# Turning Points



Women's Voices Inside and Out

Edited by Robert Sward and Deborah Culmer

Forward by Robert Sward





Turning Points: Women's Voices Inside and Out copyright 2018

Poems written by the Power in Poetry class at Main Jail, Rountree, and Blaine Street Facilities, Santa Cruz County. Essays, poems, and memoir pieces written by students at Louden Nelson Downtown Senior Center's Memoir and Poetry Class, offered by City of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation.

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Santa Cruz Poetry Project is a non-profit organization bringing poetry to men and women incarcerated in Santa Cruz County. Please visit our Web site at santacruzpoetryproject.org

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# **Turning Points: Women's Voices Inside and Out**

A few years ago I read in what the program at the time called a poetry slam. We had 12 or so participants, local poets—myself included—reading aloud and sharing our poems with people incarcerated in Santa Cruz County jails.

With encouragement from my longtime friend Ellen Bass, an earlier Poet Laureate and gifted founder of the Santa Cruz Poetry Project, I'm now in my second year of participation.

In this, my second year as Poet Laureate, I've had the good fortune to work with both senior citizens writing their memoirs, their life histories and poetry (through City of Santa Cruz Department of Parks and Recreation), AND aspiring writers in Santa Cruz County jail facilities.

The Santa Cruz Poetry Project currently conducts three men's classes at the Rountree facility near Watsonville, and one women's class at the Blaine Street facility in Santa Cruz. Over the past four years, we've published several anthologies of men's poetry, and have conducted on-site poetry slams as well.

The Santa Cruz Poetry Project is proud to present this anthology, the first to include incarcerated women's poems and art. Combining their work with the senior women's memoirs and poetry seems natural, as both groups deal with the Turning Points of past, present, and future.

Now 85, I've been teaching and writing for 61 years. Moved and inspired all these years, energized as ever, grateful to you all, I look forward to staying in touch, hearing of your successes, reading and sharing with you Turning Points to come.

Robert Sward, Poet Laureate of Santa Cruz County August 2018

#### **Ode to Santa Cruz**

--For Sandy Lydon

You want a sunrise? asks the poet,
I'll give you a sunrise. Eggplant cirrus clouds,
pinky smoky blue and gray,
pink, moss pink, pink nether flower
sunrise, sunrise
yellow white silicon chip
foghorn, wind chime, no-color haze.

Sunrise sunrise
O City of Mystical Arts and Live Soup,
Antique bathhouse, casino
Riva Fish House,
A busload of German tourists
applauding the sunrise.
Clam chowder, O scrubbed blue light
melon balls and watermelon shooters,
arcade, pink neon, roller coaster heart-shaped mirror.

KA-BOOM! House begins to dance, land moves in waves three and four feet high, weight machines swaying, mirrors rattling, a sidewalk of broken glass, a street filled with jewels.

Loma Prieta, The Earthquake of the Dark Hill, place, this place, always coming back from a disaster. Natural beauty and unnatural events, jazz, blues, canoes, tattoos, I bow and give thanks to the muse, Santa Cruz, O Santa Cruz!

-- Robert Sward, Poet Laureate, 2016-2018

## **Blaine Street Courtyard**

-- For The Women of Blaine Street

Here is a square of redwood duff and shrubbery shaded by graceful trees and an iron fence.

The clouds skitter across a constrained sky.

The breeze lifts our hair.

One of a million trillion stars warms our skin.

The birds don't care why you're in, nor the bees give a damn what you said or did.

Time serves, time is served, time is better spent outside than in.

#### -- Deb Culmer

I teach Power in Poetry at the women's jail facilities in Santa Cruz County, through the Santa Cruz Poetry Project. For the past two-plus years, I have had the honor of working with some extraordinary women, exploring the world of words and imagery. We work together to find ways of expressing life, love, struggle, victory, heartbreak. I hope I've taught them a thing or two — I know I've learned much in return.

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## **A Turning Point**

By Pamela Robinson, October 2017

I was off to see a client of mine, and her baby, Nayeli. We were meeting at a place called Mariposa, the butterfly, aptly named, a place to emerge from your chrysalis and fly away. It was a sort of farm in the hills below San Jose, not caged, but not free either. Moms and babies were mandated by court to spend time there in a program, most were drug related offenses. I had been mom's PHN when she was at home and Nayeli was a newborn. Mom was a challenge, refusing to breast feed, refusing most of my pamphlets on infant care. That was her right. OK, I'll play with the baby. At first she was a typical adorable newborn, but with each visit, she developed a personality no one could ignore. Her smile, her curly black hair framing her face, chubby dimples, what a cutie! We played together for weeks at my visits. After Mom and baby moved to Mariposa, I continued to follow them. If only Mom would see Nayeli as this irresistible creature.

I could understand her behavior, drug moms are afraid their babies will be taken away from them. I did not enjoy my own babies as much as Nayeli, I was too young and not ready for the responsibility of motherhood then, just like this mom. Her baby's dad was off in a more secure facility in the central valley, not much of a participant.

Has he seen her?

Yes, I take her with me.

Does he hold her, play with her?

Nah, not too much.

How about his family, do they come to see her?

His mom does.

I could enjoy this baby just for her very existence, so smart, so gorgeous, so soft and cuddly, so much fun. I bragged about her to her mom. Most times Nayeli was in the crib when I got there, playing happily by herself.

Let's take her out and play with her on the floor.

OK.

I brought some animal books for mom to read to Nayeli. Not much enthusiasm. Other clients were eager to tell me about the latest things their babies had done. What was different about this mom? If only I could get her to fall in love with her baby.

Mom and baby moved back home when Nayeli was almost a year old, starting to coo and babble. Home was with Grandma, in a little house with an open front porch, screen door, in east San Jose. Grandma was cooking and cleaning in the background.

Then something happened. The next visit when I came through the screen door, they were sitting together on the floor, playing, baby sitting between mom's legs, back to belly, and mom with arms around baby. Mom told me something exciting Nayeli had done. They were on their way now, together.

A year or two later I got an envelope in the mail, no return address. An announcement, Mom had graduated from her program. It was a love story after all.

## What I Love and What I Lost

By Mckelle Lloyd, April 2018

What I love and what I lost The stillness of an empty house The calm before the storm The banging of feet up the steps Which used to be the norm.

A happy, healthy family A husband's wedded bliss A child's loving, tender words A sloppy, sticky kiss.

An unborn baby's stillness Fills the heart with fear. A missing parent, a quiet room, I am no longer there.

## **Family**

By Cheyenne Cambri, April 2018

There's a mother who is extraordinary but she turns into the child when things don't go her way. A father who feels so deeply that he needs substances to breathe.

A sister who excels in school, and is given a lovely childhood before the marriage started to crack in pieces.

A brother born with a cyst on his brain, one eye one nostril not expected to live past two weeks.

Then there was me who fell in with the freaks and a younger sister who spoke her own language (I was the only one who understood her).

