

She chanted with *force, spirit and ego* • So much fun playing
in the sun • Count no more, for *today is the day* Risking it all
to show us the way • tears of laughter -- after pulling out thorns and
trying *not to ruffle the roses* • I truly thank God for saving
us from the neutron bomb • Love is a many a splendored and
wonderful thing • She deserves her *flowers while*

OUR WORDS

Our Legacy

A Collection by
**The Students and Staff of
The Goodwill Excel Center**

she is alive • With
thoughts of kittens in his head • *Joy like a river* flowing Deep
within my soul • Something *sweet in the silence* • Only go
forward and upward, and beyond • I love myself today at 64 –
I should have started years ago. But I'm here. • Count
no more, for today is the day • Risking it all to show us the way •
Blood boiling *anger building up* • Full of joy *like a vivid*
rainbow. • Will you stand with me or quit on me? • See we only

OUR WORDS
Our Legacy

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Acknowledgements

Over the course of the SY 2023-2024, students and staff at The Goodwill Excel Center in Washington D.C., re-developed an art initiative. The effort to reignite this school arts initiative came from many individuals, and was filled with many memories, some of which are captured and showcased in the following pages.

Although not comprehensive, The Literary Magazine team would like to thank all the students and staff who made a submission. Each submission is cherished and respected. Some entries did not make it to publication but we cherish them in spirit.

In addition, we would like to recognize specific members for their contribution. The team would like to thank Ms. Julie Nocida, Ms. Candace Hopkins, Ms. N'jyria Sutton, Dr. Chelsea Kirk, Ms. Queneia Harley Burkeen, Mr. Tom Pengelly, Ms. Latoya Hill, Ms. Dawn Rhodes, and others who worked on this project.

The pieces below, starting with the foreward, are a collection of art pieces made over the course of year of teaching and learning at The Goodwill Excel Center in Washington D.C. Please enjoy their legacies.

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Legacy

FOREWARD BY ALONZO PERSON

When I started at the Goodwill Excel Center (GEC), I was looking for a high school diploma – not to make friends, go to college, or even build bridges. Yet somehow, I was inspired to be the best student I could be. I ended up becoming a peer tutor, a student ambassador, and a member of the GEC Board.

I became a writer because I needed an outlet for my anger as a child. As I wrote more and more; I found myself writing more than angry poetry. I began writing stories; stories which eventually inspired me to write my first book, *Divine Kaos*, which I published without any peer-editing. Since I became a GEC student and a member of this magazine, I decided to rewrite my book. The edits I made to my book made the following very clear to me: writing is a part of me.

When I think about Legacy, a lot of things come to my mind. I begin to understand the goals and accomplishments of the magazine and of my peers. Being part of the reconstruction of this literary magazine at GEC has meant the world to me. Editing other students' work and contributing in putting the pieces together has been fun. The passion I have read in the other entries shows talent not wasted.

When I graduated in January 2024, this place was filled with peace. Today, it remains one filled with love and hardship.

Joy

BY DENISE OLADIJI

Joy comes in the morning.

It's a joy to wake up,
raising arms
to the radiant sun
brightly shining on your face.
Joy is taking your first step
on the rock
on which we stand.
OH, what a joy!

Joy does come in the morning.

There is a great joy
when a new babe is born
and to hear that first cry into the world,
as it takes that cleansing breath of life.

Joy, with its new adventures, every day full
of excitement you never knew would happen—
the joy of walking and talking
with the one you love.

Joy like a river flowing
deep within my soul.
OH, what joy it is to
Be alive!

Joy to the fishes in the
deep blue sea.

Joy to you and me.

Quiet Quad

BY CANDANCE HOPKINS

Something sweet in the silence
Of the quad at 3am
On a Monday
After you've just remembered to get out of bed
and take out your laundry
Before anyone can take it out
And leave your clothes exposed on the dryer top
And so you don't lose your socks
Which you'd probably lose anyway somehow
even when you're careful

There's something sweet in
Spotting the possums in the mulch beneath the bushes
And the bunnies near the dumpsters & trees
When it's 3am and you've almost forgotten to
get your laundry

The Lying and Steamline Chocolate

BY DAQUAN MCINTYRE

a found poem

Whose chocolate is that? I think I know.
Its owner is quite happy though.
Full of joy like a vivid rainbow.
I watch him laugh. I cry hello.

He gives his chocolate a shake.
And laughs until his belly aches.
The only other sound's the break.
Of distant waves and birds awake.

The chocolate is lying. Steamline and deep.
But he has promises to keep.
After cake and lots of sleep.
Sweet Dreams Come to him cheap.

He rises from his gentle bed.
With thoughts of kittens in his head.
He eats his Jam with lots of bread.
Ready for the day ahead.

Paths

BY DENISE OLADIJI

There are many paths
Only one way.

Journeys and destinations.
Plans, goals, ups-and-downs,
Joys, happiness, challenges.
With disappointment, riches flow.

Yes, many paths full of dreams and desires.
Yet one true path to eternal happiness and bliss.

