

# Writers Matter

at La Salle University



## Fall 2013 Annual Newsletter

### Student Writing Contest

This past spring's Writers Matter Writing Contest was to demonstrate how students have learned to use writing to express the things they care most about and helped give them a "voice" with which they can discuss their own lives and the issues that are important to them.

Students were asked to write about personal transformations including changes they've experienced, closing the door on the past, moving on, examples of courage or what it means, being brave, letting go, doing the right thing, and making their voices count. Samples of their work, as well as winning entries, are featured throughout this newsletter.

### Writers Matter Abroad

#### The Writers Matter Program In the Middle East

The Writers Matter Program has become international —Writers Matter: Voices of Teens in the Middle East engaging students in the region between the ages of 12–14 from eleven schools in grades 6th-8th. It is comprised of Israeli Jewish and Israeli Arab students residing in Israel and Palestinians living in the Palestinian territories. This program has been designed and implemented by Dr. Vogel and Dr. Sami Adwan from Bethlehem University. We have partnered with Achva College in Israel and will be working with faculty in the Department of Education and their student teachers. Achva students will be implementing the Writers Matter program in both Jewish and Arab schools

### Letter from the Director

Welcome to our Fall 2013 newsletter for the Writers Matter program. We are currently completing our eighth year of providing a unique and innovative opportunity for middle and lower high school students to learn critical writing skills through the use of journal writing as a vehicle for self-expression. Through writing about their lives, the students find an effective emotional outlet at a time in their lives when personal expression and having their voices heard is so important. Writers Matter is a motivational strategy that encourages students to share personal stories with each other, listen to other voices, and develop effective personal relationships with peers to provide more tolerance and appreciation of others.

The results of research conducted on the Program have consistently demonstrated that Writers Matter fosters more than just improved writing skill development among middle school students. These results include a more nurturing learning environment, stronger teacher-student relationships, and more effective classroom management because of the trusting and mutually respectful relationships that develop between teachers and students.

The Writers Matter Program was created in 2005 for middle school adolescent students, grades six through eight, in order to motivate and encourage them to become better writers. In 2008, I wrote, along with my coauthor, *Voices of Teens: Writers Matter*, which was published in the same year by the National Middle School Association. Since the inception of the Program, over 8000 students have participated. This year over 1200 students, 17 teachers, and 9 schools are involved in the Program.

Through an analysis of the research data and contributions from our Writers Matter teachers, many newly-tested teaching strategies have been designed and implemented related to the teaching of writing. These developments have led to a new book that will be published by Temple University Press in January 2014, by Drs. Yost, Vogel, and Lewinski called *Empowering Young Writers: The Writers Matter Approach*.

Dr. Kimberly Lewinski is my newly appointed Associate Director for the Writers Matter Program. I look forward to working with her and for her contributions to move the program forward.

#### A Renewed Focus on Professional Development

A powerful component of Writers Matter is the professional community developed among the teachers participating in the program. Each month, the teachers in the Writers Matter Program share their student writing and a one-page analysis of the drafts with the other teachers in the program. Each piece of writing is followed by a group discussion where questions are asked and further analysis is provided. This form of professional development provides each teacher an opportunity to reflect on their current practices and learn about the methods of their colleagues. The teachers also present to the group various classroom discoveries and lesson plans providing an optimal forum for meaningful and ongoing professional development. *(Continued on page 2)*

## Letter from the Director

(Continued from page 1)

### Books and Other Publications

In 2008 Michael Galbraith, an 8th grade literacy teacher in Philadelphia and I coauthored "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 Edition" of the book, which gives them tremendous insight into the program's focus and helps them to understand their role as fledgling writers and authors. Along with Deb Yost, I wrote an article featuring the Writers Matter program, entitled, "Writing matters to urban middle level students: The Writers Matter program motivates urban youth to write about their lives. It is published in the Middle School Journal, January 2012 issue. [www.amle.org](http://www.amle.org).

### Writers Matter Mentorship Program and Campus Visits

The Writers Matter program continues to provide La Salle University mentors to many of the participating schools. This past May, Smith Middle School, Wagner Middle School, and AMY Northwest School, visited the La Salle University campus to gain a better understanding of college life in the hope of motivating these students to contemplate pursuing a college education 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, listening to a powerful performance from members of the Philadelphia Youth Poetry Movement and participating in a writing activity.

