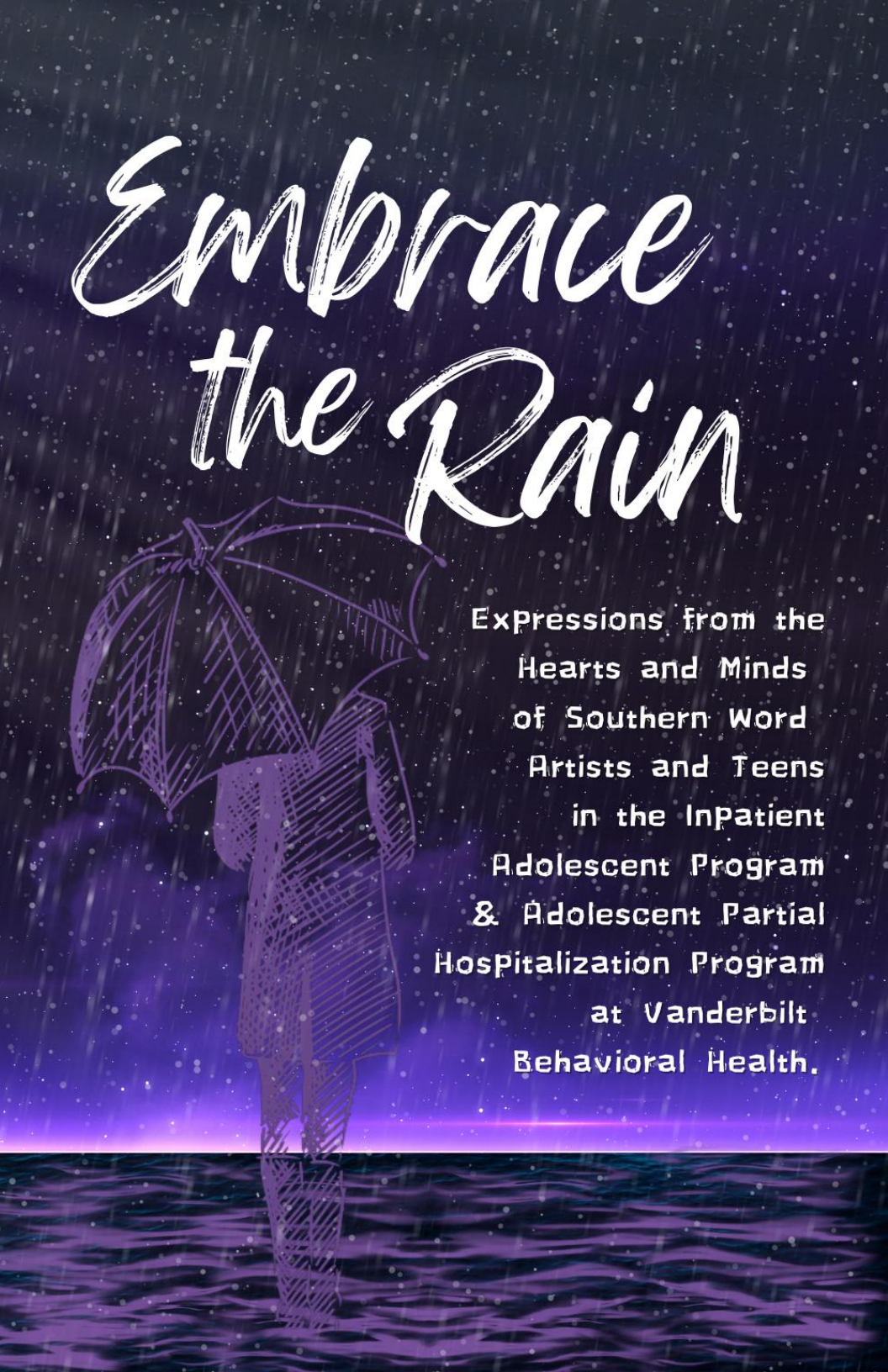


Embrace the Rain



Expressions from the
Hearts and Minds
of Southern Word
Artists and Teens
in the Inpatient
Adolescent Program
& Adolescent Partial
Hospitalization Program
at Vanderbilt
Behavioral Health.