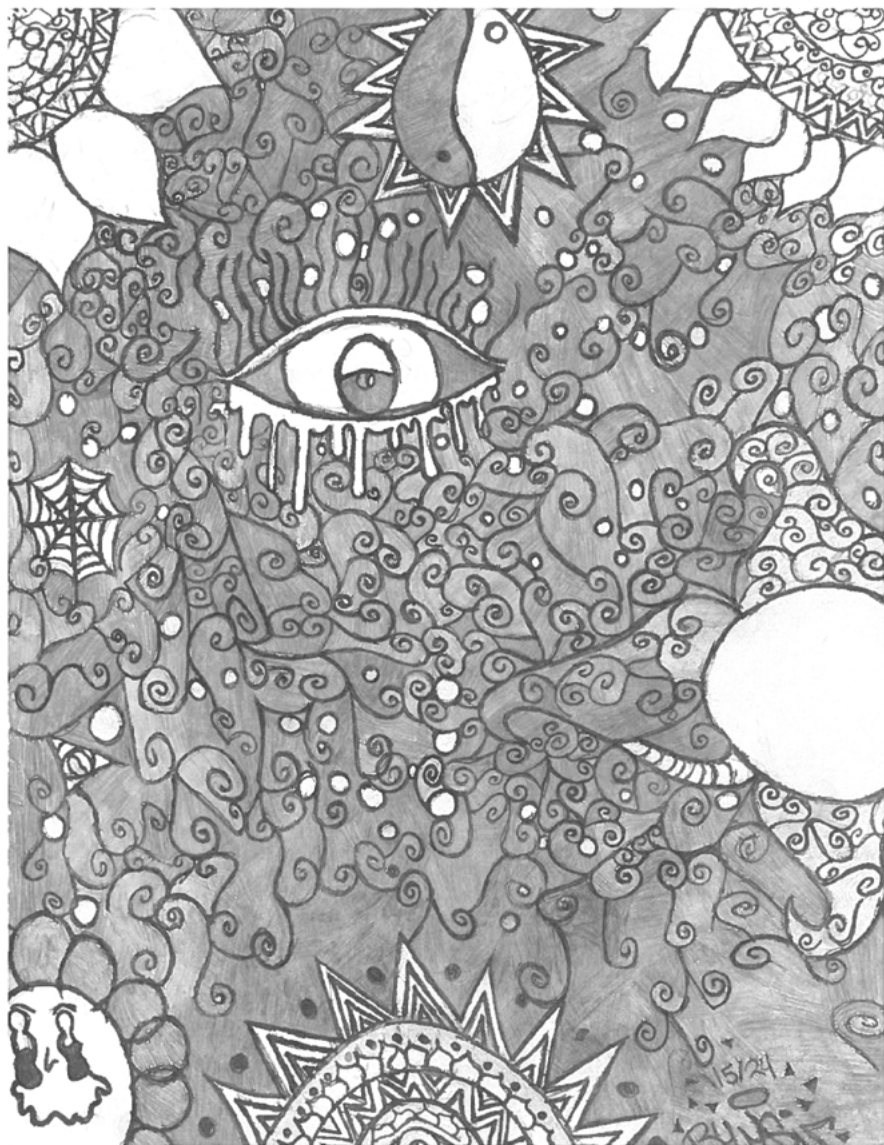
One way, one path
One truth, and
Few travel.

This path
You may ask –
How do I find this path?

Just look up.

Free Forming

BY NASIR SWINSON



Pilgrims of the Lonely Apocalypse

BY MUHAMMAD TIJANI-HENDERSON

1. Therein it lies, held together by time.
He who seeks, will surely find
Ideals made real, ambitions brought forth
Seeking the truth through endless North¹.
2. Indeed, aspirations let us traverse
Through the Spring Of Life²
At The Edge Of The Universe.
3. Count no more, for today is the day
Risking it all to show us the way.
Year after year, we sank in our sorrow
Freedom at last, we sing for good morrow.
4. Open the path, oh, we were stupid & young!
Running so fast, we were Chasing the Sun.
Homeless we felt, while gazing at stars.
Everything became clear as we drifted afar.
5. Lo and behold, the last of the ships!
Pilgrims we are, of the Lonely Apocalypse³.

1 North: North Star. A pillar of guidance and hope.

2 A tribute to Mad Snail's novel and comic, Tales of Demons and Gods.

3 A tribute to Shin-Song's 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' and its fabulous side character, Secretive Plotter

Imagine Being Ignored

BY ALONZO PERSON

Can you see me?

*I feel invisible; I am yearning to be seen.
I feel neglected in this cruel world.
It seems like a dream.*

Can you see me?

*I see your hesitation.
You want to run in the opposite direction.
I am not imagining this.
I did this to me; this is my burden to bear.
If I were you, I would probably ignore me too.*

Can you see me?

*I am forever alone, and I don't want to be.
My decisions got me here; yes, that's on me.
Begging for scraps knowing you wish me away from your
sight. Do you think this is where I want to be?*

Can you see me?

*You laugh and point with no good reason.
Why do you objectify my presence?
When roles could easily be reversed:*

*Thought things were going to be easy?
Would you consider yourself a victim?
Please don't pass me by.*

Can you see me now?

*Allow love in your heart.
Just one mistake
and this could be you.*

Life

BY DENISE OLADIJI

Every stage and season of Life.
Changes from birth to Death.
Things change. Nothing
Stays the same.

One day you're a little baby
That everyone adores, and
Then you're old as can be.
No one even notices you.

Even when things go wrong,
As they sometimes do,
Just keep your head held high
and walk through the Storm.

One step at a time.
Life changes. Nothing stays
the same as you get older.

So do what you need to do
in a Positive way today.
When you are older, you
Won't have to say: 'I should have, or I could have.'

Time has no reverse.
That's not just good advice.
It's wise advice!

There is a quote by Doris Day
Que sera, sera
[what will be, will be,
the future, not ours to see]
Que sera, sera.

Only God knows.

Grief

BY XANGO MOREL



Poem About My Life

BY MIKHAIL TIBBS

After Emily Dickinson's "Because I could not stop for Death"

Life is not sweet.

