Writers Matter-2010

Listening to the Voices and Personal Narratives of Philadelphia Students

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Hello

Welcome to the Writers Matter first edition of “Voices of Teens Journal Book” representing some of the best work from the 2010-2011 school year. The Writers Matter program is currently completing our seventh year of providing innovative writing opportunities for students in the Philadelphia metropolitan region. Using journal writing as a vehicle for self-expression, this program focuses on personal life journeys and experiences, allowing student’s voices to be heard while, at the same time, building essential writing skills.

In 2005, the Writers Matter program was created for middle school adolescent students in grades 6th through 8th in order to provide them with an innovative and motivational approach to writing development. Over 4,500 students have experienced this unique program since that time. During the 2010-2011 school year 12 schools, involving 17 teachers, and approximately 1,000 students participated in the program. Each year, Deb Yost of La Salle’s Education Department conducts research to evaluate outcomes related to writing, personal, and social skills. The results consistently show that the program fosters more than improved writing skill development among middle school students. The program also:

- Produces a warm, nurturing classroom climate that enables students to flourish and succeed;
- Encourages greater teacher-student relationships and classroom management due to the trusting and mutually respectful relationships that develop between teachers and students;
- Enhances adolescents’ motivation to write, which in turn increases writing skill development;
- Encourages multiple perspective-taking among adolescents, which breaks down cultural barriers and “cliques” that are part of the adolescent experience, and;
- Enhances deeper metacognition among adolescents, which fosters greater motivation for academic success and pro-social behaviors.
- Provides a unique approach for students from different cultures, religions and family structure to find our more commonalities than differences about each other.
- Encourages young adolescents to celebrate their personal voices and be heard by others.

A Renewed Focus on Writing Skill Development

A careful analysis of the research data over the past two years revealed that there was a strong need to focus professional development sessions on writing instruction. As well, our Writers Matters teachers indicated that they had a strong desire to learn more about mentoring texts, revision and editing, teaching of grammar and perspectives on identifying and recognizing errors. Much time was therefore devoted to analyzing student work and examining the strategies mentioned above to enhance student writing to during our professional development sessions this year. As a result of this need for more in-depth teaching of writing skills a new book is currently being written by Deb Yost and me with Marjie Allen and Kim Lewinski, all from La Salle University to address these professional development needs. Many of the teachers in the Writers Matter program will be contributing to the writing of the book by sharing their successes and units of study from the past few years. We are hoping to publish the book by January, 2012.

A Partnership with the Mural Arts Program
The mural design will incorporate student responses to this essential question. Our group teamed with nationally acclaimed mural artist, Meg Saligman to design a mural focusing on the theme of hunger. Twenty students were selected as “Writers Matter Scholars” to participate in the program. The mural will be constructed on the site of Philabundance, located in the food distribution center of Philadelphia only a few blocks from the sports complex. We are scheduled to have the opening for this mural during the summer of 2011.

**Dissemination of the Program to a Broader Audience**

Several Writers Matter faculty and teachers presented the program at national and regional professional conferences this year. The National conferences were: The National Middle School Association annual conference in Baltimore, Maryland (Bob Vogel, Deb Yost, and Dianna Newton) and the Catholic Educators Association in New Orleans, Louisiana (Bob Vogel and Steve Clark). The regional Conferences featured presentations at Pennsylvania Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, Hershey, Pa. (Bob Vogel, Katherine Muc and Francesca Cantarini). In attention, a special presentation to all Middle School Principals in the School district of Philadelphia occurred in November 2010 at La Salle University (Bob Vogel, Michael Galbraith and Katherine Muc).

**Books and other publications**

In 2008 Michael Galbraith, an 8th grade literacy teacher in Philadelphia, and I co-authored *Voices of Teens: Writers Matter*, published by the National Middle School Association. This book is an essential component of the professional development sessions implemented for Writers Matter teachers every year. Participating students also receive a copy of the “student issue” of the book, which gives them tremendous insight into the program’s focus and helps them to understand their role as fledgling “authors.” Along with Deb Yost, an article featuring the Writers Matter program, entitled, “Writing Matters to Middle School Students” was accepted for publication in the Middle School Journal, which is published by the National Middle School Association.

**Writers Matter Mentorship Program and campus visits**

In addition, the program continues to provide La Salle University mentors to many of the participating schools. This May the Henry School and Wagner Middle School visited the campus of La Salle University to gain a better understanding of college life in the hope of motivating these students to contemplate college as a future goal, if they work hard and do well
in school. This visit included a tour of the campus, meeting with faculty and students, exploring the dormitories and participating in a writing activity.

**The Writers Matter Program and Bethlehem University in Palestine**

Next year, the Writer Matter program goes international. I have partnered with Dr. Sami Abdel Razzaq Adwan from Bethlehem University located in the West Bank of Palestine to implement the program in this region of the world. We will be working with 7th grade students in six (6) different schools: two in Israel, two in Bethlehem, West Bank and two in the East Jerusalem (Palestinian area of Israel). Additionally, two schools in the United States will participate as well. The project aims at improving the writing skills of the 7th grade students as well as providing opportunities for the students to write about issues and concerns related to their experiences. Students will be encouraged to write about their lives, communities, and, specifically, how the ongoing regional conflict has impacted their lives. The program will encourage active listening to the different voices and narratives of students representing different schools, and how they are personally experiencing the conflict between the Israelis/Palestinians. The first year of the project will culminate with a book that includes a training manual and selected student work translated into three languages - Hebrew, English and Arabic. In addition, the result of the work will be displayed through a public art project (mural) that celebrates the diverse views of the students involved.

**Special Thanks**

Special thanks goes to Penny Nixon, Associate Superintendent of Schools and John W. Frangipani Assistant Superintendent for Middle Schools from the School District of Philadelphia. Their efforts and support have enabled this program to flourish.

This program is generously supported by the PTS Foundation (Pam and Tony Schneider) and the Tyler Aaron Bookman Memorial Foundation (Neil and Jill Bookman). These individuals continue to show great support and encouragement of this program and I personally thank them for their continued commitment and vision.

*A very special thanks to the incredible teachers involved in the Writers Matter program: Francesca Cantarini (Henry), Roxanne Holmes (Lingelbach), Saudia Bickley (Amy, NW), Katherine Muc (Leeds), Erin Bloom (Wagner), Caroline Shuman (Pennypacker), Darcelle Void-Boston (Leeds), Kimberly Levin (Lingelbach), Kimberly McDonald (Pennypacker), Erin Cunningham (Vare), Steve Clark (Depaul Catholic), Dianna Newton (Friends Select) and Michael Galbraith (Grover Washington Jr. MS)*

Thank You.

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Special Note: Because of privacy issues and personal nature of student work, no names will be listed. Student work will be presented by school only. Hope you enjoy the incredible work of the students in Philadelphia.

CW Henry School

Ms. Cantarini - The Writers Matter program is revolutionary for our students at Henry. Not only do they learn the academic writing skills needed to prepare for high school, they also get an outlet to have their voices heard. This program creates a culture of camaraderie, trust, and success. These ingredients are key to any 8th grade classroom. When the students feel as if they are heard and understood by both the teachers and their peers, they are much more receptive to the everyday learning involved in the curriculum. Last year alone, all of my 8th grade students scored Advanced or Proficient on the Writing PSSA. Some also stood up to bullies with their poetic pieces, made new friends, and addressed the class at graduation. The Writers Matter program is a win-win for everyone involved. We are thankful to be part of this work with Dr. Vogel and LaSalle University.

Racism

What is racism?
Racism is what I'm use to.
It makes me who I'm today.
Being called all types of names and being talked about but I'm always being called a “N____”.
In 4th grade the boy that was told that he will grow up and become a thug by his teacher, because of his race.
The boy that is trying to prove that one person wrong.
There are many ways I could show my feelings, but I just don’t.
If I go into a certain places or a certain area they would stare at me.
Who can I go to, without being laughed at.
I wish I could beat them up, but it's to many of them so I just take the pain.

You call me names
You pull my hair
You try to push me down the stairs
You tease me about the things I wear
Everywhere I go you stop and glare
I try to fit in
I'm doing my best
I tell the teachers
"I'll handle the rest."
Nothing happens
It never does
Back to square 1
Which is where I was
Still being kicked
Still being punched
Still sitting alone
While eating my lunch
No friends to have my back
No confidence to hold me up
Constantly under attack
On life I have given up

**Tired of Being Bullied**
For the girl that has to stand alone.
For the girl that feels out of place.
For the girl that does not eat because she looks down on herself.
For the girl that's not afraid to be herself.
For the girl that feels guilty.
For the girl that feels great.
For the girl that laughs and cries.
I write this for you.
I write this for all the girls in America.
I write this for all the girls in the world.
For the girl that does not look the way the world wants her to,
but in return does not care.
For the girl that hates herself.
For the girl that is called fat,
you are pretty not just on the outside but also within.
For the girl that is called ugly you are a diamond in the ruff.
For the girl that they say has nothing,
everyone has one special talent.
Listen to me.
For it's the reach of your arms.
The span of your hips.
The stride of your step and,
The curl of your lips.
You are a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman
that's you.

**Where is my board?**
It hurt when you said you wasn’t my friend any more.
Not as much as my mom saying I’m taking your board.
I tried to ask her what was she doing it for,
But before she said it I had to walk out of the door.
I always wonder what was it an example of,
Am I bad, do I fight, or is it all of the above.
I knew everything wasn’t out of love,
I guess it was my fault or maybe the hole that I dug.
My mind is still running it feels like I’m in a race,
I’m stressing need to think of a happier place.
I always wonder how long things will take,
I need my skateboard back there’s no such thing a taking a break.
Holocaust: The Tragedy That Struck The World

You might have heard about the Holocaust and the tyranny of Hitler. All the millions of innocent people punished and killed because of one man’s belief. The tragedy that shocked the world dramatically and in every way. Well it was one of the horrifying tragedies that ever happened on Earth. This horrifying event was a tragedy in many ways that were all appalling.

One of the reasons to why it was such a tragedy was that millions of innocent people were murdered and slaughtered because of the way they were. The Nazis killed all those innocent people because in Hitler’s eyes they didn’t fit his perfect race. You may think to yourself, “Why would one man want to do such a terrifying thing to millions of innocent people?” These people didn’t do anything wrong to deserve such punishment. They didn’t cause Germany’s problems. Some of the millions of innocent people served there country and yet still were punished. They were hunted and killed for no good reason. Millions of people were murdered because of what people thought they did.

Jews were blamed for German problems and persecuted for German problems. They were blamed because Hitler believed they caused his country’s problems after World War I. He didn’t even have a real reason to why he blamed them. How could you blame and pin something for something so serious, and they didn’t do it? Putting that type of accusations on someone so innocent is just cruel. Since many were people blamed they were treated so poorly.

People were taken against their will to be imprisoned in death and labor concentration camps. Mostly likely when sent to the camps they died because of the harsh environments. At the death camps, they murdered millions and dumped their bodies into pits. They even counted how many they killed. The only probability of surviving was to last through those harsh treatments, severe weather, and last to the end of the war. Basically they had a low chance of surviving. Some people were grateful and lucky enough to survive the concentration camps or escape. Why would you want to do such a thing?

The cause of one man’s belief caused all this. Hitler is the one blamed the Jews. He’s the one who wanted to make the perfect race and eliminate anyone who didn’t fit that description. Hitler started the NAZI party. He literally got into the minds of millions of people and convinced them that Jews caused this problem and made them follow his orders.

People couldn’t see their families because they had to hide out. They had no choice but to go into hiding and try to survive their best way or be subjected to the cruel and unjust treatment of interment camps. Children who were just young were forced to grow up in this terrible environment.

As you can see, the Holocaust was a tragedy in multiple ways. The Holocaust affected the world horribly and got into the minds of everyone. Millions of people lost their lives because of Hitler’s insane and cruel beliefs. Hitler’s tyranny will never be forgotten, for the innocent lives that were lost and the cruelty of one man. But we will also remember the strong and brave people who died and those who fought back for what was right.

Social Injustice
The Great Eviction
A Mohawk boy gathers wood for fire.
A Mohawk man gathers food to survive.
A Mohawk woman gathers silk for cloth.
Until a Spanish settler kicks them all out of their tribe.
He kills every native boy and girl.
He burns every hut they built.
And when the winter months get cold, he gives the natives diseased quilts.
He burns every single village, and he murders every Chief.
He fills every native heart with anger, pain and grief.
We look upon the settlers, and call them great men.
We know what they did was wrong, and yet we all pretend.

People like me.

People like me.
People of color,
People that are different,
Don’t get treated the same.
Even though we had to fight for our freedom,
Even though we came above segregation,
That didn’t change the fact that there are still ignorant people around the
country that don’t appreciate our beautiful color.
We come in all different beautiful shades.
From yellow to caramel and from brown to chocolate,
Do we intimidate you?
Do you think that my people are too smart?
Because it was a crime for someone that looks like me to learn how to
read?
But I think that you’re right.
We are too smart
Because we learned how to read.
And a man of my kind, a man that looks like me
Is now in charge of all of you!

Boy in the striped pajamas

Such a hard time, eyes closed forever, over millions.
I am no longer a human nor a peasant. Not a worker or even a person,
I am now a number. One of so many.
Life has now been ended, but only one thing to become.
My life to freedom.........
I walked behind a closed door, hands held too tight to the one friend I had.
Not knowing only moments later we both would be free of all misery.
One a life of all great things, but always misunderstood.
Two a life that never began, wishes to be free. To have a friend.
Together we were happy, friends, brothers.
Together we died single lovers.
Lovers to be understood and free.
Lovers to be friends to the end.
Lovers to be open and happy.
The boy in the striped pajamas, the boy hiding behind a cage,
The boy stripped of his life, the boy who wishes for the pain to go away.
The millions who died, the millions who were loved.
The millions whose life was cut short...... just because.
We were drowned, starved, burned, and frozen.
We took the walk of death or the bath of life.
But one thing to remember we where tortured and terrified. Rest in peace to the millions who died.

