



**Poetry by the Men of
Rehabilitation and Re-Entry
Rountree Units R & S
Main Jail Units D & N**

and

**Poetry by the Women of
Blaine Street Women's Facility
Main Jail Unit G**

Santa Cruz County, CA

Volume 14 2023

**Presented by the Santa Cruz Poetry Project
Poetry in the Jails**

The Santa Cruz Poetry Project/Poetry in the Jails began as the legacy project of Ellen Bass while she was Poet Laureate of Santa Cruz County, 2014-2015. Co-founder, Nancy Miller Gomez, helped create the program, oversaw its expansion throughout Santa Cruz County and has been instrumental in its continued growth. Over the years, the SCPP has facilitated workshops and classes throughout the county, and with your support will continue changing the lives of incarcerated men and women one word, one poem at a time.

Thanks to the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department, Kristie Clemmons (Inmate Programs Manager); Edward Greene, Lisa Zack, and Polly Schulze Elser (Inmate Programs Coordinators); and the officers and staff of the the Santa Cruz County Jail. Your dedication to providing programs and services to the incarcerated men and women of Santa Cruz County is very much appreciated. We could not do this work without your professionalism and hard work.

Our website, poetryinthejails.org, will keep you updated on recent and future events. Please visit, and consider donating! Your donations allow us to provide dictionaries, composition books, and other writing supplies to our students; and help make anthologies like this one possible. We extend our sincere thanks to our donors. The William James Association, a 501c3 non-profit, is the fiscal sponsor of The Santa Cruz Poetry Project.

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Mediocre People Don't Go To Jail

Bryn Hanley

It's the best and the worst of us in here,
These men by my side
 have put aside their fear.
There's honest truth around me now.
No sayer's-sooth confounds me. How?
Grey wall's cage only feels to be,
As days small rage,
Lonely reels so free;
The smallest kindness of strangers, delights;
Where tallest blindness of Rangers, frights —
 fights.
Freer here amongst dark and dreary day,
Kinglier near, as drunks lark-like hear me praise.
Keep me here,
 near strange new friends.
Sleep the fear
 of deranged blue ends. Δ

Gray Goose

Aaron Ibarra

The Gray Goose pulling into the prison gates.
Earned myself a 1st class ticket because of my mistakes
Wearing a paper jumpsuit that tears easily.
Surrounded by many individuals you can feel
the misery.
Thinking about my journey.
All it is is a mystery.
Hours-long bus ride sitting in cages. >

This is only the beginning of the many stages.
Enjoying the scenery & sitting here quietly,
because any sound can lose our property.
Drive up to a tower, and out of the window
peeks the gunner.
Drop us off in R&R.
Tell us "Have a good summer." Δ

R&R

Jiovanni Bueno

Rehabilitation and reform.
I'm back up in here like I never left.
Why they say time heals?
I did the time, it didn't do me.
More like time kills,
literally. Δ

Ducks

Anthony Stratton Fleming

1 duck 2 duck 3 duck 4
5 ducks 6 ducks 7 ducks more

A beautiful sunny day with my pistol on my side
A new shiny .44 I may take for a ride.
What a great addition to black Winchester shotgun,
as the duckies prepare to fly.

Chug a lug chug a lug
The brown bourbon whiskey hits just right
No sipping on this bright sunny day.
Yet there surely will be death to feed >

my family and I.
Chug a lug chug a lug
Now I'm feeling just right.
All I need is one eye to pick off the ducks as
they fly. Soon a sea of fallen feathers
will be floating about. A fun-filled
reward as my beagle rounds them
about.

Chug a lug chug a lug
It's now time for a nap
as the ducks have filled my
brown gunny sack. Δ

Speed Kills

Anthony Stratton Fleming

Cheap thrills
with points or pills
speed kills Δ

Death Legacy

Kaleb C. Wooden

For better for worse
It'll end in a hearse
Tis this we are all cursed

So if today was your last
Could you say you're proud of your past
Life is never a guarantee
If you don't live righteously >

So when I die show no pity
Send my soul to the Golden City
dig my grave six feet deep

Put two roses at my feet
Put two crosses on my chest
And tell all my homies I did my best Δ

The Strawberry That Grew From Concrete

Jiovanni Bueno

Some people believe Tupac is still
alive. Well, I ain't him and there's
definitely no roses growing from
concrete where I'm from.
Just strawberries.

Funny it seems my city is
full of broken dreams.
Left behind all over the crime
scene.

We got kids killing kids but
this ain't a surprise.
As I sit in court, I can
see they want me to fail.
There's no sugar on it

"I'm a demon known for raising
hell," so I'm forbidden bail.
Long live >

the city of broken dreams, the
city where strawberries grow
from concrete. Δ

Tupac

Shadley Stephens

Tupac had died
before his time
yet he still releases
old-new rhymes.

Video footage of recent
concerts in Brazil --
is it a hologram Tupac
or living flesh unkilld?

Regardless of whether
or not his choices unwise,
millions of positive people
were damaged by his demise.

In a short-ended quest
to achieve all his goals,
he stumbled and crumbled
and lost his damn soul.

Nobody had stopped
to see why he cried
yet all were so shocked
to hear that he died.

The rose that traveled >

without any feet,
yet he still had the strength
to emerge from concrete.

A boy with no father
or money at all
still rose to the top
making a much longer fall.

He predicted himself
before his time he would die.
Someone shoulda stopped
to see why he cried. Δ

Back Stories

In the depths

Aidan Dunworth

Somehow someway
I got myself caught up
in between my lies and my promises.
I don't know how I got this way
I know it's not okay
I think I know how to fix this.
If I stop lying
There will be no lies to hide,
If I stop making promises
There will be no promises to keep
because right now I feel trapped
in a deep trench in the ocean
feeling like I need to gasp for air >

but there is none
because I am stuck
between my lies
and my promises. Δ

Rise Above

Anthony Stratton Fleming

New Year New Me.
Out with the old in with the new.
Past mistakes and broken hearts.
Shattered dreams and sunken hope.
Death to misery and self-inflicted pain.
Forgiveness to all, especially me.
Love conquers all, something foreign to me.
But a glitter of hope and true love I now see.
The King of all Kings has come to capture me
from false ego and pride and other selfishness, you see.
And my angel eyes sparked a flame
that can't be put out.
Giving up is not an option, life is precious to me.
My actions mean more than a laugh or a joke.
Lost loved ones gone too soon,
yet they still inspire me.
Not taking for granted a single breath of fresh air.
Beauty and achievements surround me.
It's time to let go and begin this new start.
One day at a time.
No one is perfect you see, be forgiving
of others and lend a hand when you can.
Be true to yourself and live life to the fullest, >

however that may be.

No more struggling with the weight of the world.

Lean on and be guided by that bright shining light

and rise above. Δ

Top of the World

Jiovanni Bueno

One day I'll hike Mount Everest!

I'll stand up there and plant my flag.

I'll smoke a cigar, I'll make

a toast!

On top of the world

I'll take a moment of silence.

For all those who tried & died.

For those who doubted me,

and those who believed.

From hiking, Bakki, and pipeline

to the world's greatest peak!

It's 90% mental, the rest one

step at a time! Δ

Brown

Anthony Stratton Fleming

A brown squirrel running atop an old brown

dirty brown sandy barrel racing thunderous

onto the shore. The brown kelp out at >

sea swaying to and fro. The light
and sweet coffee in my cup still
giving off steam as one can see. And
the brown coffee cake in my hand
so sweet & delightful. The brown old
Chevy truck leaving a honk as my
friend passes by. A young brown lab
simplifying playing about. A large cigarillo
blunt someone left behind I see. Oh
a great start to the day for me. Δ

Wet Feet

Craig Tatum Delacruz

Fly around the city with a cape on your back.

Run that

 Girl –

go on and get your feet wet

Push that

 Girl–

go on and serve that world

Run that

 Girl–

go on and join the peace train

With no love.

Push that girl–

now go get your feet wet/ >

Feet wet wet– wet wet

Run that girl!!

Inspired by: Lil John & East Side Boyz Δ

Acts of Kindness

Bobi Joseph

It's easy to give
But hard to receive,
Small acts of kindness.

Opening doors for strangers
And shutting them to loved ones,
Small acts of kindness.

Programmed to relieve suffering
But trained to receive it,
Small acts of kindness.

