

EXPRESSIONS 2021



ALLEGANY COLLEGE
of MARYLAND

EXPRESSIONS

2021



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of
MARYLAND

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ARTWORK FEATURED ON FRONT/BACK COVER:

“Golden Cattails”
Tony (Michael) Ballas

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STUDENT EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

What brought you to where you are now and how happy are you with your place in life? Many of the students who have submitted art, photography, and writing pieces to this journal seek out a career filled with their creative passion. Many of these spirited and incredible students may have been told that their dreams in art or writing are illogical or foolish. I am here to tell you, that those people are wrong—logic doesn't drive creativity and it is okay to let emotions lead you to the life you strive after. Just don't give up.

Don't let those distant voices knock you or your creativity down. Frustration, despair, joy, enthusiasm, and anxiety are all part of the process and life of an artist. Van Gogh was clinically depressed but still captured a beautifully blue *Starry Night*. Stephen King lived in poverty and struggled with finances, but still he told tales of the malicious *It* and growing up in *Stand by Me*. Passion and emotion drove these artists to greatness. What will guide you to a better place?

I would like to congratulate the students who have been published into the *Expressions* journal for 2021 and to leave you all with a quote, which I hope you will take to heart: "If you can't fly, then run, if you can't run, then walk, if you can't walk, then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward." - Dr./Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.

Gina Franciosi
Student Editor

THE TWO REALITIES

Essay

by *Michael Skelley*

As Hurricane Irma ravaged the east coast of America and wound her way up to Virginia, my family was there waiting. Halfway through our week on the oceanfront the new tropical storm greeted the city. War drums announced her approach through the far-off clouds as a cobalt doom fell on the sky.

Low tide lapped where high tide would. The mighty ocean was now a fugitive of the coming havoc. As she finally arrived, the air over the ocean turned grey and murky, not unlike the premature dusk that sometimes falls in valleys. Irma pushed the air around so roughly that she lifted the beach along with it.

From our fifth-floor balcony, the sand was negligible, cute. It reached out in deep waves and brushed my glasses. Some of it built up in our hair. The air was shiny brown; it was moving in heavenly ways high up in the space beyond our silly little balcony. The waves banged their heads like a heavy metal crowd, creating thunder on the ground. Some waves crested and kept cresting as the wind took that water for a journey into the unknown. Nature was behaving radically, and with such ease to convince me that it was not radical at all.

“Look at the sand by the water!” Mom shouted under the wind. The storm had picked up razor thin filaments of silica and blasted them through the air. Groups of wavy threads streamed down the shore as dirty threads, though some were shiny.

“I’m going down there!” I shouted.

“I’m going with you!” Dad replied.

Mom elected to stay on the balcony.

Wind at ground level was fierce.

We pushed our way into the scraping presence of the storm where sand was not light but dark and heavy. The beach pushed back. Grains of it met my skin. The wind pressed on me like it needed help standing up. Nature’s touch was that of a realist and my body took abrasion. It

swaddled my legs and face, cutting as it bounced. Salt cleared my nose so that the sand had room to shelter. Mist that wasn't absorbed by the flying sand accumulated in my clothes and on my glasses—and this was all before I had surgery on my eyes. I could not survive without ocular aid (in a better world, I would have qualified as legally blind). Without my glasses, I genuinely could not see. From ground to sky there was no horizon. Faces were mush, and the ocean was a homogenous, breathing mass. My glasses were literally my eyes, and the storm had rendered them one-hundred percent useless, so I removed them and saw instead with my scratched face and my clogging nose, my burning legs and my wet body, my blowing hair and flapping clothes. Thunder shook me and wind screamed into my head.

If only I could put on paper the surreal feeling of removing one's own eyes and still being able to "see" the world you're in. I closed my eyes and smiled.

...

I stood on the beach and the natural world ran up to meet me, bringing none of the prevalent disgust I know. I was not judged. The silica, pushed into flight by the indifferent spinnings of our atmosphere, skimming and cutting my body, did not judge. The natural world—here long before we were, infinitely more valid, agent, and absolute than any miserable little person I've met—did not judge.

Whether the ocean and the storm saw me as equal fodder upon which to initiate decay or as something to respect with vivid embrace, I do not know. Though I hope it is both.



SEA SEEKER

Photograph | *by Michelle Metzgar*

AEONIAN LOVE

Poetry

by Marita Smith

Choosing you today and every day
Standing strong at your side and sleeping peacefully in your arms.
Loving you exactly as you are now
and
Everything you will become.
Vowing to love, accept, encourage, and trust you.
Promising that together, we will build a life together
A life filled with laughter, patience, compassion, and success.
Promising to listen and learn from you
Always striving to provide for you in any way I can.
Pushing you towards your dreams from near or far
Always chasing because you,
My best friend,
Deserve everything this world has to offer.
Praying that we fully accept the love God has for us
Trusting in Him to use us in ways greater than
We could ever imagine.
Promising that no matter what life throws at us,
I will always be by your side
Leaning on you for strength and helping you up when you've fallen
Loving you wholeheartedly throughout it all
Even after God has called us both home into his loving arms

BIRTH OF A LANGUAGE

Poetry

by Jordan Morral

Ears hear an almost constant flow of words,
Words that can be translated many ways,
And when families migrate like the birds,
In one region languages do not stay.

People mix and talk together, hence
After centuries or a few decades,
A new language may be in existence.
It may even spread like gossip through maids.

Whether it be informal or a pidgin,
Written or spoken, it does not matter.
Even Esperanto was made by man.
All the languages can grow and scatter.

We've made thousands of languages to date.
We are but people that form and create.

THE MAN I WANT TO BE

Essay

by *Daniel Hickie*

There are a lot of different traits that people have—smart, loud, nice, and funny just to name a few. We all have a list of traits that relate to us, a list of traits that we want to have, and a list of traits that we would hate to have. A few of those hated traits for me are hypocritical, mean, obnoxious, annoying, and rude. With that said, I try to avoid these kinds of traits like the plague—we all do. We hate when we catch ourselves with these kinds of traits, while the exact opposite is true for the traits we want to have. I know I want traits that will all lead me to one thing: being a respectable, responsible, well-rounded man that can stand out and compete in this modern day and age. I like to think that I have most of these traits already. However, I would like to focus on developing some of these traits further. A few of these other traits are creativity, intelligence, and patience. Why do I need these traits? I need these traits more because they all help me reach my end goal. These are also the traits I feel I need to work on the most out of all the traits that I have. Creativity will help me to stand out more, Intelligence is a needed day to day trait that will never stop growing, and simply Patience, which is harder to find in a person nowadays. The trait that I have had the longest is creativity.

In today's age, it is hard to get anywhere without creativity. This is because it is seen as a high priority. It is such a high priority that it is being taught to children at a young age. This is shown with their toys, shows and games, that all teach them to try new things and experiment. I know for me as a kid, one of my favorite activities was building and playing with Legos. I even wanted a job where I would design new Legos kits at one point. As I got older, I moved on to video games, and I loved making new fun maps and amazing courses to play on. Even now as a young adult I love to build things in games, in real life, and imagining things I can do in my spare time. The limitless options and endless bounds are awesome, and I cannot get enough.

But why is creativity seen as such a good thing? With creativity a person can look at something blank, boring, and bland and make it into something unique and desirable, something completely new. This is a very good trait to have in a world of ever-changing views, wants and opinions. Something that “everyone” wants today is outdated and obsolete tomorrow, and something no one wants at one point is the next hot thing a day later. Therefore, creativity is taught and reinforced at such a young age, to prepare people for the times they are living in. It is a new trait that is required to live now, because it allows you to go with the flow of the ever-changing “tide” of life. It is the one way to put yourself in front of the other guy, to stand out and get noticed. This trait is different from the other traits; however, if it is not used and taken care of it can slip away very quickly and be lost to time.

Intelligence is the most important trait, especially when trying to go anywhere this day. If intelligence was not the most important trait, then no one would dedicate 12 plus years to gaining as much as possible. For me, intelligence was not a priority earlier on. I hated school and all the work that came with it. It was so stressful and jammed into a such a small amount of time. And with all of this, it had nothing fun mixed in, no choices for me. It made learning slow, boring and I wanted nothing to do with it. That was, until high school, and college so far. The variety of high school and flexibility of college make learning fun, and it was my choice again. After I started gaining some intelligence, I realized just how much I needed it. So, again, I propose a question, why is intelligence seen as such an important thing? With creativity it is because the world is always changing. With intelligence it is because it keeps the world moving. Without knowing how something will work it is impossible to make it. In other words, without intelligence, creativity means nothing. Without a basic knowledge of how things work we can never prove ourselves, show what we can really do, stand out. With a good balance of knowledge, we can solve any problem, fix any situation and keep the world moving forward. Intelligence is the most important trait, yes, but it should not become the only trait that someone aims to have. The reason no one should aim to only have intelligence is because it opens the door to so many other amazing traits to have. And while,

yes, intelligence can be hard to get it is not the hardest. The hardest trait to get is patience.

Patience is a very rare trait to have, let alone an abundance of. Thus, if someone has a lot of patience, they can be a very valuable attribute. Many people that do have a lot of patience are sought after by everyone. It is required for a lot of jobs like teaching, for parents and throughout everyday life. I can say I am not the most patient person in the world. If I am trying to do something hard, I can give up very easily. I love to look back and see all that I have accomplished. I tend to get a great feeling of pride when I do. Therefore, it can be hard for me to try something if I cannot see a light at the end of the tunnel. If I feel that something will take too long, and as a result, will not make me feel proud, then it matters little to me in the moment. Lately though, I have hung in and stuck at things longer and completed more than I might have in the past. I have also found that the result feels great and the pride is still there no matter how long something takes. But why is being patient so desired? Like stated previously it is hard to have a lot of patience. It is very normal to just take the easy way out, say "I cannot do something," avoid taking the hard path. Therefore, anyone that does stay with it and take the harder path is not like everyone else. They tend to be more hard working and act nicer and friendlier. Patience also leads to other traits like calmness, respectfulness, kindness, the list goes on. And the best part of patience is that the more it is used the more it grows. If started while young, it is possible to have more patience than someone twice your age, and thus act more respectful, more pleasant. This can be a big thing when trying to get anywhere today.

