



Vines of **TRUTH**

A Creative Writing Anthology
Volume Eight



Literacy KC
Chanelina lives beyond words



Literacy KC
Changing lives beyond words

Vines of Truth

A Creative Writing Anthology
from Literacy KC

previously Writers for Readers Anthology

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Literacy KC
Volume Eight, 2026

Vines of Truth, previously known as Writers for Readers, is an annual print and online publication that features the work of Literacy KC students. Print issues are available for free in limited numbers.

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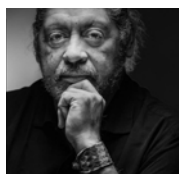
2026 Visiting Writers



Abby Bland (she/they) is an award-winning Kansas City-based writer and performer whose work has appeared in a variety of publications. She holds a B.A. in English from William Jewell College, and Masters in Public Administration from UMKC. For the last decade she has developed an established arts practice spanning literary publication, performance, and arts education. They're on Instagram @applestoabby and you can read more of their work at abbyblandpoetry.com.



Nikiyah Crosdale is a visionary children's book author and literacy advocate from Kansas City, MO. She penned *The Thought Jar* in 2021, a transformative work designed to instill the power of positive affirmations in young minds. As a dedicated partner with Lead to Read, she has engaged with countless classrooms across Kansas City, MO, and Kansas City, KS, fostering early literacy and mindset development. Currently, she is spearheading the production of an animation centered on mental and emotional wellness. With a mission to make *The Thought Jar* a household staple, she aims to revolutionize how families integrate positive thinking into daily life.



José Faus (he/him) is a visual artist, performer, writer, independent teacher/mentor with an interest in the role of artists as creative catalysts for community building. He received degrees from the University of Missouri at Kansas City in painting and creative writing. He is a founder of the Latino Writers Collective and sits on the boards of The Latino Writers Collective, The Full Frame Initiative, and Charlotte Street Foundation. His chapbook *This Town Like That*

**José Faus
cont.**

was released by Spartan Press. His book of poetry *The Life and Times of José Calderon* was published by West 39 Press.



Glenn North is the Director of Inclusive Learning and Creative Impact at the Kansas City Museum. He received an MFA in Creative Writing from UMKC and is the author of *City of Song*, a collection of poems inspired by Kansas City's rich jazz tradition and the triumphs and tragedies of the African American experience. He is a Cave Canem fellow, a Callaloo creative writing fellow and a recipient of the Charlotte Street Generative Performing Artist Award.



Mercedes Lucero (she/they) is the author of *Stereometry* (Another New Calligraphy) and the chapbook *In the Garden of Broken Things* (Flutter Press), which includes "The Possible Causes of Your Suffering," a finalist for *Glimmer Train's* Very Short Fiction Award. Mercedes won the 2017 Langston Hughes Creative Writing Award for Poetry and has received several Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has been featured on *The Project on the History of Black Writing* and published widely in *New Orleans Review*, *Puerto del Sol*, *New Ohio Review*, *The Chicago Tribune's Printers Row Journal*, *The Pinch*, and more.



Huascar Medina is a Kansas Poet Laureate emeritus (2019-2022) and Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow. He has authored two books of poetry: *Un Mango Grows in Kansas* and *How to Hang the Moon*. He is the Lit Editor for *seveneightfive magazine*, a staff editor at *South Broadway Press* in Denver, CO, an op-ed writer at *Kansas Reflector*, a founding member and former Chair of *TopekaUnited.org*, the founder of *wordssavelives.org*, and co-founder

**Huascar
Medina cont.**

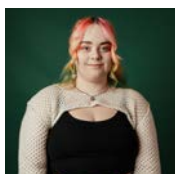
of latinidad.us. Huascar was born in Killeen, TX, and has lived artfully in Kansas for over two decades. His work has appeared in the *Flint Hills Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Kansas Magazine*, *Latino Book Review*, *The New York Times*, and elsewhere.



Nasir Anthony Montalvo (b. 1999) is the founder of {B/qKC}: a community archive of Black queer Midwestern history. Montalvo uses archival praxis, decentralized technology, popular education and the written word to move Black diasporic audiences towards life and a true dream beyond social platitudes. Montalvo's work has been exhibited locally and nationally in coffee shops, book stores, community fairs and artist galleries. Their art and archival research has also been published in *NPR*, *Syllabus*, *Sixty Inches From Center*, *The Advocate*, and *KC Studio*; along with being archived and used in curricula at Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, Columbia University and Pomona College. Montalvo holds a 2024-2026 studio residency at Charlotte Street; and has been awarded fellowships and artist grants with The Opportunity Agenda, Diaspora Solidarities Lab, and Gray Area. Montalvo is queer, Afro-Boricua, and from Kissimmee, Florida.



Dylan Pyles is an organizer and writer from Kansas City, Missouri. He's a co-founder of Liberation Lit, an organization that sends books to incarcerated people in Missouri and Kansas prisons.



Rylan Scott Keeling-Vallejo (they/them) is a genderqueer poet and performer based in Kansas City. They have been published in *Pile Press*, they have been a guest on *The Tenth Voice*, a queer radio show that broadcasts on

**Rylan Scott
cont.**

KKFI, they are a two-time Kansas City Grand Slam Champion, and they are the Program Director of Poetic Underground KC. In their free time they are cuddling their sweet puppy baby & trying valiantly to learn how to play the bass guitar. To find more of their work follow them on Instagram @Rylanscottpoetry.



Aisha Sharif is a Cave Canem fellow who earned her MFA at Indiana University, Bloomington and BA in English at Rhodes College. Her poetry has appeared in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Tidal Basin Review*, *Callaloo*, *Calyx*, *Rattle*, and other literary journals. Her poems have been nominated for Pushcart Prizes in 2019 and 2015. Her first book poetry, *To Keep From Undressing*, was published by SparkWheel Press in 2019. Her second book, *Black Diamonds*, was a finalist for the 2024 HubCity Press BIPOC Series.



Mary Silwance is an Egyptian immigrant living in Kansas City and is a mother of three daughters. She serves on the editorial teams of Whispering Prairie Press and Flying Ketchup Press, teaches EAL at Penn Valley and is a KCAI writing adjunct. You can find her publications, radio, and zoom presentations as well as workshop offerings at www.marysilwance.com. Mary's first full-length collection of poetry, *We Remember Ourselves*, was released in January 2024.

Series Editor



Chloe Chun Seim (she/her) serves as Literacy KC's Development Specialist. She is the author of the George Garrett Fiction Prize-winning novel, *Churn*, which was also a finalist for the Publishing Triangle Edmund White Award for Debut Fiction. She received her MFA from the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Participating Literacy KC Instructors

This project would not be possible without our wonderful instructors who facilitate these writer visits.



Melissa Acton
ELL Instructor



Andrew McDonald
ELL Instructor



Dianne Brewington
ABE Instructor



Addison Moberly
ABE Instructor



Netty Doyle
ABE Instructor



Emily Spradling
ELL Instructor



Marvin Evans
ABE Instructor



Dylan Straughn
ELL Instructor



Jodi Garbison
ELL Instructor



Daniele Reddy
ELL Instructor



Jenny Heller
ELL Instructor



Renee
VanZandt-Priolo
ELL Instructor



Sarah Kirby
ELL Instructor

Editor's Note

This volume serves as the eighth student publication in Literacy KC's history and the fourth volume under the title *Vines of Truth*. This new title was inspired by our core offices at the time, one at Vine Street and the other on Troost Avenue (which may be renamed to Truth Avenue). Since then, we've relocated from Troost to the Offices at Park39. Still, *Vines of Truth* remains true to the spirit of this publication.

Though we've settled into a new space, Literacy KC's history is long and our legacy growing. This publication has built its own kind of legacy. Some students have appeared in three or more volumes over the years, and each year we welcome new voices and perspectives. Volume Eight features 137 Literacy KC students inspired by 11 visiting writers. We hope you enjoy it!

—Chloe Chun Seim, Editor

Instructor Notes on This Year's Program

Our classroom has truly become a safe place for my students. They show remarkable resilience, balancing full-time work, family responsibilities, and the challenges of language acquisition. During our recent author visits, students shared stories about their memories from their country. The atmosphere was incredibly moving. We laughed, we cried, and we comforted each other with hugs, tissues, and kind words. Our author sessions allowed for deep, meaningful connections, where the focus on writing has been inseparable from the expression of emotions. I am grateful for the opportunity to teach such an inspiring group.

—Melissa Acton, ELL Instructor

"Anthology!? Huh?" This was the response from my students when I mentioned the anthology project. I wasn't surprised! Writing can be daunting and writing for a collective book, writing for publication can seem impossible. It's fun to contrast this sentiment with the feelings when they receive their printed copies. To see the completed book in print, bound up with their classmates' pieces, shift feelings from insecurity to pride and accomplishment. I'm proud of my students for accepting this

challenge, leaning into and trusting the process and submitting work they are proud of. Now, more than ever, we are hopeful that our students' stories are agents for change. May this edition of the anthology remind us that we are all better because of the diversity our students bring to our class, our community and our country. My students are hard working, resilient and kind. Their work for this anthology is a true reflection of this!

—Jodi Garbison, ELL Instructor

Writing for Literacy KC's Anthology is not only an experience, but an encounter into a different world. Our students are lured into a life of literature and from it, they become published writers. They pull parts of themselves out onto the paper, and willingly share it with us. It's beautiful and remarkable. The discomfort they face during this process shows you how resilient our students truly are. All 50 of my students had the opportunity to participate in this project. During our visits with local writers, we were able to step away from the hardships of the classroom to connect with one another over our cherished memories, our childhoods, and face our truth together. This not only brought us closer as a class, but closer to ourselves as individuals. I am in awe at the vulnerability that was brought into the room. My students inspire me everyday, but this project allowed them to inspire one another.

—Addison Moberly, ABE/HSE Instructor

If you stop for a moment to think about it, you might be awestruck at how inspiring it is for two or more people to connect in a language that neither calls their first. It's fun to see people from such different backgrounds come together not only for the sake of communication, but to exchange ideas, offer their struggles and successes, give gifts, build friendships, share meals, and just build a unique community. For a short time, we can join together as a small family, forget differences, lift away some of the pressures of life, and be humble enough to act silly and make mistakes; to admit that "I don't know what that means, but I'm willing and eager to learn." Everybody has their own story, and we use this important project to help each other feel seen and heard.

—Dylan Straughn, ELL Instructor

Dad's Courageous Decision

by Edin Ardon

My dad was born in 1956. When he was eighteen years old, he left his town to go to a place that offered him better opportunities. Even though he knew it was going to be hard to live in a new place that wasn't developed and far away from his family.

But he worked so hard for the first years, and after that he bought a huge amount of land.

Shortly, he got married to my mom and raised a family. It's been 62 years since he came to that beautiful place. He is still there to this day. My mom passed away in 2020. That's life.

The Baseball Player That Never Made It *by Ryan Brewer*

I was a kid filled with laughter, talented and skilled at baseball and football. That was my life. I was struggling in school. I wasn't the best in the classroom but out on the field I felt like Darell Reeves & Ken Griffey Jr. Just a kid from Chicago who had big money dreams. Well my mother, me, and my sister relocated to a new state. Many things happened during the move to this new city and state. The state where I lived before lost my high school transcripts in the system. I don't know how it all works. After attending my new school for about three months, I found out I had to repeat my freshman year. In 2009 I decided to drop out of high school without thinking about my future plans.

I lost hope in my dreams I once planned. I fell into a life altering path which caused me to fight for my freedom. I was lost and didn't know where I was headed in my life. My thoughts were smoke gray, and I lost control within myself. During the seven years away from my mom and sister, I lost hope and confidence. About five years ago, I became a free man, cleaned myself up, and got on the right side of faith. I was trying to get my life right. I returned home to mom and got hired by the Kansas City Royals, not as a baseball player, but as the clean-up guy, so I guess my dreams did come true. My paycheck had a pro baseball team name on it. Also I learned new talent and skills in trades.

Kindness is a Lifestyle

by Anastasiia Nahorniuk

Have you ever experienced kindness in your life? I think, yes! Someone gave up their seat to you on the subway. Your friend gave you a ride to work when your car broke down, or your neighbor made a pie for new people who are just moving in. People can make other people happier.

It seems simple, but it's actually much more complicated. You can do a good deed for someone and thereby become a little happier yourself. Awareness that you were able to help another person makes your mood better and gives you more confidence in yourself. Also, kindness helps a person become more open and attentive to people around them. People who often do kind things usually find friends more easily and build good relationships with others. Kindness brings people together and creates an atmosphere of trust and support.

Darkness

by Yavanara

What is darkness?

Some say that darkness consists of nothing but evil.

But I myself do not believe that way of thinking.

Darkness is indeed the enemy of light.

But it can also be a very strong and reliable ally.

Darkness for me is something I personally call "Home."

I feel safer whenever I assimilate myself deeper within the darkness.

The darkness helps me cloak myself.

Therefore, I go by two different names within the darkness.

"Shadow" and "Spectre."

The light is blinding and isn't meant for me.

And yet there are those who will attempt to drag me into the bright and brilliant light.

I really just want to stay to myself and hide away within the darkness.

But every now and then I will peek out from within the warm embrace of the dark in order to be in the light... even if it's just for a little bit.

One day I shall trail blaze a way out into the light.

And set my gaze down onto myself that is still within the darkness.

Until then while I'm still in its warm embrace, I say to myself...

May this journey lead us starward.

Big Brother

by Abigail Munoz

September 7, 2025 was the day my life changed forever. My baby brother Thiago was born. For me it was the worst day of my life because I was no longer the only child in my family. That morning I saw my mom and my dad rushing to get her and baby things ready to go to the hospital. I was confused because my mom never wakes up early for anything so I didn't know what was going on. My dad put out some clothes for me to get dressed. Told me to hurry up and put my shoes on and to go brush my teeth. I do not like brushing my teeth so I got upset and started crying and complaining to my dad. We hurried up and went to the car. My mom said, "Sergi, hurry up and do not forget your iPad and charger. My dad put my mom and baby brother's belongings in the trunk of the car and sped off to get dropped off at my grandma's house. I was upset because I do not like being woken up early, and I do not like being with my grandma because it is boring at her house. She's no fun. Oh no I forgot my charger in my mom's car, I forget to get it out the car because we were in such a hurry. I asked my grandma if she had an extra charger for my ipad but sadly she did not. I never put my tablet to charge so my ipad is alway without battery and my mom said it is my responsibility to put the ipad on the charger but I never listen. It was Sunday when all of this was happening. My grandma and grandpa were already up and ready to go do their Sunday grocery shopping. Out of nowhere my cousin Vicky appeared. She was getting dropped off by my aunt. She was heading to the hospital. My cousin showed up with some McDonald's Happy Meal. I was so upset because she did not bring me some and did not want to share with me. I screamed and yelled out loud that I wanted some McDonald's. My grandma did not know what to do. I could not stop crying, I could not control my emotions. I was so upset that it ruined my whole day. We were heading out to the grocery store and still could not

contain my emotions. I cried on my way to the store and cried all the way inside the store. I gave my grandparents a hard time. I threw myself on the ground, I kicked, I yelled and I cried inside the store. My grandpa had to drag me out of the store and take me to the car. He was embarrassed that everyone was staring at us. We waited in the car for my grandma and cousin to come out and head back to their house. My grandma bought me my favorite cookies, Chips Ahoy. It made me feel a little bit better but I was still overwhelmed by everything that was going on. I still did not understand why I was with my grandparents. Later that afternoon my dad came for me to head to the hospital. He was telling me that I became a big brother but I did not understand the meaning of that. We were approaching the room when I saw my mom holding a baby boy. My mom said to me, "Hey Sergi, look, it's your baby brother Thiago." I said to her, "Mommy, no more baby in belly. She said to me, "No, look, no more baby in belly." I got to hold him and give him cuddles even though I did not really understand everything that was going on, still a little confused whose baby was that.

But the next day we got to go pick up mommy and baby brother from the hospital to go back home. This is the story of the day my life changed forever. I'm Sergi E. Amador. I have autism. This is my point of view from becoming a big brother and learning how to share my mom and my dad's love with my brother.



Picture by Abigail R Munoz

I Know This One Guy

by Calvin Manning

Hey guys, I know this guy named Micheal. He was a really good kid, went to school, made ok grades, but somewhere, somehow, he started hanging with the wrong crowd and started getting into trouble. He was in the streets selling drugs. He left his momma's house because he thought he was grown. Little did he know there were consequences for his actions, no matter if it's good or bad. Micheal was getting in the life of being flashy, the money and fame was blinding him to what was going on around him, the police watching and people who was envious and wanted to rob him. His brain was in the clouds, not on Earth where it suppose to be. The struggle in his life made him numb to him when he started making money. It was rolling in. He focused on just that nothing else was in his vision, but to come up in his life knowing it's consequences for his actions. He didn't care. He was moving around town with no care at all, doing things he would of never did in life. If he just stopped and thought, money does change people, it blind people to everything that matter in life, and it will show you who your true family and friends are. When you making money there will be so called family and friends coming around you haven't seen in years, coming around begging and asking for money, they wasn't around when he didn't have anything and talked bad on him, it was people even praying on his downfall and to set him up and rob him. He helped people out, but they never paid him back, supposed to be loved ones and ran off. He just charged it to the game and kept on moving, money was coming in but not how he wanted it. Michael kept hustling and working to make a better life for him and his children. He got his own place, everything was going good, until the neighbor kept harassing him and taunting him, so Michael got fed up and the silverback came out and treated the neighbor like a rag doll. Michael thought it was over, not knowing this was just the beginning and one of the causes to his downfall.

He was going to work one day. The neighbor yelled and said he was going to break in Michael's house, not knowing it was all a set-up. Micheal let me get what he has in the house out of there so he wouldn't have to really hurt the guy. Not thinking, grab the duffle bag and left out. As soon as he got to his truck, there were like seven police cars and they boxed him in. Then he heard the neighbor yell "check that bag," so the police got the bag and checked it and saw what was in the bag. The police towed both his cars. He went to jail for a few months waiting on his lawyer to take care of everything. Michael gets out of jail three to four months later, thinking he was going to get all the money that was owed to him. They ran off. They didn't think that he was going to get out of jail that quick. He had to take it as a loss because it was family, so he had made his way back to getting money. He got robbed by a supposed-to-be friend, so he went down on everyone, family, friends, everyone, so he could try and rise back up. Then he had ran into another situation with his cousin being a snake for a girl. Micheal had the girl first, he didn't care about her, she was just a money thing for him, but his cousin back-doored him for the girl. His cousin had the girl turn off his daughter's phone. Micheal didn't play about his children at all, so Micheal and his cousin had a little tussle. His cousin said to him, "I'm going to kill you, Micheal!" He doesn't like threats at all, so he got his gun out and made a little noise. He wasn't trying to hurt his cousin, just let him know don't play with him. Micheal left and went home not knowing they called the police on him. He only been out of jail for about three months. The police came with big trucks with lights all kinds of machine guns drawn. Michael did not open the door. He had the police on a five-hour stand-off. He finally gave up and came out and they found the gun. He went back to jail for six months, his lawyer was fighting for him to get out of jail. That day finally came he was free, happy but was on probation for three years. They put it with the the probation he was previously on. He was doing ok, staying away from people, out of trouble. He had a mean probation officer. She was constantly trying to

send him back to jail. It was like three months later, once again he was in an altercation and knocked someone out at the gas station. The police ran up on him out of nowhere, and found a gun on him. Once again he goes back to jail. He was pissed. He was doing his best to stay out. His P.O. came and labeled him somewhat a menace. He spent six months and his lawyer got him out once again on house arrest this time. He had to be on it for a year that changed him for the better. He went to work, made better choices in life, and he is still working to this day spending time with his kids living a humble life, not letting anyone or anything disturb his life or character. He found the street life is not where he want to be in life anymore. He wanted better for himself and his children. It's a struggle, but he is living and maintaining, enjoying life with his children. This change brought them really close and a better relationship.

