



Dragonfly

arts magazine
2023

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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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

Instagram

www.instagram.com/HopeWorksofHC

24-Hour Helpline
410.997.2272

COVER ART: Dream Counting by Karen Crouse

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.



It is not by chance that our arts magazine is entitled Dragonfly.

The dragonfly has been a centuries old symbol for change – a special type of transformation, one wrought from crisis but ending in self-realization and liberation. This experience is often reflected in the lives of the people we serve at HopeWorks, and you'll hear it in some of the voices on the pages to follow.



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.

Transformation is rarely easy and as humans, we sometimes feel so very limited in how to bare the intensity of our experiences, thoughts, and feelings. Congratulations to each of our contributing artists who were brave enough to articulate their own deep emotions and unique perspectives.

Vanita Leatherwood, M.A., TLA
HopeWorks of Howard County
Director of Community Engagement
Dragonfly Founder/Editor

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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.*

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OVERHEAD

BY JUDITH GOEDEKE

beyond a fringe of black trees
is infinite night
and masses of shining specks
I inhale bits of constellations
stars swirl in my mouth
swathe my bones
and settle into the folds
of small, soft places
I raise my arms
cup the moon between my palms
feel the shadow's invisible, gravitational pull
its massive density, its familiarity
this thin, glass bowl of moon
even with its mountains of shadows
glows in my hands
hold on

hold on

© 2023 Judith Goedeke

MOCKING BIRD

By ARI KING

Shrill squawks and chirps startle
me as I sag into the springs
of the guest room bed.

Could it be a nightingale?
My mind, sleepless again, turns
to thoughts of birds, the creak of my turning
in tune with the shrieks shooting
through the dark.

Could that really be a nightingale?
I recall the Aesop's image of a small, golden
thing haggling through its ornate
cage. No, I shudder, not that.

My face turns blue from the
light of the screen as I search:
"birds in the east coast,
in the city
who sing at night."

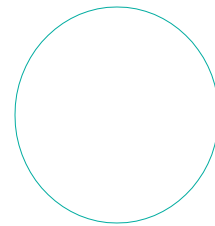
At home, I was used to the hoot-hoot of owls
and the trembling orchestra of peepers and
crickets, the occasional scream
of a fox, a shot ringing out from the woods,
the snore of my bed mate, a cough.

I listen to recordings hoping to make a match,
but nothing is quite right. And neither is the bird.
Its song is inconstant, mercurial
I can't pin it down and I feel the familiar
aching: it's not just the unknown
but the instability, the inability to connect.

Mocking bird. This must be it. A vocal changeling
that lures a mate by light of the full moon. And it is
mocking. I pull the fluffy blanket up around my neck
and release my phone. It's dark
again.

I hone in on its song, accepting
its erratic nature. Listening
to every rise and fall,
matching it with my breath
eyes closing to darkness into darkness,
thankful for the company,
thankful for the mocking.

© 2023 Ari King



BEGIN AGAIN

By JUDITH GOEDEKE

pale yellow sky
seeps slowly
steadily, forward
its searing edge
spills everywhere
soaks into these words
this piece of paper
my pores open like flowers
even my heavy old gray stones
who have eaten too much
float on stray bits of dawn

© 2023 Judith Goedeke

PRAYERS

By LORE NISSLEY

A good friend says
when someone hurts you
pray hard for them.
Pray they get everything you want
for yourself.

I tried.
I mixed the spit and the mud,
rubbed the salve on your eyes

I tried to be the vessel
that holds the oil,
to anoint you with all you are missing

I took you to the rock.
I struck it open until
the waters rushed

I made my body a prayer,
dwelled in your dark Gethsemane
folded your burdens in my hands

You would not see.
You would not heal,
You would not drink,
You would not kneel,

But at his urging I'll try again.

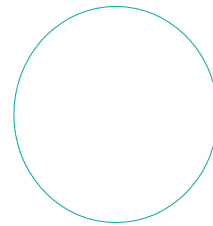
I pray for you a full accounting,
the fearless inventory if you will,
I pray you find peace in the dark
and mercy in the morning,

That when you recognize
you were loved and you wrecked it,
that you can swallow that without the choke

I pray you learn
that the hands on your throat
are usually your own

And then let go.

© 2023 Lore Nissley



INJURED WING

By JENNIFER A. GARCIA

Beautiful butterfly tries to fly high,
But with an injured wing can only go nigh,
She flaps and flaps and flaps,
but goes sideways instead of up,
So often not the direction she chose,
Because injured wing hinders where she goes,
She flitters about from flower to flower,
Sipping sweet nectar to give her power,
Yet what she gets is not what she needs,
She needs freedom not to follow leads,
Freedom to soar to the highest of heights,
Freedom to be whoever she desires,
Freedom to express herself how she sees fit,
Freedom to be loved for who she truly is.

© 2023 Jennifer A. Garcia

MUSHROOM FAE

By MC CAREY



© 2023 MC Carey

THE WATCHER

BY MC CAREY



© 2023 MC Carey

RIGHTS

By MARIAN O. NANCE

I have rights.

The 19th amendment gave me the right to vote.

This was not willingly relinquished, please note.

Arduously, we fought despite our fears.

But it shouldn't have taken over 40 years.

I have rights.

I have a right to reproductive justice.

And I thought I had a right to an abortion.

It said so in Roe VS Wade for a while.

Whether I am married, single or a child.

You can't just rape me,

Abuse me,

Kidnap me,

Traffic me,

Harass me, or

Pimp me.

So says Title 7 & Title 9

I have rights.

I have a right to be free of violence.

And to break free of this atrocious silence.

To take affirmative actions through defection,

election, projection, and connections.

And all to establish stronger protections.

To block legal and unconstitutional government opponents.

Forever and not just in the heat of the moment!

I have rights.

Check the Equal Pay Act of 1963.

It states I have a right to equal pay for equal work.

It makes economic sense,

CONTINUED

RIGHTS CONT.

By MARIAN O. NANCE

I can't understand why it took so long to commence.

I have a right to a non-traditional job,

That pays higher than those meant for my gender.

Who under this patriarchal system surrendered.

I deserve the right to an economic wellbeing in the workplace.

And to be protected in a hazardous workspace

I have rights.

I have a right not to be barred from advancement,

Or not to be fired because I'm pregnant.

For an invalid reason that is so blatant,

I have a right to question your intention.

Despite my young children or my religion.

Let it be universally known,

I have a right to work outside my home.

I have rights.

I have the right to be inclusive and creative

And without sexual harassment.

At every level in the world of entertainment.

Without being beholden,

I can be actor, writer, filmmaker, director,

Or lead in any other field for that matter.

Without serving myself up on a platter.

I have rights.

For decades I have waited.

Has my right to choose faded?

I have a right to autonomy,

To not be held down by heteronomy.

I'll not be coerced, bullied, or taunted

For exercising my right to choose.

Simply because yours are not my views.

I have rights.

For full equity, I forced a metamorphosis.

I stood up & marched when it was dangerous.

Communicator, activator, and primary navigator,

To realign government and legislature.

Ignited and united for years, days, and many an hour

CONTINUED

RIGHTS CONT.

To bring the message of justice by providing structural power.

State by state, I am a warrior and message carrier,

I used the constitution to dismantle legal barriers.

Without using my fist,

I am an activist awakening world consciousness.

I reached a pinnacle and where it was possible,

Used Federal Statutes to strike down legal obstacles.

Intentionally bringing on a gender mutiny,

Forcing the Supreme Court to heighten scrutiny.

So why don't I feel equal on Women's Equality Day?

Instead, I feel an ongoing struggle for my rights.

Why isn't the end of this fight in sight?

I still feel pain and guilt.

Despite all the hopes I've built.

When so many forces

seem to intervene differently

This movement hardly concludes

in a way that matches my political proclivity.

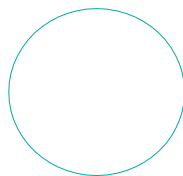
My jangled nerves are not assuaged.

For most of all, what I feel is heightened rage.

I have rights. Yes. You and me

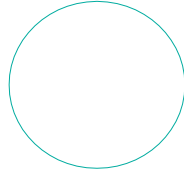
To true equality.

© 2023 Marian O. Nance



SAY SOMETHING

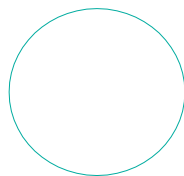
By MICHELLE PETTIES



If you see spinach or some matter, foreign or domestic, in my teeth, tell me.
If my fly is open for all to see, warn me, please.
If you see something creepy and crawly up, down, or across my back, swat it off.
If you see that crusty morning crud in the corner of my eye, pass me a tissue.
If you see the back of my skirt inadvertently tucked up or tucked in, lend me a hand.
If I forget my deodorant, slip a sistah the Secret.
If you see a telltale red spot staining the back of my pants or skirt, cover me.
If you see something dangling from my nose, that's not a ring, do the right thing.
If you see my black slip hanging below my white dress, whisper in my ear.
If you see my wig crooked and cocked, give me the straight heads up.
If You See Something, Say Something.
If my one chin has turned into two or three,
If you see rolls of extra weight gathering around my back, stomach, arms, and thighs,
If you see me struggling to walk across the street,
If it's a chore for me to take the stairs, take a seat, or touch my feet,
If I am stressed out, burnt out, and busting out of clothes that are tight, tighter, and tightest,
If my smiling denials do not hide my defeat,
If I my energy is lagging, yet my appetite raging,
And if am living to eat instead of eating to live,
If I say everything is alright and yet you see everything is all wrong,

MIND YOUR DAMN BUSINESS.

