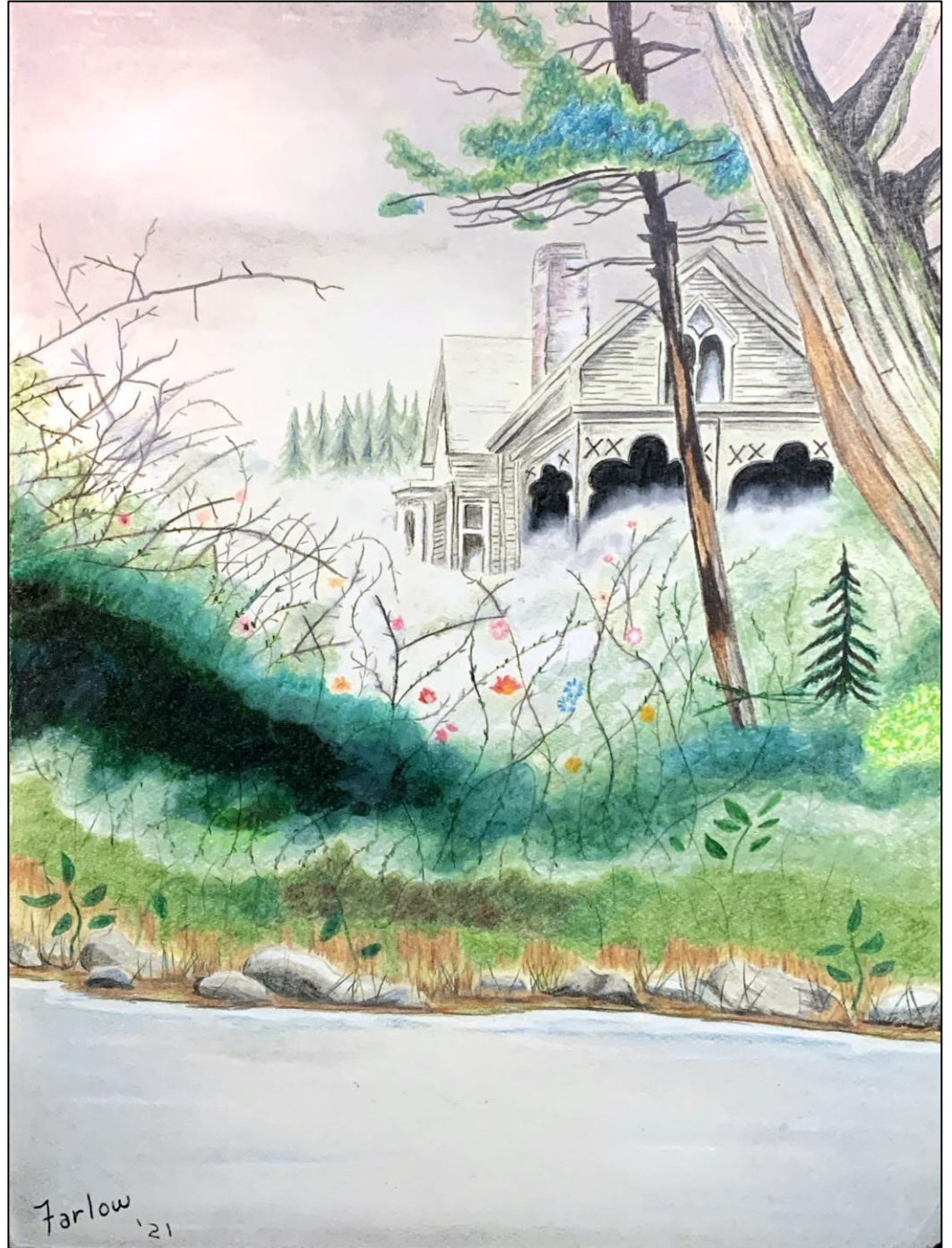


Prisoner Express Poetry Anthology Volume 26



Art by Gary Farlow

Themes: Love and Loss (1), Bound (5), State Brutality (9), Current Issues (11), Shadows and Memories (12), Faces, Places (15), Outer Space (19), Identities (20), Words on Words (21), Transformations (23)

Dear Reader,

Welcome to Prisoner Express Poetry Anthology #26! My name is Elinor and I'm a freshman at Cornell, so I'm pretty new to this place and to the Prisoner Express team.

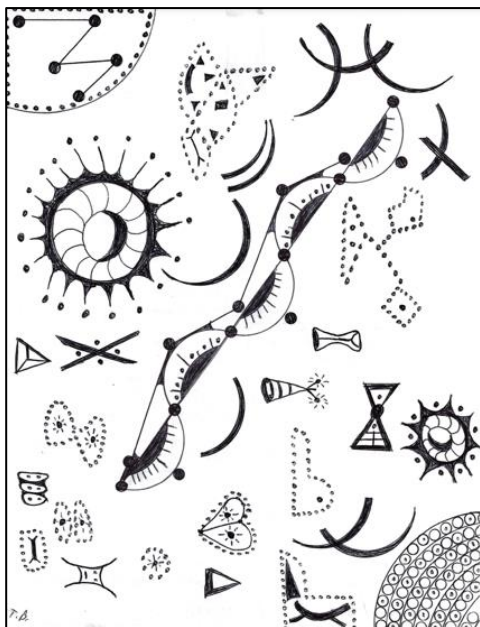
I'm incredibly grateful I've had the chance to read your beautiful poems and to compile this edition with my coworker, Claire. Your work has reignited my love of poetry. Each of these pieces is candid, precise, and filled with emotion. These pages include meditations on personal growth, musings on the simple beauty of the sunrise, and essential reflections on the meaning of and search for justice.

Submissions have poured in over the past several months and there simply wasn't enough room to contain all of them in these 28 pages. This is due to space constraints alone. Please do not be discouraged if your poems don't appear in this particular edition. I encourage you to continue to write poetry, journal, make art, and pursue every available creative outlet.

Thank you once again for submitting your writing! Poetry is inherently quite personal, and I am so impressed by those who choose to share their work, allowing their words to touch the lives of others. I hope you enjoy the poems in this collection as much as I do.

Best wishes,
Elinor

Note: Those who submitted poetry for PP27 may also receive a copy of this anthology because it will take several months before the next edition is produced. All PP27 submissions are still under consideration.



Thomas Black

PE Update: Hi friends, Elizabeth Wolfe is leading the Rattle Poetry Project and wanted all the Rattle poets to know that they are reading and responding to your entries. -Gary

Hi again from Elizabeth S. Wolf, the poet from the Response Poem Assignment. Happy to report we are swinging into action here. I recently received the first big batch of submissions from Prisoner Express. I brought them to my local community poetry group, and folks were pumped- many packets of poems were signed out on the spot. We also posted a call for readers in several other local poetry groups. I expect feedback letters will start going back to incarcerated poets soon. And then we will pass the works along to Rattle. Big thanks to the gang at PE for organizing this so nicely for us, and to Rattle for donating issues and welcoming these submissions! -Elizabeth

Love and Loss

In The Heart Of A Rose

By Silas Kanady

A Buddhist monk once told me
Peace was mine to find
If only I could watch my breath
And tame my wild mind
I thought this was unlikely
The words that were disclosed
By this humble monk who sat
In simple saffron robes
He sat with me in prison saying
Words I won't forget
"You live your life more
peacefully
By thinking of your death."
I didn't understand it
And couldn't comprehend
What good could come from
focusing
On how my life would end?
Deciding to depart from there
And not to even try
His ghoulis contemplation
When his movement caught my
eye

The monk withdrew a nimble
hand
From his saffron sleeve
He cupped a crimson-colored
rose
And held it out for me
My hands reached
automatically
Enamored at the sight
The sweetly scent, the beauty
And the way it pulsed with light
Emanating from its core
It chased out all the gloom
From every dusty corner
Of that tiny prison room
Poetry in motion
When he handed me the rose
Taking it in reverent hands
I held it to my nose

Soft and silky petals
Sweet and fragrant scent
Peerless rose of heaven
glowing
Brilliant bright and red

I took her back into my
cell
And stared at her for
hours
Hailing her as queen
Over all the other
flowers
I boldly stated loudly:
"Of roses that exist
Surely none can match this one
And usher forth such bliss."
The bloom swept all the
shadows
Evicting them henceforth
Bringing light and harmony
And life and so much more

I gazed into her depths
For hours, days, or years
The Fibonacci sequence singing
Softly in my ears
The churning of a hurricane
Battering the shore
The curling of a pinecone
pattern
On the forest floor
Seeing spirals in her face
Great galaxies so grand
I clutched the very cosmos
In my scarred and calloused
hand
Intoxicated by her touch
The coolness on my skin
Soothing something burnt in me
From way down deep within
I found that I was smiling
I stood in raptured awe
Cuz in that swirl of
petals
Were the
fingerprints of God
Every pagan
pantheon



Brian Hindson

The mysteries
were reflected
Buddha and the
Bodhi tree
All interconnected
In a flawless tapestry
Weaving sacred lines
And roots into
my consciousness
Back through the sands of time

When I went to sleep that night
I smiled while I slept
Lost in thoughts of blossoms
brought
(Red roses as I dreamt)
As soon as dawn awoke me
Prompting me to rise
I cried in fright at the sight
That met my tired eyes
My rose was sad and droopy
And darkness stole her light
While I was gone and dreaming
Of her just that very night
Her edges started browning
Her red was now subdued
In a darker color
Of her lovely crimson hue
A slow-motion tragedy
Each petal and each leaf
Turned to black not bouncing
back
And leaving me bereaved
Thus she died so peacefully
In dignity and grace

I grappled with the grieving
 And epiphany I faced:
 Impermanence is permanent
 It's over oh so fast
 The way it goes for man or rose
 We all must breathe our last
 The cycle is exquisite
 With birth, life, and decay
 From birth to death is but a
 breath
 And death will have its day*
 Live your life with beauty
 Strength and poise and grace
 Like the rose that touched my
 soul
 And gently passed away
 Thus was the lesson that the
 monk
 Wanted me to find
 Locked and tied deep inside
 My loud and cluttered mind
 Words were not sufficient
 Whether spoken or composed
 To teach the Truth that's hidden
 In the heart of every rose.