One day you will
shut your eyes and die,
won't feel the wind
or smell the flowers
when blowing past.
You won't see birds
fly by.

Death is not the end.
Death can never be the end
Because I could
Not stop for death;
He kindly stopped
For me; the carriage
Held but just ourselves.

Death cannot be the end
Death can never be
The end.

My Struggles

BY ALONZO PERSON

I am filled with rage.
This rage has grown since I was twelve years old.
My body is breaking – I hear my bones cracking.

My mental status, if it was possible, would read:
Out of order.
The pains that are crushing me –
What do I do?

Diabetes; ate it.
High blood pressure; ate it.
Depression; ate it.
The struggles are real.
But this will not hold me back?
Will you stand with me or quit on me?

I reside in the capital city of the United States –
I have the world on my shoulders.
This is just the beginning, you got that?

Steamed Mind

BY NETTINA THOMAS

Blood boiling anger building up
Face balled and I don't wanna be touched.

Don't tell me I'm wrong or disrespectful
Because I voice my opinion.
Even as a child nobody cared to listen.

O.D.D. is what my psychiatrist say
But little do they know I'm just that way.

Every few days, months and years, it shows--
This is the persona I never chose.

Living in the Dark

BY DEENA CURETON

I was 15
I played basketball and felt sick
I found out I was pregnant with my oldest son
He is now 14

My mother wasn't around
Father treated me like his stepchild but I'm his –
My dad moved me in.
He claimed me after my mother went away.
For a while, it felt like a Cinderella Story.
Two stepsisters, then me, and an evil stepmother
that made your life a living hell.
Love lost in a home that I couldn't call my own.

The Unwanted Cheerleader

BY PRISCILLA KIRKPATRICK

On the playground where the children play
Yelling and screaming, chanting away.
“No! You can’t stay with us and chant with us.”
She paid them no mind cause chanting she must.

She chanted with force, spirit and ego.
Some children looked in amazement.
Some frowned. She smiled.
Some even joined in,
liking her chanting vibe.

In the end, the unwanted cheerleader made her way,
Front and center,
Smiling away!

No Reverse

BY DENISE OLADIJI

Life has no reverse.

No matter what,
you cannot reverse.

You can't go back in time
and change all your regrets or mistakes.

So, what do you do?

Only go forward and upward,
And beyond.

Look to the skies and cry.

Do what is needed
For today.

Reach
For your dreams.

And don't give up, and don't
Give in.

Time is of the essence.

Wake up every day
With Great Expectations.

And LIVE your LIFE.

M-O-T-H-E-R

BY DENISE OLADIJI

Mom, mama, mommy, ma-
However you may say it,
Say it with love.

“M” is for the many nights
She stayed up nursing me with love
And in later years, waiting up for me
to come in from the rain.

“O” is for open arms of knowledge and wisdom
Given over the years with advice, goodness,
And also truth.

“T” is for tenderness and tireless tears,
Always thinking and focusing on her offspring.

“H” is for always having hands,
From working all day, to preparing meals,
Completing chores,
And ending with hands in prayer for change.

“E” is for waking up early for everyone,
And going to bed late, to make sure all is done.

“R” is for respect; that is what she gives,
and in return, she should receive.

Because she is mother,
She deserves her flowers while she is alive.

The Last Goodbye

BY MANDY JOYA

This letter is a way for me to let the death of a relative go.

The death of my mother was unexpected

All that I knew for the last 14 years

was being with my mother

for whatever she needed

I am doing this to let go.

I couldn't tell her no because it would have been a problem.

Or tell her I was busy because the manipulating would have began,

and the yelling

and fighting would have started

So, this is to let go.

I put her first.

I put my needs and problems to the side

to make sure she was okay

until her last dying breath, I was there to witness

So, this is to let go.

A way to really start healing from my past

and making a future about me,

this time around.

So, this is to let go.

Rest in Peace,

Mom

:)

St. Lukes Lane

BY CANDACE HOPKINS

some days i still crave the
deepest mosquito bites
that came with playing on
st.lukes lane
pesky bumps
on all our arms, legs, and bare feet

tears of laughter--
after pulling out thorns and
trying not to ruffle the roses
while Lana keeps counting slow
because of all the ouches and oofs
coming from the last of mama's rosebushes

thought of wincing at the
millionth bottle of your wintergreen
antiseptic gushing down and burning up our legs &
your ever-so-comical "uh oh! hold still now"

not much is clear except for the times i spent
fetching mama the hose before she left
and the days we had like this with you
before we knew that you were going away too

Guns and Violence

DENISE OLADIJI

Guns and violence.

As it's been said,
it's guns that kill.

I think you got it turned around.

No, it's minds, hearts and souls
That kill.

It's not guns and violence that kill.
It's minds, hearts, and souls.
It's the wrong mindset that kills.

Urgent and very serious.

People are dealing in the streets from
Drive-by shooting, and children
And women are drowning in grief
From verbal and physical abuse
At the hands of those they trust.

Please let's be real, people.
If we check out our minds, hearts, and souls,
We will see that there would be no need
For guns and violence.

None of us want to see our
Loved one's lives cut short
By guns and violence
Or anything else.

All lives matter.

So, let us check out our minds,
Hearts and souls.

Stop the violence,
And show love and peace.

Life Goes On

BY DENISE OLADIJI

Life goes on.
One cannot live in the shadows of doubt.

There is a need to let your light shine
From dawn to dusk.

Life goes on, no matter what may come.
Even though disappointments and despair may come –
Bills overdue, no food in the fridge, baby's sick, you need to work
Through grueling traffic –
Life goes on.