© 2023 Michelle Petties



A WALK IN THE WOODS

By KAREN CROUSE



© 2023 Karen Crouse

DREAM COUNTING

By KAREN CROUSE



© 2023 Karen Crouse

TO CATCH THE LIGHT

By KB BALLENTINE

The burden of hope
faces the dark,
kisses the shadows
with melodic sparks.
Hope feathers and blurs
the roughest of stones,
the ragged patches
nestling close to the bone.
What spills from our lips
will soar to the heart
like a homing pigeon
or a poison-tipped dart.
Night lingers and strangles,
provokes us to dreams.
Are we trapped, are we lost?
Is all as it seems?
When hope colors the sea,
the depths of our minds,
we can embrace the wonder
or gouge ourselves blind.

© 2023 KB Ballentine

AGAIN

By TOM BALLE

Pain
is the cut

time
the bandage

suffering
the story we tell

a wound heals
bandage falls away

and the story

tell the story
as long as you need

then find a new one

© 2023 Tom Balles

PRIMARY CARE

By DALLAS ATLAS

a new doctor questions / how someone so young & untouched / by combat / could have PTSD / out of
habit I unzip my skin / hold open / & wait / this new doctor wearing another doctor's shoes
becomes Steve from Blue's Clues / this has to happen / if this doctor doesn't see / layers of desecrated
skin / piled in peaked ash from pelvis to sternum / singed nervous system / crop circles
coating every inch of innards / matching the swirling maps / of stronger-than-mine fingers /
congealed semen / bubbling like cancerous tumors / crotch-less toddler's onesie / dangling by the
foot from my throat / how else would this doctor know to believe me?

© 2023 Dallas Atlas

US GYMNASTS TESTIFY AGAINST THE FBI'S HANDLING OF LARRY NASSAR

BY FRANCES WERTIMER



© 2023 Frances Wertimer

HAIKU 3

BY DEBORA MCCALLUM

Are we all safe now
With everything we went through
Future will heal us

© 2023 Debora McCallum

UNTITLED

By RENEE KALU



© 2023 Renee Kalu

UNTITLED

BY RENEE KALU



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PEACHY DAHLIA

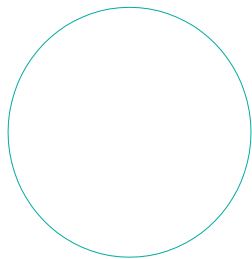
By GARY CLARK



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WHEN TIME AND PLACE COLLIDE

By HILDA FLIKE JACOBSON



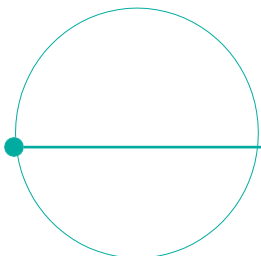
I haven't told you
That every full moon
I picture us laying
In the grass like fallen stars
Our eyes longing
For the dark ether again
And our palms sharing
The glow we stole from it
Between them

© 2023 Hilda Flike Jacobson

THE OFFERING
By AUTUMN CENTOFONTI



© 2023 Autumn Centofonti



HOPE WORKS

By ARLITA HOLLAND

Speaking truth
My sister by my side
Finding my truth
In the words she speaks
She shines a light,
So I can see my brilliance

Her story is my story,
Wrapped in hopefulness
She knows the depths of my pain
She inspires me to heal,
She believes in my innate power
To transform my mind
Her words burn through the layers
Of my unspoken pain,
Melting away the invisible bars,
Held in place by phantom memories
Of a little girl's pain.
She is me and I am her,
Moving mountains with one voice,
Speaking truth to the lies
We were once forced to believe.

Hand in hand, we rise together
Breaking chains of fear
That once held us in darkness
Rising from the Bogs
Of self hatred and confusion
Opening our eyes to the beauty
Of self love and compassion
Turning our backs on yesterday's pain,
We rewrite our stories
We choose to heal.

© 2023 Arlita Holland

PRAYER TO THE IN BETWEEN

By CARYN MIRRIAM-GOLDBERG

Praise the green intrusion as it backs
and forths itself for weeks, as if it's a question
who will take over the narrative in spring.
Glory be to the surprise snow in April,
and a hard freeze kills the possibility
of peaches from the two volunteer trees
scrambling out of the compost pile.
Lamentations for those winter-killed
in garden or living room. May they not
linger in the in between but go
where the warming ground wants them.
Hallelujah to the deer walking right up
to the field camera we set in the woods
to show us one large right eye holding
the reflection of all seasons at once.
Thanks for this tilt-a-whirl of clocks
and weather, and again, as if it has extra time
on its hands, prayers to the sky to help us.

© 2023 Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg

SPREAD YOUR WINGS

BY SHEELA BECTON



© 2023 Sheela Becton

SPREAD YOUR WINGS

BY SHEELA BECTON

As I heal, I look within
I am strong and full of dreams
My dreams soon find wings
A new journey begins
I stand tall and look up to the sky
Spread my wings and soar high

© 2023 Sheela Becton

OLD FAMILY RECIPE

By WILLIAM LOWE

Begin with one egg, whole, in a warm, moist bowl,
add a dash of lust and a tablespoon of sperm,
knead and let sit for eight to ten weeks,
bake for seven months on a medium setting,

let fully rise and remove gently with gloves,
wipe the glossy coat clean and wrap in gauze,
hold close and suckle regularly until satiated,
remove waste as needed and disinfect daily,

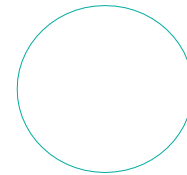
feed, clothe, bathe, soothe, punish, repeat,
instruct, guide, reprimand, coddle, rebuke,
work methodically to become superfluous,
shame as befitting the age, time, and place,

transport, teach, tether, tighten the hold, release,
watch, fret, fear, and worry, wait for returns
that transpire in less and less frequent intervals,
calls that come like bottled tongues in the night,

pass on the recipe, the mantle, the role,
observe from a distance, rejoice, regret,

serve hot, serve warm, serve cold.

© 2023 William Lowe

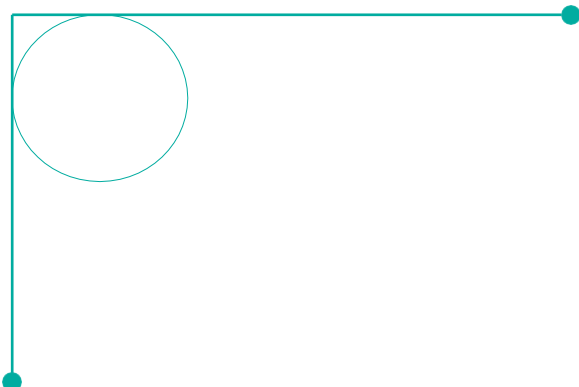


HAIKU 2

By DEBORA MCCALLUM

Memories are kept
Spilling from an ancient heart
Sewing ties that bind

© 2023 Debora McCallum

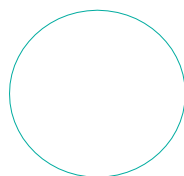
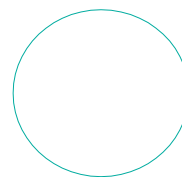


FAMILY DINNER

By WILLIAM LOWE

Family dinners, served promptly at six, are fraught—
the lessons taught that parents are at poles
of a two-headed beast (the rectangular table),
that words are knives that cut through steaks
of the heart, that bread and bones are both
made to be broken, that silence is a gift
and the only grace at this table, that fat
must be trimmed and fed slight-of-hand to the dogs
(when the two heads are turned), that greens
are a curse to be hurled out the door, that dreams
are like sweets that dissolve on the tongue,
that to be in a family is to be in a war,
with napkin entrenchments, fork bayonets,
spoons of artillery (let those peas and beans fly),
with no armistice, no quarter, no peace in sight—
take cover, children: swallow, digest, retreat, survive.

© 2023 William Lowe



LOOKING FOR LOVE

By MIKE CLARK

looking for love
begins
with self reflection
that we are the lights
in the universe
so vast
that meaning
begins
in discovering
ourselves.

© 2023 Mike Clark

BUT WE WON'T SPEAK OF THAT

BY CHRISTINE ALLEN

Green yellow lights, breasts
darting toward some unknown
allowance, some cache

of spiked heels, sore calves
short skirts. We question
the hands that traipse

up up up up.
I want home—I feel
the pain in painted faces

in why why. What
creases such lovely woman
eyes, what grimace

tells the story inside
our hands? We imagine
tomorrows, breathless

and spent, we fugitive
homeless of the Y who
have come out to play

to dance at the Corumba.
I, discomforted, homeless,
legally homelessly homed

and home at last, behind
the iron gate, inside the love
of stories that wander

and hope. Inside Building B,
tucked together in a bunkbed,
my daughters wake

with a frightened glance. Shh,
I'm home. I kiss their warm
soft foreheads then wander

falsely bright halls. Outside
the life-sized windows of the new
building, the old building

suffers rusty bulldozers
earthmovers, a skiff
of February snow. Half raised

an empty stage of cafeteria
of haunted halls and
doors open shut, broken

windows promising the dead
a true or truish vanishing.
Murals exposed, notes

still push-pinned to cork
board, painted walls
comfort ghostly hands.

I wonder, how many women
how many children
called the old Y home

to flee or battle husbands
boyfriends or brothers
to negotiate or subject

fathers who father with fists
and ire? How many women
paced long into night

CONTINUED

BUT WE WON'T SPEAK OF THAT CONT.

BY CHRISTINE ALLEN

their children waiting
their children watching
in gun-shy wonder?

Some of us have left
or will leave soon. One
woman went back

to “her man” last week.
He shot her in the face.
Some of us will sneak off

to dance again and some
of us might not dance
another day.

© 2023 Christine Allen

STRENGTH AND BALANCE

BY LEILANI NANCE



© 2023 Leilani Nance

BORN BOI

BY DALLAS ATLAS

cornflower confetti. periwinkle penis. azure amniotic // cerulean sac. sonogram snapshots showing length between legs. Dominican mother of mother hides cutlery under cushions. spoon is girl. knife for boy. mother sits on knife. every time. knife. knife. knife. knife. boy. baby is boy. a son to rejoice. white baby boy for white father. another john where half the tree of family holds juans. but baby bursts out iris. orchid. lavender labia // mauve majora. length between legs merely fingers tricking technicians. forgetting science of superstitions, parents hold white child and name a girl's name. stripping blue from memory. Dominican mother of mother, who loves only boys, loves new baby most. baby grows to sleep with knife under pillow.