A mother so overbearing I suffocate the same way my father couldn't breathe, so he rescues me from her white-knuckled reach. As my brother has seizures every day, he's all people seem to have time to smother. I choose to lose my own way while my older sister continues to excel and my younger sister moves away for college.

And that's when my brother dies at 26, while I'm in jail.

And I thought I was numb and frail before?

A mother who has lost her son.

A father who lost his son, and upgraded his substances.

Two parents, who now live in each of their empty houses, who in their own ways grieve the son who is gone, and their daughters who have gone away, out of reach, close but still so far.

A mother
A father
And three sisters
who hadn't been together in ten years
had dinner together on the anniversary of his death.
Laughed together.
Cried forever.

And it's almost as if this loss, my brother taking his last breath, was what we needed to let go of all the white-knuckled resentments, some decades old, to be a family,

even if only for an hour, or two.

# Mother's Day

By Bonnie Murphy, July 2018

Today is Mother's Day, Mother's birthday. Today she would have been 97 years old. I've always been confused by the date: is it the tenth, the twelfth, or the fourteenth? How could something so simple as a date still confuse me today? Does it mean anything that I cannot remember the date?

An only child, her delivery must have been difficult because Grandad, her father, didn't want Grams, her mother, to go through childbirth again. Then one of Gram's siblings, a girl only 6 years older than mother, came to live with them. Issues in the household because Emma, my great grandmother, died in the Influenza Epidemic and her second husband, drunken Owen, rejected all of the children. Grams, her sister/daughter, my Great Aunt Katherine, and their other siblings tried to deal with the rejection and its after effects. Was mother close or not so close to Katherine, Katie, her sister/aunt? Or jealous, perchance resentful? Poor Katie, the hand me down clothes – even mine, no less. Mother could have afforded Katie new clothes, I was embarrassed by mother's "gifts."

Ethel, my Welsh "Grams," left home in her mid teens; she couldn't stand fetching buckets of suds for Owen, her stepfather, the alcoholic. She moved, got a job in the Aeolian Organ factory, met my grandfather, a supervisor.

Grandad, Warren, had dropped out of school in the fourth grade; allowed because his father had become disabled in an accident. Grandad's earnings, as a delivery boy on a bread wagon, kept the wolves from the door.

How stern was Grandad as a father figure? Demanding I expect. Always knew to the penny how much money was in his pocket. Always talked, lectured about saving, being careful with money. Loved to laugh, talk, watch "professional wrestling" on television insisting it was real.

Grams and Grandad: parents at 17 and 18. Virgins until Great Aunt Sarah moved out their tiny apartment. Meanwhile Grandad slept in the closet. Grandad saving pennies to present Grams with a grapefruit, more treasured than an orange. Saving rent receipts because a landlord tried to cheat them by claiming they hadn't paid their rent when they had.

At 17 mother finished high school. Met seven lifelong girlfriends at a bus stop on the first day of college. Weekends at the shore in "God's Square Mile," Ocean Grove, New Jersey. No cars allowed to drive in town on Sundays, its own addition to Blue Laws. Declining an invitation to a college dance because she knew her parents couldn't afford formal dress, which included long gloves and all the rigmarole of the era to be "properly attired." Vacations in the cabin in the mountains – some of their mothers tagging along for fun. All of the girls buying fur coats and posing on the brick steps at Newark State.

Misjudging distance, or more probably not operating the car properly, one time she crashed her father's car into the rear wall of his garage. I don't think she ever truly understood automobiles and how to shift gears. Certainly never how to downshift with a synchromesh transmission.

Mother's first teaching position – a one room school in rural Hunterdon County, New Jersey. Firing up the pot bellied stove on cold days. Teaching grades 1-8. Salaried at \$800 a year plus free room and board at alternating school board members' homes. Hot coals in a bed warmer for unheated attic bedrooms. Dating a New Jersey State Trooper who wanted to marry her (she said no). Dating a guy who wanted to take her skiing for the weekend in the Laurentians (she declined). As she drove home to her parents' house she saw a sign and pulled into a farmer's dirt lane; she pulled out of the lane with Copper Shannon, an Irish Setter puppy, riding in her lap.

Got a better teaching position and moved back in with her parents. Worked on her Masters at Columbia at night and on weekends. Kept up with the girlfriends. Looked across the library at Columbia and saw my father at the card files. Went over, said hello and asked if he hadn't gone to Newark State, too. They never could agree if they had Chinese or Italian for dinner on their first date.

Why mother loved my father I'll never know. He was on the rebound from the love of his life who had rejected him.

Yes he could be funny, helpful to others, and was inquisitive, talented. But he could also be Jekyll and Hyde personified. Calm, cool, collected on the outside, superheated on the inside, a roiling cauldron of emotion. His niceness a cover for the swirling rage. Seeking acceptance from others to fill the void within. The volcano erupted and overflowed at home.

She always made excuses for his behavior, saying how kind and thoughtful he was. Or, was she making excuses for herself, for having married him and still being with him?

When they were in their 60s my mother thought he was having an affair. The two-drink max woman became the sneaky daily vodka drinker. She fell once, he came home and found her on the floor. In the ER she kept saying "My husband doesn't love me anymore." I really didn't want to know, why did she tell me all of this? There was no one else to tell; she knew I'd keep her secrets. The other side of the story never revealed; death silenced my father's lips.

Heart disease finally killed him. He dropped dead at the flea market. At least he was doing something he loved was my thought. Mother hung on in her house for several years. I brought her West when she wasn't paying bills or taking care of herself.

I thought Mother would enjoy life with Jim and me. A warmer, dryer climate. Company to talk to, share with. Sunday rides in the country, visits to museums, exploring.

Then I learned my mother's flip side. Enduringly polite, she rarely said no, she just kept on doing what she wanted. A passive aggressive personality became apparent. I began to understand why my father had become frustrated at times. The more he tried to control her, the quieter she became, walked her own path.

Mother has been gone for over 10 years now. The luxury of time and perspective. I remember her words of "you're just like your father." If you loved him then why did you make this comment and why couldn't you love me? Jealousy I think – I could, and did, push him much harder, more often, than she.

She said that long ago he had said that it was his way or the highway. The threat later unsaid but always hanging over her. Was not giving up what you had worked so hard for worth it? She wouldn't leave him, but, I couldn't wait to leave. I naively thought the threats would go away. Not realizing that the threats and fear just came along as excess baggage.

I wish I had thanked her for all of the travels together. Our times alone exploring. Things I was exposed to, people I met. Told her of the things I had loved that had brought me pleasure. I wish we had talked more. I wish I had truly listened and observed more. That I had apologized for verbally dumping on her thinking I had no one else to talk to. That I hadn't ranted to her about my father. That I had thanked her more for leading by example – learning, reading, curiosity, patience, listening ability, kindness, gentleness.

For years after Mother died I'd stop and mentally think that I'd have to share my recent experience or a story with her later that day. How much she would enjoy it. Then I'd realize that I couldn't do that anymore.



