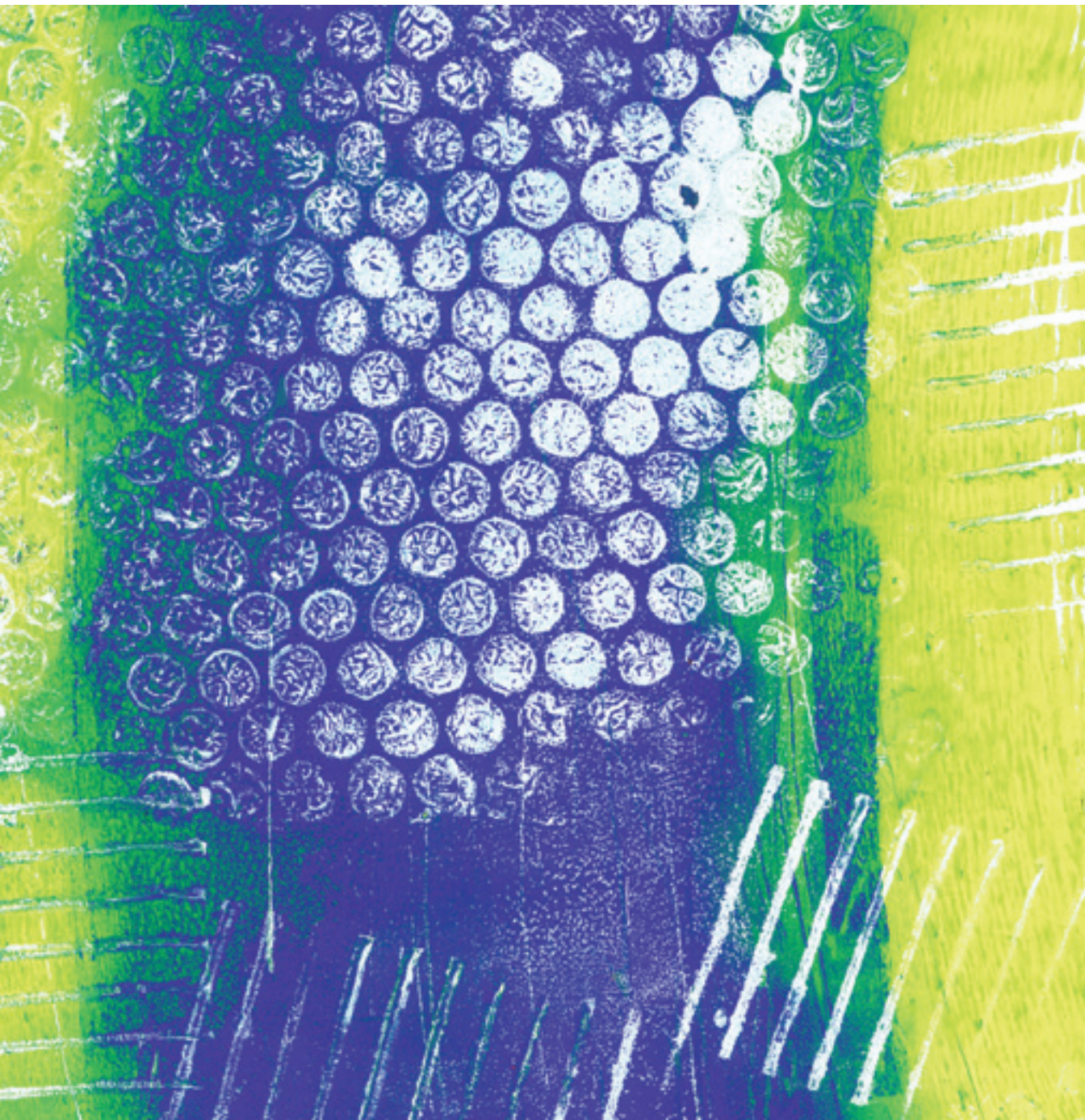


FREE WRITE

ARTS & LITERACY



IN CONVERSATION

with writings by

**Patrick Rosal, Chelsea Ross,
Greg Pardlo, Maria Gaspar,
and Randall Horton**

FREE WRITE ARTS & LITERACY

VOL. 8

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FROM THE DIRECTORS

Sometimes, summing up Free Write’s work is like trying to catch the wind with your hands. It’s not that we can’t see the growth of our students, the impact that their stories and leadership have on the community, or the changing landscape of youth incarceration and the inevitable abolition thereof. It’s not that the joy, and struggles, of the young people with whom we share space is not visceral. It is that the work of designing and implementing liberatory pedagogy evolves in response to environmental and interpersonal nuances that are almost imperceptible or that can’t be absorbed fully because there is another set in your face in need of attention.

Such is the plight of a teacher. At any given moment in our classrooms, there exists a density of experiences that are all of note, but there is not time to make note. It is volumes like this, in the culmination of the efforts of Free Write students and staff, that we can take time to breathe, cry, celebrate, and love ourselves as artists, educators, and community builders.

This collection of Free Write student work, our eighth, offers a glimpse into the past three years of our students’ interactions with creative writing, visual art, and music technology workshops facilitated by professional artist/educators and co-designed by incarcerated and criminalized youth and young adults. Since the publishing of our last anthology, *Evidence*, Free Write—the organization and the people who make it up—has come into a place of leadership within conversations around arts education, youth incarceration, prison abolition, social-emotional learning, and healing centered (ex-”trauma-informed”) engagement.

Truth is, we have been doing all these things and more since that first day in July of 2000, when we began in the corner of a classroom inside the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (CCJTDC). We came that day with a literacy tutoring strategy that focused on the emerging readers’ assets, invited them to be the co-designers of their literacy learning, and centered their stories in that learning.

This volume is a tool for you, dear reader. The artists herein invite you to see yourselves in them, to connect your personal narrative to theirs. Too often do audiences engage with the stories of our students only to walk away saying, with pearls clutched, “Oh my, those poor children. That must be so hard for them.” This sympathy is other-ing, patronizing, and often skids off toward fetishization. The artists and authors herein have taken tremendous emotional risks by sharing their stories with us. By doing so, they have asserted themselves as leaders in the long process of building the empathy necessary to dismantle this and all systems of violence. It is our turn to be emotionally open, vulnerable, and honest with ourselves and with each other.

Ryan Keesling & Mathilda De Dios


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Free Write Consent Protocol for exhibition and publication outside of the CCJTDC

A young woman's work makes it to publication out of the classrooms of Free Write Arts and Literacy because she has said she wants the work to be published. Or both the parent and the young man agree that they allow their work to be published. Or she says she gives permission for all her work to be published but changes her mind at the last minute and says *not this one, that one*. Or she says *I don't know; you decide*, but the student has written a brilliant work of first person narrative which implicates them in some sort of criminal activity, and we can't allow them to implicate themselves, and we suggest a revision into third person, and a change of detail so thorough that we/they can claim the work as fiction.

There is a complex ethic involved in the publication of the work of young people. They are under 18 and they either cannot legally consent by themselves, or, they don't feel they own enough of the power to say no to your need to publish their work. And you're a dedicated teaching artist with a genuine interest in advancing the work of

this young person, or you're a hard working non-profit administrator and exhibiting the fly-ass drawing your student has completed gets you potentially closer to the next grant that keeps you employed, that keeps your organization relevant; or you're a human being working long and thanklessly with young people and your ego needs the boost of being associated with their wonderful art. There are several reasons to talk oneself into publishing, exhibiting, selling the work of young people in your charge before they give full permission to do so. But they are the most vulnerable, rendered most powerless, often most forgotten of your city's populations and your procedure towards their consent must be blameless, must remind them at all times that you will fight alongside them to preserve what little power they have over their lives, over the narration of their own stories and journey towards freedom.

If you're Free Write Arts & Literacy, you've spent 20 years evolving pedagogies of power and freedom and equity, and you've made mistakes along the way, but your success

will eventually be measured by your ability to work hard enough at abolition so as to make yourself irrelevant, so you painstakingly curate the ethics of consent which govern the release of your students' work. Check it:

A student enters the classroom for the first time. She is not sure what will happen there but another student, or a teacher or a Youth Development Specialist officer has told her she'll make beats, or art, or write poems. The facilitator asks returning students to tell new student what Free Write is, and is about. A number of returning students fill in the picture for him. *You can make anything you want to. You can feel free here. You listen to music here. Don't snitch on yourself here. Write anything you want here. Facilitator fills in the blanks. You can publish your work here... but only if you want... You have to want to first. We will suggest ways to make sure you're not saying something that incriminates you. You get to decide first whether or not you want something you've made here to go out into the public sphere.*

The student is given an introductory exercise. Often it will look like this. Write your life story in 24 words; not more, not less. You have three minutes. Read it back to us. Now remove 12 words. You'll need only the highlights. You'll have to eschew conjunctions and prepositions and pronouns and articles and versions of the verb to be. She is introduced to the surreal and the succinct. Now remove

6. Now remove 3. Here's your three word life story for today. It's rhythmic and beautiful. It says *Born. Chicago. Hustler*. Or it says... *Family. Love. Englewood*. Or it says... *2003. K-Town. Sister*. And we ask you to pick one word for the day that is your life story, and all the learning is ours. No one's life story is ever *criminal* or *killer* or *crazy* or *Locked-Up*. It's always *born* or *work* or *Wesside* or *Mississippi*. If we're lucky (the facilitators that is) we've begun to trust ourselves. If we're blessed, the young people begin the journey towards trusting us.

And we begin the work of ensuring that we don't violate that trust. That we facilitate their stories and freedom. We facilitate the abolition of prisons. We begin an exercise. The students read a poem, or listen to a song or are explained what a non-photo blue pencil is, and within 30 minutes they have the outline of something, or a first draft, or a verse of a song. They begin to know what they're making and begin to have an idea of whether or not this is something they might want published. Facilitator offers student a consent form. Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (CCJTDC) and Free Write Arts & Literacy want to make sure that if the child gives consent that the parent knows their child has consented, and that the parent verifies and supports that consent. The CCJTDC reserves the right to sell. Free Write does not flex like this. The

creation of art is a labor. It is a labor belonging to the young person who has created the art. We will not offer for sale or agree to sale of a piece without that profit returning to the student or their family.

The student returns. They revisit the piece. We talk about what is working well, what more work can be done. Maybe we're even explaining what revision and editing is, and why this piece might benefit from it. The student isn't sure or she is enthusiastic, or she says *Nah*. We say, *the CCJTDC won't approve this*, or we say *This suggests your involvement in something that might be considered criminal. We're not comfortable putting you in that position by making this piece public. We will never turn your work over to anyone else without your say-so. I'm an ordained minister. I cannot be made to, anyway. So what's good? You wanna work some more on it? You want to give it a shot at being published? Or is this just for you? Your family? When you leave here?* We want to offer that student every possible use she can have for that piece of art she has made. We want to offer that student the opportunity to change her mind at all times.

The student returns. Maybe it's the following week. Maybe it's three months later. She's ready to work some more on that piece, or she wants to do something new. She revises.

She edits. We're like *Yes! This is it! Let's see if we can get it approved*. We send it to the authorities. They say yes. We let the student add final touches. We frame it or print it or record it. It shows up in this gallery. You pay \$1000.00 for it, because art moves people and art changes lives, and public art is its own library. A formerly incarcerated person has sold his first piece of art.

Or we have an alternate ending: the authorities say you can't publish anything with stars. Stars are a gang symbol. Or they say, you can't publish anything with a crown. Crowns are a gang symbol. Or they say, you have to remove the name of the street. Place names are gang symbols. Or they say, those colors are gang colors. We return the piece to the student. We tell them what they'll have to change if they want to publish it. They say, *No my neighborhood and my family and the stars and the moon are too important to me. I'm royalty and my crown is important to me. The names of my dead friends are important to me. I'll wait. I'll publish it when I get out. I've seen the world—on the Atlas, in this silhouette, through this poem, in the hook of this song I wrote. I'll hold on to it. I know now. I'll be free one day.*

Elgin Bokari Smith
Free Write Program Director

I

Fighting
for
Joy

Denzel B.

My City

Skittles taste the rainbow of my city lines...
red,
blue,
green,
brown,
pink,
purple & yellow
The L Train
my city segregated
my city is both love
and hate
you shouldn't mix the two but somehow they mate
my city Chicago
my city Chiraq
young niggas on the block out there sellin' crack
my city bold
my city cold
my city Chicago
my county Cook
my city cops
my city crooks
my city skyline
my city sexy....
my city is into with my city
my city's hurt and bruised,
abused
my city only looks out for my city
my city streets
Lake,
Halsted,
Western, Madison, Stony,
Exchange
my city winters

my city blisters
my city summers
my city purge
my city moves
my city grooves
my city schools
my city tools
my city mass incarcerates
they perpetrate,
annihilates
my city gangbangs
my city capone,
my city larry hoover,
my city chief malik,
my city bobby gore
my city chief keef
my city raps
my city storms
my city can't blink,
your city snores.

Jasmine B.

Strength and Powerful

I want my mom to win
because she took care of me
without anybody helping her.
She broke her back to raise me
put clothes on my back
a roof on my head
and put food in my mouth.
Even though my daddy left when she had me
he wasn't there at the hospital.
But my mom still took the time to take care of me.
I know that it was very hard to take care of a loud baby
who needed a bottle
her diaper changed
needed to take a bath.
But my mom still did what she had to do
just to take care of her one and only child.
Another reason why I want her to win
because she loves me
and she is a strong independent powerful woman.
and I love her.
No matter what I put her through or
what I have done to make taking care of me harder
she still there for me through thick and thin.
She still is my mother
at the end of the day.

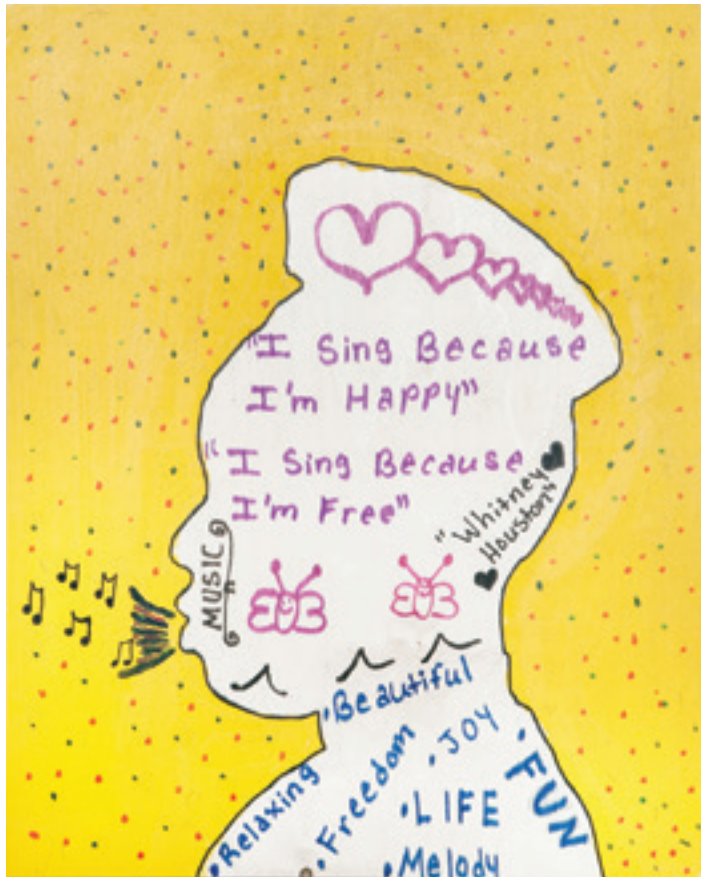


Untitled (2018) collage Frankie R.

