

HOPE
WORKS
HOWARD COUNTY
2020



Dragonfly

arts magazine



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arts magazine
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HopeWorks' mission is to support and advocate for people in Howard County affected by sexual and intimate partner violence and to engage the community in creating the change required for violence prevention.

"Insight, I believe, refers to the depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another."

- Mary Catherine Bateson

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COVER ART: **YOU HAVE NO IDEA BY NATASHA TIERRA**

DISCLAIMER

The artistic expressions in this publication are those of the individual authors and artists and do not necessarily reflect the philosophies, position or policies of HopeWorks.

It is not by chance that our arts magazine is entitled Dragonfly.

The dragonfly has been a centuries old symbol for change – a special type of transformation, one wrought from crisis but ending in

self-realization and liberation. This experience is often reflected in the lives of the people we serve

at HopeWorks, and you'll hear it in some of the voices on the pages to follow. This transformation is rarely an easy one and as humans, we sometimes feel so very limited in how to bare the intensity of our thoughts and feelings. This struggle to create something beautiful and inspirational from pain is somehow mystical and pedestrian at the same time – something that is hard to fathom, yet a common daily occurrence.



Congratulations to each of our contributing artists who were brave enough to articulate their own deep emotions and unique perspectives on life.

Self-expression through art gives wind to the wings of the dragonfly and we thank these artists who were generous enough to give us a window into their transformational journeys.

Vanita

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*HopeWorks is Howard County's sexual and intimate partner violence center. We are here for our clients completely.
And we are agents of change. Hope builds momentum and momentum creates change...when we work together.*

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SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING TO SAY

BY ROSEMARY KLEIN

Here is how you find your voice. You look
for it in places where it's never been, even
sometimes where it had no desire
to ever arrive or leave.

When you find it you throw it
over your shoulder and hope
that it snags someone's heart
and makes someone's life (even
yours maybe) better, as good
as freedom really feels or
buttered toast tastes.

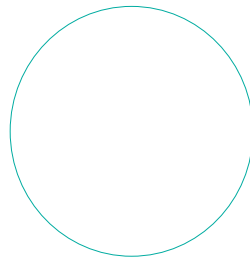
You let your voice dress
the way it wants and take
the path less traveled
as well
as shortcuts.

You let your voice ruminate
and fade. And then glare
like a spotlighted sun.

You let your voice lollygag
in the past, roar into the future,
and just live and learn today.

You let your voice speak
for the voiceless and hopeless.
You let your voice speak for you.

© 2020 Rosemary Klein



JOURNAL ENTRIES

BY M.E. WILLIAMS

March 4, 2019

I want to heal so badly, but I don't know what will be left of me once I do.

January 9, 2020

I am so much more than you.

I am the pride in her eyes, the love on his lips and the joyful owner of my own heart.

I am each crunching step through the snow, each butterfly stroke, and each daily sun salutation
moving through momentary pain and breathlessness to be warmer and stronger in my body.

I am my garden, carefully nursed to life with sweet words and soft kisses
we are learning together to root and regrow no matter the season.

I am the warm orange glow of the sun welcoming each new day as I flow through the trees,
moonlight shining through the bedroom blinds
reflecting, making warmth and waves,
always present even as I phase in and out of the spotlight.

I am every freckle on my skin and every line of laughter
that will one day replace every fading scar from you. My body may always remember you,
but soon your marks on me will be gone.

I am still in flight when I smell your cologne, and
when I see someone your height in a green sweater
when I think of that day that I bled on the lawn
but I am no longer frozen in fear.

My body has learned that she can breathe you out of her memory.

I am still in fight when I sense pain in my sisters. I am that connection between us
I know those eyes. I know that voice. They were mine once. I have been there.
(To my beautiful sisters: Stay strong. You are perfect. You will be safe soon.)

I see myself in others who have been down this road
our meeting eyes share all our stories without saying a word.
We all know how it feels
leaving. grieving. growing. shedding.
relapsing. recovering. relapsing. recovering. relapsing. recovering.
feeling. healing.

I am safe, five hundred miles and ten years and counting away.
In the words of a wise teacher of mine, I am learning to find peace in the chaos.
I am still the same, and I am living proof that my body is mine.
Today I've made an important discovery
I am finally free.

© 2020 M.E. Williams

LICENSE TO ABUSE

By SANDRA BOURDEAUX

“I am your mother.”

“I gave you life.”

This was her license to abuse.

“I am your husband,” or “I am your wife.”

This gives them a license to abuse.

“I bought dinner.”

“I paid off your loan.”

They purchased their license to abuse.

“I’ve had a bad day,

Pour me a drink”

He needs an excuse to abuse.

“What will the children,

or our family think?”

If you take back her license to abuse?

“I’m sorry I hurt you

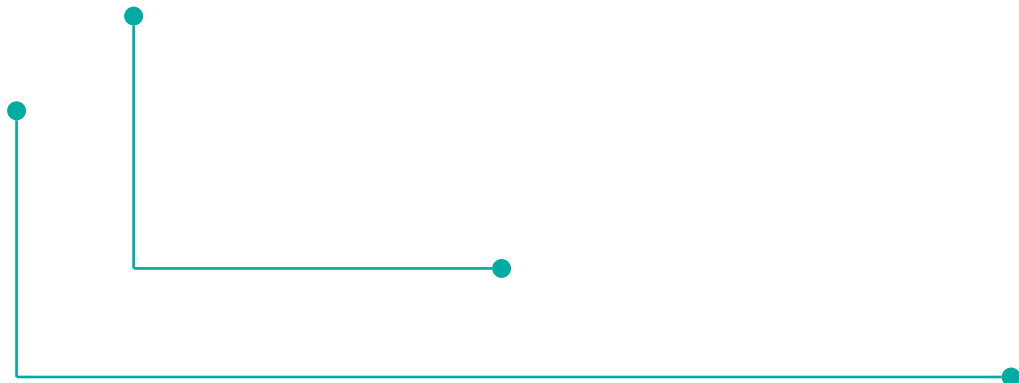
(But I couldn’t care less)”

I just needed someone to abuse!

30 years and a million tears,
silently screaming so nobody hears.

Until one day you turn
and finally learn...
there was never a license to abuse.

© 2020 Sandra Bourdeaux



HOSTAGES

BY TOM BALLE

How is it
the innocent ones always suffer the most?

This time
weeping children
torn from their families,
taken hostage along our border.

One dreams a different scenario
about a group that would be
equally shocked,
reluctant to be taken hostage -
our president, senators, representatives from
the house.
Time to round this group up,
hold them hostage instead.

Locate that abandoned warehouse in D.C.
Tear their children from them.
(Would all their children weep?)

Confiscate passports
begin the strip searches
march them with arms up
into the detention center,
three hots and a cot
an hour a day for exercise.

No need to be cruel,
do offer them asylum.
Outline clear paths to regain their citizenship.
Give these paths simple names, ones
even they could understand, like

DOING YOUR JOB

or

HOW TO LEAD

Release takes place en masse
when they learn to

work together
not disparage each other,
unite not divide,
lead not pander,
create policies

that serve all
not just some.

A patient America waits,
talking heads speculate without end.
How long will it take,
days, weeks, months, years?

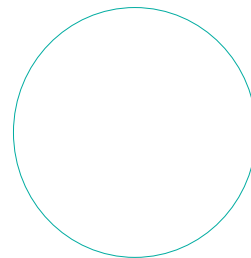
This dream, this whole hostage scenario
sounds harsh, you say?

We, the people of the United States

would do such a thing

*in order to form a more perfect Union,
establish Justice,
ensure domestic Tranquility,
provide for the common defense,
promote the general Welfare and
secure the Blessings of Liberty
to ourselves and our posterity.*