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UNION

BY FRANCES WERTIMER



© 2023 Frances Wertimer

A CROOKED CANDLE

By LYN FORD

A candle, forgotten, reshaped by use and time,
Is found in a dusty cellar,
The aged wax form bent but unbroken,
The wick unfed, hungering for a nourishing spark.
Wipe it clean, warm it in a gentle oven, and
The candle softens.
Drawn from the heat, it rests, not long.
Untouched, untended, it becomes brittle again.
Tenderly urge it upright, with patience and care.
Hold it steady and let it cool.
The candle will not be perfect. It will not be as sturdy
As a newly purchased taper,
Snugly wrapped in plastic,
Sides smooth, body erect, untouched.
Old wick is touched with new fire,
Liquid runs down
Preserved trails of a melted past,
The essence that slowly passed like tears long ago.
Slightly bowed, revealing age and wear,
Its reason for existence is renewed.
This candle spares the reader's eye,
Gives courage to the writer's pen,
Casts safe shadows, offers hope, gives light.
The candle claims the flickering of what was,
Transformed to a new flame.
A crooked candle still burns.

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SEASONS

By M.E. WILLIAMS

Part 1: Summer

*When I'm asked about my first memory,
I lie.*

Sometimes I say it's the feeling of excitement in the air
on the day my brother was born,
or something about the smell of apples or crayons,
or the olive green color of my first home by the lake.

But it's not.

The earliest picture ingrained in my mind
is the orange yellow glow of the sun
as it shines through the window on my left
and I am helpless,
on my back,
feeling myself torn open by a man
whose job was to help me.

*When I'm asked about my memories of childhood summers,
I lie.*

How can it be that while everyone else looks back
they see joy,
and play,
and warmth,
and love?

I wish I could remember that.
I wish I remembered going through life with childlike joy
and wonder
instead of responsibility
and guilt.

I wish that summertime brought back good thoughts,
like sunny beaches
and the smell of forests
and how those great lakes must have felt on my skin.

But do you know what I remember instead?

I remember the way one man looked at me
through a window,
locking eyes with mine
and sending a permanent chill down my spine.

I remember that one man shared secret photos
of my preteen body
with another man,
and that one stared at my breasts
across the dinner table
every single day.

I remember how another man, a stranger,
found me on a bus,
harassed me,
touched me,
and kissed me,

And yet another man four times my age
touched me in a bathroom,
locked me in a bedroom,
and forced me to stare out the window
at the children playing outside, and
“think about what I did.”

I remember that the first man I trusted
told me he loved me, then
assaulted me in a car,
and on a trampoline,
and on the phone every night,
and in the yard in broad daylight
as I lay there bleeding,

And the first man I loved
more than anything in this world
left me.

It's been a long time, but I still feel alone.

So, so alone.

Part 2: Fall

I know one day I will recover again,
but today I am relapsing
again.

I've been trying so hard to stay present
with the smell of bonfires
and cinnamon tea,
and I've been staring at the oaks
as they shed their pasts
and transform the earth with their new colors.

CONTINUED

But I can't enjoy them.

I'm not here.

Summer has ingrained itself into my body
and I
cannot
escape.

All I want is to feel the cool breeze on my face
and the crunching leaves under my feet,
but all I can feel is that blinding light
and those hands,
 all those hands,
and that gaze,
 and those bruises.

*How can I explain
that the only thing I can feel is pain
and the only time I feel like I'm here
is when I make myself bleed?*

I don't know who I am without this
and I hate them for taking me away from myself.

Part 3: Winter

It's January 3rd, 2022.

Seasons have passed,
and so far I have kept my promise
to stop hurting myself on purpose.

But you know what they say
about the body keeping score,
and even now,
decades of old and new memories hide
deep inside my bones,
in all my nerves and tissues,
waiting for their time –
 at yoga,
 at home,
 the car,
 the bed,
 the office,
– unpredictably.

In the middle of winter, I'm frozen in summer again,
and where I don't have words, I still remember it all.

*I remember how it felt
to be touched and then punished,
loved and then abandoned.
Over and over and over.*

My therapist says
that our deepest feelings and memories emerge
when we're finally still and safe.

That doesn't feel fair to me.

But maybe she's right.

I guess it's true that I could not be further from summer,
and something about the safety and stillness of winter
gives me a bit of hope.

I'm not there yet,
but maybe one day
 the shivers down my spine won't be as strong,
and maybe one day
 I'll be able to drive down that road,
 and hear those songs,
and maybe, maybe I'll even get a good night's sleep.

And maybe one day I'll believe
that even though those memories are stored
in all my nerves and tissues,
they aren't me.
Maybe one day
I'll be brave enough to use my voice
and tell the truth.

Part 4: Spring

Today is an important anniversary.
And so is ten days from now,
and four days after that,
and a few days this summer,
but I can't remember when.

I've found that no pill
or drink
or group
or meditation

SEASONS CONTINUED

will stop the seasons
and their memories from visiting,
but that means that
even in the darkness of winter,
I can trust
that spring will always come again too.

I'm not sure what it is,
but there's something beautiful about today.

The cerulean sky is the perfect backdrop
for the tiny white flowers,
growing on branches
that could have been mistaken for dead
only a few months ago.

The birds have found their way back home
and I've been watching them,
mesmerized by their fearlessness
as they build their nests
and proudly sing songs
that only they understand.

The sun has been staying
a little longer lately,
and I'm learning to cultivate a garden
with the springtime rains.

And every time
I taste the sweetness of a berry
or a tea that I grew with my own hands,
I get a little closer to believing that
I can create a home and a life full of color
where there was nothing before
and it can be so, so sweet.

I've been thinking a lot lately.

I think, despite everything,
the world is still good, seasons and all,
and I think I will be okay.

I think

that the bright orange yellow sun,
as it hovers over the horizon
and floods the world with its warmth,

is my new favorite color.

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HAIKU 1

BY DEBORA MCCALLUM

Intricate wings shine
Human-like faces stare back
We need dragonflies

© 2023 Debora McCallum

HAND IN HAND

BY LEILANI NANCE



© 2023 Leilani Nance

WHEN IT'S TIME TO LEAVE THE STATION

BY MILLIE GROVE

The universe saw fit to build me
like a train station
as I am ready for someone to go.
But I am ready for someone to come by, too.

The time zone I live in is temporary.
I live my life by the seat of my pants,
the edge of my seat,
the edge of the counter
where the ball is about to drop,
the glass is about to break,
the train is about to scream its farewell
and leave the station
as they all do.

When I was first asked to tell time
I couldn't see from today to tomorrow.
I was too young to understand
the biggest difference
between "beginning" and "end"
is all that space in between.

But it didn't take me long to learn.

A clock face for my grandfather,
a clock face for my great aunt,
a clock face for my grandmother-

A clock face
for my fourteen year old best friend.

A clock face for a boy
who smiled at me
when no one else did;
who climbed through my window
to remind me
"not alone"
when I needed him.

A clock face for a girl I never spoke to
just held the hand of another girl,
crying into her lap,

while her friend breathed with tubes,
and monitors beeped along
their relentless search
for any sign of activity
under all those machines.

All these frozen faces
that'll never point towards another dawn.
Sometimes
I wonder how I'm supposed to live
with a halfway completed suicide pact on my hands.
Sometimes
I wonder what those I've lost would've done.

I don't know how death makes its choices
I don't know why it swarms me like flies.
I don't know why good people
with so much more life in them
than I have in me
were snuffed out.

I don't know how the girl who didn't plan to live
is the woman writing this poem now.

All I know is that someday
I, too, will get on a train.
I will leave the station
I will scream my farewell
I won't have to wait for the glass to break anymore
when it's already broken.

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FUGITIVE BRIDE
BY FRANCES WERTIMER



© 2023 Frances Wertimer

CHAOTIC HARMONY

BY FRANCES WERTIMER



© 2023 Frances Wertimer

HOE TO HOUSEWIFE — I AM TRANSFORMED

By JALISA HARDY

Sex was my superpower but also my kryptonite
Bodies, on bodies, on bodies
To cope with the pain of my past
No one saw my pain, just kept calling me fast
It was killing me softly and it wouldn't let up
Getting burnt one time still wasn't enough
Pregnancy scare after pregnancy scare
I tried to get out felt like God wasn't there
Gave it away so they wouldn't take it
Raped three times as teen, healing I couldn't fake it
I'm sorry my Lord but prayer wasn't enough
Had to find the right help to sift through my stuff
Around age 20 I started to talk
People could finally understand the crazy road I'd walk
I thought I was free when he asked to get married
I wasn't healed, just a lot that I'd buried
My heart's desires were children and marriage
But it came crashing down like that baby carriage
The cheating, abuse, lies, and gaslighting were
more than I could bare
I fought with God told Him this wasn't fair
I made a life altering decision one that I didn't see
Little did I know that it would bring me back to me
I just wanted out and safety for us all
A single mom of 3 I can't afford to fall
Partnering with God turned it all around
Now I'm out planting good seeds in the ground
I am transformed, God renewed my mind
I have the peace that I couldn't find
All of my pain was not in vain
This is my season, a harvest to claim
Out of this world, yes I'm out of this world
I choose to believe that I'm His favorite girl
No need to feel sorry, I sure am not
Now that I've hit rock bottom,
watch me climb to the top!

© 2023 Jalisa Hardy

IN DEPENDENCE

By CHRISTINE ALLEN

Loneliness prevails, an irksome
force pushing me pressed
to that plate-glass window, light
pointing through night as a thin
irascible finger to a young woman
sitting at the smoker's bench.