My First Tricycle

by Modeline Martin

For my third birthday, Mom and Dad asked about what gift would you like?

Without thinking twice I yelled, “a tricycle of course!” with a giggly laugh.

Then they replied to me, “Oh nice, my son! As you wish, but with one condition, if you listen to your body whenever you have to go to the potty.”

When I heard that, I felt sad because I often peed and poop on myself; but now I need to teach myself how to listen to my body when it signals me to go to the potty. When I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is to go sit on the potty, before I even brush my teeth and eat my breakfast. After each meal I go to the potty. One day I peed on myself and I cried, then my Mommy said to me, “It’s okay my son, an accident happened.”

Yay!!!! The first week went well so far with my potty training.

Aww!!! The second week went great too. Mom and Dad gave me stickers for doing great, and this even motivated me a lot more because I don’t only need to improve my potty training to get my first tricycle, but also I do really enjoy having new stickers.

New stickers of all kinds.

Today is my birthday celebration, and I feel generous and happy. I’m hopping, I’m jumping. After Mom and Dad gave me the tricycle, I couldn’t stop spinning, skipping, dancing with joy. Then I shout, “I no longer pee and poop on myself!!! I’m a big kid now!!!”

to his downfall.

Wilderness

by Riccardo Thomas

On September 2, 1987, a child by the name of Riccardo was born at 10:43 AM at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, Georgia. I was born to a single woman who had already given birth to two children before him and would later give birth to two more. Little did I know that I only had thirteen years of childhood ahead of me. Because at thirteen years old, I would be forced into the wilderness. I would be forced to become a man before my time. It all began on a late Saturday evening. Weekends in my household were the time when my mother would fill the house with all kinds of people, music, and noise. That particular night, I got into a disagreement with my little brother, and without much explanation, my mother forced him out of the house. Whatever the disagreement was about, it was not serious enough to justify being put out. But that was the reality of growing up in that home.

I was thirteen years old. My brother was freshly in the ground. And now I was standing outside, alone, being pushed into a world that had already spent years trying to break him.

This was the wilderness.

This was the environment that was supposed to protect ME, supposed to nurture ME, supposed to prepare ME for the world. And yet, before I could even fully understand what life was, I had to face it. For twenty-five years I wandered. I moved from city to city across this country, chasing fulfillment in people, places, and things that were never meant to fill the void I was carrying. I was eager to please people. I honored people. I poured myself into whoever and whatever was in front of me, hoping that something outside of myself would finally make me feel whole. And every time life backed me into a corner, I appointed myself as my own rescuer. I had convinced myself that I had all the answers. I leaned entirely on my own strength, my own reasoning, my own understanding.

Without realizing it, I had made myself into a God.

I was my own idol. I was my own living sacrifice. I sinned with my body. I was broken, and nobody had ever shown me another way. I was doing the only thing a wounded thirteen year old knows how to do—keep moving and figure it out alone. I was walking among the living dead, following a path I never consciously chose, doing everything the enemy needed him to do to stay lost.

I was lost exactly as I was. Lost and homeless in every sense of the word.

Then, a little over nine months ago, something shifted. I got on a bus and arrived in a city I had never called home—Kansas City, Missouri.

And nothing has been the same since.

Ready to keep building from Kansas City whenever you are.

The Amazing Leeonnie World

by Ta'Shawna Walker

Hi my name is Ta'Shawna, and I was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. I moved to Kansas City at the age of 21. I began to find a place on my own. I started out with a rough beginning, in a relationship with my ex-boyfriend. I began to find my peace, and that's when I found my comfort, my niece.

She was born in Cleveland, Ohio on November 3, 2024. My life changed for the better. My sister, Ti'anna, made the day unforgettable when she called to announce the arrival of my niece Leeonnie, a tiny new person who managed to steal the spotlight on my own birthday. The distance between us makes me feel sad that I am missing out on watching her grow up. I may be missing out on Leeonnie's moments right now, but I am holding on to what I have now.

My niece, Leeonnie, is a very special part of my life. She is sweet, playful, and full of imagination. One thing she loves more than anything is her toys. Leeonnie enjoys playing with her toys because they let her use her imagination. She likes to play with dolls, stuffed animals, and other fun toys that keep her entertained. She often talks to her toys and pretends they are real characters in her stories. This shows how creative and thoughtful she is. Another thing I love about Leeonnie, is how excited she gets during playtime. Her face lights with her favorites. She can spend hours playing, organizing, and making up games, which shows her creativity and joyful personality. She also loves to watch Mickey Mouse Clubhouse. Whenever it is on, she gets very excited and pays close attention. She enjoys the characters, songs, and sometimes pretends to be part of the show while playing with her toys, which shows how imaginative she is.

Overall, Leeonnie is a wonderful niece who brings happiness and laughter to my life. Her love for toys is proud of her playful spirit and big imagination. I am proud

to be her aunt, and watching her grow, learn, and have fun with the toys she loves.

I can't wait see her and we can make a teddy bear together and spend our birthdays together. She is already saying 'bye bye,' 'da da,' and 'mama,' and she dances a lot. She loves to go to her family's birthday parties to spend time with her other family members.

Leeonie loves going to church with her mom. She is in daycare and spends time with peers, friends, and teacher. Leeonie's mom will miss her while she is at daycare.

Fever Dream

by Anonymous

After a long and exhausting day in school, Onyx gathers her belongings and exits the building. Feeling overstimulated and completely overwhelmed about the day, she decides to go straight home and sleep away all of the academic stress and daily troubles. Eventually, she falls asleep peacefully only to wake up in an empty and seemingly endless forest. Confused about her current surroundings, Onyx gets up and frantically searches for any signs of human life or a possible exit. Suddenly the ground beneath her feet begins to rumble violently, and the trees began to twist and turn as if reality was starting to glitch, in a desperate attempt to survive, she aimlessly runs through the trees hoping to find a way out.

Never Give Up

by Pedro Rocha

Once upon a time, there was a group of teens. Their names are Payton, Bee, Eddie, and Micheal. They all lived in a house in Seattle, WA. They all designed the house themselves and added their touch to the house. Before the big boom, it's very dull on the planet Earth. Earth has no color on its plants and they barely grow. There is very little life on Earth after the big boom. It started as any other day during the apocalypse, killing zombies. Micheal calls them "no brainers." "It's the first winter after the Big Boom. It's Christmas time." Payton says. In the morning, they listen for other survivors out there in Seattle, but on the radio every time it comes up with empty static noises. Around noon-ish, we most likely head to the pizzeria, where our Monster pals Bozzie, Mozzy, and Bone hangout, and don't worry, they are on our side. We fought King Dutch together. King Dutch was the King over the monsters in Seattle. Our group hops in our blue, eight-wheeled Monster truck. Bee added minor touches to the Big Truck. We found it on a cool monster after we slayed Snallygaster, a reptile monster with wings. They arrived at the pizzeria, Ozzy, our big, gentle friend, and Bone shouts across the pizzeria, "My favorite monster slaying teens that defeated THE KING DUTCH!" Next thing you know, the ground and everything around us starts rumbling really crazy. We all look outside and see a new 40-foot, frost beast, AKA Marshmello. She's smashing and throwing cars across the Seattle downtown streets. Mozzy, Bone, and the allies that were with us at the pizzeria, join us. Marshmello has huge ice spikes running down its back, razor sharp teeth, and glowing blue eyes like sapphire. Bee made a new tool for the group. It's a bo staff that has a knife that electrically cuts through anything. We tested it before on a car and it cuts right through the car like butter. Eddie charges after Marshmello flings Eddie into a side of a brick building. He is hurt badly. Eddie yells for help. Mike rushes to help Eddie. Rat creature humanoids that are six

feet tall surround Mike and Eddie they are barely holding on. It is just Bee and Payton left to fight Marshmello Payton "I feel like I'm defeated, our time is up I feel like." Bee says. "Payton, come on dude. What is our group motto? No matter how hard anything is, never never ever give up." We literally have won against stronger and powerful beasts, like KING DUTCH for example, and bigger challenges during this Apocalypse." Payton grabs the electric bo staff sword that this weapon cuts through anything, even half a car. Bee distracts the gigantic beast Marshmello away from the injured members of our squad. Payton chases after bee she heads towards the huge propane company where this big propane tank is located at. Bee challenges marshmallow then attacks her quick and fast she "she ducks" and slices right through marshmallow's ankle. Payton runs and leaps towards marshmallow slicing its neck all the way across killing the huge beast comes crashing down slamming into the big propane tower then falling down on marshmallow setting up flame everything. Payton and Bee hug each other in big relief they walk injured back towards Eddie and Mike, Payton and Bee to help Eddie they all lift and put him in the big blue monster truck and going back to the hideout they all built together. Payton says, "What a crazy day today! Glad we all made it back." he says. Another day down Bee shouts, "Merry Christmas guys!" Then, they all chant loudly, "NEVER GIVE UP."

My Name

by Antonio Owens

Hi, my name is Antonio

But they call me Scooby

My dad gave me that name when I was born

My high school classmates called me that

because it is a name I liked

I got the name Scooby from the cartoon and my high school

I prefer the name Scooby Doo

My nickname has followed me all my life

Hello, My Name is Donisha

by Donisha Franklin

My name is Donisha Franklin
I'm named after my father, Donald Lee Haynes
I'm the third daughter out of four girls
All of the girls' names start with "D" after him
But I'm the oldest out of the bunch that my mother birthed
Two girls and a boy
I was not raised in a two-parent family
Although my father was full time in my life
Who is Donisha?
A full time mother to my siblings
I was a motherless child
Causes me to be the opposite
Of a Menace to Society!
I thrive to cling on to live
While grasping for air as I humbling
Pushing bittersweet love through my veins
I do understand why I feel the way I do!
But as long as the ending result
Have a positive outlook!
It would have justified the means
Who is Donisha?
A leader, timely, trustworthy person
With perseverance and integrity

My Name

by Kevine Shutshe Lufungula

Hi, my name is Kevine
But they call me Lufungula
My grandfather gave me that name
When I was born
Lufungula means a KEY, FUTURE
My name is Lufungula
A future in your hand
My name is Lusi,
That person who sacrifices all her life for me
Just because she wants me to have a better future
She always said
Lufungula, your name opens doors for you
Your name is your success
My name is Lufungula,
Wherever I go
God grants me victory
My name has followed me all my life

My Name Comes From

by Calvin Harrell

Calvin, carrying storms inside his chest
Calvin walks through days
That test the strength of his soul.
Amid the weight of struggle & quiet ache of pain
He still searches for light in the dark
Learning that every fall is a step toward rising again
In his suffering he discovers
The space where joy begins
Now his joy shines brighter
Because he has known the depth of the storm
And still chose to smile
Calvin !!

My Name is...

by Tina Poole

A daughter, a sister
And a student again
Like the nature I love
I've weathered the storm
With a spirit that's fierce
And a heart that is
My name means "Warrior"
And I've fought for my place
Raising 4 children with courage and grace
Now my grandchildren laughter
Is the son that I hear
A melody of joy
That keeps the light near
I've traveled through valleys
And climbed every hill
Paving the way with strength and family
I've tried to shine bright

My Name is...
by LaShawnda Graves

The L is for the two people that came together
The A is for that your eyes I graze into
When you think the apple
That you wish Eve didn't bite!
The S is sugar in the tea
You would like to sip on a nice summer day!
The H is for the Heavens you want to stay
The A is for the stars in the Atmosphere
You nor I have yet to see in the galaxy
Few scientists have yet to comprehend!
The W is for the very wind
That breezes the meadows
The N is for the New beginnings
Of each day the creator gives to you and I
And we all are blessed by each of us!
The D is for the Delight I bring to your yearn!
The A is the Alpha and the Omega
The I'AM the way the truth the light in You and Me

My Name's Ahmad shah Moradi

by Ahmad shah Moradi

My name is Ahmad Shah Moradi,
My father gave me that name,
I was born the day Afghanistan won the war against Russia,
Kicked out Russia out of Afghanistan
That time Afghanistan have one of the best leader
It's call Ahmad shah Massoud
He is one of the best warrior
And most of Islamic people in the world
They have Ahmad names

Family Branson Trip

by Timika Prince

Myself, my sister, my kids, my mother and brother-in-law on April 27, 2019, a Saturday in Branson, MO. Timika's phone got broken and my sister wheel on her wheelchair was broken off before we left Kansas City. We went to Branson for the weekend for my mother's birthday. First we got settled in the house and then we went to Walmart to get food and we made our own pizzas for dinner. My sister's best friend bought her a brand new wheelchair and sent it to Branson. My phone got fixed the next day at the T-Mobile store. In conclusion, me and the whole family did many different things that whole weekend for my mother's birthday, and we had so much fun celebrating my mom special day. We as family got up on Saturday morning to fix breakfast together. We ate then got dress for the day. The first activity we done was the amusement park. We all played games, rode rides and just had a good time together. We went back to the house and rested up and later that evening my sister, brother and my two daughters swimming but me and momma. I did put my feet in the water. The next morning was check out day at 12:00 pm. So we all got up and packed then we started our day by going to the Believe It or Not museum. After we did that, we went to the spaghetti restaurant, and we ate, and then we headed back home to Kansas City.

My Daughter

by Santisa Jones

My daughter, Tamika Jones. We moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota at the time this story took place when my daughter Tamika was 13 years old at the time. She wanted to come back to KCMO to live with my sister and her children at the time. I told her she could not ride the bus by herself because there was so much going on at the time. Tamika was very unhappy because she could not travel by herself. I set her down and let her know that we came together and we will return back to KCMO. When she got older, she was 16 years old when we came back to KCMO. She also thanked me for not letting her come on the bus by herself. My daughter, Tamika, finished school. She has six children that she is raising with her husband. They live out of town and she and the children come to KCMO to visit in the summer.

My Story Memoirs

by Amine Djouma

In his memoirs, Ali say the most famous line in cinema history: "I have always believed that upbringing is by example not by preaching." When I was young, I went with my father to see a circus show. We stood in a long line to buy tickets and in front of us was a family of six, boys, a mother, and a father. Poverty was evident on them and I was watching them closely. Their clothes were old but clean and their shoes were worn but tidy. The boys were extremely happy. Talking excitedly about the circus as if they had a long-awaited appointment with a celebration when it was their turn. The father stepped to the ticket window and asked about the price when the worker told him. The man stammered and began whispering to his wife with signs of embarrassment appearing on his face. At that moment, I saw my father take \$20 out of his pocket and drop it on the ground then he bent down, picked it up and put his hand on the man's shoulder and said you dropped your money. The man looked at my father with tears in his eyes and said: "Thank you sir." Then the family entered the circus. While my father took me by the hand and we retreated from the line because that \$20 he had given to the man. From that day on I have been proud of my father. That situation was the most beautiful show I have ever seen in my life. Far more beautiful than the circus show I never saw formally. Upbringing is, I never see this story before.

My Legacy

by Quincy Akins

I got up today, walked to school and I was running late to class. No one was in the classroom so I was going to go back home, someone let me know it had been moved to another classroom, so I stayed. I work on Math and Spelling to get my G.E.D. It is important to me, so I can further my goals in life and create a future for my kids and grandchildren and leave my legacy for the world to know my accomplishments and help me put myself in a great position to grow farther in any career.

My Story

by Bernadette Graves

Hello, my story. I live in Kansas City, Missouri. I have four daughters, four grandkids that's in the system. I don't know where none of them are, grandbabies all right, but I do have visitation right now with one of them today. I have three daughters. My oldest daughter is 43 years old, she have four kids, but their mother is an alcoholic. Her Grandpa take care of her siblings. I had to leave her alone because she always trying to boss me around so I don't go by there too much. My middle daughter has four kids as well, her kids have been adopted. My last though has no kids, but she is my caretaker. My oldest daughter, her dad, her auntie but back to bed. I did not raise my first daughter. I was 16 when I had her. When I had my first daughter, I ran away from home. I was living, my life was a living hell. I started drinking and doing. I was a rolling stone, wherever I lay my head, that was my home. Today, I'm so proud of myself, because the court sent me to this program called Safe Top to get my driver's license, and that when the miracle started happening in my life, because they're introduced me to Alcohol Anonymous. I had been going out and send the message to another suffering alcoholic. I am five years clean sober, and it happened during the pandemic. then they introduce me to Literacy KC School. Today, I go to Heartland on Tuesdays to share the message to another suffering alcoholic. I share it with meetings online and I do an encouragement line at school. I'm so proud of myself achieving, trying to get my GED, and I go share the message and pray the news about my education.

My Life Story

by Sam Bonnarens

I want to start out about my life. I was born in Washington, MO. When I was young my brothers, sisters, and I were taken from our mom and dad.

We were put in a different home away from each other. I was put in 21 different homes and I ran away from them. I would not let them keep me from trying to find my family. I did not like the people who took me into their home. I ran away from them. I was put in some group home. When I was 17 years, I stole a car. I was put in jail. Then, when I was 23, I went to prison for murder. When I got out of prison, I come to Kansas City, MO. Now I have place to stay with a roof over my head and have food to eat, a place where I learn about more stuff. I was homeless for a long time. Plus, I've got a job now, so I eat good and sleep good at night. I don't have to look over my shoulder. I'm very proud of myself. My bad habit for good habit. It makes me feel good to talk to people without hurting them. I'm proud to be out of prison. Now I can get my GED. Now I have a job. I'm proud of myself because I've got a job now.

Dead Sick Living

by Selah Cook

I am a dead sick of living around people that are alive. It is time for me to die, only the king of king will know. Am I in the hate group? Am I esau love? It is not easiest with me, I feel like I just do not qualify. Should I end my life? I feel like a zombie. I do not belong in this world, I wonder is my name written in the lamb book of life. You send, if you my shepherd, feed my sheep and God send. He is going separate the sheeps from the goats. I feel like I am one of the goats. I know we found down but when can I get back up again? I will just not qualify to get back up again. You send a good shepherd with noises of sheep but I am a sheep. I have never had a shepherd. I get I do not qualify, I am so stressed out, I think it's time for me to smoke a cigarette. I feel guilty saying that. When is my brain going to start working so I can start living? I cannot read but I do know the ten commandments, but people misinterpret the ten commandments. Jesus Christ send in John 8:58. Jesus christ said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you before, Abraham was, I am." In the ten commandments, it is like there is a principal and there is a vice principal. In the principle said you shall have no other Gods before me in the God name. It is Jesus Christ or Lord Jesus and you have to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ or Lord Jesus. It is the same name, we are living in the New Testament, but the vice principal will say you can be baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. That was good, but when Jesus Christ got on the scene and died on the cross for all sins to be forgiven that's when the new testament came along, and that's why we need to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ or lord Jesus. That's the only way. Any other way is a lie. The second commandment Jesus Christ, the principal, said you shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything but the vice principal. You can worship football games, singers, and actors and rappers and money. The third commandment the principal

said you shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God and his name is Jesus Christ, the king of kings, and Lord of Lord, the everlasting father, the prince of peace. The fourth commandment, remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy but Jesus Christ had broken the Sabbath day and heal somebody.

mark 1:29-31 mark 3:1-6 John 9:1-16 luke 13:10-17 luke 14:1-6 mark 1:21-28 John 5:1-18 matthew 12:10 mark 3:2 John 5:14 9:14-16 John 5:18 Exodus 20:18-11 genesis 2:1-3 mark 2:27 Exodus 31:13 luke 6:1-2 matthew 5:17 matthew 7:29 matthew 23:3

The fifth commandment, Jesus Christ said honor your father and your mother, that's the principal of the almighty God. The vice principal will say yes but wow, you are honoring your mother and your father, roll your eye at them, they will know everything you say by the look in your eye. Tell me everything you just said, by the rolling up of your eye. The sixth commandment, the person said you shall not murder but the vice principal said you shall not murder but you can hate your enemy. matthew 5:43-44: "So you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy."