© 2020 Tom Balles



ALEJANDRO
OIL ON CANVAS
BY TOMER PERETZ

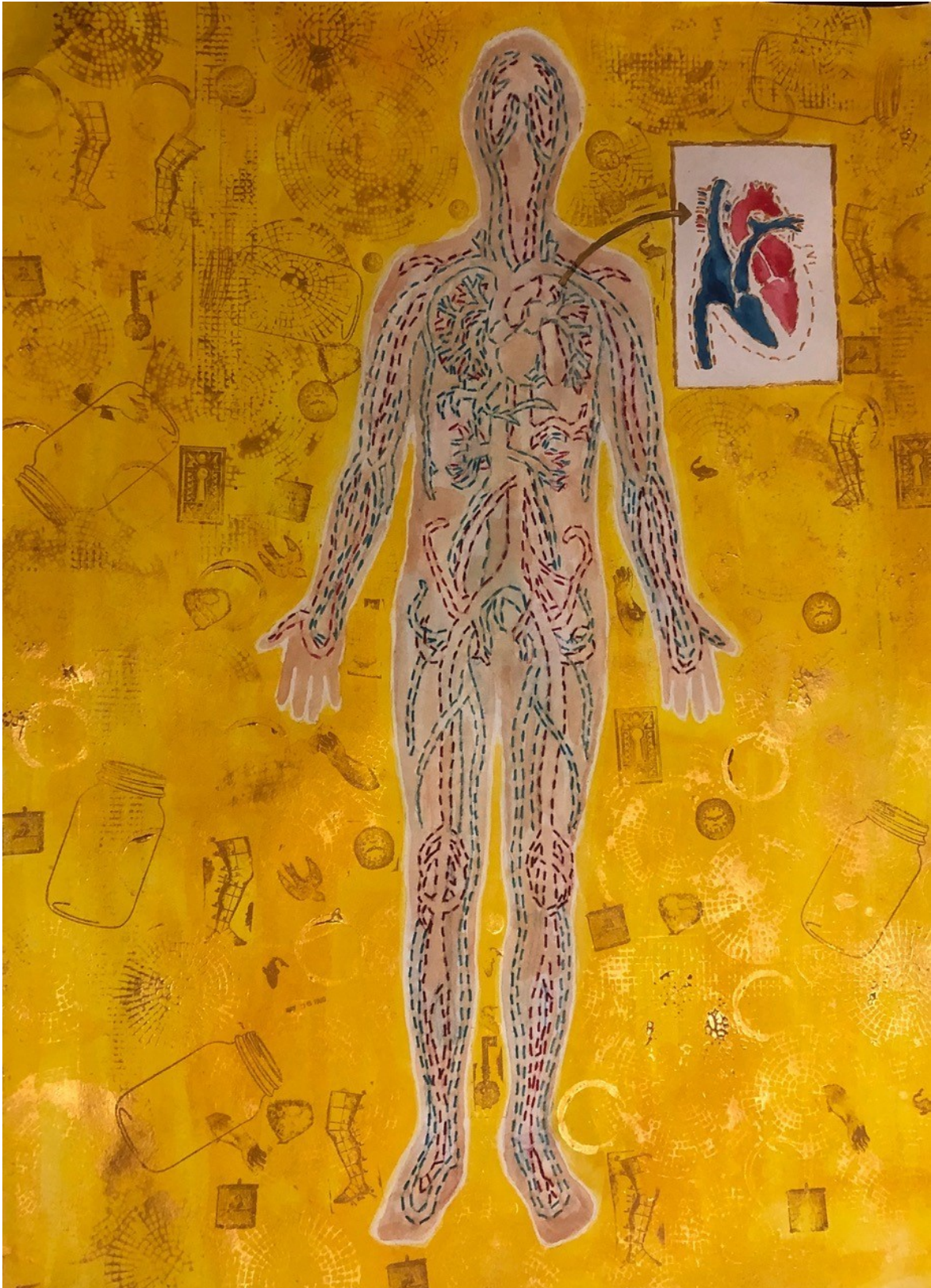


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BREATHING IN THE FOUNTAIN

MIXED-MEDIA COLLAGE

BY AMANDA BECHTEL



© 2020 Amanda Bechtel

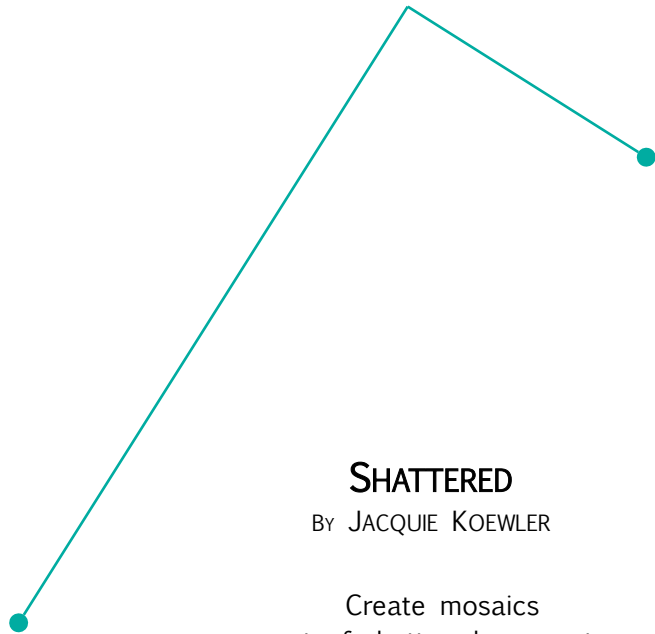
I KNOW

BY CALLEN HARTY

I know what happened to you
even though you cannot say it,
because I hear it in the words you do not say,
and I see it in your eyes,
in the way your body hides its secrets.
I see me in your eyes
and the way your body hides its secrets.
And I know.
I know the truth that your eyes
want to hide from the world.
And I want you to know
that the man who touched you,
who hurt you, abused you,
doesn't want you to know
that it was not your fault.
It was not your fault.
It is his burden, not yours.
But he wants you to believe
that no one will believe
you
if you say a word.
I believe you, even in your silence.
He wants you to believe that it was you
who invited his hands, his mouth, his . . .
other parts of his body
to join with yours.
Know that it was not you.
It was not your invitation.
It was not your fault.
It was not what you wanted.
He wants you to believe that because your body
reacted naturally
that you shared equally in the act.
Know that it was your body reacting naturally—
not your heart, your mind, your soul.
Not you.
I know.
I know it was not something you wanted.
You know it was not something you wanted.
Believe yourself.
I know also that you feel shame,
that you are afraid to speak,
that you are afraid,
and I understand the fear.

But know that I have heard you speak
despite your silence—because of your silence—
and I will hold it all with you.
When you are ready
I will be ready with you.
I will hold it all with you in brotherhood,
and when that time comes
his lies, your fear, the shame, guilt, horror,
all of it,
will start to slip through your fingers
and you will be able to touch
the truth that is now hidden behind your eyes.
Know that I will be there with you,
that I will hold it with you,
and that it will be the beginning of healing.
Your eyes will open, tears will fall,
and you will know then with certainty
it was not what you wanted.

© 2020 Callen Harty



SHATTERED

BY JACQUIE KOEWLER

Create mosaics
out of shattered moments.

© 2020 Jacquie Koewler

ONE SUNDAY

BY ZILKA JOSEPH

I saw you three darling little girls
in the parking lot of the Avon Road
K-Mart in Rochester Hills. A pink vision

of innocence in your silky Sunday frills,
white stockings, patent leather
shoes, and you stood there holding

hands, waiting obediently while
your mother, wearing a yellow suit,
locked her green Town and Country

van. You were a trinity
of perfect cherubs all in a row
and as loveable as the foreign-

made dolls I had played with as a child
in Kolkata. Your light brown hair
tumbling from bright bows

the way my own long ringlets once
poured over my shoulders. How
I wanted to pick you up in my arms

and cuddle you. But I beamed
like a lighthouse instead, reckless
and strong as the tropical sun and suddenly

you saw me staring—three pairs of honey
eyes met mine. As if in a Broadway musical,
and right on cue, your soft mouths

dropped open. But there was no sound.
I was in a silent film where your mother shot
a strange glance at me, grabbed

your hands, and you were whipped
around like little puppets, pulled
through the doors of the store

by your mother. You disappeared
in a moment. Dizzy, I loaded
my bags into the trunk

of my blue Honda Civic, my own brown
eyes looking back at me in the reflection
of sun-scorched steel, the light strange but

briefly sizzling through the fog
that filled my head. Few here
look like me. Heading home,

my hands shaking on the wheel,
I told myself forget it, forget it—
it was only surprise that scared them.

© 2020 Zilka Joseph



WINTER SUNSET, LAKE ERIE

COLLAGE

BY DIANE B. DUNN



© 2020 Diane B. Dunn

EYE CONTACT
WATERCOLOR & COLORED PENCIL
BY REBECCA HASENAUER



© 2020 Rebecca Hasenauer

LOUDER THAN MONSTERS

BY CALLA FUQUA

I can't unhear your ignorance,
I can't unsee your belligerence,
The potential difference you swore you'd make,
and the carnivorous path
You chose to take.
You are louder than monsters.

Heaven must scare you and
your desire to dissipate,
Your chance to incriminate,
the problems you exacerbate,
I can't articulate your need to intoxicate.
Your laughter is louder than monsters.

You fabricate your pity, you pretend to give,
as you wait for me to forgive,
That night I have to relive when I dream, of
our short-lived view of how happiness seemed.
Back then how could I have known that you
were louder than monsters.

Your grip on me becomes tighter,
the more your desire for me expires,
The more you secretly become a liar, and the
more I ask myself why her?
Her voicemails are louder than monsters.

I end up on the floor, after you hit me
and you swore, You don't say I love you
anymore, the way you used to before,
And now I'm just your little whore,
you pretend to love as if it's a chore.
Your silence is louder than monsters.

I pray for you and the guilt you must feel,
screaming out our window,
frantic to appeal, for the pain
you caused solely so you can heal.
Your lies are louder than monsters.

You laugh when I say no, giving me
a messed-up world you pretend to know,
Now it's my turn to outgrow you
and your plateau, the one you promised
To let go. While I undergo the pain
you overflow.
My screams are louder than monsters.

I still tell myself you love me after you throw
your fists, holding tight to my wrists,
As I keep allowing the crimes you commit,
to become imprints from the pain you inflict.
This pain is louder than monsters.

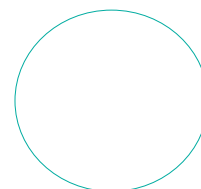
Now, nobody seems sincere, every scar is like
a souvenir, You leave me speechless,
when you sip your beer, like you didn't just
make my whole world disappear,
like you didn't cause these wasted tears.
You say you are not louder than monsters.

All I can do now is reminisce, look back on
moments like our first kiss,
Before you led me into this abyss, before I
was unable to dismiss the thought,
"What kind of monster does this?"
Someone who doesn't know
he is louder than monsters.

I dream about the day I can throw out your
ashtray, The day I can cast away you whole,
no more arms to control my body's soul,
A day where I no longer have to be your
wife, A day where I can play
a character in my own life.

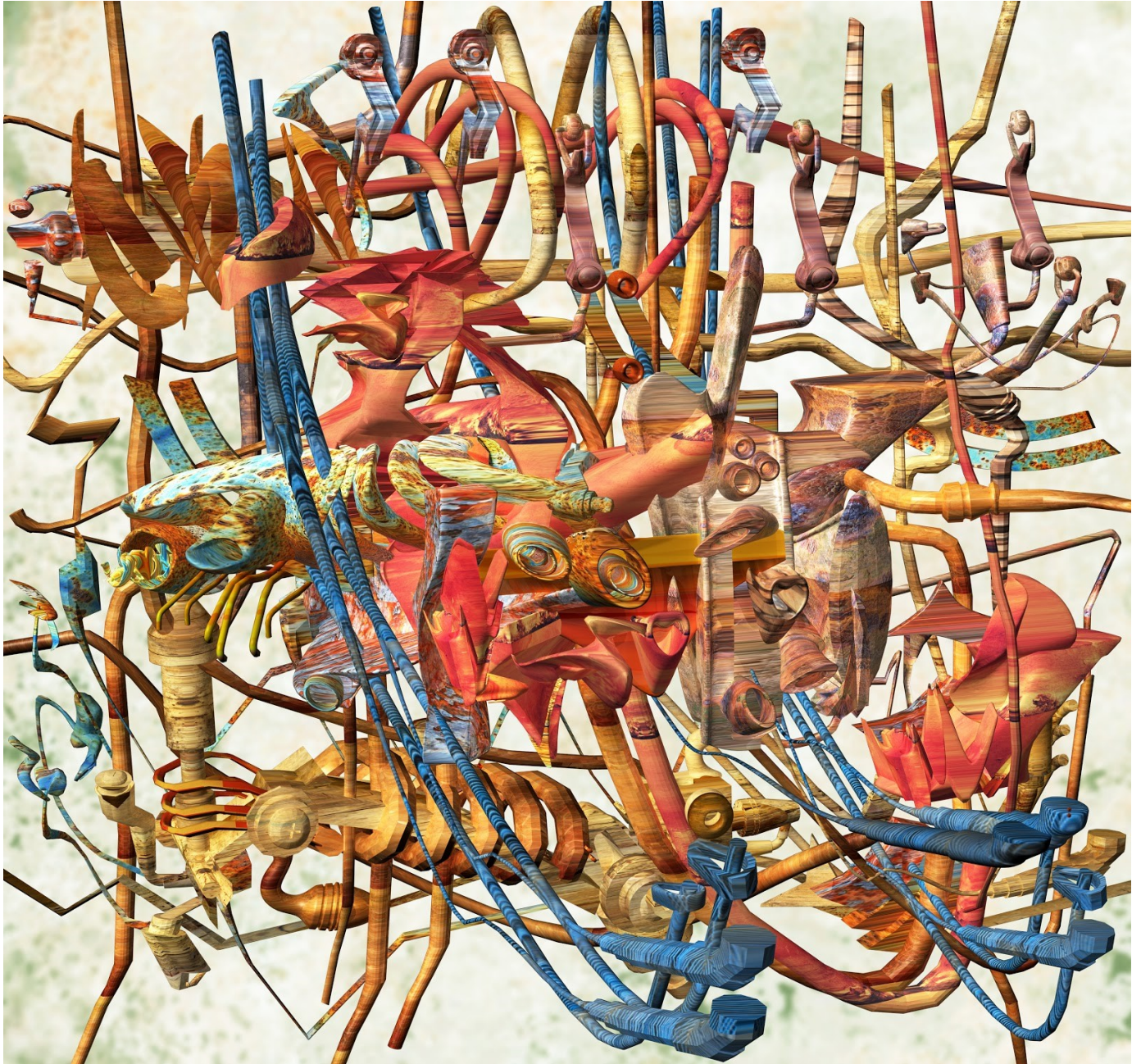
A day where love is louder than monsters.

