



2025-26

The Storytellers' Anthology

JUVENILE COURT AND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



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Please note that there may be grammatical errors, etc., but since this is narrative writing, we chose not to edit them in order to retain an authentic student voice.

FOREWORD

Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS) is committed to empowering students to develop their own agency, to foster their sense of belonging, and to honor their cultural and linguistic assets. Throughout the year, students have opportunities to present their work to others and engage in relevant and meaningful experiences. The Quarter 1 theme is “What’s the Power of Stories” because as Phillipp Humm said, *“Through the art of storytelling, we can preserve our heritage, educate future generations, and inspire change.”*

Here are our stories...



*Eunique H — Photo Collage Self
Love Internship Project*

PERSONAL NARRATIVE

By Adrian

I will never forget this game where we were losing at half and it was during May,6,2023.I scored a pen,then I assisted my teammate twice where we came back to tie the game,after we tied the game I scored an amazing goal something I won't ever forget because it was a goal to win the game so when I scored,I run around the field because I was amazed and surprised that I scored that goal and I was so happy because the shot was a finesse shot.And because of that game we won me and my whole team went back to first place and it's because the other teams we played were good but they were for sure never better than us,as my team has so much talent we always won our games.But the game we played that I am speaking about was a horrible match because it was also due to the referee,they really ever called anything on us which horrible but sometimes the referee's are old or young that have never been a ref in there life,but the ref we had during that game was never calling anything which is obvious nobody likes a horrible ref. In the end,the last-min goal wasn't just about winning the game. It was the moment everything I'd practiced finally came together-the pressure,the noise,the nerves,all of it.When the ball hit the back of the net,I felt this rush that I still think about every time I step onto a field. So ever since I thought about that game I will always have it as a memory because it was something I have never done before. So at the end of the match everyone rushed me because then I was a striker but now I'm a fullback which is a defender but I don't mind playing defender cause I am also a good defender.But as I continue to speak about the ending of the match it was and exciting ending game cause how me and my teammates communicated during the whole second half cause how fun it was to enjoy and do our best to come back and win the game so after the game I went to go get mcdonalds.

UNTITLED

By Ahmed

When I was five years old, I remember staying at one of my family friend's house with all seven of my siblings at the time in this house located in mira mesa. This house would be known as the "Big house" or called the "bighouse" by me and my siblings because of how big it was on the inside of the house. Sure the house was big,but it was very filthy and dirty. On top of that it was infested with rats everywhere and many bugs like roaches crawling all over the place. Not the right environment any child should be in. I recall waking up one early morning and feeling rats touching me through my blanket because I had my blanket on top of me when I was laying on the dirty carpet floor. It spooked me because what person on earth would want dirty little rodents crawling all over them during their sleep?.

Even though I was five, I remember thinking to myself that I wished my family's lives would get better cuz my mom didn't have it financially at the time, and who also had eight kids to feed and take care of. A heavy loss I experienced was the day me and my siblings got taken by cps. I remember talking to my mom in the early afternoon and she wanted me to look at a bunch of old shoes on top of one another in this big cardboard box.

My mom said to me to " look for any shoes inside of the box to see if any of them would fit me. Before I could look through the box I heard my older sister Basilia shout from downstairs that the cops were outside because she was looking through the curtain and saw them walking towards the front of the door. And at this time me or my siblings weren't going to school because it was a big challenge my mom had because she didn't have a working car and clean clothes for us to wear everyday. The cops kept knocking on the door for my mom until finally someone opened the door. I heard the cops talking with my mom. After they were done talking, I remember looking at my moms face who looked sad and started to cry faintly. Yet she had a pained expression on her face.

She gathered my siblings together and told everyone we were being taken away by cps to polinski. There was a white lady with glasses and had a bobcut with straight hair, she was dressed very formal and had a clipboard. She then gathered all 8 kids including me and drove us to Polinski. My three baby siblings at the time (two boys) and one girl were taken into separate foster homes, except my two little brothers Christian and Abraham. They were taken in by this nice couple named " Tye and Darcy" who ended up adopting them shortly after receiving them. My little sister Priscila was adopted by this lesbo couple " Martha n Lisa". I remember hearing this information when I got to Polinsky and feeling so sad me and my siblings were being torn apart from each other. My two older sisters left Polinsky to their new foster home together before I could even say bye to them. It was now only my twin brother and big brother and me together briefly, before our new foster parents came to pick us up.

I remember my older brother "Machele" walking me and my twin towards the exit of the polinski doors. He was holding us on each arm telling us how much he loves us so much. I was thinking to myself that I didn't want to leave my big brother, I didn't want to be split up from one of the remaining family I had. I didn't know that'd be the last time I saw my big brother in a while, same for my other siblings that were separated from me. I felt confused and vulnerable around these strangers in their car as they were driving towards their house.

From that point I knew since it was just me and my twin brother that I had to take on a form and responsibility to look after my little twin brother because he's all I had that was family.

The foster dad who me and my brother called him by was "Mr Rob". He was always really nice to me and my brother Joe. He would print superhero coloring papers for me and my brother. He would even take us shopping to buy us new toys and lego's. His wife, though the foster mom who we would refer to as Mrs. B, was nice at first until she started showing her true colors. She was very harsh and verbally abusive. One time, she made me refried beans , but I kept gagging and nearly throwing up from it.

Her daughter "brianna" was an asswipe and physically abusive to me and my brother joe. She would get mad and grab us on the back of our necks and squeeze really hard.

I recently saw her a few years back and she used to be skinny but when I seen her again she was a fat whale just like her mom.

This experience has somewhat shaped me into who I am today. I feel more angry over little things and am very violent and creative with my words. Sometimes I feel like I lose myself sometimes because I get so angry. But Its just mostly trauma I had to endure when I was younger.

UNTITLED

By Ariana

My cat getting run over by a car in front of me was the most tragic moment in my life. The situation was scary and sad.

This tragic moment was scary because my cat used to follow me and our house was right across the street from the store,but i didnt let the cat cross the street so he waited until I got far enough, and he was trying to cross it but the car came fast and killed him.

This loss made me sad because he was a baby and I feel like it was my fault because I left him across the street.

UNTITLED

By Dade

The day the social worker knocked on our door, I thought my life was being broken apart. I was nine years old, sitting on the floor with my sister and her dolls, when the voices in the kitchen suddenly went quiet. When my mother called us in, her eyes were red and the woman beside her had a clipboard and a careful, practiced smile. I did not understand every word, but I understood enough: we were leaving, and my mother was not coming with us.

At first, all I felt was fear. My sister slipped her hand into mine, and I could feel how small and shaky it was. When she whispered, “What’s happening?” I wanted to tell her the truth, that I was just as scared as she was. Instead, I took a breath and told her we were going on “a little trip” and that I would be with her the whole time. In that moment, without realizing it, I made my first real decision as an older sibling: if I could not control what happened to us, I could at least control how I showed up for her.

The first foster home felt like landing on another planet. The house smelled different, the voices were unfamiliar, and the pictures on the walls were of other people’s memories. That first night, my sister cried and asked when we were going home. I lay awake in the dark, staring at the ceiling, feeling helpless and angry. But as I listened to her breathing slowly calm down, I realized that my reaction mattered. If I gave in to panic, she would feel it too. So I started telling her stories—about how we would have our own room someday, about how we could treat every move like an adventure. At nine years old, I began to learn that leadership sometimes looks calm you do not actually feel.

Moving from one home to another taught me a different kind of strength. Every house had its own rules,

routines, and expectations: some families were kind and patient, others distant and impatient. In the beginning, I took every move personally, like it was proof that something was wrong with us. Over time, I began to see a pattern: adults were dealing with their own problems and limits, and their decisions were not a reflection of our worth. That realization changed how I saw myself. Instead of asking, “Why does no one want us?” I began to ask, “What can I learn here, even if this place is temporary?”

School became one of the hardest and most important classrooms for those lessons. Being “the foster kid” meant answering questions I did not want to answer and watching teachers’ expressions change when they read my file. At first, I shrank under that attention, trying to disappear into the back row. Eventually, I realized that letting other people define me by my situation only gave them more power. I started raising my hand more, turning in assignments on time, and staying after class when I needed help. I began to see education as something no court order or placement change could take away from me. That mindset—seeing school as a tool, not just an obligation—gave me a sense of control when everything else felt unstable.

The group home was where my role as an older sibling solidified into something deeper. There were so many kids, so many stories of loss and anger, that it would have been easy to get lost in the noise. Instead, I learned to focus on what I could do: make sure my sister woke up for school, help her with homework, sit beside her at meals, and step in when someone tried to pick on her. Those daily choices were small, but they taught me that real strength often shows up in consistent, quiet actions. I could not fix her pain, but I could stand next to her in it.

As the years went by, foster care stopped being only a source of pain and became a strange kind of teacher. It taught me resilience every time I unpacked my bag in a new room and found a way to make it feel like ours. It taught me adaptability when I learned new routines and house rules without losing my own sense of right and wrong. It taught me empathy as I listened to other kids’ stories and realized that everyone around me was carrying invisible battles. Instead of asking, “Why is this happening to me?” I began to ask, “How can this make me stronger and kinder?”

The hardest lesson was about identity. For a long time, I believed that being in foster care meant I was broken or unwanted. Slowly, through years of surviving change and supporting my sister, I realized that my identity is not defined by where I sleep or who signs my paperwork. It is defined by the choices I make: to protect, to persevere, to keep hoping. I began to see myself not as a victim of the system, but as someone who had learned skills most people my age had never needed—advocating for myself, reading adults’ intentions, and finding stability within my own character.

Now, as a 12th grader looking back, I can see that the nine-year-old who walked out of that apartment with a shaking hand and an overstuffed bag was being pushed into a life no child should have to face. But I can also see the strength that slowly grew out of that experience. Foster care forced me to grow up quickly, yet it also taught me powerful lessons: that family can be built through loyalty and love, that circumstances do not define potential, and that pain can become fuel for determination.

Being placed in multiple homes did not break me; it built me. It turned fear into responsibility, instability into resilience, and silence into a voice that is no longer afraid to speak. The most important lesson I carry is this: even when life decides things for you, you still get to decide who you become. And because of everything I went through in foster care, I am determined to become someone strong enough not only to stand on my own, but also to reach back and help others who are facing the same storms I once did.

UNTITLED

By David

Day one was a long day. We woke up at about 6am. We had packed our duffle bags they gave us just days before that. We had them ready to go and everyone woke up a little late. We all were supposed to be there at 5. But everyone was tired from practicing the day before. We didn't know how to ride road bikes 3 days before that.

We all were on boys side in boys 6 practicing clipping on and off for hours inside a little room with like 10 of us there all together. Greg, our leader from ROP, was an excellent biker. He told us to ride on the road and to go on the trip we had to stay on something called rollers for 5 minutes straight without falling. The rollers are less than 30 inches front and back so imagine having to keep increasing speed the whole 5 minutes. The first try for everyone I'm pretty sure I was number two to go and I got it for a whole 2 and a half minutes. That whole day no one could beat my time. The next day we all did the 5 minute rollers after many hours of training and working together. Day 3 of training went down to one of San Diego's long beach fronts and rode about 25 miles before a kid named John broke his entire derailleur and Greg. was really mad because we all saw him keep riding even though his chain was messed up before.

When we told him to stop and get it fixed his chain flung into the back part of his bike and got caught all around the derailleur and broke it. The next day we all woke up at 6 and it was grand canyon time. So this was day 4 of training and leave day we all had woken up late and got together at the following cars with Greg and them near the pool side at Spa. We had all had our duffle bags and loaded them up in the trailer. After that we got some breakfast and sat around for a little bit. Then Greg told us all to get in our bike gear and shoes. And then we met up to assemble our front tires onto our bikes off the top of the vans roof. It had taken about 25 minutes because of a lot of flats and other problems. We had done about 5 to 10 laps around campus.

And it was about 11:30 at this time. We had finished climbing up a lot of hills then headed up to the cafe to load up about 400 pounds of food. It took us about one hour and ten. minutes so we left at about 1:30 in peak heat.

We had to go from the front of Spa on the road and go past Bandy canyon passing on the road where I usually mountain bike on. So we were about 7 miles in then we stopped and Greg said now y'all are going to be in a world of pain. They had given us all a bottle of gatorade and we all had our water bottles and water bags. Everyone was different in that I had a cucumber gatorade that I got from them when we had done that stop. We were all scared about what Greg had said but we didn't think it was going to be over 12 miles long of a massive uphill bend that goes from side to side.

We got back on our bikes after the break and started to see a long massive uphill curve at a huge angle. It was like that for about 2.5 miles before it got a little easier. We were all pushing with all our strength but had to stop after that 4.5 miles. We were so tired we had stopped for a long while because one of the adult riders threw up and gave up and went into the van. So Greg's daughter went back to help Darian, the rider who threw up. To help him put his bike on the top of the van. After about 10 minutes of us waiting we hopped back into our bikes. We started to actually feel good and we kept climbing and climbing. It was getting less

and less steeper. Sometimes it would get worse but we dealt with it. Then about 8.5 miles in of the 11 mile monster its angle got so much worse. We had stopped right before it had a nice big sip of my cucumber gatorade. Then started climbing back up the mountain. Then I just kept feeling something hollow every push I was doing after about 2 miles I stopped. And threw up on a break everywhere. I told Greg I wanted to keep going but I was just throwing up more when I kept riding. So I decided to go in the van for 25 minutes while Greg and some of the other kids who didn't give up continued. I put my bike inside the trailer.

Went into the armored follow SUV and talked with Josh and John. They were playing video games in the back because they had also stopped. Josh, I asked when did you give up bro. He responded 'I didn't get crazy far'. I went about 7.5 miles in then got too tired. We were talking and playing video games together. Then after that we all got out and went back to biking on a smoother surface Darian decided to still stay in the car. We went on a smooth road for a lot of miles then climbed one more big hill then we arrived in a mexican looking neighborhood up this hill after many miles of no houses just cars and trees and plants and farm lands. We had stopped really quickly and Greg said we were going to pass Ramona's long road and ride through the whole town. The way we arrived in Ramona was the longer way through the side of the farm lands. Passed through romona back into the mountains and set camp in Borrego Springs inside of the almost empty valley. Day 2 was really easy and smooth for most of it. It was all almost flat rollers for about 40 miles then throughout the whole time on top there were roller bumps so 100 to 500 feet uphill every couple kilometers. These days number 2 and 3 were very strenuous and very hot. We were in Borregos like a 200 plus mile desert. We stopped a lot to refill electrolytes especially in this huge valley cause we were out there for 4 to 6 and a half hours a day in a 100 degree plus valley. It was very enjoyable but also i would say horrible time you don't notice anything on the bike, you just keep going and every time you get off to stop or even get off your bike your body almost instantly becomes nauseous sick or you lose a lot of physical, mental and spiritual feelings and do feel horrible. But you get used to it. I thought of it as fun instead of bad. I get to be out here on a desert biking while all the kids and people I know at the spa are working and doing their stuff so I just kept thinking back to my opportunity to do this trip. We kept covering huge ground. I think after two or three days we left the entire Borrego valley and started heading towards a very huge wooded and dirt area. We stayed at many different places like we camped right next to the colorado river on day 3 and swam and took photos that day after we did our biking that day. So we hopped in the SUV in the morning with all the kids in one car. Josh had asked me, "David how are u handling these last couple of days." I really wasn't sure, I didn't feel real because I was so locked in I didn't notice the heat, I didn't notice the stops for water. I just felt like I was an engine that just needed fuel ever so often. "What about you though Josh? I see that you're struggling with cramps quite a bit." "yeah they have been getting me pretty bad imma just keep taking breaks and come back in." Day 4 was pretty chill. We started getting closer to the canyon. I really forgot the name of the place. But I know it had a lot of trees. It was like starting to get into big trees and dirt areas. We had stayed in a gravel RV park that day. We had problems with the dude who owned the place cause we thought we rented enough spaces for our tents but we took up way more space we were able to solve the problem later and stayed there for the night. Next stop was Williams, Arizona. One of our biking members' names was williams hes a beast who did that whole ten mile mountain and also never quit the entire of the 7 days once. Day 5 we stayed in a wooded RV park. Tensions were getting high because Greg was not doing proper communication with us riders. So we had to stop mid ride and have a big talk because things were not working out. Everyone was angry and tired because of the heat too. We had our talk with Greg and went on and headed to our campsite. Day 6 we woke up, rode 55 miles then stopped early that

day to stop at this amazing campsite. It had go-carts, games and other activities. On day 6 evening we set up our tents and we decided for day 6 and 7 we will stay there. Day 7 is grand canyon arrival day. It was 60.5 miles away with over 30 of it being rollers. Rollers are long rides that continuously go up and down over and over for short or long periods of time. Day 6 we rode out 40 plus miles then drove back to the campsite. Then after day 6 we woke up early for day 7 everyone was super pumped up. We got up, got ready to go, drove out the campsite cause it was gravel and went to a gas station and started from there.

That day we had 60.5 miles to do. It was strange because for day 6 and 7 we were in Williams, Arizona. So day 7 was long. We went from the woods for about 20 miles. Then after that it started going back to the plains of the Arizona desert. We stopped at mile 30 at the flint stones park and historical gas station 30 miles away from the grand canyon. It was in bedrock city Williams, Arizona. You could see the canyon from the end of the valley. It was very beautiful and hot. We rode another 25 miles and arrived at Tuscan, Arizona. I honestly thank god I had a flat tire there because my energy was super low so was everyone else's we had a lot of confidence early in the riding day but later it was hard we had two crashes that day and wasted a lot of energy not taking more breaks because we were too excited. So we stopped on the side of the road and fixed my tire. We were 5 miles away and were all super tired but very excited. The Tuscan part was tiring because we passed right through a straight road with the cars and then there was about a mile and a half of straight uphill curve.

We passed right through it and by there we were almost dying. Then it got smooth for 3 miles and we saw three dead horses just right next to the road. Then back to rollers for a mile and then we finally saw it. Grand Canyon National Park sign we did a u turn into the parking lot and took a whole bunch of photos next to it we were cheering and screaming for that whole last mile a couple of kids gave up and were taking photos of us josh came back to ride the last 2 miles or something like that cause he did ride most of that day besides ten miles. We took our photos, hugged each other, then got our bikes onto the car and drove into the ticket area. It was too dangerous to fully ride into the canyon cause in that area there's a ton of cars and they go fast because they're also excited. So we drove in, stopped at the grand canyon store, got some ice cream from Greg and surprised the kids that never saw the canyon before we blindfolded them and showed them it. Everyone was just looking at us because we were all geared up in bike gear. Everyone was kinda amazed it was super beautiful when we went. A lot of us were just in shock that a couple of kids who three days before this trip were able to make it this far 497 miles away from home. It was fun because we all acted like we were one on the bike. We stayed in a very tight line the whole entire time. We only had about 3 crashes the whole trip. And we did have a random team we had two fat kids a really tall dude a couple of skinny tall people a woman who was really good at biking and our medic didn't train at all but tried his best and definitely road over 200 miles without any training prior is insane he did that whole first days climb when we left and he threw up and so did I. this is my narrative story about the Grand canyon National Park bike trip from san diego.

MY HEALING STRUGGLE

By Deema

In the past when I was in Juvenile hall, I would always test my peers and teachers, sometimes past their limits. I would even pull the fire alarm for the fun of it. I also had some problems with my anger and I got into a lot of fights. There came a point when I knew, inside of me, that I needed to change.

That change came when I decided to come to S.P.A. At first I was unsure because I had heard that SPA was not a good place to live. However I took a chance because I felt that in order to make a change in my life I needed to live in a totally different environment. That decision lit a fire in me to do better and soon after I arrived I got a job. As time went on, I started to improve my grades and eventually got a 4.00 G.P.A. Looking back at my life I don't even recognize who I was as an individual before I came to S.P.A.

Now, I have a dream of going to college at U.C.L.A. Going to college is something that I have been looking forward to practically since birth. One day, even before I came to SPA, I was looking at colleges and when I saw U.C.L.A. That was when I saw a future for myself. The reason why I want to go to that specific college is because it has a lot of really good sports, it also has a good math program and the buildings looked really cool. I remember my jaw dropping when I saw all the pictures. I couldn't believe how big their campus was, it even looked bigger than Stone Mountain Park located outside of Atlanta. Now that I'm in high school, I'm trying to make this dream my main focus.

Sometimes, this goal has been really challenging for me. When I first got to S.P.A, things were good for a while. I had a 4.0 G.P.A, a job on campus and I was even chosen to be one of the 4 people to go to Lake Tahoe. Then things started to not go so well and I faced some difficulties. My grades started getting worse each day and it caused me a lot of stress and then I had to go to a mental hospital a couple of times. I've also had some problems in my house which caused me to get restriction. In addition, I can't get a job on campus anymore since I finished all of my hours which makes me upset because I enjoy working. Working allows me to take my mind off of a lot of stuff.

I feel like now I'm ready for a fresh start so I can get back to refocusing on my goals. Paying attention in class and working on my writing like I did last semester are things that I want to get back to doing. Hopefully when I get back on track, all the work I put into school will raise my grades and get me ready for college. If I overcome these challenges, and accomplish my goals, then I know I will graduate high school and hopefully make my dream come true of going to U.C.L.A collage.

MY BIGGEST REALIZATION

By Emely

I never thought such a normal day could turn into the biggest learning experience of my life. In August of 2021, my mom and I were involved in a serious situation at a very difficult point in my life. It didn't just change me—it changed my mom too. That experience forced me to see life in a completely different way, and it taught me to never take anything for granted. I once thought experiences like this were just things that sometimes happen in teenagers' lives, but this became the biggest realization I have ever had.

I remember that day like it was yesterday. My mom, her friend, and I were staying at a hotel because we didn't have anywhere else to go. It felt like a normal day. I was about to take a bath to relax, with my music playing, trying to escape everything for a moment. When I came out of the shower, I sat down and looked at myself in the mirror. Then my mom opened the curtains, and I noticed her lips were starting to turn purple. My heart dropped. I felt scared and confused. When I saw her begin to fall backward, I rushed to help her down to the floor.

That's when I noticed her friend had foam coming out of his mouth. I panicked, but I called 911. They told me what to do to help my mom while we waited for help to arrive. I was terrified that I was going to lose her. I called my grandma because I didn't know what else to do. She told me to call the police, so I did. They tried to calm me down and told me to put my hands together and start pushing down on my mom's chest until the ambulance arrived. Watching both of them overdose at the same time is something I will never forget.

My mom and her friend were taken to the hospital, and social workers came to talk to me. After speaking with the police, they put me in a cop car and took me to my stepdad's house. I stayed there for two weeks before social workers placed me at my tia's house, where I lived for two months until my mom got clean.

When I went back to live with her, things were okay at first—but then she relapsed. She started doing everything she had done before. One day, my mom and I got into a serious argument. She was yelling at me and dragging me like I was someone she was fighting, not her daughter. At that moment, I didn't feel like her child anymore. I had reached my breaking point. I yelled back because I was tired, hurt, and overwhelmed by everything I had been holding inside.

Crying and desperate for help, I called my social worker without really thinking everything through. The police came with her, and I was taken to Polinsky Children's Center. I stayed there for about two months. I was only turning 13, and I felt like I had nothing—like I was nothing. I was doing things no 13-year-old should ever have to experience. I kept AWOLing from placements, but when I finally came back, my social worker talked to me about a better opportunity called San Pasqual Academy. She told me that if I didn't AWOL for two weeks, I would be able to go there. I wanted something better for myself, so I tried.

I arrived at San Pasqual Academy when I was 13 and in 8th grade. At first, it made me grow up faster than I should have. I started hanging around bad influences and making worse choices. I was fighting people older than me, and everything felt chaotic. As I got older, around 10th grade, I finally started to put more effort into school. I realized the people I surrounded myself with were holding me back. I was skipping classes, smoking during school hours, and not caring about my future. I knew I had to stop.

I began cutting people off and focusing on my education and what I wanted for my life. It wasn't easy. I was behind in my classes and struggled to pass, but summer school changed everything. That's when I truly started focusing and taking responsibility for myself. When 11th grade came—my junior year—I was scared. I didn't know if I was going to make it, but I did everything I could.

There was one teacher that everyone complained about, but I didn't see him the same way. He taught me so much—not just schoolwork, but how to approach life and handle situations differently. He gave me structure when no one else really had, and that meant more to me than he probably knew.

Now, I'm passing all my classes. I have a job. I'm on track to graduate, and I have all the credits I need. San Pasqual Academy helped shape me into a better person in ways I never expected. Looking back at everything I've been through, I'm proud of how far I've come. I'm finally doing well, and for the first time in a long time, I feel hopeful about my future.

A HARD LANDING ON THE SOFT GRASS

By Janaye

The summer air was warm and dry the day Sadie and I decided to hang out. We didn't have phones at eight years old, so our moms' phones were our only line of communication to schedule playdates. We rolled up to the bus stop near my house in the late morning on our scooters—I remember mine was a hot pink one, its wheels already scuffed and scratched from riding over broken concrete. We started up conversation immediately; she was my best friend, after all.

"Guess what my mom told me this morning," I said with a bratty tone.

"What?" Sadie replied.

"When I get older and my dad dies, I'm gonna get his money." The statement was a bit crass but without malice, just a simple way to start the conversation. I remember her face looking confused with a little bit of shock as she followed up with more questions.

We didn't realize a teenage girl was standing outside a nearby apartment building. We didn't notice her at all, but she definitely noticed us. She was on her phone when she overheard something horrible. Distorted by the wind and distracted by her call, she thought she heard me say, "I hope my dad dies," Filled with confusion and anger for me, she watched as I walked with Sadie to the park. Our plan was simple: grab my cat from my apartment and take her along for the ride. We placed her in a Frozen-themed basket on the front of my scooter—she always enjoyed the breeze in her fur.

We arrived at the park, propped our scooters on a stone wall, and let the cat explore the grass. As she sniffed around, a large crowd, roughly fifteen to twenty people ranging from twelve to sixteen years old, walked through the park gate. We didn't know anyone in the crowd, but the girl who had previously eavesdropped on our conversation was among them, confidently leading the way.

I kept my focus on my cat, ignoring them until they were right in front of us. Izzy, the one leading the group, motioned for Sadie. My friend left my side to talk to the group. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but I had a bad feeling about it.

Sadie returned, and before I could ask any questions, she grabbed my cat and walked away from the group and me. Confused, a small knot of worry began to form in my stomach. The girl leading the group came up to me.

"Hi, what's your name?" she asked with a fake smile.

"Janaye," I replied, feeling confused.

"That's nice. Now come with me."

