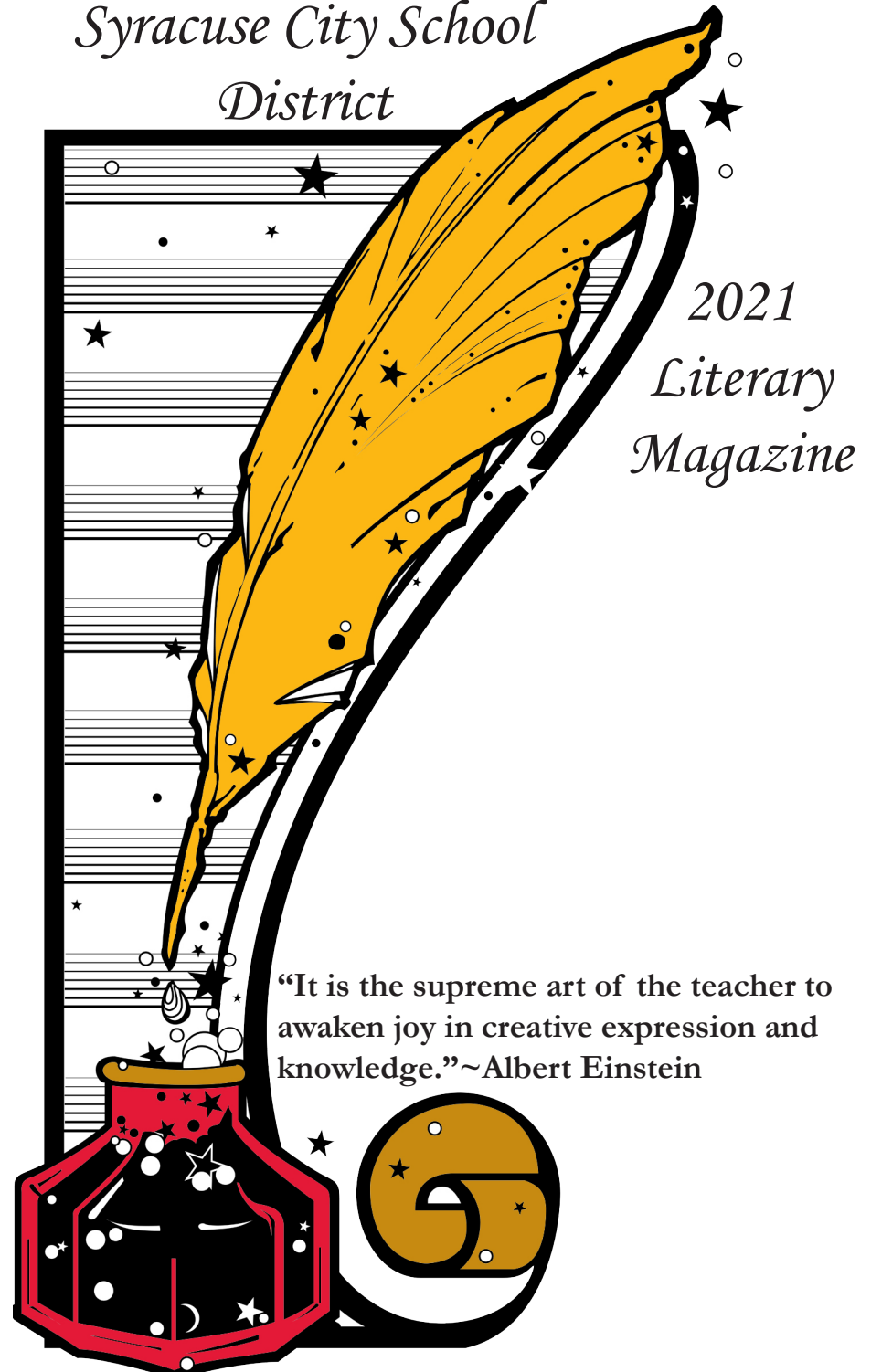


*Syracuse City School
District*

*2021
Literary
Magazine*



*“It is the supreme art of the teacher to
awaken joy in creative expression and
knowledge.”~Albert Einstein*

2021 SCSD Literary Magazine

The Syracuse City School District provides students with multiple outlets for artistic expression. One key outlet is the Literary Magazine: an annual publication showcasing superior works of art, photography, poetry, journalistic, and creative writing submitted by the students.

Many thanks to:

Rhonda Zajac, Director of English Language Arts
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Mrs. Jodi Rowe, Business Teacher and Program Design
Contributing SCSD Teachers and Staff

When day
comes we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in
this never-ending shade?

When day comes we step out of
the shade, aflame and unafraid,
the new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light, if only
we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.

Excerpt from *The Hill We Climb*
by Amanda Gorman

Syracuse City School District 2021 Literary Magazine

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“The future belongs to those
who believe in the beauty of their
dreams.”

~Eleanor Roosevelt

Poetry



MARIA MOHAMED
The Almost Dark Sky

JUSTO TRIANA
Como un árbol
Of the Broken (English)

JUSTO TRIANA
De lo roto
Like a Tree (English)

JUSTO TRIANA
Veteran

ABDIMALIK DAHIR
Where I'm From

CARLIANA RODRIGUEZ
Slam Poem

ANGELA KUMAH
Knock Knock Knock

GREER FOLEY
The Garden is Alive

The Almost Dark Sky BY MARIA MOHAMED

Ramadan on 204 Oak Street
Fast until the sun would set
The air filled with hunger
Revealing a beautiful mix
Of orangish-red lighting and longing

The smell of mom's tabikh that comes from the kitchen
I'm floating towards it
The heat in the air surrounding my skin as I enter
I am able to qualify the feeling
Of refreshment without tasting
--a dizzying appetite
The scents lingered, crept in the air
Down the hallway
Seeping into the rooms

Amirah and I, anxiously spread out the sufra on the living room floor
Then, finally, as the moon rises, we all feast together
The noise of the house progressively louder
The clanging of plates and the mix of voices
Until the notion of food releases its burden on all of us

I sat there, content
In a drifting thought
I lazily pondered
The dynamic of discipline and sacrifice
When across from me,
Amirah takes her last bite of the mahalabia
And gives me a quick glance and a smile

Como un árbol (Spanish)

BY JUSTO TRIANA

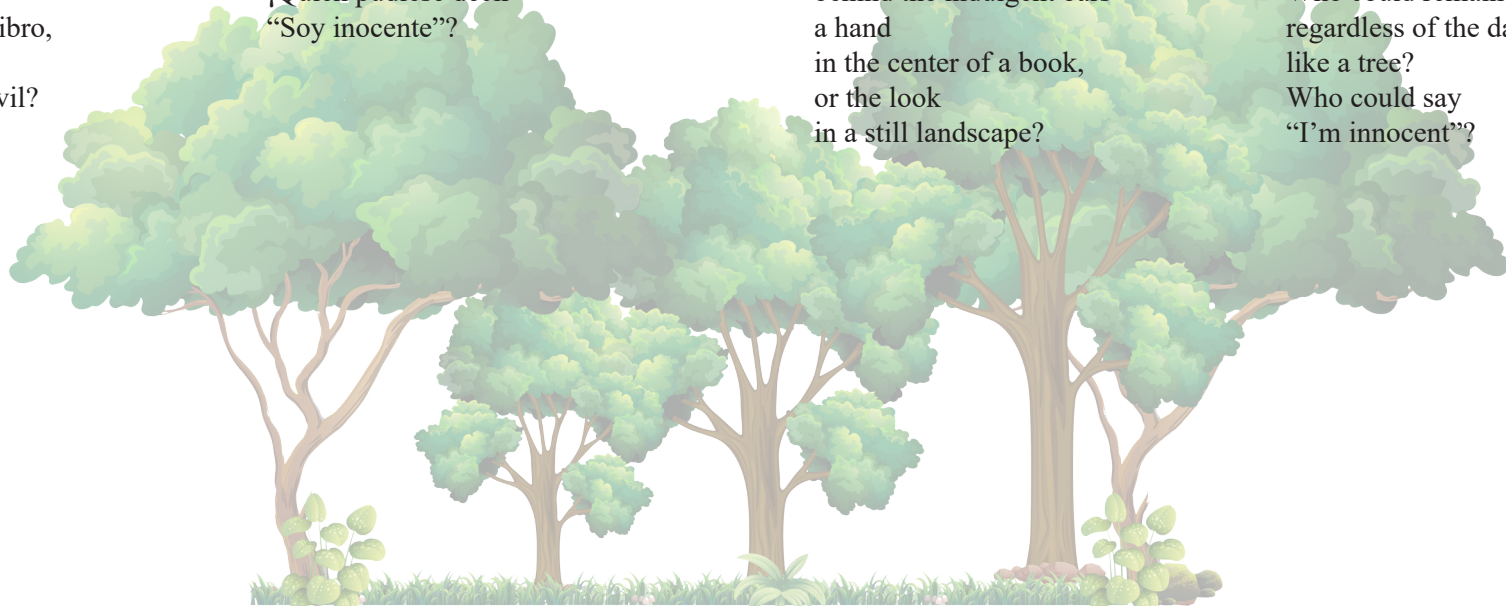
¡Quién estuviese preso en Dinamarca
en una cárcel de madera verde...
¡Quién pudiese admirar las tempestades,
los deliciosos grises
y el césped sin podar
por la escotilla
de una mazmorra quieta
al pie del bosque?

¡Quién pudiese
olvidarse de comer, y de dormir,
y no morir de hambre ni de sueño...
¡Quién se alimentara
de su respiración, o de visiones
descifradas por sus ojos,
o versiones
de una memoria paralela?

¡Quién posara
detrás de los barrotes indulgentes
una mano
en el centro de un libro,
o la mirada
en un paisaje inmóvil?

¡Quién fuese un cerdo
criado en un zoológico;
algún búfalo
dormido en un estanque,
o una ardilla en un patio
de una mansión sin dueño?
¡Quién hubiese nacido en una sierra
vasca,
en otro siglo,
y escuchado los cantares del silencio?
¡Quién hubiese salido en la mañana
a pastorear ovejas...
quién hubiese sido
los pasos del camino,
la sombra en la cañada,
una silueta en el crepúsculo?

¡Quién permaneciese
al margen de los días
como un árbol?
¡Quién pudiese decir
“Soy inocente”?



Like a Tree (English)

BY JUSTO TRIANA

Who could have been imprisoned in
Denmark
in a green wooden jail...
Who could admire the storms,
the delicious grays
and the unpruned grass
through the hatch
of a still dungeon
at the edge of the forest?

Who could
forget to eat, to sleep,
and not die of hunger or fatigue...?
Who could feed
on his breath, or on visions
deciphered by his eyes,
or versions
of a parallel memory?

Who could place
behind the indulgent bars
a hand
in the center of a book,
or the look
in a still landscape?

Who could be a pig
raised in a zoo;
some buffalo
asleep in a pond,
or a squirrel in the yard
of an abandoned mansion?

Who could have been born in a Basque
sierra,
in another century,
and could have listened to the songs of
silence?
Who could have gone out in the morn-
ing
to herd sheep...
who could have been
the steps of the way,
the shadow in the glen,
a silhouette in the twilight?

Who could remain
regardless of the days
like a tree?
Who could say
“I’m innocent”?

De lo roto (Spanish)

BY JUSTO TRIANA

Si te sirve de consuelo yo también he roto cosas que quería mucho. Cosas con mirada y pies; objetos que se movían por sí mismos...

Reliquias que permanecerán detrás del vidrio de lo que ya no existe; copias que desafían la brillantez de sus originales, cuya mera presencia es una conspiración.

He roto imágenes que me sabía de memoria. He profanado altares. He ignorado sendas... He quebrado las paredes de lo inmóvil.

He roto colecciones de felicidades. He hecho añicos tantas realidades que yo ya no soy más que una partícula de tiempo anclada en el sonido de aquel golpe presente aún en los fragmentos de mi polvo.

Of the Broken (English)

BY JUSTO TRIANA

If it makes you feel better, I've also broken things that I loved very much. Objects with eyes and feet...

Relics that will remain behind the glass of what no longer exists; copies that defy the brilliance of its originals, whose mere presence is a conspiracy.

I've also broken images that I believed I knew by heart. I've desecrated altars. I've ignored well-worn paths... I have broken the walls of the immobile.

I have broken collections of happinesses. I have shattered so many realities that I am no more than a particle of time anchored in the sound of that blow still present in the rigid, cutting fragments of my dust.

Veteran
BY JUSTO TRIANA

I didn't know his name
but he fought in World War II.
He asked my age, and said:

*"If that happened today
you wouldn't be here...
You would've been with us."*

His eyes...!
I saw a gust of hail, a landing
on the fangs of a beach,
the sigh of those who bear
the weight of death
on their young shoulders.
And countless waves of men
arriving to their destiny
in the morning.

I didn't know his name
but I received
a promise from his soul.
I took the gun
that remained in the trenches of his
forehead
for myself.
I lived his life
in a few seconds.
I saw the distant light
of what had happened;
to free those undead men
trapped in the photos.

Oh war... Oh war!
Why don't you ever pay for
the anguish of your children?

I didn't know his name
but I thanked him.
I saw the sparkles sprouting
through the clefts of his flesh burned by
the years.
I didn't know his name, but after all
what is a name if not a label
for a piece of time?

Wrinkles are sheets that cover
a great mirror:
the colors have returned,
the movement has reborn;
the hidden face has come out of the
shroud.
Another me has met me;
another me has left
to live where consciousness
will not ever arrive.

Farewell! I guess it's time
for you to go. I'll stay down here
where lives converge,
and ephemeris, and names,
and the ruins of luxuries and pains
are swept away together
—perhaps drowned—
by the dizzying currents of reality.

Where I'm From
BY ABDIMALIK DAHIR

I am from Anjero that I cook on
Saturday and Sunday with my
family.

If I see my family eat the Anjero that
I cook, that makes me happy.

I'm from my mom that takes care of
me from when I was a baby.

and from my whole family who takes
care of me when I'm sick or when I
need something.

If I see my family take care of me
like this, it is enough for me.

I am from my sister that I love so
much. If I see her, she is happy and if
she sees me, I'm happy.

She tells me, "I like to see you like this
it makes me happy."

I'm from Sheikh Saalax when I listen to
him makes me proud to be Muslim.

I want to be like him and when I see
him that makes me proud to be Muslim.



Slam Poem
BY CARLIANA RODRIGUEZ

Racism has occurred
For centuries.
From slavery to segregation to
equality.

You hear that word
Equality

And you assume
They finally got it right.
No.

There is still racism
It happens every day.
Young black children discriminated
against
Because of the color of their skin
Or the texture of their hair
Or the shape of their lips.

It is no surprise
These children grow up
And stand up
Because they know
The difference between
Right and wrong.

Black people are beautiful!
The color of their skin,
The texture of their hair,
And the shape of their lips
Make them even more beautiful.

If these simple words
Get into your brain,
Making you think about change,
And you find yourself
Wanting to stand up
And help to make a better society
And a brighter future

For young black people,
Then
Do it.
Why?
Because BLACK LIVES MATTER!

Knock Knock Knock
BY ANGELA KUMAH

Knock, Knock, Knock

The bright doors open as your head
clears when you come to the real-
ization of the sunlight streaming
through

You're dreaming of plans being
perfectly made with an appreciative
smile

Everyone needs care

It makes sense to get up off of the
floor away from a little perspective
and to grow up ignoring the damage
of history

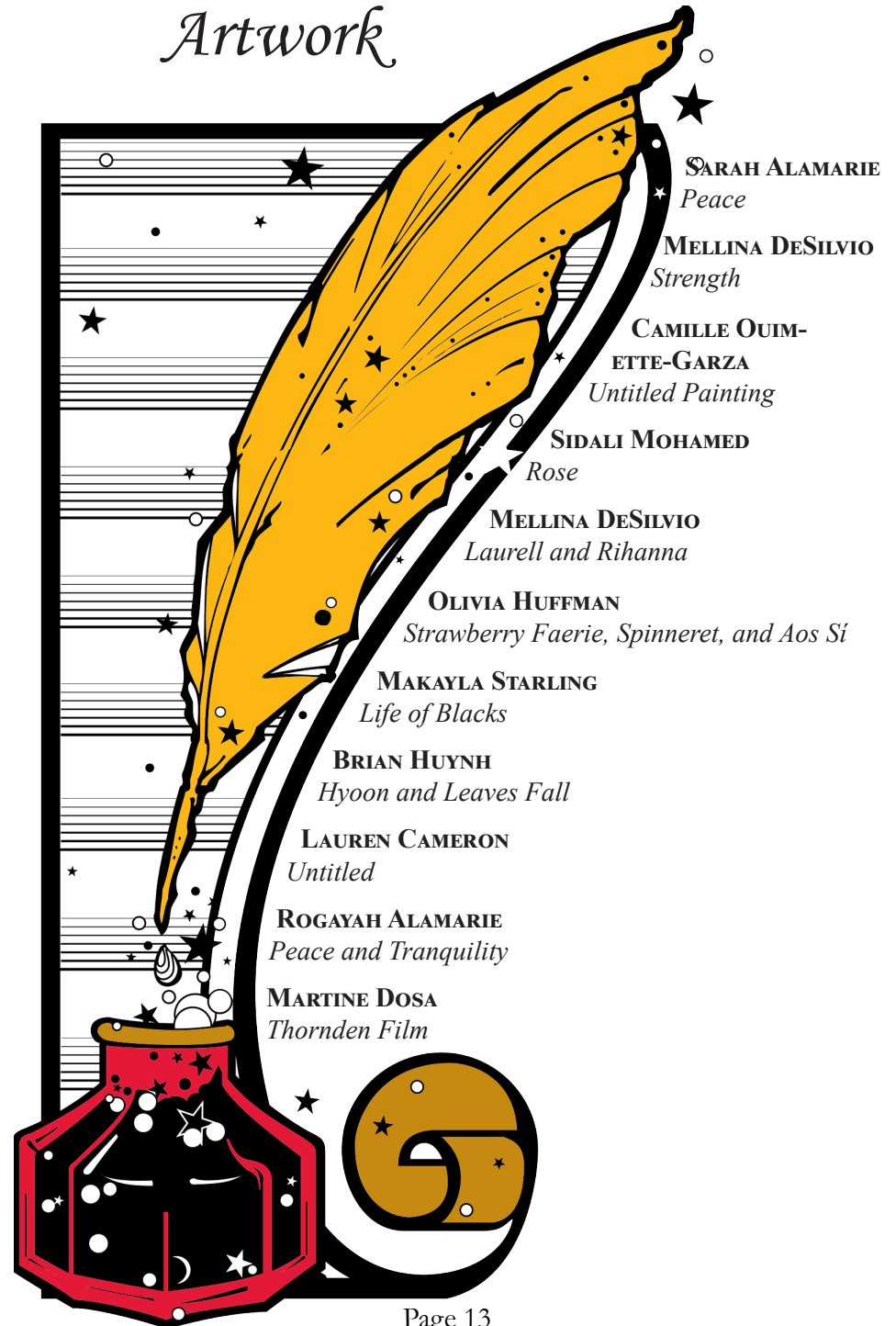
It is the truth to get some rest so you
can change and add to an evolution

Life is unthinkable
but your best interests are right in
front of you

Hear the door open
Get up and reach for space

Warm springtime air,
Roses grow,
Springtime satin petals, soft and fair
The garden is alive with secrets I
desire to know

When winter comes
fresh airs and blue skies come too
with creatures sleeping in their dens,
and children with sugar plums
Thistles left from the long-dead
roses, the bees are out of view
Still then the Garden is alive, and
filled with mystery.