# **Dear Eddie and Other Men from my Past**

By Bonnie Murphy, July 2018

Dear Eddie,

I loved nursery school because of you; you made every day special. What happened to you? Did you move away? Did you go to school in Morrisville? I loved your sweet kisses, the way you would run after me, both of us giggling and laughing until you "caught" me and kissed me. Every day.....every day before going home. Then one day you weren't there....what happened?

Whenever my parents or I drove past your house way, way up the street I'd think of you. Wonder where you were, how were you doing.

I've never forgotten you.

Thinking of you always makes me smile and feel warm inside.

#### 609

By Cheyenne Cambri, April 2018

Casting shade out front, there is a lemon and a persimmon tree above the two cats who act as the home's welcoming committee.

There used to be rosemary in the garden and at the top of the concrete steps out back, there was an apple tree until I sliced my palm open on it and we cut it down.

There's still a pear tree up there but when they're in season, my dad usually has to remind me that they're even there before I buy them from the market.

The ladder and trash can I used to climb onto the roof as a pre-teen are still there, and some of the window screens still have bends in their frames from when I was locked outside a few years later. Half of the time that I call my dad, now, when he's not at work, he's fixing something up around the house, cleaning in anticipatory anxiety of when I come home, and he won't have to be alone anymore in this big, empty house that he also grew up in.

Last night I dreamt
I was Home
and that the front bathroom tub
had been polished
and cleansed
from the years and years
of not being used.

# **Unlearning Lessons Learned**

by Bonnie Murphy, July 2018

FINALLY I realize the father connection

Control Control at all costs By whatever means it takes

Fear of physical attack that I cannot defend Fear of emotional pain Cutting, slicing words to the bone and beyond Cut to the very soul

Fatherly lessons
Lifelong fears and pain
Unknowing how to deal with it
Knives to my self-esteem
Now 67
At long last the light bulb
Illuminating the real problem
That "Little B" is going to have to grow up

Take a deep breath
Don't panic, do not be afraid
Calm down, don't be overwhelmed
Experience the validity of your own emotions
Learn how to deal with the control freaks, the bullies of the world

To each: Be mindful of the lessons you teach You may be well intentioned; think you are loving Look back and be aware Look forward and be forewarned

#### **Bats**

by Pamela Robinson

The first twelve years of my life were bat free, other than an occasional sighting outdoors at dusk. Several important things happened when I was twelve, we moved from our house across from Roosevelt School to a bigger house four blocks away on the same street. My sister was born, the fifth child, just before we moved. My father became depressed and after several months I came home from school one day and he was gone, taken to the hospital in Des Moines. When he returned, after months of shock treatments and drugs, and a diagnosis of schizophrenia, he was never the same person, the dad who grew beautiful flowers, vegetables and fruit trees at our old house. He was a robot, who went to work and got paid, but not much of a parent. My mother took excellent care of us until we were two, then the next child came along and we were on our own. Being anorexic herself, She did not feed us adequately, take us to the doctor, buy our clothes, or provide any support or affection. As the oldest, I now had to take care of myself and my siblings, but I was not much of a parent, either. My sister says she was raised an orphan. I was the lucky one, having had a real dad for eight years after he came back from the war when I was four.

The new house had a handsome brick fireplace with a broad oak mantle and the bats flew down the chimney regularly. If they got upstairs to my bedroom, and flew around, I would wake up and dive under the covers, leaving a small opening through which I would scream to my mother, "There's a bat in my room!" She would grab a towel and chase the bat, snapping the towel in the air to knock it down, throw the towel over it, pick it up and carry it outside to let it go. Then my sister, who shared the bed with me, and I could go back to sleep.

One August morning when I was 15, my mother woke up, dressed and went downstairs. It was her custom to use the half-bath downstairs next to the kitchen. My siblings and I rarely used it, it was small, dark and dank and smelled unpleasant. That particular morning, she stood up after using the toilet, and something moved in the water. Alarmed, she looked more closely and saw that it was a bat, swimming around. When I got up, she told me about it, and I witnessed the predicament, but could not think of what to do to rescue it. It was up to me as oldest child to fix the problem. Although I did not know much about bats, I

knew that they were not meant to be swimmers. Later, my three brothers and sister got up and were warned not to flush the toilet, because the bat would not only be drowned, but plug up the plumbing. My youngest brother, Michael, was five at the time, and ever eager to take advantage of an opportunity. He told all the boys in the neighborhood about the bat, and sold tickets to witness the event. If they paid a nickel, they could pee on the bat, which most of them did. All morning there was a parade of boys through the kitchen, friends of Michael's and my other brothers, Denny, age 8, and Jerry, age 10.

I felt guilt and pity for the bat, and finally came up with a plan to save it. Yesterday's Des Moines Register and the fireplace tongs were gathered in the half bath, and I fished the bat out with the tongs onto the newspaper. I carried it outside to the neighbor's back yard and placed it and the paper on their picnic table in the sunshine to recover.

One final indignity more was endured by the bat. The neighbors were on vacation, but a relative came to their house to mow the lawn. As he mowed, he saw the bat on the table and thought it was quite interesting. He thought he would take it home with him and show it to his children. After he finished mowing the yard, he went back to get the bat. Fortunately, it had dried out and flown away, leaving nothing but a wet spot on the newspaper.

## **Concrete Temple**

By A.G., April 2018

On the good ship lollipop I imagine life a better dream. I'm in your yard picking figs off of twigs. I forgot that the best things in life are free, like my memories of you when I was about two and you told me I could be anything I wanted to be. I just never imagined that at the age of 32 all I would want to be is free.



## The Door

By A.G., April 2018

On my parents' wall hangs a canvas I painted when I was five.
My kindergarten teacher titled it "I see the door looking at me!"
I told her that is what I drew.

Sure enough, on this canvas you see a child staring at a door with eyes looking right back.

I often stand in front of it and try to remember my 5-year-old self in this moment.

Was I afraid of the eyes on the other side, or the ones that were inside?

I can't imagine that I had anything to be worried about at that moment. However, looking back at my life now — maybe I did.

#### Eleanor

By Bonnie Murphy, July 2018

It's a cold winter's morning and I lay snuggled in bed pinned in position by the dogs. The first rays of the sun dimly illuminate the bedroom and announce the beginning of another day. It's Sunday and my thoughts go to SonDay and I try to talk to God. It's no use, my mind refuses and wanders off. Random thoughts speed into consciousness then just as quickly vanish. I become aware of a growing anxiety that morphs into recognition of terrifying fear. I'm drawn back to recollections of my youth. Post Road Pool, teaching little kids to swim in shallow pools. One little girl told me that she needed to go to the bathroom. I, in turn, told another counselor that I was taking the little girl to the bathroom; would she please watch my students while I was gone. Returning to discover that another little girl had almost drowned in my absence. Shock, concern, confusion, remorse, swirl in my gut. The other counselor bold faced looks me in the eye and denies my asking her to oversee the children. I look her in the eye and see malice. I didn't know that people could be so mean, that they could carelessly use others to inflict pain and suffering. And I wasn't aware that Eleanor disliked me. Just like that my dreams of pursuing a career in recreation were erased. Many many years later I realized that a large part of Eleanor's malevolence was jealousy. Jealousy that my father would take her brother, Henry, to father-son functions and other events trying to provide some adult male influence in lieu of Henry's deceased father. Little Eleanor was left behind, in pain.