She clearly didn't care about my answer. It felt strange she hadn't introduced herself, but I ignored it. I stood up and looked back at Sadie; she was holding my cat, her face full of worry. I started to get nervous. As we walked, silence hung between us, broken only by our shoes on the rubber mulch. She led me to a grassy area near the playground. Her friends watched us the whole time standing at the edge of the grass, giggling to each other as if I were the punchline of a private joke. Izzy turns around swiftly as we reach the center of the grass, still with that fake, cocky smile. Her next words made my stomach drop:

"Hit me."

She said it flatly, totally unconcerned that I was only eight and had never experienced anything like this before. Pure panic set in as my heart started to race. "Im not going to hit you" I said, forcing a laugh to cover up the fear in my voice. She glanced at her friends with a silent look, a clear command to join her. I look over and see a boy around 12 or 13 come up to me and ask for my hand. I gave it to him, unknowing what was about to happen. As he takes my hand, he forces it to her face as he makes me hit her. As soon as my hand impacts her face she lunges at me. Pushing me to the ground and screaming at me, my pounding heart drowning out her voice.

As her fists raise, I cower into a ball with my arms over my head and knees to my chest trying to block her from hitting me. The scene turns into a blur as she pounds her fists on my head, until I hear two of her friends yelling at her to stop. They pulled her off of me and helped me up off the ground realizing I wasn't going to fight back. Tears streaming down my face from the aching pain in my head.

I watched her friends lead her away to the other side of the park. That's when the other two girls noticed me. "Are you okay?" one asked. They looked about her age, maybe slightly older. I shook my head, and they exchanged a concerned glance before offering, "Do you want us to walk you home?" I nodded. As we set off and I gave them directions, they realized just how close I lived to their friend, Izzy, the one that beat me up. It turned out I lived only an apartment complex over from her, a fact that earned another shared look of worry between them. They walked me to the base of my apartment stairs, offered a quick goodbye, and left. The moment I slammed the front door shut, the silence of the living room was shattered by my sobbing. My mom, dad, and grandma shot up from the couch in alarm. I spilled everything out in a rush: Sadie, what happened at the park, the older girl, and my cat. The realization hit me hard—my cat was still with Sadie, along with my scooter, back at the park. I started to sob more, overwhelmed by the thought of having abandoned my pet with my friend.

My mom calms me down and asks me for her name. "Izzy" I said while sniffing. She looks up her name and finds a facebook post of a police report with her charges. She had over 10 restraining orders and over 15 charges of battery. My mom was shocked by what she discovered. A moment later, a knock echoed through the house. My mom, putting ice packs on my head, opened the front door to find Sadie, my cat, and my scooter. I felt angry that she hadn't helped me or gotten an adult, so I stayed hidden behind the door. After reclaiming my cat and scooter, my mom held me close, her tight hug a silent promise of the protection she would provide from that day forward.

Time changes how you see things. Now, when I look back, I understand that the other girl was likely battling her own demons—the kind of trauma that makes a person act out. My fear and anger have faded into a quiet pity for her situation. I don't know what happened to her after that day, but I truly hope she found peace, figured out her purpose, and was finally able to experience some real happiness.

UNTITLED

By Josh Y.

One day around 5:30 the power went out in the house and I didn't notice it because it was still daytime. I later found the power was out because I tried to turn on the lights. Then I tried to turn on a few more lights and realized the power was out along the whole house.

I tried to go tell my dad that the power was out but he stopped me before I could finish.

He told me " I already know about it"

Then he went to the store to buy some candles. He was gone for about 30 minutes before returning home with candles.

After returning from the store my dad went to my mom and informed her that the power was off.

"Oh ok that means I have to use the neighbor's stove".

Then I went to this room called the playroom and stayed in there playing with toys. A couple hours later the sun starts to set and my dad pulls out the candles and me and my siblings help my dad and we finish in under 10 minutes. The candles are all set up and my parents start to light all the candles. A couple hours passed and it was nearing 9:00p.m. and my dad started to feel sick and my mom had to go to our neighbors house. My mom goes to our neighbor's house to use their stove and leaves me and my siblings with our sick dad. And a few minutes passed and it started to get cold and I got up to walk around to try and warm myself. I ended up going to this room that we called the play room because there were always toys on the floor and our parents never cared if it was clean or not, so I ended up going to the playroom and playing for a couple of minutes and after about two minutes i started to get cold. The thing about the room was, it was the only room with one candle and it caught my attention. After looking at the candle I figured it could warm me up, so I went over to the candle without thinking twice and put my shirt over the fire. And soon enough my shirt started to burn.

After standing there for about 5 seconds I started to smell smoke and when I looked down my shirt was on fire. My shirt started to burn and it quickly spread across my stomach and my first instinct was to stop drop and roll. I tried to do so and it didn't work so I started screaming for help until one of my siblings came in. My older brother came into the room and immediately ran out to get some water and I ran out after him out of fear while still screaming. After running out to the living room my siblings see my shirt on fire and at this point it's burning my skin and I begin to cry. I begin to cry and I try to pull off the shirt myself but I can't because it's too hot. While trying to pull it off my sick dad comes running out his room and rips my shirt off me and begins to stomp on it and at that same moment my older brother comes in with a bucket of water but by that time it was too late.

After my dad ripped off my shirt and put out the fire he turned and yelled at me for playing with the fire.

He then told me to go lay down because I was in trouble but he made sure I was okay before going to my room. My sister then walked me to my room and brought a cold rag to put over my stomach because I had a burn injury from the fire. I then lay down and wait for my mom to come back with the food but I end up dozing off.

A couple minutes passed and my mom returned with the food and brought me the food. I eat my food in bed because it hurts to move, I eventually finish my food and go back to sleep for the rest of the night.

UNTITLED

By Justice

I still remember when I used to live in Supulpa, Oklahoma. I was living with my biological father at the time and one day i got super sick. Despite being sick I still was sent out to till a whole lot of dirt. Tilling dirt was never fun for me and i knew that my father knew that I had a hatred for working outside in a garden, still he made me continue this work for months.

“I don’t like it anymore than you do Justice” he’d say, which never made sense to me. After a while of working one night, it got really late and it started to rain a bunch. This didn’t help my sickness and I think my father realized this.”Come inside Justice let me talk to you.” I went inside silently wishing it wasn’t anything bad. “Come out to the front porch with me for a second.” I followed him wondering what this is all about.

My father opens the front door and I’m presented with a scenery that i don’t think ill get again. It’s pouring rain at this point. The way the street lights reflected off the glossy roads and how the rain water flowed down the street so smoothly. The rain and the lights made the area seem like the whole neighborhood was illuminated.

“You know if you’re not feeling well it’s alright to curse right.” He continued that sentence with him screaming at the top of his lungs, “Fuck this shit!” He turned to me saying “Go on man its okay.” “Just give it a try.” It got pretty quiet for a couple of seconds after that but I couldn’t help feeling tempted to curse as well. I finally looked up at him and told him “No, that’s not who I am.” Some days when I’m cursing alot i come to find myself back at this memory. Everytime i always end up thinking, what happened to the kid I used to be? Now I know im more like him then i’d like to be.

TROUBLES WITH MOM

By Kenneth

After a Doctor’s visit, I feel numb and exhausted in my mother’s car, laying down, stomach facing up. They finally removed my left aching tooth. It bothered me for a whole month (or what felt like one). As I lay, I realize that there’s nothing covering the recently opened wound, that possibly is causing more pain to my tooth area.

“Hey ma’, do you think you can take me back to the same doctor I just saw? They didn’t give me a filling to cover it from getting filled with bacteria” I say, still aching from the pain.

She then explodes at me, saying “I am NOT taking you to him again, do you know how much that costs!?” she exclaimed, throwing her hands up while on the wheel to emphasize how pissed off she was at me.

At that moment I had no idea where all this anger came from, although she’s always been like this, it still surprised me.

She then barked “You told them you were American didn’t you!? You did!” she exclaimed, having no proof of it, yet still pointing the problem towards me like always.

This was not the first time she’s done this, as she’s made it clear I was never the favorite, often making it obvious how she puts all the blame onto me instead of my sister’s obvious mistakes.

At this point I had enough, I knew she would never stop putting the blame on me for anything, so I just spoke my unfiltered mind.

I lash out, clearly frustrated at her pointless finger-pointing, and dropping an accusation as heavy as “me purposefully making her spend more money than she needed to”. I was aware of our money situation, but that’s absolutely no excuse to put the blame on your son.

I respond, saying “What’re you talking about? Do you seriously think I’d do such a thing? Even if I did, so what? It’s not like I’m ashamed of being an American or anything like that.”

“It’s not like I was able to choose whether or not I’m born American or not...” I add, whispering.

After I said this, she was done, like most times our ride home was silent and the noise of the car moving with the dirt and rocks makes it deafening and unbearable.

“If you don’t like it, then just go to the US, I bet you’ll have a way better time there.” She says, knowing damn well I wouldn’t do such a thing.

They’ve always kept me as a house pet, taking me places when they want to and how they want to, and if I got lucky, I’d be able to actually choose where we’re going.

I was tired of it all. No freedom to choose, alongside my “family”, was awful.

“Y’know what? Sure.” I say, looking out the car’s window

As I say so, my sister, Joanna, looks back at me puzzled, knowing well that I didn’t want to do it. Although, I was semi close to her, she never truly treated me well, often ditching me for her friends and spout nasty rumors about me to make herself look better, and I understand what she’s trying to do, get some friends and people to hang out with, but those kinds of friends are never a good thing in your life.

As we head home and the garage door opens, I rush towards my room, grabbing my green messenger bag, my wallet, my CDs, my CD player, and lastly my citizen card. Although I picked up my wallet, I didn’t have any money on me. Now that I look back on it, that was stupid.

As I pick up the stuff that matters most to me, I head downstairs and see both my mom and sister sitting in the car, both with a blank stare, ready for whatever will happen with me.

As I hop in the car in the backseat once again, I can’t help but ask myself what I’ll do over in the United States. Sure, I’m a citizen, but I’m as much of a citizen as a tourist is.

After some time, we eventually got there. I hop out to see myself completely alone right outside the border line, stranded, somewhere, I recognize, but I feel lost.

Luckily for me there wasn’t much of a line, therefore I got through the border easily.

Once I got in US territory, I just let an officer know I was a homeless minor, since I’ve already been through this around 4 times.

It was around 2 PM when I got picked up by an officer and once I was actually placed in Polinski’s Children Centre was around 1-2 AM.

As I got there and signed my papers, I immediately went to my room and passed out from how late it was. I had had enough.

PERFORMING MONKEY ON COMMAND

By Kenneth

Ever since I can recall, I’ve been a part of choirs, singing in churches Mondays and Fridays, through this, I found my love and appreciation for classical music. Eventually, I got recognized for my talent and started attending singing class, constantly giving my all on every session. After every session, I felt exhausted, having my voice completely strained and given out, and my parents recognizing my impressive high and low range, emphasizing and insisting on me continuing to improve and singing my heart out. I’d say I was in that class for 2 full years, constantly giving it my all every Monday and Fridays. And causing irreversible damage to my vocal chords. At one point I was completely fed up, screaming at the top of my broken down vocal chords about how I was absolutely done with constantly losing my voice. In a fit of rage,

THE DAY I STOPPED LAUGHING IT OFF

By Keyantae

I used to laugh everything off, no matter what people said. If someone made a joke about me, I’d chuckle like it didn’t bother me, even when it stung like a paper cut you didn’t notice till later. If I messed up in class, I’d crack a joke before anyone else could,trying to control the moment like a referee blowing the whistle before the play got messy. Humor was my shield, the armor I wore so nobody could see the dents underneath. I worked most of the time, because people thought I was confident and unbothered,like a wall that couldn’t be cracked. But the truth was< I used humor to hide my stress, my tiredness, and sometimes even my insecurities. I thought If I laughed, nobody would notice how much I carried on my shoulders like a backpack full of bricks. One day, though, that shield cracked, and I realized that laughing it off wasn’t a strength, it was just a mask.

It was a regular tuesday, nothing special, the kind of day you don’t expect to remember. The sky outside was gray , and i felt the sky was gray, and I felt the same way-heavy, like clouds about to burst. I was walking into third period, hoodie up, earbuds in, trying to stay lowkey and invisible, like a shadow sliding across the floor. As I slid into my desk, I heard someone behind me say “bro looks mad” like hes about to fight somebody”. The words hit me like a slap, sharp and unexpected. I turned around quickly, trying to play it off. “Im chill” I said, forcing a smile even though it felt like stretching a mask across my face. “Nah you just got that look like your always ready to throw hands,” the kid replied, laughing. A few others joined in, their voices echoed through the classroom like a chorus of mocking birds, I laughed too, like I always did but this time it felt hollow, like an empty room with no echo.

The truth was, I wasn’t mad at all, and I wasn’t even thinking about fighting anyone. I was just tired, tired from trying to to keep my grades up, tired of balancing school and other responsibilities outside of it. I was

tired of pretending I didn’t care when people misunderstood me. As class went on, I couldn’t focus on the lesson because my mind kept replaying that moment over and over. Why did I feel like I had to laugh it off every single time someone labeled me? Why did they see me like that? I started to wonder if I had been hiding behind humor for so long that people didn’t know the real me anymore. That thought sat heavy in my chest, I realized I couldn’t keep ignoring it.

Later that day I sat alone at lunch. Not because I don’t have people to sit with, but because I needed space to think. I pulled my phone out and opened Notes, staring at a blank screen for a minute. Then I typed I’m not angry. I’m just tired. I’m not dangerous, I’m just quiet, not cold. I just think a lot , typing those words felt like a release, like i was finally saying the things I couldn’t say out loud, that moment taught me something powerful: people will label you based off of what they see, but you don’t have to accept it, you don’t have to laugh it off every time, you can speak up, you can explain yourself, and you can show them who you really are.That realization gave me a sense of control I hadn’t felt in a long time.

Since then I’ve been more honest with myself and others. If something bothers me, I say it instead of pretending I’m fine. I still joke around , but now it’s not a mask - it’s me being myself. If I’m tired, I own it instead of pretending I’m fine . That Tuesday showed me that hiding behind humor wasn’t strength, being real was. Even though it was a simple moment in class, it gave me a deeper understanding of myself and how I want to live. I learned that I don’t have to laugh off who I am- I just have to live with it openly. That lesson sticks with me every day. Reminding me that authenticity is more powerful than pretending. and even though people may still misunderstand me, sometimes I know I don’t have to let the labels define me.



Yin — San Pasqual Academy

UNTITLED

By Marlene

After school my mom picked me up from Wilson Middle School. I have a best friend named Eli, and we both had boyfriends, and we planned on hanging out that night or even having a sleepover.

“Mom if you love me you will please let me go to Eli’s house tonight?”

“you better behave. I am going to let you sleep over but don’t do anything stupid. You make sure you are calling me every hour and don’t make any bad decisions.”

Yayyyy! I am texting my bestie on Instagram to get ready because we are going out tonight. We are talking about how our night should go. I am a little nervous because I barely go out like that or have sleepovers, or even sneak out to see my boyfriend.

My mom ends up dropping me off in the back of Eli’s apartments.

“Have a good time I love you”

“Bye momm i will”

I get out of the car, It’s about 5:00 pm. I call my bestie and tell her to open the back gate door in the alley. She comes and opens the back gate door, we hug and we go inside her house. Then we go to the back of her house where her room is. My bestie has the nicest room, her glass vanity lets you look inside and see all her expensive makeup. Her room reminds me of a shopping center with all her things decorated.

We start getting ready. She is doing her in her bathroom, im sitting on her vanity getting my makeup on. My bestie helps me straighten my hair down and oil it up so my hair looks silky. I called my boyfriend to see if he is ready to link up. It is now 8:00 and my bestie is already ready.

“Lets go bestie we got to head out now because it’s getting late my boyfriend is not answering is yours?”

“Yeah let’s go, my boyfriend is going to meet up with us while we are walking to your boyfriend’s house.”

My boyfriend lives a little further down the blocks, my bestie’s boyfriend lives really close. We start heading out of her apartments toward Terelta Park. It’s dark out by now, there’s a little people at the park hanging out in the dark. We walk towards the back streets where there’s houses, we are both on our phones. While we are walking here comes a tall boy walking towards us, he hugs my best friend he kind of startles her.

I’m in front of them walking and they are behind me. We are on the way to my boyfriend’s house now, he still is not answering my phone. All of a sudden a car pulls up behind us. They have at least four dudes in the car.

“Where are you from homie?”

One of the dudes hopped out of the car.

“Im from CLS” my bestie Man said.

My bestie and I had a bad feeling. She left his side to come stand next to me.

“Fuck 37th STREET HOMIE ITS JRS GANG”

A gun shot fired, then at least three shots fired. It all happened so fast. My bestie and I ducked so quickly behind a car. Her dumbass boyfriend took off running, he was okay because the person who shot missed. The car drove off me and my best friend started panicking. We quickly ran to where we could hide, it was a car in a drive way. I remember sitting on the side that was more open because I didn’t want to put my bestie through that again. We started praying to God to protect us from anybody that crosses us.

We sat there for at least 20 minutes scared to get up. We finally got the courage to get up so we walked towards the main streets. That’s where it gets really busy, we knew nobody would pull out a gun and shoot it there. We decided we were hungry and went to a Taco shop her mom works at, she always gives us free carne asada fries. We got them and walked back to her house scared, and paranoid.

“Bestie never again. They can come to us next time.”

“Yeah bestie your right we should’ve stayed home.”

We got in her house safe and sound, my mom was blowing my phone up. I answer the phone but I play it off like I’ve been doing my makeup having fun. I should’ve stayed home with my bestie and never went out.

UNTITLED

By Nariyah

My puppy dying was the most tragic moment of my life! The whole situation was very depressing. It was one of the saddest moments of my life. This was a hard loss I had experienced.

This loss that I had to experience started when I was in the Tijuana border line sitting inside my car, returning home from visiting a family member. In the car were my siblings and I. I remember looking out the window at all the vendors trying to sell their products. Before I knew it a man approached me with several puppies inside of a bucket. There were 4 puppies. They were very dirty, infested with fleas, and they had tiny scares on their face. Our windows were already rolled down and that’s when he began to ask me to purchase a puppy. I was in awe of the puppies he had in front of me. I said yes, because I felt really really bad for all the puppies. They were staring at me with the most innocent cutest eyes ever. I felt I had no other option but to try and save one of the little puppy’s lives. I was only thinking about the possibilities of the danger the puppy might be in considering the condition the puppy was in.

I had to choose between the four puppies and it was a very hard decision. They were all looking at me with the desperate face of them being in need of a savior. I chose the puppy I chose because he looked the healthiest, Every other puppy looked more ill. This was a sign to not purchase a puppy but the man convinced me to buy the puppy by telling me lies and showing me false paperwork showing that the puppy was healthy which I later found out he was not. The man was selling the puppy for 1,000 pesos and I bought it for 40 us dollars.

Finally, it was time to care for my puppy I had just purchased and I tried the best I could. The fourth day he was with me he suddenly got sick and was not able to consume any food. We realized my puppy had to be taken to the vet. My puppy was taken to the vet and diagnosed with parvo and he was sadly not able to live a beautiful life. I tried to save him as best I could and I learned to prevent myself from getting in my emotions that would later traumatize me even if I expect the outcome to be great. The man who sold me the puppy was very cruel and knew the disease the puppy had yet he did not care.

After such a sad traumatic experience I have no desire to ever purchase a puppy from the tijuana border ever again.

MY FIRST DAY IN AMERICA

By Neika

I still remember the day I landed in America, the world felt like it had been turned upside down. After a perpetual plane ride that lasted more hours than could count, the doors finally opened. I stepped off the plane and into a place that was completely alien, filled with a fresh smell in the air and a level of noise I had never heard before.

As I walked through the terminal, I felt like a lost baby, far away from its pack. I looked up at the growing signs, but they were all mysteries to me because I did not know a single word of English. The voice of thousands of strangers sounded like a “buzzing colony” around my ears, and I realized for the first time how lonely. It felt like a living sculpture that could not talk. Eventually, the stress of the trip caught up with me and I desperately needed to find a bathroom. I scanned the walls, hoping for a picture or symbol I couldn’t recognize, but all I saw were letters that made no sense to me in my eyes.

Out of desperation, I chose a door and pushed it open. I didn’t think twice. I just wanted to find a moment of peace. I walked inside, unaware that the sign on the doors was for the boys bathroom. I was so focused on my own stress that I was too late.

As soon as the door swung shut behind me, the room went quiet. I looked up and I saw several guys standing there. They all stopped what they were doing and stared at me with wide, shocked eyes. Time seemed to stop as I realized I was in the completely wrong place.

My heart began thundering in my ears like a drum. I felt like a wave of the heat that rushed to my face and my skin, it felt like it was on fire. I wasn’t just embarrassed, I was mad. I was frustrated at the world for being so confusing and at myself for not being able to read a simple sign.

I didn’t wait for anyone to speak. I turned around and rushed back out into the hallways as fast as I could. My pulse was racing, and I felt like I wanted to disappear into the floor. I scanned the crowd until I finally saw my mom standing by our luggage.

I ran to her, my face still bright red.

When I told her what happened, she didn’t get angry.

Instead, she pointed toward the door with the correct sign and said softly “you have to go in that one”. Her kind eyes and calm voice were the first things that made me feel like I might actually survive this day.

After gathering our heavy bags, we walked out of the airport and into the bright afternoon sun we hailed a bright yellow taxi and climbed inside. As the car sped away, I watched the massive building and wide American streets flash by the window, feeling like I was finally moving toward my future.

Sitting in that taxi, I realized that my first day in America was a spectacular failure, but it was also a beginning. I learned that I was brave enough to cross an ocean even if I still had to learn how to read the signs. I knew then that I would eventually find my way in this whole new world.

PANCHO GETTING OUT ON A LEASH

By Marlene

On the weekends, I go to my mom’s for a family pass. I have 2 dogs Pancho and Bully, Pancho is the big dog and Bully is small.

I love going on walks with my puppies because I know they enjoy getting out of my mom’s backyard. The dogs are always locked up in the backyard.

I am at my mom’s house, the thing about her is she doesn’t really like going on walks.

“Mom, can we please go on a walk tonight when Marcos gets off of work at 10:00 pm.”

“Marcos gets off of work at 10:00 pm, he doesn’t get home until 10:30 pm. It’s up to him if he wants to go out.” When she said that I already knew she didn’t really want to go.

On the days she does feel like going on a walk she says “Let’s do it, I will convince him to go on a walk tonight! Make sure you are ready, you know how he is.”

When she says that I get excited and I am already planning on it.

My brother gets home from work at 10:30 pm, he’s mad that we are going on a walk. He goes into his room to get settled, when he comes out he’s ready. Me and my Mom get the dogs leashes on.

My puppy Pancho gets overly excited when he gets his harness on. He starts running back and forth and doing crazy things out of excitement. When Pancho is like that it stresses my mom out, so then she wants all of us out the house to go on the walk. My brother is the one who walks Pancho because Pancho is always aggressively speed walking. If he had the option to, he would run away and run fast and not look back.

“Let’s go mom ! Let’s go on this adventure.”

We are walking out the house, Marcos got Pancho and I got Bully. We are walking down the streets on our way to the trails, Pancho is smelling everything. We are walking and all of a sudden Pancho starts moving weirdly. Now he is barking at something, It’s a CAT! He wanted to tear that little thing up, he was trying so

hard to get to it. Pancho got out his freaking leash, collar, harness all while trying to get the cat. I screamed, I jumped on pancho before he could even get to it. In the process of me stopping him, I accidentally stepped on Bully’s foot. He let out a little cry and I started feeling bad while holding pancho down. I am pretty sure my mom got there in time to get bully’s leash and make sure he wasn’t in the way.

Pancho is strong, when i was trying to hold him down he kept trying to charge up. And just to put his harness back on him is hard because he is always moving around. The cat was just standing there playing in Pancho’s face trying to antagonize him. Pancho’s focus was on trying to get that cat.

“Put his legs up and put his harness on the right way, come on now!” My mom yelled at me and my brother.

“Okay mom I dont want to lose him I love him” I say while I am holding him down.

It was a struggle but we got it done, I had to put his harness, collar, and leash back on with a little help from my brother. After it was going down my mom scared that cat away and he ran off. Pancho was ready to go back on a walk because he barely got out of the house.

As long as Pancho can go on his walk we are all good and as long as he is with us and not lost on the streets I am good.

QUINN’S PERSONAL NARRATIVE

By Quinn

I was living with my Mom and Grandma. It was nice but I would get really bored. We lived in a two story apartment with 2 bedrooms and 1 bathroom in San Diego. We would go on the bus and pass by this penguin that stood in the front of the store with a big red and yellow sign with big white letters and he had a big yellow nose. Sometimes we would go walking past him to the Burger King down the street that me and my Mom and my Grandma would go too. I remember whenever I hugged him he was soft and made me feel so safe and warm. I remember feeling his hands through the mascot. Me and my Mom and Grandma would have a lot of adventures. It was just us versus the world.

At home it was boring, there wasn’t much to do and very little furniture. My Mom would let me ride my bike in the kitchen and living room to pass time. Me and my Mom sometimes my Grandma would go to the park right next to our apartment. I remember I would sneak out and go to the park. Now that I’m older I think to myself: “thank God nothing happened”. I was always feeling very bored at home, and needing to feel excitement. I would go to the park at night and would swing on the swing, this would make me feel peaceful; ever since I was a kid I always enjoyed my peace. The cold breeze on my face would bring comfort to my mind. As I mentioned before I was always very bored...

One regular afternoon, I remember being 4 or 5.. When I felt this, I would be very impulsive. So what happened next is dumb and outrageous ,

I was in the living room playing, suddenly I got the urge to put a blanket on the ground next to the TV

stand, then I ran into the kitchen, and I put a blanket on my head DUMBASS!. I ran from the kitchen towards the living room.I went to the blanket and slid Smack!! I hit my arm on the wall. I screamed so loudly the whole apartment probably heard me. I felt so much pain in such a split second, my Mom came running over with something in her hand then she saw me and threw it out of her hand in another direction and ran over to me. My Mom and Grandma rushed me to the hospital. I don’t remember what happened at the hospital a lot but I broke my arm and had a hot pink cast that my Mom and Grandma signed with love.

That day something woke up in me, I learned to be more careful because not everything I want to do is safe. I need to work on controlling myself with my energy because something really bad could of happened thank you Lord I was Safe.

I am really thankful for my Mom and Grandma. They do anything to keep me safe. My Mom and Grandma kept me busy and bought me some shaving cream with a table. They put it in the spot where I broke my arm so I wouldn’t get hurt right there again. I made drawings sometimes we would all draw with the shaving cream or play with my toys and barbies and eat and watch movies :)

MY REALIZATION THAT I NEED TO DO BETTER FOR ME

By Stephanie

The past three years have been hectic for me, going missing every chance I got, becoming homeless for years, getting locked up for four months, relapsing bad again for months, losing my homegirl this year whom I went through everything with.