Did you finish reading the sentences? But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. The seventh commandment says you shall not commit adultery. Do not have sex with someone you are not married to, the principal said, but the vice principal will say you can go to the bar then to the club and see somebody that is not yours. The eighth commandment: you shall not steal. That's the principal, but the vice principal will say let us raise up pastors and bankers. Pastors, all they preach about money, wealth and prosperity. Bring your sand and offer and you'll be blessed, you can pray after that and offer. I will tell you about grace after you tied, tell you about mercy after you tied, I will tell you about forgiveness after you tied. The preacher will sing a song if you want money, pay your tithes if you want to be healed, pay your tithes if you want to be debt-free, pay your tithes if you want the pastor, pay your tithes if you want to be saved today. Come on and pay your tithes and I will baptize you in the name of Father

and Son, Holy Ghost, baptize you in Jesus's name, but the preacher will not baptize you in Jesus Christ name or Lord Jesus. Name who is the real king of king and lord of lord.

1 Timothy 6:15 Revelation 17:14 19:16 Ezer 7:12 Ezekiel 26:7 Daniel 2:37 Deuteronomy 10:17 psalm 136:3

The ninth commandment is the principal you shall not give false testimony against your neighbor, but the vice principal will say, if you know something you do not have to testify to let somebody free. The tenth commandment is: you shall not covet your neighbor's house but the vice principal say you can try to break up the relationship. Exodus 20:17 Well that is the ten commandments.

Thank you for telling me, "hey, you ate the last cookie I hate you." Oh my God, is hatred a sin? There is nothing evil about hatred in and of itself. Hate can be a normal human emotion but it can be dangerous. If it's not accompanied by self-awareness and self-reflection, in Amos 5:15 say hate, evil, love, good, and establish justice in the gate. It may be that the lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph and John.

15:23-25 Matthew 6:5 proverbs 13:15 psalm 25:19 John 15:19 psalm 22:1-31 proverbs 15:1-16:33 1 John 1:6-2:23 John 3:20 psalm 119:104 John 3:16-17 1 Peter 4:8 1 John 4:7 Exodus 20:5 psalm 35:19 genesis 26:27 revelation 2:6 Romans 5:8 John 8:44 1 John 2:11 luke 6:27 1 John 3:14-15 proverbs 20:22 Matthew 24:9 Matthew 5:44 psalm 5:5 luke 6:22 Ecclesiastes 3:8 Ephesians 4:14-32 luke 6:27-28 1 John 2:9 psalm 101:3 levičius 19:17 Matthew 6:24 psalm 31:6 psalm 26:5 John 17:14 psalm 45:7 Roman 12:9 John 13:34-35 luke 14:26 psalm 119:163 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 proverbs 26:24-26 John 7:7 psalm 11:5 proverbs 10:18 Matthew 10:22 levičius 19:17-18 proverbs 6:16-19 1 John 3:15 John 15:18 psalm 97:10 proverbs 8:13 proverbs 10:12 John 4:20

All these scriptures is just telling you all about hate. "You get the last last piece of cake, I hope you die. I'm sorry I didn't mean to say I hope you die." Is hope a sin? Yes and no. I hope I can pass my test. Or you can say, I hope I can steal some of your candy, I'm trying to steal some candy and you keeping on giving it to me. You have just

experienced to me grace?

I am sorry, you cannot serve two masters. You cannot bow down to any idol. That means no idol of Mary or Jesus or another God. Jesus Christ said I am the Lord your God ,so don't make or worship idols or images.

Planet ComiCon Kansas City

by Wayne Phommathep

“In my thought.” I introduced myself to the Planet Comicon Event in 2015. I didn’t know what makes me decide to go. That was my first time entering there. I did not know where the ticket station office was at. I kind of accidentally followed the V.I.P. people around without letting the guards see the ticket badge. I got lucky the security guard didn’t look through me. I was surprised that I entered without paying for it. Once I walk in, “I feel very surprised and special what I saw.” There was a celebrity there too. I thought it was only for comics. I saw few Hollywood characters from the movie there. I went to the line waiting for photos and autographs. I have been waiting for 2 hours in line for it. Until then, I got there, I get to meet with one of the celebrity character that I know. Her name is Ming-Na Wen. She played the Mulan Character and she also play Chun Li from Street Fighter: The Movie in 1993. I was interested walking into her line. She was the first line I walk into. I shaked her hand and told her, “I was interested watching her movie Street Fighter.” I like watching Chun Li beating up on Bison in that scene. That was the part I like watching when they were enemy and team up to help each other to save the world out from Bison. She was very happy that I very enjoy watching her movie. Then later on I went to the photo booth and take a photo with her. I have spend \$60 for the photo and \$20 to get the photo. And I went back to her station area for the autograph and paid \$20 in the photo. She was happy she likes the photo. And I gave her a hug before I leave. What I did not like about, people was ahead of me in line half way when I got there. I wasn’t expect to wait for hours more. “But, I did.” I was patient enough to wait how long it takes to get to her line. And I glad I get to see her in the roster. I did find her line. Glad, “I enjoy it.” Next year I will enjoy seeing more of my favorite celebrity who will be in for Planet Comicon’s roster. And I can’t wait to see who else is coming. I will attend if

I see one of my favorite character come. I mostly attend only Friday or Saturday and that is the best day for me to go. This will be the good time for it. I been there 11 years already during spring time or summer of my entire life. How many celebrity I see, like 55 characters, all episode only and few hollywood actors. I went 3 times a year. I'm very interested about seeing my favorite on the wish list. Hope they come to Kansas City. I also hope they have a better price to attend for the Planet Comicon event upcoming next year. And I will see about it soon.

Here's One of My Favorite Memories

by Rochelle Holman

My daughter, Tarie, and I always have a conflict about my cake. It's a family tradition that was passed on by my deceased aunt about 30 years ago. Tarie always comes and borrows my cake pan, to cook her cake. I always let her borrow my pan, and tell her to return it when she's done. This is a special cake pan that was passed on by my aunt Dinah. Tarie doesn't like returning the cake pan, I always have to go get it. I always have to give my daughter advice, let her know that's a very special cake pan to me. A family tradition!!! I offered to give her money to buy her a new cake pan, but she always says "No thanks mother. I like that cake pan you have." So, I always have to remind my daughter, "Please make sure you return my cake pan." Tarie needs to be considerate of others and return my cake pan when I ask her too. Tarie also wants this cake pan that means so much to me. Coming from the heart of my deceased aunt. "It's a family tradition cake pan that lives on and on!!!!"

Cinnamon

by Jada Harris

Hi, today I will be talking about how I got my cat Cinnamon. She is DMH (Domestic Medium Cat). She is brown, black, grey and very fluffy. She's 4 years old and her birthday is April 16th. I adopted her from Petco around my birthday, which is April 22nd. I remember the first day that I got her and brought her home, she was very scared and confused about her new surroundings after. I let her out carrier, she bolted around the house and hid. That was kinda what I expected, so I just gave her space so she can get a little comfortable. As she hid I set up a corner space for her, after I finished I prepared to make her food. As soon as she heard the sound of the bag opening, she came out ready to eat. I set her food down, and she was a bit nervous so I gave her more space. I went to my room and left the door open just in case she wanted to explore more and get comfortable. When I least expected it, she came in the room and jumped in the bed and looked at me. She even got close and let me pet her, like a thanks for feeding me. From then, she wasn't so shy or nervous and got along just fine from there.

Thrivin and Survivin

by Quinn Hampton

Sitting in my room, trying not to think about despair and gloom. I'm attending GED class, and I will work hard and try to pass. I can't wait to get this done. It's a long process but it's fun. Sometimes it's hit or miss, but I ain't worried because I got this. I have thrived and survived. Life is like a rollercoaster. It has its ups and downs and hang on for the ride.

The Radio City Rockets

by Araceli Robles

The Radio City Rockets is a show that is presented every year in New York City on Christmas.

I lived in New York for a long time.

There are approximately 36 girls who dance at the Christmas show with beautiful acts and marvelous costumes and wonderful songs. There are multiple acts of percision where they change into different clothes. All the dancers look as if they are the same person. How amazing and stunning it was to view them as little dolls in the scenario. The music is live with an orchestra.

I liked to go, whenever it was possible at Christmas time. I was there many times. I was not tired of seeing the same show every year. It was very exciting since I bought the tickets until the day I was sitting in my place in the theater.

We waited for a few minutes, in order to see the beginning of the show. At that moment, I was expecting which act would surprise me the most. I no longer remember which choreography was going to be performed first. During the moment, I listened to the music I believed the act could be and I was watching the show as if it was the first time I attended. I liked their costumes.

I don't have any idea which act could be my favorite. I didn't move at all from my seat until half time. I watched without blinking, without fluttering, only enjoying every step, every sound, every movement, between the jazz, tap ballet that was done with perfect synchronization.

And because I lived there for many years, I walked the streets near Radio City and sometimes it was for work reasons. I was not a tourist. I am a person who enjoys the big city. New York is called The Big Apple, also The Melting Pot and others and is called that because there are people from all around the world. I could not finish talking about New York. There are many stories, adventures and I wish I can go back again.

Spades

by Jarrell Brown

One of my favorite card games to play is Spades. The card game Spades is easy to learn, requires a few people to play, and can make you rich if you play in tournaments. I was able to learn Spades by watching my friends play. You can also learn it by reading books. Spades only requires 2 people to start or up to 4 people if playing in a group. You can also go to tournaments and play and possibly win money. I plan on playing in tournaments and making money playing Spades, so I can become rich. Spades is an easy game to play and learn from. I believe everyone should learn how to play Spades.

Truth Be Told

by Delana Graves

Truth be told:

The truth is a matter of knowing what is real or not. When it comes to the truth, it is the first thing that comes to mind. You feel something different, let's you see that the truth is maybe an intuition. Now to me this is how the truth can be stretched into being fake. Maybe it can go far and make you wonder. Then it seems that it allows you to maybe drift off and want to disappear from the reality. Maybe just focusing on what was the first thought. This now makes it clear on why it can be the truth and what made it go so far and getting stretched. Not be as truthful and to moving on to more of a fact. So, true yet and still we have allowed our minds to relax and remain clear of getting the truth out loud.

Car Meet

by Lost

we arrived lights, flashing and music loud
we started to vibe and u could smell the rubber in the air.
u also hear the roar of the engine and down the street
was a food truck selling tacos. we were gonna go home
and as we hopped in the car, I get a text from my friend
saying there's a car meet 18 mins away
should we go

Friends

by Joyce Henderson

I have no problem making friends. What I do is sit and watch people before I even start to introduce myself. That's something I do, let people know that I'm a friendly person and they also do the same to me.

I just hate when they leave me by moving out of state. I have been to so many of my friends' funerals. I've also sat at their hospital beds saying my goodbye and telling them how much I'm going to miss them when they are gone. I don't attend the funerals, so I grieve all by myself, remembering the good, the bad, and the ugly. That is when I cry and laugh to myself. I do have a lot of good friends whom I talk with daily. Friends to me, they seem like family when we have become so close.

Life of Young Boy

by Farhad Ahmadi

Once upon a time, a young boy was so excited to go to a foreign country. He was away from the truth. His father and his friends always talked about how a good life will be in foreign country. One day his father decided to go to Australia for a better life for his son and family. He was happy to see his father going to Australia, but he never thought it's gonna be a lot of sacrifices for him and his family. And then 5 years passed but there was not any news of him and his family going to Australia, because at the time the Australian government made a new policy for people who wanna bring their families. It was not easy. So then they decided to go to Australia without his father's invitation. At that time there was only one way to go there. To be a refugee in another country before going to Australia. Then they went to a country to be refugees. It took him more than 8 years in that country. In those past 8 years he lost his childhood, friends, study and a joyful life as a kid. In the end of this, the kid lost his 13 years to be apart from his father, and the scarifices to be in foreign country made a young man before his age. Now he knows the truth behind foreign countries.

The Truth About Me

by Fred Elias

What's truth to me? Sometimes I stay to myself because I have trauma for getting made fun of and getting teased as a kid. I used to want to disappear from everybody. I got a little anxiety from that kid but over the years I got better with it.

Truth

by DW

The truth to me is honesty and nothing more, but the truth sometimes finds its way around and is stretched into something else. I remember times I was not where I was supposed to be but I made it. Death and disturbances hallowed the night as we moved swiftly. Truth, lies, and allegations can get you caught up in the heat of the moment, and all of a sudden your life is totally different. There's a big difference between truth and lies. The truth will set you free.

A Poem About Life

by Everton Walters

Sometimes I feel like I am not here.
My brain just keep drifting like I am
going through the motions like I am
seeking to capture every precious moment.
It's the moment of truth I keep pretend that I may
live forever even though I know that will not
happen. But I keep living and hope for the best
and to create a feeling of truth I was ask where
does my brain drift to

First Time with My Sister's Boyfriend and My Niece

by Darianne Soto Estremera

I am Darianne Soto Estremera. I am from Puerto Rico. I moved to Lee's Summit.

In December:

From December 23 to December 29, 2025, my sister and her boyfriend were in Lee's Summit.

Another sister, her husband, and my niece were there from December 23, 2025, to January 4, 2026.

We live in Lee's Summit. Five of us and two dogs. Of my two sisters, the younger one lives in Boston, and she studies at university. The older one lives in Puerto Rico. She lives with her husband and my niece and grandfather.

The day arrived to meet my sister's boyfriend and reunite with my sisters, my brother-in-law, and my niece. I felt happy and excited and nervous, animated and excited.

The day my sister and her boyfriend arrived, we ate and watched television, then we played cards. My other sister, her husband, and my niece, arrived late. My parents went to pick her up. They arrived, we greeted them and talked for a bit, then went to sleep.

On December 24th, we dressed up, went to church for a candlelight activity and sang, then had a meal, put on pajamas, and took pictures. We played the game, Phase 10 cards.

The next day we exchanged gifts, many positive things from each person, and then ate breakfast and prepared cookies and pie.

The last night we watched the game, and some people were baking cookies and pie.

Another day, we went to eat ramen, and my sister's husband ate chicken and salad. Then we went to the museum, called the Museum at Prairiefire in Kansas. We went to eat ice cream, then we went home.

Another day we sang to my niece for her 5 months,

and then we went to eat. My sister and her husband left my niece with our parents at the house while they went to eat at Culver's with me and my other sister. We ate chicken and potato bread with butter.

We had a sisters and my niece outing. We went shopping, and after the store, we went to a place to buy drinks and pretzels; the place is called Swing.

I went to the cinema to see Avatar with my sisters and brother-in-law. My niece stayed with my parents and sisters at home.

We visited our mom's friend at her house. We ate and talked.

We said goodbye to my sister and her boyfriend.

On New Year's Eve, my sister and her husband, my parents and I went to a daycare to celebrate a party, and my sister and her husband won a basket of baby toys.

That night we went to Lee's Summit, took pictures and had a video call with family in Puerto Rico, then went home to sleep.

Farewell and bye to my sister, her husband, and my niece.

I hope you like my story.

Food Family

by Elvia Bougher

My history is food. For me, my family likes cooking. I'm not too much of an expert on food, and am happy to eat together on the table. For me, this is important. My family, my grandchildren, sons-in-law—before, I did not do much. I did a lot of work. I failed to attend to them. Maybe some of you understand me because you are mothers. One wants the best for one's children.

What are chicken and bean tamales? They are my grandchildren's favorite. Pambazos, mole, menudo, cheese stuffed chiles, chicken, spaghetti, shrimp soup, and baked pork leg in the oven.

For My Kids When I Am Not Here: My Friends of Adventure

by Eva Perez

My name is “Mom, Mom, Mom,” every morning. “I need my sock, my food, my money.” It’s a party in my house.

I said, “Pray for the way. I will see you later. Put my dog, Vini, outside.”

I said, “Bye, Baby, I love you.” The door is closed. I never change this moment in my house.

Ok, the point is, never forget me. When you have problems, don’t feel happy, are sick, your heart is broken, or you are hungry.

Because in your body runs the blood of generations of a strong family. Never look back.

Never forget to pray in the morning, help other people, smile, hug, and say positive words.

When you need me, look at the moon at night or the flower on the table in your house.

Only say, “Mom, Mom, Mom,” and I will be there.

Maybe it will end.

I Love Outside

by Favor Ogunsiji

The leaves are green. The grass is growing. The children are outside playing. The sun is warmer. The flowers are changing colors. It must be spring! The weather is good. It must be spring. God is good. Favor is outside with her dog. Me and my dog walk outside. I like the weather. The tree is green.

Me and my family went to the beach. The weather was good. I feel good when I'm outside. The outside is fun. I like outside because it is warm. I swam in the water. The water was nice, but it was saltwater. Me and my sister like to swim at the beach with my family, and we have some fun. I like to swim because of the weather. I love outside because of the trees.

My mommy cooks in the rain. We watch movies while we eat. Me and my family enjoy the food.

Cream Chicken Recipe

by Floralba Diaz

1 block of cream cheese
4 poblano peppers
1 cup sour cream
1 onion
2 cloves garlic
Cilantro to taste
1 chicken breast
Salt and pepper to taste

To begin, char the peppers.

Roast them until well charred and place them in a plastic bag.

Leave them for 10 minutes after removing the skin, veins, and seeds, and slice them.

Soak the chicken breast in water with onion, garlic and pepper.

Shred the chicken breast and set aside in broth.

In a blender, combine the cream, cilantro, cheese, onion, and chicken broth, and blend.

In a skillet, heat oil and saute the sliced onion for 5 minutes.

Then add the blended mixture. Check the seasoning.

Let it cook for 10 minutes, and it's ready to enjoy.

In the Seasons

by Gisele Mariano

I like observing the seasons.
The seasons are very important.
I can be grateful for memories coming.
Each season has its own charm.

Spring is a celebration
Festival of colors
Festival of flowers
The butterflies dance

Summer is happy
It's hot
It's strong
Its beautiful green vegetation

Fall is charming
It's colorful
Its harvest time
Its fruits and gratitude week

Winter is unique
It's not to be confused with any of the other seasons
It has its beauty
Its charm
Love them!

Changing

by Maria Campos

Hello!

My name is Lulu. I am married, and I have three daughters, one of whom has passed. I decided to leave my country alone with my daughters to give them a better life. I decided to come to the U.S. because my country is also dangerous. My daughters didn't know any English. Just like me.

They struggled a little in the country with the language, among other things.

But thanks to God, and my sisters, I have support from them and from my nephews, nieces, brothers-in-law, and of course from their school.

Now my family is reunited again after five years.

My daughters now know English, and I am learning with an excellent teacher, Dylan Straughn.

He is very patient.

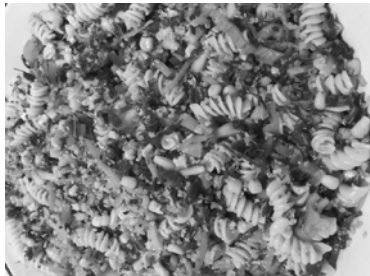
I hope to keep learning and moving forward in this country.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to learn with this program.

Fun Times in My Kitchen

by Najah Almajdoub

From a very young age, I would always watch and admire the way my mother prepared food. Her food was healthy, neat, and delicious. My mother always managed her time perfectly. Although I come from a big family, she always managed. She always found time to help us with all our schoolwork and make us a fulfilling meal. She was truly such an amazing woman. I always admired the way she organized and thoughtfully planned out her cooking routine. I learned from what she passed down and found myself copying her knowledge and skills in my own kitchen today. My mother was exceptional at making sweets. Back then, I never thought I would grow up to be like her because I did not like being in the kitchen. After getting married and starting a family, I began taking the skills I learned from my mother and introducing them in my home. Now my kids boast about how much they enjoy the meals I make for them.



