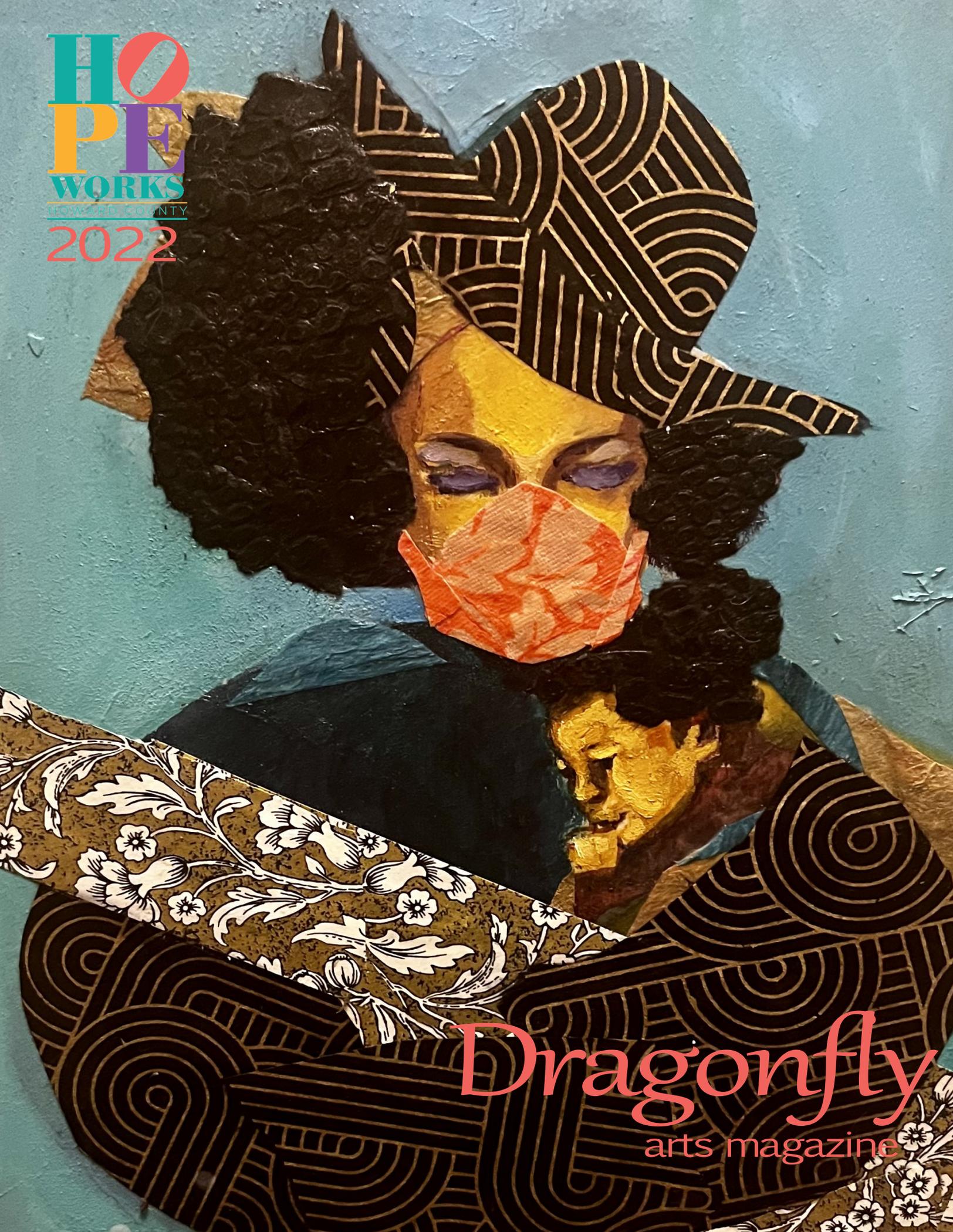


HOPE
WORKS
HOWARD COUNTY
2022



Dragonfly
arts magazine



Dragonfly

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.

"Insight, I believe, refers to the depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another."

- Mary Catherine Bateson

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COVER ART: Resilience in the Time of COVID 1 by Kamilah House

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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.

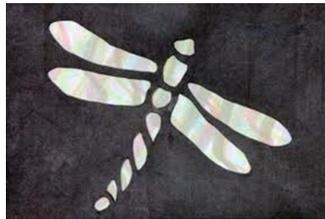


DRAGONFLY ARTS MAGAZINE IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE HOWARD COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL
THROUGH A GRANT FROM HOWARD COUNTY GOVERNMENT



As we all emerge from a painful and transformational global

we are reminded that true survival depends on both vulnerability and resilience. The dragonfly symbolizes the change that we all have been through together and yet uniquely, sometimes heartbreakingly, alone.



Self-expression through art depicts the transformation through crisis that allows self-realization and ultimately, liberation that we so often see reflected in the lives of the people we serve at HopeWorks.

Sharing our deepest feelings and thoughts in community where we are not only all welcomed but truly heard is a sometimes frightening but necessary ingredient in the healing journey. Dragonfly arts magazine provides just such a space, one that combines the raw intensity of the pain of transformation with the joy of courageous new perspectives and lives.

Congratulations to each of our contributing artists who were brave enough to articulate their own deep emotions and unique perspectives on life. We thank these artists who were generous enough to give us a window into their transformational journeys.

Elisabeth Olds, Interim Executive Director
HopeWorks of Howard County
eolds@hopeworksofhc.org

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*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
Ascension by Cori Bowen	3
I Can't Cry You a River by Gracie Cordes	4
Goddess of Broken and Lost Refugee Children by Barbara Lawson	5
White Man Delusion by Tom Balles	
Crevices by Robyn Holl	6
Pink by Robyn Holl	7
Hotline by Phyllis Rittner	8
Orchid Therapy Collection No. 14 by Thais Piageti-Cassel	
Friday Night with Mom by Barbara Weisser	9
The Big Sur, The Big Love by Ming Xu	10
Dance the Crumbling floor by KB Ballentine	11
Unfiltered After Fifty by KB Ballentine	
Self-care by Kelly DuMar	12
I Am Awakening by Kelly DuMar	13
Jesus Has Meth Teeth by Beth Gulley	14
The Weary Wife by Mark Scheel	
Karuna—Ocean of Compassion by Sheela Becton	15
Confession by hadlee	
Sunzines #1 by Mary Justin	16
Sunzines #6 by Mary Justin	17
All of Who I Am by Lyn Ford	18
Stand for the Victims by LNance Photography	
Oma's America by Barbara Lawson	19
Vigilant by Phyllis Yigdall	20
Where I'm From by Arlita Holland	21
Moon Sphere with Blossoms by Karin Stanley	22
Adi Searches for Home by Linda Joy Burke	23
sometimes by Judith Goedeke	
things I am unlearning by hadlee	24
Roan Mountain Autumn by Diane B. Dunn	25
Mother. Strength. Wisdom. by LNance Photography	26
From My Room of Memories for L. by Linda Joy Burke	27
Vortex by Cori Bowen	28
No Daddy's Girl by Michelle Petties	29
Protection by Regina Lovelace	31
Rise Up My Sisters by Arlita Holland	

Title	Page
Untitled #2 by Katarina Celebic	32
Untitled #4 by Katarina Celebic	33
American Family by Tom Balles	34
Resilience in the Time of COVID 1 by Kamilah House	35
Resilience in the Time of COVID Solo by Kamilah House	36
Chop Wood, Carry Water by Barbara Lawson	37
In the House of the World by Helen Clark	
cadence by Judith Goedeke	38
Raising Vibrations by Monica Herber	
Lunchroom Misery by Michelle Petties	39
Daybreak Angel by Monica Herber	42
Barker Street by William Lowe	43
Of Two Minds by Tom Balles	
Bloom After Storm by LNance Photography	44
Love is Love by LNance Photography	
How Black Are You Today by Marian O. Nance	45
Raven Story by Diane B. Dunn	46
Home (In Praise of Maryland) by Helen Clark	47
Untitled #1 by Katarina Celebic	
My Light Skin Privilege by Arlita Holland	48
For Debbie by Barbara Weisser	49
Try by Jennifer Vaughn	50
Sunzines #8 by Mary Justin	51
Hermit IV by Haley Linnet	52
The Power of Words Conference	54
Artists' Bios	55

ASCENSION
BY CORI BOWEN



© 2022 Cori Bowen

I CAN'T CRY YOU A RIVER

BY GRACIE CORDES

I can't cry you a river,
Mind you, what I have is barely a creek. It's run dry over the years,
Whisked away by heated, angry sun rays And wasted on people who
weren't actually worth the drain.

I've built fences around that old drizzle of mine So people can't see it,
So people aren't burdened by its wrecked flow.

There was a time when it was a roaring river,
And it came in constant waves over its surroundings. Sometimes it consumed people around it,
Just sucking them in, holding them hostage,
and nearly drowning them until it quieted down to aggravated, repressed ripples.

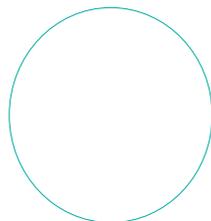
Now, there are dark days,
when the water seems to roar over its edges, and it seeps through the barricades
and worries the townspeople.

And there are bright lively days, too, where the water is running, but
It's calm and controlled, just trickling downstream
And only worrying the stones Hidden under the wetness.

So no, I can't cry you a river. I won't cry you a river.
I won't allow you a single drop.
What's left of this broken waterway, is mine. I may never take those fences down,
And maybe, if you're lucky, You'll be one of the few people I allow within those fences.
One of those people that aren't afraid
Of the roaring waves or to the aggravating ripples.

But no. not today.
So I'm wishing you well, But not my well,
Where the water is alive
And afraid of being touched and betrayed.

© 2022 Gracie Cordes



WHITE MAN DELUSION

BY TOM BALLE

One white man asks the others
who
do
you
not
think
holds
us
in
contempt?

Surely we're not scorned
by women suppressed
beaten, raped, tortured

nor startled
by ragged strands of loathing
passed through the generations

acquired from those bought and sold
those persecuted by fiery stakes of faith
those escorted to gas filled ovens.

Who would disparage us
from tribes and cultures
swallowed whole
to fill our hollow insides?

After all this
my beloved white brothers
still slow to grasp
our brutal reign
is coming to an end.

Now comes our turn
to sleep with one eye open.