Yet for some reason I ended up here in school in a program doing better for myself. It all started three years ago. I was hanging around downtown San Diego meeting people and moving around, becoming homeless and addicted to drugs. I used to think that everything would play out in my favor even when I was walking down the wrong path on my own doing the things that would surely get me locked back up. Yet one day at random i woke up wanting different for myself, I wanted my situation to change for the better and what i realized is things are always going to be fifty fifty what i mean by that is even if life plays out one way that’s only fifty percent of the effort because i could take the other fifty and change the whole outlook and base of my Life because yea lifes gonna go the way it’s going to but you also have the choice to change Half. This was a hard truth i had to accept because my life’s gone one way the whole time, but in reality: I made choices that also led me there. Therefore, I learned that not everything that happens in my life isn’t always my fault but in the end the decisions i make to lead me there are my fault, the things i decide to do after effects me and where im at also to where im going.In the end, i chose to do better because i deserve better and my actions effect everything i want to do in the future for myself. Those are the things I dont wanna ruin because one action that last a few minutes can effect years of my life ruining my wants for the future.

TALENT SHOW

By Anonymous

When I was little, I always dreamed of doing the Talent show. When I was in the fourth grade, I had run out of energy, but I had nothing prepared. I thought to myself, “This is not going to go well.” I walked out and got stage fright instantaneously, and as I thought, I didn’t get in. I was so embarrassed that I didn’t even think to do it again next year, when I was in the fifth grade. In the sixth grade, I had a change of heart. I thought “It’s been about two years, it’s time to try again, but this time I won’t do it alone.” As soon as the flyers for the talent show started coming out, I decided to do it again. I waited until people around school started to talk about the talent show and see who I wanted to do it with.

Two weeks from the talent show rolled around, and that’s when people were trying to get their groups together. I wanted to make sure the people I’m going to pick to do the talent show with are determined and motivated, not a distraction. Practices were being held in the Gym, where I found a group that seemed dedicated to what they were doing; they were good at it, too. I introduced myself and asked if I could join them, “Hey, I saw you guys practicing and y’all are really good,and if y’all don’t mind, can I join?” She said, “Of course, you look like you got some pep and skill to you, we’d love to have you” and then smiled, so I joined. We all just clicked, and before we knew it, we were practicing every day.

As days passed, we prepared and planned positions, hand and foot placement, dance moves, and timing on everything. Everything had to be spot on to ace these auditions, and everyone was working really hard. As we practiced, we made sure to have everything on point, from the coordination of clothes to stopping right when the music stopped. Auditions were two days away, and we finally had everything down, close dance moves and positions. Now everything was finished, and it was the day of auditions we were ready.

Now it was time for auditions, we hoped and prayed for all of our hard work to pay off as we stood in front of the judges, who were just teachers, our song started to play. Everything was going great until one of us had forgotten the finishing part, in my head I was freaking out with anxiety and a little bit of embarrassment. The accident may have caused us a whole talent show, but we put a positive mindset on and prayed. All other participants took their turn, and we waited in agony as peering eyes glanced at from the other side of the gym. Everyone was done now. They were calling groups that are moving forward in the talent show as we saw how many groups go up. We started to worry. but when we thought all hope was lost, we heard “group 3 is moving forward to the talent show.” We were so excited.

It was time for the talent show 6 PM Thursday and we were up next and I could just feel my hand sweating and I could hear my heart beating even feel my face getting hot as they called our names I looked out to the crowd every seat filled clapping for us to go on stage we walked out the lights blinding me. I thought to myself I can and will do this if it felt good like I could do anything. When the performance ended, everyone clapped and cheered and it was everything that had changed about the fourth grade. Looking back on it now, if I’ve surrounded myself in a good environment with good people and put in the work, I can achieve anything.



Ahmirra — Self Love Album Cover Project: amor de mi vida

EAST/SOUTH/37ECB REGION

GETTING MY FIRST JOB

By Aaron O.

I still remember the time when I applied for my first job at a Jack-in-the-Box near my house. It was convenient that it was within 5 miles. I was excited when I arrived at the destination of my future job. When I entered the fast food restaurant the atmosphere was tense because I was anxious to find out if they were hiring.

First, I went in person to see if they were hiring at the establishment and the first thing I saw was a line full of people. The smell of fries, burgers, chicken, and seasonings had me intrigued. I waited in what seemed to be a never-ending line and when I got to the counter, I asked if the restaurant was hiring. I was told to apply online through my cellular device.

Next, I went home and applied on the Jack-in-the-Box app. I uploaded my resume and entered all the required information. Within two hours I received a text to download the employment app and schedule my interview. I selected the first available interview which was over a week away.

I will never forget the day of my interview. I entered the restaurant, I waited in a shorter line, and when I got to the counter, I asked to see the manager for my interview. The manager came out, he directed me to sit at one of the tables with him. One of the first things he asked me was why I wanted the job. I explained that I had a lot of work experience and was motivated to work.

Finally, at the end of my interview, I was offered the job. I rushed to get my work permit signed and my training started after my paperwork was processed. I will never forget my first day on my job. It was stressful because the restaurant was packed with a line of never ending people and the good smells of cooking food started to give me a headache. I knew this would not be a forever job for me, but it was a good start.

UNTITLED

By Angel Q.C.

It was one of those hot mountain days where the air feels thick and the sun burns down without a single cloud in the sky. The road ahead stretched straight for miles, sloping uphill with tall, old trees on both sides, their leaves barely moving in the heat. I could feel the vibration of my KTM 350 rumbling under me, the sound echoing through the trees. My friend Caden rode next to me on his Kawasaki 450, his engine roaring louder than mine, both of us flying down the mountain road like we owned it.

The ride had been smooth—perfect, even. I was wheeling down the street, wind hitting my face, my heart racing. I didn’t have any gear besides a helmet and just a T-shirt and jeans, but at that moment, I felt unstoppable. The road was ours. I remember glancing at Caden as we rode side by side; we both had that look of pure adrenaline on our faces, grinning from ear to ear.

Then everything changed in a split second.

I had just turned off the traction control to feel the full power of the bike before going down the straight stretch. I twisted the throttle, and the bike leapt forward, roaring louder than ever. But suddenly, it didn’t feel right—the back tire started sliding, like I was riding on ice. Before I could even react, the rear wheel slipped out from under me. I felt the pavement rush up, and the world flipped upside down.

I hit the ground hard. The sound of metal scraping the road rang in my ears as the bike slid past me. My arms burned from the asphalt, and I could taste dirt and oil in the air. When I finally stopped sliding, I just sat there, staring at the bike lying on its side. Oil leaked from the bottom, dripping onto the hot pavement. That’s when I realized what had happened—the oil catcher under the engine had been releasing excess oil from the last change, and it leaked right onto the rear tire.

Caden ran over, his helmet still on, shouting, “Bro, are you okay?” I nodded, but inside I felt sick. My brother had just spent ten thousand dollars on that bike, and now it was scratched up badly.

After getting up and picking up the bike I brushed off every single feeling I had and made sure the bike rode the same and i wheelhied it back home as nothing even happened and I finally got home, I couldn’t even walk straight body aching and bad road rash on my chest to the point where my rib bone was poking out, I couldn’t even look at my brother. I felt embarrassed, guilty, and like a total failure. It wasn’t just about wrecking the bike, it was about letting him down. That ride started as one of the best days of my life, but it ended as a lesson I'll never forget sometimes, the line between freedom and foolishness is just one wrong move on the throttle.

CHILDHOOD STORIES

By Lea A.

I still remember a time back in elementary school when kids would make up all types of stories. Some would lie about going to crazy places or would try to make up stories to make them seem like they were cool. These stories were wild and looking back I can not believe that I would make up or believe any of these stories. There was one story in particular that made many kids in my class scared. All the kids in my class would talk about this story incessantly and would continue to add more stuff to make the story scarier.

For example, I remember when I was hanging out with my friend during recess and I noticed some of my other friends going into the “big kid” playground. I was in second grade, so none of us were allowed on that playground because it was only meant for the kids who were in 5th grade or above. I wanted to check out what my other friends were doing over there, so I started heading to the “big kid” playground while none of the adult helpers were looking. I was worried and scared about getting caught by the helpers.

When I joined my other friends, I was afraid we would get caught by the helpers. My friends started telling me about the story everyone in my class was talking about. It was about a car that had been parked outside the school and hadn't moved from its spot for weeks. They said crazy stuff like the owner of the car died in it or that it was a car that kidnapped little kids. Terrified, I started looking at the car they were talking about, to make sure I remembered which car I should stay away from.

While I was looking at the car, I saw a flash, the ones you see when someone is taking a picture of you with the flash on. I felt scared, terrified, how could someone take a picture of me when no one was in the car. I checked the car twice making sure there was no one inside. I was scared after hearing all these stories, but I started to think maybe the flash was something that reflected the sun and made it look like someone taking a picture. After getting so scared, I tried not to believe the crazy stories I heard from my friends anymore.

CONSEQUENCES

By Laila N.

I am a freshman, and I think I know who I am. I am trying to fit in, trying to be tough, and trying not to look scared. I make a choice that changes everything. I got involved in something at school with some friends which I shouldn't have done in the first place. I didn't think about the consequences.

The day I got caught feels unreal. A security guard from the school pulls me out of class, and my heart starts racing. I hear serious words, and suddenly I am not just a student anymore, I am a problem. By the end of the day, I am arrested and expelled. Just like that, my normal life is gone.

At home, the silence was heavy, I felt ashamed, angry, and scared all at once. I watch my friends keep on going to school while I stay behind, dealing with the mess that I got into. I realize how one bad decision can erase years of trust. This experience stays with me because it forces me to grow up fast. I learn

that choices matter, even when no one is watching. Getting expelled and arrested was a turning point in my life. It doesn't define me forever, but it changes how I think, act, and choose who I want to become.

I AM

By Anonymous

I am kind and calm

I wonder what lessons I want other people to take from my story

I hear silence, and it scares me more than noise

I see locked doors closing in front of me

I want a second chance to do better

I am the one who sees locked doors closing in front of me

I pretend I am okay when I'm really not

I feel fear about the future I can't see yet

I touch cold air that feels heavy around me

I worry disappointing the people who believe in me

I cry about the mistakes I can't take back

I am the one who sees locked doors closing in front of me

I understand that one mistake does not define my whole life

I say that people can change if they truly try

I dream about proving myself and starting over

I try to make better choices every day

I hope for forgiveness, growth, and a new path forward

I am the one who sees locked doors closing in from of me

I AM

By Anonymous

I am fearless and adventurous

I wonder how fast freedom really feels

I hear the roar of the engine echo through the mountains

I see the road stretching like fire under the sun

I want to master every ride without fear

I am fearless and adventurous

I pretend I'm invincible when I twist the throttle

I feel the wind burning against my arms like sparks

I touch the heat rising off the pavement beneath me

I worry that one small mistake could cost me everything

I cry when I think about letting my brother down

I am fearless and adventurous

I understand that even strength can't stop mistakes
I say every fall teaches something new
I dream of speeding through open roads without limits
I try to stay steady no matter how rough it gets
I hope to ride again and prove I've learned from the fall

I am fearless and adventurous

SOCCER

By Isacc P.

I still remember the time when I started to play soccer. Back then I only played basketball because I had access to a gym. However, the gym needed to be painted so they closed it for many months. Since I could not play basketball, I got very bored. Then something caught my attention. A soccer ball sitting in the middle of a turf field. Seeing the ball reminded me that I used to play soccer when I was younger. So, I made up my mind to start playing again, there were no other options.

I decided to run over to the soccer ball and kick it to get the feel for it again, then goal!! I was amazed at what I could still do. This motivated me to gather my friends to play soccer. I said, "Are you guys down?" At first they were not really interested, but after a while they soon realized that the gym wasn't gonna open anytime soon. Finally they agreed and started to play with me.

As we played, my skills returned and I started to get better. My friends noticed and started to compete with me so they got better too. We played at breakfast before school started. We played at snack time for 20 minutes and we played at lunch for 40 minutes. Sometimes, we even played after school. We got so good that people enjoyed watching us play.

After about a month, I tried to play basketball again, but poof airball! I missed and I was so disappointed and mad that day. I realized that I was better at soccer so I said to myself "I am never touching a basketball ever again!" and began to solely focus on soccer. I tried out for my school team and easily made it. This began my youth soccer career. I was usually a striker or a wing man. I scored many goals in tournaments and helped my team to win.

I will never forget the day I convinced my friends to play soccer. I demonstrated leadership skills that brought people together and I was selected as team captain. If the basketball court had never closed, I might not have realized how much I enjoy soccer. I am happy that they closed the basketball court now, even though at the time I was upset. I learned that bad things can become positive if you make an effort.

MY TRIP TO NAYARIT

By Jordan O.

I still remember the first time I went to Nayarit. We were going to visit my Dad's family, some who I had never met. I was excited to visit and swim in the lakes and at the beaches. First, we packed our bags to go to our flight. I packed a lot of shorts and swim clothes for the warm weather in Nayarit. Next, we headed to the airport in a Taxi. We waited many hours for our flight to Nayarit because it was delayed. I was bored and tired, but still excited for our trip. Finally, it was time to board the plane and head to Puerto Vallarta, which was the closest airport to Nayarit. The trip was only a couple of hours on the plane.

Then, we landed and got off the plane, we looked for a hotel to book a room and spend the night. That night we walked around the beautiful beach city of Puerto Vallarta. I thought to myself, "This place looks like Italy." I had never been to Italy but had seen pictures. We enjoyed buying different kinds of tourist products, and then ate dinner before we headed to the hotel. The next day, we got up and we rented a car and driver to take us to Nayarit. We drove about 6 hours to see our family. Once we got there, we met up with my auntie, cousins, and grandma. Shortly after, we got ready to go out and check out different places.

First we drove to a store to buy drinks, snacks, and then we drove to the beach and spent time visiting, eating, and having fun in the water. The next day we went to a lake. The lake was clear and full of fish. The only hard part was that there were a lot of jagged rocks to get out into the water and it was painful to walk out into the lake. We spent the next 4 days doing similar things.

Finally, it was time to head home. I knew that I would come back again soon so I was not too sad. I will never forget spending time with my family, because we created many memories along the way in Nayarit.

FIRST COMMUNION

By Guadalupe

I remember when I did my first communion and confirmation, which are two out of the three sacraments of Catholic religion that make you a Catholic.

The first one is baptism and I had mine when I was 5 and then I did my first communion and completed my confirmation by the time I was 15. I wasn't excited to start my first communion because I didn't care for religion and didn't want to give up my weekends for this; I started my classes for my first communion to understand the catholic religion. The classes were 8 months long.

During this time I met new people and made new friends but I still didn't want to go because I didn't want anything to do with religion. After I finished the class I did a confession and confessed the sins I had done up until that moment. They told me we do this to cleanse the heart and to welcome Jesus into my life; this day was the worst, I was very anxious, and did not want to tell him anything. I felt so guilty and bad for having been made to do that. I cried thinking about this day. I will never forget waiting in the church to confess to the priest and looking at his eyes telling him what I had done, it was horrible and then going home, crying in my bed. I remember thinking: "I will never go through this again."

Finally when I was done with my classes I got to go shopping with my mom and godmother for my dress, heels, bible and candle. I loved doing this because I was trying new and different types of shoes and dresses. After all that the day had come, I was doing my makeup and my mom doing my hair. When I arrived at the church I found my friends and waited with them to start the ceremony.

I sat in between my sister and godmother. My godmother passed my candle to me and I went up to the priest. He gently slapped me and congratulated me for completing my first communion and confirmation. I will never forget this day because it was such a new experience to me but I was still questioning my religion. In conclusion, because of this experience, I decided I will not be doing anything related to religion and have made up my mind on having no religion but keeping my faith and praying to God on my own terms.

A POOR DECISION

By Dianella A.

Just so it is clear, I am aware that I can be very forgetful, and it's a bad habit of mine. One cold, windy night, my bad habit caused real trouble. I was out with my friends and my sisters, and we had just finished watching Five Nights at Freddy's at the mall. The night air was sharp, and my hands were already freezing when we reached the car in the parking lot. I was in charge of the parking ticket, but now the ticket was gone.

When we all got in the car, I looked for my ticket and when I could not find it, panic rushed over me. My chest felt tight as the wind whipped through the parking lot, making my eyes water. I then made everyone get out of the car to help me look for the ticket. Time kept passing as the sky grew darker, the wind howled louder, and we still could not find the parking ticket to exit the parking lot. The problem was, that without the ticket, we would have to pay full price for parking and we did not have the money.

We continued to search under the seats, in our bags, and on the floor. We basically flipped the car upside down. On top of losing the ticket, my parents were texting, telling us to come home right away. That only added more pressure to find the ticket and to leave the parking lot right away.

Then a risky idea flashed through my mind. I knew it was wrong, but I was desperate. I didn't tell anyone in the car my plan. I slowly drove to the parking exit gate and I was behind another car that was waiting to exit. My heart was pounding so loud, I thought everyone could hear it. As soon as the gate opened for the car in front of me, I slammed on the gas and rushed through the gate.

My friends and sisters screamed out of fear, shock, and embarrassment. We made it through, barely, and began laughing uncontrollably. I say barely because the gate hit the top of the car. In that moment I felt everything at once like excitement, fear, and relief. When we made it out, we all let out our breath and burst into laughter again. We were shocked that it actually worked. I couldn't believe that I did something like that because it was such an impulsive act. But looking back now, it was a poor decision. I solved the problem, but in the worst way possible. When I got home, reality caught up to me. My dad noticed a small scratch on the roof of my car, left from hitting the gate. That tiny scratch was proof of my mistake and a reminder that I didn't really get away with it after all.

MY BEST FRIEND

By Yalena A.

I still remember the time when I first got my cat. My friend's cat had just given birth to 4-5 kittens and I went over to her house to see them. I was planning to take one of the kittens that was dark gray and had blue eyes. However, when I arrived, the cat was distant and another light colored kitten with a cute racoon striped tail came to me and stared at me with her big green eyes. This kitten had clearly chosen me.

I bought my new kitten for only \$25, but when I got home, I told my grandma a different story. I said I got her off the street from a lady who was unstable and not fit to take care of a cat, so I needed to save her. My grandma's first reaction was to get the cat out of the house. She did not want a cat, but I convinced her with the sob story I had made up.

My grandma agreed to let me keep the kitten and I named her Sativa. At first she was a lot to deal with. I decided to give her a bath right away. Sativa did not seem to enjoy the bath but she did not scratch me nor bite me. After her bath, she got away and slipped into my grandma's room. My grandma was upset and wanted her out, but then Sativa rubbed up against her and purred. Sativa won my grandma over with this loving action.

Over the next couple of months Sativa tried to escape from the house and often jumped up on the table. I was feeling frustrated with her and told my grandma that I did not think I was capable of taking care of her anymore. My grandma said that was not an option, I adopted her so I made a commitment to take care of her.

Honestly, now that time has passed, I have come to realize that getting my cat was the best thing that ever happened to me. From the moment I brought her home, she made everything feel better, and now she is not just a pet, she is my best friend. She is always there for me, and I can not imagine my life without her.

BAYSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

A LESSON LEARNED AT MONARCH

By Alden R.

It was a gloomy Wednesday at my old school Monarch, and because the weather was bad, we had to stay inside for recess. The gym was loud and crowded since there were a few more classes in there at the same time. The floor was plastic, the lights were dull, and everything just felt gray. It was just another school day.

I was hanging out with my best friend, Ethan. He was one of the tallest kids in third grade and had way too much energy for that early in the morning. Ethan was always trying to race people or mess around. The teacher called out, "Recess is over."

Ethan and I rushed to be first in line like we always did. Instead of waiting. I said to Ethan, "Who do you think is gonna win?"

He replied, "I will."

Then we walked towards the door that led to our classroom. Ethan opened the door and slammed it shut as a joke. He thought it would be funny. He didn't realize my hand was still on the door frame. The door slammed on my finger and crushed it between the metal latch and another door.

I screamed "OOUUCCHHH!" and started crying.

He said, "I'm going to get a teacher. Wait here!"

The pain was instant. I looked down at my finger and it looked completely flat. I thought my finger was gone and done. That's when I started to panic. My heart was racing and I felt like I couldn't breathe.

I saw Ethan freeze for a second and then run to get a teacher. The teachers tried to stop the bleeding, but it was clear that it was really bad.

I had to go to the hospital and stayed there for a week. After that I stayed at my Uncle's house for the rest of the month while my finger healed. The injury hurt, but what stayed with me the most was how scared I felt in that moment.

In the end, I wasn't even mad at Ethan. He didn't mean to hurt me, and it wasn't really his fault. It was just bad timing and a bad decision. That day taught me that accidents happen, and you can't always blame someone when they do. It's something I still think about whenever things go wrong.

MY DANGEROUS DOG DAY

By Cesar Anthony Y.

It was 1PM in the afternoon on a hot summer day. I had just gone to the store to buy the soda and tortillas my mom asked me to get. When I was leaving the store, I pushed open the door and walked out onto the street. I was carrying a grocery bag in one hand, but my other hand was free. I started to walk home, when all of a sudden, behind me, I heard a dog barking. I quickly turned around and saw a big white Pitbull dog with brown spots looking at me. I thought to myself, I need help!

All of a sudden, the dog jumped at me and locked his teeth around my knee. A man I didn't know was standing across the street and saw what happened. He ran over to me and yelled, "You okay?"

Crying, I screamed out loud, "I'm okay!"

The man grabbed the dog and pulled him off of my leg. I thought to myself, What if this dog has a disease or what if he continues to attack me? I was afraid. The man who was there helped me get the dog off me and then the dog ran away.

The stranger took me home and my mom drove me to the hospital where I received treatment. I wanted to make sure I didn't get any diseases from the dog bite. At the hospital, they cleaned up my bite and covered it up with bandages.

This experience helped me to be more alert when I go out on the street. It also showed me that there are many kind hearted people, like the man who helped get the dog away from me.

IT'S NOT A GOODBYE, IT'S A SEE YOU LATER
BECAUSE GOODBYES ARE FOREVER

By Leelah G.

It was a warm fall night in 2022 and it was late. I was hanging out at my house with my mom and our roommate, Anthony. He was my mom's coworker and friend. Today was my mom's friend's birthday so my mom was getting ready to go out and celebrate with her friend. "Leelah, I'm running late. I will only be gone for 2 hours " my mom yelled to me from the bedroom.

I was in the living room watching TV, and I replied, "Okkk."

Anthony was in his room and my mom was getting ready in ours. I heard my mom's phone ring and she shouted to me, "Leelah, can you pick up my phone please since I'm getting ready?"

"Yeahhh" I told my mom. I answered the phone and it was one of my dad's closest friends' wife. She said in a tense voice, "Tell your mom to call me right away!"

I mumbled into the phone, "Okay." Then I hung up the phone and went into the bedroom and told my mom what she said. My mom immediately called her back and asked her what was wrong.

I saw my mom go quiet before dropping her phone and sliding onto the ground. She burst into tears.

I stood up from the couch I was sitting on, “Is everything ok?” I asked.

She looked at me, her face was as red as a tomato and her eyes were filled with tears. Her voice was quiet and she was barely able to speak. She told me, “Don’t tell your sister, Bernadette yet, but Charlie is dead!”

I looked at her sitting on the ground, still hysterical, and asked, “Why did Ashley call you saying that Charlie died? Isn’t that Bernadette’s dog?”

My mom replied with her voice shaking, “Not the dog.”

I froze and said outloud, But the only other Charlie is... I looked at her and then began to cry, “No, no!” I yelled. I thought to myself, How can this be? I just saw him a couple days ago and he was fine. This is when I knew I lost the only father figure in my life, I lost the man who raised me.

She looked at me and shook her head sadly, “Yeah.” She put out her arms and I bolted across the room into them.

Anthony, our roommate, came out of his room and saw us on the ground, “What’s wrong?” he asked. My mom told him and he hugged us both. My mom and I collected ourselves and walked over to my mom’s close friend, Monica’s house. When we arrived at her house, my mom asked her, “Where are the kids at?”

“At the pool, why?” Monica replied.

“Charlie passed!” my mom said to her with head down crying. My mom called around trying to find my sister, but she wasn’t answering so we tried to call Monica’s daughter, but she wasn’t picking up either so I called Bernadette’s boyfriend, Jaun, he finally picked up. I asked him , “Where is Bernadette?”

“In the pool with Alicia, Why what’s up?” he replied,

“You guys need to hurry up and come home right now,” I said in a panicked voice.

But before he could finish his sentence, I hung up the phone and ran to my mom and Monica. Out of breath I said, “They should be on their way. I just called Jaun and told him to come home with the kids right away.”

“Ok, thank you, Leelah,” my mom said to me as she gave me a hug.

We waited for my sister to come home and then we went to the hospital.

I thought my dad would live forever. He had survived getting his finger shot off, hit in the jaw with a bat, and getting metal put in his jaw. He’d been shot at lots of times, but I didn’t think this would be the one to take him out. Even though he’s not here, I will always have our memories together.

STRUGGLING IN THE DARIEN GAP

By Esdras F.

I was taking a shower and the cold water from the shower stung my skin. I was just getting out when I heard my father yell, “Downstairs! Now! Family meeting!”

I rushed to put on the first clothes I saw, my heart was beating hard. When I reached the living room, the air was silent like space. Everything had been stressful for my family the last few months because our first journey to emigrate to the US had not been successful. Last time our guide missed a verification phone call, and because of that, we were sent back to Haiti. Once in Haiti, we took a flight back to Chile where we are living now.

My father was sitting on the edge of the sofa. My mother sat across from him, looking at a spot on the wall, not sure what my father was going to say.

“We are going to try again,” my father told us. His voice was grumpy. but his eyes were determined. My father was talking about trying to emigrate to the United States for a second time through the Darien Gap.

My mother didn’t look at him. Her face was cold. “No!” she said. “It is a dangerous route. We cannot afford to lose one of our children to the Darien Gap.”

“If we don’t go, we lose them anyway!” my father said out loud to us as he looked toward the window, toward the country that had turned its back on them. “The President has made it clear that anyone not born in Chile, doesn’t have access to college, work, or a future. Do you want our children to be ghosts?”

“I want them to be alive,” my mother said.

“We aren’t losing anyone this time,” he promised confidently “Not one of them. I will carry them myself if I have to.”

I watched my mother’s hands shake with the fear of losing one of us. I thought to myself how amazing my mom was and how the world needed more women like her.

