LIMITLESS
Acknowledgements

The Correctional Education Association-Wisconsin sponsors a yearly Creativity Contest open to people incarcerated within Wisconsin’s correctional system. Its purpose is to encourage and recognize their creative efforts, recognizing writers and artists at a variety of educational levels. The committee wishes to thank everyone who took the time to create a piece and submit it. We received 250 entries, and the selection was very difficult.

We congratulate all writers and artists featured within these pages, and thank you for being willing to share a part of yourselves with us. You should be applauded for your efforts to reflect on your experiences, develop your skills, and advance your education.

We also thank the Correctional Education Association-Wisconsin for its sponsorship of the contest and this publication. CEA-W is comprised of dedicated educators from a variety of programs and institutions who spend every day encouraging educational achievement. Together with our students, we reflect the power that learning brings.

Committee Members:

Nancy Alderton, OSCI
Margaret Done, MSDF
Vicky Ebben-Svitavsky, WCI
Jim Gordon, KMCI
Laurie Jarvis, FVTC

Rose Krutzik, FLCI
Tim Mahoney, WRC
Steve Schmick, OSCI
Jim Svitavsky, WCI

Special thanks to:
- The committee members who gave their time and talents to make this publication a reality.
- The WI Department of Corrections for their encouragement and their cooperation with CEA in creating this project.
- Ed Gallatin and his offender workers at Oshkosh Correctional Institution who typed and formatted these pages.
- Mark Hennessy and his offender workers at Columbia Correctional Institution who produced this publication.

Additional copies may be ordered by contacting:
Timothy Malchow, Teacher
Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution
P.O. Box 31
Plymouth, WI 53073-0031
$4.00 per copy. Send check or money order payable to CEA-W
Specify name or year of booklet; include mailing address

Copyright © May 2019
The printing of this publication was entirely funded by CEA

Creativity Contest 2019
# Table of Contents

Phoenix J. Santos .................................................................................................................. Cover
A Letter To... Benjie D. Crumpton ....................................................................................... 4
The Best Part of My Life Began When... Scott W. Taylor .................................................. 5
Connection Justin Feldkamp ................................................................................................. 6
Straight Eight Thomas Hunt ................................................................................................. 7
Summer of ‘74 Wayne ........................................................................................................... 8-9
Chasing the Sea Teng T. ....................................................................................................... 10
They Tell Me... Gary Schuelke ............................................................................................. 11
The Day That Didn’t Happen Roger Minter ......................................................................... 12
I Cry for Me Adrian Knox ..................................................................................................... 12
2 Birds John Shomo ................................................................................................................ 13
The Universal Language of Math C.W. .................................................................................. 14
Forever Will I Wait Austin Jakubowski .................................................................................. 15
Are You There Kevin Costner? It’s Me, Redskin CM ......................................................... 16-17
5 o’clock Shadow Rallund “Lee” Ottlinger .......................................................................... 18
Behind These Walls Josie Romero ........................................................................................ 19
Out For Blood Ben Pedrin ..................................................................................................... 20
Note 2 Self Brad D. Tower ................................................................................................... 20
Vitae Cyclum Gilbert A. Cortez ............................................................................................. 21
No Take Backs Torrey Fedyn ............................................................................................... 22-23
Make Friends With It David Lovell .................................................................................... 24
Portrait Roberto Ortiz ............................................................................................................ 25
Old Sage Annmarie C. Schulte ............................................................................................. 26
328 Surfside Road Stephen Montgomery........................................................................... 26
Raven Tallard .......................................................................................................................... 27
Stop Chasing Christine Breault ............................................................................................. 28
Battle Scars Jason Guist ......................................................................................................... 28
Cow Lick Harlan Richards .................................................................................................... 29
Rather Be Tin Man R. Shea ................................................................................................... 29
We would like to thank Barry Vann from Green Bay Correctional Institution for the inspiration for the title of this book.

As long as faith guides us
the limitations on
what we could achieve
become limits that don’t really exist
We are the only restraints that hold us back...

Creativity Contest 2019
Dear Sir or Madam,

Being in prison is hard, and getting out of prison is even harder, yet many don’t ready themselves for the inevitable return to life on the outside. You can get out of prison, go back to your old ways of living, then surely end up right back in prison. When you as men and women learn more about who you are and what you are capable of, the better chance you will have once released from prison. A person with any length of time, whether it is ninety days or ninety years, should look at his time as a chance to better himself and grow as an individual. This starts and ends with the understanding and education of oneself. With this growth, you will be able to adjust to the stigma associated with being released from prison. Right now, you can start learning new skills while fine tuning other attributes that make you great. Do this for you, do this for your family and friends, and do this for society. Do this because if you do, you will succeed in life after prison and give something wonderful to this world, yourself.

In this present time you can habilitate yourself by learning how to properly live. Notice I didn’t use the word rehabilitate, this word is normally used in an incorrect context. Habilitate means to enable or equip, and most of you are going to release from prison never fully learning what living is really about. Some were never given the tools to be the true owners of their own destinies. The way life is portrayed in music and on T.V. gives you a false perception of a lifestyle that is easily obtained, but nothing worthwhile in life is easy and definitely not free. As you learn about yourself, you will need to be educated academically. Whether it is basic or college level, it is on you as an adult to seek these opportunities and take responsibility for your education. Math, reading, language, communication and computer skills are important to show potential employers you are able and willing to learn new things. If you can’t properly fill out an application or create a resume, how can you even get a job? If you can’t communicate effectively, how can you explain your ideas to others?

Getting out of prison you already have strikes against you, an education not only shows you can read and write, it can show your intentions. Successfully completing groups can revise your purpose, and by changing the way you think, you can change your life. Once you understand how to live, it becomes like breathing. You will find it amazing what you can accomplish just by making the right decisions. There is more than one way to live life as long it stays positive and productive. Set attainable goals, have patience, knowing you will always have to work harder and prove yourself more than the average person. If you are ever in doubt about what you can or cannot achieve, don’t be afraid or too proud to seek help, this also shows positive growth. There are so many resources available to you. Use them. There is always someone who will be glad to give you a helping hand.

Sincerely,

Benjie D. Crumpton
The Best Part Of My Life Began When...
Scott W. Taylor

Thoughts and feelings...emotions taunt and turmoil.
Indecisions fraught with unfettered desires...youth.
Passions and pains...skinned knees and broken pedals, strife.
Cataclysmic revelations of an exposed child’s imagination...
Burst of reality, depravity, and sought knowledge...sealed.

Skipping rocks, fishing in creeks, swimming holes...feigned innocence.
Not wanting the day to end, heavy eyelids...dreams of dread.
Cascading luminance in worlds unknown...translucent curtains...closed.
Blurring lines of what is and what is not...lost in conflict...exposed.
Tumbling through space in my mind’s eye...light...soul.

Awaken to a slobbery face...Lurch, a faithful friend of the canine nation.
A new day, adventures...wide open and views.
Sunshine...farm smells...tractor fumes, cat’s meow.
Confliction...admission— “I didn’t do it!”...the song of a calloused hand.

Running...searching...longing for the light of sense,
only to stumble down that know of sadness and dread.
Grass fields...effervescent brooks of shimmering glass...
days growing short.

Settling in the winter of my adolescence...all is lost...youth
torn into the ripples of the past at
too much of a cost.
Connection
Justin Feldkamp
I've in all likelihood owned 20 some vehicles in my life, most of them worth a couple thousand dollars or less. I can nurse a truck running on 3 cylinders 40 miles in the dead of night. I can reattach a muffler with flex tubing and a couple wire hangers. I can duct tape anything back in place, do tune ups for cars without computers, and change oil. My knuckles carry many scars. I was talking the other day to a younger guy who didn’t believe me when I told him of the cars I’d owned and what had to be done to keep them rolling.