**Life**

They're going to kill me.
I'm 14 years old and all I can think of is that “they're going to kill me”.
There's nowhere I can run, while I'm alive I have no fun, but I know the end is near.
Mother tells me to have no fear. How can I not?
Middle of the night, their feet, I hear trot.
So how could I not dream of the scream I will let out when they capture me.
How could I not ponder through the night of flight I will be forced upon?
Grabbed by the arm, yanked at the neck, chained at the legs, shot in the back.
Alone I would lie in my bed.
Hidden in a cellar, an attic, and a porthole to another universe.
My life in another's hand.
They're going to kill me.
I reach out for a helping hand, but I need more, more than just a hand to survive.
And when I die, they won't revive me.
I just wanted to live, but they're going to kill me before I can fulfill my dreams of being rich and famous.
If only I could live to tell of my adventures in the annex.
They know where we are hiding. They know about the bookcase, they know everything.
Each day I wonder why, why they would want to kill me?
I'm young, and used to be free.
Now I'm on the run, death is after me.
They're going to kill me.
For what reason I don't know, but they're going to kill me so I have hope while I still can.
So now I embrace death with open arms and welcoming hands.
They're going to kill me, but my soul will expand, with all the others who went through hell like me, fear has left my heart I just wish the best for you.

**A Country Of Justice Created From Injustice**

*The United States, “the land of the free” wasn’t always as free as it was today. The United States, like every other country (and some still are) was unjust at many points. Our country is special because our country learned from injustices in both other countries and our own and change them for the better. The United States stands for freedom, liberty, justice, and fairness and it should be every American's honor and duty to uphold what our country stands for because these days, compared to the rest of the world, most Americans don’t realize how lucky they are to have this much freedom.*

**First Amendment:**

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances”.

One day, in 1942, not to long after World War II, a school in Charleston, West Virginia had a daily ritual of saluting the U.S. flag and reciting “The Pledge Of Allegiance”. Two girls (both sisters)
named Marie and Gatha Barnett one day refused to do the school’s ritual. They were sent to the principal’s office where they argued that it was against their religion to worship anything non-sacred. In return, school officials argued that every student is required to do the ritual, no exceptions, and the school was backed by local law. For their refusing to recite the flag their classmates called them “Nazis”, “traitors”, and “Japs”. They were expelled from school. From that point (still 1942), more that 2,000 students from around the country were expelled from school for the same reason.

These children who refused to honor the flag were Jehovah’s Witness children. During this time refusing to honor the flag, especially during a time of war, created an outrage by Americans. Witnesses lucky enough to remain in school still went through a tough time, they were teased, bullied, and beaten. In one week there were hundreds of reports of beatings in public. In one case police forced Witness children to swallow large amounts of Castor oil when they refused to recite the pledge. Gatherings of sometimes as much as 2,500 people sacked and burned down a Witness church. Churches, and houses were destroyed, and lives were ruined. One day, the two sister Marie and Gatha wrote a letter to the school district stating that forcing them or even requiring them to do the pledge went against the First Amendment. From there they went to court and won their case, which was previously turned down.

When colonist first settled in this country if anything it was for religious freedom. They wanted to express their religion freely. No one should be told how to believe and what to believe in, even those without a religion. The United States is the most diverse country in the world in race, people, and especially religion, and with that no one should be discriminated against.

December, 1965, not to long from the point when the United States entered the Vietnam war a group of teenagers in Des Moines, Iowa, protested the war and the draft while wearing black armbands with a peace symbol at it’s center. When school officials found out about their protest, they ordered that they abandon there (peaceful) protest, stating that it was a “disruptive influence”. The next day the teenagers went back to there normal lives, however three teenagers chose to still where their armbands, they were caught and were suspended from school. Backed by their parents and lawyer, they set out to sue the school district. When they got to court, the court ruled in the teenagers favor, stating that the armbands stood as a “symbolic speech” and was protected by the First Amendment.

Another right we Americans are lucky enough to have it freedom to express ourselves. The United States may not tell one how to act or behave, however what about in the cases such as libraries, and school, and ect…

In 1996 the United States past the Communications Decency Act, making it illegal to transmit, send, or display anything that might be looked as indecent to minors. Along with this there were also questions that arose such as should the First Amendment protect against songs and shows with mad lyrics or that deliver bad messages? Many people began pointing to examples such as the song “As Nasty As They Wanna Be”. Even pieces of literature were pointed out and demanded that they be taken out of libraries and schools, books like “The Adventures Of Huckleberry Finn”, “Little House on the Prairie”, and even books like “The Diary Of Anne Frank”. We came to a decision that book, songs, and television are the Americans right to view and listen to, and that removing them because they had a bad message or someone didn’t like the content was no excuse to why the should be removed and band..

The United States of America is without a doubt the freest country in the world today and as stated earlier “it should be every American’s honor and duty to uphold what our country stands for because these days, compared to the rest of the world, most Americans don’t realize how lucky they are to have this much freedom”.

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What’s The Difference?
Blacks and whites, been going at it for a while now, but the population of racism is surprisingly going down. Don’t you know how that makes people feel, now we can never walk around thinking our relationship is real.

Gays and Lesbians, are still not accepted, they’re getting judged, bullied and treated with rejection. Why does it matter to others what they want to be, isn’t it a good thing that there’s diversity?

Fat people feel as though they have to be skinny. Eat healthy and lose some weight, just so they can look pretty. Why try to look like someone else? You can’t get help if you don’t help your self.

This is crazy, from the elders to adults, down to the kids than the babies! The world is going down, and no one cares to help, cause they sit on their a__, and continue to be lazy.

Did you realize what this world is going through? Everybody being mistreated, even you.

So stop and ask yourself what’s the difference between all of you and me, stop hurting, and start helping, if you believe in what I believe.

If we don't stand for something, we'll fall for anything!

There is one girl out there everyday who gets raped, beat, or abused. How should she control herself? Some think they are not pretty and developed enough so they go out for prostitution to better themselves. What does that say? A lot in my opinion. Why should a man take control of young girls to get what they want? They shouldn’t right? Any man, who has the heart and is brave enough to rape anyone, should not have the privilege to have sex. Should not have the advantage to pleasure themselves while that one scared person is suffering.

Why should people take troublemakers, rumors and fighting? Or just bullies. One miserable person can make another’s life a living hell. “He said ...” and “They said ...”, ”Well she said ...” are just words. People will talk, it’s apart of life and communication. If you don’t know how to get passed those closed doors, you’ll be trapped forever. Pride, dignity, self-esteem are the words that will keep you moving.

Is it because I’m black? Because I don’t fit your standards? Because I’m not your color? And my hair is not straight or my clothes are different? Or is it because your eyes are not clear enough to see that we are all equal. Same country, same president, but for some reason you still feel the need to treat me different. Is it because I’m a Negro, as you say? Or better yet, I’m a child and I’m ignorant? You decide and let me know.

Prejudice, color or age. What’s the consequence for me? I’m an African-American 13-year-old girl who has brown hair and doesn’t dress like your normal teenager. Anything else? It should be a sin to be treated that way. Did Jews have a voice? If so, why weren’t they heard? They’ve been taken to
camps and treated like trash. What’s in it for them? A new scar everyday or another 10 pounds lost? I have no idea how they took it. How they looked or even felt. No food for months until they turned into a toothpick. Lives taken away because they were too young, too old or couldn’t work. Am I too young to work? Or am I too young just because? Would you just look at my face and say I’m not qualified? Or would you give me a chance to prove to you that I’m different?

Discrimination happens every hour, every day, every year. Why treat someone different when you could just get along? Think of how you would want to be treated if you were different. You would want to feel the same or even respected. Kids commit suicide knowing that they don’t fit in, feeling like they’re not welcome. Knowing that where they stand is where they are going to be. Do you feel their pain on the other side of the situation?

Anne Frank had to suffer in the same spot for almost 2 years just to stay alive. Shortage of food, tight spaces and very little movement. Why did she have to do this? Because of the Holocaust. If you didn’t protect what you were for, you would be treated like anything. They eventually found her and her family and they went through hell.

Countless people are discriminated, bullied, abused, and raped. They shouldn’t have to take it anymore. Stand up for what’s right, even if you’re standing alone. That’s why if we don’t stand for something … we will fall for ANYTHING!

**A LADY CAN DO ANYTHING A MAN CAN DO AND STILL BE A LADY!**
I kissed a couple boys and I liked it...now I’m a “whore, slut, and a hoe.”
But him having sex with five different girls makes him The Man!
I’m a girl so I have to learn to cook and clean.
While he can sit on his a__ all day and watch Sports Center.
I want to play football, but it’s a MANS sport.
They say I’ll get hurt, but can’t he get hurt too?
And why is it that, the NBA is way more popular than the WNBA?
And why is it that people expect me to be perfect
And people expect him to make mistakes?
Eff the double standards---man its crazy.
The Man upstairs created men to be stronger.
Not to take over our women and young ladies but too protect us, love us and support us with anything we do.
Because truth be told where would you be if it weren’t for us?
Not here. Not on this Earth.
In this confused twisted world we live in.
I want to get married when I get older...but I have to change my last name.
Why can’t he change his?
Because this world will never change, the people will never change, the double standards?
Aha, they will never change!
People are so stuck on how “this” person says it should be.
And how “that” person says it has to be, they forget
That a lady can do anything a man can do and still be a lady.

**I Am From**
I am from.... I don’t know where I am from.
I am from dumfounded, blank faces, and whiteout friends.
I am from, where the word “FAITH” is replaced with hate.
Where the loving houses are only burned down crisis.
I am from where the light of day is only a dream because the light is afraid of the days
that belong to dark.
I am from “LOVE”...wait, hold up
Love is only in a fantasy.
My life is way under, below the low grounds of Christianity.
I am from where a walk to the store is only a walk to hell, they have open doors.
I am from Logan valley, way past reality.
The word LIFE will have you shaking; I can tell your body is quaking.
I am from black, far away from whack.
I am from where dress down will have you shot to the ground.
I am from where virginity is only in the past, because once you have laid too fast,
you can’t turn around and walk back!
I am from, a sister that tries and a brother that would rather hide,
I am from a dad that drinks, when he should be paying for his daughter to think.
I am from an upside down smile, a backward crowd.
I am from low lives and bye-byes, broke up fears and unwanted tears.
I am from where school is a place that you don’t want to face.
I am from where hearts are broken and also a token, far away from where they have woken.
I am from where mace will always meet your face when you turn around to a fight that
might be your last night.
I am from when the boys come everybody grabs their gun and runs.
I am from a place that you shall never come.
I am from unwanted faces.
I am from words that hurt and hurting from words.
I am from hand-me-down’s, sometimes that can’t be hand-me no more.
I am from if you hustle and bustle you will always make the flow.
I am from the only education you will get is from the uneducated.
I am NOT from a home, only a Nome, something close to be but not without my peeps.
I am loyal only to the foil of my bones.
I pray only to the voice above, but I lay to the voice of a scramming love,
I am from hope, but the more I speak of this hope the more hope will not be spoken.
I am from tricks that lead to lies and lies that lead to crimes
Crimes that lead to your hands grinding behind the cold mental bars of a jail cell.
I am from a place called hell!

I Am From

I am from that little girl with the golden smile, forbidden from the
outside, who escaped for a while, and never came back.
I am from a mom you don’t know because looks don’t show what goes on
behind closed doors.
I’m from being called out of my name, being afraid of myself.
I am from a smile that will never show the pain overlooked by the ones
that watched me grow.
So when I cry, I must lie:  I bumped my head, I cracked my toe.
I am from holding back my secrets from my past, heated from the words
thrown at me
Crying because my family is leaving me, because I don’t live up to the expectations they set for me.
And if I don’t complete the task set before me? More trouble poured on me?
Another chapter of my life? Something else to yell about.
I’m from boys wanting nothing more but to freak me, never keep me, and pass me on. I’m from thinking so much I get a brainstorm.
I’m from that blue room with two windows, watching my skin glow from the sun seeping through my covers, absorbing my tears, watching the days pass hiding my fears.
I’m from very ballistic words, being confronted with absurd looks and voices saying, “Dumb it down!”
And, I’m from that million-dollar plan, trying to find a residence to infuse these thoughts of mine.
I’m from people that don’t listen to me because I present myself too innocently.
I’m from reproduction and Death Row. Being struck because I question God. Where was he when I needed him most? I would pray and no savior would come.
I’m from being abused, kicked out, and almost killed by my mother. Scared for my brother, because he’s all I have.
Little girl with the vast eyes, accepting life and all its surprises.
I’m from going to sleep envisioning my dreams. I’m from saying, “Be with me? Forever? No matter the weather?” If you need a friend, I’ll be there indeed. I’m just trying to be unforgettable for the right reason. I want people to remember ________!
Girl with the big smile, crazy style.
My problems have made me strong, brought me along, and have helped create me. I am from family.

I Am From
I am from a city.
It's a big city yet a humble city.
I'm from the city of Philadelphia.
Born and raised here, a plant never up rooted form its soil.
A city of diversity.
A city where everyone is family, even the worst of enemies.
The city of Brotherly Love.
A city that people might not like but can't hate.
A place where everyone has a face, has something to say, and nobody is the same.
Not the best city but definitely not the worst, the city has its perks.
New York's the big city, and D.C's the capital city, but Philadelphia is the birth city.
Rich with history, this city never lost its roots. As if the past were still alive,
America's roots trace all the way back here.
Birth place of America, were the Declaration was signed.
A city of beauty that never gets old, neither does its citizens.
A sky line seen the world over, its impossible to forget the view.
A city 2 million strong ready to stand for where we belong.
Tourists come and go, never to return again, but when born in Philly you always come back home in the end.
An unforgettable city.
Once you've been there you always remember how to get there.
From City Hall and all it's power, to the Library and its knowledge, the Art Museum and all its culture, to Fairmount park and all its beauty.
A city through the average eyes,
A gem through Philly's eyes.

I Am From
I am from a place where people with big feet try to wear Vans.
I am from a place where you have your neighborhood crackhead wash cars.
I am from a place where everybody is trying to be a rapper.
I am from a place where people get killed over girls or jealousy.
I am from a place where people play 2K10 and online.
I am from a place where people don’t fight they shoot.
I am from a place where my Dad smokes like Bob Marley did.
I am from a place where you can never trust people you just met.
I am from a place where girls get their weave pulled out.
I am from a place where your best meal is at your Grandma’s house.
I am from a place where my Mom works 2 jobs.
I am from a place where the football field and basketball court is a place I call home.
I am from a place where you play Spades on your steps for 5 dollars with your partner.
I am from a place where you wake up 7 o’clock to go to travel to a football game or basketball game.
I am from a place where everything is sold at your corner store.
I am from a place where everybody and their Grandma got a Facebook page.
I am from a place where people blast Drake.
I am from a place where you don’t know who Lady Gaga is or where she came from.
I am from a place where people say “I think I’m Big Meech and Larry Hoover.”
I am from a place where LeBron James and Kobe Bryant are the best players in the NBA.