A person that just goes after one thing in today's age is more likely to fail than a person that betters themselves in preparation for everything. I know that if I improve myself by bettering my good traits, it will not matter what happens. I know that I will always be successful. I do have a long way to go to get there. There are a lot of trials ahead waiting for me. There are always people that say, "You cannot do it," things that look impossible at some point, and pain and suffering no matter what. But I know that all these traits are intertwined and important. I just have to keep pushing myself. I have to keep bettering who I am. I have

to keep thinking positive, because a day will come when I do reach my goals. I will become a respectable, responsible, well-rounded man who can stand out and compete in the modern day and age. And after that day, I will become unstoppable. That is the man I want to be.



LITTLE WRANGLER

Photograph | *by Brianna Bell*

THE BIGGEST FISH CANADA HAD TO OFFER

Essay

by Jason Rakaczewski

The sun was beating down on my bare back as I precisely casted my fishing lure right between two big sections of lily pads. Time seemed to slow down when my father, my uncle, and I went fishing. When out on the river, we were a well-oiled machine that had one goal in mind: catch fish. (Well, for my uncle and dad, catch fish and drink beer.)

However, this was no normal fishing trip; this time around we were in Canada, on the Saint Lawrence River, smack dab in the middle of the Thousand Islands. This was a once in a lifetime fishing trip that brought beautiful scenery and even more beautiful fish. This was also no ordinary river; this was a river that in places was as wide as a lake. Most of the individual islands on the river had architectural masterpieces on them, with lush, green vegetation surrounding. It was truly a sight to behold, especially for a kid who had not left the small-town of Cumberland, Maryland in three years prior to this trip. The sheer reality of where we were, 400 miles away from home, in a little slice of paradise, made the stakes of catching good fish seem that much higher.

Now back to that perfect cast . . . As I watched the fake minnow go flying through the air, I thought for sure I had put too much power into my cast and as a result my lure was going to land too deep, right smack dab in the middle of the lily pads and get stuck on one of them. Only ten minutes prior to my perfect cast, my father told me “Son, do you see the small opening between those two giant sections of lily pads? If you can cast there, you’re gonna catch a monster.” Up to this point, my father and my uncle had been catching giant fish left and right, and my dad’s arms were beginning to get tired from reeling in all the river monsters that so graciously took his bait and not mine. After catching a few fish in one spot, my uncle, the captain of our tiny yet effective fishing vessel, would crank on the motor and jet to another cove. However, instead of my dad or my uncle using their laser-like precision to cast, in what looked to be the perfect nesting place for a mammoth

of a fish, they sat back and without either of them saying a word, both unanimously agreed to let me attempt to catch my own trophy of a fish, worthy of a picture to show my friends and family back home.

As my lure began its descent from its peak height and got closer and closer to the water below, I could begin to tell that my cast was on point; it was actually going to land right in the small opening between the lily pads. Then, with all eyes on my lure, we heard, splash! 'Twas the perfect cast—my minnow initially sunk a few feet under the water for the fish to see. More excited than ever, I began to reel in the top water lure as an eerie silence came over the boat, my dad and my uncle remaining quiet, waiting anxiously to see if I could complete this rite of passage.

The fact that I was using a top water lure at the time made this experience all the more exciting (a top water lure is a type of bait, typically a fake minnow, that has a big plastic lip on the front of it that allows the lure itself to float on top of the water as you reel it in). This way, since the lure is hovering on top of the water, when a fish goes to bite it, they typically rocket up from the murky depths and shoot out of the water having bit your lure and then splash back down with it. It is a magnificent sight to behold, and once this happens, the chase is on.

As I began to reel in my top water lure, my green minnow, with its white under belly and invisible hooks, rose to the surface and began doing its ever-so-enticing dance of death back and forth on the surface of the water. By design, as you reel it in, it swims back to you in a way that makes it look injured to other fish; therefore, it appears to be an easy meal for fish who are smart and methodical in their hunting practices. Slowly and surely, I reeled in the small shiny bait, and as it got a little bit closer to the boat, we saw something. With the bright sunlight beaming down on the water, we were able to see the shadow of a monster beginning to make its ascent to where our world, as land mammals, meets the unknown world of all creatures below.

Splash! The fish rocketed out of the water with my bait in its mouth, then immediately dove back down and the chase was on. My father and my uncle both erupted with excitement and began cheering me on.

As the fish swam down deep under the water, the tip of my fishing rod began to bend greatly; at one point a cracking noise could be heard and I thought for sure the fish was going to break my pole and get away. However, with my feet firmly planted on the base of the boat and beads of sweat rolling down the sides of my face, I kept reeling in line as fast as I could in the hope that I would get this fish up on to the boat. I knew the fish was a monster because I had gotten a glimpse of it when it shot out of the water and bit my bait. It was what looked to be a northern pike, which are ferocious looking in their own respect. They have sharp, razor-like teeth, that are used to rip their prey into pieces when they hunt and have piercing black eyes that makes them appear that much more ominous.

After about 15 more minutes went by and I continued to reel in as much line as I could, the fish had gotten close enough to where we could actually see how big it was. Once we saw the three-foot-plus pike staring up at us just a few feet away from the boat, the reality of the situation set in—this was a fish that people dream of catching and it was only a few feet away from me ready to be scooped up. I had just about done it; I was about to catch not only the biggest fish of the trip but the biggest fish I had ever caught in my entire life. Then as my father went to scoop it up with the net, it thrashed back and forth a few hard times and snapped my line right in half with its razor-sharp teeth. At this point its back end was still partly in the net but as my dad tried to scoop it up, the monstrous pike did a nosedive under the boat and miraculously got away.

I was crushed. Everyone on the boat went silent again. I could not believe the fish to end all fish was so close to me at one point that I could see a scar on its back. After a few more hours out on the water, we all went back to our hotel room and went to sleep.

The next evening when we were back out on the water, looking for the pike that had eluded me, and my father couldn't help but notice I looked upset. He could tell I still had that monster of a fish on my mind, so doing what any great dad would have done at the time, he cracked open a cold beer, looked me dead in the eyes and said, "Son, this one's for you. Your first beer. Drink all of it, as quickly and as fast as you can,

and by the time you're done, you will have forgotten all about this, you will have forgotten about how you almost caught the biggest northern pike Canada had to offer."

And I did. I drank it all.



NATURE'S WATER SLIDE

Photograph | *by Shana Thomas*

WHERE IS HOME?

Essay

by Cami Cutter

Where is home? When asked this question, most people automatically would tell you a location or address to where they live, but looking deeper into the question is where my answer will lie. Home to me is a one-bedroom apartment that I share with my husband Brad, our two cats Gracie and Fireball, located on Ord Street in Salisbury, Pa. Not only is this “home” where we spend most of our time, but it is the place where we feel the most relaxed and at peace because this is our safe place. We do the majority of everything in our home together, whether it is doing chores or cooking dinner. Our home is only a home to me when we are there together bonding.

Our apartment, although very small but just what two people need, is one of my favorite places to be. Although we live on the second level of the complex, climbing the ginormous set of stairs, especially carrying groceries, seems to be the only time I hate living there. We are located right beside the Salisbury Area School, which I don’t mind, as I enjoy seeing the kids, as well as watching them play baseball. The baseball field is practically my backyard, so when there are games or even when they are just practicing, the baseballs themselves sometimes end up hitting the outside of my apartment and give a good “thunk”—which can scare you if you’re not expecting it. One time my downstairs neighbor had to replace a window in her car from a baseball that glided over the fence that day.

Home to me is also the area that I live in. I live in rural Somerset County, where it is common to see Amish with their horse and buggies, and roads that are dirt and covered in potholes. Although I think I would prefer to live a city life, I know deep down inside that after I receive my Dental Hygienist degree, my roots will always bring me back to the country. I feel as if this is where I belong. I also enjoy that in my area the Amish sell their produce and plants; fresh fruits and vegetables picked from their garden are the best! Although sometimes I have

to pay more, I love their options and the quality is always fresh. The Pennsylvania Maple Festival is another huge hit in the area that I live in. The Maple Festival happens once a year in late March and has all the homemade maple products that your mind can only imagine, such as maple cotton candy, maple taffy, maple cheesesteaks, and even my favorite, spotza, which is shaved ice with a maple syrup taffy drizzled on top. Blue sugar lines that collect the maple syrup run throughout the area and you are bound to see them wherever you drive in Somerset County in March.

One of my favorite things to do in my spare time is just take a car ride on the country back roads, which where I live are all over the place. I have lived in Somerset County my whole life, and yet I can still find a road that I haven't been on. Recently, on an evening joyride that Brad and I took, we stopped by a river and got out to enjoy the scenery. Most people in my area have caught a crawfish before, and if they haven't, they have at least seen someone catch one. Well, Brad has never caught one due to growing up in Washington D. C.. So, on our way to the creek I told Brad that I was a crawfish wrangler, and that I was going to catch a crawfish and stick it on him. When we got to the creek, we made our way to the water which was only ankle deep, but rocks were sticking out of the water everywhere, so it was easy to get through and around the water without getting wet. Shortly after, Brad spotted a crawfish. I told him how to grab it behind the claws so it wouldn't pinch him. This crawfish that he caught honestly was the biggest crawfish that I have ever seen in my life, and Brad decided it would be funny to stick the crawfish on me. The crawfish stuck to my shirt, and I was so freaked out I fell in the water. The crawfish's pinchers didn't hurt—I was just freaked out that the crawfish was on me. After this is when I told Brad that I had never caught or even touched a crawfish before.