Ask for a light, says loneliness,
knowing full well we have matches.
The woman, wordless, complies.
Smoke spirals or shudders around us.
I rub or scratch at burgeoning hives
as if I could busy sorrow out
with fingernails smelling of ash.

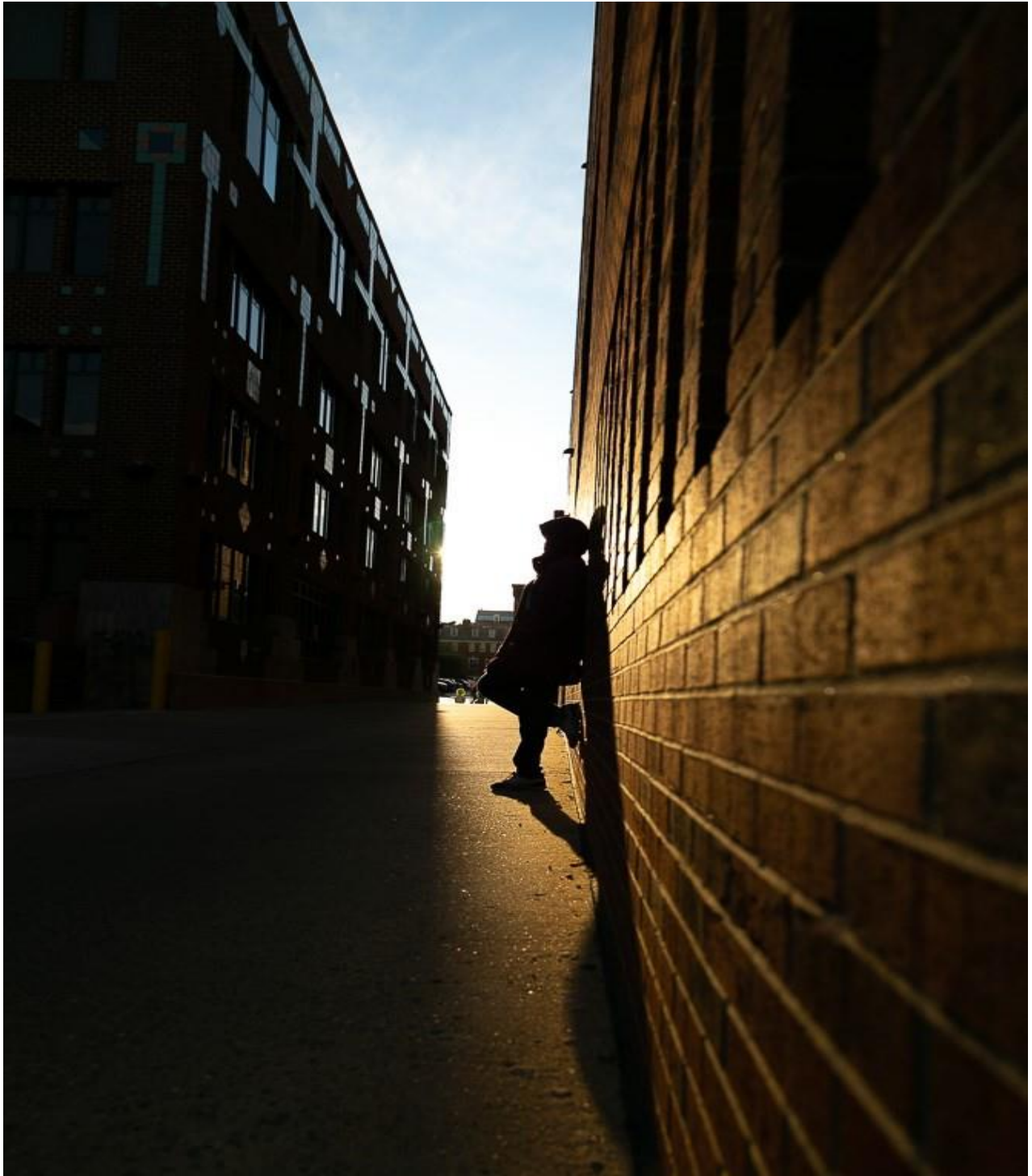
As from a void, snow drifts
sideways in clusters, pushing smog
to cold gray grounds. In a few hours
the snow will tease the thirst of kids
who will fidget or fight or sob in line
while they wait for the escorts
who will walk them to school.

Loneliness concedes. I'm buzzed
through the doors with a password,
teeth chattering. Graveyard shift take note
of the hideous sight of my face
disfigured by strain, their own
expressions give away empathy
or apathy, depending—

© 2023 Christine Allen

BETWEEN THE SHADOWS

BY LEILANI NANCE



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DREAMING

By KORELLIA SCHNEIDER

Some of us grew taller over the summer, but we didn't line up anymore like we used to when the elementary school teachers made us form a row at the back of the class. Most of the towering girls flanked at one end, before the boys went careening toward adolescence. And those of us muddled somewhere in between, catfish hoping not to get caught and filleted by the awkwardness that abounds with growing up.

Some us traveled, went north to stay in cabins at the mouths of the many lakes studding the frontier. But others had nothing more to document than pure ire for the rampant, shirtless, beer-bellied men playing ultimate frisbee in the neighborhood park until dusk.

When we all reassembled, we didn't exchange words over round tables and soggy pizza about our high-functioning alcoholic parents who peeled themselves off tables and floors every night and morning after a good soaking, to report for duty, to rinse and repeat--the humblest deglazing to behold. Instead, we filled the air with a mundaneness we secretly longed for.

I can mention these things, but it's not a slam-dunk story. The messiness of growing up, growing out, barnacled ourselves to the underbellies of truths that dawn on us decades later, is an ongoing negotiation.

I won't speak for anyone else who sat at that table, but in the absence of clarity, sometimes, the knowing is enough. Space reserved for knowing falls to the left of a sturdy, well-shading oak tree, leaves room for a garden to grow, or even lesser desired vegetation, perspiring with a determination, a moxy that still has currency in some parts.

And even if nothing is built to last, and nothing offers more than a one-year warranty anymore, I might hedge my bets on a hammock strung from this particular branch of *eternity*, as it is defined by the end-user. Gently swaying over the things that passed me by at first glance, over this anthill that I took such care not to step on, not to deprive of warmth from the setting sun.

All summer long, my neighbor pumped poison into his front property. Green, more green, chlorophyll and fluorescence that burrowed sickly, began to glow in the dark, brighter than the plastic stars with which we populated the ceilings of our bedrooms and our last thoughts before sleep. The buzz of gathering insects and the birds that ate them, come premature dawn, reminded us that perhaps we weren't just dreaming.

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FIND YOUR LIGHT

By LEILANI NANCE



© 2023 Leilani Nance

NOT MY SHAME

By MICHELLE PETTIES

I am alone.

Shame eases up and in from dark and secret places.

I am cloaked, hiding, drowning, dying in its heaviness.

Beneath the bright shine of a brilliant and risen sun, it disappears.

I proudly stand in the light.

I am not alone.

© 2023 Michelle Petties

BEAUTIFULLY MENDED

By KELLI SMITH



© 2023 Kelli Smith

BOTH

By HILDA FLIKE JACOBSON

I want to be naked
with a blanket of security
I want to lay with my limbs exposed
without fear of the crows picking at them
I want to be seen
and cling to the comfort of invisibility
simultaneously
Knowing it's impossible
to build a home
in purgatory

© 2023 Hilda Flike Jacobson

WOMAN

By MING XU



© 2023 Ming Xu

LIFT YOUR FEET

By BARBARA WEISSER

Years ago my husband and I lived across the street from my father-in-law. Every day after I sent my kids off to school, I would go see him. He had suffered injury during WWII and could not bend his back to put his socks on, I helped him every morning with his socks; he could slip his loafers on using a shoe horn. I would then go to the store and get him bread or milk, etc.

One day I let myself in as usual and went to his second floor apartment. The TV was not on. It was quiet, He was not in the living room as usual. I looked in the kitchen and bedroom-not there. He did not answer my call out for him. Reluctantly, I looked in the bathroom, I found him slumped over, unresponsive. His face was a sickening shade of purple/blue. Immediately, I knew he was dead. I ran out of there and saw some men at a cafe across the street. I told them about what I saw, and they called 911 for help.

Every night after that as I went to bed, I would see that disturbing vision I had experienced. I tried to fight it but it always came. One night, as I laid down, I said to myself, it's going to come no matter how I fight it. So I said OK, hit me with your best shot. I summoned the image. It was the same as always but it no longer had a horrible effect on me. I never had that scary vision again. I never forgot it but taking control of the situation gave me power over it.

There is one single best page that I ever read in my life. It changed my life for good and forever. I wish I could remember the title, but it is more than 30 years ago now.

The book was recommended to me by a therapist I was seeing. She told me I could request it from Sheppard-Pratt Hospital, and they would lend it for a short time. After I received it, I couldn't even open it for a month. I was afraid. I was afraid to read about my condition. I never could talk about it without being afraid it would spark a new episode.

Call it agoraphobia, panic attacks, anxiety or just depression. What brought the attacks on, I could never say. I would not feel comfortable being away from my house. If I did go out, I couldn't wait to get back home. Several times I abandoned outings and turned for home before I reached my destination.

Unfortunately, getting back home rarely solved the problem. I still suffered the symptoms, but felt better about it if I was in a familiar setting. I rarely had more than three days of peace. Even this peace was marred by my fretting.

When I wasn't in an actual attack, I was worrying about having one. I was constantly checking my current status, checking for signs, worrying about being worried. I was afraid of being afraid.

Fear triggers fight or flight reactions. The heart beats harder and faster. For me, most of the time this was accompanied by tightness in the chest and shallow breathing. I experienced dizziness and a disorienting, 'outside myself' feeling. I felt nausea and frequently did have to heave. Even worse, my bowels often felt the need to move violently. My body wanted to completely rid itself of any digestive responsibility. Several times this was followed by severe, uncontrollable shaking as though shivering.