My first car was a present from my Aunt Alberta and Uncle Richard—a '53 Buick, indiscriminate blue, four-door, straight-eight, Dynaflow, piece of wonder. I couldn’t believe my own luck! My very own car! It didn’t matter that it had 147 billion miles on it or that there was only 1 square foot of surface that wasn’t rust—on the passenger-side roof, which I polished every day. You could see yourself in it if you stood on a ladder and leaned over. It was ok that the shocks hadn’t actually been shocks for a decade or that the radio needed to be replaced (which I did at Wilhelm’s Auto Salvage for $20.00—a half-day’s salary). The radio itself was the approximate size of a jukebox and once crushed my foot when it fell out on a particularly big bump. The steering wheel had once guided a liberty ship through submarine infested waters. I think GM got a deal after the war and took the knobby things off. It was easier to steer if you stood alongside the wheel. Speaking of which, if you’ve seen submarine movies and see the big diesel engines, you’ve seen the Buick straight-eight about 27 feet long.

I got a different hood ornament from a friend, a chrome naked lady from a '53 Nash which didn’t fit right. So instead of going out in front with her hand folded under her chin, she stood straight up like a pornographic crucifix, but I thought she was cool!

When I had trouble with the brakes grinding, I’d just slow down and my friends would swing out on a door and run alongside and let go as we came past their house. I learned that changing the brakes while using a bumper jack wasn’t a good idea either. It’s really hard to re-jack it up when the wheels are off and the car is flat on the ground. My headlights caved into the fenders from rust, so I had to duct tape them back, and when I’d drive down a bumpy road at night, coupled with the lack of shocks, I saw almost everything except the road—like an early laser light show.

One time driving down Phillips Avenue in Sioux Falls, I heard a big crash and a horrible scraping sound. I got out and there was my gas tank lying on the road. So, I put it in the trunk and reattached the gas line and all was well with the world until my trunk rotted out and I had to put 2x4s under it to keep it from falling out again.

My next car, a '56 Chevy wagon was held together with 2x6s. Some feared rust, I feared termites.

All the other kids could squeal their tires too. A Dynaflow transmission was designed to be smooth. I’d put it in neutral and floor it for about a day and slam it into drive and it would go AAAAAAAAAHHHAAAAHuh...And I’d crawl off at my usual snail’s pace. I took to carrying buckets of sand to scatter in front of my tires at stop signs, but no. I also got 9 miles to the gallon on the highway, around town, made no difference. 9.

It is good what we learn from adversity. We learn that life is not fair, that it is difficult and also an adventure. And that it sure beats the alternative. Now I’m not saying I owe my staying power to a Buick, but it taught me a lot about creative problem solving. This brings me to a second point. Be a life-long learner; be curious about everything because learning transfers. You never know when a problem you’re facing could be solved because of knowing how to put a different hood ornament on your car.
In the mind’s eye of a child, nothing is more excruciating than eagerly awaiting the final pass of the razor thin crimson secondhand as it patiently rounds the stern white domineering face of the clock as it sluggishly ticks away the closing moments of the school year. Ms. Kroken was saying something about getting married, but Wayne was preoccupied, daydreaming about the carefree days ahead. An action-packed Wisconsin summer was seconds away. Ahh...sweet summertime.

He spied the clock for the millionth time and sighed, “Could I actually die from waiting?” Then time stood still. After suffering an eternity in slow motion, the sleeping gray steel bell upon the weather-beaten bronze brick façade of Lincoln Elementary sprang to life with a resounding clang. Glorious laughter, a symphony composed of children’s dreams erupted. The summer of 1974 had arrived.

Wayne lifted the worn wooden top of his taupe metal desk one last time to hunt for remnants of a left behind third grade. “Stop right there Frito Bandito.” The tiny creamsicle orange toy was dangling from a punched hole in the bottom of the compartment. Wayne revisited the logic behind making an eraser that didn’t work. “Attempting mutiny. It’ll be the brig for you mister.” He hastily snatched the miniature character while slamming the desktop in finality like a signal cannon. “Let's roll!” Wayne quickly slipped through the time-worn paned oak door. Once freed, he anxiously scanned the crowd, desperately searching for his brother Rod. The sudden flash of brilliant white sunshine was blinding. Mesmerized, Wayne teleported back in time to his fretful initial day in first grade.

Rod was two years older, and in Wayne’s eyes, a godsend. Wayne emphatically believed in his mantra, “I can always count on Rod.” He vividly recalled the nerve-wracking day. Rod spoke assuringly, “You got this buddy. I did it all alone by myself, no sweat, besides, I’ll be right upstairs, room 202. O.K. pal?” Wayne nodded reluctantly. Always apprehensive and lovingly sensitive, the little guy would sometimes literally worry himself sick. On that crisp autumn morning, Timmy Thorpe was running around whispering something that sounded to Wayne like “Santa Snotwheel.” It didn’t take long to decode the crummy message. The hurtful news only intensified his anxiety, and Wayne hid in a corner and yarked. Rod ran to his rescue, wrapped his wing around him while jabbing his thumb in the air. “What a putz.” Wayne silently responded with a quiet smile. That evening, Wayne remembered how he longed for his mother’s embrace. “Little man,” said Rosemarie while kissing away the salty tears on his warm pink cheeks, “if you truly believe in your heart that Santa’s real, then by God he is.”

Snapping back in a moment of clarity, Wayne spotted his hero. After swimming through a school of screaming classmates on the playground, he said breathlessly, “Boy-o-boy, thought I was a goner. Afternoon was forever, but it’s really real ‘n so? We’re free!”

Rod replied, “Yup, you’re not dreaming cowboy, we got the whole summer off. Dirt bikin’, campin’, fishin’, we’re doin’ it all.”
The companions hustled to the rusty bike rack arm-in-arm. They unhitched their steel horses, effortlessly mounting their colorful metal-flaked banana seats. “Let’s ride!” in no time flat, two chromed sissybars gleamed at the crest of Suicide Hill, like tandem rocket ships prepared to blast off.

“Pilot to copilot, runway clear? Over.”
“Rodger. Over.”
“Trajectory, telemetry? Over.”
“Turbines to power!”

Immediately, the brothers pushed off the steaming blacktop with their well-worn Chuck Taylors and the race was on. The course was simple; straight downhill and once around the block in opposing direction. The competition was tight. Rod reached Shawano Avenue first, already veering right when Wayne arrived, instinctively heading west. One might think that the ridiculous high speed obtained downhill, or perhaps, the perilous hairpin turn at the hill’s base, was the most treacherous feat to accomplish. Truth-be-told, the most death defying execution was simply surviving beyond the Fleischmann house, the known lair of “rotten” Richard, the entire neighborhood’s arch nemesis. Big, dumb, and mean as an alley cat. Invariably, when he wasn’t in school, he would be found standing smack-dab in the middle of Dousman Street, arms folded like a concrete sentry, taunting any poor sap to attempt passage. If a kid miraculously avoided the creep, the escapee customarily shouted at the top of his lungs, “Richard’s a rotten turd!” Our little victory song sung unwaveringly, often earned by payment of blood, sweat, and tears.

Today, rotten Richard was out of his cage, stalking prey. The brothers pedaled furiously as they converged upon the goon. He froze in catatonic, slack-jawed confusion, then feebly reached out like a Frankenstein scarecrow. Wayne pasted his left arm precisely as Rod contacted his right. Richard was a deranged ballerina, pirouetting until he lost momentum and collapsed like a drunken clown. As a curtain call, the brothers caroled their comical tune as they zipped past. Rod hesitated too long, a lucky break for Wayne. Sunshine popped through the canopy of giant elms, like a finale fireworks display in the night sky. They hit supersonic speeds, approaching their goal. Certainly, a photo finish.

