



















2018 UNTOLD STORIES

Organized by LOTUS Legal Clinic, the Untold Stories Program brings awareness and healing to survivors of sexual or domestic violence or human trafficking and builds the skills to become agents of systemic change.

The Untold Stories program offers an intensive testimonial writing workshop "The Stories We Tell™" with a creative and safe environment for survivors to develop their own work of poetry, short fiction, or prose. Guided by award-winning author, R. Clifton Spargo, and Anne K. Ream, founder of The Voices and Faces Project™, participants showcase their work in a unique format in order to impact the community through individual testimony.

In 2018, through the Arts @ Large program, students at area middle and high schools studied issues of gender-based violence, and created artistic responses to the written work of participating survivors.



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Co-Editors:

Dr. Emily Nolan Dr. Debra Brenegan Rachel Monaco-Wilcox, JD

Graphic Design:

Cat Simpson

Contributors:

The 2018 Milwaukee Cohort of "The Stories We Tell" Testimonial Writing Workshop Dr. Peter Whalen's creative writing class from Milwaukee High School of the Arts Paul Moore's creative writing class from Alliance High School

Project Team:

Georgia Black Debra Brenegan Sarah Canty Katherine Dannecker-Stevens Alondra Garcia Leah Gazinski Laura Housel Sean Kiebzak

Benetria McGowan

Rachel Monaco-Wilcox

Emily Nolan Brianna Siepel

Laura Yale

(Listed alphabetically)

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Spring Showcase

Roundtable Captures, March 16, 2018

Groups of survivors, student artists, community members, *Untold Stories* leaders, *Untold Stories* sponsors, and invited guests gathered together for lunch and camaraderie at this year's Spring Showcase. The survivors' writing was displayed alongside the art work that was produced in response to the writing, and Spring Showcase attendees had the privilege of enjoying the writing and the art before gathering together for the program and a meal. Each table discussed take-aways from the process and the event. We collected those statements to share in this zine; you will find these quotes scattered throughout this publication. Enjoy!

DEFINING ADVOCACY

Rachel Monaco-Wilcox, JD, CEO and Founder, LOTUS Legal Clinic

Advocate. With roots in Latin, as a verb, it literally translates "to call to one's aid." As a noun, it can mean a few things: champion, crusader, spokesperson, one who pleads on another's behalf. I am a lawyer (a professional advocate), a writer of poetry, and a child sexual assault survivor. Those three elements have shaped my life, in reverse order. I have an unlikely passion for the law as a poet-turned-advocate. I

am not bossy, aggressive or loud. The label of "crusader" makes me squirm a little; the risk of oversimplification of complex truths is too great for me. But, if I achieve one thing in my legal representations, I hope that every client I represent has the ability to use his or her own voice whether in court or out. I do not want to speak for them. I want to open up the way for them to be heard. That's real justice. My own journey is the reason I believe in Untold Stories, the LOTUS Legal Clinic program that returns the voices of survivors of sexual violence to them through creative writing and art.

My early poems were reflections of post-assault shattering. The words came out in groups of three, maybe five per line, fragmented by dashes, gaps and silence. Visually on the page, the poems formed little boxes of pain, tiny windows into my prison. When I could not talk to anyone nor silence my memory, my poems tried to tell for me. How would you tell someone that something awful happened to you if you had no way to form the words? Would it come out in bits and pieces? If you have no words, is it shown in colors and shapes that outline emotion? If you are a "victim" of crime, are you deemed less credible when you can't form a narrative and put one event in time before or after something else? Maybe

you would need a spokesperson along the way, someone who listens and translates your experience into powerful words that can help you get protection, get compensated for your destroyed body, property, or peace of mind. Hopefully, they would help you be seen and heard in the eyes of the legal system, the community, and your own loved ones. When you are noticed, you can then ask to be made whole; to

be restored. That is what most trauma-survivors want. They do not ask for the world to be the way it was before -- they want, more profoundly, to be recognized for what has unalterably changed. For too many survivors of sexual violence, this simple right to be known and heard is the one that proves most elusive.

In the pages of this magazine, you will see the work of survivor-writers who have found their voices. You will also see the empathy that is mirrored back to them through the art responses of young people who had, at the time, never met those writers. Two essays follow from my collaborators in Art Therapy and Creative Writing. And

finally, you will see the powerful change-directed statements created by members of the public, survivors and students during the Spring Showcase in Milwaukee this year where the work was viewed in full form. Our hope is that you, reader, will be inspired by these honest insights and the Untold Stories project to build on the momentum of breaking the silence. We become our own advocates, pleading on our own behalf and bringing others along. Together, we can tip the scales toward a safer world for our daughters and sons. For those of us who have at one time not been safe, we can be seen, heard, and loved exactly as we are, stronger in the broken places.



ABOUT RACHEL

Rachel is the founder and CEO of LOTUS Legal Clinic, a Milwaukee-based legal clinic for victims of trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence. She started LOTUS while Chair and Professor of the Justice Department at Mount Mary University, where she still teaches in the Art Therapy doctoral program. She received a Fulbright scholarship to study modern Greek poetry before a life in law consumed her.



"Silence does not make the problem go away."

No More - Traci L. Powell

No more! It's all too much, and I'm so done. Done with the pain. Done re-living events from the 1970s and 80s on a constant loop in my brain. All of it coming at me like a bad dream sequence in a movie, but this dream sequence is in 4-D. Too much. All of it. Make it stop! I have to make it stop. Spinning out of control. All of it coming at me nonstop. Visions only I can see. Flashes of ropes and knives, a darkened room lined with brown paneling, a box filled with "toys," and the form of a monster, covered in sweaty black hair, smirking, terrorizing, looming. The smells of stale cigarette smoke and beer breath linger in the air, but it is air only I can smell. His laughter echoes only in my ears with his words -- whore, bitch, worthless, I will kill you. Alone in feeling his prickly, black mustache, clammy, aggressive hands, and force overtaking a little girl. The girl I was forty years ago, yet it all feels so real right now.

No more! This night will not be like so many other nights -- sleepless, petrifying, a brain filled with a movie whose projector I have no control over. Tonight, peace will finally come. Tiny, round pale blue pills are my saviors. One, two, three, four . . . solid bits of hope for relief sliding down my throat. The only answers to make it all stop . . . five, six, seven, eight . . . I still feel him, his weight, his hands. I still see him . . . can hear that sick laugh continue . . . nine, ten, eleven, twelve . . . invisible cigarette smoke still burns my nose, makes me cough, the smells of his beer breath and moist flesh make me want to vomit . . . thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen . . . I'm still a whore, worthless, damaged forever . . . seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty . . . Finally, relief coming. Pain is dulling. Sleep will once again be my friend. His voice floating away to the distance. His touch lighter. Now, the smell of freedom. Seal the deal . . . ten more blue bits of hope . . . now at thirty. The bottom of the pill bottle finds the bottom of my pain.

No more! Serenity is coming. There is peace in the fog . . . eyes are heavy . . . the world in slow motion . . . weight is lifting . . .

floating . . . light . . . carefree . . . until . . . A shrill of laughter shatters the mirage of escape. A bubbly, brown haired girl so precious she causes true reality to set in. He did those things so long ago. The smells, the visions, the sounds, the feelings are ancient. Events from decades ago, but this girl, she is real. Her brother is real. They are perfect and love and mine. What am I doing to them? Condemning them to a life with some of the very people I must escape, because without me, they have no one. Without me, they will leave their lives of love and acceptance. Their home will no longer be a safe haven, but instead a prison, reeking of alcohol. A frigid, dungeon where souls are crushed, and brains are washed in the rancid, murky water of messages of worthlessness that stains for a lifetime.

No more! I must be strong. Crawl my way to the bathroom, fingers down my throat, retching through the fog. Frantically trying to get rid of them. Tiny blue specks come up out of me, each one a frightening reminder that he almost won. They are not my saviors that bring hope. They are the monster's tokens of victory. They represent defeat. He will not win. Not tonight or ever. My children will not suffer because of him. I will not die because of him. With an empty stomach, I will sit up all night. No sleep by choice.