IZZY 5A

She inspires me

There's the one woman that I could look for it is her
standing before you
her beauty is like a star that is just being born
when she smile bring me heat hotter than the sun itself
she brings joy like nobody else
sometimes I think to myself and ask is she really mine.
she inspires me!!
She's been there through my best and my worst!
but it is she who inspires me to do my all
it is she who put things to rest with her there's no worrying
she always will be my inspiration.



Why I Sing (2017) painting Nakiyah P.

Nakiyah P.

WHY I SING

I SING BECAUSE IT RELIEVES MY STRESS
I SING BECAUSE IT MAKES ME HAPPY
I SING BECAUSE IT TAKES MY MIND OFF OF THINGS
I SING BECAUSE THIS IS A GIFT FROM GOD AND HE
WANTS ME TO USE MY BEAUTIFUL VOICE

I SING TO EXPRESS MY FEELINGS
I SING TO MAKE OTHERS HAPPY
I SING TO CALM MYSELF DOWN
I SING TO BRING TEARS OF JOY
I SING FOR MY VOICE TO BE HEARD
I WILL CONTINUE TO SING BECAUSE I KNOW I CAN GO
FAR WITH THIS TALENT.....

Dreyana

Pledge

Drive a car. Be Free.
Finish High School.
Go to college.
Get a job.
Find a partner.
Take risk.
Ride a horse.
Take control.
Help others.
Give back.
Learn the law.
Go to church more often.
Start a program.
Climb a mountain.
Travel.
Learn new languages.
Focus more on me.
Go boxing.
Learn the true meaning of love.
Make friends.
Acknowledge my enemies.
Get tatted.
Play guitar.

Deven S.

Elegy for Lake Shore Drive

wake up, refresh, clean up
eat, rest outside.

The smell of air, cars
people walking.

Grocery store Laundry mat,
Foot Locker, Game Stop,

streets, lights, cameras,
bike trails, bridges.

Highways, cars
speeding, grass fields.

Trees, Birds, Plants,
big rocks, smell of water.

The sand, splash of water.
Sunlight beaming into eyelids.

Ronnie J.

Be the Best

I claim that I'm going to be my best. I claim that I deserve the best and that I would complete any given test. I claim to earn success even if I have to go through ups and downs. I claim that negative temptation would bring me to a positive way of life that would lead me to claim a better way of life. I claim that my mom would have a better fortune in life which would be given with luck and blessings and not consequences and bad learned lessons.

I claim what I claim.

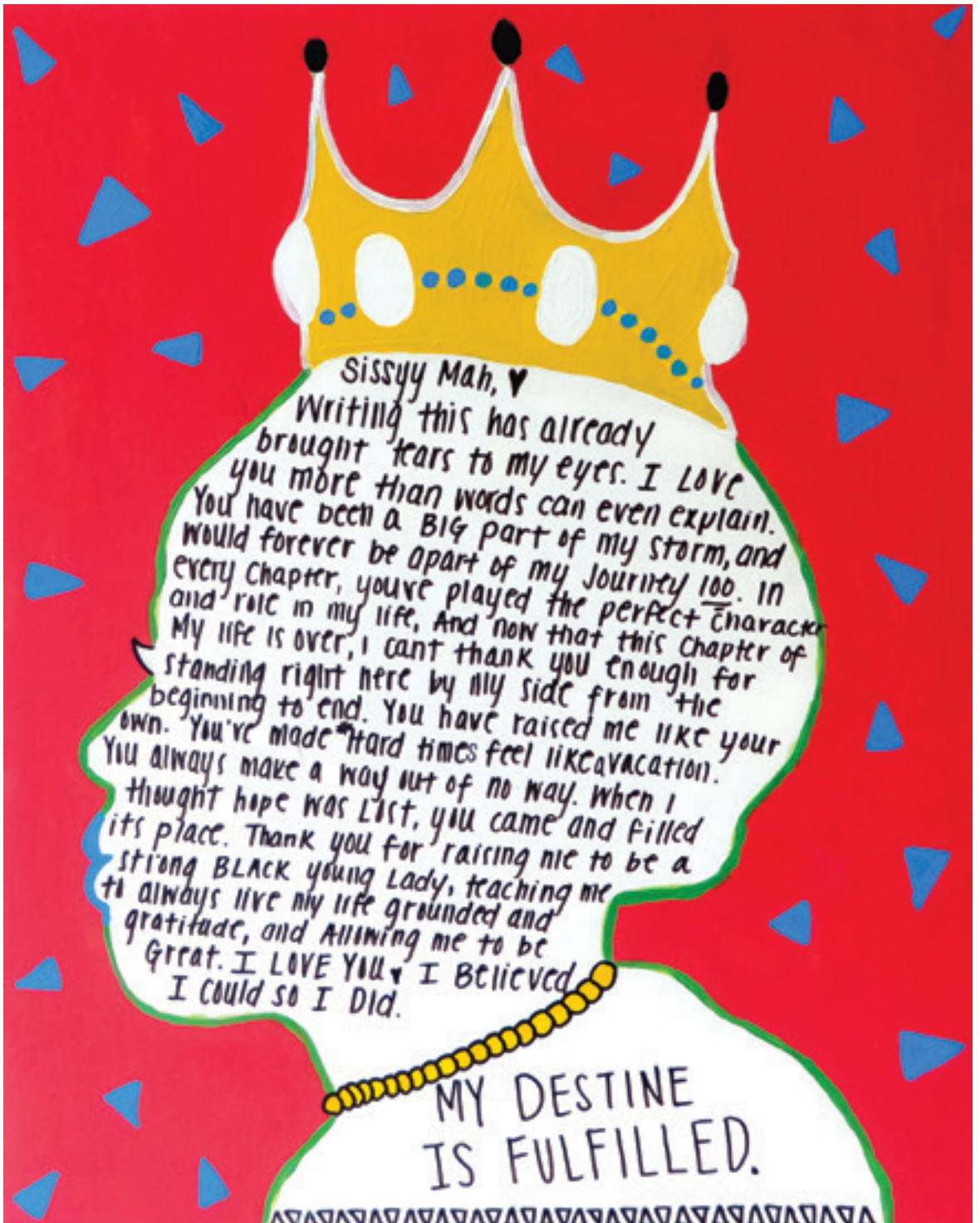
I claim my past was full with worry and a lot of darkness that was left out with no happiness.

I claim that what I grow up around doesn't predict who I am nor going to be. I claim that struggle led me to hustle. I claim that I could be better and not half-step anything. I claim to be a man of my word so I claim what I claim and that's to be the best.

Mauricio L.

Cicero

It's 3 o'clock and the city is busy
Car engines roar to life
Children are picked up from school
People in a hurry to get to work
The parks get filled with kids looking to have fun after a full day of school,
playing basketball, soccer, football, and volleyball
The sun changed position,
we lost track of time
When you get hungry take your pick on a restaurant
Food from latin countries with their own unique taste
Fast food joints available too,
McDonalds, KFC, Taco Bell and more
On warm days Carne Asada are a must
Family cookouts where all are invited
Not a day goes by that is wasted
Whether with work, family, and friends
Everyday is wonderful in Cicero



Me (2018) acrylic on wood Destine P.



Untitled (2017) acrylic on paper Darrius M.



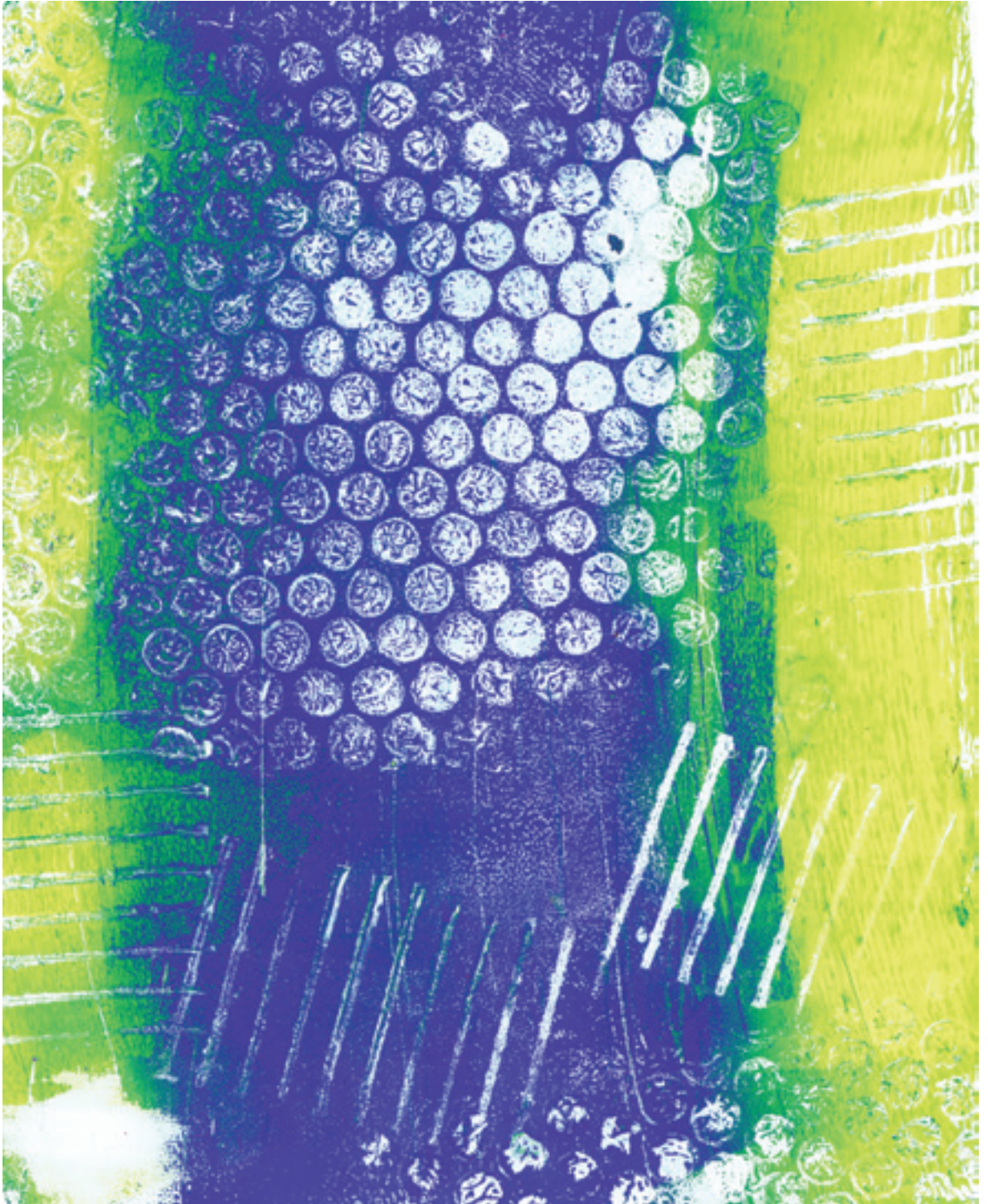
Untitled (2017) acrylic on paper Diasee S.

Tamera H.

Elegy in a quiet place

(after Aracelis Girmay)

Look out the window
you see dog walkers.
It's a quiet place all love
here. Mothers and fathers
moving quickly to work. Kids
and teenagers on their way to
school. It's a quiet place.
We all are united no matter
what color or who we are.
We came a long way
we created a bright future
it's a quiet place—no more
fighting and going against
each other



Untitled (2018) *jelli print* Jasmine

||

Who
are we?

Cole D.

Black Matter

yoo!!!!!! I say I'm black
and the criminal justices system won't get me back
for some I ain't do.....
man I study politicians so hard I watch they every move.
See they think all black people got a disability
and that we don't got history.
How they somehow lost their memory
according to what I know
and slavery so million people was sold
and only 4% came off them boats
We were abused controlled
force to be a part of the jim crow
Now you know a small of your history
class won't teach you your high school united states history
or real African American history
Yesterday I had a dream like, DR.King
that I made it to be rich and wealthy
to make sure my family was healthy
So as I speak these word I speak them so carefully
to make sure my second chance is not put in jeopardy
Family feud I wanna be Steve Harvey rich
buying buildings for the projects
and putting heat in there so nobody get sick.
I'M Black.



My Self (2017) *digital illustration* Javion H.

Dimeyon C.

Black Smart

They say black boys don't read
but I disagree to all this american publicity.

Crime is shadow it just come to me
they think i'm blind
I can't see cause this what they want us to be.

Humans controlled by a leash or
should I say a key
but i'ma fight back mentally
,put growth into my history expanding my knowledge

but now they want to put me in custody
cause i'm smart
and can't nobody touch me
black boy I can read
I Just got plant that seed
so when it rain
i'll really know what growth mean

James M.

Thank You – I am

I am a black teenager that lives on the west-side of Chicago.

I am a sibling of 5 people

I think about what I put my family through and the good things they've done for me like who am I? I didn't know or have them in the 16 years of my life.

I am slightly thin, brown skin.

My parents are short. I'm 5' 10"

I am determined. I must win.

She tells me stop. I'll do it again.

This teenager stage I need friends or communication from others and see how life is from their point of view. Sometimes I think about life and wanna be through. So far I missed my little sister's graduation and birthday too. I've been in her shoes so I wouldn't know what to do—a moral that I will take with me through the rest of my life

is that time doesn't wait for no one and the most that hate is that you'll never get it back.