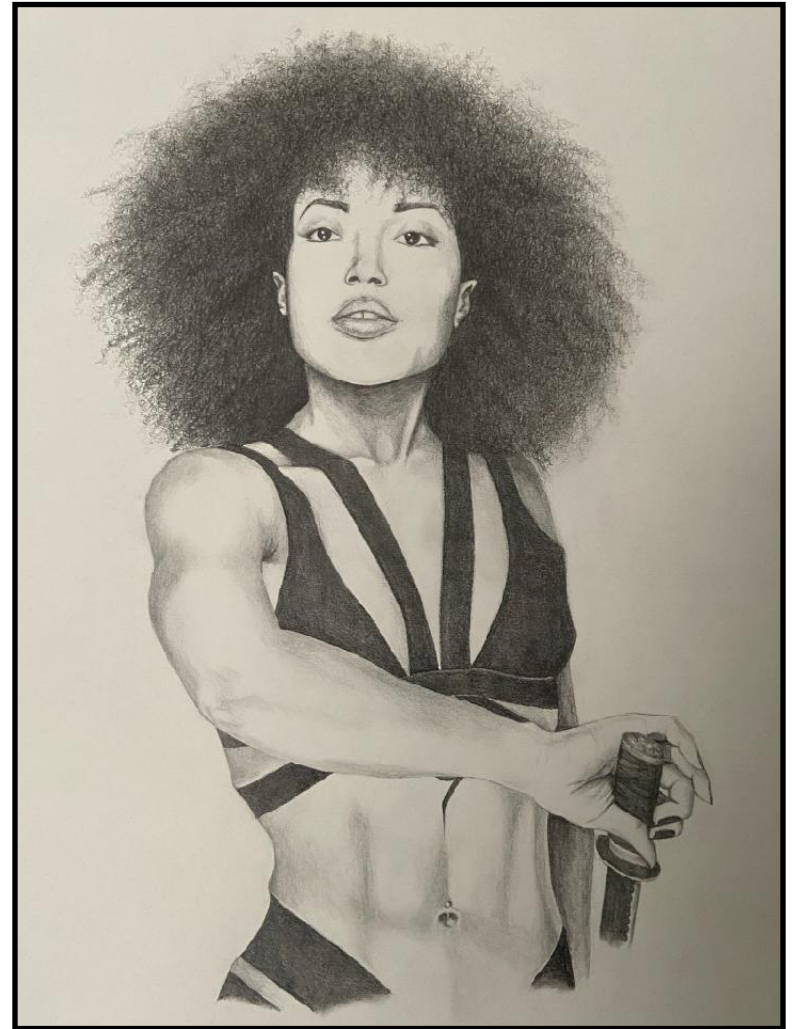
Peace
BY SARAH ALAMARIE



Sarah is a junior at Henninger High School. This painting received Director's Choice at the Community Folk Art Center's 2021 Teen Art Competition Exhibition.

In this piece, As Sarah was painting the bird, she only chose bright colors to represent the bird because there is always a bright way to the world. She chose to water paint a bird because birds represent intelligence and peace and show that dreams take time.

Strength
BY MELLINA DESILVIO



Mellina is a junior at Henninger High School. This drawing received First Place and Best in Show at the Community Folk Art Center's 2021 Teen Art Competition Exhibition.

In this piece, Mellina had hoped to capture a lifelike drawing with a great amount of detail. In doing so, she remembered how important it was to have a piece show emotion. Therefore, Her fierce face and stance drew her in and challenged her to experiment with new technique.

Untitled
BY CAMILLE OUIMETTE-GARZA



Camille is a junior at Nottingham High School. This painting received Second Place at the Community Folk Art Center's 2021 Teen Art Competition Exhibition.

In this piece, the central idea was supposed to be about all of the current chaos going on in the United States, especially how a lot of it was self-inflicted. However, she hesitated to give it a specific meaning because seeing how the viewer interprets the piece is one of the most interesting parts to her.

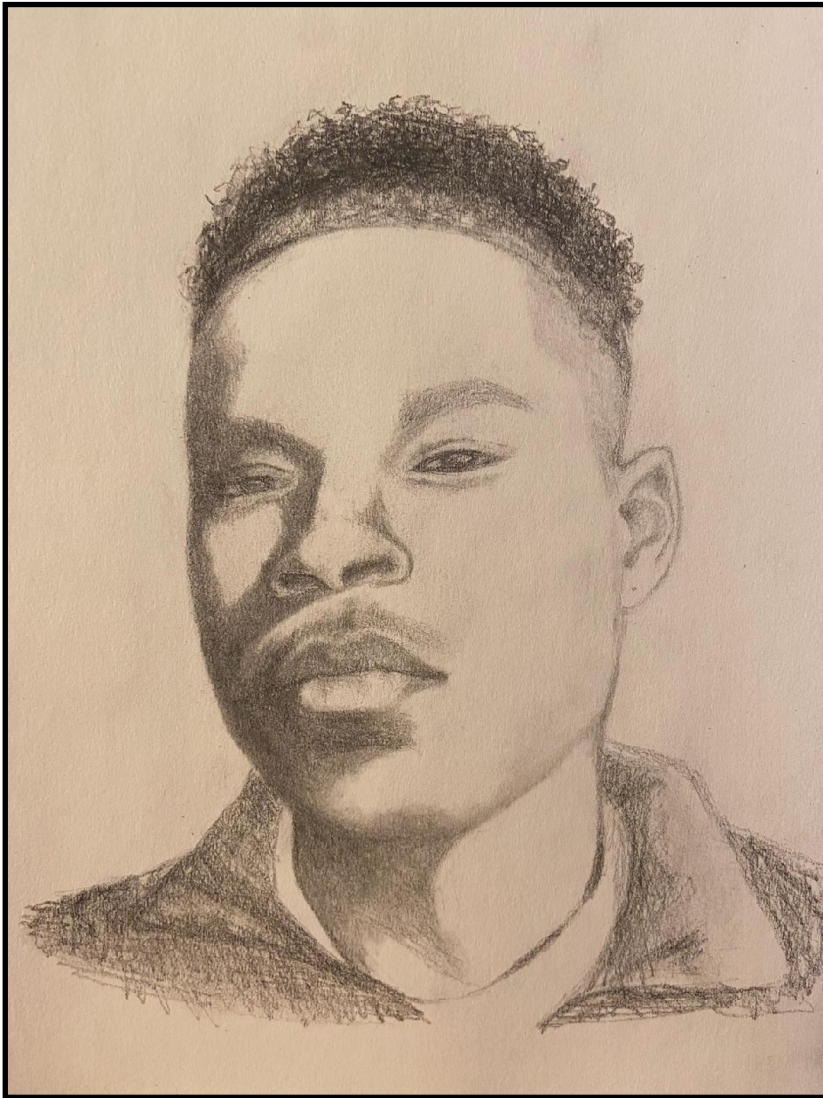
Rose
BY SIDALI MOHAMED



Sidali is a senior at Henninger High School. This drawing received Third Place at the Community Folk Art Center's 2021 Teen Art Competition Exhibition.

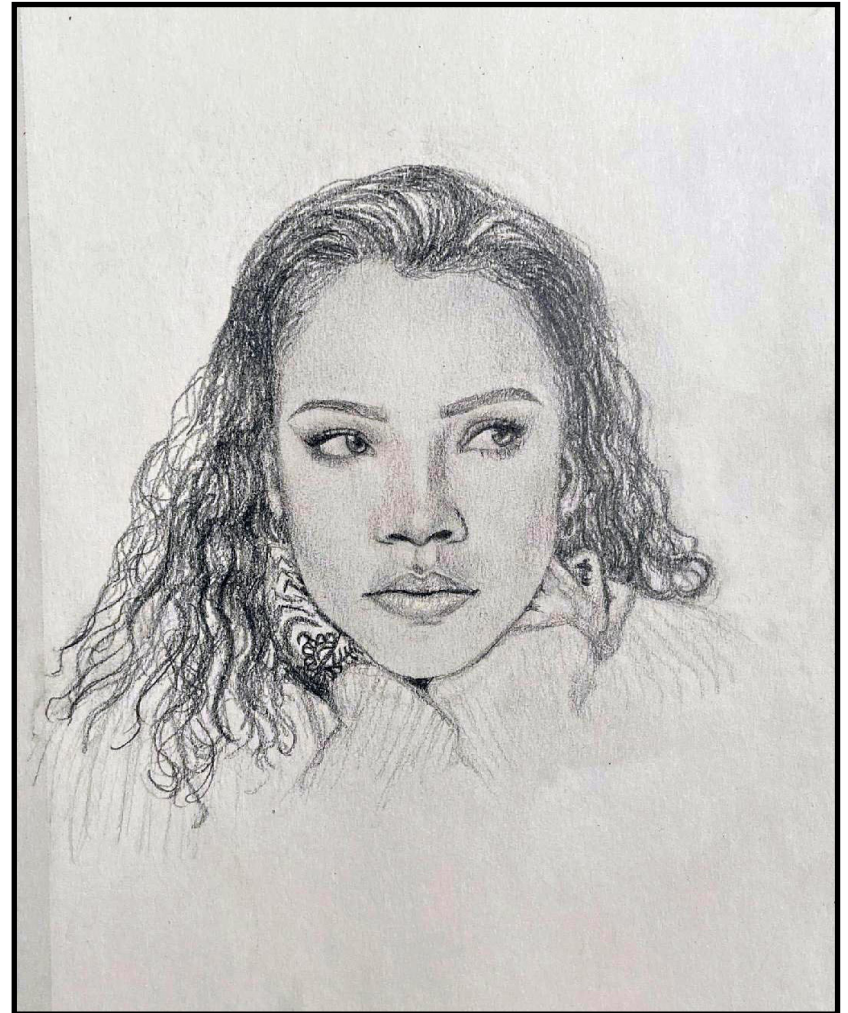
In this piece, Sidali created this rose to evaluate what techniques he needed to work on for his pencil drawings. The rose is easy to draw working with pencil, but making it look almost real is challenging.

Laurell
BY MELLINA DeDILVIO



Mellina is a junior at Henninger High School. This drawing received an Honorable Mention at the CNY Scholastic Art Competition.

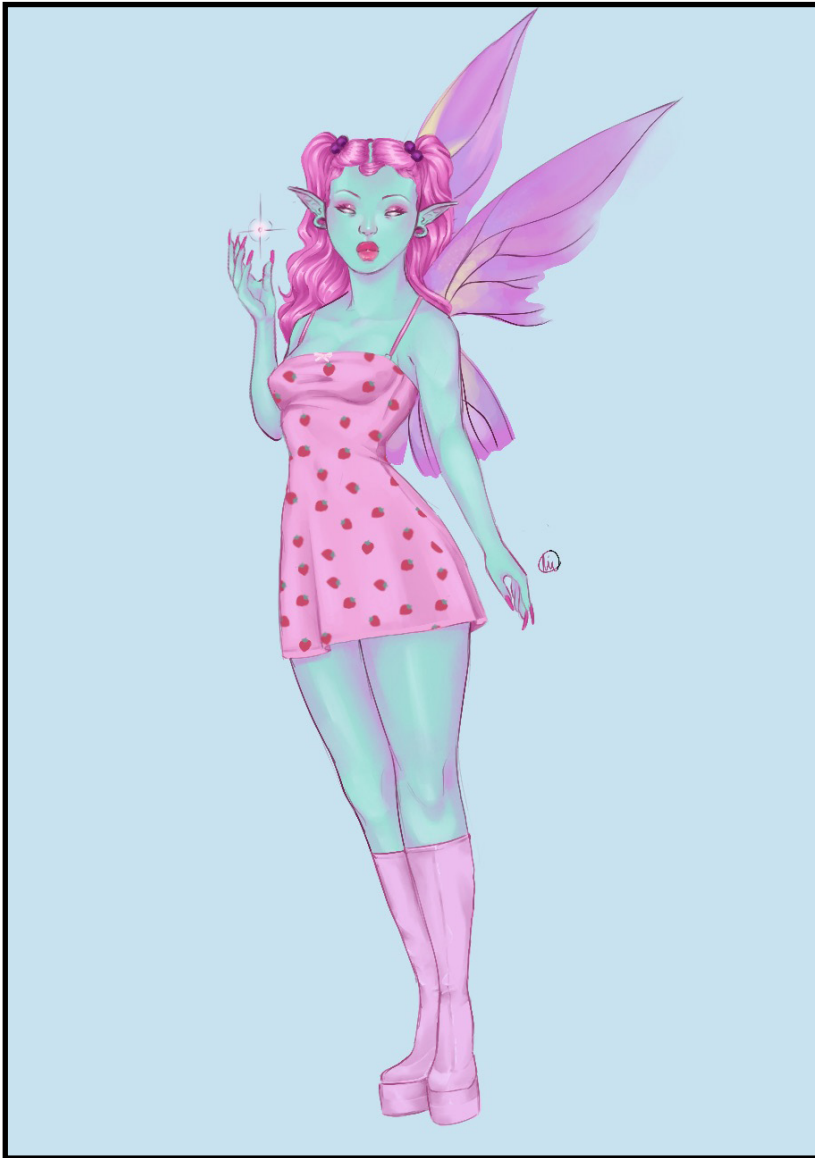
Rihanna
BY MELLINA DeSILVIO



Mellina is a junior at Henninger High School. This drawing received the Silver Key Award at the CNY Scholastic Art Competition.

Mellina explains that art is a way to keep her mind focused on one thing. During the past year, drawing has been an amazing help; a way of keeping her sane through the pandemic.

Strawberry Faerie
BY OLIVIA HUFFMAN



Olivia Huffman, Strawberry Faerie, April 2021, Digital

Description: In continuation of the Aos Si theme, I created a very feminine, contemporary portrayal of classic faerie. I tried to incorporate elements of modern Y2K and 90s fashion while keeping to a fantasy motif.

