



THE ART OF RAW TALENT:



MY LIFE

Creative Arts Therapy
Correctional Health Services | Rikers Island 2022



Correctional Health Services Creative Art Therapy Department

The Creative Art Therapy department on Rikers is funded through NYC Health and Hospitals. Creative Art Therapists are trained practitioners that utilize the arts along with an understanding of the psychological and emotional needs of the populations they serve. They provide both individual and group therapy and are an integral part of the interdisciplinary teams they work on. The following therapeutic modalities are currently used by these practitioners: art, music, poetry, and drama. There are currently 10 Creative Art Therapists assigned to work on the mental observation units throughout Rikers Island.

This mid-year edition, *The Art of Raw Talent: My Life* is a compilation of artwork created by individuals detained on Rikers Island. This presentation reflects what people learn about themselves while creating work through the various modalities. It is also our hope that it will help enlighten you about the power of the arts.

Enjoy, in Joy!

Barbara Bethea, Director of Creative Arts Therapy

Masks were used as a projective to explore culture and identity. Through the mask creation that was in partnership with discussion, journaling, scene writing, and improvisation, the question of "Who Am I?" evolved into the exploration of qualities, strengths, weaknesses, wounds, and repressed attributes. The internal versus external self and societal labels versus self-perception were dominant themes in the work.



Who Am I?
Sadam A.





Untitled
Daryl J.



Untitled
Daquan M.

A blank sign is a powerful creative space to express oneself. It has traditionally been a tool to amplify the voices of those who often go unheard. Group participants were first asked to consider "What is important enough to you to put on a sign?" This led to an exploration and reinforcement of identity, with participants engaging in a prompted reflection of an "I am _____, I am not _____" statement. Their art-making gave an opportunity for the strengths and values of the artists to be validated, and for social issues and the artists themselves to be humanized. This symbolically reinforced their future goals and aspirations to help them build resilience and to heal.



I have hope
I am not hopeless
Anonymous



I got nothin' but love
Tawana D.



We Have
Rights.....
WE ARE PEOPLE
TOO!!!!!!
Corrine



I'm Beautiful
In everyway. I am
smart,
Focused, outgoing,
and a quick learner
C.R.V.



Peaceful!

Loving

Caring

Kiana E.



I deserve a
chance!!!

Jasmin R.

Untitled

Amo La Vida
Y La Libertad Es Hermosa
No soy un animal
Soy un Humano
Perdon
Necesito La Liberta

Translation:

I love life
And freedom is beautiful
I am not an animal
IM human
Forgiveness
I need freedom

-Christian L.





I'm Not a Jailbird,
I'm a Human Being
As-samad N.



I am an artist,
a dancer,
and not an unproductive
member of society
Edwin D.



I am not Violent
I am Loving
I am not Suicidal
I am Strong
Margarita B.



I am grateful & respectful
I am not a lover of being
closed in
Danezja K.



GIRL POWER

Women coming
together &
spreading LOVE

Amanda S.



I am Jess,
I'm a Human,
Not Animal
Jess V.

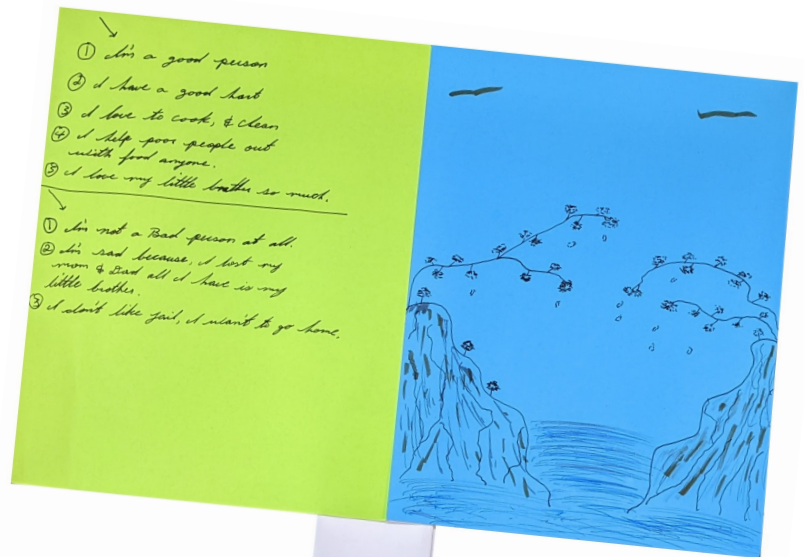


Super Girl
Kaylene C.

Untitled

I'm a good person
I have a good heart
I love to cook, & clean
I help poor people out with food,
anyone.
I love my little brother so much.
I'm not a bad person at all
I'm sad because I lost my mom &
dad. All I have is my little brother
I don't like jail, I want to go home.

-Anonymous



Untitled

I AM FREE
MENTALLY,
Liberty resides inside
Incarcerated, not limited
Unique, not imitated
Not an invisible statistic
But, A God Conscious Mystic
My hunger won't die
I shall survive
I AM FREE!

-A. A.



During a check-in icebreaker question, group members were asked to come up with a movie title that reflected a thought or experience that they have been recently holding. Participants then engaged in a creative writing session, writing fictional scenes to explore the themes within their movie titles.

Scene Title: Stay in Your Own Place: Learn Respect for Other People

Location: The character's own residence

Character 1: Mariliane

Character 2: Anthony

Mariliane: Where are we going out to?

Anthony: To the movies and after to the restaurant then back home.

Mariliane: What are we going to do tomorrow and when am I going to see another movie that I want to instead of you picking the movie out?

Anthony: Ok, I will let you pick out the next movie next time we go to the movie theater and let you not pay.

Mariliane: Ok, that's very nice of you but I'll pay for you the next time if you let me pick out what we are going to eat after the next time we eat. Each of us have to pay for one of each other and let you pick out the movie even if I have to pay for the movie or for food.

-Ananta I.

During a session exploring identity and self-expression through a creative lens, group members were provided a fact sheet with 10 prompts to answer. From there, participants were given a creative challenge to write a poem that included their responses from the fact sheet.

My wicked smile
Carries me for miles
Red + Blue
Combine to make a dream come true
As calming and electrifying as the smell of a woman
If I ruled the world I'd leave nothing behind
Accept the shine
Of when I made her laugh for months, off love and humor we dined
The passion I imply when I create with articulate punctuality
Should alter the push from intrusive people's reality
I say live
Because I like everything alive
Like music when it's live
It almost sounds like heaven
The music never stopped not even on 9/11.

-Steven G.

Morning Star

My flesh worships bl;choice awaiting the new dawn
Paved in ebony, the philanthropist walks the road not taken
Chained not by limitations however the world describes me
Allah JAHova surprise me, I ask,
For my forbidden live is glamor.

-Louis C.

Untitled
Juan L.



Primo Story is Sad
I Cry for All Inmates
Because I understand
And It hurts me because
I understand to much
to were it hurts
me and wears my
thoughts were I cant
take the fees but
I stand Strong despite
my Pain in comparasin

were I feel I cant
EXPRESS PROPERLY cause I dont

have the oppertunity
or liberty too
express myself
were I cry for
All who understand
no matter how
numb I am
because I
Live the Same
Life

Amen
Primo

About My life, I love God
EVEN When I was a boy,
Now I'm a Man, So why Not
grow in to My own Idea of
freedom



My Life
Anonymous



IKERJAHH IS THE GIFT.
I'M A BELIEVER

I Am the Prize
Ikeajahh

Summoning My Soul

What am I doing here?
 It's your younger self, you're living in fear
 But I've made it I made it in life
 "rolls eyes" Even you needed 2 see the light
 I don't have time 4 this.
 It's my big night, it's the Grammys alright
 STOP, sit down and talk
 Tell her about the trials and tribulations
 you've fought
 But everything I know I was self taught
 Can't you see that you need help?
 Yes you've conquered life and retrieved
 your black belt
 But if you don't help yourself, the future
 you, your destiny, will melt
 Hold your head up, I know the stage
 that you're in
 However Darling, I'm living proof that
 eventually you'll win
 You're the beautiful black phoenix that
 rose from its ashes
 Even Stevie Nicks can see that through
 his sunglasses
 I'm sorry 4 everything you went through,
 you know it's unfair
 You were born with purpose
 Your personality, your gifts, your aura

you must share
 In the future you, you've become
 everything you'd dreamt of and more
 Oh and Darling, your bank account
 money? It's giving Coins Gabre
 You're on Orchestra
 Every brain cell is an instrument
 You have the voice of the golden trumpet
 You remind me of Mablett
 In your wings that the Darkness stole
 True love exists in your future truth be told
 She's crying...
 I know, you're her wings
 When you're released from prison &
 fire is gonna spout under your ass and
 you gonna collect your things &
 Your time is NOW
 I don't have time 4 the why's & How's
 Stubbornness, insecurity is something I can
 no longer allow
 You're hungry 4 success, I can hear your
 stomach growl
 I got 2 go, it's Grammy's night
 The world wants you 2 win "best New
 Artist"
 So continue 2 fight

Summoning My Soul

"Summoning my Soul" is about an older me (the future me) talking 2 the current me. However, the future me is confused on how he got in the same room with the current me, so an Astro-projection comes 2 life and talks with the future me. I wrote the poem because I'm in jail and it's obviously a tough time 4 me so I needed inspiration and hope. I had 2 let myself know don't stress nothing out. This pain is temporary and I will become many things in life and things that I didn't know that was possible. I've done it before.

You know when you was a little kid and you wondered what would the future you tell you? Although I'm not a kid anymore, I know the future me would tell my current self all things he said. We all need strength, and something 2 live 4. So I choose 2 live 4 myself. I choose 2 strengthen myself.