© 2022 Tom Balles

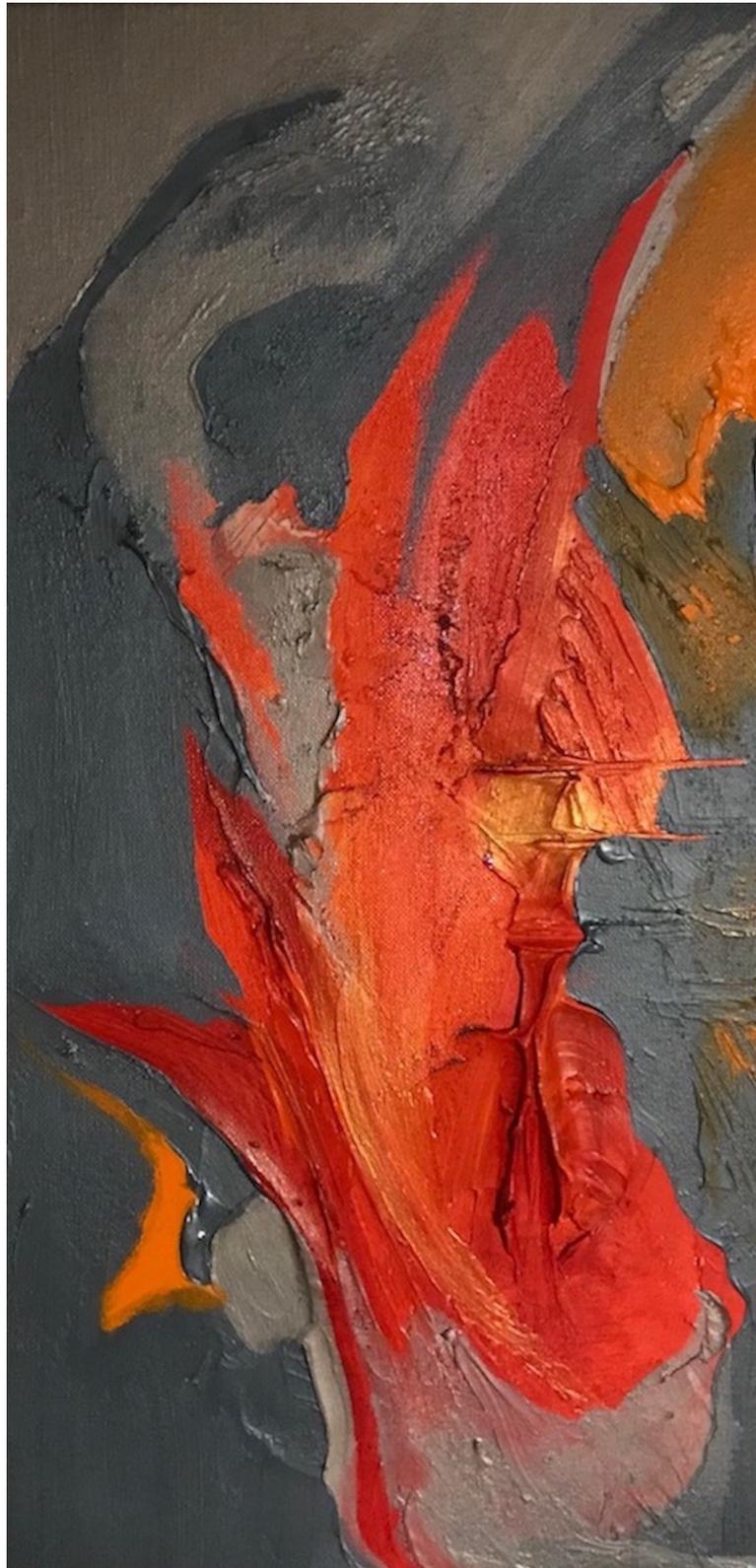
GODDESS OF BROKEN AND LOST REFUGEE CHILDREN

BY BARBARA LAWSON



© 2022 Barbara Lawson

CREVICES
BY ROBYN HOLL



© 2022 Robyn Holl

PINK
BY ROBYN HOLL



© 2022 Robyn Holl

HOTLINE

BY PHYLLIS RITTNER

I am stacking shampoo in the shelter donation room when the call comes in.

“I don’t know...” he whispers.

“That’s okay,” I say. Take your time.” I move to the office, shut the door, strain to listen. Hard, fast breaths. “Are you safe to talk?” I imagine a tornado spiraling in his belly, his mind sorting past and present into syllables, words, phrases.

“My name is Kathy,” I offer.

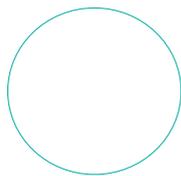
A torrent of sobs. I wait through this release, murmuring comfort between gasps. We breathe together, focusing on the exhalations. Then, a flurry of jumbled details which I scratch out with pad and pencil. For the next forty minutes I shift from counselor to mother, sister, witnesser of unimaginable courage.

“I bet this never happens to men,” he ventures. I assure him it does. We talk until I sense the inner rumblings of shame and doubt dissolve, fading into a single moment of quiet relief. Together we design a safety plan.

© 2022 Phyllis Rittner

ORCHID THERAPY COLLECTION NO. 14

BY THAIS PIAGETI-CASSEL



© 2022 Thais Piageti-Cassel

FRIDAY NIGHT WITH MOM

By BARBARA WEISSER

It was Friday night, the end of a rather rough week. My husband was out playing cards with his cronies, and I was going to have a nice quiet evening at home with nothing whatsoever to do. Driving home, I was looking forward to ripping all my clothes and underwear off as soon as I got in the door. Then I was going to sit in the living room, in my nightgown, with my feet up and drink a beer.

When I was almost home, I thought about my mother and remembered that I had to refill her pillbox on Friday evenings. I told myself I'd better do that first so I wouldn't have to go back out after I got all comfortable. My 82-year-old mother lives right next door to me. That makes looking in on her very easy. Then I thought, well maybe I could see what she might have for leftovers. I wouldn't have to fix any dinner for myself, and I could keep her a little company at the same time.

My mother has a weekly pillbox with 28 little windows in it that looks something like the control panel of a Boeing 747. After distributing the thirteen different medications, vitamins, and laxatives into her box, a feat that takes a degree in Pharmacology and nerves of steel, I asked Mom if we could share the left-over spaghetti from Wednesday night. Unfortunately, she said she had eaten it for lunch and there was none left, and besides, she felt like going out to eat. I suggested that she take her evening pills before we left. Very dutifully, she swallowed them with a large gulp of water.

This instantly sent her into a burp fest. Mom started burping loud and hard every 28 seconds. In between burps, she said she wanted to wait until it stopped before going out to a restaurant, where it would be embarrassing. OK, we'll wait. Burp and wait. When the burping finally subsided twenty-five minutes later, we got ready to leave. I was hungry enough to bite someone's foot off.

My mother doesn't walk very fast these days. To get an idea what its like, try reading this little poem while humming the tune to "God Bless America."

*Octogenarians
They walk so slow
Walk beside them
Or behind them
And you'll never get to
Where you want to go.*

We hobbled out to the car. As we passed by her mailbox, I handed Mom her letters and newspapers, so she could look at them on the way.

We went to Golden Corral for dinner, because it has a buffet, and Mom was more likely to find what she wanted to eat. When we got there, we found that the place was very, very crowded. I think everybody in the tri-state area had also decided it was a good place to go for dinner on Good Friday. We stayed anyway, because it was getting late, and we were both hungry by now. Mom ate a baked potato that was so large; she could barely carry it to the table. She also had a small piece of fried chicken, and a little bit of green beans. I really liked watching her eat that baked potato; it was obvious how much she enjoyed it.

No sooner had she finished eating, than she made a little face and told me she had to use the bathroom NOW. Peristalsis had been set into motion. Of course, the bathroom was all the way on the other side of

CONTINUED

FRIDAY NIGHT WITH MOM CONT.

the crowded dining room from where we were seated. Could a mad dash, with me running interference, get her there in time? None of that really mattered, because as soon as she stood up, it was all over. I mean all over her.

Thank goodness, we had paid before we ate. So, I threw three dollars down for a tip, and we rushed out of the crowded restaurant, as fast as the old girl could go. Mom was already sporting racing stripes down the back of her pants.

Once outside, we crept to the car where I told her to use the newspaper that was in her pile of mail from earlier. She spread the newspaper on the front seat and sat down for the ride home. Mom was very quiet. I knew she was embarrassed.

After about six minutes, very quietly Mom said, “I guess I’m going to go to hell.”

“What do you mean Mom?” I asked.

“Well, it’s Good Friday, and I just crapped all over the Catholic Review,” said Mom, “No purgatory for me; just straight to hell!”

“Was the Pope’s picture on the front?” I asked?

“No, I’m sitting on the back, so there’s no poop on the Pope.”

We both laughed so hard, I could hardly drive home.

© 2022 Barbara Weisser

THE BIG SUR, THE BIG LOVE

By MING XU



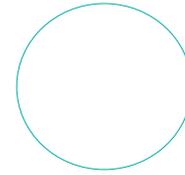
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DANCE THE CRUMBLING FLOOR

BY KB BALLENTINE

– After Damian Gorman

If I was us, I wouldn't start from here –
past the first kiss, the blush, the flush
that flamed our bodies . . .
when looking into your eyes there was time enough –
time expanding minutes and hours
into memories that forever shape us,
our connections with others.



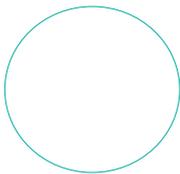
If I was us, I wouldn't start from here –
with three a.m. trips to the bathroom
and aches in joints that used to bend smoothly
as we jogged or boxed, after the cramps in fingers and toes
made handshakes and hiking more painful
than we thought when our grandparents said the same.

Who would know the gray hair, the white hair,
the no hair wouldn't matter; that laugh lines and wrinkles
only enhanced the spirit beneath our fading glory?
Already weary and set in our ways but recognizing
who we are: choosing more carefully, more wisely
like a full-bellied cat tempted with an unsought treat.

But maybe I would, would start from here:
recognizing that stillness can be healing,
that the discerning house finch turns her head
only at the unusual, the unexpected.

Maybe I'm glad,
I'm glad we didn't start
from there.

© 2022 KB Ballentine



UNFILTERED AFTER FIFTY

BY KB BALLENTINE

Fear seized, trapped me once too often.
I let it fester, scar an ugly green
like the pencil lead a boy jammed in my thigh
in seventh grade when I wanted to open my mouth,
sing about moonstone and malachite,
ghost of the writer already breathing in me.
But my tongue furred,
jaw clamped then rusted shut.
I wished I lived when monks inked
parchment and vellum, quills scratching
and tapping in forgivable silence.
The woodpecker now my totem:
unrepentant in her brash staccato, commanding
her space, boundaries extended
as she needs – her perforation of trees
unmistakable,
a wild castanet,
unquenchable –

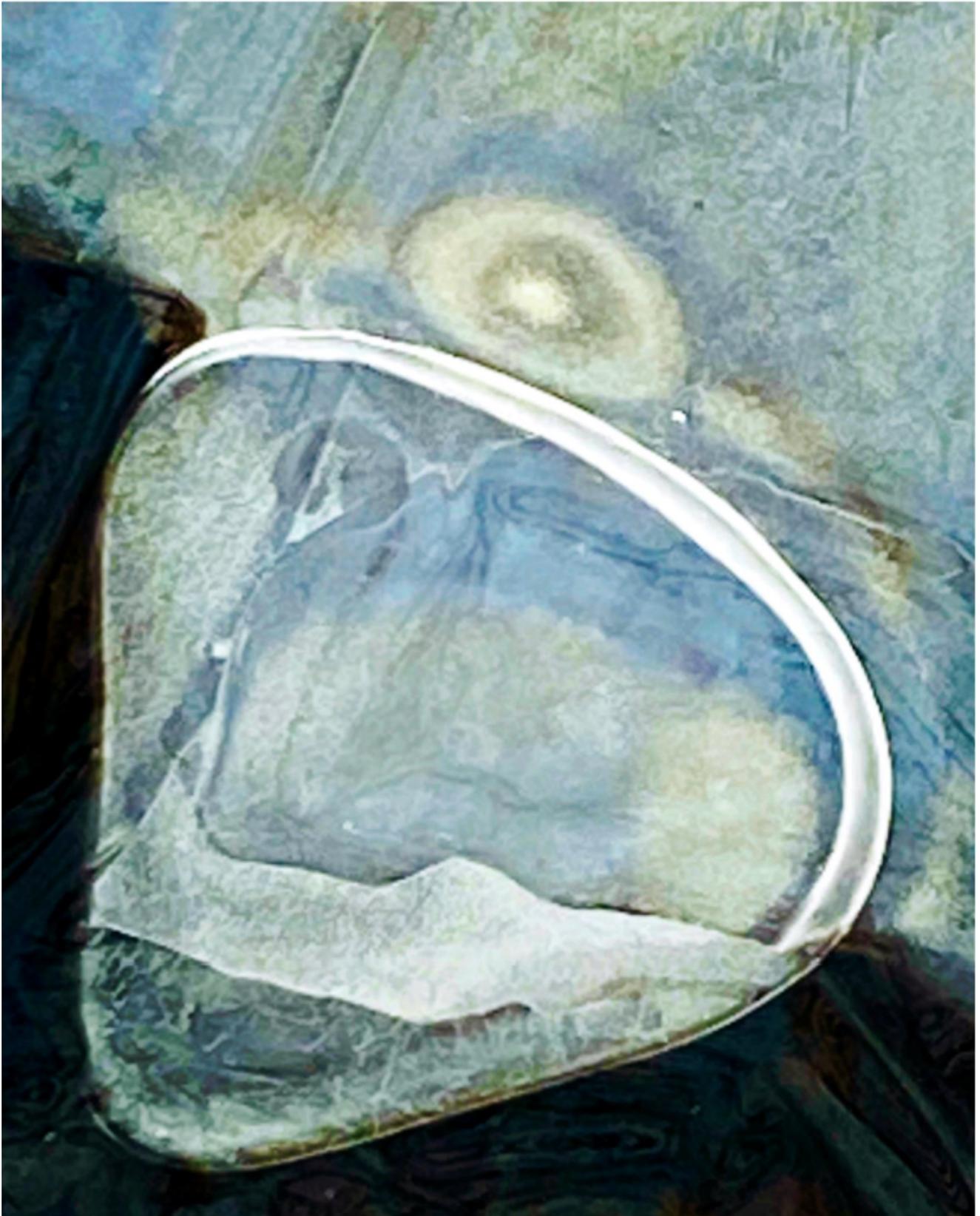
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SELF-CARE
BY KELLY DUMAR



© 2022 Kelly DuMar

I AM AWAKENING
BY KELLY DUMAR



© 2022 Kelly DuMar

JESUS HAS METH TEETH

BY BETH GULLEY

Jesus has meth teeth
and fading pink hair.
She needs eleven dollars
and eight cents
to cover the Z-Trip
to her mother's house.
I buy her a drink
and give her the change.
It's just over what she
asked for.