Home is not only the exact location where you live, but also the things that surround you and make it feel like home. Home is where you can be relaxed even if it doesn't have a roof over your head. Home is where you can be yourself.

ON THE FOUNDATION OF MORALS

Essay

by *William M. O'Boyle*

Where do our Morals come from? For many, it is a simple answer—it is laid out before them in religion. I myself believe in the Christian faith and follow (not without some struggle) the commandments laid out before me by Jesus and Moses. However, being moral as we all know isn't a religious feat and there are many who in the name of religion commit incredibly immoral acts and many who are nonreligious who are upright and incredibly good people. Therefore, we must look and see what is the reason we know something to be moral, or better yet, ask how we know that something is good?

When we think of our actions as being moral, we typically think of the “something” as our community or our lives, such as going to college to advance our education, or volunteering with a local service group, but to know that something truly is a moral good is something different; it cannot just be to advance some goal, but advance the ideals that we know to be good. Over the years ‘good’ has become synonymous with the word ‘moral’ but another definition is “to the advancement of someone or something” which is why a thief thinks they are doing good because they are advancing an agenda for themselves, but also why when someone gives you flowers you see it as good because it advances the happiness you feel, or someone is a good employee because their hard work advances the company. A better example of good in society is that of churches in the United States which have inspired many of the leaders in civil rights, such as Susan B. Anthony, whose Quaker upbringing sponsored the abolition of slaves, and also helped inspire her goal to advance the rights of women to vote and be equal in the workforce. Another example is Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., whose Baptist upbringing and service as a minister saw everyone equal before the eyes of God. This advanced his ideas that brought forth major civil rights movements in our country. One reason this may be so is because religions have their ideals written out and support their

followers to act on those ideals.

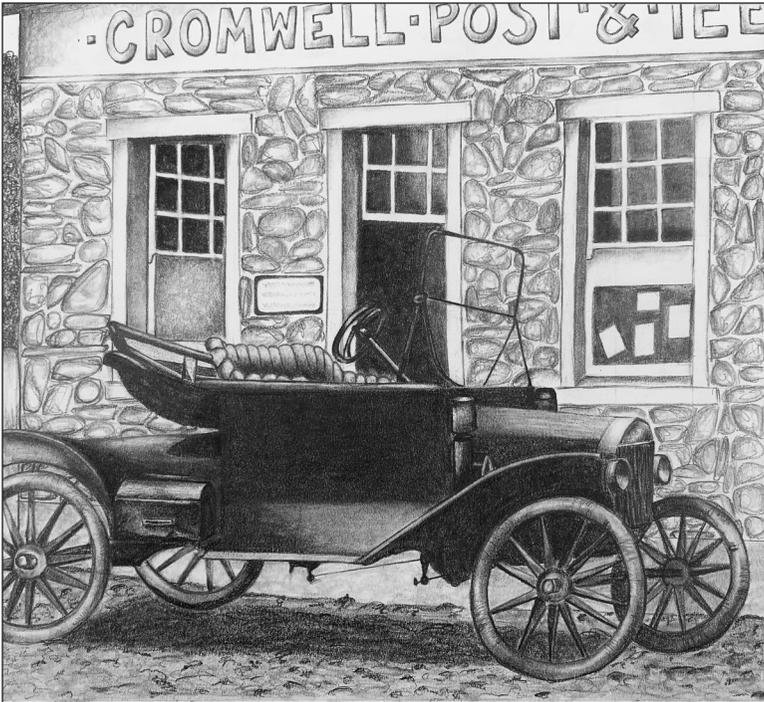
Just because many people believe it to be true and serve good does not make it so. One fable of this is of the pure democratic decision between two wolves and a sheep voting on what they should have for dinner—the inevitable result is only good for part of them and it devours the opposing group. A historical event of this is the rise and reign of the Nazi party in Germany, as the ideals and phrases used by a political party advanced the torture and imprisonment of millions of Jews. This line of thinking of whatever works best for the majority is therefore good, is not true, because it allows blame to fall on one group of minorities or another. Whether the minority is defined by race, sex, or ideology doesn't matter, because if the majority believes that it's possible to achieve their good at the expense of a minority, then they will make that happen.

What we must do now is find what makes something moral to better society. If it can't be just the advancement of the majority of people voting, then it must be something written out and made binding to the people that wish to act on them. This brings us to a prominent theory with which we can experiment and hopefully advance to do good; the theory is history, which is something that Jesus in the New Testament of the Bible uses by teaching examples that prove universally that good itself is a moral achievement. Sayings many know and recognize in their personal history, such as "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," "Whosoever shall do and teach them [the Commandments], the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven," and "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" are true and have sustained the test of time in various forms, such as the compassion others share to one another and helping someone up when they fall. The laws of Moses in The Ten Commandments have been the basis of almost every just law and practice, such as thou shalt not murder, or thou shalt not commit adultery, and even keeping the Sabbath Day holy, by taking time for ourselves, as well as rest for our bodies and minds to grow. Leaving things unto Caesar and unto God is one of the earliest calls for a separation of church and state and prevents a degree of corruption in

both; it also can point to the idea that we cannot legislate “goodness” but only act on goodness through individual acts and legislate to increase the amount of liberty to be able to do such things.

For those of us reading this who are familiar with the scientific method, the theory of history should sound familiar or at least make sense. This method I suggest is a call to use the scientific method, not just for experiments but also in life. We must question if what we are doing is moral. Define and look for the basis of why you perform this action, form your hypothesis if this is right, research and test if this action confirms or contradicts your hypothesis, know that it is okay to be wrong sometimes, observe your results then repeat, and once you are done, share what you have found with those around you—your parents, your partner, your classmates, your friends—and see what they think. For those of us not looking to create more science homework think of it like this: religiously and even culturally we are bound to struggle with God and not just live by faith, though a good degree of that is also needed. If you believe something is profoundly good or truly evil, explore the reasons why.

I believe the scientific method applied to life is an advanced way to test what we think is right and what is wrong, and it may open new doors for us to find ways to come together and possibly make an advancement of each other; in other words, do good.



ANTIQUE CAR

Graphite | *by Morgan White*

CONNOISSEUR OF ROADS

Essay

by *Wil Brauer*

River Phoenix's cornflower blue eyes, tinged with blood, squint, peering far out into the distance at the hazy point where the hills meet the horizon. Awoken, in a post-narcolepsy daze, he stands alone, wavering in the sun on the median of a deserted stretch of highway: "I'm a connoisseur of roads. I've been tasting roads my whole life. This road will never end. It probably goes all around the world."

This scene from *My Own Private Idaho* is one of many without any context as to which events placed the characters where they happen to be, scenes unique to the 1991 cult film. The film's confusing style of cinematic storytelling and its crop of eclectic characters make *My Own Private Idaho* neither generally inspirational nor relatable. Yet as I watched it for the first time, I was surprised to find myself relating to Phoenix's character of Mikey Waters, a rugged street hustler in search of his estranged mother. I am quite positive I stand as one of very few who can say that.

I wrecked my first car during the winter of my penultimate year of public education. The airbag deserves sole credit for keeping the crash from ending worse than it did. For the most part, I was all right. However, my car definitely was not. I watched the silver Hyundai Sonata as it was towed away, glass and debris trailing behind it. Thankfully, just short of a month later, a Jeep Wrangler officially replaced the Sonata via a drive home from Bedford, Pennsylvania, through the dark hours one crisp February evening.

My driver's license is valid in the United States. My passport recognizes me as a United States citizen. I live in the United States. The roads that bind the lower forty-eight are what I consider home. Roads are what truly make a location. They connect homes to places of work, farms to markets and restaurants, and cities to their suburbs. We spend our whole lives on roads. They bring us to our daughter's wedding, deep in the autumnal forest. They rush us to the hospital when a child is

being brought into the world at 3:00 A.M. Cumberland, my hometown, is ingrained in my mind through the views from roads: trees forming an emerald tunnel that snakes through The Narrows, or the Henderson Avenue bridge from which all the gleaming tops of churches sparkle in the sunlight for miles.

When I laid eyes on my Jeep for the first time, I will admit I was not all that impressed. The bond my car and I formed on the open road is what has made me so attached to the hum of its engine and the whistle of the air when the windows are down. Allegany County is vast when you look at it from the road. I have spent hours scouring its avenues, highways, streets, gravel paths, winding ways, and one lane tunnels. The love of my fingertips on the wheel is a love I have never felt until this past year and a half, yet the love is a feeling which part of me has subconsciously longed for my entire life.

In a sense, there is no wonder that I call the roads my home. To a fisherman, his boat and his fishing pole are what make his home. To a pilot, his home is his plane and the never-ending horizon. As an angst-y teenage boy, the road offers an escape from the world. The ability to travel on an undiscovered path, somewhere that can still be so close, is incredible. Fishermen find comfort in the rhythm of their boat chopping through the water. Casting a line draws their minds away from their worries and redirects their focus only on the task ahead: catching a fish. Driving consumes my mind. Watching the median disappear under my tires and seeing the trees whirl past has a calming effect, a similar effect to the one Mike Waters experiences in *My Own Private Idaho*. When life is at its most hectic, Mikey finds himself standing in the middle of that same road: the road he stares down and calls a “one of a kind place. One of a kind . . . like someone’s face . . . like a fucked up face.” We all have that “one of a kind place” that brings us serenity when life spirals off its tracks. That place takes the form of an elderly woman in a rocking chair, a walk along train tracks, arms outstretched for balance, or the tune of elevator music on the way up to the office. That place is home.