My Shopping at Walmart

by Rawda

- A American supermarket.
- B Black pants.
- C Colors of clothing are nice.
- D Do you want a phone?
- E Expensive clothes everyday.
- F Friends together.
- G Go shopping with friends.
- H Happy.
- I In the store.
- J Jacket in beautiful colors and soft.
- K Know the price.
- L Like shopping in one month.
- M Men and women in the store.
- N No color shoes.
- O On the shelf.
- P Pants are big sizes.
- Q Quiet store.
- R Rawda goes shopping.
- S Supermarket.
- T T-shirt.
- U Under the shelves.
- V View all clothes.
- W Women's store, women's supermarket.
- X eXcellent clothes.
- Y Your colors are nice.
- Z Zero money.

The Real Story

by Milvian

This is my story. My name is Milvian Bermudez Garcia. I come from Cuba. I come from separated parents; maybe it's not the best story, but it is my story.

The system I grew up in forced me to emigrate, yet I think it was the best thing that could have happened to me. Being here helped me to value and understand many things I was previously unaware of. Here I also learned to be responsible and to uphold strong values; I have had to engage in dialogue with people of different religions and races, and I have gained an understanding.

Now, there is a simple question you might want to know. Before leaving Cuba, I held a different perspective than the one I have now. I served in the youth labor army, where I was indoctrinated with a misguided ideology; they lied to us, and they continue to lie to us today. They claim it is a system where equal rights exist, yet they do not even permit freedom of expression, and they arrest us if we attempt to voice our true feelings regarding the dictatorship currently in power.

Consequently—and as a direct result of this situation—Cubans choose to emigrate; such is my case. There is a severe lack of food—in other words, hunger—as well as unemployment and extreme poverty.

When I arrived in this country, I was welcomed with great care and attention; I received assistance, and they helped me secure a job. I am now able to provide my family with all the basic necessities, which gives me a profound sense of fulfillment. I hope that, in the future, my home country will change. I wish for a government like this one—a government where all people are free to express themselves and to choose who they want in power. Nations should be led by presidents who foster the development of their country's economy, healthcare, education, and freedom of expression.

Today, I aspire to attain a better education than the one

I previously received. I intend to improve myself and focus on learning other languages—particularly English—for the sake of my personal development. I wish to express my gratitude to the government programs that help individuals grow at no cost—free programs dedicated solely to the development, growth, and well-being of human beings.

Thank you very much to this program, and a special thank you to my teacher.

When God Wants to Make You Strong

by Roberto Rosales

Everything was white and happy: I played, ate, slept. I had no problems. We were all happy. Over time, everything changed.

One day, my dad didn't come home. The war started in my country. I am from El Salvador. It is a little country that you can cross in 4 hours by car. From one end to the other, it is 168 mi by 88 mi.

It is small but beautiful, because of its people, its beaches, its mountains, its volcanoes... its traditional food... It's incredible!!!

The change from peace and happiness to civil war... this war left a little over 100,000 dead in 12 years. You saw headless bodies in the streets and on the roads, like trees and plants.

That was a very sad time in the country. You had to know your neighbors, your parents, and your whole family well. Why did you look at bodies like you were looking at fallen leaves?

And if you lost a family member, you had to look at the bodies lying in the streets to see if it wasn't your relative. You had to know if they had any recognizable marks or signs, because you saw bodies without heads, without arms. You had to look closely at your loved one, at the type and color of clothes they wore when they left home, to be able to identify the dead. They were lying on sidewalks, in ditches, or in hospital morgues...

When my father disappeared, not only did my life change, but all of ours.

There was no longer any respect for my mother. Many who were supposedly my parents' friends even offered her money for sex, which she always refused. And these were the same people my father and mother had pulled out of poverty, helped feed themselves and their children when they were starving. It had become a race to see who could sleep with my mother; she became a widow at 25.

My mother's love for my father was immense. They would trick her by saying, "Ma'am, give me 5,000 colones (the colones were the currency in El Salvador), and I'll find your husband." Then another would come and say, "Ma'am, I have contacts among the terrorists. I need you to give me 10,000 colones, and we can enter their camp and see if your husband is among the prisoners." Because back then, if you didn't like someone and they owed you money you had lent them and didn't want to pay you back, they would go to the army and say, "I have information that my neighbor is a terrorist."

They would arrive at your house at night, kidnap you, and make you disappear. And if they knew a terrorist, they would give your name and address to the army. They would arrive at night and take you along an unknown route. You would never return home to play with your children or eat at the table with your family.

There is Not a Place

by Claudia Martinez

I still haven't gotten used to living without your scent,
not tasting your flavors, and not hearing your sounds.
Sometimes people say, "time heals all," but I won't allow
time to heal me for this beautiful suffering.

Although it is your memories that hurt, they are also
the ones that comfort me and bring joy to my life.

The land I left behind.....

The Path Traveled

by Basilia Hernandez

Through faith, great effort, and double shifts, I was able to raise my sons, preparing them academically to face life. The oldest is a mechanic professional; his name is Pavel. Bryant is the second, a truck driver, and the youngest is Harryson; he is studying graphic design at the university.

They were long days, with two or three jobs, I had to go on break to pick up my little son from school and take him to basketball practice. It was days of extreme exhaustion. So, after so much sacrifice, I feel satisfied today to have helped them embark on their own professional and spiritual lives.

I hope that everything I taught them will help them live to the fullest.

Thank You, God!!

The Black Decade

by Ghania Nour

In the 1990s, Algeria lived through a difficult time known as the Black Decade. It was days filled with fear as families were affected by clashes and violence, but the spirit of hope remained alive. Despite the pain, people held on to their country, and many built their futures anew with the hope that those days would never return.

The Grandmother's House

by Frida Vazquez Gomez

Grandmother's house is the place where many of us grew up. For me, my grandmother's house means love, color, food, comforting smells, safety, and the core of the family. I remember those days when I used to run barefoot through her large orchard, eating seasonal fruits like pomegranates, apples, pears, peaches, plums, walnuts, and many more. My grandmother used to make jams with those fruits; I still remember the smell of her kitchen, where no matter the time, there was always something to offer you. From my grandmother's house, no one leaves hungry!

Despite the delicious food, what really preserves its essence is her garden, which she always took care of with so much love. She used to talk and sing to her plants and flowers; maybe that is why they grew and bloomed so beautifully. My grandmother's garden, or as I call her, Mi Nita, was a labyrinth of deep greens and flashes of color. It was a place where the stone ground told stories, and each mud pot kept a secret that my grandmother cultivated with patience.

My grandmother's house is where time stopped so that her love would never stop protecting me. And although her hands no longer reach the branches of her garden, her soul continues blooming in every corner of her home. Every July, I return to reunite with her. I sit by her side so that her peace can heal me and to remind her that the garden she planted in my heart continues blooming.



Two Pieces

by Rasmia Hijaz

My Dream Comes True!

36 years! I don't know how it happened! My memories; always remembering my native country, Colombia, mi gente alegre y amable (my cheerful, kind, and happy people). The world's second-most biodiverse country, boasting the highest biodiversity on the continent with coastlines on both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, is the world's leading producer of emeralds and a coffee powerhouse.

The good and organic food and juices, his nature, etc. "My dream comes true," and finally visited. I miss my parents because they passed away; I cried from sadness and emotion. Many years were a surreal blend of nostalgia and reverse culture. While the familiar scents, sights, and faces of loved ones brought immense joy. I didn't feel like a stranger navigating a place that kept evolving without me. Bringing me both comfort and a strange sense of detachment. It was a profound experience of emotional contradictions, reconnection with family and friends, but feeling disconnected from the day routines I once knew.

The Beauty of Nature

Nature is everything around us. It provides beauty to our environment. Without the amazing gift of nature, human life would be meaningless. Nature is one of the best, most precious, and noblest gifts of God.

The rustling of leaves, the fragrance of flowers, the taste of fresh rain, and the warmth of the sun are all beauties around us! Nature is like a mother because it gives us food, fresh air, and shelter. Nature is what we see... the hill, the afternoon, the sea... is harmony. Time in nature is an essential investment in our health and our own. We

live on the most beautiful planet, Earth, which has a very attractive nature full of green. I love being out in nature; for me, this is the place to be. Where I feel peaceful, happy, and free.

The word “nature” has its roots in the Latin word *natura*, which means “essential qualities, innate disposition, and literally translates to ‘birth.’” Protecting nature is crucial for human survival because it provides essentials like clean air, water, food, and our mental and physical health. A nature lover can be called a “naturalist,” that’s me.

Nostalgia

by Maricruz Benitez

We all had a mother who taught us how to eat, walk, talk, and, above all, survive in the world we lived in, to move forward in good times and bad. A wonderful mother who maybe wasn't prepared—but who was? She taught us to persevere, to always see the positive side of life.

Now that I'm an adult, I think about how my parents managed to get ahead. We were many, and my parents still invited the whole family, friends, and neighbors to eat, because we were all part of the family.

And how can I forget my father, who worked daily with the sweat of his brow to bring money home so my mother could manage everything? My father, who never gave up in bad times, a father who, although we didn't see him much because of work, was and always will be admired and respected by all his children.

I just want to thank those two people for guiding us on the path of life. Maybe I didn't tell them as often as I should that I love them, but I know they know we admire and love them very much.



My Story About Learning English

by Marce Ramirez Solano

For a long time, I wanted to go to school and get an education. It was one of my dreams. A couple of years ago, I sent my youngest child to Kindergarten, then I started searching for a way to make my dream come true. One day, I saw an ad on the side of the road. I called the number, and I met with Literacy KC. For a long time, I tried to learn English by myself, but it was unsuccessful.

I remember my first day in class, I was scared, nervous, and shy. But before I went, I prayed a lot.

I said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." So I coped with all my fears, but I was never alone; the Lord helped me. I am so grateful to all the teachers who taught me with love and patience, since it was my first time attending a school. In my country, I didn't have the opportunity to study, but that doesn't matter; I'm here now. Teachers made me feel welcome. Coming here was like finding a family.

In conclusion, I want to tell you I don't know what scares you—maybe there's something you want to do, but you feel shy or afraid. My advice is to just go for it. Fear won't go away on its own; just tell it: "Get out of the way here I come." Let me tell you that I have learned a lot here, not just English. It hasn't been easy, but I enjoyed it; learning is fun!

My Special Wedding Day

by Maria Rivera

When I was 23 years old, I met a gentleman whose name was Jorge. He told me, “I will work hard because I want to marry you.” Our wedding was the best wedding. Twenty-five years later, sadly, he passed away. I had the best day of my life, and I had the worst day of my life a year ago. But God has been good. He gives me peace and strength.

My Mom, Concepcion Vazquez

by Sonia Veronica Cruz

My mom, Concepcion Vazquez, is a strong, brave, fun, loving, dancing woman of prayer. Her life has been a whirlwind. She was born on September 11, 1943, in the state of Chiapas, in the south of the country; she later emigrated to the state of Hidalgo, leaving her family behind to follow the love of her life (my dad). Upon arriving, she had to adapt to spicy food and a new circle of family and friends; her life changed completely. She endured the death of my dad in 2011, having spent a significant amount of time by his side.

In 2018, after applying for her visa several times, she was finally granted. It brought immense joy to both her and us. It was wonderful to see her again after such a long time. She has traveled several times alone and without knowing the language, seeking help whenever she needed it. As she puts it, "I make myself understood through gestures."

Four months ago (November 26), my brother passed away. He was her constant companion, the very reason she always wanted to return home quickly to Pachuca, Hidalgo. It has been an incredibly difficult time for her, but God has helped her through it, and He will undoubtedly continue to do so.

I thank God for her life and for her spiritual, physical, and emotional support. Eighty-three years old and, thank God, remains a self-reliant woman.

My Little Brother, Teacher Pepe

by Maria Cruz

My little brother, what times we shared as children, filled with laughter, fights, and games, and always competing in soccer, was the best? Of course, I always won.

As time goes by, I know that every word and every detail counts.

I never imagined you would leave first.

Your departure left a great void in my heart.

I cherished your phrase, "What is up, Mary?" spoken to me.

I cherished knowing that you enjoyed yourself and did what you loved.

I cherished your passion for teaching and playing soccer.

I cherished you saying, "I love you so much."

I know I will see you again, because it is a promise we have in God.

We will see each other soon.

I'm going to hug you very tightly.

My little brother, the good teacher, Pepe.

Two Pieces

by Paula Leynez

Moving is Not Just a Change of Address, It's a Life-Changing Event

I remember the day I left Mexico with a suitcase that seemed too small for all the feelings I had packed inside. I took a change of clothes, a religious image, and the most precious thing I had, a picture of my baby girl. With a mixture of hope and anxiety that doesn't fit in any pocket. I said goodbye to my mom, who just became a widow, and above all to my baby girl. That was the most difficult part. I remember the tight hug that I gave to her (*ese calorcito que despedía su cuerpecito*). She was just one year old. She didn't understand the reason why Mom was crying and hugging her so tightly. No matter how much I wanted to be strong, that feeling of uncertainty and that repeated promise (*pronto nos veremos*).

El Tiempo, Mis Ojos y Mi Madre

Cuando era niña, recuerdo que mi madre siempre estaba ocupada con las tareas y los deberes diarios. No recuerdo haberla visto sonreír.

Se levantaba antes que el sol asomara su luz, y desde el primer instante del día, su vida era un ir y venir incesante entre el mugir de las vacas y el olor penetrante del estiércol. Mi tarea era recolectar los huevos de las gallinas para el desayuno que ella preparaba con tortillas de harina recién hechas. El aroma de los frijoles refritos se mezclaba con el del amanecer.

A veces, en mis recuerdos más vagos, la veo horneando pan dulce en la madrugada o envolviendo tamales con manos ágiles. Siempre buscaba la manera de ganar un poco de dinero para darnos algún gustito. En algunas ocasiones, recuerdo a mi hermana salir muy temprano con una canasta de pan dulce o tamales humeantes para vender. Yo

me quedaba viendo a mi madre, preguntándome si alguna vez se detendría a descansar.

Siempre pensé que era de roca, por que nunca la escuche decir: Estoy “cansada”

Nunca la vi quejarse.

Sus manos, agrietadas por el trabajo; su espalda, encorvada por el paso del tiempo; pero sus labios, siempre en silencio.

Yo era niña y no entendía. Solo quería crecer rápido y escapar de la vida del rancho, dejar atrás las madrugadas frías y los días largos.

Ahora que soy madre, lo comprendo todo. Ahora comprendo su silencio, el peso de cada día, el sacrificio de su juventud en favor de nosotros.

La vida nos juega una trampa cruel. De pequeños queremos crecer de prisa, pero cuando el tiempo nos alcanza, queremos, queremos detenerlo. Antes solo miraba el cansancio ajeno con prisa, hoy lo entiendo con amor. Hoy comprendo su fortaleza y su ternura escondida.

El tiempo no perdona, pero hoy veo a mi madre, y la veo cansada. sus manos tiemblan, su cabello ha perdido el color, y sus ojos... Esos ojos que antes parecían de acero, han perdido su luz de vida por culpa del glaucoma.

Ahora que soy mayor, soy más consciente.

Desearía que el tiempo se detuviera. Que no siguiera robándole la fuerza, salud, ni sonrisas. Quisiera que, aunque sea en estos años tardíos, pudiera sonreír sin la carga del ayer.

Quisiera devolverte algo de lo mucho que me diste.

Quisiera que mis manos te cuiden como tú cuidaste las mías.

El tiempo me dio la sabiduría para comprender. Y gracias a ti, madre, también aprendí a ver con el corazón.

A veces me pregunto si me recuerdas como yo te recuerdo. Que al igual que yo tú recuerdas esa niña que no le gustaba ayudarte o si recuerdas mis risas, mis pasos apurados detrás de los tuyos. Y mis silencios.

Hoy lo único que le pido a Dios es la oportunidad. De volver a verla para mirarla y decirle cuánto la amo. Para

rodearla con mis brazos, aunque el tiempo nos haya cambiado a las dos.

Aunque solo sea por última vez.

A ti mama:

Aunque el tiempo y la distancia nos haya separado, mi amor por ti no ha cambiado.

Vives en mis recuerdos, en mi piel, en mi manera de amar a mis hijas, porque todo lo que soy lleva tu huella.

Estos pequeños recuerdos son mi forma de abrazarte desde lejos.

De agradecer en silencio todo lo que hiciste sin pedir nada a cambio, y de decirte, aunque sea en palabras, TE AMO, TE EXTRAÑO, Y TE LLEVO CONMIGO TODOS LOS DÍAS.

Ojalá que Dios me permita volver a verte, para cerrar ese círculo de amor que nunca debió interrumpirse.

Con todo mi amor, tu hija que nunca dejó de ser niña.

Life of the Party

by Maricarmen Ibarra

I am proud of my husband's family; every family reunion is a party. We joke, we laugh, we show affection, and, of course, we eat a lot.

My brother-in-law is very special; he is always joking and happy, and he always makes us laugh. One week ago, he had to be admitted to the hospital due to heart problems. His condition was serious, he was in intensive care, and many families came from Mexico and Texas to see him. And it was his birthday.

After we sung the Feliz Cumpleanos to my brother-in-law in the hospital, he said with great difficulty, because he could not speak due to the medication, "no entiendo que cantaron," sing in English please, but we know he was joking because he doesn't speak or understand English, and our laughter broke the silence in the hospital room, so he made us sing again in English. This is the family memories that I remember in Mexico life, where all family was together.

Despite the situation, he was the life of the party again. The family love heals illnesses, but he has been a healer his entire life. So it was an unforgettable moment for our whole family.

Immigration Life

by Mouna El Farasy

Immigration life is not easy at all. When you change your native country to a different country, you have to put in your mind that you will start from the beginning, especially if you don't speak the language. For me, it's more like you will start learning stuff like a baby. Babies are sweet when they say something wrong, but when an adult says something wrong, it sounds weird.

When I first arrived in Kansas City, I was shocked; life and people are completely different. Life here is so busy that you don't see people talking outside or kids playing soccer in the neighborhood. I remember my first day here. I woke up early, and the first thing I did was open my balcony door to look out and explore my new life. I didn't see or smell anything, it was only some cars in the parking lot and some squirrels jumping over the trees. In Casablanca when I opened my window I smelled fresh baguettes and a lot of different food smells. I saw people walking, some of them running to reach the bus or a taxi to work... kids are walking to school with their parents or by themselves if they were bigger. I was living in a popular neighborhood where you didn't even need to drive to buy fresh milk or croissants for breakfast.

At that time, living there, it was very normal for me, but after living here for more than a decade, it was very noisy for me when I went there to visit. Life here is very challenging and stressful. You have to work a lot to pay all your bills and taxes if you want to provide a good life for your family.

Here you can make your dreams come true if you are a hard worker; here it's never too late to do what you want. Most of the people here are nice and helpful, exactly like where I came from, good people and bad people everywhere.

Now my life has changed completely, I'm not looking for people from the window anymore. I know where and

how to get my fresh baguette. I have two kids, and they are so sweet. I love them a lot, they make my life sweet and busy. I'm so busy with work too, I'm trying to balance work and my family. It's not easy when you don't have family to lean on, but I still have many dreams to achieve in my life.

People, lives, cultures, religions, and colors are so different in the end, all humans have the same feeling, all that we wish for humanity to live in peace and safety, and it doesn't matter who you are or how you look, just do your best to leave a good effect.

Two Poems

by Ekta Patel

I Remember

I remember my country's fruit, food, cultural traditions,
clothes, festivals, and my school dances.
I remember festivals like Diwali, Holi, and Uttarayan.
I miss going to my school dances.
I like my country song, and I remember the God prayer
that I was singing.
I liked my country's restaurants.
I remember a clothes shop where I bought many clothes.
My country's food is very delicious and spicy.
The people are very helpful.
I love my country, and I like my country.