Published in 2024, Nashville, TN.

This project is a collaboration between Southern Word and Vanderbilt Behavioral Health. Southern Word is a Tennessee non-profit that offers creative educational solutions for youth literacy and social-emotional development. All rights to the work included in this anthology belong to the authors and visual artists, who have given permission for this publication. This chapbook is made possible with the support of Metro Arts: Nashville Office of Arts + Culture, Tennessee Arts Commission, and National Endowment for the Arts.

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Forward

The poems and expressions included in this book were written by teens at the Inpatient Adolescent Program & Adolescent Partial Hospitalization Program at Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital. The teens in the program participate in weekly writing workshops, facilitated by a Southern Word Mentor. The workshops offer young writers the opportunity to express their creativity and explore their emotions, as well as provide them with healthy outlets for their thoughts.

For the first time, mentors and artists from Southern Word's networks have submitted writing and artwork that both reflect on the participant submissions as well as share messages of inspiration and perseverance culled from their own journeys.

Participants maintain physical and legal ownership of all writing completed in the workshops. Submitting to this anthology is optional. Those under the age of 18 must secure permission from a parent or legal guardian to be published. All pieces are published under a pseudonym or anonymously. The editor has left most of the writing in their original form. However, small adjustments may have been made for space, readability, and confidentiality purposes.

Southern Word is committed to providing youth, especially in underserved communities, with as many opportunities as possible to develop and publicly present their voices both live and in print, video, audio, and digital media. Southern Word elevates the stories, voices, struggles and triumphs of young people, especially those who are often marginalized.

By simply opening this book, you are contributing to the healing and empowerment of the teens in Vanderbilt Behavioral Health who were generous enough to gift the community with this valuable piece of art. As you contribute to the healing of these young people, may you also find any healing you may need yourself. Read these pieces and share them with others.

For more information, referral, or crisis intervention assistance from Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital for children, adolescents, and adults, please call (615) 320-7770 or visit www.vanderbilthealth.com

To learn more about Southern Word programs and events, or to make a tax-deductible contribution to support the work, visit www.southernword.org.

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"Fire Burns" by Keayana Robinson

"Fire" by Modern Day Warrior

Fire

Burns

Orange hot yellow red

Pretty

Because it can help bring life

You are hot you burn

You bring warmth you can bring

War but war can bring peace

We need you to live

You provide life

You are needed for so many

Things without you there

Would be no humanity

You are needed for life

To thrive though you bring

Hardships and horror

And death you bring life

You provide for the world

The world needs

You you protect us



"A Poet" by Keayana Robinson

"3:42 a.m." by Keayana Robinson

I fumble in the darkness to find my light.

I reach tiredly for the pen and notebook beside my bed I
often claim is for writing my late night thoughts—
It was empty.

Tonight, I am full of something: anger, restlessness, a
sadness both unseen and familiar.

I dread this hour, and it isn't fond of me

today we hold space for one another.

I scribble words that float to the surface uninterrupted.
A poem comes first to the spirit and then to the pen.
Two lines on the page;

Your words have power, carry weight, hold meaning.
To dream with your pen is to write the past, reflect the
present, change the future.

I fumble again to the light.

In the darkness the peace from clarity overcomes me.



“Keep Fighting” by Anonymous

Clouds so dark,
Whipping winds,
Everyone one has
Storms deep within.
Keep fighting.

Face the rain,
Face the snow,
This is a battle
That everyone knows.
Keep fighting.

The rain has stopped,
The wind has slowed,
You kept trying
Because of hope.
Keep fighting.



by Han Rodriguez

“Under This Umbrella” by Irene

I am stuck under this umbrella
It is my safety
It protects me from the rain
But I can never see the rainbow