Love Without Regrets
By Jimmie Locke

Even when you warned me not
 to I still fashioned myself wings
 of wax,
 Even when you warned me not
 to I still took flight.
 Even when you warned me not
 to I flew higher and higher.
 Even when you warned me I
 knew I couldn't stop.
 Even when I felt your tears in
 the rain and heard your cries in
 the thunderclap I crashed to the
 ground.
 And all I need is to hear you
 whisper my name just once and
 I'll rise out of my crater.
 I'll take flight yet again and
 crash to the ground over and
 over and over again.

I know in the end you and I
 shall take our place in the sun.
 This is my bittersweet pathos.

Heavenly Hugs
By William Ziegler

If laughter's a remedy
 hugs are emergency rooms
 dwarfing Earth's vast comedy
 with one compendious womb
 embraced inside guardians
 and cradled just after birth
 nestled against cardigans
 in close range of glowing
 hearths
 not to be confused with slams
 Judo or football tackles
 intercourse of one night stands
 followed by drunken cackles
 instead gripping for dear life
 sharing each other's essence
 squeezed in a compassion vice
 enhancing effervescence
 all will be well in the end
 if Love's open arms await
 be it family or true friend
 fanned wide like those pearly
 gates

Promises
By Rickey Bright

If all the world buys my prose
 and poetry, Kathy Ann,
 These things I hope will prove
 myself an honorable man.
 I would like to get down on one
 knee; not to ask your hand,
 but to place there a lovely gold
 and diamond wedding band.
 I speak not in contradiction; this
 is what you deserve.
 For the love and happiness you
 gave me without reserve.
 If that time comes, I hope you
 accept my token of love,

and forgive this foolish man as
 if you were the Lord above.
 Kathy, if my fans are many I
 long to give to you
 all the things for so long you
 have deserved, things long past
 due:
 Pretty clothes, fine cars,
 diamond jewelry, and a home,
 too,
 somewhere in the mountains,
 maybe an oceanfront so blue.

My love, if these dreams never
 come true, I'll ask the Lord
 why.
 I truly want to see you happy,
 no more tears to cry.
 If in this I fail, and this poem
 proves to be untrue,
 please know in your loving
 heart that this fool always loved
 you.

When I Laid Eyes On You
By Reginald J. Holland-Houston
III

I knew you were trouble when I
 laid eyes on you.
 Full lips, gap-toothed, 100% A-
 dork-able!
 A real-life Velma. Sultry voice.
 Shy and bashful. I didn't have a
 choice!
 A glimpse into your eyes and
 my walls came down.
 The dimples on your cheeks
 knocked my breath smooth out!
 From your sleeves to your neck,
 all gamer tats.
 What surprised me the most
 was the art on your back!
 You don't like attention, rather
 be by yourself,
 Or be with your family-But
 nobody else!
 I never liked toes, but yours are
 attractive.

Nails painted purple, with gold
and yellow accents.
Laced up gladiators, tied at your
thighs.
Yellow sundress, Givenchy by
the sight!
Glowing brown skin, caramel
brown eyes,
It may be
daylight, but the sun you
outshined!
Stare at you all day and dream
of you all night,
But the image of you will never
be a tiring sight!
Your shining
white teeth and natural
eyebrows,
Zero makeup, even Alicia Keys
would say wow!
Curly brown hair, wrapped up
in a bun,
You let your hair out and it
cascades to your buns.
High cheekbones, cute button
nose,
When you smile at me, I
become butter on toast!
A goddess you are, the rest-we
are peasants,
What a blessing it is, to be in
your presence!
Now you know the reason I said
unto you.
I knew you were trouble when I
laid eyes on you.

Temporary Forever
By Charlie B. Jenkins III

Temporary Forever

Though you only caught my eye
in passing
That was a while ago, but I still
see you

Temporary Forever

It's crazy how opposites attract
and forevers can be temporary
Though the twinkle in your eye
be the light that guides me at
night with passion, burning
bright

Temporary Forevers

My easter star, my morning
light
Temporarily closing my eyes
Forever waking up

Temporary together
Forever breaking up

Time: The Thief
By Seth Frazier

Days are long, yet nights are
longer
I was strong, but Time was
stronger.
A jewel I'd found when first I
found her.
Her voice, the sound, in which
I'd flounder;
Music I'd danced with, her
rhythm;
My heart, eyes, lips, she
orchestrated with 'em.
The Sun to a flower, she
filled me with power,
Minute by minute, hour by
hour.
Time is many things, chief
among them a thief.
I never thought she'd leave;
she was taken from me.
Ah, the way that our Time
flew, each moment special
and new.
Then one day, Time just
stopped;
Away from me the World just
dropped.
That sinister Time, its face
the clock;

Eternity between the tick and
the tock.
How slow now Time does flow,
when in the sky, a rainbow.
Oh yes, days are so long, nights
are much longer.
How I fought for her, but Time
was stronger.
A way back I cannot find. God
knows I've tried, but Time
doesn't rewind.
For now her memory resides,
constant in my mind;
Until Time finally decides to
steal that too, making me blind.

Silence #2
By James Schmidt

A silent yellow rose starts to
wither
The yellow petals begin to
slowly crack
Thorns become dull to the touch
The stem becomes fragile
He sways away from the sun
The roots have crumbled
His only tears are rain drops
Yellow petals turn black
The wind blew him over
He's consumed by weeds
His love's been forgotten



Omar Recalde

“Izzy”

By Michele Lochridge

The first time that I saw you
I looked into my own gray eyes
I knew you were my kindred
soul
and the truest meaning in my
life

With every birthday that would
come
We proudly watched you grow
Plastic dinosaurs and *randu*
braids
All the funny hats for show

The diabetic jelly to top your
kosher *dogs*
Skateboards, armless barbies,
mismatched socks
All the trophies on your shelf
and your secret treasure box

The dancing in Spongebob
goggles
Down *Poblix's* Cereal Aisle
Never missing a mud puddle
Or forbidden chocolate smiles

The bug collection hidden
inside your dress
The stars *Poe* counted each
night
Your favorite lullaby Tora Lora
And your beloved T-Rex night
light

My tiny little force of nature
Hurricane Izzy in my path
Always with a joke to tell just
to make us laugh

Now, I'll go to your cherry
blossom tree
Where I'll brush the leaves
asiade
My tears will polish your
beautiful rock

I'll tuck my memories inside

I remember butterfly kisses
Softly across my cheek
Catching them all inside my
heart
To make them a part of me

I dream of all the cozy
midnights
The Magic Cookies never baked
You sneaking into my bed
“Mom, mommy, mama are you
awake?”

I thank G-d for you Izabella
For your love and the laughter
in my pain
It's all locked inside our
treasure box
We'll open it together in heaven
one day

I hope you save a place for me
Cause I just can't come today
I'll send kisses on butterfly
wings with all I want to say

Love always,
Mommy

Bound

A Bubble Off Plumb
By Jonathan Albert Kaspar

I've built myself
and backed myself
Into a cage
Without a door
Paint picked and peeling
Rust forming, flaking,
And metal braking
The pieces sharpened
and penetrating
My fingernails
snap and break off
They bend back and rip

From the tips of my fingers
As I ineffectively
Try to maintain
My grasp on my sanity.

The Bird

By Gary Farlow

Maya Angelou's caged bird
does not sing
It wails, screaming for
redemption
to a nation, a society that its
back,
eyes shut, and deaf ears to the
caged

Prisoners we both are, the bird
and I
at the hands of man, captives
like exhibits in a zoo
oddities, separated from society

The bird's gilded cage and my
iron bars
are different, yet the same,
the bird may experience a
certain care
a tenderness, even love

The inmate seldom knows such
amidst whistles, blaring
intercom
a cacophony of prisoner and
captor
the daily chaos if incarceration

I know how the caged bird feels
and it does not sing, it cries
looking between the bars of
freedom
Just as I stand at my barred
window

Play Us A Hymn
By Rickey Bright

You walk in past the bars, and
see us sitting there,

The old convicts in halls, in our
 tear-stained wheelchair,
 The blind and the crippled,
 herded out of their cell,
 where there's no one to love us,
 and nothing but hell.

Play us a hymn, sing us a tune,
 lighten our gloom.
 Won't you pray for my mother,
 each night in your room?
 All my children are grown, and
 my life here is done,
 Please say you'll remember, my
 dearest young one.

Here in this wretched prison, we
 have no last names.
 It's Rickey and John and
 Herbert and James.
 Everything else, Lord, has been
 taken away,
 By family who won't come on
 visiting day.

Wake us up in the morning, and
 see that we're fed,
 lay us back down at night,
 where we cry in our bed.
 It's the worst kind of prison; no
 one gets paroled.
 No one to set us free; we're
 unwanted and old.

You walk out through the door
 and leave us sitting there.
 The old convicts in halls, in our
 rusty wheelchair.
 The blind and the crippled
 herded back to their cell,
 Where there's no one to love us,
 and nothing but hell.