A Visit to the Park

Last Sunday, I went to visit the park with my family.
The weather was pleasant, and the sky was clear.
The park was full of green trees, colorful flowers, and
fresh air.
I saw many children playing on swings, slides, and
seesaws.
It is an open place to relax.
I ate ice cream there.
I took some pictures.
Some people were walking.
There was a big fountain near the pond.
So I like going to parks.

Flavors and Colors

by Juan Carlos Herrera Martinez

In my mind, it seems like I just arrived in this country. I miss the flavors, colors, and aromas from Mexico. How can you not miss your family? I can't forget the flavor of a taco carnitas accompanied by my parents and siblings. The flavor that remained was not only good, it also tasted even better because I was with them. I can't forget those colorful stalls in the open-air market full of so much life that when they come to my mind, they make me feel melancholic. The friends and places I frequented seemed so ordinary when I was in Mexico.

Being so far from home, everything I experienced during that time now seems so special, not just because of being in a country where not only does language change, but the flavors and colors will never be the same again, because of being so far from home. I didn't realize that it wasn't just the food or the colors that made those memories. They will be etched in my memory forever with my family, sharing a unique moment filled with laughter and conversation. Although sometimes I feel nostalgic about that time, I know I'm going to make it worth being away from them.

Families and Time

by Earm Nou

It seems that people around the world are spending more time at work or alone and less time with their families and friends. In the past, in my country, Cambodia, the father worked, and the mother stayed home, took care of the children, did the food shopping, cooking, and cleaning. Nowadays, both parents work, so they both have to do the shopping, cooking, and cleaning in their free time. Therefore, parents don't have as much time with their children as they used to.

These days, many children come home from school alone to an apartment or house. Many children spend hours each day in front of the television. Even when families are together, it is common for family members to do things on their own. For example, they watch programs on separate TVs in different rooms, use the internet, talk with their friends on the telephone, and do other individual activities. Thanks to technology, people can communicate with their family and friends who are far away, but sometimes they don't communicate as well as before with people in their own home. People are busier than ever before!

Blessings

by Halima Khedher

Last year, I wrote about the love of parents, both father and mother. No matter what we do for them, it's impossible to ever repay even half of what they have done for us. Indeed, they are the greatest blessing one can have, provided they are still with you.

The second greatest blessing is good health, particularly as you enter your forties. At this age, you become far more attentive to your well-being: eating healthy, exercising, and surrounding yourself with family members and close friends. Always strive to be joyful and cheerful and steer clear of anything that causes you anxiety. Engage in activities that provide you with positive energy, for instance, joining charitable organizations or volunteering at animal shelters or homes for the elderly.

As for me, I have a deep passion for gardening, specifically the cultivation of flowers and aromatic plants such as rosemary, thyme, mint, and basil. Furthermore, gardening is a highly beneficial activity that seamlessly blends physical well-being and leisure; it effectively reduces stress, elevates one's mood, and enhances mental focus. Moreover, it offers distinct environmental benefits by expanding green spaces and making productive use of balconies and terraces .

Finally, I wish you a life overflowing with vibrant health, lasting happiness, and wonderful moments. May you be surrounded by positivity, strength, and joy in all that you do.

When You Think All Hope is Gone, Trust and Believe in God

by LaChawn Davis

On September 8, 2022, I lost my mother to a brain hemorrhage. My mother was a loving and caring woman that loved hard. So as her life expired, my mother was still being a blessing to others. She was a lung and liver donor. She saved three lives. This was the most devastating day of my life, especially being the only child.

My mother's death took a toll on my mental and physical being. All I wanted was my mother back. It didn't matter what anyone, said or did, it couldn't bring back my mother. I went into a deep, deep dark depression that only God could bring me out of. It lasted almost three years! Through it all, God was keeping, and I started to regain my relationship with God.

Last year on my mother's birthday, I wanted to have a balloon release for her. My mother would have been 69 years young. I was so emotional with little or no family support on her day. I never had the balloon release on her birthday, so I decided to do it the next day on December 8th. I was feeling up to doing it. My husband and I got up to go to Dollar Tree to get the balloons. As we were ordering them, my phone rang, and it was the Transplant institute asking was I ready to pack a bag. I replied, "H@#\$ yes!" I went into an extreme panic mode, and told the clerk that I no longer needed the balloons. So, we left the Dollar Tree, went home, and packed a bag to go to the hospital to get my kidney!

Surgery went well. All I could think was that God gave my mother the best birthday ever; her one and only child a kidney so that I could continue to love life to the fullest. Through it all, I still couldn't see or feel happiness without my mother. God continued to show me that just because she wasn't here in the flesh, she was still living in my heart.

My second born son and I had a strained relationship and it was not a good place to be in. So, I continued talking

to the Most High as I was healing through it all. I then get a call from my son. He stated he had something for me. I couldn't imagine what it could be. My son arrived holding a blue tin cookie can with my mother's mementos. I broke into tears, fell to my knees, hollering and screaming by giving all praises to God. It was like life was put back in me. So I got up, hugged my son, and we cried in joy; just laughing as opened it to see what was inside.

We were R O T F L O B O. So now, I'm on a journey to make my mother proud and to keep her name alive. I have now started adding to the can with more stuff so this could be a memory of my mom and myself someday.

Spring of 2024

by Talia Lopez

I thought I had my life figured out at 19. I was working. I loved the way I looked. I had many people I loved and had the attention of others. I loved all of it. I worked at Amazon and was there with my best friend, Ashley. I had been there for about 2 years and lived 5 minutes away.

It was near October or November of 2022 and I was living in an apartment building with my mom and my younger sister in Grandview, Missouri. The work environment was easy, calm, and it was my daily routine. I worked nights, so it was cool, until my mom broke the news to me that we were moving to Independence, Missouri. I was confused and my first thought was why? After I just got this job, why? We moved quite far, like 20 minutes away. Anyway, I thought it was far away. It was hard for me to get rides, so I mostly Ubered.

I was still friends with Ashley. My household was very toxic. I begged my mom to take me to Amazon every day. Work was my escape. Two years later and it was now 2024 in April. I couldn't take it anymore after I fell out with Ashley. I had to resign due to the distance from the job. Now, I had no money, no friends, and no one to talk to.

It first started out small. I was drinking when I was going to work before I quit because it made me very happy. It was a daily routine: wake up, drink, go to sleep, drink, eat, drink. Like I said, I lived in a very toxic household. I didn't know how to drive; I felt stuck. I was very depressed. It got to a point where I was angry all of the time and had arguments with my sisters while I was drunk. I was also stealing alcohol from my parents. Around that time, I actually did have one friend. His name is Ardele. I messed up my friendship with him after I kept begging him to get me alcohol. It was very intense, I needed it so bad. It was my escape.

On a random Monday, I was very drunk and decided I needed help. I was on the phone with a worker who worked at a place called Amethyst, a rehab center. They

talked with me and I was scared. I had to get on a plane and go all the way to Florida by myself at 19. It was my very first ride on a plane, and my first time traveling anywhere. I also didn't tell mom or anyone else I was going. I just left. I was hesitant and actually bailed out the first time when I got to the airport, but Amethyst kept calling me. They wouldn't leave me alone. They knew I needed the help, or they just wanted my insurance money, but either way they convinced me and I flew to Florida.

It was very nice. Once I settled in at the rehab, I liked it a lot. They made a lot of good food and I got to drink and eat a lot of soda and ice cream. I made a lot of new friends there. I stayed at Amethyst for a month. After that, I went home; a home I didn't want to come back to, but I was okay. I stopped drinking, so that made me happy. Now I'm here working my life out.

Sidnea's Table

by Sidnea Shelton

Sidnea stood in front of the door, her hand hovering just inches from the handle. The sign above her head—Sidnea's Table—was freshly painted, the letters still smelling faintly of varnish. She had imagined this moment for years, but now that it was here, her stomach twisted tighter than any knot she'd ever tied in dough.

Inside, the restaurant was quiet. Too quiet.

The tables were set just right. The napkins folded into perfect little fans. The kitchen gleamed like it was holding its breath. Sidnea took one step in, then another, her shoes echoing softly against the floor. "This is it," she whispered.

Cooking had always been easy for her. Ever since she was young, she could take a handful of simple ingredients and turn them into something that made people pause, smile, and sometimes even close their eyes. But opening a restaurant? That was different. This wasn't just food—it was a risk. It was everything she had saved, everything she believed in.

A sudden knock broke her thoughts. Sidnea turned. A man stood outside, glancing up at the sign, then back at her. He gave a small, uncertain wave. "We're... open," she said, though her voice barely carried. He stepped inside, looking around with curiosity. "First day?" She nodded. "Well," he said, pulling out a chair, "Then I guess I'll be your first customer."

Something in her chest loosened. Sidnea hurried into the kitchen, her hands moving on instinct. She didn't overthink it. She didn't try to impress. She simply cooked—letting the rhythm guide her, just like it always had.

When she brought the dish out, she hesitated before setting it down. "It's... my favorite," she said. "I hope you like it." The man took a bite. Then another. He leaned back in his chair, smiling in a way that felt honest and unforced. "You didn't just open a restaurant," he said. "You opened something special."

Sidnea looked around her space—the once-silent room now holding the beginning of something alive. Outside, a few more people slowed as they passed, peeking in. For the first time that morning, Sidnea didn't feel afraid. She walked to the door, flipped the sign from 'Closed' to 'Open,' and let the world come in.

My Journey to Becoming the Responsible Person That I am Today

by Aaron Albright

Hi, my name is Aaron, and I'm from Independence, Missouri. I spent a lot of my time there except for a few years at a couple other locations within Missouri. This is a bit of what I'd like to share from my childhood, and about what it was like grasping a sense of responsibility within my youth. I'd like to start my story from the beginning, based on what I can remember, keeping it brief with me and my family from whenever I was young and when I was growing up. :)

From as early on as I can remember, my mom was struggling as a single mom of three kids: trying to do what she could for us while working, getting us to school while encouraging us to find hobbies and expand our interests. She was always making sure that we had everything we needed to keep us occupied while she was at work. She would work from home to pay for the things we would need such as rent and food.

So, she would be busy most of the day. We always liked playing with toys, playing games and watching movies. We went on to live in Kansas City for some years until we had to move and change schools. Mom went through a lot of difficulties, and through the years, prior to me learning a somewhat sense of responsibility, all I felt like I did (looking back) was to complicate things a great deal and add to these problems in some way, shape, or form. I was reckless, rebellious and was very dangerous as a child. I liked playing with fire in the house which resulted in me actually starting a fire on multiple occasions. I was also rough and did not-so-good things outside of the home as well, like getting into things that I shouldn't have. When I didn't fear what my mother would do to me, she'd call my uncle over, who would end up disciplining me for this. Eventually they would help me conquer this by encouraging responsible behavior and rewarding that behavior, which I learned and

adapted to over the years.

I became more responsible by taking on more responsibilities around the house, and realizing that what I had been doing was really childish. So, eventually growing up with the help of authority figures in my life into my teenage years, finally getting my first job, which was an internship at the Library, I became very thankful for those authority figures over the years teaching me what responsibility was. I am happy that I am able to heed to what they taught me. And that's about it for my short story.

My Sisters, Paula and Telissa and Me *by Lillian Taylor*

When I was a little girl, about six years old, my sisters came to visit me in San Bernadino, California.

My father told me to take them to my room to play.

I didn't want to let them play with my toys, so my sister, Paula, told my father on me. He told me to stop being selfish. My father was being hard on me, so I became rebellious. He told me that if I didn't share my toys, I would not get any more toys or clothes.

So, when I went to Kansas City, Missouri to visit, my mother would comb my hair and dress me and my sisters up. I would get so mad because she would dress them up in my clothes.

When I was 12 years old, I went to Kansas City, Missouri again to visit. My mother told me to share my things. So, I combed my sister Telissa's hair and dressed her up in some of my clothes. I asked my mother if could we go downtown. When I was 14 years old, I learned to share with my sisters and not be so selfish.

My Favorite Childhood Memory

by Antoinette Parsons

When I was 12-years-old, our classmates would take a field trip to Worlds of Fun.

Every year before school was out, we would pair up with our best friends, spend the whole day together while riding as many rides as we could, and eating as much junk food as we could. The amusement park was so crowded because we were not the only school there.

So, we would have the rivals from the basketball teams and the baseball teams. So, it was a little rivalry going on and a little trash talking. I grew up going to Catholic Schools, and there weren't many black students at that time. So we were a very close knit group of kids. We looked after each other, so if one of us kids didn't have money, we would chip in and help each other out.

We would eat so much candy and hamburgers that we would feel sick, but in a good way. This was the most fun that I had in school, and every year I looked forward to the Worlds of Fun field trip.

Memories of an Empty Bottle

by Quita McAlester

I remember it like it was yesterday!

But before I get into it, let me tell you a little back story about myself. I'm the second oldest of 6 children, 4 girls and 2 boys. The boys are the youngest. My oldest sister is special needs, and I lost my baby brother 4 years ago to mental health. I was raised in a single parent household. My mom was my mother and father, and she ruled with an iron fist! She was big on respect; there was no such thing as huh or what in her house, only yes, yes ma'am or no ma'am.

The neighborhood kids loved my mom, but I thought she was crazy and mean as hell! Aunt Ninnie is what everyone called her and our house was the spot! Everyone gathered there, family, friends and all. Kind of like "Big Mamma" from the movie Soulfood but just the younger version lol.

My mom liked to party a lot, so I had to grow up fast because, once my mom was introduced to drugs she became what I called a functioning addict. I say that because she always made sure that we were safe and never put us in harm's way.

There are a lot of struggles and stories that come along with this that I could share, but it would take a while to get through them. Early 2010, my mom was diagnosed with several chronic illnesses; COPD Stage 3, congestive heart failure, and hyper pulmonary (high blood pressure on the lungs), which was the most severe. She had to cut out everything or die! My mom stopped everything cold turkey. Was it easy? No. Not by far, but she wanted to live for her kids and grandchildren. So, she had to find something to help her cope. She put down one habit and picked up another; shopping and binge- watching movies on Netflix, even the ones with subtitles! My phone rang one sunny day, and it was my mom on the other end. I could hear the excitement in her voice "Hey baby what are you doing when you get off, are you coming over?" she says. I

responded “Yes, why what’s up?”

“I have something for you and your sisters and I know you’re gonna like it!” I said, “Ok, what is it?” She did not tell me, so, let’s just say, I made it to her house in less than 2.2 hours when I got off. As I walked in the door, there she was all smiles, sitting up in her bed. “Close your eyes and open your hands,” she said with excitement! I did as she said, like a giddy little kid! I then opened them when I felt the box in my hands. To my surprise it was this bottle of perfume, (the other gifts were necklaces for my sisters).

My smile went from 32 teeth to my mom saying, “What, you don’t like it? I thought that you would because that’s what you showed me on TV a while back.” My mom loved watching QVC. “No, I do like it momma, but dis ain’t Juicy Couture. Dis is ‘Just Fashion Pour Femme. A dupe!’ My mom responds back, “I know that sh@* was high, so I got the next best thing!”

We both just laughed out loud together. She proceeded to say, “You can give it away if you like,” but she knew I would never do that. So, I just started using it as a room spray. And now that it’s gone, I just can’t bring myself to part with the empty bottle. I lost my mom May of 2018 from her illnesses, and parting with the bottle would be like losing her all over again.

Legacy of a King

by Kierra

The story takes place early Summer, the year is 2022 in Kansas City, MO.

That last summer, before the world divided them into different directions, Da-Da moved through each day like he knew it was already becoming a memory. Multiple wins under his belt in boxing. Freshly just graduated high school. Da-Da laughed louder than usual based on the sound of his family laughing and dancing. BBQs at his house were always the best. The familiar rhythm of home, because somewhere deep down, he understood that this was the last time life would ever feel this simple, this close, and this complete. Da-Da felt the tension building with every perfect day, the kind of summer that begged to be lived without restraint, and the quiet, persistent pull of everything waiting for him beyond it. His brothers wanted one last stretch of freedom, nights that blurred into mornings, no plans, no pressure. The conflict wasn't just about time; it was about identity. Was he still just one of the brothers, or had he already started becoming someone else?

That summer, the four of them, Da-Da, Mikah, Satae, and Ta'waun, moved like a single unit, bound by years of growing up together and the quiet understanding that time was running out. Satae was the steady one, always keeping things grounded when the others got too reckless, the glue that held everything together. Ta'waun brought the energy, pushing them into spontaneous plans, bro's night, last-minute kickbacks, and pop ups for sure. Mikah, quieter but sharp, saw everything; only his brothers could get him lit.

The summer before Da-Da prepared for college, they had long conversations on the porch about where they were headed and what they were afraid of leaving behind. Da-Da, caught between responsibility and freedom, found himself leaning on each of them in different ways. Mikah reminded him he didn't have to carry everything alone.

Satae made sure he knew the streets had no place for him and to always show grandma, his momma and aunties respect. Ta'waun helped him see that change didn't mean losing who they were, it just meant growing into it.

With summer coming to an end, Da-Da stopped trying to choose between responsibility, and living in the moment, he sat down with Mikah, Satae, and Ta'waun on the porch and told his brothers he was going to become the greatest he could be and that he was going to bring their family generational wealth. Mikah reminded him that he would be graduating next year and they would be attending University of Louisiana together, side-by-side and through thick-and- thin. Satae made it clear he was just a phone call away, to stay focused and don't give up. Ta'waun reminded him that taking care of his future didn't mean abandoning his present, to just go do his big one and that he was proud of him.

Standing with his brothers, Da-Da realized the conflict had never been about choosing one life over the other. It was about learning how to carry both, and he was finally ready. The theme of this story centers on the importance of not taking time or people for granted. The moments we assume will always be there often don't last. This story highlights the need to be present, to say what matters, and to make sure the people closest to you know they are loved and valued. In the end, it's not just about memories, it's about making sure no one leaves your life without knowing you are proud of them and grateful they were part of your journey.

Long Live Daquan Ayers

Learning How to Cook from My Mother

by Denita Jones

My mother was a great cook. I picked up the love of cooking from her. It was not an easy road. It took some BURNING before I made it to where I am now, a GREAT COOK like my mother.

It started when I was 10 years old. I guess part of the lesson went over my head about paying attention to the food while it was cooking. That's where the burning came into the play. I was also in a big rush to get everything done as soon as possible. This was definitely a recipe for disaster!

My mother, being the great teacher she was, kept with me so that I learned to take my time with cooking. This involved turning down the burner and staying- in the kitchen while the food was cooking. I took note because I cannot ever remember my mother ever burning food.

So, fast forward to today, and you will find an excellent cook. I am requested to cook for the church and also for repast dinners after funerals. I put my whole heart into it, which is why many people make requests for some of my specialties. I can cook a little or a lot and not one morsel is burnt. So, as I learned, from my mother, the key is PATIENCE if you want to cook without burning food.

For the Record *by Cortney Hall*

I grew up listening to all types of genres of music: R&B, Country, Gospel, Old School Pop, Rap etc... Until this point, I still do not have a favorite, but found that I have a talent and crave for Hip/Hop. It is the one in which I've accomplished great talent and drew my inspiration from while growing up.

As a born and raised resident of Kansas City, Missouri, a list of my favorite rap groups or icons are Pure Dope, Tech Nine, and Young Rich The Factor. HKB a.k.a Sauce Baker, one of my brother's best friends who lived down the street, was a mentor to me in rap. He also created beats, had a creative lingo, and is also Eddie Griffin's brother-in-law. Eddie Griffin taught me how to break dance along with other friends Bago and Dar. Those were the days!

My first performance was at a family reunion in Detroit Michigan at the age of eight along with another one of my brother's best friends, Domico, who beat-boxed during the event. My brother, Cedric, and I were the lyricists; everything went well obviously from the crowd's reaction of love and applause. It was wonderful while being surrounded by friends and family. Till this day, I still interact with developing music, and hope to become a music producer known for my talent in the industry. It takes lots of effort and dedication towards networking to build a reputation on many different platforms.