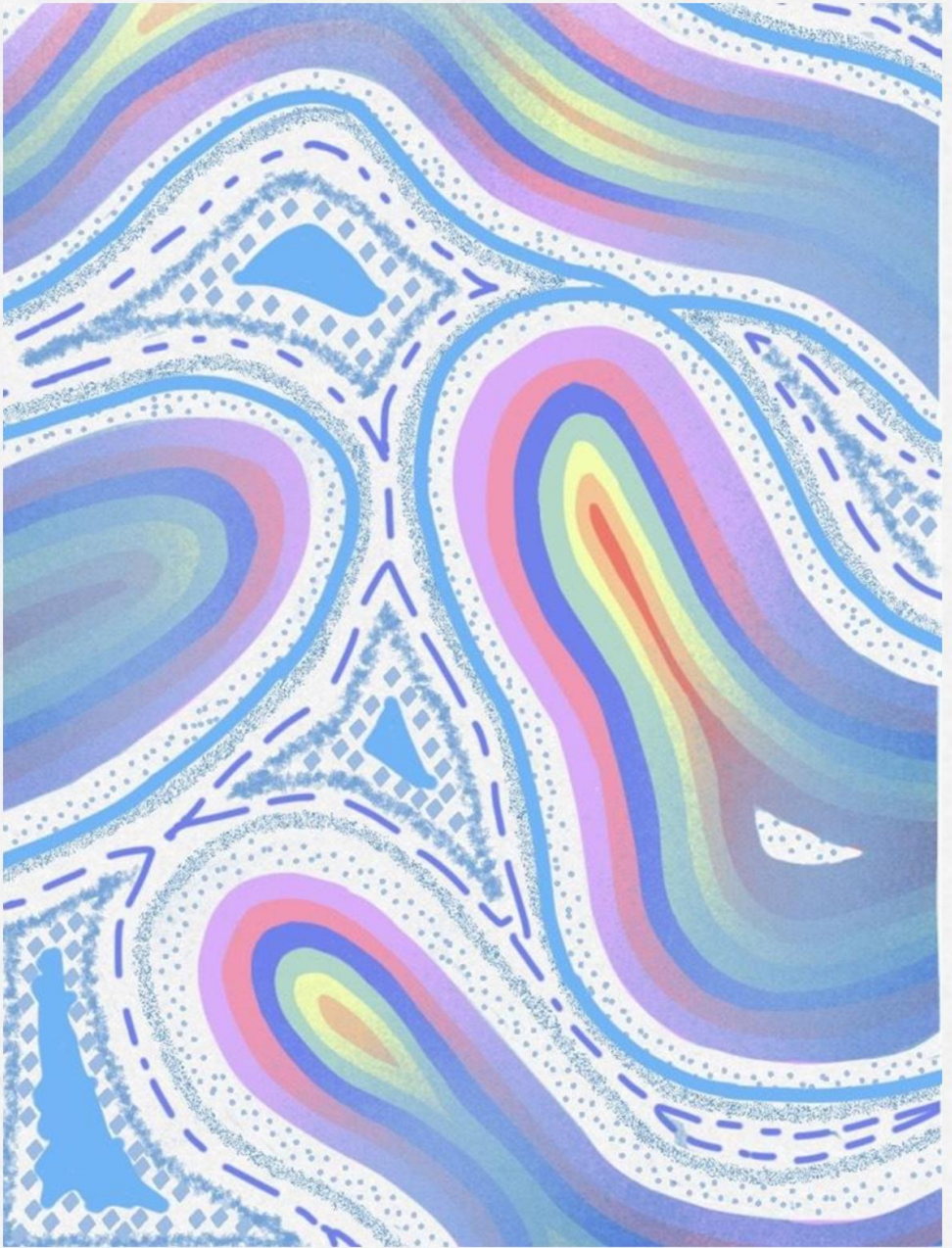
My umbrella is warping
Warping my vision
I am unable to see how the rainbow really is
It all looks like rain to me

I hope to build the courage
To drop my umbrella
Embrace the rain
And the rainbow

Life is boring with no weather
I feel no pain
But with no rain
There will never be a rainbow

I now understand
What the weather holds
For I used to not want
The rain's bow

I see now
I was at fault
So I will drop my umbrella
And embrace the rain at last



by Han Rodriguez

"Always" by Han Rodriguez

Remember:

You need not drown
To embrace the rain.
Need not feel every
Stinging drop to know
There's good weather
In waiting.
It's okay to crave shelter,
To shawl away the worst of it,
For you now know how to spare
Yourself from being
Soaked by it.

Watch

From the window sometimes.

Walk

Bravely, into the storm only
When absolutely necessary.