And my fear? The fear that overwhelmed me in bed? I recognized its source, but, as always I quickly buried it so as not to feel the pain.

#### What's Left of Me

By Helen Lindsey, November 2017

Baby spoon gripped in left hand Later sports played right handed No one bothering to teach for the left Called "goofy-footed", two left feet "Gauche!" (French slang for clumsy).

Writing in first grade with my left hand dragging along the wide lined page the edge of my hand dark with lead. Playing a violin right-handed So no need to reverse the strings.

Left to my own devices in college became left-wing, anti-war, feminist yearning to reconnect with Mother Earth. Native Indian drumming, buffalo dancing, love-ins bridged the spiritual gap.

Confused my Chinese brush painting teacher I held the brushes in my left hand No one in all of China paints with the left. Even chopsticks were a problem there No one in all of China eats with the left.

Broke my left leg skiing in Switzerland On my own without my husband First time apart in fifteen years, He'd left me in the dark For the same number of years.

How sinister that a leg can mend Much faster than a heart Left to heal supposedly with time There are no crutches or steel pins For a shattered life. Older now, ambidextrous wanting the left hand to know what the right hand is doing despite the Gospel of Matthew to keep each ignorant of the other. Shadow and clarity, memory and dream what's left in the past, what's right in this moment make me wholly who I am grateful for what's right and—what's left of me.

## Little Hula Skirt

by S.M., June 2018

The stalks are long and strong, so gorgeous emerald green.

Pick them for lineup one by one handle with care, don't be so mean.

Excited is the bunch, to know their debut is around the corner.

Just a hunch...

In the steam to soften — to get show-ready - this is often.

The line-up with the butterflies, ready to hook, fasten and shred.

Make-up on, be ready, no mistakes on stage — I'd rather be dead!

When ready — so beautiful — sway this way and that.

Awaiting the melody of the music, to dance to that track.

Little hula girl, with me on her hip.

Swaying to the music —
Telling a story —
Little hula skirt, so perfect I fit!

## **Amber**

by Cheyenne Cambri, April 2018

Amber coals sit in my stomach burning deep as anxiety turns to anger and I choked on the roses and their stems lodged in my throat.

Is my heart still red?
My blood is oil in my veins.
I can't tell if they're all lies,
gushing from her crimson lips,
or whether it's all in my little red head.

#### Green

By McKelle Lloyd, April 2018

The root of all evil A face filled with envy Lined with malice Shaded with fear.

It is speech dripping with jealousy Movement shadowed with hesitation Seeking acceptance Longing to be heard.

It is misunderstanding Coupled with violence Wrapped in greed. It is longing.

Sometimes it's springtime. Sometimes it's new life Just wanting to be free.

## **Black**

By P.A., February 2018

Disrespect, degrade me and I'll show who I am and how I can be when one lies to make themselves seem worthy.

The red-eyed mean girl comes to show me how I can be.

Take my shoes, take my bag, all my belongings (which sadly includes the one thing that means the most to me: the love that is so evil and black, that seems the only thing I feel loves me because it numbs me.)

But I'm now far, far from that black love and it's amazing the changing inside my soul. Finally I've opened my eyes, and know it's okay to love myself. I'm beautiful and smart. I believe in love and loyalty. That is how I'm always going to be.

Black love is lost. I'll forever remain that way.

## Am I A Writer?

by Bonnie Murphy, July 2018

I don't think I'm a natural writer. I can't translate the colors I see, the laughter I hear, to words, clever phrases, essays or poems.

Neither do I seem to be able to open my heart, share that which is inside. For I was trained to be silent, not to reveal. My feelings had no value.

I was the child crying in the wilderness, the one that no one knew how to deal with, or, wanted to deal with. If no one reacts to your cries, no one comforts you, you learn.

Later in life I spent what seems like a lifetime writing specifications, bids, contracts, analyses, and documentation.

A somewhat limited vocabulary of government and technical jargon.

My heart is heavy, tears fill my eyes, longing, wishing for that which it may not be able to have. It's not jealousy or envy....I just wish I had the talent, that kind of creativity.

Would that I could take a prompt, a phrase, and compose a coherent, witty story describing the world I look out at.

Am I embarrassed at my sometimes lack of vocabulary? Yes. Am I frustrated by my inability to remember author's names and titles of their work. Sometimes.

Do I regret not having more formal training in literature and some other written arts? Of course. But I accept this as I try to plow ahead and learn...my curiosity redeeming my ignorance.

Writing does not come easily to me.

I am bombarded by images and words that float in and out of consciousness.

My biggest challenge is identifying my emotions, my feelings and then dealing with them.

How can you write about feelings and emotions if you cannot identify them

If they appear as ghostly images seemingly just out of reach. Yet, again and again I return to emotions trying to paint in words the swirling colors inside.

# **Dinner Party**

by Courtney Foston, April 2018

You said it would be fun but your intentions were subliminal and written in code.

Like so many before me, I let you in for dinner and couldn't let you leave. You sat at the head of my table and poured your glass of wine as you demanded to be served first.

I waited patiently for your appetite to be satisfied before attempting to satisfy my own. When full, you placed your feet upon my table and asked me for dessert.

I rushed to meet your needs in fear that you would leave. And when all was said and done
I looked out at you laughing with the friend you had brought.

I guess you always come plus one.

# **Her Drawings**

By Cheyenne Cambri

The drawings are fading. The artist's pencil has been hidden. But now the need to make her art has begun eating at her heart.

This is the source of her bliss.

After just a day, it's already missed. She tries to remind herself to stay tough but she's starting to give in, and soon deciding she's gone long enough she unveils her pencil to darken the lines of her drawings once more.

Her wrists are now bleeding like so many times before — her head feels that rush high on her own pain.

Smiling as she watches her skin rip apart, She wonders if she's still sane but she's back in control now.

Don't take this art away from her.

Her pencil is her razor, and the drawings are her scars, the only thing that's in her favor.

The only thing that allows her bliss.

## Clean

By Y.G., April 2018

Clean

Conformed Void of scars and character All originality replaced by an appealing appearance Rearranged to meet others' ideas of satisfactory.

#### Clean

Without a layer of gruff to help you stand against the critics All stains and perfect flaws wiped away Never to help remind others Of the benefits of dirt.

Lost in a sea of empty monotony Where everything everyone just as spotless as the next.

Where is the originality and the colors of work In a place so clean?

Can our stains shine and set us apart From the cleanliness of others' opinions?

# **Anxiety**

By Mckelle Lloyd, April 2018

Anxiety.

It's like a bright blinding yellow light In the heat of the moment. Like a screeching siren. The fear of failure wears the face of Anxiety.

