

WCTC *Voices*

VOICES

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"I think," said Christopher Robin, "that we should eat all our provisions now, so that we shan't have so much to carry." - A.A. Milne

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Shevon Rowell

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Art - *Pickled* - Shevon Rowell - Page #53 Poetry - *Judging Giant Hats* - Carol Canfield - Page #29
Prose - *Train Station* - Jennifer Parris - Page #30

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Life

Daramola Abimbola

Life is like a season That changes with time
And waits for no one Life, who is as old as
thee? Who is as knowledgeable as thee? Life,
bright today, dull tomorrow We learn from
thee, we grow and die in thee Full of
emotions, full of happiness Who can really
understand you? He who has seen a smooth
life Let him tell me you are full of ups and
downs At times it is difficult to know Exactly
what you are about Oh! Life are you there?
Life that is full of mysteries and wonders
Show me your face - I want to see you Maybe
I can ask you Who really you are.



Art Head
Penny Jiles
Photography

The Least of the Earth
John Ridley

Floating soft, on foaming crest, Soft, light bodies
take their rest. Night appears, the water dark, On
annals of time, simple creatures, make no mark.

Numberless and spread throughout the world,
Free from flight, their wings are furled. But do
they sleep, or merely rest, Upon their watery
and transient nest?

As voracious creatures lurk, within the deep, Both
scaled and skinned, but do they sleep? While
feathered kin float above, invisibly tethered, For
birds of a feather, flock together.

Should one of their number become a meal,
Do the others that are left, sorrow feel? For
no funeral dirge, or bells do peal. Nor in
sacred places, mourners kneel.

But even to the least of these we know,
Heed is paid to those here below. For
even the sparrow, his fall is noted, As
in the Holy Book 'tis truly quoted.

Life

Dameian Polk

Prison walls, echoing sounds
Fear sets in from the underground
Dark rooms, nowhere to turn
Inner demons chanting burn
I'm lost inside a demented past
White lies, little sins became my last
One way in no way out
My mind playing tricks
Unrealistic thoughts
Telling me stories of what real life's about
I'm shutting down
The walls are caving in
I'm praying to God to punish my sins
You see, I'm lost without a fighting chance
Because my reality is like an artist free-lance
I'm a complex person
I hold my true feeling within
Sometimes spilling over when I'm filled to the brim
No corners, no cracks to obtain these strife
My pain is real deep
It cuts like a precision knife
My thoughts are not truths
A figment of my imagination
I'm bound within myself
From alter ago complications
One way in, no way out
This is a glance into my world and what I'm about

A Journey for the Not So Faint of Heart
Alicia Milner

Everyone has the means to live in the moment. There are only a few people in this world who have the gift to capture that moment and share it with others. Annie Dillard's descriptive essay, "Living Like Weasels," takes the reader on a journey from a physical place to an abstract destination where instinct takes precedence over choice. An unexpected voyage into the recesses of a weasel's being shows Dillard a place where living in the moment is the only living.

This journey begins in a very real place. Dillard's raw description portrays a pond popular among the locals, humans and creatures alike: "Under every bush is a muskrat hole or a beer can" (165). The author's contrast between man and nature signifies a delicate balance that must be preserved. This balance gives way to pure and natural experiences enabling man the opportunity of those poignant moments found only in nature. Dillard uses her sojourn as an escape from the everyday. She writes, "I come to Hollins Pond not so much to learn how to live as, frankly, to forget about it" (166). It is in this rather meditative state that she first encounters a weasel. Her detailed description leads the reader to believe she is within feet, if not inches, of the animal. Instead of retreating from this varmint typically known for its aggressive behavior, she stays her ground, living in the moment. For an instant, Dillard and the weasel connect. She sees through its eyes with an unanticipated clarity: "He had two black eyes I did not see, any more than you see a window" (165). With this connection the journey continues away from the pond and into the unknown, or the forgotten.

Dillard's states her intention for visiting the pond as a way "to learn, or remember, how to live" (166). Since

this passage may be a reference to an unpleasant situation or simply a desire to improve on the art of living, Dillard gives the reader the ability to relate to and apply the intention to any aspect of living. Through the eyes of the weasel, Dillard sees the purest form of living, “the purity of living in the physical senses[...]” (166). By analyzing Dillard’s thoughts while in the company of the weasel, the reader can better understand her idea of living in the physical senses. What are Dillard’s thoughts? What is going through her brain? She answers these questions with a rhetorical one: “Can I help it if it was blank?” (166). The blank mind, being a prerequisite for instinct to surface, has become the portal for this journey.

Journeys take time, time to plan, time to venture, and time to return. However, Dillard’s description of an instinctive journey does not take into consideration the restraints of time. Her chance meeting with the weasel lasts only seconds; however, it makes an impact with timeless boundaries. Dillard has found a way to describe instinct so that all sense of occasion is alleviated. She conveys this feeling by stating, “Time and events are merely poured, unremarked, and ingested directly[...]” (166). Dillard’s desire to live “open to time and death painlessly” (166) provides an avenue to experience moments where actions of the past or aspirations of influence.

Although the complex human mind feeds and grows on moments past, present, and future, Dillard’s essay suggests to the reader that the soul feeds on the purest of moments. These are the moments not bound by time or choice. Some of these moments happen by chance. Others, however, must be pursued: “The thing is to stalk your calling...to locate the most tender and live spot and plug into that pulse” (166). Dillard implores the reader “to grasp your one necessity and not let it go” (167). Surrendering in this way can lead to an embarkment of

a new journey or shed new light on old ways. Whether new, or revisited, everyone should try at least once if not daily to live like the weasel, “yielding... to the perfect freedom of single necessity”(166).

Work Cited

Dillard, Annie. “Living Like Weasels”. Patters for College Writing. Ed. Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell. 9th ed. Boston” Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2004. 165-167.

She Let Him Go
Robert Clemente

In the secret darkness she cries out his name. The breakfast plate is lean and enough for only one. She thinks of all the words not said and the arms that reach inside for dreams that are but vapor. No one else will see her hiding tear-stained pictures.

At the end of the day the candle bums down to nothing. She sees his face and finds a way to keep her mind, faith never broken but days with him never again. What happened to the promise of the touch to be a way to keep the days-she wants to know.

For the tears not shed she let him fly-why? She closes her eyes and smells him walking through the room-vanished. Shadowed by lighter days she seeks to know her heart as footsteps are silent, rooms are empty, and the doors closed.

Millennium Military

Tara Jones

The people defending your country are also defending
themselves, Against each other, and the terrorism that
plagues the world.

Getting paid little to nothing To be torn away from
their families Only to cater to the governments every
want and need.

To have to put yours and other families before their own,
While having ever right taken away that our ancestors
fought long and hard for.

Is the military all its cracked up to be?
Or the root of crime in the streets.

I like to call it the hood of high hopes, The hope to
make it another day, The hope to turn your back
without something being taken away The hope to
have an alcohol free, drug free military.

Is the military all its cracked up to be?
Or even worst than the streets.

Over worked, underpaid, and under privileged.
The key to the crimes? The governments'
payments of nickels and dimes Or the binding
contract that lies?



Direct Fire
John Rose
Photography

Autumn
Sandra Ingram

The wind twirls snatching up multiples
of partners dressed in orange, red and
brown hues dancing across the yards
and drives,

The air cooler with a hint of crispness tickling
your face and arms with goose bumps now
begins shorter days and longer shadows
Harvest time.

Jessica Lynn Harper

This is a day many of us thought wouldn't come in our generation A day that would once again awaken the tragedies of war As our Twin Towers fell we stood in awe as a nation As we take a moment to swallow this information, we can't help but to wonder will there be more? Will those we love be safe and sound? Will our nation firmly stand it's ground? As we look at the rubble that is surreal We wonder how this tragic even could be so real We show our respect and fly our patriotism We deeply appreciate the police and firefighter, doctors and nurses, and citizens for their heroism We can't even begin to imagine the pain, the fear and anger that those families feel. We can only hope that we can offer our hearts and prayer to help them heal. We are appalled by the fact that any human could be responsible for such a sin. Yet this is terrifying deep within. When War and people killed is all we hear We are told we have to resist chaos and fear We are all human and all have frights Now we have nightmares of war that cloud our nights. We as teenagers have a lack of sleep For our fear and questions lie too deep/ WE ARE SCARED!

I Will Say The Pledge Today!
Rebecca Terry

911, here again the
e-mails circulate, the
rally's begin.

People once again gathering around,
supporting New Yorkers, and other
towns.

I received an e-mail to support our land,
wear red, white and blue, say the
pledge – take a stand!

I spread the word at work, home, and school,
but some just laughed, sneered, thought I the
fool.

How sad to hear a co-worker say, "I'm so over that!
That bombing that day."

"I'm so over that"? I repeated in my head, How
could that be? How could anyone feel that?

Oh America! America! We must never forget,
How much was lost, How history was set.

Then I remembered, from many years ago,
a friend that never said the pledge, she
said "No."

Men died for that flag! I thought to myself,
It represents freedom, history, What else?

So today I will pledge, I will not forget,
I will remember those lost in the crime,
the rest.

I love our country, our history, our land,
I will support it, pledge to it, die for it, if
I can.

We must wear the colors,
we must say the pledge,
we must never forget 911
or the dead.

That day was an awakening a pulling together,
Americans now can conquer whatever!

We now are awake!
After dormant for years,
let's say the pledge, let's
cry our tears!

I stand proud with my hand over my heart,
Will you join my now? and we will never
fall apart!

The Paradox of Zero
Jenny Rabaduex

On September 11, 2001, the United States felt the impact of terrorism. Everyone remembers where they were or what they were doing when they received the news that the World Trade Center had been attacked. As the months following this tragic event went by, people from all over the world gathered at the site to pay their respects. In her essay "Ground Zero," Suzanne Berne describes her visit to the site of so much destruction and how her perspective changes to a more hopeful one as she views it from different angles.

As Berne shows through the rhetorical method of description what this site means to her, the reader is able to see it through her eyes. Of course, it will mean different things to different people, but she puts the sights, sounds, and feelings into perspective. Though there is continual activity, everything seems to be done in reverence for those who lost their lives and for the heroes of the day.

Berne begins her essay by stating that on a cold, damp day in March she decides to visit Manhattan's financial district, "a place I'd never been" (158). Maybe she is drawn to the site by a sense of duty or curiosity, but, either way, she sets out to pay her respects to what used to be the World Trade Center. As she arrives at the site, she is surprised to see that so many different nationalities are gathered. People from all over the world have come to support America, even if just in prayers, through this difficult time. Everyone on the corner cranes "to see across the street, where there was nothing to see" (158). But after looking for some time, Berne writes that "'nothing' becomes something much more potent, which is absence" (158). The people stand looking at something that is really nothing to the human eye, yet this sight depicts a great absence.