Look

In the mirror when you cry,

Once or twice,

And call yourself

Visible,

Spectrum,

Colorful,

Rainbow,

Beautiful.

Keep in mind

Always,

That it isn't rain alone

That makes the rainbow.

It is the sunlight that follows

Which makes that promise

Appear.



“The City Below” by Son Goku

Jerry stood above the valley, the wind ripping at his jacket as he took stock of the environment of the city that lay before him. The air tasted sweet, like delicious jams and jellies, the atmosphere rang with the smooth melodies of Southern jazz. The geography was typical of a place in the deep South, smooth, flat lands laced with rivers and lakes, dotted with trees of deciduous nature. Many people walked the street below, several men in suits headed for their jobs. Women draped with all fashions of jewelry, glowing in the early morning light. Children jumped with joy as they met their friends at the entrance of their school. A man carried a jug of milk, probably for the breakfast he had waiting at home. Further away, a woman covered in sweat jogged out of a gym. The shrill whine of sirens rang out, announcing the intent of officers ready to administer justice and throw criminals in jail. Jerry set his jaw and steeled himself, descending into the city below, a whole new life ahead of him.

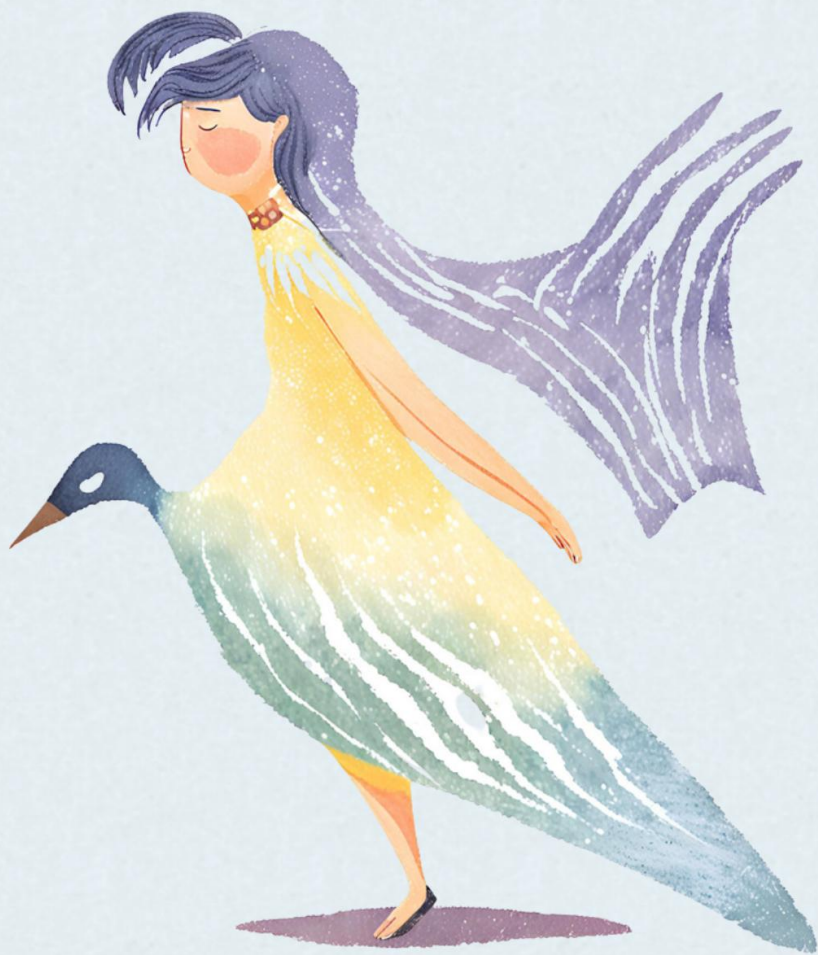


“Untitled” by Son Goku

Light switch flipping off

The soft bed under me

I am now asleep



by Simba Woodard

“I Wish” by Anonymous

Honestly, I get attached easily and will bother you 24/7. I have lots of friends, but no one to talk to. I wish I didn't make my friends uncomfortable when I am myself. I wish I didn't love the people I love.