## The Bottom of the Barrel

by A.G., April 2018

He was looking at me and I was aware that he couldn't see me.
Although his lips were moving I couldn't hear what he said.

This was how we were, unable to connect, but afraid of being alone.

I sat in the passenger seat of his hot truck, he was in the driver's seat.
We had pulled over to the side of the road to do a shot.
Suddenly it's like I'm back in the scene and I hear him say "Hand me your arm."

He's the only one that can find a vein in my body and tragically that's why I keep him around.

He ties my arm off and while he does this I think to myself, how did we get here? How did I become like this, especially with him?

There used to be a day we respected each other and loved each other, but now we can't stand each other.

#### Now

the only thing keeping us from hating each other is the love we both share for heroin.

He holds the needle to my arm, he looks me in the eyes and says "Ready?"
He looks awfully sad and tired.
I reluctantly say yes.

He draws the syringe back, blood fills up the barrel. He shoots it in.

Suddenly, it's like everything is better and I love him all over again.

In a fog, I close my eyes and fall asleep.



#### One Year

By Pamela Robinson, September 2017

It was a warm, sunny August morning. I got up and wandered into the kitchen, bright with the early sun. On the yellow chrome and formica kitchen table was David's wallet. What was it doing there? He had already left for work at least an hour ago. How did he get to work? His train ticket was in his wallet. I picked it up to check, opening the folded brown leather in my hand. I didn't see his train ticket, but a piece of paper fell out in my hand with writing on it, typing actually, and I picked it up, curious to see what it was. It was a piece of poetry, set in Memorial Park, near our house on Orange Avenue. As I read it, I realized it was a love poem, written to someone else. My marriage of 19 years was finally over. I picked up the phone from its cradle on the wall, dialed the number and said You'd better come home to the voice at the other end. You left your wallet here on the table. Oh, he said. I will.

The past year had been full of clues, my radar was finely tuned to such events. I had started my business a year ago, it had been an exciting, happy time for me, designing about 60 costumes, buying bolts and bolts of fabric, making a sample of each, taking pictures to put in a catalog, renting an industrial space in Sunnyvale, mailing hundreds of catalogs to all the dance teachers in the western states. Yes, it had been a lot of me, my, mine activities, my kids were mostly independent now, Laura was 17 and Amity 12. Laura was taking classes at DeAnza, already up and out that day, not a part of that moment in my life. Amity was home and witnessed it all, she took care of me the next week when I couldn't face the loss of my dreams. No grandchildren to share, no shared family experiences, no growing old together, no warm bodies to comfort and be comforted. Tears, more tears. And as I said, there were clues. I had asked him about once every month or two what was going on, what had changed in his life. He denied any changes each time, and I beat myself up for questioning him. How could I be such a terrible person, not trusting my closest friend, my lover, the father of my children, we had already been through many terrible times and survived for 5 years without other women in the mix. Each time I doubted him, I would take myself to task, saying shape up,

you're just imagining things. As I pushed him out of the house, out of our front door with the pillow I was holding to put a clean pillow case on it, I asked him, You owe me one thing, tell me, how long has this been going on?

One year.

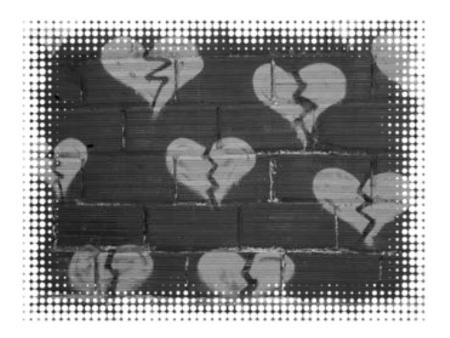
#### No Love

By A.G., July 2018

He smiles and my heart melts Like chocolate when it's hot.

I wish a had a piece of him to hold onto forever. But forever never lasts too long with him, And I have no way of turning back.

When he smiles my heart can't take it Because I know He doesn't love me back.



#### Summer

By M.A., August 2017

I run, my hips swinging left
Then right
The sun kissing the light freckles on my face
The wind blowing the gentlest breeze
Through my wavy hair.
He can't help but stare.
I wink in response, Catch me if you dare!

He asks my name, it always starts like that. Now he's got me coming over, and Calling him back.

#### **Before**

By Ashley Sowers, August 2018

Laughter in the midst of the night
Giggles rumbling through the floorboards of the morning light
Before the yelling rose between our hearts
Before the darkness of our souls took part
Before you said you were too far
Before our worlds were torn apart
Before I told you I can't, No more
Before our kisses evaporated hard
Before I could smell you on my pillow no more —
There was light so blinding in our hearts.
Only we could tell the future ahead.

A love so strong it manifested life between us So elegantly beautiful but softly blew away, like a soft breeze on a warm summer's day.

I told you I loved you and I meant that, babe. Oh, how I'm sorry, how I let that blow away...

## My Letter

By Courtney Foston, August 2018

Today

I promise you my everything: Attention, love, desire. I promise to awake your mind, to warm your heart, and fill your soul.

Tomorrow

I'll show you how to trust again. I'll teach you how to love. I'll fill your eyes with dreams you can hold, and it's okay to let go.

Forever

you'll never have to hurt alone, I'll wipe away your tears. I'll catch you every time you fall, so you can walk run skip jump dance through life. It's your choice. You're in control. And I'm here. You are not alone.

Love, Yourself.

### Pirates in Search of Treasure!

By Erika Murphy, July 2018

You and me like Pirates we used to be...
Treasure hunters, drowned in what could be.
Love was our vice until I had to walk the plank;
You sailed on, I kept holding on
to our foggy-ass memories and your words
"I'm yours" danced in my head.
Snapshots of memories flood my mind.
I worry about you all the time.
Your love, your letters, your voice is Most Wanted.
There's a reward, I tell ya!

I wish I was a photograph tucked into the corner of your wallet, like a snapshot of your future, in your back pocket. I wish I had that face you show strangers. I wish I was the one whose collect calls you took, instead of left hanging like Captain Hook. Missing you, a postcard is Most Wanted, with a babble that says "Baby, you're still my little Most Wanted."

Instead, I stare at these walls again thinking of all those times we would float away, so drunk in love.

It was like we were tapping that main line at full pull, sticking new ones into the center of the world, sipping it like it was Never-Ending Rush, like a kiss of Death, bullets from our gun I never meant to fire. You know I know you never meant to fire.

Love, now the sky burps black and blue, dust looks like bruises. Once again, waiting for Round Three, I'm left with foggy-ass memories of you and me. You're probably collecting one-night stands like wedding band treasures, but none fit. In the morning, they slip off your finger and out the door. All that lingers is the scent of me.

This is going to hurt, bowing out to "I love you." I still love you. When I think of you I think of Happy. So wherever you are I hope you're Happy, too.