Berne declares, “to the out-of-towner, ground zero looks at first simply like a construction site” (159). There is hope in construction sites; a sense of curiosity and expectation is prevalent among these sites. However, as she looks closer, Berne realizes this vision is really emptiness. As she takes everything in, she sees other buildings with boarded windows, firefighters standing around, and ambulances waiting at the top of the pit. And then, “Suddenly there is the enormous cross made of two rustic girders” (159). Finally, she observes St. Paul’s Chapel – a place that has become a memorial. Hanging from a fence are flowers and poems, pictures and teddy bears, and many, many flags.

Berne states that she heard an old man say, “I watched those towers being built. I saw this place when they weren’t there” (159). Now, the man stands looking at the same place, and the Towers are not there. This is the paradox of the whole situation. Though there is nothing of significance to see, everything that is seen is of significance. Everyone turns to their family and friends saying, “it’s unbelievable,” yet they turn back to the site unsatisfied with that remark. Berne writes, “They wanted to say something more expressive, more meaningful. But it is unbelievable, to stare at so much devastation, and know it for devastation, and yet recognize that it does not look like the devastation one has imagined” (159).

Berne plans to stand on the platform near St. Paul’s to get a better view and understanding of the site. So she proceeds to find the cheerfully painted kiosk to get a ticket. Though it is only noon, the next available viewing is at 4 p.m. While she waits for her time to visit, she finds a nearby deli that advertises “a view of the World Trade Center from its second floor dining area” (160). While eating her lunch and looking down into the pit, she is entranced by what she sees. Suddenly, she notices the firefighter’s honor guard gathering along the ramp. Berne

realizes “that someone’s remains were being carried up the ramp toward the open door of an ambulance” (160). She is moved to a state of reverence as people around her stand. “For a moment, everything paused. Then the day flowed back into itself” (160).

In writing this essay, Berne shows that life does go on and the emptiness will fill up again. She states, “And by the act of our visiting [...] that space fills up again” (160-161). As people visit the sight to pay their respects, satisfy their curiosity, or show their patriotism, the site is again populated. The people of this country have to move beyond the hatred of those who attacked and band together to pursue the common goal of rebuilding. Berne realizes that even though this place known as “ground zero” represents so much emptiness and despair, it also reflects strength and hope for a better tomorrow.

Work Cited Berne, Suzanne. “Ground Zero.” Patterns for College Writing. Ed. Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell. 9th ed. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin’s, 2004. 158-161.

Suited for Danger

Alison Payne

the fear of love covers your
skin like the poison of brightly
colored frogs who live deep in
tropical rain forests your false
words hit me in the eye like the
toxic stream some savage
lizards spit you radiate deceit
in harmful rads that could
leave me wounded for life – so
let me know, for God’s sake if
you plan to run into me next
time I go to town so I can wear
my Hazmat suit and for once
be shielded from your lethal
presence

A Marine's Final Inspection
Joel Robinson

The Marine stood and faced his **God**, which must always come to pass. His boots were shining bright as his brass.

God said, "*Step forward, now Marine, how shall I deal with you? Have you always turned the other cheek? To my church have you been true?*"

The Marine sighed, squared his shoulders, and answered his **God**. "No **Lord** I have not, because those of us who carry guns can't always be saints. At times my talk was tough, sometimes violence was my only hope, because this world so awfully rough. Though at times I trembled with fear, other times I brought that fear! Please **God** forgive me for I have wept my sinful tears." "**God**", the Marine said, "as for your church; I worked most of your Sundays, when the bills got too steep. I never took a penny that wasn't mine or earned, and never passed a cry for help. **Lord**, I know I don't deserve a place among the people here. They never wanted me around, except to calm their fears. If you do have a place for me here, it need not be so grand. I never expected or had too much, but if you don't then I will understand."

There was a silence around the Kingdom where the saints had often trod. The Marine waited silently for the judgment from his **God**.

"Step forward Marine," God said, "you have worn your burdens well! You just walk peacefully on my streets son. You have done your time in hell."

War-Torn
Troy Crowell

The leader of the armies shall I be with shock troops
marching through the blood soaked land beyond the
nation's capitol, with glee in heart, admiring chaos'
righteous hand. To dominate the world I do con-fide, that
anyone who tries resisting shall most definitely die. To run
and hide is futile, since you're almost sure to fail. What?
Something's happened! Now what have we here? The
soldiers now are running scared, away from something
which they nor I do not know. This thing 'tis beast nor
man, but light I fear that hath my armies running scared, to
say the least. This scalding heat which burns my soul.

A Painful Remembrance
Shantina Williams

September 11, 2001, was the most horrific and tragic day in American history. Many lives changed forever as a result of the terror attack. I will always remember this day because it changed my life in more ways than one.

In late 2000, my youngest brother Ronald was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer with less than a forty percent chance of survival. This shocking news tore my soul into tiny pieces. I had never imagined that my twenty-eight-year-old brother would be faced with such horrific news. I found myself in deep sorrow and utter disbelief. As a medical assistant, I had sympathized and shared many heart-felt tears with patients who had also experienced this same life-changing news but for the first time, I truly felt their pain. Because I had worked with patients with colon cancer, I knew it was incurable if not detected in time; this left me feeling empty and in despair. Would God take Ronald so young? I prayed every day for a miracle.

Ronald had so much to live for, his loving wife, a beautiful three-year-old daughter who adored him, and a supportive, close knit family that loved him unconditionally. Although my mother was numbed and devastated, she became his rock, she knew remaining strong (in the presence of Ronald) would give him a sense of hope. My mother spent her days and nights beside Ronald during his long hospital stays. Sometimes his Chemotherapy treatments would get the best of him, leaving him weak and fatigued, but he always remained positive and upbeat. I think he got his strength and encouragement from my mother being there.

After months of aggressive chemotherapy and special diets, Ronald started to improve. I went to Chicago in July to celebrate his 30th birthday. I was amazed at how well he looked. He was full of life and doing things he had not done in months. Everyone noticed the change in his condition, even his doctors. Ronald and I spent hours reflecting on our childhood and talking about what we had to look to. I felt my prayers had been answered.

Then on September 11, 2001, I received a phone call from my sister informing me that Ronald had taken a turn for the worst. He had pneumonia and was on life support in the ICU. I was devastated. I turned on the radio to focus my attention to something else, and to my surprise, America was under a terror attack and dealing with devastation as well. But at that moment, I could only think of my brother 's safety in Chicago. I now had the added concerns of Chicago becoming a target for attack since it was also a large city. My day was filled with great disbelief and uncertainty. As I waited for update progress on Ronald's condition, I became more nervous. I could feel butterflies fluttering in my stomach. After hours of waiting, I received the most painful heart wrenching news I could ever imagine. Ronald had gone into respiratory failure. At that moment, my life changed forever; part of my soul died with him. I then realized how life is so unpredictable and at a moment notice a family can change forever.

September 11, 2001, marks not only the most tragic day in American history it is the most painful remembrance for my family and me. This historic day holds a personal memory that I will never forget.

Guardian Angel
Tiffany Holloway

My fondest memories of my childhood were the times spent with my grandmother. I adored everything about her.

She had beautiful long, black, curly hair and hazel eyes; everyone says I have her eyes. Although she stayed outside most of the time, digging up weeds and planting new flowers, her nails looked professionally manicured I liked to rub the top part of her nails to feel the natural ridges on them, and wanted my nails to feel like that when I grew up. She never used fingernail polish on them, because the strong smell made her nauseated.

She loved growing and selling flowers, bringing people from all over to see her; people came from Alabama, Florida, even Texas, just to get some of her pretty flowers. I loved helping her with them, too. The National Daylily Association gave her recognition by naming a purple, her favorite color, daylily after her.

She trimmed a hoe handle down to my size so I could help her when she worked in the flowerbeds. I would walk to her house and help her dig up weeds, plant flowers, pick vegetables out of the garden, or anything else she wanted me to help with. As we diligently worked together, I would notice how angelic she looked when the sunlight beamed down on her delicate and pale skin leaving a glow around her bent body. Loving every minute of those times, I miss them so much. I only lived a pasture away from her, so I could walk to her house anytime I wanted and did not have to get on the road. I went to see her every day that I could and wished that I could have moved there, but mom would not allow it.

After Maw-Maw's diagnosis of ovarian cancer, we

did not get to spend as much time together anymore. She stayed in the hospital a lot and when she was not, there she was too sick to get out of the house. I wrote her letters and poems and drew her pictures to take to her when we could not play together; she would always cry after she read them, which I did not understand until later in life. Once her chemotherapy treatments started, she lost her beautiful long black hair and short gray hair covered her head. I still thought it was pretty, because she was such a lovely woman anyway.

Dad took me to visit her in the hospital, and I still remember everything about that visit. The dark room smelled antiseptic and medicinal; machines, tubes, and monitors set on both sides of the bed, making beeping noises that cut through the room's eerie tension every few seconds; nurses came in and out numerous times to check the machines' readings and Maw-Maw is breathing. All my family members lined the plain colored walls surrounding the room, and my aunt, whom I had only seen three times in my life, stood there in a quiet sponge-like state, taking in every breath and fond memory of Maw-Maw's life, as if it they knew the end was nearing. Only ten years old at the time, I did not fully understand why everyone was acting this way or why Maw-Maw looked so remotely ill lying there in a hospital gown, covered with blankets up to her waist, and needles and tubes coming from her arms. She appeared agedly tired from the pain her sickness had brought on her body and not her vibrant and lively self. The weakness from the disease had over taken her body so much that she struggled to hold her eyes open and long pauses came between each inhale and exhale, as if she would stop breathing at any time.

I touched her hand, and felt the coldness of death starting to sneak in. She looked at me and tried to smile, but the weakness overcame her. I was a stone, too scared

to move or say anything. She faintly said my name and I found the courage to bend down to hug her, and it hit me that she was saying goodbye.

I felt like the dam at Niagara Falls fighting against my tears so she would not know how scared I was. As I let go of her and stood back up, I looked away from her. Although I wanted to say so much to her and tell her that I loved her, I could not; still, I regret it today.

Mama told me I had to go home, but I did not want to leave my Maw-Maw alone when I knew that I might not see her again alive; after mama insisted, daddy took me home. I did not get much sleep that night, for worrying about everything.

I did not see Maw-Maw until two days later, when my parents took me to the funeral home. After six long years of battling cancer, her lifeless body rested eternally in her casket. Her soul had vanished to a place unknown. I did not want this moment in my life to be real, but I knew she had suffered long enough and her time had come to fill her place in heaven. She looked serene, pain free, something I had not seen over the last year when the cancer really progressed. I touched her hand and felt the coldness of death had completely taken over her from when it started in the hospital room the day I had visited her, the last day of her life.

Still today, with a void in my heart and the pain not restraining, I find it just as hard to talk about her as the day I saw her lying in her casket at the funeral home. I hold her memory so deeply close to my heart that I cannot let go of any of it. While remembering our time together in such detail and the pain of her death, I could not help but cry when I wrote this paper. Stolen away from me in the dawn of my life, she remains with me still as my guardian angel.