Then there is a rainbow,
And all is well in your world.
Life goes on.

OH, what a joy, fills my soul.
Love lasts forever.

L-O-V-E

BY DENISE OLADIJI

Love is kind.
Love is patient.
Love never fails,
Endures all things.
Love is a many splendored
And wonderful thing.

Let's spell it
Out loud.
L-O-V-E

L is for a longing
To be cherished and respected,
Loaded with hugs and kisses.

O is for open opportunities
Of sharing and caring for
One another, family and friends.

V is for varieties that spark,
Vibrant moments of precious
Experiences of life.

E is for everyone.
We all need and deserve love.

L-O-V-E

Keep loving life.

What is Love

BY DANIELLE MACKALL

I love you, they say
through the grapevine
on a rose bush as red as that Queen's Lipstick
as sweet as that King's colon
as he whispers again in my ear *I love you*
and to myself, I wonder *does he love me for me?*
Does he know what love mean to me

Love can be many things
like how a brother or sister love
or how we love our parents or grandparents

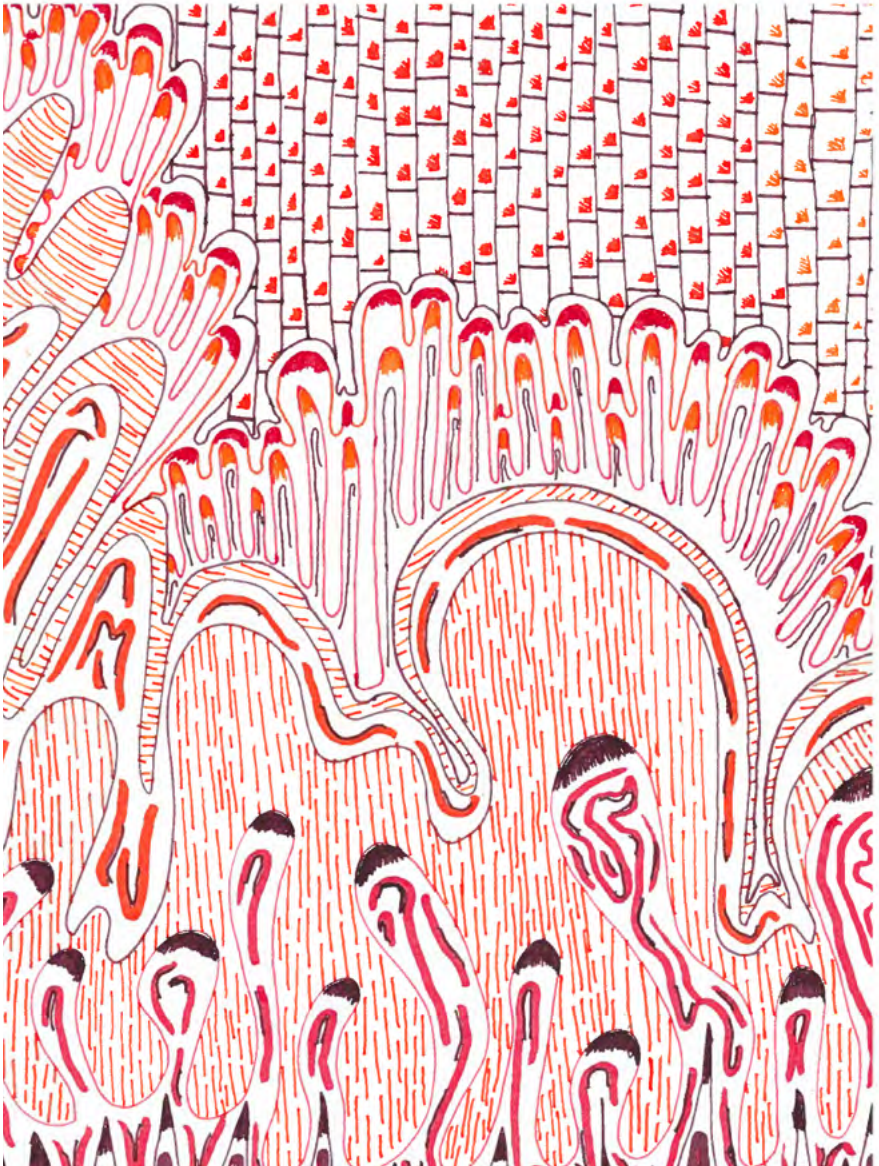
Once again what do he think love means?
Does he know the true meaning of the words
Or use them to impress little old me

what is love I wonder
Are they Just Words
to just make me smile

love is graceful as he whispers them words
over and over to me *I love you for you*
What is love

Overcoming

BY XANGO MOREL



Letter to my Father

BY MICHAEL HOWARD

Why have you forsaken me?

Why did you not love me?

You did not care for me.

You did not love me.

Why were you not there on holidays?

Why did you forget me?

I was your child.

Oh, you thought I wasn't your child.

As I got older, I started doing things I had no business doing – robbing, stealing.

My mother was suffering, and I had to support myself and my siblings.

They would want to see their father on Christmas, Thanksgiving.

Where is your phone call, father?

The last time I saw him I was nine years old.

He gave me nine dollars.

I saw him again when I was thirteen years old.

Then I saw him again on his deathbed when I was seventeen years old.

I have so much hatred in my heart.

Michelle Johns, and Joe, who were fathers,
asked me to forgive him –

They asked me to love myself and move on.
From the bottom of despair and doubt
to become the great man that I am today.
I have four kids and eleven grandkids.
I might not have all the money in the world,
but I do have the love of my kids and their kids.