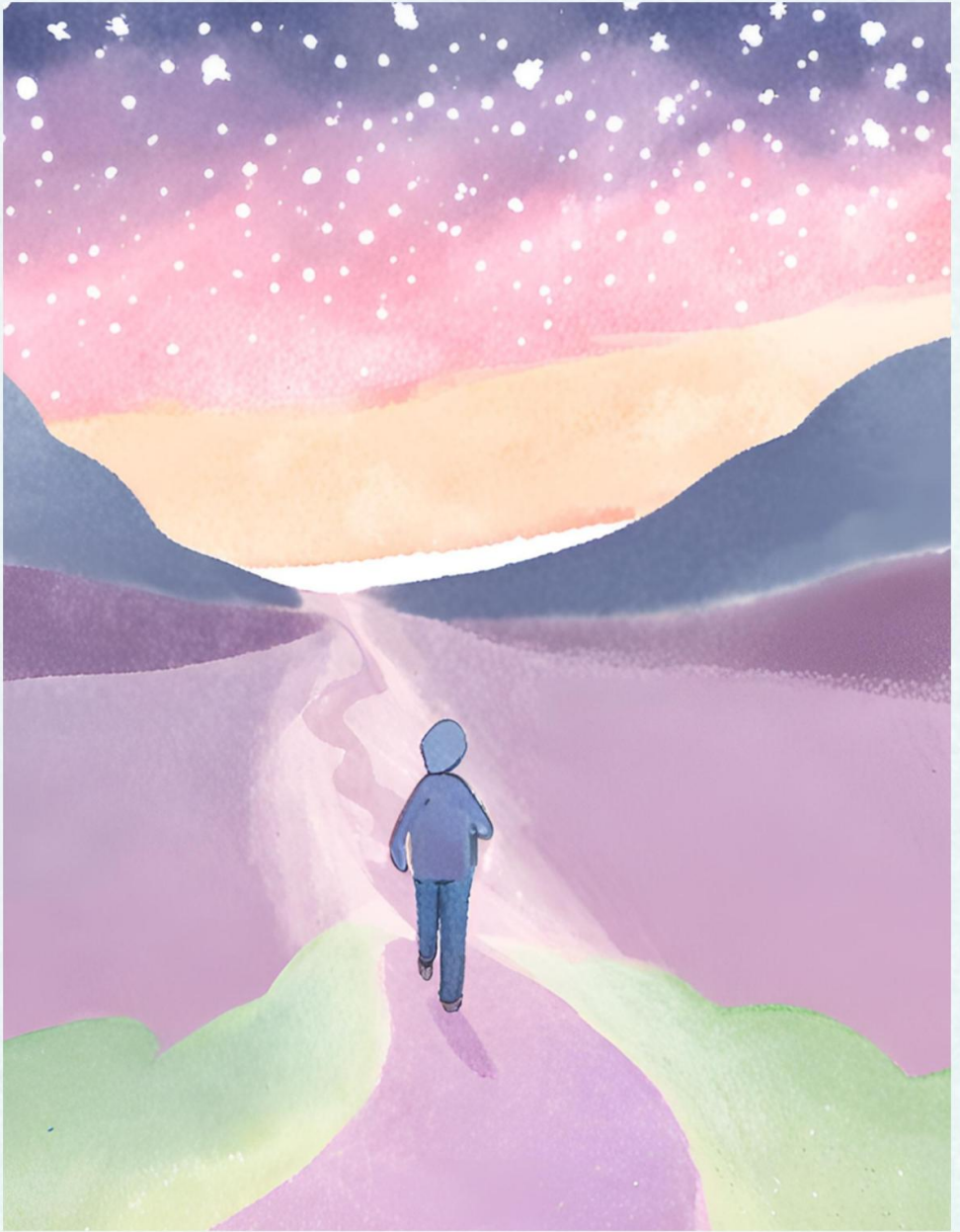
I wish I was born differently.

I wish I can make people happy.

I wish I would stop and think before I do.

I wish I can be like my mom...

I wonder what my walls hear and see from our family.



by Simba Woodard

**“If you are going to label me”
by Simba Woodard**

Don't label me Brave
For being different.

Label me Beautiful.

Label me as gift
To the world and then some.

Label me as guiding light

As colorful

And captivating as stars
in a sunrise.

Don't label me bold
For being great.