A two-way pump,
Blowing out kindness
And sucking in pain,
Small acts of kindness. Δ

The Joy

Victor Meras

The joy of Life
The joy of Love
The joy of Hope
The joy of Romance
The joy of Relationship
The joy of Happiness
The joy of Well-Being
The joy of Mindfulness
The joy of a Calm Mood
The joy of Passion
The joy of Action
The joy of Self-Expression
The joy of Vitality
The joy of Motion
The joy of the Moment
The joy of Joy.
A Blissful Encounter.
The Joy. Δ

Behind the Glass

Fabian Mendoza

All the “little things” really aren’t that little,
They can determine a variety of emotional factors
if you tweak the right one.
A haircut that makes you feel fresh inside and out
Or a visit, just seeing them there for you behind the glass,
Proving it can’t truly separate us. >

S/O to my bro Angel for coming to visit me
and to my boy Matt for forcing me into a haircut that helped lift
my spirits. Δ

Untitled

Richard Amick

Saturday, surprised with a gift
London came, gave me a kiss
Wagging his tail excited
Barked at all in the park delighted
The warm sun, the fresh air, pretty flowers
A stroll to health. I felt so empowered
These blessings rain down like a shower
Fueling my soul, something to devour
Appreciating what life's offered up
The positivity's fulfilled the cup
How could I indulge enough
Satisfaction has upheld the tough
Times that I've suffered through stuff
Tempted to make it, calling its bluff
To remain strong while the pain and the rain
Knowing the better days would sustain
Ugliness would never know real bliss
Freedom is my surprise, it's my gift. Δ

Pictures

Fabian Mendoza

Images bring memories with them.
They hold a key to your heart and mind,
one that is unable to be unlocked otherwise.
The stream of joy that fills the void
comes with a price when the time is over. Δ

Time Never Forgets What May be Unseen or Unknown

Patrick McGrath

The time I was constantly lost, betrayed, and deserted.
The time I was troubled, externally and internally.
The time I flatlined for 5 days in the ICU and considered dead.
The time I lost my way.
The time I nearly froze in the streets and night with no one who cared.
The time I blacked out and hurt someone I loved.
The time I was left for dead by my family.
The time I was literally “hunted” by a rich man.
The time I had no fears, not even of death, with a gun in my face, or a
knife
 to my neck or stabbed in my back.
The time I finally could walk in the sun.
The time I no longer had sleepless nights.
The time I finally didn’t have to look over my shoulder and pray
 if I slept I’d be blessed to wake up and see another day.
The time I lived on the run to stay alive for my kid.
The time I always had to keep a gun.
The time I was kidnapped and wondered if it’s the end.
The time I finally escaped. >

The time I found my way.
The time I was no longer led astray.
The time I returned to the bay.
The time I was my best friend's savior.
The time I was forgotten in the streets.
The time I was alone in the darkness.
The time I was consumed by demons.
The time an angel found me and helped keep me afloat.
The time that angel helped me change my ways.
The time that angel was real and had my child.
The time I realized I had to finally break the cycle and change
my ways for my soon-to-be wife and daughter:
to be a better man, husband, and father. Δ

Aokighara Forest

Jiovanni Bueno

I wonder why all those people
committed suicide. The little details.
Everyone has a story. Broken promises,
maybe 'cause of tradition and
culture?

What stood out to me was the
whole Golden Gate Bridge thing –
I drove over it once and I didn't
see a crisis going on.
I just got an alert of a big
earthquake. Δ

Better Than Most, Not As Good As Some

Brett Barber

Better - I think I'm better than you,
 you think you're better than two.
 Who's to say that what you do
 could be right, wrong, or true?

Than - I'm faster than you.
 You think you're faster, too.
 You think you have better shoes.
 That's how we all lose.

Most - I rock the folks from coast to coast.
 Most blokes think it's fame to boast.
 Most folks say it's to roast
 the Billboard charts #1 is most.

Not - Not a house, not a car
 This attitude won't get you far.
 If you star in a moonlight bar
 it could be closed due to SARS.

As - I'm as tall as you, I'm not a fool.
 As planes fly, you will try.
 As chains divide, the chance that died.
 Can we soar as eagles fly? >

Good - What's good is the question.

Is there an answer or another session?

I'm good, are you good?

Yes, it's okay.

Let's be on our merry way.

Some - Can I have some,

are you someone?

Can we just all

have some fun? Δ

Three Short Poems

Fabian Mendoza

1.

I use 7's as F's

but only for my name.

I say it's lucky

because it's my placement in my siblings.

It's ironic because I suck at gambling.

If it's 10:1 in my favor

somehow I overcome

and I end up in debt.

2.

I wear glasses. I don't need

to change my perspective.

3.

I used to wear white gold.

Now when I go out, I wear

silver on my wrists

and ankles. Δ

The System

Matthew Madriz

I'm stuck on this path of a lonely road
Where I'm to sit idle and grow up old.

I'll see the Great Wall, but not that of China.

A place full of warriors, where our past is behind us,
lost and forgotten,
nowhere to be seen. Δ

What A Day

Joshua Dolera

Such a lonely day and it's mine,
the most loneliest day of my life.
I cry sorrow, but my faith in God
is still in a prayer somewhere in the sky.

God is the definition of love, indeed,
so God, why don't you blow me a whistle
on this most loneliest day of my life.

But the clock keeps on ticking and I'm losing sight
'cause of all this darkness around me—
such a huge fog bank on one side
and the darkness on the other.

I feel trapped like the cat in the bag. >

I've felt so trapped on this lonely day,
I'm running out of breath.
All I hear is tick-tock on this lonely
day by day.

Anxiety attacks throughout this whole lonely day,
and of course, it just happens to be mine—
afraid I will never feel or understand what love is
or feel the company of God.

The clock is ticking faster.
I believe it's just a matter of time now.
The fog has taken over on one side
and darkness has taken over on the other side of me.

I believe this is good-bye. Δ

Fear

Anthony Stratton Fleming

Fear nothing, we are taught and engraved in us
as young boys. Hidden in anger and rage
as young men, we explore. Fear No Evil
the good Lord teaches as maturing begins.
But back to the hidden and stuffed anger we hide.
Collecting inside of the prideful and false ego
we take for a ride.
Stuffing painful memories that haunt us, rising
to the surface now and then, we stuff
them back deep down inside. Making sure we
don't ever shed a tearful eye.
For that would be weakness, and men don't cry. >

Yet soon boiling over emotions take control,
fighting becomes common.
Chaos a comfort to me.
Black eyes and clenched fists,
swinging in circles of a never-ending pit.
Loud music a comfort, chaotic lyrics will soothe.
A love-starved soul begging for attention.
Only destruction fills the void.
Serenity unknown and tranquility a scare.
As painful memories as a young lad,
the tunnel vision takes place.
Looking for answers
at the bottom of a bottle, I've now
settled in, the discomfort a common ground.
I now know my place. Δ

Thoughts of How I Feel

Isaiah Campos

Every day thinking 'bout my family.
Thinking of a better me. Really
tryna change, but there's always
something stopping me.
Can't really change myself
but at least change my ways.
Cuz the shit that I lived
ain't how I wanted it to play.
So every night I pray.
At least pray for some better days.
Tired of seeing the same walls.
Tired of seeing the same place. Δ

The Voice That Saves Me

Martin Bell

A storm sits in the distance, stirring...
growing darker and more angry by the moment.

Waiting and watching...like an 18-foot crocodile
for its opportunity to swallow the pretty blue sky.

As the war drum beats in my chest
the lightning crackles and the rain pounds....relentless!

From the abyss, through the darkness overhead
comes a voice...
each word pierces the clouds with rays of light.

Every word is like a strong wind
carrying the clouds away, into the beyond.

As I understand the words...
the sky brightens, and the crocodile swims away...
into a pink and orange sunset! Δ

Just Know I'll Win

Anthony Koppe

If it guides me wrong and
I don't win, just know I'll
slide back, dust off, & catch
that win. Life come so hard,
with no playbook. We make
our own, right or wrong,
it guides us on. Δ

Instinct

Matthew Madriz

We're all the same in the dark,
It just takes motivation.
If you were placed in his shoes
I'm sure you'd have his determination
Just like a pack of hyenas
Looking for its meal
It's survival of the fittest
That gazelle is a done deal. Δ

We Be Cool

Craig Tatum Delacruz

They be cool. They
could fool. They

may even rule. They

could have stayed in school.
They.
Run before they walk. They

Sing before they talk.