It is hard being a male
when you do not have the love of a father
and when you do not love yourself.
No one shows you as a young man
that males need love and nourishment, just like a girl.
We need to be nursed and loved.

Today, I love myself.
I think you would be proud to call me your son.
I went back to GEC to get my high school diploma
and graduated in January 2024.
I have a loving wife. She loves me and I love her.
I love myself today at 64 – I should have started years ago.
But I am here. I am a proud father; and proud husband.
I love others, too!

This is a letter to my father.
I wish you could have been in my life.
I love you.

Conflict in the Village

BY ALONZO PERSON

A normal day in the village. I woke up, had a drink and washed my face. I kissed my wife, and got my day started. As I stepped out my door all I could hear was “Good Day” from all the villagers.

As, I walked through the village, I heard an argument between Chantico, the fisherman, and Acalan, the farmer. Their argument was loud and very disruptive. As I approached, I cleared my throat to get their attention.

“What seem to be the problem?” Chantico, the fisherman, started speaking at the same time as Acalan, the farmer. So, I, Quetzalli the wise, silenced the two and got them to settle down for a little while.

I asked Chantico, “What's wrong?” He replied, “Quetzalli, this guy is a fake! We had a deal: I throw him a few extra fish, and he will help me during the harvest season.”

Acalan replied “this fool is a liar, I said to him maybe I help him during harvest time.”

I cannot take it. I asked them both to wait, “Give me a minute to sort this out.”

As I think about the argument, I take both sides. If I need to ask more, I'll pull them both aside and talk to them individually. As I took Chantico, we walked.

“Chantico why is it so important for him to pay you back? Are you having troubles with food and coin?”

“Quetzalli, it's neither of those things. He keeps secrets and I think Acalan is helping an outsider.”

“An outsider? What do you mean, Chantico, by outsider?”

“Wait, Quetzalli it is not that serious. Acalan is helping that outsider Ahuic you brought in. I caught him coming from that Ahuic’s hut.”

“Ahuic is a beautiful woman and Acalan lost his wife two winters ago.”

“I know he lost his wife. She was my sister, Quetzalli.”

By this point, I understood Chantico’s beef, and Chantico seemed to calm down. I then went to talk to Acalan, but he was not at his hut. So, I asked myself, where could he have gone? I know he has a son. Could he have gone searching for him?

Acalan had gone searching for his son Ahuatzi. He was nowhere to be found. So Acalan decided to wait for him at home. As Acalan stood in front of his hut waiting on his son, I walked by and said, “My friend you and I need to talk. Rest tonight and we will talk when the sun next rise.”

“I know old friend, but I went looking for Ahuatzi. He should’ve been home.”

“If you need me to search, I am there.”

Suddenly, Chantico came out of his hut frantic.

“My friend, calm yourself. What’s the problem?”

“My son Chimalli is not home. He should have been here. I bet he is out with that no-good lying cousin of his.”

“Don’t you dare dishonor my son; he is your kin.”

“Yes, he is but if he is a liar like you then he will dishonor himself.”

“You come with your dishonesty and fairy tales. You helped me, yes you did, but you said that is what family do for one another.”

“Hold on you two! Stop this at once. Your sons are missing, and all you can do is argue with each other.”

They calmed down and began to search for their children. As they were about to leave, Chimalli and Ahuatzi walked up, laughing and talking with each other. Their mood changed when they saw their parents' faces. They just knew they were arguing again.

As Ahuatzi and Chimalli were about to go into their huts, I asked them to talk if it was ok with their fathers.

I asked them to meet me at the fire pit, and we will talk there. As we approached the fire pit, I say to them “We all are here. Let's talk.”

Ahuic walks up. She says, “You wanted me here too.”

“Yes, my friend, this feud seems to be about you.”

As they talked, getting deep into the feud, there seemed to be a bigger problem than we all knew. Ahuic seemed to like them both Chantico and Acalan, and they were courting her at the same time.

She could not make up her mind, so I say to her, “This is a great village, and the people are very close here. You must decide if you want to be with Chantico or Acalan. You have until the sun rise in three days' time. Do you understand what I am saying to you? If you cannot decide you will be exiled from this village.”

“Exiled! Why exiled? Quetzalli, why can't we try and find a better solution?”

I walk away.

I knew Ahuic was sad and feeling lost. She found me and told me she wanted to just leave but had felt something for one of the villagers. She knew what needed to be done, so she decided to let them both know of my solution.

After informing Acalan and Chantico of my decision, they were upset not thinking about why I would say that.

Two days went by, and they were just restless. Nobody wanted Ahuic to leave, so they were trying to convince her to stay.

“Ahuic just pick one of us. We want you to stay please.”

“I got to agree. I want you to stay also.”

“Look I really like the both of you and honestly, I think if I pick, I will ruin your family. Your kids love how close they are. I spent the day with them both, and all they talked about was the loss of their mothers and how living close to each other truly helps them be there for one another.”

Ahuic asked them both, “How would you two feel if I just remain friends with the two of you?”

Chantico says, “Look I think you are great in this village. Whether you are with me or just a friend I’m ok with that.”

Acalan was falling in love with Ahuic, so he tells her, “I want you here in any way. Don’t leave because of us two idiots. This is not the first time we fought over a woman.”

As I was eavesdropping on the conversation, I walk up and say, “So it is settled. She will remain, and you two will let her be.”

They both replied, “Yes my friend.”

So, to celebrate this they all went to the tavern and had a few pints of pulque. The village was once again quiet with no problems at the time.