We are going into our second year of starting an after school program at Wagner Middle school. Mentors from La Salle University meet with the students weekly for an afternoon of writing and support providing a safe space for these students to share their stories and find comfort from their peers.

This past year, one of our newest mentors Youssef Kromah and several members of the Youth Poetry Movement, held assemblies at each of the schools participating in the Writers Matter Program. All of the teachers reported a positive response to the assemblies therefore we intend to continue these assemblies again this year.

### Special Thanks

Special thanks go to Dr. Karen Kolsky, Assistant Superintendent, from the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) and to Dr. Penny Nixon Senior Executive Vice President of Education Universal Companies for their relentless support and encouragement for the Writers Matter Program.

This Program is generously supported by the PTS Foundation (Pam and Tony Schneider), Tyler Aaron Bookman Memorial Foundation (Neil and Jill Bookman) and Moses Feldman Family Foundation (Moe and Susan Feldman). A heartfelt thanks to these special individuals for their vision to help those less fortunate than themselves.

Thank You.

### Bob Vogel

Founding Director, Writers Matter Program at La Salle University  
Professor, Department of Education, La Salle University



### First Place Entry - "Who is ME: A Family Tree Poem"

Wagner Middle School

#### The Roots:

Blood rushes through each body creating another  
1940: from Accomac Virginia to Philadelphia  
Speaking English  
Saying "clean the house"—not ours, but the house of the other.  
Hoping for a better life and fair job  
Saving childhood memorials

#### The Trunk:

Generations change like weather  
Singing "I made you a fisherman"  
Cooking homemade gravy from scratch and making corn cakes  
Hearing about abbreviated assassinations: First, MLK then JFK  
Being a part of when blacks were not allowed in school with whites  
...And when they were not able to vote  
Hoping to take away the violence and be a better world  
Memories of going to a carnival and seeing airplanes fly above for the first time

#### The Branches and Leaves:

My family tree marched on together  
I am Maleka Tate  
I now live on Bouvier Street in a house of women:  
With my grandmom, aunt, mom, and my sister  
I enjoy playing games and making art  
When I think about my grandma's family, I feel proud of my past  
In the future, I will teach my own about my family and tell them that our history matters

Just like our writing about it matters, too.

*Help Support Writers Matter!*

Your continued support will help ensure the current and future success of Writers Matter in Philadelphia schools.

Contributions can be made to the Writers Matter program by sending donations to:

La Salle University attn: Dr. Robert Vogel  
1900 West Olney Ave  
Philadelphia, PA 19141

- or -

Make a gift online at  
[www.lasalle.edu/makeagift](http://www.lasalle.edu/makeagift)  
In the comments section, please type "Urban Writers Program: Writers Matter"





## Teacher Testimonial

“Writers Matters has opened the eyes of my students in ways that I could have never imagined. The focus, expression, insight, knowledge, ambition, and motivation to cultivate words and wisdom have been inspiring to me as their teacher. I never imagined growing up that I’d be the one to affect a person’s eternity, but everyday I see a future where I know I made a difference.”

- Erin Lynn Cunningham  
Teacher, Smith School

## Israel and Palestinian Territories

In October 2013, Dr. Sami Adwan and I began the professional development for the teachers in both Israel and the Palestinian territories. This year we have 10 participating schools, 12 teachers and over 450 students involved in Writers Matter. We are beginning to implement a pen pal program between the middle school students from both countries to allow them to share stories and hear each other’s personal narratives. Additionally, we held a writing contest for the second straight year and awarded 8 prizes to over 250 submissions. We are looking forward to a great year and with the Middle East Writers Matter.

## Student Writing Contest (continued)

### Second Place Entry - “Bully, Bully”

*Wagner Middle School*

Bully, bully, you can’t stop me!  
I have dreams and a future you see,  
You can’t tell me how to fix my hair,  
And I won’t give you my care,  
Bully, bully, your words may hurt  
But my brain pays no attention.

I’ve had enough of this misery and pain,  
So now I have to bring my game.  
I’ve paid attention to the saying  
“Sticks and stones may break my  
Bones, but words can never hurt me.”  
So now I can stand up with the millions of people and say...