A New York City block,
a body outlined in chalk. Δ

Soul Tune

Benjamine Goertz

I see myself on a foggy morning
miles out at sea
floating on something I can't see
staying above water
flowing up and down on massive swells.
It's very calming
not scary at all
complete solitude
peacefully being one with the ocean.
As I breathe in deeply
the next big swell takes place
underneath me, and then
as I breathe out
it's as if I'm controlling the large swell
to be sent out from under me
outwards into the universe
as if they are large messages of energy
to later be received from the universe,
from above, each breath,
I send out enormous pulses,
utilizing the great element to silently speak,
loudly to the source,
to center myself directly. Δ

Foggy Day

Jiovanni Bueno

I miss a foggy day.
Everything is chill, literally,
the weather, the people.
A day to stay indoors
or go for a hike and
run into a bear.
A day to
reflect at open seas.
Hoping that by night the skies
clear up for a nice moon mist. Δ

Que Hora Son

Craig Tatum Delacruz

Que hora son
Fog that loiters the lenses
of my glasses
the marine layer that
blocks my vision
Que hora son
I must be late to work. Δ

Untitled

Carl Edberg

Walking on a beautiful afternoon
with the dog running through the tulips,
with no fences around,
happy to see snow on the upper hillside
to start the new year off with water for all. Δ

Where the Fish Live

Fabian Mendoza

I submerge myself far down below
while I'm with her,
letting her soft voice
change my brain chemistry.
As her cool calming presence flows
through the stream of my blood,
I lay down below.
Growing tired and colder,
How I exit the liquid filled
porcelain box, I do not know
as I never want it to be over.
I feel cursed by the burden
of getting to know her.
She cannot numb me
when I am sober. Δ

Ruby

Matthew Madriz

Roses filled with blood-red petals
and forest green stems.
So very vibrant and beautiful
that I cannot resist its glory.
I reach my hand out
to only be pricked by its thorns.

She would like to be loved
but she chooses only to revoke. Δ

Cold Cougar

Martin Bell

She says she knows me...
She also reads the back of the book
claiming she can recite its entirety, word for word.
How absurd! No entirety can be known from a blurb.

Well, if that's the case
She should know intentions by a glimpse of the face!
Yeah, and my other house is a mansion in outer space!
Her omnipotent stance gives me a bad taste.

Always on defense, her walls go up on cue,
her life has been hard, she's lonely and blue.
She's beautiful like a goddess, one heck of a view.
she pushes me away, but I'm stuck on her like glue. Δ

Departed

Dedicated to all who lost loved ones and/or freedom

Soledad Prison 1997-2007

Rudy H. Salas

Since we departed, I lost track of the time. The clock
keep ticking but nothing
ever changes. This break-up we had
corrupted my heart, so many lonely days
I don't know where to start.
...every night I dream of you >

I lie in paradise - a mental addiction
for you to enter my life. I need your love
right away, don't waste no time.
I can't stand another day without your love
in my life. Looking back on
promises made, how did I lose you
and who can be to blame?
Well the way I feel I lost my world
and I'm losing my mind. No doubt about it,
true love is hard to find. Δ

Love At First Sight

Anthony Stratton Fleming

Love I once thought I knew,
but not so, you see,
until that first breath, tears, and cry from you
that my eyes bore witness to.
A fresh new beat in my heart
and twinkle in my eyes.
The purest and most amazing gift I will ever receive;
and not so much from your mother and I
but from the good Lord, you see.

A miracle, I think not.
Daddy's angel eyes is what I see,
so pure and so true.
I promise to always be here for you,
till death do us part...
I'll be by your side
whether near or far, lending an ear,
some experience and honesty. >

No wrong could you do in my eyes,
you'll come to see.
Perfectly imperfect, a true gift of individuality.
Always be true to yourself, and please,
chase your dreams.
Life will become painful at times,
something I can't save you from.
But serenity and tranquility can surely be yours
as long as you do what is right
and let the King of All Kings
be your ever-shining light. Δ

When She's Older

Patrick McGrath

When you're older, I wonder what you'll think of me.
When you're older, will you have gotten to know me or
me know you?
When you're older, will you still be dad's starry-eyed little girl?
When you're older, will I be your friend or just your father?
When you're older, will you remember me not always being there
because of the distance?
When you're older, I hope you'll come to me with problems.
When you're older, I hope you'll come to me with whatever makes
you happy.
When you're older, and I start to age, will you lock me away
in an old folks' home?
When you're older, will you keep in contact?
When you're older, will you blame me for not being there
because I'm in here?
When you're older, will you hate me or resent me for my past,
or think outlaw dad was cool and a blast? >

When you're older, will you remember us visiting through
the phone while I was locked away?
When you're older, will I be able to make you freeze
like I do now when you hear my voice?
When you're older, will we still be silly like our little "rawrs"
we did today in the video visit?
When you're older, will you feel ashamed of me
or astonished and amazed at what dad's done
in the stories I tell about mom and dad's past?
When you're older, how will you be as a kid
or as a young woman someday?
When you're older, will you enjoy your father's poems?
When you're older, would you like some poetry? Δ

I Am

Craig Tatum Delacruz

a father of two daughters
and
a brother with 2 brothers a son of a gun
and
soon to be husband
and
a fisherman with a rod in both hands
and
the man with the Plan,
Soon, we'll all be playing
in the sand!!

namaste at the beach. Δ

Dear Son

Anthony Koppe

From the day I found out,
I knew you would be coming home
one day soon. I drove
myself crazy, making sure that everything
was just the way you would want it
for the day we meet. That rainy day came
oh so fast. Clammy hands
gripping the steering wheel
as we rushed her to the hospital.
Knowing how great it was going to be,
that you're on your way, too soon, not soon enough.
Almost eleven hours later
looking like us both
holding you in our arms
putting you in your newly-bought car seat.
Family complete.
Welcome to this crazy world, son,
let's go home. Δ

Hindsight

Bobi Joseph

Hindsight
My astute delight
Full of insight
Forever right.

She's always late
Many a broken date >

Plenty of advice
Too late to suffice.

I look ahead
she's never in sight
I look to the rear
She's dominant and clear.

I beseech and pray
"Sight my path ahead."
But she blindfolds me
And fills me with dread.

I swivel my head
She's there
Everything is clear
Clarity

If I could move forward
While looking behind
I'd be much wiser
While crashing my mind. Δ

Truth

Fabian Mendoza

Don't get stuck in the past,
things won't go back to how they were.
Memories stay in your mind and
they never come back. >

Life can be beautiful
or it can be trash.
It depends on perspective.

Enjoy the good moments, they
don't seem to last.

Life will continue with or w/o you
and it'll move too fast.

Time is too short.
Don't get stuck in the past. Δ

Tears in the Ink

Egmidio Anderson

Part I

Every tattoo I have, at one point,
the artist began to cry while giving me the tattoo.
All my tattoos have tears in them.

11:00 prison dorm is mixed
with Cadillac coffee drinks and
questions back and forth about
our kids our cars our crimes our sentences
our release dates our favorite foods our favorite music.
The way of gun and knife,
it can bring tears to a grown man's eyes,
which end up in my tattoo ink.
Reaper, Opium, Snoopy,
these are not Santa's reindeer, neither are
Snow White, 7 Dwarves. >

It's all pre-designed,
the norms made it that way
so I could have tears
in my tattoo ink.

Part II

A melted blue rubber handball,
mixed with ash from a jailhouse candle.
I will show you fear in a handful of dust,
as scientists argue over time zero and
religious leaders argue over creationism.
We turn ash and melted blue rubber handballs
into acts of violence, murder, rage,
racism, love. A character
may be developed, or maybe
it's all pre-designed
like the colors of wildflowers --
who chooses the years of superblooms,
who picks those colors.

My tattoos have tears in the ink. Δ

Down

Craig Tatum Delacruz

With my road dog Chino & M.B.
I been down,
not that long
Staring at these
Jail house walls >

I've been down
ready to run out of
Bounce
Staring at these jail house walls

I've been down
not that long,
wondering if I belong

Staring at these jail house walls
Still can't accept incoming calls
I been down oh so Down

Sing the same ole song
I can't remember how long
Since I've been down. Δ

A History in Chains

Isaiah Raymundo Ornelas

America has more blacks in prison today than it had slaves in 1850.

All the people in prison waiting for their freedom
Patiently, all the innocents incarcerated, discriminated
racially, having no resources. Once being put out on the street,
used to the structure of prison, so they don't know who to be, >

everything has changed, it's way different than it used be,
family has moved so they don't know who to see.
Hard to get a job, on the record is a felony,
tryna change their ways, but they're reminded they are criminals,
tryna be seen in a bigger light, but they left in the peripherals.
Now they're getting desperate, it's situation critical.
Back to bad habits, it's tragic the way they have it,
wanting to change but tempters are consistent in their antics.
Like they say, the rich man is the one who rules,
it's hard to fix something when you're left with no tools.
It's hard to be a horse when you're surrounded by mules.
Get made, you grow horns then turn into a bull,
tryna be calm yup you're tryna be cool.
It's hard to succeed when you're surrounded by fools.
Never put anyone through misery, you don't know their history.
They say things are gonna change, but to me
they seem the same:
from slaves to prisoners,
a history in chains. Δ

Untitled

Matthew Madriz

I'm a number. Why?
My fate determined for me.
Another jumpsuit
Same shit, different toilet.
The system has failed me. Why?
Teachers never reached me. Δ

P.S. Tell Your Friends About Me

Craig Tatum Delacruz

To whom it may concern,

No bail in this jail
Sending these words in a kite
From the main cell.

am I alive or did I- I just
fail!