Tastes Like **By Randy Carter**

whose eyes hold freedom
 like the prisoner?
 those who've been swallowed
 by the beast know liberty's
 stark clarity
 they've heard the steel locks
 turn
 clink

screams of anguish & anger
 echo
 subliminally & season a
 summer
 breeze in the evening
 that matte gray flavor
 the prisoner never forgets
 that taste

they lock memories in cells &
 guard them
 like you should yours

open your dream & dance with
 me
 to your favorite song

when we imagine our feet tired
 we'll drift
 to your kitchen, spin your lazy
 susan
 search your spice rack & cook
 your favorite food—which is
 also my favorite
 whatever it is. has to be cuz
 it's my first meal in awhile
 free
 taste...mmm...like lovers lips

when the tune plays again
 (must've been on repeat)
 & we feel our feet tap to the
 rhythm & bass in our chests
 have us moving again til the sky
 turns that matte gray. morning
 tastes like iron.

do your eyes search mine
 for a reflection?
 or a translation?
 i can't make it real
 for you. i can
 adore you for caring to imagine
 what it tastes like

Are You There? **By Santiago Leija**

Excuse me ma'am are you there
 I wrote you a couple times I'm
 sure you're very aware
 You will never know what a
 letter can mean
 Cause you never been where
 I've been and seen what I've
 seen
 Trapped in a box this house is
 not a home
 Stuck in these walls, forgotten
 and alone
 Where nobody calls, no
 goodbyes or hellos



Patrick Bentley

mmmm...tonight
 I'm gonna leave my
 corporeal form (you
 know: astral
 projection) and
 float thru
 a wall, grapple a
 cloud and hitch a
 ride on WIFI to
 your apartment.

when you hear my
 whisper &
 feel my breath on
 your ear

Everyday the same, so sad and alone
 I grieve with anger, sometimes with a stranger
 But what can I do but stay loyal and true
 The CO just walked by and still no letter from you
 I was sure you would write me
 Help me feel better with one single letter
 It will heal my heart from the start
 Excuse me ma'am, are you there?
 Things are supposed to get greater later so please if you may send me a letter
 Excuse me ma'am are you there? Or gone forever

Dear Mister Postman
By Jimmie Locke

How can I see the meaning of life behind brick and bars?
 Dear Mister Postman, where were you when I needed you?
 I crave to get a visit from you to give me what I need.
 But you passed me by again, you visited others but not me.
 Dear Mister Postman, what did I do wrong? Tell me so I can fix it.
 Now I live my life without rhyme or reason.
 Just another leaf changing with the passing season.
 Dear Mister Postman, I wait for you.
 I wait for you to tell me everything is alright.
 Dear Mister Postman, I give this letter to you.
 Can you do the same?

Sam Is A Numbers Guy
By Claude "Kelley" Kirk

My mother says "Son, you are one in a million."
 Numero Uno. A-Number One.
 But my Uncle?
 He says I am more like one in two million
 In fact, he says
 I am number 56868-177
 right down to the last digit.
 Hell, you might even know my Uncle.
 He goes by Sam.

Sam is a numbers guy
 and a generous one at that.
 He's given me so many numbers
 I should be a mathematician
 or maybe a statistician.
 After all, statistically speaking
 I am only a statistic
 only a number.

I've been investigated
 my case litigated
 defense checkmated
 value disrated
 course dictated
 and before I am reintegrated
 my voice must be liberated
 'cause the stench of percentage
 is so strong
 and the stain of sentence so long
 it cannot be scraped from my skin.

CDCR
By Matt Barnes

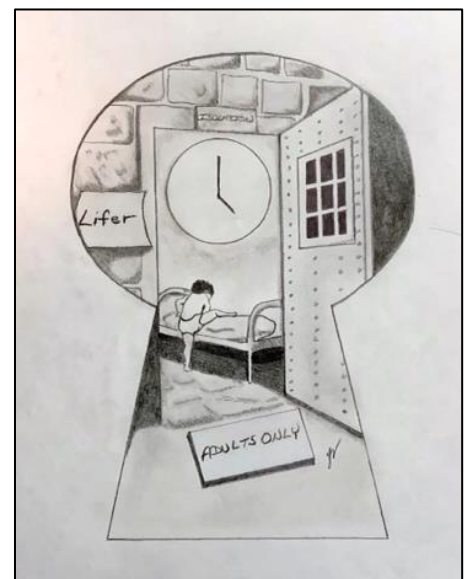
I see myself slowly slipping
 into that dark abyss
 Too much pain, sleepless
 nights, my mind not at ease
 Destined to spend eternity
 Warehoused and caged like a beast
 Asking where is the humanity
 Stripped of all integrity
 And the right to be me

Another nameless one trapped
 in this insanity
 Given a number
 A practice to dehumanize
 And deprive us the essence of life
 More specifically I am a dollar sign
 In the profit
 Of the prison industry complex
 Otherwise known as CDCR
 Where their bottom line is more precious than a human life
 Fueled by the ideologies of a corrupt capitalistic society
 A living testimony here I stand
 To prove to the world that even the people society has thrown away
 Have the power and strength to change their destiny

A Prisoner's Soul
By Donald J. Degner

I hear the sounds
 Of tortured souls
 Echoing through my prison cell.

The Preacher says,
 There are none



John Vance

righteous
No not one.

Insanity runs
through
My veins.
But only a few
acknowledge it.
Edgar Allan Poe
Knew all too well
In his years cut
short.

Mine seem to never end
With a merciless mind.
Blood is thicker than water
But mine is filled with toxic
waste.

Steel or Concrete **By Toby Moore**

What is this cold,
wet, dry, or hot
Running through the
veins of the
shell of a man.



Kenneth Zamarron

Is it cold or dry,
Do I panic, scream,
Laugh or do I cry,

Is it wet or hot,
I clench my teeth,
Pull out a razor,
Should I open myself...
or not...

NO emotion as I
stare at a wall,
Silence in the cell
NO loved one to call,

I push the floor
But it won't push back,
Pull on the sink,
Still no slack,

So, I KICK the door,
Finally, a yell,
"GET OFF THE DOOR", he
says,
'DUDE GO-TO-HELL!!'

NO mail again
NOBODY CARES TO WRITE
Rain against the window
Fog dresses the night,

Has this Heart turn cold,
or hot, dry, or wet
What is this in MY VEINS,
STEEL OR
CONCRETE

State Brutality

The Gasp of a Nation **By Michael Wiese**

I'm sorry this poem smells
like teargas; burnt orange,
breathless, and fiery.

Like eating all the yellow

M+Ms first; crushing the bright,
sharp, and finite.

And we breathe many noxious
fumes; a tickle choke,
coughing, and obstructed.

A million people with phantom
knees on necks; saying,
gasping, and begging –
"Momma, help me. I
can't breathe."

Are they *all* like you?
Will their words make us
question and think,
maybe even
hope from a darkling
place? Not if
three seconds later we turn the
page and forget.

Three Little Words **By I Cee Vagante**

I can imagine but cannot know
the brutal shock of a man shot
bleeding and dying in a calm of
compliance because
his complexion was of a richer
hue; how it feels to be an
adolescent followed, chased,
hunted and murdered
because a fair-skinned man
assumed an inherent threat
where none exist;
what, under unrelenting
pressure, quick horror savagely
beats your heart as your breath
and life are so callously stolen
from you; or the unanswered
questions of the young bog
playing, playing,
looking up to be gunned down
because some are prone to see
'BLACK' rather than to
perceive the truth of a harmless
child with brown

skin.

I can imagine, but still cannot
know what it is to be watched
and judged because the birthday
suit his mother made and loves
him in, is by some looked upon
with the accusing stares
of an unjust and ill reasoned
malice, which I cannot imagine
nor understand:

hate.

I cannot know because my skin
is pale, but because I am human
I can imagine another's beating
heart holding a horrid hurt my
heart will never know,
though a heart-beating no
different than mine;
a heart missing a piece I well
know, a piece of my heart I
would gladly give if then all
good hearts could no longer
beat with

fear.

Of these three words (skin, hate,
fear), some won't see which
hurts, but does not harm.

I see.
Do you?

Their Sin **By James Guss**

Riots in the streets, shots in the
air dead and dying.
Color of skin making you
wrong the blue lights turn on.
We can't breathe.
We're shot in the streets.
In our homes, no safety, no
reprieve.
Liberty and justice for some
based on skin tone.
Lights glare, smoke in the air.
We're tired of their sin.

Protect and serve – justice

failed, judged by wealth and
skin.
We're tired of their sin.
Pop goes the gun, protected by
the shield.
Democracy failed.
Millions in jail – democracy
failed.
It's time to stand hand in hand
to heal this land, take it back
from their sin.
Become one nation – one
people united we stand.
Justice for all.
Free this land from bias and sin.

The Face of Emmett Till **By Shawn Block**

Face the face of Emmett Till 'til
justice finds him whole.
Face the wounds that haunt us
still, still restless in his soul.
The ballooned orbs where
cheeks should be,
The bludgeoned smile that we
can't see.
Look upon the gruesome marks
of Jim Crow's heavy toll.

Peer into the casket, gasp at
evil's wicked hand.
Peer into the past at unmasked
inhumanity of man.
The mangled form that was a
boy.
The Equal Right's they can't
destroy.
Look upon the face that caused
the world to take a stand.

His mother bade us look, just
look and let the whole world
see.
She showed us what they took,
they showed their insecurity.
The stolen youth based on a lie,
The face of truth that cannot
die.

Look upon the face of one
who's finally been set free.
Embrace him in his loneliness
who died a martyr's death.
Embrace his endless liveliness
for we are now his breath.
The struggle that has yet been
won,
the
victory we must give her son.
Look upon the face of all the
work that we have left.

Michael Sloan

Tough On Crime **By Fabian Garcia**

Too many of us imprisoned for
decades
Because of this system and all
its flaws,
And our Judges handing out
these harsh sentences
Recommended by the D.A.'s,
with no questions and less
pause.

It was the decisions of past
politicians
To adopt this 'Tough On
Crime' mentality,
With the solution to their
problem
Removing the Black and Brown
youth from society.

Educational opportunities, as
well as other resources
These minority communities
could really use,
But instead their kids end up
getting snatched up and thrown
away like a bunch of refuse.

A 10-Year Sentence
Enhancement for being a gang
member
And another 10 for being in
possession of a gun,
These California laws just

earned some kid 20
For standing on the street and
not hurting anyone.
That's the effect of the 'Tough
On Crime' cause,
It has destroyed our
communities
By enforcing their bias laws.