I suffered these panic attacks for 12 or 14 years.

CONTINUED

When it was at its worse, I summoned my sheer determination and willpower, and saw a doctor about my problem. He didn't seem to think any of this was a problem. He told me to, "just go relax myself." I ran all the way home that day stopping only to throw up in the gutters four or five times.

That doctor gave me the name of a psychiatrist, and I did go see him. After talking with that doctor for about 15 minutes, he wrote me a prescription for what I believe was an antidepressant. I took it faithfully every day. It had absolutely no effect. I still had attacks just as frequently and just as severe.

One day as I felt the scary feelings creep up my spine, I tried to talk to myself about it. I reasoned that I had experienced hundreds of these attacks and I had survived every one. I had not gone and jumped off a bridge. I never hurt anyone or myself. I never completely lost my marbles, or failed to return to myself, which was my worst fear. Whether it lasted twenty minutes or five hours, I always recovered. But I never stopped worrying about the next time. I tried to convince myself that I was obsessing about the fear, and the other symptoms. I can't say that lessened the frequency or the severity, but I did feel slightly better after that.

Before we moved to another area, I made sure the doctor could give three months of the ineffective medicine. Even though I felt it was not helping, I was afraid to run out of it. I tried to get another prescription in the new place, but the doctor said he never heard of that medicine.

Close to running out, I decided to seek another doctor or a therapist. I found a very kind and understanding woman who told me that I was having panic attacks. She said it was quite common. I had never talked to anyone before who remotely understood what was happening to me. She recommended that I request to borrow the book I mentioned above.

When I finally steeled myself enough to open the book and find out just what a hopeless case I was, I read the best page that was ever written for people like me who suffered in silence, fear and shame.

The book told me the same thing I had been trying to tell myself, just in other words. I paraphrase:

If you've never stood in the ocean waves, up to your waist, you'll have to trust me on this, and use your imagination. The ocean is always rushing to shore in waves, pushed by the wind. If you stand in the water up to the waist, the waves can rise up over your head. If you turn your back to the incoming wave, it will come in unseen and push you down on your face. If you stand facing the next wave and tighten yourself, hunched over with your fists up, it will throw you down on your ass. Still the waves keep coming.

Now try to stand relaxed, and get ready for the next wave. Remember that none of the other waves has killed you. I will tell you the secret. As the next wave comes, face it, Turn to face it and get ready for a great feeling. Here it comes; lift your feet. Lift them and float with the wave. Be part of the movement of the wave. Know that even though you are not a fish, you can survive the ocean and even enjoy being alive in it.

Reading the same idea, which was written by an expert, confirmed for me that not fighting the feelings and the anxiety, but allowing it to come as it will, will kill the bogeyman who was always lurking in my mind.

CONTINUED

LIFT YOUR FEET CONTINUED

Next time I felt that awful feelings were creeping up on me, I turned to face it. I said, “OK, Give me your best shot. You have never destroyed me, and you never will. I have survived everything you can throw at me, and I am still whole.”

I discovered how wonderfully strong I am. It also reminded me that when my FIL died I had done the same thing. Instead of avoiding it, I lifted my feet and let it come.

Shortly after that revelation, my life turned around. The attacks became less severe, less frequent and finally disappeared altogether. Writing about this feels very good to me now. I could not have done it then.

Even though antidepressants can help, sometimes people need an anti-anxiety medication to get through the worst parts. But eventually, gaining faith in our own strength, will overcome the hopelessness we feel.

I hope that this can help someone else who is suffering and can't find the way out. Hopefully, someone else can learn to trust his or her own strength enough to turn around, face the scary wave, and lift your feet.

© 2023 Barbara Weisser

YOU ARE MY PEACE

By LEILANI NANCE



© 2023 Leilani Nance

SECTION G — WASHINGTON POST

FEBRUARY 4, 2022

BY TOM BALLES

For seven months
the fading news print
gathered dust on my desk

American Epidemic
profiled 13 children
killed by gun violence

in the US one child is shot
every hour of everyday...

Janaria, 15

*...one of five students
at her neighborhood high school
who were fatally shot in the first half
of that year.*

Black kids more than four times
as likely to die in shootings
as white ones...

*Alyse, 6 and Ava, 9
killed by their father
in a murder/suicide*

*They had always been
each other's best friend...
while Ava's first word
had been "Dada,"
Alyse's was "Ava."*

*...but even in death
they were together*

*for their funeral
the girls were nestled
in the same white casket
their arms wrapped
around each other.*

White kids much more likely to
use guns to take their own lives...

Sterling, 15

*Aspired to become a nuclear physicist
shot himself in front of three other students*

*"Life is nothing but a mess,"
he'd written in a note.*

*"Every time I try,
I get less."*

one listens for
the rising wail of grief
for those we never met
whose gifts we never received

not knowing
if our child will be
the next one killed

or
the next killer

© 2023 Tom Balle

HOMEGOING

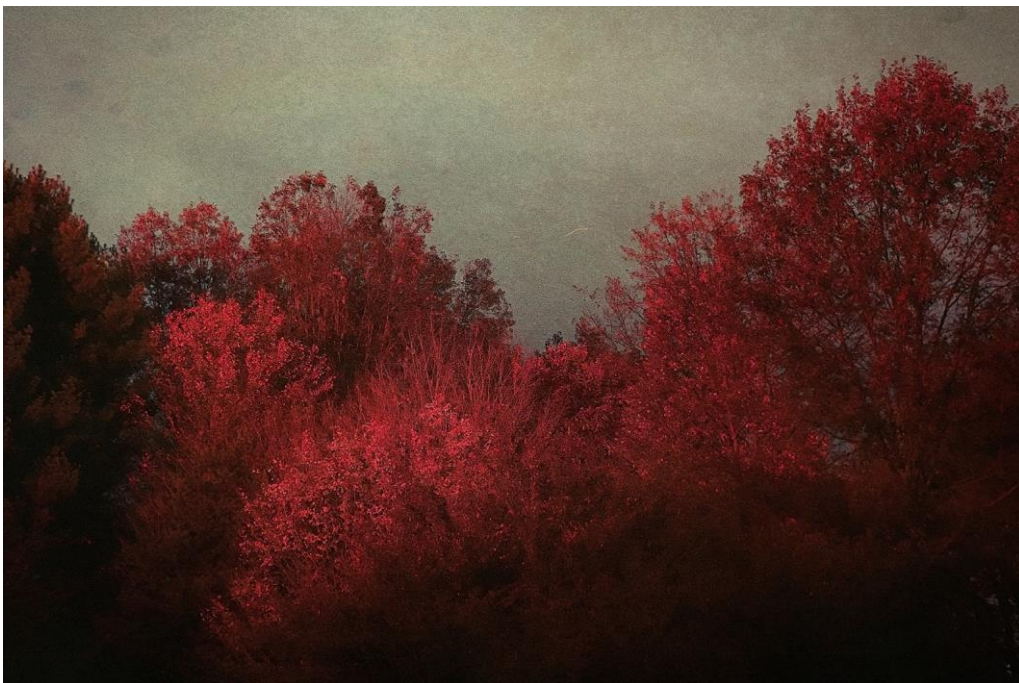
By SANDRA PRICE



© 2023 Sandra Price

SUN SETTING AFTER STORM

By KAREN CROUSE



© 2023 Karen Crouse

THE PRIEST

By JEANA LOVELACE

She lies in her sick bed
a crucifix on the wall above her
she's dying, quick call the Priest

He will apply
his special holy ointment
and she will be blessed
because he is the Priest

Mom, dad, we want to get married
well, call the Priest and talk to him

We want our baby baptized
and raised Catholic
time to call the Priest

As the organ music reaches a crescendo
he raises his arms to God
resplendent in his special vestments
beautiful garments of gold and purple
garments meant only for him
because, he is the Priest

You sit in the confessional
your face partially hidden
you reveal your deep dark secrets
to him in hopes for absolution
because he is the Priest

All your life you run to him,
trust him,
confide in him
because he is the Priest

Now he is the one who needs absolution
finally caught abusing innocent children

He left broken hearts and minds
confusion and betrayal
because he was the priest

© 2023 Jeana Lovelace

LOVE IS NOT PATIENT

By MIRIAM LAUFER

Love is not patient, nor must love be kind.
No, love is not some ever fixed mark.
Love is not respect, or integrity.
Love is not forgiveness, or permission.

Love is not a rose, or a cupcake, or
a bar of chocolate. Love's not a ring,
or a diamond, or a red convertible.
Love is not a dress, or a day, or a vow.

Love is not a set of requirements,
a magic formula, a recipe,
or points on a metaphorical graph.
No, love is not a sonnet.

Love is you and me on a starry night,
and all the choices we made to be there.

© 2023 Miriam Laufer

BIRDS ON A WIRE

By DIANE DUNN



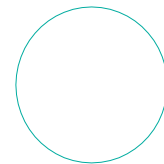
© 2023 Diane Dunn



© 2023 Diane Dunn

CADAQUES

By DIANE DUNN



PROMISE OF LIGHT

BY HELGA KIDDER

Late afternoon, when women rest
in the cooling breath of day,
mother sat on the wooden bench
next to the fence, the sun tilting
toward the horizon like a sleepy child.

Black-eyed susans shone gold-leafed
and the rich aroma of roses ribboned
through the pebbled path. The garden
stippled in waning light, some leaves
already turning copper.

I sat with mother then.
Birds snacked on pyracantha berries,
their tiny propellers fluttering
back and forth twittering prompts.

Mother's hands, rosy-red
from scrubbing linens and polishing floors
for neighbors, were folded in her lap.
But when I touched them,
they felt soft as if I stroked velvet.