The whole exchange
is subtle, ordinary, humbling.

I haven't seen Jesus
since he was lost
on his first day
at a new school,
or maybe the day
he was trying to stay
out of the rain
as he picked up
recycled cans.

As always,
I'm grateful for the chance
to be of service.

This time at a random
Quick Trip

on a Saturday.

© 2022 Beth Gulley

THE WEARY WIFE

BY MARK SCHEEL

I do the things that must be done
to satisfy the house demands.
Set back the clock, shade out the sun.
Pay bills come due; dust ceiling fans.

To keep our home in state of grace,
I do the things that must be done.
Wash underwear, and cleanse my face.
Rewind the clock; set plants in sun.

To meet what marriage vow demands
and keep our home in state of grace,
I wash the pots and scrub the pans.
Make sure the silverware's in place.

Shop for fruit, bake the bun,
sweep the stoop, then change the bed.
I do the things that must be done
to rest assured the pets are fed.

And so at a determined pace,
with little time for rest or fun,
to keep our home in state of grace,
I do the things that must be done.

© 2022 Mark Scheel

KARUNA - OCEAN OF COMPASSION

BY SHEELA BECTON



© 2022 Sheela Becton

CONFESSION

BY HADLEE

i feel (alone)
in the world
a lot of the time
i wonder if
i'll ever feel whole
it's like i go through life
in f a m n e
r g e t d pieces
part of me can show up
in one place
and another part of me
someplace else

but will i ever feel whole?

does whole even exist?
or am i just chasing
some unrealistic expectation
of a freedom
i've never known?

© 2022 Hadlee

SUNZINES 1

BY MARY JUSTIN



© 2022 Mary Justin

SUNZINES 6

BY MARY JUSTIN



© 2022 Mary Justin

STAND FOR THE VICTIMS

By LNANCE PHOTOGRAPHY



© 2022 LNance Photography

ALL OF WHO I AM

By LYN FORD

I love all of who I am,
Even the ragged and broken bits.
The wounded heart. The cluttered mind.
The jagged memories.
The bent and worried bones.
I claim them as pieces structuring foundation,
Stepping stones on my path,
But not the path, still under my construction.
I build the path now, slowly, but with power, with majesty
I arrange the silver hairs that are my crown.
I feel my weight a mantle of my enlightened spirit,
Trust the transformed strength of my battle-weary soul
I must squint in the bold light
At the edge of my own horizon,
Yet I trust its promise.
I flap my flesh-winged arms
And I fly.

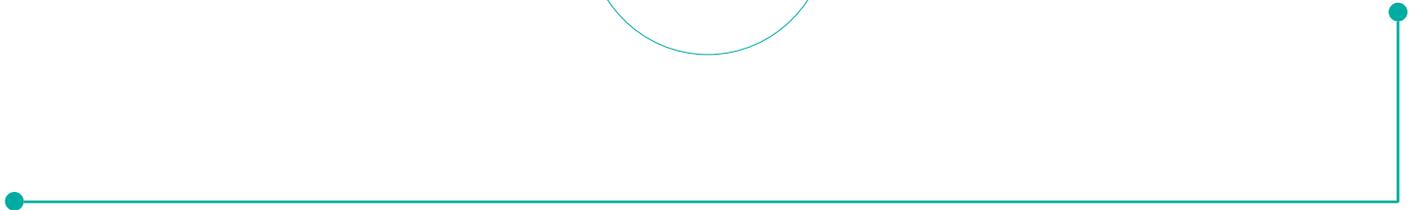
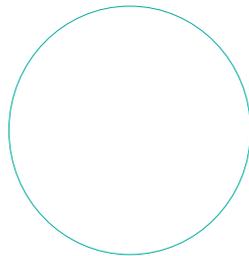
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OMA'S AMERICA

BY BARBARA LAWSON



© 2022 Barbara Lawson



VIGILANT
BY PHYLLIS YIGDALL



© 2022 Phyllis Yigdall

WHERE I'M FROM

BY ARLITA HOLLAND

I'm from weeping endureth for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.
I'm from china cabinets with curved glass, filled with antique vases, dishes, and teacups.

I'm from hope chests, filled with cherished heirlooms,
passed down from mother to daughter to granddaughter.

I come from vintage pictures, a treasure of memories, more precious than gold,
taken out on special occasions like family reunions, where tears and laughter fill the air
and old folk reminisce about days gone by.

I come from handprints and footprints, Arlita the baby, July 3, 1965.
a little girl memory wrapped in sunshine.

I'm from Goddesses, weaving stories, creating sacred mosaics,
connecting mothers to daughters as they journey through time.

I'm from brave women
with strong backbones, the prayer warriors, the caregivers, the survivors,
the penny pinchers and the bargain hunters.

I'm from the decision makers and the problem solvers.

I'm from church clothes, school clothes, play clothes, hand me down clothes,
dressing up and dressing down, taking off your good clothes and hanging them up.
I'm from the golden rule, doing unto others, as you would have them do unto you.

I'm from the helping hands and the soft shoulders to cry on.

I'm from the church goers, the atheists and those who claim they see God in the trees.

I'm from the old tattered bible on Nannie's nightstand,
filled with names and dates, of births, marriages and deaths.

I'm from a long line of woman, who stepped up, stood up and showed up.

Women who were beautiful, talented and capable.

I'm from daughters, watching mothers, take care of grandmothers.

I'm from women who make sacred vows to sit with the dying.

from Sheros who fought Goliath and made Black girl magic.

I'm from a family tree with deep roots and strong branches that bend in the storm.

Who've endured valleys of sorrow, fought through grief and hard times,
determined to press forward,

knowing that joy cometh in the morning!

© 2022 Arlita Holland

MOON SPHERES WITH BLOSSOMS

By KARIN STANLEY



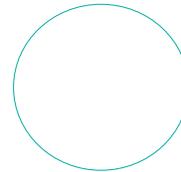
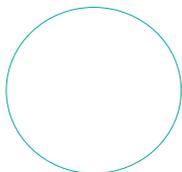
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ADI SEARCHES FOR HOME

BY LINDA JOY BURKE

Not wanting to appear too eager
or nervous – she can't help swaying
imperceptibly to the music in her head
tapping her toes discreetly
to the drumming in her heart,
a reel in her mind turns on itself
measuring the distance
between the departure
and the goal –
home and the unknown
Unprotected and praying on the voyage
That the other humans are sane,
Curled in her fingers grip
A few crisp bills
With so many things to tempt her
Her grasp turns the greenbacks soggy
She hopes this America will be golden
This new world her dream come true.

© 2022 Linda Joy Burke



SOMETIMES

BY JUDITH GOEDEKE

sometimes
clouds just part
light breaks loose
spills onto deepest despair
and suddenly,
cracks it open

the darkness you detest
never abandons you
asks only for love
and in return
offers you
peace

© 2022 Judith Goedeke

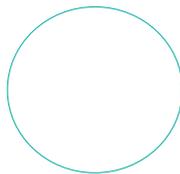
THINGS I AM (UN) LEARNING

BY HADLEE

nature grounds me, brings me back to myself, and heals my heart
there's room for pain and joy and everything in between
worthiness and enoughness come from within
i am in charge of my body, my life, myself
i am not a burden (i am human)
i am loved more than i know
chosen family is family
my healing is for me
i am not broken
i belong
i deserve safety
tears are strength
it was never my fault
we all need each other
not everything is mine to carry
i am worthy of my own protection
i don't have to know the end before i begin
we can love or we can control, but we can't do both
intimacy means telling the truth about myself even when it's hard

my stories matter
my needs matter
i matter
you do too

© 2022 hadlee



ROAN MOUNTAIN AUTUMN

BY DIANE B. DUNN



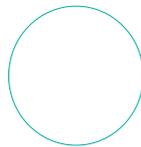
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MOTHER. STRENGTH. WISDOM.

BY LNANCE PHOTOGRAPHY



© 2022 LNance Photography



FROM MY ROOM OF MEMORIES FOR L.

BY LINDA JOY BURKE

it started the first night after
her death
a collage of memories
took over my dreams,
what I wanted to know
was infinity with her
what I learned was how short
our time on the orb was
Twelve cycles around the sun
made her curl into herself
her tongue unable to articulate
what was gradually signaling
her deterioration
we tried taking it to the well
we tried to meditate
we tried to chant our way out of the
bad Karma out of erasure
but fate awaited her anyhow
did not share our dodged desires to
reshape outcomes out of our control.
at night, the collage of memories
takes over my dreams -
her a glitter laden sprite
of a nature played tricks
with my reason
gradually I learned she was a
mirage,
a flashback to a time I thought was
the best in my life.
lives are too short -
glitter lingering too long
becomes
annoying
loving you for those 12 years we
shared would have to be enough
A finite presence in our control.

© 2022 Linda Joy Burke

VORTEX
BY CORI BOWEN



© 2022 Cowen Bowen

NO DADDY'S GIRL

By MICHELLE PETTIES

Years ago, a good girlfriend and I decided to meet for breakfast. As we pondered our choices—Silver Diner, Denny's, IHOP or someplace a little fancier—she said quietly in her naturally soft-spoken way, “I don't really care where we go as long as I can have pancakes. I like having pancakes on Saturday morning.”

That was fine with me, since I loved pancakes, too. Yet, I was curious about her insistence. So, I threw her a quizzical look. She went on to explain that when she was a little girl, her father would always take her to have pancakes on Saturday mornings.

“I like to go have pancakes on Saturdays because it reminds me of my father,” she said. I had mixed feelings about her recollection. On the one hand, I felt warm and happy that she had this sweet remembrance of her father. But I also felt a certain emptiness because I have no such memories of my father. That's because I never met the man, let alone had pancakes with him.

For years I lived with the belief that my father did not care about me or my mother. Growing up, I spent countless hours looking through my mother's old black and white photographs hoping to magically recognize my father's face, which I was sure would be handsome.

I know he was in the Air Force because the occupation box next to “father” on my first birth certificate says “Airman.” I know he was twenty-five years old when I was born, at least that's what it says on my birth certificate. My grandmother told me he was from Arkansas. I also assume he must have been special for my mother to risk her reputation and livelihood as a schoolteacher to be with him.

He was stunned by the news of my impending arrival and was ill-prepared to step up. At least that's what my mother told me. I sometimes wonder if he was afraid, confused, and needed a little time to figure things out. I know he was honorable and wanted to do the right thing by my mother and me because my grandmother told me that he came looking for my mother and me. He must have felt so frustrated, powerless, and defeated when my grandmother turned him away, refusing to tell him where we were and daring anyone else in the family to speak up. As far as my grandmother was concerned, he had broken her baby girl's heart and turned her life upside down. I believe that Troy L. Gibson, or Gipson—I've forgotten the correct spelling of his name—wanted to do the right thing. I choose to believe he did the best he could, but it was not to be. I often wonder what I might have called him, my handsome (don't all little girls think that about their fathers?) airman of a father. Probably it would have simply been “Daddy.”

Three Daddies

It's not that I didn't have any father figures in my life. In fact, I remember announcing proudly to my playmates as a kid “I have three daddies.” My aunt, who was listening and watching through the window, came out and admonished me for talking too much. She knew the truth. I had no daddies. I think it was with that scolding, I started to feel small, voiceless, damaged, and disconnected. I wasn't abandoned, but I felt that way. I have learned over the years that your feelings can't always be trusted. They don't always represent the truth of a situation. I grew up in a family that showered me with love. I was happy, but it was a happiness tinged with irrepressible and irreparable sadness that my three “daddies” either didn't know about or had actually caused.

Daddy Petties

I had a Daddy Petties. That would be my grandfather, the man who called me “gal.” I didn't discover this until well after his death, but he used to brag about me to his fellow rail workers on the tracks. He and my grandmother stepped up and legally adopted me when I was six years old. He was the one who helped me with third grade multiplication and division while cursing “this new math.”