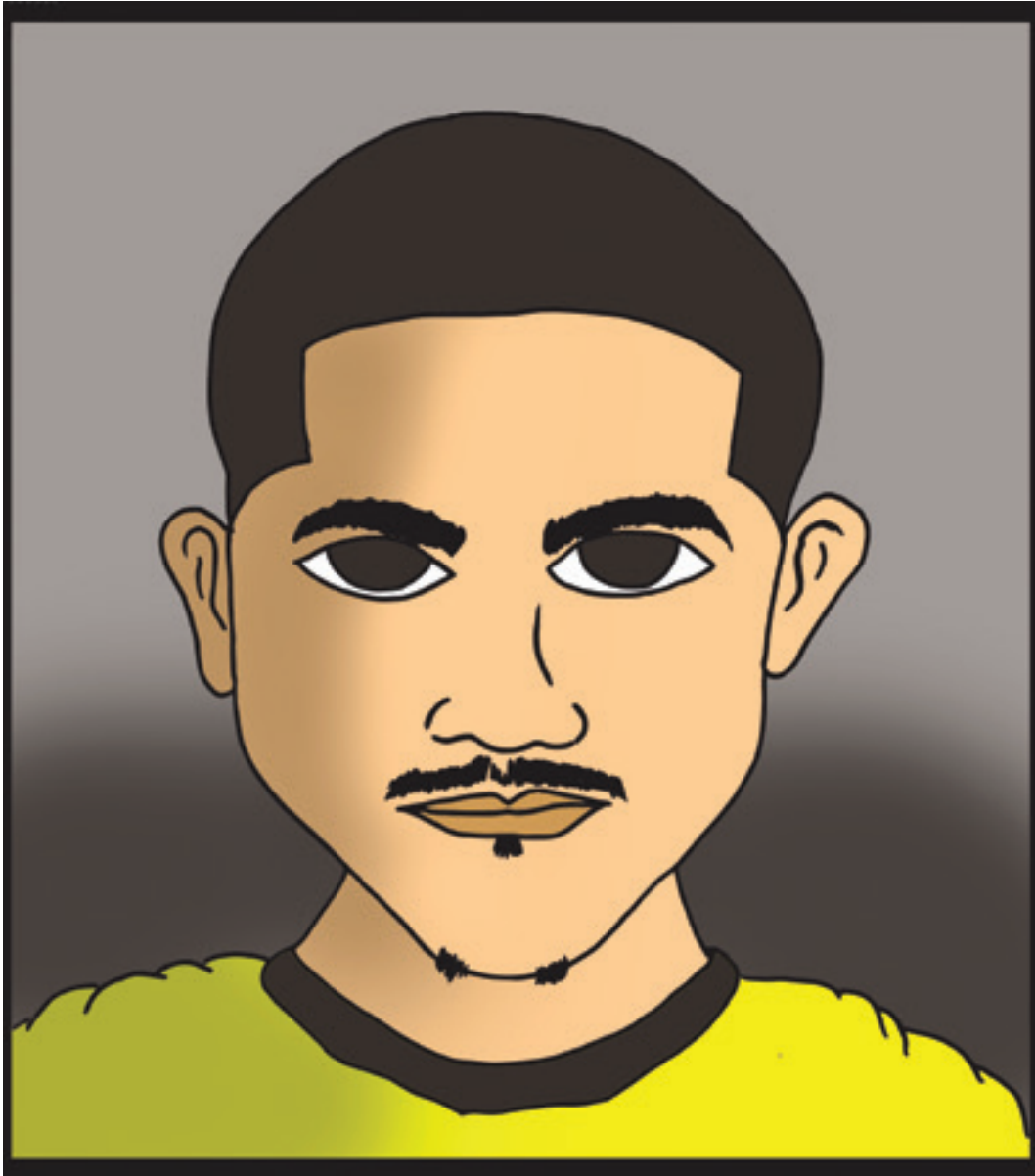
Keshawn

My Life

Growing up without my dad made me think as I did wrong
momma always at work, working doubles got me and my siblings left alone
holidays moms at work we opened our presents alone
started hanging with my homies dropped outta school just to hustle
fell in love with fast money shit was just fun to me
lost homies in the street bullets flying every week
body after body seen people die in front of me got me can't sleep
growing up I learned ain't no love in the streets
but I don't know why I love the streets
the streets were like crack to me
no matter how much it hurt me, hurt the people that care about me
made me do things I don't want to, but I had to
fighting demons in my sleep got me thinking like this shit weak
it got so real before I leave the house I tell my momma I love her
make sure I tell my homies I love em cause they like real brothers
never know when the grim reaper will come
but when he does come I want everyone know I love them



Wild Life (2017) acrylic on paper and digital illustration Katrina H.



Self-portrait (2017) *digital illustration* Adam M.

Jaemiya

My Mother's Child

I am my mother's child
through the hurt and the pain
I MAKE LIFE HARD
but it will go away
I WILL CHANGE
My mother is my heart and
there is no me without her
She is my support and my everything
I am my mother's child
she has accepted me for everything I have done
It hurts me to see her hurt
over my SHAME
But like a mother she remains the same
I am my mother's child
Through the pain and the rain
I LOVE YOU

Kawhan

I-N-D-E-P-E-N-D-E-N-T

My name Kawhan
But they call me lil 2 on the outside
I'm an independent person
I like to stick to my money
Sometimes I make the wrong decision
A lot of people tell me I am a follower
But I know I am a leader
As long as I know that
I'm going to continue to do what I got to do
Which is get money
To get my og and grandma
Out the trenches



Untitled (2018) collage Dominick D.

Dominick D.

IV

I do this for my baby sister
because I love her to death
and won't let nobody stop me from loving her
because she makes me wake up
and not let no one say that I don't
so when I leave
she'll know my love
never left.

Dominick D.

Papi's Girl

Instead of seeing my Baby sister grow up
Day by Day
It's month by month
calling my OG
Hearing ivy in the background
Say she wanna talk to her big brother
Makes me smile
But also hurts
She's asking why I ain't around
She's wondering where's "papi"
holding back tears
Cause that's what life taught me.

Dominick D.

life's tuition

I came a long way
from what I was
to what I am
I came from smoking trees
to getting chased by the police
To getting a education
to graduation
focused on my dreams instead of the streets
I was blind at first
I had to step back
Now I see the bigger picture
I just wish I could've seen this sooner.



Africa (2017) mixed media Oscar M.

Laniya W.

Drama Queen

IT'S ME
Just me
I don't know
but I am a drama queen
I've always loved attention
but it was a problem for me
Got me in trouble
but I didn't care
I just argued for what I thought was right
but look where it got me
Here
with cold nights
but now I have to fight for what is right
and get through the night
I don't know if I wanna be a Drama queen no more
but it's time to change
so I can go out the main door

Cheyenne S.

Royalty

I am not a princess. I am a queen.
That's the truth.
Most of you guys have no clue
I can't trust none but a few.
I just sit here thinkin on how they
should free all the guys.
Then I realize that all this shit is
nothing but lies.
Trying to hide from my dark past.
Mad that our "everlasting" love would
never last.
I am royalty and nothing less.
Can't settle for less cause brother raised
me to know I'm the best.

Everardo G.

Born

I was born far away, from a far away star. I am a star child that has grown and developed into a man of wisdom & knowledge by the understanding of God.

I was born to live a better life, than my Mom & Dad.

I was born to climb mountains and reach my peak.

I was born to be reborn.

I was born from pennies and nickels.

I was born in Saint James Hospital, Chicago Heights.

I am born a Libra. Oct 5, in the cold.

I was born with the name, Everardo.

I am a wild boar with tusks now that are fangs

I was born without a mask.

I was the first born in my family, boy then, man now.

I was born!!!



Untitled (2018) *jelli print* Adam M.

Christopher V.

Come From / Where I'm From / From

1. I come from love, pain, hate,
and strong 2. I came from never
give up to keep moving forward
3. I come from smelling good
food throughout the house to
good times with family 4. I
come from the family of stargos
to being separate 5. I come from
the family of fighters 6. I come
from reminder to poor 7. I come
from long names 8. I come

from two beautiful baby girls
and more to come 9. I come from
drawer to artist 10. I come from
loud music throughout
the house to family eating
together at the table 11. to come
from the legend of Villegas to
know what Villegas means or
want Villegas to mean.
I come from power to making
an empire

Veshonae H.

Anne

It's a hard knock life for me,
only 17 god knows some don't believe in me.
Got my hands dirty, 17 reasons why the police looking for me.
Been through hell and back!
You say you been there done that,
well.... I did more!
Been through too much to tell,
life was never a bore!
I'm a girl I shouldn't be in jail.
But, it's a hard knock life for me.
Not an orphan, but my parent name is streets,
i've been doing what I want since age 15.
mom always said do good you get what you want,
but, I became a product of my environment and got what I need.
From picking up books to cases.
Go karting to high speed chases.
Dressers to joggers.
It's a hard knock life for me,
communication is key, it's alright to ask for help...
attitude on point, mistakes on repeat.
Lord knows I can stand on my own two feet sometimes I just do what I want
not what I need
It's a hard knock life for me .
There isn't any justice!
Fighting one too many cases!
Judge kinda racist,
going down the wrong path, but it's not too late to fix the rates,
and,
it's a hard knock life for me,
but I try to make an effort,
pushing to the limit is something I am the best of..
i'm just saying.. it's a hard knock life and hard is beyond enough for me..!



Untitled (2017) *digital illustration* Veshonae H.

Terrion P.

We are the Moba Mob Men

(after Patrick Rosal)

we are the Moba Mob men
the stand up for your rights men
the men that stay up all night preparing
for the next fight men
The garlic voodoo men, to leave a doctor
without todo men
the you won't last 2 hours
in my shoes men
The men the government want
to put away for trying to uplift
our people men
Not the take, but the giver men
the kind, kind, but would take it there if you test
'em men. The sacrifice men. The fighter
men. The pain men. The lost
but now found men. The men men
the family men—where it was
if he say he gon touch you, touch him
first men.



I LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE
Good is bad And bad is good,
Where when you try to do good but
All you get is bad, like when you try to get a job and all you hear is
"HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONVICTED OF A CRIME" so you go.

BACK TO THE DOG EAT DOG WORLD, BACK TO THE GET IT WHEN YOU CAN,
BACK TO THE GOT DAMN BLOCK, where we wasn't raised to say he a KING and she a
QUEEN, its more like he a OPP and she a THOT. I LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE people are
Happy with things just the way they are. Like when we see ourselves as athletes, rapper,
Entertainers, lazy, stupid, pimps, criminals, worthless, or superior to women and treat them like
Toys. They convince you that you aren't capable and don't deserve better, when really its just
White America has more ADVANTAGES and black America has more OBSTACLES.
What some whites don't realize is they're born into a world and system that automatically puts them
On top and us on the bottom with other so-called minorities, poor people and people of color, fighting
Each other for left overs this is what I mean when I say people are happy with things just the way they are.

I LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE a attack happens almost just about in any
Way you can think of Unemployment, hunger which leads to
Incarceration, Liquor stores are on every corner, healthy food
Is on no corner, the laws are unfair, evictions, and
Foreclosed, diabetes, and high blood pressure,
Schools with old wrong books and over worked teachers,
Garbage on the street, garbage on the radio, Drugs and guns,
Imported from outside the community
And POLICE and JUDGES act like they're GOD.

I LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE they
kinda freed us but started lynching us
Instead, than changed their mind and let
Us vote, go to their schools and get jobs
Only if WE DRESSED, TALKED, AND THOUGHT
Just like white people. Now white America
doesn't need us for labor anymore machines
Do all the work, so with fewer jobs and proper
Education a lot of us COMMITTEE CRIMES
that get us back in the System AGAIN,
In chains AGAIN, And working for free AGAIN,
So WAKE UP! STAND UP! STEP UP!
And recognize
What WORLD
We live in.

Africa (2017) digital illustration Destine P.



Flag (2017) ink on paper and digital illustration Adam M.

Dejanae A.

Untitled

The person I want to win is my mother
She's nice to everyone
She works with everybody
When she sees someone doing wrong
She's going to tell them
She's a respectful person and she has a good heart
When she's sick she still comes to every court date
When I'm away she cries because she knows that's not me
when I miss school she know its something up
She does everything for us
I want her to win
I really love her
she was there
from
day
one

Dominick D.

Untitled

While I was livin the street life
I was rollin dutchies riding around them street lights
And yeah I keep the heat tight
saved my life at least twice
I'm glad I ain't hit that 3 piece strike
cause my third coming up
I ain't scared of the judge or the time
I'm scared of what I'll within due of time.

Charles M.

Young Money / Swap O Hustle

It's 4:30 in the morning before the sun wakes up. I've been waking up this early for a while now so I don't need an alarm clock to wake me up. It's Saturday morning; money weekend is what I call it, Me and my three brothers only, through my girlfriend Nika at the time, get up and go down into the crawl space which we cover up in the garage so the thieves won't see it and try to rob us blind like before. I was just 15 years old at the time. So we go about the task of taking inventory on all the tools that we have and what we're going to take today. We have drills, sawsalls, hammer drills, skillsaws—all types of tools down to screwdrivers. Pops came in and said we're taking everything—money day. I just started about 2 months ago when I was chilling with my girl on the steps of her crib. It was an old cobble stone with gray and red stones and a red and black concrete stairs that lead up to a glass door with bars on it. Her father came out mad about something so she asked what was wrong. He told her he got a \$1000.00 generator that won't start but he told a customer that will be here in 30 minutes that it works. He was frustrated because he would be missing out on a thousand dollars and he loved money more than he love women. So I said to him let me take a look at it. He look at me and said if you don't know what you're doing don't waste my time because time is money. I was calm and said again let me take a look. We went into the garage and it was a DeWalt generator so I took a look at the massive machine and said here's the problem. Your gas line is pinched and gas was not getting through to the starter, so I replaced it, pushed the gas button 3 times and it started up. He was so amazed that I did it under 5 minutes, that he gave me a job working with him and his sons at the Swap O Rama. I would fix anything and any brand; DeWalt, Milwaukee, Thakita, anything, and I became the highest paid. I would make no less than 1500 on Monday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday. \$3000 a week. Not bad for a thirteen year old even though I had to give 2 stacks to my mom but aye, that's moms. I always had an older mind at a young age. I was old before I got old. Pops always said that, and took me everywhere he went. I became his right hand.

Solomon A.

Patience

I am somebody. I am great
I am strong. I am a young black
male.

I have big dreams deep inside
me. I have something that's so
good and great that I have been
waiting for, for a long time

I know it's coming. I can see
it coming. I can't rush it but
I could wait on it.

I been through so much in
life and now my dreams will
cancel out all of my pain
that I ever had in life

Now I can finally live a
peaceful life without stress.

Veshonae H.

TotAlly Screwed

Sitting in this cell getting old and kinda fat,
wondering where the fuck was my mind at?

Only having pessimistic thoughts..

Missing memories

Oh, how I miss them fallen soldiers so dearly..

Gloomy days,

Lonelier night

Working a 6 to 2, not giving a fuck if its long overdue

Not even a penny a day

How bout free 50 my Pay

I am a female that's totAlly screwed!

Malicious thoughts day in day out.

Never optimistic

except when i'm thinking..

"I WILL NEVER GET CAUGHT!"

Can't absorb the pain so I get lyrical

been told I wouldn't be shit

So I gotta get fanciful

Head down,tears streaming wondering, what's next in line for me..