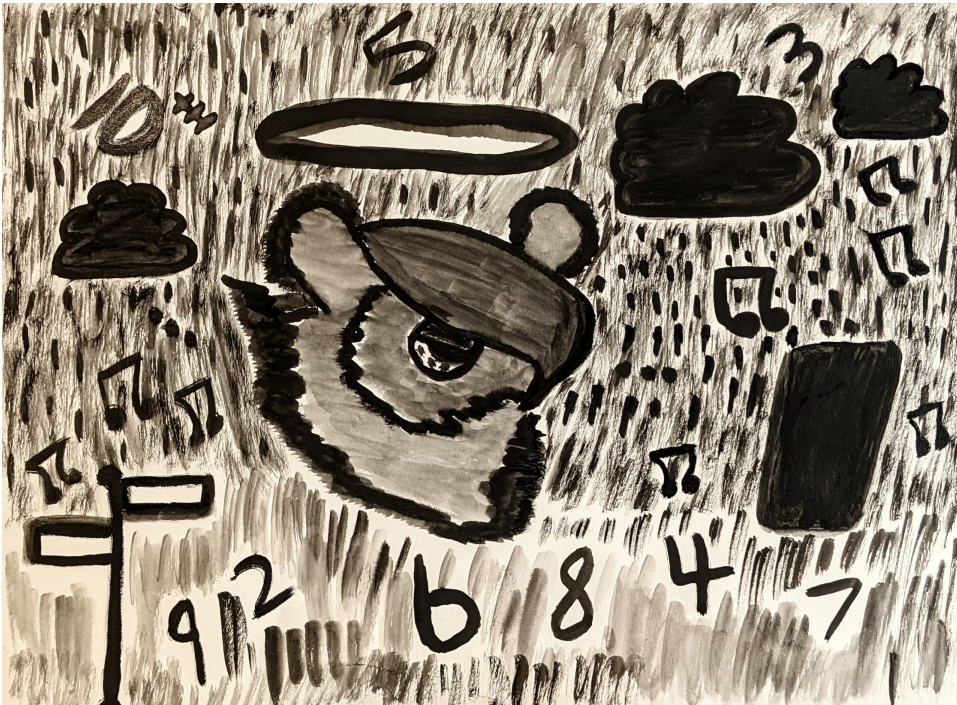
-Tommy A.

Octobers Very Own

In my family there is a talent of war, with my sister, through her music. We battle through messages in our individual music. I haven't seen her since 2015 but she talks to me though music. All of the symbols I've included here come out in my music. This is basically wanting my family to reunite

one day, thought music. In my family, October is the best time for us, and I've Included autumn rain washing away pain, counting our days. It all leads back to music.

-Eric D,



Road to Glory

I want this image to be a tribute with seeing eyes, to my deceased cousin and brother, who both tragically died. I can't believe they're gone sometimes. There is a lot of pain in these pictures It's a hard time for dreamers. It's a hard to image my family getting back together, but they are together in these pictures."

-Eric D.

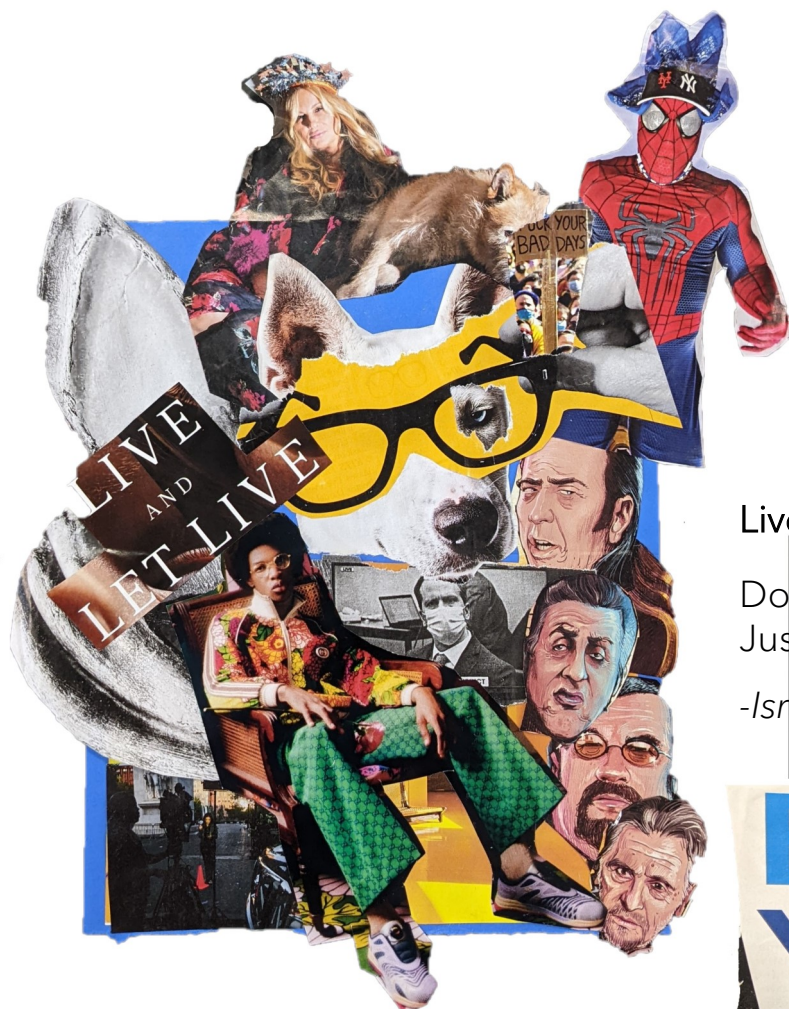




Respect
Taiwan A.



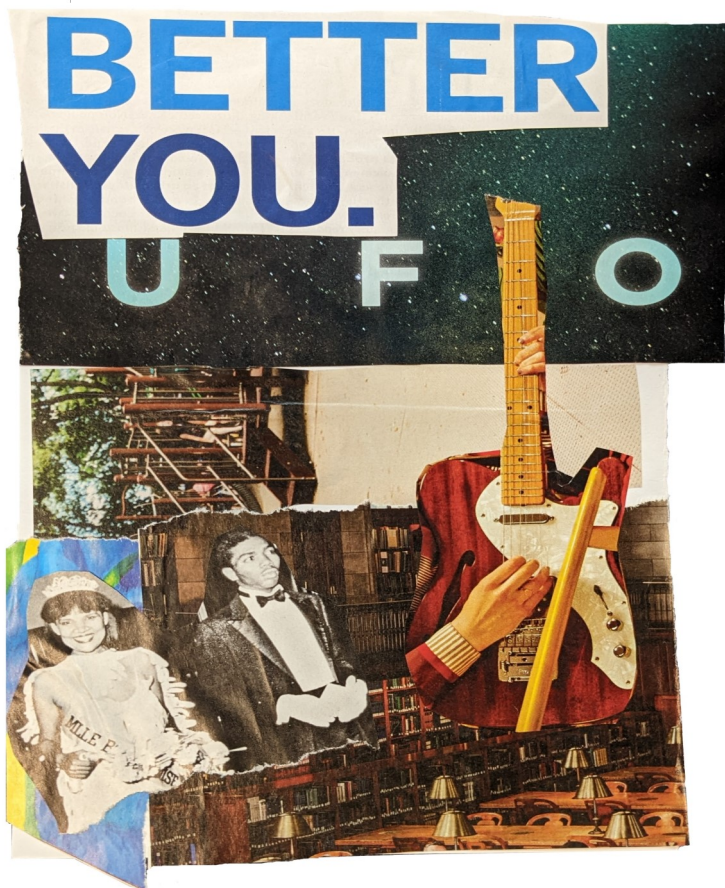
Utilizing the projective of magazine images and the metaphor of a storyboard, images were laid out across the room in three sets: location/environment, characters/the who, and text. Participants were invited to select images from each batch that intrigued or resonated with them. Utilizing the images, group members designed collages that told a story exploring an element of who they are.



Live and Let Live

Don't let your thoughts cloud your mind.
Just live and let live.

-Israel F.



Untitled
Tyree S.



I am the one who thru the destruction of my life plays music while storms rage.

Steven G.

Untitled

The tree represents me. Why? Cause it's strong. It grows and it also attracts people.

The star is myself. It shines and grows.

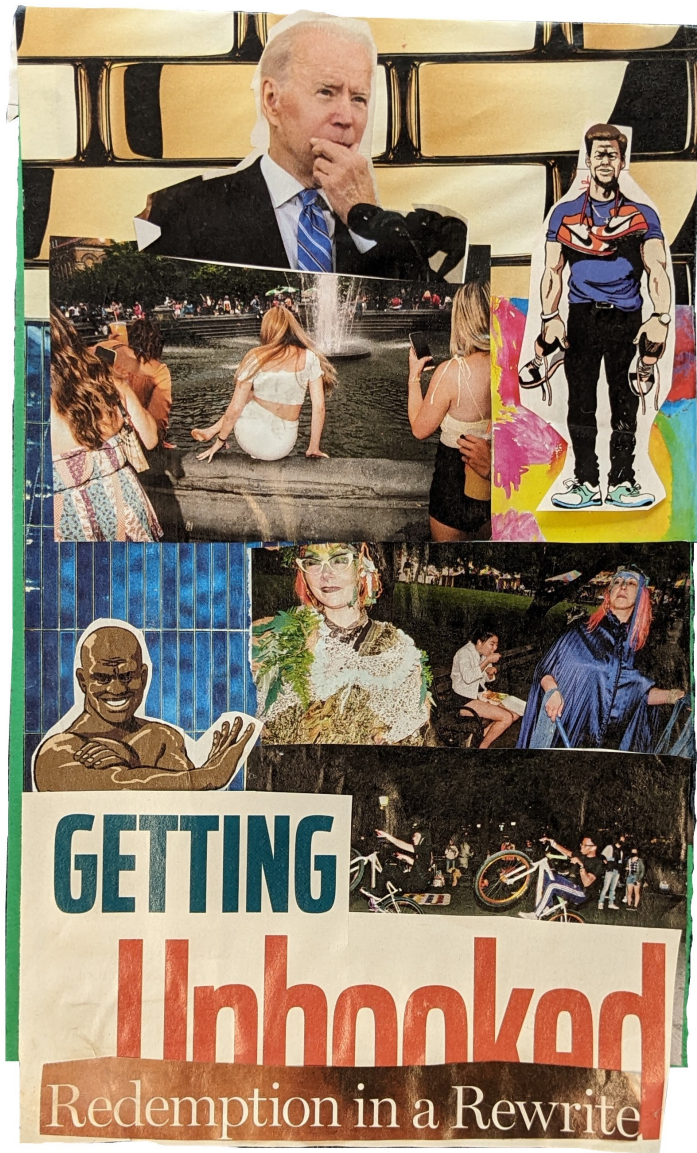
The clock is wasted time out of my life, time I can't get back.