Current Issues

Digital Dependency **By Stephen Caple**

I press the button, my soul
powers on.
So smooth the transition,
physical interaction is gone.
Swiping through this life, world
at a finger,
Love it hate it, no need to
linger.
Reality is made inflexible, what
should I show?
All insecurities lay hidden, they
will never know.
This photo of me, it can't be
right.
Photoshop to the rescue, wow,
what a sight.
All of these friends, from
everywhere on earth.
I check my likes to determine
self-worth.
Can't be left out, look what is
trending.
Proof that I know, Tweets I'll
be sending.
Is that the time, where'd the day
go?
Oh no, not now, my battery so
low.
My life goes dark, no you can't
die.

Everything is on there, I scream
and cry.
A crowd gathers round,

disgusted at my display.
Setting our phones down, we all
walk away.
What's this around us, a world
we lost?
The convenience is great, but
worth the cost?

The Children's Hearts Cry Silently **By Free Lazor**

The children's hearts cry
silently, but their suffering is
written on their faces.
They hurt, they dream, they die
violently, on our watch, out in
the open-hidden places.
Victims of a world gone mad,
victims of violence;
but turn the page and suddenly
it's gone, as they die quietly,
as they suffer in silence.

These children live to die, never
knowing what hit them-
we call it "life"; they never gave
it a name. They never saw the
snake of fate that bit them,
but they lay slumped in the
saddle of its rattle, just the
same. These children will
succumb, in lonely anguish they
will die, with their one burning
question still unanswered ---
why?

These children's hearts
cry silently, never
knowing why, they die,
violently.

Turn the page, hurry, hurry,
turn the page, turn the pages,
And return my attention to the
all-important coffee pot,
And things of such earth-
shaking, earth-quaking
magnitude --needs another pack

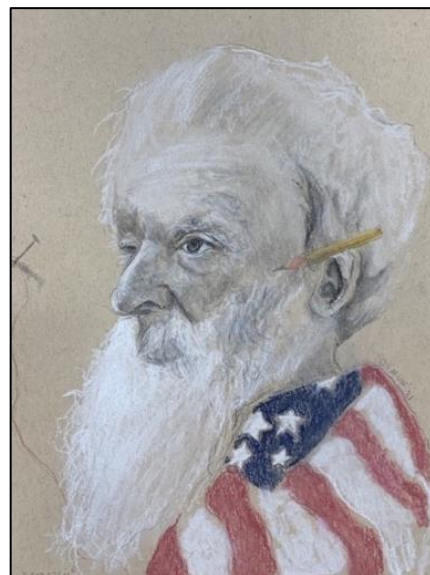
of sweetener, it's three degrees
too hot. If I can't see their faces,
they're put out of my mind
--should I buy the flower-print
laces, or the designer one-of-a-
kind? Priorities, priorities, your
rat in the race swallowed down
another day, but, hey, another
page turned, another thousand
children spurned, who made it
to their unmarked graves,
thrown away...

As their hearts cried
ever silently, never
knowing why they died
violently, it's still
written on their faces, in
those silent, dark
places...

Turn the page.

An Epic Summer's Opus **By Cory Lambing**

Dwell upon a bleak July
shattering's of yore.
I pluck upon a half strong harp
a lazy summer's score.
The leaves are green



Jesse Osmun

the days are long
laughter echoes in the wind
teens sneak out when their
parents sleep to engage in minor
sins.

The votes have been counted
the regions divided
still my calloused fingers strum
on. Let's face the truth it's all
semblance – our allegiance is to
Amazon!!

Gun control and Roe V. Wade
better vaccinate your pets
send all your money to other
countries.
And cash in those government
checks!

And still I sit,
my harp cries out!
My notes lost in the wind
commercialized nostalgia –
Another school year begins...

So we've made our reservations
I pray they last the week
fill out the forms
and check the box
don't forget the old receipts!

I place my harp into its case
and break another string
objurgation passes my chapped
lips a throatied laugh I sing!

The Danger of Complacency **By Gary Farlow**

Why are you silent, America?
Why do you keep your counsel
as millions of your countrymen
languish?
Why are you content to spend
your taxes to subsidize a failed
system called prison?

Why, America, do you turn the
blind eye to the plight of so
many?

Why are you content to keep
company with the likes of
Hitler, Stalin, Amin, Papa doc?

Why do you refuse to speak
out?

Is it due to the fact that such
injustice hasn't come to your
door – yet?

Is it because of your own
feelings of moral superiority to
the likes less affluent?

Is it owed to your feelings of
righteous indignation toward
crime rates – but aren't those
rates dropping?

Take care America for as
Bonhoeffer wrote, your failure
to speak out could result in your
own injustice – and there won't
be anyone left to speak out.

Shadows and Memories

Shadows

By Aaron Estes

Sometimes, it seems
the shadow has more substance
than the one from whom it's
cast,
misshapen as it is

Tall shadows of morning
promise a future
turning with every movement
undeterred by the real

Evening shadows grow dim
and slant to the unknown
the look of things make way
to visual fallacy

Memory's shadows are replete
with textures,

aromas and sounds
bright, dark, and shades of
grays

As night encroaches upon the
quiet
discerning faces and forms
begin to slip away
from our embrace

Within that last darkness there
must be light
to chase away shadows
or we might be known, then,
by the shadows we've cast

My Shadow **By Edward Williams Jr.**

I saw my shadow today.
It actually looks a lot like it did
When I was a kid.
Only difference, now I'm
broken
And my anger's all unspoken
I just bottle it inside
Does no good to show, so hide
And the shadow of the child
Which before was amped and
wild
Is too frail for such routines
Copying what he saw on
screens
Now this child is quite weak
And his future is too bleak
And his cuts, still fresh and
warm,
You cannot see in shadow's
form
All you see is just the kid
But not the pain which he has
hid
Within the shady, murky deep
of his dark soul where shadows
creep.
Poor shadow.
At least there's a ghost of a
chance
Somebody will help the kid

But who will help the shadow?
Who will help the broken
shadow?

Alcohol Tears
By James Guss

Inside you're cold and lonely,
another drink will hide your
pain.
But I see through your window
and recognize your shame.

You fall and stumble, picking
up another bottle to feel whole.
Inside a storm is raging, tearing
at your soul.
Memories like lightning flash
across your mind.
You see me through your
window begging to come
inside.
You turn away in shame and
regret.
You can't stand who they made
you to be – stuck in the past of
painful memories. Broken
dreams of a little girl all grown
up now.

You can't see tomorrow, your
yesterday's tie you down.
Inside you're cold and lonely as
you're laid out on the floor.
I see inside your window of
who you really are.
A full-grown princess – who
you were made to be, but you
can't see through the haze of
alcohol memories.
You promise tomorrow will be
better – you'll stop for sure, but
days turn into weeks and weeks
into years.

Now everyone has left you all
but your alcohol tears.

Masquerade
By Richard LaRue Barlow

She falls asleep, not counting
sheep far from childhood's gasp
or reach, but in her mind returns
a time when pain was all she
knew

Her dreams, they dance, by
happenstance
Through truth and lies, there's
still a chance for all her dreams
to wake with her
and her soul to be renewed

Hope alive, she opens her eyes
with lascivious thoughts from
lonely times and all at once her
soul returns from the dreams
which held her truth

Tears fade 'neath makeup's
masquerade
as her feet touch down to greet
the day and all that's left to hide
her death is a smile upon her
face...

Return to Sender
By Burl N. Corbett

Reading before a winter's fire
her upstairs husband safely
abed, does my old lover ever
lay down her novel,
smile into the conjuring
flames, and think of me as I
think of her?

Does the old woman she is
now recall the golden girl she
was then, remember the sun-
tanned boy who loved so much
his summer lass, and she him
in return? In time, young
lovers become ex-lovers
content to disavow
their memories, whitewash

their pasts, drink their cups of
remorse, and go on to marry
others.

But then a shimmer of
fireflies on a still summer
night, a whippoorwill's lonely
cry, a whisper of rain upon a tin
roof fetches them back
to...what?

A stinging reminder of life's
fickle transience?
With a sigh, my former love
gets up to place another log on
the fire, picks up her book, and
returns to the sender my too-
painful-to-reopen memory.

The end.

Lielight / Streetlies
By Edward Williams Jr.

I used to love the streetlights
Or rather any light upon a pole
But now these accursed objects
Bring misery to my soul
They shine into my window
My ghastly night light
Bringing reminders to me
nightly
That I am not alright.
I remember being a kid
Looking out of the vertical



Edward Rodriguez

blinds,
 Never knowing then the depth
 Of how far life winds
 I used to stare at those orbs,
 my eyes filled with yellow light
 Their constant glow forever
 parting
 To the promises of the night
 At nighttime, the people leave
 Scarcely cars upon the road
 Sometimes a breeze offering me
 A cool and pleasant ode.
 Nobody hit me in the night
 Nobody ever called me names
 Nobody ever made me angry
 Nobody shunned me from their
 games
 The night was deep, so very
 deep
 So deep it swallowed up the day
 It banished all my wretched
 "friends"
 Made all the evil go away
 The night was nice without the
 sun
 No sun to overload my eyes
 I had a hundred tiny suns
 That spread sparse light into the
 skies
 Is it over? Is it over?
 Is the wretched day at an end?
 Can the streetlight finally come
 to me
 And be my closest friend?
 One day, when I was little,
 Poor as dirt beneath my feet
 My only dinner was some bread
 6 pieces for me to eat.
 "We'll get food tomorrow,"
 Mama said,
 And it made her kind of sad,
 So I pretended it was cool
 So that she wouldn't feel so bad
 She didn't know I had a better
 meal
 Though it wasn't solid food
 I fed on tasty streetlight glow
 Onto which my eyes were glued
 "It'll get better,"

it whispered to me.
 "Life won't always be this hard.
 You could be a Super Saiyan,
 Win glory with a Poke' card.
 Let me help you read your
 Potter,
 Let me faintly light your room,
 For you are a growing baby,
 Your room a temporary womb.
 You will break free! You shall
 break free!
 Forget the hunger! Listen to
 me!
 For soon there shall be gladness
 everywhere,
 As far as you can see!
 Tomorrow will be better! Trust!