I am a female that's totAlly screwed,

Until I got sat down for this bid of 9 months

It's time to pay up for what I owe

Now I have a time of bad luck

BUT, I'm not going to be a female that's totAlly screwed.



Facing Me (2017) pencil on paper, marker on paper, and digital illustration Oscar M.

Deonte M.

East Side Story

My name is Deonte
I'm from the Eastside
where you can coming up missing
I'm a black King
all I know is gettin money
You can think I'm a goofy
but come on our side
bet you see
if one fight
we all fight

In Conv

ersation

Curatorial Note

Several years ago, I took a Thai bodywork training. Something my teacher said in that training I think about often: Never too deep, only too fast.

What she meant, in the context of working with another person's body, was that you can always go deeper, facilitate softness, opening, space, release, but that the body has to receive you, it has to invite you in, it has to be ready. If you go too fast, it will resist.

I believe the same principle can be applied to cultural labor and community-centered advocacy work.

Most of us working with Free Write, involved in the making of this book you hold, in the facilitation of the art and writing within, and the exhibition it catalogues, have been doing this work for a long time. For most of us, between 10 and 20 years. We're all playing the long game.

In Conversation is the seventh exhibition of Free Write student work I have curated over the last decade. Each one has been different. As we have all evolved and grown as teachers, artists, curators, so too has the work and the way we present it. However, the question posed behind each exhibition has remained the same: How do we present work created by incarcerated youth in a way that celebrates the artists, elevates the artwork, and produces understandings and conversations about youth incarceration, without fetishizing our students or minimizing the grave seriousness of their situations?

As Ryan and Mathilda call attention to in their note, too often we have found that visitors walk away from Free Write's exhibitions or public events feeling sympathy for our students, but keeping a comfortable distance. They stop short of connecting the dots to their own role in the systems that create and support the conditions that put and keep kids in jail. I see my job as the curator of these exhibitions to aid our audiences in connecting these dots. To present the work in ways that meet all the challenges noted above, and also help anyone engaging in these spaces to see themselves in the work we present, and the systems within which it is created.

In this way, exhibition is partly a decoy. It is a means, a mechanism, a medium—not an end. It's a delivery system. A way into

the endlessly complex conversations around the perpetually changing reality of youth incarceration. A way to think about what it means for each of us, individually and collectively, that we participate in a society that keeps kids in jail.

In Conversation is way to deepen and expand that work. The idea to invite contemporary artists to create work in response to Free Write student work is one that I have been holding close for several years, waiting for the right time push forward, both within the body of our organization and within the cultural body around us. Now is that time.

For *In Conversation*, Free Write's curatorial team, staff, and teaching artists compiled a catalogue of student visual artwork, poetry, audio recordings, and animations, and invited artists to select one piece to respond to. Some of the work has been previously exhibited and/or published. Some of it has not. The prompt was open for the artists to select work regardless of medium. As you'll see in this catalogue, there are visual works in response to visual work, and also to poetry, audio work in response to animations, and poetry in response to everything. In a couple cases, more than one artist responded to the same Free Write student artwork.

The result is a multifaceted, expansive, and living collection that brings new context and ways of seeing the work created by

Free Write students, and the work we do to support them. The power and potential of conversations, creative exchanges, between artists and individuals cannot be underrated. With *In Conversation*, the exchange is not only visible and audible, it is palpable. And it's thrilling to observe and to receive.

Elizabeth De La Piedra interprets and transforms Hector's illustration of a cross piercing a rose as a tattoo. Her photograph depicts the image tattooed on a woman's back, overlooking the expanse of the city in the window beyond her from high above, extending power, status and possibility to both the artwork and the artist. Marzena Abrahamik offers two photographs that borrow from the color palette of Meisha's "I Will Speak" illustration: a silhouette of a pregnant woman, within which she shares a complex story of teen pregnancy. Seeing Marzena's photographs (a yellow-hued, fecund still life, depicting flowers, fruits, and fractal vegetables, and a very pink self-portrait of the artist, standing in the nude with her young son on her hip, drinking milk from her breast) next to Meisha's illustration is like eavesdropping on an intimate moment of connection and understanding between two women. Like peering into a keyhole as they share a cup of tea or bottle of gin. Norman Teague takes the sentiment of Adrian's "Free The Guyz" drawing and builds it into a wooden wall sculpture, with a pair of old boxing gloves hanging off it. The gloves are tied

together and threaded through the wood, making them a suggestive but ultimately ineffectual gesture of resistance. It's a sharp crystallization of how this work often feels.

For those of us doing this work, seeing beyond the realities we face everyday to futures, depths, expansions that do not yet exist, it can be frustrating, demoralizing. It's hard not to push so hard. To have patience. To continue working, everyday, to make small changes. All for tiny moments of release, relief, liberation. Waiting in ready for the systems and the culture around us to shift, open up, invite us in.

I have the deepest respect for my colleagues who consistently put their own bodies and spirits on the line, working inside of these oppressive spaces to facilitate these moments of relief and liberation for the students they work with, and ultimately, aspirationally, influence changes in the systems, structures, and culture that keep kids in jail. So hopefully one day soon, there will no longer be kids in jail. And no longer jails. Period.

I must also extend my deepest gratitude to all of the artists who contributed work to *In Conversation*, and to my curatorial assistant, Omar Dyette, whose support, energy, and efforts have been absolutely vital.

In solidarity and spirit,
Chelsea Ross



Cross (2014) digital illustration printed on paper



(2019) giclée fine art print on Somerset velvet paper with Espon Ultrachrome HD inks, 40" x 60"

"Hector's design translated as a tattoo in this portrait serves as a pictorial metaphor representing an experience that you accept is a part of you, but understand it does not define you."

— Elizabeth De La Piedra



Laugh Now Cry Later (2010) pencil on paper, framed



(2019) stoneware, painted wood, 46" x 35"

"Being human constantly challenges us to navigate, slip through and decode psychological and physical barriers. The clay whistles in this piece can be sounded with joy or warning, entangled in a ridged façade."

— Liz McCarthy



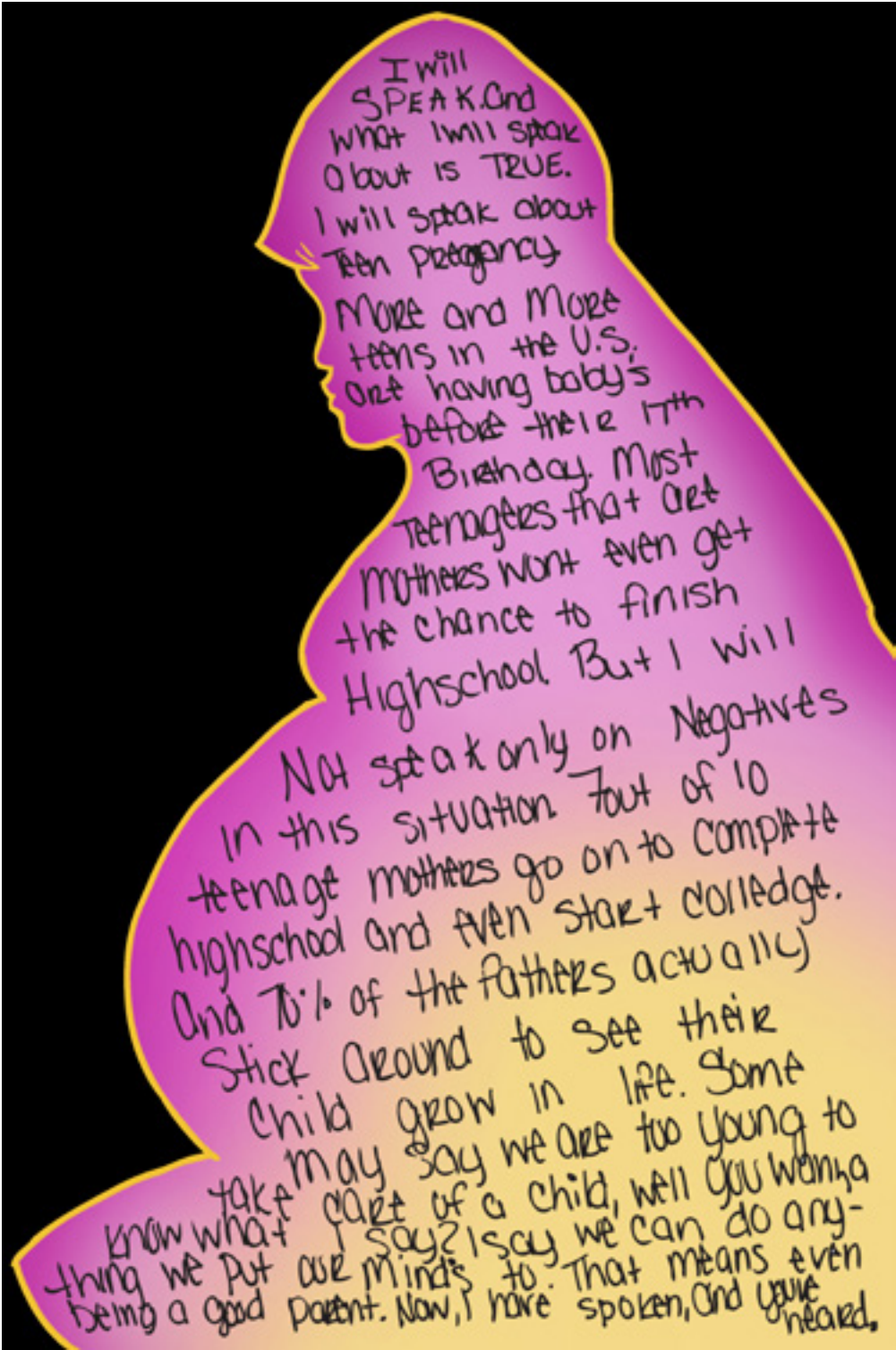
Bubbles (2013) digital illustration printed on vinyl



(2019) watercolor, spray paint, glitter and pencil on archival watercolor paper, 16" x 20"

"When I first saw 'Bubbles' I was sure it was made by a man, but I was wrong and that interested me. I was entranced by the swagger she'd given him, the mix of violence and femininity."

— Iris Bernblum



I Will Speak (2014) illustration



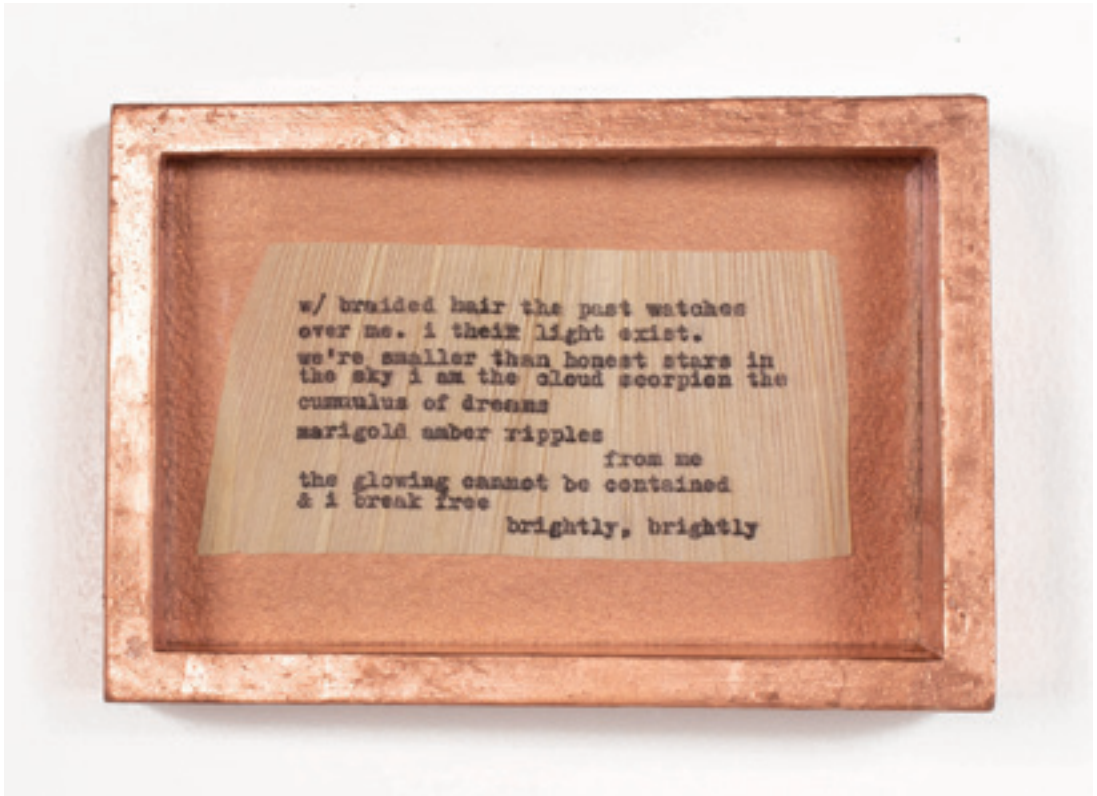
HANG IN THERE/ 2yrs 4hrs 44min of sleep
(2019) archival inkjet, 30" x 22.5", 1 of 5



TOUCHED OUT *(2019) archival inkjet, 30" x 22.5", 1 of 3*



Untitled (2018) collage



(2019) 4" x 6" sanded & painted wooden photo frame with Arches Aquarelle 140 lb cotton paper, MTN Liquid Metallics Copper Paint (resin & leafing pigments), corn husk, typewriter ink

"Adam's collage reminded me of the beauty behind the belief that many of us are our ancestors dreams, their light incarnate, their resistance still existing, still moving us forward."