Well, no way in hell
you can tell, got to strive
to survive and get up out
this cell.

P.S. Tell your friends about me. Δ

Trust Issues

Anthony Koppe

Who in this world can you trust?
When guns are drawn,
when the sun goes down,
when you're walking in the shadows,
who can you call on,
who can you trust?
People call themselves your friends. >

They tell you they'll be there, but aren't.
Say they got your back, but don't.
As they get their knives out,
two tongues in their mouths,
the one they use to promise,
the other they use to lie,
who can you really trust?
I don't have friends.
I have associates. Δ

Zodiac

Fabian Mendoza

I'm a Libra, which is really ironic
Because I'm extremely unbalanced.

Unable to express emotion and so it bottles up,
it breaks on the good days and makes a mess you can't clean.
When you want it to break because you long to feel,
You find that it is empty
And you no longer comprehend which is worse:
Feeling too much, unable to go numb,
Or being in a flat void, unable to feel. Δ

Vicious Cycle

Martin Bell

My anger pulses throughout
but I bottle it up
don't let it out of my spout
take a deep breath
in and out, in and out.
If I talked I would regret >

what came out of my mouth.
Violence is the other path
When I am lost in the city of wrath.
But I know what waits on that route
regret and pain, like an unstoppable rain
giving me cold concrete and being shackled in chains.
The only freedom I would have is inside of my brain
So anger is something I must learn to maintain
Because I'm tired of coming back, again and again. Δ

Under the Bridge

Ernesto Murillo

Driving across the bridge at the end of town,
I see she sits on a boulder tucked underneath the bridge,
hand clutching a bottle of liquor, face displaced full
of broken promises, disappointment and sorrow. I remember
her before all the drugs, death, and destruction that
plagued her life, and took her late husband. She
was vibrant and a sight to see. Now she is a
shell of a person, now her life is unraveled.
As I pass her, a loose thread in the darkness looking
for love in all the wrong places, the scars on her
face and worn-out features tell the tales of
struggle. She was a friend of mine a long time ago.
I look over my shoulder as I cross the bridge
at the end of town. Δ

How to Treat One Another

Ryan Scott Brown

Enjoyment and Satisfaction

Loyalty

Truthfulness

Prayer Support

Forgiveness

Encouragement

Generosity

Respect and Honor

Acceptance

Protection from emotional,
physical, or spiritual harm. Δ

Sunset

Fabian Mendoza

My first time at the beach was with my tia.
I won't forget the beauty of that day,
for she's the reason I was able to have that experience.

She left this world two years ago,
but despite the circumstances
I'm glad she passed away in a place that she loved,
even if I can no longer see its beauty. Δ

Love You

Craig Tatum Delacruz

Love

A chocolate strawberry

A glass half full of wine

Dancing in the moonlight

That's amore!

Love

as deep as the Ocean.

soft like a kiss on the cheek

Butterflies in your stomach

Love

is for me and you. Δ

miss you miss pink

Benjamine Goertz

You super pretty squeaky redhead

Why are you still with this dread head

Your thoughts of me make my ears ring

Thinking of you makes my heart sing

Your explosive character and contagious laughter

You next to me is what I am after

Craving your energy, mind, body and spirit

Soul screaming for yours, I know that you feel it

So far away yet so very close

You love me more, I love you most

-to Olivia Cue Δ

The One

Patrick McGrath

The one I would hug.
The one I dream of.
She once was my drug.
She carried my seeds.
The one that I lead.
The reason I breathe.
The one I just need.
The hurt is no good.
The pain is so real.
The loss I now feel.
The past I dream of.
The one I still love.
She is no longer mine.
The blame is all mine
for I crossed the line.
The love was once mine Δ

Expect A Miracle

Floyd Battese

Do plant your own garden
to soothe the soul, my
Grandmother's place is where
she puts her Gold, turning
soil to loosen the root.
I got too close, got dirt
in my boots. Now Grandma
won't have to wait for some
one to bring flowers. You're
just as strong as those Miracle flowers. Δ

Broken

Anthony Stratton Fleming

Broken home as a young lad
Broken dreams lay about
Broken relationships inside as we are
torn apart
Broken hearts turned to stone
Simply breaking down others and tearing
them apart
Broken faces and bones are things
that are soothing to me
Pain is a cure-all to what
is broken in me. Δ

Broke

Shadley Stephens

I manifest money,
When my wallet's broke.
By drawing it on paper,
And that ain't a joke.
I start drawing stacks of money,
And I just won't stop.
Till the paper's full of ink,
And I'm back on top.

I look down at my shackles,
As they shatter 'part.
Throwin' Jedi mind tricks,
I use the Force a lot. >

If it were only that easy,
Livin' like a boss.
My freedom uncompromised,
I'm never at a loss.

'Cuz I hit the streets runnin',
And I don't look back.
And when I'm comin' I be gunnin',
You know that's a fact.
I be leavin' you stunnin'
You straight up got smacked.
That's what you get for slippin',
Now your jaw be slack.

So you know I'm all in,
I say "fuck a soup".
And to those of you callin',
I be thankin' you.
You're all the reason I be ballin',
I got so much food.
But if you find yourself fallin',
Just know I'm catchin' you...

...we can't be broke... Δ

What is Life

Fabian Mendoza

Life is nothing more than an experience,
an experiment in which you are the test subject.
When our experiment is over, the lab coats remain
and they move on to the next subject. Δ

Broken

Craig Tatum Delacruz

Get broken off like
a KitKat or a Snap Back

or a tail in a mouse trap

broken & broken unbroken

Words unspoken I am woken

Just Joking. Δ

.

Programming

Juan Manuel Beyes, Jr.

Being programmed since day Juan.

Being programmed to sell drugs.

Being programmed by my grandparent.

Being programmed by mom's influence.

Being programmed by family's encouragement.

Being programmed to protect my family at all costs.

Being programmed to NEVER show weakness and vulnerability.

Being programmed to never answer to another man.

Being programmed to never lose a battle.

Being programmed to never start but always finish.

Being programmed to always be aware of my surroundings.

Being programmed to always show respect.

Being programmed to never allow disrespect.

Being programmed to be smarter than my enemies.

Being programmed to never be incarcerated.

Being programmed to take care of everyone else except myself. Δ

May I Rest?

Matthew Madriz

I at times find myself staring into the mirror
asking the same questions over and over.

Why can't I see you? Can you not express nor shed tears? Are you
human?

I feel as that I am some sort of mutant
like Natalie Diaz's description.

I can't seem to wrap my head around why I do the things I do...
Is it because of our genes? Or am I just damaged?

I understand that we are products of our environment and some of us
are more tested in life.

Far as I can remember I was tested since day one.

They say the hate U give life is what accustoms those
within poverty: the hood, the ghetto, us minorities.

Innocence is there when we are babies
but as we become more aware of our
surroundings that innocence is stripped away
like to those within the System.

I try decompressing negative thoughts but they just keep on coming,
although I want to smile, laugh and joke around, to
simply have compassion.

I find it difficult...I'm angry, sad and lost. A confused child
wondering

Where did it all go wrong. Was it me? My parents? Or just bad luck?
No. This is not a confession, this is 1 out of a million thoughts. Δ

The Boat

Brett Barber

The boat that wouldn't float.
The boat on the hill, never gone to sea.
The boat anchored to a fixer-upper's dream.
The boat that's beat.
The boat that doesn't want to be a boat now.
The boat anchored to a bed of ice plants.
The boat we said if it floats, f's or flies,
rent, don't buy.
The boat we call a hole in the water
you throw money into.
The boat who never had a chance.
The boat that nose-dived and is 200 feet
below on the bottom of Lake Mead.
The boat of shattered dreams...
The boat with rope sucked into
the motor.
The boat wakeboarders had fun in.
The Tiki boat party.
The boat to Catalina.
The boat to Amalfi Coast, Capri, and
billionaire's row.
The boat dreams are made of.
I wanna be a boat, I wanna learn
to sing, I wanna learn to float and
begin again. Δ

Road Runner

Matthew Madriz

I'd like to be free
Just like that crazy blue bird
Running from coyote
He seems to be so careless
A driver speeding
Oh how I miss the outside
Not this dead feeling
As if I'm not some inmate
Struggling to keep my head high
With constant bullshit
That just seems to multiply
Like some drug money Δ

Pirate Code

Martin Bell

Yo-ho yo-ho a pirate's life for me,
a real pirate doesn't pay, he takes for free.
Always ready for a fight he would
never flee.
When it's his time to die he'll go down
like a kraken of the sea.
Drinks to think and thinks to drink
all the rum near and far.
I'll find my final home with Davy Jones
'cause a pirate's what we ARRRRR! Δ

Marksmanship

Ryan Scott Brown

Know your surroundings

Safety and Emergency Protocol

Distance

Clear Mind, Calm Mind

Steady Your Breathing

Squeeze Trigger Never Pull

Clean Weapon and Ammunition

Shout before firing but never while hunting.