Bully, bully, you can’t stop me  
Because I am who I am and you look at me otherwise  
I have skin JUST LIKE YOU  
With eyes that I can see through

And when I look in the mirror, I see a beautiful girl,  
Not what you describe  
Your words can be selfish, greedy, ugly, and most of all, annoying!  
You might be cool...  
For me, some might use nerd which rules!

You hunt me down like a bee,  
But all I see is a jealousy.  
Bully, bully, you can’t stop me because you are just jealous  
And jealousy is not the key  
So don’t try to stop me!

Your words make others cry,  
But for me I’ll just say sigh.  
Bully, bully has someone ever told you  
That you’re ugly?  
Or that you aren’t cool?

So when you’re an adult, go through your memories. (Continue page 4)



**Second Place Entry - "Bully, Bully"** (continued from page 3)

Wagner Middle School

My dad was taken by cancer  
But you have the dream life  
I hope that he watched me while you did what you've done  
But now, I'm laughing and having fun.

So with these last words, you look through your time  
Now, instead of a penny, you may think I'm a dime  
I'm the boss of me  
And that's something that you can't be  
I'm the robin in the tree

I'm me and you can't be  
You may try to make me cry  
But before the tree dies,  
Bully, bully, you CANNOT stop me!

## Honorable Mention

**"The Right to be Heard"**

C.W. Henry Elementary School

*Discrimination and prejudice are running wild  
As rampant and untamed as a newborn child.  
Like a ferocious beast it will not be stopped  
Unless a decision is made by someone on top.  
Top, top, top, like the president,  
To whom good and evil should probably be evident  
I hope that this is relevant:  
Gays, straights, autistic, and lesbians' too-  
They're all getting beat until they're black and blue.  
Not just fists and punches, and bullies stealing lunches.  
Words.  
Splendid characters that illuminate the page  
Are being used to take out hate and rage.  
It's hard to believe,  
To even conceive,  
The things people say and do.  
Let me tell you this, from me to you:  
It's real.  
It's there.  
Oh yes. It's true.  
Something has to be done.  
This disease must be cured.  
I'll do this by speaking up.  
I have the right to be heard.*

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.

## Student Writing Contest (continued)

**Third Place Entry - "Philly Spoken Word"**

Amy NorthWest School

I have realized  
I have never seen  
This city at it's best  
Scared of tomorrow  
No one knows  
What will happen next

Young black people  
With no education  
Black on black crime  
Now, worse than segregation

Girls of all ages selling their bodies  
To help their families  
End up pregnant  
And become their own enemies

What's love got to do with it anymore?  
They hit it than quit it  
Just walk out the door

Got me convinced  
All boys are the same  
Lost hope 3 days ago  
I don't think we are ever goanna change

West side, south side  
And southwest is "burnin'"  
We wouldn't have this problem  
If everyone was in school learnin'

Northeast, Northwest  
North side and Uptown  
Martins dream didn't  
Include his youth to fall down

9-year-old girls running around  
Talking like they grown  
You cant even spell "gangsta"  
So how you "bad to the bone"

I'm tired of drowning  
In this generation's sorrows  
I keep waiting, and... waiting  
And I just can't find tomorrow!

I keep hoping for tomorrow  
But yesterday keeps showing up in its place  
They say Philly is suppose to stick together  
But yet they turn against their own race

I was told every generation gets weaker and weaker with every crime  
And it takes time  
To defend  
What goes on in the youth's mind

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(Continued from page 5)

### PHILLY SPOKEN WORD

Amy NorthWest School

If your goanna kill your own people  
The most you can do is at least  
Show a little mercy  
And let them REST IN PEACE

Say you love them than mistreat them  
And try to fake a broken heart  
Say you need them than you leave them  
Waste of time from the start

Once mended heart  
Now shattered to pieces  
And still black on black crime  
Intensely increases

Sending nude pictures  
For a little attention  
This whole generation  
Is in need of redemption

Everyone is getting booked  
Everyone is having kids  
Our hope is across the river  
But our ignorance broke the bridge

People ask why am I so  
pretty, smart, and single  
It's because I don't have time  
For another broken heart to mingle