The people laying on the ground is for my fallen soldiers that was lost in any type of war.

The father and his son is who I want to be some day, that perfect dad and also granddad. Peace

-Clifton B.





Redemption in a Rewrite
Taiwan A.



Untitled

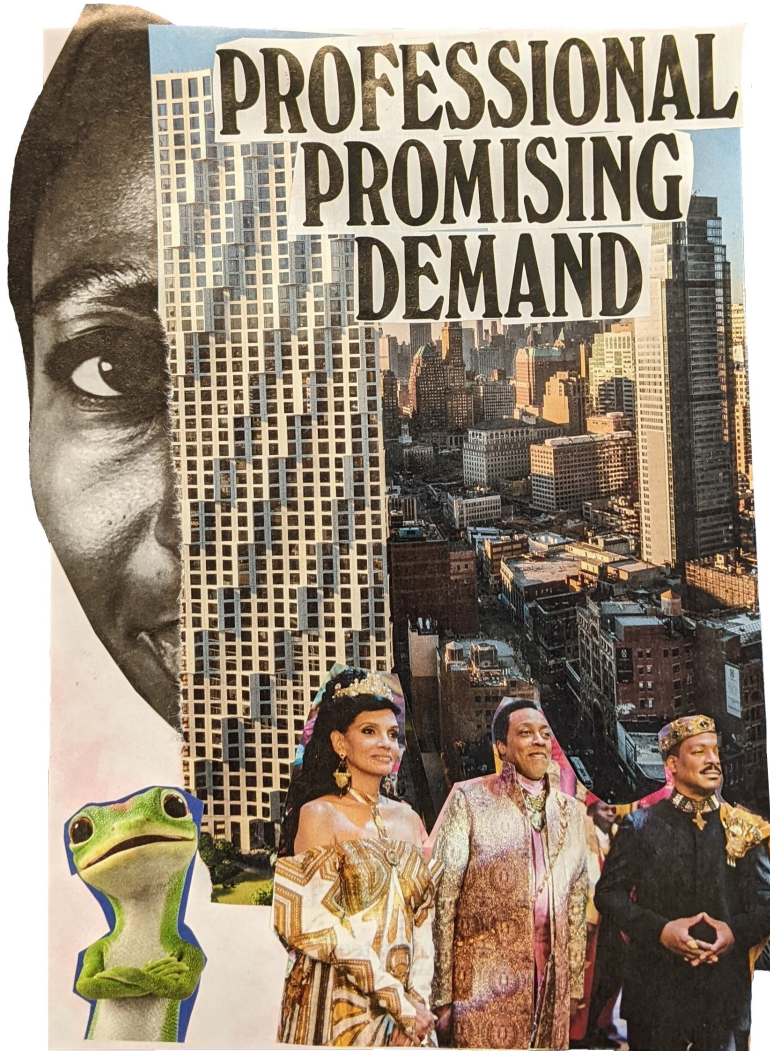
I pick this one because I'm from New York City + I miss home - the small things like what's in the background, music + the people dancing on the train.

-Ikeajahh



I'm a part of the future. I stand up for my rights. The power of authority is what I especially love. I love clothing. Designing is my favorite thing. I love architecture. I love jewelry. I'm standing up for the rights of the women being mistreated and abused by police brutality. People need to hear the voice or see and be interested in survival. Global warming is real and is taking place in our lives.

-Kaylene C.



Promising Land of the City

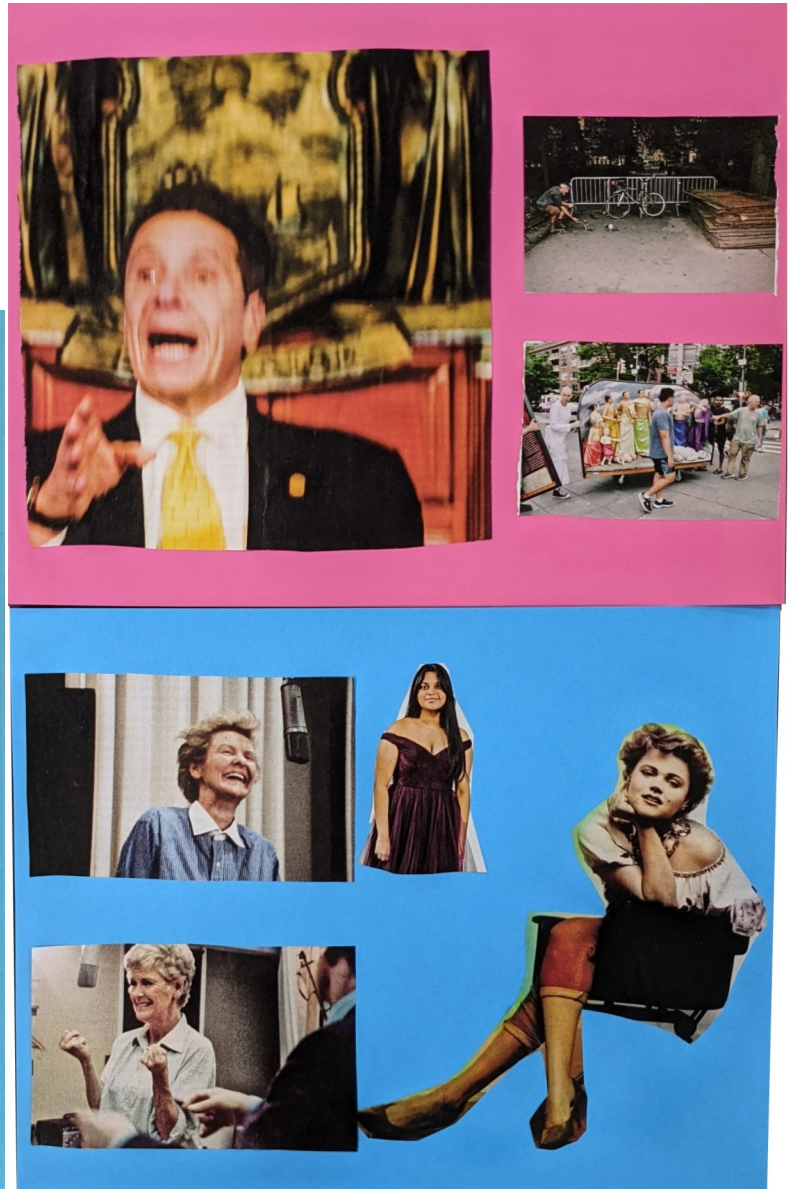
For all those who love to shop around, this is an example of the Promising Land. I love the sunrise of the city. I like to know that there are Kings and Queens in the city. I like that you get great deals for car insurance, for example - Geico. Having the eye of the city is a promise to those who realize, work, help, believe. The eye of the city is for courage, respect, and power.

-Danezja K.



Untitled
Kelvin V.



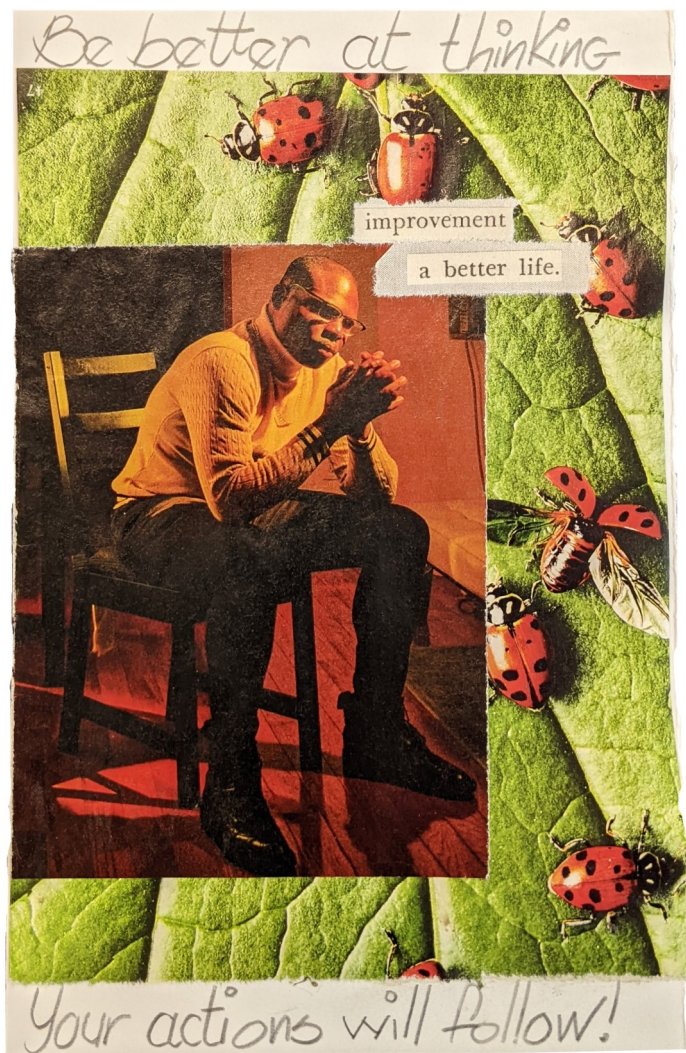


Untitled

There's no business like show business and show business I know, and it's appealing when it is you. Take that extra bow when you are selling that extra brow. There's no people like show people. I know people so go on with the show, just go on with the show.

For Hollywood, why would one think, well that's show business!

-K. Mitchell



Untitled

Use your mind to come 2gether

And sit to think things out.