Life: How I Came About the Poetic Words
Larry Carlos

My father passed on to glory June 28, 2000. It happened that, as I sat on his bed, holding him in my hands and watching him cross from life to death, my mind quickly reflected back to how I grew up to know this man as my father, and how active he was then. I felt now so humbled by his helplessness. This made me reminisce about the story of creation I learned as a child in Nigeria. I marveled about the wonders of the world, and how mysterious nature can be. I composed the poetic words after I laid my father to rest.

What is Life? What do I want from Life? I went down into the deepest sea searching for Life in its sovereign majesty I saw the ocean scavengers chasing to devour me Thanks to my friend the Whale who to the shore brought me I made my way to the darkest thick But the Darkness was present to scare me It was the Elephant that used the palm tree to catapult me to the other side At this point, I was troubled on every side Yet not distressed Perplexed but not in despair Persecuted but not forsaken Cast down but not destroyed Eledu, to my help came and showed me Life in the abode of the strong man Dinning with the strong man Eledu now gave me the riddle to the mystery of the predicament that befell Life He said and I quote, At the beginning there was a huge drop of milk Dondari came and He created iron Iron created Steel Steel created Wood

Wood created Fire Fire created Water Dondari
descended the second time Took the five elements
and shaped them into man Man became proud
Dondari created Worry Worry defeated Man Worry
became proud Dondari created Sleep Sleep defeated
Worry Sleep became proud Dondari created Death
Death defeated Sleep When Death became proud
Dondari descended the third time as the 'Gueno' the
eternal one And Life became the eternal wonder

Why?

J. McLeod

I am a home, a protector, and a provider. Without me you
would not be. Sometimes I grieve and pine. I am tall and
majestic; I am short and stubby. I can be burnt orange,
magenta, or shades of yellow at times. I grow older just
like you, just count my rings you will see. Without me you
could not breathe. I need you and you need me. Now why
would you ever hurt me?

To: Aunt Jennifer
Summer Deese

*The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand.*
-Adrienne Rich

I urge you to

Speak.

Forget weak-ringed fingers. No
mere meekness. No shyness. No
yes your highness.

Stand.

Stand tall. Create
awareness. You are
a goddess - A
mighty force to be
reckoned with.

Smile.

Smile all the while, and
showcase the beauty
God has blessed us with.

Live.

Live life like life is
yours. Live life
louder than a
tiger's roar.

Live. Live. Live life. Live life. Like life. Like life.

Is yours? Is yours?

A Kingdom as Wide as My Imagination

Yvonne Robinson

Please don't wake me from this dream world
I don't wanna face the ordinary day to day
Oh what did you say? Sorry, I didn't mean
not to say hey I'm just in my own place A
thousand miles away A realm in my head As
vivid as all the books you've ever read

There's a vampire in his old mansion And a cat
from another dimension A pirate seeking treasure
from a magic stronghold A dragon for every
season that unfolds Princesses with minds of their
own A band of aliens from the unknown

There is action, horror, and romance Perhaps someday I'll
be brave and take the chance Write this all down Share with
you my beauty realm If in typing I do not become
overwhelmed Like painting a picture I feel but do not see
But if a hardcopy is ever born Be sure, you're invited to my
jubilee

Random Thoughts
Summer Deese

I wish to inspire
the exact thoughts I am not completely sure of
they're not solid, yet I can feel them
pounding away at my tongue wanting to release needing
to find resolve in this place
I have it all inside
this masterpiece I hide
I know I'm not supposed to write
I beat the odds- I guess?
Why do I never know how to spell?
I do not think it matters that much
Hearts- I want to touch
people need to know how true love feels
the hate in this world is consuming so many
It's not fair for us to fight
underneath this great big sky of starry light.
no man knows anything for sure
so why must everyone try to defend the unknown seems
irrational and very immature -to me
Why can't everyone awake from this sleep
awake to a brighter, sunnier day
flowers blooming, birds chirping, crickets, BBQ's, fireflies,
children playing in
sprinklers, little girls with short hair and freckles, snaggle
teeth, mommas hugs
and bedtime stories.
you're first crush and finding TRUE love
riding those rickety carnival rides, hot dogs and beer at a
baseball game, pride for
your hometown and respect for others, good deeds and
and Christmas!
what a wonderful place this world should be
there's so much good just waiting to emerge
evil is scared of the good we possess
it's positive verses negative 27

head to head I believe in a place where peace is the norm and home is all around you I may be called a dreamer for my hopes but I'd rather imagine love than despair I'd rather be wrong with a smile on my face I'd rather be blind than to see so much hate relax your fist and embrace your brother stands beside you with his arms open wide just let yourself go ... find your space and then give it away! this world is ours, equally Together, we can evolve into Anything! Life is too incredible a gift to waste! the colors- just think of all these wonderful colors- and rhythm rhythm takes my breath away People- unique in their own special way Why can't we just be okay- with that? I am a dreamer I love it ... clouds, flying, sunshine, salty ocean waves, shooting stars and fresh cut grass, receiving mail when you're a child and making phone calls to your best pal, leaning on God's shoulder to cry ... Simple-the pleasures of this life Why can't everyone just pause and see it? it's so much easier than living with the chaos peace is a wonderful place feel the warmth of it on your skin it makes me smile such a great way to live at such little cost Allow yourself the chance to know everything.

It's worth it.

Judging Giant Hats
**Carol Canfield 2007 Best
Poetry Winner**

We are giant hats with scraps
of paper written on inside.
And if I draw from you an
ugly piece I may conclude
that you are full of faulty
pride. You too may draw a
failed exam and so assume
my loyalty defective. Then
we have both collected one
for error because the other
scraps were ne'er by us
inspected. But if we learn to
draw in turn and not be too
demanding, We may find
that with time we will have
understanding.

Train Station
Jennifer Parris 2007
Best Prose Winner

Sitting nestled in the shadows near the center of town, it had been abandoned for over thirty years. The railroad company, which owned the abandoned train station, had no plans for it other than to allow it to rot. We found refuge inside the ominous structure from our teenage pressures as the turpentine timbers absorbed our conversations and gave off a distinguishable smell.

Sitting just off the square, the train station sat on the edge of the historical section of town. On its rustic foundation sat several cement markers bearing the date of 1889. Surrounded by broken train cars and overgrown vegetation, the building was protected by creature-like shadows at night.

The only entrance to the building was a crack in the gigantic bay doors on one side of the building and all light that entered was quickly absorbed by the darkness. Tiny particles, suspended in mid air, danced in the remaining light as we entered the building. Walking across the floor, our shoes crunched bird droppings and gave off hollow sounds that echoed off the high ceiling.

The light from the windows touched our eyes as the room narrowed led us into another part of the structure. The floor, bathed in the glow of the street light, was covered with old papers dating back to the 1960s. In the far right corner was a hallway lit by the warped light passing through the barred windows.

The hallway contained wooden lockers holding various items forgotten by time. Adjacent to the hallway was a room containing only a lone chair illuminated by the moonlight and glowing as if alive.

The hallway dead-ended into a small room containing a sleeping bag and other personal effects. Some nights various items in the room would be rearranged, removed or, may have been replaced with different items. Reflecting on those nights, I wonder if someone may have been lurking in the shadows. He may have only been a defenseless wayfarer, but the thought of his eyes watching us still gives me chills. Beyond the makeshift bedroom was a hole in the wall that lead to the next and final room.

Our destination must have been some sort of garage many years ago because of the structure. Large swinging doors on the far end of the room opened to the outside and allowed headlights from passing cars to seep through their cracks and scan the room. The opposite wall was covered with windows a few feet from the passing trains that served as our entertainment. Our footprints were retained by the thick, snow-like dust covering the floor. An overturned spool served as a table and chairs had been collected from different rooms and were placed around it. We were safe in this room from anyone looking in, but we still ducked as the engines from passing trains shot past the wall of windows.

Upon our last return, we found the bay door pushed shut and secured from inside. The next week the newspaper would run a story about the purchase of the train station by the city. Eventually a chain link fence encircled the structure. Our time with the train station was over.

I still pass by it from time to time and try to peek in the windows to see if the old spool and chairs are still there. Memories of the times we spent there invade my thoughts as the smell of the turpentine and the old timbers linger. I smile as I turn the corner and lose sight of the old train station and wish that I could visit one more time.

My Dream

Ansley Shipp

Life is short I hear them say So why is
there so much hate every day? Seems
the world would be a better place We
need to change before it's too late.

Material achievements seem to matter most.
People are judged by our riches, The heart
of a person has long ago been lost; To be a
good person is my wish.

When I leave this world I hope they say: She
helped others in every way. Not the
achievements of every day, My dream is to
be a good person day by day.

Mirror Image

Dameian Polk

Hey you!
Yeah I'm talking to you
I see the way you look at me
I see the way you stare around those corners
Hey you!
Yeah I'm talking to you
I see the frowns on your face
I see the expressions that you face makes
I see the way you bite your lip and nod your head
As if I'm supposed to be scared
Hey you!
Yeah I'm talking to you
Oh no!
This couldn't be
I see ...me 32

Love Seems So Small

Merlie P. Alley

Perched naked on the ledge of this jejune life, I could see dangling beneath my feet glimpses of the places I had run playing hide-and-seek with myself. How easy it was there to pause far too long to pity the souvenirs of my sojourning, the hoofed scars upon my spirit. So softly did the warmth of your dawning approach my side that I remembered what it was to have been a flower. Turning my face to draw life from the light in your eyes, I heard the rushing of a thousand wings signaling that my flight was near. The depths of me sensed the distant approaching thunder of you. The arms of my soul reached out at your passing — Always, I knew you would come.

Your valleys and peaks beneath my hand, against my heart, are frontiers new to me with each abandonment of ourselves; Every shudder breaking the veil, ushering my rebirth. Seeds of life are sown from the hands, the sinew, the brow-breaths; But the nourishment is in the eyes, in the knowing, the language without words. How delicately your life force unwinds the tangled threads of my essence. Maestro and the willing Marionette dance to harmonies never before whispered. And I hear the music, the rushing of a thousand wings and I know my flight is near. With eyes wide open, the depths of me ache for the resonant thunder of you.

In the maze of hollow traces burrowed by unforgotten worm-words, my yet unborn self seems lost.

Holding its most precious breath, my deepest being gropes for the pathways to light, though stumbling in the footprints of dead men walking. The passage to weightlessness is daunting and solitary, but the smell of freshness is not so vague a memory. If I find significance in the surface journey, parable then transcends into philosophy. Somehow, a small notion of victory has taken root, though the avalanche of scars in this labyrinth may bury me time to time again; Still, I hear the rushing of a thousand wings and I hope that my flight is near. So I close my eyes while the depths of me fear the imminent thunder. Painfully, it always comes.

Nothing of me is hidden in the brilliance of your sunrise where there is no shame in the baring of myself. Shadows of used-to-be and what-was stretch forth their black fingers, yet they cannot reach me here, safely within the nearness of you.

Love seems so small a thing for the greatness that has become this indefinable absolute.