Days later, the sun was bright, and we stood waiting for our guide. My mother turned to us, her expression was full of fear, “Are you ready?” she asked me. Her voice was cold and she was preoccupied with the fear of losing us.

I responded, “Yes mother,” looking into her eyes.

We started walking into the most dangerous forest in Panama, the Darien Gap. My father looked at us with a smile on his face, telling us we could do this. On his back, he had a white, heavy backpack full of clothes and food for the days we were going to be in the forest. We started walking and he said to us, “The Lord is with us.” These words kept us going.

At first, it was a normal walk, crossing small rivers of water, but that was just the beginning. When we encountered our first mountain of the journey, it was tall, big, and full of mud, but because it was my second

time climbing it, I knew it was the easiest one. I could see that the other people around me were starting to worry. The mountain was full of thick mud, so people with thicker boots had more difficulty going up it. Every time the guide had us take a break, I looked back yelling to each of my family members, “Where Are You Guys?!”

I thought to myself how worried I was for my mother who was pregnant and couldn’t take big steps like the rest of us. When I screamed, I heard my voice echo through the forest, yelling my mothers name, “AMA!!”

The forest was full of trash and footsteps of different kinds.

As a kid I liked the feeling of an adventure, but this was nothing compared to an adventure, it was life or death. It had consequences such as sleeping only 3 hours a night, losing your loved ones, all for the dream of coming to America. We were risking our lives in hopes of a better future. I had walked the Darian Gap one time before and I knew there were many risks. There was the risk of getting eaten by crocodiles under the sea, the risk of getting pulled under the water during the water crossings, the risk of getting lost in the middle of the forest, and because I knew all of this, sleeping for me was almost impossible. The worst was not knowing where my mother was, but I always had faith in God and knew he would protect her everywhere she went and all of us too.

It was the second day and I saw confidence on my family’s faces and I knew we would make it out of the forest, all of us together. While we were walking, we encountered the biggest river I had ever seen with dead people on the edges laying lifeless. While walking across it, I turned my head slightly around to stop looking at the dead bodies. I walked away from them as I crossed the river which was pulling at me. I was surviving on a small portion of food and that had to give me enough energy for the next three days, as we kept following our guide, walking, swimming, and running. I was praying in my heart, knowing that we would make it out of here

.On the last day of the journey, I felt the warm sun hitting my face. With that inspiration, I knew I would make it. I felt the grace and the glory of making it to the end. Knowing I had survived and had made it to America, safe and clear without getting robbed, experiencing a whiteout or getting eaten. We didn’t lose a loved one, thanks to Jesus and our confidence.

This is when I realized that if you never give up, if you have a dream, you can make it come true no matter how many times you fail, just keep going. Just do it!

UNEXPECTED BEACH DAY

By Evelyn A.

It was a warm December day and I was about to leave school and go home when my friend, Betsy, had an idea, “We should go get a Starbucks, what do you think?” Betsy said to me.

“Yes, that is a great idea,” I told her.

The sun was out and it was hot, but it was still a little cold. We got into Betsy’s car and all of a sudden she said, “Let’s go to the beach instead.”

I responded, ‘Huh? Yes, let’s go!’

We did a u-turn and started to drive to Coronado Beach. When we got to the beach, Betsy parked the car, and we got out. We walked down the beach, found a spot, and sat on the sand. We didn’t have the right clothes for the beach. We weren’t prepared because we never planned on going.

We just had on our normal clothes. We were wearing jeans, t-shirts, and tennis shoes. At

first, we just sat in the sand and talked. After a while, we both took our shoes off and started kicking sand around with our feet.

It was fun. We were just talking and sitting there. About an hour passed and I could see people far away playing in the water. The sun was out and hot like a stove. The weather was nice. Out of nowhere, I said to Betsy, “I’m curious to see if the water is hot or cold.”

“Let’s go see,” she agreed.

We jumped up and walked towards the ocean. We already had our shoes off and had left them further up the beach. At first, we just put our feet in and then Betsy splashed me with water. The water is cold, I thought to myself when I got splashed.

We started to get wet and after a while, our clothes were soaked.

Thirty minutes later, we got out of the water. We weren’t cold because it was hot outside. We sat in the sand to dry off and started to draw. The sand was wet, and it was a beautiful day.

A little while later, we walked towards Betsy’s car, and she said to me, “I’m hungry, what do you want to eat?”

I responded, “Anything you want?”

Betsy smiled and said, “What about In-N-Out or Chick-fil-A?”

Smiling, I replied, “Yes, In-N-Out is fine.”

We drove to In-N-Out, ordered the food and ate it in her car in the parking lot. We were eating, gossiping, and laughing. Our clothes were still wet, but we didn’t care because of the fun we had just had.

Finally, Betsy took me home. When I walked into the house, my mom scolded me because my clothes were wet. She doesn't like it when my clothes get wet because she thinks that makes them ugly.

Looking back, that day was fun because everything that happened was not planned, and we did things we'll never forget. Those are memories I will always remember. That day, I was happy and content because I was with my bestie.

ONE SMALL DECISION

By Ivan V.

The house was quiet, and outside it was just a normal day in the neighborhood. It was a Friday afternoon around 3 p.m., and I was at my friend Ereka's house just hanging out. I have known Ereka since the 7th grade when we met at school. Over the years, we have built a strong friendship. He is a good and trustworthy person, and I value our friendship very much.

Ereka looked at me and said, "You wanna go outside for a bit?"

I shrugged and replied, "Yeah, I guess. Why not?"

It was decided that we were going to sneak out. It wasn't something we really planned; it just kind of happened. Everyone in the house was doing their own thing, and nobody was really paying attention to us. Nothing felt serious at first.

My friend and I didn't talk much about it. We just waited until no one was by the front door and then walked out like it wasn't a big deal. I thought to myself, I'm not really nervous or excited—I guess I'll just go along with it.

Once outside, we walked around for a bit, talking about random stuff and killing time.

Ereka laughed and said, "This is nothing. We'll be back in like ten minutes."

I replied, "Yeah, it's not a big deal."

After some time, we headed back to the house, thinking everything was fine. We weren't rushing or trying to hide anything. As soon as we walked inside, my friend's parent was standing there looking straight at us. He asked, "Where did you two go?"

Ereka hesitated and said, "Uh... we just went for a walk."

Right away, I knew we were caught. I didn't say anything because there wasn't really anything to say. I already knew how it was about to go. That moment wasn't loud or dramatic, but it was awkward. The whole mood changed instantly. His dad said, "You're not supposed to leave without telling anyone. That's not okay."

We both stood there quietly while he explained what we did wrong.

We lost privileges and were told not to do anything like that again. I just stood there listening, feeling embarrassed and kind of stupid for thinking it wouldn't matter.

When I left later, I kept thinking about it. Sneaking out didn't even do anything for me. It wasn't worth the trouble that came after. Especially where I live, doing small careless things can turn into bigger problems fast.

That day showed me that not everything needs to be done just because it seems easy or normal at the time. It taught me to think more before making decisions and to understand that actions always come with consequences, even if they don't seem serious at first.

THE UNEXPECTED

By Joseph S.

One day I was on social media, which I enjoy, when I decided to take a picture of an inappropriate object. I thought to myself, a photo of this could be cool. Who would have thought that sharing that picture would become the source of a huge problem.

Not long later, my friend, Choncheez and I were walking home. We were talking about how we could get rich and what plans we had for our future. All of a sudden, a cop car pulled up right next to where we were walking.

A policeman got out of the car and approached me and said, "Stop right there! Put your hands up. You are under arrest."

I responded, "What did I do wrong? I'm just walking."

Five more patrols appeared from nowhere. My friend and I were surrounded by unfriendly officers. I wasn't following the orders of the policeman so he put me on the ground and handcuffed me. My brand new white sweater got dirty and ruined.

I thought to myself, I'm angry and pissed off about how I'm being treated because I'm a minor. I feel like I'm being treated like a criminal and disrespected.

The police officer drove me to my apartment where all my family was.

He left me in the backseat of his vehicle and I saw the police storm into my house and yell, "House warrant. If someone is in the house, please make yourself known. This is the police department."

The police made a mess of everything. They did not disclose what they were looking for. At one point, a policeman said outloud, "Where is it? Just tell us so we don't make it harder for you." But they did not say why they were acting like that or what they were looking for.

One month later, I ended up going to court four times. I wrote a few letters and got some support letters from people who know me. At the end, I got a big file of documents that I used to prove that I am a good person.

The whole experience was exhausting because of everything I went through, but now I'm happy that I did not have to spend any time in prison at this point in my life. I am thankful for my freedom and in the future, I will be more cautious of what I share on social media.

A RAINY DAY ACCIDENT

By Josue G.

It was a rainy, cloudy day and I was sleeping when my cousin Carlos pulled up to my house in his Dodge car and honked the horn. I walked outside to see who was there and he yelled to me, “Hop in!”

I got in the car and we drove to the gym. When we got there, we worked out for about an hour and a half when Carlos said, “Yo, this is the last set. We have to go now if we’re going to Plaza Bonita to eat.”

I said, “Alright, let me finish up.”

When we got back into the car, we started playing Despegando el Vuelo by Marca MP. My cousin likes to listen to all kinds of music.

When we arrived at the mall, we walked to the corn dog place at Plaza Bonita and I said to Carlos, “Ay, there’s the corndog place and there’s not that many people in line.”

Carlos said “Bet, let’s go.”

We ordered our corndogs pretty fast. After 15 minutes, they called our order number. Once we got done eating our corndogs, we got up, threw our trash away, and started to head out.

I said to Carlos “Bro, that corndog was great.”

Carlos responded “It filled me up good.”

After eating, we walked to the car, and started to drive home. We were sitting at a red light. I saw the light turn green and said to my cousin, “ Go!”

He put his foot on the gas pedal and out of nowhere I heard a “BOOM!” Someone had hit Carlos’s car on the passenger side where I was sitting. The car spun out and hit the curb. We ended up on the wrong side of the road. I was in shock and a bit mad as I said outloud, “Bro, what just happened?” Carlos didn’t reply.

Right away we got out of Carlos’s car and asked the other car’s driver for insurance. When everything was done, we cooled off and were just thankful no one got hurt badly. We tried to drive off, but the wheel was messed up and the car couldn’t move so we called my aunt to pick us up. When she got there, she was furious, but glad we were okay. My aunt ended up dropping me back off at home and they stayed over for a couple of minutes. Looking back now, I’m just glad no one got hurt and nobody made a big deal out of it.

NEVER GROW ATTACHED TO LIVESTOCK

By Lorenzo N-R.

It was a cold rainy day when I decided to visit my abuela. She was living in Uruapan and I went to her house almost every day. I knocked on the door and she opened it and smiled at me and asked, “How is your day going?”

As I walked into her candle lit, cotton ball smelling house, she said, “Come here son, take a seat.” My abela was standing in the kitchen.

I replied, “I’m coming, Abuela.” Then I walked into the kitchen and took a seat at her dining room table. I smelled the fresh tortillas de harina and the chocolate being made.

While sitting near the window of her dining room table, I heard raindrops hitting the glass on her windows.

Then her voice broke the silence, “Ok, breakfast is done.” she said to me as she put the food down in front of me and sat across from me. She continued, “You know we’re having caldo today, right?”

“Great, I like the caldo you make, it tastes great,” I responded. After eating, I went to the back room for a bit until I heard commotion in the back yard so I went to investigate.

I walked into my abuela’s backyard. This is where my chickens lived. I take care of and have raised the chickens in my abuela’s backyard since they were born. I felt close to the chickens because I had taken care of them their whole lives.

Once I was outside, I saw my grandparents gather around the chickens and I knew something wasn’t right.

“Guys what’s going on?” I asked my grandparents.

“Nothing, want to see the chicken dance?” my abuelo asked me.

“Yea I do!” I replied in an excited voice. Then he grinned at me.

My grandparents got quiet and the whole mood shifted as if I was being left out of a joke, but I was in for a surprise. I saw my abuelo grab one of the chickens by the neck and start to twist its neck in circles. Then he dropped the chicken on the ground and let it hop and flop around with its broken neck.

I stood there in utter disbelief with nothing to say, just my mouth wide open. Then I walked back indoors in shock. I heard the others talking as if nothing had happened. I stayed indoors for a few hours because I couldn’t believe what I had just seen.

A couple of hours later, my abuela called me to dinner. As I sat at the table with my grandparents eating chicken soup for dinner, I remembered where the chicken came from. After that day, I learned not to have friendship with livestock.

MOVIES ON A BAD DAY

By Luis G.

My friends and I love going to the movies. I had planned to go with my friends to see Django in two days. It was a chill Monday afternoon and I was sitting on my bed in my room playing an online video game named Ark with my friends, Admed and Damien. We are able to talk to each other through Party Chat.

Admed said to us through the Xbox, “Let’s go to the movies on Wednesday.”

I replied laughing, ‘Good aim! Ok.’

I walked into the living room and asked my mom, “Can I have some money to go to the movies on Wednesday?”

My mom replied, “Yes, you can go, but don’t be bad.” She gave me the money and said, “Have fun at the movies.”

On Tuesday night, I was playing video games again online with my friends when my brother walked into my room and said, “I got you something to eat from Dave’s Hot Chicken.”

I said, “Thank you for the food. It looks good.” I thought to myself how good the food looked. It was chicken and the skin was fried. It looked delicious and I saw that it was hot because it was a red color. I took a bite and it tasted spicy. It was good, but really hot.

Later that night, I felt like I ate something that I shouldn’t have eaten. I wondered to myself if the chicken was undercooked. My stomach felt like it was going to explode, but I decided to try to go to sleep. I was looking forward to tomorrow, seeing the movie with my friends..

In the middle of the night I woke up and had a bad feeling in my stomach. I knew the chicken must have been undercooked. I ran to the bathroom and threw up.

I felt like I was going to die. I kept throwing up all night and by morning, I did not feel like going to the movies, but I had to go.

My mom said that I shouldn’t go, but I decided to go anyways, even if it killed me!

Admed’s mom picked me up later that morning. Admed is my best friend and he is funny all the time. He was making me laugh in the car, but just laughing was hell for me. After 30 minutes driving in the car, I had to go to the bathroom and got sick again. After a good 15 minutes of me dying, I walked into the theater. My friends were laughing at me and said, “Why would you come if you are sick? ”

They laughed at me all throughout the movie because I was in pain. Watching the movie was cool, but I felt so bad that I couldn’t even enjoy it.

After an hour of hell on earth, the movie ended and my friend’s mom came to pick us. She was kind and got me medicine. Liquid medicine I do not like, but I had no choice and felt so sick so I swallowed it. Ever since that day, I never accept food from my brother late at night because I know it might make me sick. Now I know not to eat chicken that is undercooked because it’s the worst thing that can happen to me.

WORK EXPERIENCE!

By Raul C.

“Get up, Raul, you’re gonna be late,” my mom yelled at me as I was lying in bed.

It was a hot Spring day, and I had just arrived at work. This was a new job and it was only my second day. My aunt got me the job, telling me they needed workers to fix a dock on a pond.

It was still wet on the ground from the rain the night before. It was 8 AM when I heard a horn beep, so I ran outside and got in my boss’s car. He was giving me a ride to my new construction job.

“You ready to go to work with Chuck?” my boss said to me as I sat down in his luxurious black car.

“I hope he’s ready to work with me!” I commented laughing.

“I’m sure he is,” my boss said, knowing what a good worker I was.

We pulled up to the job site, and the boss stated, “Get to work,” and then asked me, “What do you want for lunch?”

Laughing, I pleaded, ” Chinese food sounds good.”

I got out of the car and saw Chuck standing on the dock, so I ran towards him. This was the old dock we were going to fix.

Chuck is a 66 year old man and a genius in carpeting, but doesn’t have the best walking skills. For 2 hours he reminded me to be careful and watch my step.

We were replacing some boards on the dock when Chuck said to me, “Get me a nail gun from the tool box.” I started walking toward the tool box at the edge of the dock when I heard a yell.

“Rrrrrruulll!” Chuck screamed out loud.

I turned around to see what happened and saw Chuck in the pond. I ran back to him and reached down into the water and dragged him out onto the new wood boards we had just put down.

“Stuff happens!” Chuck said laughing as he stood up and waddled around in his wet clothes. He had dropped 3 tools into the deep pond.

I thought to myself, that was about \$150 worth of tools. What a crazy old man!

Later in the day, Chuck and I sat down with the boss man and ate Chinese food. While the water from the pond dripped down Chuck’s face, he retold the story of falling in the water. We all laughed and in that moment, I realized something important, even though it was only my second day on the job, I learned that construction wasn’t just about nails, it was also about the people you work with. This would be a day I would never forget.

THE DAY WE CRASHED

By Samantha L.

What started out as a normal ride home, turned into a bad day for my sister. It was a sunny day at 4 pm, my sister, my mom, and I were driving back home after eating lunch. When we were 5 minutes from the house, my mom and my sister started to argue.

I heard my sister ask my mom, “Let me drive, I know how.”

My mom said, “Okay maybe, but be careful because you don’t know how.” She had only driven a few times before, but was not good at it.

I thought to myself, Oh, if they keep going like this, something bad is going to happen. Finally, my mom gave in and let my sister drive. My mom pulled the car over and got out. My sister took the wheel and she looked mad.

My sister looked ahead and started to drive. “Here we go,” she said as she started to move the car. I could see she was still mad and wasn’t really paying attention to the street. I was sitting in the backseat and I felt a little worried because my sister wasn’t taking driving properly seriously.

All of a sudden, my sister hit the gas pedal and the car jumped! I could tell she didn’t distinguish between the gas pedal and the brake. I felt the car move faster and faster and I said to my sister, “Come on, do things right, be careful.”

She didn’t respond or stop, then I heard a loud Bam! We crashed into our house!

My mom started to yell at my sister, “This is the last time I let you drive my car!”

I could tell my sister was scared, but she told my mom, “I don’t care.”

I started laughing because I knew she made a mistake and didn’t pay attention. I knew it wasn’t a bad crash, and luckily nobody was hurt.

My brother was on the second floor of our house and saw the accident. He ran outside to see if everything was okay. We got out of our car and saw the damage that was done to the side of the house. There was a big crack.

My mom told my sister, “You have to pay for the damage and take responsibility for your actions.”

My sister and I went inside the house. My mom called the insurance company and they took care of everything. I learned that day that I should never ride with my sister when she’s mad.

THE BOY WHO WAS FOLLOWING ME

Sherlyn B.

I had just gotten home from school and my four brothers were being loud. “Ay guys, can y’all please be quiet?” I yelled at my brothers.

“You shut up! Matter of fact, if you don’t like it, leave,” they screamed back at me.

I have 4 brothers. The oldest one is Armando. He is 20 years old. Then I have my twin brother who is 16, but we don’t look like each other. And I have two little brothers, one is 7 and the other one is 6. That afternoon they were all home from school.

My head was hurting and I didn’t want to argue with them or get upset so I decided to go for a walk. It was really dark and cold outside. I was going to take the bus to my friend’s house.

The bus arrived 15 minutes later and I got on it. I got off the bus near my friend’s house. While I was walking towards her house, I was looking down at my phone and texting her, but she did not answer my texts so I sat on the side of the road waiting for her to respond.

I was kind of mad when I heard somebody walk by the alley behind me. I didn’t really care so I didn’t pay attention at first, but then I heard the noise getting closer. I turned around and saw a kid who I had seen before. He stopped and was staring at me for a while. “What are you looking at, fool?” I yelled at him. He didn’t respond. I thought to myself Oh that’s weird! I didn’t know him very well. I turned around again, but didn’t see him.

Then all of a sudden, he jumped in front of me and screamed, “Booo!!” It scared me and I jumped back. Then he ran across the street and stopped in front of the alley. He kept staring and it was really freaking me out. He moved into the alley trying to hide but I could still see him. I said out loud “What you looking at, fool.” He just kept eating his chips and staring at me. I thought to myself, What a weirdo.

He crawled behind a car and still kept on staring. And then I said out loud, “Nah, maybe I’m the one tripping.” I got up and started walking to the corner. He kept on following me, but on the other side of the street. I knew he was following me and it was making me more mad.

Finally, my home girl texted me to ask where I was and I told her I was close to her house. I walked to my friend’s, but the kid was still following me. I saw him eating chips and I heard him walking behind me. Every time I turned around, he would hide behind the trees. I finally made it to my friend’s house and when she opened the door, I was happy, but a little scared.



This piece symbolizes loss of innocence and discovering the cruelty of the real world.

The Playground-I used vibrant colors and a thick black outline to act as the innocence of a young child.

The Scenery-I made the scenery look very abstract to act as the real world, symbolizing how the world is chaotic, unpredictable, and cruel.

Janaye

Janaye — Art from Narrative: Front Page at San Pasqual Academy

TRIP TO OREGON

By Sky C.

My sister, Athena, and I had just landed at Medford airport. We were going to visit our other siblings and we were excited.

“Text mom that we landed, we need to find our exit,” I mentioned to my sister. “I did, she’s on her way right now,” Athena responded.

It was winter time, the weather was so cold it was almost nearing the negatives. Oregon winters are freezing so I had to reach in my suitcase and put on an extra coat before stepping outside the airport.

We saw our stepdad’s gray car pull up at the curb and Athena and I got in.

It was the middle of the day and my stepdad was driving us to my mom’s house, a two story white house with a little garden in the front and a garage on the side.

We finally arrived and parked the car in the garage. We were about to go inside the house to surprise my siblings.

“We should go around the back so we can scare them,” Athena whispered to me.

“They just got home so they should all be inside now,” I whispered back to her, making sure to be extra quiet.

We opened the gate and walked around the house to the backyard. We hid behind the wood patio. I thought to myself This is a good hiding spot for now.

I saw my siblings playing in the living room and I said to Athena, “This is our chance, let’s surprise them.”

We opened the back door and Athena and I, at the same time, yelled, “SURPRISE!”

Almost immediately, my two sisters and brother snapped their heads towards us, with shock on their faces, they screamed, “Oh my gosh!” Then they ran over and hugged us.

The rest of the evening we hung out, playing games and just enjoying each other’s company.

After dinner it had already gotten late and it was time to go to bed. I was happy to be reunited with my siblings once again and excited to spend the rest of the week with them.

THE REALIZATION

By Achilles O.

It was the first day of December and the clouds were all dark, and it was sprinkling rain. It was my last day on the basketball team. I was sitting on the bench in the locker room at school putting on my basketball shoes for our game. School had just ended and my friend Johnny was sitting next to me. Johnny and I are in 11th grade and have known each other for 4 years. Johnny is 5ft 8 and Mexican, as am I. He’s one of my closest friends.

Just as the bell rang, my friend Johnny said, “Hurry up, we’ve got to be there right on time or else we’re running!”

I responded, “I know, hold up, I’m just tying my right shoe lace.” I finished lacing my shoe and we quickly sprinted out of the bathroom to get to the gym. We pushed open the gym doors and immediately started stretching, a few seconds later my other teammates came to the gym and joined us.

As we stretched, Coach G walked towards us with a smirk on his face and said,

“Achilles! You’re stretching like you don’t care and don’t want to be here.” Then he laughed while whispering something to his assistant coach. Then Coach G said to me, “If you won’t pick up the pace, you’ll be a cheerleader on the bench”.

I didn’t say anything back, but my stomach started to feel bad. I had played for this team for years and worked harder than anyone, but I was tired of being treated like a machine instead of a person.

“Coach is stressed about the Logan Memorial Game,” Johnny whispered, trying to cheer me up.

The gym was loud and crowded for the big game. The bleachers were packed and there was a smell of fresh gym and popcorn in the air.

During the game, I was tired, but I kept running. Coach G kept yelling from the sidelines telling me to play harder. In the fourth quarter, I jumped for a rebound and landed wrong. My ankle twisted so bad my foot was on the side. I fell to the floor in pain.

Coach G ran over and shouted, “Get up! We need this win. Don’t be lazy .Get your heads in the game.”

I couldn’t stand it anymore so I said to Coach G, “I can’t play anymore, it hurts bad. I’m out!” Mr.G just looked at me in a weird way and went back to focusing on the game.

At that moment I realized this wasn’t the best fit for me. I wanted to be on the basketball team and I had worked so hard to get to this point. I put all my emotions towards this sport, but that night I understood I deserved respect and to be treated as an equal, not as some soldier willing to sacrifice all for nothing. I realized that strength isn’t just playing through pain, but knowing when to walk away.

SUDDEN GRIEF

By Valeria M.

I was folding my clothes when all of a sudden, I received a call from my aunt, “Hey can you go with your Uncle Berry, the neighbor said one of our dogs got run over!”

Startled, I replied, “Which one and where?”

Yelling into the phone, my aunt responded, “I don’t know and Berry doesn’t want to go alone.”

I tried to argue and say I didn’t want to go, but there was no time. Finally, I agreed to go. “Okay, I’ll go,” I said. I grabbed a towel from the cupboard to bring with us. Then I ran outside to where my uncle and aunt were arguing.

My uncle didn’t want to make a big deal about it and have the police come by.

I got in the car with my uncle and he started driving towards my aunt’s house.

As we drove down the alley by her house, I could see a little bit of fur on the ground. I didn’t want to see the dead dog or even pick it up. At first I thought to myself, This was one of my grandmother’s first dogs, but when I looked closer, I saw it was a puppy. I scooped him into my arms. He was already limp and I could feel him stiffening.

I said to my uncle, “Ask around to see if anyone saw anything.”

“Okay, I’ll go down the street and see if anyone is outside,” my uncle said to me.

I tried to cover the puppy with the towel I brought to give him warmth, but it was too late because he had gone cold.

As we arrived home, I got out of the car. I was still holding him. I set him on the ground in the sun allowing myself to process that he was gone.I felt bad for my uncle because everyone was blaming him for opening the door and letting the dogs out. I could see he regretted doing it.

Later that night, I watched my uncle get a shovel and dig around the area where we had dirt and plants. I knew he was going to bury the puppy there. I let the other dogs say goodbye first and then my uncle set him into the newly dug hole. I felt bad for the puppy. He was so young and he hadn’t even bled. The neighbor said it happened fast and that he most likely died quickly, but the whole thing just felt unjust.

A week later, my uncle told us something at the dinner table, he said, “Today another dog got run over one block over.”

“Whose dog was it?” my grandma said.

My uncle replied, “It was the neighbor’s dog, a Husky.”

We all stayed quiet, noting it wasn’t only our dog who was unlucky. We understood to keep a closer eye on our dogs and to never let them out.

CHASED LIFE

By Zoie C.

It was winter last year and I was having a sleepover at my house with my best friend, Annalise. her sister, Julissa, and their cousin, Gia. We were all bored until Julissa said outloud, “Let’s go to the graveyard.”