IMPROVE

To

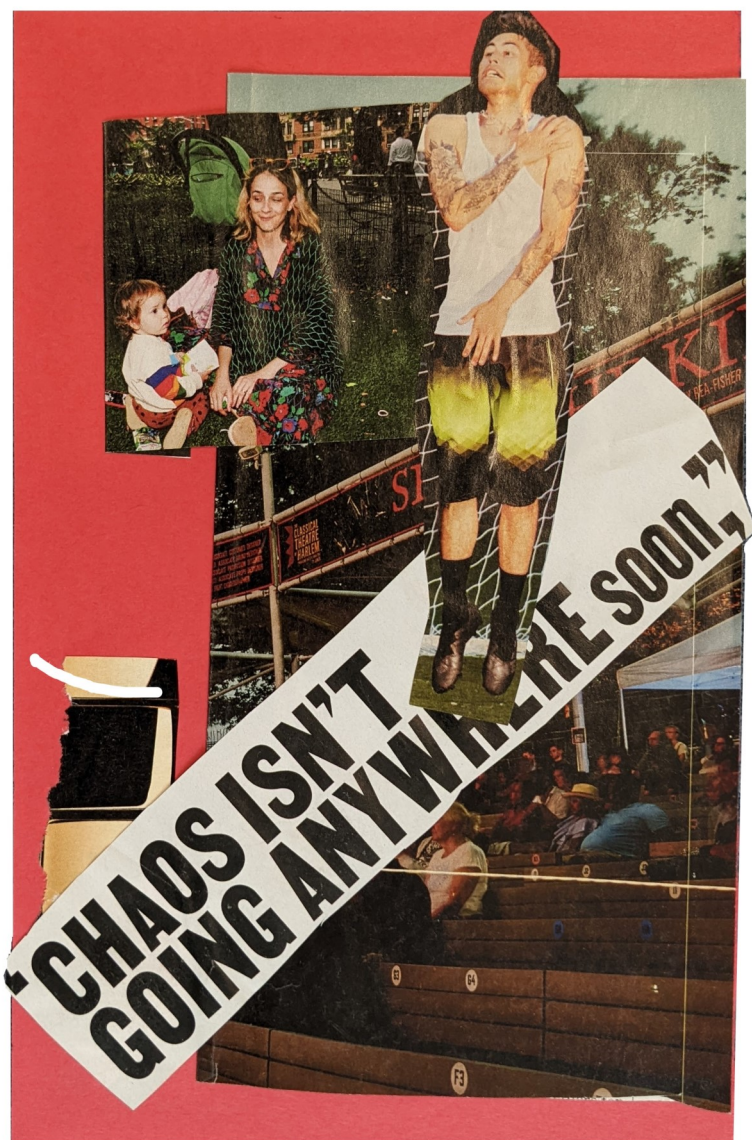
Be

Better in

Life.

Uncle
William.

-William B.



Untitled
Tracee M.



Untitled

Whoopi Goldberg, she's dyslexic like me. A Black woman like me. That's the car I always wanted. I'm a Leo symbolized by the lion and this is the scary house I once lived in.

-Kiana E.





Untitled

The man and woman are representing my family, mom and dad experimenting on me with their crazy parenting techniques. It led me to being the big title on top of them, "Pissed Off." Next part is a scene from Washington Square Park, where a lot of hipped and college folks are walking around, and I'm laying down as he outsider I most times feel like...as the pissed off onlooker looking in.

I eventually outgrows always being pissed off, but kinda sorta turned into a undercover gangsta. I have a long winded text response in my picture for all of the different scenarios I've been in with being a grown wild child, and the Chicano Squad is a group of friends. They're special like me.

-Dee

family

The most important
← thing in life is family.
family over Anything.



I use
my head
which I
mean I
think be-
fore I do
something,
Even if
I might be
wrong.

Untitled
ACE



...sense that the
"precision"
if one has
process.
months
eidos,
ed six
y 28,
and



recently co-founded The Intercept, a
publication premised on the act of
classified documents.

For the Love of Family
Kaylene C.



Graffiti Art
Garth D.





Love Peace Bully-Free

Adam M., Aramis, G., Becan F., Dillon W., James G., Latif, W.,
Nicolas R., Tavion M., Tymari H.

One of the reasons for making the banner is to express our raw talent and also to show what we should practice on the unit. I learned how to make a mosaic and how to create things using my feelings. This could apply to my life by practicing love and peace and in a bully-free zone. My favorite part was making the LOVE banner. This one is my favorite because I love love!

-Dillon W.



Fly | Vincent L.

Super boy | Vincent L.





The William B Collection
William B.

I AM the prize because I graduated ABRAHAM LINCOLN High School.

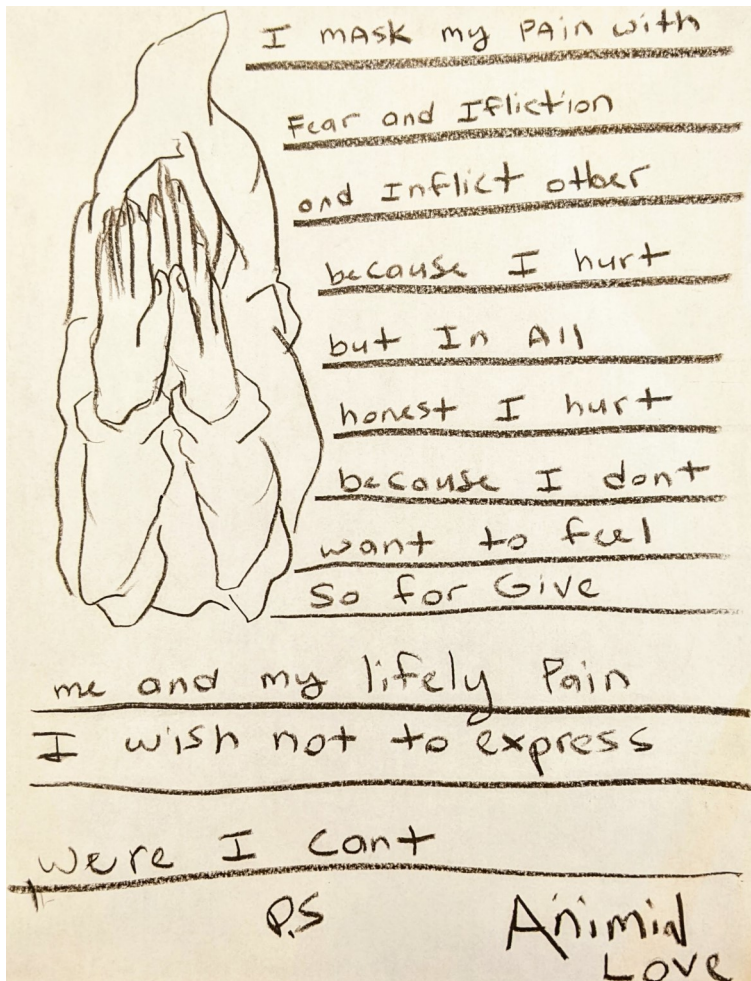
master *ambler*



I Am the Prize
Noshier A.



My Culture
Kaylene C.



Untitled
Juan L.

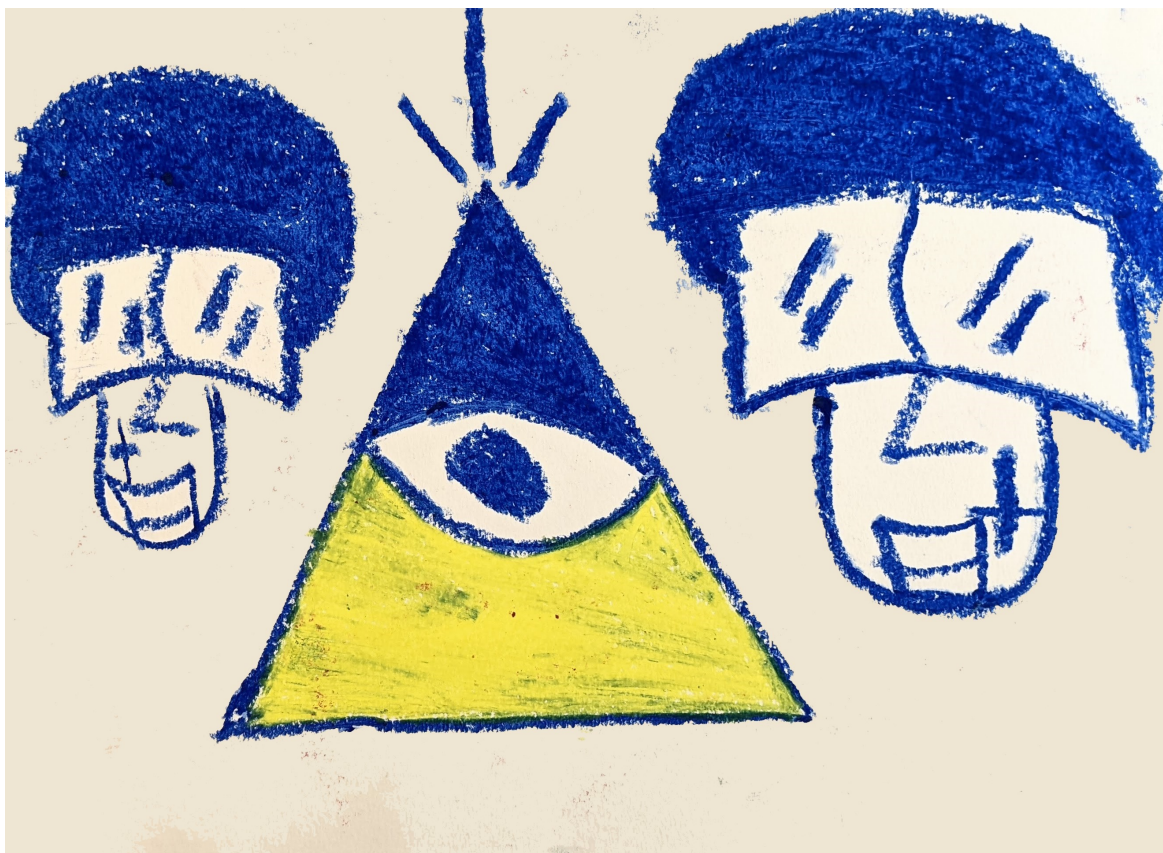
written by: ~~Sebastian~~ Jacob III
Contributed on: 3.23.22
Title: "The Ultimate Message"
Keep peace; pray and keep a small circle,
be careful whom kept company,
Some people may hurt you.
Stand on your two feet,
Keep hesitant out,
without a doubt; think before actions,
you will figure it out.
Stop quitting on yourself,
always aim to win.
Don't try to be perfect;
in a jealousy lived world, made of nothing,
but sin.
Keep faith alive; loose some of your aggression,
learn to progress, to process
the ultimate message.