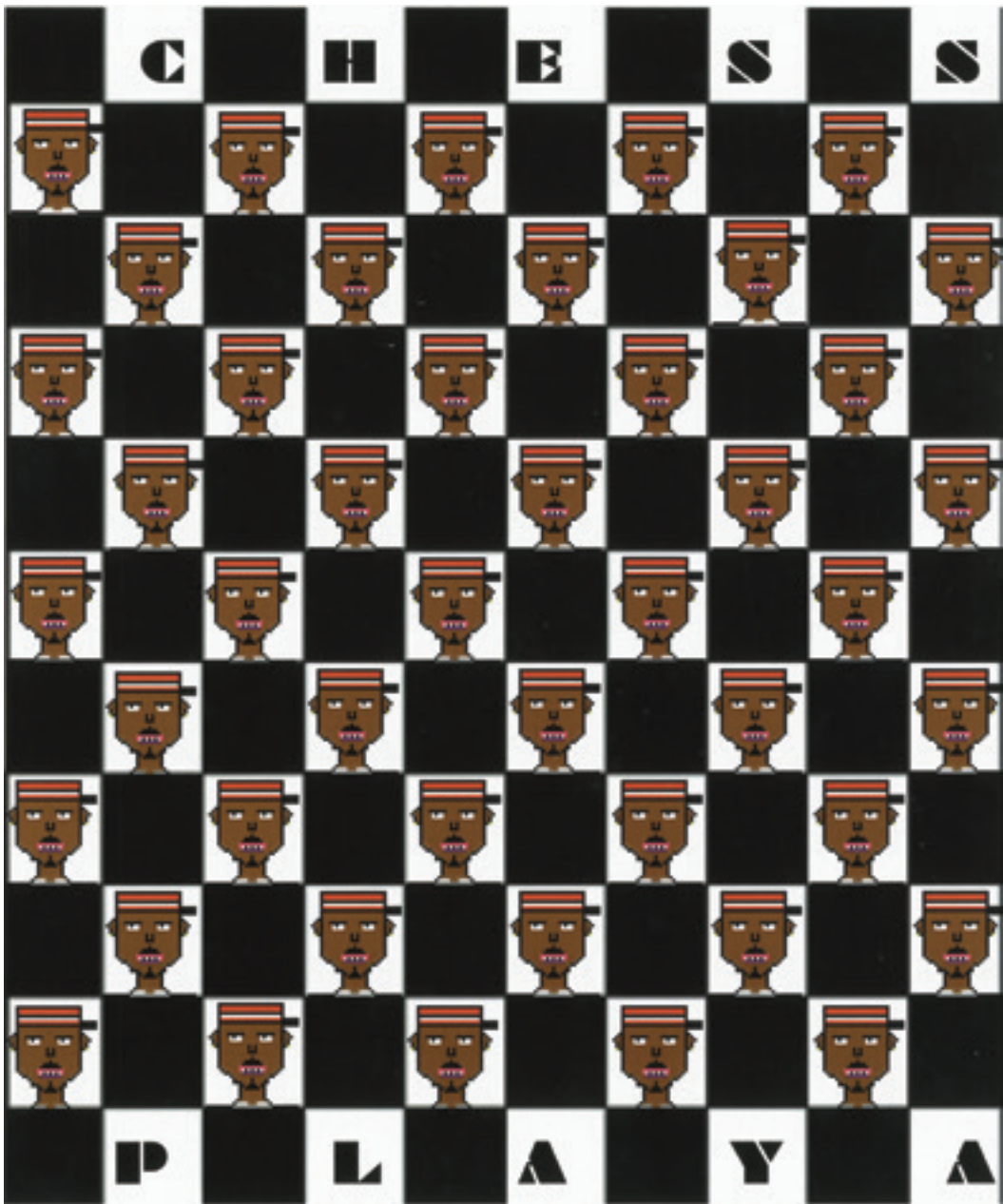
— Melissa Castro Almandina



Pillows (2018) acrylic and marker on pillows



This spatial existence (2019) *plastic flowers, wire, pillow case and embroidery*



Chess Playa (2011) illustration



(2019) mixed media

"The characters in 'American Bull' take on a samboish quality in an attempt to poke fun at stereotypes waged against those navigating America's criminal justice system as captives. These people remain buried beneath the betrayal of the 'American Dream' shackled by the stronghold of the nation state and its values."

— Tarnynon Onumonu



Listen Up

Spoken word poetry I wonder if they notice me,
Thinking bout them lonely nights it's hard for me to go to sleep
Checked my surrounding everybody vanished it was only me
But I remember posted with bro nem we was bout 30deep

But a lot of it then changed my boy
Tell me why these handcuffs don't feel the same nomore
Lord please I don't feel this pain nomore
These stormy nights got me hoping it don't rain nomore

Cuz when it rain it pour
So I gotta keep that tool on me
Og needed help so then I said forget a school homie
Only thing i'm worried bout is bringing in that food homie

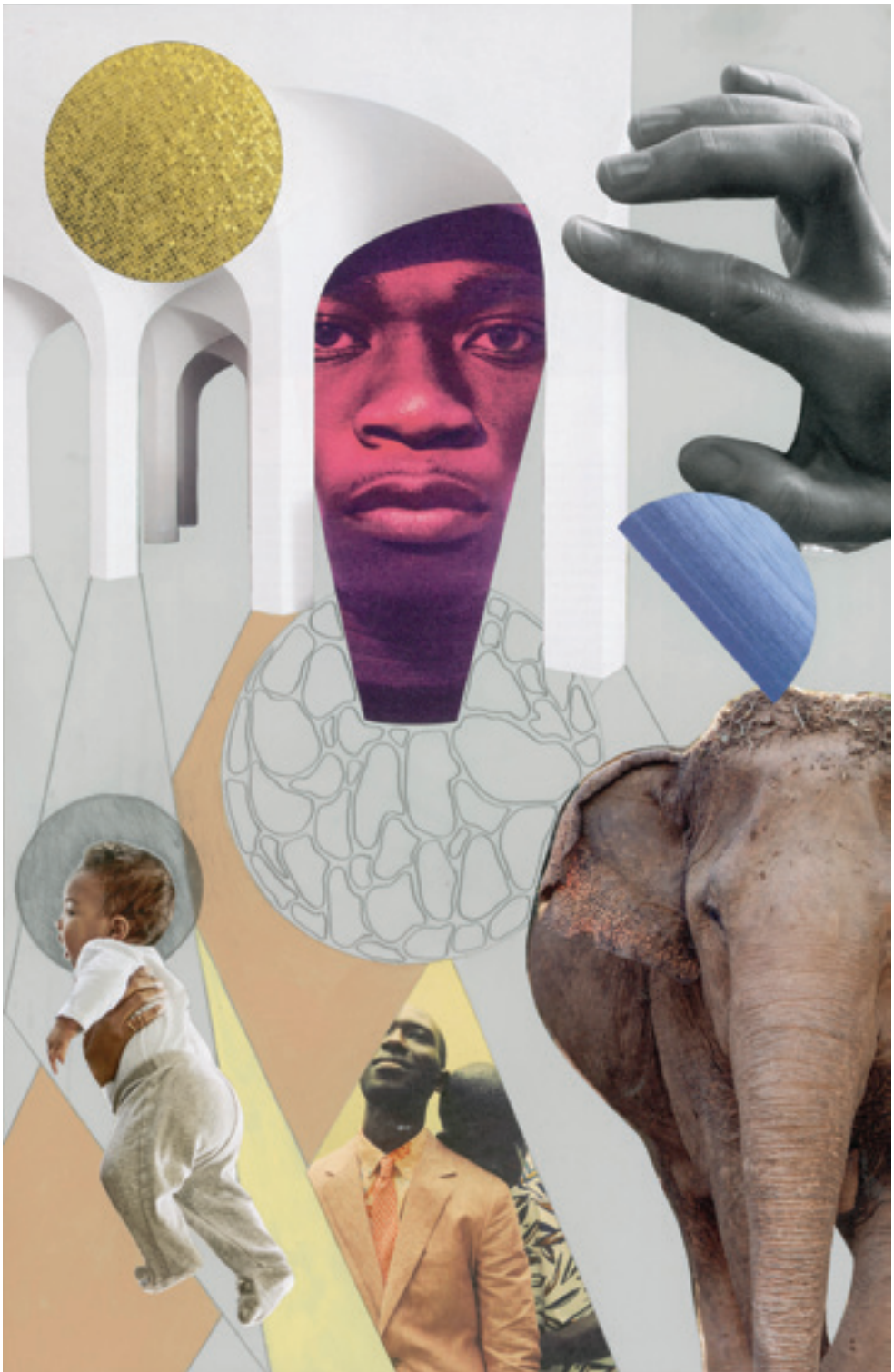
In this game you win sooner or later you gone lose homie
the stuff we go threw ah leave the average person traumatized
Look at my face you can see the pain straight through my eyes

I had a couple homies die
Couple homies tried to ride
Judge looked them in they face and then threw them 45
When I speak I speak the truth
Ain't no reason to be lying
All this hatred in my heart sometimes I just feel like crying

And everybody wondering why the youngins out wilding
Cuz, when we tried to talk ain't nobody want to hear us
Yeah we was hurting and when we told them people closed they ears
And this ain't happen yesterday man this stuff been going on for years

But here I am standing 10 toes down
Granny told me don't give up keep standing 10 toes down

continued pg. 65



(2019) collage work on paper



Here & Now

[Daquan]

I am here you are now.
What? how am I supposed to talk
with nobody to hear me out.
Tell me how I'm supposed to win
when people want to see me down.
I was right there with my mans when they pulled up and gunned him down.
That's the reason why I always gotta keep my gun around.
Out here wildin', guess they got me labeled as a hoodlum now
and I give up.

[Guard]

I'm here now.
Let me tell you how to win.
You gotta give it up, everybody, not your friend.
Labeled you a hoodlum? How are you gonna win?
It's your frame of thought that changes your predicament.

[Daquan]

But you don't understand that feeling,
seeing them on that ground.
When I say thunderstorm,
no lie man, it was pouring down.
I wanted them all in, I'm going for it now.
They say I'm talking too much,
time for me to show them now.

Success? Man I know more about neglect.
I'm talking poverty,
sleeping with roaches and the rats.
And even though my Granny raised me different from the rest
I'm only stuck on one thing,
and that's the thing that I know best.

continued pg. 66



No Mud, No Lotus (Rise Young King) (2019) mixed media on canvas, 24" x 30"

Listen up Daquan *continued from pg. 61*

Believe me life is gonna get ruff keep standing 10 toes down
And baby girl you a queen just keep standing 10 toes down

Yeah I said it you ah queen don't let em tell you different
And the haters that be talking pay them no attention
Yeah I be bossed up I don't talk I just sit back and listen
Ask me who I do it for simply the people that i'm missing

I talk to baby sis onna phone
She told me "brother I miss you,you need to hurry up home"
You have one minute left I had to hang up the phone
It hurt my soul to know I left my baby sis all alone

It's killing me inside every night
I always hear her voice up in my head every night
"bro I miss you" I think about them words every night
Stressing tryna get this rock up off my shoulder every night
So when them youngins talking man y'all better listen
Can't judge him cuz he onna corner tryna check a million
And for my queens reach for the stars the sky's the limit
Don't think this the ending cuz I ain't start from the beginning.

(2018)

Here and Now Daquan *continued from pg. 63*

[Guard]

I've been there, I've done that.

I've seen them on the ground.

You think it was pouring then? Keep looking
to the clouds.

Tomorrow is a brighter day, but you gotta
stay focused.

Let bygones be stepping stones,
forget about the roaches.

Rats are everywhere, even when you asleep.
being side-tracked by drama is definitely for
the weak.

Turn your pain to prosperity
and your passion to a flame.

Ignite it around the world,
Make the people hear your name.

[Daquan]

Leave a legacy?

Is that basically what you're telling me?
Keep throwing dirt on my name, I see the
jealousy.

Want to see that I break down?

Some of you will never see.

This situation don't hurt me,
this shit just better than me.

I'm trying to move my granny somewhere
where the weather's sweet.

And yeah, it's hard to stay focused when
people testing me.

But I can't let no simple niggas get the best
of me.

That's for my Auntie, I'ma do it

[both]

through the jealousy

[Guard]

We leaving legacies.

They done throw dirt on my names, can't get
the best of me.

Here and now I break down,

Man that'll never be

Through the hurt and the pain, know where
I gotta be.

It ain't no need to look down 'cause I'm a
better me.

[Daquan]

I understand now the life is only what you
make it.

And if you want it they ain't gonna give it,
you gotta take it.

But look the journey ain't gonna be easy, so
don't mistake it.

Be sure to always trust yourself and forget
about the hatred.

And 'cause you was dealt a certain hand don't
mean you gotta take it.

I get it.

If I want my dreams true then I gotta chase
them.

(2018)

Fatboy

Fatboy have dreads
Fatboy get called Fatboy all day but
Fatboy don't like that,
Fatboy don't know how he is fat
because he run around all day
but he loves to eat
Fatboy is not a lame
he have friends but
Fatboy is just fat,
Fatboy don't want to be fat
but he don't want to be skinny
Fatboy wants to be the boss
Fatboy wants all the money he can get
he wants to be king
Fatboy have girls too, but he need more
Fatboy is just fat, boy.

(2015)



Super Phat (2019) colored pencil and pen on paper



Free the Guys (2016) colored pencil



Free to Fight (2019) *sculpted wall piece*

Body

(after Yusef Komunyakaa)

I love how my hands
are made to damage things
I love how my body is
solid and can't nothing break it down.
My mind is self-made, and my elbow
is a killing machine!
My legs are made of various colors
and my heart is made of money
and that's a valid point. My skin is bulwark
that protects what's inside. My
soul is a vest that can never
get damaged and my back
is glass but still glaze.

(2015)

"The poem drips with the ease and immortality of youth. It's also reads through a very masculine lens. 'Bodied #1' conjures the spirit of strength, confidence, and power of Dejuanye's poem, but with a hyper-feminine, lived-in figure and sensibility. Aware of the strength of her body, and also its fragility."

— Chelsea Ross



Bodied #1 (2019) *giclée fine art print on Hahnemühle photo rag metallic, 22" x 33"*



Untitled (2019) resin on mirror, 23" x 35"

Dejuanye Body (pg. 71)



Run Cycle Animation (2015) animation

Jovanny S., Jeremy D., Marco M., Darian G., Kian M.,
Kenneth T., and Joshua S.

The Run Cycle Animation was responded to
with scores by four producers.

Jared Brown, Don Crescendo, Tim Nice, Ryan Searchlighte



This animation and scores can be found:

bit.ly/freewriteruncycle

"I want my work to reflect the various individuals depicted not solely by their outward appearances but also the similarities in their paths in pursuit of a destination that cannot be seen on screen."

— Don Crescendo

#BlackGirlsMatter

My name is Destine P.
I'm a black bird without wings
I'm misunderstood and a young trendsetter
I'm misunderstood because no one
understands me and I'm a trendsetter
because everyone follows me.
I worry about Black teenage girls
I wonder how long would black girls
get treated without respect.
I dream about changing the world.
I hope my wings grow and I fly back home.
I feel myself lonely, hurt, and lost.

(2015)



Knowing We Are The Dream (2019) *watercolor and collage on paper, 11" x 14"*



Freedom

(after Nina Simone and Herbert Sacker)

Why you want to fly Blackbird?
You ain't ever gonna fly.

Freedom is what we need.
Life is real, it's not a dream.
Why can't they just set us free?
Locking us up doesn't make us weak.

Why you want to fly Blackbird?
You ain't ever gonna fly.
No place big enough for holding
all the tears you're gonna cry.

I want to be free.
I want to be me.
I want to be whole.

'Cause your mama's name was lonely
and your daddy's name was pain.
And they call you little sorrow
'cause you'll never love again.

How can they keep me?
I want to feel the breeze.
I'm going to be strong.