“Ok,” I replied.

We all got up, put on our sweaters and shoes, and started walking over to the graveyard. As we were walking over, I thought to myself, We shouldn’t go anymore.

When we got there, there was a gate all around it and we couldn’t get in. I said to my friends, “Girls, let’s go.”

Julissa said to us, “No bruh.”

We ended up leaving because we couldn’t get through the graveyard gate. When we were walking back I kept looking behind me because I’m always cautious when I walk. I turned my head and saw a guy behind us. He was walking fast, getting closer and closer.

Calmly, I said to my friends, “Girls, cross the street, come on.”

Julissa responded, “Why bro?” She is always asking stupid questions.

“Just cross, bro,” I told them. They didn’t understand that something was wrong. But we all crossed. I looked back and the guy crossed too.

We started speed walking. Then Gia looked back and saw the guy who was following us. He was running towards us. Gia and I started running.

Julissa didn’t because she thought we were joking. She whispered, “You’re lying, you’re lying.” Then all of a sudden, she saw that we hadn’t stopped running so she started running too.

As I was running, I was thinking to myself, There’s no way this is happening. I was so scared.

We passed by a house with people hanging out outside. They saw us running and they got up and said, “What the hell?!”

We were all running as fast as we could. Then we turned the corner and looked back and saw that he was gone. We had outrun him.

We were paranoid the whole walk home. When we finally arrived home, we were relieved and didn’t leave the house. That night we all laughed about what had happened and made jokes about it. Looking back, I was happy that I trusted my instincts that night

Me and my teammates are sprinting up and down our basketball court. With 5 seconds left on the shot clock giving it my all , ‘shot clock goes off’ , gasping for air as me and my teammates huddle for what coach has to say

LINDSAY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

EVANGELINE: MY WARM EMBRACE

By Isabella R.

“Good job mom! Your baby is beautiful.” The Nurse said as she placed my baby on my chest. “Oh my god. She’s perfect!” I cried while staring at my baby. At 2:22 am on September 27, 2024, in a labor and delivery room my life changed forever. As soon as my baby touched my skin, I instantly felt safe. I knew from that day on, my safe place was in a little 8.8lb baby girl named Evangeline.

When I am around my daughter, a wave of emotions come over me. I feel happy, excited, safe, calm, etc. Having a daughter at such a young age has changed my mindset on a lot of things. Such as how I feel now as a young woman, she taught me a different kind of love I have never experienced before. My daughter helped me realize that a safe place doesn’t need to be a location, but it could be a person. I love how my daughter shows me love and affection. When she hugs me, gives me kisses, and just wants me, it’s the best feeling. Nothing feels better than having someone who loves you so much and unconditionally. I feel the safest when I sleep next to my daughter. Feeling her heartbeat sync with mine makes me feel safe and at home. I know that sometimes being a teen mom is so hard. In the end when she grows up to be a beautiful young woman, I know it will all be worth it.

When it comes to being safe, it’s the little things my daughter does that makes me feel that way. Looking at my daughter, seeing her smile, watching her sleep, laugh, play with toys, makes my heart feel full of love. When I play with my daughter, seeing her smile and laugh while we play with her toys brings me so much joy and comfort. I love when she just wants to lay on my chest to fall asleep. I feel like my life is so chaotic and all over the place but, for little moments like that, I feel safe. The little moments such as reading together, playing together, going on walks, I know my safest place is with Evangeline.

Having my daughter has changed my perspective in a lot of ways. Before I had my daughter I was not feeling safe and I was doing things I should not have been doing. I was always out with my friends, smoking, ditching class to see my baby daddy, etc. I was a young girl that just wanted to fit in with the crowd. Then on February 23rd my everything changed. I found out I was pregnant. I remember being a terrified pregnant 16 year old girl who didn’t know what to do. The next day I went to my grandma’s house and literally all of my family came over. Everyone was talking to me and supporting me. My aunt had told me something that stuck with me. She told me, “Being a teen mom is hard, but not impossible. You will be okay.”

“Wow, that opens my eyes and makes me feel better thank you tia,” I replied.

After I talked to my grandma she confessed, “If you’re not able to keep the baby, you can give it to me. I will take care of the baby and raise it.”

I nervously replied “It’s okay grandma. I know I will keep my baby and be the best mom I can be.”

From that day on, everything changed for me. I never even knew I could create my safe place until I had her. Evangeline means the absolute world to me. She made me the young woman I am today. My daughter has taught me to be responsible, how to love, she taught me the correct way to be loved, how to have patience, how to calm down, how to show emotions, show affection, and she gave me a love I never knew I deserved. My safe place will always be my Evangeline.

SAFE PLACE IN ROOM 7-4

By Vanessa C.

Freshman year was one of the hardest years of my life. Most days, it felt like I was just trying to survive the day without completely falling apart. My anxiety followed me everywhere. From the moment I woke to the second I got home. Walking through the halls felt overwhelming, like the halls were closing in on me. I felt invisible and exposed at the same time. But in the middle of all the chaos, I found a safe place in Miss Lopez’s science class. Room 7-4 didn’t feel like a normal classroom. It was calm in a way the rest of the class wasn’t. Posters about the environment covered the walls, and sunlight typically always seemed to find its way through the windows. The room felt steady and warm. When I walked in, my chest didn’t feel as tight. For once, I could breathe without feeling like I was running out of air.

One day in particular stands out clearly in my memory. I had an awful day. One of those days where everything felt wrong. Even if nothing special happened. My anxiety had been building up non-stop and by the end of the day, I felt completely overwhelmed. Without thinking, I walked straight to Miss Lopez’s classroom, like my body already knew where it needed to be. She looked up when I walked in and immediately noticed something was wrong.

“Hey”, she said gently. “Are you okay?”

That was all it took. The words spilled out before I could stop them. I started crying and told her, “I feel my anxiety so high today and I am so tired of feeling like this all the time.” I felt embarrassed, but she didn’t make me feel like I had anything to be embarrassed about. She stood up and hugged me, and I cried into her arms. In the moment, I felt safe in a way I hadn’t felt in a long time. The noise in my head quieted, and for the first time that day, I didn’t feel so alone. I felt like everything was paused just long enough for me to breathe again. After a while, I pulled back and wiped my face.

My voice was shaky when I said, “Thank you for always being there for me.”

She smiled softly and said, “I’m really glad you came to me.”

Without thinking, I told her, “You feel like a school mother.”

I meant every word. She listened to me, understood me, and cared about me when I needed it most. She wasn’t just my science teacher, she was someone who made me feel seen and protected.

The same feeling of comfort followed me when I found out she ran the Green Club. The club focused

on protecting the environment, something she was clearly passionate about. I decided to join, and it ended up being more than I expected. Through the club, I met new people and slowly started building a circle of friends. Being a part of something positive helped me feel less alone and gave me confidence.

My mental health struggles eventually led to hospital stays, and coming back to school afterwards was terrifying. I felt like everyone was watching me, even though they weren’t. But knowing Miss Lopez was there made it easier. Her classroom became the one place I knew I could go when things became too much. Looking back now as a junior, I realize how much that space mattered to me. Miss Lopez’s classroom wasn’t just a room, it was a refuge during a time when I desperately needed one. She helped me through one of the darkest periods of my life without ever making me feel like a burden. Room 7-4 at Valley High School will always be my safe place. It’s where I learned it’s okay to ask for help, okay to feel overwhelmed, and okay to lean on someone when you need to. Most importantly, it’s where I learned that one person’s kindness can make all the difference.

MY SAFE PLACE

By Jasmin S.

The moment I stepped into the hospital’s maternity room, my life changed. I felt an overwhelming sense of safety wrapped around me like a warm blanket. I like to reminisce and think back to the experience I had giving birth to my children in that hospital, a real event that made me feel proudly safe. Around ten o’clock in the morning I arrived at the hospital with my partner, Jeremiah, and my Grandma. The nurse Ms. Alvarez greets us at the desk, we tell her my water broke and that I was already having contractions. She then sent someone to wheel me to a room. As I was being pushed to the delivery room I really couldn’t believe that I was about to be a mom and push out a baby out of my coochie! In the delivery room Ms. Alvarez and Dr. Lujan and my partner are just surrounding me with comfort and reassuring me that I can do this and that I’m a strong woman.

Me being me, I’m stressed and overthinking but knowing I was in a safe environment and was surrounded by people who love me made me feel 10 times better. As my contractions are getting worse I tell Ms. Alvarez that I want the epidural, she then walks out to go tell the doctor. Ms.Alvarez comes back and tells me that the doctor who does epidural’s was doing someone elses. After I was done panicking my partner and my grandma made me realize that I’m strong enough to give birth without the epidural. Besides when it was about time for me to push Ms. Alvarez had told me it was too late for me to get it and that I would have to start pushing. As my contractions get worse the doctor and my partner are telling me to take deep breaths in and out, my partner whispers to me, “you’re doing so great my love,” I replied with “I love you so much.” When I was nine and a half centimeters dilated, Dr. Lujan tells me I’m going to have to start pushing. At that moment I knew I was ready to be a mother and that I would be a good ass mother. As I’m about to start pushing the environment, my anxiety transforms into confidence. When pushing out my baby I can hear everyone telling me, “You’re doing so good” and “Come on! You got this! You’re so strong.” Hearing those words I felt an overwhelming sense of confidence and love, like I was exactly where I was meant to be. I was surrounded by people who had my back.

When my precious baby came out it was pure joy, a wave of love so intense it felt like my heart had

expanded to fill the entire room. The first cry, the tiny squeak, and then the warmth of my baby’s skin against mine, it was a mix of relief and happiness and I’ll never forget that. My partner and my grandma with tears coming down their eyes made me even more emotional, I was overwhelmed by the love and gratitude I felt for this tiny, perfect being we had created. My experience made me realize that safety can be created in an environment where people have compassion and gave me the confidence to embrace one of life’s most profound moments. Having my children changed my whole perspective on life, it’s like they become your whole world and suddenly you’re not just living for yourself anymore. It’s crazy how much love they bring into your life, like your heart’s got this whole new level of capacity. And safety I think it’s more like they make you wanna be safe, you know? Like you wanna be there for them, protect them, and make a stable world for them. It’s wild how much they have impacted my life in the best way possible. They teach you patience, love, and how to be selfless.

ONE DAY I’LL HAVE A SAFE PLACE

By Anonymous

What is a safe place? I don’t have a safe place or think I’ve ever had one before. I grew up in loud houses, always moving, always surrounded by different family members. My grandma, my four tias, my two uncles and my fourteen cousins. My tias and four of my cousins all slept in one room sharing one bed. Most of my life I grew up with my grandma and cousins so my house was never peaceful. I never had any privacy so I learned to get dressed with my other clothes still on and how to stay aware of everything and everyone around me. I always had to be on watch for my cousins not to steal my stuff or clothing.

Just to have some space, we used to sneak out to the park alone. My grandma would catch us and chase us home. She would say “Eres o te haces?” when we would ask what we did wrong. It was rare if the house was quiet. I never felt like my house was my house. It felt like I’d just go there to sleep, wake up and eat. There was nothing to do but to argue and fight with each other. When it came to eating dinner, we would fight over who would get to eat on the TV dinner table.

My cousin would shout, “It was my turn to use it!”

I would go find my grandma and say, “Me quitaron la mesita, abuelita! Yo quiero comer ahí.”

She would go over and say, “No mas dacele,” but there was always some type of argument.

Because I grew up in this chaotic, loud space where we didn’t have any alone time or our own space, I don’t really know what being in a safe place would feel like. What I know and what I’ve had to experience is constant noise and stress. It doesn’t feel safe, peaceful or joyful to have to not have enough bathrooms for everyone, to have so many spaces be dirty because there’s just too many people using them and not enough people cleaning them. It didn’t feel safe to move through a house where my grandma hoarded so much stuff that we didn’t even use. I can only imagine what it must be like to have a truly safe space.

I would imagine a safe place to be calm no one else, just me. Quiet and peaceful. I wouldn’t have to worry about any stupid things like where I might stay at, money or arguing. Any stressful thing that most privileged people don’t even have to think about I wouldn’t care. It won’t exist anymore in my safe space. My safe

space would always stay the same no matter what else might be going on in my life. When I was little I always imagined living alone in a small house. This house would be in the woods. Trees all around I wouldn’t have to go anywhere because everything I’ll need would be right there. I’d be in my house just painting or sewing, maybe just doing the most random things to keep myself entertained. Little me wanted to be like Rapunzel before she got rescued by the prince. Except I wouldn’t be locked up if I stayed there willingly. Even though a place like that might not even exist yet or even at all I guess someone still has to hope it exists.

THE SAFE MOMENT

By Daniela M.

My safe place is the bodies of my non-human ancestors. In the autumn of 2024, I stepped out of the car of a good friend of mine to find myself in what seemed like the middle of nowhere. I was on the outskirts of Tijuana, Baja California, on top of a mountain that connected with many others. The view was spectacular. Despite having lived most of my life in Tijuana, I had never had such a good opportunity to appreciate the natural shapes of the land. In the distance, I could see a green-colored sea, the surrounding mountains full of plants and trees, with livestock wandering among them.

It made me think about the stories and conspiracy theories my mother likes to watch on television about giants sleeping on the earth, waiting for the downfall of the world to wake up and become its protectors. I focused so much that for a moment I forgot why I had gone there and that I had to unload my suitcases from my friend’s car to arrange them in the room where we would stay.

I’m not sure how to name the place where I was—it was a space set up to stay and give classes. Outside, it was a huge courtyard with two rows of freight containers, like the ones on trailers, which had been modified into rooms facing each other, forming a long pathway in the courtyard. At the end of these rows, in the middle, there was a giant dome and a building that served as a kitchen and dining area. And next to the main courtyard, there was a large terrace with seating and beds to sit on.

I specifically went at that time for the so-called “encounter with the four elements,” a series of classes that would be taught by Josefa, a Maya priestess at the site throughout the weekend, whose goal was to share ancestral knowledge about the natural world and establish a connection with the four elements. Even before the start of the classes, we had been asked to bring an intention to space; however, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to find in those mountains. All the other people in the group seemed to have stronger and more genuine intentions—they were there thinking about their children, their adult problems, or to nurture the vast knowledge they already had.

During the first night, the priestess guided us in meditation and breathing exercises. The second day, we continued with classes inside the dome, dances, songs, exercise, and writing exercises. On the third and last day, we were instructed not to touch or drink water for any reason and to be early in the middle of the courtyard to go for a walk at the lower part of the mountains. At sunrise we went down halfway on the mountain in a truck as a group, and gave an offer of tobacco to mother earth before entering. During the walk a loud sound emerged from a huge bush next to the path we were following, which was followed by the flight of some birds that came out of it. “Hey Dani, do you know what those birds are called?” the man, who if I remember correctly was the owner of the place, asked me. “No,” I replied in a very low tone. Honestly,

being among so many adults made me very socially nervous. “Those are swallows,” he said. I turned back to take a look at the birds, which were still visible in the distance. “Like in Bécquer’s poem?” “I don’t know.” “I hadn’t seen them here before, but it seems more animals come here,” he told me, and I wondered if perhaps those animals had been driven from their old habitats.

At the end of the trip, we arrived at a small lake, made an offering with fruit and songs—songs to Mother Water and Mother Earth. The priestess pointed out that there were fish in the lake. ‘Let’s be quiet for a moment, and you will see that they will come closer.’ I closed my eyes and focused on feeling my body, and when I heard a small sound of water, I opened my eyes. Indeed, the fish in the lake came to greet us. When I opened my eyes, for a second I got confused seeing a bunch of silver things jumping quickly out of the water—they were the fish, and not only that, they came closer. When I lifted my head, I saw a dragonfly flying above me and some cows approaching from a distance.

It’s hard to describe the feeling that filled me at that moment; the only similar thing I can recall is the sensation I felt when resting my head on my mother’s stomach when I was a little girl. For a brief moment, my breathing felt weightless, the beat of my heart gentle, and my mind fell silent. It wasn’t until the way back that I became aware of what I had felt on the edge of that lake. For the first time in a long time, I felt safe in my surroundings, and not just in terms of survival standards. I felt connected without being prey to anything or being a predator—something that in my daily life is nonexistent, whether it’s criminalization by an immigration officer crossing the border or my own mind consuming me from within. I always feel like I’m surviving an attack and for a moment I was able to escape from that. My safe place is in the cerros that have seen me survive just as they did with my ancestors when man divided the land and that will always be there to welcome me into their heart.

NANA: MY FOREVER SAFE SPACE

By Savannah M.

I walk in the door and I’m engulfed in the aroma of something that smells delicious, my mouth is watering and I see my nanas heart warming smile. “Hey mama are you hungry?” Inquired my grandma, “I made fresh tamales.” I sat at the kitchen table after hugging and kissing my grandmother’s cheek.

“I’m starving Nana, I haven’t eaten all day,” I confessed.

She placed the plate on the table for me and another for her. We sat and joked. “Did you know that your cousin is dating an amish guy?” My grandma giggles. “AN AMISH GUY?!?” I burst into laughter. She doesn’t know how much the time I get to spend with her means to me. Whenever I’m with my grandma she always reminds me, “If you ever feel unloved or unsafe I hope you know you always have a home here mama, okay?”

I always respond with “I know nana,” and it never fails to make me feel seen.

Even though she’s my grandma, she’s always felt more like a second mom to me because she’s never made me feel left out or anything less than a daughter. I have two tias who are twins and older than me by three years and my grandma always treated me like a third daughter.

My grandma inspires me and motivates me every day. One of my Nana’s favorite sayings is “Love people for who they are, not who you hope they’ll become.” “Do you know what I mean when I say this mija?” she would ask. She has always told me this, even when I was a little girl. Honestly, when I was little this saying didn’t make much sense to me, now that I’m older I understand. She knows that when you have a big heart you are too loving and or forgiving to people who don’t deserve it. She was a teen mom and gave birth to my mom at 16. That woman’s resilience is one of the many reasons she’s my favorite role model. She grew up in Tecate and her family crossed the border together and from a young age had to get a job to help support and provide for her family. She met and fell in love with my grandpa and ended up having my mom. This didn’t stop my grandma from pursuing her dreams of graduating. She went to a trade school for dentistry and now she’s a dentist. She taught me to not let anything or anyone define me or hold me back from pursuing my dreams.

Something that I will always remember about my grandma is when I had to go to court to testify against my sperm donor for molesting me. My paternal grandparents, and basically my entire paternal side of my family turned against me and didn’t believe me, but my grandma on my mom’s side me. My grandma took that day off of work. So she could be there in court with me and sat all day awaiting the trial. She distracted my mind so that wasn’t the only thing I was thinking about.

I am so grateful to have a role model like her in my life and I know her influence will stay with me forever. My nana’s love and guidance have helped to shape me into the person I am today. She tells me I remind her of herself. That is the biggest compliment she could give me. She taught me that a safe place doesn’t have to be confined within four walls. It can be a person too.

I LEARNED THE HARD WAY

By Giovanna H.

After losing my father, I felt very alone and confused. Everything in my life felt heavy, and I didn’t know how to deal with it. I was only fourteen years old, and I made a decision that I deeply regret. In 2022, I was staying at my grandma’s house in Tijuana, and I was going through a very hard time emotionally. I had no motivation and no one to talk to. All I wanted was to feel loved and noticed by someone. I spent most of my time on my phone, trying to distract myself. That’s when I met a guy through Instagram. His name was Alexis. He told me he was eighteen and that he lived in Playas de Tijuana. I knew he had bad habits and that he talked to other girls, but I ignored it. At that time, my mindset was very different, and I wasn’t thinking clearly. I just wanted attention and someone to care about me. There was a time when we were on the phone, and he said, “Why don’t we meet in person?” I thought about it a lot. I had never been allowed to leave the house on my own. I told him, “I can’t. They don’t let me.” But he kept insisting.

As the days went by, I kept thinking about how I could see him, and I thought maybe we can have a nice time together, so I agreed. I called him and said “I have an idea for us to meet, but it has to be a secret.” He agreed. I remember there were times when he told me about his family problems and his addiction to crystal meth. The day arrived, and it was a Friday we chose a late evening meeting. I was nervous and hoped my grandmother wouldn’t notice anything. My mind felt blank, but I wanted to take the risk. It was already 12 a.m., and I told him which way to enter the main door facing the street. I got ready and tried to look pretty.

He called and said, “I’ll need an Uber. Can you pay for it?”

I replied, “Yes, but you’ll pay on the way back.”

“Yeah. That’s ok.” he agreed.

I got an Uber and waited for him. By that time my grandma was already asleep. When he arrived, I opened the door carefully and paid the driver. The first thing he did was hug me tightly and kiss me. I could smell the strong cologne he was wearing. He was tall, had dark hair, and a skull tattoo on his right hand. We went to my room quietly and locked the door. We talked for a little while, but there wasn’t much connection. He insisted I smoke with him, saying it would help us relax, and I gave in. That’s when everything changed. I realized he only wanted one thing, and I immediately regretted my decision. I had tried marijuana before, so I knew the effects, but this felt different. I felt awful. I was cold, trembling, scared, and couldn’t think clearly. Everything felt like it was spinning. I knew he had given me something else. I remember him touching me, trying to take off my clothes, and laying me down on the bed. Even though he knew I wasn’t okay, he held me tightly. All I wanted was to get out of that situation. He tried to take advantage of me, but I didn’t let it continue. Even though he was still holding me, I pushed myself to move and take control of my body again.

I asked, “What did you give me?”

He replied, “I don’t know what you’re talking about, I didn’t give you anything.”

After that, I found the courage to make him leave my house. I told him I never wanted to see him again. The next day, I felt sick to my stomach and overwhelmed with regret.

Now that I have experienced this, I know how important it is to trust my instincts and set boundaries. I seek safety by being careful about who I let into my life and making sure I feel secure emotionally and physically. Safety is not just about protection, it’s about listening to myself and putting my well-being first.

MY SAFE PLACE IS HIM

By Selina Z.

My safe place is my boyfriend or his room. I feel like other peoples houses or their homes feel like an escape from your own house. That is how I see my boyfriend’s room. Even just the person’s presence can be too

When me and my boyfriend first started dating. Me and my family would argue badly; I would leave the house for hours and that would help with all my emotions. But my boyfriend didn’t like how late and dangerous it would get on those walks. So every time something would happen, I would come over. He would let me vent and just cry while he held me. I loved how quiet his house was. I loved how I could step out of his room and just feel calm.

I felt very calm. I would take and get the rest that I needed. I would be able to do all the normal things, but no yelling, no arguing, crying, or fighting. That is why he is my safe place, because he can make me feel safe everywhere when I need him and if I just need a break. He is my safe place.

THE MAN WHO HAS INFLUENCED ME

By Jazmin S.

Throughout our lives we meet many people, but only a few leave a mark on who we are and how we see the world. These people influence us not only by what they say, but also by what they do. One of the people who has influenced my life is my dad. He hasHe has been a guide for me and an example of effort and responsibility. From a very young age, I have learned by observing him and listening to his advice, although I have sometimes made mistakes, which has shaped my way of thinking and acting. Before having one of the most important experiences of my life with him, I was a more insecure and fearful person. I often doubted myself and thought I was too kind to people who weren’t kind to me. At school, I worried too much about what others thought of me, and that made me feel nervous and unmotivated.

My dad noticed my attitude and my sadness, even though I didn’t always tell him what was really going on or how I felt. He has always been observant and attentive to me. Despite his own responsibilities and problems, he never stopped caring about how I felt and what was happening in my life. One particular day marked a turning point in my life. I had had a bad experience with some “friends” and felt awful and inadequate. I thought maybe I wasn’t the kind of person they really wanted to spend their time with. When I got home, I started crying because I couldn’t hold back my tears. My dad heard me crying in my room and came in to see what was wrong. He hugged me and told me to tell him what was bothering me. During that conversation, he spoke to me very calmly and patiently. He explained that not everyone is capable of being your friend and being there when you need them. His words made me reflect and realize that it was true. At that moment, I felt that I didn’t really need friends or company to feel enough.

While we were talking, my dad helped me see the situation differently. He told me that everyone chooses whether or not they want to be friends with you, and I don’t have to force myself to stay in a place where I’m made to feel less than. At that moment, I felt supported, calm, and more confident. That event was very impactful for me because it changed the way I see people who call themselves friends. I began to feel emotionally stronger and more confident.

From that experience, I noticed a change in my personality. I began to distance myself and avoid people, and to choose my influences more carefully. I also learned to treat people the way they treat me and not to tolerate anything I didn’t like. Over time, I understood that my father’s influence wasn’t limited to that single moment. Thanks to him, I learned my own worth without waiting for others to assign me a value in order to consider me a friend.

In conclusion, my dad has been one of the most important people in my life and a great influence on the person I am today. This moment marked a change in the way I think and act. Thanks to his support, I am a stronger and more confident person, able to move forward even though I am alone because, for me, friends are no longer a reality.

Down, Sick & Wicked

Dsteez- Slide
Chito Ransa\$- Gold grips
Babyfacewood- Paper Route
Lul jody- RockN
JayDaYoungan-Muddy Situation
Lil baby- How
Youngboy- Untouchable
Youngboy - Have You Ever



I chose this photo for my album cover project because it really fits in with what I'm really trying to say. The image makes me feel happy since it reminds me of where I grew up at and my childhood. The image represents my community do to it showing something that is important or common in our area. It could be something we all enjoy or something that makes our community special. The image helps others see what makes our community unique and it makes me proud to share it with them.

Cali — Love Album Cover

MY SAFE PLACE

By Marry F.

“Mom, I’m so excited for my birthday tomorrow! The backyard is filled with balloons and decorations!” I say, preparing for my 6th birthday the next day.

“Yes, but we’re gonna have to finish this tomorrow, it’s getting dark.”

We were having the party in the back garden. It was pretty huge to me. There were lights all around the fence to the roof, decorations of Elsa and blue tables set up all around. My jumper was my favorite part; it was huge with a big slide and a basketball hoop. I was so excited getting ready for bed that night, but it was so hard for me to sleep.

Getting ready for my birthday was so exciting; all my friends came over and were getting ready with me. We watched Frozen while getting ready. It was early in the morning and all my neighbors were over at our house. My brother’s friends from around the block jumped on my jumper at 9 am in the morning, while my parents were cooking us breakfast upstairs. By the time my party started, it felt like everyone in the world was there, family, friends, and neighbors. Hearing the sounds of all the kids playing and laughing made me know/feel like I was safe and even loved.

Being around all the people I care about made me feel loved. Outside all your heard was conversations and laughing, kids playing and screaming. This was just a reminder that I have people in my life who genuinely care. Seeing all their smiles on their faces and knowing they were here to celebrate with me, made me feel appreciated and loved. In that moment, everything felt right and a place where I could let my guard down and just be myself.