The Ultimate Message
Jacob S.

Love and Hate
Vincent L.



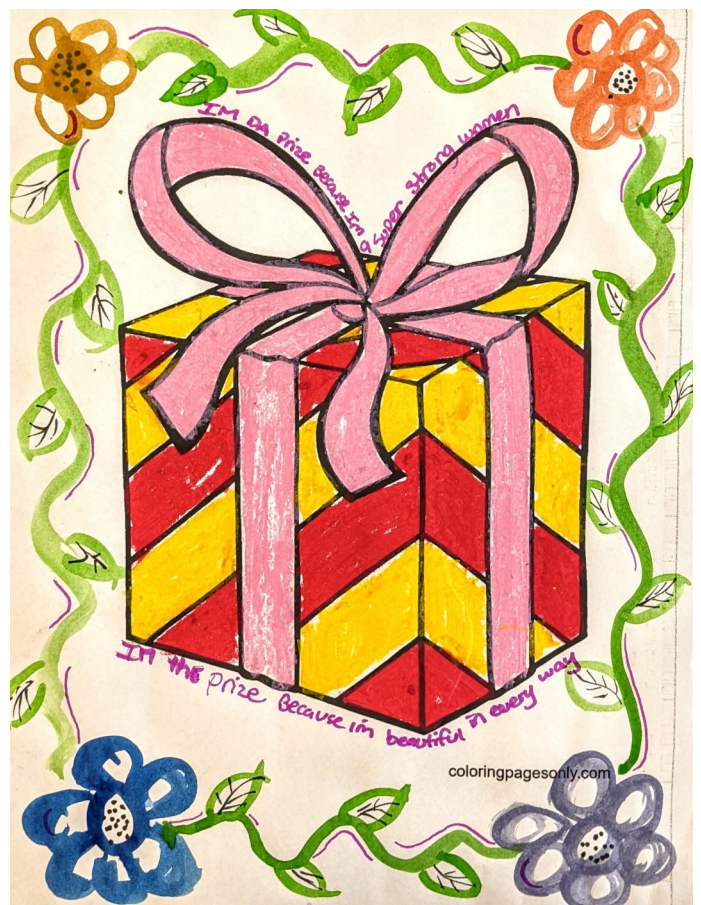
All Seeing Eye
Johnny M.





God
Kids
Parent

I Am the Prize
Elizabeth G.



I Am the Prize
Versace R.

The following poetic writings were inspired through the reading of a poem by Tupac Shakur, "The Rose That Grew from the Concrete," during a poetry therapy session.

I've been through a lot in my life

When I grow up I want to know if
People will be more afraid to cry
then they are to die?
Will I see a rainbow in a smile filled sky?
Will it be any trees or leaves?
If not, how would the planet survive?
Will the internet have a website:
At www.lifetime air supply?
When I grow up will innocent
Children be wrongfully test?
Will students go home in a bullet proof vest
What happens if children have no one to trust,
That will hurt me so much
And I want to be happy when I grow up.

-Michael R.

Overcoming

Overcoming life's struggles on being a part of own processes. I mean its survival and safety with self and surroundings.

"Survival and safety..."

-Quincy G.

The 4 Corners

Life tends to place us in corners where we do not belong. All different shapes, sizes, all but the directions were supposed to be. I've found this corner that brought me to a new elevation that allows me to keep a forward path toward success. My rose started as an innocent child whose elevating to become a better beginning of help humanity looks for help in different health for others society whether it's good, bad, addictive, harmful, I've lead the path to a new journey to become a therapist the good help because I was once in need of help. I want to help people deal with their struggles addiction losing a lot can cost without proper help. If I had gotten the help I needed, I would already be elevated.

"If I had the help I needed..."

-Mustafa A.

Untitled

I don't want to be in here
I want to get out
I was with girl went into someone's house.
I came here I didn't mean it
I didn't take anything
I lost my clothes
I lost my freedom
I can't control my life
I can control my life but
I've lost so much

"I want to go home..."

-Rockim H.

Spiritual Divine Intervention

Basically, improving one's positive side to cause them to never lose their drive, confidence, integrity, beautiful, happy imaginative and loving soul. No matter whose opinion comes into play, to make it seem their way. When you have your own unique self-abilities to be your own master of your life:

Never give up!

Never surrender!

Just be yourself...

Plain and simple, Eternal.

"Just be yourself"

-Jonathan M.

Untitled

At present, in the moment, the overcoming moves through me as I approach people, places, and things...

One, I approach my relationships in the moment. Exhibiting, peace, joy, and abundance because that is the way I want to be briefed.

Two, the immediate environment is the place. I utilize "radical acceptance" to infuse peace, joy, and opportunities into my surroundings. Accepting the situation, I can transform the boundaries.

Three, I give gratitude for all of the "things" that I have available to me. I am aware that the universe provides all of the necessities that embellish my life.

Overcoming is a constant and revealing aspect of our dimension of life.

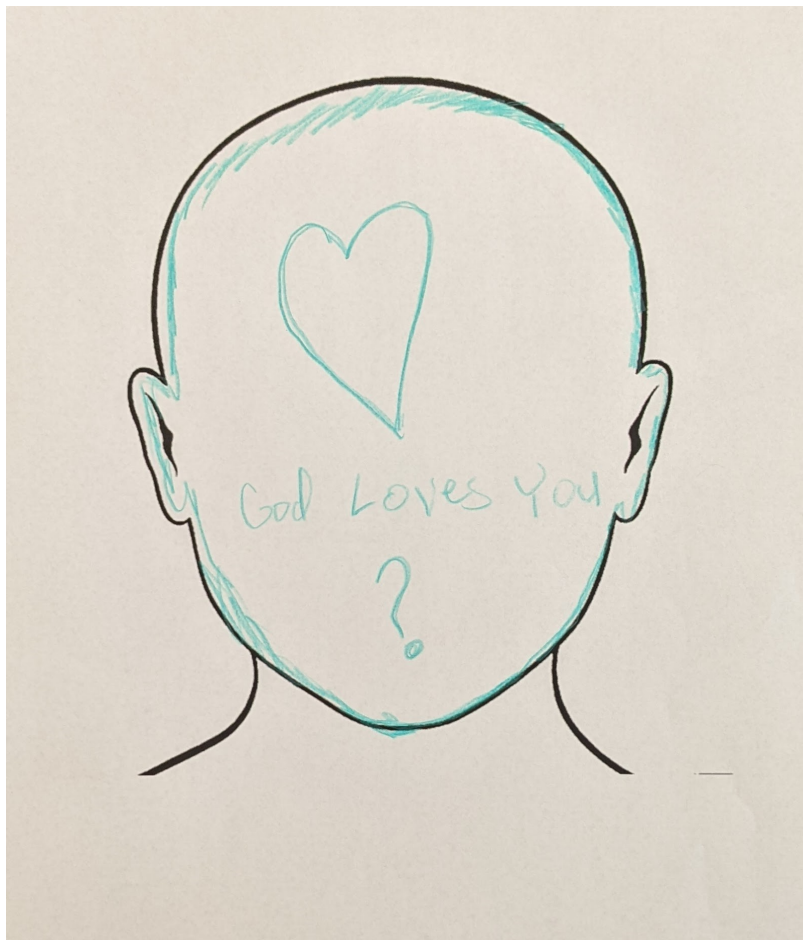
I am in jail but I have boundaries. I can transform boundaries...

"I can transform boundaries even while I'm in jail..."

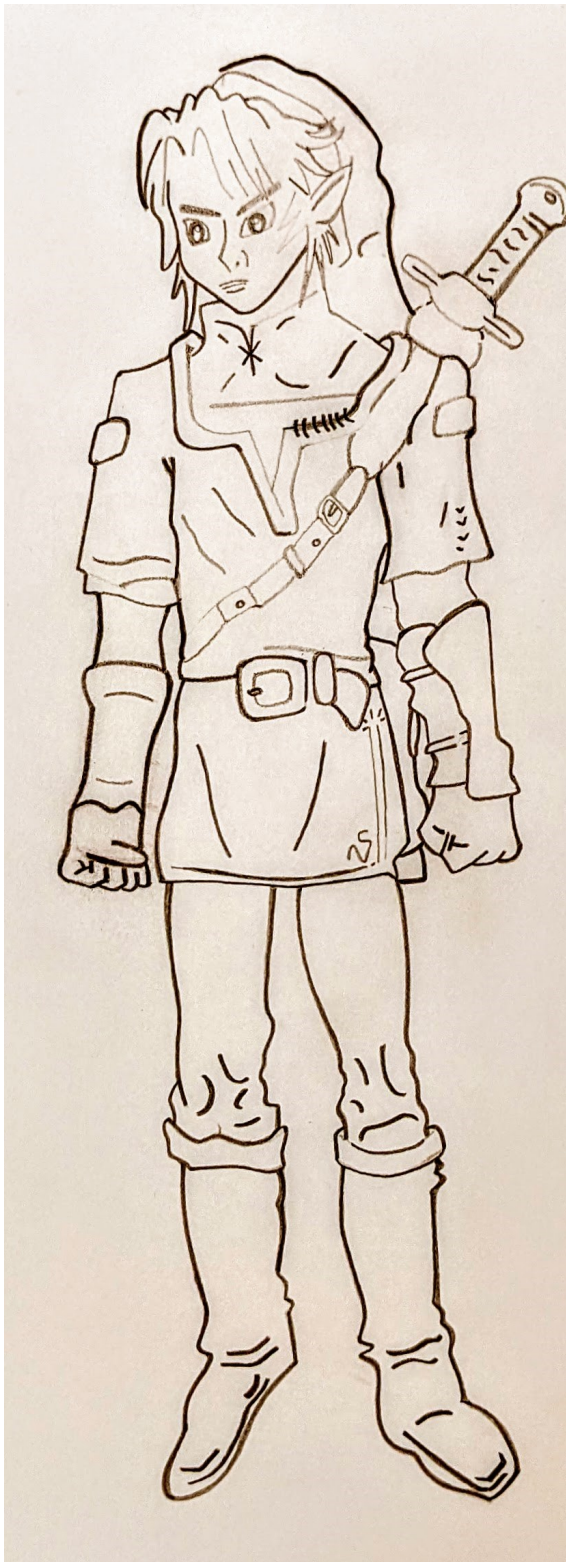
-James R.