We sat listening to the day's last words,
the birds' asides, evening air fresh
on her worn body, her smile
an eternal light flickering in the dark.

© 2023 Helga Kidder

NO SECRET

BY HELGA KIDDER

Summer hobbles into fall,
slowly sheds her golden cape, exposing
goosebumps on skin
waking early mornings.

Yesterday we cleared pockets of scrub,
pulled spiders' spit off roses and dahlias,
our eyes joyful for blooms.

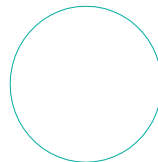
Why can't we protect our Earth
the way we tend our gardens?

Research documents global warming,
niches for polar bears, whales
slowly closing as time for protection
runs out.

Instead we explore Mars,
the red planet, where wheat, corn,
and apples can't grow naturally, where man,
without wearing masked suits,
can't survive.

Gravestones point to the sky like scoffers
warning of wasted hours,
the price we pay for idle hands.

© 2023 Helga Kidder



THIS IS NOT THE EASY POEM TO WRITE

BY CARYN MIRRIAM-GOLDBERG

Not like that night decades ago, riding
in her father's convertible up and down hills
in the Ozarks, topless, our breasts happy
in the sweet air that poured through us
thick and variegated, our eyes steady on
the yellow line just to the left, Queen Anne's lace
to the right, the moon hoisting itself up.

Not like the rare ease of waking too early
without exhaustion or rancor, paddling
to the kitchen for hot tea and the sound
of eggs cracking, his hands smiling
as they move from flour-muddied counter
to bowl, even the children up early, rifling through
the pantry for maple syrup or something sweeter.

This isn't easy as my father's last breath,
a slowing train that stops almost imperceptibly
except for the stillness not actually still, then
how the rabbi opened the window wide enough
for my father's soul to take its full size.

This is what happens after the ending, like when
I saw a friend's orange car years after he died,
or the 1 a.m. call from the adult child whose voice
catches on a "but...." tumbling in what I can't fix.

The easy poem to live isn't the sidewalk
dotted with rain that sucked itself back up
when we needed it most. Here I am instead
pacing the deck, unable to sleep, the flashlight
of my thoughts grappling toward some anchor
of assurance in the heat lightning all around.
This is the line I'll write anyway about rain
so hard it amplifies the redness of one bird.

© 2023 Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg

CONSENT

BY LORE NISSLEY

It isn't always a gun.
Sometimes the only weapon needed
to take you down
is you.

You have laid it all out for him,
guided his hands to the broken spots,
lifted your chin to bare your pretty throat.

The moment you know
what is going to happen

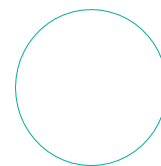
That you won't say no again

You see your whole world turned to glass.
You recognize the hands you used to love
turned to the creeping crush that holds it.

You lay yourself down to save it,
let your body take the tantrum.

By morning it never happened.
You fold the clothes and feed the baby,
The world is rock and river again.
You are only one tiny city of ruin.

© 2023 Lore Nissley



LADY IN RED No. 1

By GREG SCHULER



© 2023 Greg Schuler

WOODLAND REFLECTIONS

By DIANE DUNN



© 2023 Diane Dunn

WHAT IS THE TEMPERATURE TODAY

BY AUTUMN CENTOFONTI



© 2023 Autumn Centofonti

JAPANESE GARDEN: IN SEARCH OF HEALING

BY HELGA KIDDER

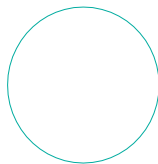
Why am I here
in the cold shadow
of the midnight moon?

Pebbles stroked in waves
with a rake, a few rocks
wedged in feng shui,
the garden speaks to me
like a calming sea
as itch eats my skin
in prickles and screams –
scratch me, lotion me,
cool the inferno,
the layering burn.

For decades I milked
my good genes.
Now dreams flurry
my sleep, flakes waking
in mugo pine branches
needling the sky
for answers.

Sipping *Sleepytime* tea
under the pagoda,
I learn the gravelly road
of pain outside in.

© 2023 Helga Kidder



WITHOUT ASYLUM

1981

BY KB BALLENTINE

We laughed into the dark kitchen
coming home one night still licking salt
and butter from our fingers, debating possibilities
of Indiana Jones finding the Ark,
just Mom and me, Dad still working out of town.
Heading upstairs to bed, Mom pushed me backwards,
hand over my chest like we were in a car
about to crash.

I didn't know what she was doing, why
she wouldn't speak,
only knew something was wrong
as she backed us out the side door
to the driveway, stumbled
to the neighbor's for his phone.

What I didn't see then was the front-jamb, splintered,
door leaning into the stairwell.
Radio, records, television all gone, just empty spaces,
strangers' words smeared across the walls,
the music and voice of our family silenced –
like my trust in coming home, believing it
safe.

How do you live with fear?
When violation contaminates your core,
infests your privacy, renders everything
untouchable,
when invaders have cracked the heart of your home,
exchanging a husk for your heart?

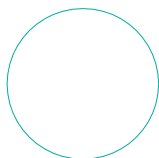
© 2023 KB Ballentine

HOME REMEDY

By CHRIS WOOD

My body hurled last night's dinner,
fever tipping one hundred two degrees,
and I am alone.
In my delirium,
I feel her presence, cool hand
on my forehead, her silhouette shadowing
the room, my room, in my grownup house
where I am trying to be brave.
I remember her
home remedies, hot Jell-O - cherry - my favorite,
and saltines around a steaming mug, The only thing
that stays down.
The next morning,
I wake to birds singing, the storm of last night over,
and a cup and saucer on my nightstand,
only crumbs remain.

© 2023 Chris Wood

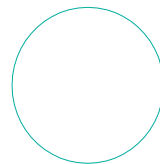


UNTITLED

By ALJAI HOFF



© 2023 Aljai Hoff



CHAOS GOES TO SCHOOL

BY AISSATOU SUNJATA

Chaos

Each week we count young bodies
teachers who trade chalkboards for bravery
keep score as gun lovers cringe
no one will take their Second Amendment away
so their sons learn early how to kill when bullied
hiding revenge inside
till they go to school one day
teach the unthinkable and leave lasting memories of terror
screams, blood and death
hoping no one he encounters mocked him
aim, shoot and taking out a whole class or more
many bullets penetrating delicate flesh
altered weapons ensure mass slaughter
only leveling the once-innocent brick building of learning
now, saturated with blood recollections
even the walls continue to cry
rebuilding on what becomes hallowed ground
it will never cease bitter anniversaries each year
the day chaos heard the school bell
raised its weapon in madness
and with an automatic weapon answered questions
no teacher or student ever needed to know.

© 2023 Aissatou Sunjata

FLORA AND FAUNA

By ANNA KLINE AND JUDAS LACKEY



© 2023 Anna Kline and Judas Lackey

REVOLUTIONARIES

FOR S. CHOI

BY WILLIAM LOWE

Do revolutionaries ever laugh unrestrained,
let their guards down with mirth in their eyes,
lie naked with a lover and speak sugared words,
eat sweets and let the taste linger on their tongues,
feel homesick and long for their mothers,
breathe in and hold the scent of a rose,
bathe in the sea and feel cleansed by the tide,

lie in a field and stare at the stars,
make a wish on a star and slip Marx for a time,
think random thoughts when dialectics dissolve,
drink coffee at dawn and gaze out the window,
call up a sister and speak of the time....
sit in a worn chair and feel nothing but home,
embrace contradictions and allow for exceptions,

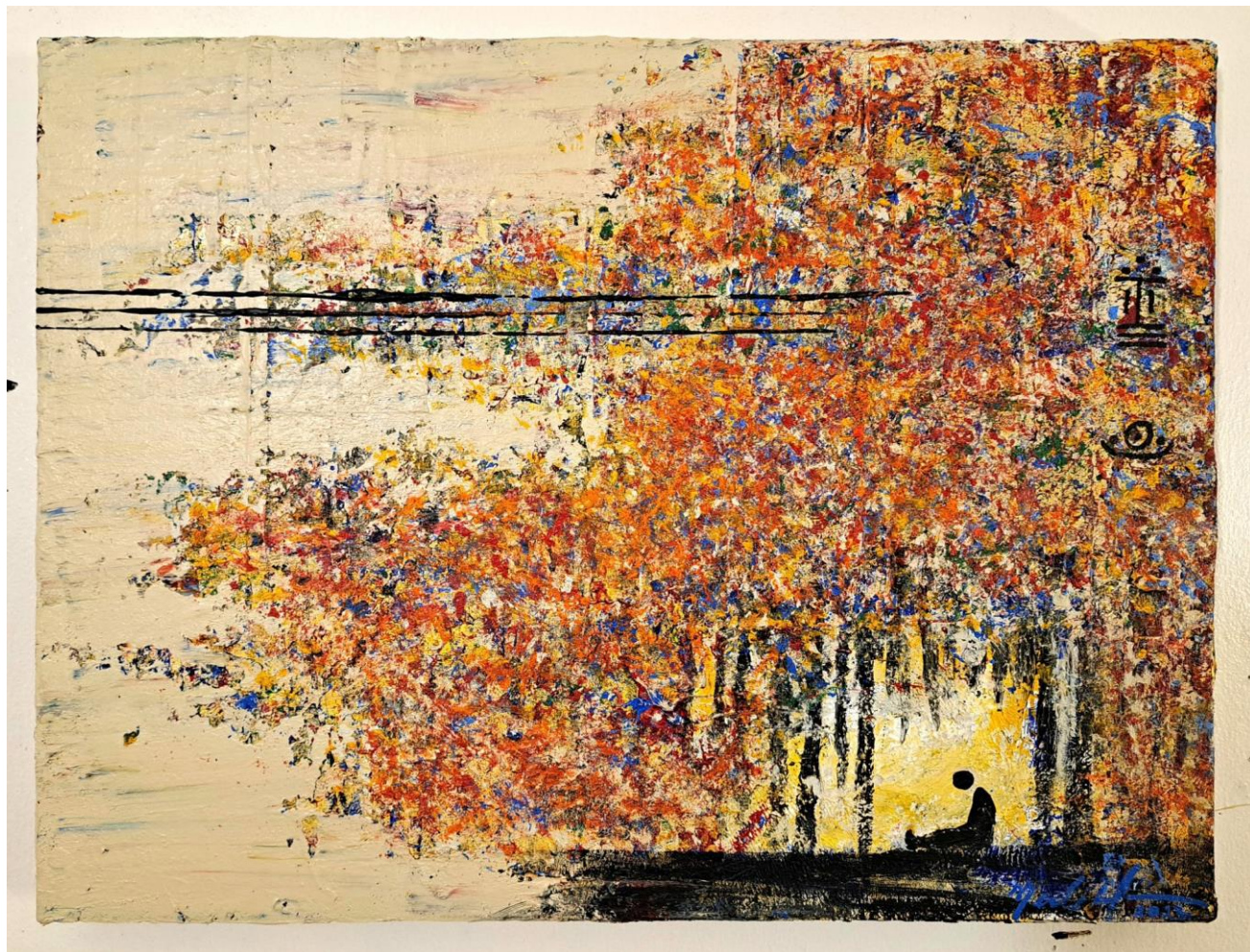
feel joy when love blooms and grief when it dies,
travel far and embrace wide unknowns,
deceive and dissemble, ponder and doubt,
beget children and grant space to grow,
aspire and strive and fall short and fail,
forgive faults in themselves and their friends,
live in the flesh and outside a theory?