One o'clock . . . two o'clock . . . I will not slip away. I will fight eyes so tired, begging for sleep. Fight the enticing nebula that taunts me with promises of everlasting peace. Three o'clock . . . four o'clock . . . Slowly ascending from the numbing fog. Lucidity is setting in. I want to live, tonight and always. Not just for my kids, but for every survivor who has been left to feel they cannot take another day, because of the monsters who left them feeling that way. Five o'clock . . . six o'clock . . . Rising from immeasurable hopelessness like the break of dawn. Resolved to transcend the ingrained lessons of worthlessness and shame. Breathe in sweet victory over a night almost lost to the great escape. He has taken enough from me. No more!



The Crack - *Kathryn Keleny*

A little girl hides from all of her fear, hides in the crack no one knows she is here.

It's here she must hide to get away from it all, it's too much for her she's afraid of it all.

"Maybe they won't find me; this time anyway." Is all she can think of to get through each day.

So afraid of her mom and of daddy, it's true, she's so terribly small and can't know what to do.

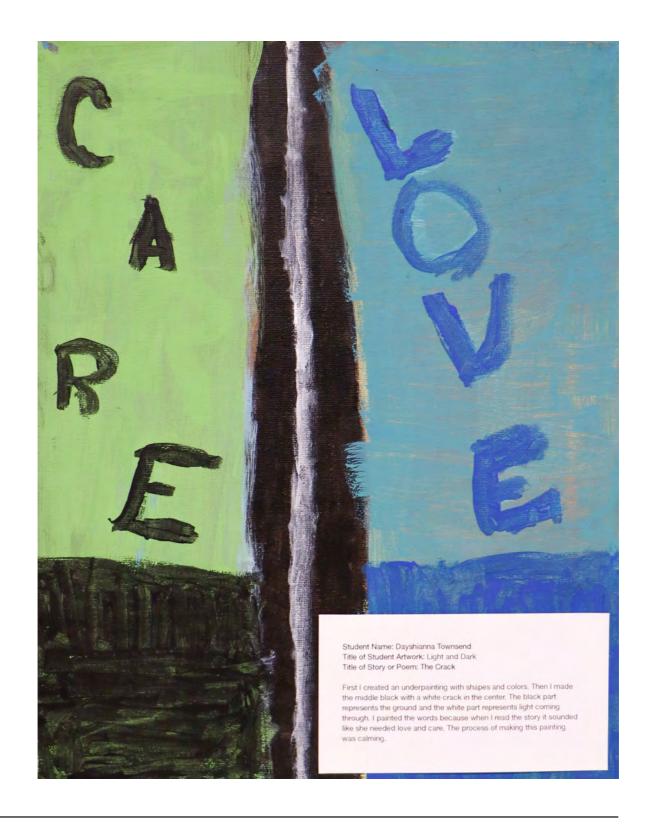
So she does what she knows to keep safe and sound, she hides in the crack but she's usually found.



Student Name: Vickia Nolan
Title of Artwork: Stuck in the Middle
Title of Story or Poem: The Crack

Based on the story I put a small mouse in the middle of the crack. I put different colors representing different feelings. She is in the crack hiding from what's going on outside of the crack. I chose a mouse as a symbol because a mouse is small and quiet and scared, kind of like the girl in the story. I feel like I can relate to the poem so I didn't struggle making this painting.







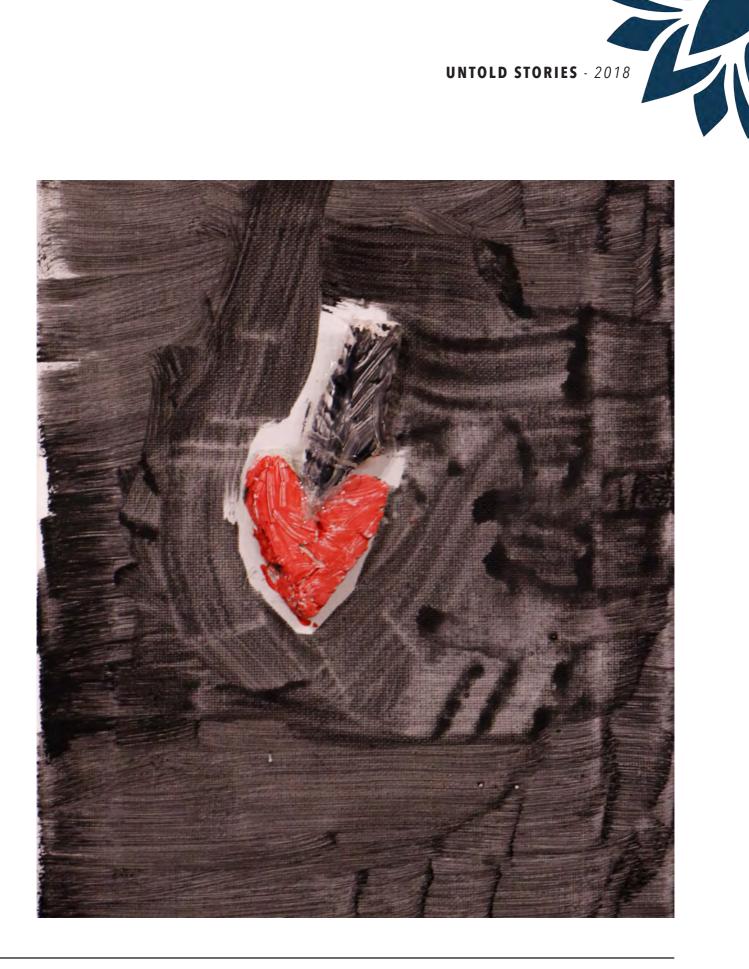
"In order to heal it is not just about prosecution.

Sharing survivor's stories creates a healing

process and allows us to raise awareness,

giving courage to other survivors."







"I can and will speak out, and
I will listen to those with
whom I share different
experiences to deepen my own
perspective. Encourage
empathy and strive for
nuance in social discourse."

The Big D - Catherine Cain

After agonizingly waiting what seemed forever for the divorce to be final, the day arrived. He had petitioned me so I didn't need to go to court. That earned me a new word on his lengthy *Why Cathy sucks* list. "Coward" he sneered. I didn't care. I'd taken the day off and was

full of Walt Disney style expectation. Blue birds were going to dance around my head, the pain was going to disappear and my carefree pre-marriage lightheartedness was going to come bounding back.

The split had torn our poor sons to pieces. The boys were 14 and 12 then. "You don't know the real me," I had said to them when they begged me to reconcile with their dad. "Long ago I used to laugh and joke and

always have a smile on my face. I made people happy. This mopey, sad face is going to disappear, boys, and our lives are going to be so much better when you get to meet the real me. I promise."

I didn't tell them I also expected not to be scared anymore, or that they wouldn't hear me wake up screaming from nightmares anymore, or that I'd no longer startle and jump when they approached me unexpectedly. It was hard work not painting their dad as the boogie man. He wasn't their boogie man; only mine.

So when divorce day arrived, I went and sat by the lake where the water had always calmed me. I waited for the blue birds but they were not there. The divorce care class I'd taken said I needed to grieve the loss. Fair enough. I got back in my car, let the flood gates open, and

bawled my eyes out. Then I cleaned my face and drove to another favorite place, the Botanic Gardens, where I walked. Late October's chill couldn't dull the shimmer off the gold ginkgo trees. I loved the Japanese garden but it wasn't working its usual magic. It was nearly

11:30 a.m. and our court date had been at 10:30 a.m. Was I divorced? Was I free? Wouldn't I feel it? Wouldn't I know? Perhaps I was still married because there was still no sign of the blue birds. They were not at the Botanic Gardens.

Maybe I didn't need the blue birds but could be content to just find solace in knowing he couldn't hurt me anymore. I could get that spring back in my step and get the weight off my shoulders allowing that lightness of 15 years ago to come back. I needed to keep my promise to my children. I waited all that day, and then

I waited the rest of that week, month and year. Nothing changed. The tears and fears were still constant companions and the signing of that wretched document didn't have even the smallest bit of real life impact on my shattered psyche.

That happy girl of years ago is not coming back, and Walt Disney and his dumb birds are six feet under, but just maybe, this wizened old broad of today can find a different contentment, be a smarter source of joy for her adult children, and can find a finer period for the end of her marital sentence. Maybe sharing my knowledge can bring peace to some, maybe knowing their mom has chosen to fearlessly lead can become a source of pride for my children, and maybe, if I allow my-self to exhale, the ordinary sparrow can bring me more joy than any make believe blue bird ever could have.