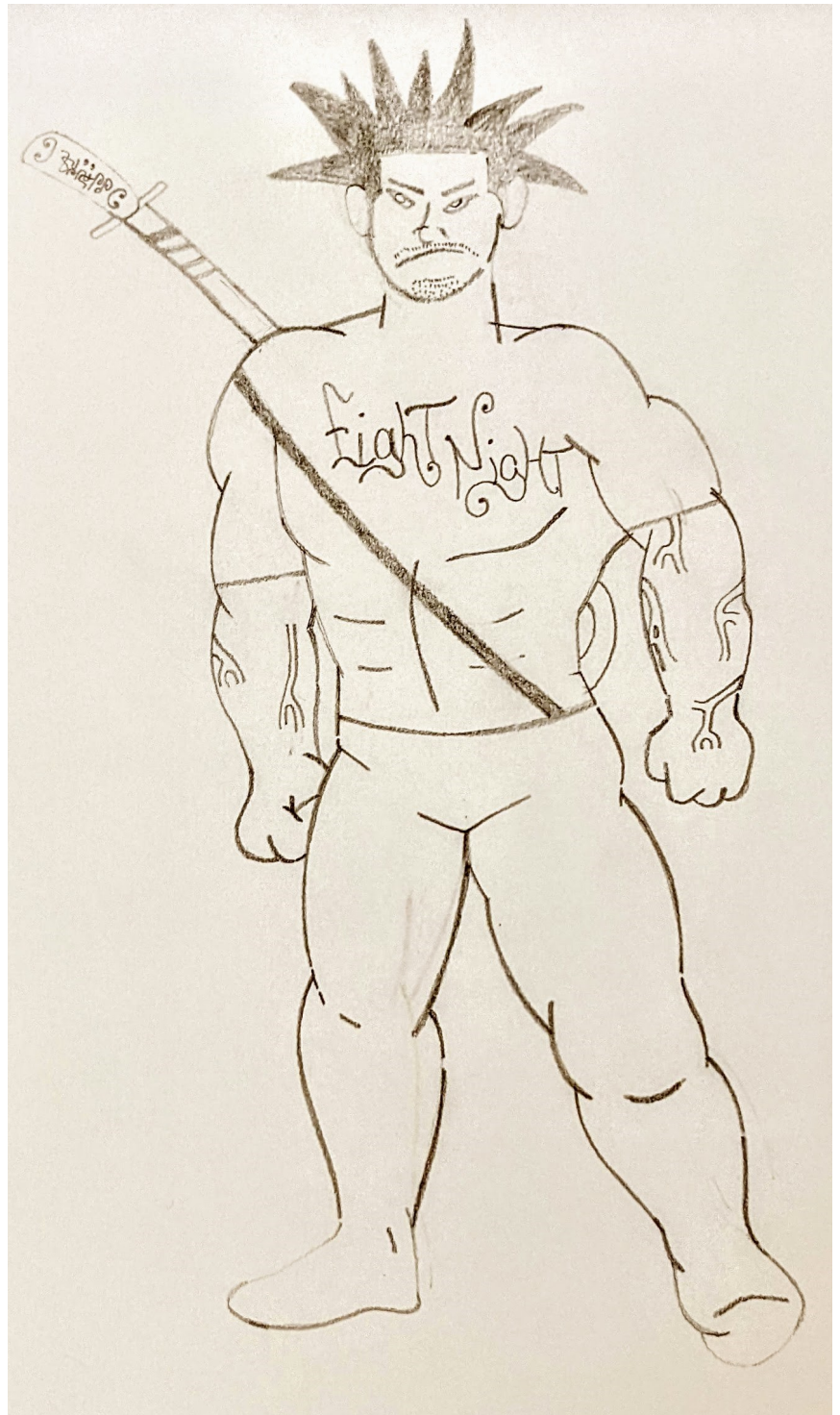
Untitled
Fasika B.



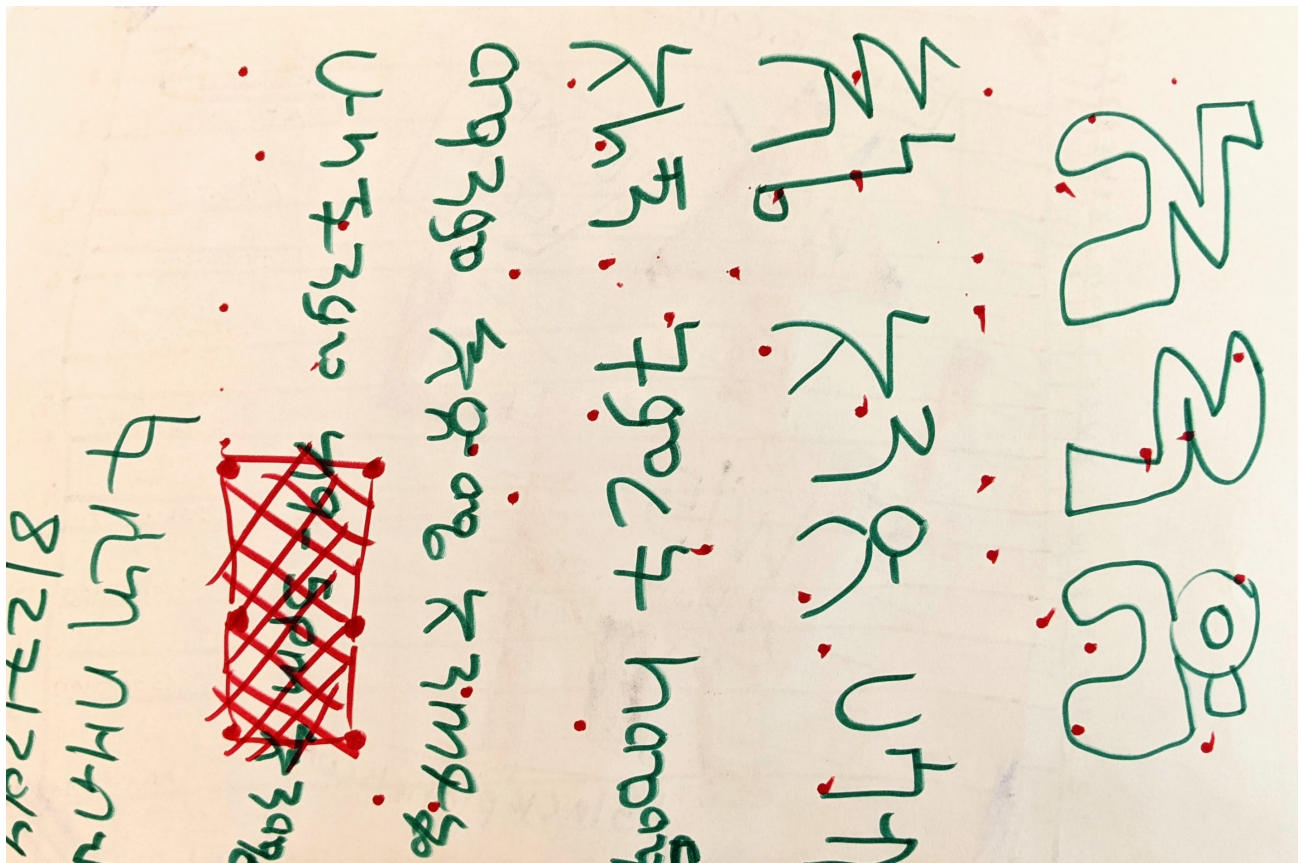
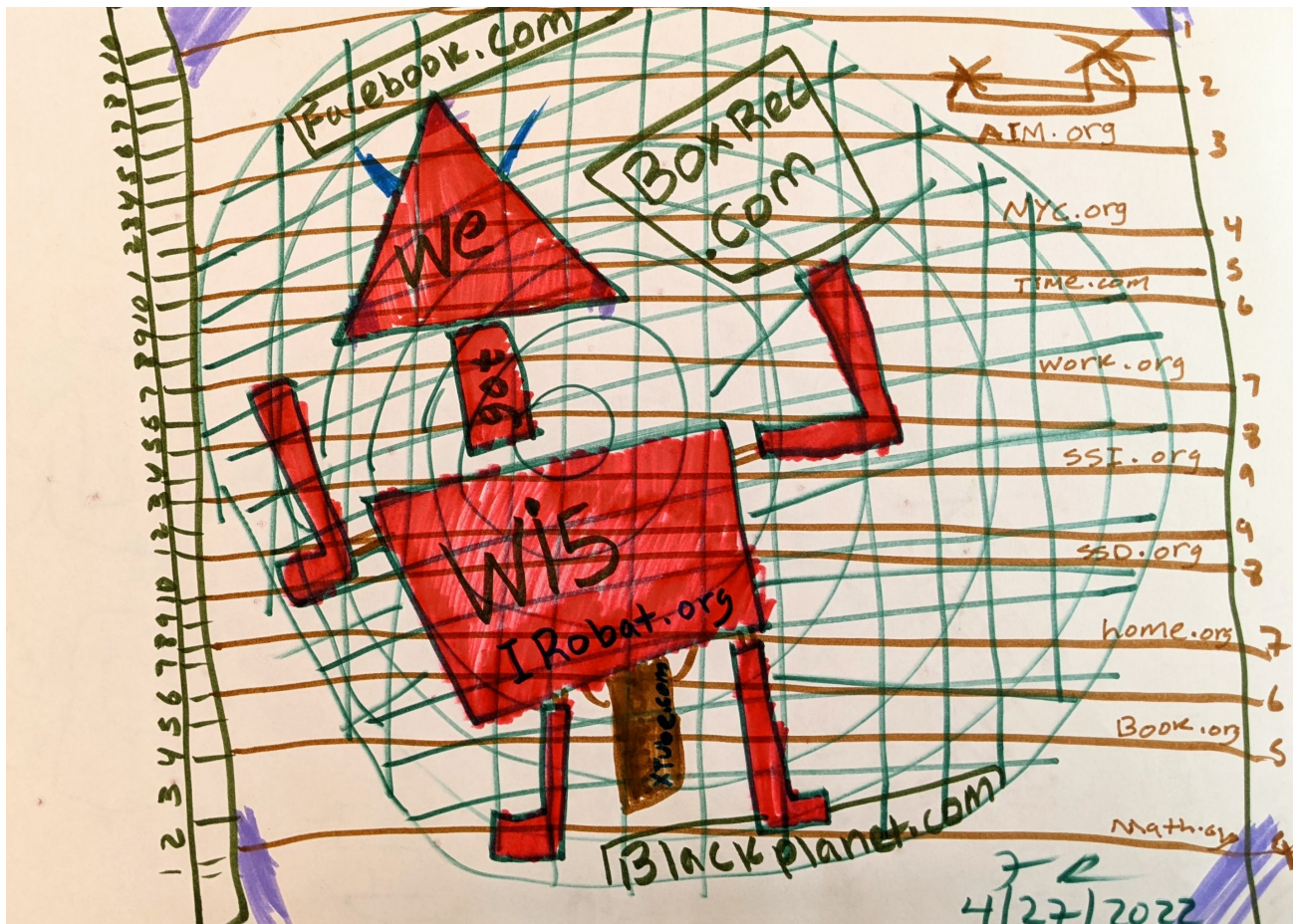
Untitled
Ashley C.