This universe swelling within me cannot be branded by the trite accepted wisdoms and concepts of mere men who, in their soupcon acumen, cannot discern that which passes between us. Who I am with you is everyone that I always was, but dared not be. Moreover, all that matters in the world more than any moment with you.... Is the next Strength for all moments is garnered from the rhythmic pounding within your strong frame. In that sacred moment of your breathing into me, I felt the rushing of my own wings. My flight is upon me-Your thunder bearing me up.

The Cell

Robert Clemente

A weightless chunk of plastic and micro-metal inside (we do not know) clipped to ear or flipped to mouth— colors, styles, shapes, sizes-all having nothing to do with hearing sounds at all, just the sights of sounds perhaps; the carrier of messages more important than the messages. The shopping list is replaced by the menu, but nothing to eat.

Birthdays and sizes lost in memory but inside plastic, not to worry, interruptions will produce information on demand. What time is the meeting? Remember? When? Why? Check the menu, but still nothing to eat ...

Honey, I'm looking at the counter; what kind of lettuce?

The "Lie" in Belief

Lauren Shumate

Beauty in the depths Of your
never-ending soul Can never
melt the freezing Of a heart
turned so cold Your words are so
smooth They just cut like a knife
Making scars across my heart
And all across my life I want to
break free Spread my wings and
fly But I find hidden in belief
There always is a lie.

Equality at What Price?

Jenny Rabaduex

What price would this country be willing to pay in order that it may reach equality? Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s short story "Harrison Bergeron" is a depiction of what could happen if the government is given full control over human population and never questioned by its citizens. In this story, there is a dystopic world where no one understands that he can - and must - question authority.

Vonnegut's story tells of a world where everyone is equal. No one is judged by how smart or beautiful he may be. "All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General" (192). Due to this enforced equality, not one person is able to express himself to his full potential. For example, George and Hazel Bergeron are just average people with average lives. They are sitting at home watching the ballerinas on the television when the show is interrupted by a news bulletin. Because the announcer has his handicapper (a government-monitored headset) on, he is not able to speak clearly. Hazel states, "He tried to do the best he could with what God gave him" (194). However, this statement could not be further from the truth. God gave the man the ability to speak, and the government has taken that away from him by forcing him to wear a handicapper.

Harrison Bergeron is taken by the government at the tender age of fourteen because he is questioning the laws; most critically, he questions the laws that require the handicaps. He escapes from jail and rushes into the television studio. Once inside and on the stage in the middle of the ballerinas, he "tore the straps of his handicap harness like wet tissue paper" (195) and all his handicaps are thrown to the floor. Harrison decides to

take one of the ballerinas into his arms and dances with her. Soon the Handicapper General comes in and shoots them both dead. "It was then that the Bergerons' television tube burned out" (196) and the Bergerons cannot remember what they just saw. When George asks Hazel if she has been crying, she can only comment, "I forget" (196).

There is no hope for the future in this story. Harrison gives his life for a cause that he thinks is important, yet everything soon goes back to the way it was before he stood up to the government. "It was tragic, all right [...]" (192), but nothing is done to make things any better. Equality may be a good objective to pursue, but is it worth giving up all the good that comes with the differences in life? If a society's differences are ruled out, so are the possibilities for excellence in that society. George says, "the minute people start cheating on laws, what do you think happens to society?" (193). This country has become what it is today because minds are allowed to explore and question what reality is. In order to make something better, there must first be someone who is willing to question it and to see the potential of the idea.

Vonnegut's purpose in writing this story is to tell a fable about what might happen if we allow the government to control our every thought or action. He implies that if trends continue the way they are going, society will become more and more under the control of government. It makes people who are strong wear scrap-iron and "Harrison looked like a walking junkyard" (194). Though the government may only be trying to get rid of the potential greed and chaos in the world by making everyone "equal," it is suppressing the good that people have in them too. When Hazel tells her husband that he should rest and take out a few of the lead balls out of his bag, he says, "If I tried to get away with it, [...] then other people'd get away with it – and pretty soon we'd be right

back to the dark ages again, with everybody competing against everybody else” (193). George is suggesting that things will get worse again if everyone tries to cheat the laws. This may be true, but would it not be wonderful to be able to fully express what is inside the soul?

Somewhere along the line, someone has to stand up and say enough is enough. There are certain aspects of life that government should not control, like the human mind. As Vonnegut’s satirical story shows, there comes a point in time where equality can become dangerous, and at this point we have the obligation to speak up and challenge the laws which we think are immoral.

Work Cited Vonnegut, Kurt, Jr. “Harrison Bergeron.” Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama. Ed. X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 4th ed. New York: Person Longman, 2005. 191-196.

Backward Rides
Carol Canfield

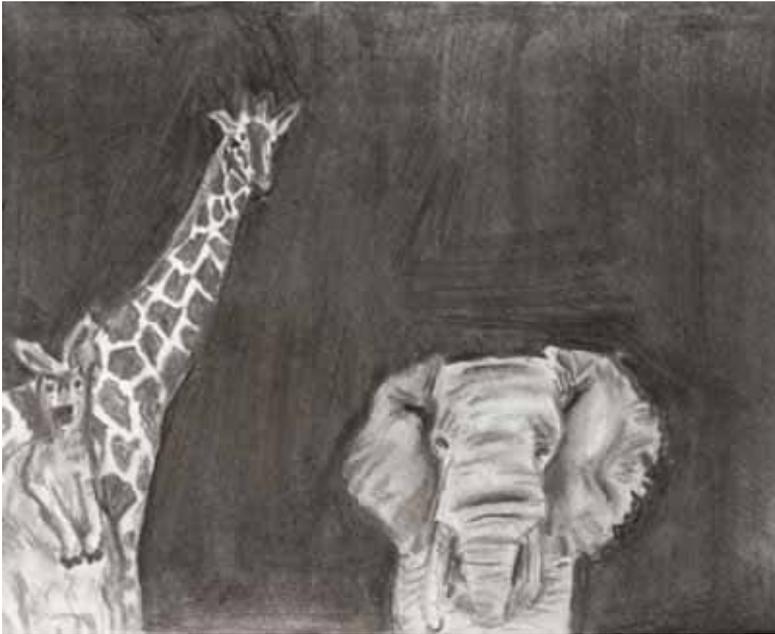
I dream of backward rides Through folds of time
that seem to sooth my soul. Hear echoes of a spirit
past that did not fear the cold, The heat, the storm,
To nothing did it yield. Yet then I pass a kindred of
my present there Who longs to be consoled. My
spirit past has not a trinket warm, Not cool, not safe.
For nothing does it feel.

Alphabet

Abimbola Daramola

25 letters from my native Yoruba language in Western Nigeria Children learn these in school along with the English A B C's

A - aja (dog) B - bata (shoe) D
- doje (string guitar) E - ejo
(snake) F - fila (cap) G - gele
(woman's cap) GB - gbaguda
(cassava fruit) H - hausa (a
local tribe) I - igi (tree) J -
jagun jagun (soldier) K -
kiniun (lion) L - laba laba
(butterfly) M - Malu (cow) N -
nangudu (teeth) O - ogonao
(father of all birds) O - ogede
(banana) P - pepeye (duck) R -
rakunmi (donkey) S - salubata
(slippers) SH - sago (cup) T -
tafa tafa (archer) U - uku uku
(clouds) W - waala (writing
material) Y - yanmu -yanmu
(mosquito)



Decline
Jill Mundt
Charcoal

Desire
Sandra Ingram

I've allowed them to seduce and tease me. I avert
my eyes and pretend not to see how I hunger
wantonly Turning back I abandon myself, In a bag
of Oreo cookies....

Genealogy

Carol Canfield

Big, dark, bulging eyes Stare at me from
inside the mirror. A hereditary
possession. Beautiful, I've heard.
Monstrous screams my mind sometimes.

Those in the occupation of unfathomable magnitude
Have their by-lines upon us. Even on those who left
the home world at birth. Intergalactic postcards are
floating Somewhere between the tiniest lines.

Poverty and violence and inappropriate affection. They
were staples on my planet. I've made my boast in sanity
and optimism Despite the overwhelming menace. But
then I do not mention constant fear That my thoughts are
audible. Or that he and she and they are phonies
underneath it all And they are waiting to strike.

Sudden Echo
Carol Canfield

I had hearts and flowers but everyone had those... not the cliffs and bridges and a soul to follow as naturally as the leaves change color and fall from trees in autumn. For so long at first it lashed against the windows in the storm-impatient like decisions. The final residue a sad and lonely droning in the background (loss not fully mourned), too impotent for bitterness forever stuck at resignation... Until recently I looked into a stranger's face and saw the loudest echo of it In almost twenty years.

There Shall Be No Other Way
Michael Boggs

Because of pain; we do not hide. Because we know it's all about mine. Because it reminds us we're "all Man." Because we're in control, all the time. Because a left, a right, and a left renown. Because those directions are well known. Because easily the road is over there. Because of pride, predominately aware. Because we're lost and not despaired. Because a stereotype, ill-prepared.



Lizard, Black and White Checkered

Casey Cronan

Acrylic



VOICES are Everywhere VOICES are Everywhere
Jamie Brown
Photography



Submerged Head
Tiffany Garrett
Photography

One Place
James Brown

If I could put it all away, I could see what is underneath. I hold on to what you said, and what we did, and all the regrets in between. Dim the lights we taught ourselves to hide behind. It was all over since it began, and I don't feel anything has changed since then. I feel the words that make me hurt and the words that make me smile. My memory fades and we all die too, but we are born again to live and die. We all return from where we came and then we spread out again. Where you and I stand in this world is in one place. No matter how far we move we are always here.