I've been in several groups (labels): for starters, Lyrical Mafia, second, Players Association, and next with Hygiene until I created a solo album called Distilled G.N. At the age of 17 in 1996, while I was in the group Players Association, we were the opening act for Young Rich the Factor at the National Guard in Kansas City, Kansas. During the development of the album, Hygiene performances were staged at Madigra's downtown in Kansas City, Missouri, Club Crome on Highway 40 during K.B 's birthday bash, and several other places.

I can also be found on YouTube: Players Association Kansas City, Kansas. There are two songs, one Player in Me, and another, Only the Strong Survive. Also, I have been featured on Kneehi Entertainment on eighteen of twenty songs. You can find four of them on Soundcloud.

Bailey Kills Bambi

by Donald Heckman

One sunny summer day while I was on vacation for the week of my birthday, it was a birthday I will never forget. My dog Bailey wanted to go outside to go potty. I made the mistake of opening the back door without looking out the window to see if the coast was clear or not—see we have deer that wonder the property sometimes that will get into the backyard. You see, the backyard was her domain, an area that she is very protective of, and she doesn't want anything in her yard!

On this day, I let her out and there was a large deer roaming in the backyard. She went nuts! Running, barking, squealing, and chasing after this deer, which was much bigger than her. You see, this deer was 3 1/2 feet tall and Bailey was only 1 1/2 feet tall, but she didn't care. She ran out of the house like a rocket and chased the deer around the backyard, scaring the deer so badly that it tried to jump over the fence. Unfortunately, it landed right into a tree branch hanging over the fence. The fence was covered with vines and was surrounded by trees but had trails the deer had traveled through.

This is where a funny event turned tragic. Here I was cheering for her to chase the deer out of the backyard. I was thinking that it had an open path out of the yard, but it didn't. It tried to leap over the fence but smashed its head against the thick tree branch. I thought it just knocked itself silly, but the poor deer was hurt! I felt horrible, sad, and sorry that it was hurt by trying to get away from Bailey. I got her back in the house then tried to shoo the deer out of the yard, but when it got up, it could only run in a circle to the right. It couldn't run straight due to its equilibrium being off. The poor thing had been hurt worse than I imagined. It had broken its neck, so we called the police and animal control. It had to be put down and that's how Bailey killed Bambi.

A Poem

by Fredy Alexander Velasquez

Funny, positive, cheerful, patient.

Father of two sons.

I love nature, music, walking, and coffee.

Fear, risky, proud.

Fear of conflicts, accidents, ICE.

1 I brought my two children to America.

2 Stop drinking alcohol.

3 I have my work permit.

Two Poems

by Paola Ramirez

Party in my heart
Always I think about my daughters
October is special
Long is my path
Adventure is my life.

- 1 - PAOLA
- 2 - Very happy, positive, and loving
- 3 - Mother and daughters
- 4 - Love my dog and play soccer
- 5 - Scared, here and calm
- 6 - To drive, the language and get lost
- 7 - Drive, not to depend on anyone
- 8 - Travel and be independent.

Achieve the Objectives Recipe

by Juan Guerrero

3 cups of goals
2 cups of encouragement
3 cups of steps toward your goals
1 cup of interest
1 cup of perserverance
1 cup of learning

Preparation:

Add 2 cups of learning, 3 cups of goals, 2 cups of encouragement, 3 cups of steps toward your goals, and 1 cup of interest. Mix everything together well.

Once prepared, you'll have everything ready to serve daily.

Darline, I Love You So Much

by Amos Francois

Always I think of you
Receive you in my mind
Light up you heart
Important in my life
Never not nice
Embrace endless love
Jesus we love you

Two Poems

by Claudia Martinez

Person Poem

Eyes - I have my grandmother's eyes
because they see the beauty in small things

Head - I have my mother's curiosity
because the world feels like an open book

Hands - I have my mother's hands
because her kindness is felt in my touch

Legs - My legs are the path
because they always lead me toward my dreams

Feet - My feet are compasses
because they always guide me back to my roots.

Flower Poem

Pistil - My future goals and the legacy I leave

Petal - My kindness and how others see me

Sepals - My close friends and personal boundaries

Stem - My discipline and daily resilience

Leaves - My hobbies and what inspires me

Roots - My family, origins, and core values

A Piece

by Diana Laura

I would like to return to my country with the aim of having fulfilled the projects I have planned. Two years ago I had an opportunity to emigrate from Mexico to the United States. In this country, I have learned many things, from adapting to their culture and language, to rules and jobs. During this time, good things have happened and not so good, but always with a positive attitude towards life what I long for most is to be with my family again: my mom, my brothers and my grandmother—especially her. I am a little afraid she can no longer be with me because she is sick, but in the end, I am happy and grateful because being in the United States I can support them in the best way.

Happiness *by Mutwalli*

Happiness is very important.
Life happiness comes when we
enjoy small things
with friends, spending time
with family, or watching beautiful
sunsets. We should not worry too
much about things we cannot
change and focus on the good
moments.

A Poem

by Nancy

These are the things I want to remember.

When my children were babies, during the Christmas season,
and when I bought them their first dog.

When I got married.

When we threw my daughter her 16th birthday party.

A Poem

by Shaket Noor

My daughter is the most like me.

We look almost the same.

She is tall like me.

She is always happy.

My son is tall like me, too.

My son likes basketball.

I love my family.

A Piece

by Junior Belizaire

OK I look like my older brother, I call him dad. He's my brother OK. I really look like my mother too. My mother really makes my heart happy. I love my mother, Melina Belfort.

My brother always wants to tell me jokes to make me laugh so I can always be happy.

And I love the teacher who teaches my class. She is always happy and makes me learn faster. I love you teacher Sarah.

A Piece

by Loveta Filius

I want to write a movie about my classmates and teacher Michaela.

She works a lot. The students play and smile after.
Students say "Teacher Michaela, I love you."

A Piece

by William Bading I

I remember the first time I came to the United States. It snowed. My family never saw snow and my children asked “What’s this dad?” I told them, “I don’t know what it is!”

My name is William Bading.

I am from South Sudan.

What I like about the United States is peace, clean water, good schools, health care, food security, and food safety.

A Piece

by Nimo Abdullahi

As I think of family, the first one that comes to mind is my mom.

She teaches me how to respect and treat people. She taught me how to be patient when dealing with people, especially my brothers and sisters.

She cares about me. My mother says that everything happens for a reason.

She taught me to focus on having a positive and good attitude in life.

She shows me so much love. I really appreciate the gift. Thank you, Allah. You gave me a wonderful gift, my mom.

Precious Photo

by Edy Cayax

The date was May 3rd, 2005. My three older brothers and I were playing in the backyard of our Guatemalan home. We were laughing and having a great time playing the game, "Hide and Seek." While we were playing, our parents were busy searching for our best clothes to take a special photo. In our yard, there were many beautiful flowers. My mother cut one of the flowers and gave it to me for the photo. My father grabbed a sheet for the background, and my mother took the picture.

This picture fills my heart with happiness, but at the same time it brings some sadness. This photo is the only one that I have with all of my siblings in it. Looking at it, I remember how my mother did her best to carefully dress us. That moment captured in time means more to me than words can explain.



Variety of Flowers and Scents

by Victor Clemente

In my state of Guerrero, south of Mexico City, there is a great variety of flavors and aromas traditional to the state. In my town, Ometepec, Guerrero, which in Nahuatl means “town between two mountains,” when you walk along its cobblestone streets, you’re greeted by the aroma of different foods being prepared by neighbors, friends, or anyone else cooking. In my childhood, it was a tradition to cook outdoors with firewood. Besides giving the food a different flavor and aroma, it has that special touch that only grandmothers and daughters possess. What I miss most are the many varieties of tamales, especially the traditional ones wrapped in banana leaves, filled with chicken or pork, and of course, the barbacoa, made with beef or goat, which is cooked underground. All those smells and flavors are now gone.

Montecadas

by Jose Ramon Torres

It's more than food.

I remember my family and my Montecada family from my ancestors. It's special to me, my homeland.

Cooking tip. One is to cook a Montecada tortilla. For the lard, you put a little bit on the hot griddle, let the tortilla cook for a few minutes, then you add matzo oil, continue cooking the tortilla, and for the grapes, add a few grains. Each one is dinner. For lunch, we can eat the mantecada with beans from the pot, tomato sauce with chili, fresh cheese, and accompanied by black coffee.

Memorias / Memories

by Maria Pino

Tamales en hojas de plátanos comida tradicional de mi estado de Acapulco Guerrero Mexico. Yo recuerdo cuando vivía en México me hacía muy feliz comer tamales en hojas de plátano porque son muy deliciosos. Son muy laboriosos para prepararlos . primero se amasa la masa con manteca y sal y después se tuestan las hojas en la lumbre para que las hojas se puedan doblar y luego se le pone manteca de cerdo a la hojas y después se le pone la masa a la hoja se distiende la masa y enseguida se pone el asado de mole que se prepara con una salsa roja con chile guajillo y se le pone el pollo o puerco o se puede guisar con salsa verde ya q esta el guisado se deshebra el pollo en seguida se le pone la masa en la hoja de plátano y despues se pone el guisado y de ya que está listo se doblan en cuatro partes y se ponen en una olla vaporera y se pone al fuego con leña por dos horas y listo,todos nos reunimos para prepararlos esto se hacían en días especiales como por ejemplo cumpleaños o navidades Eramos muy felices haciendo esta tradicional comida con nuestras familias mama y papa hermana y sobrina . Esta memoria va dedicada a mis padres Maria de Jesus Garcia y Narciso Pino

Tamales in banana leaves, a traditional food from my state of Guerrero, Mexico. I remember when I lived in Mexico, eating tamales in banana leaves made me very happy because they are so delicious. They are very laborious to prepare. First, the dough is kneaded with lard and salt. Then, the banana leaves are toasted over a fire so they can be folded. Next, lard is applied to the leaves, and then the dough is placed on them. The dough is spread out, and then the mole sauce, prepared with a red sauce made with guajillo chiles, is added. Chicken or pork is added, or it can be cooked with green sauce. Once the mole is cooked, the chicken is shredded. Then, the dough is placed

on the banana leaf, followed by the mole sauce. When it's ready, the leaves are folded into quarters and placed in a steamer. They are then steamed over a wood fire for two hours. We all used to get together to prepare them. This was done on special days like birthdays or Christmas. We were very happy making this traditional food with our families: mom, dad, siblings, and nieces/nephews. This memory is dedicated to my parents, Maria de Jesus Garcia and Narciso Pino.

Manjar Blanco Dulce Hogar / Sweet Home Caramel

by Jorge Andres Perez Castro

Es especial para mi, porque su preparación aunque toma su tiempo y es algo tedioso, significa tradición familiar, una que viene de muchas generaciones, un ritual de sencillos ingredientes fáciles de conseguir, pero que tienen su rol específico y tiempo esencial para brindar su sabor único y especial.

Desde la leña hasta la leche, se debe de respetar los tiempos de cocción, cantidades y movimientos, pero lo más especial es ver la familia reunida alrededor del fuego como una ceremonia ancestral; ayudando, riendo contando anécdotas pero con un mismo fin, disfrutar del maravilloso sabor del dulce ancestral, que en 4 horas estaremos disfrutando, un dulce con sabor a familia, anécdotas, tradición y recuerdos con sabor a dulce hogar.

This is special to me because, although its preparation takes time and is somewhat tedious, it represents a family tradition, one that comes from many generations. It's a ritual of simple, easy-to-find ingredients, each with its specific role and essential time to impart its unique and special flavor.

From the firewood to the milk, the cooking times, quantities, and movements must be respected. But the most special thing is seeing the family gathered around the fire like an ancestral ceremony; helping, laughing, sharing anecdotes, all with the same goal: to enjoy the wonderful flavor of this ancestral sweet, which in four hours we will be savoring—a sweet with the taste of family, stories, tradition, and memories, with the sweet taste of home.

From the Mountains of Colombia to the Great Kansas City

by Alexander Mantilla

This is the story of a boy born in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, a mythical, ancestral place in our territory, but one with many economic difficulties and very low incomes for its inhabitants.

He grew up with a unique quality: respect and love, where your neighbors are more than friends, they are family.

This boy grew up with many dreams, which seemed to come from the fiction of a magical movie or a story by García Márquez.

Finishing elementary school was an achievement, but he had to move forward. That next step was starting high school, pursuing his goal: to be someone different, to set an example for others, to make children believe that anything was possible.

Like every young person from the Colombian mountains, his biggest obstacle was the distance he had to travel to get to school, fighting against many adversities, the weather, and the violence that was beginning to appear in our region. He knew that this wouldn't stop him from moving forward with a firm step. Six years passed, and he finally earned his high school diploma, but as the saying goes, some days are good, others are bad. Without money, the possibilities of continuing his studies began to dwindle.

The perseverance of a mountaineer keeps us going, never giving up. He managed to study everything related to the environment and a bit of administration, wanting to share this knowledge with his community. A major blow came to his life. The internal conflict in Colombia reached our region, and overnight he had to leave everything behind, fleeing with only the clothes on his back. The word "displacement" entered our lives. A new beginning, a new goal had to be set; it was no longer possible to continue with his previous dream; he only had to work and forge his

own path.

A new idea came to me: to travel to the great country to the North. Just thinking about getting a visa was a dream, and for someone without resources, without money, a peasant, it was pure fiction. Everyone laughed at me, saying, "You're out of place." I remember getting my passport and then the embassy appointment; I was playing my last card. Everything I had was on this last shot.

I arrived a day early in the capital and climbed Monserrate Hill. I went into the church and said a prayer to the Virgin, asking her to fill me with positivity and calm all the fear I felt inside. The next day, with a firm step, I arrived at the embassy, face to face with the official, full of fear, trembling inside, but with a firm and confident expression, after two minutes of conversation, the expected decision was finally delivered: Welcome to the United States of America.

"Your visa has been approved."

Cebiche Peruano

by Darwin Jeans Guaylupo

El cebiche Peruano es uno de los platos más reconocidos a nivel mundial, muchas personas se preguntan cómo es posible que un plato tan fácil de preparar pueda generar muchas sensaciones en nuestra lengua.

Esas sensaciones que nos llevan a recordar Momentos memorables con nuestra familia, que nos trasladan a esos detalles que tenían nuestros familiares cuando éramos niños o jóvenes.

Se dice que cuando pruebas algo o escuchas algo que en algún momento de tu vida probaste, instantáneamente te transportas a ese momento y lugar.

La combinación del pescado fresco con el limón, sal, red onion, pimienta, maíz, ají picante, cilantro, y lo más importante el amor que se le pone al prepararlo.

Preparación:

-Cortar el pescado en cuadros como si fueran pequeños cubos de hielo.

- Poner el jugo de limón mientras se va cocinando el pescado con el jugo(limon).

- Cortar la cebolla en estilo largo y muy fino(estilo Juliana), luego picar muy pequeño el cilantro, el aji picante de la misma manera lo tienes que picar muy pequeño.

- Le pones al pescado la sal y pimienta al gusto, agregamos el resto de ingredientes y combinas muy bien.

Lo importante de este plato es que puedes intentar con cualquier pescado y cualquier tipo de seafood.

I Remember

by Irvelle Dathus

I remember the city where I was born.
Where the birds sang early in the morning.
Merchants went to the market with their wares on their heads.
The children, before going to school,
Reviewed their lessons by singing.
My grandmother laid down under the tree to get some fresh air.
Now all of that is gone.
The gangsters are in the city.
Many children have left the city to live in other countries.
Many merchants have died without seeing their children come.
It's very sad.

A Poem

by Maria Angelica Barragan

I come from Mexico.
The place that I was born is Buenos Aires, Michoacan.
It is a beautiful place.
We have mangoes and coconut.
My mom made tortillas and pozole.
Good memories.
I love my parents.

A Story

by Maribel Perez

Hello, dear readers. My beloved professors asked me to write a story, and this is what came to mind—the story of a very famous man that I heard a long time ago, which I would like to share with you in my own way: A long time ago, a sergeant in a battalion was harshly insulting and berating his soldiers because they were unable to pull a vehicle out of the mud. At that moment, a tall, slender gentleman appeared; he observed the situation and asked the sergeant why he wasn't helping the soldiers.

"Why should *I* do that?" the sergeant replied.

"I am the sergeant," the newly arrived man—tall and lean—replied haughtily, without missing a beat. He removed his jacket and joined the soldiers in the arduous task of extracting the vehicle from the quagmire in which it was submerged. Once the task was complete, the man washed his hands in a pool of water, put his jacket back on, and said to the sergeant, "Should you ever require my assistance again, I beg you to call upon me; I would be more than happy to help!"

"And who, exactly, are *you*?" the sergeant asked him.

"I am Abraham Lincoln, President of the nation."

Such men truly exist—men who, through their actions, even from a position of superiority—do not hesitate to serve those of lower standing without feeling the need to humiliate them. Rather, they convey a message of true greatness: that it matters not what position you hold or who you are; what truly matters is what lies within the human heart. We were created in the image and likeness of God, and in His eyes, all human beings possess equal worth. I chose to write about this act of charity and nobility because I believe the world needs more people who—regardless of their rank or social standing—possess a noble heart like his, and who come to the aid of the needy whenever they are in distress. Would that all the presidents of the world—especially those currently in office—would

heed this story of a man who did not judge his neighbor by social status, political affiliation, skin color, or the number of zeros in their bank account to determine whether they deserved to be treated as God intends for us to treat one another. This president simply recognized a need and went forth to aid the one in distress.

And that reminds me of the words of God, our Lord: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.” (Matthew 25:35-40).

For whenever we do this for our neighbor, we do it for God. We all yearn to obey God and fulfill His word; yet, to do so, one essential ingredient is required in our lives: a profound and abiding Love. First, love God; second, love my neighbor; and third, love myself—just as Mother Teresa of Calcutta expressed in those very famous and beautiful words that I cherish and always keep present in my memory:

“We can all do something.” “Kindness is a language everyone understands.” “Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love.”

May these brief reflections help us all become better human beings and never remain indifferent to the needs of others. GOD BLESS AMERICA AND THE ENTIRE WORLD.

An Essay

by Miguel Pop

I am from Guatemala. I came to the United States to have a better opportunity for myself and my family. In my country the opportunities are very limited. I came alone. The culture and language were different for me when I arrived. It was difficult because I didn't know anyone, I didn't have any family or friends to help me. I had enough support and money to stay in a hotel for 3 days. I felt nervous and scared because I didn't know anything like the language and culture.

I knew one guy from Ecuador and he helped me find a job. I worked at this job for 3 weeks making \$55 a day. So after 3 weeks I started to look for another job and found a job in landscaping. Because it was December, this job didn't last long. I quickly found a job that required me to move to different states, finding jobs wherever I could. I worked hard and saved money for 6 years. Now I own my own company, have steady work and a place to live.

I make money to live here and send some money to my parents in Guatemala when I can.

My Country

by Emmanuel Erassaint

I come from Haiti, a country located in the Caribbean on the Island of Hispaniola. It shares with the Dominican Republic. Haiti is known for its history, rich and vibrant culture. It's the first black independent nation in the world after its revolution in 1804.

Haitians are very rich, with music (Racine, Konpa), dance, art, and a highly appreciated cuisine especially. The main spoken languages are Haitian Creole and French. It is a very beautiful country with 27,500 km² and a population of 12 million residents. The country also has beautiful, natural landscapes such as beaches, mountains and waterfalls.

Haitian are known for their courage, solidarity, and strong sense of community, despite the economic and social challenges the country faces.

Chantal's Journey

by Chantal Nashimwe

My name is Chantal. I'm 21 years old and I'm the youngest of the family. There are five kids in my family.

I was born in Congo, but I grew up in Burundi. I was there for eighteen years.