CONTINUED

He protected me from high school boys with big afros, deep voices, and slow-growing beards and mustaches. He was also the one who sat in his truck for hours, never moving, while I took my SAT for college. Daddy Petties was the man who impatiently taught me how to drive a stick shift, and bought my first two cars— Buicks, a 1970 Skylark and a 1972 Apollo. He would, on a whim, read random volumes of my begged-for-but -rarely- used World Book Encyclopedias. “Somebody’s got to read them,” he would say. He never attended any of my school activities, but faithfully and dependably picked me up on time after every one of them. When my grandmother passed, it was my grandfather who paid my airfare to attend her funeral because I was so broke. I didn’t fully appreciate my grandfather in my youth, nor did I really understand the impact of his presence until it was too late for me to tell him.

Daddy Paul

I had a Daddy Paul. That would be my mother’s husband. I remember being told to call him that, but I don't remember ever directly addressing him that way. Daddy Paul. I tried it out privately and sometimes in the mirror, but it always felt a little awkward and unnatural on my tongue. I think Stephanie, my sister- n-law, nailed it when she dubbed him Big Paul. He was father to my sister and two brothers. When I was a teenager, my mother told me that early on he had wanted me to be a part of their family. But my grandmother had other ideas. So, it was confusing to think of this man as my stepfather. He was married to my mother, a mother from afar, who was also legally my sister since my grandparents had adopted me. Yes, it was perplexing. So, I guess that made him kind of a stepfather, but in name only. I was quite pleasantly surprised as we sat at my brother’s kitchen table one Christmas morning when Big Paul, in his rather distinctive Rochester, New York, accent announced, “You have feet like your mother.” I’m not sure how he intended it, but I took it as a compliment. What I’m saying is this, I’m grateful that our relationship was friendly and cordial.

Daddy Al

I had a Daddy Al, which was short for Alphonso. He died of a heart attack in 2001. His nickname for me was Pasquale, his version of “pesky,” because I was always asking questions. But I’m repulsed by the mere thought of him. He was my mother’s sister’s husband, technically an uncle, before my grandparents adopted me, or brother-in-law post-adoption. A disabled WWII veteran, he worked nights at the post office and watched me during the day while my aunt worked teaching special needs children.

In later years, I learned that my aunt paid this man to take care of me, to make sure I had breakfast, a mid-morning snack, lunch, afternoon nap, and an afternoon snack. I sat at the kitchen table and drew while he prepared dinner for us, and I happily tagged along during his daily errands to the store or auto supply shop. He always bought popcorn for me when we went to the mall and took me with him when he visited the lady across the street. He watched me as I innocently played in the backyard, baking mud pies in the special oven my aunt fashioned just for me, using discarded grocery store boxes.

Stolen Childhood

The thought sickens me. She paid him. My aunt who-loved-me-like-she-birthered-me, who visited me daily while I was in the incubator because I was born two months premature, who took ferocious precautions to shield me from harm, unwittingly entrusted me to a monster. She unknowingly left me with an afternoon tormentor, who ordered me into the house, into bed and under the covers with him before I was old enough to articulate or explain his actions in any meaningful way. Almost immediately a sense of my own wrongness started to form inside me, wrongness that grew like a malignant tumor.

Later, I wondered if this wrongness is what made my real daddy abandon his search for me. My innate sense of well-being disappeared as if by sinister magic, vanquished in mere minutes by this child abuser, this pedophile. And statistics tell me I am not alone.

CONTINUED

NO DADDY'S GIRL CONTINUED

Even now, when I am out and I see a little girl, seemingly happy and well adjusted, skipping along holding her daddy's hand, I see my four-year-old self and wonder, "Is it happening to her?" Will she spend years trying to fill a cavernous hole in her soul with food like I did? Will food become a salve for her wounded spirit and the pieces that don't quite come together? It was decades before I could reveal or reconcile the depths of my shame and despair to my aunt or anyone. Here is what I know for sure: good daddies keep you safe. They protect you. They make everything right when everything is wrong. They take you for pancakes on Saturday morning.

Unlike my friends, who speak fondly of their daddies, I don't have memories of my daddy teaching me how to ride a bike or tie my shoelaces, throwing me up in the air and catching me, twirling me around, carrying me on his shoulders, going to baseball games, scuba diving in the islands or even playing Spades. I never did any of these things with my daddy. No, I don't have any such memories to soothe the ache of my darkest hours. I am, however, comforted by the fact that he tried. My daddy tried.

Occasionally, when I pass a Silver Diner, International House of Pancakes, or Denny's on a Saturday morning, I must admit that I get a little sad because I don't have my own breakfast-with-my-daddy story. Yet, I am glad that my friend has hers and shared it with me. I smile and let the warmth of her experience wash over me.

© 2022 Michelle Petties

RISE UP MY SISTERS

BY ARLITA HOLLAND

I am a survivor
You are a survivor
We are survivors

Rise up my sisters, Rise up
Feel the wind beneath your wings
Look up my sisters, Look up
Take your visions higher
Release those self-enslaving thoughts
That have taken you to places
You no longer want to visit

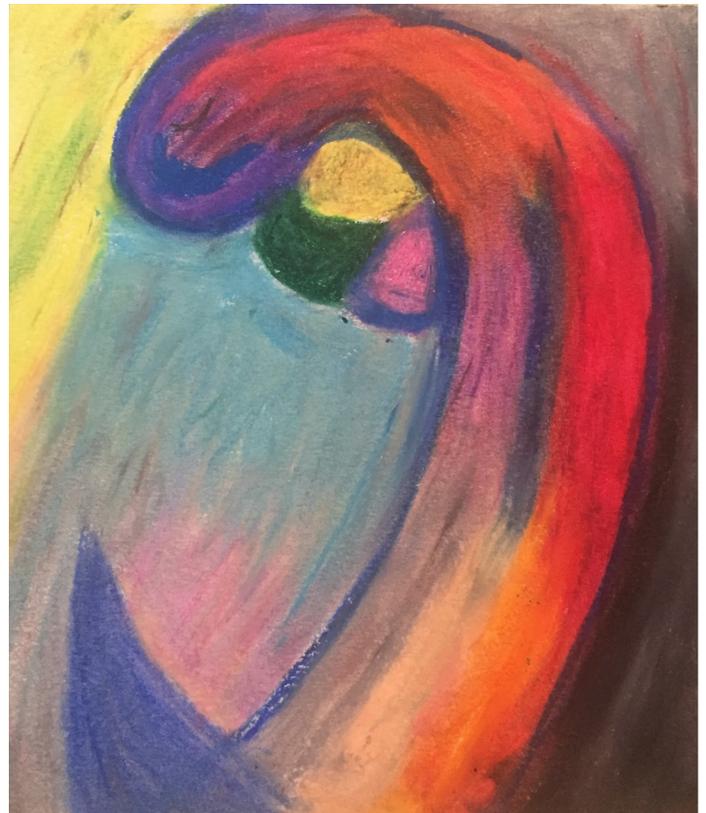
Come up my sisters, Come up
Take your visions higher
Release those self-enslaving thoughts
That have imprisoned you in places
You no longer want to be

Come up my sisters
Look up my sisters
Rise up my sisters, Rise up
Release those self-enslaving thoughts
That have chained you to lives
You no longer want to live

© 2022 Arlita Holland

PROTECTION

BY REGINA LOVELACE



© 2022 Regina Lovelace

UNTITLED 2
BY KATARINA CELEBIC



© 2022 Katarina Celebic

UNTITLED 4
BY KATARINA CELEBIC



© 2022 Katarina Celebic

AMERICAN FAMILY

BY TOM BALLEs

Our founding fathers
giddy from adopting democracy
lost track of all the grifter cousins
who came looking for a place to call home.

Plutocracy, oligarchy, capitalism;
growing up together all those years
the family is hard pressed to tell them apart.

Peace loving?
Tangled roots of genocide and slavery
in wars 90% of our history
hundreds of military bases around the world
the blood never dries.

Fair?
Women - property
red - savages
brown, yellow - illegals
black - criminal.

Just?
5% of the world's population
25% of the world's prisoners.

Innocent?
Ceaseless quests
for land, labor, profit
hidden with great care.

Best of intentions?
hidden collateral damage
crimes pardoned
sins absolved.

Exceptional?
Defining ourselves
as higher than, superior to,
the best at, more civilized,
benevolent, most advanced?

What a radical difference
between not knowing
and not wanting to know.

What is that raucous din rising from the streets?

That is the sound
of left out stories
from our kin
shadow narratives
about our blended family

begging

to be
seen
heard
felt

acknowledged
clamoring to be welcomed
home.

© 2022 Tom Balles



RESILIENCE IN THE TIME OF COVID 1

BY KAMILAH HOUSE



© 2022 Kamilah House

RESILIENCE IN THE TIME OF COVID SOLO

BY KAMILAH HOUSE



© 2022 Kamilah House

IN THE HOUSE OF THE WORLD

BY HELEN CLARK

Morning stillness,
Winter quiet,
Moisture in the air—almost snow?
Coffee and eggs,
Reading the newspaper,
Birds calling.
The rhythm of my life is returning.
No longer a stranger stuck and alone in
Purgatory, in the “upside down” where monsters stalk...
Returning now seems like slipping through an invisible curtain,
Without any fanfare whatsoever,
So soft and quiet and safe.
Connection is all I longed for.
It turned out to be right here,
In my house in the cold stillness of morning,
With birds calling and coffee and quiet,
Here in the right side up,
In the stream of life, in the house of the world.

© 2022 Helen Clark

CHOP WOOD, CARRY WATER

BY BARBARA LAWSON



© 2022 Barbara Lawson

RAISING VIBRATIONS

BY MONICA HERBER



© 2022 Monica Herber

CADENCE

BY JUDITH GOEDEKE

our sun, and a million others
chiseled gray mountains
and soft green ones
cadences, of water
and verdant fields
witness our lives
lift us, faithfully
Into promises
prayers
poems

© 2022 Judith Goedeke

LUNCHROOM MISERY

By MICHELLE PETTIES

Usually when you see images of the first Black children to integrate America's public schools in the 1950s and 60s, they show the Black kids being escorted by Federal Agents or U.S. soldiers to all-White schools as angry White mobs protest their presence.

That's what happened with the "Little Rock Nine" when they became the first Black students to attend Little Rock Central High School in 1957, the year before I was born. And it happened to Ruby Bridges when she became the first Black girl to attend William Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans in 1960. Norman Rockwell captured Ruby's historic walk to school in a famous 1964 painting titled "The Problem We All Live With." In the painting, a then-six-year-old Ruby is seen carrying her school supplies while being accompanied by four uniformed U.S. Marshals. Scrawled on a wall behind Ruby was the word "NIGGER" and the initials "KKK." Traces of a tomato that someone had thrown at little Ruby were splattered against the wall. If Norman Rockwell had visited my school, Sam Houston Elementary, when I became one of the first Black students to integrate it in September of 1965, he would have had a vastly different picture to paint.

The Struggle for Acceptance

If Rockwell had captured me during my first days as a second grader at Sam Houston Elementary, the painting would not have shown a little Black girl flanked by four U.S. Marshals being taunted by an angry White mob. Instead, it would have shown a lonely Black girl sitting at the lunch table all by herself. No one threw food at me like they threw at Ruby. The only food in my picture would have been my sandwiches: bologna and cheese, tuna or chicken salad, peanut butter and jelly, pressed ham, and cheese. Sweet treats like Hostess CupCakes, Twinkies, and Sno Balls often completed the menu. Food dulled the pain of isolation and helped me cope with the stress of those first lonely lunches as I struggled for acceptance.

I really missed my friends at Paul Laurence Dunbar, the Black elementary school about a mile from our house. I watched longingly through the window as the neighborhood kids passed my house on Travis Street, on their way to Dunbar.

The difference between Paul Laurence Dunbar and Sam Houston Elementary school was like night and day. Whereas Sam Houston had manicured grounds enclosed by a beautiful chain link fence, Dunbar sat on a ditch-encircled hill. When it rained, that ditch would fill and overflow with rushing water. I was afraid to jump over the gushing water and my grandmother would have to get out of the car in the rain to coax or lift me over what to me at the time looked like treacherous waters. In fact, my grandparents transferred me to Sam Houston because my grandmother had grown tired of this drill. That's when she became an activist and jumped on the Brown vs. Board of Education bandwagon and enrolled me in Sam Houston, which was also much closer to our house.

My new school was physically closer, but my friends at Dunbar were still closer to my heart.