Stealth and Silence. Quietly become your surroundings.

Don't Waste Ammo. Shoot to kill not to injure. Unless disarming. Δ

Chess Master

Fabian Mendoza

Life is like a game of chess.

Think ahead, move smart, protect your king.

And sacrificing for the bigger picture. Δ

And

Brett Barber

I landed in a far-off land, to
see the man some say can
connect man to the holy land.

So bring the band and all your fans.

He commands the attention
of the great bystanders

who have traveled thousands >

of miles to see what the
Candyman can.
If you can pay the entry
fee to the man at the candy
stand then you can land
yourself a picture with this man,
who ran the world
in someone's eyes
to no surprise.
You pass the guards from
Switzerland and pass through
the gates by hundreds of
bystanders and clergymen
and gentle grins.
And once you arrive
and touch his hand you can
feel the presence of God
in this man from a far-away land. Δ

Some Like Discovering Poetry

Juan Manuel Reyes, Jr.

Some - but especially me, I didn't even
know that I somewhat like & am even interested in
having poetry in my life, not some but all poetry is
somewhat very powerful to me.

Like - to me is a word that somewhat connects me to
somewhere, place, or things that interest me.
I like poetry when it connects with you and me.
I do like all poetry, but I wonder:
does poetry do for you? like it does for me? >

Discovering Poetry - I'm finding out that it is
a wonderful place - not all agree with me.
For the ones that do, discovering and writing it out,
poetry is coming from our souls.
Discovering poetry is definitely for you & me,
and also discovering some much more things
we didn't know
about you & me. Δ

The Hangover

Egmidio Anderson

If all wisdom
is just plagiarism, then only
foolishness is original.

That would explain why
Shakespeare said all the
world is a stage and
we are just actors
and our future may
lie in a dead man's words.

And seeing with the eyes of the Dead
we must exit stage left.

I go
getting ready for Act 1 Scene 2.
I am not a good actor, but I know
my role and I must study
my lines. >

This poem has no rhyme or rhythm,
only the rhythm of my circulatory system
pumping from my heart throughout
my body. Interdependent lifeforce
connected to a bird or an ant,
all sharing the stage.

Exit stage left, Act 1 Scene 3.
Empty beer bottles and
cigarette butts, dehydration
from Trader Joe's 2 Buck Chuck and
camping with no water. There is no name
for the dehydration.

I paid the price
for a campsite up Nacimiento Road.
Is Heaven a hangover?
That hangover was the closest thing
2 Heaven I've ever seen.

Thank you, Shakespeare. Δ

Destination

Matthew Madriz

Our mother's sorrow & sobs will overflow that
of the Great Canyon.

A distinct yet heart-wrenching experience that matches
no other.

Her one true love, her son, against an unbeatable opponent.
The mouth of the beast himself disguised with open arms

Only to swallow him whole & leave a distant memory
to those who once knew him.

This beast has no compassion, this beast is a true savage.
It cannot speak, but only wrecks out havoc. Δ

Half Empty/Half Full

Fabian Mendoza

Outside is nothing more than a blank stare
Inside is a buildup we try not to let spill out
You climb too high & you end up without air
You sink too low and you are unable to breathe.
Life is not about balance for it's a constant tug of war.
Life is about enduring the hardships
And moving forward. Δ

Golden Triangle

Jiovanni Bueno

Sierra Madre, the Mother Mountains
that's where el señor de las montañas
resides. No pasa nada en el triangulo
dorado. There he is in peace
because the golden triangle is secluded, >

uncharted terrain.
You can only get there on foot.
No one dares to go,
not because of an ambush –
the turns are so sharp, and
the hills so steep!

I want my own mountain, my
Golden Triangle.
For people to leave me alone,
so I can see those that
I wish to see.
To be able to come out
and disappear like a ghost,
missed just by minutes! Δ

Blackout Poem from Nezahualcoyotl

Fabian Mendoza

Nothing is forever
Gold, it wears away
What endure: will not perish.
My songs will not cease.
Even when the flowers wither.
Finally, my heart understands it. Δ

The Road

Matt Sadell

The road that starts at Sunny Cove
The road that stops at Santa Mo's
The road that comes, but both ways it goes
The road that leads to Pleasure Point
The road I learned to smoke a joint
The road that makes me feel alive
The road where I almost died
The road that I like to skate
The road where I sit and contemplate
The road that I love
The road that is above
The road where we like to watch
The road where my watch stopped
The road of my childhood rise
The road of adult demise
I can't believe I'm still alive
The road I know all too well
The road of East Cliff Drive. Δ

Thou Shall Not Fall

Egmidio Anderson

First and foremost,
I'd like to thank the fools out there,
especially the Fool from King Lear Unabridged.
Furthermore, let's thank the nuncle again
from the Unabridged version of
Shakespeare's King Lear. >

I thank them, but they
are not from the trestle.
They are not bridgefolk.
We lost boyz know
all wisdom is plagiarism,
only foolishness is original.
I say nay to the 3-storey morons.

I'd like to take a moment to apologize...
to absolutely nobody.
A lost boy does and says what he wants.
We apologize to nobody, absolutely nobody.
We are lost boyz!

We raided sk8board factory dumpsters
played tag on the cement whale. I got lost
staring at the stuffed mountain lion.
My school lunches were different --
I couldn't trade my tofu or my carrots.
My mom and her veggies.
Tie-dye M.C. Escher shirts
I would wear for picture day.
Summers spent being a junior lifeguard.

Lost boyz.
From all of Seabright to Soquel, from Frederick Street
to Ocean View was our turf,
spending our food stamps, Section 8 rich,
only the Skeltons had a dad.
But most of us, my mum and my sis
and our food stamps. >

We were lost boyz,
feeding off each other's energy.
Looking back it was like a movie,
the never-ending candy aisle
of Horshnyder Pharmacy,
the Friday night roller rink,
the trembling hand of Boy and Girl
in a couple skate.
Kind of like Valentine's Day in the third grade.

We were lost boyz. And
some of us had to die.
Bootz speeding down Seabright
right into the Rio Theatre.
He was pronounced DOA.
Bootz was my friend.
He was a lost boy.
He was 3 years sober, off heroin.
He gave me hope, then gave me antibiotics
and fed me when I was strung out.
"Why did the Germans call it The Hero's Drug?"
I still feed off his past energy, maybe he
was trying to split the atom,
speeding down Seabright
like a fucking superconductor.

We are Lost Boyz.
No patience, just resistance
to anything poisoning our precious Santa Cruz soil.
No patience, just resistance
to the Googles, resistance to any
so-called dominant entity who isn't from Santa Cruz soil, >

any building over 2 storeys, except
for our Government buildings.

I am a lost boy,
no one is taking me from me,
raised on our tap water.

It takes a village to raise a child, and
I love being a lost boy.

Who the hell are you.

I apologize to nobody.

This goes out to the dirty old town
which I love.

Again, it takes a village to raise a child,
this child is now a lost boy, and I'd like
to take this time to apologize to.....absolutely
Nobody.

Lost boyz forever,
thou shall not fall.

Open fire, thou shall not fall,
protect our modern-day fertile crescent
thou shall not fall.

I prepare the muddy waters, I look through
the crumbling castles to the sea, I apologize to nobody.

I am a lost boy.

No patience, just resistance.

We serve this modern-day fertile crescent
with strength and protection.

We are lost boyz.

Who the hell are you. Δ

Dominos

Matthew Madriz

Dark skies & warm summers
with star-filled nights.

Bottles of liquor & blunts to pass.
I pour some out for those who have left.

It's sad to say, but they were too young
A bullet for death redrum redrum. Δ

Untitled

Joshua Dolera

The things you should remember you seem to forget
and the things you should forget
you seem to keep remembering.
You seem to not be able to forget.
You start to learn to accept the things
that are called dead memories.