Student Name: Yerusha and Ahmad Title of Artwork: The Gates to Hell Title of Story or Poem: The Big D

The Big D is a very powerful piece. We used a "heaven and hell" approach because Catherine had to make many choices that changed her life. We really hope Catherine likes it and appreciates our work. We are glad she's found a better place.



Demon Child - Traci L. Powell

There was a girl of nine who cared so much about me that on a brisk New Jersey autumn day in 1977, she gave up her life so that I could live. Crowned with long, flowing blonde hair and small in stature, with pale white skin and full round cheeks, like a soldier readying for battle, she bravely went off on her own to endure her adversary. She had battled him in the past, but this day was different. This day, his fury and arsenal of weapons were so mighty and terrifying that

she would set me free, while she stayed behind to continue to endure his tyranny on that day and for many days to come. She had no weapons with which to protect herself, no armor, no battle cry. Silently, she carried with her only an invisible, cold steel black box, in which she would deeply pack away the memories of invasion on her helpless form. She would endure it all to protect me, so that I could survive.

After the war was over, for decades, she bravely stood guard over the box filled with unspeakable acts, alone, while I pretended she didn't exist. She remained deeply locked away in isolation and darkness, while I became a nurse, then a mother, then a nurse practitioner, then a PhD student. I built a life, while she was held captive in the battle room of torture. She sacrificed herself for me, and I betrayed her, mak-

ing her a prisoner of war. I hated her existence and perpetuated her abuse by shaming and blaming her. I continued to tell her the lies that she held to be truths for so long -- she is worthless, unwanted, stupid, filthy, broken. I hung a neon sign over her head. The word "whore" flashing in bright red, off and on, everywhere she went. I had no sympathy for what she had endured and the memories she protected me from. In fact, I passionately hated her for existing.

Eventually, collapsing from the weight of it all, she needed me to set her free. The black and blue colors of her soul bled out inside of me, demanding my attention, begging, pleading, for someone, anyone, to care. She no longer wanted to be the martyr. She needed to be a child, innocent and loved. Like the annoying neighbor kid who is always there to say "hi" when you walk out of your house, she never

went away. Finally, not to be ignored, she did the unthinkable and unlocked the secret steel, black box of stored horrors. Like a colony of thousands of bats escaping a cave, each with a memory etched on its wings, the horrors flew out relentlessly. She took control of my brain. She played the tapes I turned off a long time ago -- rewind, pause, play, freeze frame, rewind and play some more. No longer my protector, I called her Demon Child, possessed by immense despair, and frantically begging for help.

Demon Child had no place in my life. My stucco facade of a successful, middle-aged woman was strong. People fell for the show. Perfect mom, perfect nurse practitioner, perfect student, perfectly independent. The trouble is, when the perfect storm hits, stucco crumbles and what has been hidden behind it becomes exposed. Demon Child hit me with a ven-

geance, and no matter how frantically I tried to repair the cracks in the stucco, I couldn't keep up, until eventually it all came crashing down.

She knew what I pretended to not know. Without her, a whole part of me was missing. She held the gaps in my memory. I grew to hate her even more. Why didn't she run? Why didn't she fight back? Why did she give up and surrender to it all? My therapist told me the only way

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Student Name: Neo Xiong
Title of Artwork: Different World
Title of Story or Poem: Demon Child

When I read the story, I thought the author was living in two worlds and two mindsets. I tried to show that in my painting by making the character in the center split in two, a happy place and a sad place. I put two suns in my painting to symbolize sunrise and sunset.

to truly heal would be through her, that I had to be the one to heal her gaping wounds. What kind of twisted logic was that? How was I, the adult damaged version of that girl, supposed to be the one to fill the holes in her heart and brighten the blackness in her soul? I hated her! She was my enemy. She needed annihilation, not my help. Her exorcism from my life was essential. So, we battled, she and I, for over three years, until an iceberg changed it all.

I took my kids on an Alaskan cruise to celebrate my daughter's high

school graduation. Doubts and fears filled me as I heard every voice that made me feel I could never be smart enough to navigate my way from Florida to Alaska, especially while keeping myself and my two kids safe. But, this was my daughter's dream, and for her, I will find a way past my many insecurities. So, my kids and I went on the adventure of a lifetime. I did my best to hide my anxiety as we transitioned from plane to train to ship. Triggers hit me from all angles -- the popping of can tabs on the plane as the flight attendants offered beverages to the passengers, the cab that smelled of cigarette smoke, the feeling of complete disorientation as we stood in the middle of the train station trying to figure out which direction we needed to go as hundreds of hurried travelers whizzed by us. Finally, we made it to the safety of our stateroom on the ship.

As I lay on the bed, mentally and physically exhausted by the day of travel and endless navigation, I cursed my nine-year-old Demon Child. She created the anxiety in me. She created my doubts, fears and deep belief that I am inherently flawed. Rather than just allow me to enjoy each moment of the trip, she made the connections

in my brain from pop tops, the smells of cigarettes and feelings of disorientation to events from years ago. Why didn't she stay in Florida?? Just for one week? Why couldn't she leave me alone!?!!?!?

As we visited each Alaskan port, my kids and I wandered just far enough to see the town, yet not so far that I couldn't easily return to the safety of the ship. At least that was the case until Juneau day came. All week I had dreaded this day, because I knew it would be much different. My daughter's lifelong dream had been to go dog-sledding

on a glacier in Alaska. I secretly knew her whole life there was no way screwed up me would be making that dream come true, yet somehow, suddenly there I was, about to board a helicopter to fly to the top of a glacier. I just kept thinking to myself, "How did I get here?!?!" "What was I thinking!?!" "Surely, we will die, and I will be the killer of my children." As I stood on the launching pad, cloaked in a bright yellow parka provided by the helicopter company and standing in glacier boots with spikey bottoms to grab the ice, I began to shake. My daughter, intuitively, took hold of my arm and said, "Mom, you've got this." As we approached the helicopter, with it's massive propeller whipping the air around us, and color matching my yellow parka, I couldn't help but think, "We are going to die in a freaking banana!" The friendly helicopter pilot looked at me with a smile and said. "Welcome to

the adventure of a lifetime," but all Demon Child allowed me to see was his mustache and instantly, the panic of a nine-year-old warrior child enduring the attack of the mustached enemy coursed through me. I wanted out. I wanted to throw the door open and just jump out, but before I knew it, we were high over snowcapped mountains. I

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Student Name: Romeo Johnnies Title of Artwork: Dandelion Storm Title of Story or Poem: Demon Child

Have you ever noticed in the summertime when it storms the dandelions are still standing upright? It makes me think that anybody can stand strong if you are ready to; that is why I painted the dandelion in the center of my painting. The dandelion represents the child. At first I had the sky all blue which represented peace and tranquility and then I painted the storm because that represents hardship. I also wanted to respond to the story with this poem of my own...

Misunderstood through a storm wave Trying to change myself trying to change my ways



wondered, "Would it really be so bad if the door flew open, and I fell to my death?" Relief started to fill me as I could feel the helicopter begin to make its descent down to land on the glacier. As the helicopter skids made contact with the mile-wide mass of ice underneath us,

the tension of the flight released from my body. Just as my muscles were beginning to relax, I readied myself for the certain death I was sure I would face by walking on the glacier. Certainly 300 feet of solid ice had to have its weak spots, right?

The pilot left my children and me to explore this glacier that was all ours for a brief period in time. I was immediately overwhelmed by the scenery that surrounded me. Never in my life had I witnessed anything more beautiful. As I stood in amazement, I watched as waterfalls raced down the mountains around us at speeds so fast there was no time for them to freeze. The sound of the crunch underneath my spikey boots was a constant reminder of the block of solid water underneath me. As the sunlight dove deeply into the glacier, leaving it's red and yellow colors behind in the

solid mass, shades of blue bounced back up out of the ice all around me. Small streams of melted ice trickled past my feet, and as the coolness of pure air never contaminated by pollution brushed across my cheeks, a calm I had never known came over me.