SILENCE

Poetry

by Angel Kifer

This silence is deafening,
Weighing heavy on
Every fiber of my being.
Turn up the sound!
Loudly to drown it out!
This silence—
Screeching,
deafening-
much too silent-
silence.

AFTER

What comes after this life?
Where do we go when our bodies give up the fight?
Will we rejoice on streets of gold, or suffer through horrors untold?
Or is it all a lie—contrived—to keep us in a perfect line?
When we finally breathe our last, will we simply fade into the past?



BLACK AND WHITE CATERPILLAR

Photograph | *by Donna J. Morgan*

PANIC DISORDER OF THE SOUL

Poetry

by Gina Franciosi

Concern starts oddly. I was giddy. Normal.
I'm turning into them.
It's irrational, it's unrealistic...

But you're turning into them, believe me.

I watch with glossy eyes, I'm becoming one of them.
I only stop myself when I focus on my shoes.

I'm not turning into them. These are my shoes.

Angst starts out of air.
A pounding. A racing. A trembling.
That one thought, it whispered it to me.
Something is wrong. No it's not.
Something is happening. No it isn't.
But something is wrong. Something, I don't know what, but it's bad.
It's happening. It's here. It's real.
It's gone.

Nothing was happening. I wait for it to pass.

This time I know.
It's me that brought terror on.
Something so stupid. I misspoke something small.
Yet, it's going to ruin me.
I know what it is, but I don't know at all.
I don't want it to leave me, but it's worse than before.

Life happens, it all goes on.
Just give me an hour. I just need an hour.

A STARVING RABBIT AND A DEEP, DARK HOLE

Fiction

by Gina Franciosi

I'm just a starving rabbit skittering down a deep, dark hole.

At the entrance of the grand hole, a carrot glistens and reflects orange tints against the black mud and yellow grass. My stomach grumbles and growls, flips and aches like a rabid wolf.

Hunger and blindness drive me to the carrot, but before my paws can touch the fluffy green top... before the holy grail is in my grasp... the carrot runs down, down into the hole and darkness swallows it whole.

It isn't worth it, there are other foods in the meadow. Rationality speaks clear and bold.

Yellow grass is flavorless. Apples are rotten and bitter. I want the carrot. Desire screams blunt and determined.

With fuzzy ears perked and strides high, I rush down, down into the hole.

Chunky mud is damp, bumpy beneath my paws. Icy wind blows pebbles into my fur. Darkness steals my sight, but the image of the carrot will never leave me mind. Its long orange shape beckons me, its green lettuce top seduces me. The carrot will be mine.

"What are you doing?" a shrill voice squeaks from a tiny white mouse scurrying between my paws.

"Chasing a carrot I badly want," I chime.

"Good luck with that," the white mouse laughs and continues further down the deep, dark hole. "Rabbits that come down this tunnel never see the end."

He's wrong. The carrot is mere feet from our grasp. Keep going, keep striding. Desire cheers.

Turn back now, other foods are certain, this carrot isn't real. Rationality crows.

With fuzzy ears laying downward and steps becoming tiptoes, the chunky mud under my paws begins to turn slushy, grabbing at my toes and desperately trying to sink me under. The orange shimmer and

sweet garden taste bring a skip to my heart and a joy to my brain. I pull out of the mud and hop down, down into the hole.

The white mouse is right, a hole like this is too big a risk.

Rationality cries.

Imagine how delicious this carrot will be, it'll be eaten and digested smoothly under that flourished willow tree. Desire sings.

"Stop! Stop!" screams an old grey owl racing to me from the unseen other side. "You must stop now rabbit, you're making a mistake."

"What's the mistake?" I ask and shrug. "I'm chasing what I want, isn't that the drive of us all?"

Owl shakes her head and shoves me to the side, running in the darkness back to the entrance. "You have passion and talent, that I'll admit, but it's not enough to find a measly carrot. Turn back, you've made a mistake."

Follow the others, they know what they're saying. Rationality whines.

They're stuck in a pattern. Eating bland grass and poisoned fruits. Keep going, keep running. The carrot is close. Desire bursts.

My hopping has stopped and pain stabs my paws with each trudge. The hole seems to be growing, getting darker and colder. When I look ahead there's no light to be seen. When I look behind, there's a small portal calling to me.

The carrot is nowhere. I've made a mistake. I'm in over my head, I don't know how much farther or longer I can make it.

A dry lump clogs my throat. My paws and ears are numb. Shuffling steps have halted and hot tears blur in my eyes. *I can't go any deeper in this hole. I'll never survive.*

I sob and shriek into the path of mud. Its black stain coating, engulfing my thudding heart, its crude truths filling my lungs with its words. *Stop going forward. The carrot and I have no worth.*

Don't forget the way its orange skin glimmered in the sun. Desire chants. *Don't forget how the sight of it watered the lips. Don't forget the silk touch of its green, fluffy tips. The journey is difficult, the hole is dark and cold, but the carrot is worth it. You are the one.*

If I give up now, I'll never see the end. If I keep on crying, I'll never move an inch more.

The carrot is worth it and so am I. The carrot is what I want. The carrot is my drive.

Weakly and limply, I run through the mud. The walls are enclosing and the air burns in my lungs.

Keep running little rabbit. The sunshine is brightening the hole.

Desire prays.

You're acting irrational. Please, please turn away! Rationality's loud screams are now nothing more than a mutter.

The warm summer sun pelts on my fur as I tear out the other side of the hole. The carrot lays peacefully next to the pond, beneath the bushy willow tree. Every emotion dances a jig on my chest, my wide eyes are blurry, and my heart stutters and pounds.

I collapse on a log beneath the welcoming willow tree, the carrot by my side, and tranquility singing to me. The first bite is sweet, the second is rich.

Never give up. Desire whispers to me. *It's not a race that was being run, but a spiritual journey.*



13 CANAL STREET JOURNEY

Photograph | *by Shana Thomas*



JUST A BOY, PRAYING FOR A BITE

Photograph | *by Ciara Alisha*



WISH YOU WERE HERE

Photograph | *by Michelle Metzgar*



COTTON CANDY MOTH

Photograph | *by Donna J. Morgan*



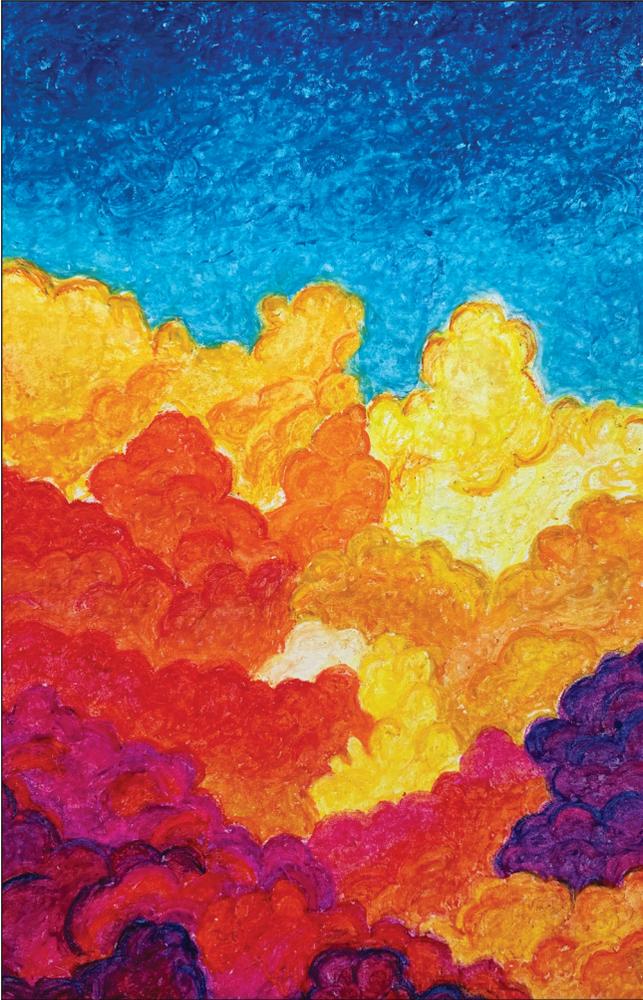
MYSTERY BLUE

Photograph | *by Shana Thomas*



BILLIE

Prismacolor Pencil | *by Wil Brauer*



PASTEL CLOUDS

Pastels | *by Morgan White*



STREAM OF HANCOCK

Photograph | *by Tony (Michael) Ballas*



COLORS OF FALL

Photograph | *by Samantha Blackstone*



A SAPPHIC'S TRIBUTE TO APHRODITE

Watercolor | *by Emma Messick*

DEAR YOUNG GIRL,

Poetry

by Zakiyah Felder

You are the embodiment of love.
Always feeling lost but knowing you were just
On your way.
To the existence that you craved,
The life you knew you wanted and deserved.
Always feeling lost because that existence was so unclear, only a feeling.
Trying to find life in anything because your spirit never felt alive,
Maybe you were running like they said you were.

But there is no shame in breaking from a cage in which you were suffering.

Young girl, maybe you were lost... lost in the limbo of the world you lived
And the world that lived inside of you.

But there is no shame in not having the answers as a young girl.

I saw your soul shatter when your father died.
I saw the grief of your mother finally resonate with you.
What a tragic thing for a young girl of only nine to redefine how to survive.
Nothing hit deeply until age twelve and life felt like hell.

I saw you struggling to put all the broken pieces of yourself back together.
Young girl, you were never broken.

I saw your throat swell and close when you begged and pleaded for help.

Young girl, it is okay that you didn't know how to ask.
Crowded and drowning in everyone else's pain, young girl, how could
you have even known,
How to deal with your own?