You start to realize after a while
things personal to you
people personal to you
seem to start forgetting about you.

And you start to realize,
in order to make it home to the things
you have forgotten -
you realize there's nothing like a trail of blood
to find your way back home. >

So before you start to forget everything,
open your eyes and realize
life is beautiful.

So start remembering. Δ

It's Been Hard Lately

Jiovanni Bueno

It's been hard lately.
I think about how did my life
get here.

It's been hard lately.
I'm only getting older —
am I getting wiser or
colder?

It keeps getting harder,
It keeps getting harder for me,
to express myself.

So many ups and downs, yet
life is what you make it.

Where did I go wrong?
What do I have to do right?

This is my life
and "it's" hard for me,
but "it's" a part of me. Δ

#1 Hitter

Craig Tatum Delacruz

Now I am up to bat
I'm on the plate

you're on the mound
I hittem out the
Park, never on the ground

I make home runs
not just pop-flies

Dusting myself off
Like I just stole
Home.

Vocally gifted physically lifted
Mentally with it.

Dirt on my feet
Feet on the ground Δ

Division

Fabian Mendoza

Sometimes I feel like I'm viewing life from another's eyes
I see the same things but the emotion doesn't collide within
I'm simply standing next to myself observing,
unable to bring together what hasn't been connected for a long
time.

I feel as though I'm in a coma
or that my last breath is being taken, >

I don't fully comprehend it myself,
I don't expect you to, either... Δ

God's Gift

Matthew Madriz

Cold steel like a canine's bite
Rips through flesh with all its might
Soulless eyes like a moonless night
A shark in its frenzy, a blood-thirsty fight
Without a doubt, I will survive
I walk by faith and not by sight. Δ

Don't

Craig Tatum Delacruz

I don't want no kerfuffle
 With you anymore
I just want to stop this
emotional war.

Don't text my phone
 I don't want to read messages
from you anymore.

Don't Do it!
 Already ran through
that before...

Don't want your kerfuffle
 Anymore. Δ

Sleep

Steven Kay

Long day, double scrub, workout n hoops,
class, Pinnochio and spades, and pernod raids, Risk, poker,
Need to get some sleep

The restful rejuvenation that helps your
brain think, into the mattress sink,
wanna get some sleep

Peaceful mind and slumber to bring dreams
transcending into deep realms, count numbers
Love some beautiful sleep

Mind ticking over, tick tock, from thought to
thought, tick tock
Tryna get some sleep

The comfort of bed, the brown bun and
mattress that, hmmm... feels like a
sweatbox

How to get some sleep?

Trying to breathe but stale hot air gives
no relief, wanna smoke a spliff.
Not getting any sleep

Tossing and turning, frustrating and yearning
to...
can't get no sleep >

So hot, why no cool air, oh yeah, the broke
heater and AC is no priority
can't get no sleep

But the yard door is cracked open, oh no!
he closed it, so hot,
CAN'T get NO sleep

Request after refused request, they just
don't care, so hot in here
No sleep, no sleep, no sleep

Guys in the bay are breathing hard and
snoring, what irony. Agh!
They are in deep sleep

Nose and sinus so blocked and dry, sweating
profusely, oh why? No matter how I try
CAN'T GET NO SLEEP

Mind drifts, tiredness and aching body shifts
into a black dark rift, ahh!
Finally fallen asleep!

"Breakfast!" Oh fuck it's 5. Jump up, ID,
get alive, line up, oh my!
Did I get any sleep?
So sleep deprived
Sleep, sleep, sleep >

Hit the sack, lying on my back, snook the
door open, Lunch!
I think I got some sleep.

What? Wed. is here? Inspection, explaining
the hotbox situation, Ahh yes, door will be open seriously no jokin'.
Now I can sleep, sleep
Sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep, sleep. Δ

Z's

Fabian Mendoza

Waking up is a gamble.
You never know how you'll wake up feeling,
what's gonna take place throughout the day,
Sometimes you don't know where you'll wake up.
You can wake up at home
or in a hospital,
or even in a different city.

The past is then a story or a dream
that'll never return.

Sleep is an internal heaven.
Waking up is a game of poker with life. Δ

The Answers

Ryan Scott Brown

The Lion sniffs no fear or threat
and lays next to The Sleeping
Gypsy.
Gypsy is dreaming of her >

father reincarnated as a Lion
named Lyon being her protector
at night as she sleeps.

The Lion is thinking of any
new smells that might arise as
it protects its territory.

The Moon dreams of being the
light under a dark sky.

This picture should be shown
to a wandering spirit.

Show it to someone leaving
Mexico coming into America.

Show this to someone close
to you letting them know, even
when you dream in your sleep
you think of them as the Lion
they once were.

No matter where I go, my
father will be by my side. Δ

The Scream - Munch

Benjamine Goertz

Quietly pace
Traps of my mind
Silently waste
Cursed from behind
Float in disgrace
Sun setting time
Boat out of place
Gather in line
Coat oven lace
Scream til I'm blind
Ghost without trace
Controls my spine
Searching this space
Less i will find
Glued to my face
No way to climb
Dungeon encased
Solitude primed
Neverend race
Wrists & feet bind
Artistic taste
Psychotic kind Δ

Sin

Fabian Mendoza

Sin is in the flesh
Repent it day in and day out
It will remain as Lucifer's realm is here on Earth
All I ask is I be forgiven. Δ

I found me

Benjamine Goertz

Here I am,
Alone,
Stranded,
Desolate,
Hopeless,
feeling so meager,
so small,
so matter-less,
stuck,
by myself,
on this makeshift raft,
in the middle of the ocean,
A tiny stream of light,
hope peering through the thick grey clouds that
have now quickly added more fear into my mind of
never making it,
Huge swells of unknown abyss underneath me
Pushing me along in a direction I am lost for,
A black winged creature flies overhead in the same direction,
might as well be a demonic banshee leading my soul
to hell as it soars towards the radiant beacon of death,
The world may seem to be a terrible place
but the wonder of nature has never failed me.
So where am I really going? Δ

Dante's Inferno

Matthew Madriz

A palace of fiery embers
Where the damned souls roam
A palace of nine levels
Where satan must dwell
A palace of all seven sins
Where evil sleeps prays on those
Who have fell
A palace of eternal misery & suffering
Where in order to seek retribution
There must travel though all rings of hell. Δ

One Night

Steven Kay

Lights flashing, children excitedly screaming and dashing
Rides and Christmas trees, the night so enchanting
Selling LED toys with a friend, Xmas Santa-ing
Christmas in the Park, families rejoicing under starry dark

Happiness, smiles
Everyone beguiled

Late drive homeward, only my headlight beams forward
Smash, boom, the sound of doom
Shock and panic...the man is dead...how manic
Life has changed, death estranged

Sadness, grief
What disbelief. Δ

Whispers and Lies

Matthew Madriz

Can you hear the whispers,
the lies?

No.

Maybe you are blind because
the devil's on your side.

I can feel your heart
ache and cries.

All that is left now
is hate for life

lawless and despised. Δ

Haiku

Fabian Mendoza

We became the same.
The apple doesn't fall far.

Now I understand. Δ



We Are From

The Women of Blaine Street

We are from the wet winter that ended a thirty year drought.
From posole, caldo and puro frijoles

We are from the traditions and values that constitute family
We are from baptism, rules and choir

We are from Boulder Creek
We are from camping, swimming
And the two waterparks in my hometown

We are from the bullfrog croaks and jelly bean jar. Δ

Capirotada

Elise Chavez

I am so grateful for the terracotta pot,
the way it sits brightly in my mom's kitchen counter,
with hand painted flowers from Mexico.

It feels cold like earth's cold to the touch when we first
grab it by its two handles to add layers
of toasted bread as we prepare capirotada during Lent season.
It's a big circle clay pot like the sun, smooth like circles.

As we toast roasted seeds and chocolate for
chicken mole, we ground everything on the molcajuete
with a rock. Once everything is prepared we cover it
with foil and place it in the oven to finish cooking. >

The best part of this big circle clay pot is that it makes enough food for our family to come together and feast with nourishment for grandparents to the smallest of children.

This cooking technique connects us to our ancestors' and grandparents' old way of cooking in Mexico in outdoor kitchens. We get to take our time to prepare delicious meals with the main ingredient Love.

Clay pots teach us to appreciate the people who work on digging for clay and making a beautiful pot for us to experience not only delicious meals but beautiful memories.

This is an old tradition and way of cooking that can be passed on to our children.

Gracias Madre,

Elisa Δ

I'm Cold

Martha Espinoza

When I was a niña my mama would braid my hair so tight I had Asian eyes.