I looked into the distance and could see the edge of the glacier. Airy, white clouds floated above in a brilliant blue sky, and along the horizon, I saw her. A girl of nine. Long blonde hair blowing in the wind. Surrounded by the enormous majesty of it all, she stood alone, small, sad, frightened and misunderstood. I looked at her, and as if I was the Grinch himself, my heart grew three sizes in that moment. Freezing

drops of salt water rolled down my cheeks as I opened my heart to that fragile, innocent, little girl. This was no Demon Child. She was not bad, nor broken. Not dirty, nor shameful and none of the battles she was forced to surrender to could have been her fault. She was pure

and innocent. She, this brave soul, who carried the memories of heinous acts, weights tied around her ankles for so long, was not my enemy. She was my hero. She so beautifully and bravely hid my scars, both emotional and physical. She, this nine-year-old child, saw to it that I became the nurse, who would become a mother, who would become a nurse practitioner, who would make a life that eventually took me from a house of despair in New Jersey, to a house of safety under a palm tree in the Florida sun, and now all the way to the top of a glacier in the Alaskan cold. She held all the excruciating pain in her small body for as long as she could, for me, and in that moment, I finally understood that only I could set her free.

As I stood on that glacier, for the first time in my life, I spoke to her. Through tears of gratitude, I told her how sorry

I was for what she had to live through, and even worse, that I held her responsible all those years. As I spoke to her, in my heart, I could feel her pain lift just a little. As I turned off the neon whore sign that I had placed over her head so long ago, the endless chain that bound her, each link holding the lies of abuse, began to loosen from her, until finally the Alaskan wind carried it away and she was free. Finally, unfettered from the weight of it all, I could see her running around without a care on the glacier. I watched as she spun with glee under the Alaskan sun, arms outstretched, taking in the pure joy of it all, and for the first time ever, she looked at me and smiled. She knew she was finally home.



Student Name: Kyshon Galloway
Title of Artwork: Feelings Versus Feelings
Title of Story or Poem: Demon Child

When I was making this painting I was thinking about my brother. Joey was going through a bad breakup and that reminded me of this story because there was a wall around him and he wasn't in touch with his feelings. He turned to me to help him through this hard time. I told him that he has to do what brings him happiness to break out of the sadness. Basically you have to punch the wall with a strong emotion to break it. This is like the story I read because she broke her wall with a feeling that she made.

"Student response art helps in the healing process because it helps create connection through empathy."



"Be open minded and listen to the stories around you. Then, share your stories and what you have learned from others."

The Nightmare - *Laurel Blackstone*

I walk in the door and I call for my family members.

No one answers, I have a bad feeling but don't know why.

Then all of a sudden, the walls around me are being torn down and destroyed.

I hear loud sounds and realize it's gun fire all around me. But, it's not just normal gunfire, it's explosions riveting the entire area. I hear screaming outside and run out to see what's happening. I look up and see a spaceship shooting laser rays at the houses. The buildings are all in a row. Military housing is like that.

The trees all around. The tree right outside our door that I loved to climb.

My friends are playing outside and then running in fear.

They are destroying the houses, hitting people running around.

My friends, my family, and neighbors are all being killed by the aliens.

My house, my neighborhood, my life is being torn apart and destroyed. Crashing sounds all around me.

Eventually, they are all gone. I'm all alone, a 4 year old child scared and con-

Then I'm looking down on it all like I'm not there anymore.

"Am I dead?"

Seeing all this destruction. The fires, the torn buildings, the destruction. Seeing what used to be a happy place for me, what I once knew to be safe.

Where was my family, they were all gone!

I continued to have this dream for another twenty some years and had no idea why.

One simple statement my husband at the time made that reminded me of the moment I was forgetting.

The moment he told me he'd destroy my life if I left him.

Immediately I cowerd in the kitchen in a ball like an infant.

Fear overtook me.I couldn't move I was frozen in that moment, that flashback.

My first flashback to the time when I was little and I was told that if I told anyone, he would kill my family.

The moment I would push so far back in my mind

that I didn't remember for almost 20 years.

I still wouldn't be able to deal with for another 20 plus years.

But I finally figured out what this dream was when I attended "Untold Stories".

The flashbacks of the time I was molested as a child haven't stopped, and I don't know all the details, and I hope maybe I never will.

My childhood was taken from me.

It didn't even seem real at first, it just felt like a dream but the flash-backs are real and are my life, it did happen to me.



I'm working through it.

I was threatened and as a small child my mind dealt with at this way. I don't have the nightmare anymore, I just have the flashbacks.

Quite honestly, I'm not sure which is worst. The not knowing what's frightening me or the knowing what is frightening me!

Student Name: Thomas Bracy **Title of Artwork**: Cocoon

Title of Story or Poem: The Nightmare

The story called the Nightmare is mostly about a person having a nightmare, I made this artwork called the Cocoon because in every nightmare, you feel like you're trapped and you try to find ways to get out the nightmare. Cocoon shows a good example of that. I used the color black for the cocoon because the color black is evil darkness. I used the color grey for the stand so it can show out with the evil cocoon and also dent it around too. The material I used is clay because I love to use clay.



"Shine a light to empower the victims and the community."

DEFINING CREATIVE WRITING

Debra Brenegan, Associate Professor, Graduate Program Director and Author

Paul Witty and Lou LaBrant in *Teaching the People's Language* define creative writing as "any type of writing at any time primarily in the service of such needs as: the need for keeping records of significant experience, the need for sharing experience with an interested group, and the need for free individual expression which contributes to mental and physical health."

I believe that all writing is process-oriented – it is often the process itself that takes more of a writer's attention than the final words. The process of feeling the words bubble up, of wanting and needing to get them out and get them down, of having others read and respond to those words. And I agree with Witty and LaBrant that creative writing is writing that serves a myriad of needs, including the need to influence social change.

As a creative writer and a creative writing professor, and as a survivor who used writing to help heal my own trauma, I can attest to the power of the written word to help people document traumatic experiences, make sense of them, and use those personal experiences to work toward healing and social change. When a person writes her own story, then sees it written down, it becomes more real – it is true – and this knowledge validates the flitty feelings survivors of trauma often have trouble capturing and investigating. Those words, too, become even more powerful when shared with others – whether fellow

survivors or compassionate supporters. A person's story told in her own voice is stronger than columns of data to prompt social change. Hearts are stirred. Connections are made. These are real people being hurt. These are the effects of such treatment. This is the healing process of brave and resilient survivors. We can have a different future. We can heal and create healthy environments. We can treat each other well.

Telling the truth, expressing our feelings, and believing each other's stories helps communities build solid foundations of trust, safety, respect, and equality, as it reduces the chances of more abuse and trauma unfolding among our people. I was lucky to have kind and caring people help me through my healing process and I was lucky to find the value of creative writing in that process. Now, I'm honored to be able to help others use creative writing as a tool of self-expression to help them on their own healing journeys. I'm delighted to be a part of *Untold Stories* as a writing workshop facilitator. It is a pleasure to help others discover and develop one of my favorite processing tools – writing – and to help them unleash its healing power in their own lives. The fact that their writing is then responded to by art students, celebrated at the "Spring Showcase," and featured in this zine for community consumption is the icing on the cake of social transformation we're all baking together.



ABOUT DEBRA

Debra Brenegan serves as an Associate Professor and the Graduate Program Director at Mount Mary University. Her work has been published in Calyx, Tampa Review, Natural Bridge, The Laurel Review, Cimarron Review, Phoebe, RE:AL, The Southern Women's Review, Knee-Jerk, Literary Orphans, and elsewhere. Her novel, Shame the Devil was named a finalist for Foreword Reviews 2011 Book of the Year Award for Historical Fiction.

"Everyone can change if they try. If you do not know something, you cannot change it. So, invite yourself to make a change."

16 and Grown - *Samantha Collier*

Every day after class it's Drew, HER and those fishnet tights. As they both walk into the coat closet.

He, thinks it's awesome to have an older woman.

As he rushes to basketball practice, a whole hour later. He arrives and screams over all the bouncing balls over to the coach. "I'll need an extension on my college applications..."

As the group heads to the showers, Drew walks as if, he is walking on a red carpet with cameras flashes and babies to kiss.

As showers began to spray, the sounds of click clack click clack heels and the smell of lilies feels the locker room.