Do they laugh unrestrained? Do they cry?

© 2023 William Lowe

THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF SELF-ESTEEM

BY MERLE A. DAVISON



© 2023 Merle A. Davison

RECOVERING PROCESS

BY CAROL COBER

I lock all the doors and windows
and still do not feel safe.
I know what might happen again,
walking outside at night.
The stories of friends and survivors
haunt me for years.
Those who practice violence- steal trust.
Dark harm invades the family circle.
How odd that we once pretended it would be different for us,
that our family would be spared, our lives protected.
I am not alone, in my own fears and losses,
I am standing with so many others hurt and harmed.
Lives changed-in an instant.
Our hope battered we are then awakened
to the fragility of peace,
the precariousness of safety.
How does the courage arrive to embrace healing?
How long I wonder will this pain torment me?
Some days support is not enough, to bring ease to my body.
Eventually I become a non-victim, as fear unravels, I am empowered.
Still, I am changed by my losses, never the same again.
The body and heart shifts in a million ways once we know the truth.
Sometimes we can heal find ease and trust again.
When I can feel joy again and be held tenderly,
I find am becoming my authentic, hopeful self.

© 2023 Carol Cober

TEMPTATION

BY HELEN CLARK

Social media has made us all instant reporters, true,
but it's also made us into researchers,
gathering data on our old friends
like slot machine players sitting in rooms with no clocks
and stale cigarette smoke air
on a beautiful day,
we learn too much about each other
without the boundaries good friendships need in order to breathe.
Beware, beware how you use this tool
that was meant to connect us (allegedly)
beware, beware the loneliness of having a thousand Facebook friends
and of judging your friends too harshly for their pedestrian tastes
or moral lapses (AKA their humanity),
and envying their successes and perfect lives,
beware, beware of CEOs who rely on these
temptations of our human hearts
to make their fortunes.

© 2023 Helen Clark



© 2023 MC Carey

BIG SMALL WHIE BLACK

By GARY CLARK



© 2023 Gary Clark

BIG SMALL WHIE BLACK

By GARY CLARK



© 2023 Gary Clark

ROSEMARY OF CANAAN

By ARI KING

Tending to Thyme for hope,
Wishing for fears' repose
This daily caring, my comfort
Watering till they've grown cold.

Too late I realize the secret to their vigor
is sun and neglect.

To Rosemary I say, thank you for your wisdom
you've shown me this:
Through drought and famine
You grow, in a bed of dust
You push forth, under fiery rays
You stand, plump and green
pungent and alive.

You give me faith
that growing through my desert
is also the way for my spirit
to thrive.

© 2023 Ari King

ARTISTS' BIOS

Christine Allen

Christine wrote *The Arc and the Sediment*, which won a best-novel and best book-length work publication prize from the Utah Arts Council, who also awarded her short-fiction collection *There's Death in the Balloon* and poetry collection, *Multiple Choice Questions*. She has a doctorate from the University of Utah, where she finished a hybrid titled *Spolia*.

Dallas Atlas

Dallas Atlas (they/he) is a Dominican-American poet currently pursuing their MFA through the Rainier Writing Workshop. You can find him online at dallasatlas.com or on Instagram @madremoca.

KB Ballentine

KB Ballentine's seventh collection, *Edge of the Echo*, launched in 2021 with Iris Press. Her earlier books can be found with Blue Light Press, Middle Creek Publishing, and Celtic Cat Publishing. Published in North Dakota Quarterly, Atlanta Review and Haight-Ashbury Literary Journal, and others, her work also appears in anthologies including *I Heard a Cardinal Sing* (2022), *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

Tom 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*, *Dancing with the Ten Thousand Things*, and a poetry chapbook, *Under the Hot Lights of the Third Degree*.

Sheela Becton

Sheela Becton is a visual Artist based in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her brushwork often tells the story of her memories from life and travels in India, showcasing the richness and beauty of Indian Culture. Her creativity is also inspired by the beauty of nature and a desire to spread positivity. Sheela's artwork has been shown in Exhibitions in Maryland and include 'Colors of India' at Slayton House, Columbia, Maryland, in 2022, and 'Colors of Nature' at Brookside Gardens. Sheela's painting, 'Soulmates,' was juried into the Love themed Exhibit at 'Girls Who Paint' Gallery in Kensington, Maryland. You can view Sheela's Art Collections at <https://www.sheelacreates.com/> and follow her in Instagram @sheelabectoncreates.

MC Carey

MC Carey (they/them) is a self-taught linoleum block printmaker currently living and creating in Baltimore, MD. MC has been a printmaker for over five years and has run a printmaking studio, Femme Prints, for four of those years. Much of their artworld centers on themes of whimsy, transformation and abundance, LGBTQ+ and body liberation, and afro futurism. MC has attended artist residencies and their work has been showcased in international traveling exhibits and local art galleries.

Autumn Centofonti

The emphasis on strength obtained from experiencing pain can be seen throughout Autumn's artwork. She currently works as a legal advocate for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and is finishing up a master's degree in psychology, concentrating on trauma and crisis. She uses art to tell her and others' stories and to express her deepest emotions.

ARTISTS' BIOS

Gary Clark

Gary Clark is a local photographer and semi-retired mental health counselor. While he likes capturing the beauty of flowers and landscapes, he loves street and event photography the most. Gary specializes in impromptu portraits of dogs (and their humans), street musicians, and shooting a variety of events with a journalistic perspective.

Helen Clark

Helen Clark is an author, editor, and adjunct English and Journalism professor at Howard Community College. She is also an avid reader, hiker, and nature nerd. Helen enjoys hosting music nights, bead jewelry-making workshops, and creative writing workshops that allow people to create for the joy of it.

Mike Clark

Mike Clark is publisher emeritus and a board member for the Little Patuxent Review, a journal of literature and the arts now in its eleventh year of publishing. Clark previously was a reporter for the Baltimore Sun. He also served three years as editor of a regional publication of the American Friends Service Committee. In 2018, he received the Howie award as a supporter of arts in Howard County. He was awarded the Audrey Robbins award from the Association of Community Services in Howard County for his work that set up a backpack & school supply project for children who lacked the necessary supplies. At that time, he was coordinator of Christ Church Link. He has three adult children and seven grandchildren. His wife, Lois, is a retired adjunct professor at Howard Community College, having taught special education and reading students for ten years.

Carol Cober

Carol is an intuitive process painter and collage artist who works in watercolor, oil, acrylic and photographs. Carol creates art as a way to nourish the capacity to listen within so consider creating spiritual practice as a meditation. This involves seeing tenderly, using non-judgmental eyes to see deeply. Their subject captures abstract moments of awareness and the spiritual expression of deep joy after loss in people. Carol feels we all have the potential to express insights and spiritual messages in our creative expression: art, writing, dance, singing and music making.

Karen Crouse

Karen Crouse is a fine art photographer who sees creating photographs as therapy. She finds the process of taking and editing photographs as a type of meditation and enjoys observing and recording the world around her.

Merle Davison

Merle Davison is a self-taught artist creating figurative sculptures and abstract paintings. Her artistic development has been much like her recovery from childhood trauma and alcoholism - gradual strengthening of clarity and direction. Her artwork's focus is human emotion; from agony to sublime contentment. If she's honest, the moments of profound pain are what make sculpting or painting necessary...if, for no other reason, than to access the power these moments have and purposefully re-direct it.

ARTISTS' BIOS

Diane B. Dunn

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 assembling 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

Storyteller Lyn Ford is grateful for her roots in spoken-word art and the creative narrative passed down in her Affrilachian family. Lyn is an award-winning writer, Ohio teaching artist, certified laughter yoga teacher, international keynote speaker and workshop presenter, and a member of the National Association of Black Storytellers' Circle of Elders.

Jennifer A. Garcia

Jennifer A. Garcia is a poet who currently publishes her poetry on a monthly basis in the Fulton Living Magazine. Jennifer earned a master's degree and bachelor's degree in English from Florida International University (<http://instagram.com/JenniferGarciaPoet>). Jennifer is a Certified Energy Healer, Motivational Speaker, and Founder of Spiritual Spectra. Spiritual Spectra is a spiritual and holistic healing practice offering an array of services that increase wellness through the mind-body-spirit connection (<http://SpiritualSpectra.com>).