The epic collision sounded like two freight trains smashing head on. The entanglement of bikes and boys looked like a Picasso. In tragic irony, the sky-blue Sanyo transistor radio Wayne had strapped onto his handlebars blared Alice Cooper’s latest 45 record, “School’s Out for Summer.” In the end, the brothers shared two broken wrists, a fractured arm, serious cases of road rash, and a couple of terminally bruised egos. The Schwinn bicycles were destroyed. When the injuries sustained were finally healed, it was already time to go school shopping. The summer of ’74 ended nearly as soon as it began, yet their unconditional love will live forever.
Chasing the Sea
Teng T.
They Tell Me
Gary Schuelke

When I speak of freedom, some people laugh it off
Yeah, when I talk about it, naysayers frown and scoff
So I tell them about life. They say, “Incarceration.”
They tell me that I’m locked up. I say, “Emancipation.”
Each new sun that rises gets me closer to the door
They say, “Your days embrace no hope.” I tell them, “Look for more.”
You see loss and razor wire. I’m building a new stage
I wait there within the wings, ‘til the script turns to my page
I see them in the audience. Are they critics? Are they fans?
‘Cause when this scene is over, they must tell me how it ran
They all say I just can’t trust my own sense of self
“Take everything you’ve ever done and put it on a shelf.”
I say, “Let’s speak recovery, such a romantic language”
“NO!” They say, “It’s not for you. Sit in silent anguish.”
We’ll deliberate on happiness, a subject we agree on
They scream, “stay within your lane, you are just a peon.”
God grant me serenity, I don’t know which way to turn
My spirit’s sure I’ve made amends and heed what I have learned
Yet still their voices tell me, I’m not worthy of respect
I leave it to a higher power and my introspect
Oh Lord, if you hear me, give me some kind of sign
Am I a wretched little fool, or closer yet, to fine?
From above, I heard a voice, “These evil folks you call, ‘THEY,’
What is their place? Why do they balk and remark this way?”
The truth is Lord, they live in me. They represent my pain
One at a time, I call to them, “Hey Anger, Guilt, and Shame.”
The Day That Didn’t Happen  
*Roger Minter*

The day that didn’t happen, is a day we can’t discuss  
through the lights and the shadows, the dirt and the dust  
the good and the bad times, the joy and the pain  
the warmth of the sunshine, the cold of the rain  
those gone before us, and those yet to come  
somebody’s daughter, or somebody’s son

The day that didn’t happen, is a day we can’t discuss  
a young man afraid to wait, or a young woman feeling rushed  
a kiss that never happened, or a dance that would never end  
a feeling in your gut that said you’d never be more than friends  
clarity in a moment or, discomfort in a span  
the feeling that made the moment, when you held each other’s hands

The day that didn’t happen, is a day we can’t discuss  
confined into your cage, following others orders is a must  
we push our luck each day, to the limit sometimes it seems  
but at night you can hear the cries, and not so silent screams  
we count the days and weeks, the months turn into years  
until the day that didn’t happen, once again becomes oh so clear

I Cry for Me  
*Adrian Knox*

I’ve suffered, I’ve struggled lost deep inside  
My emotional pain angry at the ugly walls of child abuse.  
I cry for me  
I am broken, abandoned, misused, empty, lonely,  
And fueled by rejection.  
I have suffered at the hands of my abusers  
I cry for me  
I am haunted by the scary fright of flashback  
Nightmares on the battlefields  
Physical and sexual abuse  
I was wounded, injured  
The violent memories are constant and real  
I cry for me  
And the little boy that resides in me  
Deeply in the depths of my soul.  
I cry for him even when death comes for us  
I’ll continue crying, praying, asking  
God to save us from our adversary  
In hopes that he will cry for the little boy  
Deeply hiding inside of me.  
Save us please, God, I’m tired  
I’m done crying, I’ll die for me  
Just set me free.
2 Birds
John Shomo
The Universal Language of Math  
C.W.

Math is the language of the universe, which was once stated by Galileo. What this means is that Math is the law, i.e. the nature of the universe. And this is why we can see Math all around us, when we truly begin to understand the concept of Math; for Math is not just numbers or graphs. Math can be seen as growth, order, and direction, considering how everything in nature grows, develops, and decomposes, according to a pretty general set of mathematical laws (like adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing). For example, look at the law of reproduction, which is pretty much multiplying, or the relationship between predator and prey, which boils down to simple subtraction. And there’s clearly an additive factor in the emergence of groups, colonies, herds, and other communal networks of living organisms. This is the basic math of life.

Speaking of life, look at the process of a cell, which comes together with other cells that then form into tissues, organs, organ systems, and ultimately an organism. Moreover, we can look at the process of mitosis and meiosis that both deal with adding and subtracting genes, chromosomes, etc. and this is all related to mathematics!

From another standpoint, Math can also be seen as sequences, patterns, and probabilities. For example, when you put your words together to articulate yourself, you are demonstrating a form of Math by sequencing your words. Sound itself is rooted in Math, because of the way it travels through frequencies. Therefore, music can also be seen as a form of Math, due to it being rooted in rhythm, pitch, tempo, and degrees. This is why music can be read through symbols like harmonic notes and so forth.

Even light can be seen as a form of Mathematics, due to how it travels at different speeds through different mediums. For instance, look at this mathematical expression: Earth is 93,000,000 miles from the sun. Light travels at 186,000 mps. So in order to figure out how many seconds or minutes it takes for the light to travel from the sun to Earth, you would have to do what? Divide 93,000,000 miles by 186,000 mps, which equals 500 seconds. And now we know that it takes 8 minutes and 20 seconds for light to travel from the sun to Earth, which is all related to Math!

Now in regards to patterns, we can simply turn to fractals, which are simply fragmented, geometric shapes that can be subdivided into parts, each of which are (at least approximately) a reduced size of the whole. Trees, lightning, and blood vessels are all examples of a fractal. And fractals can be found everywhere in nature, from the way a fern is shaped, with its branches, following the same design as the leaves on the branches, to the branching of a riverbed. Even at the molecular level, we can see how molecules are organized in geometric formation, which then become multiplied in elements with crystalline structure that reproduce the geometric forms within them.

Last but not least, our very DNA (double helix structure) is rooted in Mathematics, which also demonstrates sequences, patterns, and probabilities. And this is no accident or coincidence, but rather an intelligent order, like an order of operations!

Finally, as I’ve come to acknowledge this mathematical nature of the universe, I have now become more appreciative of Mathematics, as I can now see how it relates to everything around me and within me!!!
Forever Will I Wait
Austin Jakubowski
Diversity is alive and well in American pop culture. In 2018, a common sentiment echoed throughout the entertainment industry is the importance of a child being able to turn on the television and see people like themselves. In recent years, there has been a noticeable effort to focus on inclusion and diversity in mainstream films and T.V. shows. And America and its many cultures and lifestyles are on display within the realm of pop culture. A kid can finally turn on the T.V. and see people who look and live the way that they do, unless of course, you're a Native American kid.

There has been undeniable progress in the fight for inclusion in the entertainment industry. Studios are producing content portraying the lifestyles of characters from all races, classes, sexes, religions, and sexual orientation. There are mainstream television shows that focus exclusively on the lives of African American characters and families, as well as those of Latin Americans, Asian Americans and those in the LGBTQ community, to name a few. Most, if not all, shows feature a very diverse supporting cast as well. Films have followed this same formula with great success. The spirit of diversity is front and center, and audiences seem to support and appreciate this wave of inclusion. The multi-cultural American population is well represented in pop culture today, or so it seems. With an unprecedented number of media platforms on which audiences are able to view content, there seems to be something available for everyone. Couple that accessibility with the effect of social media and audiences now directly influence what is being produced. If people are offended or misrepresented, the backlash is immediate, therefore those creating these projects are careful to insure that the people and subjects they cover are accurately and respectfully portrayed. So regardless of your background, ethnicity, or lifestyle, chances are there are films and shows that at the very least feature a character with which you can relate.

Growing up as a Native kid in a fairly traditional Native household, I was obsessed with all things pop culture, particularly films and television. Yet the only times I remember seeing my people represented, they were always portrayed as victims in need of rescuing. And somehow, in these stories of indigenous struggle, the “hero” was always a white man! A few examples of this trend being, Daniel-Day Lewis in “The Last of the Mohicans,” Val Kilmer in “Thunderheart,” and probably most memorable, Kevin Costner in “Dances with Wolves.” Native filmmakers have made valiant efforts to produce stories about modern day Indians and life on the reservation, but chances are
if you’re not Native, you’ve probably never heard of films like “Smoke Signals” or “Grand Avenue.”