Missing My Friends

I missed Amelia—hands down the smartest person in our class. Her mother, Miss Dorothy, made sure of that. Charlotte and I shared the same middle name, and our mothers grew up together. Rene's house on Johnson Street was one of the few places my grandmother would drop me off to play all day. Barbara always brought the best lunches, certainly the ones with the best desserts. Sheila thought I wanted her boyfriend, but I didn't care nothing 'bout no Denny Cooper. Besides, my little six-year-old heart was set on Jesse Fisher. Sheila's big mama made the best lemon pies in the city. Kathy Diane Jackson, may she rest in peace, always took my lunch. And Esther Davis, my cousin Pettis, had a big-time crush on her. Now I only saw these people, my friends, on Sundays at Galilee Baptist Church.

CONTINUED

As I made my way to what would become my school home for the next five years, I knew my friends at Dunbar would be involved in first-day-of-school-rituals for students attending Black schools, getting locker assignments and brown paper book covers, and sandpaper to clean the hand-me-down textbooks from the White schools. At Sam Houston, I had no idea what I would be doing, or more importantly, who I would be eating lunch with.

The White kids at Sam Houston weren't mean to me. They just didn't know me. I didn't know them, and they weren't in a rush to get to know me. So, lunch was a difficult time, especially since I was such a social person back then. But my grandmother always made sure I had plenty to eat. She even reluctantly made BLT for me after I saw one of my White classmates with one and wanted the same thing, my attempt to fit in. No longer content with a brown bag, I begged for a lunch box with a thermos. I eventually got it, too.

Finding My Place

After several weeks, I became more comfortable and made a place for myself at Sam Houston. I took to heart my grandmother's simple advice to "do your best." Over the years, I grew to love my time at the school, as well as my teachers and classmates. Still, it wasn't exactly a piece of cake.

I was the biggest kid in my class, but I felt like I had to fight for visibility. And sometimes I suspected that my size and color were getting in the way of things I wanted. I remember when our music teacher, Mrs. Shaw, announced that our class would perform the "12 Days of Christmas" for the upcoming holiday program and that everyone would have a part. I was excited at first, but my delight soon turned to disappointment when I learned that I had been selected to be one of the five golden rings. Not that golden rings aren't precious and cool, but I wanted to be one of the beautiful, graceful swans and wear the pretty petticoats. The swans were clearly the stars of the production. After class, I approached Mrs. Shaw and told her I wanted to be a swan. If she was surprised by the boldness of my request, she didn't show it and was rather matter of fact in her refusal. While she didn't say it directly, I got the message: "You're too big and too dark to be a swan." I guess I should have been happy I wasn't the partridge in the pear tree.

As trying as it was being one of a few Black kids in Ms. Eubanks' second grade class, and one of a handful in the entire school, it presaged the various social situations in which I would later find myself in college and in my career, as the only person of color, or one of a few, in the room.

Workplace Parallels

That's how it was when I accepted an entry-level position at the advertising giant, J. Walter Thompson, as an assistant to Donna Wald, one of the most powerful women in the Dallas media market. It was the end of June 1981, and after five years, I had finally received my B.A. in Radio and Television from the University of Texas at Arlington. I would be earning \$10,800 a year, which was decent money at the time. I felt lucky and grateful to have landed such a coveted position. While I was in college, I heard repeatedly that it was tough to get a job in advertising, and even tougher for Black folks to break into this competitive and overwhelmingly White field. In a way, it was true.

I sensed how difficult it was to break into the business when interviewing for a position with Blair Radio. I researched Blair Radio prior to the interview, and I let them know it. Blair was a top tier organization. I was nervous, but confident and delighted that I didn't have to take a typing test. A few days later, sales manager Randell Harris called and said they offered the job to someone else. I was crushed. He quickly halted my disappointment, assuring me with his next words, "Don't be upset. We like you. And we called around to see who else was hiring. Call Donna Wald, now. She is looking for an assistant. Here is the number. She's expecting to hear from you." In an industry known to be cutthroat, this simple, selfless, and unexpected kindness changed the trajectory of my career and life.

CONTINUED

My first day at work, I was 30-minutes early, ready to get every available worm. I was excited and intrigued as I entered 13700 Park Central. I had no idea what was waiting behind door #300. I thought I kind of knew, but I really didn't.

I was happy and pleasantly surprised to see two other sistahs in the mix. I was in, but like those early days at Sam Houston Elementary, I still didn't fit in. I was once again the biggest one in the room, but this time it was the conference room instead of the classroom and the lunchroom. It was like elementary school all over again.

During my first country club lunch, I heard the term "expense account." Who knew? When I first saw a bagel, I said something like, "Look at those giant donuts!" Talk about embarrassment. I might as well have worn a button that said, "Hi, I'm a country bumpkin." Nor did I know what to drink at happy hour. Or what makes chicken salad gourmet. Or what to wear for a network premier party.

Soon after attending my first premier party, I figured out why I was passed over for other positions. The room was filled with Amys, Beckys, and Mollys with Farrah Fawcett hair and Bally Fitness bodies. While I was smart and personable, I could not check any of those boxes—big blonde hair and beach body—just as in those early days at Sam Houston. My grandmother's sage advice, my best effort, attitude, and hard work—I soon learned were only getting me so far. As I struggled to fit in, I turned to food for comfort, just as I had during those early lonely days in the cafeteria at Sam Houston.

A Constant Companion

That pattern would repeat itself throughout my career in advertising, as I endeavored to live the financially secure life my grandmother envisioned for me. I loved my job and realized I was blessed and privileged to contribute in a way that was meaningful, interesting and a ton of fun.

But even as I rode the wave of success in my professional life, no matter the time, circumstance, situation or event, food remained my constant companion in the stressful world of advertising sales. This went on for more than 40 years as I freely moved in and out of broadcast organizations — from Dallas to Washington to Atlanta, and back to Washington. My career in advertising and sales included decades of work for major media outlets like ABC, Disney, and Radio One. I negotiated client campaigns for household brands like McDonald's, T-Mobile, and Coca-Cola. Entertaining clients at restaurants and venues citywide became my life. As the cycle of eating continued, I eventually ended up in a situation where food threatened not only my life but my very livelihood. The two, you see—food and work—became so intertwined that I used the former to help me cope with the stress of the latter. Until one day, it all came to a head.

A Fork in the Road

I had just scarfed down five giant slices of veggie pizza in about 10 minutes. I knew something was seriously wrong when I did that.

It was September 2018. I was attending a professional conference in Crystal City, Virginia, weighing in at 215 pounds, a size 18 squeezing into a size 16, and just a few slices of pizza away from not even being able to do that. Up until that day, I thought I had this overeating thing under control. But pizza, a food I have loved since college, had something else in mind. As I found myself eating slice after slice, I knew I had to do something different from what I had tried up to this point.

I sensed this was not purely about lack of willpower, self-control, or discipline. Something else was going on that had me on a hamster wheel of dieting. And I was tired. I was ready to get off. "Please God, help me!" After the pizza breakdown, the first thing I thought to do was go to the wellness doctor I had been seeing regularly. She had mentioned her weight-loss programs during previous visits. Now it was time to take her up on her offer, a choice that changed my life.

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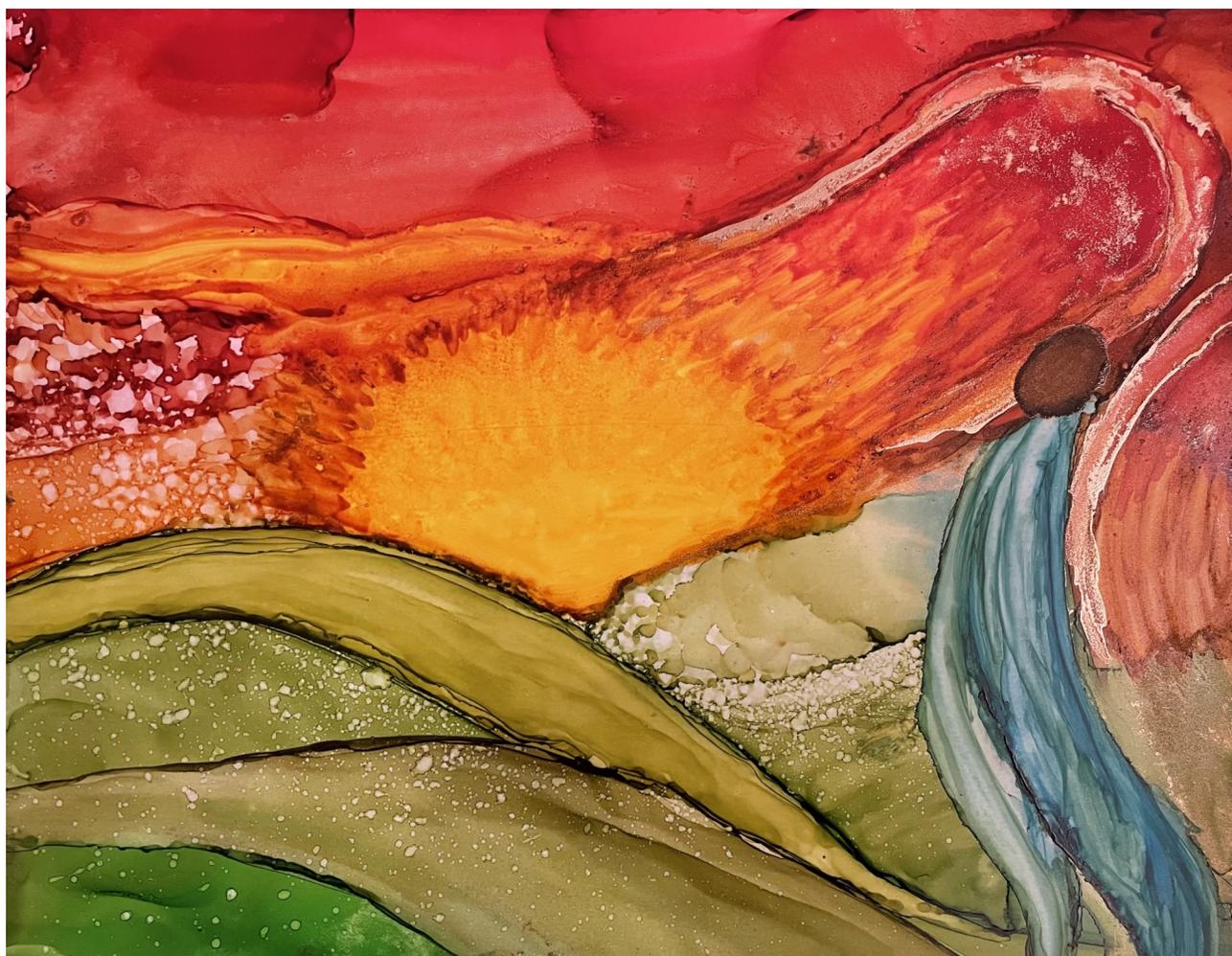
LUNCHROOM MISERY CONTINUED

I struggled with my weight all my adult life, constantly yo-yoing up and down. For years, I would focus on changing what I was eating without changing what I was feeling and thinking, or more importantly, considering the origin of those thoughts and feelings. This dawning realization soon gave way to new insight, intuition, and understanding about food, eating, and hunger. Questions that were once a source of frustration and confusion landed differently and ignited this superpower of clarity and vision. Sure, I understood that obesity posed a threat to my longevity and quality of life. But it was only when my livelihood was threatened did my superpower kick in and allow true transformation to begin. That was the day I started to slay the pizza demon, its cohorts, and tag-alongs, once and for all! I haven't had pizza since or any desire for it. And to think, there was a point when pizza meant so much to me. But not anymore.

© 2022 Michelle Petties

DAYBREAK ANGEL

BY MONICA HERBER



© 2022 Monica Herber

OF TWO MINDS

BY TOM BALLE

My small immature mind

awkward
brash

thin skin
hard heart

eyes that only see black and white
a nose for smelling threats

selfish tongue
blaming
justifying
defending

wild suffering continues.

My larger mature mind

older
wiser
seasoned
responsive

open heart
eyes that perceive shades of grey
a nose for sniffing out possibilities
tongue with a taste for compassion

shaping conversations
big enough
for everyone
to live in

the wild suffering ends.

Being of two minds

in the slightest breeze
I sway like brittle bamboo.

© 2022 Tom Balles

BARKER STREET

BY WILLIAM LOWE

"Dead End," the sign
at the head of Barker Street read.
"You got that right," I said and laughed.
She smiled and sighed.

I let the car roll on
without pressing a pedal.
We moved as close to stillness
as motion can get. I parked
on a drive paved with foreboding.