No time for these boys  
And their silly little games  
Seems to me like everyone's the problem  
WELL SOMEONE'S GATTA MAKE A CHANGE

Don't let your hater's hold you back  
If you want to show something, let it show  
And just because you're in the ghetto  
Doesn't mean you can't grow

Tired of teens getting pregnant  
Then turning around and killing their seed  
I guess these young ladies  
Just don't think the same as me

If your woman enough to make the baby  
Than your woman enough to raise the baby  
And if you don't like the idea  
Than just stay young and be a lady

Something has got to give  
More than it can and will take,  
Because our generation is dropping Faster,  
Than these young ladies can populate

PHILLY'S SUPPOSE TO STICK TOGETHER

INSTEAD, THEY KILL AND HATE EACH OTHER!!

## Honorable Mention Continued

### "Pursuing Your Dreams"

C.W. Henry Elementary School

COURAGE what that word means to me  
I will tell you in my little and short story  
There once was a girl who lived down the block  
And she didn't even know what courage was about  
Wherever she went she was quiet and shy  
Until one day when she opened up about one time  
She was 12 years old and had plenty of talents  
She had many, many dreams but thought life was a challenge  
Everyone at school laughed and giggled  
When she told them that she had knowledge  
Because all they knew her for was all of her talents  
At that point she believed that she wasn't taken serious  
And that she was living in a dream that everyone else thought was hilarious  
Then came one day she was walking alone and singing to the beat  
That she thought of on her on  
Then out of the blue she heard something that she thought was inspiring  
An old lady she knew told her  
"GIRL keep on trying, and your dreams filled with many of your talents includ-  
ing your knowledge will come true"  
5 minutes later after she thought about  
She knew that the words that were spoken came to her for courage  
And since that point she made plenty of changes  
She felt brave and successful  
She's not afraid to express herself whether she has  
Talents  
Knowledge  
Or other traits  
She Express herself in every different way  
So lets go back to the beginning  
Courage what that word means to me  
C- Change what you want to improve  
O-Outstanding at what you do  
U-Understood by others  
R-Respected by yourself and others to  
A-Astonishing  
G-Great at your specialties  
E-Extra give it something nice  
Courage what that word means to you make a new change in your point of view.

### "Take Charge: Change"

Smith Middle School

Little black boys and girls being degraded because of their race and become what they are ac-  
cused.  
Little black boys and girls that used to run and play in the streets are now walking around the  
streets: Some with guns in their hands, and others with condoms looking for a fix!  
When they were young, their parents had such high hopes, but now their parents are on the  
verge of taking them out themselves.  
Blood cutting blood over drugs and addiction.  
Uncles killing nephews!  
Brothers killing sisters!  
Why?  
The only question I have for the dissolving race is why?  
Why do we present ourselves so negatively?  
So disrespectfully?  
Why not make a change starting now, with this generation?  
Rather than selling illegal drugs on the corner, do something productive.  
Why not finish school and become a pharmacist to sell drugs?  
If you wish to deliver a baby, why not become an OB/GYN?  
You can deliver them instead of going through the pain and later decide to not take care of them.  
Stop letting the media control your minds and change!  
They want you to fail!  
Which is why we need to rise above!  
Insist on change!  
We as a whole can change!  
You can change what people think of you, of us, if we work together and correct ourselves!  
We don't need to be what they say we are. We need to be successful!  
Take charge and change the way the other people think of us.

## Her Life Was Taken...

Amy Northwest

Light Brown skin  
Dark brown eyes  
Thick in the waist  
Heavy in the thighs  
Picture herself thin  
Just because she wants to fit in  
Thinks about her self as someone else  
People say she has no confidence, she's chasing her dream and hardly ever stopping at it  
Time and time again she comes to realize that her dreams aren't real, they're what she can fantasize.  
Looks at her self with insecurity  
All people tell her, is that she so pretty  
She believes that beauty is not found on her face  
Yet she is sweet with poise and grace  
No one listens they just keep speaking  
She closes her eyes but her mind is still seeking  
Beat down by hateful words  
Scars that cover her voice unheard  
Categorized by her personality  
Being hit by her own reality  
Tears rolled down her face  
She hugged the pillow with embrace  
Her mind felt unspoken  
Her life left a token  
She tried to stay real  
As her broken heart tried to heal  
Voices traveled through her head  
As her soul wandered towards the dead  
She went from being a quiet girl trapped inside  
To a lonely heart ready to die  
Can't really say why she felt this way  
A kiss without a lip to touch  
Two hands that push away too rough  
A hand without a heart to mold  
These lips that tell you her story untold  
Forever gone.