© 2020 Calla Fuqua



SWIRLING EFFECTS AND THEIR WAYSIDE PHENOMENA

MIXED MEDIA
BY RYOTA MATSUMOTO



© 2020 Ryota Matsumoto

MS

By YOGESH PATEL
(DEDICATED TO JEREMY AND JO PIPER)

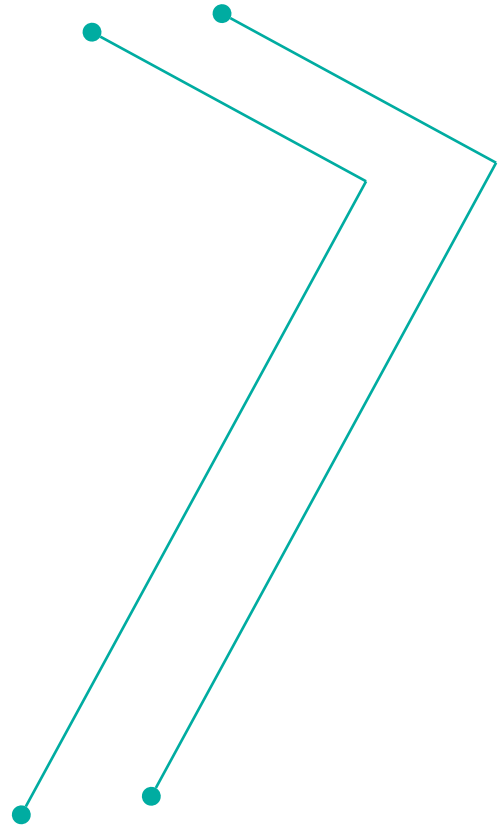
If you're showing me a broken world
It's a chaos harnessed
A kaleidoscope of the rainbow-shards
Behind the drifting autumn leaves
Yet it is not a torn picture
I stroke your hands gently
This is you who once wandered off in a meaning

The mirror may have broken
Each piece has your face
You ask:
Can you rearrange fragments as love?

You fill the emptiness of the sky and the sea
With the blues fetched from your loss
I stare at the jagged seas and skies
I walk sideways I study from an angle
Bloody things are broken
You reassure me:
These are opposite worlds of abundance

You gently pull back your hand
Nothing is broken and yet everything is
Not everything dropped breaks
I like that
The painting that you painted was restoring itself!
You continue
Then let me make those masks I drew speak
Let me fit cubes and triangles precisely
A cobweb of frozen time was thawing
I am the missing piece of this rendition
A light is finally reaching the flame
So, hold my shaky hands with a brush

The time had come for a painting to just hang
Never bother us again



FRAGMENTS

By JO PIPER
PERMISSION TO PRINT WITH POEM GRANTED BY JO PIPER
JO IS GRATEFUL TO THOSE WHO APPRECIATE THE PAINS OF MS



© 2020 Jo Piper

© 2020 Yogesh Patel

THE ART OF FLYING

BY ZILKA JOSEPH

“THERE IS NO ART TO FLYING, ONLY THE PROBLEM OF FLYING” - WILBUR WRIGHT

And so, disregarding tales
of Icarus, I learn to fly,
glide easily

into blue deepening like a sea,
white waves like wet sails
lapping the face

of the sun. Blood rushes
to my head. Which way
is up? Where's east? What

winds are these? Which
cloud? Where ground? I am
plummeting. My skin

grows tight and begins
to crack. Salt
and water hide just below

the surface of my eyes.
I've crashed off-course,
in a desert, my body torqued,

lying eye level with skeletal remains
of small animals who must have been
searching for something. Sky?

Water? But it is not the season
of rain, and the voice
of the turtle has not been heard

in this land for a long, long
time. The half-buried-in-sand
flesh on my back

flames as if bitten by fire ants,
my mouth sucks dry air.
The open throat of the sky

gapes wider. I am no
Phoenix. My feet are ashes,
I'm splayed out like a dead

canary, but suddenly something stirs
in my feet, a heat—shift
of blood inside. My palms

press down, lift my weight. Bleached
skulls strewn in random patterns
around me are a mystic runway,

they are lines of a map
I am memorizing
carefully. And now, like sere

leaves they move in circles,
grow smaller as I angle off
the ground, dripping

grains of fine sand. I stare
harder at the sun,
accept its blinding

dare. I'll read its face,
master these falls, lessons
in resistance, lift-

off, landing, and
brand the fiery compass
rose of earthly direction

on the dashboard of my brain. I'll
fly by night, even a moonless one,
and like my ancestors, find home.

© 2020 Zilka Joseph

HORIZON ILLUMINATED

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY HEIDI GRISWOLD



© 2020 Heidi Griswold

NONLINEAR

BY PHYLLIS YIGDALL

As a teen, I was told that life is a river.
And we were, this teacher declared, near the beginning.
We had started, like the river, as a small trickle, bubbling out of the ground.
We would grow, like the river.
We would encounter turbulence and rapids.
And, in many years, we would experience a leveling out.
A state of peace, calm, and contentment.
But there was no doubt in my mind.
I was rapids.
In turbulence. In chaos. In confusion. In danger.
I did not resonate with a small stream gently tripping over stones.
The only place that felt like me was rapids.
Decades later, now, I am a small stream.
Just starting. In my own way.
Claiming a new life.
Beginning.
I have already tumbled over the waterfall.
Perhaps I will do it again.

© 2020 Phyllis Yigdall

BEGINNING

WATERCOLOR & COLORED PENCIL

BY REBECCA HASENAUER



© 2020 Rebecca Hasenauer

LEAVING

By MONA DASH

I have been telling myself
I must leave soon
And I have been packing
The first, the second, the third
the last – I am not sure which of the
last moments I should pick –
but I have been packing

I have been hiding things
Today my face, yesterday the feet
The things you'd loved in
the first photograph you saw
see the arc of your foot and mine
the curve tells us how close we are to the earth

Then faceless, feetless, I move silently
picking bits and pieces of the nights
we spent tracing maps on bodies
a future on the skies
The shards of the mornings
spent sucking oranges from the bowl
until refreshed

The jagged pieces of the cold anger and hot fury
the first, the second and the other fights
I want to keep that as well to remind
Of the morning after,
as if a dip in a lake
on a burning summer day, brutally beautiful

All this I try to pack in a bag; it is filling fast
tomorrow it will be the fingers turn to leave
slowly, the neck, the tongue, one day
it will be the turn of the navel

I have been telling myself to leave
in bits, in parts, in shadowy whispers
all along these years
and you haven't noticed
maybe when my smell is lost forever
from those sheets you will see
maybe when my *breath becomes air*
you will know I was once there.

© 2020 Mona Dash

THE PAIN OF SILENCE

PAINTING
BY LINDA0863



© 2020 Linda0863

RAINY DAYS

BY REGINA WINNER

Rainy days. The soft tapping of droplets on the ground forming puddles of black mud. Thickness of humidity in the air. A dimness of daylight that tricks the body into slowing down, believing twilight has come early. Slowness. Reprieve. A time to withdraw from the chaos of the world and just be. A sense of safety.

Rainy days bring hope, at least for a time, the stalking will stop.

© 2020 Regina Winner

LOVE AND RESPECT

PAINTING
BY LINDA0863



© 2020 Linda0863

YOU HAVE NO IDEA
PAINTING
BY NATASHA TIERRA



© 2020 Natasha Tierra

CITY OF WOMEN

BY DIANE GLASS

Children eat breakfast every day at home,
under the watch of someone who loves them,
the daycare worker basks in praise for nurturing
toddlers with adventure books as well as snacks,
the longtime maintenance worker sits with the CEO,
drinking coffee at an old oak table,
sharing her vision for the company's future.

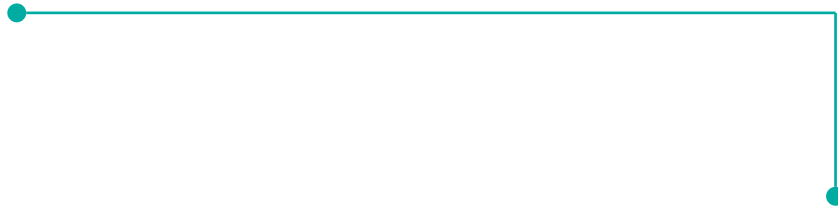
Boundaries flux to welcome new refugees
searching for a home, away from violence,
away from rootlessness. Children teach adults
Hindi, Spanish, Swahili, residents
and newcomers chat over chai, smiling while
exchanging customs, familiar and strange.

In this city of women, the bus driver creates new
routes to serve the stranded, the gardener
allocates city funds to beautify neighborhoods,
planting seeds of red and purple petunias
to color neglected neighborhoods,
the garbage collector plans the recycling plant.

Writers and artists bring together political partisans
to envision justice for the aggrieved, freedom
for the teen, now old, denied parole, new life
for parking lots to grow vegetables, install
merry-go-rounds, resurrect prairie grass on land
once belonging to native tribes, remembered now.

Dancers approach strangers in the city square
to tango, rumba, waltz, to twirl orange and red
skirts, to shed jackets and ties,
restoring the vigor of bodies
folded too long in chairs,
opening minds to the beauty
of forgotten childlike movement.

© 2020 Diane Glass



SACRED, 2017

MIXED CANVAS

BY LILIA LUJÁN



© 2020 Lilia Luján



© 2020 Lilia Luján

WHAT I WANT TO REMEMBER

BY DIANE GLASS

"All good things are wild and free." - Henry David Thoreau

The Harvest Moon rises over the prairie of our farmhouse,
lighting the tips of swaying big bluestem grass with mango magic.
Dragonfly droves soar and dive, kites liberated from string.
Grasshoppers spring their delight, scattering us in surprise.

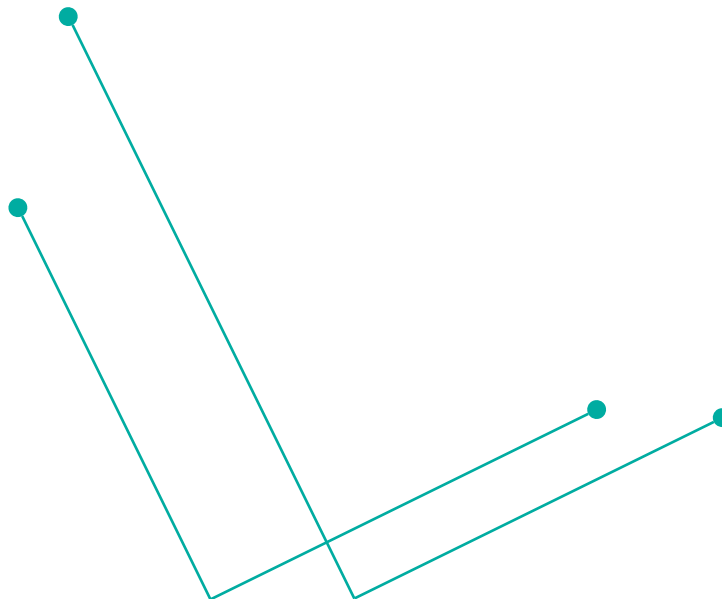
I fight for the survival of these endangered memories
driving through suburban streets, an asphalt grid,
once home to Echinacea, primrose, wood lilies,
and meadowlarks building nests for their young.