I saw your body tremble and shake at every loud sound.

Surrounded by violence, I understand that outside was your quiet.
Outside had its own noise, its own ways of bringing you down.
Outside had its own violence, its own pain,
its own loud sound that still echoes in the heart.

Young girl, you were not running, you were searching.

Searching for still, searching for a pain that made sense,
searching for a love that you can feel, searching for somebody to
hear you
to see you

Searching for why you never felt alive.

Young girl, it is okay that you looked for all these things in the wrong
places.

How could you have known someone else's true intentions?

I saw your eyes water when nobody was around.
forgive me for not being more empathetic.

I saw you when you contemplated taking your life.

I saw the urge in you to stay alive.

Young girl, you took that urge and you held it close.

I saw you break down and get back up time and time again.

Young girl, be proud of yourself.

Young girl, be patient with yourself.

Young girl, be empathetic with yourself.

Young girl, forgive yourself.

Young girl, give yourself credit where it is due.

Young girl, be unapologetic with your process.

Young girl, love yourself as much as I love you.

I saw you put the work in to reach your higher, to reach your other world.

Young girl, you are closer than you think,

Closer than you give yourself credit for.

It is not who you think you are that holds you back, but who you think you are not.

Young girl, the being you aim to achieve lives within your spirit.
You do not have to chase her because she is you, and you are her.
You are who you crave to be, and who you crave to be is you.
You do not have to run because you are not your mistakes, and
The mistakes of others are not yours.
Without these flaws, you would lack life's greatest riches.

Young girl, I saw you create your world.
Live in it as if it is yours.
Live as if you owe it to yourself, because you do.
Young girl, you are the embodiment of life.
You are here.

UNTITLED

Poetry

by Gracie Steele

And my darling,
I know you hope that there are others out there like you.
Others who love with that same reckless abandon,
But they are a rare beauty.
I am so sorry,
So sorry that you will be stuck waiting for others to love you
With that same kind of passion that you hold.
So sorry that the chances of someone coming along
With that same loving beauty
Are so rare.
Don't let this tame you.
Don't let this put you in a box.
We need more people who love this way,
And we need you to teach the rest of us.

UNTITLED

Today I decided to soak in the grief
Like I soak in the sun on the warmest summer days.
Soaking in every inch of the pain
Until it has taken over every drop of blood that is running through my veins.
Gasping for air after it's stolen my breath,
But I must heal,
And in order to heal, I have to feel.
Even if it's the hottest day at the end of July
I must soak in every ray of sunlight
I must feel every drop of pain
In order to become my new name:

Enough.



PAYA, ELERY, RAINE AND V

Prismacolor Pencil | *by Emma Messick*

THE CASE FOR MODERN ART

Essay

by Tyler Robinson

What was once respected has fallen into denigration. In our current manifestation of Modernity, it is not revelatory to say that the role, status, and definition of art have morphed and changed alongside the rest of culture. Indeed, starting around the early 20th century, a rift in the realm of art movements appeared. Perhaps necessitated by the advent and popularization of consumer cameras, various art movements around this time ceased to represent the world. Rather than remaining content to represent the world as in centuries past, art morphed into Surrealism, Dadaism, Expressionism and so forth. This is not to say the mirroring and expression of the world ceased entirely—it is hard to imagine popular culture without the likes of Normal Rockwell or Claude Monet! Instead it suffices for our exploration that the above-mentioned movements appeared, and that they can be said to constitute some type of rift. Likewise, what is today referred to as Modern Art appears to be a continuation of this rift between representative art and the movements since the twentieth century. From empty canvasses to colored geometry, it is of no great surprise that Modern Art is often ridiculed and even scoffed at as nothing more than forms of tax fraud and snobbery. But are such claims true? Is Modern Art nothing more than a failure as art? No. Modern Art has to be understood differently than a Rockwell. This difference does not exclude it from artistic merits as will become apparent, instead this difference is for now best acknowledged as a passive, nonjudgmental distance.

How then can we justify the statement that Modern Art has merit, value, and integrity? The onus is on the one who makes a positive statement, placing the burden of proof on these very paragraphs. To avoid indulging in philosophical waxing about definitions or axiology, fiction author Susan Sontag's non-fiction treatise on art, literature, and film titled "On Style" will be called forward in the defense of Modern Art. What follows will be a defense against common claims and attacks

against the Modern Art movement. The mere defense of Modern Art as legitimate will not be the end point (perhaps simply referencing its place in countless museums could do that); rather, what follows will be a championing of Modern Art to show its deserved status and place in our world today.

A chief objection raised against Modern Art is that it has no content. People say they don't understand it, or that there is nothing to understand. This seems rather an intuitive criticism, as works of art have been explored for deeper messages as far back as ancient Athens. One can understand the message of loneliness and existentialism present in Hopper's paintings, or the feelings of confusion or anxiety in a Picasso. What can geometry or paint splotches represent if representation is the point of art? While intellectualizing contemporary art is doable, and is indeed done in classrooms across the world, the act of engaging in such hermeneutics is an artistic mistake. Sontag makes this explicit with her declaration that "A work of art encountered as a work of art is an experience, not a statement or an answer to a question" (19). That is, Modern Art does not require meaning to be meaningful. Rather, by notion of its existence it has worth. Experiencing it as an art object, in whatever form this idea of experience will be shown to take, is the only legitimate way of aesthetic appreciation.

Indeed, this is how we approach the topic of beauty, is it not? When we gaze upon the form of a lover, we do not interrogate the flesh and bone of the erotic. Gazing upon a cityscape, or at rolling hills from atop a mountain, we do not question the towering metal or the towering cliffs. We merely gaze in awe. The appreciation of the beauty of the natural world goes unquestioned when we encounter it, even when it is as unfathomable and terror inducing as the raw experience of the vast night sky. It is likewise with that which we label Modern Art. How fallacious it is to understand that a tree may possess aesthetic value, but not afford the same acknowledgement to paintings? Demands for a use value are not placed upon nature, but are a human insistence burdened on human creation.

Why then, is there such a tendency to place the responsibility of utility upon a painting, a sculpture, music, and so forth? This is not to say it can't provide one; the myths of the bronze age can certainly be used to understand some facet about their society, much as stained glassed windows in ancient churches allowed those without the ability to read learn theology. Our great stories of heroes have inspired us for as long as we have created! However, these are mere secondary characteristics, as first a thing must exist as itself before anything can be gained from it. Or, as Sontag says in relation to the words of Francisco Goya, "But so far as we deal with these works as works of art, the gratification they impart is of another order" (23).

Gratification is more universal of a term for aesthetic appreciation than beauty. It allows one to speak of the gratification of the experience of something dark and terrible without implying it is pleasing (as in the case of a beautiful sunset). This gratification is the domain of art more so than beauty. That said, beauty provides this gratification as well. The gratification provided by beauty is what is enjoyed in the experience of something understood to be beautiful. Understanding the role of art as some form of abstract aesthetic gratification is why we can assign aesthetic appreciation for the best of the horror genre. Few would dare call the heights of macabre pleasing or good, but they are nonetheless gratifying to behold.

If it is not the love of the beauty of an art, or the seduction of its embedded meaning, this feeling of gratification must be something altogether different from these things. This aesthetic gratification is peculiar in that it must not discriminate based on the ethics of its time (if it did discriminate, one would not be able to appreciate images bearing the full spectrum of brutality and anguish), but rather it must disassociate itself from such judgments of content to be able to take in its style as such. To understand this gratification, is to better understand the nature of Modern Art. Of this gratification, Sontag speaks of experiencing art as "something like an excitation, a phenomenon of commitment, judgment in a state of thralldom or captivation" (19).

Finally, what is made manifest uniquely by the aesthetic is apparent. An excitation that puts aside morality and common notions of beauty,

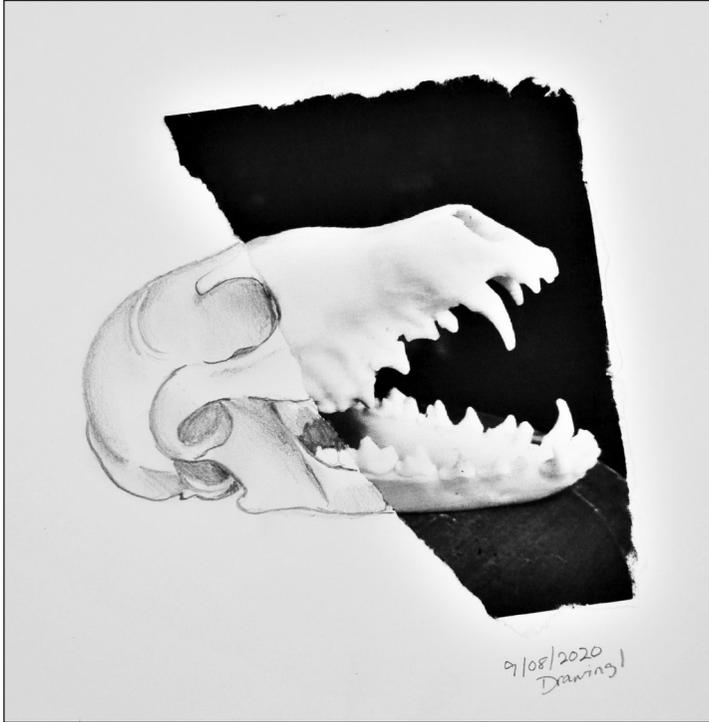
that ignores contact, that is simply a phenomenon of seductive captivation—this is the experience of the highest aesthetic quality. Modern Art then, armed with this knowledge, liberates itself from criticism of its lack of apparent content, its lack of traditional beauty, even against the perhaps more fringe accusations of its amorality. But Modern Art is not just the liberation of itself from the attacks of its critics, rather it liberates art from the constraints of its old schools, norms, and critics. Modern Art is the skeleton of art, it is art stripped of everything that it doesn't need. This skeleton of art shows us what has been underneath all of the pomp, style, and personalities that hung upon the art world like a gaudy rug draped over an antique mirror.