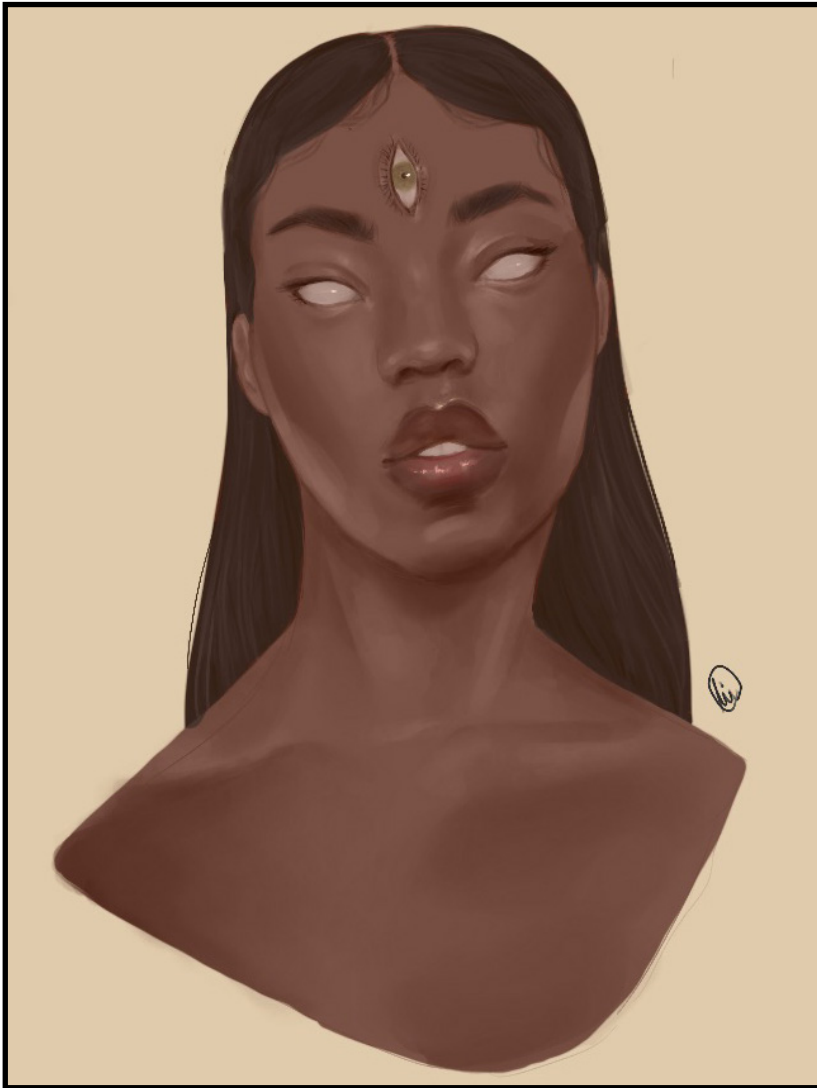
Spinneret
BY OLIVIA HUFFMAN



Olivia Huffman, Spinneret, May 2021, Digital

Description: The Pùca are the shapeshifters of Irish Folklore and have used their shapeshifting abilities for both good and evil. While these creatures can shift themselves into human forms, they still retain some aspect of their true animal nature. I tried to impart what I thought a spider would shape shift its way into. While being able to turn into a beautiful girl, Spinneret's eyes never cease to recede.

Aos Sí
BY OLIVIA HUFFMAN



Caption: Olivia Huffman, Aos Si, February 2021, Digital

Description: The Aos Si in Irish folklore are a supernatural race of faeries who live underground, away from the prying eyes of humans. Due to the darkness of this magical underworld, the woman above has lost her conventional sight - leaving her with only her third eye to navigate the world. While making this piece I was influenced by Irish myths.

Hyoon
BY BRIAN HUYNH



Brian Huynh is a junior at Henninger. "When you have an idea, pursue it. You may have to leave your comfort zone, but if you love what you create, your result will show that."

Leaves Fall
BY BRIAN HUYNH

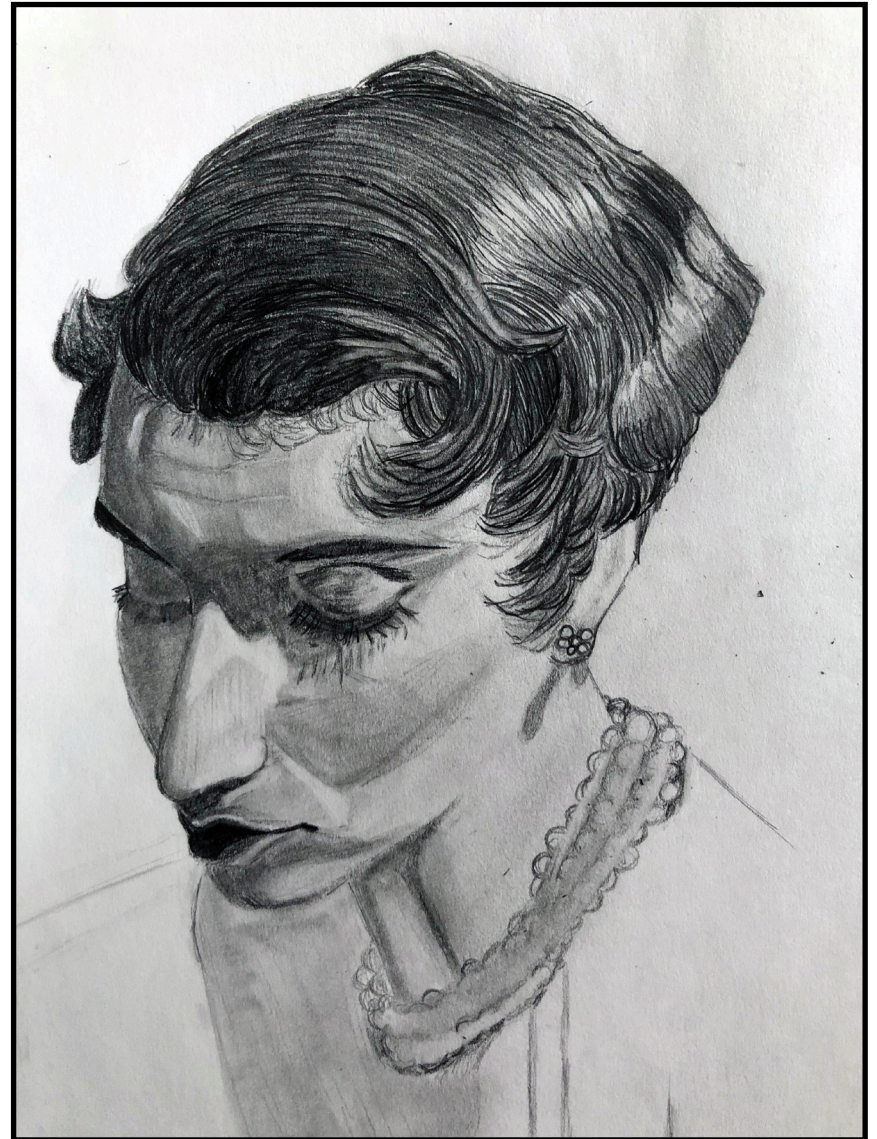


Peace and Tranquility
BY ROGAYAH ALAMARIE



Rogayah is a junior at Henninger High School.

Untitled
BY LAUREN CAMERON



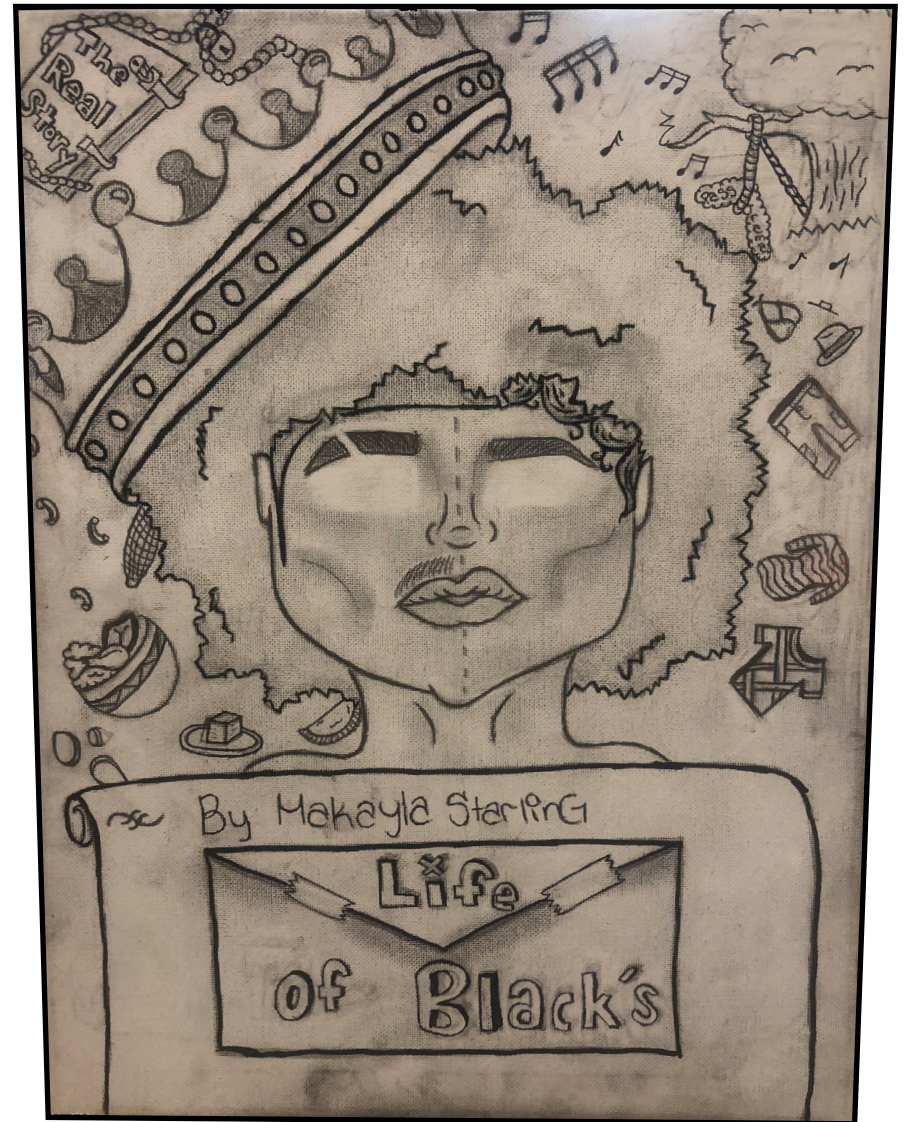
Lauren is a junior at Henninger High School. This drawing received an Honorable Mention at the CNY Scholastic Art Competition.

Thorden Film
BY MARTINE DOSA



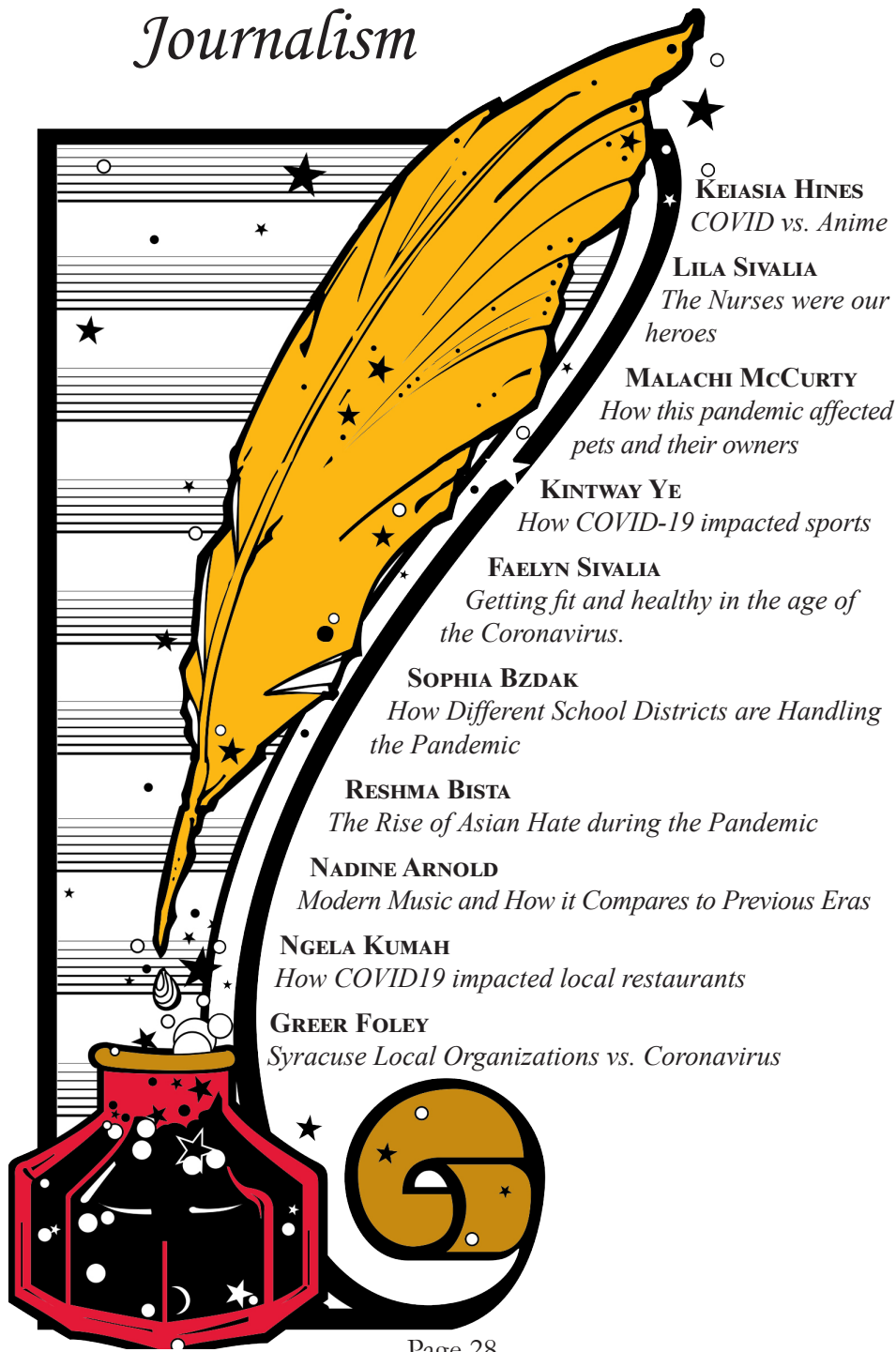
Martine is a junior at Nottingham High School.

Life of Blacks
BY MAKAYA STARLING



Makaya is a senior at Nottingham High School.

Journalism



KEIASIA HINES
COVID vs. Anime

LILA SIVALIA
The Nurses were our heroes

MALACHI McCURTY
How this pandemic affected pets and their owners

KINTWAY YE
How COVID-19 impacted sports

FAELYN SIVALIA
Getting fit and healthy in the age of the Coronavirus.

SOPHIA BZDAK
How Different School Districts are Handling the Pandemic

RESHMA BISTA
The Rise of Asian Hate during the Pandemic

NADINE ARNOLD
Modern Music and How it Compares to Previous Eras

NGELA KUMAH
How COVID19 impacted local restaurants

GREER FOLEY
Syracuse Local Organizations vs. Coronavirus

COVID vs. Anime

BY KEIASIA HINES

The date that marks one full year that this world has had been in constant battle against a virus that we never saw coming.

From schools shutting down to quarantine, humanity has been trying to stay as safe as possible while maintaining entertainment levels in the safety of their homes.

Heaven Nobel, a 16-year-old high school student at Nottingham high school, already has the solution as she's been doing it since the 5th grade.

"I watch anime, because it's interesting and I can never take my eyes off it. It's really entertaining and it's like taking a look at another culture as anime is basically Japanese cartoons," she states.

Heaven hasn't been in constant hardships but did have a few in 2020 that could scare most people. Her sister suffered from a seizure, only to be taken to a hospital and have it later been discovered that she has a touch of the virus. During that time, anime kept Heaven's mental health at ease.

Despite her own hardships, Heaven was against the idea of the 2020-2021 school year being cancelled, rather, she says, "Kids still need their education. Teachers should have just gone easier on giving work."

One Piece and Attack on Titan are some of the more famous works of anime known amongst the com-

munity, but COVID-19 got the upper hand again and caused for One Piece to release a PSA to the people from a loved character by the name of Tony Tony Chopper.

They also have a PSA at the beginning of every episode explaining how episodes are being filmed from home and they hope for the best during these difficult times.

"COVID-19 affects action animes the most because it has a lot more work to put into it than a romance anime of two people kissing," says Jania Carter, a 10-year-old student at Bellevue Elementary School who picked up anime during the quarantine as a solution to her overwhelming schoolwork.

Anime cons are huge conventions where people gather to hang out with friends, participate in panels, meet new people, cosplay, buy merch, and so much more.

"Cons are too big, that what caused them to be cancelled or postponed. People can't maintain six feet," says Asia Perineau, 16-year-old, student at Fowler High School, who also picked up anime in her spare time during quarantine, "I'd wear a mask to get my favorite animes and cons back on track".

Vaccines are coming out left and right and hopefully masks will be no more within our everyday lives and the anime community, till then, we fight every day more and more like our favorite protagonist.

The Nurses were our heroes during COVID-19

BY LILA SIVALIA

Nurses: the very soul of a hospital itself. Bustling around a constant schedule of aiding the old, curing the sick, and bandaging the wounded; all through a strong-willed courage to help the people around them.

Working so hard for so many people could get exhausting, but still, they continue their tasks, because they care for these patients. Going through new courses to become updated on facts, working long shifts to supplant their coworkers who cannot make it into work, and at the same time helping their patients recover.

Nursing was an exhausting profession even before corona virus struck, but now, during this pandemic, when there is a constant stream of infected patients that must be treated, nursing now seems like an even more difficult task.

Mary Sivalia, a nurse working at Crouse comments on the change of environment on the floor of her hospital, "During COVID-19, there were no visitors allowed." Patients no longer could have visitations from their family members to keep the potential of spreading COVID-19 limited. Thanks to COVID-19, Mary and her co-workers also had to wear protective clothing, Mary comments on "downing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) every time you go into a person's room." These were some of the few obstacles presented to the nursing staff.

More than this, though, was the risk. "when COVID-19 first came out, it was the fear factor, you know?" Nurses were in one of the major professions where COVID-19 was most prevalent, and the staff were worried. After all, they were the ones most likely to catch COVID-19 working in a hospital. Mary works in a department that deals with recovering patients and she talks about the certain changes being made on her floor.