### $C_{21}H_{23}NO_5$

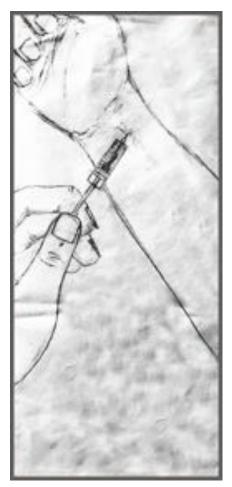
By Cheyenne Cambri, March 2018

Her eyes are golden as honey and when they find me they melt me and I am frozen.

Underneath her soft satin gloves her finger are slugs slimy and sneaky on my skin.

She wraps a warm blanket around me when I'm cold and sad.
But I wake up shivering.
She is gone.
And I am frozen.







### **Breathe**

By Jenessa Kic, July 2017

Evil images float through the air touches your skin and tangles your hair letting go of the past that traps us here breathing into the present of our minds' fear.

Images dance and thoughts taunt — the past may be unforgettable but it's the future that haunts.

Where will we go, what will we do when our whole life has become unglued?

Blindfolded, choked, my body is so heavy drowning in a sea of cruel memories, trying to hide from everything in sight creating a reality of nightmares through the night.

But then I woke up.

Wipe your eyes, don't be afraid, breathe in deep and appreciate. Give thanks to your life that fills the air, the laughter than spreads over hateful glares.

Your shoulders relax, your spirit glistens, a feeling inside you've long since been missing.

And when the darkness lurks and lures you to fight just remember: you are the sun, you are the light.

## **Four Poems**

By Jenessa Kic, July 2017

i.

In the garden

a goddess of beauty.

From the forest a

boy sees

Diamond hair

skin of honey.

ii.

Swim in the rain

Dream in the sea

The storm will

rock you to sleep

iii.

Beneath the moon

the smell of lust

A sweet moan

rose above.

iv.

Watch as you whisper

as the shadow screams

Death is singing

for you a

symphony.



## **Shaurn Thomas at 43**

By Helen Lindsey, May 2017

"I don't got no animosity towards nobody. What for? Life's too short." Nineteen years old, accused of murder, black Shaurn claimed he was in another place But the sign-in log to prove his alibi Mysteriously disappeared. His mother and sister testified they were with him But the jurors didn't believe them either. An ex-police sergeant, who became his lawyer Working pro bono for eight years said: "I joined him in his struggle and many times it seemed that we would never succeed and he would remain in prison for the rest of his life." Finally exonerated, through DNA proof After 24 years in prison, more than half his life. "I feel wonderfu! It's a tragedy that happened to me but I'm pretty sure I'm not the only one," Declared with a heartfelt smile he heads off to a seafood meal With his family and new fiancee, "You know, time heals all wounds."

(taken from a CBS news item, 5/24/17)

## **Senses Blind**

By Cheyenne Cambri, August 2018

I smell you I feel you I taste you I hear you but I can't see you.

Your sweatshirt still holds your scent. I can almost feel your skin (almost). I don't know if I'm imagining your taste on my lips, but I can hear the words you whispered in my ear, minutes before you, my sunshine, were taken from me.

Now my sky is dark. I'm blind. My hands are outstretched in front of me and I listen, I listen, but there is nothing. I am lost.

I can't see you, so I can't see anything.

### The Reverbs of "Howl"

Sara Cloud, October 2017

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, ......

angel-headed hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night..

We didn't have to love poetry. We didn't have to understand it—all the words, meanings, references. We just knew it was saying something to us--the young who were anxious, bored, resentful of all those old people expecting us to lead dreary lives like theirs. And it had all these taboo words in it—"fuck", "cock", "cunt"., words we wouldn't dare say out loud.

Friend Joan passed me a copy of Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl" in 1958, our senior year in high school: Ginsberg had been touched by William Blake and Walt Whitman's poetic visions--and now we were being brought into the gravitational pull. 16 going on 17. I reacted with fascination and uncertainty---the emotional charge of these words seemed downright dangerous. Growing up with the white suburban strictures of the 1950's didn't leave you much room to howl.

"Howl" rocks with rhythm. During high school years in Tacoma friends and I glued our ears to a rhythm and blues radio show with a black disc jockey. We heard sounds that got us moving, dancing: LaVern Baker, Fats Domino, the Coasters, Chuck Berry--this music had an energy that Bing Crosby, Patti Page, Doris Day and other Lucky Strike hit paraders were totally missing.

Before Tacoma my family—Mom, Dad, and three of us sisters--lived in a newly-built suburb of Sacramento. At the house in Morse Manor I saw my mother washing, ironing, cleaning and cooking dinner. The highlight of her day seemed to be having coffee with the next door neighbor. I remember seeing her stopped in the middle of her vacuuming one day, racked with sobs and me not having a clue why. As one of my sisters said later "Our family didn't talk about things." She tried being president of the PTA at our school and came home after one meeting making a rare admission that she hated it for all the gossiping. She led a Girl Scout troop but with a sense of the dutiful. She would sometimes remind us that her I.Q. had tested very high and that she'd studied literature with some prominent professors at the University of

Washington. She had loved her outdoor adventures growing up in Seattle, canoeing in Lake Washington, exploring with her Campfire Girl buddies on Puget Sound islands. She shared that part of her with us girls when we went north on summer vacations, and she continued to share it in her later life, implanting each of us with a love of nature.

Mom would sometimes take us to church or Sunday school but that too felt dutiful. She once said "I wish I could believe like my mother did." Daddy declared himself an agnostic and made fun of Biblical claims. All three of us sisters have explored religion in our own differing ways. My exploration may have started with the poem "Howl" and subsequent readings of William Blake's poetry.

The moments when my dad would join a family expedition were rare. I did see him in the yard struggling with frustration to get the crab grass out of the lawn. Often he was holed up in their bedroom (which felt like a taboo space to me) reading detective novels. His happiness was lying on the couch listening to Wagner operas, smoking his pipe. Much later when I heard him expound on the beauty of reading Proust's Remembrance of Things Past "like listening to a symphony", and, long after his death, reading his love letters to my mom, I realized he was a true romantic. He said what he did as an engineer was mundane when compared to the pure search for truth that a scientist engages in.

I can see us kids picking up on the shriveling of our parent's dreams, though they never made us feel it was our fault, and then of course having to navigate our own disillusionments.

Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable dollars!

Children screaming under the stairways! Boys sobbing in armies! Old men weeping in the parks!

The Moloch vision comes from the city --the everyday street scenes of people struggling and celebrating while the money machine moves relentlessly around them. San Francisco was the city that "Howl" came from—for all its New York scenes--and I had felt the magic of that city since childhood.

San Francisco!—holidays with my mother and sisters, staying in a cousin's apartment on Lincoln Avenue across from Golden Gate Park, catching a streetcar downtown and a trolley up Powell Street to Chinatown. Life humming with people from all over the world, colorful and exciting beyond anything imagined in Morse Manor. These people weren't all

white folks, they weren't all moms cooking and cleaning while dads were at the office. A family friend would talk about going to the opera or when she heard Fats Waller, the jazz pianist, play at a club near her apartment. Those trips planted images of sensory expansion into an unknown world.