## "My Voice"

Wagner Middle School

There are many different ways writing gives me a voice. For example in writing I can say what I feel and I can say it how I want, some stuff I say in my writing I can't speak it. Meaning I can't like say it, I don't know why but writing just lets me show my feelings better than I can speak it. Lot of people might say if you can write it you can speak it but that's not always true.

Writing lets me be myself; it lets me say things that I feel. If I could say everything I write it just wouldn't be the same. In my writings you can understand what I'm saying or trying to say. I know that writing is a big thing and it can get people going on or understand better. Writing shows people a different side of them. If people could speak what they wrote then they wouldn't get the full effect of what they wrote.

In my writing it's like I'm telling a story, a story about things that go on in the world and in my life as well. When I write I don't plan things out about like what I'm going to write about or how I'm going to write it I just go along with the flow and come up with stuff off the top of my head. I don't know why I do that; I just come up with stuff better like that

When I write it's relaxing, I always feel calm when I write. Your suppose to be calm every time you write because if your not calm you start to freak out and become nervous. When you start to freak out and become nervous you don't know what to write about and you'll just be stuck. That's why I always try to be calm and relaxed because mind stays focused.

Writing helps people out with everything. It lets people express there feelings in a different way, people can say what they feel and how they feel just on a piece of paper. When someone writes something it shows people how they really feel and why they feel this way. Especially teens because we are at that age where writing is everything to us and writing matters.

## "Where I've Been, Where I'm going"

Wagner Middle School

As a teen I have faced many difficulties with finding the right friends and decision-making. I remember when I first entered middle school I was always hyper active and never really followed directions. My grades were ok but I knew I could do better but I never really cared. In my 6th grade year my mother passed away and from then on I promised myself that I would get good grades because I knew she would be proud. It's not always easy to get good grades and get along with my peers. So to avoid problems I always tried and get along and talk to people I knew I could get along with also I keep a journal to express my feelings.

Writing to me is a very good way to express my feelings whether they are positive or negative. When I write in my journal I feel like my journal is my own secret world. Writing has given me a different voice that I had never had before. I always had a voice before but since I started writing people were now able to see me in a different way instead of always loud and mean. People started to see that I'm a nice person and that's how I was able to make new friends.

As a teen I know it is good for me to make good choices in order to go to higher places. When I grow up I want to be a cosmetologist. I also had to let go my past of physical abuse. My past is not going to stop me from being the best I can. Letting go of my past has made my teenage life easier and better because now I look back at my past and see how much I progressed over the years and I can honestly say I have come out insecurity shell and I am proud of myself for that.

I have changed from always being loud, mean, and insecure but now thanks to my friends and my journal I learned I have to get through my past in order for me to have a brighter future. I am going to make my mother proud of a successful young leader. I am going to a place where I can keep studying and keep going just like Seff Alfriqi. I am thankful to have all of these outlets that I can count on.

In the end I have been up and down just like any other teenager but all of our stories are not the same. I've have been from being mean to now being as sweet as I can be. I have learned to have more confidence in myself and to never let my past weigh me down. I know I can be the best I can to be. I am glad have gone through some of these changes because without them I wouldn't really know who I am.

## "The Change"

Carnell Annex

I've always have been scared, shy, and filled with sorrow.  
I've always thought the bad and the good was just an imagination.  
My family and friends try, but I never listen.  
I was like a feather, drifting in nothingness, avoiding my friends, family, and love.  
I was like a lost soul, filled with sorrow.

But now it's time to weigh down the feather, and find joy in the soul.  
The chain that was binding me has been broken.  
I knew that I could make a difference.

Without courage, happiness, and braveness, I wouldn't have been set free from the chain that has locked me out of this open world for so long.

Now I'm going to live a life full of hope, peace, and happiness.