Now in a pandemic riddled country, there would be no elective surgeries. Patients who were scheduled for less urgent surgeries would be rescheduled for a much later date. Due to this update, many nurses worked less hours with less patients, and had to 'float' to other floors to work. In the beginning of COVID-19 it was even more difficult.

"The department that I worked on was shut down, so you were on furlough... less pay."

Though the nursing staff were presented obstacles like gearing up with PPE, moving to other floors, and less pay during working their shifts in the hospital, the nurses were still able to help patients while at the same time keeping a steady head during the confusion.

Thanks to the nursing staff, surgeries for patients could remain open, and people can still get the help they need. Through this pandemic, it has proven to the world, that nurses are courageous and are not afraid to learn and adapt to new environments.

How this pandemic affected pets and their owners

BY MALACHI MCCURTLY

I asked my good friend Gwen and my grandfather on how the pandemic affected their pets and how they take care of them.

I will also be giving my own input on how this has affected my dogs and me as a pet owner.

The global pandemic has affected me by making it harder to get my dogs their food. That reason being because the stores closed earlier since this pandemic started. Also, I am busy during the day so it's hard to find a convenient time to go out and get them their food.

Another way it has affected my pets is that I can't take them outside as frequently as I usually would, so they are less active.

Due to that, my pets are sad more than they usually are and that's something that bothers me. When I asked my friend Gwen how this has affected her pets, her response was, "It's hard for me. I usually would take my pet to the pet groomers, but I cannot so, I have to do it myself. I can't wash him as good as the groomers do so you know it's taking a risk to his health."

My grandfather lost his pet, Shepard Maximus during this pandemic, so this has affected him in a big way.

When I asked my grandfather about it he told me, "It's hard man, you know. Max was more than just a dog, he was friend and losing him obviously was hard. So, this affected me in a big way emotionally."

He also said, "The really hard part about it is realizing that you can't say for certain when this will end for people like myself who have pets. So, it's going to be a risk for who knows how long. It's always going to be something that affects you because it puts your pet at risk." On the other hand, my grandfather and my grandma got a new puppy just like Mr. McDowell. They got a *pandemic pup*.

The pandemic had a really big impact for people with pets. It made life harder for pets and for owners to know what they need and to care for them. I will say this, as long as we keep doing our best to take care of our pets, we will see better days for our pets and ourselves.

How COVID-19 Impacted Playing Sports

BY KINTWAY YE

During a pandemic playing sports can be at a risk especially contact sports like wrestling, football, and soccer.

Many athletes were devastated and upset as Fall sports in 2020 were postponed. Even though school soccer was not available, club soccer was available. But there was a catch; masks must be worn at all times, no spectators allowed, and observe social distance.

Athletes don't get to play or practice as often. The season might've gotten canceled and athletes could have gotten COVID-19 while playing sports.

One of players from Nottingham boys' soccer explained the whole situation playing soccer while in a pandemic.

"COVID-19 spreads easily and when you're playing a sport. You're not 6 feet apart making the virus spread easily. Even if all the players and staff members are tested, there is still a chance of the virus spreading. So, you never know," explained Bibek.

Playing soccer while wearing masks can make it really hard to breathe.

While running, it can be even worse.

"Running with a mask on is very hard. I can't breathe properly, but that won't stop me from getting onto the field," said Eliza, Nottingham Soccer player.

Team members all agree that playing contact sports is risky. Testing should be done frequently for the entire team; including players, coaches, staff and even family members to be safe from catching and spreading the virus. But, there's still a chance of risk.

Fall soccer would be able to start in spring 2021.

"I'm very grateful to have a season for my girls. They've worked really hard for the upcoming season. We might have bad weather on some days, but that didn't stop us from practicing and having fun. Of course, we followed the guidelines of COVID-19 to make sure every player was safe," explained Coach H. United Girls Coach.



Getting Fit and Healthy in the Age of Coronavirus

BY FAELYN SIVALIA

When the pandemic first hit in March of last year, people went into quarantine. They were asked to stay home and refrain from being around people that were not their families.

Many public facilities were now being asked to close down. One of these facilities being gyms.

Without knowing how long the lockdown would last, people began to panic. How were they going to meet their New Year's resolutions in lockdown? The answer being, they must learn to adapt and get used to a new way of living.

Learning to adapt in this case means to find new ways of staying active and healthy.

During the quarantine, many people chose to give up on their goals because it was just too hard for them. Without the gym, some people had no other resources, such as equipment to continue working out and achieving a fit lifestyle.

These people bought equipment, watched countless YouTube videos, downloaded apps and fitness programs. They let home workouts become the new normal.

Nothing was going to let anything stop them from achieving their dreams.

Mrs. Graves, a teacher at Nottingham high school says, "It seems to correlate to socioeconomic status. If you have access to fitness programs it seems to improve fitness,

while if you don't have access to weights and/or facilities people did not fare as well physically."

It's not just about the aspect of being fit in a healthy lifestyle. The only way you are truly going to be the healthiest and fittest version of yourself is if you start eating in the way your body needs you to eat.

This means eating a balanced diet and fueling your body with nutrient dense foods. This will give you energy for being physically active.

Mrs. Graves says, "Some took the time off to simply sit and eat and did not do well with health/diet aspects of being stuck at home."

Sometimes the diet part of being fit is the hardest part of the process, especially since there are restrictions because of the virus.

Although it can be hard for some people to master their diet without help from a nutritionist or coach, you can still be successful by doing some research.

Getting fit and healthy can be a hard challenge to face, and an even harder challenge because of the pandemic.

Some people have let that stop them from achieving their goals, but for some people the lockdown was an opportunity to change their lives for the better.

Even though gyms are opening now in the present day, people are still using the tools they have discovered in quarantine to be the best possible fit and healthy version of themselves.

How Different School Districts are Handling the Pandemic

BY SOPHIA BZDAK

Now that vaccines are being distributed, and schools are reopening, districts are handling the return differently.

A year into the pandemic, and a lot has changed. Some changes were caused by the COVID-19 virus while other changes just ran parallel to it.

Students spent a good portion of the school year exclusively from their computers and devices, learning virtually.

However, as vaccines are developed and precautions are being taken, things have gradually been opening back up.

Three school districts, Liverpool, Westhill, and the Syracuse City Schools, were looked at.

All three districts have kids going in two days a week, all are using the assistance of virtual learning, and all are planning on increasing in-person time or days at some point after Spring Break.

Schools in the Westhill District have in-person classes all day on the days they physically attend, as do Liverpool schools.

High schools in the SCSD only go half-days when in person, which end at around noon.

All districts are allowing kids to move between classes, which was inevitable, and Westhill and Liverpool have rules about specific directions you must travel when in the halls.



School buses line up to take in-person students home.

It seems that sports are also back for everyone, though not according to season.

Both Westhill and Liverpool are offering electives in person, such as gym, band, orchestra, and choir. All are taking place with the correct precautions, and with social distancing.

According to the students interviewed on the behalf of SCSD however, no in-person electives, nor gym classes, are currently running.

Even on in-person days, those classes are held virtually, once students reach home.

Parents of the interviewees are all willing to send their kids in more days when schools open up a bit more, but students have mixed feelings.

Many teachers from all districts have been vaccinated against the virus, so the possibility of going in more days, or even full weeks, is becoming more realistic.

The Rise of Asian Hate During the Pandemic

BY RESHMA BISTA

Hate crimes and incidents targeting Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have increased tremendously during the pandemic, resulting in injuries, trauma, fear, and deaths.

The origin of COVID-19 was reported to be first found in China, which resulted in Asians being blamed for it.

This goes way to back to the time when our former president, Donald Trump, pushed xenophobic rhetoric, referring COVID-19 as *Chinese virus* and Kung Flu.

Blaming a country for it gives a mass group of people the message that Asians are to be blamed, and a license to attack.

A group called Stop AAPI Hate (Asian American and Pacific islander) cataloged nearly 3,800 hateful incidents, during the first year of the pandemic, and the center for study of Hate and Extremism found Anti-Asian crimes rose from 49 crimes in 2019 to 122 in 2020, an increase of 149%.

This indicates the rise of Asian hate crime, the media outlets had yet to speak regarding global issue especially mainstream ones, until the murders of 8 women in Atlanta spa shootings on March 16, 2021 was reported, 6 women being Asian, it was committed by a white 21-year-old Robert Long who is said to possibly have "sex addictions."

He was charged with 8 counts of murder, police made a statement that shooter wasn't racially motivated, although he went to three Asian spas.

The other victims of violence are Vichar Ratanapakdee, an 81-year-old immigrant from Thailand, was violently shoved into the ground while he was walking in the Anza Vista, neighborhood in San Francisco on January 28. He was said to be still unconscious, sustaining brain hemorrhage, and died two days later. The families made a statement it was a hate crime although there wasn't sufficient evidence to consider it as one.

There was also, 64-year-old Vietnamese grandmother who was robbed and assaulted in San Jose, California, and the Noel Quintana, 61, was slashed across the face from cheek to cheek on the way to his jobs. "I was so scared because I thought I was going to die and nobody helped," stated Noel.

The list goes on. Elders have been the most targeted groups due to their vulnerability, and inability to stand up for themselves.

Pranita Gurung, who is a 15-year-old girl from Des Moines, Iowa, said "I'm just so tired of seeing Asian people get assaulted on spot; especially the elders who have to live in constant fear. My family might be next."

This is the harsh reality of many Asian Americans, who are in constant fear of being next, or their families being mocked, and hurt.

Modern Music and How it Compares to Previous Eras

BY NADINE ARNOLD

Music has changed over time. The modern music that many of us have become accustomed to, has also been criticized for its lack of originality and noticeable repetitiveness. Many prefer music from the 60s, 70s, and 80s instead.

MODERN MUSIC CLASSIFICATION

There is no question that music has changed over time. Every decade seems to bring a new sound to the radio along with artists that represent them. But is there an era of music that reigns superior to all others? This question isn't so easily answered.

First, we must recognize the differences in modern music and some older styles of music. When listening to songs played on the radio today versus the 60s and 70s, clear differences can be marked. One of the biggest changes has been how vocals have come to conquer the stereos of so many today.

Nowadays, it's not often that we hear a grand electric guitar solo in a song. The focus has shifted from the instrumental to the voice of the artist. If focusing solely on this instrumental aspect, drums seem to dominate over guitars in modern music, which was the favored instrument of the 60s, 70s, and 80s.

Technological developments have also influenced the making of music, and with it, the sounds that we hear today. Digital music production

is far more accessible. It has allowed for creativity to flourish as soundbites are incorporated into songs.

THE IMPACT OF 60s, 70s, AND 80s

There's no doubt that music is a very impactful art form that is heavily integrated in society. But is one music era more influential than another?

Like previously mentioned, music is constantly evolving. The different eras build off of one another to create the next. Some stretch further than others. Many believe that music from the 60s through the 80s set the stage for all the music that followed.

In fact, if you ask modern day artists where they get their inspiration from, many will point you in the direction of Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Queen, David Bowie, etc. These artists are often recognized as people who transformed the face of music (specifically rock). This time period brought inspiration to so many.

"Music had heart, it showed effort, and originality. Something the modern industry is lacking," says Vega. He isn't the only one who feels this way either. Meghan Christian, who is also a high schooler says, "modern music has become more and more repetitive and it's hard to find new music that I enjoy."

It seems that "old school" music has quite a big impact, and not just on older generations. It's important to notice that not only those who grew up with this type of music have come to appreciate it.

(continued)

MODERN MUSIC VS. TIME

You can often hear a college student today listening to music from the 60s. Songs like Bohemian Rhapsody and Yesterday, which are nearly 50 and 60 years old are still being played and appreciated.

Will modern music be the same decades in the future? People seem to disagree on the answer.

Morgan Morocco says, "I think that modern music will withstand the test of time because as adults, the effect will stand that we can hear a song and be taken back to another time in our lives."

However, Alessio Vega sees it a bit differently. "Do you think Post Malone, Ariana Grande, and Billie Eilish will be around in the same way that Freddie Mercury, John Lennon, and Aretha Franklin will be? Of course not!"

We can only predict what the future of music will hold. In reality, only time will tell.

The different ages of music have brought a different feel to each era. Some favor the originality of the music that has lived through several generations, while some prefer a more contemporary sound.

It is hard to measure something as artistic as music. Everyone has their own taste, and are therefore entitled to their own opinion. You can't help but wonder, though, what the future of music is bound to hold.



How COVID-19 Impacted Local Restaurants

BY NGELA KUMAH

By March 22, 2020, thirty-eight states including NY closed all restaurants, diners, and many other fast-food eateries.

Smaller businesses suffered greatly from these closures both economically and socially. One of these businesses is Sunshine's Coffee Shop located on Thompson Road in Syracuse.

This fast-food restaurant is owned by Lorene Dadey and her husband. Lorene shared a few of her thoughts with us on how she was able to steer and keep her diner alive through COVID-19.

"We have to take extra care and caution in sealing everything before it leaves into the customers hands," stated Lorene Dadey. "We also sanitize much more frequently now."

Businesses like Sunshine's Coffee Shop are taking several precautions like placing hand sanitizers on front counters, tables, and in bathrooms to protect all staff, and consumers.

It is important for staff and consumers to follow new regulations and CDC guidelines when entering diners and restaurants to help keep everyone safe.

"We try our best to be proactive and I tend to be strict with wearing masks and facilitating the

amount of people that are inside at one time. Doing things like this helps to keep the business under control and up and running. If a customer were to walk in a restaurant without a mask, they would be asked to leave," added Dadey.

"COVID-19 has changed the whole atmosphere of our business. It greatly impacted it, but we've been able to survive."

Businesses have tried their best to stand strong in their journey throughout COVID-19.

"When you're faced with a pandemic or you're faced with another form of crisis, you have to gather your thoughts and ask yourself, How am I going to make this work and how am I still going to feed my family?"

Restaurants and fast-food diners have gone about this by setting up online websites for online orders and focusing on meeting their quota instead of gaining profits.

"We thought outside the box. We tried to maintain our sales and not our profits by keeping people on our payroll and working more with *Grubhub* and *DoorDash*."

The light of the tunnel is getting brighter. Just like Sunshine's Coffee Shop, diners and restaurants are beginning dine-in, takeout, and delivery while maintaining social distancing, the use of masks, and frequent sanitation.

"I look at this as a new

normal. People will be much more cautious and more aware of self-sanitation and their surroundings."

As fast-food places and other eateries move on into the future, they should continue these practices and learn to adapt in a world recovering from a pandemic.



The popular times have changed for Sunshine's Coffee shop due to the pandemic. This diner has been focusing on maintaining a stable number of customers and sales to help keep all staff on the payroll. Slowly but surely, the owners are all working to increase numbers each day.

Syracuse Local Organizations Close due to the Pandemic

BY GREER FOLEY

Local businesses all over have felt the effects of COVID-19, here is an exploration on the effects of the pandemic in Syracuse.

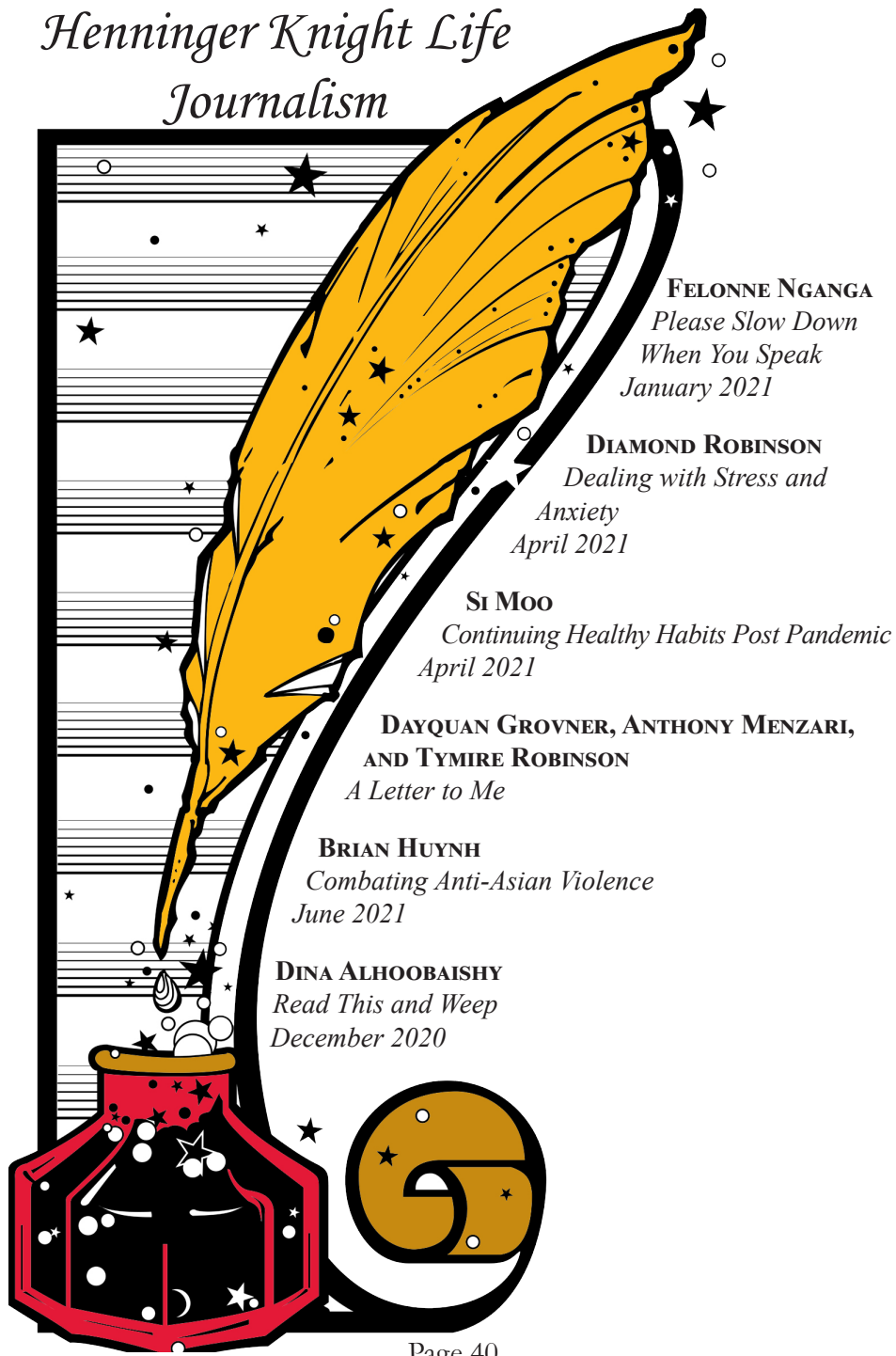
Yelp stated back in 2020 that 800 local/small businesses were closing and 60,000 local businesses closed down from March 1- July 25.