The way in which people are portrayed in pop culture has a direct effect on the way they are perceived by the rest of the world, especially if those viewing are already unfamiliar with the culture and lifestyles of certain groups. The main representation the rest of the world has of Native Americans is the “Noble Savage” of 18th and 19th century America. A stoic caricature with no emotion or personality, or as they were so colorfully described by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, “the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian savages.” In 2018, what, if any representation do Native people have in pop culture? There are no mainstream films or T.V. shows chronicling the lives of modern day Native American people or families. In fact, the only place Native Americans are prominently featured in pop culture is in the world of professional sports. The red faced, big nosed, feather clad mascot smiling idiotically on the ball caps of the Cleveland Indians (endearingly referred to as Chief Wahoo) being one example. If that’s not offensive enough for you, head to our nation’s capital and cheer for its NFL home team the Washington Redskins. “Redskin,” a racial slur used to demean and dehumanize indigenous people for centuries. The controversy surrounding the name and calls for it to be changed have been largely ignored. Native Americans make up less than one percent of the US population, therefore our impact socially and politically is virtually non-existent. As a result, our calls for equality, justice, and even respect fall on deaf ears. If an NFL franchise were to change its name to an African American, Hispanic, anti-Semitic, or homophobic slur, the public backlash would be ferocious and the owner would most likely be forced to step down. But the Native American community has to just accept that a national sports organization uses a name that is extremely offensive to them and their ancestors. I find it ironic that while NFL players kneel during the National Anthem to protest racial injustice, some do so with a racial slur printed on their uniforms.

So, is the spirit of diversity in today’s pop culture only reserved for the demographics that have a substantial political impact in America? Does the diminutive Native American population exclude us from our proverbial “seat at the table?” Or is it that Native people are simply disinterested in having their stories told to a worldwide audience, and therefore don’t campaign for or create projects that showcase the lives and culture of modern day Natives? Whatever the case, the American Indian is being mistreated, misrepresented, and is in need of rescuing, where is Kevin Costner when you need him?
5 o'clock Shadow
Rallund “Lee” Ottlinger
Behind These Walls
Josie Romero

Seconds turn into minutes
Minutes turn into days
Sitting in this block
Thinking I need to change my ways.
Thoughts turn into memories
Memories turn into tears
Court dates coming up
Hoping I don’t get plenty of years.
Missing my kids and family
My man is locked down as well
People out there hating
Wishing me to hell.
 Asking for forgiveness
Praying late at night
Getting up everyday
To fight the same old fight.
As the days go by
It’s like the time is standing still
Hearing those block doors close
Still makes me feel ill.
Waiting for the mail call
Standing up for count
People forgetting about me
That’s without a doubt.
Phone calls not being answered
Commissary getting low
People making visits
But of course no one ever shows.
Trying to stay positive
Keeping a level head
Holding back my tears
Hearing people wishing they were dead.
Painful memories coming
Waking up from dream
Sitting in my bunk
Thinking is this really me?
Out For Blood  
Ben Pedrin

The landing zone was a blur of kinetic energy  
as it rocked and swayed chaotically.  
Huge war machines flew through the sky  
decimating whole squadrons  
as attempts were made to land  
on its seething surface.  
It was clearly best to be wary and patient,  
but completing the mission was  
an instinctive impulse  
that could not be ignored.  
Diving once again for the target,  
the impact from yet another war engine  
created a disruptive shockwave  
that rippled across the wings,  
altering the flight trajectory  
and causing another flyby.  
Circling back around,  
the combatant approached the target.  
The skies cleared of danger,  
All movement ceased,  
And the assailant gently touched down.  
Finally, to complete the insertion by...  
SMACK!  
“Damn mosquito!”

Note 2 Self  
Brad D. Tower

Lately, I’ve been thinking, you are not yourself.  
This isn’t you, look where you got yourself.  
Think of all the time that you’ve cost yourself.  
Tried to carry all that weight like you could spot yourself.  
Look at all the pain that you’ve brought yourself.  
Open up your eyes, you gotta watch yourself.  
Unlearn all those things that you’ve taught yourself.  
‘cause standing on the “blocks” only blocks yourself.  
See, you’re the only person that can stop yourself.  
But somewhere along the line, man, you lost yourself.  
Put your pride aside, man, and opt for help.  
We both know you’re slippin’, now it’s ‘bout time  
You’ve caught yourself.
Vitae Cyclum
Gilbert A. Cortez

Creativity Contest 2019
This is a story of a man I used to know. A good man, strong, yet loving, but prideful and struggled with anger. He would tell you he’s just a man that knows what he wants and how things should be. He led an honest life and worked for what he had. He also had a beautiful family. A beautiful wife of eight years and a wonderful son named Mattie. Mattie was six years old and idolized his father.

Although this guy loved his family very much, he was a work-a-holic and if he wasn’t at work, you could find him in the garage tinkering on his pride and joy...he called her “Beauty.” She was a 1969 Plymouth Roadrunner. Day in and day out he lived in the garage building her from the ground up.

One day when he had Beauty out in the driveway, after giving her a fresh wax, her black mirror-like shell gleaming in the sun, he took a few minutes to make some adjustments under her hood. Seeing that his dad was working on the car, Mattie ran out to the driveway and asked his dad if he could help work on the car. The man picked up his son and holding him said, “Maybe when you’re a little older.” Then suggested that he go play by the swing-set. Mattie said, “But Daddy, I wanna.” His father interrupted in a stern voice saying, “I said not now! Now run along and go inside with your mother.” Reluctantly, Mattie moped back to the house. His dad continued to work on the car’s engine.

Some minutes passed and the man heard his son call out, “Look Daddy I’m helping.” To the man’s surprise his son Mattie was around the side of the car wiping down Beauty’s rear quarter panel with the same rag he had used earlier to wax her, not noticing that Mattie had dropped the rag in the gravel driveway and continued to wipe the car, leaving scratches in her perfect paint. When the man saw this he instantly flew off the handle and began to smack the boy’s hands, yelling at him, “NO! I told you No.” He was in such a rage over Beauty’s tarnished skin he hadn’t noticed that when he began to punish his son he still had the wrench in his hand. Only a few seconds later when the boy’s cries broke through his waves of anger did he notice the damage he had done to his son’s hands with the wrench. Reality came back to him like a slap in the
face. His son’s hands were mangled past recognition by the violent beating with the tool. Immediately the man picked his son up, ran into the house and called 911. Several minutes went by, they could hear the ambulance approaching in the distance, getting closer. The man tried to comfort his son, telling him, “Hold on, they’re almost here.” As the paramedics were packing the child into the ambulance, the boy cried for his parents.

Now at the hospital, Mattie was in surgery and his parents paced the waiting room. After what seemed to be a lifetime, the surgeon came to them with a glum look on his face and gave them the news no parent wants to hear, “I’m sorry, but the damage was too extensive. We were not able to save Matthew’s hands. We had to amputate them. He’s in recovery now, you can see him in the morning.” The man fell in his chair and put his face in hands and began to sob. Mattie’s mother frantically asked the doctor how this could be.

After a couple of days and agonizing interviews with the police and child protective services, the mother went to stay with the parents. She could not find it in herself to forgive her husband for this. The doctors and social workers told the man to go home and get a proper night’s rest. Heeding their advice he went home, showered, ate, and climbed into bed to toss and turn all night, his mind racing about how he had lost so much so easily in one fit of rage. How could he ever forgive himself for this? How could Mattie ever forgive him?

As he got ready to go back to the hospital, he poured himself a cup of coffee and went out to the yard to let the sun hit his face, reflecting on how he was going to put his life back together. Wandering through the yard, he found himself moving toward Beauty. Now in his calm state he decided to assess her blemished skin. To the man’s heart breaking surprise, inside the scratches left by Mattie’s help, there were the words that would haunt him the rest of his life, the scratches read...“I love you Daddy.”
Make Friends With It
David Lovell

The perfectness of my “perfect” tropical island getaway began to fall apart as soon as the realtor gave me the key and left. I took my suitcase to the bedroom, but something (a voice?) told me not to put it on the bed. I tried to put it on the dresser but couldn’t lift that high. “Strange,” I thought. I knew it wasn’t heavy. I opened the top drawer but it pulled out of my grip and slammed closed. I tried, but couldn’t open it again. I looked in the closet. A stand-up vacuum cleaner growled at me and made a series of lunges at my feet. I closed the door before it could damage my new deck shoes.

