting about healthy sexuality with kids?

Robin Slaw (RS): Thank you for having me! It's been so wonderful to be in social justice community with HopeWorks and to have you as a facilitator with the 7-9 grade Our Whole Lives kids. I've been a sexuality educator for over two decades and I have taught sexuality education to every age group—kindergarteners through high school seniors, college students and young adults, and even sexuality education for elders in their 70s and 80s. I love doing it, I love helping people explore their own thoughts and beliefs around sexuality; really help them to understand the values that drive the Our Whole Lives program. The program itself is value driven and so what we help them (students at any age) look at are things like healthy relationships, agency over their own bodies, consent, communication skills, bystander intervention, and more. All of these things are wrapped up in the everyday life of our whole lives and being able to bring conversations to all of our students, age appropriately, is so powerful. We get to bring a program to them that is deeply sex positive. The program isn't meant to scare the kids with the worst possibilities of what could happen when you have unprotected sex; instead, the program is giving kids the agency and information to make healthy decisions that work with their life without shame. The program is focused on teaching the students how to have agency over their lives and the decisions that they make, and the way they care for themselves and their whether it is developing a friendship, falling in love, or preventing sexual assault. The values of the Our Whole Lives program are rooted in the importance of all of this regardless of the belief in a god, in one theology, or in one practice. It is a human right and a moral duty of me and the UUC to promote agency and self-determination.

MC: This is absolutely one of the core reasons why it was so important for me to become an authorized OWL facilitator and start working as soon as possible with the program at the UUC. Self-determination, agency, sex positivity and full information are massive when it comes to the values of HopeWorks and preventing gender and sexual violence. The morals and philosophy of the program just work so beautifully with how HopeWorks believes we can support and protect youth

CONTINUED

from violence. My next question speaks to the mission of the Cultivate Youth Arts Magazine which can be summed up in this quote by Audre Lorde: “Only one thing is more frightening than speaking your truth... and that is not speaking.” What does that quote mean to you as an educator and what role do you think story telling plays in helping shape young minds?

RS: When I talk to the children, especially the younger children, of our congregation, I tell them about the Universalist Unitarian (UU) philosophy which says, “we are called to build a better world”, so the idea of speaking your truth or not speaking your truth makes all the difference in your ability to build a better world. I also believe that, and frequently tell people, that my job is to teach people to question authority. And I say that because we are a creedless religion, and we don't tell our children what to believe; they through study and asking questions figure out for themselves what they want. Our congregation is made up of members of all different faiths—Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Atheist, and so on. So, what we do in our religious education classes, and this is true for all ages even adult classes, is we ask a lot of questions. Part of my job, as Director of Religious Education, is to help children, youth, and adults understand the values of questions, the appropriate use of questions and how to ask the kinds of questions that inspire others. We wonder about things, we explore, and we try to re-evaluate our knowledge, thoughts and understanding of the world on a regular basis and we allow ourselves to be transformed by all the questions we ask ourselves and each other.

MC: I am so inspired by that, especially as a person who has taken on a role of educator. It is a big deal to invite that questioning of authority, to invite questioning of the “one way” of doing things, and to invite confrontation through emotional knowledge and belief. It's very inspiring to know that the kids that you engage with are encouraged to find their own vision of the world that is centered in questioning, imagining, and exploring rather than forcing them to just regurgitate what is told to them. This flows well into our next conversation. At HopeWorks, we believe in the importance of bringing light to people who have had to hide in the shadows due to violence, in which ways do you hope the UUCC offers the same thing? In which ways do you think OWL is helping to navigate youth out of the shadows of potential violence and/or shallow sexuality health education?

RS: So, I want to share the story of my friend Kevin, who I met when we were both working at a summer camp for Universality Unitarian families. Kevin was working as a youth advisor, and I was a brand-new youth educator when we became really good friends, and eventually we both became trainers for Our Whole Lives. The reason why I bring him up is because Kevin was HIV positive and that was because when he was a teenager, he came out as gay and his family tossed him out on the street, and they wouldn't let him live at home anymore because he was gay. In addition to these risk factors of having little support systems and little access to a safe and welcoming environment, he ended up contracting HIV in his youth. This was down south in the U.S. where they didn't teach any sort of sexuality education in schools. He didn't know about condoms, agency