In Syracuse, according to Syracuse.com, around 22 local restaurants have permanently closed down during the pandemic.

While this might seem like a lot, 29 restaurants permanently closed in 2019, a year free from the strains of the pandemic.

While at first, these numbers don't make much sense, many local businesses are unsure if their closings are going to be temporary or not. Sadly, Yelp states that 60% of "temporary closings are permanent. It's clear many Syracuse-based Organizations have faced troubles due to the pandemic."

Henninger Knight Life Journalism



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Please Slow Down When You Speak

BY FELONNE NGANGA

ENL students and teachers faced additional challenges during the pandemic when instruction moved online.

Others should realize the difficulty these students have with comprehending words in a language they don't know.

"When I first came to the U.S., I didn't even know how to tell the teacher that I needed a pencil," stated Furaha Bilemanga.

"Many ENL students are unable to understand how to use technology. What makes it harder is that they don't understand the words that explain how to use technology," stated Lydia Andrews, CYO Social Worker.

Furthermore, teachers find it difficult to explain how to use technology without pointing, gesturing, or showing ENL students what is needed.

"Some of my students never owned a computer or laptop before the pandemic. So these students had to learn to navigate the Internet and learn how to access and submit assignments on Canvas without direct instruction," stated Ms. Gauthier.

Beginning ENL students need to learn Email, texting, and Canvas to share information with teachers.

"What makes communication more difficult is that each teacher has a preferred method of contact. This becomes a great obstacle to learning until students learn these programs," added Ms. Gauthier.

ENL students may get confused and need teachers to speak slower so they can process what they hear.

"Online school is tough because teachers speak too fast when they ask questions," stated Bibiche Depo, Congo native.

Teachers can help ENL students by encouraging them to speak as part of learning the language instead of just answering questions about classwork.

"Sometimes, I don't say anything because I'm not sure if what I'm saying is right. It's not that I'm not smart, I just don't know how to respond in that language," stated Lucie Bukuru.

Making minor adjustments to instructions may help ENL students better understand assignments and increase participation.

"ENL teachers model just about everything. Without visual directions, teaching becomes complicated," stated Amy Banks.

Slowing down when you speak is just the beginning that leads to better understanding and communication.

Dealling with Stress and Anxiety

By DIAMOND ROBINSON

Since the pandemic began, Henninger staff and students learned coping skills to handle their stress in both work and home life.

Students are feeling overwhelmed when there is too much going on. As a result, they need take some time to organize their thoughts.

“When there are too many distractions at home and I don’t get enough quiet time, I am not able to focus and and get things done,” explained Carliana Rodriguez.

Students who work learn how to balance school, home life, and their job. Over time, they develop communication, teamwork, and organizational skills.

“When mulitiple things are happening at once, I easily become overwhelmed. I focus on one thing by starting with the most important issue and put other issues aside,” described Loren Smith, Panera Bread Manager.

When students encounter stressful situations, they may start exhibiting anxiety symptoms. Some students deal with unmanageable pressures in a variety of ways.

“When I get overwhelmed with schoolwork, I learned how to relax by listening to music by Ed Sheeran,” shared Larissa Flint.

One way students successfully handle stress is by focusing on the most important problem.

“Lately, I’ve been stressed out with making college plans, working at Marshall’s, and keeping up with my school work. I take my problems one step at a time instead of trying to manage everything at once,” admitted Marlos Nixon.

Some students turn to relaxation methods to deal with their problems.

“It’s harder working virturally as opposed to in-school with teachers. When I can’t keep up with the work, I meditate to clear my mind,” disclosed Reyna Andino-Madden.

Maintaining control of events may not be realistic. Therefore, dealing with the matter before it develops into a problem is key.

“Occasionally, I don’t have any control over circumstances. So, I try to stay ahead of the situation as much as possible,” confided Jayson Bouvia.

Dealing with unmanageable pressures is part of our daily lives. Learning to work through the demands instead of giving into it takes practice.

Continuing Healthy Habits Post Pandemic

By Si Moo

Many people decided to keep their current routines and practices they adopted during the pandemic.

Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic caused the world to change, people were forced to adjust their lives.

“I’ve had to do lots more handwashing, wiping things down with disinfectant, and less gathering with friends and family on weekends,” grumbled Mr. Wait.

Certain plans, travel, and recreation needed to be modified or even cancelled.

“I stopped going out, seeing people, going on vacation, and going to restaurants,” fretted Mr. Fritzen.

Some people are staying inside their homes and finding activities to prevent boredom.

“My family stayed home and cooked more meals together, played family games and had Wii game tournaments,” shared Dione Tedd.

Having to practice social distancing has been inconvenient. In addition, wearing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) to prevent spreading the virus has been irritating.

“My habits have drastically changed from carrying a mask everywhere to refraining from hugs from my dearest students,” sighed Jamie Hilton, School Counselor.

Once this pandemic is over, people will be celebrating, attending events, and planning vacations. However, many will be keeping their lifestyle changes and maintaining a healthier lifestyle.

“I am extremely conscious of staying extra safe and will continue having hand sanitizer, Lysol wipes in my car, my bag, my kitchen. No more blowing out candles on a birthday cake,” admitted Ms. Shiel, Librarian.

“I will be eating out less, spending more time with family, walking outside and doing more outside activities,” divulged Mr. Fritzen.

“I can’t say that I’ve had many major changes in my routine with the exception of working remotely. So I will be continue with my balanced routine,” confessed Ms. Hilton.

“I am definitely going to keep up with the outdoor stuff like road trips into the country for no reason and fishing,” disclosed Mr. Wait.

One thing for sure, due to the pandemic people will be getting out of their homes and celebrating life.

A Letter to Me

By DAYQUAN GROVNER, ANTHONY MENZARI, AND TYMIRE ROBINSON

Ms. Polsin's physical education students were asked to write a letter from their future self to their present self. This exercise helped reassure her students that all will be okay.

Students were willing to share these personal letters of forgiveness, encouragement, and faith to help others through these tough times.

ISMAHAN OMAR

Dear Me,

I am writing this letter to encourage you to always believe in yourself no matter what. I never want you to give up on yourself. I want you to live the life you want to have. Be the person you talk about. Be, don't just say. Show, and prove to them who you really are.

OLIVIA OLIVEIRA

Dear Olivia,

I'm writing this to you to inspire you to try harder. Do what ever is necessary to get to where you want to be in ten years. Back then, it was a criminal lawyer. Do not forget why you want to be a lawyer. It was never about the money, but about the smiles and sense of relief when you won the

case. The feeling of power when you stand up and yell, with so much pride and determination, "**I object!**" Don't let that spark die, it is beautiful.

There will be some unexpected bumps and curves. You will make history in your own home and give your siblings someone to look up to. So, with all that being said, ***Keep Pushing!***

SYDNEY BUNGER

Dear Sydney,

I hope you're doing okay. I know everything is weird right now, but you got to graduate with your friends and meet your teachers from that year in real life. I know you are missing your friends, and your season. It wasn't fair that you had to miss out on your social life this year. But, think about how much you've grown. How comfortable you've become in yourself that year. You finally fit into the shoes.

JUNI RANA

Dear Self,

I know you struggled sometimes, but in case I didn't tell you enough, you're beautiful. Thank you for being so strong and transparent. The world sees you even when you feel invisible.

I appreciate your heart and your stubbornness. Your willingness to love, even after being discarded and forgotten, is admirable. I'm so proud that you've grown to acknowledge your worth.

I hope one day you realize that there's nothing wrong with you. Don't be so hard on yourself.

Don't be afraid of losing someone who doesn't feel lucky to have you. Please stay strong. Love yourself, stay on your path. You were born to be real, not perfect.

SHYNICE FLAGG

Dear Myself,

I know you are going through a lot, but everything is going to be okay. I promise.

Don't worry about anything. Give it all to God, He will help you through this difficult time. Don't pay attention to what other people are saying about you because they are not important. Keep your focus on God, always.

You are a 17 year-old girl that is going through a lot right now. You're trying to figure out what you want to do with your life, but just focus on what you have to do right now. Focus on getting yourself together.

LILLIEBELL HAWK

Dear Lillie,

Hey! You're beautiful and strong. Always remember that. Don't ever let anyone tell you you're not worthy.

As you get older, life will get harder. You're going to want to date and then marry. Find the one that is good for you. Don't get into a relationship now. Just wait and focus on yourself.

ANNALYSIA LOPEZ

To myself,

I just want to tell you that I'm proud of you and what you've done to better yourself. We haven't had time to grow and now all we have is time. I know we can do great things in life we just have to work for it.

✽✽✽

"I asked my students to write these letters because I was worried. When I spoke to them individually, I learned that each student had a unique story to tell. I learned that this year has been really hard for them. I realized that many of them were struggling emotionally. Most importantly, I wanted them to remember that they had dreams, future plans, and not to let this bump in the road derail them. What lies ahead is what's important," explained Michelle Polsin, Teacher and Coach.

Combating Anti-Asian Violence

BY BRIAN HUYNH

The rise of COVID in the past year has resulted in a surge of hate crimes and violence targeted at Asians and Asian-Americans of all ages.

Regrettably, some people feel entitled to use violence to justify their actions without reason.

"I noticed that when the pandemic started in China, people started blaming the Chinese and other Asian people. I believe that it is human nature for people to blame others," surmised Chadani Timsina.

These hate crimes and violent acts are targeting Asian families and invoking fear into their everyday lives.

"People of Asian descent have often been scapegoated throughout history. I see this reoccurring today during COVID," revealed Peilin Lu.

Students in the Syracuse community have witnessed loved ones being subjected to both verbal and physical harassment.

"A family friend was attacked recently. The victim and the attacker were strangers to each other. I don't think anyone deserves to be mistreated," commented Chadani.

Having a family member assaulted can be tragic and distressing to loved ones. "It's especially heart-breaking seeing elders attacked. Every time I see their faces, I not only see someone's loving grandparent, but my own Lao Lao and Lao Ye as well," agonized Peilin.

Acknowledging this issue is a first step in dealing with the racial injustice that is prevalent nationwide.

Consequently, there is a lack of attention regarding anti-Asian violence in mainstream media.

"I believe hate crimes could have been prevented if the media had brought these attacks to everyone's attention sooner," vocalized Peilin.

Nevertheless, certain trends of anti-Asian sentiment are fueled by stereotypes and miseducation.

"A big challenge that Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) youth face is not seeing themselves represented accurately in education. Changing the way Asian-American history is taught is important in preventing future acts of racism," added Peilin.

"If you see an Asian person being harassed, step in and educate them. Say that, The virus is no one's fault. No race or group should be blamed for COVID," voiced Amy.

Read This and Weep

BY DINA ALHOOBAISHY

In the Henninger community, reading for pleasure continues to take a backseat to other activities even though people are spending more time at home.

Many people still enjoy reading, but some will listen to books if they don't have the time to sit and read. "I have an Audible subscription, so lately I've been listening to audiobooks," explained Mrs. Collins.

Some teachers spend their spare time being active with family and within their community. "I have been hiking, spending time with my children, cleaning, and volunteering at Vera House," mentioned Mrs. Archambeault.

Other teachers read both for their pleasure and to help others select books that may interest them. "I try to read young adult books. That way I'm able to suggest books they may enjoy to students," shared, Mrs. Shiel.

Parents enjoy reading books with their children as a family activity and to improve their skills. "I read with my little ones most evenings as they are learning to read independently," explained Mrs. Rombel.

Some seniors work part-time in addition to going to school but try to fit reading in their busy schedule.

"I enjoy reading teen romance books, fictional stories, and mystery books. I'm busy now and it's hard to find the time to just enjoy a good book, I try to read every couple of months if there's a book that catches my attention," noted Nadiyah Madera.

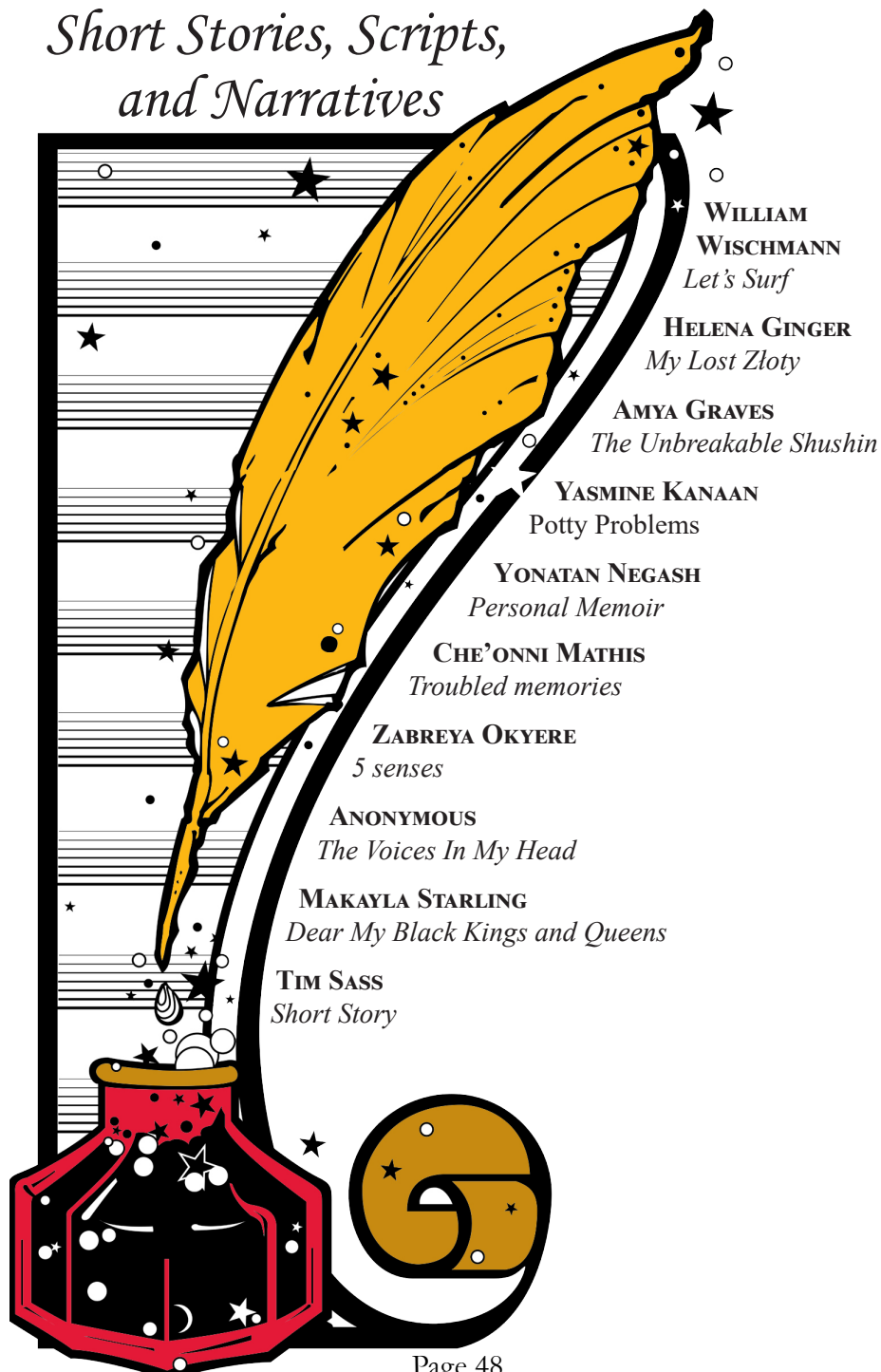
A handful of people have the free time to read because their obligations have changed. "I read for pleasure now more than I used to as my children are older and more self-sufficient," added Mrs. Archambeault.

Today, readers have the option to switch their reading formats to fit their lifestyle.

During the pandemic, a few teachers became creative when it came to needing a new book. "When my local library closed during quarantine, I exchanged books with my neighbor. I spent more time on my own art and projects that I previously did not have time for," mentioned Mrs. Rombel.