SHIM

BY EMILIA AMAYA-RAMIREZ

1

Shim is a ghost that does not come from much. He is low-income, he is bald, and feeds off good energy. His life was a scramble. He struggled to keep many things together. He finally got the courage to be resilient and did everything in his power to help others. He would ride around and fly but also save people from danger. He had BPD, and it sometimes got the best of him, but helping others made him feel good about himself. Once Shim seen a lady getting kidnapped by the boogeyman, and he got so alert, he flew to save the young lady, and he took her somewhere safe. They felt relieved at the end, but she then felt like she needed to rest so she went to lay down.

2

This is a story about Shim. His life was exceedingly difficult. Shim lived a spiteful life dealing with a lot.

Shim is a person who came from nothing. He came from poverty.

As a person, he did not feel loved. Shim's mother and father were very toxic. They argued and fought over him and their own personal problems.

Shim loved school. He looked at it as a getaway. Shim felt heard at school. All he wanted was love and attention.

He grew up to be such a good person despite his life growing up. He became an advocate for others because he didn't want others to feel unheard the way he once did growing up as a young kid. He advocated for thirty-five years; then he retired at 78 years old with an advocacy certificate.

He was a bald Buddhist who was a person and became a ghost. He only consumed the good energy around him, which made him feel good, immortal.

He struggled to keep himself together mentally. He became resilient and did so much to help others.

He would ride around in a car and plane looking for endangered people.

3

At 78 years old, Shim lived a spiteful life dealing with a lot. He didn't let his BPD get in the way of work.

Shim went to advocate and help someone. He took the train to Connecticut, and an incident happened while he was in the train. The tracks messed up, and the train lost control during the nuke.

The immediate response for Shim was to help and save everyone on the train. Then he got everyone out to make a run and escape. With all this going on, we must remember that he's capable of a lot at just being 78 years old, but being such a strong-willed man.

Philip seemed a little tired and distressed while conducting and driving the train. Everyone on the train seen it and wondered.

Shim said, "Hey Philip. Are you okay? You seem very off and tired today. You're usually up and happy with a smile on your face."

Then the artist Fred said, "Hey Shim and Philip. How are you?"

They all talked amongst themselves. They talked about what's going on.

Then Fred asked Jesse, "How are you, beautiful lady?"

Jesse replies, "I'm okay. I could be better. Hope you're well."

All while they were talking, things took a turn once they got underground. Nobody knew what was going on.

All of a sudden, they heard a big boom and the train stopped, the lights turned off, and things got really dark. People started panicking thinking they were going to be stuck in darkness in a tunnel while on a train with many other people.

Shim became very alarmed with people's reactions, so he was trying to find ways to calm everyone while trying to help. Jesse and Fred were just in shock, not saying one word while the driver Philip was trying to find ways to get the train moving and give everyone news. He got the lights on, but the train wasn't moving still.

Shim and Philip got out of the train and tried looking for a way out. While doing so they noticed everything was gone... Everything was burnt in ashes and flames.

After, they made a run back to the train and pushed it to get moving to Canada. They tried not scaring the people by telling them too much is going on.

Then Shim said, "We'll be going to Canada. We must get somewhere safe and rebuild most of what we had. I, Shim will help you."

It took them about 9 hours and 35 minutes to get to Canada. After it all, they felt free. They felt claustrophobic sitting on a train with that many people for such a long time.

Shim knew where all the supplies were because he seen this coming, so he just wants to help. He has a plan mapped out already. He used to work with Ancient Persians. They are now on their way to Quebec, Canada.

Even at 78 years old, he could be strong-minded and independent a lot; he rode around to make sure everyone made it safely to a shelter or their homes.

Shim knew everyone was shocked and distraught by the news they had heard recently and having to change a lot. Since Shim knew about this place before the bomb, he decided to take them there, so he had an idea of how to go about things.

They were in an underground building. It was spacious so most of everyone fitted inside of it had to be roommate style, so that everyone would fit, but they had some type of privacy.

Everyone decided that there were going to be chores, and everyone was going to switch chores about every week or so. The many chores were: cleaning, taking the trash to the open world, finding ways to preserve the food, and mentoring each other.

The people came together to do everything and didn't give up. They did activities such as drawing, watching TV, doing hair and making meals or desserts. At the end everyone just enjoyed themselves and didn't feel the need to go back home because they got so accustomed to a routine and didn't want to go back because everyone enjoyed each other's company.

Although some people have a small issue with not having their own room, but those who said that said they would stay if they got more access to TV-like items, and they did.

They got tablets and TVs. Everything was fixed.

Shim got into something while being curious and ended up time traveling back in time.

He met the driver Philip, but he met him because he was the conductor of the train and Shim was a regular rider

when he was alive, so he seen him all the time on the train. At times they'd interact with each other.

After a while he met one of his clients, the office assistant Jesse. At this period, they were in Chicago, so it was cold at this time, and things were hard and difficult, and jobs couldn't be kept up with always.

Anyways, back to the story.

Shim seen a woman getting kidnapped by the boogeyman, and Shim saved her.

He was walking by an alley and seen what was going on. He made sure that she got home safely and got some rest. They got up the next day planning a kind of routine to keep everything in check and to ensure that everyone is safe and taken care of properly after dealing with so much.

Jesse was one of a kind. She dealt with so much but was such a happy person. She decided to open to Shim about everything. He helped and advocated for how she felt and what made her the person she is today. That's how they met. It was such a lovely time getting to know someone and helping them through a tough time in need.

Jesse said, "Shim you're great. Don't forget that you got me through a tough time in my life. I thank you."

The reason of her saying this was because she came from a middle eastern family. They dealt with a lot of poverty and male chauvinism.