Having caught the energy of the wave to the 60's I wasn't suited for Whitman College in the fall of 1959. Whitman is located in Walla Walla, a small farming town in southeastern Washington. The college is known for its academics but the social life at that time was all fraternities and sororities. I pledged a sorority and dropped the pledge a month later feeling uncomfortable with the organized cheer. The campus was green but the surrounding town was flat and dry. After the dreaded physics lab one day, I went to the bookstore and bought a copy of Ferlinghetti's Coney Island of the Mind, more for the sound of the title than the actual poems. I found other dissatisfied girls to hang out with. And we were just girls, stumbling around an environment that felt too tidy, too constricted; girls who had other notions of experiencing the world and wanted to get away from the kind of authorities we'd grown up with. At the end of spring term I left with one of these friends to go to San Francisco with my sister and her girlfriend and rent an apartment in the city.

Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone! Moloch whose soul is electricity and banks! Moloch whose poverty is the specter of genius!

Wikipedia says Moloch is "a biblical name for a Canaanite god associated with child sacrifice." "Howl" got in trouble in 1957 and its publisher Lawrence Ferlinghetti, owner of City Lights bookstore, was taken to court on charges of distributing obscene material. Ferlinghetti said it was about the poem's attack on the consumer society. I wonder if it wasn't more about the homosexual references and all the references to sex in the streets. Anyway it's Ginsberg connecting his dots--sexual repression/capitalism/ authoritarianism/ destruction of minds and souls.

I got to hear Ginsberg recite once and as he chanted the ears picked up more clearly than the eye--his religious vision came through his love of rhythm and song. He was a bard and he knew it, bringing a harmonium to his readings and the compassion of his voice. My favorite line from "Howl" is the "angel-headed hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection...". I've heard people living on the streets

here in Santa Cruz whose flashes of clarity and insight stand stark and pure in my mind. At the same time I see the devastation of drugs, the paranoia, the inability to cope with our social machinery

At Whitman College I had a chance to develop a more stable path to the future—perhaps teaching with an actual framework of knowledge to impart, maturing with some degree of patience and a measured rhythm—qualities which have mostly eluded me. Living in San Francisco meant being pulled in different directions by my sensory attractions. It meant losing my virginity to a sweet and lost-soul sailor (who looked a little like Elvis) that first summer we arrived. After experiencing our mutual floundering I backed away and enrolled in S.F. State, but the studying came and went between other kinds of exploration.

San Francisco early '60's I lived on the \$100 a month my folks sent me supplemented by odd jobs waitressing and clerking in an office. The Fillmore West was going strong with the Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin and Big Brother and the Holding Company playing there regularly. One memorable evening Gary Snyder read poetry sitting on a cushion with candles lit all throughout the hall and everyone respectfully listening. In small North Beach clubs jazz greats and magnetic performers like Aretha Franklin and Miriam Makeba sang and played for the price of a few drinks. The Actors Workshop performed Jean Genet's The Maids, where the servant becomes the master. It mostly sailed past me, but I did know it had something challenging to say about dominance and class.

Like many people I still revere the beauty and flair of San Francisco and mourn the takeover of the rich technocrats. The streets have descended into stronger evidence of Moloch than was present in the 50's when Ginsburg had his vision of that evil god while looking at the Sir Francis Drake hotel. He stood with the Old Testament prophets seeing the dark forces and ready to speak about their damage...

How do we separate our personal turning points from our starting points and the cultural forces that stream through our lives? When I had my first child, a boy, I suggested to my husband that we give him the middle name Allen in honor of Ginsberg and he agreed. Then in 1970 the Women's Movement had gained enough traction to affect me about the same time that my second child, a girl, was born. Looking back at "Howl" and the Beats it's possible to see the fear and the conflicted attitudes toward women that permeated that movement, even as they raised a fist to the normal symbols of patriarchy. But that is another story.

# **Mastery of Love**

By Norma Garcia, July 2018

You are mastery of love in me, My Journey to the heart and Soul, Internal voice of giving, Thoughts that bring peace, Energetic Investments To myself care.

Concept to my Inner Spirits, Unconditional Unique Love Of quality for Compassion, Care.

You take my distortion (Projected bad behaviors, demands of anger within) And give me special gifts Of Spiritual Beliefs; Awareness of Isolation To Communication To healing Self process.

You give me
External Energy
To Knowledge reflection.
The voice of choice
To staying center in Devoted Self, Potential.

Different path of Courage and Strength To love others, Development to Energy of heart and Soul To the change of Ways.

I love life and am Grateful For the living things Fully gifted of love Within myself.

Live Love Enjoy and Care.

# **Reflections Through My Looking Glass**

By C.R., July 2018

As I stare into the looking glass,
I see many reflections of my life
Where I was at war within myself
Through the many troubles I endured.
Struggling
Yearning to proclaim the peace and victory within
That had once been so deeply rooted
As a child - but yet seemed distant and foreign.

Although I found myself consumed by the chaos and darkness, These were also reflections through my looking glass. That in a glimmer of light gave me hope.

At first it was so dim
Just as the moon would disappear
As the clouds move silently and consume it.
As they pass, the moon in its fullness
Shines bright to light the path.
It was once naked to my eyes, guided me
To that peace I once knew
And gave me victory in my life.

As each reflection passed through the looking glass, It renewed my strength and filled me with hope, It pushed me to endure and bear the darkness around me And the war within me that was slowly drifting away, Just as the clouds did from the moon.

And once again, it shined in its fullness And I find myself filled with a peace That surpasses all understanding, Fills me beyond measure, And gives me that victory.

# My Own Stranger

By Erika Murphy, July 2018

Broken mirrors
Keepers of my reflection
Shards of glass on the bathroom floor
I don't recognize my own self
My own eyes
Look like those of a stranger, a
Fucking junkie
As my confession
Stares back at me
Trying to make sense of it all
I am a stranger to myself
Despite it all
Brave enough to love you

So reward her, damn it.

### The Next Time We Meet

By Cheyenne Cambri, July 2018

May your weaknesses flourish so I may exploit them the next time I meet you.

May I find new outlets so you are no longer so much a weakness to me and so that I may turn away the next time I meet you.

May we accept one another out of each other's lives so that I may overlook you on the street, without a second thought the next time that I meet you.

### **Before**

By M.M., August 2018

Before you were you, you were me -Look, you see how this could be. Before, you found me (how I hate thee). Before you were you, you found me, Sad and lonely. You ran through me, blood and black. Before you found me. I love you I love you please don't leave me. You found me you found me. Please! Please! Please! My blood will stop if you die before me you are my air you are my breath you are my sight my taste my feel. Without you I have no life, Blue Heaven. Before are my heroines, my heroes. I should say you left me withal -Nothing to show, just black memories, black skies, scars and marks to burn and bruise -I love you before and I hate you today.