It is unfortunate that people are not reading as much as they used to. People are involved with their smartphones and other activities instead of cracking open a good book.

Short Stories, Scripts, and Narratives



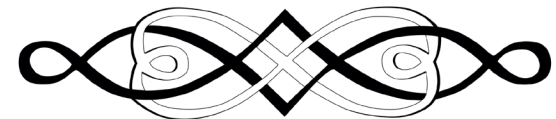
Let's Surf BY WILLIAM WISCHMANN

When you are riding the wave, you throw your head back, looking similar to the *Blown-Away-Man* from the Maxwell ads.

I watch your head hit the wall, and your mouth tries to shape a grin. The room you occupy, surrounded by dirty clothes, empty cans, ashtrays, broken TVs, it becomes a tunnel, you throw a laugh towards me and it barely lands because you're already cruising deeper down the tunnel, a thousand miles per hour. No one can hear you now.

Your life is thing after thing after thing, I watch you drive, I watch you jam, I watch you eat, and I watch you ride. Suddenly I can't even see you anymore, I can watch you cruise, like a live broadcast, we are all smiling, cheering for you, shouting encouragement down the tunnel, the wave, pushing you to reach whatever mystery checkpoint only you can reach. Ride Forrest, ride. Catch the tip of the wave, cut through the water so smoothly, eyes fully in focus, locked in, you fly forward into the water, into the barrel, where it crashes around you on all sides.

When you sling yourself around, trying to regain your balance, attain and follow trajectory, point the board, eyes wide. You slice deep into the water, submerged, and we all watch because no one can dive in with you, only make eye contact through the layer of water, a boundary between two worlds, we wait for you to break through the surface, throwing yourself everywhere, free for a moment from the endless summer.



My Lost Zloty

BY HELENA GINGER

“Look what I got from the tooth fairy,” I said proudly as I showed my parents the capital I had amassed for my upper denticle.

I had practiced my smile in the mirror; it was not overly giddy, but not inappropriately unenthused. Nothing too suspicious- making sure to modify my excitement so that my parents wouldn’t suspect where I got the money from.

I presented three quarters, one penny, and one coin that I didn’t know the name of. It was silver with a golden eagle in the center.

“The tooth fairy must have liked my teeth,” I said not-suspiciously, “I brushed them everyday so she gave me a lot of money,” I explained.

I looked up to my parents to gauge their reactions. The look on my mother’s face was not what I had hoped for.

“Skąd to masz?” she exclaimed, Where did you get that?

My stubby little finger reluctantly pointed at the coin jar sitting in the room next door, spongy dread forming in my stomach.

“It shouldn’t be there,” she said, “can I have it back?” I agreed, looking down and shrugging my shoulders. “What is it?” I asked her cautiously.

“It’s a złoty,” she answered with a smile, “złoty means gold.”

I already knew that złoty meant gold. I heard the word spoken over and over again as I watched a Polish film starring a poor step daughter with greedy gold-crazed stepsisters who put gold into their mouths and spat it out demanding more. The little coin was taken from the jar of coins that my parents kept on top of a cabinet-desk in the spare room. The tooth fairy wasn’t doing her job, so I decided to take on her responsibility myself. I snuck into that room, swinging my legs over the childproof gate one after another, grabbed a handful of coins and shoved them under my pillow. On previous days, I snuck into that room to play with the coins. I reached into the jar and swirled my hands in the shiny coolness until the metallic scent was embedded in my skin. No soap would get it off; I would smell like spare change all day.

After my tooth-related endeavor, I thought of the pretty little coin so much. It was much more special than any coin that I had ever seen in America (it had two colors!). I begged my mom to give me one so that I could put it into my pretty little coin box.

“Proszę mamó,” I begged my mom, “please?”

She finally conceded and gave me a tiny silver one.

“Złoty are called złoty because a long time ago, Poland was a very prosperous country and their money was made of gold,” she explained to me in her mother language. She spoke in złoty. Fondly speaking in her language of gold.

“I don’t have many of these so don’t lose it,” she warned me, “these are very special.”

I understood. I ran to put it into my coin box, nestled next to a euro and a golden dollar.

The euro was from my grandfather who recently visited his country of Spain. He gave it to me and said, “buy ice cream with this,” in his thick, bristly Spanish accent which complemented his thick, bristly Spanish mustache. I was to go to Europe that summer to visit friends and family. I went to Spain, then to Poland, then to Spain, then to Switzerland, then back to Spain again. I spent my euro on the only word that I knew in Spanish, “helaaaaado.” My little ice-cream crazed voice traveled down the dusty streets littered with euros and cigarette butts and to the beachside heladería.

When I reached Poland, I had fallen behind on my Polish speaking and was out of practice. “Ja nie mówię po polsku.” I said to my relatives at first, I don’t speak Polish.

But it soon became apparent that I could, in fact, speak Polish. It was like a little złoty that I had dropped on a walk; I hadn’t walked too far from it, so I could easily turn around and pick it up.

“Mysz, mice! Lód, ice!” I chanted as I jumped a trampoline in Gdańsk, relishing my bilingual abilities.

My cousin’s friends looked at me with funny expressions; Mysz actually meant mouse, but I had decided to take some creative liberties so that my song would rhyme. The people in Poland knew better, but I pretended that they didn’t.

My little brother also had a fascination with coins. He loved things that were shiny and round. “Egg,” he called them. He could only say three words: “hi,” “bye,” and “egg.” A sharp contrast to his older sister who babbled as she came out of the womb, according to her parents. “Egg” was used to describe anything that was round and somewhat yellow- pennies, tennis balls, nickels. He would slip the “eggs” into his mouth to the horror of my mother. One time a penny appeared in his diaper. The coin jar went away after that.

I missed sifting through my parents’ collection of American money that was for everyday use and finding a surprise euro. I would show it to them and my dad would attempt to teach me some Spanish with the most authentic Spanish accent. We would talk and laugh about the places where this money was used. Where everyone spoke in euros.

Alex had not spoken much for the first four years of his life. His collection of idioms only consisted of a few pennies. My parents had decided to give it time, hoping desperately that Alex was just a late bloomer, but by the time that we came back from Europe they knew that something was different.

“Alex ma autyzm,” my mom said over the telephone. “Tak, tato, jestem

pewien. Jest zdiagnozowany. Zdiagnozowana przez lekarza,” she explained to her father that she was sure; that there was no mistake. He was diagnosed by a doctor.

A study in Canada indicated that children with autism tend to mix up different languages- unable to differentiate the different currencies in their coin jars. After extensive deliberation, my mother decided to stop speaking Polish in the house. We severed ties with my childhood language. Locked up our Polish currency in a savings account until Alex could master English. I quickly lost my Polish; it trickled out of my brain like spare change from a hole in a pocket. It fell out so quickly.

I was like my grandparents. When they moved back to their homeland, they tossed their English out of the airplane window. Their coin-bag of American currency was not needed in Poland. It’s still floating around in the ocean. Bobbing up and down on the waves somewhere in the Atlantic. They suddenly couldn’t speak English and I suddenly couldn’t speak Polish. Our communication fizzled out like a water droplet thrown on a hot pan.

“Jak się masz?” my grandparents asked me over the phone; How are you?

I froze in my tracks, gripping the phone in my hands. I turned around to pick up my złoty, but I could not see it anywhere. I couldn’t see the familiar glint on the pavement.

“Ja nie mówię po polsku.” I apologized, I don’t speak Polish.

It became apparent that I couldn’t talk to my grandparents. I was ashamed that I couldn’t remember much. I was fluent just a year before. I didn’t think that I could’ve lost it so soon. The telephone line that stretched to my mother’s ear as she spoke effortlessly in the language of my childhood never again reached mine.

“Mom, speak to me in Polish,” I begged my mom when I was twelve.

I had felt a spasm of guilt whenever I told my classmates that I spoke Polish, when really I could just say two phrases. I was a fraud, like the spongy feeling in my upper stomach that came after I uttered those untrue words. Although I still understood most of it, I couldn’t speak. The path that I had walked on was shrouded in fog. The sunny pavement of my childhood turned into a twisted forest; no light to shine on my coin. I would have to work very hard to find it again. The search could take years.

“It’s really hard,” my mom told me. I told her that I understood.

“co chcesz żebym ci powiedział?” My mom asked me. What do you want me to say to you?

I didn’t know how to respond. I dreaded revealing my terrible accent; a mortified kid who had to break to their parents that they mishandled their pocket change.

“Ja nie mówię po polsku.” I said, reverting to the only phrase that I knew was correct. I don’t speak Polish.

Alex had a Polish babysitter. She was from Poland. Alex was fascinated with the way that she talked.

“In Polish,” Alex said in awe whenever she and my mother had a conversation. He loved the language of his childhood, although he had no recollection of ever speaking it.

The study in Canada turned out to be flawed. We were free to talk in euros, złoty, or any way that we wanted. The cloud held over my household had lifted and we were free to search for our missing change in the sunlight.

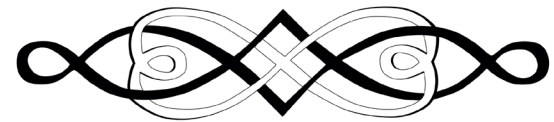
But it was too late. I had walked too far away from the sidewalk where I left my złoty. It was long gone. Maybe it fell into a sewer. Maybe it found its way into the ocean. It could’ve crossed paths with my grandparents’ coin purse.

My mom missed speaking in Polish. The language of her childhood; when she was happier. One day, I looked with her through the old things in her cabinet. I found a little pink and green coin purse. It was filled with złoty.

“They will probably be replaced by euros soon,” my mom said, “maybe if I give these to you, they will be valuable in 50 years and you can sell them.” I agreed. I took one. The shiny little złoty glimmered in my palm. I looked up at my mother.

“Porozmawiajmy po polsku.” I said.

Let’s speak in Polish.



“The Unbreakable Shushin”

フェーズ 1:

36° N, 138° E. The archipelago near Korea and China. They are known for their calligraphy, traditional customs; etc. The next page included a map covering most of East Asia. My finger slides along the page until I land on the island of Japan. For the past few weeks, my teacher spoke about Japan maybe once or twice. However, the urgency to obtain more knowledge of this place was strong. Almost as strong as the wind blowing in your face as you open up the cafe door. That night, I searched every possible fact about this place. *Click clack click clack.. What is the population in Japan? What types of cafes does Japan have? Can I exchange schools?* My brain slowly became a sponge as I absorbed more and more information. The next week, I had run, well at least tried to, off the bus towards my home. It was fall time and the leaves were saying farewell to the tree branches. I opened the door, slightly slamming it shut in the process. My backpack was thrown by the door and my shoes slipped off to reveal my cat socks.

“Nanny, you won’t believe what I need.. to move to Japan.”, I hurried to sit on the couch, the floor creaking as I went. Me of course, out of breath. I sat down beside my grandma, who unimpressively stared at me. *What does this girl want now? A piece of cake?* I open up my phone, my wallpaper being a Studio Ghibli scene, and type in Amazon. *Cricket, cricket, crik-* The silence left as I speedily typed in, “Japanese dictionary”. “Aha!”, I said, while sniffing the air to smell incense; probably myrrh. *My aunt’s probably home.* I shove the phone in my grandma’s lap, her rolling her eyes in the process. *Tic, tock, tic, tock...*

“Mya, you may think this is what you need to go to Japan; however, you must need a reminder. You’re only 13. Also, where’s the money for this? What you need to do is go clean that bathroom. Maybe then you’ll have some chore money.” *Don’t get mad. Don’t get mad.* That night, I cried myself to sleep. It wasn’t the loud, hysterical cry but, the silent, heartbreaking cry. It was hard having truth slap you in the face. *I should’ve cleaned that bathroom earlier.*

フェーズ 2:

The wind rattled against the open door as spring flooded our house. I was sweeping the living room. My grandma had her CD player on.

*“Very superstitious,
Writing’s on the wall,
Very superstitious,
Ladders bout’ to fall,
Thirteen month old baby,
Broke the lookin’ glass
Seven years of bad luck,
The good things in your past”.*

She danced around the kitchen and I put more rhythm in my step. My mind suddenly lost consciousness as I thought of the many delicious foods in Japan. It was now two years later. My dad had brought me a picture dictionary filled with every Japanese word possible. I think it even had two different words for shrimp.

I had scribbled so much on sticky notes that the book seemed to look like my locker. *Messy but aesthetic.* My friends would stare at me, squinting their eyes and laughing.

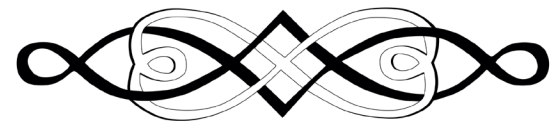
“Amya, you really want to go to Japan? What about us? What about prom?”, one of my friends asked. I shut my locker and shrugged. I had been through this talk with my dad as I was entering another year in high school. “Mya papaya, you just had to choose the place with tsunamis.” I tapped on the dining table with my smiley face nails. “You know there’s danger everywhere, right? Besides, I didn’t choose Japan. Japan chose me.” *...I didn’t exactly say that however, yes, I would much rather be in my homeland but, something is luring me to Japan. Maybe it was the delicious sushi. Or the millions of stationary. It could’ve been the electronic music or the language itself.* As I rode the bus home that night, I fell asleep against the tear stained window. Not even the stall air and sweaty sneaker smell could wake me up. Somehow, I woke up to see three more students with me. I pulled out my sketchbook and dug in the front zipper of my back pack. *OUchh. Definitely should’ve put that pencil on its side instead of standing right up.* I flipped through the many filled pages. *Totoro, Taehyung, doodles of disfigured hands, calligraphy practice.. Flip flip.. Ahaha, a blank space.* I started letting my hands take the control as if I was Alfredo letting Remy take over in Ratatouille. Lines transformed into Katakana and Hiragana, the main alphabet of Japanese. The eyes became wide with little to no eyelashes. *Sch sch sch schh.. My pencil rubbed against the white paper as I continued to travel farther down Daydream Ave. It felt as if I was lifted on a cloud and became paralyzed from the waist down by the eraser shavings. My eyes finally lean down.* イチゴ (a random drawing of anime)

イチゴ イチゴ (a marshmallow with a warm smile) スイカ
スイカ (SUGOI: awesome in Japanese
in bold letters) スイカ

I smile down at the paper, realizing that I just summed up what I loved about Japan. It wasn’t just the thought of Japan but everything else. The food (udon, sushi, dango, matcha, tamagoyaki). The people (harajuku, business, pop singers, geishas). The culture (bowing, different titles, the temples). The landscape (Mt. Fuji, Senso-ji, Osaka). All these facts became bullet points in my brain, like little clouds accompanying a blue sky. Even after coming down from Cloud 9, I still felt elated as this unbreakable bond became pasted in my heart. As if this cloud appeared in the painting of my life.

フェーズ 3:

So here I stand. 1 year later. My expanding career, from teaching my friends words in Japanese to absentmindedly thinking in Japanese. All it took was for my ears to hear two simple syllables, “Ja-pan”.



Potty Problems

BY YASMINE KANAAN

There is no desire to want to banish one from using the toilet. We must take the power of using proper bathroom etiquette and change our treacherous ways.

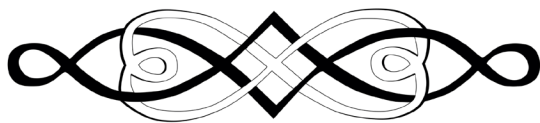
Aim your tinkle in the hole.

God did not make the man think of the toilet to leave it unused. This is God's grace and will that you use the resources available to take care of your everyday business. We must thank God everyday for needing no more to urinate in holes dug in the ground. God's reign will prevail on all those who consider his gift unworthy of recognition. Man has a brain. He has a brain to explore and advise for situations of uncertainty. We must change our devilish ways and respect all men and women who use the restroom.

The toilet seat is manufactured in a way where it lays perfectly atop the base of the toilet. It is like yin and yang. This harmonious balance creates a sense of unity and beauty in the bathroom. The four walls confine the greatest invention of all time and the luxury of peeing on a seat. Men, you have the option to urinate while standing.

Teach the youngins how to utilize the gift given by God. Never let their mistakes and path to proper form disrupt the balance of society. Those older and wiser are the only ones up to the challenge to world all the strength they possess to erase your mistakes from history. They break their backs and bleach the floor to have harmony once again in the home. Never forget to click that button or pull the lever to send the toxins of the body rushing down to the earth in mighty pipes.

Acknowledge them. Thank them. Praise them. Put the toilet seat down as a gift to your beloved females and other residents of the home. This is your chance to prove yourself to the world that you, the future generation of men, are capable of change. Capable of changing the world requires to revive its society of selfish and unloving creates of God. Never forget God's might. He has given us a miracle and it is our duty to oblige by his rules.



Personal Memoir

BY YONATAN NEGASH

My most significant memory is about the time that I was crossing the border between Ethiopia and my country, Eritrean. At that time, I was only twelve years old. My older sister was 15 years old at the time. We were so fearful. There were so many soldiers from both sides. The Eritrean soldiers were furious and mean. If the Eritrean soldiers saw us, they would shoot us. We paid one Eritrean soldier 80,00 Nafk (Eritrean money) so he would not shoot us. It was two o'clock in the morning. If we didn't have the money that my dad sent to us, we would have either been killed or I would have been forced to become a child soldier which would be devastating.