For being all that I was
meant to be.

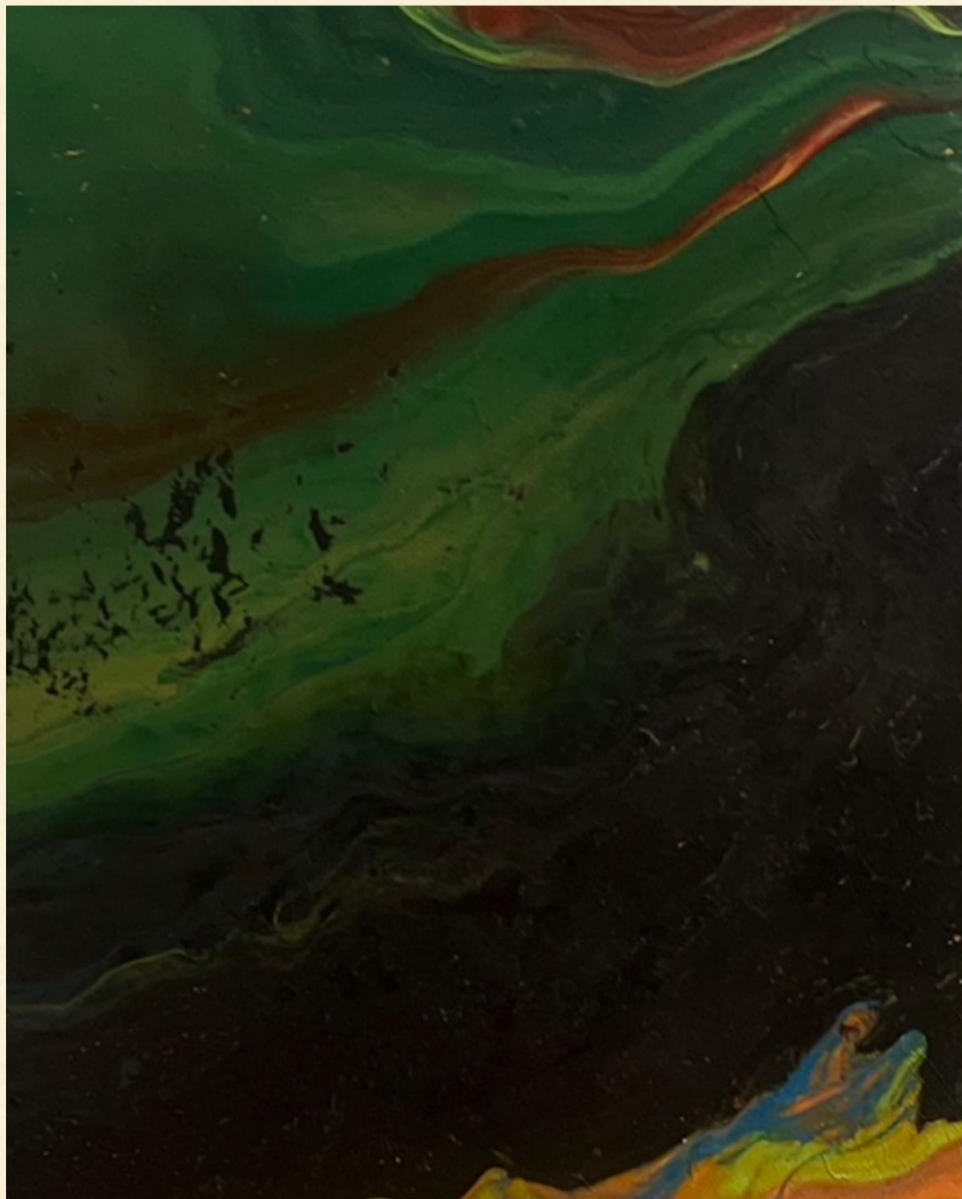
I am me.

Wholly. And here.