Jesse knew she didn't want to live a life always being locked down. She wanted freedom and peace.

She always went to school to avoid life. She graduated high school with a 3.8 GPA and earned an academic scholarship.

Jesse became an office assistant and did it for about thirty-five years and retired at 70. She lived alone in a small town called Ship Rink Village.

She grew alone and old but at peace at the end.

At the end Shim and Jesse decided to go back to the underground shelter to make sure everything is kept up with and everyone was on board and okay before he left.

After some time went by, they found a new village about 12 miles away from the original shelter, and he and Jesse settled and waited for others in need to come.

It took a lot for Shim to leave the others, but he felt and believed they could do it after he left all the resources for them and showed them the way of things. At times he would visit them, so he technically became their Wise Person. He helped them build their own set of rules in the community. Some rules were forbidden to break and there were consequences to the actions.

At the end everyone came to an agreement and settled down with everything and the community they built. After all, everything came together for the whole community.

Everyone was happy with the new life they built.

Alter Ego

BY STEPHANIE SAVOY

On that beautiful Monday morning, I woke up in my bed.

Got up to get my day started. I washed my face and brushed my teeth. Then I flossed while waiting for my roasted Folgers coffee to brew. I then grabbed my keys and briefcase, and I left for work.

Everything was going well.

The sun was out, the birds were chirping, people smiling and walking by. Different conversations going on and cars honking horns. It was a regular busy morning.

As I walked across the street to catch my shuttle bus to get to the Pentagon, I received a call from my coworker saying she bought me some breakfast on her way to work.

So, as I got there, my coworker and I went into the break room to eat, and a couple more workers came in to get a bite to eat. So as the workday got started, we had a meeting, and it was the whole staff that was in that meeting, and we were three floors down in the pentagon, and they was telling us what happened in the World Trade Center.

As I walked to my desk, I felt a little shake from the floor, and started hearing a rumbling noise. The noise was coming from us being attacked by a nuclear bomb!

Once everything calmed down, we all came out from hiding underground.

When we got outside, we saw the building still up. The military commander told me it was not a nuclear bomb. It was a neutron bomb, and that is why the buildings were still up. Because if it were a nuclear bomb everything would have been blown up.

A woman yelled out, "Oh my god, everyone dead!"

A man speaks up and say, "Thank God we made it."

And then after that people start to check their cell phones to see if they can reach family members.

I overheard the Commander's wife crying over the phone about how scared she was when she thought she would never talk to or see him again. Then, he started to shed a tear. So, me as a social worker for the military, I said to him that it is ok to cry and that it's good that your wife got to hear your voice due to some of the phones having no services.

Commander says, "Hey Storm. I know a safe place in Canada we all can move to, and on our way, I will pick up my wife and kids from the train station."

"Okay," I replied as we were walking down. We got on the only train that was up and running, so I spotted some kids on the train and one of the kids spotted me.

The kids said, "Hey. That is Hero Storm," but before I could say anything, the Commander said, "There you go."

I looked to see who he was talking to, and he said, "Those are my kids..."

I said, "Wow, they are so beautiful! So, you have twin girls? What are they names...?"

The Commander responded, "Oh, their names are Summer and Winter."

I chuckled and said the names are beautiful like the seasons.

So, we got off the train, then started to walk towards where we saw the sticks and wood by the water. We then started building this big boat. As we were building, someone spotted me from the other group from Paris.

She says, "Hello. Is your name Stephanie? And you have an alter ego named Storm?" I got a good look at her. I noticed she was my friend, Tamara. She is also known as her alter ego Black widow. She also has superpowers, so I told her the plan is to get everybody on this boat, and we use our powers to push and fly us to Canada.

The sun started to set, and it started to get dark. As everyone was trying to get comfortable, I heard people whispering. And I heard one group of people talking about the Commander and his family and how he was the only one who found and got to talk to his family, and that is because he had them in a safe place. Their house is built underground and made of iron. That is what one lady said.

Kim yelled, "That is not fair!" And she started crying, saying, "I miss my family as well!" and how the Commander's wife and kids were found.

So, the Commander's wife stood up and said, "You have no right to say that about me and my family!"

The lady came over there and hit the Commander's wife in the face. So, they started fighting, falling all over people. After that everybody started fighting.

*

I woke up with a headache, thinking I should not have stepped into that right hook that the Commander's wife threw.

But the punch knocked me back into the 1880s, back when I was in New York.

So, I started hearing the guys that were beating on the buckets on the corner and people dancing to the beats on Canal Street. I heard horses and the people walking by.

So, I got myself together and walked down to Broadway. I ran into this Russian lady who said her name was Miss

Marshall, and she told me I need some clothes, so she gave me this long dress that came to my ankles, so I can look like them because I woke up with my 2023 clothes on.

Miss Marshall asked, "Do you have family here?"

I responded, "No, I do not."

She replied that I can stay with her and work in her shop.

So, later she taught me how to take a bag of cotton in without dropping any of the cotton. We went to two people's homes. I knocked on one door, and a Polish Jew opened the door. He was a young boy. He reached his arms out to grab the bag of cotton.

After I walked back to the shop, Miss Marshall said, "We are about to close the shop to get lunch."

We spotted this tasty food place called The Eating House on Broadway. We ate cornbread with syrup and bacon and drank a cup of water.

That was so delicious, especially that sweet cornbread! I never tasted anything like that.

So, after that, we went back to Miss Marshall home and got ready for bed.

*

After I woke up, I was back at home in Canada. I said to myself, wow, what a dream to go back in time. To see how they lived back then.