Mrs. Williams is talking to coach!

When Drew noticed her, their eyes locked and his friends all laughed, since they all new about the coat closet love story.



The Rainbow - *Laurel Blackstone*

Red - The anger I had when I first remembered.

Orange - Once fear set in.

Yellow - Next came denial.

Green - After years of therapy came the calm feeling.

Blue - Eventually after a writing workshop came the understanding.

Violet - And through all this I've become the strong woman I am now.

Student Name: Madison Roby **Title of Artwork**: Therapy

Title of Story or Poem: The Rainbow

This poem inspired me in many ways. Each color on the heart represents each emotion the writer felt while going through her healing process (therapy) and each color becomes more positive as you look at the painting.

It's 5 AM - Kathryn Keleny

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ts 5 AM – 2 hours before my alarm is set to go off. I should know by now that it's useless to set the alarm – I'm always up well before it goes off. I lay in bed for a while thinking about my dreams – if there had been any, and what I need to get accomplished today. Then I remember a suggestion given to me. I pick up the journal that has been on my bedside table for months and begin making a list of things I need to do today.

- Shower
- Wash hair
- Brush teeth
- Get dressed
- Go to library

I have to include every task no matter how small in order to keep my momentum going and keep me on track.

I don't really want to go anyplace – even if its somewhere I've been looking forward to or to meet a friend. It's much easier to just stay in all day and forget the outside world. I don't have to interact with anyone. I can choose whether to answer the phone or not. There is no need for me to take the effort to have a coherent conversation with another person. It doesn't matter who the person is.

Even interacting with the cashier at the grocery store is difficult to do without making a fool of myself. It's hard for me to follow a conversation. It is hard to keep up with the fast paced short interaction.

And then there's having to deal with the judgments I know everyone is making: "What's wrong with her" – To my reaction when a friend approaches me to say hello. What they see is my friend excitedly

approaching me as she gets off the bus. She says "Hi! I'm glad to see you today." I did not see her disembark from the bus and am startled by her voice. I scream and jump seemingly out of my skin, as I spin around; dropping my purse, book bag and anything else I'm carrying. Everything sprawls onto the sidewalk; books, pens, wallet, money, credit cards, medications, tampons, photos, etc. I'm morti-

fied that such personal items have been seen by strangers. I'm positive they have been watching and laughing at me. I ask myself, "What are they thinking about me?" I'm sure it's only negative things – "She's so clumsy" and "She's so weird".

My friend helps me gather all my things and shove them haphazardly back in my bags. After that is done, I'm still visibly shaken. My friend notices me trembling and reaches out compassionately in an effort to help me calm down. I jump backwards and yell loudly, "Don't touch me!" She seems surprised at my response and asks me what's wrong. How should I respond? She knows nothing about what I've been through. So I just say something general like, "I was just so focused on my thoughts and didn't hear you coming." Even after we part ways, I am

still anxious and tremble for several hours. I'm constantly watching for anybody coming towards me, even having to check to make sure there's no one behind me.

Nobody realizes how much time and energy it has taken for me to bolster my courage to get out. They have no idea how long it takes me to get ready to go anywhere and how much I have to keep telling

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Student Name: Mikaeyla Owens Title of Artwork: Isolated Title of Story or Poem: It's 5 AM

In the middle of the painting, I drew a woman crying with her hands over her head, inside of a snow globe isolating herself from society. On the left side of the woman, I drew eyes looking down at her, and the snow globe is trying to protect her from society. On the right side of the woman, there is a list of priorities and her therapist and pills. For this painting, I used paint and pastels. I made this painting because I felt that the woman was always scheduled and was afraid of connecting with society; I thought that this piece would connect with the author. Its relation to the storn is that the author was always prioritizing her life and did not want to communicate with others, and I felt that she was trapped, and I needed to express her struggles.

myself this is a good thing. What is routine for most people is far from routine for me. I have to consciously think about each thing I need to do and sometimes even have to write down a detailed schedule to follow:

> 1 Eat breakfast Take medications

Wash hair 5. Make a list of things to

ccomplish at the library Pack bag for library Go to library

- Eat breakfast
- Take medications
- Shower
- Wash hair
- Find appropriate clean, matching clothes
- Make a list of things to accomplish at the library
- Pack bag for the library
- Etc, etc

Plus I need to allow for extra time in case I forget what I'm doing in the middle of something.

When I'm finally dressed, have my bag packed and am ready to go, I look at the clock.

SHIT!! - its 6 PM. The library's closed.

It took me all day to get ready and now

there's no place for me to go. I can't think of any alternatives because the library has been the only place I had intended to go today. That's why tomorrow I won't even make any effort to go anyplace. Why take all the time and effort to go someplace when in the end I won't get

I know that I should be gentle and not shame myself (at least that's

what everybody tells me). Sometimes I even try to talk to myself with compassion and love, but I know that I'm not doing it right. My version of self-compassion always seems to differ from my therapist's.

> So I just put my pajamas back on, turn on the TV, grab some chips and soda and lay on the couch cocooned in my blanket and cuddle with my cats. Sometimes I feel more optimistic and actually start planning the next day. I make notes about what to do at the library, make a schedule for the day and begin packing my bag because of course I unpacked it already with the hopes of accomplishing something tonight. But usually I don't have enough energy to do anything productive even reading or calling a friend. I'm also focused on beating myself up about all my failures today, this week, this month.

When bedtime finally comes (and it seems to take forever when in reality it's only a couple hours) I

crawl into bed, set the alarm for tomorrow and hope that I'll sleep

So begins another day.



Student Name: Grace Phillips Title of Artwork: Weight of Anxiety Title of Story or Poem: It's 5 AM

I empathize with the mood of the essay I chose. I decided to make a collage over any other option because I found that it was an abstract technique that could communicate what I wanted in a simplistically powerful way. The girl on the bottom represents the author feeling powerless and out of control like the spirit of a helpless child. She is holding up a pile of clocks. It represents time, which is weighing her down because she cannot control or keep track of it. The foot represents her past. It is the main force metaphorically pressing her into the ground. The eyes represent the people she feels are judging her. The list in the top corner shows her one route of control. She described it as the outlet that keeps her momentum going; keeps her on track. It is the only thing on the page that is not tilted because it represents her one sense of stability within the chaos.





Student Name: Yovana Gonzalez Title of Artwork: Rain, Rain Go Away Title of Story or Poem: It's 5 AM

The writing that inspired my painting is called "it's 5 a.m.". It was painted on a canvas with different shades of blues/greens. The whole point of it was to make it look rainy, using different kinds of brushes for all sorts of details, and adding a piece of lined paper to add more creativity. I made it this way because I feel it suits the story well. I also think it adds more meaning with the girl in the rain. The piece of paper represents creativity, starting over, or perhaps a memory. It relates to the story because while reading "its 5 a.m." it had a gloomy feel to it and with the drawing of the girl, I think it suited the story more.

Bells, Betrayal and the Boogie Man - Catherine Cain

As the living room clock struck six bells, the automatic gnawing deep in her belly started its nightly churn. She sat in her rocking chair by the big bay window and pretended to be reading but was peeking over her glasses, trying to catch a sideways glimpse of his face when he came in from work. Sometimes his expression bore telltale signs that foreshadowed what sort of night he had in store for her. He didn't give away any hints this night. The not knowing was scarier than the knowing. If he wore the approachable face, she could confidently greet him. If he wore his this-was-an-absolute-crap-day face, she knew to stay out of his way. Even if he wore the crap-day face, the knowing was better. She could anticipate him, and stay small and in another room. Not knowing his mood meant she risked failure and punishment in choosing whether to greet him or not greet him. She had a 50/50 shot at guessing wrong and sometimes a wrong guess meant all sorts of hot water.

Luckily he muttered something about his boss being a jerk and continued wordlessly past the dining room, ignoring their two sons who were playing and coloring at the table, so she got her answer. Crapday. She'd become a good detective since they'd married, and had learned to discern all sorts of cues in her efforts to stay out of his line of fire. Knowing this would be a stay-small-and-quiet sort of evening, she donned her cloak of invisibility and went about her afternoon.