When we crossed Ethiopia, we found a dark, uncertain, old, and abandoned house to sleep in. Near that abandoned house, there were two mountains and a river in the middle. One mountain was Ethiopia's mountain and the other one was Eritrea's.

In the morning, we started walking toward the river. When we got to the river, we noticed that the river was dry and that made it easier to cross. They had so many guns, but I think the guns were not meant for us, I think it was to protect us from the Eritrean soldier. They gave us some food and they put us in the back of a big truck. We rode for almost a week. It was unbearably hot, uncomfortable, and many people were getting sick. There were about 50 people in the truck.

Finally, we reached a refugee camp. My sister and I stayed there for three months. In the three months, we experienced the worst life ever. It was uncomfortable, uneasy, and indifferent. We couldn't call anyone because there were no phones or internet. We didn't have any electricity and it was super-hot. So many people got sick and died because of lack of medicines and hunger. There was no medicine, so I try my best to stay healthy. But my sister got sick, and she almost died. I was so worried when my sister got sick because I thought I was going to lose her. Then, we traveled by bus for three days to arrive in Addis Ababa. We stayed with my dad's first wife. Things got better. I started going to school, but my sister moved in with my aunt very far away to a different city. That made me sad and lonely. After six months, my sister returned and things heated up. My sister and my stepmom didn't quite understand each other, and they had an argument that caused me and my sister to rent a house.

After four months, things got better again. Life became hard for us living without parents. My sister lived with depression and working at a bar at the same time. My dad returned to Ethiopia to begin the process of bringing us into the United States. That was the first time I met with my dad. After two long years, my sister and I began our journey to a new life in the United States. When we settled to the United States, we felt hopeful and happy.

5 Senses

BY ZABREYA OKYERE

SMELL

I got a job at The Nottingham, a residence for older people as a dining room server. When serving, it advisable to know the resident's name, they're about 40, so a paper is placed on the table with their names on it but, I've only been working there for a month, I only know a few names but I'm able to know who it is by the way they smell. I'm not trying to say they smell bad just that, everyone has a unique smell.

It's not a loud smell but it's something that can get stuck in your head. Last Sunday, I was assigned to go room by room to serve drinks. Every room I stepped into had a different smell. It's easier to remember by smell.

My dad wears this distinctive cologne every time. Anytime he's around, I know it's him because of his cologne. It smells good and sometimes; I wish I was a boy so I could use it too. I remember when I was little, and he comes to pick me up from school he would always smell like the cologne, and it makes me so glad. Most time I just like to be around him just to smell his cologne. I don't live with him now, but I still remember how the cologne smells. If someone smells like that, I immediately remember my dad.

TASTE

When I lived in Ghana, My Grandma would buy porridge and golden-brown buff loaves for my younger siblings and me. I am not a porridge kind of girl, but this porridge was exceptional. In Ghana, it was called Koko and boffrot or puff puff. A Muslim lady sold some in my neighborhood but with hers, sometimes the porridge is good and the right color or bad and strange, and she didn't sell the golden-brown buff loaves my grandma brings. My Grandma lived a little bit far from us, but anytime she comes to visit, she brings us Koko and boffrot because she knows we love it. The taste was superb, it felt like my taste buds were dancing in my mouth even though I don't really like porridge that much. I loved it, especially, those golden-brown buff loaves. When they are warm, you can't even imagine how good they taste. Now, I don't live in Ghana anymore, but I crave the Koko and boffrot my grandma use to buy for me every morning.

HEARING

When I was little, my younger siblings and I had to wake up early to get ready for school. The school was a little bit far from where we lived and there was less traffic, if you set off early. The family that lived behind our house owned a rooster. Each sunrise, the rooster crows, the birds begin to sing, and everyone wakes up. My parents have their morning devotion, and I will always hear my mother singing this distinct song, you deserve the glory by Juanita Bynum. After my dad turns the radio on to Joy FM,99.7, the motivational word starts first then the news. My dad wakes me up then my mom wakes my sisters up. They'll always cry and say they want to sleep a little more. My younger siblings get into the shower when the news begins. It goes on and on and on. On our way to school, my mother listens to Dag Heward-Mills, A Ghanaian preacher on the radio in her car. We sing along to the song and listen quietly to the preaching, through the traffic until we get to school.

TOUCH

"If you ever get hurt, I will beat you then, tend to it," my mother said to me. This statement kept ringing in my head all my childhood. My mom has quite a few scars on her leg, and she did not want the same for me. She said that to me to make me scared of what would happen if I ever got hurt. The first time I got hurt as a child, I don't remember what happen, I think I fell down or something. It happened on my knee, and I was bleeding. I was so scared of what my mom would do to me that I did not want to go home. That evening, when she came back from work, I showed her my knee. Surprisingly, she wasn't angry but after cleaning it up again, she put an ointment on it, Ice cold. I still remember how it pierced through my skin and stung and tingled till I began to cry. She looked at me and said, "I told you to never get hurt." Overtime it healed and left a scar on my knee but as I grew up it kept fading away.

SEEING

When I look in the mirror, I stare into my eyes. A few people have told me my sclera looks yellow. I don't think I have jaundice maybe it's anemia or because I use my gadgets too much. I look at my eyes because they are the first thing people look at when they look at another person. I haven't gone to see a doctor or used anything on them. I love eating carrots and drinking a lot of water. I try to sleep early too. Sometimes it becomes white and sometimes it becomes yellow but it's never that bad. I may start drinking chamomile tea because I did some research and find out that it will work. I'm sure with all this, my sclera eyes will change.

The Voices in My Head

ANONYMOUS

SCENE 1

(Lights turn on slightly. Scott is sitting cross legged on the bed holding a pillow on his legs. He's looking at the audience. There's a door to the left (center) of the stage. Two bedside tables on either side of the bed. One of them has a lamp, the other has a bottle of pills and an alarm clock that reads 8:58 PM. There's a spotlight pointed at Scott)

Scott: Life is hard sometimes. One second everything is great and dandy, and the next, your whole world spirals out of control. That's exactly what happened to me. Ever since I was 7 years old, I kept hearing voices in my head. I didn't know what was happening and didn't think it was too concerning, so I didn't tell my parents. Then, my parents got divorced, so it was just me and my mom. Time skip to when I was 12 years old and I still kept hearing voices in my head, but I would also see them. I told my mom and she immediately got worried. We rushed to the hospital and they diagnosed me with schizophrenia. From that point on, my life kept getting worse and worse. My friends started calling me insane. Everyone made fun of me. My mom was too overprotective and was on my case all the time. It gets really annoying sometimes. Since everyone either hates me or doesn't leave me alone, I made friends with the voices inside my head. Speaking of the devil, here they come.

(Lights fully turn on and spotlight turns off. Enter Nancy from downstage right and Richard from downstage left)

Scott: (Looks at Nancy) Hi Nancy!

Nancy: Hiya Scott!

Scott: (Looks at Richard) Hello Richard!

Richard: Hello Scott

(Both Nancy and Richard freeze. Scott looks at the audience. Lights dim slightly and spotlight is pointed at him)

Scott: Now that you know who they are, let me tell you some things about them. Nancy is the angel. Now, you may think that she acts like an angel, all calm and good and blessed, but you're wrong. She's actually the opposite of what an angel should be like. While angels, according to her, like classical music, she prefers rock, like, full on screaming rock. So, she's an outcast. She's basically a devil dressed as an angel, but isn't as evil as actual demons. Talking about demons, let me tell you about Richard now.

Richard, like Nancy, goes totally against what their normal species would be like. He actually doesn't pressure you to do things you don't want to do. He's the more rational person out of the three of us. Nancy being the most irrational and me being neutral.

Well, I guess what they say is true, never judge a book by its cover. (Spotlight turns off and lights are fully on)

Nancy: Okay Scott, there's a reason as to why we came here. And that reason is because me and Richard can't agree on what's the right way to do this.

Richard: (Looks at Nancy) I know the right way to do this, it's just that you keep contradicting me and it's getting annoying.

Scott: (In a complaining/whining tone) Ughhh, not again. What is it this time?

Nancy: Well, we were talking about how to deal with your bullies.

Richard: I said that we should ignore them or tell an adult figure. Like our therapist.

Nancy: And I said that we should just do something. Plain and simple.

Richard: (In a tired tone) Nancy, how many times do I have to tell you, we can't do anything. It may be illegal. Also, it would get us in trouble and mom would be more overprotective of us than she already is.

Nancy: (In a disappointed tone) Why do you have to be such a buzz-kill Richard? Have some fun why don't ya.

(Nancy and Richard both freeze right when they are about to continue to argue like a married couple. Lights dim a little and a spotlight is pointing at Scott. Scott is looking at the audience)

Scott: Well, this is a normal occurrence. They are always fighting. I'm starting to think that they are actually a married couple, but I don't want to ask because if it's not true, then Nancy will get angry, and she's scary when she's angry. At least this is better than being all alone. They support me no matter what. And they've always been there on my darkest days and have stopped me from doing things that could've ended my suffering (His face turns into a dark expression, as if he were remembering all those times in which he was really depressed. A few seconds later, he pulls off a fake smile, acting as if everything was fine) They really make me feel better, no matter how sad, or angry I am. They are the bestest friends I could ask for. (Looks at the alarm clock. It reads 9:00 PM. Sighs) My mom is going to be here any second. So that means that you'll meet her.

(Lights fully turn on and spotlight turns off. Nancy and Richard are still arguing. There's a knock on the door)

Scott: Come in Mom!

(Mom opens the door and steps in a little)

Mom: Hey Scottie, it's pill time. Here's your water.

(Mom walks up to Scott and hands him the glass full of water. She stands there)

Scott: Mom, you can leave. You don't have to watch me take my pills ya know.

Mom: (Looks slightly concerned) Scotty, I won't leave until you take it. I don't want a repeat of last time.

(Scott's expression turns dark for a second and then turns neutral)

Scott: (Looks at Mom for a second) OK Mom. (Reaches to his bedside table and picks up the bottle of pills. He opens the lid and takes a pill out. He then closes the lid and puts the bottle back onto the bedside table. He looks at his Mom again and then puts the pill in his mouth. He drinks water to help him swallow the pill) There Mom, are you happy now?

Mom: (She looks slightly happy and proud) Yes Scotty. (Pats his head and then heads out to the door. She starts to close the door but then stops when he hears Scott talking to no one)

(Nancy and Richard stop arguing and look at Scott. Scott looks back at them apologetically)

Scott: I'm sorry guys. I couldn't avoid it. You know how my mom is. (Hears the door open again and looks at the door, sees his mother slightly crying)

Mom: Th-They aren't working are they? The pills I mean.

(Mom, Nancy, and Richard freeze. Lights dim slightly and spotlight turns on and points towards Scott)

Scott: Oh no. She didn't need to find out. This is going to turn out really badly. She's gonna over think everything. She's going to search up more hospitals and therapists and I can't have that. I've suffered enough. I don't need to go through this again. (His expression darkens) But there is a way I can stop this. All it takes is one cut, a deep one, but just one cut. Or a few too many pills. (He keeps mumbling ideas)

(Nancy and Richard unfreeze. They look at each other)

Nancy: (Very concerned) Not again. No. We can't let this happen again.

Richard: (Nods his head) I agree. We need to pull him out. (They both start calling Scott at the same time)

Nancy & Richard: Scott! (They both shake him a little bit) Scott! (They shake him once more. They yell louder) SCOTT!

(Scott breaks out of his spell and looks around in a daze)

Scott: Nancy? Richard? What happened? (Nancy and Richard look at each other) Nancy: You did it again Scott.

Richard: Yeah buddy. You went there again. You gave both of us a scare. (Scott looks really depressed and is crying)

Scott: I-I'm s-sorry guys. I-I didn't m-mean to go there a-again. I-I ca-can't help it s-sometimes.

(Scott puts his face onto his hands and keeps crying. Both Nancy and Richard go to hug him.)

Nancy: (Whispers to Richard) He needs to get better.

Richard: (Whispers to Nancy) I agree, but how?

Nancy: (Whispers to Richard) I think you know how Richard.

Richard: (His face turns dark. Whispers to Nancy) Yeah...

(Nancy and Richard both look at Scott. They then look at each other and nod)

Nancy: Hey Scott, I think we all need to talk.

Scott: About what?

Richard: Both Nancy and I agree that you need to get better.

(Scott looks at both of them. It takes a second for it to register in his mind. He then pushes them both away from him)

Scott: (Yells) No! NO! NO! I'M NOT GETTING RID OF YOU! YOU'RE MY ONLY FRIENDS! (Starts crying) P-please d-don't leave me...

Nancy: We're so, so sorry Scott, but this is the only way. You can make better friends. Friends who understand you. Who understand how you're feeling.

Richard: Yeah buddy. I agree with Nancy. We'll always be with you, in your heart. You're never alone, even when you won't be able to hear nor see us. We'll always be with you. Go get better. Make real friends. Don't forget us like we'll never forget you.

(Scott looks at both of them. They all hug. When they break the hug, Nancy exits downstage right and Richard exits downstage left. Scott looks sad but determined. He wipes his tears with the sleeve of his shirt and looks up at the audience)

Scott: I can do this. This is what they want me to do and I will do it.

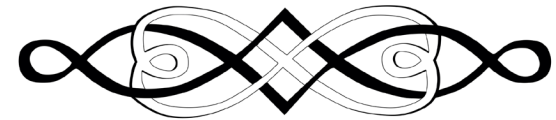
(Spotlight turns off and the lights fully turn on. Mom is still ranting but Scott interrupts her)

Scott: Mom. I-I think I'm ready to go to that place you told me about a while ago. The one where all the kids with schizophrenia go to get better.

Mom: (Looks very proudly at Scott. Has tears in her eyes) I-I'm so proud of you son. I'll get started on signing you up for it.

(Mom exits through the door. Lights dim and spotlight turns on, pointed at Scott) Scott: I think it's time for a new chapter of my life. Guess life is not so bad after all. (Blackout)

THE END



Dear My Black Kings and Queens
BY MAKAYLA STARLING

Life for us is different but don't get it twisted we are magnificent. We come from whips and lost limbs, so we have fake grimes but, hey, my beautiful Black men life for you is no game. They treat y'all like y'all lames, but momma taught "you hold ya tongue, don't have no shame because you came from a Queen. Don't be naive they wanna see you kick and scream, show them you're a King."

Hey, my Queen, my strong Black Queen, we know y'all been through things. We learned to suck it up when times get tough, when have you seen or heard of Black women giving up? Yes, our life is tough and y'all say so what but if y'all were in our shoes y'all would've given up. That's it so please stop saying you don't feel it, enough is enough because just being a woman is tough but in 2021 we're done, WE'RE NOT ASKING TO BE ENOUGH.

Troubled Memories

BY CHE'ONNI MATHIS

“Whatever you’re going through right now, leave me out of it.” The words echoed in my head over and over again. The sentence itself made me go silent immediately. How could someone I trust with my entire life say something like that to me? I tried to process if that’s what she really said but I was sure it was. You wouldn’t expect that to come from someone you trust. But you definitely wouldn’t expect it from your own mother.

It was a cold September morning, and my alarm was going off very loudly. It was the first day of September so it surprised me how cool the weather was. School begins next week and I have an early practice today. I got up to start my morning routine which consisted of me making my bed, brushing my teeth, getting in the shower, and getting dressed for practice. I looked at my phone to see how much time I have before I have to leave. It was currently 7 am and practice was at noon leaving me plenty of time to get ready. I set the alarm early this morning to make sure the bathroom was clear. Living with six other people in a house with one bathroom was definitely a challenge. But when I opened the door, it seemed my cousin had the same plan as me; he just executed it earlier than I did. I don’t like to be behind schedule so this was just great.

My cousin finally got out of the bathroom and I was able to finish my routine and get dressed. There was tension throughout the house because my mom gets in moods so we usually try to do things before she gets up so we can avoid her. Lately we haven’t been getting along. We’ve just haven’t been on the same page lately. By now it’s 8:30 and I don’t have to start walking to my bus stop until 10. I decided to watch TV for a while in the living room making sure I have everything in my bag so I can just walk out the door. The sound of heavy footsteps above notified me that my mother was awake. We haven’t talked in the last 12 hours because she thinks I’m going through a “midlife crisis” when I’m not even midway through my life. I hear her walking down the stairs and then she appears in the doorway. She stares at me for a second before asking, “Are you done with this crisis?” I open my mouth to explain that I’m not going through one but she cuts me off to say, “Whatever you’re going through right now, leave me out of it.”

I’m still in shock that I don’t even respond. I check the time and notice it’s time for me to leave. I tell my mother goodbye while I walk out the door. As I walked to my bus stop a million questions raced through my head but the one that stuck was why would she say that? It was a sentence that hurt my feelings deeply but I also did not want to think about it anymore. I went about my day as usual, came home, and acted as if what she said didn’t affect me. It just taught me that anyone, even the person you trust the most could hurt you.

Short Story

BY TIM SASS

“All right. Time to head home,” Eric said to himself as he closed his laptop. He stretched and put his laptop, notebook, and pens in his bag. “See you Monday.” Eric said to his friend Jeff as he walked past him and out the front door. Eric had walked over to his car and drove back to his apartment.