CONTINUED

over his own body, what it meant to be in healthy sexual relationships as a young gay person living on the streets, or anything about keeping himself safe sexually, which contributed to him becoming HIV positive. Kevin eventually passed away from AIDS when he was older, and it was heartbreaking; I adored him. Part of the reason why I feel so passionate about sexuality education is because of Kevin and his story. If he had the opportunity to engage in a program like OWL—sex positive, inclusive of gender and sexual orientation, supportive of bodily autonomy, risk aware, and focused on understanding safety in all of its capacity—he may not have had the same outcome. Our program and the UU would have reinforced the idea that he was a holy child and loved by God exactly as he is. He might have been able to have a community that could care for him the way his parents couldn't, and he would have understood about body agency, keeping himself safe in sexual relationships, understanding his own understanding of safety, and maybe wouldn't have been infected by HIV—it could have been lifesaving. When I teach OWL, I truly believe we're saving lives—changing lives. For example, when I taught human sexuality at the college level, I would see some young adults who haven't had any sexuality education as a child or in high school and how life changing it was for them, especially those who took it seriously. There were so many kids who bought in to such toxic beliefs around misogyny, homophobia, shame, and sex. Kids who didn't believe in body autonomy and who didn't understand anything about transgender people. I remember having conversations about consent back then where I would bring up the idea of asking people before you kissed them and almost everyone said “ew no way!” especially the cisgender men in the classes. But then, as the years went by and the culture on campus and within young adults changed, I had more and more students agreeing with the idea and noting how romantic it would be. At the end, even the frat boys got it—the idea that people would start asking if they could have a kiss instead of just going for it and assuming. What a revolutionary world. The world changes for the better when we understand these ideas.

MC: This story was so powerful, and I can fully say that as a person who didn't grow up with this type of sexuality education, as a queer and trans person myself, the type of sex positivity and radical self determination that is supported through OWL is deeply life changing. My next question is what do you feel is the most impactful part of working with youth in your community capacity? Are there any core messages or values you hope to share with the children you engage with every week?

RS: I have two points. One is that our children are people, and they are loved for themselves no matter who they are. Two is that all of us can have a positive impact on the world and that is what we are called to do. The UU congregation is one place where there are adults, like me and not *just* me, where people are interested in them, will love them for them, and ask them questions about themselves. Kids are people just as much as adults. Knowing who they are and what they care about is a huge part. Every lesson and every time we are together, we talk about how they can have a positive impact on the world. We can't just be along for the ride, it's up to us to

CONTINUED

decide to make an impact. The Unitarian Universalist values sum it up perfectly; we create the heaven right here and right now and so everything we do or don't do creates/ created the opposite. All of our interactions with people and living things on earth... it needs to be a positive interaction.

MC: What a beautiful sentiment. Finally, Cultivate Arts Magazine highlights the artistic endeavors of creative youth throughout Maryland and beyond, in what ways do you bring creative energy into the work you do with youth at the UUCC?

RS: Like I said before, its all about asking questions. Asking questions opens people up to wonder, create, and explore. When you ask a question, you learn something new and that opens up your mind. When you open up your mind, maybe your reaction is “wow I never knew that” or “how am I going to fixt this” or “lets brainstorm more.” Or maybe it is just to sit with what you've learned and wait for something to come—actively invite new thoughts and creativity. I believe that at the UUCC we encourage this whole heartedly, especially with our youth, but everywhere in our congregation. We believe in the 6-word statement of faith: “Love radically, serve gratefully, wonder daily”.



Robin Slaw

Robin Slaw (she/her/hers) is the Director of Religious Education at the Universalist Unitarian Congregation of Columbia. You can learn more about the congregation and the Our Whole Lives: Lifespan Sexuality Education (OWL) program they run here <https://uucolumbia.net/our-whole-lives-owl/>



This magazine was published
with the assistance of...



The HopeWorks' Youth Leadership Project is a service-learning program dedicated to empowering teens to challenge systems of oppression and prevent relationship violence in their community. This project creates a space for students to grow in understanding themselves and the world. Facilitating self-care and social justice projects, youth leaders engage in frank discussions, raise their social consciousness and participate in creative projects and activism.

This project provides an affirming and safe space for all students.

Open to teens, age 13 to 18, participants explore many topics related to violence prevention including healthy relationships, media literacy and the safe use of technology, social constructions of femininity, healthy masculinity, self-management and self-care, environmental justice, body policing, bystander intervention, healthy sexuality, cultural relativity, bullying, gender dynamics, and understanding intersectionality and root causes of oppression.