“Happiness” by Anonymous

Make your heart big
and be bright
Study your beliefs
and let them guide you
Work and love yourself
Put yourself before anyone else
Or work with hope and be powerful
with it
Let people help and trust ones
who are leads for yourself



by Taria Person

**“If Only I Could Find Happiness” by
Anonymous**

If only I could find happiness within myself. Maybe I wouldn't be such a lost soul. I feel I'm caring and lovable, yet still learning to be kind to myself. Waking up seeing Paul's obituary fills me with so much pain, yet motivation. All I hear is: "You got this sis, don't let up." So although a lost soul, I'm tryna find my way to better days.



by Taria Person

“The Recipe: takes time” by Taria Person

HAVE TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE STOVETOP
SUCCESS IS SIMMERING SLOW
IT TAKES TIME TO GET THE PERFECT RECIPE
JUST RIGHT

DON'T LET HUNGER CONTROL THE CHOICES MADE
TAKE A HOLD OF THE SPATULA
BE PURPOSEFUL
STIR WITH INTENT

WHEN IT'S READY...

YOU'LL KNOW

AND ENJOY EVERY BITE



“Dodge Charger” by Big Boi Bob

He always wanted
a Dodge Charger in
his life. He would be
so much happier if he
had one. He also always
wanted people to realize
he was a nice person,
Funny too. He also
owned a sick stick.



“Capricorn” by Big Boi Bob

He said, “Rick and Morty’s ass.” I said while listening to hip hop, “It’s cause you’re a Capricorn.” He was munching a pear and a cucumber. It was around Halloween and we were watching *It*. After I said that he said, “You saying it’s cause I was born in January?” I declared, “Yuh.” I took a sip of my water, cause my Lucky Charms were dry. My mouth was parched cause of the Lays I ate earlier, along with my Burger King. That’s when he asked, “Can we change it to the Buccaneers game?” I said, “Well nah, we at the part where he eats the kids in summer.”



“Briley Parkway” by Anonymous

I was driving down Briley Parkway with about 2.5-3 car lengths behind the white SUV in front of me. Suddenly everyone in front of me slammed on their brakes causing me to have to join with a screeching of the tires. My brakes locked up and I had to react by swerving out of the way. When my brakes came back, it shot me toward the cement wall to my left, causing me to swerve again to avoid T-boning the wall. With the rush of adrenaline and fear, as well as nerves and anxiety, I looked in my rearview to horrifyingly see a car driving halfway up the wall barreling right at me, about to rear-end me. With another swerve, I dodged the silver Nissan Altima by the skin on my teeth. The rush of relief came when I realized I was safe, though the crashing and screeching ringing in my ears with my hands shaking and rapid breathing.



by AB Bedran

“Honest Poem”

***after Rudy Francisco* by Scott Bible**

I was born on October 6th, 2006. The first 2 years of my life were here. The next 6 in a small town called Sheffield, just 15 minutes from London. People said I had weird humor, but I like it and what's mine is mine. I don't like when people chew with their mouths open, and I'm afraid of the future and open water. Music is one of my favorite things. I can play 8 instruments and I'm working on 9. I like to sing, but not in front of people. I'd do anything for my friends, and most animals. I wish I could have kept old friends, while making new ones wherever I go. I wish the bright joy of my childhood had stayed with me throughout life, but time changes us all. I want to be the exception, not just a cog in the machine of life. I want love, but I'm terrified of being abandoned. My family is the most important thing in the world to me, and I would do anything for them.



"Where Divine Rage Softens" by AB Bedran

“A Love Letter To Land” By AB Bedran

Send me
where not all of us
have known you
Within this reverie
We treat you unfallen
So gentle and kind

These spaces between nothing,
And every want or need to be met
Like strangers who become lovers
Immerse me
in the touch of your soul
though sometimes escaping,
We are holding
All the curses and blessings,
I'll find you in our corner of the sky.



"Cold" by heavensbee crane

One word, cold
Inside and out.
Blue, all that's left.
Eyesight blinded by
frostbite and pain.
The pain is ice
and digs my hole deeper.
Planet Earth isn't the
only thing destroyed by global
warming. The freeze spread too
far...too fast, and now I
stand alone in the dark, with
a frozen heart and no remorse
left to shed. Feels like an
eternity as I'm being held captive
only in my mind. As I grow
colder, I also gain distance.
I now lost sight of my family.
This isn't the same reality.
No house is home, no one to live with.
Cold.
That's how I end, that's how
that happens. That's final,
from now on, goodbye...
"Friends..."