As the deconstructed skeleton of millennia of art, Modern Art does away with even the role of the artist. Talent has become secondary as people look upon museum walls with envious statements that they could have created the same works. Modern Art is art made sentient, free of its trappings. Modern Art is thus art qua art, the purest of expression of the unsayable, the obliterating thralldom of the ungraspable.

Modern Art's fall into denigration is, with the above knowledge, the only reasonable place it could go. It shatters talent distinctions and liberates the viewer from having to know how to interpret it. Art is now universal, beyond man, beyond nature. The art object has transformed into the object as art, and the attacks of its critics are seen now as not only being impotent, but of the same character as one condemning a free society. That is, oppressive and doomed to never being able to eliminate fully the spark that has been ignited. As cries for freedom demand recognition from the master, so too does Modern Art demand and deserve its rightful acknowledgement as art.

Work Cited

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HALF AND HALF

Pencil | *by Phoebe Shuttleworth*

THE LITTLE CHAMPAGNE GIRL

Fiction

by *Phoebe Shuttleworth*

The moon shone brightly through the tiny gaps between leaves on the trees. They stood taller than such a small girl could ever dream, that is, if she would ever see them in the daylight. They called her Badriyah, nothing more or less. Nicknames were not allowed. She was a special asset in initiations. She carried the champagne on a golden tray, weakly holding it up to their leader and whoever was to be welcomed into the group to follow in worship of the moon. They held an initiation ceremony that night, one in which she must participate.

Every member dressed in silky gray robes that dragged the ground they walked along. Except for her. She was singled out by the white, lacey dress with mesh sleeves that devoured her arms. Their faces couldn't be seen, even with the light of the moon fractured by the trees. They all stood in a circle, surrounding the newcomers. The leaders held candles, while Badriyah stood with them holding a golden platter with two slim glasses filled a third of the way with the champagne that would soon bind them to the moon and its followers as long as they shall live, just like her, despite her initiation being her birth into the world.

The highest authority spoke the rules: "You will give yourself to the moon in all of its lunar glory. Answer to us when you are called. No other names, only what we call you. Any relationships unapproved by us will be punished. Upon drinking this champagne, you relinquish your freedom to us."

With that, both freshly initiated newcomers drank from the wine glasses held by the redheaded girl in the lacey white dress, and in that moment, belonged to the moon and its followers. They were to hold a silent vigil under the full moon that night. They may not speak to each other, or anyone else. Meanwhile, the curly haired redhead was to continue living her life closed away with her Mother in the home provided to them by those higher. But lately it had been obvious that

something was bothering her Mother, although the woman would not make clear what it was. However, whenever she was this worried it was often over the young girl's well-being. It wasn't until Badriyah bothered her about it enough to get her to confess, that she found out it was her Mother's plan to free her from the group, to send her out into the world in hopes of the small girl living a better life, though this act surely would not go unpunished to one or both of them.

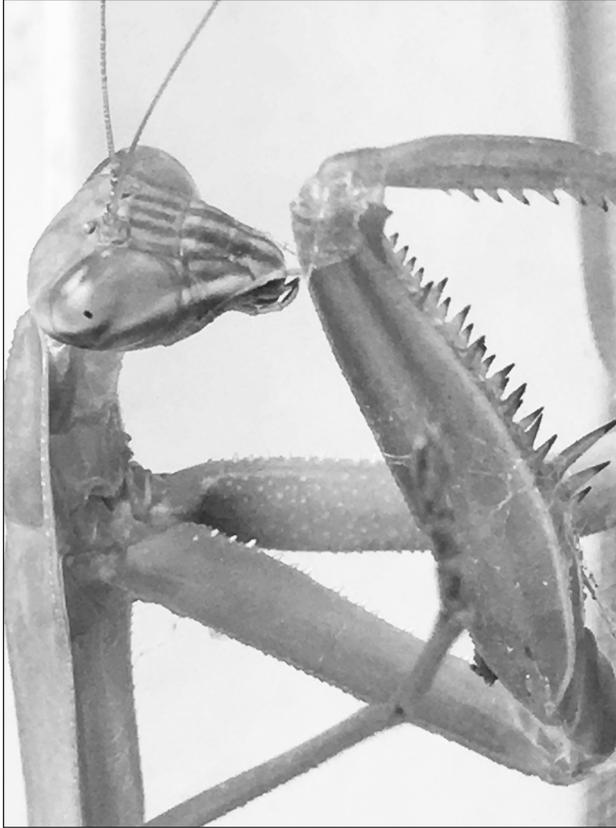
They waited until early in the morning, when the sun was just starting to rise and it was bright enough for them to see. The two of them left their home, stopping in a much less dense part of the forest. The older woman nudged Badriyah away and, with one last 'I love you,' left the child on her own. Badriyah watched her leave and just stood there alone, until her Mother was completely out of sight. It wasn't until she started walking, and continued to for a while, that she saw a shack in the distance that seemed to be dimly lit from the inside. She started to walk toward the old wooden shack but was stopped dead in her tracks by the barking of coyotes that was rapidly growing in volume and steadily getting closer.

VOICELESS ROYALTY

Poetry

by Ky Bittner

I am a queen.
Of the words I do not say,
the regent of the resilience
to not break the peace.
I have worn my crown.
I have counted its diamonds:
one-at-a-time,
many times.
Relationships bought with silence,
a good reputation,
comfortable existence.
Perhaps a family someday.
All from knowing
the place and time:
To not speak.
To not smile.
My mouth is stitched
with golden thread.
And I know what it will cost
to open it again.



PRAYING MANTIS

Photograph | *by Donna J. Morgan*

TOUCH ME IF YOU DARE, HELP ME IF YOU CARE

Poetry

by *Chloe Puffenberger*

My name is Dalit, or at least that's what I'm supposed to call myself;
In my world there are four classes, split up by profession and wealth.

I fall outside of the four and get a class all to my own with many more;
But I don't want to stay below, or listen to them at all anymore.

I'm called untouchable but I have so much to give and long to be more;
I have so much to offer but no one cares, not today or ever before.

They only see me as less than dirt and of no more worth;
I am shown and feel this everyday, even from birth.

The horrors my eyes have seen are but a taste of the trap in which I live;
I long for freedom, and for it there is nothing I won't do or wouldn't give.

I'm a human just like them, but they don't see me as such;
They scoff and scorn, rape and ruin, and shudder at my touch.

I wish there was a way to make them see my humanity;
I wish for change to come and end this insanity.

How long will I have to wait to see change for my family and I?
How long will it be before by the cruel hand of the caste I die?

Will anyone hear our cries, or will it be too late?
Should we just accept it, and embrace our fate?

Will my children live in the same tortuous turmoil as me?
Will this cruelty be the only side of humanity they ever see?

Or will change finally appear? Though it be bought with much blood and death;
Will it be celebrated by every free child, and remembered with every free breath?

As with any revolution support and belief will need to be ever present;
And if change is to last, with small victories we must not be content.

Not content until the caste is abolished and driven out by the sword or the pen;
But no matter the means, we must ensure that this cruelty never happens again.

IT'S NOT WHAT IT SEEMS

Poetry

by Rome Davis

I'd like to tell you that being homeless changed my life but on some days • it's the worst of things • how all of my thoughts are scrambled • sometimes I'd wish I just couldn't remember anything • I'll have a shift in my mood • like "what do I do?" • I'll have continuous nightmares • at times I can't even finish my food • My childhood is 14 schools • I never walked the stage but I'd have dreams that I did • my mind would flash to every moment where I never got the chance to genuinely be a kid • No Child Left Behind • that was the MOCO policy • that's how I even got to the 9th grade • but I'd lie to my peers so they would never know that side of me • 4th year a freshman • that's 17 in the 9th grade • homelessness got to me bad • 6 states & 23 cities • no matter where I'd step foot • my life was instantly sad • I'd cry to my self • I'd even cry out loud • then it got to a point where I felt everybody should be able to hear me now • but they didn't • so I'd cry even more • I'd never ask for a tissue • it was the loneliest of nights where nobody catered to my issues • never told me that my childhood consists of sick people doing bad drugs • that it was never my fault • I just had trouble figuring out exactly who I was • could've told me trying to kill myself would never solve my problems • but the greatest listener just seemed to sit within a bottle • where it would let me rest • put me at ease • only for it to hurt when I'd realize who I'd never get the chance to be • I attempted suicide • more than I could ever imagine • I'd fix my problems through a substance • it was hard to keep balance • everything was a challenge • I seemed to never progress • each day that go by • I'd feel I'm taking upon even more stress • I don't remember happy times with my mom • I do know my dad really tried • if only people could understand who was never on our side • if only people could understand the times I'd sleep in our ride • ducking down in the passenger seat • prayers no other kid can see me before class time • 20 years of being depressed • 8 years roaming around with little left in the tank • no belief in myself •

even with the suicidal attempts • I still didn't break yet • I managed to fight through life • standing next to my trauma • uplift myself and try to create much happier moments • with all that being said • I was never the problem • fall semester I made it to Dean's List 4.0 • deep inside for all them years • I was really the problem solver •



HAL

Black Watercolor | *by Wil Brauer*

CONTRASTING FASCIST AND COMMUNIST VIEWS ON SOCIAL HIERARCHY

Essay

by *Chloe Baldwin*

Fascism and communism are highly debated and controversial topics. There are many complex aspects to each ideology, such as views on religion, social hierarchy, the role of government, military dynamics, international relations, and even the meaning of life. Popularly recognized communist ideas come from Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the Manifesto of the Communist Party, written in 1848. Fascism is newer, and is attributed to Benito Mussolini in his book, *The Doctrine of Fascism* (1935). When applied historically, both have always diverted from conventional ideas, often due to corruption. Therefore, there has been no true fascist or communist country. During the beginning of his reign, Mussolini denounced antisemitism. Later, he supported it to create an alliance with Hitler. This is an example of how fascist governments in the past base their choices on opportunism rather than “sticking to the book.” The history of fascism and communism causes much confusion because leaders of these countries diverted from the rules so often. It creates a disparity between different people’s definitions of each. When comparing the Manifesto of the Communist Party and the *Doctrine of Fascism*, fascist social structure clearly contrasts with communist social structure.