A bulldozer growls, tearing up farmland for concrete, burying
dormant prairie seeds in coffins, their time to emerge forever gone.
Youth march and chant: Save the earth for us and our children.
We're fighting for our future! There is no Plan B.

They speak for my grandchildren, too young to march,
who play in well-manicured city parks, unaware
the prairie once opened its arms to children, including me.
Monarchs, the Red Admiral, and the Blue Adonis blinked
with invitations to play hide and seek in seas of sunflowers.

Once I lived in a farmhouse on a prairie and I reside there still
in my imagination: the moon lights up switchgrass
and casts an amber glow over milkweed and bergamot.
The wind remembers stories of native tribes who tended
this land where buffalo, elk, and coyote souls roamed, wild and free.

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DREAM POND

PHOTOGRAPHY

By DANUTA E. KOSK-KOSICKA



© 2020 Danuta E. Kosk-Kosicka

THE INTERSECTION OF NORMAL AND BEAUTIFUL

PHOTOGRAPHY

By HEIDI GRISWOLD



© 2020 Heidi Griswold

TOWARDS LIGHT

OIL ON CANVAS
BY SHEELA BECTON



© 2020 Sheela Becton

AURORA

BY JUDITH GOEDEKE

a slim arc of moon slides by
the woods exhale holy breath
birds waken from dreams

luminous blue, then dazzling silver
she wraps herself in sky
and returns to her own light
sacred
pristine
boundless

© 2020 Judith Goedeke

THE PATH
PHOTOGRAPHY
BY DANUTA E. KOSK-KOSICKA



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WALKING THE LINE WITH FIRE

PHOTOGRAPHY
By JILL CHRISTIANSON



© 2020 Jill Christianson

DREAMERS
MIXED WOOD
BY LILIA LUJÁN



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BRANCA AZEDA

BY CRIS WERNECK

Branca Azeda
Sour White

Not sour like the tangy surprise
Of a Sour Patch Kid:
Bitter soothed by sweet.

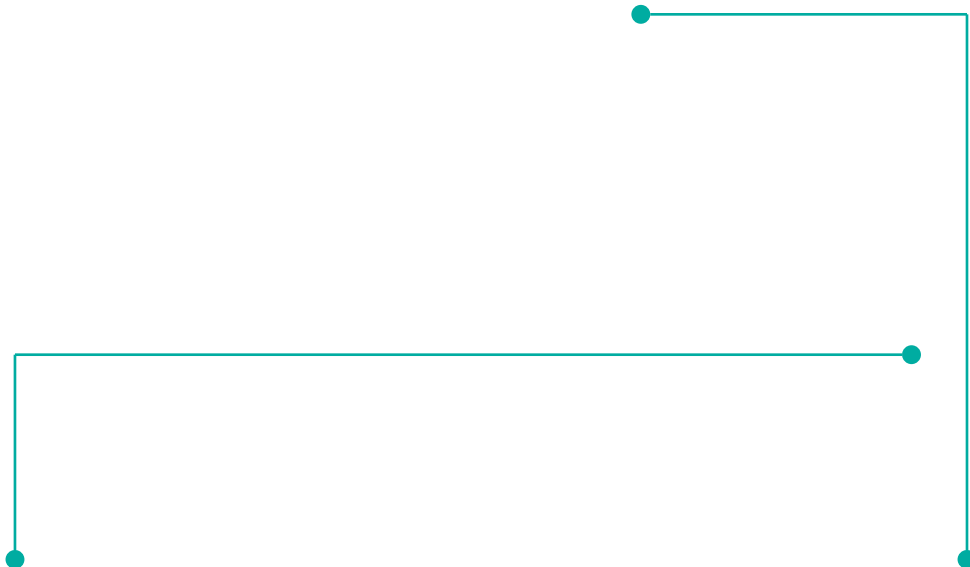
Sour like spoiled milk,
Curdled:
So nasty, you spit it out.

“Branca Azeda!”,
Cries the sourpuss face.
Shaking her head,
Like an Etch-a-Sketch.

The memory of me,
Which is not who I am,
Festered from her shortcomings,
Not my own.

Menina Linda.
Inside and out.
A beauty the blind just can't see.

© 2020 Cris Werneck



A THOUGHT

BY CALEB WINEBRENNER

Come and sit awhile and tell me all
that weighs upon your heart.
How the injustice of the world haunts you –
Haunts you --haunts memories
Of lives we could have lived.

I cannot make it all go away.

But if God can speak the World into being
in six days (and rest on the seventh)
Then I can speak Love into being
in a moment where injustice hovers
And you can rest awhile.

© 2020 Caleb Winebrenner



ABUNDANCE

BY CALEB WINEBRENNER

Do you know the smell of a life made abundant?
When there is time to crack the peppercorns
With the soft, steady
screet, screet, screet, thrum
of a mortar and pestle.

Or when the tulips pirouette
in the vase on the table?

Do you remember what it feels like to rest?
When your only job for a day
is to love, to laugh, to gather,
To pray: Abundance is
not only for me.

So I will teach – joyfully –
and turn down the volume on the radio.

© 2020 Caleb Winebrenner

HOPE
MIXED CANVAS
BY LILIA LUJÁN



© 2020 Lilia Luján

WE ARE HERE
BY CAROLINE GORMAN

When they forgot your name, but he made headlines,
 We remembered.
 When they exalted him, despite your pleas,
 We mourned.
 When they probed your body in a sterile room,
 We held your hand.
 When they let him free, but questioned your past,
 We cried for justice.
When they asked what you'd be drinking or how you'd been dressed,
 We protested.
 When you told the truth and they branded you "liar,"
 We believed you.
When it seems like progress falls stagnant, the villains win, and hope is far too fleeting,
 I promise, we are with you.

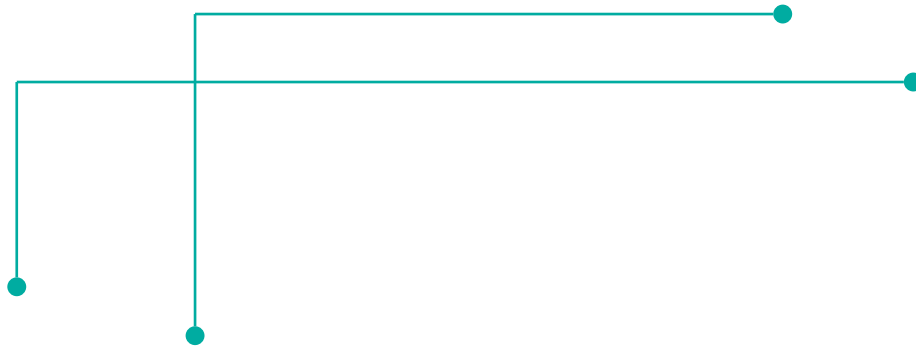
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WONDEROUS WINGS AND LITTLE THINGS

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY CHIARA D'AMORE



© 2020 Chiara D'Amore



SHE IS WOMAN

BY CAROLINE GORMAN

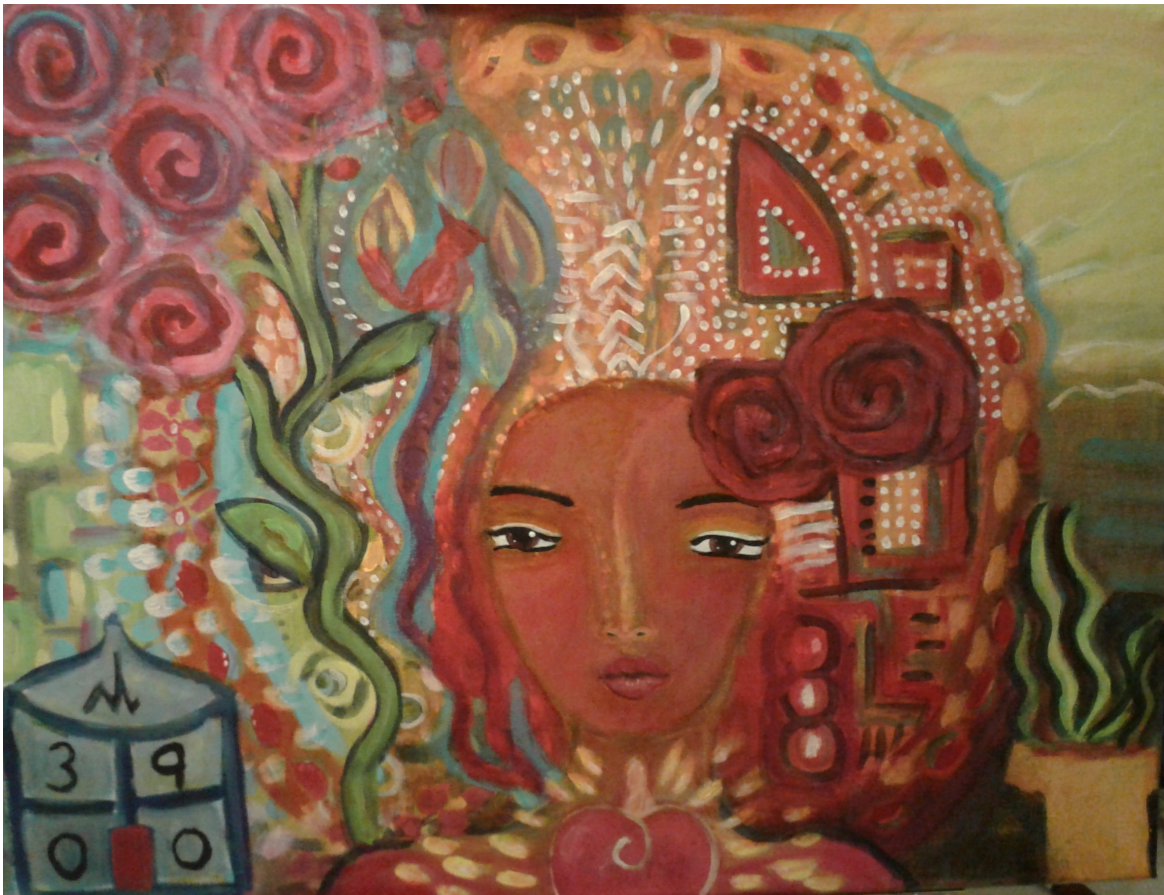
She's built of divinity.
Mother Earth birthed her,
sculpted her figure.
She's the generations past;
She's the collective future.
Her voice carries over the crests of waves,
harmonizing with the wind,
uniting the stars.
When she cries,
her tears rain from the heavens,
eroding sharp cliffs
and rough quarries
She created nations from dirt,
and power from her hands.
She is Woman.