 If it's not, wait one day more!
 For soon, I PROMISE YOU,
 for soon,
 Love will come knocking at
 your door!
 Yes, your destiny shall come to
 you;
 You belly shan't be bare!
 Won't you wait? You HAVE to
 wait!
 For you shall climb the final
 stair!
 Until then, let your mind run
 wild,
 Let fantasy wipe away the pain!
 And let it hold you till the
 happy days
 Are reigning once again!"

 He swore to me and I believed
 him
 Every lamp confirmed his oath
 And so I gave my hands to
 fantasy,
 Beloved fiction took them both.
 But I was deceived. He was
 wrong.
 Though I gave my mind to play,
 Nary a single lie he said to me
 Did see the light of day.
 I did not find my destiny.

I did not find my food.
 They did not cross the horizon
 Onto which my eyes were
 glued.
 I did not find my purpose and
 I did not find my love.
 It did not grow up from the
 ground
 Or fall from up above.
 I did not find them in a house.
 I did not find them in a train.
 I did not find them on a sunny
 day
 Or find them in the rain.
 Not on a bus. Not on a train.
 Not in a lake. Not on a dam.
 I did not find green eggs and
 ham.
 I did not find them, Sam I Am.
 A curse upon you, lying
 streetlight!
 A curse upon your family too!
 Adorning every major highway,
 Making them a liar too!
 Curse you, lamps outside my
 window,
 For you remind me of those
 lies!
 For life will never let a human
 win,
 No matter how hard he tries!
 Curse you, lamps outside my
 window!
 Take back your fibs and your
 suspense!
 You ONLY purpose is to make
 sure
 Guards can see us climb the
 fence!
 So tell me no more wretched
 stories!
 Sing me no more stupid songs!
 Tell me no more tales of days to
 come!
 Where I fit in, belong!
 You lying lights! You horrid
 lamps!
 I hate you more than you can
 see!

So may you fizzle dim forever,
HERE ARE MY WORDS, SO
LET IT BE!

Hours later, here I sit,
Staring at the window, sad.
Wishing I could reach those
hateful bulbs
And hurt them real bad.
'Stead I sit here on my ragged
bed.
Immersed in caustic gloom
Wishing I could tell that boy to
cast
Those lies back out his room.
On we go, and I realize
What a folly was my night
For who would ever listen to a
promise
Given by a light?
It's just a light. Just a lamp.
It was ME that told the lies
Lying 'bout a thousand
promises
Of golden, honeyed skies.
And so the light was just a light,
Somewhat beautiful to me
And I used it to give a hurting
kid
Some lonely company.
Even so, even so
Not again shall I then scoff;
Even so, though they're just
lights
How I wish they'd just turn off.

Faces, Places

Frontier Farm Auction By James Allen Gregg

Tractors and guitars
and old metal trucks
Antlers on a beam
And an old Singer sewing
machine
Rusty wire, held up by a nail
Sections and sickles

In an old milk pail
Baking tins, a flour box
A dozen jars (well one is lost)
Bent tools, broken parts
An Edison type fuse
Fancy plates and silverware
Things not often used

Secondhand clothes
And a wild barn cat
In an old iron pile
Lays a broke pump jack
Cupboards so worn
They're fat at the hinge
A gate so tight
You'll never get in
Water that's hard (they own
nothing soft)
They live alone
Far away
Call before you leave
You might get lost.

Dystopia By Carnell Wingfield Jr

I grew up in the trenches,
Palms be sweaty,
Heartbeat quickens.

Trigger fingers itching
Weapons bitching.

Guns deafen eardrums
That's why kids don't listen.

Hair pieces and clips come
with extensions,
Bullets poke holes in
tension.

Streets hotter than a kitchen
Bodies smell like chicken,
Wounds be hissing.

Men are kidnapped,
Bodies found fishing,
T-shirts post the missing,

Alcohol abuse for the honorable
mentions,
Murder is business.

We fight hard,
Until our hearts stop kicking.

Welcome to my world,
Another day in the life,
Live fast,
Can't do it twice.

Gateway Crime By Tony Tieger

Many years ago when I was
younger,
Mother gave me a treat to
silence my hunger.
My mind was blown by this
newfound flavor,
Not a cent did it cost, only the
hug that I gave her.
I set up shop in the middle of
the kitchen,
to find this treat that had me
'itchin'.



Jesse Osmun

Just above the counter, higher
 than the shelf,
 lies an openly hidden treasure,
 all for myself.
 It's called a cookie, sentenced
 to a jar.
 The perfect caper, commute not
 far.
 No alarm, guard dogs or
 grownups did I see,
 It was way too easy, not even a
 key.
 Then out sprang Mother
 thwarting my climb,
 Face contorted, screaming
 gateway crime.
 I dropped to the floor, fled
 down the hall,
 But Mother had moves, had to
 take the fall.
 Court was held right on the
 scene,
 Think I wet myself, never seen
 her this mean.
 I caught 10 to 15 for my first
 time out.
 The longest minutes ever
 without a doubt.
 Made early parole 'cause
 Mother's on the take.
 It only cost a hug, but wait...
 Do I smell cake?

My Young Life **By James Gondek**

Too young to know what's right
 12 years old, an undeveloped
 mind
 You could say too young to live
 life
 but Fate seemed to say it was
 time,
 I gained new brothers
 and they taught me the ropes,
 taught me how to survive the
 jungle
 showed me everything, except
 sell dope

hands on, I learned to break cars
 down,
 along with rumbling in the
 streets
 blindly I was manipulated,
 I just wanted to fit in.
 A little while down,
 I took a case for my bro
 The wheel of a stolen car I took
 ahold
 I let them out and hit the gas
 On a chase I thought I'd last
 A couple blocks, I jumped out
 fast,
 but cornered in I was attacked
 They punched and kicked
 lifted me up and talked their shit
 Took me to jail, on the way
 they asked me my age,
 I said 14, and I saw their eyes,
 grew opened real wide
 they both yelled and said I lied,
 I swore I was 14 with a bloody
 face,
 with a glance to one another
 their tones changed.
 Reached over with a shirt and
 water
 And said clean my face
 they said it was for my mugshot
 So I did what I was told
 Then juvi was it
 This was the first step
 For 3 months I remained
 No family showed
 So foster care was the next
 In a shelter for months I stayed
 there
 No family had a home to share
 So some stranger came, invited
 me there
 I accepted, but in the end I
 shouldn't
 The home was worse than the
 shelter
 No bed, it was only the box
 spring
 Only fed once, that was only
 dinner

Left after school in the cold
 For hours waiting, so I made a
 choice
 I walked to my sis's house, this
 stayed the same
 After a week I was sick of it
 I left back to the jungle
 Back to homelessness,
 Breaking in abandoned houses
 to sleep
 Just to escape the cold nights
 For a few months life was hard
 Stuck in a life not meant for
 none
 Until I got caught walking to
 my safehouse
 A black car turnt the corner
 I looked up, as they were
 getting out
 Their tires squealed and I turned
 to run
 But a 10-foot wooden fence
 stretched the yard
 I was in the middle stuck to
 jump the wall
 They grabbed me and smiled,
 saying we finally got you
 I said I'm the wrong one, and
 gave a fake name,
 But my tattoo was a match to
 my name
 So now I was taken away, but it
 was crazy
 I was relieved to leave that
 hardship behind
 Back to juvi but this time for a
 long stay
 Sent to high security, I was
 there for a year
 Now it was different, I had
 someone near
 My sis helped, reached out to
 live with her
 But too late, I was brainwashed
 from what I learned
 It was just a matter of time
 Before I went back to my
 horrible life.

Untitled

By James Gondek

It's been a while since I wrote
some lines
It feels like an eternity of time
I hide it well so I'm always
lying
If I'm asked, I'm ok, but I'm
really dying
Burdened with a past I'm left
attached
To trauma and pain, forever it
lasts
I pray for release but I only hear
laughs
I'm left as a joke, I'm mocked
and attacked
In need of help, but I'm too
ashamed
Words too powerful, I only feel
the flame
From the fires of hell
But honestly who is to blame?
A schizophrenic mother
Who herself needed help
Or my father, who never had a
father
Who raised his kids
With an addiction until it grew
And with it, he himself
consumed.
Do I look at my siblings?
But they had their own battles
Is it my fault being left alone
Fighting through hunger pains
Cold, stuck in the freezing rain
Is it my fault for turning to the
streets
For finding idols and brothers,
To seek shelter through the
storms
Learning handshakes and signs
Loyalty to a false love
Is the blame on me, my family,
or the streets?
Maybe it's all three...

Herald Lineage

By Carnell Wingfield

I am an Urban Warrior,
An earthly soldier.
I hold a gun to my head,
the other at my enemies,
I kill myself with every squeeze,
To allow them to live,
Causes a dis-ease.
I am a Gangster,
I will take if you don't give,
When war time,
death is positive.
I am who I can be,
Home is where my heart is,
My love is where I can't leave.
Within my failure,
I am great,
Within the World's hatred,
Is my faith.
I was given this World,
I accept what comes with it,
Opportunities, I must take it,
Death is the main outcome,
I didn't make it.

Satisfied Man

By Claude "Kelley" Kirk

Well there's people goin' 'round
with the saddest look on their
face
'cause they're worried 'bout
these times we're livin' in
They got stacks of bills and
pressure pills
But the stress it just builds and
builds
And, pretty soon their whole
world is torn apart

But everyone must understand,
how to be a satisfied man

You know I walk down the
street with the slyest smile on
my face

People say, "Man that dude's
sure got it made"

I got guitars and cars and my
home is a bar
And I'm eatin' up the night life
like it comes in a jar
So, come along baby we'll have
the times of our lives

'cause you people just
misunderstand, that I am a
satisfied man

Now people don't worry
ev'rything is gonna be alright
Dry your tears and hold your
heads up to the sky
Realize ev'rything
life has got to offer
And light the fire before the
flame can die

Then you people will all
understand, how I am a satisfied
man

My Side of the Tracks

By Bobby Thompson

On my side of the track, we
don't own cars like that;
Lamborghinis, Ferraris,
Maybachs with the tops back
What we have are old school
Deltas and Cutlasses with the
windows cracked, a couple of



Gary Farlow

pick-ups and Ford Tauruses and
the occasional Cadillac

But still, we ride...