So, I got out of bed, pulled the curtains to open them to get some sun, and opened the window to get some fresh air, and took a shower.

I got to freshen up from all the traveling I went through (and survived), and from there my phone rang. It was my friend Black Widow, and her real name is Tamara, and

Tamara and I been friends since we were four years old, and we are 45 and 46 as of now when she came over to my house.

Tamara said, “I am so happy to see you, and I truly thank God for saving us from the neutron bomb. Oh my God! Like, how we survived the neutron BOMB?”

Then, we walked through the woods, found leftover wood and sticks to build a boat, found things like cardboard to sleep in, rubbed two sticks together to make fire to keep warm, and we even went to the lake and caught fish to eat. We also met new groups of other people that survived just like her and me, like you and me.

Oh my God, we can go on and on, but no matter all of it. We all made a way out of no way, and everybody that was included in my journey? They all survived and is doing well as of today.

Infinity

BY NASIR SWINSON



Editorial Notes

Our Words, Our Legacy is a new literary magazine featuring poetry, prose, and visual art by students and staff of the Goodwill Excel Center in Washington D.C. The mission of our editorial team is to showcase and uplift the vast amount of unique talent who walk through the Excel doors each day. Our hope with this inaugural issue is to preserve the voices of all our contributors and lay a foundation strong enough to support the many more layers to come.

When the editorial team first began soliciting submissions, we had no expectations and no rules. As faculty members of GEC, we knew our students were exceptional and wildly creative. Still, what we would soon receive was always a bit more — more thoughtful, more generous, more inspiring, more loving, more courageous, more daring, more funny, more eventful, more moving, more subversive, more profound, more introspective, more joyful, more enlightening, more fantastical and more real. The work displayed between these pages alternately made me smile, laugh, cry, reflect, and even meditate.

On the following page, you will find just a small sampling of each of these works.

JASMINE FRANCIS

M.F.A. Fiction

STEM Instructor, The Goodwill Excel Center

Notable Themes and Images in *Our Words, Our Legacy*

- In Stephanie Savoy's "Alter Ego": *time-travel, confronting fears, survival, world trade center, neutron bomb, 1880s New York*
- In Priscilla Kirkpatrick's "The Unwanted Cheerleader": *ostracization, bullying, positivity, acceptance*
- In Candace Hopkin's "st. luke's lane": *nostalgia, loss, family, memory*
- In Candace Hopkins' "Quiet Quad": *routine, chores, night, juxtapositions, college, memory, present, living-in-the-moment, forgotten laundry, "possums in the mulch," "bunnies near the dumpsters and trees"*
- In Muhammad Tijani-Henderson's "Pilgrims of the Lonely Apocalypse": *pilgrimage, journeymen, collective, seeking, freedom, revelation, "chasing the sun"*
- In Denise Bowens Oladiji's "L-O-V-E": *platonic love, bible, family, friendship, celebration*
- In Denise Bowens Oladiji's "No Reverse": *inspiration, endurance, resilience, aspirations, advice*
- In Denise Bowens Oladiji's "Paths": *decisions, choices, potentialities, "with disappointment, riches flow"*
- In Denise Bowens Oladiji's "Guns and Violence": *danger, neighborhood strife, violence, looking inward, "No, it's minds, hearts and souls that kill"*
- In Denise Bowens Oladiji's "Life": *birth and death, constant change, "nothing stays the same," "time has no reverse," "only God knows"*
- In Denise Bowens Oladiji's "Life Goes On": *hope, perseverance through struggle, overcoming, "then there is a rainbow and all is well in your world"*

- In Mandy Joya's "The death of a relative": *grief, acceptance, sadness, letting go, complicated relationship with a family member, healing from the past*
- In Emilia Amaya-Ramirez's "Shim": *ghosts, history, mental illness, altruism, biography, community, bald Buddhist, boogeyman, poverty, hero, train accident*
- In Alonzo Person's "Conflict in the Village": *honor, village-life, love triangle, conflict resolution, arguments, fisherman, farmer*
- In Alonzo Person's "Imagine Being Ignored": *outsider, loneliness, isolation, empathy, compassion, "The Invisible Man," homelessness, "cruel world"*
- In Alonzo Person's "My Struggles": *trials, anger, resilience, imploration, health, (un)wellness, strength*
- In Mikhail Tibbs' "Poem about My Life": *death, life, Emily Dickinson, afterlife, found poetry*
- In Danielle Mackall's "What is Love": *romantic love vs. familial love, confusion, questioning, "vine on a rose bush as red as that Queen's lipstick"*
- In Daquan McIntyre's "The Lying and Steamline Chocolate": *irreverent, happy, joyful, found poetry, "whose chocolate is that?"*
- In Nettina Thomas' "Steamed Mind": *anger, identity, misunderstood, mental health, "blood boiling anger building up," psychiatrist, "persona I never chose"*
- In Deena "Blessings" Cureton's "Living in the Dark": *unhappy family, domestic tribulations, step-child, home, out-of-place, Cinderella, "played basketball felt sick and found out I was pregnant"*

have the moment that is *Given to us now.* • so i decided to put
my needs and problems to the side and make sure she was ok until
her last dying breath • *just keep your head held high* and
walk through the Storm • for awhile *felt like a Cinderella*
Story. • The *people came together* to do everything and didn't
give up • *Joys, happiness, challenges,*

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With disappointment

riches flow • I feel invisible, *I am yearning to be seen.* • It's
not guns and violence that kills. It's *minds, hearts, and souls*
• if he is a liar like you then he will dishonor himself • *The end*
death can never be the end • *Words to just make me*
smile love is Graceful whisper them words over and over