Eric opened his door and headed over to his kitchen. He opened the fridge and got a Fiji water bottle. He opened it and took a sip as he headed back over to his room and set his bag down on his bed. He sat down at his desk, turned on his iMac and played peaceful lofi music. He grabbed his sketch book and started sketching some characters that he is animating for work and relaxed a bit.

Avery got back to the apartment and tossed her stuff down on the couch. She then barged into Eric’s room, hopped onto Eric’s bed. “So how was your day?” Avery asked. “Uh- just make yourself at home.” Eric replied with some sarcasm. “I will.” Avery responded with a smug look and a chuckle. Eric sighed. “So how was your day?” Avery asked again. “It was alright, I got a lot done on this episode I’m working on. Uh- How about you?” Eric said happily. “That’s good. My boss was annoying as hell today as always. Doesn’t matter though I guess, I’m gonna quit soon and get another job. I mean, I know you can’t pick and choose what jobs you get, and you gotta find a way to make ends meet, but this job suuckks.” Avery replied. “Yeah, sorry. Have you found any other jobs yet?” Eric said. “Not really, but don’t worry about it, It’s not your problem, its mine.” Avery said reassuringly.

“Whatcha workin on?” Avery asked as she leaned over Eric’s shoulder. “Just sketching some characters that I have to animate. This just kinda makes it easier later, to get some practice in now.” Eric replied “Oh, that’s cool. What is this character all about, or like what’s his story?” Avery asked.

“He’s a high school student that has great artistic ability. The show kind of shows how he paints different things that express himself throughout high school. Later on he starts making manga and stuff. I wasn’t the biggest fan of the idea, but they just threw me on the project, and just said an- to hell with it, okay, I’ll go with it,” Eric said.

“Oh, fun.” Avery replied with a chuckle. “Yeah, not really,” Eric replied. Avery smirked. Eric rolled his eyes.

After a bit of Eric working and Avery scrolling on her phone with a crack on its screen on Eric’s bed the two headed out to the kitchen to decide on what to do for dinner. “Wanna just do Chinese?” Eric said with a sigh. “Yeah, I guess.” Avery said. Eric ordered Chinese and the two waited for their food. Avery walked over and plopped down onto the couch and played Friends on TV.

“Don’t you ever get sick of this show?” Eric asked “Nope.” Avery said without hesitation. Eric went over and sat in the chair next to the couch. Eric began dossing off.

Knock. Knock. Knock. Hello? Avery had gotten up and ran over to the door. “Thank God I’m starving.” Avery said as she walked over to the door. Avery opened the door and got the Chinese food and put it on the kitchen counter. “Hey, get up. Foods here.” Avery said to Eric. “Wha-” Eric said half awake. “Food’s here,” Avery said. “Oh, alright.” Eric said, he rubbed his eyes, and stretched with a yawn.

Eric had walked over to the kitchen and grabbed a plate. Suddenly Eric’s phone started ringing. Eric ran over to his room and got his phone off his desk. “Hello?... What?... When?... What? ... O- Okay.” Eric got off the phone and walked back into the kitchen. “Who was that? Everything okay?” Avery asked. “Yeah, it was just Sam. He was telling me that our 10-year high school reunion was this Thursday. I don’t know, I don’t think I’m going to go.” Eric said as he continued getting his food on his plate. “What? It’s your reunion, why wouldn’t you go?” Avery said looking at Eric, squinting her eyes.

“Why would I? They were such jerks back then. Why would I want to see any of them now?” Eric said with an annoyed tone. “Of course they were. Everyone sucked in high school, that’s just how it is. That’s what makes it high school.” Avery replied with a bit of sympathy in her voice. “Mmm, no I’m good.” Eric said keeping his tone. Eric had taken his plate back to his room and shut the door.

Avery looked at the door for a second. She then marched over and opened the door. “Hey, there’s clearly something else going on besides people were jerks back in high school. What’s going on?” Avery asked with a worried-an- noyed tone. “It’s nothing don’t worry about it.” Eric replied, “Well clearly it’s affecting you in some way that would cause you to completely change your tone and just go into your room and slam your door!” Avery yelled back at Eric. “It’s nothing. I’m fine!” Eric yelled. He turned his chair around. “No, you’re not. Now please tell me what’s wrong. Please, I care about you Eric. Lately you’ve been acting weird and so something must be going on. I’m worried about you.” Avery said, her voice cracking a little. Avery dropped to the floor and just stared at the floor. “What is it?” she said softly.

Eric pauses for a couple seconds. “Look, I’m sorry I yelled at you. I promise I’m- I’m okay.” Eric said to Avery as he gently lifted her head by her chin. Avery’s eyes widened. “Are you sure? You know you can talk to me about anything right?” Avery said. “Ye- yeah.” Eric said, he stopped looking in Avery’s eyes and looked across the room.

“Come on, we should go eat.” Eric said calmly. Eric helped Avery off the floor, and they walked back over to the kitchen. Eric had gotten his plate and sat on the couch. Avery got an Arizona tea out of the fridge and sat on the couch, making sure she was close to Eric.

The two ate dinner and continued to watch TV for a bit. “Alright, I’m going to head to bed, guess I gotta pack up in the morning now.” Eric said with a yawn. Avery looked at Eric with some relief, “So you’re going?” Avery asked. “Yeah, I know I’ll never hear the end of it if I don’t.” Eric replied. “That’s great.” Avery said with some enthusiasm. “What the hell am I doing? All this is going to do is hurt me.” Eric thought to himself as he walked back to his bedroom.

Avery watched as Eric walked back over to his room and closed the door. “Somethings definitely wrong with him,” Avery quietly said to herself with a sigh. “Uhh, let’s see, what do I need to pack?” Eric said to himself. Eric got his suitcase from under his bed and placed it on top of it. Eric went over to his dresser and grabbed some of his clothes and set them into his suitcase. “Alright, so I got my clothes for the week. So, what should I wear if I do end up going to this flippin reunion?” Eric said to himself looking in his closet for a suit. Eric flipped through hangers with shirts on them and found an old suit. “Hmm, I wonder if this still even fits? Only one way to find then I guess.” Eric said to himself with a sigh. Eric changed into the suit and left his room to go look in the mirror in the bathroom. “Whoa! What’s the occasion?” Avery asked with some laughter. “Eh- nothing, just seeing if it fits or looks good. I was thinking I might wear it if I DO go to the reunion.” Eric responded. “Well you look great,” Avery said, her face immediately blushed and she looked back at the TV before Eric noticed. “Uh- thanks,” Eric said as he walked into the bathroom and shut the door. “What the hell was that?” Avery thought to herself.

Eric looked at the mirror and straited his tie. Eric started thinking, “I mean, I guess it looks fine... but will it be good enough for- never mind. What am I thinking?” Eric used his hand and brushed his hair out of his face. He then went back to his room and changed back into his regular clothes. “Well I guess this works,” he though as he neatly put his suit into his suitcase. “Alright, well I guess I just need to pack up work stuff and a bit of tech in my backpack and my toothbrush and hygiene stuff in my suitcase, but I’ll just do that in the morning.” Eric thought to himself. He went over and put his suitcase on the floor and sat over at his desk. He turned off his computer and got his laptop and sketchbook and threw it in his backpack.

“Now that this is all done, I guess I’ll just go sit and watch some more TV for a bit with Avery.” Eric thought. He went over and sat on the couch with Avery. “Oh, hey, how’s the packing going?” Avery asked. “Just a few things I gotta get here and there.” Eric responded. “That’s good.” Avery said.

After the episode ended, Avery looked at her phone and saw the time.” It read 12:47. “Shouldn’t you be heading in now? Don’t you have like a thirteen hour drive ahead of you to get back home?” Avery asked. “Yeah, I mean I guess you’re right, but it’s fine, I guess I’m good for one more episode.” Eric said. “I think I’m actually just going to go to bed.” Avery said. “Oh, okay.” Eric said. He went over to the kitchen and refilled his water bottle. “Night,” Avery said as she went back over to her room. “Night,” Eric said. Avery went to her room and closed the door.

“He still seems off,” Avery said to herself. Avery sat on her bed and played some lofi beats and read some Webtoons on her phone. Eric went back over to his room and sat on his bed scrolling through his twitter. “Should I even really go? No, I have to now, and I’ll never hear the end of it... This is going to be hard, seeing Bella and Sam like this. Avery’s even starting to notice, I just have to stay strong and keep going.” Eric thought to himself. Eric plugged his phone into the charger, took his glasses off and laid down in bed with a sigh. “What’s going to happen when I get there. No. It’s all me, I’m the problem.” Eric thought to himself with another sigh. He closed his eyes and drifted off to sleep. The next morning, the light made its way through Eric’s curtain. Eric yawned and sat up. He rubbed his eyes and put his glasses back on. “Today’s the day, a thirteen-hour car trip which will only bring me to a place I don’t want to go, with, things, I don’t want to see.” Eric thought to himself as he unplugged his phone and looked at the time. “Oh great, It’s already nine-thirty.” Eric said to himself sarcastically. “Wait, do I smell bacon?” Eric asked himself. Eric got up to go to the bathroom.

“Look who’s up.” Avery said cheerfully as Eric came out of his room. “So I did smell bacon?” Eric said joyfully. “Yup, its bacon, eggs, and a couple waffles. You seem like you’re in a better mood, that’s good!” Avery replied. “Yeah, I guess I am.” Eric said with a small laugh as he went into the bathroom. Eric splashed some water on his face and looked in the mirror. “Okay, just try and stay positive today. God, I annoy even myself sometimes, okay, just don’t be as pessimistic.” Eric said to himself.

“Were you talking to someone in there?” Avery asked after Eric came back out of the bathroom. “Uh- no I was just kinda talking to myself, I guess.” Eric replied. “It’s fine, I mean I do it sometimes too.” Avery said reassuringly. “Oh, so do you want to hand me the bacon?” Eric said with a smirk. Avery sighed. “Yeah yeah, I know.” Avery said while handing Eric the plate with eggs, a waffle with syrup on it and most importantly, the bacon.

Eric sat down at the small island in the kitchen and ate breakfast while talking to Avery about work. “You really should become a baker or chef, your great in the kitchen you know. I think you’d enjoy it more than just being a cashier.”

Eric said. “Yeah, I’ve looked into it a bit, but I don’t think I’m that good.” Avery replied nervously. “Seriously, I think that you should look into it.” Eric said. “Alright if you say so.” Avery replied. “I do.” Eric said.

Eric finished eating and headed back to his bedroom to finish getting ready to leave. “I wonder, should I actually look into becoming a baker? I mean, I actually like doing it.” Avery said to herself. “Okay, I just need to grab my toothbrush, chargers and quickly get changed then I guess I’m good to go.” Eric thought to himself as he put his chargers and headphones into his backpack. He went over to the bathroom and changed and grabbed his hygiene products and put them into his suitcase. “Alright, I- I guess I’m ready to go.” Eric said to himself. Eric grabbed his suitcase and his backpack and went into the living room. “Oh, you’re leaving already?” Avery asked with concern. “Yeah, I’ve got a thirteen hour drive ahead.” Eric replied. “Oh yeah, that’s right.” Avery said with some disappointment.

“Alright, well I guess I’ll see you when I-” Avery ran over and gave him a hug. “Oh, don’t worry I’ll be back.” Eric said with a chuckle. “Bye.” Avery said trying to look as though it wasn’t affecting her too much. Eric grabbed his bags and opened the door. “I’ll see you when I get back!” He said with a smile. “Yeah,” Avery said looking at him with wide eyes. Eric closed the door and went down to his car. He opened his trunk and set his suitcase inside, he closed the trunk and got into the driver’s seat and set his backpack in the passenger seat.

Eric sighed and then started his car. “Alright, here I go.” Eric thought to himself. He pulled out of his parking spot and headed toward home. He got onto the interstate and started thinking. He just kept driving as though he was on autopilot. “What will Sam and Bella think about this? Why? What should I do? Do they know? Can they tell?” The thoughts raced through Eric’s head. After a couple of hours of driving Eric stopped at a rest stop. Eric parked his car and got out to stretch. “Oh, that feels good. I guess I’ll go use the bathroom and go to McDonald’s.” Eric said to himself. Eric went inside and used the bathroom. “What should I get?” Eric asked himself as he got in line. “What can I get you sir?” The employee asked. “Uh- I’ll have a cheeseburger, medium fry, and a small coke please.” Eric said. “Alright that’ll be \$5.34. Will that be for here or to go?” The employee asked. “To go. Thank you.” Eric replied as he handed the cashier his debt card. The employee took the card and swiped it. Eric took his card back and stepped back waiting for his order.

“327!” an employee said. Eric looked at his receipt. “Oh, that’s mine number.” He thought to himself. Eric went up to the front counter and grabbed the bag with his order in it. “Thanks.” Eric said as he went out the door and got back into his car. Eric started his car and got back on the interstate. After a couple of minutes Eric stuck his hand in the bag and grabbed his cheeseburger.

He unwrapped it and started eating as he kept driving. Eric looked down at his phone at Google maps. "I'm almost near Cleveland. I'm like a little over half-way." Eric thought to himself.

Eric continued his drive back home. Eric's thoughts of "what should I do?" Continued. Eric finished his burger and started eating his fries with a sip of his coke every couple of minutes. "Maybe I should just listen to some music and just try to forget about this for now." Eric thought. He turned on the radio and looked for something to listen to. "Ugh, there's nothing good on, it's all just commercials." Eric said to himself. "I guess I'll just connect my phone." Eric said as he plugged the aux cable from his car into his phone. He turned on his phone to see that he had gotten a message from Avery. It said, "Hey, drive safe plz don't b stupid :)" Eric chuckled a little. He replied, "ofc & so much for staying safe, I'm driving lol"

Eric opened Spotify and played his playlist. Eric started singing along to some of his songs. Eric couldn't help but still think about Bella. After a couple of hours of driving, Eric quickly looked at his phone to see what time it was. "It's nine? I guess I'm getting I'm pretty close." Eric thought to himself. Before he set down his phone, he got a notification. It was from Avery. "lol." Eric chuckled looking at the message. He kept driving.

Eric kept on listening to his music. "I'm actually excited to see my family." Eric thought to himself. Eric started tapping the steering wheel. "I haven't seen anyone since ... When was it? Christmas? I hope everyone's still up when I get there. Well, they are typically up later, like midnight-ish." Eric thought to himself.

"Just a little under an hour left. I'm starting to recognize things around here." Eric thought to himself with excitement. Eric got off the interstate and got on back roads to get home. "Almost there! Good thing too, I gotta take a leak." Eric thought to himself.

Eric drove past his old high school. He looked at it and thought, "Should I even go? What will happen? Do they know? Is it all in my head?" Eric thought to himself. He kept driving, he was near his neighborhood.

He pulled into his parents' driveway. He sat in his car for a minute and put his head down and just looked at his feet. "Okay, I can do this. It's my family, they don't know anything about this, or I don't think so at least. Besides, I was excited to see them an hour ago, I can't worry about this. Oh I gotta pee." Eric thought to himself, his mind racing from one thing to another. He took a deep breath and turned off his car and took out his keys. He got his backpack on and stretched. He went over and got his suitcase out of the trunk.

To finish reading Tim's Short Story, email Rhonda Zajac, rzajac@scsd.us.

The Hill We Climb By Amanda Gorman

When day comes we ask ourselves, where can we find light in this never-ending shade?

The loss we carry, a sea we must wade. ● We've braved the belly of the beast, We've learned that quiet isn't always peace, and the norms and notions of what just is isn't always just-ice. ● And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it. ● Somehow we do it. ● Somehow we've weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished. ● We the successors of a country and a time where a skinny black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president only to find herself reciting for one. ● And yes, we are far from polished. ● Far from pristine. ● But that doesn't mean we are striving to form a union that is perfect. ● We are striving to forge a union with purpose, to compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man. ● And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us. ● We close the divide because we know, to put our future first, we must first put our differences aside. ● We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another. ● We seek harm to none and harmony for all. ● Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true, that even as we grieved, we grew, that even as we hurt, we hoped, that even as we tired, we tried, that we'll forever be tied together, victorious. ● Not because we will never again know defeat, but because we will never again sow division. ● Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree and no one shall make them afraid. ● If we're to live up to our own time, then victory won't lie in the blade. ● But in all the bridges we've made, that is the promise to glade, the hill we climb. ● If only we dare. ● It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit, ● it's the past we step into and how we repair it. ● We've seen a force that would shatter our nation rather than share it. ● Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy. ● And this effort very nearly succeeded. ● But while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated. ● In this truth, in this faith we trust. ● For while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us. This is the era of just redemption we feared at its inception. ● We did not feel prepared to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour but within it we found the power to author a new chapter. ● To offer hope and laughter to ourselves. ● So while once we asked, how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe? ● Now we assert, how could catastrophe possibly prevail over us? ● We will not march back to what was, but move to what shall be. ● A country that is bruised but whole, benevolent but bold, fierce and free. ● We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation, because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation. ● Our blunders become their burdens. ● But one thing is certain, If we merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy, and change our children's birthright. ● So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left with. ● Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest, we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one. ● We will rise from the gold-limbed hills of the west. ● We will rise from the windswept northeast, where our forefathers first realized revolution. ● We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the mid-western states. ● We will rise from the sunbaked south. ● We will rebuild, reconcile and recover. ● And every known nook of our nation and every corner called our country, our people diverse and beautiful will emerge, battered and beautiful.

**When day comes we step out of the shade,
afame and unafraid,
the new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it.
If only we're brave enough to be it.**

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