On my side of the track, we
don't have spacious lawns. Our
houses are meshed up with
convenience stores, churches,
liquor stores, and bus barns.
And around our houses,
you'll find no picket fence.
You'll find a Pit Bull hooked to

a tree looking real, real tense.

But still, we reside...

On my side of the track, we
don't have pickpocketing
thieves. We have kick doors and
jack boys that'll shoot you in
your knees. They will lay you
down, run your pockets as you
bleed, and shoot you again if
you have the nerves to plead.

But still, we survive...

On my side of the track, we
don't know the meaning of
poor, because we've never had
an up close look at rich before.
We use words like furniture and
odds and ins, not the word
décor. There's no wall to wall
carpeting; what we have are
throw rugs on the floor.

But still, we thrive...

On my side of the track, we're
not over here looking at you.
We're ten toes in our own
struggles and making it do what
it do. We have working folk,
church goers, hustlers and
killers too. The real representers
of, thine self be true.

And still, we stand with pride.

Welcome to By Sandy Blazinski

Welcome to my world
Where dragons breathe fire
And fairies fly thru the air
Time stands still, spinning
round and round
Where wizards cast spells
And witches stir potions
Night turns to day, day turns to
night

Welcome to my world.

To the place where magic can
happen

And dreams come true in the
blink of an eye

But you must beware

It's not all fun and games you
see

Sometimes the nightmares are
also set free

Welcome to the world I like to
call mine

Welcome to Sandyland

Stop by anytime

The Small Pictures By James R. Jacoby

Our leaders look only
at the "Big Picture".
How do my pictures
get attention?

They lead us down
a road without destination.
What matters to me
and my life gets no mention.

All our individual lives
are the small pictures,
providing all the goods and
profits that color them.

What are the values
of the artful pictures
that are not big enough
to survive their whim.

Ours are not the vivid,
colorful pictures worth the
investment of those on high
that cut the fat from our thigh.

With innocent, unbiased eyes,
I see your picture.
It's a masterpiece,
no matter its size

Outer Space

90 Million

By Taj Alexander Mahon-Haft

Ninety million miles plus
straight on till dawn
unbent by even gravity
super is the sun and
every yellow ray she throws
but dance do they still
in the breeze of your blue
whisper
where the ocean caresses our
shores.
You don't need muscles to
move me
in fact, force just sets my feet
but strength like yours and I'll
shimmer.

Ninety million miles plus and
still scorching
blinding at just a glance
sublimating dreams and ice
alike
but swallowed whole and
sipped cool
in just two hundred feet
of your deep blue flow
where the light kisses the
current
and life clearly begins.
You don't need heat to move
me
in fact concrete sweat box just
taught me patience

but passion like yours and I'll
gladly burn...
...always

"Heartprints in this Man"
By Christopher Petteway

Surrounded by eternity: the
moon was in command -
As darkness held its vibrance -
And crisp wind, gently, overran.

The air was soft and cozy -
Accompanied by the warmth.
Filled with the scent of "hold
me" -
As the ocean waves were
formed

Gazing out beyond the sea
Life seemed so innocent
As I stood there: a tiny pea
In a world of heaven scent.

I could "feel" the love beside
me...
Arms of silk and their embrace
Inwardly, I traveled -
As my mind increased its pace

Wonder filled my being
As i delve into those eyes
There, I too, could see the moon
-
The vibrant starlit skies

Her hair gave sight -
To things unseen -
Shapes to air that whispered
clean -
And as her presence took me in
-
Her touch caressed my
chocolate skin.

Walking along the seashore -
I found a sacred place
Inwardly, I traveled -
As my mind decreased it's pace

And as we traipsed cross
nature's rug
The sand embraced each toe...
Gently, calmly, patiently
The moon's reflective glow.

Though unlike "footprints in the
sand" -
When the lord carries his son...
She and I walked side by side -
Although we, "two", were one.

Comet Duality
By Taj Alexander Mahon-Haft

A comet's brightness inspires
lovers
on a single pass 250 million
miles up
every three generations
but burns with cold if ridden
tightly

wan and wanting
long in longing
moved while moving
a gypsy communitarian
trapped in a dungeon
still picks wild strawberries
and digs spring onions
when mowing abandoned
fields
under captors' gun shadows
just to prove the
promise of possibility
to his fingers
and his long-distance love
who shows serendipity
and synchronicity
how to surprise

Obsidian
By Peter Kaha

Important
are all
Dark things
A vehemence mentioned
delirium &

ugly contentment.
Pressed close
are the unwanted,
apprentice of
the carefully
haunted.
Alarmed by nothing
on a distant plane
of the empty
obsidian portals
clear ones
mind.

Unknown
By David Wade

I've seen
the world
in a new light
as dawn breaks
into a
thousand shards.

I've felt
a pressure
so dense,
obscured by
concrete clouds



Omar Recalde

impaled by fear.

I've heard
your voice
scream for me,
shapeshifting through
eternal fires
dividing the darkness within.

My will
is key to
my survival.
I'll conquer
with you
by my side.

I've seen,
I've felt,
I've heard,
I've conquered.

Game over
I win!

Identities

Plagiarism By Tim Katz

I exist in a world that is meant
only for the living-
A ghost, drifting
In and out of memories of those
left behind
Hiding behind the mirror –
Floating inside the void
Desperately trying to wake up
and be whole

I've plagiarized a life
Out of the lives of many others
–

Cutting and pasting all of my
dreams with every lie
Editing reality around me so I
can make it fit
And make something out of the
nothing I call my own

Who I am
Is who you often mistake me to
be

Untitled By Anthony Vick

Once saw a man with
No shoes on his feet
No home to live in
Or food to eat.
Could I help him?
Do I have the means?
These I do.
Along with selfish tendencies.
Am I an asshole?
So it would seem.
How close are my feet
To this same concrete?
I work hard.
Maybe he does too,
If that was me
What would I do?
Jesus would wash his feet
Break some bread
Shoe the man
And talk with Pete
I'm not Jesus
But that's ok
I'll be forgiven
Anyway.
I will show this man love
Because I need just that
Remember I'm selfish?
I stated this fact.
Everything is about me
Has to be.
What I need to see
Is right in front of me.
I'm that same man
Different history.

My Demons By Abdullah Hakim

Shattered innocence at the
hands of family, the brutal
demons of
the night. Left me behind

abandoned and bleeding,
entirely defeated by broken
promises too young to know
how to fight. Pleading to the
mysterious one for protection
with all my might, lost in lies of
darkness there is no light.

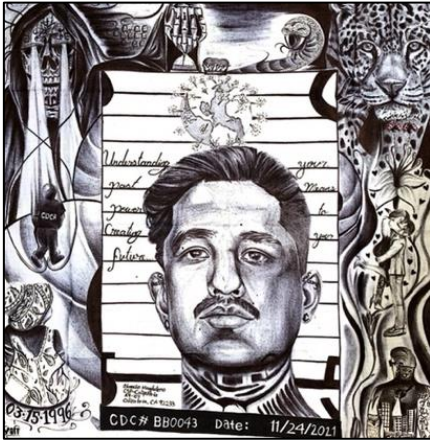
Many years wasted in pain
living
damaged and broken
surrounded by sins of silence.
My heart's suffering, spirit
shattered deep
within these walls.

Darkness awakens
cultivating the
shadows of defiance. The
polarization in personality
destroys self-reliance.
The monster in the mirror
leaves me bound to violence.

Faithless, a façade of faces.
A masquerading mirage of
shallow impressions. Secrets
regrettably practiced to
perfection.
Losing myself becomes my
newest obsessions.
A practice and pretense of
devious deceptions disregards
any notion of direction and
discretion...

Untitled By Anthony Vick

Some people are so lonely they
create enemies just to have
someone.
So thirsty for happiness they
keep drinking shots of sadness.
Who is my enemy?
The man in the looking glass
staring back at me.
What has pain taught me?
To keep the truth inside



Eduardo Magdaleno

and show the lies,
Are they lies anymore,
that everyone believes them?
Death knocks on everyone's
door,
when will he show up at mine?
Hope he brings a six-pack of
peace

NESA

By Spencer Butler

So here I sit in limbo at a prison
known as Wynn
A neon electric space alien
Labels are given and called by
the state
They say transgender, gay, or
straight
Maybe I'm not either. Ask and
I'll yell.
I am myself and I know myself
well.
Somedays I'm Superman and
somedays I'm not
Somedays I'm Wonderwoman,
and yeah, I know I'm hot
But someday I'm neither or all
of the same
Some days I'm a rainbow and
Nesa is by name
Neon
Electric
Space
Alien

Words on Words

Poem Sonnet

By Richard Smith

A poem is symbolic, showing
care,
expressing inspiration, love, and
you.
Iambic meter is the best for
flare.
It is euphonic and cathartic too.
A rhyme and rhythm's an
aesthetic need.
An allegory or a metaphor,
a little symbolism plants a seed
for polysemic similes galore.
Your heart's the author, you are
just the pen
to write the words it feels and
makes it long
for life, for love, and all that's
ever been,
to let another heart beat to your
song
and we are better with our
hearts adorned
by poems honored and by
poems mourned.

Lifelines

By George Hesse

Prisoner Express became an
outlet lifeline as my mind gets
too focused on overdrive.
A shoutout to camp Prisonery
Land for showing me another
timeline perception.
Family ties, my brother in a
halfway house, thank God he
still alive.
My other
brother turned sober a few years
ago. We let him take the lead
cause we were blinded.
Phone calls and letters woke me
up from alone in solitary.
I got a job in PI,
I really think I can do this,

Writing, compiling, editing,
hundreds of fat pages of flows
and whatever,
Or free style writing, exercise is
a balance necessity for me.
Reading feeds my mind; I make
it positive so all the scenes
repeating won't be violence.
What grinds my gears is
negative people up in my
business like I'm supposed to
act like them.
No more detoxing, I made some
friends I can call friends.
My flow more constructive
connecting with others at dead
ends.
Show them the light, its Heaven
sent.
I'm turning this addiction ghost
ship around, are you with me???