Inside, we knew, was morass.
No matter the season the heat would stifle.
We would sit on a couch and feel
our flesh melt to adhesion.
A brain could wilt in such heat.
A soul could wither and die.

The words would swallow us whole.
The house was a toothless mouth.
The clock on the wall would tick.
It would slow time to stillness.
It would bend time to its will.

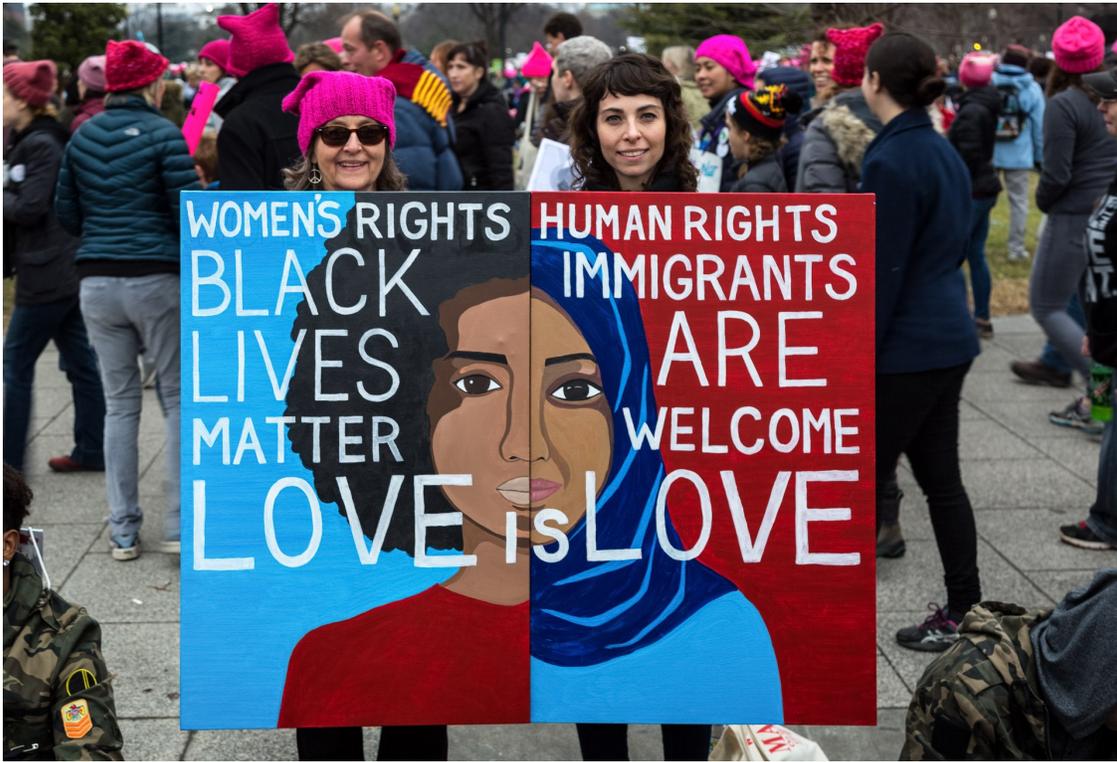
The scent of tobacco
would swim on the walls.
How one might drown in those walls.
How we would hope that someone,
anyone, would come calling.
No one would come calling.

Night would fall, but sleep
would give no respite.
All night the clock would tick.
It would taunt with warped rhythms.

Dawn would break.
The sun would rise.
The light would be muted.
The toothless mouth would yawn.

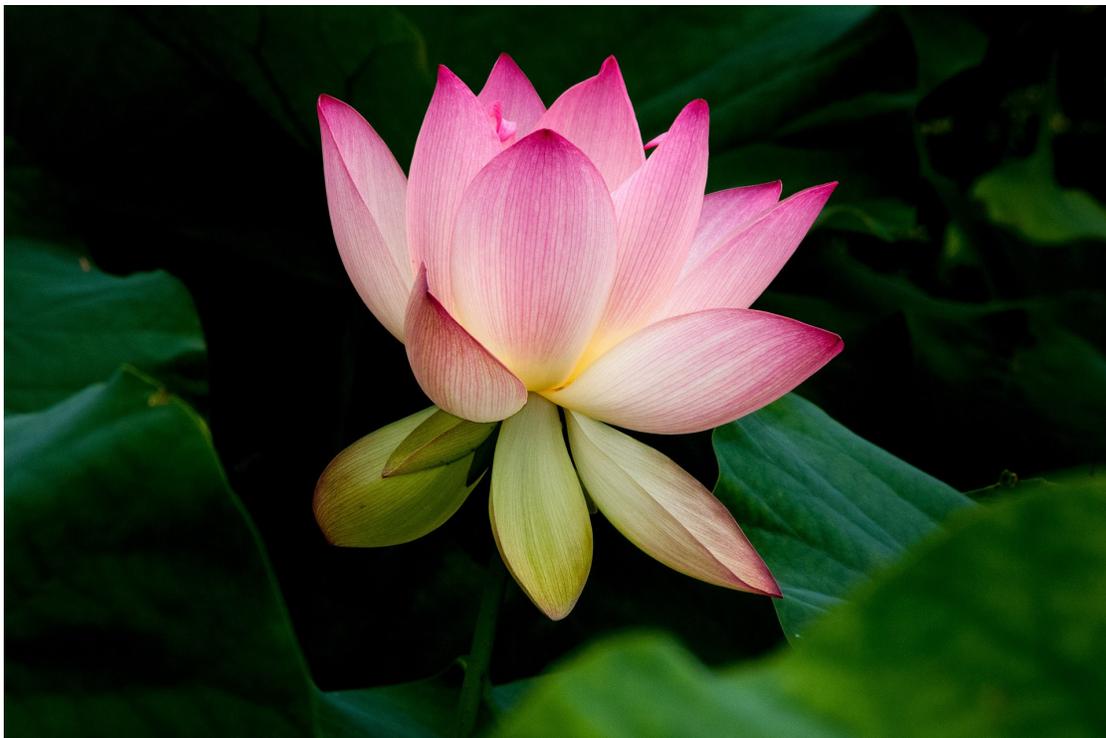
© 2022 William Lowe

LOVE IS LOVE
BY LNANCE PHOTOGRAPHY



© 2022 LNance Photography

BLOOM AFTER THE STORM
BY LNANCE PHOTOGRAPHY



© 2022 LNance Photography

HOW BLACK ARE YOU TODAY

BY MARIAN O. NANCE

Every day I wake up and ask,
“How Black are you today?”
Will my project be challenged
because of my brown skin?
It stands out in a room full of white men.
Or because I am the only woman and
They are ten.

Because I am Black, does that mean
They know better than me?
Well, that depends on
how Black you are today?
Subservient Black?
Defiant Black?
Black with no color or
Just Human Being Black?

I woke up to a new day and asked,
“How Black are you today?”
Will I be questioned about my braids or hair?
Will I solicit the unblinking,
inquisitive and blatant stare?
For God’s sake!

It’s just Hair.
Uh uh, no!!!
Don’t touch!
Entitlement doesn’t give you the right
And it certainly won’t give you more insight
On how Black I am today.

I woke up to a new day and asked,
“How Black are you today?”
Not too Black I pray.
Are you ready for that interview?
There are three very Black, beautiful, highly
qualified women,
ahead of you.

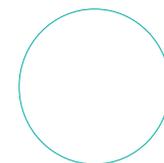
Your resume is not quite up to par,
but the interviewer won’t really know
who you are.
You’ve never ever been transparent now or then
because of your great, great, great grandmother
plantation master’s skin.

So, go ahead and try it again.

I woke up to a new day and asked,
“How Black Are You Today?”
Will I be classified
Black, Brown, AfroAmerican, Latino, Hispanic,
Native or “You People?”
Will someone tell me what I think
Because I’m “You People?”
Will someone tell me what I eat
Because I’m “You People?”
Will someone tell me what I do
Because I’m “You People?”
Will the vibrant colors of my garb
Be criticized because I’m “You People?”

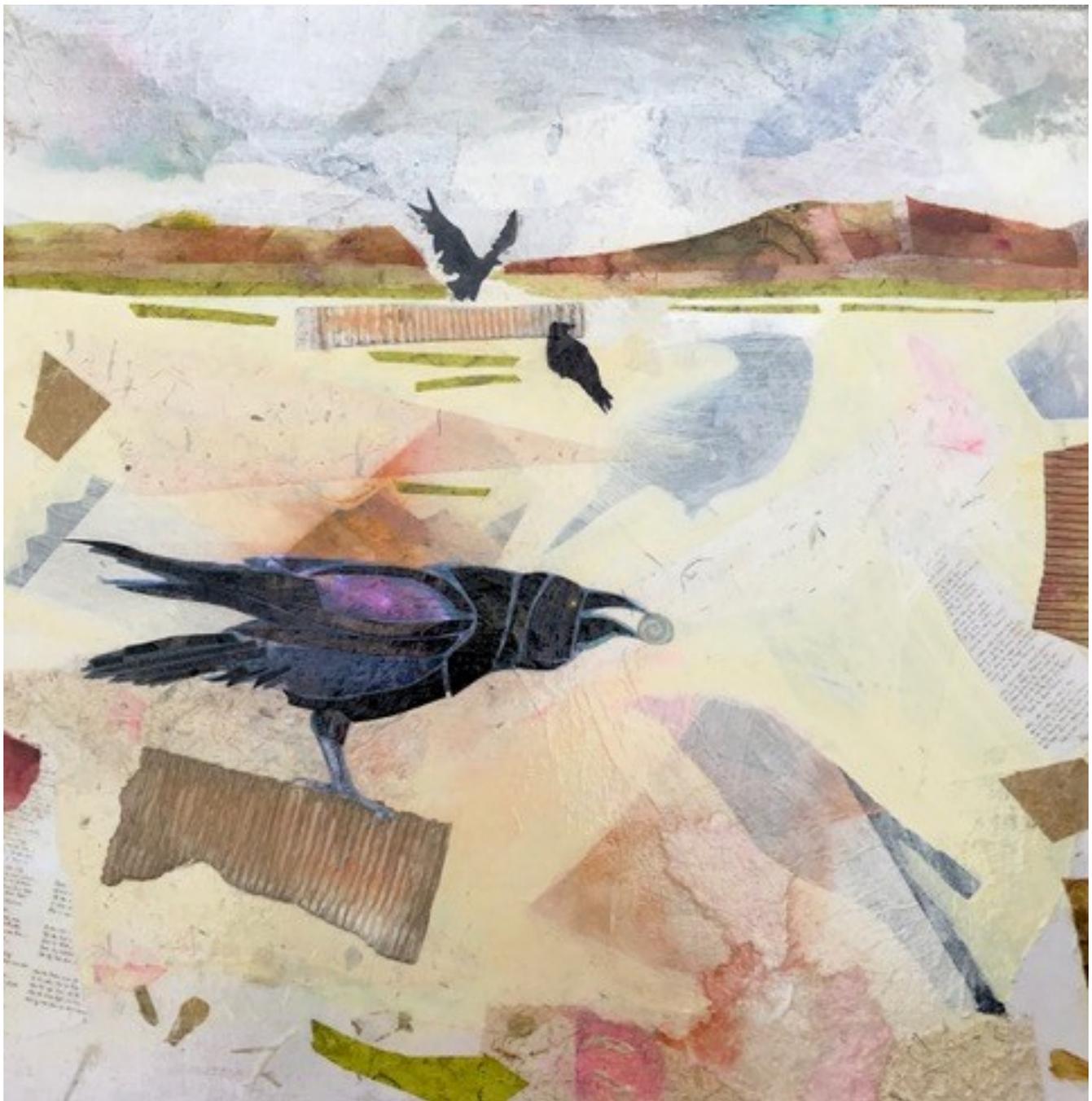
How Black are you today?
When I wake up and I’m not
Singled out
Left out
Blocked out
Pointed out
Or given a new classification.
I will wake up bold,
strong, determined, empowered, fearless, brave,
beautiful, intelligent, proud
and very,
very Black.