“From the Outside” by Scott Bible

From the outside, people see sweatpants and hoodies. They see a big man who doesn't need to feel things. They see a big man of brick, wood, and concrete. On the outside, they see a caring friend who puts others ahead of himself. They see someone who knows that he shouldn't cry. They see a pillar that others can rely on.

But on the inside, there's a boy who hid his body with loose clothes. On the inside, there's a boy who was taught that men don't cry. There was a boy who over the years, forgot how to cry. There's a kid who was taught to forget yourself and only worry about others, that other people's feelings are more important than your own. That your only worth is what you provide.



by Mel Dalili

“On Harvest Day” by Mel Dalili
2024 Tennessee Youth Poet Laureate

as soon as june arrives, you will know it is peach season.

even though the orchard is yours,
sometimes the bugs will beat you to it. a worm will dangle
out of the wooly underside of a rare maroon catch. his
belly will be full. if he had a tongue and hands, he would
be licking his lips and rubbing his abdomen in satisfaction.
fighting your hunger, you will cut this peach from the tree
and let him have it.

even though the orchard is yours,
you will find some peaches– or what
is left of them– scattered in the tall grass,
rotten and blackened with time. a fuzzy, white
coating will wring the color out of your best pickings.
fighting your hunger, you will take these peaches from the
tall grass and put them into the compost bin.

everything has purpose, you tell yourself
as you walk back home. the world around you
is fighting to live, too, is fighting their hunger,

is drooling for a piece of your fortune.

they will not ask for your permission before

they take something from you.

your stomach will feel hollow as you kick

spoiled fruit from the pathway.

everything has purpose, you tell yourself

as you walk back home. out of the corner of your eye

you will spot the perfect find:

the ripest peach, rose and gold.

you would have missed it if you spent your time

kicking and kicking and kicking. you will take a bite

out of its tender side and embrace the whole

orchard to be yours— mold and worms and all,

small losses and larger reasons to plant another tree.



“Reflection” by Masquerade

I am always in pain. But it's how one uses the pain that matters. What I mean by this is that pain can be used for a variety of reasons. One can be someone is in too much pain and needs a channel for it. Something to use the pain for. I have not observed anyone use the pain for something. Or at least anyone in intense pain use it for something. I've seen people in mild pain use it for lesser things. Seen TV shows of people in pain attempting to use it. Batman for example. He must be in constant pain. But he uses it. Another is Dr. Gregory House from House M.D. He himself says life is pain. But still, he lives on. I will admit I am not anywhere near in the constant set of pain as say someone like Dr. House, Batman, John Wick. But I am in constant pain. Not physical but mental. Sometimes the physical pain adds to the mental and emotional pain but all in all, I am in constant pain. Everything I do is to lessen the pain. There have been times when the pain has gotten so bad I wanted to die. Thus the attempts. But I have been able to manage the pain as of late. I am able to manage it after years of hard work. Two or three years of tears and blood have led up to this moment. And by

god, I am not going to wait any longer to heal myself. I am not going to let people walk over me. I am not going to take anything from anyone anymore. I am no longer going to resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms simply because it's easier. I am no longer going to let others have a stranglehold over me. Everything from now on is purely for me. Forget if I am being selfish I think no, I know I deserve to be selfish for a bit! Forget if others object I am in it for myself now! Forget if others care, it's all for me now! Forget if others say anything else, I am now focused on me!

All in all, I have improved since my first months in treatment. I have been in treatment in total outside of Rogers since I was 13. Two years. Two whole years of treatment. And it's only now that I've gotten my stuff together. I'm finally able to trust people. I can do hygiene every other day. I can effectively communicate with people when I'm angry. I've improved. I at this current moment am a dramatically more improved version of myself a year ago. I think I'm ready for leadership because I have shown to be a kind individual who has grown despite the challenges that have appeared. And I will admit I have

much more room for improvement. But I believe that above all, I should be proud of myself for finding the will to live even when I had every chance not to. I have been able to grow. I have been able to improve. And now I want to help others grow and improve themselves. I want to help others see the best in life and themselves. I want to help others not have to go through years of unhealthy coping and such. It's the main reason I want to be a psychologist. To help others. And to understand the brain more.