She'd learned to appreciate some of the little joys, and food helped numb that icky-belly feeling. With the smell of her lasagna in the oven and the sauces and cheeses bubbling and browning, she looked forward to that night's dinner and some relief. She exhaled a little when they all sat down to eat. The kids were being good, the dog wasn't barking and things seemed to be going along quite nicely. Suddenly his chair screeched across the kitchen floor as he shoved it hard away from the table causing the rest of them to jump. "I can't eat this disgusting food," he bitingly growled, and he pulled the garbage can out from under the sink, knife-scraped all his food off the plate, threw his empty plate in the sink and stormed out. She and the boys sat stunned as the echo of his spinning plate in the sink faded to a stop. The plate didn't break, but something else inside of her did. Something else inside of her broke a little more every day. She and the boys all cried, but did so softly so he wouldn't hear. Tears pissed him off more than just about anything, and he considered them punishable.

She always tried to un-teach her sons the bad things they learned from him. Despite the huge lump in her throat she continued to eat as if nothing happened wanting the boys to follow suit. In a hushed but what she hoped was authoritative voice, she said, "You boys know

it's not right to treat a woman like your father just did! Please remember this when you're grownups." She prayed they didn't see the fork shaking between her fingers, or detect the quiver in her voice, but most of all she prayed they heard her words and would remember.

Later after the kids were tucked in and nine bells had chimed, she headed to the bedroom, alone. He never went with her anymore. The faint smell of lasagna that had earlier pleased her still hung in the air but now it made her shudder. With her comfy jammie bottoms and long sleeved jammie top that had the frill all the way up to the top of her neck, she climbed into bed and took her usual position at the very edge on her side, facing the wall. The way she was scrunched up so tight like a ball at that edge, she looked as if a feather could push her right off the side. She prayed her usual prayer over and over. "Please not tonight. Please not tonight."

Her wish list at this point of the marriage had grown small. Please don't yell at me, please don't judge me, please don't find fault with everything I do, please let me sleep till my 4:30am alarm wakes me for work. Maybe then she'd be able to enjoy the nights again. Gone were the days of wanting romance, kindness and flowers. Now she just wanted a little bit of stop-yelling-at-me, please, and how about some don't-wake-me-in-the-middle-of-the-night, please. With these uneasy thoughts, sleep took her.

Twelve bells sung faintly beyond the bedroom door. Her eyes fluttered opened as she heard his unsteady footsteps down the hall. The sour beer smell wafted in first and she squeezed herself tighter to the edge of the bed. Then the mattress compressed with his weight and she held her breath, pretending to be asleep. Ultimately the hand, that dreaded hand, came in from behind and pulled hard to separate her one leg from the other. Yes it would be tonight. And "no" would not be an option. "No" was never an option. It meant a crap-day became a crap-month. "No" was punishable by not speaking to her for weeks at a time, or refusing to attend family events such as Christmas or a graduation or that long anticipated family party even though she got on her knees to beg and apologize for her sins. "No" meant his hot breath whispering in her ear that he won't hesitate to divorce her if she doesn't "do her job."

While she lay on her back in the dark that night, doing her job, the silent tears slid vertically past her ears and puddled on her pillow as they had so many other nights and would so many nights again. And the bells, they just kept ringing.



"I am worthy. You are worthy. Let your voice be heard."







The Vow - Traci L. Powell

found out I was chosen to participate in the weekend of a lifetime 19 days before I would have to fly to Milwaukee to attend. It was something I'd been deeply wanting to do for over two years. The problem was I never felt worthy of applying, much less being invited to participate. But events that occurred a few days before I applied led me to know it was time I tried.

It was an unusually slow night in our neonatal intensive care unit. The babies were quiet and all of them doing relatively well. No alarms were ringing and very few families were visiting, so I had a rare chance to spend time at the nurses' station talking with some of the nurses I work with. Some started asking me questions about my family, because I rarely talked about them. I shared carefully selected parts of my story that revealed just enough to give the sense mine were not the best family bonds, but I gave no real details. Over the next 30 minutes, the nurses prodded me deeper and deeper, as if searching for answers to some great unknown question, until eventually, I shared the highlights of a childhood blackened by monsters disquised as loving family members.

Little by little, each of the nurses walked away to tend to babies who were waking for their midnight feedings. Sarah, our charge nurse for the night, stayed behind. Visibly shaking, in a voice so low I could barely hear her, she said "Could we please talk privately in your office?" Located on the opposite end of the unit, she and I walked casually to my office engaged in idle chit chat about the implications of the full moon that night, as most full moons brought with them crazy nights in the NICU. We made it to my office, and as soon as I shut the door behind us, Sarah, a strong-willed, feisty, short, pudgy Puerto Rican woman, who we all knew to be one of our best, smartest and most reliable nurses, slid down the back of my door and fell into a heap on the floor. At first, I was in shock. This was not the Sarah I had known for 3 years. Then suddenly it hit me. After only a few seconds, I realized that I was looking at the same kind of nurse that I had been for many years -- strong and fiercely independent on the outside, but collapsing under the weight of the shame and blame of child sexual abuse on the inside. Slowly, I kneeled by her on the floor. I placed my hand on her shoulder and sat in silence as I watched this pillar of strength crumble under the weight of it all.

"Sarah, what's going on?" I asked, though in my heart I already knew. She looked at me briefly and then it happened. The telltale sign of a survivor of sexual abuse that I have come to know far too well. The head hang of shame. Since I started telling my story to others, I saw it more times than I can count. So many who had never told a soul until they heard my story. Every single one of them, just prior to telling me,

have hung their heads, deeply ashamed of something that was never their fault, refusing to make eye contact, as they would break down and speak their truths of the horrific events of their childhoods.

Sarah settled herself a bit and sat up, hugging her knees which were pulled in tightly to her chest. She kept her eyes on the floor and softly whispered, "I can't say it." At this point, I revealed a more descriptive version of my own story. I needed her to know how deeply I understood, even without her saying a word. Slowly, bravely, she began to describe to me the sexual and emotional abuse she suffered through as a child. Now, in her mid-40s, after years of pushing it away, she could no longer run from the truth of her past. She revealed how it all came flooding back and that she passionately hated herself. Hated herself for things we all tend to think as survivors -- she is flawed because she can't let it go, it was her fault, she is worthless, a slut, damaged.

Sarah went on to tell me that until she heard my story, she had never told anyone. She told me how her days were filled with multiple episodes of purging and constant panic attacks. She cried about her disgust with herself. Finally, she revealed how she couldn't tolerate the pain anymore, so she was planning to kill herself that weekend while her nine and ten-year-old kids were away for the night with friends.

Fortunately, after our talk, Sarah's plan changed. I supported her as she spent the next few days putting appointments in place to start her recovery journey. She started taking medication for depression and anxiety and she now regularly sees a trauma-informed therapist. Sarah still has a long road ahead of her, but now she is doing better, surrounded with the support that she so desperately needed, but was too ashamed to ask for.

I've experienced many times when other survivors have disclosed to me after hearing my story, but this was the first time it really hit me what an impact we have when we tell our stories. Thanks to Sarah and her bravery in disclosing that day, I made up my mind that it was time I applied for the weekend and took my chances that I would be among the privileged who would attend. I needed to learn to use my voice in bigger ways to help more than one person at a time. The desire to help other survivors burns deeply into the core of my being, lighting the blackness that my monsters left behind.

When I received the email that I was accepted to attend the weekend, I was so excited, but that excitement was quickly taken over by sheer terror. What was I thinking?! I felt I wasn't deserving to even be in

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the presence of the others who would be there, let alone attend. Still, I dug deep and went on an inward expedition of myself to find the courage to go. Each day as the weekend got closer, I could feel my anxiety climbing further and further up my throat, until eventually, the weekend had arrived, and it was time to board the plane.