I looked out the front window. I saw the blue sky. I saw the swaying palms. I saw the dark green lawn of closely cut Bermuda grass. But I did not see the realtor.

I went to the kitchen. The garbage disposal growled at me. I turned on the faucet and it threw water back in my face. I was not going to tolerate insubordinate household equipment. There was a glass Coke bottle in the can (this really was a place that time had forgotten). I fetched it and threw it in the maw of the petulant appliance. There was a tremendous crash and the sound of glass being ground to dust. It went silent. I swear I heard a burp.

I called the realtor. He acknowledged that the house was somewhat particular. He suggested I make friends with it.

“How? Burnt offerings?”
“Not burnt,” he said in his rolling Caribbean accent. “Ruins the taste. But, yes, that’s the thing.”
“Any idea of what it likes?” I asked without much hope of a helpful answer.
“You should make the choice. A gift chosen on another’s suggestion is not a gift from the heart. I’m sure the house could tell.”

I would have given up then and there, but I remembered the tourism literature talking about an active voodoo culture on the island. It looked like someone had been at work on this house.

I went to the public market to look for inspiration. What would make a garbage disposal happy? I came back with a variety of fruits and vegetables, a whole red snapper, and stock for my bar. I started filleting the fish, while tossing various things down the sink. It didn’t like iceberg lettuce—but who does? I tried some crackers. It made a choking sound, so I turned on the tap to wash it down. It liked a mango better, spitting out a perfectly clean seed. But it was still growling.

I had finished filleting the fish, so I threw the head and bones in. The growling turned to something closer to a purr, but it growled again when I started to walk away. I made a drink and threw the whole filet in on my way to the patio.

I came back to the kitchen an hour later. There was a perfect martini and a plate of hot crab croquettes for me on the counter. Friendship with this house was going to be expensive, but the payback looked pretty good.
Limitless

CEA-W

Creativity Contest 2019

Portrait
Roberto Ortiz
Old Sage

Annmarie C. Schulte

I saw the old wounded tree in the park
Tall and stalwart
Thin bark strips flapping
Lightning and wind had splintered five branches
City workers had sawed them off
A crippled sage now
Old sage somehow laughing
Lifting its few remaining limbs
Laughing with summer breezes
The base gashed on one side
Top branches mostly bare
Some though still green and showing life
Stark calm
Realistically certain
Grounded in roots spread far
To be that best teacher
Resolute father
Brave torn mother
Fierce true leader
Defiant imperturbable sage

328 Surfside Road

Stephen Montgomery

Roots run deep in that little cottage by the sea,
Where seagulls play in the breeze.
That house still stands from times gone past,
Where memories will always last.

Nantucket, the land that brought us Moby Dick,
Tall Ships owned by the Quaker rich.
Out to sea my mind will go,
To that place I will always know.

Wind and waves still shape that land,
Nothing more than rock and sand.
But for me it will always be,
The place with the little cottage by the sea.
Raven
Tallard

Creativity Contest 2019
Stop Chasing
Christine Breault

I see this happen all the time, 
this selfish love, this heinous crime.

With it you will never find, 
that life of yours you left behind.

With that needle in your vein, 
to your family you bring pain.

When you stick that in your arm, 
don’t you see it brings you harm.

You say, “feels good, feels really nice,” 
then your heart turns cold as ice.

I watch you dig your only hole, 
for your life, your heart, and soul.

That heroin that does you in, 
with it you will never win.

If you stop you’ll surely see, 
just how good your life can be.

There’s a freedom beyond that place, 
a freedom you don’t have to chase.

Battle Scars
Jason Guist

Relationships always sound so physically painful:

You fall in love...

You break your heart...

You lose your head...

Is it any wonder that people come through it...

With battle scars...
Rather Be Tin Man  
*R. Shea*

I never knew a heart can be dangerous,  
no one seems to take it too serious.  
I wanted to feel what they feel,  
maybe then I’d become something real

But no one told me that when you feel,  
it’s also impossible to completely heal.  
how can something take so long to make,  
But be so quick and easy to break?

So is it too late to give it back,  
put it again on that cooler rack?  
Where it could be placed under lock and key,  
safe from ever hurting me.

Because I don’t want it anymore,  
I want to go back to the way it was before.  
I’d rather be tin man and rest,  
with the emptiness inside my chest.

*Cow Lick*  
*Harlan Richards*
The FTL Medallion

Charles A. Clayton-Jones

Monica had her rituals, her routines; they helped her keep on track, to stay sane in a zany world. Her bling was a part of that routine. She knew she wasn’t supposed to wear it at work, but it helped to keep her connected to her larger world, the one outside of her lab filled with humming wires, LCD screens, and exotic materials. She never expected a keepsake to become a part of the problem, not like this.

The ‘moonstone’ had come from her husband, Tim. He had found it in the raw, while working on a tunneling project in the French Alps. She missed him terribly, separated as they were by the war; she was lucky that the stone had come to her, parcel post, just days before the continent of Europe was cut off from the Americas by the troubles.

She thought of Tim often, and when she did, she inevitably stroked the smooth blue stone she’d had mounted into a medallion that rarely left her neck. It connected her to him—the warmth of it, how it seemed to glow when she stroked it. Sometimes she fancied that she could almost hear his thoughts as she caressed the cerulean jewel. However, now that she had found that the jewel was the missing piece to problem in electro-gravitics that her team had been struggling with for almost a year, her allegiance was torn between Jet Propulsion Laboratories, her employer, and her burning need to see her husband again.

How she longed to share with him the love of their twin boys whom he had yet to meet. They were so like him, with their fair French-Canadian skin and tight blonde curls; yet how like her they also were, with their beautiful almond-shaped Japanese eyes. At least she could find comfort that they were safe with their grandmother in the suburbs of Toronto. Monica was confident that the retaliatory nuclear strikes, which had wiped out Houston and Phoenix, would be unlikely to include a strike against a secret JPL lab in Scarborough, since Canada was doing its level best to remain neutral in the conflict that pitted US against the European Union.

She stared at the test results on her monitor. She had known that she needed a powerful dielectric material to control the field effect of the superconducting silver-niobium coils. She had felt like an idiot, trying her pendant on a whim, when no one else was watching. She most certainly had not expected it to work, let alone show additional properties beyond a strong electro-gravitic potential. Her mind fizzed at the possibilities.

The Searle ratio alone meant that her workbench experiment was producing more energy that it consumed, sitting there, quietly levitating before her eyes, glowing with that soft blue hue. The ramifications of the shift in the Hummel constant meant that it was emitting particles before it received them, essentially radiating back in time. That meant...well, for one thing, it made Faster-Than-Light travel possible, even easy, and without the huge expenditure of fuel of traditional space travel. This thing was folding space-time right before her eyes.
Soon-Mi, Monica’s mother, had drilled into her the tautology of *giri* and *ninjo* as a child. *Giri*, conformity, the need for a good citizen to do her duty, was tempered by *ninjo*, the desire for self-expression, to follow one’s own path. Monica had never before felt so torn.

Why her? Why today? If she told anyone about this, the consequences were obvious. Primarily, they’d take her pendant away. Her link to Tim; all she had of him. They’d use her data, naturally...but this was JPL...they’d turn it into a formidable weapon. That’s what JPL did, and, as a branch of the US government, that weapon would be used—presumably as soon as practicable—to end the war in the US’ favor. Two years ago, she might not have had a problem with that; but two years ago, the US hadn’t caused this war by clandestinely dropping a neutron bomb on its own ally, France. Their senseless need for power and control had caused a couple of million deaths. Two years ago, CERN was a lab, like this one, albeit bigger, and not a large smoking hole in the ground—and for what? Because the US arsenal of nuclear weapons was made redundant by the better, antimatter-based weapons being developed by the EU at CERN? Boo-Hoo.

Monica had no sympathy for them. To her, the US meant a steady paycheck, no more. It was the Canadians who had taken her in and given her a home after the Sino-Japanese conflict had displaced thousands of her people. It was to Tim, soft gentle-giant Tim, that she owed her allegiance. Yet much of why she loved him was that he always did what was right, putting duty first—to God, to home, to family—before thinking of his own needs. What would Tim do in her place?