You ain't got no one to hold you.
You ain't got no one to care.
If you'd only understand dear,
nobody wants you anywhere.

Locking us up makes us stronger.
We want to be treated fairly.
We want justice.
We want our broken wings to fly again.

So why you want to fly Blackbird?
You ain't ever gonna fly.
Why you want to fly Blackbird?
You ain't ever gonna fly.

(2018)



(2019) xerox edition of 30 and an inexpensively framed version



keys for little sorrow (2019) vintage keys, paint, assorted hardwares

Nakiyah Freedom (pg. 71)

“keys for lil' sorrow, or what's been collected are the keys and the keys are all black.”

keys for lil' sorrow, or what's been collected are the keys and the keys are all black. (2019) is a sculptural gesture made in response to Nakiyah's poem Freedom. In Freedom she sings a nostalgic melodic refrain : “cus your mama's name was [Lonely] / and your Daddy's name was Pain / and they called you little sorrow / cus you never love again.” Reminiscent of Nina Simone's Four Sisters and Mahalia Jackson's Trouble of the World, Nakiyah's Freedom collects the energy, narrative devices, and tone of many legends who came before her. Like the work of these women, Nakiyah makes reference to a strong desire for freedom, understanding, and freedom through understanding for herself, little sorrow and her other fictional characters, and those who comprise a mirroring group – the “us” of which she sings.

This sculpture responds with a set of assorted black keys from various decades, hanging from a silver ring, attached to a small draw latch. To unlatch the mechanism you must remove the keys. After removing the keys, you see that none will aid in the unlocking of the draw latch. The “unlocker” now becomes what can open the draw latch. “Lockin' us up wont make us weak,” Nakiyah writes, keys for lil' sorrow, or what's been collected are the keys and the keys are all black. is a simple puzzle that illustrates that sentiment in the responding artist's hand. We, armed with knowledge (read: keys, read: help) from the past, are strength that can break what binds us.”

— shawné michaelain holloway

Grandma's Garden

Next door to my house
is my Grandma
and her
big rectangular colorful garden
We get dirty
while picking the fruits and vegetables
Dirty food
Dirty hands
Tastes fresh
Tastes good
So we clean our hands and our food
So we can use them to prepare a picnic
After, we can play around
We go in the house
Cut up the food
prepare dinner
and sit around discussing our day.

(2012)

"I've been thinking about my grandmother more as the days go by. She was everything to us, is still most everything to us. To me, to my mother and to the entire family – and for those who knew her at all, those who knew her as I did, are very few. Growing up I would have never been considered 'hard'. My dimples, brown and deep, were obvious indications, if not my teeth, my grin, my boyish body—forever playful in love with other black boy bodies (on the basketball court, in the North Carolina fields, in the red dirt Auntie Gayle ate, in the bushes with them boys. And I didn't cry very often, but I damn sure wasn't 'Hard'. In Grandma's garden I was safest because she allowed me to be a self 'whole in happiness'. Eventually she taught me something more valuable than all the blood diamonds mined on black backs. She taught me how to rest in the heat; in a warm glow, cool, in the middle of summer."

— Derrick Woods Morrow

Alex
Hands

Hands to eat.
Hands to pull the trigger.
Hands to shoot the basketball.
Hands to put my clothes on.
Hands to throw a punch.
Hands to turn a page on my life.
Hands to put that ring on my fiancée.
Hands to make love with.
Hands to dial numbers.
Hands to play video games with.
Hands to hold my newborn child.
Hands to hold hands.
Hands to tattoo your daughter's face on your
chest above your heart to show your love for her.
Hands to open the door to see my wife holding
my newborn son.
Hands to throw gangs signs at my rival gang.
Hands to get handcuffed with.
Hands to write this poem called "Hands."

(2015)



Hands to Hold (2019) *fine-art photo print on cotton Hahnemühle paper, debossed text*

"Hands to Hold, the sins of our fathers the deeds of our ancestors, the burdens and the blessings, we inherited, By virtue of being born breathing, the historic continuum from a past which never belonged to us, but was built with our bones, and our bare backs."

— Emilio Rojas

STREETZ

I Was Born

I was born in water
swimming like a fish
I threw a coin in the well
waiting for my wish
I'm strong as the winter wind
tall like the Sears Tower
I'm filled with many secrets
like a little gun with big power
My city attacked me
as if I did 9/11
when I smoke I get so high
I feel like I'm in heaven
I been locked up for some months
but it feel like it's been years
I call my little sister
and I can't hear nothing but the tears
The pain feels like it will never
stop, like a woman giving birth
it's sad to see me leave cuz if
I do 45 years
it's like I'm leaving this place
in a hearse.

(2014)

Keshawn H.

I was born

(after Gregory Pardlo)

I was born listening to horses yap.
I was born with a monkey to protect
me. I was born floating off my feet
and hands. I was born with bodies
and skeletons around me. I was
born trapped in the darkness with no
one to help. I was born without
a spirit to take care of me. I was
born with a hole in my stomach.
I was born surrounded by sticks
with tools. I was born going
to the light.

(2015)

Keshawn H.

I Was Born

(after Keshawn and STREETZ)

Some people say the mind is like a horse ridden
by a monkey. To the horse I whisper secrets
because the monkey sure won't listen.

He won't protect or lead the horse with licorice
to fountains where light dips from the coin of a wish
and swims with quickness, and water reflects a violent
city. My man, America is full of skeletons:
keys without locks, dominos with no dots. Oh, Mercy
is the hospital where I was born like an elephant
in a small room. You see, I was trapped in darkness
unlike my mother's stomach. Older, without thirst
now, I remember with hunger the days I spent sour
and wasted, and all I did was watch the sun ride
to the horizon in some clouds shaped like a hearse.
Like monkeys, my eyes climb up the Sears Tower
and I fear every tear that the wind ever cried.

(2019)

Keshawn and STREETZ' "I was born" poems were created in response to Greg Pardlo's poem "Written By Himself", under the guidance of Roger Bonair-Agard at CCTJDC. Greg's new poem of the same name created in response to Keshawn and STREETZ closes the loop of creative exchange between artists.

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Where
I live

Destine P.

Africa

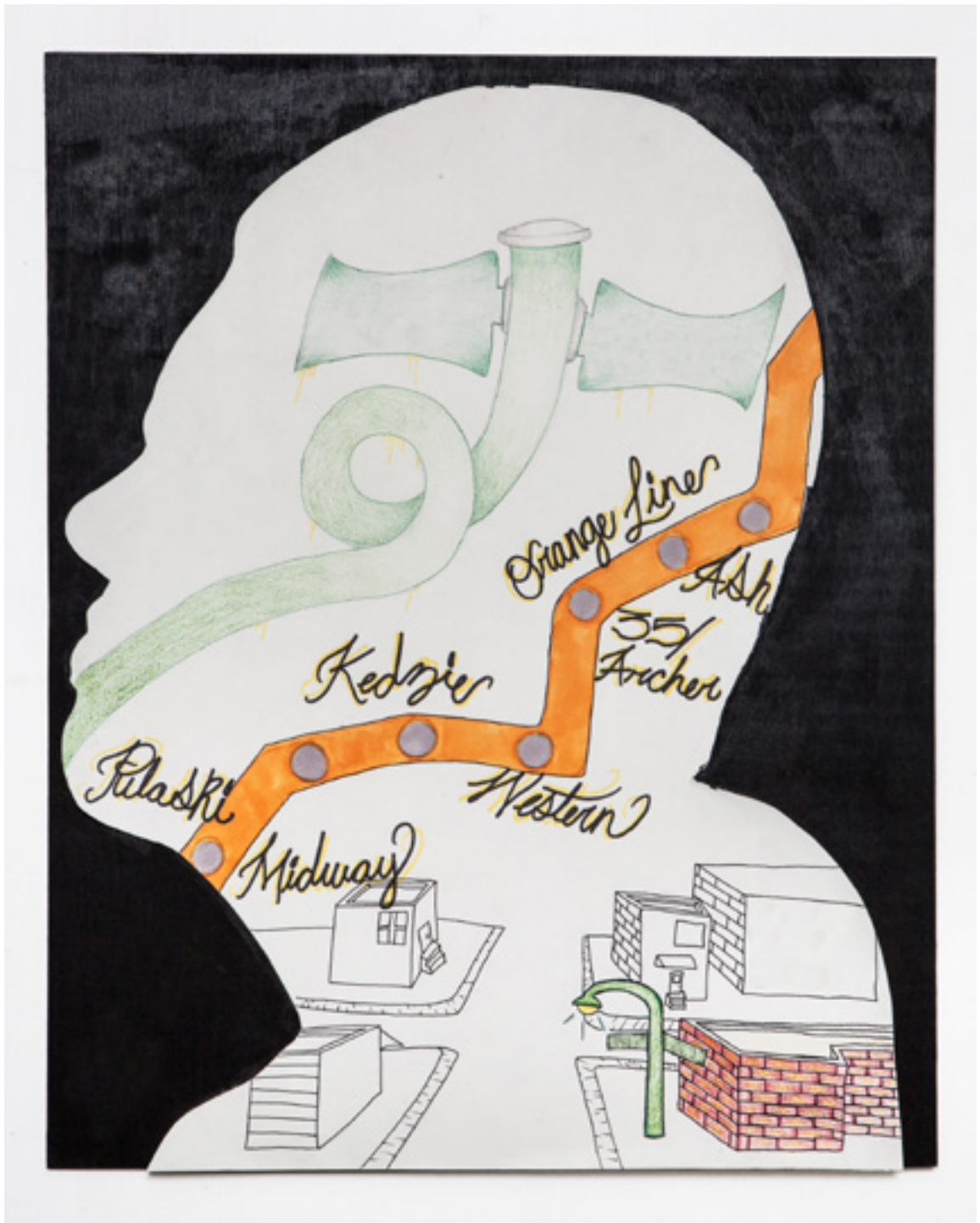
I LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE good is bad
is bad is good
where when you try to do good but all you get
is bad, like when you try to get a job and all
you hear is
“HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CONVICTED
OF A CRIME”
so you go,
BACK TO THE DOG EAT DOG WORLD,
BACK TO THE GET IT WHEN YOU
CAN,
BACK TO THE GODDAMN BLOCK,
where we wasn't raised to say he a KING and
she a QUEEN
it's more like he a OPP and she a THOT.

I LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE people are
happy with things just the way they are.
Like when we see ourselves as
athletes,
rapper,
entertainers,
lazy,
stupid,
pimps,
criminals,
worthless,
or superior to women and treat them like toys.
They convince you that you aren't capable and
don't deserve better, when really it's just white
america has more ADVANTAGES and black
america has more OBSTACLES.
What some whites don't realize is they're born
into a world and system that automatical-
ly puts them on top and us on the bottom
with other so-called minorities, poor people,
and people of color, fighting each other for

leftovers this is what I mean when I say people
are happy with things just the way they are.

I LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE a attack
happens almost just about in any way you can
think of
Unemployment, hunger which leads to
incarceration,
Liquor stores are on every corner, healthy
food is on no corner, the laws are unfair,
evictions, and Foreclose, diabetes, and high
blood pressure,
Schools with old wrong books and over-
worked teachers,
Garbage on the streets, garbage on the radio,
Drugs and guns, imported from outside the
community and POLICE and JUDGES act
like they're GOD.

I LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE they kinda
freed us
but started lynching us instead,
than changed their mind and let us vote,
go to their schools and get jobs only if
WE DRESSED, TALKED, AND
THOUGHT just like white people.
Now america doesn't need us for labor any-
more machines do all the work, so with fewer
jobs and proper education a lot of us COM-
MIT CRIMES that get us back in the
System AGAIN,
In chains AGAIN,
And working for free AGAIN,
So how many time will we allowing ourselves
to go backwards before we realize what world
we live in.



Orange Line (2018) acrylic and marker on wood Adam M.

Sergio B.

My City

House of lost souls,
house of guns and drugs
and women with thick thighs.
City brings money & blood.
City so Chicago-city take your shirt off
winter was too short.
I keep my 40 so I wont feel lonely.
City cold.
City bad.
When I say city rumble,
I mean the OJ,
I mean riding down the 3rd.
I mean hearing gunshots in the hood.
City tries to stay right
but city cant stop the wrongs.
In the city young people die
& some don't
Lets just say...
don't lose hope.
City bad..... City bad... City bad.

William B.

ROSELAND

I'm from roseland
were a lot of people don't make it out
mommy want you do good
but you choose another route
day going by you
hope you make it in the house
babies wild
no daddy's in their house whole
now you wishing you be rich
but things ain't going right

James M.

Elegy in West Garfield Park

(after Aracelis Girmay)

police sirens, drug dealers,
a church, trees

biker jeans, jordans, white
tank-tops, guns

beaming sunlight, green grass
fences, cars

addicts, mamas, children,
young gangbanger

old heads, gamblers
grandmas, squirrels

cats, hand-sized turtles,
chilly breeze, debris

white neighbors, pastors,
huge parking lot, a church van.



Levels of Destruction (2018) colored pencil on paper Oscar M.

Jabari J.

Westside

I'm from the westside of Chicago
everything is unique about my side of town
money
 parties
 peoples
 the vibe
 the music
 the places.
Ain't nothing better than being at a Fefe
everybody you know
 in a good mood
 where it aint no violence
everybody T'd having fun
 just vibing.

Brandon Y.

Late 80s in the Hood / Adventures of the lil homies from the hood / From Innocence to Alcoholic

My neighborhood is made up of a bunch of different characters. Like for instance, growing up on 100th street between Yates and Oglesby, it was the place to be for a kid. We had a restaurant owned and operated by Ray and his sister Rose, where you could buy burgers, fish sandwiches, ice cream, and play video games like Pac-Man, Donkey Kong, Kung Fu Master, and Centipede and also buy penny candy like Frooties, Big Bols, Chews and wine candy. On the corner was a corner store where you could buy toiletries, medical stuff like Band-Aids and peroxide and it also was a liquor store where all the local wine heads hung out. They all had great nicknames like “every now and then” and “Grip” and “Goodie” and “Smitty.” They always stood in front of the liquor store panhandling or like... they called it hustling. Even us little kids was fair game for them to ask for some spare change. I can still hear them now “what’s up lil soldier? Help me out wit a lil change so I can get me a taste.” And as soon as they got enough you would see them with a Pint or half pint of Night Train or Thunderbird. But once we turned teenagers and was drinking malt liquor like Old E, St. Ides, Private Stock, Crazy Horse, and Coqui 900, they came in handy to cop our beers for us for 25 or 50 cents. They would actually line up when they saw us coming.