© 2022 Marian O. Nance

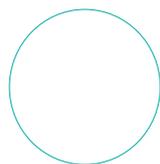


RAVEN STORY

BY DIANE B. DUNN



© 2022 Diane B. Dunn



HOME (IN PRAISE OF MARYLAND)

BY HELEN CLARK

Rocks flecked with bottle green lichen,
Pale gold and russet autumn grasses,
The crisp tang of frost in the air every November,
I remember....
So familiar....
Or the foggy air on a humid summer night when
The sound of peepers rises and falls and lightning bugs speak to each other with light.
These familiar touchstones are home to me,
And I don't want or need to go too far afield from what I know.
Give me my rolling hills with horses grazing,
My Chesapeake Bay, my Rock Creek, my Appalachian Mountains,
Grasses, rocks, and old barns,
And the familiar sequence of flowers—snow drops, crocus, cherry blossom, red bud, rose
Budding, blooming, and dying,
And hawks migrating,
And trees everywhere, like old friends.
We are creatures, after all.
And it's good to have roots, and safety,
And a sense of home
The fox in his den, the horse in her barn, the bird in her nest all know this.
They're not nostalgic for the fictional future "better place" out there,
And now that I'm older, neither am I.

© 2022 Helen Clark



UNTITLED 1
BY KATARINA CELEBIC

© 2022 Katarina Celebic

MY LIGHT SKIN PRIVILEGE

BY ARLITA HOLLAND



My light skin privilege
Opened doors with open arms
And big wide smiles
Into spaces with welcoming signs
Into groups with open hearts
Into places with invisible,
No trespass signs

Childhood memories
Well meaning folk
Clothed in white skin
Holding my hand
With kind, caring words
Dripping with acid
Wounding my spirit
“You don’t have to tell anyone,
That you are one of them,
Colored, you know
You can be one of us.”

© 2022 Arlita Holland

FOR DEBBIE

WITH LOVE
BY BARBARA WEISSER

Two little girls stand on a porch
suntanned skin shaded from the summer sun.
Arms around each other
Holding on
Each lost in a different way.

If we hold on to each other we can make it.
I will guide you I will follow you

Two young girls stand,
each holding hell in her heart but smile the
smiles of children. Nothing is wrong here
That's just the way life is.

If we hold on to each other we can make it.
I will guide you I will follow you

Two young women stand as one holding on to
what is good Don't think about home,
we're away now, acting normal

If we hold on to each other We can make it
I will guide you I will follow you

We're two young mothers,
each of us living a married hell.
Children are precious,
they must have a better life. Make it so.

If we hold on to each other We can make it.
I will guide you I will follow you

Two young women living in different parts of the
world, writing letters with only good news.
I have a son!
One day I'll see you again
We will tell our truths

If we hold on to each other we can make it.
I will guide you I will follow you

Both women trying to improve life,
take the path of education
New worlds are opened to each now
You inspire me
to love myself better

If we hold on to each other we can make it.
I will guide you I will follow you

In the middle of life,
two women lots of sorrows
lots of battles won.
I've got scars to prove it you've got your own

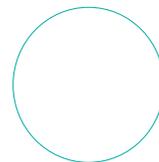
If we hold on to each other we can make it.
I will guide you I will follow you

Slowly we try to tell our hells,
but we both already know.
It's hard to speak it's hard to listen.
Spoken truths will kill the devils

If we hold on to each other we can make it.
I will guide you I will follow you
Two old women sitting on the porch,
staying out of the sun
know everything now.
Hell is torn open, exposed;
all its power is gone
Love is all that's left.

If we hold on to each other we can make it.
I will guide you I will follow you

© 2022 Barbara Weisser



TRY

By JENNIFER VAUGHN

In the beginning, I was encouraged to try

Hold my head up
Smile for granny
Roll from my back onto my tummy
Stand on my own two feet
Walk to momma, forward
Repeat your words
Blow kisses
Laugh out loud

I tried

Instinctively, I tried with all my senses
To behave
be quiet
be invisible
To please
To be what they wanted

They asked

Can you try harder
Can you give more
Why won't you put effort into *it*
Why can't you get *it* right

They ordered

Shut your mouth
Fall in line
Stand at attention
Follow instructions
codes
regulations
Set the example
Carry on

I wonder

Couldn't they see me try, feel me try
Were my efforts to comply overlooked
Did they recognize my effort, my try

Now

I want you to try
I plead for you to try
I wish you'd try
I hope you try
I pray you try
I can't make you try

All my actions cannot control your try

I am disappointed you won't try
I am saddened you won't try
My heart breaks that you won't try
I resent that you won't try

I try

to cooperate
to compromise
to hold it together
to remain engaged
to reconcile
to demonstrate my physical and emotional love for you
I try to forget, forgive and move forward

I try

To be honest
To understand
To accept
To be true
To see things from your perspective
To appreciate our differences, our strengths

To bite my tongue to preserve peace
To let the past remain behind but not forgotten

I try

To learn
To heal
To find my voice
To improve
To accept
To hold *IT* together for this moment

I try to breathe and live another day

© 2022 Jennifer Vaughn

SUNZINES 8
BY MARY JUSTIN

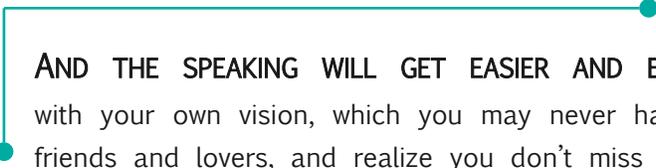


© 2022 Mary Justin

HERMIT IV
BY HALEY LINNET



© 2022 Haley Linnet



AND THE SPEAKING WILL GET EASIER AND EASIER. And you will find you have fallen in love with your own vision, which you may never have realized you had. And you will lose some friends and lovers, and realize you don't miss them. And new ones will find you and cherish you. And you will still flirt and paint your nails, dress up and party, because, as I think Emma Goldman said, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution." And at last you'll know with surpassing certainty that only one thing is more frightening than speaking your truth. And that is not speaking.

Audre Lorde
Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches, 1984

THE POWER OF WORDS: HOPE IS A DISCIPLINE

OCTOBER 13-16, 2022
AN ONLINE CONFERENCE
FEATURING:

CAMILLE DUNGY
KATHLEEN ADAMS
PÁDRAIG Ó TUAMA



You are warmly invited to join the Transformative Language Arts Network—a collaborative of writers, poets, storytellers, artists, performers, musicians, songwriters, educators, community leaders, activists, healers, therapists, health professionals, facilitators and more—as we turn our collective energies to cultivating the Power of Words in all people, with the goal of transforming our world for the better.

As transformative language artists, our work is aimed at inspiring, building unity and connection, sharing perspectives, and moving us collectively towards transitioning in the 21st century from Climate Emergency to Climate Emergence—the emergence of a more balanced, harmonious human relationship with all life on our beloved planet.

In this year's conference, we advocate for Hope as a Discipline that each of us can practice, making intentional use of the power of our creative imaginations to build bridges towards a brighter future on Earth.

Our voices and visions matter, now more than ever! Let's come together to share our successes and find ways to work together to bring about meaningful change that keeps the flame of Hope alive through the Power of Words.

Join us in exploring how we use words — written, spoken, and sung — to build community, deepen healing, witness one another, wake up, and foster transformation, while addressing the more important issues of our time.

*Transformation, liberation, and celebration
through the spoken, written, and sung word.*
www.TLANetwork.org



TRANSFORMATIVE
LANGUAGE ARTS
NETWORK

ARTISTS' BIOS

KB Ballentine (11)

KB Ballentine's seventh collection, *Edge of the Echo*, launched in 2021 with Iris Press. Her work also appears in anthologies including *The Strategic Poet* (2021), *Pandemic Evolution* (2021), and *Carrying the Branch: Poets in Search of Peace* (2017). Learn more at www.kbballentine.com.

Tom Balles (5, 34, 43)

Tom Balles is a retired acupuncturist living in Laurel, MD. He was a faculty member at Tai Sophia (now Maryland University of Integrative Health) for 20 years and is the author of *Becoming a Healing Presence* and *Dancing with the Ten Thousand Things*.

Sheela Becton (15)

Sheela Becton lives in Silver Spring, Maryland, where she embraces her love for painting. Sheela believes in painting with a purpose to bring positivity. While her themes showcase the richness and beauty of Indian Culture they also focus on women, hope, love, and empowerment. Painting has given her "a way to express". She brings her paintings to life on canvas with vibrant colors and patterns, providing an opportunity to share with others.

Cori Bowen (3, 28)

Cori Bowen is a fine artist from Columbia, Maryland. Specializing in acrylics, she paints geometric abstract paintings and commissioned portraits for clients. Her work has been featured in galleries regionally, most recently achieving an honorable mention at Columbia Art Center's *Visionary Women 2022: Healing and Hope* exhibition and the second-place prize at Art Howard County, 2021. Her work can be found on Instagram: @_corri or at <https://www.coribowen.art>.

Linda Joy Burke (23, 27)

Performance Poet, Writer, Percussionist, Storyteller, Picture Maker, Workshop Facilitator, Linda Joy Burke is a 2021 HOWIE recipient for Outstanding Artist, from the Howard County Arts Council. Burke's poetry has appeared in numerous publications including: *The Little Patuxent Review*, *Obsidian // Black Literature in Review*, *Beltway: An On-Line Quarterly*, *Passager*, *Gargoyle 54*, *When Divas Laugh: The Diva Squad Poetry Collective*, and *Fledgling Rag*. She is currently a co-host of the Wilde Reading Series in Columbia, MD.

Katarina Čelebić (32, 33, 47)

Katarina Čelebić is from Podgorica, Montenegro. She is 24 years old. She finished Faculty of Fine Arts in Cetinje, Montenegro, Department of Graphic Design and Illustration, with part of her studies spent in Macerata, Italy. So far, she had a few collective exhibitions and awards in her home country and abroad, including Mexico, Japan, and Italy. She has participated in many workshops in Montenegro as part of faculty organization in fields of calligraphy and illustration.

Helen Clark (37, 47)

Helen Clark is an adjunct English professor at Howard Community College, author, editor, and nature nerd.

Gracie Cordes (4)

Gracie started writing poetry in sixth grade as a coping mechanism, and she hasn't stopped since. These three poems are about her struggle with her mental health issues. Gracie is a student at HCC and Dr. Tara Hart recommended she submit her work here.

ARTISTS' BIOS

Kelly DuMar (12, 13)

Kelly DuMar is a Boston-based poet, playwright, and photographer who leads creative writing workshops in person and online. She has published three poetry chapbooks, and her poems are published in *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Thrush*, *Glassworks*, and more. Kelly produces the monthly Open Mic for the *Journal of Expressive Writing*. Her daily blog, *#NewThisDay*, features nature photos from her daily walks on the Charles River with reflections on the writing life. Visit kellydumar.com to learn more.

Diane Dunn (25, 46)

Diane Dunn has, over the years, worked in black and white photography, painting (watercolor, acrylic, oil, and pastel), collage, and mono prints. She has recently become enamored with the medium of collage and loves the tactile experience of cutting, tearing, and assembly various hand-painted papers and fabrics, often combined with paint. Diane finds a serendipitous aspect to collage that is exciting and is never sure where a piece will lead when she starts. She also enjoys making mono prints, which allow for layering and masking that reveals hidden patterns and images.

Lyn Ford (18)

Lyn Ford is an award-winning writer and storyteller, an Ohio teaching artist, a certified laughter yoga teacher, an international keynote speaker and workshop presenter, a member of the National Association of Black Storytellers' Circle of Elders, and a great-grandmother. Lyn will be published in the 2022 poetry collection, *I Thought I Heard a Cardinal Sing: Ohio's Appalachian Voices*, and the journal *Tomorrow and Tomorrow: Birth*.

Judith Goedeke (23, 38)

The enormous healing power of words compels Judith Goedeke to write. She strives to clarify, challenge, redirect, own up to, and celebrate life. And do damage control. Judith is a retired acupuncturist and holds a Writing degree from Towson University. Her poems appear in anthologies, literary journals, and *River of Silver Sky*. For twelve years, she has facilitated monthly Poem as Portal workshops that foster loving and courageous self-awareness, intentional living, and deepening compassion.

Beth Gulley (14)

Beth Gulley is a Kansas poet who likes to get lost in the woods. She has also been known to jump from moving buses in Paraguay, visit the breeding ground for Giant Chinese Salamanders, and run more than fifty miles at a time. She recently published two collections of poetry, *The Sticky Note Alphabet* and *Dragon Eggs*. When she is not writing, teaching, or volunteering, she likes to hang out with her cat.

hadlee (15, 24)

hadlee is a human who has leaned on writing and drawing as creative outlets on their healing journey.