As I walked down the aisle of the airplane to my seat, I felt like I was suffocating. Thoughts raced back and forth in my head. "I don't deserve to go!" "I can do this!" "I'm such a fraud and need to go home!" "I have to help other people!" Through the denseness of my spinning thoughts I heard a man yelling, "Lady!" . . . "LADY!!" I looked up. He was talking to me! At least eight rows ahead of me, the steward was yelling at me. This tall, skinny, grey-haired, wrinkled

faced man, wearing a navy-blue steward uniform and a smirk on his face, looked at me and said, "Smile!" All I wanted to do was throw up. I had no desire to smile whatsoever! I don't know if I smiled or not. I just remember quickly looking away towards the floor and wanting just to get to my seat, because as I looked at him, his pale white face morphed into the face of the tall, tan-skinned man with jet black hair and mustache, who I was always to refer to as "my favorite uncle." The one who said to me often, with an evil grin on his face, "Why do you frown all of the time? Show me your smile," many times holding a knife to my throat until I did. When I finally arrived to the safety of my seat, I fought back the tears and battled the monster in my brain as I folded into my happy place of inner isolation until we landed three hours later.

Finally, it was the big day. The nine-year-old in me, who so loves to make me doubt everyone and everything, was very much with me. She convinced me before I even entered the door they would all figure out I had no business being there. They'd figure out I can't write and that I am the worthless person so many other people have tried to teach me that I am. So, I had to have a little chat with my nine-year-old. In the car ride on the way, I told her about how we had to learn to be more open to opportunities, so that we could help others like us not want to die and to know they matter. I literally envisioned little nine-year-old me sitting in the backseat of the Uber car and telepathically I said to her, "We can do this! He was then. He's dead! THIS is real and could be life-changing."

As I walked in to the room, I did as I always do in a new situation - Head down. Don't talk. Assess the room. What is the vibe? Friends or foes? Fight? Flight? Freeze? No, best to fawn and blend into the furniture. I barely looked at anyone and walked directly to a seat, praying to not get noticed, yet also praying I wasn't perceived to be an "uptight bitch," as I'd been called so many times before, because I barely spoke.

One by one, the other women walked in. Some quiet. Some exuberant and ready to go. All filling the room with a sense of purpose and acceptance. As we got to know each other, I felt a little more comfortable and began to realize that I was with a brave tribe of women who knew me, without even knowing my story. Abuse connected us,

but not through shame and blame. Instead, through the strength we all found within ourselves to participate in the weekend that was about to unfold. Abuse connected us through compassion, and most amazingly to me, the compassion I felt for others, helped me to find compassion for myself as I faced the tasks at hand over the next two days.

The writings were painful, but I was determined to do them. I shocked myself when my hand went up to volunteer to read one of my pieces out loud. What was I thinking?! Who put my hand in the air? Surely, not me! But, read I did. I read about one of the worst, most emotional days of my life. It was a story I had never told out-loud or re-lived so vividly until that day. In my head I was saying, "Don't cry! Don't cry!" But no more than two sentences in, my grief

from that night poured out through the words, and I couldn't hold back the tears. All at the same time, my brain was trying to make my mouth read out-loud, while grounding me in the present moment. As I calmed myself, I finished reading. When I reached the end, the quiet that was to follow my last word seemed to last an eternity. All I could think was "I shouldn't have read this. I'm a horrible writer. Nobody wants to hear this stuff." I was so deeply grateful to the first person who spoke, shattering the silence. I heard words like "powerful," "moving," and "strong" in response to what I wrote. The discomfort of hearing those words was excruciating. These were not words I would even consider applying to myself, yet somehow, hearing them from these women opened me up to the possibility of a new perspective.



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As the weekend went on, I would cry many more times. I don't know what I expected, but I was not prepared for the depth at which hearing the other women read their own words would hit me. The passion, the pain and the strength in their voices touched me in ways impossible to describe. The commonality of the effects of our experiences gave me a sense of belonging. Their pain was my pain, and I knew my pain was theirs. Women with a common bond no one should have to share. My heart ached for them as I listened, and it ached for the child version of me who was forced to live through unspeakable acts. Even more, I found an anger in me. It was an anger that nine-year-old girl had locked away from me a long time ago. Locked away in a very dark room where very bad things happened by an evil monster, never to be felt again. Anger was not allowed. Perfection was the safety net that kept the monster at bay and perfect girls cannot get angry. That weekend, though, anger would rage through me for the other women as I listened to their stories of abuse.

As Sunday evening neared, inspiration from the leaders and the other woman from this powerful weekend filled me beyond measure. I knew it was time to stop trying to figure out what I'm meant to do and

just do it. I have known for a long time that I must help other survivors, but his voice has played like a broken record- "You're nothing." "No one wants anything to do with you." "You should be dead." "You'll never do anything right." The intense energy, pain, strength and hope of the weekend brought out a resolve in me I've never known. I left that place changed in ways I never dreamed possible, and I left refusing to listen to the voice of someone who doesn't even exist anymore.

I spent the weekend listening to real, beautiful, powerful and strong voices. Voices that are here and now and voices that will make a change. I want my voice to be part of that change. Thanks to a weekend, that has forever impacted my life, I have been called to action. I vow to use my voice and my story to help as many survivors as I possibly can. I will do it for the me of today. I will do it for the me of yesterday, and I will do it for every Sarah out there, man or woman, who is living alone in the lies of abuse, so that they may know the truth and know that their voices and faces matter.

"You are not alone. You are safe.
There is always a reason for hope!"

"What is needed: Support. Courage.

Listening. Compassion. Complete healing.

Advocacy. A space to share. Understanding.

Innovative way with resources. Continued

listening. More sensitivity. What is not

needed: Hardcore blaming the victim."



My Sister - Deborah Estrada-Carson

She sauntered to the misfits' table during lunchtime and just sat. It was a big deal because she was everything I was not: pretty, petite and popular. She smiled at me. I smiled back. After coming to the table for three or four more days in a row, one of the other popular girls said, "Latoya, why you sitting at the table with this freak?"

She said, "Morgan is my best friend in the whole world."

I don't know who was more surprised me or the girl. We hadn't done much talking from that point, but hearing her words somehow made it true. She became my best friend. We were both ten years old when that happened, but she is eight months older. Soon after, she begged to come home with me. My parents did not play that. Strangers were not allowed in without their approval. I didn't dare call because that

would have been an automatic no. I risked getting into trouble and took her home. My mother was mad for just a split second. She looked at Latoya and immediately treated her like one of her own. Latoya ate up the attention and silently begged for more as if her life depended on it. She came over as much as she could and never wanted to go home. When she was thirteen, she mustered up the courage to ask if she could spend the night. You see, my parents didn't do the spending the night thing. I could stay with my grandparents and my Aun-

tie Monica. That was it. Latoya was allowed to spend the night which ended up being the whole weekend.

Mama pulled me aside to say; "Morgan, You are not spending the night at her house."

I figured as much. Mama did not like Latoya's mother anyway. She only tolerated her. Latoya slept in my room on the pull out sofa because she didn't want to be alone. When Latoya was sixteen, she made a declaration to my mother one summer evening.

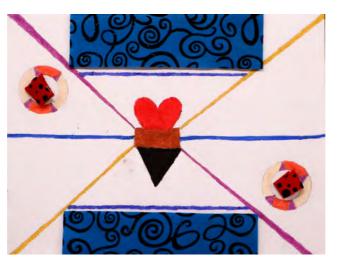
"Mama Cynthia, I don't want to go back home. You have to let me live here. Please."

My mother said, "Yes."

I wasn't surprised. Latoya was already a permanent fixture in our family. When she was eighteen, Latoya got into serious trouble at school. Vice Principal Maddox aka Mr. Mean called my mother instead of hers. Someone told someone who told someone who told me that my mother was in the building. I started shaking at the thought because my parents didn't play about goofing off at school. My brothers and I grew up hearing: "School is for getting an education. Ain't no time for tomfoolery."

I don't know what happened in the office, but the look on my mother's face was not anger. I think I saw fear. She pulled me out of class early. I had to drive home. Latoya clutched my mother like a preschooler hides from a stranger. Her face looked empty and her body was limp.

I almost cried.



My mother said, "Mr. Maddox's voice moved up an unnatural octave during the conference. He felt Latoya needed to go to the hospital for a psych evaluation. I assured him we would take care of her. If she needed to go the hospital, we would take her."

Mr. Maddox formed a special place in my heart on that day. I would never call him "Mr. Mean" again. I drove well and confidently. My hands were steady, but my inside trem-

bled violently. My mother and I managed to get Latoya inside and to the couch. She whined like a small child having separation anxiety when mama made her some hot green tea with honey. My mother swaddled her in a blanket and cradled her. I held her hand while we sat on the couch in painful peaceful silence. At the perfect time, my mother started speaking in a soft gentle tone. She is not soft and gentle.