I came to the United States in May 2024. I came here to find a better life. I came with my father, mom, my two brothers, uncle, and my sister-in-law, and her daughter, but left two siblings behind. I was so excited to get here, but I had a bad feeling because I left behind my two siblings in Burundi. I hope one day they get a chance to come here.

The first day we got here was a good day for us because we met our friends, family, and case workers. After a month I found a job in the company I worked at for five months. After five months, I quit the job because I wanted to study. In January 2025 I started to study at Job Corps in Excelsior Springs. I was so excited to start school! When I got there I had little challenge about the language because I wasn't able to speak English. It was a difficult challenge for me! After a month, they told me there is a place where they teach English. I enrolled at Literacy KC. I am happy for the opportunity to study English and MOS (Medical Office Support). I got my high school diploma through Job Corps and got my permit for my driver's license. I also completed my food handler's license. I hope to complete the Job Corps program in April! After this, I want to apply for a scholarship for college.

My Short Story

by Athumani Tambwe

I have dreamed of coming to the United States since my childhood. It was my pleasure to be in the most powerful country in the world, but unfortunately my father didn't come with me. I wish to have him here. The country I'm from was amazing and peaceful at that moment. What I expected and what I have seen are different things. A lot of people exaggerate about this country if they have already been here or are looking from a distance. They thought life would be easier here than at home. That has not been true. Life is difficult here, like work for example. When I stepped into this new land, my entire life changed in many ways. I started my first job here. I was grateful! Things really changed though, after I got in a car accident. Everything I planned for, it's stopped. I was supposed to start English class and Job Corps but the wreck interrupted everything. Now I have so many possibilities, but I'm still dreaming about how I will finish my education. I study English and work full time. I would like to go forward and get my GED next year and go to college.

My Life

by Laura

Mi Vida

Yo Laura Alejandra vivia en Mexico ciudad chihuahua yo vivia con mis padres despues en el 2012 tuve una nina ella se llama Alexa Mendoza ella y yo llegamos a los estados unidos en el 2013 llegamos a casa de mi hermana vivimos en su casa por un tiempo despues de un ano de vivir con mi hermana nos fuimos a un apartamento mi esposo mi hija y yo .En el 2015 tuve un hijo llamado Michael Mendoza.

Mis padres viven en chihuahua y tengo siete hermanos que tambien viven en chihuahua aqui en kansas city mo viven tres hermanas y yo , en texas vive otra hermana.

Mis padres pueden venir a visitarme pero tengo tres hermanas en chihuahua que hace 12 anos que no las he visto.

Me gusta vivir en estados unidos porque hay trabajo mejores escuelas para mis hijos hay posibilidades de viajar y conocer diferentes ciudades. En el 2022 llevamos a los ninos a disney y tambien a conocer la playa a ellos les encanto.

Mi hiha Alexa ahora tiene 13 anos de edad ella esta en el grado 7 ella esta practicando para jugar futbol.

Mi hijo michael ahora tiene 10 anos de edad el esta en el grado 4 a el le gusta jugar tambien futbol.

Yo empeze a estudiar ingles el 9 de marzo del 2026 porque quiero aprender un segundo idioma mi primer idioma es espanol pero me interesa aprender para poder ayudrles a mis hijos con lo de la escuela y tambien porque estamos en un pais donde se necesita saber el idioma.

My Life

I, Laura Alejandra, used to live in Chihuahua City, Mexico, where I lived with my parents. Later, in 2012, I had a daughter named Alexa Mendoza. She and I arrived in the

United States in 2013; we stayed at my sister's house and lived there for a while. After living with my sister for a year, my husband, my daughter, and I moved into an apartment. In 2015, I had a son named Michael Mendoza.

My parents live in Chihuahua, and I have seven siblings who also live there. Here in Kansas City, Missouri, three of my sisters and I reside, while another sister lives in Texas.

My parents are able to come and visit me, but I have three sisters in Chihuahua whom I haven't seen in 12 years.

I enjoy living in the United States because there are job opportunities, better schools for my children, and the chance to travel and explore different cities. In 2022, we took the children to Disney World and also took them to see the beach; they absolutely loved it.

My daughter, Alexa, is now 13 years old and is in the 7th grade; she is currently on a soccer team.

My son, Michael, is now 10 years old and is in the 4th grade; he also enjoys playing soccer. I started studying English on March 9, 2026, because I want to learn a second language. My first language is Spanish, but I am interested in learning so that I can help my children with their schoolwork, and also because we are living in a country where knowing the language is necessary.

An Essay

by Angeline Duvert

I came to America on August 10th, 2023 with my father, brother, and sister. Sadly, my mother and my best friend didn't come with me. I'm from a beautiful country named Haiti. It has a tropical climate. The people of Haiti are generous. Haiti has several places to visit and good food to eat. The fortress Citadele Laferriere, the beach island of Labadee, and the spiritual Saut d'Eau waterfall are fantastic places to visit. Wonderful meals like Fritay, Pen Patat, Griot, and Soup Joumou are found in Haiti. Many different mixtures of varieties of rice, vegetables, and beans are key to many delicious Haitian meals.

My family decided to leave Haiti because it was too dangerous due to the collapse of the government. Gangs and criminal organizations have filled the power vacuum. We immigrated to the United States for a better life. However, life in the U.S.A. is difficult for me due to the language and the culture. God has blessed me because I am improving my English and learning more about American culture. My American Dream is to get a good job that can support a wonderful family. I also hope my best friend gets the opportunity to come to the United States. I am going to work hard, focus on the positive things, and never give up until my dreams come true. God willing.

My Dream Home

by Rachid El Moutaoifik

I came to the United States in September 2020. I came here because I won the immigration lottery. Many people in Morocco entered the lottery to come to the United States. I was chosen out of many people who entered the lottery. I came by myself the first trip to find housing, a job and a school for my son and daughter. When I returned the second time, I brought my two kids with me. My wife wasn't able to come but I have applied for her to join us.

When I first arrived, the person who helped me the most was my friend, Somo. He helped me find a job and an apartment to rent. I found a job near the Plaza and worked full time. This first job was hard because I didn't speak any English and I didn't know where I could learn English. I was thankful when my boss told me about Literacy KC. I enrolled in English school, 1 or 2 days a week while I continued to work.

My dream for coming to the US was to save money, change my life, but I miss my wife, my country, my food, my friends, my pets, and my mom and dad. Living in the US has been different than I thought it would be. It is harder than I thought it would be. Everything is expensive here like rent, food, insurance, healthcare, etc. Learning English has been difficult. Getting a driver's license was also difficult. My children are doing well now. My daughter is studying in college at UMKC and my son is in middle school. They are both happy here.

I want to continue to learn English and I want to own my own business some day. I love farming and have a lot of experience growing vegetables and fruit trees. Maybe I can start a business growing these things.

Three Pieces

by Sing Tse

Seasons of Life

Life is like four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter.

Springtime is verdant: flowers and plants are in full bloom, brimming with life and hope.

Springtime is like childhood: growing up, full of enthusiasm and vigor, daring to learn, persevering and unafraid of failure.

The Summer sun shines on you and me: even under the blazing sun, smiles bloom.

Summer symbolizes adolescence—the most vibrant, energetic and hopeful period of life: a time of fervent pursuit and learning from mistakes.

Autumn is a season of bountiful harvest: with golden wheat filling the fields and trees laden with fruit. It is a time of ripeness and gathering, we store away the year's yield for future use.

Autumn is like adulthood: mature and reserved, without the restlessness of summer; it is the harvest season of life.

The weather in Winter is not suitable for production; however it serves as a reminder that during other seasons, one must work diligently and build up reserves.

Winter is the season of retirement: every year during the bitter cold of winter, heavy snows fall. The snow turns the city pure white; life has become peaceful. It's a good time to reflect on life and pass on experience to the next generation.

The years and seasons are perennial but our life only blooms once.

Cherish your seeds sowed in Spring, enjoy what you reap in Autumn.

You are a mindful gardener. You will have no regrets.

Poetic Fall

One Sunday morning, I opened the door: the wind blew a smile onto my face and kissed me passionately.

I opened my eyes. Look! The trees are dressed in their finest golden dresses, and the breeze hugs our town gently.

My favorite season has visited the Earth again.

After breakfast, my wife and I decided to go to Weston Bend State Park to enjoy the fall leaves.

Let's roll down the windows and enjoy the crisp fall breeze. We don't need the car's air conditioning, for the fall wind had ruthlessly kicked away the summer days.

After an hour, we arrived. We followed the trails to the opposite side of the Missouri River, sat down and enjoyed the scenery: the world painted in shades of gold and ochre.

The fall's wind whispers to the trees, asking them to let their gilded leaves dance in the wind before tumbling to the ground.

Fall wraps the world in a warm cozy blanket of autumn hues and covers the ground in a coppery carpet. The forest was blushing in shades of crimson and russet.

We waited until the moon came out. The noble moon cast a soft, silvery glow, as if she were spreading a blanket of peace, smiling; guarding.

The full moon gazes down at us like a curious, white-faced lady, shining above the river. A perfect portrait of pearlescent beauty and golden leaves.

The sight is truly intoxicating.

True enjoyment of life does not rely solely on money, it lies in knowing how to cherish inner peace.

It's time to head back down the trail toward home.

Thank God for the beautiful surroundings and this wonderful day.



Photograph by Sing Tse

Fantasy Dream

On that memorable morning when I saw your smiling face.
You looked only at me and I was yours.
But when I turned around you
were nowhere to be seen.
You'd walked away.
When will I see you again?
When will the sky rain?
When will the stars start to shine?
When will I know that you're mine?
Did I ever meet you in the sunshine
When we were about a thousand years away.
Did I ever hold you in the moonlight?
When the stars started to dim.
All I have left are memories and this song.
I need to wake up now.
I need to stop dreaming.
This will never happen again.
The sun will start to shine.
The rain will eventually stop, that's fine.
That will make me smile.
Return to my life.
Let me try.
Try Try Try!

Two Pieces

by Salehe Mwenebatu

Father and Son

The relationship between fathers and sons is a true mystery of life; where teaching and love are paramount.

The father, happy to have a descendant, does everything in his power to raise his son according to his reason. He is justified in being strict in his teaching, so that it is thorough and effective.

On the one hand, the son feels good to have someone who cares for him. That gives him confidence and he idolizes his father.

On the other hand, he interprets his father's strict teaching as a lack of love and a focus on punishment.

The father deeply loves his son. He tries to conceal his love so that his teaching can be effective. Worried about the future of his son, he wants his son to become stronger in life.

Breaking up With Football

When I was 7, I found the best hobby ever: football, though my dad wasn't so keen about it. My love for football carried me through 10 years of punishments; my dad thought I should have spent more time studying and less time on the pitch.

At 17, I joined a 2nd division team in my village. With my devotion to the sport, we played well and even won two competitions.

The next season, disaster struck: I injured my foot. During my long recovery, I made the difficult decision to break up with football.

Chicago

by Nicolas Alvarado

I remember when I arrived in Chicago;
Everything was good.

I explored a little, finding it difficult to drive in the traffic.
Maybe because it was my first time driving there.

Though there is too much traffic - and everything is expensive -
Chicago is still beautiful.

I admired the old, looming buildings
as I walked through the streets.

I enjoyed watching my daughter play on the playground at
Millennium Park.
It's a great park for spending time with family.

I tried a pizza that was four inches thick,
but it was too saucy.

This time I didn't see much,
but I like exploring new places.

Maybe I will give Chicago a second chance.

The Small Town Around the Beach

by Jonathan Hernandez

I remember when I visited my grandparents;
They live close to the sea

I enjoy seeing the sun in the afternoon
I hear and see the strong sounds of the ferries on the
broken, choppy waves.

At night, I can see the
lights around some stores,
some restaurants around the town.

It is a good place for people
to visit in the summertime.

All I need is to share
this time with my grandparents:
play and relax,
swim all day.

When my head hits the pillow,
my only thought is:
I don't want
this vacation with my grandparents
to end.

Why Do We Stop Dreaming When We Grow Up?

by Roxana Sosa

Somewhere along the way, growing up becomes less about discovering who we really are and more about learning what we left behind. We trade wonderings for routine, curiosity for certainty, and slowly almost without noticing we begin to lose our grip on our dreams that once felt as natural as breathing.

As children, we believe without hesitation. We imagine freely, love deeply, and dream without limits. The impossible wasn't something to question about, it was something reachable. We didn't ask ourselves if we could, only when we would.

So, what changed?

Was it the rush of life? The expectations? The fear of failure? Or was it the moment when we were told directly or indirectly that dreaming too high was unrealistic?

Sometimes we move so fast in life that we forget to feel. Every morning we jump out of bed, already thinking about everything we have to do, instead of taking a pause... breathe... and recognize the quiet miracle of another day. Another chance. Another beginning.

The truth is, nothing magical disappears.

The world didn't become smaller—our beliefs did.

Dreams don't vanish just because we get older. They do when we stop giving them importance, when we stop nurturing them, when we convince ourselves that it's "too late" or "too hard" or "too unrealistic." But what if that isn't true?

What if growing up isn't about giving up on dreams—but choosing, every single day, to fight a little harder for them?

What if believing again is simply a decision?

A decision to slow down. To listen to that quiet voice inside you. To remember who you were before the world told you what to be.

You don't need to have everything figured out. You don't need permission. And you are never too late.

Even the smallest step towards what you really love is a rebellion against the idea that dreams are only for children.

So today, breathe a little deeper. Look at your life with softer eyes. Let yourself imagine again without limits, without fear, without apology.

And ask yourself, honestly...

When was the last time you believed in something impossible?

And the most important thing is - What is that small thing that you can do today to make it happen?

Going Back to My Mom's Lap

by Margoth Hidalgo

After being in the U.S.A since 2007, I went back to my home. Everything was different; the streets, the home was completely empty, and this time I was missing someone important in my life: my dad.

I went to visit him in his tomb.

I felt different emotions. I felt happy because I was back in my mom's lap, and I felt so sad because my dad was not at home anymore.

With my broken heart, I made a decision to be happy and enjoy my trip with my family and my empty home. I thought my dad was not at home, but I found two beautiful nieces and three handsome nephews. I was happy because something that was still the same was my mom's delicious food. I loved how she cooked. She was spoiling me a lot, and I felt how you can feel being a daughter again. It's a good feeling. I waited 17 years for this feeling. Because when I left home, I was alone.

When I went back home, I went back with two beautiful daughters; my Ashley and my Diana, my world in my hands, my everything.

My Classmates

by Jairo Romero

I like the English language, and I want to speak. I made the decision to come to Literacy KC to receive English class. I started the process and took two tests. I took a reading test and a listening test with the aim of being placed in a group alongside my peers. I was assisted and guided by very kind and professional people, and I felt very comfortable with them. They informed me that I had been placed in Group D, and they introduced me to my teacher, Dylan Straughn, and my classmates!

After meeting them, I was surprised to observe that everyone could communicate in English, while I was just starting my first day of classes. I considered asking to be moved to a lower level and mentioned this to two of my classmates; they immediately told me, “Don’t worry—we’re here to learn. You can count on us; we’ll help you with everything.” From that moment on, I realized that I had been placed in the perfect group to start my English classes!

Right now, I feel very confident; I am not afraid of making mistakes. My teacher is a professional with an incredible teaching technique. I thank God for being alongside Dylan Straughn and my classmates.

Thank you very much!

Two Poems

by Ifrah

I Am Strong

I am Ifrah

Gentle, emotional, strong

Daughter of a heart full of love

Love of peace, memories, and quiet moments

Who feels deeply, loved endlessly, and forgives silently

Who fears losing loved ones, being forgotten, and hidden pain

Who struggled in silence, stayed strong, and never gave up

Who wants healing, true happiness, and a peaceful life

Who lives between hope and reality

Yusuf

A Peaceful Life Recipe

3 Cups of Patience

2 Cups of Respect

4 Cups of Love

1 Cup of Understanding

5 spoons of Kindness

2 spoons of Care

3 quarts of Faith

1 bucket of Happiness

Instructions:

Take Love and Respect, mix them gently with Faith.

Add Patience and Understanding, stir with a calm heart.

Blend in Kindness and Care until it feels warm.

Sprinkle Happiness on top and never forget Hope.

Cook it daily with gratitude.

Serve with a smile always.

The Caliph Who Found Peace

by Helan Aly Villanueva Candiotti

I'm finally here! I've achieved the goal I set for myself as a young man: to live in the United States. It was one of those fixed ideas that take root in your mind when you dream of changing your life. But there's always a "but!" Sometimes I feel that the timing wasn't right anymore; I've learned that, occasionally, goals have an expiration date, too.

I remember my hunger to take on the world—that urge to travel ceaselessly and leave home behind. I'm reminded of that time I traveled across my entire homeland, Peru. I recall a night in March 2015 when my former boss called and said, "Helan, I've got a project, but it involves traveling across all of Peru." My response was immediate, "Let's do it!"—without even asking about the pay. I remember that during that trip, I went from the glacial cold of the Andes (32°F) to the stifling heat of the jungle (91.4°F). Today, looking back on it from the vantage point of Missouri's extreme climate, I can't help but burst out laughing. What irony!

In this stage of my life, I've found a sense of peace I never expected. I stopped competing. I stopped viewing my workdays as a contest to see who could wear the most elegant suit to the office. Left behind are the four hours I used to lose every day behind the wheel, commuting to and from work—along with that feeling of never seeing the light of day. Finally, I managed to let go of that phrase that used to obsess me: **stop trying to be the caliph instead of letting the caliph be the caliph!** Few will understand it, but for me, it means that I finally stopped fighting for a throne I didn't need. As the years go by, the landscape changes, and nostalgia sets in. You begin to miss the walls of your home, your parents' embrace, and the laughter shared with friends from the neighborhood. An irrepressible urge arises—to return, to reclaim lost time, and to build new memories atop the old ones.

Here I am now, in the United States, yet with a different ambition. That thirst for adventure has evolved into a desire for peace; I simply want to stay home, watch the hours drift by, and wait—with an open heart—for my children to one day repeat this story... but with dreams of their own.

I Love Literacy KC

by Dayana Alvarez

“Literacy KC began as a dream and grew out of a passion to help people” (taken from the Literacy KC history on the web). This idea was born in the hearts of several people led by Catherine Mathews. Forty-one years have passed since that dream, and I believe it has most certainly been fulfilled. I think that if the founders could see how much that dream has expanded and the number of people it has uplifted, they would undoubtedly be very proud and happy. And although these people may not be here right now, I still wanted to take the time to leave this token of gratitude, because this place has become a very important place for my family (my daughter and me).

At Literacy KC, I have received support and understanding. It is much more than that. It is a place filled with wonderful, professional, ethical, kind, and caring people who truly care about others and are dedicated to empowering them to become the best version of themselves. I’m deeply grateful for this place, and I sincerely hope it continues to expand into many more areas, so that it may keep supporting the millions of people who arrive in this country with the dream of building a better life for their families.

If you ask me how to describe Literacy KC, I would say...

Learning

Inspiration

Transformative

Empowering

Respectful

Amazing

Caring

Youthful

Kind

Compassionate

Volume Eight

Thank you Teachers and all the Literacy KC team,
especially the staff at the Clymer Center.

With Love
Dayana Alvarez

I Do Not Like the Candies

by Dana Reyes

It's not that I don't like sweets here.
They're good, yes... but they don't speak to me.

I walk through aisles filled with color, with brands I can't
even name, and still... I feel nothing, no pull, no spark.
It's as if the sugar is there, but without a story.

So, I miss them. I miss the sweets from my country.

Not just their taste, but everything they carried with
them: the memories of childhood, the joy of having
them occasionally, the waiting that made them feel
special.

I miss how sweets could be more than just a sweet.
It was a moment, a memory, a small, saved piece of
happiness.

The other day, I found them in a store.
There they were, as if they had been waiting for me.
And I didn't think twice... I bought a lot.

Because sometimes, what we're really searching for isn't
the taste, but a way back to those moments.