I Am From
I am from being hurt, happy & just plain mean all in a day.
I am from darkness, laughter & late Friday night movies.
I am from being called fat, beautiful & amazing.
I am from being judged by how I look instead of who I am.
I am from putting all my trust into GOD & knowing somehow, someday, everything’s going to work out right.
I am from confusion, procrastination & long dark nights.
I am from jokes, making someone’s day & having friends who care for me.
I am from friendship, fun & trust.
I am from life, all it’s good things & all its downfalls.
I am from music, art & creativity.
I am from having respect, giving respect & trying to get what I want on my own.
I am from a strong, loving & supportive family.
I am from a crazy father, 2 adorable sisters & 1 over-protective mother.
I am from shopping, cooking, cleaning & learning.
I am from joy, pain & struggles.
I am from thinking how to make happiness last.
I am from originality, not fitting in & being different.
I am from being labeled just from someone taking one look at me.
I am from vacations, meeting new people & life long friends.
I am from being confident, faithful & carefree.
I am from a classroom full of drama, laughter, arguments & a group full of crazy different people.
I am from me.
I am from me.
I am from life.

I Am From
I am from grief to joy.
From the sadness of being alone.
From wanting my life to end.
From needing to live.
From needing my father around.
From the music deep in my soul.
Where beauty is the thing to have and money is the thing to want.
Where my smiles bring happiness to most.
Where I am tired of people's pity and fake smiles.
Where I want to scream because people are holding back true feelings.
Where people's greed gets the best of them.
Where I get a little happy when my sister giggles.
Where my parents divorce kind of made things better.
Where my horrible immune system gets in the way of everything.
Where the lovely scenes on a movie screen is my savior and not the big man upstairs.
Where arguments with my mom don't seem like a big deal when I think of what we've been through together.
Where my mother tells me I'm beautiful but it doesn't really compute.
Where I want peace in this world but it isn't gonna happen.
Where flashbacks of a healthy grandmother only comes up when it is evident that's no longer the case.
Where I want to be free as the wind, loved like Christmas morning and needed like the air we breath
But I'm not always going to be and I have to except that and on that note ....
I am from the city that never sleeps also known as the big apple.
I am from New York.

I Am From
I'm from a place were you don't want vacation to end because when you go back you go back to the same old same old.
I'm from a place where people hide behind laughs to cover up the tears.
I'm from tears on my pillow and unanswered questions.
I'm from looking like everything is cool and you hold your head high while all you want to do is shout.
I'm from past anger, present daydreams, and future hope.
I'm from Sunday dinners, block parties and chilling with my family.
I'm from hard working mothers and even harder neighborhoods.
I'm from brothers grinding hard tryin to make a dollar to feed himself and his son.
I’m from little sisters dreaming big and reaching for the stars.  
I’m from the city of Philly—the part they call Nicetown.

**I Am From**

I am from a place where people are always on the streets.  
I am from a place where education is top priority.  
I am from a place that you have to do chores to get stuff you want or allowance.  
I am from a place that family is the most important thing you have.  
I am from a place where family gets together for every holiday.

I am from a family with a brother and a sister and a mother and father that are separated.  
I am from a place where siblings are very close.  
I am from a place where my brother and sister think they are superior because they are older.  
I am from a family where sports bind us together.

I am from a place where you must respect one another.  
I am from a place where failure is not an option.  
I am from a family that loves to laugh and have fun.  
I am from a family that is willing to help you to accomplish anything.

I am from a school that has good teachers.  
I am from a city in California called Fairfield.  
I am from a house where arguments are always happening.  
I am from a family where brothers are competitive.  
I am from a family that is fun caring and respectful of each other.

**I Am From**

New York, a place where I called home.  
A place where there’s true to fake  
Honesty to lying  
Ugly to pretty  
Skinny to fat  
Nappy hair to getting it done  
Ugly nails to cute nails  
A gorgeous life to a Ghetto one  
Little girl to too grown  
Scared of boys to liking them  
Quiet and lonely to popular and noisy
Wal-Mart and Payless to Hollister and Footlocker
Youngest child to second youngest
Public transportation to a car of our own
Unconfident girls to All That!
30 year old perverts to my brother’s friends
A family of 5 to a family of 7
Singing to acting
A sad family to a Christian family
Divorced parents to a stepmom and stepdad
Jerry Spinelli to Ashley and JaQuavis
Mickey Mouse and Elmo to Beyoncé’ and Nicki Minaj
New York Yankees to Philadelphia Phillies
Hating school to liking it
Heart broken to not caring
Smiling faces to sad ones
I am from being me to being someone I thought I never would be.

I Am From
I am from violence where you thought you were safe the most.
I am from where sometimes it’s okay to be abused.
I am from being judged for who you are.
I am from where dreams don’t mean a thing.
I am from not a day gone by without a tear shed.
I am from shooting hoops, and then shooting people.
I am from proving yourself worthy.
I am from grade A clothes and not grade A scores.
I am from guns in the hands of children.
I am from where wisdom is not welcome,
I am from showing no mercy.
I am from gunshots in the darkness.
I am from tight clothes and low cut shirts.
I am from where growing up without parents is normal.
I am from a proud hood.
I am from your neighbor being shot last week.
I am from a mother burying her son.
I am from men on the street corners selling everything that the law disapproves of.
I am from weaves, acrylic, ockie clothes, and push-up bras.
I am from each day could be your last.
I am from where everything that is beautiful is fake.
I am from where wrong is always right.
I am from Germantown.

That Girl on the Corner
I look at her and shake my head.
Look at her showing her body.
And, her pants, gosh—they don’t fit.
OMG, her lipgloss is shiny.
Look at her hair—nappy and different colors.
My god, someone help her.
Long nails.
I watch her as she starts to talk to the man in the car pulling up. When she gets out, I see her tall, red pumps in her hand. She walks to her spot on that very same corner. Make-up sweated off of her face. Glowing body is no more. So sad as I see this lovely woman, pretty as can be, Give herself to the many men that call her a “B.”

Footprints
My footprints leave a trace—
A trace of loneliness, regrets, broken dreams, painful fears, and lonesome tears.
I've left a lone journey.
A journey you should not follow.
But where I end up is where I should be placed.
I've faced the lonely nights when I've thought there was no more good for life.
I've faced the regrets of harm—something so painful done to me.
I've faced the broken dreams of being something—someday.
Then I found reality.
I've faced the painful fears of life.
Something which the devil has taken.
I've faced the lonesome tears of faith, something that has long gone, flown down the long road of fears.
My footprints are something unnamed, untamed, and most likely, reframed.

Family Matters
I wanna be Yellow.
So, maybe then my mom will hug me.
I could brighten her day and she’ll never have to cry again.
Every day would be sunny.
I wanna be a Butterfly.
So, maybe then my mom will try to capture me and keep me—forever.
She'll never let me run away or kick me out.
I wanna be a Baby.
So, maybe then she'll cradle me and squeeze me.
Kiss me and feed me. Love me.
I wanna look just like Her.
So, maybe then she'd notice me more, and wouldn't half hate me because I look like my Dad.
I wanna be Weed.
So, maybe then she'll be addicted to me.
Spend all her money on me.
Try to find me if I was lost.
Smoke me until I'm gone, and hold on to my aroma in the air.
I wanna Die.
So, maybe then she'll cry over me and come and join me.
I wanna be Happy.
So, maybe then she’ll be happy, too.
I would know how to make her happy.
And she would love me, I would be her yellow hue.

A Voice
I have a voice.
I am rarely allowed to use this voice.
This book has reentitled me my claim to this voice.
This voice I have is often hushed by opposing views.
But not for long because when they turn their backs I let the whole world loose.
This voice is quiet, this voice is loud, this voice is very proud.
This voice is truth and never a lie.
This voice retaliates when haters despise.
This voice is soothing, this voice is angry.
This voice is letting itself be known.
THIS VOICE IS MINE.
MY voice is here and will never go.
MY voice is here and I’m not afraid to let it show.
MY voice is strong and beautiful, bright and overwhelming.
MY voice has caused other people’s eyes to start tearing.
MY voice is of passion, pride, and glory.
MY voice tells MY story.
A story of sadness, hope, and love,
Blowing kisses to angels above.
MY voice creates change.
MY voice is to speak.
MY voice is exciting and never bleak.
MY voice is tired of staying quiet,
It’s been this way far too long.
The longer and longer she stays quiet, the louder her voice grows.

Family Matters
I feel left out.
You guys think I can handle myself, but I can’t.
I just can’t.
I’ve been struggling with this for a while now, but I guess it has to finally come out.
Guys, I love you, but...
Now it’s getting harder.
I’ve been through fights and...I need your help.
My grades are fallin’ and I can’t catch them.
I finally know why.
Out of everyone, I was the normal one.
I was the smart one.
I never got complaints from the teacher.
I never was in trouble.
Mom, Dad—I love you guys.
I know you guys love me.
But, don’t let me fall.
Because if I do I wouldn’t be able to get back up.
Catch me before it's too late.

**Family Matters - A Hard Divorce**

I can never come to a conclusion on how I feel about my mother and father’s marriage; I guess I never saw it at it's prime. I know they got divorced two months after my birth, and I know my dad gave me his name just so my mom's family would be aggravated. I always wish they could swallow their pride, shake hands, and get along for my well-being, but then reality strikes viciously. I feel as if I am in the middle of a gang war. Where I come from this is resolved by low blows and cheap shots but it’s never a fair fight. When my grandfather drops me off at my mom’s house he says, “What has your mother ever done for you?” Then when I get in the house my mom says things I know shouldn’t be repeated. Holidays were always awkward. I remember going over my best friend Eric's house for Thanksgiving because I couldn’t decide which side of the family I should spend the holiday with. I remember my mom would always pick me up around the corner from my dad's house because then my parents couldn’t see each other without a long altercation and the neighbors staring at us and calling the cops. I remember my father always coached my baseball team so I would have a stronger connection to him, and my mother takes me to late night movies with her so there’s no choice but to spend the night at her house. I feel confused like a dog with two people calling him, having no idea which one to go to.

**Family Matters**

I’m this thick girl with long dark hair.
I’m this thick girl with hips and thighs.
I’m this thick girl that tell all the n_____ “Bye-bye.”
I’m this thick girl with long legs.
I’m this thick girl that get all the play.
I’m this thick girl with bumps on her face.
I’m this thick girl with lumps that lay under her face.
I’m this thick girl with fat long feet.
I’m this thick girl that likes to eat.
I’m this thick girl that made all the wrong choices.
I’m this thick girl with all the attitude.
I’m this thick girl with backstabbing friends.
I’m this thick girl that likes to learn the hard way.
I’m this thick girl with a big head on her shoulders.
I’m this thick girl with lots of judgment.
I’m this thick girl without a real father.
I’m this thick girl that would rather not be bothered.
I’m this thick girl with lots of responsibility.
I’m this thick girl with A’s and B’s.
I’m this thick girl that would just let you flee.
But this is not who I want to be.
I want to be a princess—someone that you would adore.
I want to be the sky so then you would look up to me.
I want to be a star so you could wish on me.
I want to be the lord so you could pray to me.
I want to be black so maybe you’ll love me.
I want to be Gucci, Coach, and Louie so then you’ll buy me.
I want to be money so then you will touch me.
I want to be something—something more than just me.
I want to be something that you would love me to be.
I want to be clothes so then you’ll wear me.
I want to be food so you can eat me.
I want to be word so then you’ll yell me.
I want to be the words love so then you’ll say me.
I want to be Uggs so you can walk with me.
I want to be jewelry so then you’ll buy me, care for me, wash me, wear me, love me, and never break me.
I want to be a perfect daughter.
But, since I’m everything that you don’t want me to be
I’m going to sit back and let you beat me—
Try to bring me back from Hell,
This place you wish I burn in.
Try to turn me into something that has not been created yet.
You say I’m hard headed—
That’s true.
You say I’m fat—
That’s true, too.
You say I’m ugly—
That’s most of all true.
You say I stink—
Okay, that’s true, too.
You say I eat too much—
True.
But when you say you don’t love me
You have turned me into something new.
Something with no backbone,
No hope
Something with two left feet.
I am who I am.
And, this is who I’m going to be.
So if you don’t like me
Just sit back and let me do me.

Problem Child
Stop labeling me as the Problem Child.
All I have asked for was forgiveness. That, and a little respect.
And, for you to stop.
Stop judging me on the color of my skin—because I’m brown and I go to public school
I’m automatically an idiot?
Stop judging me on my clothes—because I wear my jeans a little snug, some of my shirts
a little low, my hair straightened—but I prefer my Afro.
Stop judging me on the look in my eye. The look of desperation. If you only knew what
I was desperate for. Not a mother or a brother who’s been locked away. Or a dad
who’s not here cause in a grave he lays. Nor a welfare check to come my way.
You can make an effort to get me to go, but I’m here to stay.
I’m not tryin’ make it out the ghetto.
Let go of the fear that this young black lady might be smarter than you. Cuz you know 2+2 is 4, and you aren’t a
wh___ giving babies away everyday like you a corner store. 
You get a scholarship from the wealthy.
But you’re a joke to your team.
So you don’t make it a dream
Forgetting your purpose and losing your beams.
For your only education is by the uneducated—and they’re that way because they were
hated by themselves.

That look of desperation is for someone to listen.
I would save my last breath to tell you (if it wasn’t already taken from screaming at the top of my lungs)—can you hear me now?

Am I a Problem Child?
Why am I the Problem Child?
I am a Problem Child.

Teen Challenge
Everyday of the week there’s a different teenager being judged by other teenagers. Whether it’s about their hair or the clothes we wear to the sneaks we have on our feet. Someone is always being critical and the next day the same person is being criticized by someone else. We get judged if we’re too skinny, or too fat, if our eyes are too big or too small. It doesn’t matter what it is—we are always being judged or being the judge. What we have to realize is NO ONE can judge you but the Man who crated you—God. Usually people do that because they’re not happy with themselves. You have to accept yourself before you can accept anybody else. For you to lower somebody else’s self esteem and try to bring yours up is not cool. And it’s nice to joke—but to a certain extent.