In fascism, the roles of the capital and working class share a common goal but are treated vastly different. According to *The Doctrine of Fascism*, the role of the rich is to run their businesses in a way that best serves the nation, which means they are ultimately controlled by the state. The book states fascist countries “are a full-blown Corporative state” (30). In the Merriam Webster Dictionary, corporatism is defined as “the organization of a society into industrial and professional corporations serving as organs of political representation and exercising control over persons and activities within their jurisdiction.” The state controls all “economic forces” because “the state alone transcends

the contrasting interests of groups and individuals, in view of co-ordinating them to achieve higher aims" (30). The state knows best. If corporations are acting in a way that aligns with what the state wants, they are free to enrich themselves by any means. Similarly, the entire purpose of the working class is to support the goals of the government. Conversely, they are not allowed to enrich themselves. This ideology is "opposed to trade unionism as a class weapon" (5). This means that those born into the working class cannot fight for more power or push for better wages/benefits. The working class must not have power because it is "lowering [the state] to the level of the largest number" (5). Again, the government knows best. The citizens are merely pawns for the state. Fascism also boasts that everyone is equal because everyone lives and dies for the state. Equality does not have anything to do with money or power.

Communism believes that equality can only be achieved through a no class system. Everyone should be on the same level regarding power and wealth. According to *The Manifesto of Communism*, having a class hierarchy where the capitalists exploit the working class naturally creates a power disparity. In a capitalist society, the bourgeoisie create businesses to gain as much wealth as possible while paying their workers as little as possible. Workers fight to get paid more but are ultimately at the disposal of the capital class. The class of "labourers live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital" (18). In other words, they "must sell themselves piecemeal, [and] are a commodity, like every other article of commerce" (18). For this reason, the elite class must slowly dissolve. They must surrender their assets to the working class in the name of equality. The goal is to "overthrow...the bourgeois supremacy, [a] conquest of political power by the proletariat" (22). It is a large-scale Robin Hood theory: take from the rich and give to the poor. In communism, it is vital to decrease the pain in "the most suffering class" (31). To avoid exploitation all people must have power, not just a

few. A single class of people is the only way to create true equality.

Both fascism and communism are commonly misused and misunderstood ideologies. This is because the complexities of the original ideologies are multiplied by the intricacy of their history. They are often used as insults, and while it is possible to display characteristics of either ideology without being a full-on fascist or communist, the ideologies are more extreme than a lot of people understand. Fascism is dangerous, oppressive, and controlling. Anyone who supports causes that do not coincide with what the state wants is silenced, usually violently. Every single person's life must be dedicated to the state. Communism is controlling in a different way. There is no free trade. People work to benefit society, not just themselves. Every single person's life must be dedicated to contributing to society equally. No one can gain more power, and industry is managed by the state to ensure no one has more money. Both control society in opposing ways. One supports class division and the other wants to destroy it.

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UNACCOUNTABLE KILLINGS

Essay

by *Morgan Eberhart*

Police officers, also known as law enforcement officers, are hired to protect and serve us, the people. So, what happens when law enforcers are the ones engaging in misconduct? The term police brutality was coined in the 1870s. Police brutality is defined as the use of excessive and/or unnecessary force by police when dealing with civilians. Police brutality can consist of excessive use of force, racial profiling, and improperly using batons, tasers, and pepper spray. When we look back over history and continue to see the same issue, when will we make big changes? The unwarranted force used on citizens by their police officers is very much real yet so many continue to turn a blind eye or refuse to confess that it is a problem. Michaels (2020) explains that, "Police unions, like all unions, were designed to protect their own. But unlike other labor unions, they represent workers with the state-sanctioned power to use deadly force. And they have successfully bargained for more job security than what's afforded to most workers, security they can often rely on even after committing acts of violence that would likely get anyone else fired or locked up." The media is able to show us firsthand how our fellow Americans are treated and statistically much more often when you're a person of color. Police brutality must be acknowledged by all, the excessive use of force by police officers must be regulated, and we must deal with the lack of trust between civilians and law enforcement.

People of color have been subject to police brutality throughout all of history and it continues to happen today. Much research shows that people of color, the poor, and those ranked lower on the socioeconomic scale are at a higher risk to experience police brutality. When looking at the statistical data, African Americans make up about 13% of the population in the United States yet they make up 24% of people who are killed by police (McEvoy, 2020). African Americans make up less of the population yet are over twice as likely than a white person to be

killed at the hands of an officer. Hispanic Americans also make up a large population of those killed by police at a disproportionate rate. In a country filled with different races and ethnicities, we continue to fail them at the hands of those whose purpose is to protect them.

Despite the media showing the evidence through videos, cops continue to not be held accountable. Of those killed by police, only one percent of cops are indicted, yet ninety percent of civilians who kill another person are indicted. Can we expect officers to be held accountable when we have witnessed the President of the United States send our own troops to harm peaceful protestors? They were ordered to shoot the protestors and bystanders with rubber bullets, and innocent civilians of all colors were sprayed with tear gas, while troops pushed and shoved innocent people to the ground. Elie Mystal, a Harvard College and Harvard Law School graduate who writes as *The Nation's* justice correspondent expressed, "The past few weeks have opened some eyes to the systemic brutality faced by black people. But for things to get better for my kids, people will have to maintain their energy and their demands for police reform over the next few weeks. And months. And years. The system of white supremacy enforced and protected by the American police was not built in a day, and it will not be dismantled in a day" (Mystal, 2020).

Being killed by police is one of the top leading causes of death among young African American males. *LA Times* writer Amina Khan reports that, "about 1 in 1,000 black men and boys in America can expect to die at the hands of police, according to a new analysis of deaths involving law enforcement officers" (Khan, 2019). There is the case study of Eric Garner, for instance, a black man who was killed in New York, when he was put into a chokehold by a police officer. While he yelled, "stop" and cried out "I can't breathe," police continued to lay on top of him. Garner was accused of selling cigarettes. The officers involved were not held accountable even though Eric's death was ruled a homicide. New York banned the use of chokeholds by police officers in 1993, unless they believe their life is being threatened which was never stated in the report or seen on the video footage. Another case study involves a police officer who was acquitted of the murder of Philando Castile,

a black, thirty-two-year-old school worker. Philando was shot multiple times during a traffic stop. His girlfriend and four-year-old daughter were also in the car while he was murdered. When pulled over by the officer, for a broken taillight, Castile explained to the officer that he had a permit for the gun he carried. The police officer yelled at him not to get the gun out—Castile stated he was not, and his girlfriend also explained he was not getting the gun out. The officer continued to yell then fired multiple shots at Philando, killing him. Philando’s girlfriend recorded the unsettling encounter and it was made public.

Some researchers claim that police officers target minorities based on their data. This type of data often states that minorities are construed as threatening to their communities and should be seen as a threat. Some of these threats include economic threats, for example, when a majority of white people feel they could lose job opportunities to those considered a minority. There is a perception of a political threat, such as when the majority thinks it they will lose “control of political institutions” (Racial Threat Theory: Definitions & Examples, 2017). When a majority of people believe there is a threat to them, they place more pressure on the police to be harsher. This type of data shows how racial profiling and discrimination against people of color continue through different biases. Mystal (2020) reports that in “1,356 racial profiling complaints filed with the Los Angeles Police Department from 2012-2014, zero of those complaints were upheld by the LAPD.”

Some people claim that “police leave you alone if you’re not doing anything illegal.” This is saying that the individuals who were victims of police brutality would not have been hurt or killed if they weren’t doing something that was against the law. However, Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old African American man who was walking home, had a citizen call the police on him because he was “wearing a ski mask” and “seemed sketchy,” although the caller stated he did not think Elijah was a danger or even armed. Officers approached Elijah, who had earbuds in and was presumably listening to music. They assumed this was Elijah not listening to them, and the police attempted to restrain him. Elijah was placed into a chokehold while three officers held him on the ground. Elijah cried, “I can’t breathe” while he vomited and then apologized for

vomiting. Paramedics arrived and sedated Elijah with ketamine. Elijah went into cardiac arrest and eventually died. Elijah's last words to police can be found online:

I can't breathe. I have my ID right here. My name is Elijah McClain. That's my house. I was just going home. I'm an introvert. I'm just different. That's all. I'm so sorry. I have no gun. I don't do that stuff. I don't do any fighting. Why are you attacking me? I don't even kill flies! I don't eat meat! But I don't judge people, I don't judge people who do eat meat. Forgive me. All I was trying to do was become better. I will do it. I will do anything. Sacrifice my identity, I'll do it. You all are phenomenal. You are beautiful and I love you. Try to forgive me. I'm a mood Gemini. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. Ow, that really hurt! You are all very strong. Teamwork makes the dream work. Oh, I'm sorry, I wasn't trying to do that. I just can't breathe correctly.
(in Jangra, 2020)

So, does the punishment of the brutality fit the accused crimes at hand, like when someone supposedly illegally sells cigarettes, has a broken taillight, or seems "sketchy"?