Then she would squeeze lemon juice on it to keep up so neat.

I sure miss my mama.

She chose to leave me and go to Heaven early.

Then I had 12 sets of foster parents--some were good like gold, others were cold as a winter storm without shelter

without love I could never get warm. >

I'm sitting in my cell. It's warm.
Did I find my warm place?
I saved my heart but lost my babies
in here
I found courage that I never had before before before

thank you mama Δ

Untitled

Angela Monique Guardado

My lonely walk through high and low times in despair
with high, harsh, and calm deep long miles of creeks,
levees, rivers, fields of apple cores of berry
sweet heartless cold walks through the rain of fire of darkness or
light

I still rise like the lights of the sun rays
I shine through the sunsets like a flawed angel
mother of God's plan to harvest through the unconditional love
of the rise of new lights or new crops to be picked
ripe enough to go home peace Mercy, Grace & Love...
Home Sweet Home.... Δ

Anxiety

Martha Espinoza

When I hear my tears fall off my
face like rocks are raining
in the storm of my own emotions
I have fallen into a deep nightmare >

where I'm not sure if I want to wake up
I'm feeling safe in this pit of darkness
if I try to open one eye will it
hurt? Will the light burn a hole
in my skull? Will I survive the
light of Day light? The sun kissing
my skin? Can I even walk without
falling? Δ

Untitled

Diana Ornelas

I Don't have to sleep,
I Don't have to be awake,
We wait for news every day,
we don't have to allow emotions to move the sun,
A choice is made,
Don't slouch; leaving when time is speeding
Tell me wwhhyy?
perspective, choices, people, it's late.
Remember who you love first,
why are you doing this, steel-stainless
.see. Δ

Kindness

Rashel Brandon

Kindness can be expressed in many ways.
Lately I've seen someone
Soaking another person's feet and clipping their toe nails just
because they couldn't reach >

Helping someone shower when they don't have the energy to even walk

Giving a hug to someone that hasn't felt a touch in a long time

Having a celebration of a birthday for a person or loved one

Seeing someone blossom who has decided to start anew a gift of sobriety.

Kindness is the beauty of the connections made every day even as women are fleeting in and out daily.

Kindness can be moving out of the way down a walkway.

Kindness is brushing someone's tangle out when they have a knot in their hair.

Kindness is giving someone a book so they can read their boredom away.

Kindness is thanking people who have cared for you over the years even if it was their job to.

Kindness is thanking an officer who saved you from committing suicide.

Kindness is the endless love and support from your family.

Ways of being kind can be sought out through the day, it's just how you carry it out that matters. Δ

Thoughts of Purity?

Jasmine

Hope, Faith, Allah, Fortune,

Joy, Happiness.

These are Certain;

These are Healthy.

These are Wishes. >

Those Help Heal/
Those aren't losses.
That is a wonder? Δ

Angel Bear

Martha Espinoza

As you snuggle up with your
angel teddy bear, I see your rosy
red cheeks light up like Christmas lights
I'm jealous of the lil velvety
chocolate brown bear stuffed
with dry lavender it gets to hold you all nite
I can see it's golden soft wings
keeping you warm safe as you
dream of my sweet kisses
and hugs a mother's love never ends
I dream of you my angel my son Δ

Where I'm From

Mariah St. George (aka Wind)

I am from
sayings like "Chew your food, not swallow it!"
and "Speak not yell."

I am from
my grandmother's balcony,
the one throughout my childhood that would have a fantastic view
dead smack middle of the mountains.

I'm from
enchiladas, spaghetti, pancakes, popcorn, French bread, butter and
soda. >

I am from the pool and park

I grew up in the Village of Victorville apartments.

I am from

Nicole Marie Vig and Justin Michael St. George.

Where I'm from are Louisiana, Texas, Wisconsin, the High Desert of Southern California

and now Orange and Los Angeles County.

I'm from sports

like recreational cheerleading, gymnastics, running track in school and swimming

all times throughout the day.

I'm from The Eagles, Elton John, Miley Cyrus, Eminem, the Beatles, Queen, Ozzy Osbourn

Classical Rock, and Alternative Rock.

Well, I

love where I came from

This is me. Δ

Sayings: Dichos

Elisa Chavez

From Mom

Tienes que ser decente / you have to be decent

Tienes que ser guerrera / be a warrior/ even warriors get wounded by life

Sana, Sana colita de rana, si no sanas hoy sanaras mañana / Heal, heal, little tail of the frog. If you don't heal today, you'll heal tomorrow. >

*Con esa boca comes / You eat with that mouth--said when one says
bad words.*

From Grandma Chela

*Tienes que ser decente en la calle, pero puta en la cama / You need to be
decent in public with your husband, but in bed be wild.*

Basically, please your husband or someone else will

Grandma Chela taught me to pray rosary every night. Once I
accidently caught my hair on fire with one of her prayer candles. Δ

Someone Looking at Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks"

by Mariah St. George

It's the early morning

precisely 2:30 am

I see a very nice antique coffee house

I see a middle-aged man with his back facing towards me

I see a couple--they're young adults; they're drinking coffee near
here

in Ontario Mills, Ontario, California in the mid 1940s.

I see marble flowing outside on the sidewalk.

I'm walking home

till I happen to see this beautiful white and pure butterfly.

I follow him. Δ

Last Day

Rashel Brandon

Her blood pressure was too high and the doctors admitted her.

The next morning, my Grandmother had a stroke,
right in front of my Grandfather. >

They decided to let her go in peace
Take her home to live her last days with family.

When I found out, I went to her side and took care of her.
She was still warm and would mumble.
I medicated her when she needed something to soothe the pain.

She was beautiful lying in the hospital bed.
I put perfume on her and fluffed up her grey hair.
We put her favorite teal Sharks sweatshirt atop her blankets.
I kept her comfortable as I could, turning her,
hugging her, holding her hand.
The last day she was here, I told her it was okay to go.
It was a rainy day all morning, then when she
died I went outside, the sun shown through
the clouds and a rainbow appeared
she was in heaven. Δ

Blossom Pain

Marie Espinoza

My heart is fractured like a puzzle that can never be put together.
I hunger to find the missing pieces. My heart pounding. I'm
drowned in fear.
I can taste freedom , but my chains trap me in tradition.
My shackles snuggle against me bruising my skin.
I love the way it hurts.
Blossom of pain Δ

Balances

Liz Cooper

Trespassing into darkness
Taking time to reflect
Time to review
Stepping back into
light, into the everyday
fold, forgiveness tags along
unloading guilt and
lifting moods, laughter
sneaks in and smiles
are renewed. Δ

The Sky is Mine

Italia Salgado

Bear with me as a drought of
Values run through the core
Of my family...

Naturally setting the rules that must be applied. OBEY! They say...
As I leap like a bullfrog with no eyes.

...I must touch the sky..

My hometown; reminds me of a splashy waterpark with a croak

Splashy waterpark with a croak

Swimming inside.. disasters ...

But I'm here to baptize the dark water...

And it becomes purer.

As I touch the sky.

Now everyone is staring with piercing eyes...

Like jelly beans and frijoles, >

Trying to look up high...
And they see that the
Sky is Mine. Δ

A Soft Breeze

Liz Cooper

The wind how it works
often so subtle and calm
bringing fresh breath
and renewed vision
a refreshing caress
recharging faith
renewing hope
clearing minds
allowing peace to
balance again
oh the beauty of that
gentle breeze. Δ

Where I'm From

Italia Salgado

I am from loony bin,
Where I followed the wind to
Every inch of my town.

I am from nothing to something
To having money to not having
Anything. >

I am from two homes that
Never seemed to align
And I had two families, two of
Everything: two dads and two mothers.
I was a lucky child.

I am from cannabis leaves and nuggets
I've smoked my own life away at the age of eight
I am from ashes to dust,
To the bright beach sun.

From Mark and Martha
The leftover joints: I picked
Up as a child just for fun.
Believing that they were cigars.

I am from those moments
Where it made me who I am today.
A better yesterday.

Nothing can break me today Δ

American Girl

Kelsey Grace Mangan

As an American, born with blue eyes & blonde hair,
I was taught too bad so sad, no one said life's fair

I was raised on work hard play harder
& how to survive with only things
got through bargain & barter >

I was taught I'm left-handed
in a right-handed world,

that I'm your typical image of your American girl.

I have been shown the ways not to live by first
& that no matter what
life could always be worse

I may fit your opinion of a common type
of where the flag is flown full of stars & stripes Δ

Celebrating the 4th of July

Italia Salgado

Why they ask do we celebrate 4th of July? Why?
Most of us don't know why...
I really don't even know why...
Have I lost my marbles? perhaps so

All I know is that we throw fireworks,
get all lunatic with a feast:
hot dogs, hamburgers, chips, soda with more drinks.