Bear Creek Mill, 1992
Chuck Lott
Photography



Happy Mothers' Day
Amanda Allen
Watercolor



A Summer Flower
Yvonne Robinson
Photography



The Winding Road
Brittany Peters
Watercolor



In the Eye of a Horse
Christopher Liphart
Photography



*William Wetmore
Storey's "Medea"*
Penny Jiles
Photography



God's Nature
Brenda Tillman
Photography



Golden Glow
Tracy Ward

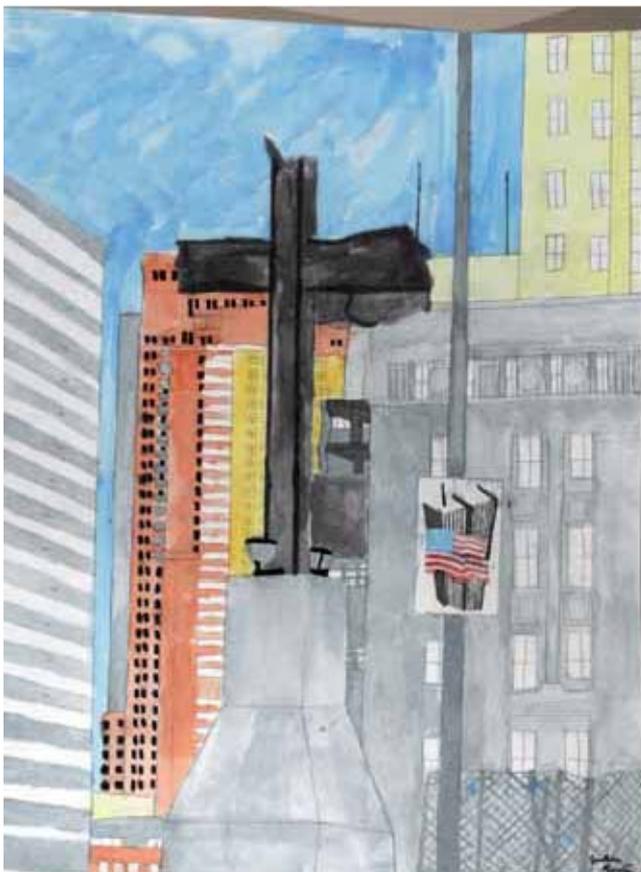
Photography



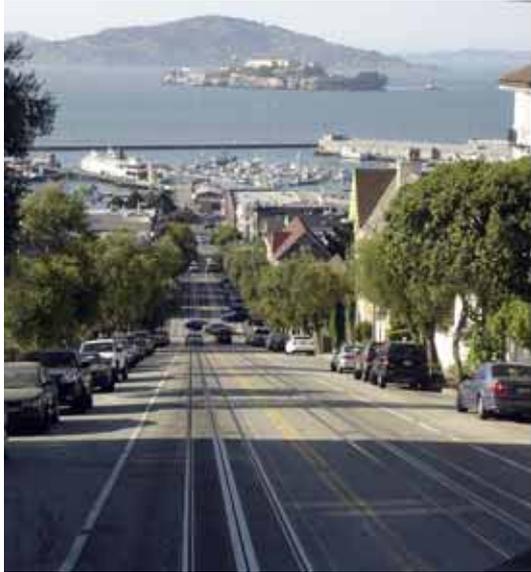
Smell the Rose

Shevon Rowell

Watercolor



The Names
Justine Harris
Watercolor



San Fransisco
Brandon Oakes
Photography



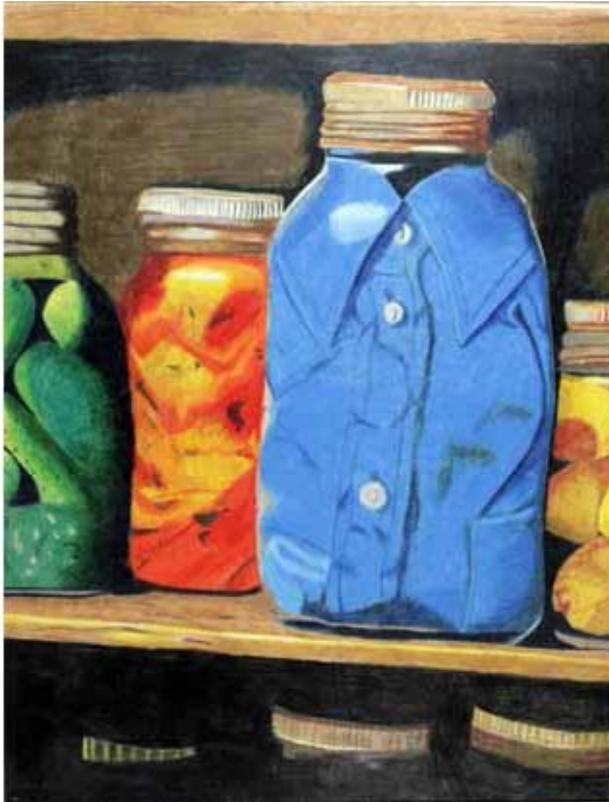
Montana Mist
Kevin McMichen
Photography



The View from Snowbird Trail at Red Lakes
Malena Soucy
Photography



Will's Fall
Elaine Heifner
Photography



Pickled

Shevon Rowell

Colored Pencil

2007 Best Art Winner

Perspectives

Jill Mundt

Whenever I could manage, I'd be sick. I would go to their house and spend just a little while under a white blanket that always made me sweat, while drifting off to the sounds of *The Price is Right* coming from the television. She always worked her magic, and miraculously all better, I would head downstairs with Grandpa. The garage was so clean, every little nut and bolt had a place. I'd sit on a tall stool and spin in circles until I was dizzy, watching through wide eyes at a man who I knew was so perfect, who smelled of Old Spice and the motor oil that never quite came out from under his fingernails. When he was finished with whatever it was he did there, I would climb through the window of the car (because I *was* Daisy Duke after all) and ride on the "hump" in the middle of the front seat to go get the evening newspaper. When we got back, she and I would play cards and I would win. There was no such thing as time at Grandma's house.

In kindergarten we had a playhouse in our classroom, and on top of the playhouse was a dreamland. It had a ten story ladder that only very lucky kids were allowed to climb up, and only two a day. The top of the playhouse had a fence around it, and nothing more, but it was the best place in the world. I waited a million years for my turn, and when it came I was terrified to climb the ladder. My teacher gently coaxed me up it, and I climbed with shaking legs and my heart pounding in my ears. When I finally reached the top I looked down at the kids playing below, and realized *I* was the lucky kid on top of the world.

I remember being a little girl, and walking one street over to my friend Kelly's house. She was a year younger than me, we met the summer before I started first

grade. I always wanted to go to her house, because she had a swing set, a playroom, and a tiny baby sister. We'd spend eternity swinging to the treetops and singing made up songs, jumping on beanbag chairs, and eating peanut butter crackers- mine always had lids. I bet her mom made a thousand of them during those years. She would always offer something else, and we would always tell her "No thanks, just peanut butter crackers." They had to be Jif on Ritz, it never tasted right otherwise. I would ask to go over there, and my mother would remind me that dinner was in an hour, and I would tell her that was okay, and skip off. We lived close enough that she could stand on our porch and yell my name six hours later when dinner was done. I'd hear her yell my name and go running home to eat, promising Kelly I would come back the next day.

I was always fascinated by creatures. As I grew a little taller the world expanded to include the woods nearby and a field the big people rode their dirt bikes on after we were in bed. I'd lead my fearless band of Mighty Creature Hunters, expertly equipped with stolen Tupperware (that my Mom never seemed to miss) and goldfish nets into the woods, which had trees so tall you couldn't see the top. It always seemed so dark, but somehow we managed to see. We never did quite figure out how to get the tiny garner snake into the Tupperware bowl, or how to hatch the egg that momma bird must have left behind in that nest way up there, or quite what to feed the dozens of tadpoles that inhabited my Barbie swimming pool. Entire summers were devoted to chasing tiny toads around a field so big we were scared when we got to the other side that we might not find our way home, for if we could not see my house, we were obviously many miles away from it. When we finally managed our ten mile hike across that two acre field and back into my house, my Mom would meet me with a stern face and scold me for being an hour late, even though I'd swear we only left ten minutes before. I remember the knowing

smile my Dad would give me from behind her back, letting me know the world was still okay.

Several years later I worked after school bathing dogs at the local grooming salon to buy my first car. Around that same time new creatures appeared in the world. They were strange, but somehow familiar...and not so concerned about catching tadpoles any more. That creature had an odd way of making time shift- how else would you explain the fifteen minute drive to his house taking an hour? We spent forever in the sound booth of the high school theater, listening to the strumming of a guitar, laughing at jokes that may not have been funny, and pretending we really had an interest in learning how to light the stage for Jesus Christ Superstar. All we had to do was push a few buttons, no problem! That time warp was amazing, while locked in that little crowded room with five more people than seats, time slowed to a crawl. Eventually the lights would go out, and time suddenly sped back up. We'd find a way to sneak out without being seen by the prison guard with the push broom. Was it really six o'clock? Surely our parents wouldn't find out the rehearsal had ended at four.

The world was just as big as the old pastel green 1978 LTD could take my over sized load of friends and I that next summer. That car was the most beautiful in all of the world and the rust orange spots were cool- of course. When I wasn't looking, the house I called home faded in the distance, obviously this new world had links to another dimension. Road trips to Washington DC, sneaking across the state line to West Virginia- "no really Mom, I put 200 miles on the car driving my friends home!"- and cruising the endless roads of South Park with the radio blaring that one same song over and over. That became the entire world, and in that world time was a chain that eventually drug me unwillingly back to my bed after eating leftovers from the dinner I forgot I should

have been home to eat. Nowhere to go of importance, nowhere to be but where we ended up, the summer days slowly turned into summer nights, which I thought never really would come to an end. Yet somehow August always appeared.

It took just a short time more before the chain to that old world was broken with a quick snap of a worn out link. The new world grew times a thousand instantly. Austin, Knoxville, Chicago, Atlanta... so much to see! People came into and faded out of view, just a few leaving lasting footprints behind them. There was no room for such a silly thing as time in those early years. We would make enough money to get to the next city, the next adventure, the next person we *had* to meet. Dinners consisting of bags of Doritos and Mountain Dew, and the Greyhound bus for sleep. I had no fear of not finding my way home, so I didn't once turn around to realize it could no longer be seen.

Something strange happened between then and now. Time managed to become an enemy always close by, but never quite seen. I feel no different than when I was the small girl snacking on peanut butter crackers with lids. That *was* just yesterday, right? Yet now I somehow know that the roof of the playhouse was only four feet off the ground, and the six hours before my mother yelled my name *was* really just an hour. I know that the mother bird was probably wondering just where that egg ran off to while she ate, and that hour drive to his house *was* really just a few miles down the road. I know that summer nights lasted only from sundown until I closed my eyes, and I now understand that the more footprints people leave behind the stronger I become.

It took many long years to find my way back home. The roads that lead there now take so much longer to travel than the roads I took to get away. I spend a great

deal of time and energy trying to find shorter ways back, and when I do manage I ask my Mother if she minds if we stay for dinner, instead of hearing her yell my name from the porch. In my absence, time seems to have found its way back into my Grandma's house. I try to stay long enough to play cards or ride along to get the evening newspaper while I am there. The world now is much smaller than it had ever seemed. It's only as wide as I can stand to drive, but in the rare moment when I am given a choice, it instantly shrinks to the size of my own backyard. The endless summer nights have morphed into a brief acknowledgment of how hot and humid it is as I rush to someplace I'm late. The creatures that fascinate me most now I regret not being able to stop and chase as often as I would like. They are little, loud, messy, and so very easy to love.

Every now and then I will catch from the corner of my eye an oddly familiar site of a small child holding my stolen Tupperware, laughing and getting soaked, all the while trying to catch tadpoles; or of one soaring to the very tops of the tallest trees, held down by nothing but the chains of a swing. When I do, I can't help but smile as I remember ... for just a second ... as it's all the time I can spare now.

School Daze

Robert Clemente

I find a parking space right out
front-I plod up the walk with
wind whipping leafy frenzy
and hair to swirly display.

The walk is slow but the cold is brisk
to feel some mishappen place or
mistaken space, climbing cemented
cubes, holding ceremonial bagel, fake
cream cheese, balancing coffee ...