We girls tend to fall in love while those boys tend to fall in lust. While we’re worrying about impressing them, they’re worrying about pressuring us to do things we’re not ready for. While we’re looking into something so much deeper than looks—personality, they’re looking at the things God gave us as young ladies. They’re not paying attention and realizing all of those things we feed into; the crap they tell us make us do things that we know we’re not ready for. Then, out of nowhere they walk off the face of the Earth. Then, you, keeping secrets from your friends because you don’t want to hear the words, “I told you so,” come out of their mouths. We shouldn’t be worried about none of that we should be focused on our schoolwork, getting A’s and B’s and being a daughter or son to our parents and a good brother or sister to the little ones.

Yes, we are teens with creative and intelligent minds of our own. And, yes, you are adults, but you still don’t know everything. Yes, we should respect you, but yet we should also receive respect from you. Yes, you were in our shoes before, but when you grew out of them you forgot how much they hurt. And, now we’re wearing them, so why not listen? Give us a chance to explain how we feel and what we’re thinking about. Think about how it affects us when adults aren’t listening and are making us feel like we don’t amount to anything and we don’t matter because we only teens.

These are the things teens go through—from criticizing to peer pressure and secrets to getting adults to listen. These are MY challenges, but I’ll get through them.
Dear Pop Pop,
You left me.
You left me in this world all by myself—no money, no love.
You left me with a coward—someone who was too scared to show his true colors when you were around.
The person that you knew was the worst person in my life.
I miss your loving kisses and hugs.
Christmas is coming around and you’re not coming over to see me and my sisters open our gifts.
You’re not going to decorate the tree and make the eggs on Christmas morning.
You won’t be able to get me the gift no one else would get me.
But this Christmas I want a gift that even you can’t get me.
I want you.
I want you to come back for just this one day.
Come back and save me from that horrible person.
Come back and tell Mom Mom, Mommy, Laila, Lauryn, and Aunt Lillian you love them.
But that can never happen.
I’ll have to come to you
When my life is over.
When I finish my duties here.
I hope I have as big as an impact on people’s lives as you have.
I miss you and when my day comes
We will be reunited.

Wagner Middle School

Buried in the Rubble

I see people crying, families dying
I see collapsing buildings, I see thieves stealing
I see a mom devastated by the disaster, whole families wiped out by the rubble
I hear screaming coming from the rubble.
I rush to help someone else when I can barely help my self.
I smell the bodies of the deceased, hoping I don’t become one of them
A falling building, I pass by, I felt like I was about to die
I am so scared, I’m breathing toxic air
But then a building fell and I was in the way
Boom boom!
My dead corpse was swept away
But then my ghost creeps
It creeps high and low
And the other dead spirits say hello
I continue my reap through the dangerous deep sea of rubble
Only dead bodies I see and one looks like me.

The Mind’s True Peace
Calmness is different than peace of mind.
Calmness means the state of mind where everything is perfect.
Calmness means that you can’t be broken down.
Calmness does not have a destructive sound
It has a gentle breeze sound.

Calmness is harmony.
Almost like how the first snowflake you see it is harmony
Or like the time you see your nephew’s first steps.
Calmness makes you feel unstoppable and true peace.
It looks like spring with that warm nice feeling inside.
Calmness is light green and light blue.
Calmness is like that. Sometimes.
When you feel calmness, you feel like there are
Colors flowing all around you.
Harmony and true peace keep you company.
You are not stressful.
Jimmy and Santino are calmness.
Calmness is beautiful to me.

I Saw Disasters in Haiti

It was late January when Port Au Prince started to shake. I saw buildings collapsed. My first thought was to save my sister from the school. I saw the murky dust in the air. I saw 300,000 arms and legs debased in the dirt. I saw the tap taps upside down. I smelled fear and death coming towards me like a bullet train. I was terrified of the dust and the polluted air I thought I was going to die, but I survived.

When I reached my destination, I saw my little sister’s shoes and what looked like her arm beneath the rubble. I could tell because of her golden brown skin which looked like a vanilla wafer. I knew she was gone.

I tried to survive in this county of the deceased, but now I feel like I can’t. It was like the devil was coming for our country and souls. We felt like this disaster happened because we did a lot of sins in our lifetime. Sometimes, I feel like since I lied to my mom and cheated on my writing test in 6th grade, it is my fault. I wish the devil took me instead of my little sister.

I can’t survive. What am I’m going to eat tonight? And the next day? I don’t know I just think this is the way life is now. Can I Survive? I’m lost in my own misery… I want my country.

.Com generation

The Internet is the .COMmon thread among us.
The cable wires that connect us,
The signal that goes through us,
The .COMmunication between us.
It is the .NETwork that brings us together.
That helps us stay together.
Learn together.
Exist together.
Like wolves in a pack,
Technology enables us to .COMmute,
To transmute,
To mp3 play or mute.
It assists us in .ORGanization,
GPS location,
Knowledge station.
Still, as JFK once said:
“Man is still the most extraordinary computer of all.”
Technology is a Doctor
Technology is a doctor who can cure the pain of the world:
Global warming spreading like Cancer.
War, an epidemic like AIDS.
Earthquakes dismantling the area like Lou Gehrig’s disease.
Tsunamis, wiping away memories like Alzheimer’s.
Oil spills spreading like swine flu.
Genocide, a mass murder, like poison in your blood.
A hurricane destroying like pneumonia.
A volcano erupting like vomit from your lips.
A forest fire growing quickly like a rash your skin.
Terrorism attacking like whooping cough.
Pollution poisoning the air like a sneeze.
We can solve the problems in world by the technology in the world.

The Little Things
When I look back on my life I see a lot of things I don't like.
But what comforts me is the little things in life.
When my mother greets me when I come home from school I feel important.
When the birds sing to me in the morning I wake up for school happy instead of waking up to BUZZZZZZZZZZZZxFFFFFFFF on my alarm clock.
When my little brother tries to make me laugh, I've heard it all before but I laugh anyway.
When my mom makes me oatmeal raisin cookies it warms my stomach.
When the crossing guard says “good morning” it makes me greet the morning with content.
When my uncle offers me a ride to school,
When my dad gives me advice to help me through my life,
When my dog Peanut looks at me with those big eyes when I'm sad.
These are the little things that make my day bright.
So when life doesn't go my way, I think of the little things to make it all okay.

My Grandfather
One day while reading
A good book I
Lost my life.

My world around me
Started going crazy
But in the pages
In the book,

I forgot all about it.
I saw birds flying
Around me. I
Saw snow falling
When I looked
Out my window
I saw clouds.

Then words were
Dancing on my pages.

I Am From
I am from
A family of many,
A family I regret to have.
I am from a family that has
Raised me.
Not one but two
That I love daily
I am from a mother and a father.
That encourage me to be the
Girl I am now.
I am from a place of sun and peace.
I am from a place
I shouldn't left called hometown.
I am from the past, present, and a
Horrible future.
I am from a place called Philly
Also known as Philth-adelphia.
I am from a ghost town,
With dirty roads and crack heads
All around.
I am from a chipped Street,
Where hard working people that
Lie down dead.
I am from
Kids that carry guns,
Ready to cap someone, as sad as
Parents worried
About loved ones.
As they slowly die of cancer or AIDS.
I am from a
Red bandana across
A grown man's face ready for a kill
Attack to another person.
I am from
God and truly grateful
I am from a place
Filled with child takers that
Break loved one’s hearts
I am from
Kids in the E.R everyday

Hope
Hope is different than shame.
Hope means wonder.
Hope means surprise.
Hope does not have a fearful sound.
It has an exciting sound like angels singing, “AAAHHHHH.”
Almost like waking up in the morning hoping something great will happen.
Or like being alone and hoping somebody will come to keep you company.
Hope makes you feel angry when it doesn’t come through
And surprised when it does.
It looks like a lost bear cub hoping to see his parents.
Hope is dark blue.
It as blue as a cloudless blue sky.
Hope is like that. Sometimes.
When you feel hope, you are happy.
Trust and pride keep you company.
You are not ANGRY.
Martin Luther King, Jr. and Barrack Obama are hope.
HOPE
Hope is beautiful to me

Leeds Middle School
Secret

A struggle that I face in life is one that I wish I could change. In particular, I am struggling with my behavior. I wish I could change it, but I’m having trouble doing so. I try to be well behaved, but I can’t seem to control my temper. Deep down I want to be good, but I just snap at everybody. I make excellent grades, but I know I won’t be able to get into the college and high school of my choice due to my behavior. I try to act like I can handle problems myself, but I know I can’t do all of it by myself. I know I got people to back me up 100%. For instance, family, friends, teachers are at my beck and call and are there to listen to me.

There are two main teachers I know want to help me, but I just have problems with them in the process. For instance, both Mr. Lebofsky and Mrs. Muc seem to care. Both want to bring the best of my potential out of me. I just can’t accept that. One little thing they do or say just basically makes me attack them. I know they just want to help, but I just push them away like I do most people. I do not have a problem with people; it’s just that I’m a little antisocial with others.

Now I don’t want to be that way forever, but it’s not a straight road. There are going to be a few bumps along the way. For me, my life is planned out already, but getting there is a problem. For example, everyone wants me to go to Central to be the best I can be. Everyone wants me to be a doctor even though it’s been my life long dream. Everyone wants me to be this or do that, but I can’t be
everything. I'm one person trying to do all this alone, and the strange thing is they don't see how bad I'm
struggling. All they see is a smart little boy, but they don't know how hard it is to keep that up.
Sometimes I just want to say forget it and just stay home and go to sleep.
Now I know I sound selfish saying how hard it is for me to get up every day and go to school.
Adults have to get up every day and go to work but I'm pretty sure that they feel the same way that I do.
But I'm going to be what I want to be because this is my life and frankly I make the decisions. I
appreciate the help, but I just prefer if they do it from the sidelines. Now I'm not just saying that I'm
going to sleep, eat, and play video games all day, I'm just saying that I need a break from all the people
in my life trying to tell me what to do and trying to tell me what to be.
I know they just want me to be successful and to get my behavior together, and I know I might
need help along the way, but mostly I just want to do it by myself. They think I can't do it by myself and I
can understand that because I'm not focused all the time. But I'm determined to get where I need to be.
I'm determined to be the best I can be, to be successful, and to have the career I want. I also want
everyone to know that I want to do most of it by myself to better myself on my own. If people aren't ok
with that, then they can get out of the car because I'm driving toward success.
I know they just want me to be successful and to get my behavior together, and I know I might
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with that then they can get out of the car because I'm driving toward success.

I Am From Uptown
I am from Williams Ave
I am from girls getting hit by boys
    I am from Nicetown
I am from Leeds Middle School
    I am from 704
I am from people loving me and me loving them back
I am from teenagers having babies
    I am from loyalty
    I am from who is real
I am from kids having guns
    I am from 187 's
I am from West Oak Lane Jazz Fest
    I am from fights over girls
I am from fallen soldiers
    I am from angels
I am from people ratting on their men
    I am from fights and drug wars
        I am from R.I.P tats
        I am from violence
    I am from men getting DUI's
I am from parents getting divorced
    I am from gangs gang banging
I am from the city where the good die young
I am from the city of Brotherly Love
    This is where I'm from my home
Welcome to my hood UPTOWN

Writer's Matter

I am from down south.
I am from the block of Cecil Street.
I am from a block where there are fights every day, and
Shootings like a hunter hunting his prey.
I am from a block where they sell drugs and
Crack.
I am from a block where people rob stores
I am from a generation of people laughing and joking.
I am from where our family plays around.
I am from a family where love is strong.
I am from a world of boys and girls fighting
I am from a world of people in GANGS
I am from GANGS that rack on people for no reason.
I am from a family that watches the Channel 6 news.
I am from a family of greedy people that eat a lot of food.
I am from a family of R.I.P. tats.
I am from a family with tats that have meanings to them.
I am from a big proud, happy family.

To love someone...

To love someone, I have to love myself first
To love someone, I have to put them first
To love someone, I have to fear the heartbreak
To love someone, I have to face what is front of me that stands in my way
To love you, I have given my all to be with you

I am from...

I am from Philly where people love football and it’s a big thing
I am from a football team where I need a certain GPA to play
I am from a Pee Wee football team called Enon Eagles
I am from a home where my mother loves me, but a dad that is never around
I am from a home that takes my schoolwork seriously
I am from a family that loves me very much
I am from a family that wants me to go to a good high school
I am from a family that wants me to go to college
I am from a city when a black person goes to college is a serious accomplishment
I am from a city that has murders every day
I am from the hood where people get shot
I am from a place where people take respect seriously
I am from a world with different colors. Phillies Red and Eagles Green
I am from a world that is not that bad

This is where I’m from
THE END
SUNRISE

I woke up this morning in my own bed
the same place I woke up before
but something was special about today

I have noticed
As I opened up the door
The birds were singing in the trees
The air was nice and sweet
With the smell of the flowers in the air
The traffic even had a special beat
The neighbor’s yelling ‘hi’ to me
was such a welcome sound
I answered back, went out the door
to enjoy the sunlight lying down
To my surprise it felt so good
it took my breath away
I stayed and enjoyed the wonder
of a special no-work day.

Life

Love, hate is what we see.
Kids are dropping out of school with no place to be.
People are stuck with nowhere to go.
When it comes to drugs kids try to say no.
All around kids my age are dying.
Some kids parents are nowhere to be found.
Kids are trying to strive to meet their goals.
But they keep falling down in the big dark hole of life.
This is the way of life I finally see.
I am grateful that none of this happened to me.

Life Is A Race

Round and round you go twist and turns around the track of the teenage life. Many
dreams ahead of you and all your mistakes you made in the past behind you.
The haters who distract you and make you run off track. You lose your train of thought
and are soon in last place. Your family and friends, your motivations, make you want to try even
harder. You sprint ahead and feel like a winner again.
When you feel like you’ve had enough and the race is over for you, and you feel like
giving up look ahead toward your goal. The finish line is there, and you realize that you are
worth the try and you are worth being proud of.
You run this race forever until the day you die and when the race comes to an end
you’re a winner because you have tried.
Life is a race!