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SOUL WORK

ART

BY VALERIE RICH



© 2020 Valerie Rich

BOUNDARIES
COLLAGE
By AMANDA BECHTEL



© 2020 Amanda Bechtel

APOLOGY

BY PRAMILA VENKATESWARAN

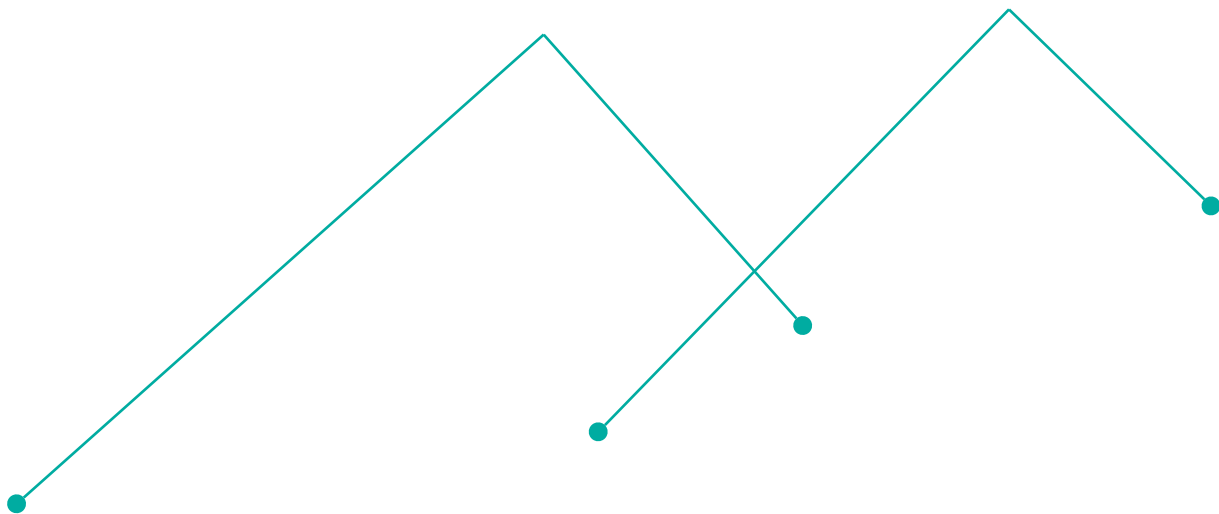
Napalm, the naked child running toward us,
her pain frozen in black and white photographs,
daisy cutters rending mountains, grenades
shearing randomly, the old, the young, women,
children, the armed, the unarmed, the decrepit,
bombs dropping like confetti, hunger raging,
refugees milling along borders, old and new,
children shell shocked, voices muted, spirits stunned,

for all this I am sorry, for I know
I cannot remain disaffected, protected
by routine rolling like tanks, since war
and peace are seldom coincidences,
but carried out in my name, in my country's
allegiances, choices, attitudes.

Loss, emptiness, want, these are the same
wherever they occur, like joy and abundance,
and these I feel perhaps differently from you
whose house and family have been blown up.

If you cannot hear my apology, then
I have lost, utterly.

© 2020 Pramila Venkateswaran



DEER IN WINTER SNOW

COLLAGE

BY DIANE B. DUNN



© 2020 Diane B. Dunn

ALONE & TOGETHER IN THE FOG

PHOTOGRAPHY

By JILL CHRISTIANSON



© 2020 Jill Christianson

WE GREW UP IN SILENCE

BY CALISTA OGBURN

when they ask us
why we do not speak up
and the oppressors remind us of our yellow skin:

our yellow bodies do not speak
we keep quiet
cultural homes cradled us in silence

broken voices hide in the sea
endless salty abyss with no yellow
dirty blue waves crashing onto shore

mothers said, *no opinions* at the table
fathers said, *do not push back* at the table
everyone said, *show respect. never speak up* at the table

our skin peels itself to show red
yellow pulls us back into our bloody homes
stay in our darkness

when they ask us
why we do not speak up
we stay *silent*

© 2020 Calista Ogburn

PEACE

PHOTOGRAPHY

BY JOANNE JACKSON



© 2020 Joanne Jackson

UNIVERSAL SPIRAL

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY CHIARA D'AMORE



© 2020 Chiara D'Amore

THE HITCHHIKER
MIXED-MEDIA COLLAGE
BY AMANDA BECHTEL



© 2020 Amanda Bechtel



STAGED

BY DESIREE ST. CLAIR GLASS

I see
I hear
I pray
I do
I feel
I open
I say
I love you
I get
I give
I forgive
I try
I dismiss
I sweep
I cover
I cry
And yet
I am
Dismissed
Discarded
Disposed
Dispensed
Dispersed
Disregarded
Forsaken
Forgotten
Rejected
Replaced
Not seen
Not heard
Not enough
Erased

I see

© 2020 Desiree St. Clair Glass

HEALING

BY MONA DASH

See, its autumn, then its winter
and when everything dies, they heal
under the earth
these little daffodils the bulbs I have planted
they grow don't they every year every spring?
life within, life grows, it heals
so why not these wounds?
these ruptures will patch
skin, nerves, capillaries heal

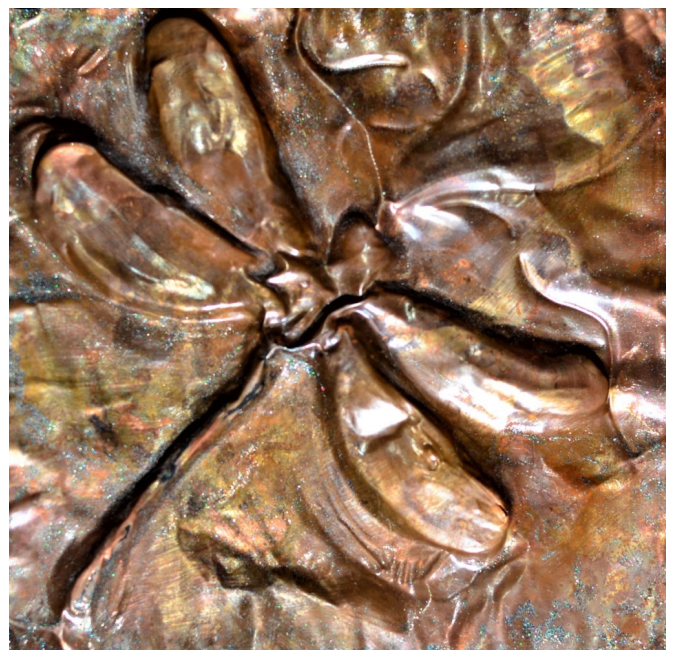
everything changes
why not then this pain
that sits many splendoured
taking forms shape shifting
someday it will stop biting
and stop stinging, start scabbing
time it heals they say; hardens
the skin over these wounds, then heals

so will I
become myself, like yesterday again
before there was a you, before you
could rip in so deep, rip me so true
slowly, again, it will happen, I will heal

© 2020 Mona Dash

DRAGONFLY

MIXED-MEDIA METAL
BY JENNIFER L. VAUGHN



© 2020 Jennifer L. Vaughn

WELCOME

BY SUSAN GEBREN

Welcome food addicts of all shapes and sizes. Welcome old-timers and newcomers alike. If you've ever binged or starved or exercised to exhaustion – welcome.

Welcome if you've ever hated yourself for how you look, how you ate or how you acted. If you've ever made a promise to yourself or someone else about your eating and promptly broken it – welcome.

Welcome if you've ever tried every diet on every magazine at the checkout line to no avail. If you've ever thrown food away in the trash in frustration over your overwhelming desire to eat it only to retrieve it in the morning to start the cycle again– welcome.

Welcome if you've ever used the words “starting Monday.” If you have ever named one of your children Sara Lee – welcome.

Welcome if ever in a fit of craving you have poured maple syrup on a bunch of frozen hot dog buns because it was the only thing you could find in the house. If you have ever joined Weight Watchers with such a strong resolve only to find that you are eating all your weekly points in one sitting – welcome.

Welcome if you have ever ignored a baby's cry or children fighting in another room while you stood and stuffed your face. If you've ever gotten on a scale more than four times in one day – welcome.

Welcome if you've ever thrown your scale away and refused to be weighed because you couldn't bear to see the number. If you do not appear in family photographs due to the shame about the way you look in them – welcome.

Welcome if you have not enjoyed the sensation of diving into cool water on a hot day in years because you wouldn't be caught dead in a bathing suit. If you've ever preferred chocolate to sex with your partner – welcome.

Welcome if you've ever gossiped about others to make yourself feel better. If you've ever been pulled over for driving under the influence of TastyCake – welcome.

Welcome from those of us who have been there and know your pain.

Self-acceptance is the first step.

Welcome home.

© 2020 Susan Gebren

FULL CIRCLE
PHOTOGRAPHY
BY CHIARA D'AMORE



© 2020 Chiara D' Amore

BACKYARD BEAUTY MANDALA
PHOTOGRAPHY
BY CHIARA D'AMORE



© 2020 Chiara D' Amore

THE UNCERTAIN DIVIDE

PHOTOGRAPHY/DIGITAL ART

BY JJ D'OROFRIO



© 2020 Jj D'Orofrío

ANAMCHARA

OIL ON CANVAS

BY TOM BOURDEAUX JR



© 2020 Tom Bourdeaux Jr

A STATE OF UNREST

PHOTOGRAPHY/DIGITAL ART

BY JJ D'ONOFRIO



© 2020 Jj D'Onofrio

KASHMIR

BY PRAMILA VENKATESWARAN

Kashmir's last whisper,
memory arrested, history's
bastard clamped between hell flames,
blood and shit fanning land and water.

These whoring hills are steel,
missiles erupting among them,
houseboats on Dal's glassy stillness stabbed.

Pines along avenues snaking
around rose gardens and villas,
frozen in European books,
are widows, ashen.

Lovers in a boat trailing the moon
are ghosts in tales, half-remembered.
The flimsy silk sky is rent
by smoke spires from carcasses
scattered after a skirmish.
The living lament—Kashmir, Kashmir,
as the dull red burst of grenades
wounds them.

© 2020 Pramila Venkateswaran

AVANT-GARDE KALINGA WAR

BY YOGESH PATEL

it's a bullet
crow's eye
god in the line of fire

in each man's pocket
the crow has slipped
different book-rifles

it dreams of
god's funeral
at a Dakhma

it knows
each man will collect
god's remains

start a shrine
an avant-garde religion
a weapon

but the dreams are dreams
and god made the man
in His image
to dream with His eyes
hence, be unknown to crow
at Kalinga the man is now
aiming at the crow

© 2020 Yogesh Patel



AUTOBIOGRAPHY

MIXED-MEDIA COLLAGE
By AMANDA BECHTEL



© 2020 Amanda Bechtel

NAMING

By USHA AKELLA

(for Jyoti, Delhi rape survivor)

"We want the world to know her real name. My daughter didn't do anything wrong, she died while protecting herself. I am proud of her. Revealing her name will give courage to other women who have survived these attacks. They will find strength from my daughter." — Father of rape victim Jyoti,¹ Delhi rape case, 2012 BBC Hindi.



She was returning home from watching *Life of Pi*,
the hero lived to tell the tale
in a boat shared with animals... was this a sign from
fate? Her journey in a bus with predators:

 six men falling
 upon her like hyenas,
 a wheel jack handle and metal rod plunged
in her private parts, the intestines ripped out,
in a moving bus circumambulating Munirka,
bite marks across her body... death in a Singapore hospital.

Her mother's eyes were dark charcoal, unspilled lakes,
*She died but we die every day... Kudrat bhi ne hamare saath nahin diya*²

 When the dots finally connected they were black,
black gags, gnashes across their mouths, black dressed,
the women gathered in India Gate, Raisina Hill,
the drum beat of marching footsteps in cities spelt *Justice*...

 women as petroleum, she the wick
 keeping the flame burning.