Judith Goedeke

The healing power of words compels Judith Goedeke to write. She strives to clarify, redirect, own up to, and celebrate life — and do damage control. Her poems appear in anthologies, literary journals, and River of Silver Sky. She is proud to serve as Poet Laureate of HopeWorks of Howard County. Judith collaborates with mental health professionals to use writing in therapeutic settings. She facilitates workshops that foster loving and courageous self-awareness, intentional living, and compassion.

Millie Grove

Millie Grove has loved literature since a young age and began writing poetry when she was 10. She currently lives in Ellicott City with her fiancé and two cats.

Jalisa Hardy

Minister Jalisa Hardy is a survivor, single mom of three young children, licensed minister, self-published author, global speaker, and Board-Certified Holistic Health Practitioner, residing in Glen Burnie, MD. She is known as the "Holistic Health Plug," providing resources, tools and safe spaces for single moms going through divorce or other major transitions. Jalisa was featured in Women of The City and VoyageBaltimore magazine.

Aljaii Hoff

Aljaii Hoff is a Maryland-based artist inspired by anime and cartoons. In 2020, she attended Montgomery College to obtain her Associate of Fine Arts degree, and became a member of the Student Art League. In addition to drawing and painting, Aljaii has experience in graphic design through various internships.

ARTISTS' BIOS

Arlita Joy Holland

Arlita Joy Holland is a survivor who's been blessed with the gift of poetry. She writes to inspire those who struggle to rise 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. The RiseUp! Poetry Project featured Arlita's work in their three-volume anthology. Her poems have been published in two volumes of *Dragonfly*. In 2021 and 2022, she was the Highlighted Poet at *Dragonfly The Poetry Reading and Gallery Walk*.

Hilda Flike Jacobson

Hilda is a storyteller and multidisciplinary artist that strives to capture hard truths and love in its many forms through art. They work in several mediums, mainly gravitating toward drawing, painting, printing, and rug making, with the occasional poem being formed when visuals fail to capture a feeling. Their work revolves around the themes of gender and relationships, focusing on identity as it relates to the self and connections with those around you.

Renee Kalu

Renee Kalu is a marketing and communications professional with a passion for creating and re-creating for work and pleasure. She considers herself a hobby-artist and enjoys acrylic painting and incorporating mixed media (Nigerian fabrics and jewelry) in her pieces. Some of her artwork was first published in the 2021 edition of *Dragonfly Arts Magazine*. Renee lives in Frederick, MD, with her husband.

Helga Kidder

Helga Kidder lives in the Tennessee hills with her husband. When the muse rests, she plays tennis or peruses recipes for cakes. Her poems have been published in *Conestoga Zen*, *Poetry South*, *American Diversity Report* and in the anthology, *Carrying the Branch: Poets in Search of Peace*. She has five collections of poetry, *Wild Plums*, *Luckier than the Stars*, *Blackberry Winter*, *Loving the Dead*, which won the Blue Light Press Book Award 2020, and *Learning Curve*, poems about immigration and assimilation.

Ari King

Ari King is a poet and prose writer based in Maryland. She is deeply inspired by the wisdom nature has to offer and often uses the natural world as a lens through which to examine uncomfortable truths. Ari enjoys spending time observing the flow of the earth and considering how the wildness 'out there' reflects the wildness within us all.

Anna Kline and Judas Lackey

Anna (they/them) and Judas (he/him) are queer trans art students who grew up exploring their genders and sexuality through art. They both describe their genders through non-traditional means, with Anna using plant-based imagery and Judas using themes related to animals and beasts. The name "Flora and Fauna" describes the differences in their identities and similarities in experience. They continue to explore similar themes in their studies and personal artwork.

Miriam Laufer

Miriam Laufer works as a technical writer and has taught college writing at Howard Community College.

ARTISTS' BIOS

Jeana Lovelace

Jeana is a trauma survivor. She has used writing to express emotions. She has published poems in "One Voice," she also, published a book on Amazon, *Walking Through Trauma*, and has published in *Dragonfly Arts Magazine*. She is a retired nurse who volunteers for a hospice and is involved in various workshops in Hope-Works.

William Lowe

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*, *Dragonfly*, and *Open Minds Quarterly*.

Debora McCallum

Debora McCallum was born in Washington, DC, and has lived in Virginia and Maryland. She has traveled the world and is a retired staff photographer for NASA. Interested in the arts all her life, she is inspired by adventure, nature, and the wonders of the world - appreciating that we are all one. She loves trees, family, travel, history, and antiques. A gypsy at heart.

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg, Ph.D., the 2009-13 Kansas Poet Laureate, is the author of 24 books, including *How Time Moves: New & Selected Poems*; *Miriam's Well*, a novel; and *The Sky Begins At Your Feet: A Memoir on Cancer, Community, and Coming Home to the Body*. Founder of Transformative Language Arts, she offers writing workshops, coaching, and collaborative projects at YourRightLivelihood.com, with Kathryn Lorenzen, Bravevoice.com with Kelley Hunt, and TheArtofFacilitation.net with Joy Roulier Sawyer. Connect with Caryn at CarynMirriamGoldberg.com.

Leilani Nance

Leilani is an Army veteran and local photographer who seeks to capture beauty in the small things. She hopes her work brings a positive experience to all who view it.

Marian O. Nance

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

Lore Nissley

Lore Nissley is a poet and essayist living and working in Maryland. Her relationship with words drove her to earn a degree in English and Creative Writing at UMBC and to work in journalism. She later moved into nonprofit management and early childhood education, working to bring the love of words and literacy resources to our youngest learners. Lore is currently enjoying her newly empty nest and rediscovering the joy of writing her personal story. Her poetry was most recently published in *45 Magazine: Women's Literary Journal*.

ARTISTS' BIOS

Michelle Petties

Michelle Petties is an author and speaker. Her memoir, *Leaving Large – The Stories of a Food Addict*, a category winner in The 2022 Memoir Prize for Books, features the award-winning essay, *The Cake is in the Mail*. Her memoir illustrates how events, experiences, and memories inform our beliefs, attitudes, and habits around food, eating, hunger, and everything else in life. Michelle teaches others how to find their food and personal truths during healing-through-writing-and-storytelling workshops.

Sandra Price

Sandra Price is a mother of three, grandmother, sister, friend, community volunteer, gardener, activist, book lover, anti-racist, survivor, and spiritual being who loves being outdoors in nature. She enjoys communicating her thoughts and experiences via the arts. Born in Washington, DC, in the 60s, growing up as a BIPOC/ biracial woman wasn't always easy but was certainly interesting. She loves music, poetry, live theatre, dance, travel, and family.

Greg Schuler

Greg is a soon-to-be-retired scientist who is rekindling his creative side. He enjoys drawing, painting, photography, and videography, and he is excited to see what new and exciting projects he can work on in his retirement.

Korellia Schneider

Korellia Schneider is a queer poet originally from Minneapolis, MN. She has dabbled in poetry since she was a teenager but has more recently been growing the courage to share her work. In her private time, she enjoys reading, traveling, and volunteering at a local cat shelter. She lives in Winnipeg, MB, Canada.

Kelli Smith

Kelli Smith is a Howard County native. Her creative process is her first language and the voice she uses to express her healing. Her artwork exists in multiple mediums, and she hopes that it will resonate with others and allow others to find their own creative process too.

Aissatou Sunjata

Aissatou is a retired Public/School Librarian K-12. She is also a Disabled American Army Veteran and Military Widow. A survivor of domestic abuse. She has been a poet most of her life. Now, embarking on her 63rd year of living, she enjoys listening to birds chirping, driving on rural roads in the south, and entertaining full time her Muse; assuring her with fountain pens filled and cream-unlined journal, she is only a metaphor away.

Barbara Weisser

Barbara Weisser is a retired librarian and educator who worked in adult education for many years, both volunteer and paid in different settings. She writes prose and poetry mostly about good and bad times she experienced. She says writing is very good for her spirit. It is a wonderful way to get things off her chest. And some of her humorous pieces just make her smile.

ARTISTS' BIOS

Frances Wertimer

Frances Wertimer is a Baltimore-based multimedia artist originally from New York City, with roots in New Orleans as well. Her work is inspired by psychology, myth, spirituality, and the pursuit of justice.

M.E. Williams

M.E. is an educator, researcher, crafter, yogi, hiker, plant mom, advocate, and survivor. She was first published in *Dragonfly* in 2020, and her work seeks to support and empower other survivors as they navigate the many seasons of healing.

Chris Wood

Chris Wood is an analyst by day, spends most evenings cleaning up dog hair from the abundance of love she receives from her fur babies, and in between, she writes to balance her right brain from her left. She has a bachelor's degree in accounting and serves as treasurer for the Chattanooga Writers' Guild. Her work has appeared in several journals and publications, including *Poetry Quarterly* and the *American Diversity Report*. Learn more at chriswoodwriter.com

Ming Xu

Ming Xu, licensed acupuncturist, and founder of the Monterey Institute of Natural Medicine, moved to Maryland and started practicing Traditional Chinese Medicine in Columbia. Ming is also an artist; she does oil/acrylic paintings. Her artwork, "The Beauty," won the 2nd place among 87 other paintings at the 2009 Art Competition in Seaside City Hall in Monterey, California. She lives in Ellicott City, Maryland with her family, which includes her two sons.



SUBMIT YOUR ART

Dragonfly

arts & transformative justice magazine

Poetry
Photography
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Prose

submission season
September 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024


WORKS

Please read our submission guidelines before submitting your work. Visit: <https://hopeworksofhc.org/dragonfly/>



Submit your work to: dragonfly@HopeWorksOfHC.org

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



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 analysis and 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

CRISIS 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, HEALING & 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: Survivors Peer-Led Support & Leadership Programs
- The Survivors' Health Project addressing the long-term health consequences of trauma
- Arts-Based Programs to enhance wellness, build community and create change
- Self-care & Social Justice workshops for the 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