Looking back made me realize what it felt like to feel safe and be home; it was the feeling of being loved by different people in my life. It made me realize that home isn’t just a physical place, but a feeling of belonging and being loved unconditionally.

THE DAY I FOUND MY SAFE PLACE

By J’Launi B.

I’ve realized out of my 18 years of being alive that my safe place and the most I’ve ever felt safe was when I was at the hospital to get induced to have my baby Marryanna. I wasn’t scared. I was so happy to meet her and see the little feet that had been kicking my belly. So when I first went to the hospital on the 8th of April, my mom was there and I called my doula so she could come. Then I checked in, went to my room and my mom waited until my doula came. It was very late so they both stayed for a little bit and latee that day, Maryanna’s dad came to stay with us.

Early the next morning at 5:00 am as I was standing up to go to the bathroom, my water broke. I told her dad and the nurses and we moved rooms so that I could have an epidural. I did not feel it until. Then I made it to the other room and I felt her head and then I had her. My everything. She was so small and pretty. I had her at 5:26 in the morning. She was only 6 pounds and they gave her to me and I looked at her in disbelief that she was beautiful and I knew right then and there that she was and is my safe place.

I'm still in disbelief that I could create this little person, that I can be myself around. It's hard to believe that I can care for someone in that way. It's a completely different love, it's honestly unbelievable. The whole time, we were at the hospital and I had her by my side all the time. She is my safe place and it just makes me realize how grateful I am to even get to meet her. I had a lot of complications, but it just makes me realize how much I wanna be better for her in every way I can.

SHE HAS INFLUENCED ME THE MOST

By Star H.

From a young age I always felt different. My mom was always angry, and made me feel like everything was my fault. When she was angry, she'd call me names, "Stupid, bitch. Ho." Then, after lashing out, she'd act like nothing happened and would ask, "What do you want for dinner?"

"I'm not hungry," I'd mutter.

Or she was always crying, yelling, talking about how much she hated her life, and how she wanted to kill herself. I didn't understand it at the time, and wondered why everyone else's mom was gentle and loving. I felt alone thinking I was the one one with a mom like mine. I felt like it was all my fault. I so badly wanted that better life for my mom. I wished that she had never met my dad, and went on to college to become something more, even if that meant I would've never been born. I wish I had never been born. I didn't want to keep living with the guilt of thinking I had ruined my mom's life.

Truth is, her life was ruined before I even existed. One day while cutting my hair, she was telling me stories about her childhood and then began sharing, "When I was around 8 years old, my stepdad came into my room one night and started touching me, it went on for months. When I tried to tell my mom she didn't believe me. She cared more about keeping her man than protecting me." She told me about how her mom never wanted to take care of her, and would just beat her. "I couldn't tell her anything, she never listened to me," my mom confessed. I don't think she realized I felt the same way.

As I got older, I too became angry. I was angry at my mom for the way she treated me, I was angry at myself for being angry, and I was angry at the world for the life I lived. I started fighting back more, and I stopped being the little girl who cried for mommy to love her. I thought I didn't need her, and that my life would be better off without her. "6 more years, 5 more years, 4 more years." I'd tell myself, counting down the years until I'd turn 18, so I could get away and be free. Then, I think I was 15 when it started, my mom was standing in front of the mirror.

"My boob is hurting. It feels hard right here, like a ball," my mom pressed down, wincing at the pain.

"It's probably nothing," I responded.

It wasn't nothing. With time it got worse, and just like that, everything came crashing down. She was in and out of hospitals, doctors experimenting on her like a lab rat, like she was nothing. She isn't nothing. She's a mother, a daughter, a sister, and a friend.

After months of doctors not knowing what it was, she was diagnosed with granulomatous mastitis, an

autoimmune disease, meaning her body was doing it to itself. I wasn't angry at her anymore, but the anger I had towards myself and the world grew. I was angry that I had to watch her go through it all, and there was nothing I could do. I was angry at the world for making her go through this. "Hasn't she been through enough?" I'd yell out into the world, never getting a response back.

Visiting her in the hospital was the worst. I hated hospitals, and so did she. The air felt cold, and I'd think about how many people died in the room she was staying in. I felt like a little girl again, crying for her mommy. All those times I told myself I didn't need her were lies. I needed her more than anything. I sat on her bed and cried with her. "I'm so scared. I don't want to die and I feel so alone here, like no one's in my corner, you know?" she cried.

I did know. For once, I felt understood. I realized like me, she said things she didn't mean. Like me, she was just a girl living life for the first time. She was scared like me, she felt alone like me, she was just a girl who needed her mom, like me. All this time I spent feeling angry and alone, she had felt the same way. My mom is still fighting this disease and remains strong. I've grown to be a strong, independent, and intellectual woman just like her.

MY PERSON MY CONFIDANT

By Sophia G.

Sisters are supposed to be there through thick and thin, but Dana's been more than that; she's been my rock, my confidante, and my best friend. My sister Dana has been a constant source of support and comfort in my life, standing by me through all the ups and downs. Growing up she was more than just a sibling; she is the person I can confide in, my partner in crime, and my best friend. We shared countless memories, from late-night conversations about life to silly adventures that only made sense to us.

When life got tough, Dana was always there to lend a listening ear and offer words of encouragement. She always said, "hey come on i know you can do it your a strong independent smart girl im here for you and anything you need just let me know." I would reply, "thank you I really appreciate all the support and encouragement you always give me, love you ." But ultimately, she would always show me how much she believed in me and how much she loved me. She's also celebrated my victories no matter how small, and helped me pick up the pieces when things didn't go my way. Her unwavering belief in me gave me the strength to keep pushing forward, even when things seemed impossible.

Take for example when my mom would yell at me for not doing something right like forgetting to sweep before I mop. My sister demanded " Stop yelling at her over something that's so stupid it's not that serious." Whether it was a bad day or major crisis, Dana was always just a phone call away ready to drop everything and be there for me.

Dana's presence in my life has been a gift, and I'm so grateful to have her by my side, she's taught me the value of empathy, kindness, and unconditional love. Her support has helped shape me into the person I am today, and I can't imagine navigating life's challenges without her. Through every up and down, Dana has been a steady source of love and encouragement, and for that I will be forever grateful.

In a world where relationships can be fleeting, Dana’s commitment to our bond is something I cherish deeply. She’s been there for me through all the messy moments, and her love and support has only grown stronger with time. I’m so lucky to have a sister like Dana, and I know that no matter what life brings, she’ll be there to face it with me side by side.

THE MOMENT MY LIFE CHANGED

By Rozeli Z.

The typical life of a 14 year old was hanging out with friends, wasn’t home, and doing things that made me happy and that all changed on Thanksgiving 2024. I had been feeling stomach pain for two days and didn’t know what was causing it. Never in a million years did I believe that I could be pregnant nor did it cross my mind. My grandma had forced me to go to the doctors to get answers to my issue and I left the hospital with more questions. They weren’t able to help me nor give me answers so I was left more confused than ever. I had this feeling to take another pregnancy test and that’s when my life changed.

The test came out positive. I was in shock. I couldn’t look at the stick without my hand shaking. I immediately ran to my grandma and showed her the positive pregnancy test. I was nervous to see her reaction; I was afraid she was gonna be extremely upset at me. But thankfully that wasn’t the case, she showed me a lot of support and grace. Although I had my grandma’s support I still felt uneasy. As the months flew by I made sure I was taking care of myself physically and emotionally because I was feeling sick, throwing up, and not in the best mood. Thankfully my boyfriend was super supportive and understanding of the great changes my body was going through.

The day was July 17th 2025 and I was on my way to the hospital to give birth to my beautiful daughter. I had my grandma and boyfriend with me to help me through this big and emotional day. I was being induced, so that helped speed up the process. Although I was extremely nervous, I think the feeling of joy overcame the feeling of nervousness. I had support from my boyfriend. He rubbed my head and told me it’ll be okay. Once labor began it all felt real. It didn’t take much pushing before my daughter Avyanna came into the world. As soon as they put her on me I felt peace and my mind went blank, knowing she was here was the only thing that mattered to me. I knew my life would change for the better and all I knew was that I wanted to give my daughter the best life possible. I saw my boyfriend crying, and rubbing her back. Once I saw her face I could see a beautiful mix of me and her dad. She was 6.9 pounds, I knew from that moment I knew that this miracle was supposed to happen.

My life before my daughter was very difficult and not looking in the best direction. I was drinking and going to parties and living my life carelessly. My daughter has given me purpose and has taught me patience. Being in postpartum it was rough and I lost value of myself but just holding her always kept me warm. Motherhood has taught me how to love and be loved, how to be selfless and it’s giving me the motivation to achieve the best so I can give my daughter the best. Since having her I plan on going to school to become an ultrasound technician, establish a successful and abundant life for our daughter, my boyfriend and I.

THE MOMENT MY EIGHT-MONTH-OLD DAUGHTER BECAME MY GREATEST TEACHER

By Sherly D.

“Mommy,” my daughter murmured softly, not in words, but in gentle sounds as her small fingers wrapped tightly around mine. The hospital room was quiet, filled with the steady hum of machines and the warmth of her tiny body resting against my chest. Pale light filtered through the curtains, and in that moment, everything in my life changed. Although my daughter was only eight months old, she became the most influential person I had ever known.

Before she was born, I often struggled with uncertainty and self-doubt. I worried about my future and questioned whether I was strong enough to handle life’s responsibilities. Fear shaped many of my decisions, and I sometimes felt lost. However, holding my daughter for the first time gave me a sense of purpose I had never experienced before. As I looked at her fragile face, I whispered, “I will do everything I can to protect you.” That promise marked the beginning of my transformation. Motherhood quickly taught me lessons that no classroom ever could. Sleepless nights became routine as I rocked my daughter back and forth, pacing the room while moonlight spilled across the floor. When she stirred or cried softly, I reassured her by saying, “It’s okay, Mommy is here.” At only eight months old, she could not speak, yet her wide eyes and gentle grip communicated complete trust. That trust forced me to grow stronger, even when exhaustion weighed heavily on me.

One evening stands out clearly in my memory. After a long day filled with schoolwork and responsibilities, I sat on the edge of my bed feeling overwhelmed and close to giving up.

Tears filled my eyes as I questioned whether I could continue balancing everything. My daughter lay beside me, sleeping peacefully, her chest rising and falling with each breath. In a quiet whisper, I said, “I have to be strong for you.” At that moment, I realized that quitting was no longer an option. She depended on me, and that responsibility changed my mindset completely.

As my daughter grew, even in just eight months, her influence became more visible in my daily life. Watching her learn to sit on her own, crawl across the floor, and pull herself up using furniture taught me powerful lessons about perseverance.

Each time she lost her balance, she paused only briefly before trying again. I often encouraged her by saying, “You’re okay. Try again.” Through her determination, she showed me that progress does not require perfection, only persistence.

Caring for my daughter also taught me patience and discipline. I became more organized with my time, more focused on my goals, and more aware of my actions. Every decision I made was influenced by a single question: What example am I setting for my child? Even though she is too young to understand my words, I know she is learning from my actions. That realization pushed me to work harder and believe in my own abilities. Although my daughter is only eight months old and cannot yet understand the impact she has had on my life, her presence alone has transformed me. She motivates me to face challenges with courage and to remain hopeful during difficult moments. Because of her, I am learning to trust myself and embrace

responsibility rather than fear it. She gave my life direction when I once felt uncertain.Today, my daughter continues to shape who I am becoming. She inspires me to grow emotionally, mentally, and personally.

That first moment in the hospital was not simply the beginning of her life; it was the beginning of mine as a stronger and more determined person. My daughter may be small, but her influence on my life is powerful. She has taught me that strength comes from love, responsibility, and perseverance, and for that reason, she will always be the greatest teacher I have ever had.

MY MOTHER

By Evemanuela G.

I still remember the night clearly. The house was quiet, and the only sound I could hear was the ticking clock on the wall. I sat at the kitchen table with my head down, feeling tired, stressed, and unsure about my future. At that moment, my mother walked in and looked at me carefully. She could tell something was wrong without me saying a word.

“What’s going on?” she asked softly as she pulled out a chair and sat next to me.

“I don’t think I can do this anymore,” I said quietly. “Everything feels too hard.”

That night became one of the most important moments of my life. It showed me how influential my mother truly is and how her words and actions continue to shape who I am today. At that time, I was dealing with many responsibilities. School felt overwhelming, and life was moving faster than I expected. I felt like no matter how hard I tried, it was never enough. I was scared of failing and disappointed in myself. My mother listened carefully as I explained how lost I felt. She did not interrupt me. She simply listened, her face calm and understanding. After a moment, she placed her hand over mine and said, “Life will never be easy, but you are stronger than you think. Don’t give up on yourself.” Her words stayed with me. She explained that everyone struggles, even when they seem strong on the outside. She told me about her own difficulties and the sacrifices she made to keep moving forward. Hearing her story made me realize that I was not alone. The kitchen light felt warmer, and for the first time that day, I felt safe.

Another moment that showed my mother’s influence happened a few days later. I was still unsure about school, but I remembered her advice about education. She always told me that knowledge is power and that no one can take it away from you. One morning before school, she looked at me and said, “Do your best today. That’s all I ask.” “I will,” I replied, even though I still felt nervous. That simple conversation changed my mindset. Instead of focusing on fear, I focused on effort. I started taking school one day at a time. Whenever I felt tired or discouraged, I thought about my mother’s strength and her constant support. Her belief in me helped me believe in myself.

As I grew older, I began to understand how much my mother sacrificed for me. She worked hard, often putting her own needs aside so I could have opportunities. She rarely complained, even when she was exhausted. Watching her taught me responsibility and gratitude. I realized that her love was not just in her words, but in her actions every single day.

Today, I carry my mother’s lessons with me. When life feels difficult, I hear her voice reminding me not to give up. When I feel afraid, I remember her strength. She has influenced the way I think, the way I act, and the way I face challenges. Because of her, I am stronger, more determined, and more hopeful about my future. In the end, that quiet night at the kitchen table changed everything. My mother’s guidance helped me stand back up when I felt like falling. She is the most influential person in my life because she never stopped believing in me, even when I struggled to believe in myself.

MY STRONG MOTHER

By April I.

Have you ever had someone in your life be so important that you wouldn’t know what to do without them? Well I have, in this essay I will be writing about how my mom plays such an important role in my life. I have always loved my mom even if we’re not on the same page. She’s always taught me to be independent, hardworking, and to be responsible. My mom’s name is Lourdes Flores. She is 40 years old and she has 4 kids with my Father Jose. She is a very hardworking person that would do anything for her kids. We used to live in an apartment when I was a toddler behind my grandma’s house until we moved in 2013. We’ve always been a peaceful family until last year January, 2025 when things started going downhill.

My mom kept feeling a sharp pain in her stomach and lower body. She was very pale. Everyday she would whine “ My stomach and legs hurt” while in pain. She had gone to the hospital, and they had simply warned, “ She needs to drink more water!” However, she was afraid that it was something else, which she was right about. During this she pulled me aside and told me, “If it’s serious and I don’t make it I love you but you’re going to have to fill my spot as the parent and take care of your siblings.”

I replied to her, “ Don’t say that. I don’t want anything to happen to you. I really need you.”

Seeing her weak made me realize I had to be responsible like she told me. I had to make her proud even if what she had wasn’t so major. After a week, they told her it was just kidney stones and prescribed her medication to take daily and drink lots of water. Nonetheless, she would still feel that weird sharp pain. What I didn’t know and I doubt she knew was that a month after finding out she had kidney stones she would also find out she was pregnant with my baby sister. She did extremely well at hiding her stomach. It was really odd.

Prior to my mom telling me, my grandma kept constantly asking me, “Wouldn’t you want a baby sister?”

I simply replied, “No? I’m good” and my day went on. It wasn’t until Father’s Day that my mom gave me a perfume with a sonogram in it. I looked at her and asked “It’s not real right?”

She laughed and replied “Yes it is.” Apparently, almost everyone knew but me. She later confessed, “The doctors told me that I have vasa previa.”

“What is that? Is it serious?” I asked.

“Well the doctor said it could get serious. That I could possibly bleed a lot as the baby grows,” she explained.

When she told me that my heart dropped. I didn't want another scare of losing my mom. This moment made me feel guilty for the way I'd taken her for granted. At the time, I also had court so she was very stressed with my court issues and her various check ups. Then, a few months passed and in October my dad got a call that my grandma had a heart attack. Her family rushed her to the US Border so they could take her to the hospital from TJ. And on October 9, 2025 I had my final court. We were finally going to relieve some of the stress. That evening after a stressful day, I fell asleep early. A few hours later, I woke up to a sad text from my mom. "Your grandma passed away," she wrote. I felt so much grief take over me.

Just when we thought the stressful situations would calm down, my mom had to plan most of the funeral that was held a week after my grandma died. A week later she went into labor. She shared with me, "I do so much for everyone even at my lowest."

"You're right. You really do, Mom. I'm sorry that we don't appreciate all you do."

Then as she was starting to go into labor, she sobbed, "If anything goes wrong, take care of your baby sister and the rest of your family. I love you."

Thankfully everything went well and we were all grateful that she was able to come home safely with my now 3 month old baby sister who healed my mom with everything that was put on her. My mom is a very influential and important person to me. Not only does she put a roof over our heads, but she also spoils us occasionally. She makes sure there's always food on our plates, money to spend and most of all always has love to give. She taught me to be an independent woman. She showed me that being a mother is not easy, but always has a smile on her face. Wrapping this up I hope to become like my smart, caring understanding, loving mother who always pushes me to be and do better. I don't know what I'd do without her.

MY BEST FRIEND

By Jaydleen C.

My influential person is my best friend. She has had such a positive impact on my life. How yall may ask? Well let me explain. Before we met I was in the 6th grade but was stuck in a very unhealthy and toxic friend group. I was constantly finding myself in trouble almost two to three times a week. It was a cycle of negativity and poor choices that I couldn't seem to get away from.

Then me and my now best friend started talking in the middle of the 6th grade and instantly clicked and enjoyed each other's company so we began talking more and more every single day and then we called each other best friends. She showed me what a true friendship is, which was confusing to me because my past friendships were never that great. She never made me feel left behind, ashamed, or embarrassed about my interest and opinions. It was wonderful finally being able to be myself without worrying about anyone judging me.

She helped me distance myself from the toxic people who were negatively influencing my life. She was always there for me when no one was. Her support was a source of strength for me. She encouraged me to never give up on anything, to always be true to myself, and to never waste my time on people who don't bring me any happiness. She's more than a best friend though she's like a second sister to me.

Now we face a very hard challenge which is distance and time differences. She had moved away and with an 11 hour time difference so it's not always easy to connect. However our friendship remains as strong as ever. We still make the effort to catch up on each other's lives, often playing roblox on call or simply talking and playing around on call. Our distance has not lessened the bond we share.

Over the past four years of our friendship, we have created so many unforgettable memories. It's challenging to pick just a few but some of the best moments are when we made a friendship finger painting a week before summer break in 6th grade and I still have the painting to this day which is always a reminder of our bond. Another cherished memory is when we went to the mall a week after my birthday. We shopped, laughed, and had an incredible time, buying lots of things, and taking photos in the photo booths, which I really love.

The most recent memory is when she slept over, and we went for a walk late at night. It was around 10pm. When we decided to go to a frozen yogurt place. We ate in the place then walked around for a bit then headed back home around 11pm. It was such an amazing night filled with joy and laughter.

Our friendship is proof that you don't need to see each other everyday in order to still have a genuine friendship. I feel like this friendship is built on trust, understanding, and so much support. It has taught me the importance of being true to myself and the value of having someone who doesn't judge and is real with me. I am very grateful for her being in my life and I look forward to many more years of friendship and shared experiences with her.

The impact she has had on my life is great, and I cherish the bond we share, knowing that no matter what our friendship will stick together.

Most of all my best friend changed my life for the better when we met in the 6th grade, helping me escape a toxic environment, showed me true friendship, supported me, encouraged me to be myself. Despite the distance now, our bond remains strong and I hope it will stay like that forever.

BEING DIFFERENT

By Leo C.

Have you ever felt like you’re different from the entire world? I have and this story is about me overcoming these feelings. I was 13 years old and in middle school. I had friends and I was always laughing. My best friends’ names were Jesse and Daniel, they were very respectful, not because I’m in a wheelchair, but to everyone else too. We would always mess around in class. But, then came the moment I had to say goodbye as I graduated. Everything changed, and I remember this moment like it was yesterday.

“Leo, we know this isn’t the end of our friendship. We will meet again. We’re going to miss you”, I remember them saying. Suddenly my eyes softened. I was shocked to hear for the first time that someone actually liked having me as a friend. I had such an urge to cry and hug them but I was afraid it was too dramatic.

A few months later, I am now a Freshman in high school. I didn’t have any friends or people that I could talk to. I felt like I didn’t fit in because everyone stared at me and laughed because I was handicapped. I was constantly feeling mentally drained as I had no friends and felt unmotivated to come to school.

“How are you? I noticed you are always annoyed after school.” my mom asked. After I heard those words I froze because I thought no one would notice how I was feeling. I broke down crying and told her everything that has happened in school. She listened to what I said and didn’t talk. I remember feeling surprised because someone for once showed they cared. After I told her everything, the first thing she did was hug me.

“You don’t have to go to school today,” my mom said.

I felt at ease knowing that my mother was now aware of this situation and that she understood why I was angry and sad every single day. Shortly after the incident, she offered me something that I couldn’t believe I heard.

“We know that you don’t like going to school so we were wondering if you wanted to move schools?” my mom asked. Your cousin Mario is also in this school. When I heard this at first I was hesitant to move schools because I thought if I waited longer in this school then my friends might come back. But, I realized they weren’t because it’s been awhile. So, I was happy to move schools.

“Honey, it’s okay to be different.” Those words made me the happiest I had been in months and I love my mom for that. I entered therapy where I got help and now I feel motivated to go to school. I feel like I fit in at my new school and it is okay to be different from everyone else.

Janaye — Art from Narrative Front Page at SPA

FRIENDLY FADE

By: Jailynn G.

Have you ever gotten into a fight with your friend? Well, I have. It was supposed to be a friendly fade or a fight in the bathroom. But, it didn’t go that way.

“I really wanna fight somebody for fun!” Gia exclaimed.

“I’ll do a friendly fade with you“ I replied.

So, there we were in the restroom flailing our arms away at each other. I came out victorious. But, she got all butthurt.

“Run it back, it was slippery,” said Gia.

“No, you just can’t fight,” I sarcastically replied.

So, there we were, going at it again flailing our arms away like a wrestling match. This time, it was for real. Just like the friendly fade, I came out victorious again.

However, this time around she snitched on me to the principal. She told him that I had weed on me and I started a fight with her. As a consequence, I was kicked out of school and was sent to a drug program. Ultimately, I learned that actions have consequences and to not bring weed to school.

LOCKED UP

By Jonathan G.

Have you ever had a disagreement with someone you didn’t like? I have and it didn’t go well. I just woke up at 6 in the morning to eat breakfast and get ready to see my friend. But I forgot I couldn’t go with the homies because I was on a special program. So I ate in my dorm. I finished eating, did my roll, played pingpong for a bit with the homies and came back. Then, we went to hit the yard to workout.

As I was working out some vatos were being escorted by guards and as they passed us they started to throw hand signs. One of the vatos made a sign that said,“culon” which means “little bitch” while he’s surrounded by guards.

“Alright fosho then cuh we on that diss all his shit they go in,” I said.

I started planning with the homies, we stayed behind during PE and he came out standing next to the gym door. His dumbass goes in and comes back out and forgets to lock the door.

I rushed him and was immediately slammed to the floor. The supervisor caught me before I could reach vato. I was sent to my dorm all day for a week and with no phone privilege except to call my mom. Next time I will be smarter.

MY DOG RAN OUT

By Frida R.

I was scared when I saw my dog heading towards the road. It felt like my heart skipped a beat and chills went down my spine. It was a Thursday and I was in my room with my dog relaxing watching videos on my phone.

“Frida ben ayudame,” my mom yelled.

My dog heard my mom calling me from the driveway and she took off running. I followed to help my mom because she just got back from getting groceries. As I opened the door my dog bolted out like the wind. I felt scared.

“Ama la pelusa se salió de la casa se va ir a la caye”

She almost went into the road but my mom got in front of her so she made an abrupt about face and proceeded to run around the driveway. She escaped our grasp but eventually she was boxed up by my mom and I when she hid underneath the car. But, not for long because she darted out underneath the car through the back. Lucky for us she was cornered at the end of the driveway. I’m relieved that nothing happened to her. I learned that now every time I go out or if anyone leaves I have to grab her and put her in my room but leave a little crack in the door so when we leave the house she can walk wherever she pleases.

SKATE 3

By Liliana F.

Have you ever hit somebody with a skateboard or seen anybody get hit by a skateboard? Well, I have. Me and my best friends Jasmine and Destiny were in PE class and we thought that it would be a good idea to go jump someone.

“I want to fight that lil girl, Amy! She keeps giving me all these weird looks,” Jasmine shouted.

“You should fight her, dude if you start getting beat up I will jump in,” said Destiny.

“Girllll I aint jumping in, my momma finna beat my ass if I beat up someone!” I exclaimed.

“Don’t jump in and record for me.” Jasmine said.

We were searching everywhere during PE for Amy. We couldn’t find her. But, we saw her after school walking with her friend, Gia.

Jasmine said, “wassup with you giving me weird looks in PE? I need your fade.”

Gia responded, “back up off my cousin or run my fade.”

Jasmine swung at Amy and Gia pushed Jasmine to protect her friend from eating the punches. At this

point, my other friend, Destiny jumped in and started hitting Amy. However, I saw Destiny falling to the ground a couple of times.

“Oh hell no!” I exclaimed to myself. I grabbed my skateboard and hit Gia 3 times on her back.

When it was all said and done, I was kicked out of that school. Was it worth it? No. I learned that not to put myself in things that don’t involve me.



Nariyah — San Pasqual Academy

GROWING IN THE CORNER FLORAL SHOP

By Jarelli Victoria P.

I am from the flowers that grow at the corner shop
From peonies to lilies to roses
I am from the thorns from the stems
It tastes like rose water
I am from the hydrangea bush
The pretty pink bloom
The pretty blue sky
Whose pretty day I remember
As if I were the blooms
I am from selling blooms to admiring blooms
From “Hello” to “Thank you.”
I am from the know-it-alls
From blooming to wilting
I am from the blooming markets
With a vase of water
And a handful of blooms
I am from the seeds & soils
Breezy sunny days
From the moment I trim the stems
To wrapping the stems
The blooms are looking beautiful
From under the soil to sprouting
Pulling old stems
A shift of new beginnings
I am from these learning moments
To growing moments
All the petals from each bloom.