If this day is a fruit, it is a papaya, with a black heart
in the gaudy gold of a nation; if a flower, the frangapani,
its milky sap blistering a nation's veins; if a fish, *vaam*,
as her intestines like eels on the bus floor;
if a tree, the tamarind souring the breath of India.

 And if a name:
Jyoti emerging like a lion from a cave,

 whisking the world like a tornado,

 Enough!

© 2020 Usha Akella

¹By Indian law a rape victim's name is not published. The victim was given the name Nirbhaya in the media.

²Even God was not on our side.

ENOUGH!

BY USHA AKELLA

People let us say it.

Bring back our caged children to a field of sunflowers,
open our land to people as we would our palms
to catch a raindrop,
bring back Aylan in blue shorts
washed up as a fish, snuggled in sand,
let us not say again: he did not make it,
let children not have to tell their stories.

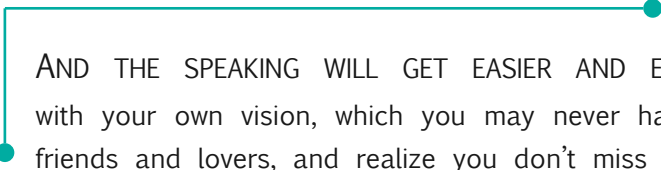
Let us bring back Gulsoma, seven years old,
oil her back scarred like a cluster of sardines,
let us hear her laughter before it was married,
let Malala not be shot in the head, let Karla
not have to say 43, 200 raped.

And bring back Asifa Bano's rosy cheeks and chirping,
let her bring back goats bare-footed,
and roast warm chestnuts on a humble fire,
let her eight-year old legs not be parted brutally for
things other than what children do,
and bring back all the murdered girl infants
still as stone swaddled in earth.

And the police/traffickers/abductors/
mothers/fathers/sisters/brothers
who kill/sell/abuse/rape/shoot their own,
let us hang them as rotting fruit from trees.

And people, we who know too much with our tentacles of knowing
like octopuses with many eyes,
how much of knowing do we need,
before we say it?

© 2020 Usha Akella



AND THE SPEAKING WILL GET EASIER AND EASIER. And you will find you have fallen in love with your own vision, which you may never have realized you had. And you will lose some friends and lovers, and realize you don't miss them. And new ones will find you and cherish you. And you will still flirt and paint your nails, dress up and party, because, as I think Emma Goldman said, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution." And at last you'll know with surpassing certainty that only one thing is more frightening than speaking your truth. And that is not speaking.

...Audre Lorde
Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches, 1984

ARTISTS' BIOS

TOM BALLE: PAGE(S) 6

Tom is a retired acupuncturist living in Laurel, MD. He was a faculty member at Tai Sophia (now Maryland University of Integrative Health) for 20 years and is the author of *Becoming a Healing Presence* and *Dancing with the Ten Thousand Things*.

AMANDA BECHTEL: PAGE(S) 8, 38, 44, 51

Amanda is an art therapist living and working in Howard County, Maryland. She believes in the healing and transformative power of art for both her clients and herself. She enjoys using mixed media and incorporating text into her work.

SHEELA BECTON: PAGE(S) 29

Sheela is a Director in the IT department at Anne Arundel Community College. She lives in Montgomery County with her husband Eugene Becton. Sheela rekindled her passion for painting 13 years ago. Painting on the weekends is very fulfilling and also allows her to express herself. Most of her themes revolve around her memories from India. Her themes also focus on women, hope, love and empowerment. To Sheela her family is her greatest blessing.

SANDRA BOURDEAUX: PAGE(S) 5

Freelance Writer and Blogger Sandra is a domestic violence survivor. An avid equestrian, she credits her horses for leading her through the very dark days marking the end of her first marriage. Through Facebook page "Ride Against Domestic Violence," as co-editor, and her blog "Rhiannon's Ailes," she hopes to shine a light on the emotional devastation caused by abuse and to help all victims become warriors one post at a time.

TOM BOURDEAUX, JR.: PAGE(S) 48

Tom is an artist and photographer who resides with his wife Sandra in Howard County. After four years in the Marine Corps, he attended college, the last two years studying at Maryland Institute College of Art. His professional experience consists of almost 30 years in the graphic arts and printing industry. He credits Sandra as his inspiration for revitalizing his creative endeavors in oil painting, drawing, and photography.

JILL CHRISTIANSON: PAGE(S) 31, 41

Jill is a global social justice practitioner, impacting the lives of women and girls. She has worked in 49 countries in public education, labor rights, and human rights. She has leveraged resources and built programs in Kenya, the Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Colombia, and Brazil to curb school-related gender-based violence and strengthen women's leadership. At home in Maryland, Jill delights in yard sales, crafts, and the flowers in her garden.

CHIARA D'AMORE: PAGE(S) 36, 43, 47

Chiara is founder of The Community Ecology Institute and director of Columbia Families in Nature. She holds a PhD in Sustainability Education and M.S. in Environmental Science and Engineering and works as an environmental educator, researcher, and consultant. Her passion is fostering environmental and social well-being through reconnecting people with the natural environment. Chiara spends a lot of time leading hikes and experiential education opportunities in local natural areas. She gathers items during these outings and creates art that captures the time and place of the experience. After photographing her creations, she leaves it behind for others to discover before the pieces return to the environment. You can learn more about her work at <http://chiaradamore.com> and you can order her art in a variety of formats (puzzles, mugs, phone cases, cards, wall prints, etc.) at www.chiaradamore.smugmug.com

ARTISTS' BIOS

MONA DASH: PAGE(S) 19, 45

Mona Dash is the author of *Untamed Heart* (Tara India Research Press, 2016), and two collections of poetry *Dawn-Drops* (Writer's Workshop, 2001) *A certain way*, and her memoir *A Roll of the Dice : a story of loss, love and genetics* (Linen Press, UK). Mona was awarded a 'Poet of excellence' award in the House of Lords in 2016. Mona is also a Telecoms Engineer and MBA and works full time in a global technology organization. Originally from India, she lives in London. To learn more visit: www.monadash.net

JJ D'ONOFRIO: PAGE(S) 48, 49

The artwork of Jj D'Onofrio has been shown in galleries throughout Wisconsin and the Midwest over the past ten years. His work encompasses both traditional approaches to photography and forays into digital art. As someone who suffers from bouts of severe depression, his work attempts to reflect the emotional topography of that illness and to perhaps reach an audience who experience similar challenges.

DIANE B. DUNN: PAGE(S) 11, 40

After many years of exploring black and white photography and painting in various media, Diane has become enamored with the medium of collage and loves the tactile experience of cutting, tearing and assembling various papers and fabrics that are sometimes combined with paint. She finds a serendipitous aspect to collage that is exciting. When starting a piece, she is never quite sure where it will lead. She also enjoys making mono prints, which allow for layering and masking that reveals hidden patterns and images.

CALLA FUQUA: PAGE(S) 13

Calla is a 23-year-old actress and teacher from Baltimore and believes poetry and acting go hand in hand, using empathy and imagination to create a truthful and raw narrative. Her poem, *Louder Than Monsters*, is the first she ever wrote, and though fiction, reflects certain events in her life. Though the poem is devastating at moments, she hopes it will reach the hearts of its readers and help survivors feel validated. So often we minimize the experiences of women in abusive relationships. This poem provides an all too familiar and honest story of domestic abuse. She wants to praise all survivors of abuse for their strength. Survivors are not broken; they are braver than they know and stronger than they think.

SUSAN GEBREN: PAGE(S) 46

A grateful person in recovery who longs to show others the way.

DESIREE ST. CLAIR GLASS: PAGE(S) 45

Currently a public high school teacher, Desiree has 30 years of experience, teaching all ages from infant to adult. Her writing has appeared in *Guideposts*, *A Joy-Full Season*, the *Short and Sweet* series, and newspapers and magazines, including previous publications of *Dragonfly*. Desiree earned her M.A. at Notre Dame of Maryland University and her B.S. at Salisbury University. She is the mother of three children and grandmother of ten.

DIANE GLASS: PAGE(S) 23, 26

Diane explores issues of disability, justice and the environment through her poetry and teaching. As an adult with spina bifida, she has interviewed adults with this birth defect throughout the state of Iowa. This research has informed her writing about issues facing people who are disabled. In her personal life she has lived on an acreage and converted soybean fields to prairie. As a native Iowan, she mourns the loss of prairie to agriculture.

ARTISTS' BIOS

JUDITH GOEDEKE: PAGE(S) 29

The enormous healing power of words compels Judith to write. She strives to clarify, challenge, redirect, own up to and celebrate life. And do damage control. Poetry's unique spaciousness invites us to land in surprising places, come face to face with ourselves anew, and discover fresh perspectives. It connects us more deeply to ourselves and others. An award winning poet, she facilitates Poem as Portal workshops that foster loving self-awareness, intentional living and compassion.

CAROLINE GORMAN: PAGE(S) 35, 37

Caroline is a college student at George Washington University seeking a degree in Psychology and Criminal Justice. She is also the current intern at Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA). She is very passionate about advocating for survivors and she hopes to continue this in her future career.

HEIDI GRISWOLD: PAGE(S) 17, 28

Heidi is a queer storyteller and recent resident of Los Angeles, CA. Capturing moments of beauty through photography has helped them cultivate gratitude and wonder during difficult periods of transition and change. Heidi is especially interested in light, visually and symbolically.

CALLEN HARTY: PAGE(S) 9

Callen is a writer, public speaker, and activist. He was the driving force in creating Paths to Healing, an annual conference on surviving child sex abuse with a focus on male survivors. He won Community Shares of Wisconsin's Backyard Hero award in October of 2013 for his work on organizing the conference. In 2016, Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault honored him for his survivor activism by naming him their annual Courage Award winner.

REBECCA HASENAUER: PAGE(S) 12, 18

Rebecca is a visual artist working toward her BFA degree in Visual Arts at the State University of New York at Potsdam. She enjoys working with watercolors and gouache because of their fluidity, along with colored pencils to give texture to her works. Her self-portraits featuring little creatures represent people in her life that have helped her see her true self and grow in life.

JOANNE JACKSON: PAGE(S) 42

Joanne is a graduate of HopeWorks' Telling This Truth program, a member of the Survivors Speakers Bureau, a childcare volunteer, a member of the Our Voice Advisory Committee, and a co-facilitator for the Ain't I a Woman? Workshop Series. Ms. Jackson is a passionate believer in the prevention of intimate partner violence and sexual assault through education. She has a special connection with and understanding for mothers of intimate partner violence and their children. She shares her own healing journey and insights on her website, helpforabusedmothers.com.

ZILKA JOSEPH: PAGE(S) 10, 16

Zilka was nominated twice for a Pushcart prize. Her work has appeared in *Poetry*, *Poetry Daily*, *Frontier Poetry*, *Kenyon Review Online*, *MQR*, *Asia Literary Review*, *Cha*, *Review Americana*, *Gastronomica*, and *Cheers To Muses: Contemporary Works by Asian American Women*. Her chapbooks, *Lands I Live In* and *What Dread*, were nominated for a PEN America and a Pushcart award respectively. *Sharp Blue Search of Flame*, her book of poems published by Wayne State University Press was a finalist for the Foreword INDIES Book Award. She teaches creative writing workshops, and is a freelance editor and manuscript coach.