WHAT'S PLANNED

- * Explore self-care and social justice in our monthly meetings (September-May)
- * Learn to plan and conduct workshops
- * Publish a Youth Arts Magazine, *Cultivate*
- * Experience producing HopeWorks' podcast, *Transforming Together*
- * Stand up for environmental justice by participating in our community garden, "The Our Earth Project"
- * Earn community service hours



Questions? For more information and an application, contact Community Engagement Coordinator, Victoria Rain, at (410) 997- 0304 or email her at vrain@hopeworksofhc.org.



HopeWorks of Howard County

The Our Earth Project

cultivating peace, sustainability, and connection

Members of the Our Voice and Youth Leadership Projects plant, tend, and harvest a community garden, located on Freetown Farm, that benefits HopeWorks' clients. In addition to pollinator-friendly plants and food, the garden offers a peaceful meditative space and poetry garden.

The Our Earth Program serves as a backdrop for discussing food deserts, access to clean water, the benefits of connecting with each other, the restorative aspects of being in nature, civic ecology, and the environmental injustices that disproportionately affect those who are marginalized.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

All ages welcome.

Join us for this life-sustaining experience in which we will learn from one another, cultivate peace, just sustainability and connection.

No gardening experience required!

Please contact the HopeWorks Community Engagement Department at (410) 997-0304 or email our Community Engagement Department at volunteer@hopeworksofhc.org.

This year, we planted a "Three Sisters" Garden, which acknowledges that we are on Indigenous Land, and is also a living representation of the work of HopeWorks. For many Native American communities, three seeds - corn, beans, and squash represent the most important crops. When planted together, the Three Sisters, work together to help one another thrive and survive. **We need lots of help from volunteers to maintain the space and, when ready, harvest crops for our clients.**

We Are HopeWorks.

Founded in 1978, HopeWorks of Howard County is a private nonprofit agency. HopeWorks' mission is to support and advocate for people in Howard County affected by sexual and intimate partner violence and to engage the community in creating the change required for violence prevention.

We are proud of our strong tradition of service provision and survivors will always need the specialized care our dedicated staff provides on a daily basis. Critical also to our mission is engaging the entire community in the work of changing the conditions that allow sexual and intimate partner violence to occur in the first place. This part takes all of us. Sexual and intimate partner violence are not inevitable realities in our world.

We all benefit when individuals are free to live self-determined lives without the threat of sexual and intimate partner violence – not just survivors. Parents, law enforcement, businesses, students, day care providers, doctors, nurses and teachers, men and boys benefit. Families and friends will all be better off without these threats.

Prevention takes an entire community working together – challenging and changing the beliefs, attitudes and culture that allow them to exist. And it takes hope. Hope builds momentum and momentum creates change...when we work together. Our community can be stronger and better and safer when we are all engaged in this work together.



WE ARE HOPEWORKS. EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US.

ADVOCACY SERVICES

- 24-Hour Helpline for callers seeking crisis counseling and referrals regarding sexual and intimate partner violence
- Providing comfort, support, and advocacy to survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence at Howard County General Hospital

SAFE SHELTER AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

- Crisis shelter for victims and their children
- Transitional housing
- Individual case management and educational programs and life-skill trainings

COUNSELING FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL & INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE (WOMEN, MEN & CHILDREN)

- Crisis appointments
- Individual and group counseling

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

- Brief advice, information and referrals for victims of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, stalking and child abuse
- Representation, consultation in peace & protective order matters, divorce, and family law proceedings
- Information and support through the Volunteer Legal Advocacy Project staffed at the District Court daily
- Criminal accompaniments to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault

ENGAGEMENT, EDUCATION & AWARENESS PROGRAMS

- Workshops and trainings at schools, faith communities, businesses and civic organizations
- HopeWorks' Youth Leadership Project: a service-learning program for teens ages 13 to 18
- The Our Voice Project: Survivor's Wellness & Leadership programs
- Arts-Based Programs for the general public to enhance wellness, build community and create change
- Self-care & Social Justice workshops for the general public to facilitating conversation, transformation and liberation
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Outreach and participation in community events such as school fairs, health fairs and awareness events

HOPEWORKS 24-HOUR HELPLINE 410.997.2272