She asked, "Is what Mr. Maddox said true?"

Latoya shook her head yes.

Continued on Page 35

"Did the boy apologize for bumping into you?"

Latoya shook her head yes.

"Why did you keep yelling and pushing him in his chest?"

Latoya said, "Because he laughed." Time lapsed before she continued talking. "He reminded me of my brother and my cousins. They used to laugh at me every time."

"Did they tease you a lot?"

"No, they did other stuff."

"What stuff?"

"They would come in my room when I was sleep and feel me up."

"They would touch you?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"All over."

"Did you tell your mother?"

"Yes."

"Did she say anything? Did she do anything?"

"She asked me if they took off my clothes. I told her no. She said they were boys being boys. They weren't doing nothing wrong. And I might as well get used to it because men like touching women's bodies. She wouldn't allow me to lock the door. She said if the house caught on fire, I would be trapped."

She asked, "How old were you when they started touching you?"

"I was nine years old. It only happened when my cousins came to spend a few weeks with us during the summer. I hated the summer time."

"When did it stop?"

"When you let me start living here."

To the naked eye, Mama did not change a bit. I could feel her unshed tears. I could feel her anger deep in the pit of my belly. I could feel the heat on her face. I breathed her shallow rapid breaths because I felt the same. Mama held Latoya closer; I squeezed her hand tighter. We sat there together in silence feeling less pain and feeling more peace.

"Admitting there is an issue. Advocates for others. Conversation starters. Movement of all of their stories. Empowering victims. Cultural shift.

Enough is enough. All voices matter."





"Breaking silence.

Self-expression.

Empowerment.

Changing lives.

Making ugly, beautiful.

Releasing tension."

"For healing _ make policy changes if the "law" can do nothing. It's hard to tell stories _ you will. It is all of our problem. Stories build empathy. There are more results in numbers."





"Create a movement. #Metoo has motivated change even prior to legal change. Discussion creates advocates. We need to create safe spaces."



DEFINING ART THERAPY

Dr. Emily Nolan, LPC, ATRL, BC

Art Therapist: one who is trained to use the creative process to help others become aware of how they perceive and experience

the world, others and self; recognize thought, behavioral, emotional and relational patterns that do not serve them; and create change for personal and collective transformation.

I began to work in the Untold Stories project because I knew that art therapy played a role in helping others see and be seen, and the program was one way to help facilitate this on a wider scale. I know what it feels like as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse to be out of place, not belong, and feel like an

outsider. Although I have recovered from many of my wounds as a survivor, as an art therapist I get to walk through recovery with others and help them use the creative process to heal.

A few years back, Rachel asked me to develop an art therapy program for students who respond to the survivors' written work. I knew at that

point that this was an opportunity to help young people use the art process to develop empathy. Working with Untold Stories has been the perfect opportunity to teach people how to respond to others with empathy. So that we no longer have to ask, what is wrong with that person? But instead, what happened to that person, and how can I respond in a way that is compassionate?

You see, I imagine a world where we do not have to have special training in empathy in order to help people feel seen, heard, and understood. I imagine a world where empathy is a given, and everyone knows how to validate one another. The cycle of empathy

and caring would continue on its own, our society becomes stronger and more resilient as a result, and everyone in this world would find a place of true belonging.





ABOUT EMILY

Dr. Emily Nolan LPC ATRL BC is a full-time assistant professor at Mount Mary University, a licensed professional counselor, a licensed art psychotherapist, and the president-elect of the WI Art Therapy Association. In 2012, she created Bloom: Center for Art and Integrated Therapies, LLC, a studio art therapy practice in Milwaukee, WI. Emily sees clients in private sessions there as well as develops and oversees the community art therapy programs. Emily is dedicated to working with people who have experienced trauma and have been marginalized to feel seen, heard, and understood.



"In class reading the poem, it was sometimes hard to create the art. A student like me helped to show that I understood the topic with my art. Art helps us. Shared problem = shared solution.

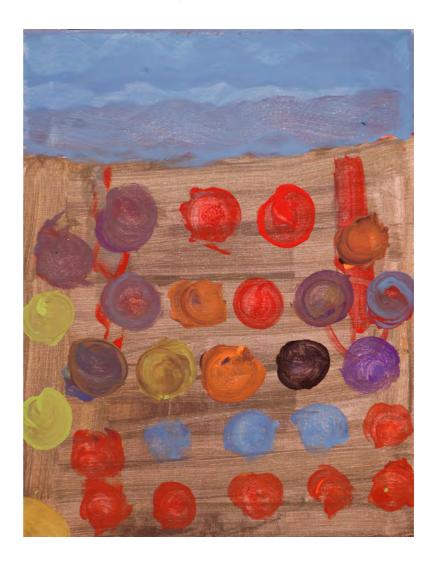
The River and Garden of Life - *Tiffany*

The river reminds me of life and so does my garden.

I feel a part of me dies during certain times and seasons of the year, and then before you know it with a little love, attention and care....

I BLOOM BACK TO LIFE! Taking on new forms and colors, ready for a new season to begin.

Ask for the river, my life continues to flow without stopping. There are a few waves, ripples, and splashes from people but I do not stop flowing like this river, this river I call life. And like this river one day I will produce and give life and watch as we flow together though the ripples, waves and splashes!

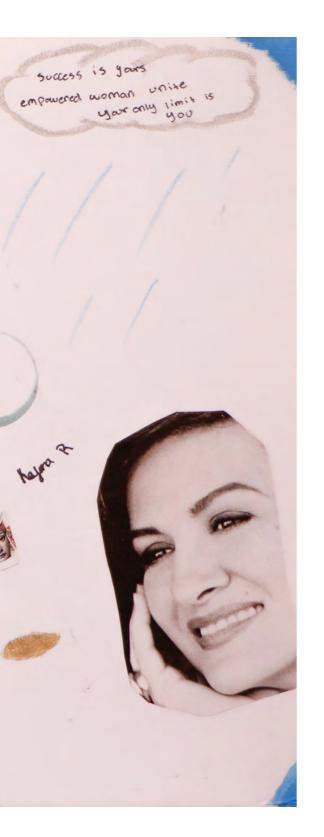


Student Name: Armon Roberson-Boone Title of Student Artwork: Untitled

Title of Story or Poem: The River and Garden of Life

I made this painting of flowers, a river, and grass. I choose certain colors to represent pain, like the red color.





"Share the Stories. Being present and in the moment. Building relationships. Awareness of resources available, access to resources. You are not alone _ there is strength in numbers. There's someone to relate to and you can connect to other survivors.

"If we don't talk about gender-based violence, we reinforce the idea that harm has not happened. Law is changeable and is what we create. You take away the power from the people who want you to be silenced. Just because the law doesn't care, doesn't mean we can't care. We can support one another if we know, as a community, that someone might hear our stories and be able to do something.





Better WE - *Samantha Collier*

First, be aware you are rare! Second, make a list of life goals, and rip it UP!

Changing the cycle in me, changes what I see. My safe space is where peace lives. Hell once gave me refuge

Better we Better us. From mud we came

Ashed and shamed Beaten and blamed

To bring about the change.
I refuse to be the same,
Freedom to soar, not be sorry for my story.
Even as I write I'm changing into a

Better me.



Student Name: **Jillian Mhoon**Title of Student Artwork: **Peace of Mind**Title of Story or Poem: **Better We**

When I was making his painting, I was thinking about how you might have darkness in the past, but there are also light places in your life. There might be darkness along the way but it will get better for you. The black heart represents the darkness you might be feeling but the colors surrounding it are hope and happiness. Sometimes when I'm depressed, painting makes me feel better.

Survivor - Laurel Blackstone

Strong and determined.
Understanding what has happened to me.
Realizing that I'm in control of my own reactions.
Victim no more.
Independent woman.
Owner of myself.
Respected by others.

SURVIVOR!





"It is imperative to listen to other people's stories and to hold space for people who have experienced sexual violence, so they can feel empowered to overcome."





UNTOLD STORIES - 2018

A compilation of creative writing, poetry, artwork, and discussions surrounding issues of gender-based violence; for the purpose of healing, awareness, and systemic change.