I AM FROM THE STREETS

By Antonino S.

I am from the streets,
Corner stores, bodies on the ground, food vendors and the smell of pan
I am from the Bible
Faith, the story of the cross and resurrection
I am from bread
Conchas daily
I am from the smell of trash
Litter on the streets and pigeons
I am from TJ, the hood
Fireworks or gunshots?
I am from people who steal
Clothes, food and press people
I am from video games, from Fortnite
I am from guns and the knives
from the hood and suburbs
I am from the streets.

I AM FROM

By Brianna M.

I am from “Pareces tonta.”
For my dad, I am the tonta
But he only says that when he’s mad

I am from people who like to have the last word every single day, and when they’re angry.
I am from “¡Limpien todo!”
I am from “¿Porque nunca esta limpio?”
I am from “Laven su ropa”
Nobody helps me to do laundry.

My brother said
“That’s not my responsibility.”
And my sister said,
“That’s not my clothes.”

I am from “Nunca me ayudan.”
I am from “Te ves linda.”
My mom said me, “You look pretty.”

I am from “Let’s go to the casa de tu abuela.”
I am from plants and trees because my grandmother’s house is very green
I go to my grandmother’s house to celebrate Navidad with the family
My family makes red pozole or carne asada with guacamole and quesadillas

I am from “Pareces tonta.”

WHERE I’M FROM

By Chris M.

I am from people throwing their old shoes up on tall strings on the streets
I am from people who celebrate two different cultures,
Eating delicious dishes for dinner such as red pozole and turkey every Thanksgiving or Christmas

I am from kids playing soccer on dirty streets that show off a shiny sunset
I am from people who speak two different languages
I am from family that crosses daily across the most controversial border in the world

I AM FROM

By Ean

I am from San Diego
Where people who were raised here call it daygo,
Where you call your day ones reli

I am from the rags to riches,
Where even though my dad didn’t have money,
he tried his best to give my brothers and me what we wanted

Where I’m from it always smells nauseating and like cigarettes at 12th & Imperial
Where I’m from I would see needles all over the ground where I would play
Where I’m from I would hear gunshots, screaming, and a lot of cussing

Where I’m from I wouldn’t taste much because money was tight,
But when I did, it was always school food and was like heaven in my mouth
Where I’m from I would feel my father’s hands and my mother’s,
It felt great like these two people make me feel safe

Where I’m from my mom would cuss in Spanish and I wouldn’t understand a word
Where I’m from you’ve got to watch what you wear and what you say
I am from San Diego

I AM FROM

By K.D.

I am from the screech of the tracks,
From the grass and flowers inviting themselves into the cracks in the concrete and pavement
I am from the many different scents of an always-burning candle,
From the taste of a dozen different soups and sweet candy

I am from the rough shoulder slaps and toothy grins,
From melted popsicles and a never-resting sun with blinding rays
I am from the stories my mom tells me and greasy chow mein
I am from long, late-night drives and restless laughter, petty arguments, and the scare of a sleepwalker at 3am

I am from a big dream made of tiny remnants of a dozen crushed ones
They hold onto what is left of their crushed dreams and hand it to us
To the younger ones, afraid to disappoint
I am from a strong faith that everything works out in the end

I AM FROM

By Santos B.

I am from loud and quiet places
I am from sunny skies and good weather
I am from sand and water and rides
I am from the smooth grounds and nice tall buildings
to the other side that's rocky, sandy and a bit messy
I am from greasy fake food to authentic food,
naturally, watching them make it
I am more from smooth places and sketchy places.
I am from busy times and calm times
I am from strength and intelligence
I am from a land that was stolen

I AM FROM

By Jay G.V.

I am from mini hoop
where I shoot and dunk on my little brother
And I hear the ball bounce on the floor.
The ball feels squishy, round, and full of air,
It smells like rubber.
The floor is nice and soft because it's a carpet,
And my mini hoop is hanging over my bunk bed.
I bounce the ball
I shoot
I miss it
Sike, I swished it!
It smells like my cologne
It's bright because my window shades are open.
Sometimes it's quiet,
Sometimes you hear gunshots and cars going fast.
There's not a lot of space, but I make it work
I am from mini hoop.

I AM FROM

By Fabian H.

I am from the baggy pants, not the saggy pants.
I am from the flavorful tacos my lovely mother makes.
I am from the flavorless waters my stepfather buys.
I am from the love my family gives.
I am knitted and weaved on the way I act.
I am from the strength that looks like love, not to hurt but to help.
I am from people who cared for me and fed me cereal that smells delicious and tasty.
I am from the four eyes with shining glasses.
I am from the people who will never give up on one another.
I am from the sadness, too scared to show everyone.

I AM FROM SAN DIEGO

By J.D.F.

I am from San Diego,
where cars honk & people yell,
and the air smells like smoke and gas.

From people who thrive in pressure,
who survived a worldwide virus and hardships.

From my family tradition of watching The Lord of the Rings on every major holiday.

From resilience,
like falling from trees as a kid and hurting,
but learning to be safer than before

From the pain of daily chores
From wanting to stay home and skip school,
but never did so I wouldn't have to spend the day cleaning.

From waking up to the loud barks of tiny dogs daily.

From the pit of trees on my way to school
on the hiking trail close to the road
where cars speed without care for the turns in the road or coyotes on the trail.

I AM FROM SAN DIEGO / WHERE I AM FROM

By Travis

I am from rough times
I am from the taste of Ramen noodles and Hamburger Helper
I am from the smell of cigarettes
I am from flavorful tacos
I am from spicy salsa
I am from loud nights
I am from basketball games on Thursday nights
I am from leaving my all on the basketball court
I am from leaving my all on the football field
I am from “All glory to God!”
I am from a Christian household
I am from church on Sunday
I am from curly hair
I am from early mornings
I am from rough times

THE TIJUANA RAID

By Santos B.D., Jr.

I was visiting my dad for the night in Tijuana when the unexpected happened. It was late, around midnight, and I was just climbing into bed when my mom looked out the window. She saw a line of vehicles flooding the street. I initially thought it was a crime scene elsewhere, but the scale was massive: eight PDI (Policía de Investigación) cars, three Marina and Guardia Nacional troop trucks, and a large transport filled with even more soldiers.

The chaos moved toward us. Heavy knocks echoed from downstairs. The owner of the building hesitated to open the door, but the officers threatened to use force. When she finally opened it, they rushed in, forcing everyone out of their rooms. They pointed automatic weapons with laser sights throughout the building, breaking down doors for tenants who weren't home. They lined the men up against the wall, though they let me stay by my mom's side. I was terrified; in Mexico, you never know the true story behind these raids. Sometimes the troops are doing their jobs, but other times, they are hired by outside interests. After checking everyone, they left with a ominous warning: they would be back.

A couple of days later, the tension remained. While sitting outside with my mom, we noticed a truck with dark tinted windows idling on the corner. The people inside were staring intently at the building and the surrounding area.

Eventually, back in San Diego, we got the call from my dad. He had been given an ultimatum: leave in a few weeks or be forcibly removed. He started selling his belongings to make the move easier and to save up some money. When the day of the eviction arrived, the officers returned, kicking everyone out and padlocking the rooms.

My dad struggled for a while, staying in a shelter because affordable housing was so hard to find. However, a few weeks later, he finally found a new place. When my mom and I went to visit him, we walked past the old building. Strangely, the locks were gone and a group of new, unfamiliar people had already moved in. It felt weird to see the original residents replaced so quickly, but the peace had finally returned. Through it all, I learned that no matter how bad a situation gets, there is always a bright light waiting on the other side.

LOSING PIN PON, FINDING NIÑO

by: Hailey G.R.

I was only fourteen when I received the news that made my heart stop. I had just arrived home from school to find my mother with wide, panicked eyes and trembling hands. I knew instantly that something was wrong. My cousin, Pin Pon, had been kidnapped by the cartel in Sinaloa. For three agonizing days, he was missing. When he was finally found by a stranger under a pile of tires and leaves, the details were horrific; he had been brutally beaten and his body mutilated. I can still feel the terror reflected in my mother’s eyes from that moment. It pulled me into a deep, heavy depression.

The day they found his body, my family tried to shield me from the truth. I was at Monarch School near Father Joe’s Villages when I sensed the shift in the air. To get to my family, I walked to the trolley with my brother to begin the journey across the border to Tijuana. I was shaking the entire way. My brother was uncharacteristically quiet, sensing the weight of the silence. He asked me what was happening, but I told him our mother had asked us to wait.

Once we reached Tijuana, the truth was finally confirmed inside the car, surrounded by my mother, her ex-girlfriend, my three cousins, and my brother. In the weeks that followed, I felt hollow. My emotions were frozen, and I didn’t know how to speak to anyone; no words could bring Pin Pon back. The trauma bled into our nights, too. My brother suffered from nightmares, claiming he could hear the screams and that he had seen the tragedy unfolding in his dreams before it even happened.

In March, two years ago, a small light broke through the darkness. My mother’s ex-girlfriend came home with a surprise intended to help me feel happiness again. It was a late birthday gift: a tiny puppy, a perfect ball of black fur with a white chest. It was love at first sight. I named him Niño.

Niño makes me happy. He is a constant reminder that there is still good in this world. He sleeps in my bed and makes me feel truly loved and safe. I chose the name Niño because he acts just like a little kid—he is my kid. While I will always miss Pin Pon and the memories we shared, having Niño has filled the massive hole left in my heart. I feel happier at home and at school now. I know that despite the pain, I will always have love, and I will be okay.

I’M BEING FOLLOWED

by: Briana N.

There was a night when I was walking home alone and felt the unmistakable sensation of being followed. I turned my head and caught a glimpse of a shadow darting behind a car. I began to walk faster, and almost immediately, I heard the rhythm of footsteps behind me. Every time I turned around, the street looked empty, but the feeling wouldn’t leave me. I took out my knife, keeping it ready just in case I had to protect myself.

I called my dad, my voice shaking as I told him I was scared and gave him my exact location. He told me to find a crowded area and stay there until the person left. I was sweating and incredibly nervous, but I followed his advice. I stayed put until my sister arrived to pick me up. Once I saw her, I felt a wave of relief, though the fear for my life hadn’t fully faded.

As we started walking together, it seemed like the person began to follow us again. At that point, we didn’t take any chances; we started to run. We purposely ran to a different block so they wouldn’t see which house was ours. When we finally reached my neighborhood, we looked back to see if they were still there. The coast was clear, so we slowed down to catch our breath, our hearts pounding from the sheer terror of the situation.

We called my dad again and asked him to wait outside for us. As we rounded the final corner, we heard a sudden noise and sprinted the rest of the way. My dad was standing right there. I ran straight to him, and he told us to get inside and lock the door behind us immediately. Once inside, I rushed to get a glass of water, trying to settle my breathing. I went to my other sister’s room to tell her what had happened. She was in disbelief, so she peered out the window to see my dad still standing guard on the sidewalk, watching for anyone who looked suspicious.



THE MONTH I LOST

by: Juan R.

It was a dark night, around 3:00 AM, when I woke up thirsty. I got out of bed and walked to the kitchen for a drink of water, but on the way back to my room, a sickening feeling hit my stomach. I ran to the restroom and began throwing up violently. As I looked down at my hands, the world started to blur. I called out for help, and then—everything went black.

When I finally woke up, I was overwhelmed with questions. How did I get here? What happened? Why can't I move? I tried to speak, but no words came out. The doctor began asking me basic questions to see if I knew who I was. Since I couldn't talk, my only option was to shake my head. When they pointed at my mother and asked if I recognized her, I nodded. I desperately wanted to ask where I was, but a tube in my mouth was busy cleaning my insides.

Eventually, they moved me to a permanent room. My mom was overcome with joy that I was finally awake, but I was terrified. I soon learned the shocking truth: I had been in a coma for an entire month.

My mom explained that after I collapsed, they found me unconscious on the floor and rushed me to the first hospital. The doctors there couldn't figure out what was wrong, so they transferred me to Rady Children's Hospital. Tragically, I had caught a virus at the first hospital that attacked my nervous system. It had affected my legs to the point where I couldn't feel them or move them at all.

I was in tears. It felt like a living hell, thinking my life as I knew it was over. When my sisters called from home, they were crying so hard they could barely speak. I just listened, later asking my mom, "When can I go home?" She didn't have an answer.

That night, after my mom fell asleep, the doctors came in to check on me. I told them I was doing fine, but I kept begging to go home. They told me I wasn't ready yet. I tried to make the best of it, but I spent my entire summer in that hospital bed with my mom by my side every single day.

Finally, on August 15, I was released. After a long summer of uncertainty and fear, I was finally going home.

THE PRICE OF A PRANK

By David R.R.

Time and time again, my mom would warn me not to scare my younger siblings, but I did it anyway. I used to get so annoyed when she would yell at me because I thought she was just exaggerating. Her voice would echo in my head, but I never took her words seriously. I loved to jump-scare my little brother, Noah, just to see him jump out of his skin; I thought it was the funniest thing in the world. Noah would scream at the top of his lungs and snitch on me, but I never thought it was a big deal—until one day.

It was about 8:00 PM on a typical evening, and Noah and I were in the side yard playing tag. Everything was going fine until I decided to pull a prank. I wanted to see the look on his face when I tricked him into believing something was lurking in the dark. With everyone else inside the house, it was the perfect

opportunity to scare the living crap out of him. In my head, I was already anticipating how hilarious it was going to be.

“Noah, there’s something behind you!” I shouted. I put on my best terrified face and sprinted away as if I were running for my life.

Noah absolutely freaked out. He was terrified and scrambled to stay right behind me. His face was priceless, and for a split second, my prank was a success—but then things went wrong instantly. As he bolted toward the house, he turned his head to see if something was chasing us. While looking backward, he ran full speed into the weight set my mom kept in the yard.

Noah hit his forehead so hard that he immediately started bleeding. He ran into the house crying, and the second my mom saw him, she started freaking out.

I was paralyzed with fear. I knew I had messed up big time. The look on my mom’s face wasn’t just anger; it was pure worry as she watched the blood wash down his face. I felt a pit in my stomach, not just because I knew I was in trouble, but because I felt terrible. I never wanted my brother to actually get hurt; I just wanted to mess with him.

My mom was so angry she didn’t even want to speak to me, and she took my phone away as punishment. That night, I learned a lesson the hard way. I realized that “just having fun” can go too far in the blink of an eye. Thankfully, Noah was okay and the injury wasn’t permanent, but I promised myself right then that I would never take a prank that far again.

FINDING MYSELF FIRST

by: Luis S.G.

When I was a young teen, I wasn’t looking for love. That changed when a girl named Sofía (not her real name) entered my life. At first, I was quiet, but she always made an effort to talk to me. Over time, our friendship deepened into something more, and I started feeling those “butterflies” in my stomach every time she was around. We dated twice. The first time was difficult; I was just a kid who was new to love and had no idea what I was doing. The second time, however, was much better. I grew as a person and experienced so many new things by her side.

After our second breakup, a heavy sense of loneliness set in. As the days passed, I craved someone who truly understood me, but I couldn’t find that connection anywhere else. Because Sofía and I had essentially grown up together, we knew everything about one another—how to offer support, how to cheer each other up, and how to be best friends. I tried dating other people, but it always felt “off.” I hated that everyone was so different from her. At one point, I even told myself, “I’m not going to date anyone unless it’s her.”

Trying to find a replacement for what we had was exhausting. Eventually, though, I began to see the beauty in those differences. I grew closer to another girl I had known for years, “P.” She was smart, kind, and beautiful—a truly wonderful person. While our circumstances meant we couldn’t date, the time I spent with her gave me a new set of experiences and helped me mature in ways I didn’t expect.

Through these experiences, I realized I had been so fixated on looking for “the one” that I had stopped looking for myself. A teacher I admire, Mr. JJ, once shared a quote with me: “Some people find love first, while others find themselves first.” That quote has stuck with me ever since. For now, I think I’m going to focus on finding myself.

THE CYCLE OF BETRAYAL

by: Jonathan T.

Three years ago, I faced a betrayal that nearly broke me. I was with a girl I cared for deeply, and I gave her everything I had, despite my fear of getting hurt again. I did everything in my power to be my best self and keep her happy. Yet, even as I poured my heart into the relationship, I had a nagging feeling that something was wrong. In the end, my instincts were right: she was cheating on me.

I constantly replayed the things she used to say—how much she loved me and how she could never hurt the person she cared for. I felt completely betrayed. What made it worse was that I forgave her multiple times, only for her to repeat the same mistakes years later, long after we both knew better. The pain was so overwhelming that I struggled with dark thoughts and even considered ending my life. When my mom found cuts on my body, she forced me to seek help. I didn’t want to talk to anyone; I simply couldn’t wrap my head around how someone I loved so unconditionally could treat me that way.

Two Years Later, that same girl eventually reached out to my mom to ask for forgiveness, claiming she had learned from her past. A few months after that, she texted me. We started talking again as if the past hadn’t happened. However, the old betrayals had left me with deep insecurities. I was always on edge, trying to prevent another heartbreak before it could happen. I knew people might think I was “dumb” for taking her back, but she was the only girl I had ever truly loved, and that changed how I viewed her actions. She insisted she was different now and was taking us seriously. I wanted to trust her, but part of me remained guarded.

Then, out of nowhere, we got into a massive argument. We decided to take a break from each other. In a moment of weakness and clouded judgment, the first thing I did was go back to my ex.

In that moment, I became the one who betrayed her. I realized too late that she had actually changed this time, and I was too blind to see how much she really loved me. I’m sharing this story to acknowledge how much I regret what I did. I ended up inflicting the same horrible pain on her that I once hated so much when it was done to me.

THE SPINNING BLADE

by: Maria W.P.

When I was about ten years old, I came home from school to find that my mom had removed the cover from one of our floor fans to clean it. She looked me and my siblings in the eye and gave us a specific warning: “Don’t touch the fan. You’ll get hurt.”

Despite the warning, my curiosity got the better of me. I looked at the spinning blades and wondered what

would happen if I just reached out. As soon as my finger grazed the moving parts, I felt a sharp, searing pain. My finger felt like it was on fire. When I saw the blood beginning to flow, I panicked and tried to make a run for the bathroom to hide the evidence. I didn’t make it far. My two older sisters saw the blood dripping on the floor and rushed to help me. My first instinct was to beg them, “Please, don’t tell mom!” I was terrified of getting in trouble for disobeying a direct order.

However, when my mom found us, the situation took a turn I didn’t expect. Instead of being angry, she looked devastated. She started blaming herself for leaving the fan uncovered and for the accident happening. Seeing her take the blame for my mistake made the guilt feel worse than the pain in my finger.

I couldn’t stay silent. I confessed right then that it wasn’t her fault—I was the one who had intentionally put my finger in the fan.

To my surprise, the scolding I expected never came. Instead, my mom was simply relieved that I was okay. She held my hand and told me seriously that if I had left my finger in there even a second longer, I could have lost it entirely. That experience taught me that honesty is more than just staying out of trouble; it’s about taking responsibility. I learned that day that being truthful is important, even when you’re afraid of the consequences.

NORTH REGION

INNOVATIONS ACADEMY OF EMPOWERMENT

BAD NIGHT

By Deondre E.

One day, me and the homies are chilling at the hood park drinking and sh*t. A group of us are over here on one side of the park and more groups are scattered around all over the park. While we stayed at the park chilling, drinking, having fun, being loud we heard like 3-4 cars zooming past us down the street, then turned around and came back towards us. We all started looking and running towards the street. Some of the homies are saying “ aye look who these foos”. Once they got close enough we all started banging the hood talking about “ whoop do whoop whoop” and they were banging their hood too ”whoop do whoop” while sitting in the car. After a little bit the first car sped off and left the other 3 cars right there, next thing you know the “foos” in the car hopped out and started tripping “whats craccin whos trippin” . So we all start getting down right there in the middle of the street in the middle of the night and it’s like 15-20 of us and 10 of them. After we are done fighting those “foos” are leaking, we’re leaking cause we both got bats and we out numbered them but those “foos” got sum good shots in to. After everybody ran away cause we had heard police sirens coming towards us and while running i felt something warm i start touching my face/ head then i see that I was leaking from my head and my homie came running up to me saying “ aye foo u good, u good stay awake” cause he seen that i got shocked and my knees got weak then he grabbed me and basically dragged me to his car then he took me to the hospital where i stayed for a week or so . Something that I discovered about myself that day was that I have anger issues and I never think before acting on anything. Nowadays I’m calm, chill, and just be to myself.

THE 200 DOLLAR BASKETBALL GAME

By Kalem W.

There were 10 seconds left in the basketball game when the ref made a controversial call but before all this happened let’s rewind this from the start. It was a 5v5 LA Fitness game. There were 200 bucks on the line so everything and every call mattered. There was no playing around, no talking, just straight focus and competitiveness.

The game finally started. It was me and my friends Alex, David, Max, John and me. Our team and the other team were going back and forth. We were holding a really close game. Everyone was in a competitive

mindset. There was a bunch of cussing and everyone was mad at each other and it only kept getting more heated. The intensity kept building up in the gym and the ref yelled to everyone,” calm down”. Everyone was cursing and shoving each other but no one listened because they were too focused on the game. It came down to the last quarter and everyone had a break to talk and get some water. The score of the game 97-98 with the other team ahead.

Me and my teammates were discussing what we should do. I was giving them words of motivation. I said , “keep pushing through no matter what because we are gonna regret not giving it our all”. One of my teammates, David, said “It’s getting really intense and everyone needs to chill .” I agreed and he said,” I wouldn’t be surprised if there’s a fight so the ref timeout over and we kept playing then one of the guys pushed my teammate (David) to the floor way to hard so my teammate Alex and I got into his face he said what are you doing then pushed him back then he swung then me and my teammates swung at the opposing player he got knocked out then his teammates swung then everything went into a big brawl. They had fitness security come and it took 5 long minutes to break up the fight and no one could finish the game. They kicked everybody out but after everything was said and done everybody made up got some food and talked. The moral of the story is that more people need to keep their emotions regulated during sports/ basketball.

MY INJURY

By Lizbeth G.O.

It was an average sunny afternoon with my grandma & brother when I saw a ladybug on a branch near my pool that had no water. I recognized the ladybug that I took from my school. I had a really close friend and we both saw two ladybugs and took that as a sign to take them. I lived down the street from my school and when I made it home I took it out my backpack and put it on top of bricks so no one would accidentally squish it. Later on that day, I went to my backyard where I saw the ladybug. I reached out to grab the ladybug to get a good look & make sure it was the one that I took from my school. Before reaching over I told my grandma & brother I saw a ladybug. My grandma told me to leave it alone while my brother didn’t mind it meanwhile my grandma was telling me to leave it alone. I tried leaping over a corner of the pool. I somehow lost my balance and fell inside. When I fell in I twisted my foot but didn’t feel anything. My brother helped me out & the adrenaline I got from the fall gave me the chance to run inside the house & I made it half way through the stairs. I had 3 more stairs to go but couldn’t go any more. I started to feel the pain. I had to hop on to each stair to go inside my room. Once I made it to my room I told my mom what happened & she started massaging my foot & we waited a little bit to see if the pain would go away but it didn’t I was taken to the hospital where they took x-rays & told me I broke my foot & I ended up with crunches. When I ended up with crunches it felt like I had them for years. I couldn’t do gymnastics which caused me to officially stop. At school people would have to help me & I’d have to sit out for recess & I had to eat in the office during lunch. Me breaking a bone made me realize that I shouldn’t be leaping on things & that bugs are just bugs. I’m going to find them everywhere & it made me lose motivation for gymnastics. I was scared I was gonna hurt myself even more, not only that it taught me a big lesson and that grandmas should be listened to too. Before anything my grandma was telling me & telling me to be careful & to not stand so close & before I had the accident we would always climb rocks near the pool we would hop inside the pool so being around there wasn’t new.

MY FIRST TIME FLYING

By Amaré D.R.

When I was 7 years old it was my first time flying in an airplane. When I first got to the LAX airport it was big and I did not expect it to be big but it was. When I finally got through security scans I went to my gate. When I got to my gate my mom asked me if I wanted to eat my snack and I said yes. Then it was finally time for us to board the plane. When we got on the plane it had tv screens and I was able to watch tv on the tv screen and also I was able to lean my seat backwards. I was comfortable and relaxed and the plane was finally ready to take off. When it finally did we were high in the air then the plane started shaking and people started to get worried and my mom and older sister told me that it was just turbulence so I stopped getting worried then the pilot spoke on the mic telling the people on board it was just turbulence so everyone stopped panicking and finally we quit when we were almost to Alabama and this baby started crying when the plane was lowering and it was so bad the baby did not stop crying no matter what the parents tried to do stop the baby from crying when we finally landed everyone stood up and started grabbing their belongings and start to leave the plane so that was my first time being on a plane and what I learned about myself was that im brave and that no matter how scared you are to just see it there and go with it.

FIRST TIME GOING TO MY GIRL’S HOUSE FOR THE FIRST TIME

By Paola R.G.

I arrived at her place but I was already staring at the room. It was a dope, small room with a lot of stuff like stuffed animals, pictures, and just how she described it. My stomach felt butterflies and excitement because she trusted me to know where she lives. Me and my girl would watch La Rosa de Guadalupe so that’s what we decided to do this time.. We got snacks from the store to munch out at her house and we put chamoy on our chips and had a side drink of pepsi soda. Meanwhile we enjoyed the snacks, and watched one episode. She tells me what goes on in school by saying, “my teacher is rude.” I can tell that she makes sure I like what we are doing or watching. I learned that being crazy over here ain’t worth it. Also I learned about her mom’s rules for my girl, and last I learned her mom has a reason why she can’t be with me because of history. I learned that a relationship must require continuous effort, being nice, listening to each other, staying loyal, not lying, and being straight up. Not always but most times yeah! What I learn about myself is that I want everything to go my way with her. Other people think I’m crazy when I wanna do some bad stuff cause she gets me in some type of bad mood but I think it’s not dumb but most of them do. We started talking back in 7th grade and I was so shy that I would never talk to her but this one time it was the 14th of February. I gave her a chocolate strawberry saying “im in love weed you” but I made my friend give it to her because I left school early that day. But that first visit at her home ended up feeling amazing.

THE THIEF

By Bryan R.