Safety

There was once a little girl named Bluey! Everyone called her Bluey because she always wore blue. One day her mother told her to take some cookies to the neighbor across the street. Bluey asked her mother if she could go to the playground after she delivered the cookies, her mom said yes. So she went across the street and took the cookies to the neighbor. Then she headed off to the park! Bluey had remembered to look both ways while crossing the street to the park. At the park she remembered not to climb up the sliding board because last week her little cousin fell backward and hit her head on a rock. Bluey also remembered not to jump off the swing because her friend had jumped off and sprained her ankle. Then she remembered to hold on to the chain on the swing because if you don’t then you will flip off and hurt yourself. She also remembered while she was at the park not to talk to strangers or give away any information. So at the end of the day Bluey had done everything safe! She looked both ways while crossing the street, she did not climb up the sliding board, she did not jump off the swing, she held on to the chains on the swings, and she did not talk to strangers or give away any information. When Bluey went home her mother was very proud of her for being safe and not getting hurt.

The Bitter Truth!

You say one thing
Yet you mean another
You try to be up front
While hiding beneath a cover

Why are you so selfish?
And why so ignorant?
What exactly does love mean to you?
Or should I say, meant?

I’ve never known someone so fake
Someone who can’t speak the truth
Someone so terribly insecure
Someone so cruel, someone like you

Why did you have to be like this?
You started off quite fine
You would always say how much you cared
I guess that was just another “LIE”

I just sit around and remember
Of how much I used to enjoy your name
And how I so dearly loved
To play your little game

But now I finally know
That you aren’t at all what I thought
And it’s a shame, because I really liked you a lot.

Obstacles I Overcame

At some point in everyone’s life they must overcome obstacles that will shape them into who they will eventually become. The way people deal with their problems at times defines who they are. Problems are solved either positively or negatively. People either grow from their problems or dwell on them. Over the years I have overcome many obstacles that have changed my outlook on situations, such as many deaths in my family, my behavior problems, and my Aunt’s health.

Throughout my life I have been to too many funerals my mom’s, dad’s, grandmothers and many others. All of which changed the way I look at the world and my relationships with others. Getting attached to people became frightening; I was afraid to have another bond severed. I shut everyone out in order to save myself from empty feelings that deaths leave behind. I figured if I let people go and they pass away I would be saved from any pain. The way I faced my problems was wrong. Instead of talking to someone about my problems I dwelled on them until they began to consume me. So I began feeling sorry for myself; I questioned my existence. There was no one who needed me, I felt unnecessary. My family wanted me to look to God for closure but I couldn’t. I felt like he was the one who took everyone I loved away from me.

Learning to cope with death was not the only problem that I had. I also had behavior problems between first grade and fifth grade. On my report card I’d always have “needs improvement” near my behavior. The way I acted wasn’t something I was doing on purpose. I was just hyper and most people thought I had ADHD instead of being an average hyperactive child. I didn’t really get in trouble at home for my behavior, but at school I did. My teachers would always say I was disruptive and that I was loud. It wasn’t until my 4th and 5th grade teachers showed me they cared about me that made me want to change my behavior. Eventually I learned to control my behavior.

Not only did I have to learn how to channel my negative behavior, but also I had to deal with the potential death of my only parent. My mom had a drug addiction so she was unable to take care of me. My aunt and her boyfriend became my guardians. I grew up with my aunt as my mother and her boyfriend as my father. I can now see how God always gave me what I needed when I was lacking. My birth mother and my father eventually died. My aunt had always been there for me, just like a real mother. She didn’t give birth to me but she loves me like she did. I couldn’t stand the thought of her dying. She had recently had a hernia and had to have surgery to fix the problem. If she were to die, I’d have nowhere to go. While she was battling her health, I was battling the thought of losing her. I later learned that a hernia was not life threatening, but the fact that she was all that I have really scared me, and my mind was really running ramped.

Everyone must face challenges in their life. Although there will be difficult obstacles, if the right path is chosen, triumph will be the end result. How one faces their challenges makes a person who they are. People either make the best out of their problems or let their problems get the best of them.

Segregation The Biggest Injustice of Them All

In most cases people are judged whether it’s pertaining to gender, sexual orientation or race. People are often judged based upon someone else’s preconceived faults, notions or ideas about what the “thinker” thinks a person is unable to accomplish or become. The crazy thing about America’s history is that this country was born out of an idea of “freedom and justice for all”, but all did not really include all. All happened to only include white wealthy men while
others were marginalized or not even thought of. Although it is 2011, the ugly history of the past is still present. In the city of brotherly love and sisterly affection, it is very evident that segregation is alive and well. Segregation was and continues to be wrong. It’s unfair and cruel and my generation will have to be the ones to make a change/difference.

The act of segregation is absolutely wrong. According to the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution that was adopted on July 9, 1868 as one of the Reconstruction Amendments, it says that all American citizens would not be deprived/denied access to rights in America. Because of the unfair practice of segregation many African Americans, Native Americans, women and the list goes on, were denied simple things, or things that many take for granted such as where one can live, attend school or work. Because of the 14th Amendment’s Citizenship Clause, it allowed for African Americans to be viewed as citizens of the United States. “The 14th Amendment declares that persons may be citizens of the United States without regard to their citizenship of a particular State, and it overturns the Dred Scott decision by making all persons born within the United States and subject to its jurisdiction citizens of the United States.” The Equal Protection Clause “requires each state to provide equal protection under the law to all people within its jurisdiction. This clause was the basis for Brown v. Board of Education (1954), the Supreme Court decision which precipitated the dismantling of racial segregation in the United States.” Everyone should be treated equal and have all so the same rights. No one deserves to be mistreated or treated differently. It shouldn’t matter what ones race is; all people are the same.

Segregation is not only wrong, but it’s unfair. The idea behind segregation was separate but equal and it did not work. Things were separate, but they sure were not equal. Blacks had to attend black only schools, drink at water fountains for blacks only and ride on the back of busses. In every aspect of life for African Americans and many people of color during the segregation period lived an unequal experience. The problem was that the schools were poorly funded. The water fountains for blacks were rubber hoses in the back of alleyways. Housing was unfair and in many cases blacks paid more money than many white Americans.

Segregation was not just unfair, but it was also cruel. It is hard to imagine not being able to check into a hotel of my choosing. I try and imagine a family traveling for a long period of time and want to pull into a hotel to rest and be told that blacks are not allowed to sleep here. Imaging a father or mother trying to explain to a child why they are not able to check into the hotel, or swim in the public swimming pool is very difficult for me to do. I would think that this made people feel less than human. After all, dogs and animals received better treatment than many African Americans and people of color who were legal citizens of America. Because people fought against segregation, many African Americans were killed. African Americans were sprayed with water hose, which was a very bitter and cruel act.

Segregation has put many people through so much pain. Still today segregation continues to harm people. It is quite and unspoken, but I am aware that my community is all African American and at one time it was an all European section, and certain sections of Philadelphia remains segregated. Not to long ago in the news, it was reported that blacks had moved into a certain section that did not have many black residents and people in the neighborhood burned a cross on the front of the person’s lawn. Someone who painted swastikas on the side of the building defaced a synagogue in the Abington section of Pennsylvania. Even the school system here in Philadelphia is very segregated. Many people who are poor and low income do not receive the same education as many of the upper class and wealthy citizens in and around surrounding suburbs of Philadelphia.

Segregation is plain old wrong, unfair and cruel and will need people like me to help fight this injustice. When will it all end? I believe it will take people in my generation to bring a change. It is clear that change is on the move. For the first time in history the United States has an African American president. How did this happen? The media said that young people were responsible. Just like the young people during the Civil Rights Movement were the main
players in helping to end segregation. The more people learn about various cultures, differences and behaviors, the better things will become.

Loyal to a fault, and outspoken at times is one way to describe myself. I am learning that experiencing disappointment seems almost impossible to avoid. Misfortunate events seem to swarm around me at this time of my life. I guess I had to learn at some point that when there’s good, bad will be sure to follow. I am still learning and finding my way, but the great thing about me is that I don’t drown myself in self-pity. My bad experiences are helping to shape me into a better individual by realizing that even when one works hard they might not always earn the A. I am learning how to deal with rejection, and I am learning how to deal with the loss of someone very important to me.

Ever since I can remember I’ve always received good grades. Failing was never an option for me. Receiving A’s and B’s was the norm for me. I was oblivious of the feeling of getting anything below a “B”. I often pitied people for getting bad grades even those who tried their hardest, only until I was the one struggling and making no progression at all. This year I received a “C” in math. I was devastated. What made me feel even worse and still makes me feel horrible until this very day is that I thought I was doing absolutely fine. Now I have a “B” average in math, and I no longer pity other people who try their hardest.

Along with my shocking change of grades, I did not get accepted into the two schools of my choice. In my seventh grade year I was so sure that I would get accepted to Central and Creative and Performing Arts High Schools. I would constantly brag about how I was going to get accepted to those schools. I thought that to be smart I had to attend a school with a bunch of scholars. In March of 2011 I found out that I didn’t meet the requirements of the two schools. That was quite shocking because I did not realize that I was cocky and arrogant to the point where it made others feel bad. However, I did get accepted to Parkway Northwest; which is still a special admission high school. I realized that I was holding myself to a standard that made me think that I was invincible and that if no one was admitted, then surely I would be admitted to all of the schools of my choice. From the moment I received my rejection letter I never acted in such an arrogant manner again.

Not only was being rejected from the schools of my choice an incident that is molding me, but in February I lost a family member by the name of Epharant who I felt would be in my life until the end of time. Epharant wasn’t the cousin whom I knew nothing about. He suddenly died and his death had an affect on me; he was someone close to me. Death is a part of life and someday I’ll have my time to go also, but Epharant’s death was harder to cope with because he was killed. Someone who had little regard for how precious life is and how dear he was to not only myself, but also to my family cut his life short. To this day, we still do not understand why? What pushes someone to play judge and executioner with something (life) that they are unable to actually give or take away? I think on it often but I must go on living. I am learning that life is much too short to dwell on the minor things. I now try to live each day like it is my last because it just may be my last day.

Sadly, there will be more disappointing things that will happen to me, but that is apart of life. On the flip side, I am looking forward to all of the great things that lie ahead of me. I refuse to allow
disappointments to bring me down. My shocking change in grades, being rejected from the two high schools of my choice, and losing my cousin have hurt me in a way but there is a brighter side and a better day.

The Loss Of My Friend

We were like sisters. We were growing up together and it’s still hard to imagine that she is no longer with me in this realm. When I saw her then, it was known that I was not far behind, and it all started at the ripe age of three. We both attended the same daycare. If my memory serves me correct she started talking to me and from that point began the root of a cut-too-soon friendship.

From the first hello, she became my partner; whether it was being placed in time-out for misbehaving or sharing a private joke. Even doing plain old nothing with my friend seemed to make the time pass swiftly. We really had a lot of things in common such as our love of art, music and even people.

Now would be a good time to mention her name. My friend’s name was Tiana. Tiana and I both attended the same elementary school after we moved on from daycare. The great thing about the new move, place, and people was that I was able to have an old constant which was my best friend Tiana. We even were in the same class, which was good for me, but probably not so good for the teacher. Like always, we got in trouble. The great thing about Tiana was that she gave as "good as she got"! Sometimes we would fight, but we never remained angry at each other. We really moved past the friend stage and viewed one another as sisters. I use to love to call her my sister and she loved to call me sister.

We made it to graduation from elementary school to middle school in June of 2009. It’s funny but I always assumed that she would be taking the walk down the isle with me as we transition into high school. There are times when something crazy happens, and I go to pick up the phone to call her and realize that she is not going to answer.

The summer months were the best. That was when we could talk all night and not be told you had to get ready for bed to go to school in the morning. During the summer of ’09 we were actually planning what we were going to be for Halloween. We were anticipating all of the candy that we were going to get and the fun that was going to come along with transforming into someone or something for a few hours without anyone really questioning why we were dressed as princesses or ghosts. During the summer of ’09 we also planned for our new start at Leeds Middle School.

The fall of 2010 came and we walked through the front door of Leeds Middle School together. Again we were in the same class and got into trouble in that class too. We were always talking and the teachers were always asking for us to stop talking. We talked so much that the teachers placed our seats on opposite sides of the room. We were always there for one another.

It was about the end of September and I noticed that Tirana was not present in school. Later that day the class we were informed that Tiana would not be
coming back because she had passed away. When hearing about Tiana dying, I went completely numb. I felt very angry and sad. My best friend was gone!!! A piece of me also died that day. I later learned that she died because she choked on a piece of a hoagie and that lead to her untimely death. What was even worse about the situation was that she was in the house by herself so no one could have helped her. It is very difficult for me to not think about her. When I walk down the isle for graduation, I am going to walk for her as well. Tiana is gone, but she will never be forgotten.

**My Life**

If someone asked me to rate my life from one to ten I would say eight. Eight is a reasonable number because I’m not the type of girl that gets everything handed to her, but I have to work for it. I would say I have one of the best lives ever because my family is very supportive with everything I do, and I have the best friends ever. I have always dreamed big never small, and I’ve achieved many things in my life. I’ve been in plays, met some of my best friends, and I’ve learned many things about life. I love my life.

Ever since I was a little girl I always wanted to perform and when I was a student at Freedom Theatre I got the chance. The first professional play I did was Monster Soup it was so fun. I’ve also been in many other plays such as Porgy and Bess, African Folktales, and many more. I enjoy doing plays because it gives me a chance to express myself and to have fun.

Along with the opportunity to perform, I have made some of the greatest friends a girl could have. It might sound strange, but I am learning how to be a friend. I am bonding really well with some of my friends; it allows me to place them in the category as best friend. I love my best friends because they’re always willing to help me with my problems and they always give me good advice. One of my closest friends attends my old school Duckery Tanner and her name is Briana. Briana and I do everything together from shopping at the mall to talking about boys on the phone all night. I love my bestie like she’s one of my sisters. It’s always good to have a best friend because they never let me down.

There are many things to learn about in life many things that people think will not ever happen to them. Girls start liking boys, encounter female issues, and deal with the weird body change. I’ve learned many things from my mom. My mom and dad have taught me how to be book smart and street smart, book smart because I need to have an education and street smart so that I will not let anyone get over on me. I’m always open to learn new things that are constructive.

I love my life I couldn’t ask for a better one, even though I’ve been through some things. My friends and family support me in everything I do, and I know that everything in my life happens for a reason whether it’s good or bad. No matter how hard my life is I decide to enjoy it to the fullest no matter what. I only have one precious life so I’m going to live it up!!!

**Vare Middle School**

**PERFECTLY**

What is wrong with the world we live in?