Azariah

They Don't Know

Being the streets
aint nothing like being in here
but I rather be in here
then being out there
homies dying everyday
so I keeps droppin tears
I aint scared to die
but living I fear
I got so much pain in me
I can't even release
I can't let them see my cry
cause they'll think that Im weak
respect aint what I need
It's love that I seek
and with the love I seek
It keeps me on my feet
See the love to the game
is embedded in me
but the cleaver in me
knows then to get out of them streets
R.I.P Grandma cause you saw the good in me
You and my family been my priority
When they look at me
They see the hood in me
Can you converse with me
Cause things aint what it seems
See there's more to me then a clip and a beam
Cause Azariah got aspirations, goals, and dreams

Kenneth T.

The 8

Red tape on poles
Bullets holes that show hard times

Young youth like to play
But this block isn't safe

Broken glass. It will hurt
No grass all dirt

I grew up here. Ain't much changed.
Same people around. I know everyone's name.

Spray tagging from the gang
remember our brothers' names

We live on the 8. I love that block.
Even though it's where I got shot.

Christian G.

They Don't Know

How you gone tell how to live
you don't know my history
you don't know how it feels for somebody to turn yo story into "His-Story"
Terrorist
I won't call 'em slave owners
because they don't deserve it
They took our pride away
that's why ain't none of us kids safe.
They don't know
The only thing they care about is that \$ sign.

Dimeyon C.

POWER

Put the guns down in walk with power

Bang !!! shots fired black kid can't open his eyes.....He has a mother that's in pain and crying....over time we are decreasing off black on black crime in don't think I'm trying to rhyme this is history slavery started off us selling our own kind.

See 20 million people sold...in only 4% survive. You do the math, That means 19.2 million people died and not for us to keep committing homicides or answering fools with stupidity so they can think they wise. Put the guns down and walk with power. Bang... black kid open his eyes in walked with power.

Cheyenne S.

Elegy in a different life

(after Aracelis Girmay)

Red, White, and blue
most of these people ain't gotta clue

Been through hell and back I swear
I wish I could take it all back.

I did what I wanted while the rest
do what they can.

This life ain't meant for many so
watch out you're in my motherland.
Be careful how you move. People
try and act brand new

So watch out for the men in
dark blue. They're all out to get you.

Maria Gaspar

How to Build a Bridge

Radioactive: Stories from Beyond the Wall took place in Division V of the Cook County Department of Corrections (CCDOC), a division not unlike those at other detention facilities. The division is saturated with a yellowish tint of light, further accentuated by the bland walls that someone I know once described as “cement color, not actual color.” Most of the CCDOC uniforms are khaki. Once in a while, you can catch a whiff of an air freshener a guard placed in an office to help coat the stale scent of windowless rooms. Some of the facilities are now vacant, while others house about seventy-five people in two-tiered rooms with metal doors and chuckholes. A small but loud television plays a sports game. Our workshop room neighbored a barbershop training program. The gatherings inside the barbershop made it probably the most joyful place inside the facility. You could hear laughter, conversation, and music coming from a small portable radio. With my co-facilitator Michael De Anda Muñiz and several guest artists, we worked with two groups of men several days a week for three to four months each.

The Radioactive Ensemble, as the two groups would come to be known, consisted of thirty self-selected men. Some had interests in art and writing while others just wanted to leave their tiers and escape boredom. Together we talked about the power of metaphor through the work of Doris Salcedo and Assata Shakur. We developed a project influenced by artists like Krzysztof Wodiczko and discussed “hauntings” and “traces” in architecture as described by sociologist Avery Gordon. The ensemble then composed original narratives and recorded audio using their own voices to essentially personify a place of detention often stripped of its humanity, one which in turn also stripped them of their humanity. Over the duration of almost a year, their drawings and recordings were sound engineered and animated for public presentation. Hundreds of listeners tuned in to Lumpen Radio to hear the narratives, while those on-site experienced the narrated animation projected onto the largest and oldest concrete wall of the detention center, through a collaboration with Free Write Sound & Vision (S&V), a program of that is committed to social justice and employment equity in the arts industry. S&V hires and train alumni of Free Write Arts & Literacy and other marginalized young adults that have historically been excluded from the field. We support them as they make their way into an arts industry that is in need of a diverse, young workforce. Some ensemble members who had been released introduced the project and shared their experiences. *Radioactive* was one of many public art installations that grew out of the 96 Acres Project (2012-16), a series of community-engaged site interventions that examined the impact of mass incarceration on Chicago’s West Side.

One could say that my current art practice was influenced by my first visit to Cook County Jail at age 12. Not only did I grow up a couple blocks away from the facility, my first visit

to the jail made a lasting impression on me and my peers. As part of a “scared straight” program during grade school, my mostly Mexican and Mexican-American classmates and I experienced a day-long walk through of Division I. Most of us do not remember the entire visit, but rather distinct moments, such as the jail food we received for lunch, a firm bologna sandwich, or the ways in which the girls in our class were scolded for crossing our legs. I remember walking through the slim hallways of Division I, the iron bars, and the way my mostly white teachers scurried through the facility, scared. Although I lacked the political consciousness at this young age, something felt strangely familiar. The detained men looked like my neighbors, my family, and friends and I knew something was wrong with this image.

A large part of my work includes teaching through a community-engaged process, which is often slow-paced, responsive, and long-term. It is also a process influenced by the civic and creative history of a place like Chicago, where the city’s mural movement has historically lifted up the voices of Black and Brown communities or how cultural organizations, like the South Side Community Art Center or Casa Aztlán emerged through the organizing efforts of artists and culture workers and dedicated themselves to social justice issues relevant to their neighborhoods. In fact, there are many other local groups across the city committed to the generating work that is both political and poetic.

Without going into the history of prisons and jails, we know that places of detention are meant to confine and limit the body (and mind). So, how do we create liberatory gestures in places of captivity? How do we enact freedom? How do we generate joy, love, and tenderness in a place that feels cold and rigid? When I consider the work of Free Write Arts & Literacy, I begin to understand exactly how one can push against these realities and how important and vital their work in Chicago has been. From working inside the Juvenile Detention Center to producing opportunities for young people who were formerly incarcerated through their Sound & Vision program, Free Write Arts & Literacy is distinct in their pedagogy, experimental in their creative process, and most importantly, committed to young people through their generous and tender work. Although our society perpetrates a culture of dis-belonging, especially towards young people, Free Write embodies the opposite and incites a liberatory space for creative expression.

If I recall my first visit to Cook County Jail, I would have preferred seeing a program like Free Write, instead of a “scared straight” program. Instead of feeling fear from my surroundings, I may have felt joy. Instead of feeling threatened by guards, I may have felt loved. Instead of feeling stuck, I may have felt a sense of freedom and that freedom could be attained. If Free Write was a program we had visited in my youth, perhaps more of us would be fighting against oppressive systems and working towards building a world without prisons. Young people should feel self-determined, loved and listened to; they should feel like they belong and that they can shine. Free Write represents a possibility, an opening, or a bridge. And sometimes all we need to know is that there is something more out there and that we can get there and get there safely.

IV

All the
People!



Untitled (2018) collage Sergio B.

Richard S.

Hands

Hands to hug hands to write stories, poems, songs. Hands to eat food hands to play video games hands to love hands to drive hands to work hands to cook dinner hands to wash hair hands to wash dishes hands to play spades, black jack hands to use computers hands to type poems and stories hands to paint pictures hands to put a ring on my wife's finger hands to read a book, the bible hands to do sign language hands to do contractor work hands to block hits hands to grab a big booty hands to hold a cane hands to put on clothes hands to put on shoes hands to share any and everything hands to rub your head when you have waves like me.



Untitled (2018) collage Keon F.

Dominick D.

Dreams

They say this reality
But the stuff I was doing makes it feel like a fantasy
the things you be dreaming of doing
I've been did it
waiting for that to happen to you
is like waiting for it to rain on a sunny day
Don't wait for the opportunity
You gotta make it happen for yourself
I can show you the path
Only you can choose how to take it .

Aaliyah R.

LOVE IS

Love is painful,
hurtful
can barely tell when a person love is true
how can love be true
when the person isn't true to you.
The feeling can't be described
or said in a way for anyone else's understanding,
now you telling me you love me
but I can't see it in your eyes
the action you showing me got me going crazy.
Do you really care?
Or is it just fake?
Now love is just NOTHING
because when the person you love
don't love you back
what's the point of love ..
Because that's exactly what LOVE IS!

Dominick D.

REALIZATION 7,15,18

I learned from the old me
Get caught up in that jam
Bet chu only be there lonely
Learned from my past mistakes
Realizing what's at stake
Facing the judge face to face
She's calling people case by case
While I look through my families eyes
Seeing nothing but tears on their face
So I smile
Hoping their tears evaporate
I know it caused them pain
Seeing their child in chains.

Chanel H.

Sister, Sister

under the skin
we met in the mirror
my imagination superimposed
for one split second
ready or not-
I peer into your deep soul
diving deep.
landing in a pool of pain
as salty and familiar,
as the tears on my cheek.
your eyes don't like what they see-
you don't wanna be me.
so you curse and smashed the mirror
which gives you what?
Bit of blood,
handful of glass splinters
and another source of pain...

Shanna W.

Love

love is a crazy thing
I don't really know what love mean
Broke my heart
made me didn't believe a thing
mama told me it's a feeling above
but everything's done
from the pain 2 the saddest
to the abuse and madness
I just wanna feel the passion
hop on the love wagon
tears down my face
I really made a mistake
I shouldn't love you every day
it sad I feel this way
deep down I just wonder why do my niggas have to die I guess that the meaning of love
when u can kiss and huh
and make a poetry of love
I can feel it in my feet in my heart
ion know when it starts but it made me fall apart
ended up with a broken heart
should have thought start smart

J.Sales 5K

She Inspires Me

To be the best I can be
To think I can fly without wings
To be 100% sure she's there for me
Even through what I go through
Anything for her
Blood, sweat, and tears into her
Dig, shovel, and run for her
Kill, steal and build anything for her
My Mother



Untitled (2018) collage Landon

Dominick D.

Images

In my head I'm walking through the fires of hell
The pressure of the heat keeps rising & rising
I see him in my sleep but
I cant speak
I try & wake up but I stay asleep
Sometimes it don't feel like a dream cause it repeats & repeats
It's like a horror film that will make you not want to sleep
I see the sins I've committed I think it's a sign of where I'm going when I'm not livin.

Oscar M.

Repent

Stop to think
The thought to stop,
salute the fault that fought for rights, thank em',
time fasts forward to the second before, Was',
Was is best of legacies,
the time before your time is your best memory,
I can't even blink, just to think, before a blink will be your last,
A young soul on my shirt, I miss em', to watch his son grow up to disaster,
not even a pastor or the creator master can save this soul,
the common repeat "poppa is gone to work", hurt in solemn fo' years until the
truth "he's gone since the day I made this shirt" comes out,
it's too many tombstones,
I said, It's too many tombstones,
Gang violence, graduating in the streets limit is higher than diplomas,
Moment of silence for a sec,
For the deceased and the ones that's life time facing in a deck, so
STOP to think the thought to stop the mayhem.

Devante W.

San Francisco, CA

If I had to move, and only had room for important things to bring, I would bring my father's picture, him in his captain's button-up shirt, showing us that a Black man can succeed in a mostly white town. I would bring his axe. I had the head dipped in a nickle finish, the wood sand-blasted and re-sprayed, making the handle look as if it is a fresh piece of oak. I would also bring my medals that I received in the Army—my bronze star, my combat badge, my strips and my Airborne wings.

All I've listed was earned. Everything else can be re-purchased.

Javier O.

Untitled

They who hold guns and stand
on the block risking
their lives for one another.
Doesn't make sense what they're fighting
for, but I am not one to judge.
I was in their shoes once.
They have nothing to lose.
You feel the world ganging up
on you; when you hear shots
on the block you better shoot
back and defend yourself. Don't let
yourself get killed. You have
to survive in these cold streets
'cause when you die, your homies
will continue as if you were
locked up how we are now.
But you leave your mom
in pain forever

Raziyah H.

Loving Soul

I picked my grandma
she is always on my team
never gives up
even when stuff gets rough
one thing I know
she will always be right by my side.
Also, Grandma has a good head on her
she makes everyone happy
somehow.
Some way
my grandma is never wanted for anything
she is positive & has a good loving heart.
She was there when I wanted to give up.
Now she is still on my team.

Frankie R.

HEART

Some people HEART's so cold it will freeze the heat Others so warm and loving it's like watching a sun set rise till its peak Some live life guided by their mind Some follow their HEART trying to find a potion of love I believe they're connected to land you Where your destined to be HEART beat unique But if you find a companion it will link to another soul And beat as a Whole

Andrew Z.

where we stand???

look girl this kites for you
& i'm just tryna explain
what I been going thru
kick back & hear this pain
Yeah I been gone a while
I know some shit has changed
but i'm always gonna love you
that'll stay the same
& I know they out there talking
how i'll be gone forever
girl just stick with me
through all the stormy weather
& I hope it's not too late
by the time you get this letter
cuz we been falling off
& it's hurting more than ever
& I heard you moving on
You on to something new
but i'm still holding on
I cant let go of you

look girl you been there for me
& I appreciate it
all them letters & the visits & them
conversations
last night I had a dream
about just you & me
it was freshman year
my favorite memories
& if I make it home
is you gone take me back?
Do you love that nigga?
Is you happy where you at?
& girl i'm sorry for
all your time I waste
I just hope you know
you're someone I can't replace
& have you been missing me
like I been missing you?
Girl just write me back
let me know is we really thru.

V

Free Me!!

Derrick W.

A SECOND CHANCE

A 2nd Chance at being free from captivity feels like
being a boulder lifted off you
A 2nd chance to smell fresh air our Holy one has created
A chance to see little faces and giggles that admire me
A chance to rethink my decisions A chance to be loved again A chance to honor and
appreciate your freedom
A chance to think twice before pulling that trigger
A 2nd is a chance you may never get again
so while that chance is in yo reach grab it
and run with it
because the Holy one has put it there for you
A chance to fall asleep on your own
A chance to wear your own clothes
A chance to feed yourself
A chance to close and lock your door
A chance that beats any gift you ever gotten
A CHANCE AT FREEDOM AGAIN !!!