The house I live in now used to house a couple who were involved in some criminal activities, I am told. I have lived here for a few years now and still, to this day, get knocks at my door asking about certain individuals. I have even had a police officer, about a month ago, sneak behind my fenced-in yard while another stood at my door and questioned my husband about who is in our house. We could not have been any clearer about who we are, and we have explained on many occasions that the people they continue to stop and look for have not resided in our house since long before we bought it.

In conclusion, we must acknowledge this issue so we can begin to find answers for rebuilding trust between civilians and law enforcement. So, what can we do when police officers have the law on their side and seemingly have no major consequences for their actions? First, we must know that the data we find on police misconduct is often from nonprofit groups and private groups who have their own databases. The Washington Post logs all fatal shootings by on-duty officers, but not those killed by officers in other ways or off duty, because no

government will keep comprehensive data on these crimes.

This knowledge alone allows police officers to not be held responsible for their actions. As Pappas (2020) notes, "Police department data should be accessible through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which allows citizens to request records from public agencies. But FOIA requests often come up empty, in many cases because police decide they simply do not want their department's data scrutinized." Police officers need more training on psychological issues, and we need more non-police organizations that can respond to some emergencies instead of only the police. A program called CAHOOTS, which stands for Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets, provides non-violent solutions to mental health, homelessness, and addiction crises. This is cost-saving, safe, and effective. A difficult but important step is demilitarizing the police. Military weapons, such as tear gas, rubber bullets, and armored vehicles, are now being used against American civilians, outside of combat zones and by civilian police officers, creating an immense amount of hostility. With more training, less immediate force, less weapon use, and less assuming everyone is a criminal, we can begin to restore trust within our communities. As Mystal (2020) asks, "Will a cop think twice about killing an unarmed black man in the future? Will a reporter think twice before uncritically quoting a police report about that murder? The protests have raised awareness, but will new allies maintain the vigilance needed to see systemic change come to fruition? Or will people get distracted?"

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A VIEW FROM A COVID-19 NURSE

Essay

by *Deanna M. Auvil, LPN*

A day in the life of a COVID testing nurse is not as alluring as one might think. You arrive at 8am to a testing site that is not scheduled to open until 10am. You see lines of cars wrapped around the building and down the road, some of which have been waiting there since 5:30am. There is little time for preparation as you and the other nurses don PPE (personal protective equipment): a gown, N95 face mask, face shield, hair covering, shoe coverings and gloves. You make sure you use the restroom prior to gowning up because there is a process of taking everything off except the mask to use the restroom. You cannot take the mask off until you are in a “clean room” to take a drink or grab a bite to eat. At 9:00 am the garage doors roll up (an hour early due to the lines) and the first patients drive in. The testing area consists of four testing lanes, each staffed with 2 scribes to take information, one nurse to swab, one health assistant to hold the specimen tube and specimen bag, and one health assistant to verify the correct information has been documented. On May 30, 2020, Elizabeth Janney of the Arundel Patch reported that “more than 52,000 Marylanders have tested positive for Corona Virus, and 242,000 have tested negative.” She also reported in the same article that “Admissions also decrease on the intensive care unit (ICU) day to day by 15 patients.” These comments give us hope that at least in Maryland this virus is declining and life as we knew it previously may be on the horizon.

While it seems to be declining in Maryland, Madeline Holcombe of CNN.com reported on May 29, 2020 that “more than 1.7 million people in the US have tested positive for the coronavirus and over 102,500 have died.” The numbers are astronomical and even having been a nurse for twenty-five years I have never seen anything like this. My fellow nurses and I are in disbelief. We are discouraged but we will continue to show up every day to care for and test anyone that needs us. Conspiracy theorists say this is all a ruse from the government to

shift the focus of the American public away from what is happening throughout the political realms and different affiliations. Well if that is true, it sure has worked because COVID-19 has definitively captured everyone's attention. But from where I'm standing, this is anything but a ruse. Per CDC reports, "This week's national ensemble forecast indicates that the rate of increase in cumulative COVID-19 deaths is continuing to decline. Nevertheless, total COVID-19 deaths are likely to exceed 115,000 by June 20." That's a lot of deaths for an alleged 'ruse.'

Within the first hour the testing center has been open, 112 cars have passed through containing people from all walks of life. There is no discrimination with this virus. Testing is occurring on the very young, even mere babies, as well as the elderly that have already endured so much in their lives, and everyone in between. Black, white, Asian, Hispanic—it doesn't matter because this virus is attacking everyone. The end of the line of cars is nowhere in sight. It's now 1:00pm. The testing continues as the cars keep coming. Nurses and staff keep moving—no one has been able to get off their feet, use the restroom, or grab a drink or a quick bite to eat. When you finally do get a bathroom break, you must first doff all PPE except the mask, at a specified location and wash your hands before entering the "clean" area. Upon returning from your short respite, it's time to gear up again. Then you jump right back to your assigned duty in the line.

By the time the final car exits the testing site (well after 3:00 pm), you and your coworkers have administered nearly 1,000 tests.

The day is finally over, yet there are still strict procedures to follow. You must doff all PPE in a way that leaves the outside of the gown on the outside, being careful not to touch the outer area of the gown. You wipe down the face shield inside first because that's the "clean" side, while still keeping your mask on. As you exit the testing area for the day you may finally remove your mask and breathe fresh air. When you get home to your family, no one can talk to you or touch you. You enter the house through the basement or garage and remove the scrubs you were wearing under your PPE. You toss the scrubs directly into the

washing machine and get yourself quickly into the shower. It is only after your shower, while your clothes are still spinning in the washing machine, that you can see your family. Physically and mentally drained, you sit down to enjoy their company, but the evening news is reporting that more testing is required. You hop onto social media where so-called friends are saying it's all a waste of time and taxpayer money, and that the virus is a hoax. When it's finally time to go to bed, you pray. You pray for the folks you tested hoping they are either negative or are able to overcome this virus. You pray for the people who are blind to the enormity and severity of this potentially deadly illness. And you pray for all of humanity, that we are able to get through this and find more compassion for our fellow man in the days, weeks, months and years to come. That's what a day in the life of a COVID testing nurse looks like—at least from where I'm standing.

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LIGHT OF MY LIFE

Essay

by Lisa L. Lease

Parker is 4 and was born with Down Syndrome. Along with his diagnosis came a whole slew of other medical issues that he has dealt with and continues to deal with to this day. But you would never know that he isn't well. He is constantly the light and energy in the room. This little boy is the true meaning of living life and of so many things that are incredible.

My wish for him and actually everyone else, too, is for everyone to meet this darling little fellow. Just a day in the life of Parker would hopefully change the world for the better. If we could all see what he sees and how he views life as this amazing journey each and every second. Gosh, we would all view things differently if we could be more like him.

This past October, Parker had his 1 year post-op appointment from having open heart surgery. We were celebrating a wonderful outcome after leaving the doctor's office. We had just sat down for a nice dinner out and told him the news that his heart was doing fine. The look on his face was breathtaking and priceless. He doesn't speak much, but we knew exactly what he was thinking.



Thanks for reading about him, and feel free to share his sweet story and sweet face.

INSPIRATIONS



Ciara Alisha

Just a Boy, Praying for a Bite

Just a boy, praying for a bite. And a mom behind the camera, praying he discovers so much more.

Deanna M. Auvil

A View from a Covid-19 Nurse

This essay was written during the initial wave of the pandemic and was a reflection of my personal experience and working a Covid-19 testing site.

Chloe Baldwin

Contrasting Fascist and Communist Views on Social Hierarchy

Nothing is purely black or white.



Brianna Bell

Little Wrangler

This is a photograph I took of my two year-old son . . . we all just love it so much I figured it was worth sharing!

Cami Cutter

Where is Home?

First paper for English 101 Fall 2020 semester.

Rome Davis

It's Not What It Seems

Tired of the same emotions. Create change.

Morgan Eberhart

Unaccountable Killings

Equal rights for everyone is needed and inspiring. Everyone needs to stand up and speak up when we witness injustice.

Angel Kifer

Silence and After

"Silence" is based on my own struggles with depression and anxiety. "After" is the first poem I've ever written. I tried to write it in a similar style to Langston Hughes' "Dream Deferred."



Lisa L. Lease

Light of My Life

Parker is my inspiration. He gives life so much meaning and sees the world and all of the people in it for who and what they are: perfect and exact. His expressions and thoughts are always pure and sweet. He brings out the best, sees the best and simply is the best. Being inspired by him brings so much hope for the future, not only for him, but for everyone who interacts with him.



Emma Messick

Paya, Elery, Raine and V

Most of my work is done as exercises, like testing poses and clothing, and sometimes the characters from those exercises take on a life of their own.



Donna J. Morgan

Cotton Candy Moth, Praying Mantis, and Black and White Caterpillar

"If people would just stop and take a look around them, they would be amazed at what they see." – Words of my late Grandfather

William M. O'Boyle

On the Foundation of Morals

For the individuals who are lost and need to find their way home.

Chloe Puffenberger

Touch Me If You Dare, Help Me If You Care

I took Cultural Geography in the fall and I wrote a poem for one of my assignments. My professor Dr. Michaela Wood suggested I submit this poem to Expressions and I thought it was a great idea.

Jason Rakaczewski

The Biggest Fish Canada Had to Offer

The fact that this story exists is proof that it is important to say yes. Say yes to life, say yes to opportunity. If I would have told my father "no, I don't want to go on the fishing trip with you," I wouldn't have been just telling my father no, I would have been saying no to the entire experience. Say yes to chaos, say yes to the dragon that lives in the eye of the hurricane, and conquer him or he will most certainly conquer you.

Michael Skelley

The Two Realities

Nothing quite hits like a force of nature.

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