# One Day's Song of Myself

by Sara Cloud, October 2017

There must be the cessation of all search, and only then is there a possibility of the coming into being of that which is nameless. J. Krishnamurti

On this Saturday I'm sitting in Santa Cruz, age seventy-five, eyes turned inward. I'm feeling grief and one hell of a headache. Headache in the brain-- this human brain with its damned sensitivity, confusion and pride. Grief for the strength of Moloch, pervasive money machine, grinding us up or cloning itself in our bodies. Grief for whole peoples, nations, continents become commodities in the competitive games of empires, rising and falling. Grief for mother earth, the sea, the precious land, the trees that give us life doused with poison, raped and mutilated in turn. Grief for all the wars, outer and inner, and the children caught in them. Grief for the parents who strain to protect their young. Grief for myself.

Later this same Saturday I'm walking to town. It's one of the dying days of October-all is illuminated by the clear blue sky bright shining with its orb of golden light: lemons, limes, crimsons, purples, neon greens, shades of scarlet, brown and persimmon. Not just the maples, the ginkgos, the sycamores, the roses, the verbena, the bougainvillea--the trees and flowers, but also the shiny red stripe on the curb, and the silver and gold cars streaming slowly by.

And the people! Out for strolls along Pacific Avenue. they are all sizes and ages—

open-eyed young children pushed or herded by parents, teens with holey jeans, short shorts, blue and red streaked hair, some traveling with backpacks and guitars, musicians, talented and not, busking at the sidewalks' edges, purposeful people with purchases and stylish haircuts, people on benches with bundles of clothing and blankets, people in shades of white, brown and black, walking fast or slow, wearing their colors, and joy is here—unearned, unexpected.

### The Pain

By Norma Garcia, June 2018

Discerning the Disorder of occurrence and pain, Inflicting Destruction with Distress. Charge to release, emit discharge of Anger and Self-Emotion, Stress.

Like a poker with several Card Games with pointed tips at the end, ready.

Walk out like a woman's tears from hurt and suffering. But even when she cries, she has her Self with Elegance and Refinement.

With principal Chemistry and Physics of Substance, composed of Love, elevating
Moral Levels of understanding, self-tough.
Knowledge
to enable the meaning
of True and Pure
Unique Love.

# My Spells (The Cauldron's Brew)

by A.S., August 2018

### **Self-Healing**

Combining the moon's pull with the strength of the sea:
bring me courage to grow into a more free me.
Kindness and grace are out of place, use pixie dust, puppy dog tails, and everything good to bring me into a being a better me.
Although it has been hard, and tough to move forward, guided by the sun's fire, I will move on to the star's glistening reign.
Tree's covering overhead, leaves fall on and on.

Brisk wind carries me to my rightful state, mind over matter when out of rain.

Closed doors stay shut while inside isn't all too safe. Be free to live and choose which sun to follow and moon to chase.

## I Want/My Future

Clouded by the shore's haze I cannot begin until I've slayed every beast amongst my own rage.

It's a battle of wits against the Queen's Joker. A comedy fit for a King of Idiots.

We all can refrain.

Butterflies and rabbit tails, wings of a bat, guide me to my open door.

Unleash me, lily pads and fox ears, let me hear your croak and be done so I may commence a better path, a future made in the stars, bright and yearning.

#### **B4**

By Courtney Foston, August 2017

Before me there was you. Before you, was irrelevant. Before him, there was us.

Before that was forever. Before, forever never mattered. Before it mattered, it was too late.

#### A Poem About Before

By Tammy Adelman, August 2018

before I met you solid true blue with envy beginning to mend me descending on ending of sadness madness turned plastic reaction to action finding satisfaction within the design of who you are my shooting star wishing fishing for a sea of hoping eloping in one spot I took a short step towards you before the day I'd say hello a mellow chaos moving slow faster and little less prepared scared and then I stared at those sleeping eyes disguised by a man who I thought died long before I existed persisting resisting until my eyes opened by yours, in that second before began an understanding in an extinct man who can willingly unravel me synching into a destiny mending the mess in me underneath your clothes shows a hidden agenda of dreams unleashing the seemingly unseen ascending into a mist of decided unknowns of infinite possibility willingly resistant to society's mold doing the bold untold already written design of the time that stopped the unwatched clock of the day that to me would never come yet came deranging the deranged way of unraveling the before creating the moment our energies were in sync disconnecting the lock that preserved the spot where you always belonged.

105100 irrelevant as us. no more Tammy Adelman m about before : August 8 208 D.J met you solid true blue with going to mend descending an saness madness turned place action finding satisfaction action of who you are my Johns fishing the a sea

#### War

By Leah Gomez, June 2018

War goes on in my life daily.
I sit here waiting patiently, mindful of my surroundings and people's own battles.
I cry in the middle of the night so no one can hear me - for the war that troubles me is in my head.

In the reality of my own struggle is this vicious addiction most of us are trying to overcome. Trials and tribulations — some different yet similar — but we all act differently to our situation.

Yet in me, peace starts with our Lord and Savior. I know He is the reason I'm still alive.

Battles, I may lose. But the best is yet to come, because the War, I have won.



#### **Bree Newsome**

By Helen Lindsey, June 2015

A strong, black woman climbs a flagpole.

As the woman shimmies up, some men cheer but it's not the usual pole dance even though this woman is stripping.

She is stripping away pretenses, flimsy excuses veiling prejudices long and publicly upheld. Based on white masters and black slaves, Enshrining, exulting slave-holding states at the expense of being a land of the free for all.

"Every day that flag stays up, there's an endorsement of hate". So saying Bree Newsome climbs the flagpole in front of the capitol of North Carolina.

She replaces the Confederate flag with her own self —being someone new—then once back on the ground is arrested "for defacing a public monument".

(taken from a CNN news article, 6/26/15)

# When I Say I Love You What I Mean Is, You Are the World to Me

By Ashley Sowers, August 2018

When I say I Love You, it means so much more than the words I say. Hearing your little voices brings joy to my day. The sound of "Momma" sometimes causes tears in my eyes, 'cause this Momma's been battling a fire inside.

When I say I Love You, I hope you feel the love combined. Sometimes I scream, but my love never changes from my internal side.

When I say I Love You, I want to throw you up so high that I can see your little face brighten up and I actually feel high. Your little giggles rumble through my ear and sometimes I imagine that I'm really, actually there.



# **Power in Poetry**

by Mckelle Lloyd, August 2018

If I could put into words the song inside my being, I'd fill the page with ups and

downs and all the in-betweens.

It might be hateful it might be sad but only I'd know exactly what it means.

Thank you to all the brave, gifted women who lent their voices to this book.

### **Power in Poetry:**

M.A.

P.A.

Tammy Adelman

Cheyenne Cambri

Courtney Foston

Norma Garcia

Leah Gomez

A.G.

Y.G.

lenessa Kic

Mckelle Lloyd

M.M.

S.M.

Erika Murphy

C.R.

**Ashley Sowers** 

A.S.

## **Memoir Writing and Poetry:**

Sara Cloud

Helen Lindsey

Bonnie Murphy

Pamela Robinson

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