## "Where I've Been Where I'm going"

Carnell Annex

I've been stuck drama trying to overcome it  
I've been around too much bad influence trying to escape it  
I've been around teenagers thinking they're cool, smoking and trying to change others  
I've been the kind of kid always getting bullied just for being smart  
I've been in my bed sleeping hoping this world can recover from drama  
I've been around crying everyday from my whole 1st grade class jumping me  
I've been around coming home everyday with wounds on my body from getting attacked for no reason  
I've been around kids with dreams who let words get the best of them

I've been around to many haters  
I've been and still am with a dad trying his best to recover from a stroke  
I've been and still am with a mom coming home from work everyday with her feet always hurting

(continued on page 7)

**“Where I’ve Been Where I’m going”** (continued from page 6)

*Carnell Annex*

I’ve been around people wanting to be my friend but then turning their back on me  
I’ve been around fights happening over very little conflict  
Where I’m going-That’s a good question  
I’m going to put my name in history  
I’m going to feed and protect my family  
I’m going to work hard and accomplish my goals  
I’m going to change the world  
I’m going to get stronger and stronger facing challenges that may come  
I’m going to stand up tall and fight for this nation  
I’m going to be successful in what I do  
I’m going to help others change themselves, and help them become a better person  
I’m going to fight for what I believe  
I’m going to be a role model for young children  
I’m going to let my voice be heard  
I’m going to stop all our nations violence  
I’m going to one day make this nation join hands  
I’m going to make all my friends and family proud of me  
I’m going to grow up and have a family of my own  
I’m going to help the less fortunate  
I’m going to stand tall as the face of this nation  
I’m going to be a hero  
I’m going to be a hero  
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

**“I AM FROM”**

*Logan Middle School*

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 a 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 jumps are punks and punks are always flunks  
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, not from a home, 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 scrambling love,  
I am from hope, but the more I spoke 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!

**“The Cracks In Between”**

*Wagner Middle School*

The cracks in between used to be wide  
The cracks in between are strong  
All the rumbles and little pieces of rocks  
Symbolize the obstacles I went through  
The cracks in between never hide the secrets  
and the lies that stand between  
The cracks in between go deep into  
The heart of life  
The cracks in between tell it all from  
Not having a father, to people in my  
Family not going to college  
The cracks in between are the smoke from the lungs, they are the heart and soul from  
The ancestors that come before  
The cracks in between show how I’ve  
Changed, it shows passion and desire  
The cracks in between show the courage and how  
It’s used  
The cracks in between show the belief,  
The love, the grandparents, the great grandparents,  
Mother’s, father’s, the children  
The cracks in between show the pain, the hurt, the blood, the bruises, the abuse  
The cracks in between show that you matter  
It shows that your voice matter’s,  
The cracks in between tell a story, a  
Story about being together  
About being a family  
The cracks in between tell the story of the life of one.

**“The Change”**

*Carnell Annex*

I’ve always have been scared, shy, and filled with sorrow.  
I’ve always thought the bad and the good was just an imagination.  
My family and friends try, but I never listen.  
I was like a feather, drifting in nothingness, avoiding my friends, family, and love.  
I was like a lost soul, filled with sorrow.

But now it’s time to weigh down the feather, and find joy in the soul.  
The chain that was binding me has been broken.  
I knew that I could make a difference.  
Without courage, happiness, and braveness, I wouldn’t have been set free from the chain that has locked me out of this open world for so long.

**“Untitled”**

*West Bank*

I want to admit something. In the past, we were very rich; we had two cars and whenever I asked for something, my folks gave it to me immediately. But now we have become much less rich, because we were hit by the evil eye. But this doesn’t mean that we have become poor. Thank Allah, we still have everything and we ask for anything, my folks give it to us. That is to say, we are middle class, just like many others.  
I wish to be successful in life. Thank you.  
I have written this poem:  
He hides away from sight.  
He speaks only when he smiles.  
I see you under thee moonlight.  
I see you in the early rays of the day.  
My body is becoming bigger and taller  
Like a planted seed growing every day.  
My body has grown  
Like a man who is showing off.  
There are kids who are rich.  
There are kids who are poor orphans.  
There are kids who are rich.  
There are boys and girls who are hungry.