People hate on each other’s ethnicity or the color of their skin
“Don’t judge a book by its color “, they say
But people judge one another by their looks everyday
Racism has been around for so long
Most people think it’s okay, but it’s really wrong
This big problem is everywhere
The next person they offend will probably tear
People say names and they just don’t care
Rice bowl, Cracker, Nig____, Negro, or Di____
These are all racist and they make me sick!
Racism leads one thing to another
Soon they’ll be saying all these jokes about their mother
All of these actions are so rude
It’s very offensive, immature, and cruel
It should be stopped once and for all
There’s no time to wait or stall
It doesn’t get any better, but worse
People will discriminate and they will curse
There is no cure for it, but it’s inside all of us
To bring peace and make the world a better place
Even though racism has been around for so long
It doesn’t mean it can’t be stopped or gone
We don’t want to make the same mistake as our grandfathers
But try to work things out and be better
Racism sometimes causes trouble and pain
If they take it personally, they won’t be the same
They will think of all the mistakes or troubles they’ve caused
And will regret that they ever lived and wish it would pause
They won’t respect themselves anymore
On the outside they will act happy, but in the inside they’re torn
We need to stop and think before we act
So next time people won’t feel attacked
That may be true or not
But “Stop doing these foolish actions, just give it a shot!”
Racism isn’t a thing anyone looks forward to
It’s very stupid and a waste of time to do
No one should hate each other because of race
Even though a lot of people do it these days
So please don’t contribute to this animosity
The only thing it does is prevent peace and unity
Whether you’re black, white, or beige
God made you all perfectly

**Being The Opposite**

Everything I changed about me was strange.
Why did I want to be this way?
Since I was little I liked dressing up.
I even loved putting on makeup.
Few years later I grew my hair longer.
I tried different hairstyles.
I curled it, flipped it, everything.
But as I did these things, it made me feel less stronger.
This made me feel bad.
I let a few down.
Thinking of myself, just to be crowned.
This was a feeling I wanted to be shattered.
When my father found out, he was upset.
He hurt me, he even treated me differently.
I let him down, I was his only warrior.
But now, he calls me a sissy.
Changing me was for the better.
But my dad and his comments needed to go.
I'll tell him I'm a boy again in a letter.
If he buys it, I'll be a girl on the low.
Soon he found out, & I was devastated.
This was a life crisis that had to be debated
I was done with this bullying.
I chose the best decision, killing!
Now that I look at my past
It was definitely a show I did not want to cast!

BULLYING: TO THOSE WHO ARE GETTING BULLIED IN THE WORLD

My world is starting to die.
And I slowly start to cry.
People talking smack,
Right behind my back.

The childish games they play
Need to end this very day.
I don’t think they realize,
The tears coming out my eyes.

I hate how they get to me,
And how they don’t see,
That my heart is bleeding,
And that my tears have meaning.

They mean I am hurt.
And I want them to stop talking dirt.
They mean that I can't take it.
And that there's stuff they just don't get.

There's more to me than they know.
I just don't let it show.
I hide the things inside.
But I wish I could speak my mind.

I wish they knew the real me.
Than they could leave me be.
I'm just so scared of rejection,
That I can't even stand my own reflection.
I hope they see who is the real Key!

People just don't understand,
I want to show who I really am.
There are so many things I need to say.
But even if I could they won't give me the time of day!

If only I could say it all.
Than I wouldn't easily fall.
They just don't comprehend.
That I could be a great friend.

I hate how they view me,
As small and weak.
Inside me I am learning to be tough,
I am able to fight through the rough.

I just wish that was who I could be,
On the outside that is I mean.
My world would be so much easier,
If I could be a little happier.

Like I had said,
Their childish games need to end.
And they need to realize,
That there is truth beyond these eyes.

**Racism Is A Pain**

*Racism is a pain,*
*What is there to gain?*
*Is it hard to maintain?*
Like they do on Broad Street and Main!
Can it ever stop?
Let us rise to the top,
Giving it a little pop!
Every one takes one big hop!
Stop the violence make the peace,
Let racism cease!
Since peace is all
Let the violence fall!
Let’s raise the love
That flies like a graceful dove.

Racism...

Oh when I think of my long-suffering race,
Enslaved and lynched, denied a human place.
God made me and God made you,
Respect is what we got to do!
Because respect is what we got to do
Respect from me respect from you!
Just because we have different skins
that doesn’t mean we don’t fit in.
We all should take a stand
And the world will be just grand!
My parents tell me of stories they have endured
I wish racism was a sickness that could have been cured!
Everyone has the right to go anywhere they choose,
They shouldn’t have to worry about being separated in different schools!

You push ME
You tease ME
But why?.................
Do you hate ME
I ask these questions to myself because I’m scared to ask you why.
Why do you put your anger on ME, so much that tears start to fall? So much that fear starts to call.
What did I do?.................

Can’t we just talk it out?
Or that’s old school.
Maybe you don’t wanna talk about it.
Because you think that nobody will open their ears.
Is it something at home?  
Maybe you don’t wanna talk about it.  
Is that why you come to school with anger and hate?

I wish I knew……  
I wish you would tell me……  
Maybe we’re too different.  
Maybe you think that my life is better than yours.  
Trust me its not.  
So don’t push ME  
So don’t tease ME

Let's just work it out we’re not kids anymore. We can get through this.

**Teen Challenges**

You taunt me  
You hurt me  
You bully me  
You tease me  
You harass me  
You manipulate me  
But never got to know me

You say this and that about me  
And day after day I wonder why you do it to me  
Why do you bully me?  
Is it because I’m different?  
I know I’m different

I know that I like dressing up  
I know I like doing my hair  
I know I like going to the mall  
I know that I’m a girl  
But do you know that I care?

Day after day walking down the hall  
You’re the one who laughs  
You’re the one who starts the rumors  
As I sit down in class and hear giggles  
Why do you follow me when I walk home?  
Why I say, why me?

**Racism**

Why is there so much racism in the world?  
Where did man go wrong and start to hate each other?  
All through time different races never mix.  
There’s gang wars because I’m black you’re not.  
Even in jail they have fights about your skin color.
Where did this hate against a person’s skin color come from? They just believe that one nationality is better than the other. They use racism as a powerful weapon to encourage fear and hate into the hearts of people. When did racism start? When you started to make me feel bad about my skin color. Why did you make me feel so bad? Why do you hate me if we never met before? I know why you are afraid of me because my skin color is not like yours. You are threatened by me because I’m black and you are Asian. What is the meaning of racism if you hate the color of my skin? You don’t know that because you only know how to hurt people’s feelings. This is not how God wanted man to be, he encourages everyone to love their neighbor. So what can we do to stop racism? We can start to love our neighbors. I’m going to start by loving my neighbors and pass this down to my kids.

Bullying
What’s wrong with the world? Why is there so much bullying out there? I want to stop the bullying, But I can’t. I’m too young to stop bullying. Bullying is not fun, But it hurts you.

What did I do to you? I know you are my friend, So I thought! But you keep bullying me, You stole something from me, You push and make fun of me.

What did I do to you? You said you love your friend, But I’m the only one you keep bullying. I wonder why? All weak persons that you know, You bully them. All strong persons that you know, You befriend them. So you can win by bullying the weak persons. There’s no way to compare, If you are weak or strong.

Some people always bully, And they have nothing. Some people bully because of their race.
You killed them
But you got nothing.
Bullying is fun to some people and
not me.

**Linglebach School**

**Without A Care**

God is grace God is good; bless my homies and my hood...
I can’t get out ‘cause shouts of hell in my mind
Sometimes I ask “God is it my time?”
A baby, drugs, the leader of wealth calls me a thug
A baby appears because of a hug
A thug to support and show homiest love
Drugs whiffed and made mama pissed
Life’s intense, like living on a fence, confused where to go
Yea, I gotta list of problems
No math, but no psych could solve ‘em
No dad, no making mama proud, my baby and its mama’s voices loud
Wish I lived on a cloud and didn’t give up
Tell the voices of hell to shut-up
Fulfill my dreams instead of screams for my bad choices
Recycled for the next man, no one told him no partner is holding his hand,
So screams of hell inside my head continue along
With prayers and worries of blood shed & prayers for the next
year

**Penny Packer Elementary School - Grade: 6**

**Bestie**

Fire, Fire burns
In my eyes, It really hurts
The lies, The sighs
The way people cry
It doesn’t matter to you
Because you only care about what you had to do
Funny because I mistaken you for a bestie,
But you turned your back on me
What you did wasn’t good,
I know you had to do it for the hood
I’m mad at you,
Cause the things you do  
I'm bringing out this pain,  
The pain of anger and hurt  
I'm saying it how it is,  
I guess this is how it ends  
Fire, Fire burns  
In my heart it really hurts  
Bye, Bye bestie,  
When your you, Holla at me

**Justice: Not For You**

**Chapter 1: Starting Now - Getting Ready**

There lived two sisters named “M” and “S”. Their parents always abused them by not buying them food and not feeding them. Their stepdad “R” always beat “M” (the youngest) and gave her bruises on her back, and her mom gave “S” (the oldest) bruises on her legs.

“M I’m very scared of James”. Said “S” worried. “M” I’m not and I know you are because you’re little.” “S”, “R” she said in a low voice. “R” what” she said in a flash of speed. “James gave me a bruise on back with the belt and momma was standing there and she didn’t even care. She laughed at me while he was hurting me, and I couldn’t do anything. I was screaming but nobody would come. You were sleep that’s why you didn’t know.” “That’s why you were in my bed crying?” “Um mom can you drop us off at the school please because we never get to ride in that car not one time.” That’s because I don’t want ya’ll ugly dirty kids stinking up my car.” “A” (mother) didn’t even hesitate to say no. “Mom no offense but if your calling us ugly your talking about yourself because you’re the one who had us, so apparently you’re the dirty and ugly one too.” “SLAP” That’s what “A” did to “S”. Why did she do that just because of what “M” said? Both of the girls ran out the house and went off to school. They finally came to school with only one friend and that was Shelly.

**Chapter 2: Get Out And Leave {The Final Chapter}**

“Hey Shelly what you doing? ” “Nothing talking to you and why is your hand on your face? Let me guess “A” hit you; why is she always hitting you?” “I really don’t know”. “S” began to cry. She started to cry even more when thinking about when “R” had raped her. She still didn’t tell anybody, not even her sister “M”. “May can you go away for a second.” “Okay”. “Shelly don’t tell anybody not even “M”. I’ll tell her myself okay?” “I won’t okay? Now what is?” “R” told me to go brush my hair and put some make-up on and some
spray. I was home by myself with him that day and I didn’t know what it was for but I did, and he ran up behind me and raped me. I told my mom but she didn’t even care about me, and I said to God why is our life like this? Why are we here if we are getting treated like this? God told me to just wait and see and he will deal with them later. He also said that he will even do better and bless us with a perfect family, and I pray to God that it is you.” Shelly paused, and she didn’t say a word. She said come with me and she called her mom. She was already there she grabbed “M” and “S”. They came in the car, and Shelly’s mom asked what’s the problem. Shelly said a lot, and they went to the mall to buy some clothes (for “M” and “S”). Then they moved in with Shelly and her mom and now they are a happy family. Oh and I forgot to tell you “A” and “R” are in a hell right now which is the other word for “JAIL”. God Bless You “M” And “S” “THE END”

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Freedom. She had a very merry and happy life with just her mother Sage and her father Adam until her father and mother both died in a car crash and Freedom was critically hurt. Freedom was sent to a foster home and there she also liked it. There she had this one best friend named Freedom also and another named Johnny. There was this caretaker everybody called medusa because she had dreads that were long and frizzy, but her name was Anny Mae and she was sweeter than a butterfly. She helped us bake cookies, and cakes along with any type of goodies you can imagine. And then somebody came to adopt her; it was a man. He had rotten teeth, red frizzy hair, freckles and a big nose. His name was James but he told her to call him “Big Poppa” or “God”. I said, “Can’t I just call you Mister or Daddy?” He said, “You sassy mouthing me?” And I said “NO” and he said “You know what...” and he dragged her up the stairs and he took her into his room and he beat her. Her first time getting a beating or ever getting hit period, and then he punched her in the head. Then when she woke up she was naked and bleeding. She said to herself “What could this have meant? Did he rape me?” Then she cried and she said to herself “I know I’m not supposed to question. But why me God why me?” She had woke up the next day and James told her to fix him some breakfast and make sure it is not burnt for if it is I will burn you. Freedom knew how to cook but she accidentally burned the eggs and bacon and James noticed it. He threw it on the ground and took her and jammed her head onto a burning fire for a whole minute and told her to get out of his face and you better not even think about crying. She ran up the steps and she was pouting and bleeding all over the place. Then he said get down here right now and she did and he told her “I only adopted you because I wanted sex and money.” Then she said “OK” she didn’t want to upset him than he told her to get out of his face you are to ugly. After he had told her that she lost her self confidence and she went to school thinking she was ugly and at school she made a new friend her name was Justice and she had noticed the bruises and marks all over her face and she told Freedom she know what that man is doing and maybe you need help Freedom told her that she do but she was scared and Justice gave Freedom her cellphone and she called the police and she told them how many times he had raped her which was over 45 times and how he abused her and the cops came and took him to jail he was sentence to 45 years to life in jail and she went back to live with her new mother Anny Mae. There she was happy and she never wanted to live in another home again. And that was all. THE END

DePaul Catholic School
“This Is The Day”

Have you ever seen a boy standing
on the corner of a bar, drinking
a beer like it’s a never-ending thirst?
Like it’s the first time a candy enters your mouth
a drizzling dip of water on a hot sunny day.
Have you ever seen the water in the
color of red filled with despair and fear?
A child...a child laying in a cold,
icy red water
flooded over by a tear of a Father and
Mother, of a friend, an enemy, a sister and brother.
This is what our ancestors fought for?
More tears, more death, less hope?
I think not!
They fought for free hands, fast legs,
free minds.
This is what we fight for, strive for,
grieve for.
With our two hands up in the air
saying, “We surrender!”
I think not!
We have courage within us
with the God Almighty at our side.
We fight wars against Iraq, Germany,
and for this land we have today,
saying, “We can’t fight our own local
battles in our neighborhood today.”
With the black boys, and the drug
selling, and the stealing of souls.
I think not!
With a Mother and Father
begging on their knees
Saying to their sons, “Please come home.”
With their two neighbors in their beds
and when they finally wake up
It’s too late.
With a child in a grave and
A mother in a cave filled with
despair and fear,
What do you have to say
When you see R.I.P. on top of
your son’s name?
What do you have to say
when the fault falls on you?
You see this generation, this day is
a sad moment in history.
With our doctors in the streets. I say...
I think not!
Because if I’m strong enough to say
that I will not give up this day
I will not give up fighting, I will
not give up striving, I will not
give up on you, I will not give
up on myself.
Then I know that today is your day,
that today is my day, our day to shape our history.
To shape our future
because
this is the day that the Lord has made,
this is the day that we all shall
have faith.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Bully Poem
B = You Big Bully Stop it... always picking on me
always wanting to feel safe but “I’M NOT BECAUSE OF YOU”
U = You’re always waiting for me to turn that corner, to come out of class, and to enter that big building
L = You say I am a loser but I’m not actually. I am a winner, winning every time I ignore you, winning when I say hi or hello and you get mad
L = I am living normal no bully, no pain, no shame to turn that corner, or to come out of that class even to enter that big building
Y = You see me happy now but that doesn’t stop you, I stand up to you but I’m not gonna fight you, I AM GOING TO STAND UP TO YOU so the world can see how bullies can be.