ARTISTS' BIOS

ROSEMARY KLEIN: PAGE(S) 3

Rosemary edited *The Maryland Poetry Review* throughout its 15-year existence, and is founding editor/publisher of Three Conditions Press. She has publications in regional, national, international journals and anthologies including *Little Patuxent Review*, *Gunpowder Review*, *Beltway: An Online Quarterly*, and *Delaware Review*. She was a Virginia Center for the Creative Arts fellow, a Maryland State Arts Council poet-in-residence with much work done in Howard County, and a recipient of a Poetry for the People Baltimore Legacy Award.

JACQUIE KOEWLER: PAGE(S) 9

Jacque is an advocate, writer, and paralegal in Denver, Colorado and has an MFA in creative non-fiction. She enjoys crossword puzzles, cardmaking and reading mysteries. She is also an avid Winnie the Pooh collector and finds solace living in the shadow of the mountains.

DANUTA E. KOSK-KOSICKA: PAGE(S) 27, 30

Danuta is a photographer whose work has been exhibited in shows, art journals, and used for book covers. Her art was featured in *Dragonfly* 2018. She is the author of two award-winning books, *Oblige the Light* (CityLit Press, 2015), and *Face Half-Illuminated* (Apprentice House, 2014). She is also the translator for four books by Lidia Kosk. A biochemist, poet, poetry translator, and co-editor of *Loch Raven Review*, she grew up in Poland and now lives in Maryland. Her website: danutakk.wordpress.com

LINDA0863: PAGE(S) 20, 21

Linda is a Venezuelan who stands against injustice and today lives in the United States of America like a political exile. She enjoys painting people, animals and landscapes, and uses different materials to create art abstract and Impressionism. At the age of 13 she discovered that painting was her passion but she dedicated 30 years of her life to her three children. Now she has more time to paint. She also makes sculptures in clay.

LILIA LUJÁN: PAGE(S) 24, 25, 32, 35

Self-taught Mexican artist, Lilia Luján, has worked in the plastic arts since 1995. He has explored and experimented with many techniques, materials and supports in a multidisciplinary way, specializing in painting, alternative sculpture, murals and teaching with disabled people. He has 25 directed murals, more than 400 national and international exhibitions, and five published books of Contemporary Art and Mandalas.

RYOTA MATSUMOTO: PAGE(S) 14

Ryota is an artist, designer and urban planner. Born in Tokyo, he was raised in Hong Kong and Japan. He received a Master of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 2007 after studying at the Architectural Association in London and Mackintosh School of Architecture, Glasgow School of Art in the early 1990's. His art and built work are featured in numerous publications and exhibitions internationally.

CALISTA OGBURN: PAGE(S) 42

Calista is a Korean-Vietnamese poet who recently published her poetry book, *A Splash of Yellow*, on Amazon. Her poetry is centered around body image, gender oppression, and building the foundation of self-worth.

ARTISTS' BIOS

YOGESH PATEL: PAGE(S) 15, 50

Yogesh edits *Skylark* and runs Skylark Publications UK as well as a non-profit Word Masala project to promote SA diaspora literature. A founder of the literary charity, Gujarati Literary Academy, he has been honoured with the Freedom of the City of London. With LP records, films, radio, children's books, fiction and non-fiction books, and three poetry collections to his credit, in 2017 he was presented to The Queen at Buckingham Palace. A recipient of many awards, including an honour in April 2019 at the New York University as a Poet-of-Honor, he has read in the House of Lords and at the National Poetry Library. His writing has appeared in prestigious journals PN Review, The London Magazine, Shearsman, IOTA, Envoi, Understanding, Orbis, on BBC, and more. He is also anthologised in several anthologies. By profession, Yogesh is a qualified optometrist and an accountant.

TOMER PERETZ: PAGE(S) 7

Tomer passionately searches for the unexplored but interesting side of the persona he paints. He spends weeks with his anonymous or famous subjects, photographing and merging into their lives, getting inspired by their habits, beliefs and family. His goal is not only to create a visually pleasing and highly detailed portrait but also to tell a story and document a moment in time that makes the viewer feel something. Tomer utilizes oil, acrylic, photography and conceptual art to express his point of view and is represented by the reputable *Fabrica Eos* gallery in Milan, Italy.

VALERIE RICH: PAGE(S) 37

Valerie is a creative artist and author living in Baltimore County. Art soothes her soul. She began her journey and love of art in 2012 and is a mixed media and abstract artist. She has been featured at several galleries around Baltimore. She loves all things creative and holds monthly creative classes. You may see her work on IG - Painted_imagery.

NATASHA TIERRA: PAGE(S) COVER, 22

Natasha is a native Baltimorean creative who uses her gifts and talents to serve her community as well as spread love and hope to the world. She is currently an elementary school teacher in West Baltimore as well as an aspiring serial entrepreneur. She is the owner and lead stylist at Braid(Her) Mobile Natural Solutions and more is soon to come!

JENNIFER L. VAUGHN: PAGE(S) 45

Jen is an exploratory artist and writer. In 2016, a complicated health journey and pending military retirement increased her struggle to manage anxiety and depression. She found solace in creative writing and visual arts; both continue to contribute to her healing and to the discovery of her most authentic self. She believes strongly in the Alev Oguz quote, "Art is the journey of a free soul," and does not take herself or her art too seriously.

PRAMILA VENKATESWARAN: PAGE(S) 39, 49

Pramila, poet laureate of Suffolk County, NY and co-director of Matwaala: South Asian Diaspora Poetry Festival, is the author of *Thirtha*, *Behind Dark Waters*, *Draw Me Inmost*, *Trace*, *Thirteen Days to Let Go*, *Slow Ripening*, and *The Singer of Alleppey*. An award-winning poet, she teaches English and Women's Studies at SUNY Nassau.

CRIS WERNECK: PAGE(S) 33

Cris is a warrior, a devout Christian, and mother to two wonderful children. A survivor of childhood emotional trauma and intimate partner abuse, her journey to healing continues as she honors her experiences to inspire other survivors to speak their truths.

ARTISTS' BIOS

M. E. WILLIAMS: PAGE(S) 4

M.E. is an educator, researcher, crafter, yogi, hiker, plant mom, advocate, and survivor. She cares deeply about promoting reproductive justice and equity, and much of her work seeks to empower other survivors to take the necessary steps toward healing.

CALEB WINEBRENNER: PAGE(S) 34

Caleb is a storyteller and poet with ardent hopes for a more just and humane world. His diverse and international projects -- from clowning with Patch Adams, storytelling in Brazil, teaching poetry in urban school settings, to facilitating a theatre troupe for immigrant youth -- serve a mission of caring by sparking creativity. As the son of innkeepers, he sees hospitality as a central virtue and is grateful for the collective wisdom present when people gather.

REGINA WINNER: PAGE(S) 20

Regina is a mother, a nurse, a daughter, a friend and a survivor of narcissistic abuse and stalking. Her writing is a reflection of her lived experiences and helps heal her soul.

PHYLLIS A YIGDALL: PAGE(S) 18

Phyllis creatively engages with the world in many ways: written word, theater, music, gardening, and graphic arts in many forms. She is tapping into what is most important to herself and to the places she can best contribute her unique talents and skills.

ARTICLE

At HopeWorks, we use the arts in three important ways to accomplish our mission: to support survivors in their healing; as a vehicle to increase awareness; and to imagine creative solutions to bring about social change. Each year we are excited to introduce you to folks who also know the power of the arts.

“INTO ALL OF OUR PSYCHE” A CONVERSATION WITH POET USHA AKELLA |BY JAPJYOT SINGH

Usha Akella, Poet and Creative Ambassador for the City of Austin, Texas (2015 & 2019) is the founder of Matwaala (www.matwaala.com) and The Poetry Caravan. She offered her thoughts on poetry and transformation to HopeWorks' Japjyot Singh for this year's magazine.

Japjyot Singh (JS): Your poetry collection, ‘the Waiting’, is a beautiful story of the ways we connect with divinity. Could you share with us your journey in creating this collection and why it was important for you to focus on connection with the Divine?

Usha Akella (UA): Thank you for your attention to my work. As you know, my roots are Indian, a country suffused and subsumed with religion and spirituality. It is impossible to grow up there without being touched in some way- parents lighting the lamp in the morning, their pujas and mantra recitals, devotional songs blaring from loudspeakers on religious holidays and festivities, the innumerable shrines in every lane, nook and cranny, TV shows and movies based on mythology, story-telling of myths and fables by grandmothers and cultural festivals with religious significance. It all permeated our life without us being indoctrinated deliberately into anything. The pluralism in the culture also meant we participated in festivities of other religions at our friends’ homes. My childhood was a wonderful one of peaceful co-existence and mutual tolerance socially.

Modernist and post-modernist poetry in the West is signed with a voice of fracture and dissent, a voice also borrowed by Indian modernism. While that voice is mine too, for me, it became important to be true to my own sensibility, a sensibility that has been occupied with a spiritual quest. I wanted to be able to say ‘God’ with no guilt in my work, to be able to articulate the spiritual thirst, angst, frustrations, hope and yearning of the inner journey. I wanted to be true to my preoccupations and not worry about being fashionable or mimic trends to be successful. The wonderful thing about poetry is that it is a lens into all of our psyche, it goes inward and outward, telescopic to microscopic, it can speak of the political to the innermost landscape. I allow myself to write feminist poems, political poems and spiritual poems without a sense of contradiction.

This particular collection stemmed from my meeting with a spiritual master in 2016. I was unprepared and stunned by the intense transformative experiences that spiraled for the three-four months upon the very first meeting. I was actually traveling to the University of Cambridge for my Masters the next day and had to deal with this unfoldment that bombarded me all along the coursework. I had no intention of writing a book, my mind was focused on the studies to come. For some reason, I had the presence of mind to journal—my personal testimonial of things as they were happening—and the poetry poured out without conscious premeditation. As poetry it used poetic devices, poetic license and poetic truth to convey an inner gist that was real. Mostly, that entire collection stands as is with a bare minimum of editing, it appears on the page as it flowed spontaneously and loosely with wide line spacing propelled by an inner intensity that consumed me for weeks. For example, poem number 26, that begins with You’ve withdrawn your color on page 53: What was all that?/What did I come back to? Where did you take me? Were you real—I refer to a very particular experience that lasted about twenty-four hours. In prose, I’d say my mind ceased to function, had quietened down like I had never expressed before, to a stillness. After twenty-four hours approximately, my mind began to work again, I witnessed the slow trickle of thought by thought into my mind. In poetry, it is expressed differently. Cessation of conscious thought, erasure, the awareness and humility that it was the grace of a higher power—is expressed with heightened language. I was petrified of the collection as there is so much

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talk of Love; indeed, it was Love, something forceful, and divine that transcended the vehicle of the teacher it had come through—but not personal and romantic. The sense of devotion is the thread running through. As a poet, you have to be very true to what calls you, you can't lie to the page. So, there it was! At whatever personal peril! It was published by the Sahitya Akademi, the highest literary authority in India followed by a bi-lingual translation by Elsa Cross and published in Mexico. Both of these were surprising events beyond my personal power, and I read it as proof that the book had its destiny beyond me.

(JS): Part of the mission of *Dragonfly* is summed up in this quote: “Only one thing is more frightening than speaking your truth...And that is not speaking.” ~ Audre Lorde. What does that quote mean to you personally and what do you think is the role of story-telling and truth-telling in poetry?