*Giri—ninjo* Duty vs. Desire, Honor, integrity, and conformity before self. Wasn’t that the Japanese way? Isn’t that what Soon-Mi had drilled into her? Monica imagined her mother’s sad brown eyes.

Monica had to act, and act soon. Her supervisor mostly left her to do her work, but the bigwigs from Washington were touring today, and this lab’s funding rode in no small part on her decision. To choose herself meant that the 41 employees of this small facility might soon be out of work; but the alternative could easily mean losing Tim. The last she had heard of him, he was trapped in a refugee camp in Grenoble, the French Alps visible from his barracks.

Trembling, she exhaled. Quietly, decisively, without any fuss, she shut her experiment down, and then erased her data using a mil-spec erasure protocol. She put her still glowing pendant around her neck, and for the last time, left the lab. She never looked back.
The Voices in Her Head

S. Hams

You took what wasn’t yours to take.
You made decisions that weren’t yours to make.

You have robbed the innocence of an impressionable child.
Until the point she was left feeling defiled.

Her Daddy was once her hero and best friend, and now she can’t and won’t look him in the eye.
Daddy always said, “Toughen up Bubba, don’t cry.”
He doesn’t know that she feels so alone and wants to die.

Her sparkling eyes and million dollar smile used to light up an entire room.
Now her heart and soul are full of such gloom.

You ruined her ever so precious young life and you left her with nothing but strife.

It feels like no one cares or understands, but then again she will never place her feelings in someone else’s hands.

She’ll have trust issues and anxiety for the rest of her days. She’ll let all the wrong people love her in all the wrong ways.

She feels as if she will never be good enough, even though on the outside she appears strong and tough.

Deep down inside she is so empty and lost.
You never once thought about what it might cost.

You’ve corrupted and sickened a truly beautiful mind.
She will forever search for answers that she will never find.

She will seek solace in dark and evil things.
She no longer cares what tomorrow brings.

If she can just stay numb all of the time, it may help her forget what she can never rewind.

They say that life is all about choices and decisions, but she did not choose this cruel imposition.

She screams so loudly but never makes an actual sound.
Her and her dirty secrets are forever bound.

She will forever fight her wicked demons until her death because she never had a choice when you took away her one and only voice.

By the time that she realizes that it was never even her fault it is way too late.
Because of you, addiction had become her only escape.
The Mourning Morning

Leslie Sumlin

Layla screamed at the top of her lungs, “Daddy! Daddy! Daddy! Nooooo!” I thought to myself, “Wow, for a four-year-old she’s really loud and really strong.” “Daddy! Daddy! Daddy! Don’t leave me!” she screamed again as I pried her from my leg for the third time. I was struggling to loosen her Velcro-like grips. Her screams pierced my soul like sunlight piercing a darkened room as curtains are being drawn open. As I looked into her puppy dog, tear-filled eyes, I felt like my heart was melting like a snowman on a summer’s day.

Then I felt my wife’s hand squeeze my hand like a python squeezing its prey. “Be strong,” my wife said to me and added, “You’re doing good so far.” “What kind of father would I be if I leave my daughter crying on her first day of school?” I asked. My wife squeezed my hand even harder as she pulled me gently toward the car.

Layla continued to scream “Daddy! Daddy! Daddy! Don’t leave me!” The teacher held her at bay as I was being dragged off to the car. “I never thought that Layla’s first day of school was going to be this traumatic,” I said looking my wife in her eyes. “Be strong,” my wife repeated to me with a hint of a chuckle in her voice.

In The Attic

Dana M.

Things were old, dusty, had the odor of dried cloth, moth ball clinging to the still air.

Imagining who had worn these items, what they were thinking, what they may have said, what they had been doing then.

What about these shoes, how many miles they had traveled.

What about these glasses, if they could talk what would they say about the things they had seen.

What about this old cross, how many prayers had been made while held between fingers of hope.

What about this book, faded pages, how many had heard its story.

Hmmm...those old memories.
Disappearing Confidant
William H.

Ode to a Prison Pencil

Vessel dark, encased in wood
to keep my fingers from your blood
of black, that dyes and dances down
the scraps of sacks—
flat, crumpled, brown,
or any paper that can hold
your soul of shrinking gold,
as smells of wood and shavings sweet
increase, and mark our time complete;
then gone, no longer here, dissolved,
you've merged with muses that we called,
stirred into what we felt and prayed,
become the words that we arrayed
on crumpled bags, on paper scraps—
our life, our music; inner maps.
At times I wish you’d lived to see
the things your life began in me.
On other skyless, formless days
I wish I’d merged
and you had stayed.
Time We Missed
George R. LaRue

I think about all of the time we missed, going to a park holding hands, or going to the beach building sandcastles in the sand. For not being able to read to you, and tuck you in at night, and for not being able to kiss your forehead or cheek whispering sleep tight. For not being able to take you to the zoo watching the delight and wonder in your face when you, for the first time, saw elephants, lions, tiger, and bears saying, “cool!”

For me not being able to teach you how to ride a bike, for me not teaching you how to protect yourself and fight,

For not coming when you heard a noise in the middle of the night, for not checking under the bed or in the closet for monsters telling you there are none in sight.

For not being able to see you shine at a school play, or not carrying you on my shoulders so you felt tall all day.

For not being able to encourage you to play a musical instrument or to sing, for us not being able to build a snowman type thing.

For all of the times that we missed, unmentioned are a whole lot more, every time I think about it, my heart breaks and gets sore.

And regardless of how much time we missed I know one thing will never change, all the love I have for you can wash away most of the pain.

Despite all the time we missed, I always loved you, and in my mind I carry the short time we shared, I believe somehow, so we may meet again my life has been spared.

My beautiful daughter, I love you.

Your Father, George R. LaRue
Pep Talk from a Prison Vet
Daniel Marsh

Finally, after twenty long years, my time is winding down. I have had my fair share of trials and tribulations. This time has taught me a lot, and I feel compelled to pass on some of the things that I have learned along the way.

Loss
It may feel like you have “lost” a lot when you got locked up. I used to long for the things that I no longer had. I was angry at the people that put me here. The reality, though, is that I lost nothing at all. I chose to give it up when I committed my crimes. My loved ones lost when their son, brother, and uncle removed himself from their lives. My victims lost out on a normal life when I chose to hurt them. What? You don’t have a victim in your case? Take a look in the mirror...there’s your victim. At the very least, you victimized yourself with your poor choices.

Now you’re stuck in prison. Do you feel ashamed of what you have done, or are you still mad at the person that did their civic duty and reported you to the police? If so, your anger is misdirected. You should be mad at yourself for what YOU HAVE DONE. You can’t move past that criminal thought process until you can feel empathy for the harm that you cause others.

The Environment Around You
Do you hate prison? Do you hate it enough to correct your bad behavior? Take a look at the people around you. Do you see the fifteen year old kids in grown men’s bodies? Do you see how immature they are? Watch as they walk around and call each other names and talk tough to each other. Are these the guys that you want to impress? Is this who you aspire to be? Don’t you want something better in life?

Do you like your living conditions? It’s pretty sparse when you compare it to what you had at home. This is by design. Prison is meant to be a little harsh. It’s supposed to be a deterrent to you coming back. Before you go on a big diatribe about how bad your particular prison is, let me preempt that complaint with three simple words...ALL PRISONS SUCK. Sure, there may be certain prisons that suck a little less than the one you are in, but one inescapable fact still exists...ALL PRISONS SUCK.

Rehabilitation
Certain conditions must exist for true rehabilitation to take place. The first condition is that you have to want to change. You have to be ready to acknowledge that the problem exists, and you have to be tired of repeating the same self-defeating behaviors over and over again. You must be ready to do something about it.