Bleed

By Steven Beauchamp

Drag the blade slowly across
the barren sheet
Fragments of all that was
forbade, coldly bleed

Rivulets of vermillion stains
fade and seethe
Marionnettes dance inside
tirades of syllables undressing
me

Submissive tears and oppressive
fears paint my colloquial
tapestry
Repressive years and repulsive
jeers reacquaint through my
soliloquy
Expansive scars and an
expressive heart
inundate my musings of poetry
Excessive pain and intrusive
shame accentuate my duality

Stanzas staunch with intricacies
and shadows of the real me
Verses wrought with intimacy
and inuendoes seek to set me
free

Words fraught with complexity
disclose my soul's quarantine
Emotional onslaughts and
raging insensitivity repose my
inner insanity

Through pen to paper my blood
the ink that castigates my
misery

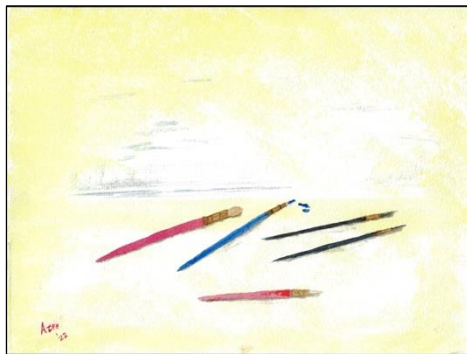
Dripping...oozing...chaotically
spewing to lacerate my
drudgery

Beyond the pain harbingers of
healing await my destiny
Like a soothing summer's rain,
my quatrains forever cleanse
me.

Paper Warper

By Edward Williams Jr.

I have the power to warp a page
Into a paper filled with rage,
Sorrow, hate, and much duress
First a blank page I caress
One without a speck or spot
Then express my pain a log,
Yes, I just complain a lot
But each line contains a lot (of)
Steam in my dead train of
thought
I like it when it rains a lot



Arnie Zepeda

Cause then I can refrain from
thought
And watch the water pout.
To add to this, I have nothing
more

Transformations

Change

By True \$tone (Devonta Ward)

In the world I went on a
rampage
And now I wake up to cold
pancakes
I can't believe that I'm
imprisoned
Hoping for a letter or a picture
They want me to work for no
pay
And now I really feel like a
slave

I went five years without
hearing from my mother
I can't even remember the last
time I got to hug her
I thought I was hustling for
what I needed
But all I really needed was
Jesus
You can say money was the
reason
But there's nothing worth more
than your freedom
I remember waiting in a holding
tank

Preparing to sign my life away
I was only 18 years old
That was ten years ago
I didn't need prison I needed
wisdom
From someone that cared about
children
I want the youth to know my
pain
And let them know it's never
too late to...change

Prayer Call

By Lance Fleming

There is no logical escape plan
Surrounded yet alone in
concrete land
In the depths of the deepest dark
Your spirit speaks to mine
This was the plan
Since before the beginning of
time
Never would I imagine where
my steps would lead
Rain or shine
You're all I ever need
Not who I was
And never will I again
A child of God
Born in the Texas State Pen
Letting go of the past, including
all associations
My voice carries "Prayer Call"
among every nation
Witnessing daily
His word piercing the soul and
spirit
All not present, yet quiet
In anticipation to hear it
A burning flame the lion is
unable to steal
We pray for the hearts
That only you can heal

Prison: Will It Become My Womb or Tomb?

By Jeffrey A. White

Dwelling within the exiles of
steel and concrete,
Physically bound I struggle
mentally with selfish defeat.
Many of us so young, life
seemingly over too soon,
Prison, will it become my
womb or tomb?

Loved ones fervently stand by
our side,
They too, intertwined with the
struggles of doing time.

Especially the three million kids
that go to bed each night,
who have a mother or father in
prison unable to hold them
tight.

Dwelling within the exiles of
steel and concrete,
Physically bound, spiritually
within I must retreat,
asking for forgiveness,
forgiveness of self, a heart
renewed
Prison, will it become my
womb or tomb?

How do we become so
powerless over our chosen
addiction?
Squandering away life's
blessings turned into a state of
chaotic perdition.
I must accept responsibility for
my ineptness as a man.
How is it my son,
unconditionally loves and
forgives me, I do not
understand.

Dwelling within the exiles of
steel and concrete,
Physically bound, emotionally
there are many truths I must
meet.
"Who am I?" along this journey
with due diligence I must
exhume.
Prison, will it become my
womb or tomb?

I am still a son, husband, and
father,
Therefore, daily I must strive to
educate and rehabilitate self to
go farther.
From entering prison, a young
illiterate, to now pursuing
college degrees,

Reducing recidivism, paying it
forward with integrity and
honest means.

Prison – For many has become
a tomb;
For me it has become my
womb!

Prayer To My Foes **By Carnell Wingfield**

I hope you forgive yourself for
my pain,
You thought what you were
doing was just,
Now you see you hurt me in
vain.

I was the underdog with his tail
tucked and was shell shocked,

The quiet voice who was
overpowered in a cell block.
Now I am the bread winner with
a loud bark and a big heart,
What you did to me was
pointless,
You call it your job, the right
way of living,
I hope it feels that way now,
Now that the way is light, I got
the heart to fight we bring our
way to start.
I forgave you twice.
I forgave you back then.
I forgive you today.
You had the power to quiet my
voice,
This time you cannot stop what
I say. I forgive you,
I hope you can forgive yourself
for my pain.

Not Broken Anymore **By Shaun Blake**

I know how to let you leave
How am I supposed to let you
go?

Now you stand in front of me
And all the rain is turning into
snow.

Can you tell me that you're real.
So I can really know
That everything I feel I can
finally show.
Standing next to me oh the
person I can be
Is finally here and he won't
back down at all.

But I can't stop thinking
How you just keep making
Sense of all that was broken
before.

And I won't keep faking
Cause I'm done with taking,
Cause with you I'm not broken
anymore.

I've seen the empty deep.
I've damned up the water flow.
You're the touchstone, my
complete,
You're the ship that kept me
afloat.

Can you tell me that you're real
So I can really know
That everything I feel I can
finally show
Standing next to me oh the
person I can be
Is finally here and he won't
back down at all.

And I won't keep faking
Cause I'm done with all the
taking
Cause with you I'm not broken
anymore

And I can't stop thinking
How you just keep making
Sense of all that was broken
before

Yeah, and I won't keep faking
Cause I'm done with taking
Cause with you I'm not broken
anymore
I'm not broken anymore

Game Of Life

By Danny Camacho

Bully tack tricks, careless
words,
Angry people, things not heard.
Tricky people, crazy eyes,
Stylish women, homegrown
lies.
Paranoia, scandalous friends,
Abusive family on the mend.
Bad boy player, fresh tattoo's,
The game of life I will not lose.
Pretty mommies, money chase,
Selfish children, losing face.
Voodoo magic, lighting storms,
Pretty woman to keep me warm.
Helpful people, special times,
Gifted writers, writing rhymes.
It doesn't matter, wrong or
right,
These are things, a part of life.

Untitled

By Colin J. Broughton

I see an enterprise before my
eyes
Every time I look in the mirror,
Every time I stand for count
Statistics rise, and so will the
dollar sign
Locked away for a lifetime
For selfish wats
Steel doors suffocate a dying
nation,

Yet they stand for liberty,
Right hand over heart
Dads are decaying
Sons are put on layaway
Pops is still seeking
But he didn't get any mail today

I'm a black man and my cellie
is white
But stored away we turn green
Housed by an aging democracy
Until souls wither away
I continue to dream beyond the
blocks
Watch as my hope seeps
through brick and mortar
Conceits to my surroundings
That strengthen my faith
I know this spirit dwells inside
my being
Styrofoam trays, no shower in
days
Yet mercy is born to me each
day
My internal trumpet and
marching legs
Wound these ancient walls
See my peace as they come
tumbling down
My battle cry seethes upon the
raging wind
When I am weak, he is strong
When I fall he lifts me into his
arms
Upon the sand appears one pair
of footprints
He is my rock
My everything

Evaporate

By Amanda Hancock

Patterns evaporating
into the dusk
A breeze carries
new meaning
No longer basking
in reckless behavior
Commitment to unstable
ground
Change is a choice
made with yourself
We need a way
to tap in
to the brilliant
might inside

I can see the potential strike

Spark of Motivation

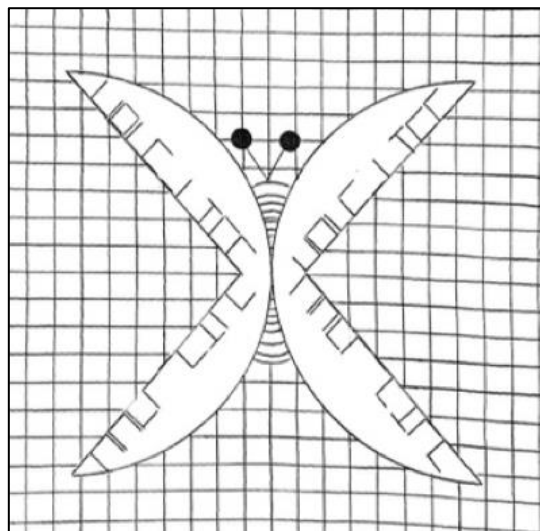
By Marino K. Leyba

I don't know what to do or
where to start?
So I will give you everything, I
will pour out my heart!
I will make something from
nothing, I will give you my art!
Imagine me alone in the park.
Imagine me alone in the dark.
I can't give up, so I will become
your motivation, I will be your
spark!

That ray of light, that day from
night!

You have to play every card
you are given.
Make the most out of what you
have or else you are not really
living.
Never say never and never play
the unforgiven.

We are not quite out of the
woods yet.
But we will be!



Leroy Sodorff

It's never over as long as we
can still see.

It's never over as long as we
can still breathe!