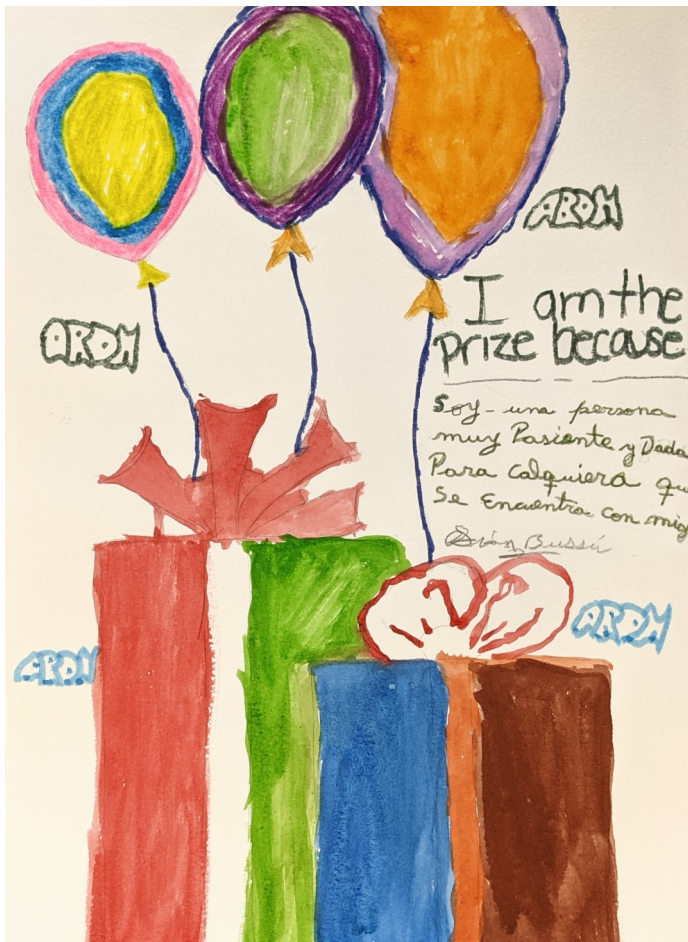
Link
Justin P.



Fight Night
Justin P.



Internet
Fasika B.



I Am the Prize
Aron B.



I Am...
Kiana E.



Untitled
JB



Untitled
K.E.

Evergreen the Great

Once upon a time there was a Majestic Dragon. If you're wondering what a dragon is, it's a ginormous serpent with wings. But this particular dragon had no wings. This was his blessing. Some would say it was a curse but no one understood.

Aladdin and Judar are one and the same entity. You could say that they were actually twins but nothing was similar about these two. There's this wonderful place that has a sun and a moon. Called Washington Square Park.

Ok so here's where the story begins.

"Hey Aladdin come down from that tree man," said Judar.

"I, not done absorbing its life prana," relied Aladdin.

"What are you going to do when you're done," said Judar.

"I'm going to find a cure for its pain and suffering," said Aladdin.

"You're such a wimp always interfering with the way things work. I swear if it wasn't for you, I wouldn't be here right now," said Judar.

Aladdin falls into the middle of Washington Square Park. It was a well where the majestic dragon lived. This dragon's name was known through all of existence.

"Hello" says Aladdin.

"Who are you, well that's beside the point. Why did you disturb existence? You're my new prisoner and there's nothing you can do. No one can hear you. Everyone has forgotten you and the memories you've created with them," said the dragon.

"Uggghhh" Aladdin screamed. "Futile said his father. OK, OK, I'll tell you. It's because I want to be like you, but stronger than that."

"Granted," said the dragon.

Proof

Aladdin awoke in pain but helped.

Fin

-Shian P.



My Raw Talent
Gemini



Face
Gene Z

Untitled

Do you believe in reincarnation? I do, but I don't want to come back as an animal or another person. I want to be on a secluded island that hasn't been discovered by mankind, and I want to be a plant or flower that can grow wildly without being cut down.

-Tyrell E.