You are going to hear many people around you that say things like, “They don’t care about us anyway.” People seem to use this as their justification for not doing anything for themselves. Challenge this notion when you hear it. If you are one of these people that believe this, allow me to dispense with that fallacy right here and now.
Look at your surroundings. Look hard. If you stop focusing on all of the negativity around you, you can see the army of people that care about you. I see a school of educators that want to see you succeed in life. I see psychological services that care about your mental health. I see a bunch of dedicated therapists that care about you getting you into the treatment programs that you so desperately need. I see the people that come visit you and send you money. If you are still convinced that nobody cares about you (and I call B.S. on that one), that’s fine. If you want to truly make a change in your life, there is only one person that needs to care about you. Look in the mirror. It has been my experience that when you show others that you want to change, help comes from every angle. FYI, I care about you too. That’s why I am writing this.

Redemption

Like it or not, we all owe a debt to society. If you don’t believe this, then you are clearly not my intended audience. You might as well stop reading right here and go serve your time. This is probably one of several that you intend to serve. It’s called doing a life bit on the installment plan.

For the rest of you, I believe that the best way that you can redeem yourself is by resolving to never hurt another person again. Part of that resolution is to take necessary corrective steps to prevent yourself from reoffending. You do this through education, therapy, and a lot of self-reflection.

In order for the redemption to begin, I had to make the difficult acknowledgement that I committed those crimes and that I NEEDED to go to prison. Prison saved my life, and it saved me from ruining yet another person’s life with my violent and selfish behavior.

I can’t take back what I have done, but I hope that I gave my victims some measure of justice by getting the help that I needed, and by resolving to never do it again. There was never any mysterious cosmological force that took control of my body to commit those crimes. It was my own selfish desires.

For those guys that are never getting out, I feel for you. Don’t give up on making a good life for yourself in here. You have the most important job of all. You are in the unique position to mentor guys that are just coming into the system. Teach them that this is not the life that they should be living. Use yourself as their example. Become a tutor. It is the most rewarding thing that I have ever done.

For the rest of you, I hope one day that you will be writing a similar letter on your way out the door. Train yourself to see only the good things in this environment and what it can offer you, and good is all that you will see. Appreciate the gravity of where you are at and make the most of it. It is time to step up and be a contributing member of society. All of our well-being hinges on your success. We are all rooting for you. You can do it!
Artwork
Mr. Berry D. Martie
Beauty
Anthony

Beauty...
Beauty is everything I am and that I am not
I am Beauty’s own essence,
I am its most significant
I am its originator...
In me, I behold all its elements
I am its capture...its captive I am not.
Nor am I bound or shackled by its endless infomercials
About what pure/clear skin is;
I accept EVERY dark spot, EVERY scar—
I and I alone get to decide on my Beauty
As for those things they call imperfections...lol
Well, I call those God’s Blessings.
For he and he alone can pass judgment on what is good and what is bad.
And you know what’s sad?
We’ve allowed companies.
We’ve allowed ‘clay man-made’ products/oils/solutions...
Made by ‘clay made’ men...
To strip us of our natural essence and tell and sell us
on what natural Beauty is,
We’ve become too dependent on other’s summations of us;
The Beauty Pageants—
Miss Americas, Miss Universes and
And...let’s not forget our Victoria’s Secrets.
Women, beautiful women!
Clad in bikinis, lingerie, and stilettos they can barely walk in.
Told to walk a certain way and smile—this is what Beauty is.
Beauty is not a call to judgment...
At least that’s what they tell us.
But they mask their judgment by asking them questions at the end of competitions
’cause there’s nothing like a beautiful mind;
Though to get that crown, that sash, that childhood desired title...
they must FIRST be judged.
But “I” will NOT budge!
For “I” was made to be ME!
For “I” was made UNIQUELY!
For THIS world is BENEATH me.
For “I”, I said, for “I”
Am God’s very own DEFINITION of...
This thing they call...
BEAUTY.
Birth of a Poem
Edward Marquardt

Do I want to create?
Do I want to write something that’s great?
Do I want my mind pregnant with a poem?
If I do, then my mind must roam
For an idea... (click)...I got one and it’s growing...
So now it’s a matter of knowing...
   Do I want to write a poem what people want to read?—or—
   Do I want to write a poem what I want to say?—Take heed...
   No—I want people to want to read a poem about what I want to say.
   But the idea isn’t big enough yet today.
Yes, I have a few phrases—some words on a line...
But with cramps and a headache...
   (Is this morning sickness?)—I’m not feeling so fine.
      I mean—will this take nine months or longer?
      In that time, then, I want to make my mind stronger.
So I’m living a healthy writing style...
Learning new vocabulary...New types of poems...
   (This might take a while!)
Will it be haiku, an acrostic or a free-write rhyme?
Choosing the right style might take some time.
I must prepare the room—dictionary, paper, pen...
Music...The blues? Pink Floyd? Michael Jackson?—the mood and then...
   I look on the paper...There’s very little showing...
But I can feel it—my idea is growing and growing...
And then the waiting for the right words—

Nouns, adjectives or adverbs?...

In the right order, on the right line...

With the right rhythm? I'm not going to resign.

The lines are short—But I will not abort.

But the idea is getting bigger—It’s beginning to show...

And I’m so proud of all the writing tips I now know.

So with patience and perseverance—The arrival must be near!

Sure enough, the contractions of mind are here...

So I rush to the pen, paper, and table...

(breathe)—Watery words are flowing out...and now I’m able...

(Breathe) With the right rhythm...

On the right line...

(BREATHE) With the right meaning—

The words are mine!

And I push—

And I push—

And with more PUSHES—The right verses come out!

I’m excited! Ecstatic! Exuberant! Exhilarated!—

I’m going to shout!!

FOR I’VE EXPERIENCED THE BIRTH OF A POEM!!!

I’m tired!

I’m proud!

I’m happy!

I’m taking this baby home!
Wonder Woman
Rick Gurholt

Creativity Contest 2019
Paradise Lost

TJ

Born to seed of greed,
Unchecked avarice, cloaked as need.
Conquering by sickness and steel,
Crimson shed without time to congeal.

Curdled milk, thick as waves,
Autopsy of unmarked graves.
Whispered memories; paper promises fawned.
All unknowing, our paradise pawned.

Riven with each new wrong,
Desperately clinging to our song.
Tongue forbidden, children taken,
Never still the drum, heartbeat unshaken.

Red People of fallacious pride,
What delusion led you from our side?
To the Great White Father you turned,
Our ancient heritage, spurned.

Grief of spirits for unfaithful kin,
Divided, destitute, we cannot win.
Where is the True Red Heart,
Freely given from the start?

Now we say, “You’re on my property,” to others,
Turning cold shoulders upon our brothers.
Foolishly mimicking a game’s greed,
Scoffing at our elder’s need.

Thin of blood and thick of wit,
Heart ailing, our ways you forget!
White Will fulfilled in you,
Generation of crooked view.
Helpless

Christina Galilee Ross

My chest is so tight, I feel pain in my back.
It travels right through me, I’m under attack.
My breathing is heavy and rapid, then slow.
The more thoughts I think, have me losing control.
It’s at the tips of my fingers, and flowing through every vein.
This feeling inside me has me going insane.
   I feel it in every step that I take.
This is way too much, am I going to break?
Swirling and twirling, then sinking down deep.
   I lay in my bed, but I cannot sleep.
My eyes; they are closed, and my body lay still.
My thoughts keep on going, they’re making me ill.
   Not one, but two; sometimes three at a time.
My mind so complex, thoughts just fall in line.
They cook in my head, becoming more than they are.
   Over thinking every detail; causing more harm.
   Dark turns to light way too fast.
Still no rest in my brain, as hours come, then pass.
Again on my feet, back in front of the crowd.
They look, then they speak as my mind drowns them out.
   I try to converse, and be part of their talk.
Within minutes my eyes gloss over.
   I stare, they balk.
I don’t mean to be rude, not at all.
My anxiety has me Helpless.
   I Stand, then I Fall.
All Alone With My Enemy  
*Jedidiah P.*

Sitting all alone with no one around but my biggest enemy  
No phone, nobody, no stereo, no mail, no t.v.  
Just me and the enemy  
I try looking at him but I just can’t  
I try asking why he did this to me, but it seems he doesn’t know how to act  
Maybe he is as uneasy as I am  
All my anger pent up inside, so much anger it makes me cry  
Sitting all alone trying to face my fear  
Fear is real easy when the enemy is this near  
Why did I think he was ok, why did I do what I knew would lead me astray  
My life has become unmanageable, I don’t have anything tangible  
The love of my life may not become my wife  
All because I lost the fight, but I’ll try with all my might to make things right, but I’m still sitting here face to face  
With my enemy tonight  
I cry out to God and pray for his help and tell him I’m sorry I didn’t stay on the right path  
I turned my back on him and welcomed evil and sin  
Things have become a bit clearer when I realize the enemy is much nearer  
His face is finally coming into focus  
Wait a minute it’s me  
Sitting all alone by myself and enemy  
Which in the end is just me

Life of the Sun  
*A.J.S.*

The sun rises in the east  
And brings a solitude of peace.  
Creating shadows through the trees,  
Just before it heats.  
What a wonderful feat  
To bring abundance of treats.  
Nothing compares to what is seen,  
All from the comfort of your seat.  