Stairs stare me and sometimes scare to
dare not to elevate but evaporate into
the fog of thought and wonder.

God, they're half my age.



Master Student

Catherine Blabac

Photography

Meteor Crater: Time, Space, and the Unknown
Diane Greene

As I stood on the rim of Barringer Crater, 35 miles east of Flagstaff, Arizona, my awareness grew, and I realized that time means nothing and time can mean everything. This natural wonder brought together the aspect of time, space, and the unknown. I felt my minute existence threatened by our never-ending race against time. I imagined myself as a bewildered dinosaur before the impact confused by which direction lead to safety, and I envisioned suffering plants, scorched and vaporized by the intense heat given off as the meteor screamed towards them.

Growing up I branded myself as the sister that lovingly abused our family's encyclopedias that overflowed with colorful pictures and information about outer space. My childhood curiosity for earth science and the beyond beckoned me to study briefly about meteors. Astronomers relish in digging through the realms of deep dark space to find powerful wonders for where it all began. I looked forward to my daily emails from numerous astrological websites such as www.space.com, describing new discoveries and adventures from the millions of years of galactic activity.

I received an exciting advertisement about a self-preserved meteor crater in Arizona and instantly made plans to investigate this desert wonder. The very next weekend I arrived at the entrance to Meteor Crater; the sky appeared an exotic shade of turquoise crowned by silvery, wispy clouds resembling a Native American dream catcher. The endless landscape around my Saturn vehicle made me ponder if astronomers viewing the planet Mars observed terrain like this on a "good day." Barren areas of rusty colored soil contained boulders and layered rock haphazardly tossed alongside the winding road. Leading

up to the entrance building that appeared lifeless and camouflaged, shrubbery, cactus, and greenery refused to show themselves. I approached its unsophisticated, bunker-like entrance, waited impatiently to pay my fee, and received my mandatory ticket stub to catch a glimpse of the landmark. I anxiously followed the cold, metal rails as they guided me, ascending to the rim of the crater. The only thing faster than my heartbeat was the sound of everyone's footsteps in unison crunching in the desert sand. I reached the brim and the feelings of wonder, fright, and admiration washed over me. Meteor Crater, also introduced to tourists as Barringer Meteor Crater, a vast and profound cavity of the past, came to life and whispered its story.

A new, young, inexperienced tour guide made his excursion with our small, chatty group, tagging along struggling to explain the highlights of Meteor Crater. However, at a closer glance, the winds of time told me their tale kept private in the plains for thousands of years until my arrival. The fiery, grotesque sphere of molten rock swiftly sped hundreds of miles towards earth and hit the sandy soil like Jack's enormous, terrifying giant and the beanstalk during the last frantic swipe of Jack's axe.

The ancient remnants from the metamorphosis lay scattered around hundreds of feet down in every direction. At the bottom of the crater, an old abandoned exploration site looked like a small pile of ash from an extinguished cigarette. To the left an oxidized pillar of rock the size of a house rested uneasily on the edge of the crater's rim, and to the right heaved earth and stone against the crater's walls suggested the needed force to create such agony against mother earth. I sensed time stand still, considering this devastation upon the plains. I felt so insignificant, as if time transformed me into a grain of star dust in a cosmic sea.

Dark clouds quietly alarmed our dwindling group that a storm lurked ahead. The sun became lazy in the once turquoise sky, and the closing announcement for the natural museum rang out like a double barrel shotgun shattering my time warp. Reluctantly I left quite a find. I glanced behind me and witnessed the magnificent crater recede into a dim shadow by the increasing darkness.

I acquainted myself with the perplexity that time can be irrelevant. I envisioned the blazing iron-nickel mass streaking across the sky on a collision course with Mother Earth as if it happened in front of me 50,000 years ago. The extreme impact inflicted self preservation. The monument had an eerie sense of beauty that overtook me. Meteor Crater humbled, mystified, and bewildered me with the unknown. Because of this experience, I have decided to visit as many natural wonders in my given life as time permits. My everyday existence depends on evolution, yet the crater has stood the test of time for each soul to relive the drastic event through physical detail exposing itself, naked, in its entire splendor.

Work Cited "Meteor Crater -
Experience the Impact!" Science
Data. Meteor Crater Enterprises. 2004. 21 Oct.
2006 <<http://www.meteorcrater.com/index.php>>.

Identity Theft: A True Life Story of Transgression at Big Mama's Kitchen

Alison Payne

I have to kill some time in the small Georgia town of Waco where I am waiting to meet with a real estate client, so I decide to eat lunch at what appears to be the only diner in town, Big Mama's Kitchen. The dirt parking lot makes my SUV jitter like gizzards in a boiler, forcing me to slow down and take my time. I predict that taking my time will be an important part of the Big Mama experience.

As I reach for the front door, I read an advertisement for the gospel music of Reverend Al and Passion Lewis. I'd like to be named "Passion." People would know right up front what I stand for, not just who I am. Like some Native American names. If your name was "Two-Faced," I'd at least know to watch out.

Inside, the room is painted bright blue with even brighter yellow trim. Fake bricks are painted around edges and doorways to make it look old, but they needn't have bothered. It's old. The pale green plates look just like the three sectioned plastic plates we ate lunch on in grammar school forty years ago, and the slat-back chairs look just like our old auditorium seats. The wall is mostly decorated with faded Pepsi posters. Those I get. I'm not so sure about the lone Titanic sign. Does it mean if there's a flood, Big Mama will go down with her diner? Will the waitresses stand arm in arm, their aprons glowing like celestial robes, and sing "Amazing Grace" in tragically sweet a cappella? Would the flies sink, or would they swim?

I am seated at one of two remaining tables. This is a busy spot. Of course, there is no menu. The day's offerings are written on a blackboard beside the kitchen.

Today's specials are fried chicken, meat loaf, and neck bones. I'll get a vegetable plate, though. It reminds me of home, when my folks grew summer gardens and we ate like this every day: butterbeans, okra, corn, collards simmered all morning in fatback. I am just about to begin my order with fried squash when a burly guy in a hair net comes out from the back and erases it. I guess the squash was extra good that day, but I'll just get okra instead. The rolls of paper towels instead of flimsy napkins on the tables tell me the grease will be plentiful, so the food will be good.

Once my order is placed and my bucket-o-sweet tea has arrived, I try to take in the ambiance. Four cops in full uniform are sucking the air out of one corner of the room. At the far opposite corner sit a group of young African American males and females, eating quietly. Beside me is a table that must represent three generations, disturbingly close in pasty-faced resemblance. The grandmother is chiding the hefty toddler for still drinking from a bottle instead of a "big boy" cup. Granddaddy is threatening to take Baby Boy's "sugar tit" away. Baby Boy is threatening to scream bloody murder. His mother knowingly gives him the bottle, and I sigh in relief.

There's a smattering of men and women in professional garb, some on their cell phones while their fried chicken sits at their elbow growing cold. I wonder what sort of business in Waco would require one to "dress for success." I don't think it's the tiny post office or the feed 'n seed across the street. Down the road, a defunct sandwich shop and vacant barbeque shack speak to the proliferation of burger joints on the other side of the freeway. I wonder if they will ever be the undoing of Big Mama's? She seems to holding her own so far.

I also note some farmers in worn overalls and baseball caps of all descriptions, worn the way they believe God

intended, brim forward. Then I see another sign I had not caught earlier: "Big Mama's Coffee: the Hottest Thing in Waco." A couple of young males in the room might beg to differ. They have had their eyes glued on, I'll just call her "Little Mama," a young waitress with a waist so slim the apron strings have to wrap around twice to keep her apron snug. The front bib dips a little lower than the pink tank top she generously wears underneath. Nice and snug. I see how she keeps trying to sneak glances at one of the boys through her poofy blond bangs. He is talking loud, showing off, but she just keeps blushing and ducking her eyes. A little later, she slips a ticket onto his checkered table. I don't think it's a bill either, because when he opens it, he just grins wolfishly.

The fact that it has been the hottest summer on record has, fortunately, not disabled the air conditioner at Big Mama's, but it is enough on the warm side that anyone who opens the door for access or egress gets the "Hurry up!" stare from everyone else. Now as the door slowly swings open, all attention is drawn to the next customer. With midday temperatures hovering around 100, he is incongruously draped in black leather, though the sleeves of his jacket have been ripped off at the shoulder, displaying a dense tapestry of tattoos down the length of both arms. His long wiry hair is slightly tamed by the confederate do-rag tied around his head. But it isn't any of that that worries me; in fact, Big Mama's seems to be just the kind of place where anyone can eat, so long as there's no trouble. But Motorcycle Guy here is giving off too much heat, and I don't just mean road heat, but a heat that smells of sweat, adrenaline, and testosterone. It makes me shiver.

Then the cute waitress, "Little Mama," comes out from the back, and she suddenly looks nervous for more than obvious reasons. "Crystal," the guy says. Just, "Crystal." You can tell she wants to keep him calm. She quickly

gives a dirty tabletop a swipe and tells him in a voice sweeter than honeysuckle that she will be right back with his tea. A sideways glance tells me that the boy who was giving her the eye has suddenly turned as pale as an uncooked biscuit. I don't know whether to get out of there for my own safety or stay for the entertainment . . . curiosity can be a perilous thing.

Smiling tensely, Crystal waits for the Man in Black to order. "Anything you want - coming right up." She's breathing so hard now, her chest heaves. The man's fixed scowl turns to suspicion; his eyes squinch up and his mouth curves down. "I know I been gone a while, but you still my gal, ain't ya?"

The slight pause is too long for anyone's comfort. The cops have finished eating, but they obviously aren't leaving yet.

"Course I am, Sugar." Crystal has a charming smile, but perspiration is making her face slick and sticky. She tears off a section of power towel and blots her cheeks. "Have you ever seen it so hot?" she asks. Motorcycle Guy just grunts. "Let me get that plate for you, Sugar. Be right back." I notice that she has loosened her apron strings, probably to get a little more breeze when she walks by the exhaust fan beside the kitchen door.

When Crystal re-enters, minutes later, her apron just hangs loosely from her neck. She is no longer perspiring like a lady; she's sweating like a grill jockey. She holds a plate, piled high with neck bones, butterbeans, and mashed potatoes. As she bends to put the plate down, her tank top, no longer secured by the apron bib, sags just enough to let Biker Guy see her newest tattoo.

At first, he just looks befuddled. Then, he grabs her shirt and tilts his head to see the word better. "Don - nie,"

he reads. "Donnie?" He's still thinking. "Donnie! Who the hell is Donnie?" The place goes so quiet you could hear a bean drop. The cops are watching. Crystal just can't help herself. She looks straight at the boy she passed the note to earlier. Now it seems like hours ago. She looks at him with pure fear. Biker Guy turns and follows her eyes until he finds the answer to his question – the putative "Donnie" of her tattoo. Now "Donnie" looks scared, looks like he wants to be any place else on earth rather than Big Mama's Kitchen. "No," he says in a real low voice. "No, t'aint me." He's hunched over, arms crossed over his narrow chest.