(UA): That quote strikes me as one of the very tenets of my own writing. My first poem of consequence was a poem titled ‘No’, written in 1994, a poem about arranged marriages. I found my voice with that poem as I was able to articulate for the first time the conflicts and trauma of patriarchy I had faced in India while growing up. I realized that one cannot lie to the page as a writer. It is a vessel for truth. If you lie, your poetry cannot ring true or pulsate. A good amount of my writing addresses women and political issues and I am ready with a new manuscript with those themes. I feel strongly that women must owe, own and articulate their stories for the possibility of social change; the ownership of pain and trauma without guilt, is essential. I prefer to label my poems as autobiographical not confessional which is a traditional literary term applied to women's or feminist poetry in the West. It carries a nuance of Christianity related guilt. I refuse to associate personal trauma experienced via patriarchy with the added burden of guilt.



Poet, Usha Akella

(JS): You've been actively involved in 'Matwalaa', a South Asian Diasporic poetry festival, and have done amazing work with connecting diasporic youth and community members with the power of poetry. What has that experience been like for you?

(UA): I am the founder of Matwaala which I co-direct with Pramila Venkateswaran, my indomitable friend. You can find a good account of our work on www.matwaala.com. I think there is primarily a sense of empowerment and positive energy when you become proactive about issues that bother you. Pramila and I felt there was not enough representation and visibility of South Asian poets in the mainstream, or there was a focus on a few while so many more are writing. We wanted to increase visibility, change canon and what people and students read. So, the festivals were born and the undertaking of projects like the poetry wall project recently in collaboration with Think India Foundation for the Smithsonian project, Beyond Bollywood (a poetry wall of twenty-four poems by diaspora South Asian poets at the Irving museum and arts center in Dallas).

For me, it was always insufficient to succeed alone, empowerment is rooted in the collective, in giving back, taking poetry out to society, in moving forward together. Within my small power, I have striven to bring poetry to disadvantaged audiences via the Poetry Caravan project first launched in 2003 in the town of Greenburgh and White Plains. It still continues as a collective after I left. Well over a thousand free poetry readings have reached senior homes, women's shelters and other facilities. Matwaala was founded to promote the visibility of South Asian Diaspora Poetry; we've had four festivals so far, the fifth was canceled due to COVID but Stony Brook University will be posting readings by the five women poets who were to feature. I've

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spoken extensively about the project at:

- 1) <https://www.alumni.cam.ac.uk/news/success-is-%E2%80%98we%E2%80%99-not-%E2%80%98i%E2%80%99-%E2%80%94usha-akella>
- 2) <https://indiacurrents.com/matwaala-poetry-and-diaspora-culture/>
- 3) <http://lucywritersplatform.com/2018/12/30/matwaala-intoxicated-by-poetry-and-to-intoxicate-with-poetry/>

(JS): Do you think art or poetry have a responsibility in activating impacted community members to raise their voices and engage in social activism? What is its role in healing?

(UA): Art and Poetry do have a responsibility in affecting change, it is done poem by poem or painting by painting. Throughout history, poetry has done that. A recent example, would be Sam Hammil's Poets against war project. Even as we engage in this interview, now, so many COVID-themed anthologies are surfacing.

When poetry was taken to women's shelters and poets shared feminist poetry we hoped it would inspire women there to tell their stories too. There is great power in the act of articulation. With Matwaala, for example, we are taking poetry into educational institutions affecting what students are exposed to. Our model is a deliberate multi-sited one to reach academic institutions. This way faculty and students hear South Asian voices articulating immigration, identity and integration issues. The exposure helps to recognize the voice as a valid American one. Healing takes place on many levels, for many of us it comes when we are validated, accepted and heard. I think Matwaala's work does that for poets via poetry as it trying to bring the South Asian poet's voice to the mainstream, to a wider audience.

Poetry is created in isolation from the fabric of one human soul, it achieves completion when read, when it travels to the outer world. For the poet, it is a culminating experience to find oneself in the larger self this way, to realize that personal experience is universal. For the reader, the poet articulates her or his own reality, creating self-awareness.

(JS): How do you see your work impacting social movements? Is there something that you think should be at the heart of justice work?

(UA): I can speak from the work of Matwaala, that it affects what students and adults hear and read when we offer college-site readings. At the heart of social work is a passion for equality, justice and dignity. My reason for launching the collective was born from the passion to see change, from the desire to see South Asian poets represented more in anthologies, and readings in educational and cultural institutions, to receive more coverage in recognized mainstream media and poetry outlets. Many SA poets have had experiences of exclusion with academic, publishing or teaching opportunities. Even the question of what is accepted subject matter, form, style or voice needs to change to accommodate pluralistic ways of expression. Matwaala in trying to establish the South Asian Diasporic experience as valid, authentic, and an integral component of the American fabric is social work.

(JS): Dragonfly comes from HopeWorks' belief that art and literature have the power to heal us, shape us, and even fundamentally change who we are. Do you have a favorite poem, book, or piece of visual art that transformed you in some way? How?

(UA): There are so many poems that have moved me so deeply for so many reasons. In general, when I read poems that resonate with me deeply, I know I belong to an invisible community around the world, a nation of poets who dare to write of their innermost selves irrespective of monetary returns or mockery or censure or

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INTO ALL OF OUR PSYCHE CONTINUED

blame or praise. It helps me go on. Being a poet is a very solitary thing, perhaps, one of the most insane and crazy things to do, to dedicate decade after decade to the magic of creation, churning the self for meaning and connection, for validation and joy—but the most meaningful craziest thing I do.

When I was very young, Keat's Ode to a Nightingale was like a potion I read again and again; T.S Eliot's Prufrock seared me with its rhythms and branded my personal poetics with aural ingredients. Yehuda Amichai, Mahmoud Darwish, Nazim Hikmet, have showed me the political is personal and vice versa, they have shown how to alchemize suffering to sheer gold with words. Rumi with his spiritual poetry... too many to name and be grateful for.

For more information about the work of Usha Akella please visit:

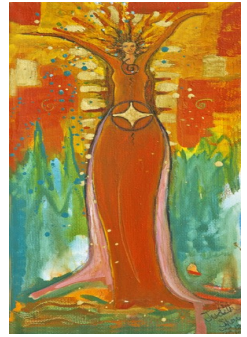
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The Our Voice Project

Wellness & Leadership Programs for Survivors



Program Descriptions

Leadership and Advocacy Opportunities

The **Our Voice Advisory Council** is HopeWorks' organizing mechanism for survivors to build community, share insights and provide feedback on a number of issues such as current events, and agency services or programs. Subcommittees include Legislative Advocacy and Outreach to Faith Communities. Meetings are quarterly, held in the months of July, October, January and April.

Workshops for Learning and Self-care

Survivors are invited to attend **Preservation Circle**. Through engaging and creative activities, we cultivate continued courage, self-compassion, connection, learning and self-directed advocacy. Events, topics and themes vary. Past events have included seminars about emotional abuse, workshops on learning to love again and arts-based stress relief.

Developing Self-care Practices

During one-on-one sessions called **Poetry N2 Wellness**, survivors who are out of crisis can learn and practice wellness and healing techniques. Sessions include development of self-care practices and mindfulness tools, as well as creative activities such as expressive journaling, visual journaling and mixed-media arts. No prior art or writing experience is needed. Call to schedule an appointment for an entrance interview.

Fostering Community & Creativity

In our **Poetry N2 Wellness Workshop** series, we use expressive arts activities to explore issues, share insights, and learn from guest speakers. A series usually meets once a week for eight weeks. Topics include stress relief, self-awareness, understanding boundaries, self-compassion, trauma and the body, and moving forward.

Maintaining Your Healing Journey

After participating in Poetry N2 Wellness one-on-one sessions or a workshop series, you are eligible to receive **Journaling Our Voice**, a monthly eNewsletter providing information to help you maintain self-care practices. Articles focus on expressive arts techniques, such as journaling prompts, inspirational quotes, arts journaling ideas, affirmations and more.

Annual Wellness & Self-care Day Retreat

During the **Unlearning Not to Speak Day Retreat**, members of the Advisory Committee facilitate interactive workshops where we share, play, reflect, and collectively celebrate surviving and thriving. This event is typically held in spring.

Prepare to Share Your Survivor Story

If you would like to be a member of **HopeWorks' Speakers Bureau**, inquire about our next Speakers Bureau Training program. In this eight-week workshop series we provide you with the support and tools to be an effective public speaker. Call to schedule an appointment for an entrance interview.



Questions? Please visit our website for a current schedule of events. For more information and a membership form, contact the Community Engagement Department at (410) 997- 0304 or email outreach@wearehopeworks.org.

finding our voices. speaking our truth. living our lives - well.

We Are HopeWorks.



Founded in 1978, HopeWorks of Howard County is a private nonprofit agency. HopeWorks' mission is to support and advocate for people in Howard County affected by sexual and intimate partner violence and to engage the community in creating the change required for violence prevention.

We are proud of our strong tradition of service provision and survivors will always need the specialized care our dedicated staff provides on a daily basis. Critical also to our mission is engaging the entire community in the work of changing the conditions that allow sexual and intimate partner violence to occur in the first place. This part takes all of us. Sexual and intimate partner violence are not inevitable realities in our world.

We all benefit when individuals are free to live self-determined lives without the threat of sexual and intimate partner violence – not just survivors. Parents, law enforcement, businesses, students, day care providers, doctors, nurses and teachers, men and boys benefit. Families and friends will all be better off without these threats.

Prevention takes an entire community working together – challenging and changing the beliefs, attitudes and culture that allow them to exist. And it takes hope. Hope builds momentum and momentum creates change...when we work together. Our community can be stronger and better and safer when we are all engaged in this work together.

WE ARE HOPEWORKS. EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US.

ADVOCACY SERVICES

- 24-Hour Helpline for callers seeking crisis counseling and referrals regarding sexual and intimate partner violence
- Providing comfort, support, and advocacy to survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence at Howard County General Hospital

SAFE SHELTER AND TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

- Crisis shelter for victims and their children
- Transitional housing
- Individual case management and educational programs and life-skill trainings

COUNSELING FOR SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE, SEXUAL VIOLENCE, AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- Crisis appointments
- Individual and group counseling

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

- Brief advice, information and referrals for victims of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, stalking and child abuse
- Representation, consultation in peace & protective order matters, divorce, and family law proceedings
- Information and support through the Volunteer Legal Advocacy Project staffed at the District Court daily
- Criminal accompaniments to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault

ANTI-TRAFFICKING SERVICES

- Safety planning for survivors of human trafficking
- Intensive case management
- Human Trafficking Peer Support Group

ENGAGEMENT, EDUCATION & AWARENESS PROGRAMS

- Workshops and trainings at schools, faith communities, businesses and civic organizations
- HopeWorks' Youth Leadership Project: a service-learning program for teens ages 13 to 18
- The Our Voice Project: Survivor's Wellness & Leadership programs
- Arts-Based Programs for the general public to enhance wellness, build community and create change
- Self-care & Social Justice workshops for the general public to facilitating conversation, transformation and liberation
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Outreach and participation in community events such as school fairs, health fairs and awareness events

HOPEWORKS 24-HOUR HELPLINE 410.997.2272