Housekeeping Work at a Hotel **!The Art of Cleaning!**

by Claribeth Torres

Housekeepers at a hotel are women and men that clean all the areas in a hotel room. Between them are the bathroom, living room, bedroom, and all the spaces of rooms. Also, they make the bed.

The housekeeping job doesn't need to have previous experience because in all the hotels they give the opportunity to learn through training for 3 or 5 days, then after 2 to 4 weeks, they will be an expert. After 4 weeks the people have practiced too. They have learned to clean and to be fast people that become efficient and effective. So they learned to apply high cleaning quality standards.

On the first day of work, the housekeeper has to wear a black uniform (pants, T-shirt, and shoes), and look good.

The shift could start between 7:00 A.M to 8:00 A.M for 3 or 5 days per week.

When they arrive at the hotel, the housekeeping boss talks to them about duties, rules, their training, and trainer.

Then the manager gives them 10 to 20 rooms that they will clean in the shift of 8:00 - 4:00 pm. They may take 30 minutes to have lunch.

Let's go housekeeper, your training will start soon! ...I'll give you inspiration!

You'll learn to be strong and valiant.

Harmony at the hotel room
Open the door
Universal are the cleaning procedures
Simple
Experience
Knowledge, you'll learn!
Efficient and
Effective, you'll be
Principal
Inspiration in the
Night you'll
Get!

Arriving in the USA

by Cindy Martinez

The “American Dream” is often sold as a straight line to prosperity, but for those who live it, it feels more like an “iron maze.”

Migrating to the United States is one of the most valiant and lonely decisions a person can make. By crossing the border, you don't just change countries, you change identities: you go from being “someone” with a name, profession, and family, to being a number, a labor hand or a shadow trying not to be seen.

The experience of migrating is unique to each person; many arrive with family, friends, and many venture alone. But despite their experiences, they share common points: the search for a better life, the hope for a better future, adaptation to a new environment, resilience and determination, nostalgia and uprooting.

It's strange to arrive in the land of opportunities and discover that the price of those opportunities is time. “You come here to work, not to live.” The hardest part isn't the cold of winter or the long hours. The hardest part is the silence. The silence of not understanding the language, the silence of not having someone to tell how you feel upon arriving at an empty room.

Many migrants describe their life in the U.S. as a gilded cage. They have a better income, can buy things that were luxuries in their countries, but they can't leave the country to hug their families or say goodbye to their deceased loved ones.

However, in the midst of adversity, migrants find an unexpected source of strength to move forward. For some, it's faith that gives them hope and determination to overcome obstacles. Others find support in communities that share their language and experiences. But what drives them the most is the conviction that their sacrifice is not in vain, that their struggle and effort will bear fruit in a better future.

The migrant learns to be the architect of their own destiny in a foreign land. Families are formed with strangers who share the same pain, and every small achievement (a used car, the first money transfer, a new English word) is celebrated like a war victory.

Two Poems

by Primeflore Dathus

Peyi Marassa

I come from a twin country with enormous and strong mountains,

I come from an island with a big story,

A land who reminds all the world: enough is enough.

A country who stands when no one wanted to,

A colorful place, beaches, nature and the long warm season mark a long tradition of hospitality.

I come from a mixed country,

Clear father, dark mother;

I come from somewhere people and nature mixed with color:

Black, mulatre, grimeaux, marabou, metisse, rouge ou blanc ou, panyol.

Rire...

I come from a land where fruits, pana bread, coconut stand for snacks;

Warm bread and strong coffee or AK100, pate kode stand for breakfast.

I come from a neighborhood, where "Good morning" is an "Open door" and belongs for

Everyone even the stranger

And "Thank you" is a sign of respect even though we disagree.

Somewhere every kid is everybody's child.

I am from somewhere on this earth where people can take loans

For welcoming visitors.

I come from a family where school and books are the way to exist.

Suddenly, chaos...

Money is the new way...

People became strange...

Suddenly, chaos...

Guns take place and neighbors become strangers.

You don't know who they are.

They don't know who you are.

You run away. You checked everywhere: family, friends,
even churches just for a night,

Just to take a deep breath.

No one to call. No one to talk to.

And you remember your house, the warm sand of the
beaches, the mangos.

You cry. You smile because some memories still stay there.

You left, you take a new step, you try new things

You learn about cultures, countries, languages.

You add new friends, new realities, new perspectives but,

You didn't forget your past because you cannot change it,

You try to change your mind and the future, the way life
could go

MAYBE!

What We Never Say

What we never say

Sometimes, behind our window,

we gaze outward and witness small miracles —

the birth of the sunrise,

the quiet farewell of the sunset,

autumn leaves drifting like forgotten memories,

snow falling in whispered secrets,

a bird passing through,

or a child running as if the world belonged to them.

And suddenly, a question rises within us, gentle and sharp:

At what temperature does life beat?

We often forget that just beyond the glass,
someone longs for open air—
a snowman dreaming of horizons,
a superhero tired of walls,
a silent figure waiting only for permission to live.

Inside, we surround ourselves
with everything money can place around us—
marble, silver, gold, wood, plastic,
even fragile paper.
And there we remain, motionless,
watching the true meaning of life
bloom just beyond our reach: to live.

We forget that the only distance
between us and the outside world
is freedom.

Four words.
Different meanings, yet the same echoes.
It is hard to grasp how powerful these four words are in
our lives.
It is hard to imagine how they could ever be enough
to describe what we feel.

There is no proof that words can truly hold
joy and fear,
peace and love,
anger and gratitude.
Behind every emotion, day after day,
We hide a true story no one else knows.

We sit behind our window,
and outside, butterflies, bugs, and tiny creatures
enjoy nature without wondering what comes next,
without knowing whether tomorrow will arrive.
They do not worry about that.

We sit behind our window,

forgetting that there is someone inside us
who longs to live without fear,
without judgment,
without shame.

Inside, we surround ourselves
with everything we can buy,
and we forget that the only thing
that separates us from the outside
is this simple word: freedom.

No one can truly understand.
No one knows what happens within you.
They speak—blablabla—
words that echo and fade.

Meanwhile, in your heart,
a quiet tremor remains.
You smile,
not because everything is fine,
but because you need to remind yourself
that you are strong enough to face it.

You stay silent,
because you no longer wish to explain
what words cannot hold.
And sometimes,
you cry —
because it is too hard to describe.

My Little Treasure *by Fatima Sensente*

For you my sweet Treasure:
Who fills my days with your immense love,
your heart is the purest and most precious diamond,
full of tenderness that in my darkest days,
in the depths, makes a brilliant sun of colors,
that revives my heart when I hear you say,
“Mom, you are the best.”



Let Me Tell You About My Country, Ecuador *by Ximena Bastidas*

Nestled in the heart of the world, right where the imaginary line divides the Earth into two hemispheres, Ecuador shines in a corner of South America. It is called the country of the four worlds for its four unique regions: the towering Sierra with majestic volcanoes covered in morning mist, the sun-kissed coast along the Pacific Ocean, the endless green of the Amazon rainforest with the scent of earth and rain, and the magical Galápagos Islands with crystal-clear waters and landscapes that seem from another world.

Ecuador is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world, with species, ecosystems, and landscapes found nowhere else on Earth.

You can feel Ecuador's culture in every corner, its vibrant colors, rich traditions, and living history. Markets full of scents and colors tell centuries of stories, and festivals where music and dance mingle with the spirit of the people make the country's heart beat.

Its food is a hug for the soul, full of flavors that tell the story of home, of recipes passed down through generations, of tables that always have room for one more.

The people of Ecuador are its greatest treasure: warm, resilient, and full of hope. People who, despite life's challenges, keep smiling and building with their hearts.

Ecuador is my roots, my origin, my identity, and even though I left Ecuador, my country will never leave me.

It lives in every memory, every story I carry, and every dream of a place where mountains touch the sky, rivers run free, and the heart of the world beats strong. Here I learned that greatness is not measured by size, but by the heart.





Artwork Introduction

Hello, dear friends. It's me again. I am an artist—I've already shared my work with you in previous books—but today I'd like to show you something different that I'm currently working on. I create quick portraits of people and their beloved pets. I typically do this very quickly at art shows, taking just 10 to 15 minutes per piece. Today, I present some of these drawings for your enjoyment. Thank you to our wonderful school Literacy KC for providing this opportunity.

Yours,
Tanya Siedina Tucker



The romantic legend of the volcanoes Popocatépetl and Iztaccihualt

by Jessica Zepeda

Hello, my name is Jessica Zepeda. I'm from Mexico City. In Mexico we have many legends.

Today I'd like to share with you the romantic legend of the Popocatépetl and Iztaccihuatl volcanoes.

The legend says that Iztaccihuatl was a Tlaxcalteca princess who fell in love with Popocatépetl. He was a warrior of Iztaccihuatl's father. The father sent the warrior to battle and promised to give him his daughter's hand in marriage if he returned victorious with the head of his enemy. But by mistake, a false message arrived with the news that Popocatépetl had died. The princess was devastated and fell into a deep depression, eventually dying of a broken heart.

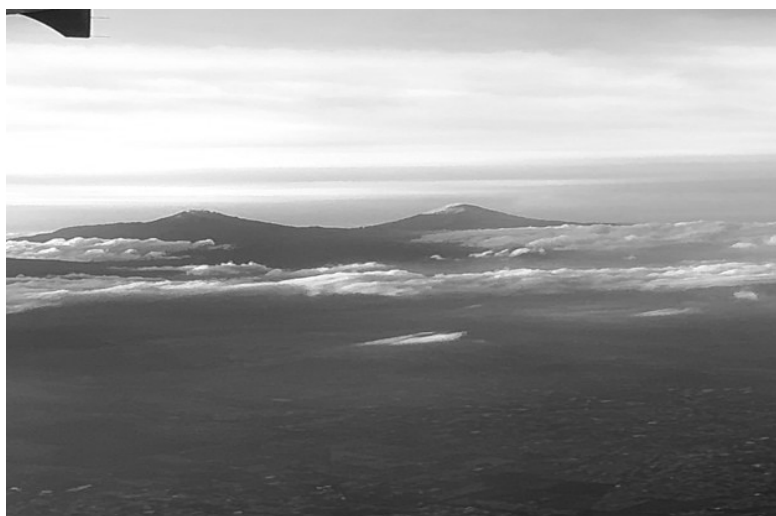
Eventually, the warrior returned but his princess had died. The heartbroken warrior carried his beloved's body to a mountain. Then Popocatépetl took a torch and vowed that nothing would extinguish its flame. With it, he watched over his beloved princess's body, and thus the gods granted them to eternity, transforming them into volcanoes.

Iztaccihuatl has remained dormant, and Popocatépetl sometimes awakens to remind us that their love still lives on. Today they are the Guardians of the Valley of Mexico City.

Popocatépetl and Iztaccihuatl come from the Náhuatl dialect.

Iztaccihuatl means "woman in white" or "sleeping woman."

Popocatépetl means "smoking mountain."



Just Hold Me Back

by Kervens Duperia

Just hold me back when I feel the entire world falling upon me
When I don't see any future in my plan, project, even my dream
Would you squeeze me when I can't see anything around
Even for my pain, my ego refusing me to drop any tears down
Can I kiss you, smell you, press you even though you are not mine
I'll set back to you my folly if you don't mind
Loneliness is a prison that consumes you step by step deep inside
Just hold me back for some second I'll figure out where to fly back
Just hold me back cause I think I am falling for you...

I Come From

by Mei Yi

I come from

a slow-paced city.

A slow-paced life is

sipping a cup of jasmine tea

while listening to

the rain pattering on the eaves.

A slow-paced life is

watching the pink waves of blossoms

while thinking of a lovely face.

How Do You Change?

by Iraiz Nava Mora

How do you change this word
if you are not empathetic with others?
How can I help you if you can't help yourself?
How do you say I'm a good person
when you are pointed at others?
Most people forget where they came from.
Never change your personality to please other people.
You know what kind of person you are.
And how far have you come?
Maybe you don't agree with someone.
But you need to respect different options
about this person.
How to see life.
Each person has a different world in his head.
Just be nice and respectful
if you like to receive the same thing.
Be humble and honest.
I always say thank you, God, for giving me another day.
For opening my eyes. I'm still breathing
and bless my family too.
Thanks for putting everything in my hands.
Don't forget me and don't forget your son's sleep.
Just one life, the time never came back.
Enjoy the most you can.
The dead are around you and you don't know
when she will take it.
I love more than you can imagine with all my heart.

Life

by Raquel Rivera Palacios

I woke up with the sunlight on my face telling me
how beautiful life is.

It was nice to think about my family's love,
think how much God gives me every day,
the opportunity to enjoy everything around me.

I was happy to take a deep breath and feel the air on my face,
drink a cup of coffee,
thinking how wonderful life is, with lemons to make juice,
sweet as a new wine and as short as fog on a sunny day.



Two Worlds, One Heart

by Marjan Kia

I started a new journey
with a small suitcase
and big dreams.

A new city,
new faces,
new words to learn.

The city was bright
lights, tall buildings,
streets full of life.

Everything felt new,
like the world was opening
just for me.

I walked alone,
but I was not afraid.

Sometimes I feel lost,
sometimes I feel strong.

I learned new words,
met new faces,
and slowly found my place.

I miss my past,
but I keep moving forward.

Between two worlds
one I remember,
one I am building.

Some dreams I carried
are now in my hands.

I smile more,
I feel stronger.

I am still that girl
growing,
learning,
becoming,
moving forward
with quiet strength.

A Happy Home Recipe

by Lester Armas

If a happy home you wanna have
With small habits you can move forward
Four cups of love will help
And don't forget four cups of faith
Spend time with your family
Look at that picture that makes you remember good times.

Light and Grace

by Hugo Morales

I woke to breath and light today
A blessed gift to start that way
With ears to hear and voice to speak
The strength to guide the worn and weak
Another chance to serve and share
Abundant grace beyond compare
To inspire lives and make them new
And walk the world with spirit true
With heart contented light and free
That this new day was given to me
Closed my eyes with peace to say
It was a happy, blessed day!!



My Family
by Emma Avila

In every shared laugh,
In every endless embrace,
Lives the love that guides me,
My refuge, my home.

They are roots that hold me steady
When the wind tries to push me down,
They are hands that never let go,
Even when I stumble around.

They are voices calling me home,
I find my peace within their space,
My family is my hidden treasure,
a warmth no riches could replace.

In their words I find calm,
In their gaze, the truth,
they are light in darks days,
my strength to keep moving through.

No matter the time nor distance,
nor whatever may come to pass,
they live within my heart,
my family... my forever.

Two Poems

by Ablaye Sarr Yade

Person Poem

Brave, ambitious, kind
Son of mom, his brother's friend
Love cars, money and his mom
Grateful, give thanks to God everytime
Loss and death
Build a house for my mom, return home after
a resounding success,
go to Mecca, the prophet's mausoleum,
To have my own plenty parking business,
to make my family happy and proud
Someone who lives for their dreams

Ablaye

- A) Admirable
- B) Believe in god
- L) Love people
- A) Always happy
- Y) Yearn to become someone
- E) Emotional

A Poem

by Claudia Ramirez

1. Claudia.
2. Good person, kind, friendship, Believer in God.
3. I am human, daughter, friend, sister, wife.
4. I love cats, I love the cloudy and sunny sky, I love coffee in the mornings and love the view from the windows.
5. When I left my home and made the decision to live in another country, when I traveled the world and discovered a new place. When I met my husband.
6. When I'm feeling lost in my life, my first flight, To experience firsthand a friend losing her baby.
7. To finish this poem, To finish my university degree, On a flight crossing the Atlantic, I experienced the transition from day to night; through the window, you can watch yourself entering the darkness of the night after leaving behind a sunny day. It was a wonderful experience that life granted me.
8. Read, listen to, and speak advanced English and French, finish my book; Cometas en el Cielo.
9. Physically in Kansas City, but in my heart in Mexico.
10. Ramirez.



Letter to My Younger Self

by Alfredo Vasquez

Dear Alfredo,

You don't know me yet, but I know you very well. You're about 10 years old, with many questions in your mind. I am you, writing from many years in the future, from a place far away from home. I'm writing because there are things you need to hear.

Throughout your life, you will face many challenges. They won't go away, but you will learn how to overcome them. There will be people who try to make you feel less, others who reject you, and some who even make fun of your flaws. But listen carefully: none of that defines who you are. You are stronger, smarter, and more capable than you think. You may not be number one in everything, and that's okay. Life is not about competing with others—it's about becoming better than who you were yesterday. The world does not define you; you decide who you are.

What you think about yourself matters more than anyone else's opinion. You are valuable. You have abilities that you will discover over time, and when they appear, pay attention to them. They will help shape the person you are becoming.

You will make mistakes, and that's okay. Don't run away. Face things, even when you are afraid. There is a courage inside you that you haven't discovered yet. Don't punish yourself for failing—learn from it and keep moving forward.

There will be moments when you feel lost, alone, or like you don't belong. Those moments will pass. When they do, return to your values and your goals—because that's where you will always find your way.

I can't tell you exactly what the future looks like, but I can tell you this: it will be a roller coaster. You will fall in love and be disappointed, you will laugh and cry, you will meet important people and you will have to let others go. And even though many things will change, your parents and your siblings will still be by your side.

I am proud of you. Of who you are and of who you will become. When you reach my age, you will understand that life always has more to offer, no matter how old you are.

Oh, and one more thing—when you see that girl with those blue eyes smiling at you, ask her out. You'll understand later.

I'm waiting for you with open arms, Alfredo. Keep moving forward. I'll be here.

With love,
Alfredo

Three Poems
by Francisco Santana

Annoy

Irritability, disturbance
Exhausting, frustrating, draining
Poverty, politics, paper works, poseur
Relaxing, breathing, flowing
Blast, bash,
Delight.

Mi - Re

I'd like us to exist together in an endless loop.
You and I are forever intertwined.
You can't stop thirsting for me and I can't stop hungering
for you.
Want you weaving your soul, your anger and lust under
my skin? Allowed me to take the lead and flow.
Oh!, but you want to, don't you?

Ouroborus

Fate or coincidence
Divinity or madness?
Eagerness of supremacy is a never-ending cycle.
Death, rebirth, poverty, submission and power.
Headed by a man, maybe a man and 3/4 of a country.



About Literacy KC

Vision

Literacy For All

Mission

To advance literacy within the Kansas City metropolitan area through direct services, advocacy, and collaboration.

History

Literacy KC was founded in 1985 by volunteers to provide one-on-one tutoring to adults wanting to learn how to read and write but who did not have the resources to do so. In 2015, Literacy KC developed an innovative community and classroom-based model to meet the needs of a larger student audience. This new adult-literacy program, Ticket to Read, served as the first expansion of Literacy KC's services that have since only continued to grow.

Literacy KC has since added High School Equivalency, English Language Learning, Workforce Development, Digital Literacy, and Excel High School to our offerings.

As a regional and national leader in adult education, Literacy KC has made waves in our field by providing state-of-the-art curriculum following Federal College and Career Readiness Standards.

Support Literacy KC

Become a Volunteer

Volunteers are part of the fabric of our organization. From tutoring in HiSET or ESL classes and modeling best practices in our family reading program, to making the everyday at our offices go smoothly, volunteers add so much value to our programs.

Sign up for Volunteer Training

Join us to learn about our work and participate in training! Sign up by visiting our website or calling (816) 333-9332.

You can also
scan this QR code:



Donate to Literacy KC

To ensure that our programs remain free and high quality, Literacy KC relies on the generous support of community members, businesses, and foundations. Consider supporting our programs by making a gift.

**Give by visiting our website or
scanning this QR code:**



Literacy KC is a Section 501(c)3 nonprofit and your gift may qualify as a charitable deduction for federal income tax purposes. After each gift, Literacy KC sends a written acknowledgement of your donation in the mail, which may be used for your tax records.

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