Monica Herber (38, 42)

Monica Herber is a self-taught artist and dedicated arts administrator. Visual arts have always been a key form of personal discipline for her, keeping her hands busy and her head focused. Always inspired by color, patterns, and processes, Monica's art is an expression of her relationship with ideas, materials, source energy, and creative momentum. Monica's current work aims to challenge the viewers' perspective of certain visual archetypes and stereotypes, encouraging them to see the world differently.

Robyn Holl (6, 7)

Robyn Marie Holl paints energetic, sensual paintings. She earned an MFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts as well as a BFA from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY. Robyn's recent exhibits include *Visionary Women* at the Columbia Art Center (CAC) in March 2019, 2020 & 2022; *The Art of Abstraction* in 2018, also at CAC; and *Colorful Spirit* with the support of HorseSpirit Arts Gallery in 2017. Internationally, Robyn has shown in Sarajevo and Mostar, BiH. Upon returning to the US, she exhibited the show, *The Balkans*, in Brooklyn, NY, in 2008. Robyn is the Cultural Curator at Art Ovation Hotel in Sarasota, FL, and mentors virtually through Art Works Now.

Arlita Holland (21, 31, 48)

Arlita Holland is a survivor who's been blessed with the gift of poetry. She writes to inspire those who struggle to rise up out of the ashes of pain and suffering. She believes in the power of poetry and prays that her poems find their way into the hearts of those yearning to be free from the effects of sexual assault and domestic violence.

Kamilah House (35, 36)

Kamilah House is a mixed media artist working in D.C. and Maryland. She often employs bold color and dramatic brushstrokes to express social and political issues through both figurative and abstract art. Her work is informed by her career as an attorney with GEICO, for the DOJ, and for the White House; her love for the history of the African Diaspora and current events; her background in international studies and politics; and her experience growing up as a Bahamian/African American and a diplomat brat throughout the world. Kamilah is passionate about black maternal mental health and, in 2020, partnered with the Howard County Library System and author Faye McCray for an online exhibition and workshop, *Dear Mama*, to provide information and healing on issues of Black Maternal Mortality and health concerns and the mental health crisis among mothers of African descent in the United States. Her work has been exhibited at the Columbia Arts Center, the Hill Center in Washington, D.C., Harmony Hall in Fort Washington, Maryland, as well as in gallery shows in Colorado. It has also been collected throughout the United States and in several countries abroad. Kamilah paints to speak her mind when words aren't colorful enough or when frustrations are high. While her website is under construction (sign up for information at www.kamilahhouse.com), to find the very latest updates on her work and events, please visit www.instagram.com/kohouseart.

Mary Justin (16, 17, 47, 51)

Artist Mary Justin hails amongst the shimmering waters of the raging Atlantic Ocean and the tranquil waves of the Caribbean Sea. She has danced to the rhythm of the African drums of her ancestors under the coconut and mango trees and rubbed her satisfied tummy after feasting on succulent taste of green bananas under a salt fish stew garnished with avocados. She has smelled the aroma of freshly pounded coffee and cocoa beans. Her feet swirl to the tunes of reggae, soca, and calypso music. Her art is the breath of a St Lucia-bred girl emulating the ocean waves, the steam from the volcanos, and the rugged topography. Her colors radiate the oceans, earth, sky, and the blood of generation who fought for the survival of "Fair Helen."

Barbara K. Lawson (5, 19, 37)

Barbara K. Lawson creates "found object assemblage" pieces at the Willowbrook Studio in Howard County. Her work is created from objects, which are found anywhere or rescued from the garbage. She is intrigued by the imaginative and creative process of transforming objects, which may convey a current message to the viewer. Most of her current work speaks to the social issues of race, capital punishment, mass incarceration and immigration.

ARTISTS' BIOS

Haley Linnet (52)

Haley Linnet is a multidisciplinary artist based in Portland, Maine. Their work centers around their lived experience existing in a body and gender identity that is often invalidated by societal norms. Haley works primarily in sculptural forms and 2D painting. When not in the studio, Haley loves exploring the wilderness of Maine and connecting with nature and Source as fuel for creativity.

William Lowe (43)

William Lowe teaches literature, Asian studies, and ESL composition at Howard Community College in Columbia, Maryland. William is a poet, fiction writer, and musician. He has published poems and short stories in several journals, including *Cold Mountain Review*, *Appalachian Broadsides*, *Silhouette*, *Wakenings*, *New River Free Press*, *The Muse*, *Welter*, *Little Patuxent Review*, *Connections*, and *Open Minds Quarterly*.

Jeana Lovelace (31)

Jeana is a trauma survivor who has been involved with HopeWorks for several years. She has volunteered and attended many wonderful workshops. Over the years she has used art as a means of expression for feelings too deep for words.

LNance Photography (18, 26, 44)

LNance Photography is an Army veteran and local photographer who seeks to capture beauty in the small things. She believes a good image is not just what you see but what you make it. She hopes her work brings joy and positive memories to those who experience it.

Marian O. Nance (45)

Marian is a retired librarian who believes writing and art soothe the soul and are therapeutic. She believes that poetry and prose confront a personal truth and provoke needed conversations.

Thaís Piageti-Cassel (8)

Thaís Piageti-Cassel is a Brazilian artist with degrees in Fashion Marketing and Advertising and a lifetime passion for the visual arts. She has given painting classes for adults and children for nearly a decade, savoring each opportunity to share her love for colors and shapes. Thaís' restless spirit makes her art inventive and universal, navigating across a multitude of themes and techniques with easiness and maturity. No challenges go unanswered, and those willing to experience the magic will get gracefully stained in the process.

Michelle Petties (29, 39)

Michelle Petties is an author, speaker, and recovering food addict. Her debut book, *Leaving Large: The Stories of a Food Addict*, chronicles a lifetime of eating for the wrong reasons. After gaining and losing 700 pounds, Michelle finally discovered the "secret" to ending the battle between her mind, body, and hunger. By unlocking her unique Food Stories, Michelle debunked her misconceptions and misconnections about the purpose of eating. She now teaches others how to find their food truths.

Phyllis Rittner (8)

Phyllis Rittner writes poetry, flash fiction, and creative non-fiction. Her work can be found in the *Journal of Expressive Writing*, *Paper Dragon*, *Versification*, *Fairfield Scribes*, *Six Sentences*, *Sparks of Calliope*, and others. She is the winner of the Grub Street Free Press Fiction Contest and a member of The Charles River Writer's Collective.

ARTISTS' BIOS

Mark Scheel (14)

Mark Scheel is a retired library information specialist and now a full-time writer. His essays, short stories, and poetry have appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies, and his seventh book, the novel *The Potter's Wheel*, was released from Clarendon House Publications last August. An earlier work—the story and poetry collection *A Backward View*—was the recipient of the J. Donald Coffin Memorial Book Award from The Kansas Authors Club.

Karin Stanley (22)

Karin Stanley is an artist, sculptor, garden designer, and writer in the Boston area. Her art and sculptures have been featured widely in magazines and shows. Some of her public work can be seen at Wellesley College, Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and the Irish Cultural Center of New England. A native of Ireland, Karin's work is Celtic-inspired. Her poetry and art reflect her deep involvement with gardens, nature, and the ancient history of Ireland.

Jennifer Vaughn (50)

Jen is an exploratory artist and full-time traveler. She lives with her spouse in a recreational vehicle and is continually immersed in the outdoors. She is inquisitive, drawn to nature, and finds great inspiration in its splendor. Rocks, plants, and birds bring peace to her soul. Green spaces, mountains, and deserts fuel her curiosity and creativity.

Barbara Weisser (9, 49)

Barbara Weisser, a native of Baltimore, lives in Cecil County. She writes poetry and short personal essays. After raising her family, she received an A.A. degree in English and in Education and is learning to become a better writer.

Ming Xu (10)

Ming Xu is a self-taught artist and a Doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine with an acupuncture license who practices in Columbia, Maryland. She fell in love with all kinds of Art at her young age. Oil Painting, acrylic painting, and drawing have been her personal habits ever since. Along the up-and-down path of life, she always finds a way to keep her creativity. She believes that Art is not just beauty and inspiration, but more often provides philosophy to guide humanity through the darkness. She is truly appreciative and honored to have her work featured in *Dragonfly*.

Phyllis Yigdall (20)

Phyllis is looking forward to really getting back out into the world—spending time with friends, traveling and exploring, gardening, working for environmental justice, and fully engaging with all the creative arts. She is an active volunteer and enjoys being in service to the greater good.

Submit Your Art!



Poetry

Photography

Sketch

Short Story

Mixed-media

Sculpture

Painting

Prose

Dragonfly

arts magazine

Reflections on Inner Strength, Oppression, Transformation, Healing, Hope and Justice

Dragonflies are a symbol of renewal after a time of great hardship.

Accepting submissions for the 2023 issue:
October 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

For inquiries contact:

Vanita Leatherwood, Director of Community Engagement

Dragonfly Editor

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HopeWorksOfHC.org

Made possible by the Howard County Arts Council through a grant from Howard County Government

The Our Voice Project

Wellness & Leadership Programs for Survivors

Program Descriptions



Leadership Opportunities

The **Our Voice Advisory Council** is HopeWorks' organizing mechanism for survivors to build community, share insights and provide feedback on issues such as current events, and agency services or programs. The quarterly meetings are held in the months of January, April, July, and October.

Survivors Support Group for Learning and Self-care

Survivors are invited to attend **Preservation Circle**. Through engaging and creative activities, we cultivate continued courage, self-compassion, connection, learning and self-directed advocacy. Events, and topics vary. Past events have included workshops about emotional abuse, the effects of trauma on the body and arts-based stress relief techniques. Meets on the second Saturday of the month (September to May) 10am to noon.

Developing Self-care Practices

During one-on-one sessions called **Poetry N2 Wellness**, survivors who are out of crisis, can learn and practice wellness and healing techniques. Sessions include development of self-care practices and mindfulness tools, as well as creative activities such as expressive journaling, visual journaling, and mixed-media arts. No prior art or writing experience is needed. Call to schedule an appointment for an entrance interview.

Fostering Self-care & Healing

In our eight-week **Self-care & the Healing Journey** workshop series, we use expressive arts activities to explore issues, share insights and learn from guest speakers. Topics include stress relief, healing, self-awareness, identity, understanding boundaries, self-compassion, mental and physical health awareness, and the dynamics of experiencing multiple oppressions (e.g., poverty and sexual violence).

Addressing Intersections of Oppression & Healing

In **LOVED: A Survivor Self-care Circle for Black Women**, we address "triple jeopardy"; the exploitation and oppression experienced by survivors who are black women. Through engaging and creative activities, we cultivate self-love, beloved community, and strategies to address the root causes of violence. Sessions feature the use of expressive-arts techniques, guided discussions, seminars, and guest speakers. Typically meets on the fourth Saturday of the month (September to May), 10am to Noon.

Maintaining Your Healing Journey

After participating in Poetry N2 Wellness one-on-one sessions or a workshop series you are eligible to receive **Journaling Our Voice**, a monthly eNewsletter focusing on expressive arts techniques such as poetry, journaling prompts, inspirational quotes, arts journaling ideas, affirmations and more.

Wellness & Self-care Day Retreat

In the spring we often host a day of interactive workshops called the **Unlearning Not to Speak Day Retreat**, where we share, play, reflect, learn, and collectively celebrate surviving and thriving. This event will not be held in 2023.

Preparing to Share Your Survivor Story

If you would like to be a member of HopeWorks' Speakers Bureau, inquire about our next **Speakers Bureau Training** program. In this nine-week workshop series we provide you with the support and tools to be an effective public speaker. A Training is scheduled to begin August 4, 2022. Call to schedule an appointment for an entrance interview.

Addressing Long-term Health Consequences

Many survivors experience chronic pain conditions that interfere with the quality of life. **ARTiculation** is a peer support and education group focused on exploring ways to live well, be informed self-advocates, address stigma and the health disparities that challenge our well-being. Sessions feature expressive-arts activities, self-care practices, relaxation techniques and guest speakers. The quarterly meetings are held in the months of March, June, September and December.

finding our voices. speaking our truth. living our lives — well.

We Are HopeWorks.



Incorporated 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.

To accomplish our mission, we use an anti-racist/anti-oppression framework; enabling us to address and decrease the root causes of sexual and intimate partner violence, as well as the systems that fuel sexism, racism, poverty, transphobia, health disparities, homophobia, ableism, genocide, xenophobia, and other forms of oppression.

We support and partner with others doing anti-racist/anti-oppression work, efforts to achieve healthier relationships and a world where each person is safe, valued and affirmed.

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

COUNSELING FOR SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

- 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 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