Grief, Guilt, and Grudges

By Gary Farlow

Grief will consume you
Trying to capture that which
was lost
Leaving you spinning in sorrow
In a fruitless pursuit of what
was

Guilt can weigh heavy on you
Like the sultry humidity of a
southern summer
A blanket of turmoil and self-
hate

Carrying the luggage of pain
through the airport of life

Grudges absorb your creativity
In what is the most worthless of
all causes

Trauma, perceived or real,
becomes a noose
Strangling all positive energy

Cast off these consumers of life
Rise from the rubble of the past
With the will of a phoenix
Lifting from the ashes

Rise with the possibility of
newfound wings
A reality more than the debris
For suffering never knocks
Seeking permission to enter

So, view life like the back of a
tapestry
All the knots and tangles, your
adversities
That once turned over become
the beautiful
Priceless work of art that
is...you

The Truths We Hold

By Steven Beauchamp

The truths we hold about love
and hate
Broken hearts and fragile
emotions endlessly debate
Retractable lies weaponized to
insidiously ingratiate
Detestable lives deprived of the
intimacy that encapsulates
Slanderous words and
scandalous urges intentionally
defecate
From the mouths of
cantankerous husbands and
wives who claim to love
unconditionally while radiating
radical hate.

The truths we hold about the
gift of life and agony of death,
twist and contort underneath the
whispers of the deft, that tears
of joy and tears of pain coincide
with such heft, in the wake of a
newborn baby or a dying man's
last breath.

We laud such lavish new
beginnings and appall the grief
of all that's bereft,
Raw and anguishing – the
unexpected losses we endure
with contempt,
Flawless and ravishing – the
beauty of life so esoteric and
unkempt.

The truths we hold about all-
consuming pride and
unrestrained prejudice.
The irony of building ourselves
up to tear others down feels so
selfish.
Hypocrites and holier-than-
thous emaciate the ethically
defenseless.
The scars we inflict
irrepressibly afflict the weak
and oppressed.

What right do we have to allow
our conceitedness to incite
greater distress.

O' the audaciousness of the
gilded to ignore their self-
induced messes.

While hiding behind cowardice
instead of mustering the
courage to confess.

The truths we hold about
rhetorical and theological good
and evil.

Coldly projecting our
assumptions onto a plethora of
innocent people.
We aspire to live like the devil
while playing house beneath the
steeple.

Our own imperfections the
mirror never reflects as wrong
or feeble.

Our compunction to believe our
sins are feasible seems
inconceivable.

Within the bereaved shadow of
our existence our originality
seems irretrievable.

Lest we earnestly pray that our
souls haven't become calloused
and irredeemable.

The truths we hold inevitably
define us for better or for worse.
Harboring the perception of
timely blessings or scornful
curses.

Choices we make in life carry
consequences we can never
rehearse.

Catastrophic circumstances and
deep regret so easily dispersed.
For jubilation to commence, the
roots of evil must be unearthed.
Authentic heartfelt change in
one's self cannot be coerced.
For our deepest truths to be
true, they must be spiritually
immersed.

You Ask
By Tim Strichland

You ask me if
I am a believer,
A seeker of truth,
A person of faith,
A disciple of the story.

But what you really
Want to know...
Do I think like you,
See the world like you,
Dream like you,
Believe like you,
Speak the same truths
As you?

Maybe I do,
Maybe I don't

Could we agree
For a minute
We are awaiting
A better day
A day of peace
A moment of rest
To be friends
With our enemies
To embrace each
Other in love.

2 You
By Ramont Adams

Pray for all the haters even
while they're out there hating,
I pray for all the perpetrators
while they're out there faking,
I hope Black Lives Matter so
don't lose your concentration
for problem solving does matter
like race relations

Innocent blood being shed
leaving families hearts shaking,
because of race, color or creed
your life may be forsaken

Better days are coming breathe
easy just have patience
But the way black souls are
being raised, Human nature is
so impatient
It's a cruel cruel world, it's a
thousand miles per hour pacing,
If you don't stay strong
mentally it can drive you stir
crazy.

Just keep from pushing daisies
and learn from your mistakes,
distinguish illusion from reality
or your bubble will deflate.
Life speaks in different jargons
where lies and truth debate,
Being just is what really matters
find guidance and never lose
your way. I've experienced
trials and tribulations to waste
energy all on hate,
I can even find peace in just
watching children play.
Most people can't be trusted so
I rather go through life pro se,
But there maybe more than
most people who need me, so I
interact anyway.

Giving love also shows you
care, some people will still hate,
so be aware;
Too much of a blackened heart
to see things clear,
and when you try to guide them,
it's the same result as if they
cover their ears.
If you don't love yourself how
can you love your peers,
No thoughts to stay strong and
to conquer all of your fears,
No thoughts to help others so
selfish.

Like you won't be in need: your
vulnerability is near,
So just cast all that hate aside
and try something new

Because what the world is
missing is a better version of
you!

Freedom Path
By Chad Miller

While we sit and take these
punches,
Walking nowhere, through life
with these hunches.
Rivers of lies wash us about,
Our many cries diligently
drowned out.
Pages read without meaning
lulling me to sleep,
I wake, seeking, consuming,
knowledge taking leap,
Discovering paths in the
darkness cut by determined
men,
Few learn, build and grow our
minds to overtake them.
Bondage in chains take keys of
tin and brass to free me,
So I forge my mind and heart to
lose the link of slavery.

The Callings
By Shaun Jones

The artist who succumbs
To the reality of being haunted
by the echoing plurality of
artistic expressions
Must approach the different
forms as one would with most
imminent of undertakings
As one submits to the love
within the unadorned void of
endeavors excavations see them
as separate pools
No matter if so closely related
that they part by the thinnest of
hues.

Go unto each! Selfishly!!!
But with the prudence of a
timekeeper, so to acclimate

gradually to the medium's
felicitation agencies of divine
reciprocation.

Yea, merging within transitions
of stifling indecision!
Crimping, blending, removing
and bending until struggles
level and fade...

To cascade into arcs of gentle
backstrokes streamings as of
diamonds' splatter,
synchronized as if in a dance of
swans gliding ceremoniously,
laden for land and the ripples
that flow

Shimmer your artistry,
Like unto nothing the world has
seen
A creation...born of us all...
Amidst the schemes we dream.

Judgment
By Richard Smith

There are worse things to do
than break the law
Where the wicked run free to
castigate
And the good are imprisoned by
their hate
As actions do reveal a truth
that's raw
And words have power to
destroy our awe,
Dishonor love, and seal
another's fate
To blood and virtue men can
congregate
As prejudism and hate has
oversaw
An evil that lurks in the hearts
of all
Our love and hate can mask that
which is real
However we decide to take the
fall

To follow whims as we neglect
to feel
A soul is worth it, you make the
call
Life's on the docket, you are on
appeal

Untitled
By Todd Broxmeyer

To see the sun rise
and then set
is such a common occurrence
everyone seems to forget
what a day really represents
The days that come
The days that go
Events that cannot be redone

Everyone seems to forget
what a day really represents
the love we look past
the smile we never give
the touch we continue to take
for granted
Everyone seems to forget
what a day really represents
at some point the time will
come
when the present meets the
end
Everyone then seeing
what a day really represents

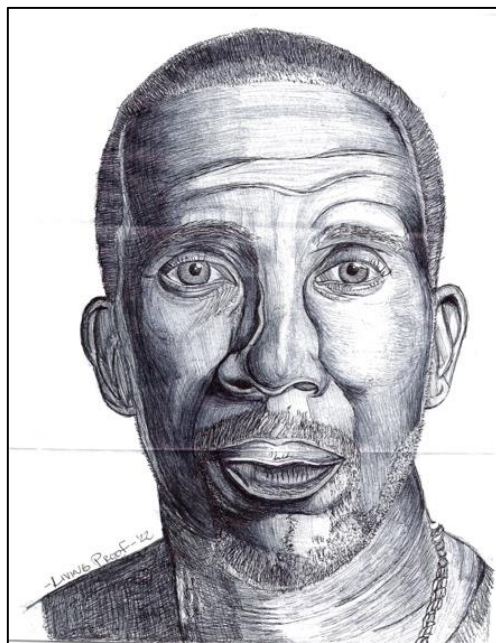
Hope
By David Morales Zenquis

As I walk through the beach,
The calm winds and sea
Resonate with the solemn
drought -
Alas, I lost my chain of
thought
As I stumble
Into strands
Of water-entwined sand
And my sandcastles crumble.
As I watch the ocean dissolve
Those traces of my resolve,

I think I've lost it all.
But the sight of the unwavering
debris
Of those castles that I weaved
Makes me remember
The thought I lost to the sea's
ember:
It's difficult to make amends,
But...
Hold on, pain ends.

Verve for Vetch
By Mark Hamme

Though the biome's vast, me
Sonora eye did catch
A small vigorous vine. My
friend said, "It's called vetch."
Two types were in that spot, but
the narrower leaf
Spread over the bare ground
like coral makes a reef.
Bending down to inspect and
lay its rootstock bare,
I dug 'round it with a pointed
rock I found there.



Brian Byrnes

The shallow, slim roots, I
 extracted easily,
 Then I came face-to-face with
 the world's smallest bee.
 In this bee's care were the
 vetch's tiny flower;
 I wouldn't take it all if I had the
 power.
 Transplanting theme, most
 vines died, but they came back
 up,
 Climbing other desert plants in
 a plastic cup.
 Like most survivor vines, vetch
 grows best on its own
 Where it finds a small crack in
 the parched ground or stone.

Tucson's sidewalk cracks, too,
 yield to such plants and vine.
 From these I've taken some,
 and now I call them mine-
 Homage to the desert in a
 terrarium
 That grew and thrived inside
 because of God's green thumb.
 Sometimes I think how I'd like
 short vetch vines to grow
 Throughout the yard, killing the
 grass - I wouldn't have to mow!
 If it wished, it could climb upon
 the house and trees.
 Then we'd be befriended by all
 those little bees!



Tim Vergason