The day is almost over, said  
Sun slides to the west.  
For every day is a test  
As night starts to set.  
This to come next  
And tuck away day’s events.  
Now time for rest,  
The cycle to repeat once again.
Creativity Contest 2019

Madonna
Rodney Baer
Sherman
Greg G.

He struck fear into the feeble hearts of all whom have heard of him and could never be forgotten once he was encountered. His body was bulky and built of iron clad muscle. No one knew for certain his real name, but the locals dubbed him simply as “Sherman,” in honor of an infamous WWII killing machine, bringing with it the respect that he deserved. Now if this wasn’t enough to intimidate even the strongest of God fearing men, then nothing would.

He had a battle scar that contorted his face into a permanent sneer that seemed to say, “Go ahead and try to cross paths with me.” So with the power that he inherently possessed and the instinctive danger that he invoked, why were my wife and I about to enter his domain?

Adventures abound in the pristine waters of the Caribbean Sea, and scuba diving was our main objective on our Black Beard’s Cruise. We sailed on a sixty-five foot restored schooner through the corals reefs that teemed with gentle ocean life. We also challenged ourselves with two night dives into the unknown world deep below. But now we were preparing to meet Sherman himself, a nine foot bull shark, and a half dozen tiger sharks as well. We were told not to feel intimidated by the rows of razor like teeth left exposed on this behemoth by the rips of a fisherman’s hook.

The descent to the ocean’s bottom was traumatic enough as 5-foot tiger sharks encircled us. At least our backs were protected by a horseshoe shaped coral reef as we knelt on the sandy bottom, and curious sharks darted about only feet above and in front of us.

Suddenly the pace of our hearts quickened as a looming shadow passed overhead, like a mid-day eclipse, and seemingly out of nowhere Sherman stealthily appeared for his inspection. As he lumbered back and forth, he eyed each of us as potential prey. He indeed was intimidating with those ravenous looking exposed teeth that could shred his meal instantly, and we had no steel cage to protect us from this perceived certain fate. We anxiously pulled in air in deep breaths from our oxygen tanks.

Not wanting to tempt fate for too long, our dive master gently persuaded Sherman to mosey along, and though uneventful, we were able to safely ascend past the gauntlet of tiger sharks.

Upon re-surfacing, we quickly retreated from water...lest we tempt a looming shark and it changes its predatory mind about tasting us.

We realized hours later that our jaws still ached from the clenching down on our regulators and that our tanks were almost void of oxygen. I guess we were a little more anxious than we thought. We will always cherish this adventurous experience, now that it was over, and admire Sherman, the ultimate ruler of his sea...
Skulljection - A Self-Portrait
Anthony Radencich
Lunatic Storm
Harlan Richards

It always starts out the same way. I notice that I’m laughing more than usual, often at things that aren’t funny. Then before you know it, I’m cracking corny jokes and spouting puns like there’s no tomorrow. That’s when I get that uh-oh feeling in the pit of my stomach.

I know I’m in for a wild ride, most of which I won’t remember and most probably won’t want to know about when I recover. It wouldn’t be so bad if I was the only one, but there’re a lot of us who get afflicted at the same time. We are just normal people doing normal things. Then the Lunatic Storm hits. We jump on Ozzie’s Crazy Train and off we go.

Fortunately, we don’t get violent—just goofy, silly, inane, and completely uncontrollable. I’ve been to numerous doctors and other experts looking for answers. Is it in my blood? An infection that wasn’t treated properly? How about my DNA? Nope, nothing was found. There are simply millions of us who wig-out at the same time for no apparent reason for an undetermined length of time. We seem to attract each other like magnets, and then oh boy let the good times roll.

I remember it hit me one time when I was at the zoo. I swear I was Dr. Dolittle talking to all the animals. Jeez, do they have some stories to tell. The ones raised in captivity tell horror stories about infamous zoo keepers who abused them. The ones captured in the wild are mostly angry and bitter, but if you gain their confidence, you can get them to open up a bit.

Another time I was in a public library along with a whole slew of other Storm-ridden lunatics. We merely touched the spines of books and instantly knew the whole book by heart. We strutted around declaiming like Shakespearean actors on Piccadilly Circus stage. Sad to say, although I remember grandly performing Hamlet’s soliloquy to a stunned audience outside the library, nothing else remains in my memory but “to be or not to be.”

For the most part the normals tolerate our antics. They know we are harmless and although we may be moderately annoying, we never hurt anyone or do lasting damage. I’ve heard tales from others that Loonies have performed heroic feats while under the Storm. Fear leaves us along with the good sense God gave us. Dramatic rescues, stopping crimes in progress, even preventing suicides. It seems we are blessed with Fool’s Luck when out Storming. We don’t get hurt even when doing crazy stunts like riding bicycles off garage roofs into hay mows.

You know, I’ve been giggling since the second paragraph and there’s one more thing I want to say: What has 4 wheels and flies? A garbage truck!

Wait, wait, here’s another one...
I've slept these days away in a stupor
And wrestled my nights
From repressed aggression
In light of a better future;
And if I had a suture
For each mistake I've ever made,
I could make a monster,
Stitched up and sponsored
By a fight and a war I wage
On the frontlines of my lost mind;
I'd say “I'm fine,” if you asked...
I'd even smile, just to complete the mask
And I'd laugh along with jokes
While I'm quietly, choking on hope—
Falling between the cracks of a broken home;
I've overdosed on the fact
That I come from a troubled past
And I've surpassed even the lowest of spectrums—
Demanding respect from
Those who don't care or
Those who aren't aware
Of how bad it is,
On just how mad this gets—
Feeling cursed, going in circles;
Lost in a forest, chasing myself through the foliage
In search of a purpose;
Or a reason to think that existence is worth it—
And while these verses carry on
I've been stuck in the prelude,
Hope to prelude, or refute—
In an effort to defuse
These lit wicks in my consciousness;
And while I wish
That I could make it all just...disappear—
The pain, my past, the hatred
And crippling fear—
I know in my heart
That change is a force of today
And tomorrow's unknown;
So while I waste all this time
And wage these battles of mine
I'm only trying to find
The chance to fully atone
For all that I've done
And to show that I've grown—

That all the blood and cuts
The scars and broken bones
Had a reason
They weren't just chaos,
Senseless, in the midst of those living and breathing,
Who struggle along, lost in their own agony
Of hurting and hiding
And hoping and fighting
To make better choices
Or shout at the world
On behalf of the voiceless
While the voices of torment
Try to hold them back;
And I know forgiveness is hard
But, I thought I should ask...
Because I'm sorry. Truly, I know I was wrong
And while I try to hold on
I feel this constant slip—
Like I'm losing my grip—
And I wish I would've helped
When “they” made the request...
But I was caught up in myself
And all my regrets...
So I guess, what I mean to say,
Is that I see it now...
I know what it means to be so far down
That when you look up
You don't even see the light...
And I know what it's like to realize
You have to find your strength
And start to climb—
'cause at the bottom, under the rocks,
When the clock starts ticking its tock,
Counting the time with a melancholy chime,
The echoes linger, haunting the mind...
So despite the daunting height
Of all that we have to conquer
And all that we are yet to overcome—
There's only one way out,
There's only one way through...
And I've come to understand
That the only person you can truly count on
To make the changes you need to...
The only thing you need to believe in...
Is YOU.