United
United we stand that’s our phrase
but departed we are for the
rest of our days
state against state
over a ball game
country against country
over political views
son against daughter
over who’s favorite
Father against mother who
will have the child that day
child against child to see
who is more bad
me against myself because
I don’t have the guts to
speak out, don’t have the
guts to fight back can’t
look in the mirror and say
I accomplished something
Today, can’t look at
myself and say you’re
beautiful because people
say I’m not

Change
Change...
We need to change the violence...
In this world we have to live in...
We need to change what the children...
Exposed to...
We need to change the regrets....
Of the uninformed...
We need to change the unaware people...
Who are getting killed by accident...
We need to change the way...
The “system” runs...
We need to change ourselves before we can change anyone else...
We need to change...

Knuckles
Knuckles.
That bring the
force against your
face. Only when
the words you say
have the sound of
a whistle in them.
Knuckles.
Try to push away
and keep walking.
But you get sucked
in by words that come
on a screen.
Knuckles.
The firm and boldness
in them. Knowing you
can’t beat the mass
and impact.
Knuckles.
The tears when
words penetrate
your tissue into your
cells. When they find
out the truth.
Knuckles.
Life in the cyber world

Friends, strangers, viruses and spyware.
That's what it's like in the cyber world.
You can get MacAfee or you could get firewalls,
but they can't protect you from cyber bullies.
These people would go to the deepest part of the underworld just to make you miserable.
They threaten you so much that you wind up taking your own life just to ease the pain.
They laugh, giggle, and chuckle until they realize what you have done.

On the Outside Looking in

I feel like I'm lost inside a time warp with nobody to talk to. I feel like even if I try to speak to explain myself you shun me out. Every time when I stand up to fight for what I believe in, you push me three steps back. You ridicule me; say I'm weird, and a bother. But just because I'm young I can't get my point across or speak my mind, and that's not okay with me! I think about saying what I want to say, but I can't because if I do all you'll do is scream and yell. I can't deal with that every time. I don't want to be overlooked as a kid because my opinion matters and what I have to say matters too. I'm a beautiful African American 21st century girl in the wise words of Willow Smith. I have no reason to be ashamed of who I am and who I stand for.

I should have the right to say what I feel and you should respect that and me for that matter. I want to be heard and be known. I have freedom of speech, and I'm going to use it! No matter what anyone else thinks, I'm me and I love me! And I shouldn't care what other people think of me! I am a proud young lady who fights for what she believes in. I try to do my best, but it's not good enough.

It's had enough being a teen and facing the hardships of school, but then you have to deal with your parents and that's rough in itself. They say life is unfair and it's true. And for the people who feel like this is your life, living on the outside looking in.

Untitled

People tease me.
People make me feel like I'm trash.
People make me sad.
People look at me with a disgusted look.
People throw things at me.
People gossip false things about me.
People blame things on me.
People bring me down so badly that I am scared to be in the hallway alone.
People give me threats.
When I try to gain confidence in myself people bring me down and get in my head.
People trip me.
People make fun of my clothes.
People destroy my things.
People set plans to hurt me.
People say I'm a nerd when I do my homework!
People get people to jump me.
People say that I have stupid clothes and that I get my clothes at the thrift store.
People say I'm not in style.
People say that I could die alone.

YOU ARE

You are the seconds that turn to minutes
You are the sun that goes down and the stars that come out
You are the shadow that walks behind me
You are what keeps me from falling when I trip
You are the eyes I feel burning a hole in my back
You are the happiness I have and the
Dreams that I follow
You are my mom

ME
People say, “Who are you?”
Who am I?
I am a Haitian African American girl,
living the dreams of my ancestors.
Plucking cotton off plantations owned by white
folks,
Trying to prove, trying to say I am worth nothing.
Saying, “I’m white as day, but you’re dark as
night, filled with thieves.”
But what you don’t understand is I’m
black like the oil that makes you rich.
Black as the sky that lets the stars shine.
I am me.
I am a fearless leader, a child of God.
Even though people speak blasphemy everywhere
I turn about me,
I know who I am...
I’m many
A child of two wonderful parents.
A sister to brothers.
A grandchild to grands.
A niece to my aunts and uncles.
Friends of friends and enemies.
I’m me.
I’m not, I am because
you can’t make me who I am,
and if you still don’t understand,
I am ---------,
a smart, God gifted and many more child.
Do you finally understand who I am?
I am many in one and one in many.
I AM ME.

Brothers

I've seen my “Brother” walking down the streets.
Now the streets are empty like deserted factories.
   You be hearin’ them chillin’,
   now the loudest thing you be hearin’
   are cars with colors
   They’ve faded, faded away
   because the party is over
With beers, drugs, guns, “money”, and friends.
   Some got shot and left.
Others got caught with “friends” and are in jail,
   5 years, 10 years, 20 years, forever.
   Now you see they have deserted me
because they've deserted themselves.
And their “money”?
Gone, buried under arguments and gun shots
   But it’s not all bad
because few had opened their eyes
   and got upgraded.

Miss Philadelphia

Wake to her with smiles
We used to walk for miles
Now she runs the streets
She used to be the sweetest girl
Now gang banging is her
Snow falls like her tears
Needles on the ground
Bodies on the floor
Cops kicking down doors
But she don’t care
I just can’t bear
It’s fake
Trash fills her lake
I fall asleep to gunshots
and cop cars
Loud music and Drunks leave bars
The good times seem so far
Used to wake with smile
We used to walk for miles
From love and above
to Miss Philadelphia

Untitled
......The tears that fall from my eyes represent the pain + hurt that I feel.
The emotions that I feel are sometimes confused
I don't know whether to cry, or smile.
I don't know whether I should be mad or be happy.
I cry anyway.
I let it all out.
And then, I write.

Life

Life is not easy as 2 + 2 but complicated as an algebra problem.
Life is short like the word cat but can be long like the word extemporaneous.
   Life is not simple like the Newton's laws,
   but difficult like finding the cure to cancer.
Life is not always exciting like Magellan trying to find the West Indies,
   but dull like the Patriots losing in the beginning.
Life is interesting like a story pyramid and a story frame because they connect,
   but confusing like a venn diagram with three circles.
Life is a gift from God that everyone should appreciate.

Weakness

Her weakness makes her stronger
So she must be the world’s strongest woman.
She has her ups and downs, good and bad days
But moves on with her life; it’s not a good place to stay.
Having breakdowns and struggles are hard
But it's like a disease with a cure, it won't stick or harden like tar.
A lot is on her mind I can see it, she wants to let it out.
I think she needs to express it more but not with a loud shout.
What is happening to her is it a part of a nerve
So that she'll feel it all the time, something she don't deserve?
But again I will say her weaknesses make her stronger
So she must be the world’s strongest woman.

You Are?
I’m your worst nightmare in life people might say.
Hey if I’m so dangerous why do I come from nature?
Beautiful Nature.
I comfort...
though:
I damage your lungs
put you in the hospital
I make you cough up blood, and
I can kill you, but still
I relieve your pain.
Once you start it’ll be hard to get rid of me.
I’ll always be knocking at your door.
Some people never open it and you can do the same, but
please just open the door.
Just a little.
It’ll feel good.
Open it wider and you’ll get
One thing though...
it’ll only last for a couple of minutes
Worst nightmare? Wrong!
Let me introduce myself.
I’m drugs and you are?

I am
I am a tree
sitting in one place
staying up all times of
the night
sleeping is not what I do.

Living until like 10,000
years old
Dying at like a million years old.

Wondering why I can't move
Being connected to the ground
Doing nothing but waiting
for someone to climb up my trunk,
and take my sweet fruits.
looking at people walk
by me and throw their
trash on me.

Getting no respect
seeing people die being a witness
Bystanding when people get Bullied.
Being not able to tell
what happens
Looking at people
Wanting to talk to.
Upset feelings because
I am lonely.

Wondering why people
won’t hug me
I am a tree
Dull Tree
Nothing fancy, but needs respect.

Seeing birds climb up my
branches sitting there.

seeing people drunk
drive then slam into my trunk.

Hurting badly
because people disrespect
me.

Hoping people don’t
cut me down.

Wishing I have
someone to speak
to me.

Feeling the breezes
go through my branches
starting very small
but comes out to be
as high as the
sky.

Reading while people
(are) reading under my trunk.
Praying to God asking him
Why I can’t move.

Seeing colors everywhere
Expressing my feelings by
moving my branches.

Seeing my
beautiful leaves fall to the ground
and rust like a screw
Trying my best, but never succeed.
Where I’m from, ‘tis hot
But cold it is too.
Seasons change
Bringin’ life a new.
Where I’m from, trees and bushes grow among the concrete ways
Wilder lands, unkempt and unharmed are few and varied
Where I’m from...
Towering buildings
Lining once cobbled streets
Now choked in black asphalt.
Where I’m from...
Where I’m from...
Life is all
School or work.
What do you do?
Hangin’ with friends
Playing with friends
Having fun
Where I’m from, life’s what you make it.
Life has many colors.
Where I’m from...
Where I’m from...
Ripened fruit on the tree
On the ground
Everywhere.
Life can be sweet, tangy or sour, where I’m from...
The sights and smells of the sea
Cleansing water
Earthy sand
Harsh salt
Where I’m from...
Where I’m from...
Where I’m from...

Where I’m from
Where I’m from
A free verse poem
As I walk
along
the filthy streets
watching the reflections of skyscrapers
while the exhaust fumes and smoke mix
   As I hear
   The mad
   Babbling and screaming of those distant from sanity
   So as I pace, as I walk home
   I see
   the left behind lost things, the possessions
   of the homeless
   When I feel
   the crisp air, I know
   it's filled with sorrows
   and grim
The streets once filled with lavish plants
   now hold metal and concrete
   That's where I'm from
   I then turn on my street
And from my mind is erased all those things
   And my mind
   Is cleared by
   pure air
It ruins the bitterness of the left
   Behind city
   At my house
delight and amity are astronomical
   So there
   As the bland day ends
comfort stays like the stars in the night sky
   And the night will go with that one cricket
   That's
   Where I'm from

Haiku poems:

Solitude lives there
Wind is all I hear sometimes
My voice echoes on
People curse at each
Other but they keep moving
Night fall rage arrives

Listening to the
Ice cream truck song over and
Over drives me mad

The smell of the wind flies
By like a bee in a storm
Always traveling

Always cars on the
Block my mom gets really pissed
I say life’s tough mom

Cats roam our streets they
Live through the seasons it’s a
Hard life as a cat

**Where I’m From**

I am from a place where you can taste victory and defeat. Where literally seeing is not believing. Where I’m from, you have to actually feel the atmosphere to get a taste of the intensity that is here. I am from a place where sports are what make us crazy, a place where cheese steaks make you want more and more. A place for firsts, and a place for lasts. I am from a place where this land all became, a place where tall buildings live, where skyscrapers really do scrape the sky, where all you hear are cars and people. I am from a place where smells draw you in. I am from a place where you can taste defeat and want to try, try again, where trial and error is the only way to win. When you see where I’m from you will feel free, you will let go of all your fears and worries. I am from a place where you can literally taste the world, a place where it changes from a big city to a small neighborhood just like that. A place where the sky is always blue and where clouds are always white. Where I’m from you will feel the brutal heat of the summer and the bitter cold of winter.

Where I’m from the loud cheers of sport fans will inspire you to be more than who you are. Where I’m from the colors of Broad Street will encourage you to be artistic. A place where each area of what you see has some history to it, where every step outside your home you will see the happiness of everyone. That’s where I’m from. You can taste the sheer excitement in the air during baseball season, a place where music is an education for your ears, a place where a museum asks you to touch rather than look. I am from a place where history is made each day, where you can catch public transportation anywhere. I am from a cultural place, where you can feel free from any pain or suffering. I am from Philadelphia, my home.

**Crucible Letters---Teen Challenges**

Dear John,
My love for you is unbearable but, as we both know, we can’t be together. It’s your wife and your denial that is keeping us apart. I know you don’t know it yet, but when she is executed because the court knows she’s a witch, that will be the best day of our lives. We will be able to marry, and we will be happier than you and Elizabeth ever were. That night you realized that you loved me will always be remembered. Although your wife may have a chance of living, I will always be waiting for you to realize that I am the one for you, and that only I can make you truly happy.

That day when we saw each other in court, I could see your happiness building and building because we were in the same room. When our eyes met, I could see that you were brighter than the moon. I know you love me, and you always will. You can never stop loving me no matter how hard you try. Don’t be afraid to admit your love for me. I admit that I stabbed myself with the needle to get Elizabeth out of the way. I had to see you. I knew you wanted me also. I could feel it in my soul.

We should run away together, change our names, get married and have a family. I have been thinking about this for a while now. I know you are thinking of it also. I think we should go through with this plan as soon as Elizabeth is executed. Nobody has to know about this. We will celebrate our new lives together every day and every night. We will drink and dance, and we won’t have to worry about going to jail for it. I know this will work out because we are in love. We don’t have to worry about the rules because we are together.

If we can’t be together, I will find another way for us. If none of this works, we can kill ourselves and die together. We may be dead, but we will be together. That’s all that matters. God will smile upon us because of our love and our determination. Please accept one of my propositions. We can be together forever. Dead or alive we will love each other.