Cheers; wink wink

I laugh so bright
that in the dark night
there are lights.
Twinkle twinkle
Stars so bright >

Have we lost the true meaning of the true
4th of July?

I did...please tell me why so I can learn the facts of our history.

It seems I've been walking around blind...

Blinded we been walking...Can you relate?

If not please tell me why.

And bring us to the light because most of us
are walking blinded with a tight blind around our eyes.

No wink wink.

But today is the day we celebrate the real 4th of July

And if you don't know, now you know.

But I still don't know what you know.

What do you know about the 4th of July? Δ

Looking Glass

Danyelle North

Through the looking
glass there's day
becoming through the clouds
seeping its way in
slipping slithering its way
amongst the cracks
those bars are
no boundaries
but a foreplay
to my lusty imagination
tomorrow perhaps >

today shall pass
for what I see
through the looking glass. Δ

Prideful Brown

Italia Salgado

Brown like the color of my skin, my hair, and eyes.
Piercing...Souls a bind.
Brown as I am a prideful Mexicana, Chicana.
Brown all around me as I sit on the beach to the right of the wharf.
Brown like the park I kick around.
Brown hands up in the air with the paper I be stacking up.
Look into my eyes: you'll see
the prideful brown of my town. Δ

In the Style of Maya Angelou

Kelsey Grace Mangan

Yes I'm blonde and spunky
I stand tall and walk with pride

My intelligence is chunky
And my attitude will take you for a ride

My aura is so bright
My energy spreads wide
My kindness can be contagious
And my laugh spills with a glide

I know I am not so perfect
And I know I have some flaws >

I try my hardest to not forget
All the pain I have once caused

Yes I am all woman,
Who stands tall and strong within,
But I know I am all human and
I don't forget where we all begin Δ

Tantilizing Touch

Liz Cooper

A simple response
A slow turn
sensual desire
passionate burn
a soft touch of skin
to begin again
a small part of paradise found
endless beauty within
the lovers entangled
embrace
electric spark
dynamic exchange
oh to be in love
the world ceases to
exist
the universe condensed
and then all at once
expanded again
pleasure unbound
your lover found Δ

The Argument

Martha Espinoza

Nobody can argue that the ocean
didn't look deep into my eyes
with the power of purpose.
But I responded in silence. Since I cannot see the future,
I am part of the beauty the ocean speaks.
It tells me I am part of it.
"I'm here baby and for years to come."
But I respond with the decision
that I'm just a swimmer
passing by its dark waters.
And the ocean says:
"You are not my visitor.
You are here to stay." Δ

Lightning Rays

Rashel Brandon

On a boat to our adventure at sea
Flippers and masks in our hands
We are going to swim with the sting rays.
The weather is sunny with clouds on the horizon.

We arrive on the reef where hundreds of rays
are swimming about.
The anchor lands and we disembark
Into the warm Cayman waters below.
Squid is what we offer the playful animals.
They swim up and suck the squid right out of our hands.
The rays are beautiful grey and white, rough on >

the top and silky smooth on the bottom.

They are playful like a puppy and swim about
hoping for the next meal at hand.

We have stayed long enough for the clouds to draw near.
The rain starts falling and we are whisked away from our
paradise we have seen.

We arrive to the dock and the rain is pouring, thunder
sounding and lightning striking the dock,
smelling like burnt hair.

We try to hide under the only building around
about fifty of us hovered under the eave.

No escaping the wetness of the rain,
afraid we might be struck,

the static electricity in the air makes us feel like pins and needles are
pricking our numb bodies.

Eventually our heroes appear, vans to bring us safely to the awaiting
ship.

Crisis averted we are safe and sound. Δ

Katie May

Liz Cooper

Sun bathing beauty

out by the pool

soaking up golden rays

youth embraced >

cherished and loved
warmth radiating in
sweat trickles down
her neck gathers on
her collarbones
the cool water of the
pool calls to her
inviting her to cool off
she dives in and
emerges refreshed again Δ

Hula

Rashel Brandon

The first time I went to Hawaii, I was amazed by all the fancy
flower garlands and tea leaves the leis were made of.
The flowers dripped with fragrance.
Any time I smell a powerful flower
I reminisce about my trips to Hawaii.
when we would go to the luaus, the dancers would
undulate their hips weightless while dancing the hula.
We would visit my families' homes while sitting
on cushions and listen to the stories the elders
would tell of our ancestors and the ties that bind
us together. Δ

Hannalore Grietch

Annemarie Banuelos

Hannalore Grietch
greyed hair hanging down with thick glasses
hunched over, small frame
of German descent
who had a temper
went through WWII
sometimes hard to communicate with due to mental health issues.
She lived to be 82 yrs old.

I miss my mother.
She was an intelligent woman.
She liked lying in bed reading her books.
She came from a large family.
Her mother had 13 kids on a farm.
She lost her brothers to the war.

My mother married an American soldier who treated her poorly,
left her sister back in Germany
for which she felt ashamed.

I felt bad for my mother and the sad life she led.
I feel proud about her but also when I was young
my mother scared me due to her mental health and alcoholic
drinking. >

Oh, such times we had in Bronx, New York
all the experiences that she put us through
my 1/2 sister, my 1/2 brothers, and me.

When she passed away I felt lonely and sad and guilty
for how I treated her
my mother
Hannalore Grietch Δ

Saint Helens

Rashel Brandon

I was only six years old, we didn't watch much T.V.
It was all over the radio and news
Mount Saint Helens was erupting...
So close to where we lived.

We had warning ahead of time, rumbles, quakes all
in and around the mountain.
Everyone near there was evacuated except
One old man, he was going to go with the mountain.

What was going to happen?
Were we going to blow up?
Were we going to have lava flow down the roads?

My questions were answered. >

The explosion sent ash through the sky--
rivers flooded and mud slides took massive trees
from their homes, down the mountain they went.
Houses near were demolished--
But all we saw was silky ash that felt like flour, two feet deep
that we played in, often without a mask.
Soon people were scrambling to avoid breathing the
“poisonous” ash.

When I look at my dad’s container of Mount Saint Helen’s ash
I remember the days of play in the grey sandbox of ash. Δ

Drawing in the Dark

Sunnah Lopez

Feels like I lost one of
my senses

 I can’t tell if my writing is
good or bad, messy or spaced apart
right.

 All I know is that it’s what
I’m thinking at this very moment
and I’m doing my best to make sense.

LIKE LIVING LIFE

It stresses you out not knowing what
the outcome will be

 But I know once the light
comes back on

 It’ll all make sense Δ

Where I'm From

Kelsey Grace Mangan

I am from the castle across Kelly Lake
From the tall wooden grandfather clock, where
The pendulum swings, and the bell divider
Built by grandfather's hands

I am from the lakehouse on Cutter Drive
and the four palm trees out back, next to the
Martinelli home

I am from jasmines and bird of paradise
Whose scent and beauty exist so profound in my memory
I am from the bullfrog croaks & jelly bean jar
From my grandfather Ralph and grandmama Joyce
I am from traveling far and flying often
and from visits to Mission Ranch and stays at Saint Francis
I am from "Gracie Bell, come give me some suga!"

I am from the Smalling genes and Morgan family
From fresh crab cakes all over the bay and handmade
Cheesecake. From playing mind teasers with grandma
And watering the flower bed with grandpa,
Digging up bugs from the dirt & making mud pie
I am from the moments in which all my best
Memories lie. Δ

Untitled

Denise Schiraldi

With a painted picture of life
I see sunsets and flowers blooming
Sometimes the sounds of love
Sound like wind chimes and carousels

But where our paths lead us
Is it really all good times
And memorabilia

Well I guess yesterdays
and faded tomorrows

Will give us the answers
To all of our sorrows Δ

The Shackles are Removed

Rashel Brandon

i

The shackles are removed and I am
led to the gate. Freedom is finally
tasted. The velvet dirt under
my feet, I await my train to leave
I can finally breathe.

ii

As I sip the tangerine tea from the tea cup,
I am aware that my mouth has left
lipstick on the rim.
My mind sees a tattoo of a butterfly
as the velvet coats my throat. Δ

A thousand thanks to our volunteers who have made it possible to reach so many men and women! Their hard work, persistence, talent, and love of teaching poetry have enabled us to add classes, and to provide a free workshop at the Santa Cruz County Library (Downtown Branch) for incarcerated individuals and all members of the community:

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Copies of this and earlier anthologies are available at
poetryinthejails.org, and at the Santa Cruz and
Watsonville Public Libraries.