Biker Guy walks over. "Stand up," he commands. The cops are getting up now too, their hands hovering near their sidearms. The younger boy stands up. He is wearing the uniform of the tire store where he works, the kind that has your name embroidered over your chest pocket. The nametag reads "Bobby Tucker." Biker Guy is still staring at it uncertainly when a cop takes him by either arm and says, "It's time to move along, buddy." You can tell the guy doesn't want to go. You can also tell the cops really do mean for him to go. They walk him out the door and watch until his chopper rumbles away, spitting gravel in its wake. They loiter outside in the heat ten, fifteen more minutes, to make sure he's gone. Finally they go back in to pay their tab.

Waiting in line behind the boys in blue are "Bobby Tucker" and his friend. I'm not sure what happened here, but I'm glad it didn't get dangerous. Once the cops are out the door, the two boys start to laugh all over themselves. Tucker is patting his nametag, just laughing himself silly. Finally his friend says, "Good thing you wore your brother's overall today, Donnie. If you'd a had a clean 'un, you'd be dead meat."

"For real," his friend answers, but he is already

beginning to be dazed by the heat that rushed in upon the last diner's exit. "It's just too freaking hot," he says. I watch as he unzips and opens out his jumpsuit a few inches to get some air. Tattooed on the hairless field of his scrawny chest in scrolling letters, with hearts and roses, it says "Crystal."

Now that everyone has figured out who belongs to whom, I'm ready to go. But first I write down the address for that Reverend Al gospel show. After all, who knows when your own name might expire just as quickly as the fried squash that was erased from Big Mama's menu board by Fate in a hair net? I'd like to be ready when that day comes.

Van

Robert Clemente

The blue truck slid across sands not caring for job nor time. Children sleeping awake to smells of cheese sandwiches and juice to fill the tanks. Horses whinny in the wheeled box knowing their tack will track the team. The humming of the tires sings of busier days. Glistening chrome and smiling lights adorn its frame, inside and out. The swelling lessens as each one leaves its belly-relief and rest. It wonders when it drinks again and is sure of more miles rolling out its caring, snuffing out its fearing of twisted metal and broken glass. The beach water cools hot feet while sand creeps into carpets. Farm dirt stains clean rugs and walls, but the barn holds work done. The blue truck resists the backwards pull of the tow. Standing high on the platform as it leaves, the chrome face blinks a wink, and water drips from a headlight.

A Grown Man
Michelle Phillips

Out the window I gaze And I
become so amazed It's so hard for
me to believe That one day my
little boy will be A grown man.

Out the window I gaze And
still I am so amazed My
grandchildren playing I see
Where my little boy used to be
But is now, a grown man.



Pasture Lesson I "I was Mario Andretti when Great Granddaddy let me drive."

Eddie Gore
Photography

Joe Robby
Kevin McMichen

"MAY DAY MAY DAY!" I heard him say. It
was not long until we had crashed,
Everything that was around me was smashed.

The sad thing is that no one knows where we are,
Because base camp is too far. I looked and seen that
I'm all alone, Even though everyone was here, they
were all gone.

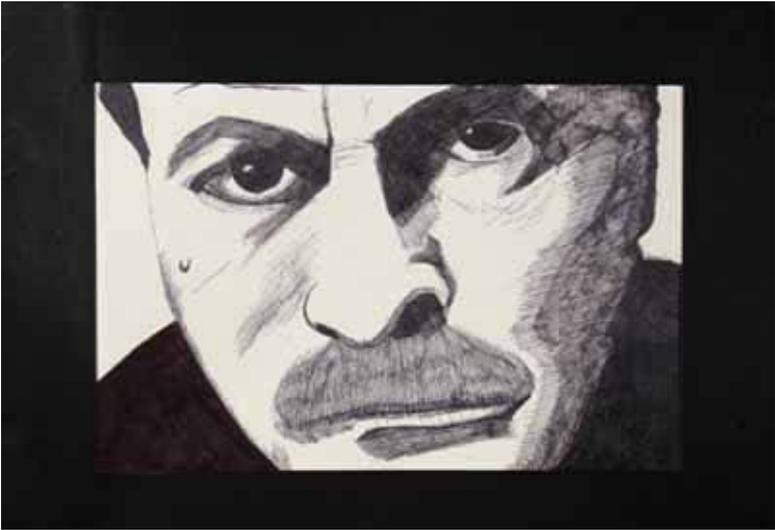
I looked at the pilot, my best friend John, it was evident he
was dead. I looked for the gun man, Bob, and saw that he
had no head. I crawled from the wreck and onto the
ground, Again I took a look around.

Then all at once, bullets began flying at me fast And I
started to wonder just how long I would last. Then I
felt a sharp pain in my arm, and blood started to run
down. Slowly I fell down, down to the ground. Then I
started to feel really cold And I didn't know if I could
hold, For I was so very, very cold.

A thought ran though my mind that I'm now a MIA
And no one knows where I lay. Then an angel came to
me to say "I'm here to take you away" So I took her
hand and left my body, I remember looking back and
saying "now I'm no longer Joe Robby."

I'm Still Blessed
Antrina Stephens

One night I was in my bed thinking about all the finer things that seem nice that I don't have, but yet I'm still blessed. I might not wake up in the finest house, but yet I have a home. I'm still blessed. I might not have all the name brand clothes, but yet I have clothes to wear. I'm still blessed. I might not have hair all down my back, but yet I have hair. I'm still blessed. I might not have the fancy manicure and pedicure, but yet I have all ten fingers and toes. I'm still blessed. I might not have had an earthly father, but yet God is my father. I'm still blessed. I might not be the smartest person in the world, but yet God gave me common sense. I'm still blessed. I might not drive the tightest ride, but yet I drive a vehicle that gets me to point A and to point B. I'm still blessed. I might not have all the friends in the world, but yet I have God and my family. I'm still blessed. I might not go to the finest school, but yet I'm in school. I'm still blessed. I might not have a job, but God still supplies all my needs and sometimes my wants. I'm still blessed. I might not have the man of my dreams, but yet God is there. I'm still blessed. I might not have everything my heart desires, but yet I realize that I'm still blessed.



Deep Thought
Shevon Rowell
Pen and Ink

?

Sandra Ingram

In how many hearts
In how many heads
In how many hands
In how many lives
In how many rooms
In how many houses
In how many towns
In how many cities
In how many counties
In how many states
In how many countries
How in the world

A Belt

Robert Clemente

I made a belt today -not that I could not find one or buy one. I wanted to make a belt out of old horse tack, the stirrup leathers, that long belty piece that hangs the iron from the saddle. So many times I raised and lowered those leathers on the saddles to make them fit my children into the saddle, onto the horse.

Having that strip of hide around my waist holds me together, I need a strong work belt, the kind that can no longer be bought, the thick but not too thick and wide but not too wide.

I like having horses; things they bring are unimaginable and unfathomable and reasonable. Had I not gotten that first pony and supported the children in their riding, showing, working ...

More beautiful than ever, under the dirt and grime of barn work, she draws up a business plan, her new vision and adventure, her own horse training facility, barn, and home. I see some things I wanted to give her but could not. I do not think she holds it to my debit. I hope she sees that her greater joy will come when she has those things because of her life now ... and me.

My belt suits me very well.

If Only I Could
Jennifer Reinert

I wish I could go back, Go back and do
some things over again.

I wish I knew then what I know now. How
things might have turned differently.

The troubles and struggles I have now, Would not be troubles
at all, just normal parts of life. All of the could of, should of,
and would of, I could say I did, Because I would know what I
could of, should of, would have done.

I would not want to change the experiences I have had. I
would only want to change the life my children have had to
live. This way of life was not by their choice, but by bad
choices that I made.

If only I knew what it would do, where it would take me,
I would have made a better choice.

I hope and pray that one day my children will see, That
if I could go back, go back and do some things over
again, I would, just to take some of their pain away.

Boss's Challenge
Ruthie Wheeler

My boss requested Does this
mean 'I'm to be tested?'"

I have no rhythm I
have no reason
However tis the season

So in respond to your challenge
I'll make an effort To put forth
some words That has no
meaning

Boss, here it is my answer to your challenge
May you not twitch when you read These
words put forth with no meaning After all
tis the season



The Night Before Ivan

Margie Satterfield
Photography



Patrick Morelli's "Behold"

Alison Payne

Photography

Walk into the Light:
Interview with Larry Carlos
Alison Payne

With recent news of some well-known entertainers spouting invidious epithets, the topic of racial profiling remains controversial. When my English 191 students read Brent Staples' essay "Just Walk on By: a Black Man Ponders his Power to Alter Public Space," they respond eagerly with examples of their own. After one such class discussion, Mr. Larry Adetokunbol Carlos, a student from Nigeria, shared a story so emotionally riveting that the air around us became charged with energy, as though lifting the room with its surge, as players would carry their champion shoulder high to celebrate his victory, or as the outstretched arms of a father might lift his newborn son high overhead to signify: behold, unto God, this is life.

The students' energy was one powerful enough to change lives. Its name is love, and where it exists, even the ugly hatred expressed in this story bows down in submission.

I wanted Larry's story to be told because such incidents happen all the time, and the damage that ensues can be devastating. This subsequently recorded interview pays tribute to Larry Adetokunbol Carlos, but also to the exceptional classmates who were finally giving Larry the welcome that his entrance to "paradise" had so cruelly perverted. Their names are listed at the end of the interview, since they were as much a part of the story as Larry was, for it was they who lifted him up and validated his worth.

The Interview

Payne: Larry, you recently shared a story in class that shocked everyone and created an amazing bond

of empathy for what you had suffered. Could you begin by explaining why you came to America and what happened when you arrived? Tell us where you are from and how you made the decision to come to the U.S.

Carlos: Each time I think about what happened on that class day, I look at it as something I never thought could happen. I thought, the day has come. Why not speak up? I had to release this, and thank God I did. I got my visa to come to the U.S. in February 2002. Considering the way the Nigerians, the Africans, the way third world countries look at America, if you are able to get the visa, you are going to the land of angels. You are going to paradise. That is the impression. When you look around you and everyone is poverty-stricken, you see that the desire to migrate is written on the faces of all who live in third world countries, especially Africa.

Payne: How do you think that that image of paradise is so thoroughly propagated? Is it through the media - television and magazines and such?

Carlos: Yes, it is everything. But they don't show the bad side. They don't show the poverty of Mississippi. All they show is Los Angeles, Hollywood, the bright lights. . . ooh, it is a dream. I can remember being back home and people saying, "If I could just smell the breeze of JFK airport, I would be alright." When I told my friends I got a visa, they were jubilating. Oh my goodness! But you would not know the truth until you got here.

Payne: What was your plan? Having attained a visa, what did you want to accomplish when you got here?