There is one more very important thing I must tell you. It may not be true, but I believe it to be. I think I am with child. You are the father. Lately, I have been feeling kicks every once in a while. I hope that you are not mad. Please write back soon then I will know that you love me and our child with all of your heart.

Your love forever,

Abigail

Dearest John,

You will die tomorrow, and it will be my fault. My fault that the only man I have every loved was hung for being accused of a crime he did not commit. My fault, for my weakness in not confessing when I lied. And unless you confess, it will be so. I beg you, no, I plead that you confess so that one less person will have died because of me. I love you too much for you to die for my sins.

Your speech….I know you meant every one of the things you said. You hate me. I understand, and I deserve it. I’m a coward, John. I am a weak, sniveling coward, but I’m in too far now to fight it. I did something terrible, but I did not think was terrible at the time, and I did it for Betty and for Ruth. I pretended to see innocent people with Lucifer. And then, when I could have turned back, I could not.
When fourteen Christian women were accused, I said what they wanted me to say. I said that I saw spirits, and eventually thought I did, though I think in my black heart that I was lying...lying to myself. You cannot possibly understand how much the sinner I am. Is this how you felt when you convinced yourself that your feelings for me were simply lust?

But I still love you, John. I cannot let them kill you and know it is my fault. Everything you said about your hatred for me was right. I cannot make myself a better person while I live here in Salem. I cannot redeem myself while all expect me to cry out, “Witch! Spirits choke me!” I will not come to Christ unless I confess, but I cannot confess. I cannot! I cannot! So I must leave Salem where all expect me to bring murder to the innocent “witches” as the Holy Speaker and Sister. I do not want to be considered holy anymore, not if it means performing terrible actions again. I cannot be a good person anymore.

Yes, running away will allow me to rebuild my life nicely. The courts here will lose me as another accuser and no longer will I be responsible for the deaths of so many. I can become a good person. I hope the adults, uncle and the judges, are stronger than me. I hope they will be able to see that they are in too deep. I’m a coward, John. I run away from my problems. But I hope that, this time, running away will solve the problems, at least partially.

The Angel Raphael said, “Do that which is right, and you will have nothing to fear.” But doing what is right is what I fear. I created a monster. I can’t take this life here in Salem anymore. I hope you can forgive me. If you can, then know that I want to see you again. I still love you, and I know that you did the right thing and that you are a better person than I will ever be. And yet, you sit in jail, to be executed, while I am showered with gifts and prayers. If you confess, please come and join me. I have not yet decided where I will go, but I will write it on another parchment and leave it tucked between the boards of your east window. I love you so much, and I hope that we can go to the city and rebuild our lives together.

Love, Abby

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**Found Poems based on Christina Aguilera’s “Beautiful” and several inspirational quotes; students added whatever they were moved to add:**

**Found Poem #1:**
Love yourself for who you are. No one can make you feel inferior without your consent. Don’t listen to others. Block them out! There isn’t anything wrong with you. It’s them. You are gorgeous just the way you are. Words can’t bring you down, only if you let them. Love yourself, fill the emptiness. What you think you see, isn’t the reality.

**Found Poem #2:**
I single way. When I am proud of who I am, you can’t bring me down. I am a song full of happiness and honest mistakes. Words will not bring me down. From within, I am beautiful in every way.

**Found Poem #3:**

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Sometimes it’s hard to breathe. It’s hard, I know living with the empty spaces, living with beautiful mistakes and waiting for love and happiness. One day the sun will shine for you. Feel the strength and confidence like never before. Just remember that you are beautiful no matter what they say cause words can’t change you.

**Butterfly**

The boy who wrote these words younger than I, suffered, died, because of their hatred.

He should have lived, kept a life, had a future. Seen another butterfly.

But he and the other children caught under prejudice, and hatred, were murdered, their young lives taken.

Taken, hurt, murdered because someone hated who they were. who they are.

I saw a butterfly and wished he could have. free, happy, just for one day.

**New technology**, menacing and highly advanced, has exploded in popularity across the world, to such an extreme extent, that it has become a sacred part of our culture. In a survey conducted by myself, I randomly asked ten kids in my seventh grade class, age 13: do you use technological devices, such as cell phones, computers, or televisions most days, in your daily routine? Nine out of ten of them, 90 percent, replied yes, while one of them, 10 percent, replied no. Unsure of their dependence on these innovative technological devices, I then asked them a second question: How would you describe life and your daily routine without these luxuries? I received descriptions such as hard, toiling, and boring.

I then went on and asked my grandmother, age 70: Did you use technology most days in your everyday routine when you were a teenager? Her obvious reply was no. I then asked: How would you describe life and your daily routine without these luxuries? I received a much different answer from her; her explanation included words such as exciting, fun, and inventive.
The question I found myself asking is: What has happened to change this normal routine of humans in the past 50 years? My obvious, simple answer to this is the innovation in technology. This generation of human beings, born in the midst of this technological revolution, has been deeply and harshly effected; almost completely unimaginable to this generation. Life without technology is out of the question. This new technological generation has unconsciously incorporated these devices into our constantly influenced and changing culture.

I would like to take you back into a time without these luxuries, no cell phones or computers; news took at least a week to reach one end of the east coast to the other. We, in our new technological world, have abridged that time into seconds or even instantaneously by using e-mail, texting, and instant messaging. Communication, one of the large factors in new innovative technology, have been extended from telephones, even cell phones, but are now becoming a part of the world wide web and our obsession with the internet.

Social networking sites are becoming very popular among humans around the globe. They are some of the most dangerous sites on the internet; about 996,304,00 people use the internet, out of those, about 681,299,000 use these types of sites. These sites let you interact with people that you know or don’t know and his or her friends. With so many connections to so many people, your personal information is out for everyone to see, making it easy for your identity to be stolen.

Quick messages or posts, visible for the world to see, are not so indubitably checked or sent out to communicate; they are changing the way, we as humans, interact with each other. Everyday, people communicate and interact in events, some special, some not so special, but without these small interactions, how could this change the way we humans interact with the rest of the world?

Studies show that most people, using social networking sites, feel it’s alright to send a congratulations message over the internet, rather than meet face to face or be present for important events; with only these sites, people feel lonely, disconnected to their friends and family. Without these crucial interactions between humans, it changes our culture of being together and communicating. Teenagers, having had fewer interactions with people, are losing their social and communication skills; what could this mean for our countries future?

Teenagers, being more susceptible our constantly changing culture, are deeply targeted by social networking sites and social media; about 73 percent of teenagers use social networking sites. ¼ of young people have posted things, they are no longer proud of, that haunted them forever. People aren’t always aware of the damage they can cause to themselves and others when they communicate electronically.

Cyber bullying, a statement through electronic communication, that could potentially hurt someone, has grown popular among young adults. When talking face to face or with verbal communication, you can easily back up your statements with an explanation or proof. While electronically communicating, that is not common; e-mails, texts, and posts are written in quick succession, to get your point across. This is a dangerous type of bullying and can also cause damage to someone; people aren’t aware and need to be mindful of the havoc that could be caused when they communicate electronically.

There are some positive sides to social networking. It provides quick information, lets you search for people you have been disconnected from, start a business, and gives you an easier life. But when used the wrong way, or for the wrong purpose, it could be harmful to those,
more fragile to our culture. With this great communication tool comes a responsibility not always accustomed to our culture.

**REALITY**

Your self-esteem is like a beam of light.  
When darkness falls, it’s gone.  
Everyday can be so clear and bright.  
So don’t let that darkness conquer your life when you can enjoy the sunlight.  
Suddenly you see, you’ve got to make a choice to raise your voice.  
Don’t let them bring you down.  
Stand back up when they’ve pushed you down.  
Enjoy the day, love yourself today.  
They say you’re dumb.  
They say you’re strange.  
What they say isn’t reality.  
You’re the one who makes it.  
Words can’t bring you down.  

**Cyber bullying**

The definition of cyber bullying is when a kid of any age or adult torments, threatens, harasses, humiliates or embarrasses another child using technology. If adults get involved in it, it’s not called cyber bullying but it is called cyber stalking, also know as proxy, which is a whole different and larger issue. Results of cyber bullying have led to suicide and homicide. Once cyber bullying starts, it doesn’t stop at one conversation or threat. Kids tend to understand the whole picture of cyber bullying while some adults tend to take one aspect and focus on that instead of all the mean and hurtful aspects.

Punishment for cyber bullying is not only from your parents but you could be arrested and convicted if you’re caught. Most of the time schools would like to intervene, but then they could risk getting sued for what some parents call violating the right of free speech. When the threat of this occurs, schools try to think of a creative way to get around the lawsuit. School’s often try to inform the kids on cyber bullying. For example, my school showed our 6th grade class a movie about cyber bullying and how far it can go. In my opinion, the movie had a less true ending because they caught the kid and lived happily ever after as a cyber bullying stopper club, but in real life I thought the kid might not have been caught.

The two general types of cyber bullying are direct (direct attacks) or proxy (when someone gets help doing it) and proxy also can usually lead to adults doing it. Most kids cyber bully because of anger, revenge or frustration from many reasons, such as dating issues to getting made fun of. Some kids do it because they’re bored with life at home and need something to do. Some do it for laughs or some do it by accident. Some do it for their ego and some do it to remind the school of their social standing. Depending on the motive, there is a type of cyber bullying for that. Many people mistake cyber bullying for a schoolyard bully way of bullying when it’s a whole different universe. Even though they are extremely separate two ways to stop it are linked.
A good rule for kids to follow is the “Take 5” rule. This rule consists of kids taking five at the computer and thinking about what they are going to say. Another good way to tell children the danger of becoming a cyber bully is showing them the consequences of it. Many people must recognize that this doesn’t help prevention of cyber bullying. We need a full, successful way to stop it. If you see cyber bullying you need to report it immediately to an adult or teacher. You could let them know that you are against what is happening and stick up for the child that is getting cyber bullied. We need to teach that silence, while cyber bullying is going on, is not an option. With these ways, cyber bullying could be put to rest in a certain school permanently and hopefully one day we could wipe it out for good.

**Simplistic Nature**

I am the dominant cool force field  
You are the bare uncool alien

People notice my power  
People notice your vulnerability

Nothing affects me  
Everything affects you

People say “Who the hell is that kid?!” about you  
People say “Who is that God?!” about me

You are the invisible thread  
I am the spider

I made you who you are  
You finished the process

You wonder how this came to be  
I say there’s nothing to it

I use you when I want  
You make yourself available when I need

You are my stable base in the social jungle  
I am your mother

I use you when I want  
You make yourself available when I need

**Social Injustice:** We all know what social injustice is, but the causes go unaddressed. A cry for
attention, a way to release inner anger or just in the nature of a terrible person or government. Slavery, segregation, the separation of social classes and the idea of male supremacy are all examples of social injustice. Slavery has been in existence since humans became able to convince others to feel inferior enough to do their masters bidding or repressed into working out of fear all while turning a profit. Slavery is the oldest social injustice and is still being practiced today in some parts of China. Within some Chinese factories children eight or nine years old work in conditions comparable to American sweat shops of the 1910’s, while working over one hundred hours a week and any injuries that forced them out of the work force went uncompensated by the company. In Roman times slaves were mainly prisoners of war from the latest conquests in Gaul and later Britain or Carthage. Romans, for the most part, treated slaves like people (with some exceptions, Vedius Pollio fed slaves to lampreys for pleasure). Unfortunately, in many colonies and countries in the seventeen hundreds a new form of slavery known as chattel slavery came to be. In chattel slavery slaves are treated as tools to be bought and sold as the master pleased. This was the slavery that is most commonly thought of. The last major debate to end slavery in a large country resulted in a civil war. The United States was ripped in two after rebels commanded by General Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard (P.G.T Beauregard) fired upon FT. Sumter on April 12–13, 1861. The following war ripped a nation apart and tore brother from brother. After four years and 212,938 losses on both sides the union had come back together and slavery ended in most 1st world countries. After slavery ended in many countries segregation took its place, most memorably the Ku Klux Klan (widely known as the KKK) which was founded originally in 1865 with the end of the American Civil War, they were responsible for the burning of freed slaves and their property. Dissolving in 1870 and then reforming in 1911 the Ku Klux Klan was less active and only incited one major event (the Tulsa Race Riots) until dissolving again in 1944, they reformed a final time in 1946 and is still active today but the third incarnation of the Ku Klux Klan is decentralized and therefore is not nearly as active as the first or second incarnations. The separations of the social classes and the idea of male supremacy are and were a long-standing issue. Although it has been supposedly ended in many western countries, women are still paid on average around four percent less over one year than a man with the same job. In history women were expected to be housewives, in ancient Greek and Roman time’s women were married to produce male offspring to continue the family line, baby girls were often left to die or sold into slavery by their parents. In Roman times the parents of the bride were expected to pay a fee or dowry to the husband as upkeep for the new family. Women were also not allowed to hold government positions. The separations and laws that kept men in power and women weak lasted for many years. Finally in the 1920’s women in the United States gained the right to vote. Combined with the American Civil Rights Movement most of the separation of the social classes and segregation were over, but now while homeless people live in the streets of many cities half-starved and nearly frozen, many people live in massive mansions that they probably have not even been in every room. While some think that the problem has been resolved it is actually worse than ever. Industrialization has its place, but it has forced many people out of work. Monopolization has also played a contributing role in social injustices. Many small and family owned companies have been forced to close due to large-scale company being able to offer lower prices. Big business can be good in some markets such as oil but when it comes to food the small family companies with experience in the subject matter know best. Massive farms owned by one company with one person alone taking care of up to one thousand acres and one cash crop being grown over and over again on one plot of land has depleted the soil resulting in the use of chemicals to
replenish it. Around 30 percent of the fertilizer (chemicals) is swept away in run off and goes into the water supply. Many United States rivers and the Gulf of Mexico had rapid declines in the amount of fish due to the nitrogen fertilizers and augmenting algae growth that consume all of the oxygen in the water thereby suffocating the fish, ending some local businesses but almost unnoticed by major fish suppliers. The way a social injustice can change and contort of a person, company or government is massive and many companies may need to be broken up to allow the people who live there to reclaim their livelihood. While some companies may not by making a thirty million dollar profit the economy could get back on track and the war to end social injustices would be one battle closer to victory.