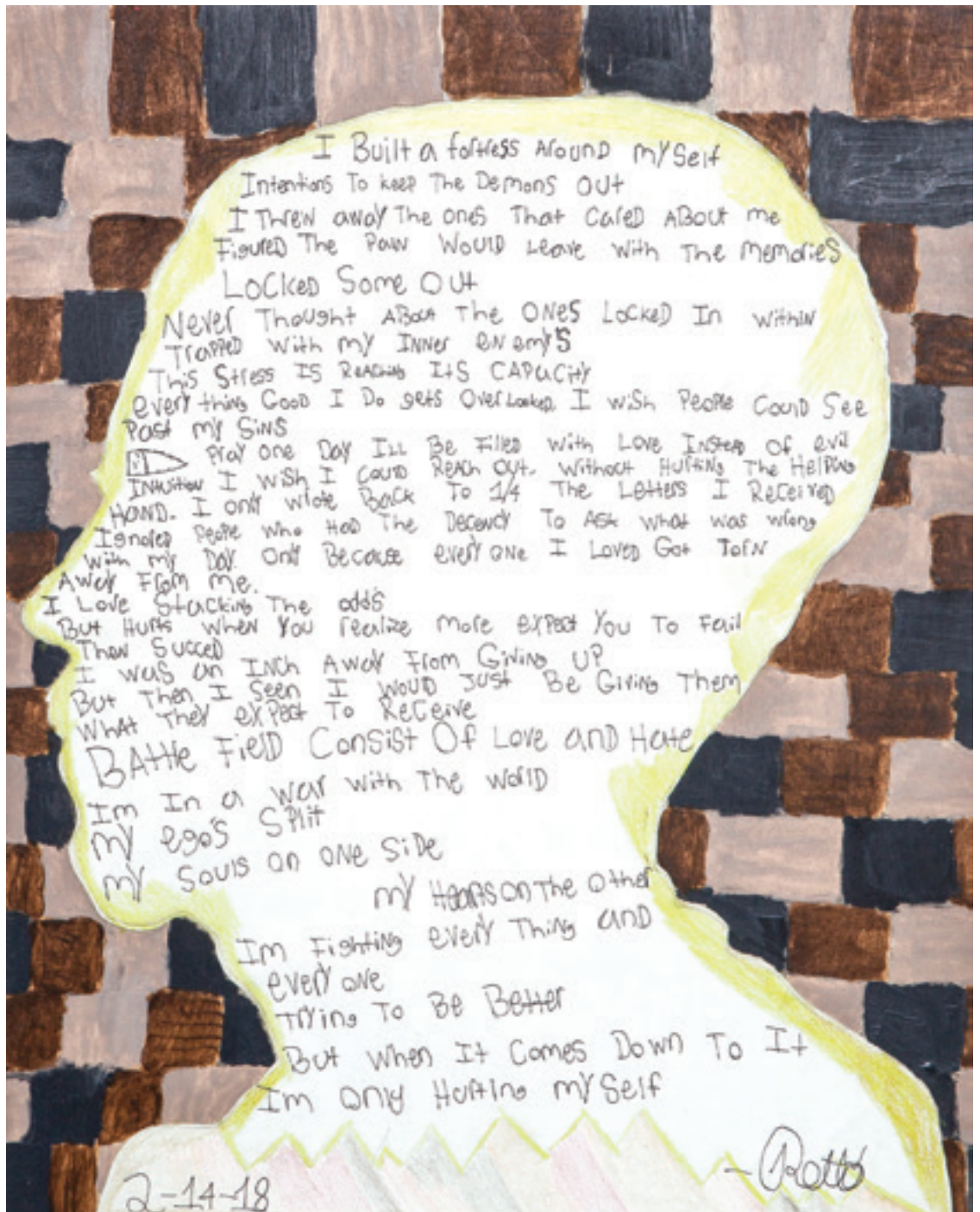


Oscar M.

Survive the system

System just hit ya,
Life sentence cant take it
So face it
Your now a mister,
So many shot, rob, lie
Get jammed and become a Christian,
Only the toughest lace it,
Associate with the racist
the weak wait in a patient
RACE
and keynote
Something I thought you would want to know
I been in the position
Did 21 consecutively
So many birthdays and holidays
I spent in a population of 10
Unsegregated
We mixed from different neighborhoods,
Nobody understood
How it really feels
Not leaving the 16 room moniterized
15 camera type
Emotionally fight
Demons inside
Angel outside
Visitation only lasts 45
And lets match it to the 45 the minor got
Because he was systematized
And the system lied
Moms in the court couldn't take
It was like retaliation
She couldn't fake it
So in public cried
They ask poor momma stay strong
He'll be back in no time
She screams and yells

On the ground he fell
And asked god please give my son a bail
Double sentence in reception was confused
Things got hectic
All the years he couldn't help it
Yes he felt it
he calls it life
And that's how he dealt with it



Fortress (2018) acrylic and marker on wood Frankie R.

Frankie R.

TRAPPED

Waking up feeling the same pain
No where to go so I remain in the same lane
Hoping this darkness changes to a bright stage
Wishing I could turn back time to them good ole days
When my moms used to sing me to sleep,
and wake me up to eat
We were living lavish
It was me and my sister with no cares in the world
We just wanted to act grown
Now I'm locked up trapped all on my own while shes siting back trying to raise
two baby girls all on her own
Deep down we know that all we can do is remain Humble, hope and pray that one
day we make it out of these dark stages
I honestly made a lot of mistakes for a 17 year old
But now I know its time for me to change
Looking down this path I'm not trying to be 6 feet deep or locked up doing life
Time to rehabilitate, kickback and stand to my feet
And show the people I'm more then a piece of crap
I can see the future through this thick glass
I see more for myself than chain shackles and county slacks
I'm not trying to watch my nieces grow up through a thick piece of glass

Najee

What I'm feeling about what's going on in my head when I'm locked up in my room

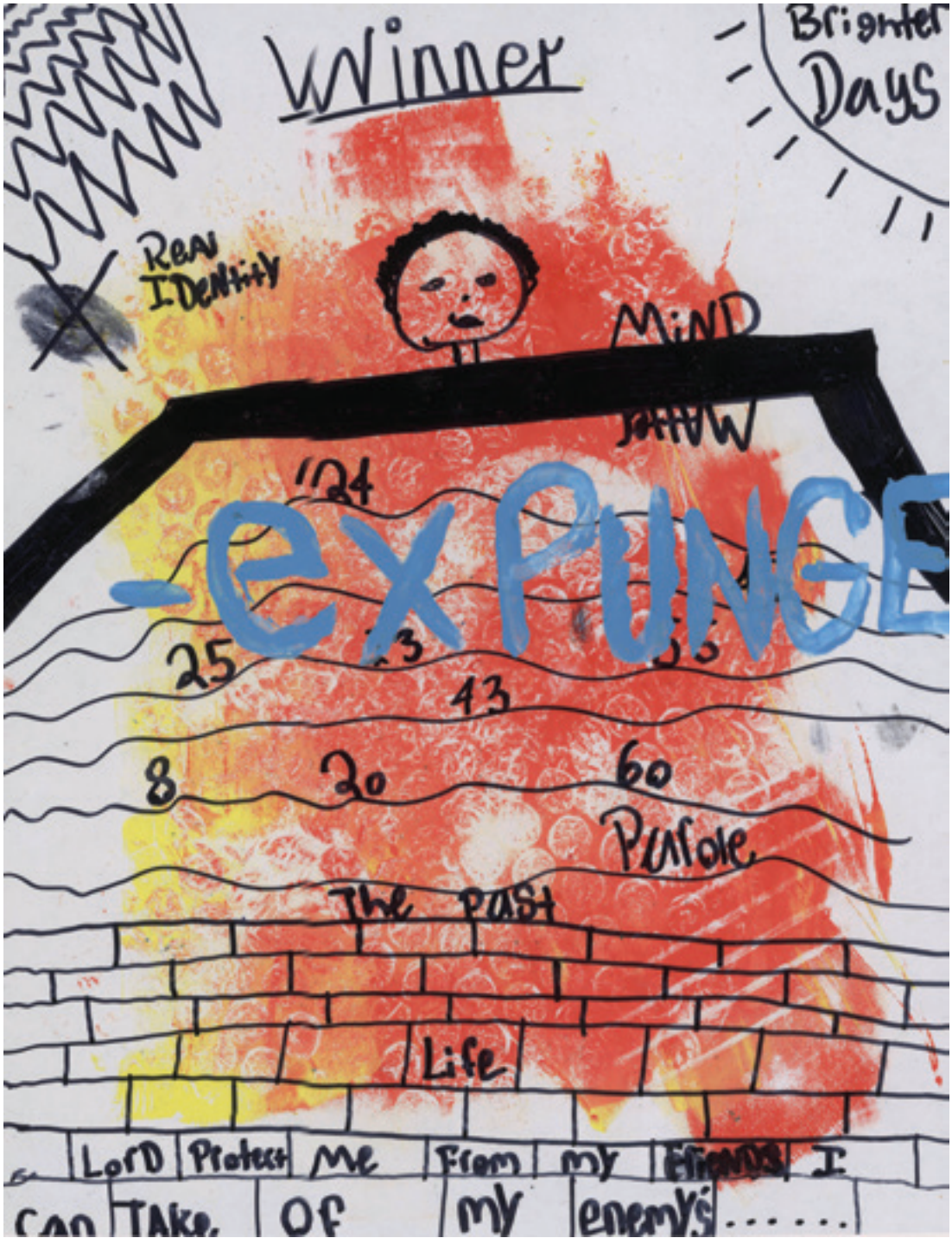
Stay out the way. Get the mind right.
It ain't easy to walk down the wrong block
and get harassed by cops

In 2018 I claim to be better do better for myself and not tryna do bad; to support what I don't have. Try not to see jail in 2018; be a better example for my family and get this money and stay in school and separate myself from the crooks and thieves and sit down and get my mind right and think about life and get a better understanding of what's going on in the real world and not in jail, but outside of here. I raise a glass to all the good I've been doing in here.

Destine P.

Time On My Hands

738 days, I stand here reflecting on all the time I Wasted, Wasted, Wasted
Brown Girl,
Accused,
Judged,
Lock Away,
The first thing you wanna see me do is cop out and take a plea
Nahh not me I have a DESTINY,
Everyday I walk through these halls all I see is black faces,
Would you call this the NEW slavery



Untitled (2018) jelli print Frankie R.

Sergio B.

Untitled

All that you touch becomes new.

All that new becomes old.

It becomes old because you are no longer new to it.

It changes. It changes you in a way of you wanting something new.

New always gets old and new isn't always nice or pretty.

But if that new is something good then enjoy it while it last.

Christian

Freedom

When I say freedom I don't just mean getting out of jail, I mean I can walk down the street with clothes that's twice my size and nobody can say or do anything to me, or when I got inside a store people don't look at me crazy because my skin color or I also can be riding in a car and the police pull me over because of my skin color I feel bad for the way I disrespected my father and mother I don't wish to be looked at as a person people don't wanna be around or can't succeed I really believe I can make it as long as I'm freed

Crandall W.

My List of Inner-strengths

My daydreams
are full of passionate ambitious
wants and needs
that set afloat
when no one is talking to me,
or when they're talking to me
and are making
completely no sense at all,
but I struggle
to listen and pay attention
and hope that they didn't notice
that I had
drifted off in the first place:
a 2003 Impala, fully loaded,
that I never had
but still want to this day.
With my foot on the gas pedal,
it took me away
from my mother's curb,
with my face kissing the air
as I propelled
through the sunny streets of Chicago
blasting away
the best rap music
that anyone's ever heard.
The car is a magic trick, it fills voids.
Its siblings are my favorite of collections.
I would drive it to smithereens,
with my hands
still gripping the steering wheel,
James Dean '55.
15 steps from the bullpen
to the bench in court
and hear the words "you are free to go"

from my judge
who doesn't pound a gavel,
but knows in his own heartbreak that he's made
the right decision
to send me back
to society.
Then I can be reunited
with my daughter on a cloudy day
when after we embrace,
she'd show me her phone
and i'd see all the selfies
that she never sent me
and i'll feel sad about it
but still have the strength
to dress up in clean clothes
and go to the movies with hereditary to see a
film
that excites us both
and makes a good memory.
My daydreams are powerful.
They keep me strong
and I am grateful for them.

Some people in here say that the television is
an idiot box.

I say
that it's the greatest source of information
that we have
to keep us connected to the outside world
since we can't have newspapers.
Whether it's institutionalization
or a clearly consistent routine,
I always come out of my cell
the exact same way

and do the same thing everyday:
property bag and blanket in hand
to sit in my favorite spot
on the second bench
to tune in to the big screen
and tune out the loud & wild dayroom
that is also known as the block
because it actually does
have an alley.
There I would gradually
warm the steel under my rear end
and become fascinated
by all the celebrities of today
who have no problems
with sharing their lives on social media
and learn of all the latest fashion trends
that have dictated
the pace of our country
in terms of expression and direct messages.
Or watching old movies
that put me in the days
when i'd never doze off on a school night,
but sit in class the next morning
and try to rest until the teacher made me stand
up
and the other students laughed at me.
It's funny to see
that I have the same emotions
about these things
that I had as a kid
and be able to stay in truth
that pop culture and the world of entertain-
ment
was part of my upbringing.

If it wasn't for the television,
I might be sucked
into the depths of blindness
and have a high aggression level
like a lot of my peers
who can't sit still
and take a breath.
The television is my mental escape
from behind the lines of confinement
when the pages of a book
has run out of pictures
to show me.

Calling myself a caged animal
or simply saying
that I am locked up like an animal
is as cliché
as saying that my mind
is as free as a bird
because of my ability to have free thought
while going through
a very tough situation:
my deepest thoughts are phenomenal
in ways in which they have
befriended me
into a life of blessings from God
because of my patience
for all things worthwhile
like a small dose of friendship
while under my circumstances
and a considerable future
upon my release.
It's more to me than meets the eye.
My deepest thoughts include

a nice and spacious home
that I can share with someone
who loves me
and together we'll enjoy
every moment of hugs and triumphs
when after a hard day's work
we'll look at each other
and give thanks to the fact
that we've made it so far
with the promises that we made
to never give up
on the love that has blossomed
and has come to define us
over the years
while the world kept turning.
I just want to be happy
in the life
that was given to me
and scream "yes" at the top of my lungs
when I get anxious
and dopamine causes spasms
to my body
like volts of electric shock.
My deepest thoughts
were born out of boredom
from when I awoke
and found myself drenched in sweat
after realizing
that everything in the world should start off slow;
I want it all
to go slow.
All things mentioned here are coping mechanisms
that I use
to combat the injustice
that was bestowed to me
when the cuffs hit my wrists
which all takes place in my mind
on a daily basis
when I am walking
my laps.

Randall Horton

{#289-128} PROPERTY OF THE STATE: DON'T TRUST THE PROCESS

wait & waiting & weight—
naked stand before a guard
you are now quite invisible

will not materialize through
iron nor the ignorant—
nothing changes nothing:

intake, property, medical
seize a piece of humanity
each destination a moral point

converging towards a cell
hidden in the open by a lie
no one really believes unless

given a grand tour via hands
handcuffed to hard plastic
behind the back pulled tight

no money no phone call no bail:
product for expenditure.
.or. process as prosecution

for the good of the people,
dante & duncan said. the most
abused of an unrighteous order

wrote the soledad brother.
good people do not reside here—
screaming in a dark ocean

the body is not constitutional
becomes more effective than
yelling this set-up ain't right!

IN CONVERSATION

with writings by

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