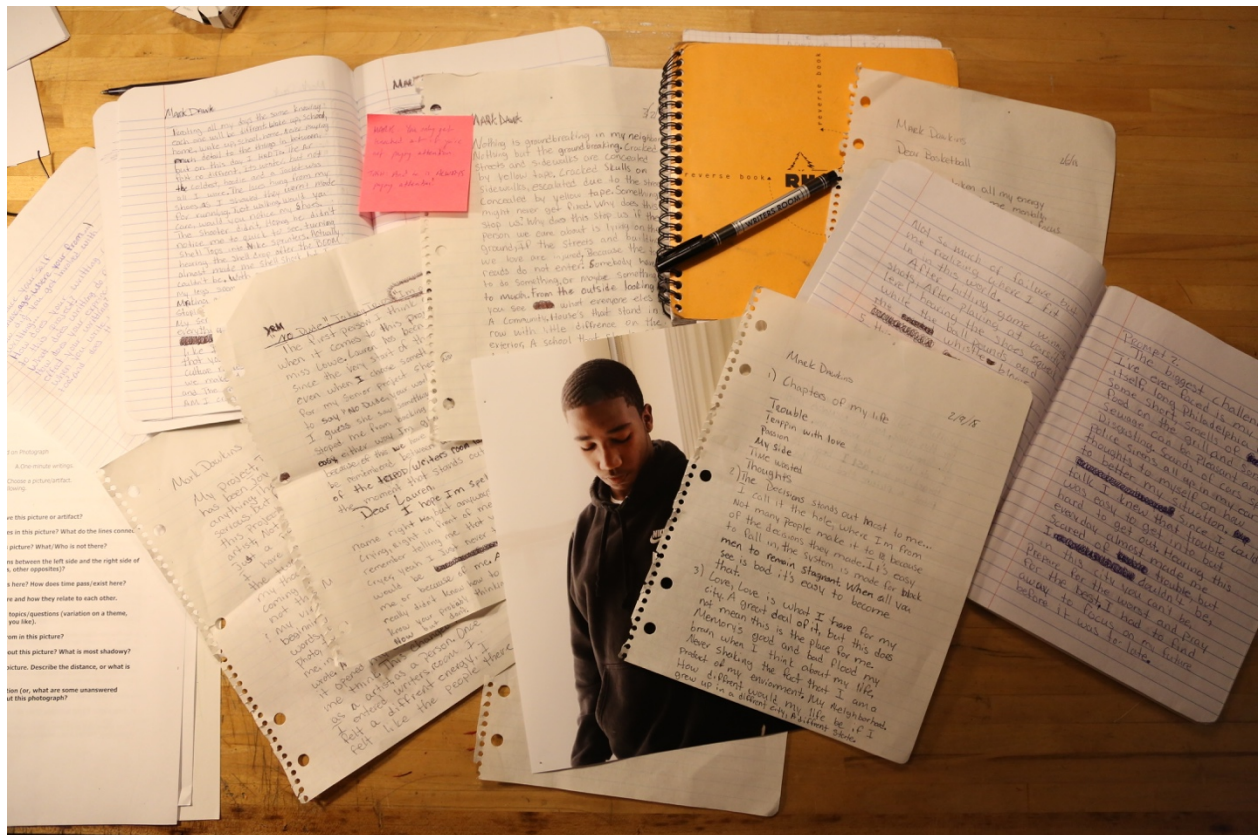


Spotlight: ArtistYear Creative Writing Portfolio

Mark Dawkins, Student Author - Robeson High School - Lauren Lowe, ArtistYear AmeriCorps Fellow



About: Mark Dawkins is a senior at Paul Robeson High School for Human Services in Philadelphia, a school partner site for ArtistYear programing during the 2017-2018 school year. Mark's ArtistYear AmeriCorps Fellow, Lauren Lowe (*ArtistYear Class of 2018*) used her service year to link Robeson High to Drexel University's Writers Room, bringing her students on campus to participate in an intergenerational collaboration called "TRIPOD." TRIPOD is an innovative project series with Drexel's Writer's Room and Mighty Writers, with sponsorship from Canon Solutions America and Canon USA. Bringing writing and photography together, small cohorts comprised of senior citizens, high schoolers, and Drexel students documented West Philadelphia to tell collaborative stories about the ongoing changes in their neighborhoods. The pieces below are samples from the portfolio Lauren has been working on with Mark this year through her ArtistYear. These pieces are shared for internal purposes with Mark's permission.

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Shells

Treating all my days the same knowing each one will be different.

Wake up, school, home, wake up, school home. Never paying much detail to the things in between, but on this day I *had* to.

The air felt no different, it's winter, but not the coldest, hoodie and a jacket was all I wore. The laces hung from my shoes, as I showed they weren't made for running, just walking. Would you care? Would you notice my shoes?

The shooter didn't.

Hoping he didn't notice, me too quick to see, turning shell tops into Nike sprinters. Actually hearing the shell drop after the *BOOM* almost made me shell shock, but I couldn't be. With everything spinning my legs seemed to take me straight, making quick turns to get away, not stopping until I was blocks away. My senses became stronger but everything felt still, quiet, numb, like I was all alone.

Reality is that you are.

Our way is different, the culture makes us static, each decision we make determines who we are, and the environment shapes us.

Philly, am I crazy to say this is normal?



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46TH

The movement is different. When I'm around you my energy changes, I feel free, I think about now instead of tomorrow. The air I breathe is light, while my mind levels, our bond is unbreakable. For now at least. I treat you as if you have feelings, but mine are to care about. Saying "I will neva change" is just a clouded mind. Do you care? Of course you don't you're just a place. But you're my place. I stayed through the winter love, and the summer madness. It was fun to me, but not to mamma, but my loyalty lied with you. Do you care? If I left how would you feel? Would you change on me? If I came back would everything be different? I'm doing it again. Maybe change is good for both of us. Anyways I found some new friends. I like them, they seem to care about me and my future. Look at their faces. "Your neighborhood is not a person it can't see." I feel crazy sometimes but you mean a lot to me, and I know you see them just like me.

The place I love most will soon be behind me as I move on in life, wondering will it still be a part of me as I take many steps towards my future. Could I forget this place, the hate, the love, the excitement. I don't think so, but will it forget me?



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