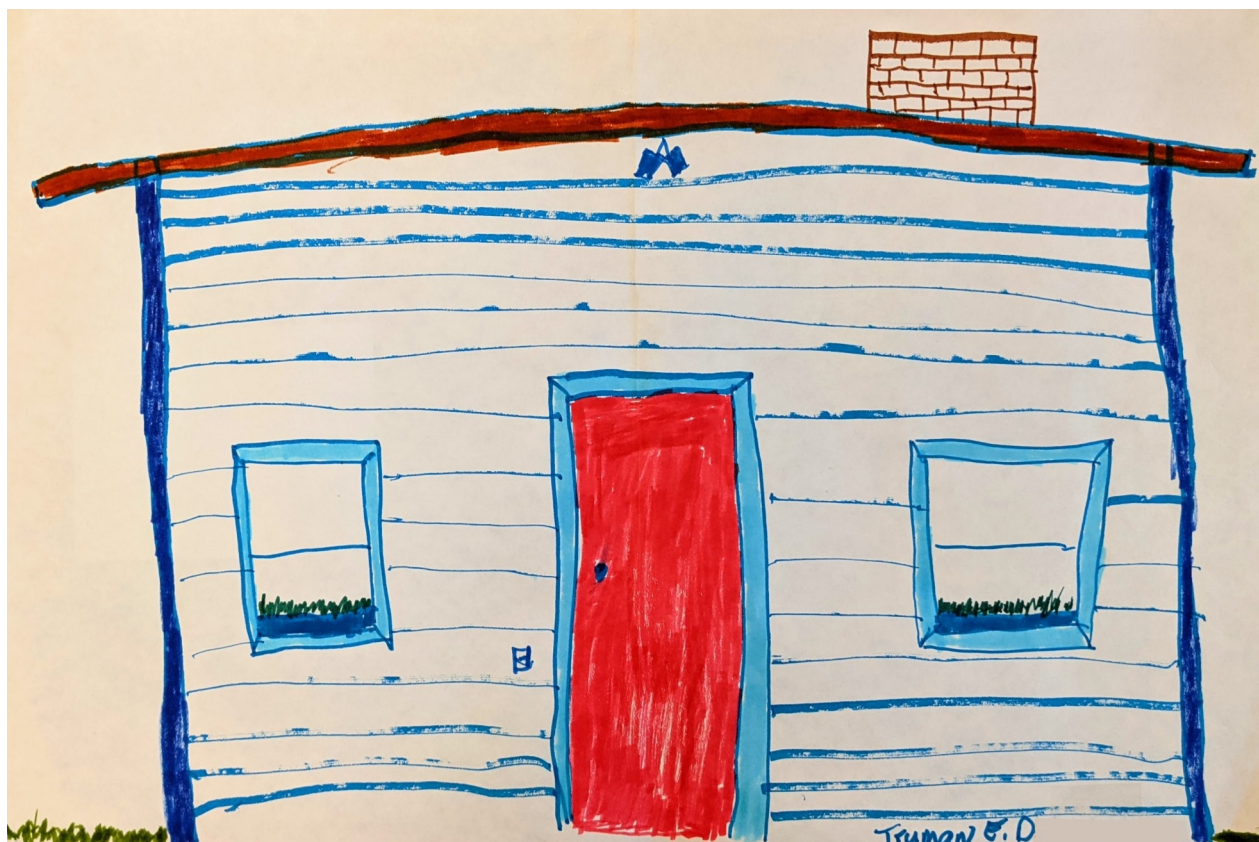


My Life
Anonymous



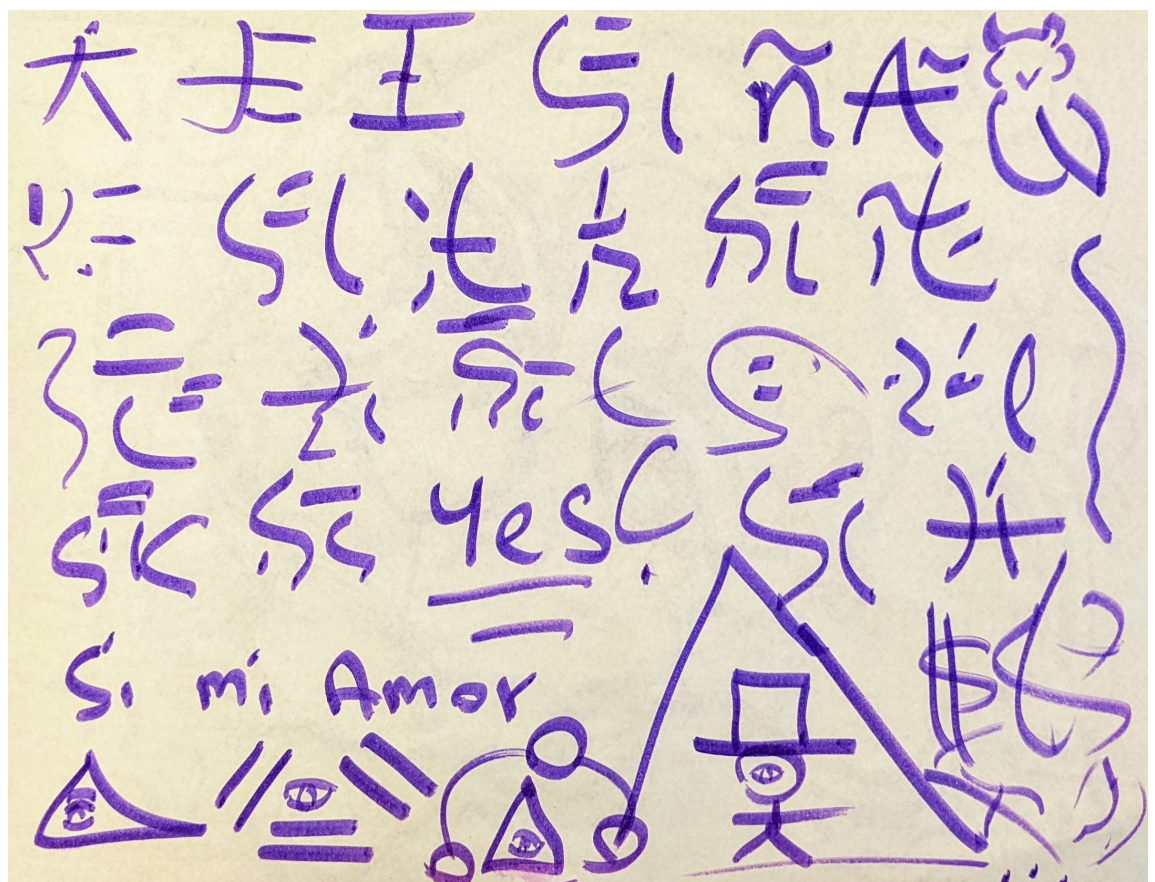
Untitled | Anonymous

The House | Truman D.





Untitled
Juan L.



Gay

You don't wake up one morning and say
"Hey, I'm gay."
It's something that you should feel deep
within,
Like it's the right way;
The right way of living your life.
Walking down the street with your head
held high
And not giving a damn about what no one
says.
Because I'm gay,
People ask silly questions like
"Why do you choose to be gay?
Or is it just a phase?"
As if someone would choose to be mocked
every single day;
Being bullied,
Tortured,
Thrown against the school hallways,
Being called names
And physically abused.
Do you think this is something that I chose?!
Tuh! Try 24 hours walking in my shoes.
I'd guarantee you'll be listening to the blues.
Asking God, why did you make me this way?
Why did I have to be gay?
There are many different types of gays:
There's fems.
Fems are the feminine boys that's dashed
with a little bit of cinnamon.
There's trades.
Trades are the "homo thugs,"
The ones that are in denial about being gay.
The ones that beat up the gays;
Wishing that one day
They can come out and say,
I am gay.
Being gay can make or break you
No matter what anyone has put you
through.
Girls being gay;
Boys think it's sexy,
Attractive,

And a good look.
Boys being gay;
You get called batty boy,
Fish,
F*****,
Repeatedly over and over every single day,
Stressing,
Crying,
Running away.
That's why there's so many "homo thugs"
until this day.
Kids getting kicked out their homes, having
nowhere to go;
Starving,
Crying,
Hurting,
All because they said "Mommy I'm gay."
Do you think it feels good to be waiting for
the train;
All eyes in you
And everyone saying,
"Yo that n**** gay?"
Do you think it feels good to walk passed a
group of boys
And they all immediately move away
Saying, woahhh! "That n**** gay,
We don't roll that way."
So before you ask someone that's gay,
"Do you choose to be this way?"
Tell them that they're a confident individual
No matter what anyone says.
Continue walking down the street with your
head held high.
When someone talks bad,
Let it fly.
You're not straight,
Gay,
Transsexual,
Bisexual,
Or a lesbian.
You are a human being!!!

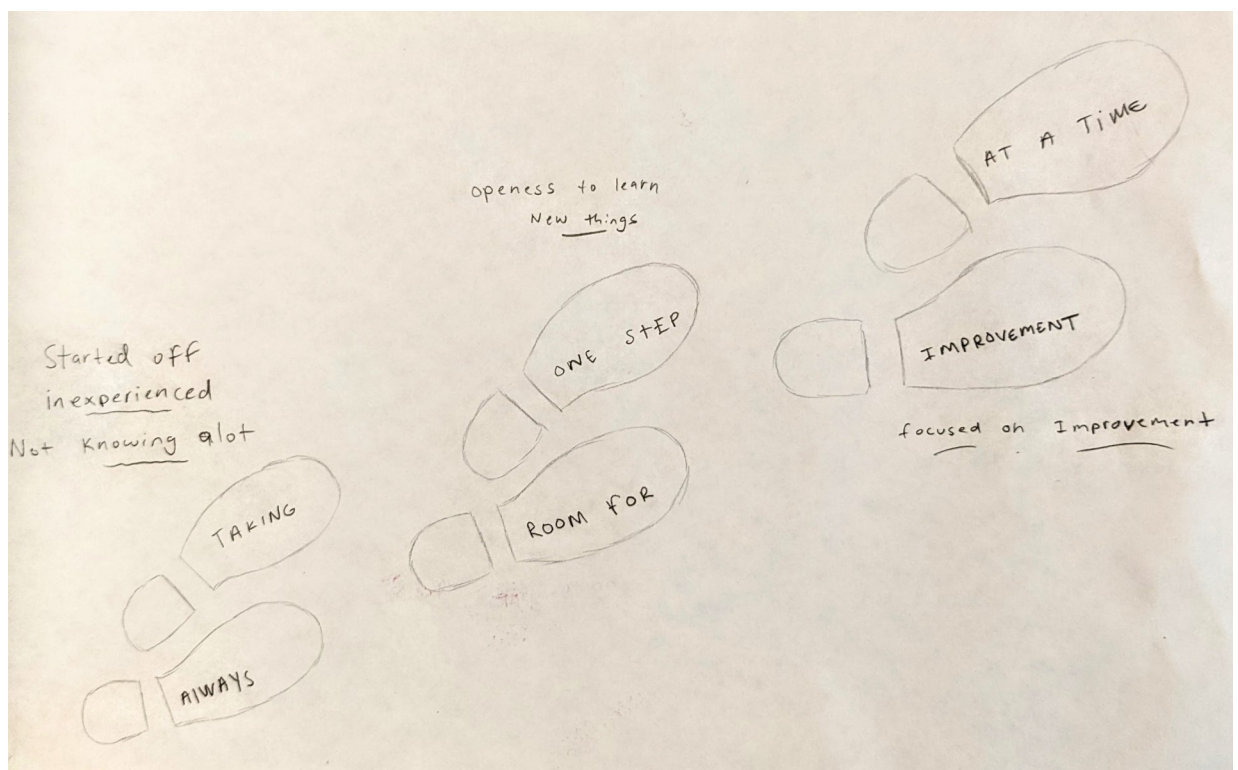
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I wrote the "Gay" poem when I was 16 years old in the 11th grade. I wrote it 2 pass my class. After reading 2 my classmates my teacher recommended me 2 read it 2 every class in school, which I did. I'm 26 years old now, that's why I still memorize it till this day. That's when I've realized that my poem had a lot of impact. I wrote the poem because I wanted 2 touch a lot of topics, end a lot of stereotypes and most importantly put an end to a lot of stupid questions. Growing up, straight males told me "all you need is some coodie cat if your life, you'll turn straight". Even my mom told me she was going 2 pay female escorts to have good time with me. Till this day I don't know if she was joking or not, however as I've gotten older and experienced life, no parent should play like that. A parent should embrace their child, prep their child at a young age for the trials and tribulations that society is going 2 put them through. I wanted everyone 2 know nobody chooses 2 be gay. There's several countries that does not accept our kind. Anywhere, I repeat ANYWHERE, in the world I can get KILLED for being GAY if I'm in the wrong place at the wrong time. My poem is literally self-explanatory. So I hope I changed peoples' minds about the LGBTQ community.

-Tommy A.

During a check-in icebreaker question and group discussion, evolution was explored. Group members then reflected on their personal journeys and offered a title as symbol. Using their identified titles as inspiration, participants were invited to create a piece exploring their life journeys with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Untitled
Tyree S.





Intersecting Dreams
Mustapha K.



A Sad Face
Mustapha K.



Untitled

I've personally done art since childhood, I took art class in high school, I did architectural collage in Phoenix, Arizona but didn't finish. This picture takes me back to my 20s, going to raves in Florida and New York. Those were good times for me. It was a learning experience. In my 30s I went to AA and it was eye opening and helped me stay sober for a while. This artwork was difficult to do, but it was time consuming and was a long process. I thought the artwork was ruined for a while, but I adapted to it and then I was able to problem solve it and complete it. I've learned through making this artwork that sometimes things seem ruined but there are ways to problem solve it.

-Derek M.



Love the World
Vincent L.

Acknowledgements

We thank **our patients** for: their willingness to participate and create the artistic expressions of themselves contained within this catalog; their courage to expand; their ability to connect to a community of people previously unknown to them; and their sense of agency to express themselves through the arts, giving voice to their humanity.

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Barbara B. and Mary M. (drama therapists);
Jeff A. and Emily H. (music therapist); and
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