Carlos: I had the mind that I would visit this land that I dreamed about because I never thought I could. Actually, I was doing well back home, a little bit comfortable, where I could make it in life and have my little pleasures. But I thought going to America could be a great opportunity for me. But it would cost me a lot. I sold my car and some of my belongings because the flight is close to \$2,000. And it's not the flight ticket alone. You are expected to have money to spend, about \$500, and to send home, for you cannot leave your home in disarray. I got my visa in February, but I could not leave until May 10th. Everyone showed me to the airport, saying, "We are so happy you are going! You might start life all over again, but please do not forget me."

Payne: And that was the same year?

Carlos: Yes, it was May 2002. It was a direct flight to New York. It was like stepping into the unknown, but I believed I should be able to survive. I have survived Nigeria. If I can survive there, I can survive anywhere in the world.

Payne: But it seems so intimidating to me, to come alone to a new country, with no plan.

Carlos: Oh, there was a plan that I will stay with my niece who lives in Georgia. I would have to go to JFK and then board another plane to Georgia. I thought if I can work, I will, then go back 3, 4, 5 months and maybe return later.

Payne: So it was a possibility in the back of your mind that you might stay and build a life here?

Carlos: It is a dream of anybody from Africa, to come to America where the economy is better. The economy at home is nothing to write about. Even if you are a graduate, there is little chance of getting a job. That's why corruption is everywhere. You are pushed to a wall. You might struggle to complete your education, but after your bachelor's, there is no job. You stay at home 1, 2, 3 years. That is what often turns these people toward crime. There are people back home that are well-educated, but the dreadful economic conditions change them to an antisocial person that loves and depends on crime.

Payne: May I ask you. Larry, what was your level of education when you left Nigeria?

Carlos: I began my bachelor's, and I had the mind to come over here and continue with it or start working. During the course of my journey over, I met some people on the plane. Someone said it is easier if you go to New Jersey where you can catch a connecting flight. One man said, "My brother is coming to pick me up, and I can do you a favor. I can take you to the airport." Thankfully, I had met someone who was ready to help me out.

Payne: So was it before you left JFK airport that this incident occurred?

Carlos: Once I left the plane, I had to go through customs. When you go into the lobby, you have to enter immigrations. They have to look at your passport and ask how many days you will be staying. I passed that procedure. The men from the plane who offered to help me waited. When I came out of the door, I was [flanked by] immigration officers. As I passed. I was beckoned by another

officer. Ahhkh! I looked at him. I was already cleared. I thought, what should disturb me any more? He said, "Come over here!" I looked back at the guys who were waiting, and he asked me, "Where did you put it?"

I said, "Put what?" He said, "Where did you hide it?" "What? I don't understand you."

Then they pulled me aside. I was afraid. I was confused. They said, "Let me see all your stuff." They held my bag and threw everything on the floor. They searched and searched my things. All my clothes and everything.

Payne: So everything that was in your suitcase was just tossed out onto the floor?

Carlos: Everything to the floor. He touched everything. Then he said again, "Where did you hide it?"

"Hide what?" I said. "I don't have anything. I was holding juice that they gave us on the plane. My lips were dry, my throat was dry, so I raised the juice and took a sip.

He looked at me. He said, "OK, you must have swallowed it." I said, "Swallowed what?" He said, "How many parcels did you swallow

- how many kilos?" I said, "I don't understand. Please enlighten me."

He said, "You want me to enlighten you? I surely will. Step aside!" He turned to the guys that were waiting for me and said, "You can go." I was so embarrassed. Everyone was just looking at me! He said, "Follow me. Leave your *shit* right there" (that was the way he said it). Then two other immigration officers came behind me, and I followed them into a room where there

about ten other officers and again he asked, "How many did you swallow?" "Swallow what? I don't understand what you are talking about."

He said, "I'm going to scan you. I'm going to do an x-ray of you, and as soon as I do, you will spend the rest of your life right here."

I said, "What are you looking for?" He said, "You don't know?" I said, "I don't know what?" The rest of the

men were jeering, talking, laughing. I looked right and I looked left, and there was nobody to help me. I started shedding tears because I was so confused and frightened. They took me to another room with two other immigration officers, and I was stripped naked, stripped of everything, naked, and he was touching my stomach, touching my head, touching everywhere. Then they said for me to bend over. In my mind, I said, I don't do these things! I don't do this! They said, "You will never tell the truth."

I said, "You did not see anything in my bag. You did not see anything in me. Why did you do this to me?"

He said, "You have to sign a paper to be x-rayed."

Payne: Before you go on, let's clarify that you are in this room, with these very intimidating agents, stripped down to your most vulnerable self, defenseless, not even clothing to cover or protect you. What could you be feeling at this time?

Carlos: I was so frightened. I thought of the movies I've seen. My cousin, who came to America before me, had oriented me: don't follow bad gangs; don't let anyone push you to do something

wrong; if the police stop you, you stop. Raise up your hands because you are a black man. He told me when you are stopped at night and see police lights stopping you at a dark place, just go at a slow pace toward a light. Go where there is light because you are in peril – anything might happen. As these words came to me. I was shivering. The air conditioning was on, but I was sweating with fear.

Payne: Larry, did you know they were looking for drugs? Did you understand?

Carlos: I did. When they stopped me, I finally understood. But it did not come straight away to me.

Payne: Do you think because you a good and law-abiding man, these references to drugs were so alien to you that the questions they were asking you made no sense? That you had no context in which to frame them?

Carlos: Yes, I was thinking at the beginning maybe he had a problem with my visa. Then I regretted sipping the juice. It was just too much for me to believe. After a while I looked around at my clothes scattered all over the floor. It was then that I started shedding tears, and I summed up the courage to ask, "You know what? Just let me go back home!" (I am sorry. I am shedding tears now when I reflect it.) I was trying to check his name, but his name tag was missing. I could see the clip where it had been before. The first time he stopped me, he had a badge, but when he took me to the other room, he had no badge on. I told him, "I bought a round trip ticket. I can go back home. Let me go back to my country. I would

rather go back than take all this embarrassment.” They were tossing me around, turning me, using one hand to turn me around and around. I couldn’t say nothing. I couldn’t find the words to say.

Payne: When you asked that agent if you could just immediately return home, what did you think, after having imagined this place as a paradise? Was home such an imperfect place, but one where at the very least you would feel safe and secure?

Carlos: While they were tossing me around, what was going through my mind was I never had felt like this back home. I was OK at home. It was then it came to mind like a flash, like a hallucination, seeing myself at home, in my little abode, where I was living in safety and my little comfort. It was at that moment I realized that the positivity in me changed. I was not seeing the beautiful United States any more. I was seeing an ugly side and I was seeing the hatred in everybody. I might come out safe, but they had ruined the welcome. In my culture, you always know if someone loves you if you see the welcome. If the welcome is not good, it’s better for you to leave, for if you proceed, you might not come out alive.

Payne: So, traditionally, how someone is welcomed is an omen of what is to come?

Carlos: [In every part of my country] the welcome is very, very important. If you are a stranger without welcome, then you should leave, or something evil can happen to you. So that was what I felt as I pleaded with him, “Can I go home?” He said, “Put on your pants.” Hammering

all the words! "Do you only speak *bull shit*? Don't you understand English?" I understood that I had no status. I put on my clothing and was taken back to the room where others agents were. I looked all around the room, and there was no other person with my color. They were laughing and jeering at me. I pleaded once more, "Please, just let me go home." Then the room was quiet. They realized what it meant for someone who is just arriving to say I want to leave. They began moving out of the room. One officer said, "We'll be tracking you. Pick up your stuff and go - go!" I was so nervous I left my jacket, with the \$500 in my pocket.

I went to the lobby. I didn't feel like coming into the country any more. I looked at it as a different place. Then a guy came running back to me, yelling, "You should come back here!" I briefly thought, should I drop my bag and run for it? But he had a gun. I went back as he yelled at me that I left my jacket and threw it back at me. I checked my money and found that I now had only \$200. \$300 was gone, taken from me. I looked around. What would I do? So at a concrete curb outside I sat, and oh, I started shedding tears again. That was the reason for the crying. I looked all around, and there was nobody for me. A 35, 36 year old man shedding tears! But a cab driver must have been watching me. He came over and asked where I was going. He sounded a little bit like an African. He said, "I can take you to New Jersey for your flight." I was so scared, I couldn't even tell him what had happened.

Payne: Did you tell anyone about this?

Carlos: Nothing. To be sincere with you, I have not even

told people back home. The first time I ever mentioned it was in this class. My mom was 75 years old. I could not risk such a negativity on her because I don't know what might happen to her health. She holds me in high esteem, so I kept it to myself. It was when we were talking in class about Brent Staples that my mind went back.

Payne: Larry, I didn't realize. That's been – four years! You haven't spoken of this for four years? That's extraordinary!

Carlos: And since then I have never felt free. Now I learned in psychology that releasing your troubles gives you peace of mind. I mentioned it in my class, and I felt relieved. I had never felt welcomed until that day. I was so scared, because I am sorry ma'am, but you are white, too. I don't know how you will see it. The way the class responded I was so surprised and the welcome I got from my teacher, all my classmates, I felt relieved, and from that day, you can see me coming out in class. Each time I came to class, I thought what can I contribute today, for now I am welcomed.

Payne: I will never forget that day, Larry. It was as if the whole class wanted to lift you up and hold you safe from the terrible thing that had happened to you. Your story was a powerful narrative, and we all just felt privileged that you would offer it to us. But, tell me please, once you were finally on a plane from Newark, at what point do you start to be OK? At what point can the outrage and humiliation fade away so that you can find something hopeful in the prospect of staying here?

Carlos: I never felt positive again. I felt I should just get what benefit I can and leave. I felt that I am here alone, and I would have to be careful what I say. How could I describe even to my own niece what I had been through? I never knew something like that would come up in class. It was like a fire that had been burning Carlos: And since then I have never felt free. Now I learned in psychology that releasing your troubles gives you peace of mind. I mentioned it in my class, and I felt relieved. I had never felt welcomed until that day. I was so scared, because I am sorry ma'am, but you are white, too. I don't know how you will see it. The way the class responded I was so surprised and the welcome I got from my teacher, all my classmates, I felt relieved, and from that day, you can see me coming out in class. Each time I came to class, I thought what can I contribute today, for now I am welcomed.

Payne: I will never forget that day, Larry. It was as if the whole class wanted to lift you up and hold you safe from the terrible thing that had happened to you. Your story was a powerful narrative, and we all just felt privileged that you would offer it to us. But, tell me please, once you were finally on a plane from Newark, at what point do you start to be OK? At what point can the outrage and humiliation fade away so that you can find something hopeful in the prospect of staying here?

Mr. Larry Carlos' classmates, English 191, Fall 2006: Kelly Burney, Sue Chism, Cameron Gaston, Stasi Guerrero, Shellie Hagen, Nancy Hicks, Tamala Hobbs, Kristina Holsten, Brittney Humes, Nasir Javaid, Amanda Johnston, Kanika Mosely, Lauren Shumate, Liz Sims, Janette Thomas, Rita Tillman



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Joshua Albertson

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