My friend and I decided to go to the store together, we decided to go to the closest one there was. After walking a couple of minutes we finally have gotten there, it was not too big such as other stores but it was good enough to look for something, we went around looking for items such as food and chips but when I turn around I see my friend put something in his pocket, I am in shock and ask him “yo bro what are you stealing?”, he responds with “Nothing bro lets just get out of here”. As we are making our way to the exit I am nervous and overthinking stuff such as “is my friend going to get caught?” “Am I going to get involved?”. We eventually reach the exit door when we hear from a distance an employee shouts “STOP RIGHT THERE RETURN THOSE ITEMS NOW”, my friend now panicked decides to go give the employee the items, the employee simply said “don’t come back here again, consider this a warning” We left the store and I was relieved that nothing too major happened.

At the end of the day I learned that in any situation can quickly escalate at any time even when you least expect it. I also learned that the friend in the story isn’t a good friend for them to be robbing in stores, especially with friends who don’t want legal trouble.

FAMILY TRIP

By Sebastian M.

So as you guys may know, different types of people from other places do different types of festivals and I would like to tell you guys how Oaxaca Mexico does it. Every year on December 8th there’s a birthday for a virgin slash called la virgen de juquila and every year in December they throw big party’s for that virgin so when I got to go and see how they did it I was excited. The day I got there I saw people praying on there knees for the virgin at night the next day I see people making the delicious food they need for the parties they were cooking tamales de verde and posole plus the food was very good the tamales de verde where very soft and had a good spice to it at night is when all the parties start so I have to get ready for the party they made me wear a mexico shirt with the virgin on it more later at night when the first party started people were carrying the virgin to the church on the way to the church all the people from the town following behind singing songs while walking the virgin to the church once we all got there they passed around food for the people who have not eaten after everyone has eaten all the people and I have finished that’s when the banda starts playing music for the virgin when I was there I hear people saying “viva la virgin” each time they would say that the banda would get louder and louder once they finished doing that that’s when the party start they start burning fireworks and they burn something known as a castillo de fuegos all I would hear was fireworks explode and the banda playing loud and the things i was seeing was beautiful on the fire works they had art peaces of the vigin on the fire works after they finished the fire work my family and I went to go burn Toritos and Canastillas toritos are a type of hand made cardboard model in the shape of a bull that is decorated in fireworks. Canastillas are the exact same but just in a basket and louder fireworks on top usually have the virgin on it or a cross. The next day I woke up to the smell of chocolate and I told my grandma “this smell’s good” what are u guys making and then my grandma told me what they where making so i got up and went to get some and when i tried it was very good it tasted amazing.

VIRTUAL REALITY

By John G.

Virtual reality is something that started at my school. I liked it because you see states and other things I have never visited before and you also win money. That’s why I liked it even more. but also it was competitive because the students also wanted to win money there was this one day at school. It was a Friday and I didn’t know there was going to be virtual reality. “I already knew I wasn’t going to win ”before it even started, I said to myself. Then the virtual reality class teacher came and everyone started getting into groups of 2 or 3 people. I was in the back of the class alone and the game started. I had no one on my team so I thought to myself “I’m not winning any money today”. Then the teacher started putting videos on the mask about states like Japan ,Iceland, London and more.

I wasn’t paying attention to any of the videos at all so I just guessed when they asked me questions and somehow got them right and wrong. Some were easy and some were extremely hard because I didn’t even pay attention. People were saying “how is he getting them right?” he wasn’t even paying attention! “”He’s cheating “”He’s not going to win either way he’s alone”. But then at the end it was 1 group with 2 people in it and I was alone. I told myself “I’m done for” but I kept answering the questions even if I didn’t know them. Then another group joined with a teacher in it I already knew I was going to lose but my teacher helped me win by answering questions for his team which was losing badly so it gave me a chance to win.

This was a powerful moment because you should never give up on something you’re working on even if you don’t know the answers to the questions. Even if you’re alone on your team playing against teams with 2 or more people in them. What I learned about myself is to never give up, just keep pushing on your dreams.

What I learned about society is you can’t trust nobody in this world even if you’re playing a game for some money.

NORTH COUNTY TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY

A TEACHER THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

By Anonymous

Have you ever had that one person in your life that can help you see things from a different perspective, a person that is sort of a guardian for you? A person that is brutally honest and doesn’t want to sugarcoat any advice they give? Well, I got the BEST experience firsthand at JCCS.

My first day at JCCS was just nuts to be honest. I was in a conference room with Mrs. Erika and Mrs. Kate along with the principal Cindy and some office workers when they were reviewing my case for why I am here at JCCS. When Mrs. Kate looked at my case, she crashed out on me and started lecturing me on how serious the situation was and how I got super lucky. My mom then got mad at Mrs. Kate and she was thinking of not enrolling me in San Marcos JCCS, but rather a different one in Escondido or Vista.

After a couple days in, I figured out she wasn't as bad as the Mrs. Kate I knew the first time when she was reviewing my case. Mrs. Kate made me feel heard and understood as I got to be in her class more often than Mrs. Erika's. This teacher was there for me in times where I was messing around and told me to knock it off. I perceived it at first like I didn't care to hear her out, or even annoyed at times. But then over time as I got to know her, I realized she was caring for her students and just wanted to see her students be right minded and to succeed. She would especially nag me during times where I would be off task or being derogatory yelling racial slurs at peers to sort of, "fight fire with fire."

But now that I honestly think about it, I do realize that Mrs. Kate was just trying to look out for me and hopefully get me to learn on what my actions/influences were causing even from transferring to JCCS after getting expelled from Mission Hills High School. She was such a HUGE upgrade over the teachers that I had at Mission Hills High School. As she was also a mischievous kid just like all of us when she was small, she could really give us advice on how to not act like fools.

To really cap it all off, it showed me that some people's characters are just shown based on honesty and responsibility. What a teacher goes through in her life can give them the wisdom they need to go through life. To help their students by giving life changing advice so they might not even repeat the same mistakes they have done in the past. I wonder if most teachers go through life being subtle or being brave and going through life with their heads clashing against the walls often?. I will carry this experience with being in JCCS and interacting with Mrs. Kate and use that advice to pass on to the next upcoming generations when I get older and then look back at when I was still a young man, still reminiscing about life and its wonders/ mysteries.

ONE BAD DECISION

By Anonymous

Did you know Black and Latino students are expelled at significantly higher rates than White or Asian students? I was one of those Latino students that was expelled and I am going to tell you my story.

I still remember the biggest challenge in my life yet. It all started when some of my friends and I wanted to make money. When I was 15 years of age, I wanted to have nice things so I made a decision to make money. On May 14, I got caught selling drugs at school. One moment I will never forget is when the security guard that always walked past our table walked in and called my friends and me.

They brought all of my friends and I out of the class and took us to the office. They had us sit and brought us in one by one into the Principal's office. As each one of us went in, they would question and search us. When it was my turn, I was sweating bullets. I kept shaking and kept thinking about being suspended, my parents finding out and being mad at me.

When it was my turn to be searched, they searched my body and our iPads. In our iPads, we had videos and text messages of drugs and selling them. They separated me first and put me away from everyone for four hours. After four hours they had caught all of my friends who were involved.

In the end we got expelled from school but what I learned is that one bad decision can cause your life to

change. I also learned to never put myself in a situation like that again. It helped me realize that my life can drastically change very badly very quickly if I don't follow the rules. This decision also made people lose their hope and I wish to gain it back and not commit the same mistake again because I realized how greatly it can affect me.

FRIENDSHIP FALLOUT

By Anonymous

At the beginning of 6th grade I went to San Marcos Middle School, then the last two months I moved to Woodland Park Middle School. On my first day there's a girl named Isabel/Izzy, who was the first person to talk to me. We then became "best friends". She was so sweet to me and fell for her nice act, but that all changed.

During the summer I couldn't keep in contact with her because she did not have a phone. Seventh grade came and I saw her. I went up to her and she ignored me. I thought nothing of it until I eventually started to care a lot more about why she wasn't talking to me. every time I saw her during passing periods.

I ended up in counseling one day because she was saying how I said I was going to jump her when none of it was true. I got really angry but then she said she wanted to be friends again. We became friends but we didn't talk much. I then met this guy and I started dating him, she suddenly started talking to me a lot more after that. The guy I was dating told me she liked him. The next day him and I got together, it all started to make sense she wanted to talk to me more, she always tried getting at peoples boyfriends especially mine, and she till this day blames me that I stole him away from her when I didn't even know she liked him because we weren't friends. After all that, I forgave her many times because I had a soft spot for her. Him and I broke up and two weeks later she tried getting at him and forced him to talk to her or else she would've harmed herself.

A week later him and I started talking again which pissed her off and I did not know why, Until he told me that they talked and that's why she was mad at him and I for dating again, I went up to her and I confronted her how she was always touchy with him and trying to get close to him by me. I was really pissed off but mostly because she was my best friend and she was there every time I cried to her about him. I then realized how much of a hypocrite and a horrible person she is. Everytime I confronted her but not in a mean way she cried in the office saying I was going to fight her.

I was really frustrated with all her lies and her victim act. There was one point I got suspended because I almost got physical with her. I got expelled one month left of school because of another girl. During summer I talked to this girl. Lilieauna, She was my "best friend"-. She has a girlfriend, and she was there for me through everything even during my breakup with the same guy. Turns out she kissed him and tried getting at him, I eventually dropped her.

Another girl named Hazel also tried getting at him. I got betrayed again. My new "best friend" tried to kiss my ex boyfriend. I learned a lot through all of this. The moral of the story is do not trust every girl/boy as your friend or best friend because they might turn out to be fake and end up betraying you. I learned that the hard way. This is what has made me have trust issues and has impacted my life in both negative and positive ways. I am hopeful that I will be able to trust people again one day.

LAS NOCHES FRÍAS CON LA LUNA

By Anonymous

My mom and I seem to always be arguing over every little thing. We would yell at each other. She would watch me so closely that I felt like she was mad at me for every little thing I did wrong. I felt misunderstood when my family and friends began to think I was always angry and a mean person.

At this time of my life I would always have a serious face and I was very quiet. I didn't like talking to anyone because I felt like I would just sound stupid or I would offend the person I was speaking to, so I just stayed quiet. My family and I didn't get along and my mom and me would always be arguing, I felt like I was always getting into trouble. For this reason I was always feeling alone and useless.

Then everything changed when I started smoking. The moment I took my first puff I knew that was my only solution. I knew I could depend on it like no other. I also started going out late just to get away from my family problems. The only thing I would do when I go out is just smoke and stare at the moon. I would admire it and feel some kind of love towards it. At that moment I felt calm and safe, with the moon by my side. I felt like the moon was the only one there for me, the only one who understood me. I started opening up to my family and friends way more than I used to. I would show more emotion. I was showing peacefulness.

After a whole year of staying to myself, not speaking, and only showing emotions I was comfortable with, I started looking back and realized why people always thought I was an angry and horrible person. This experience made me want to change for the better..

Today I am different and a better person because I learned to show my emotions to my friends and family. I started to learn how to trust people at least enough to talk to them. I found some healthy coping mechanisms such as drawing and listening to music. Although I stopped my unhealthy habits, I know I will never hate these things because they were there for me at my lowest. No matter what, they helped me feel happiness and peacefulness.

SONG

By Anonymous

I listen to “F@#k It” by YngActive because it reminds me of a time when I felt overwhelmed and how I got through it. During my freshman year, everything felt like too much. School pressure, expectations, and unexpressed feelings built up until I felt trapped in my own mind. I was tired, numb, and disconnected from who I used to be. There were times when I felt so low that I questioned whether I wanted to keep going. I didn't feel seen, and I didn't feel strong.

When I first heard this song, it felt raw and honest, which matched what I was experiencing. The song isn't about having it all figured out; it's about being fed up, tired of pretending you're okay, and still standing. Listening to it made me feel less alone, like someone was voicing thoughts I was too scared to admit.

What the song truly gave me wasn't anger—it was permission. Permission to feel frustrated. Permission to stop blaming myself for struggling. Permission to keep going even when things felt pointless. Over time, the

song became a reminder that emotions pass, even when they seem permanent, and that getting through a tough moment is still strength.

Now, when I listen to “F@#k It,” I don't hear despair anymore. I hear proof that I made it through something that once felt impossible. It reminds me that I'm still here, still growing, and still learning to choose myself. That's why the song matters to me—not because of where I was, but because of how far I've come.

GETTING BUSTED

By Anonymous

One moment I will never forget is when I was arrested at the mall. It all started when I called my cousin to pick me up to go make some money. We decided to drive farther down to Orange County to hit SunglassHuts. We were planning on going and stealing expensive glasses that would sell. At that time in my life I was doing this a lot for quick money.

When we arrived at the first mall, I put the grocery bag in my pocket and we walked to Macy's. The glasses were located in the back of the store but it wasn't that far of a run. We walked up and took a look at the glasses to make sure we got the right ones then pulled out our bags and scooped up as much as we could. The cashier would just watch as we took glasses and ran off. After we got the glasses we ran to the car which was parked across the street in the parking lot garage at the mall. I remember thinking let's go to another mall by Orange County so we drove there.

We arrived, we passed the Sunglasshut, they locked the doors when they spotted us. We decided we should leave, but we both didn't want to leave empty handed and decided to go to a shoe store. We asked the worker to get us two pairs of shoes each from the back of the store. The worker came from the back and told us they didn't have the shoes so we asked for different shoes.

While we were talking we noticed two officers entering The store. As they walked towards us I was in disbelief, I instantly tried to run. They cornered the door and as I tried to get past the officer, he grabbed me by my hoodie with both hands. I was trying to get my hoodie off but I had a Nike windbreaker on which was hard to take off in a situation like this. He let go with one hand to call for backup. That's when I unzipped the windbreaker and I thought I was going to get away, but my arm got stuck, he then pinned me on the wall. I saw backup coming and I dived to the ground to avoid getting body slammed.

I got arrested and was sentenced to a 1 month sentence at Juvenile Hall. This was a very difficult experience for me and my family. I learned that my actions had consequences and making easy money isn't worth my freedom. I am currently in JCCS and am working towards getting off probation. I am looking forward to being off probation and having a successful future.

REMINISCING

By Anonymous

I have been in and out of trouble since I was 13. I remember the first time I was arrested at 13 they took me to the Oceanside police station. I was given a court date and released. I ended up on home supervision and since then I've had a hard time staying out of trouble. I am now on probation and I'm ready to be done with it.

When I first got in trouble, I didn't think much of it. I thought the consequences would not affect me. I started to notice every time I was with my friends something always seemed to go down. I was driving a car while under the influence. I didn't think much of what was happening. All I could think about after hitting the cars was that I needed to get out of there.

Everything started to change when I got out of juvenile hall. I started getting frustrated having to answer to my probation officer and to a judge. I was tired of being in the Halls with only guys. I missed being on "the outside" with the girls. I started to worry about my adult record. If I can get off probation successfully they will seal my juvenile records.

Looking back, I was in the moment and I let my impulsivity get to me. Everytime this happened I found I was deeper and deeper into trouble with the law and it has been harder and harder to get off probation.

If I could tell my past self something I would say to take everything seriously and that it will affect my life later. I realize that a one time decision can cause the spotlight to be on me for longer. It was not worth it.

AN EXTRAORDINARY EVENT

By Anonymous

I still remember a special time I went to my cousins house, it was the funnest time I went to their house. It was a long time ago, about three months ago we explored the city which included my first roller coaster ride. This was unlike any other experience that I had. I had the most fun day in my life. I tried so many new things. This trip was an unforgettable experience, and a spectacular unplanned event.

A few days back, my brother and I were playing video games together, and all of sudden my cousin called; "Yo you should pull up to my pad." So we made plans with my parents to go. We got ready and went off on the long winding road with all the traffic heading south, one of the worst times to be on the highway. After what seemed like an eternity of treacherous roads we arrived. It took us about 30 minutes, we left home Friday and arrived by 7:30 pm.

We hung out and played more video games together, when my uncle came out suddenly and told us to stop being lazy and invited us to go somewhere. We went to the car and asked where we were heading. My cousin replied "Sky Ranch" so we headed there. Heading up to the place, altitude was rising and each second you could see the buildings becoming small lights. We hiked a bit to the spot, after we were on top of a large hill. It seemed like millions of stars and it was such a fascinating scene to see the whole city from on top.

Later the next day, my uncle invited us to go with him and go for a walk at Pacific Beach. We headed over there and I saw so many new things I have never seen before, like the Snapdragon Stadium and a University that I forget the name of. When we got to the place it was so fascinating. It was like a children's dream, well, it was for me. I saw a huge roller coaster and many other rides. There were mini concerts going on outside as well which I have never seen before. We spent so long looking for parking spots, when we did walk, we went walking for about two hours; my knees were in so much pain after. After my uncle invited us to go eat ice cream which was so delicious with all the flavors rushing in like waves of fruity delight, we hit up the rides. This was very expensive for my brother, cousin, and I. After going on the rides I felt like throwing up. I felt like a little kid screaming of joy going on the rides for the first time. After the enjoyment we left back to my cousin's place and then back home.

All this gave me another reason to live for so many new emotions and experiences to find out. I appreciate every moment I have. After that event, I realized the world is full of exploration that one has not discovered yet. Also, as a person so small in this vast world, and the world is full of beauty. Even though a place is full of beauty some people have to ruin it for others by being selfish.

This moment shaped me in numerous ways that I could have appreciated back then, only now, after reflecting, I learned to appreciate the world more since it is full of beauty and ugliness. There are also infinite ways to explore and learn new things.

THE TRAGEDY I CAUSED

By Anonymous

One moment in my life I will never forget is a time I learned the hard way. I was a little kid still in elementary school and I didn't know at the time how brutal my decision would heavily affect me and my family. Before this happened all of my moms side of the family lived with each other and everything was cordial. I was by myself and was skating around the apartments bored with nothing to do when I found a lighter and started playing with boxes in a trash area, lighting boxes on fire and putting them out.

At that moment I wasn't really thinking how dangerous it could be and decided to go back home. What I didn't know was that a box ended up staying lit which made a big fire and the smoke caught the neighbours attention and they called the fire department. Almost a week later my mom had a meeting with the manager and they ended up giving us a 30 day notice to move out. Looking back, I realized that I caused my family to have to go through unnecessary grief and have even more problems than we already had. This experience taught me to try and be there more for my family and check up on them every now and then especially since the whole family went their separate ways. Now, there aren't as many family gatherings, which I miss a lot.

If I could tell my younger self anything, I learned that my actions will affect my family and I need to be careful to think about the consequences of my actions.

A NEW BEGINNING

By Anonymous

I still remember my first day at San Marcos Juvenile Court Community School (JCCS), it was a great moment that I'll never forget. I had a weird feeling in my stomach almost as if I wanted to throw up. Although I was nervous to start at a new school and make new friends this was a new beginning for my life.

On my first day of school I was feeling good, but at the same time I wasn't, since I didn't know anyone in my class. I felt very nervous, and scared of how this school was going to be, and how my other peers were going to treat me. My teachers made me feel safe in the class because it was a smaller place and they were very kind to me. They made me feel welcome and not judged.

Then everything changed when I saw my friend Abraham, and I started making a lot of friends after. For example, I met Rudy and Justin for the first time, and I got close to all my teachers. Then, for the first time I took the train and it felt good being able to experience taking the train for the first time, it made me feel very proud because I had never rode the train before.

Looking back, I realize there are some misfortunes that happen most of the time outside of school. For example, there are a lot of homeless people that bother the kids around the school campus. It is also very easy to get in trouble because it is very easy to get caught up in a bad situation, due to the gang activity in the area.

Today, I'm different because I realized that we have to be a good person with other people, instead of unpleasant to others around us. I realized that for being successful in life, I have to put more effort in the class, so I am able to graduate successfully and get a diploma. It is important to have an education for myself because I can have a better future, and be able to be someone in life. I am hopeful that being here at JCCS can help me with a new beginning.

MY FUN EXPERIENCE

By Anonymous

The time I faced a challenge was when I played football with a strained arm and most of the team was benched. We were losing by some points, but I caught a ball with one hand and made a touchdown.

I was always running around with no problems and I played football. At that time in my life, I enjoyed playing sports because it was what I liked to do at the time. I was feeling good because football was fun for me.

Everything changed when I sprained my arm. It was only sprained, but it felt like my arm was completely broken. I remember thinking I wouldn't be able to play football anymore and thinking about how bad it was hurting.

I was shocked because I did not expect to get injured. Looking back, I realize how much I enjoyed playing football. This experience taught me that football was important to me when I was young.

Today I am different because after Covid, I stopped playing football. This moment shaped me because I used to like football and now how I barely talk about it. If I could tell my younger self something I would say even though you're hurt, continue to play.

LETTER TO MY FUTURE SELF

By Anonymous

I remember when everybody in my house would talk about struggling with money. They were constantly worrying and stressed. So in my future the thing I want most is to have money and not be worried about my finances. This is why I decided to write a letter to my future self.

Dear my Future Self,

I hope by now you have a car, a good job and are getting good money. Hopefully my car is something strong like a Toyota or Impala. I want to have my family with me the whole time and my close friends I want to bring them to the top with me because they were the people who have always been there.

I remember going from apartment to apartment house to house as a little kid. Just thinking about it then, and now I never want to be house hopping again and never deal with that in my future. I want to have a stable house and good money to at least live well. I think about how bad it was never having a moment to relax, and I am never going to go through that in my future.

I hope you use everything bad that has happened and use it to make everything you dreamed of come true. I hope you are successful in whatever you do. Right now I don't really know what to do when I grow up. I know I have to get a entry level job, like in construction or something to survive for a while. I hope to graduate from high school, and from a real high school like Escondido High School. I don't know about going to college. I don't really want to, I liked Cal State San Marcos classes. But I still don't think I will do it because it's not for me. I don't think I can do the work, but you never know it can change..

I just hope you're enjoying whatever you're doing. I hope you have a lot of money to not worry about a good paying job that you enjoy doing. I know you are going to still be close with close friends. I just hope no one switches up. I hope you and your family are in good health, and that there are no bad events that happen. In conclusion, I know you are going to make something out of yourself.

Sincerely,

–Your Younger Self



Destiny — Self Love Album Cover 2

MY TRIP TO MEXICO

By Anonymous

One moment I will never forget is traveling to Mexico with my mom and sister to go see my step dads family. This trip was exciting because it pushed me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to experience new parts of my culture and new people from my family.

Before this happened, I had never been on a plane and I was nervous about the flight. There was a storm during my flight which caused turbulence and made my stomach drop. Once we landed my tio picked us up from the airport and we drove for about two hours from the city to my step dads village San Antonio Coayuca, Puebla. By the time we got there it was already midnight and we were super tired, but excited to meet everyone first thing in the morning.

At that moment when we started to explore the town and spend time together, I realized how exciting the trip was going to be. There was a small fair happening the day after we arrived so we ended up going and trying different foods we haven't had before. After we got back my cousin invited me to go play soccer with the kids from the town which was super fun. The next day, my tia took us hiking in the mountains and we got to see the volcano and lake.

The trip continued to get better while creating memories. This experience taught me the importance of family and enjoying moments with the people you love while you still have them. Overall, we had so much fun, but it was really hard to say goodbye because we never know when it's going to be the last time we see each other.

If I could tell my younger self anything it would be to not let anything or anyone get in the way of you trying new things. My trip to Mexico will always matter to me because it allowed me to create many memories that I won't forget.

TEMPER

By Anonymous

I still remember when I was doing good in school, but then I started doing bad. It all started when our P.E class got in trouble because my friend pantsed another kid and we all got in trouble. The teacher said that what he did was sexual harassment and if we or he did it again, we would be suspended for it. I was mad because I didn't think it was fair. Later on, this older kid started messing with me and tried to hit me. I got even angrier and I told him if he kept messing with me I would stab him. I took out a pocket knife that was in my backpack and showed it to him. A student told a supervisor and I got taken out of my 6th period math class, I had to talk with the principal. At the time, I hated the person who told on me because I felt it was none of their business.

Soon after, in 6th period, a different supervisor came in looking for me and took my backpack. They said they were told to take me out of my class and bring me to the principal's office. The police interviewed me in a different room and I was taken in a police car. The officer was chill, he drove me to a law enforcement

building in Escondido and brought me into a room where I had to change clothes. The room had a bed and windows, I was later released and was told that if anything happened again, I was going to be brought back. I never went back, I started behaving well and getting better little by little. I was transferred to San Elijo Middle School, but later that year, sometime in November, I got expelled for threatening a kid that I would kill his family after he spit on my hoodie, called me a “bitch ass,” and a racial slur which was the n-word hard R. He went ahead and told the assistant principal and nothing happened to him for being racist. I got expelled again, and I was nearly close to going to Juvenile Hall but instead I went to JCCS.

What I learned from this is that I need to control my temper and mostly control my anger issues. I used to be close to let my anger get so bad, to the point, I used to get into fights with people. Now, I realize I could’ve controlled it in a different way and controlled my actions. I could not threaten him, and said something else I shouldn’t have threatened his family. It wasn’t worth it because now I’m facing the consequences and I’m here in JCCS until August when I will be able to go back to my school district.

EAST MESA

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

It was a hot summer day in Tijuana and the house felt like an oven. I recall I was only 10 years old and started arguing with my sister over one fan that we had.

“Stop hogging the fan and put it on me and get your own,” I said.

“You are not the only one suffering in this heat,” she replied. We argued back and forth when she stopped me. “Why don’t you go out and play with your friends?”

I never had a close friend and she knew it and she made me start crying. So I stomped out of the house to meet up with my cousin at the park to cool off in some shade. I saw people playing with their dogs and it made me sad because I always wanted a dog and a best friend.

Once it started cooling off me and my cousin went back to my house my sister was there waiting for me. “sit down, I want to talk to you,” she said. “I feel bad for being mean to you and I have a surprise for you.”

I replied, what is it? She left the room and I heard a bark and she walked in with a dog.

“This is for you,” she said as she put the dog on the ground.

I was so surprised. I fell to my knees crying and the dog ran up to me and began to lick my tears away. I knew from the moment forward that he was my forever friend until that dreadful day.

It’s important to mention that I didn’t like my step dad so I was surprised when he said, “You can keep the dog.”

This filled me with joy. I felt so much love towards my dog. That little thing was black with clipped ears that made her look mad but she was very loving. She would follow me everywhere. She slept on top of my feet. She was so cute and she kept my feet warm. I remember all the energy she had, she was so playful with the other dogs and the neighborhood.

A year had passed and she started to get sick. I woke up late on the weekend and she was not there with me. I wondered if she was getting some water or eating. I went back to sleep and did nothing about it.

Later, I woke up to brush my teeth and no one was home so I went outside. I yelled out her name and nothing, no barking or anything. At the corner of my eye, I saw my step dad walking down the street carrying my dog.

He came down the hill where I was and started crying and said, “she just got run over by a car!” He explained to me that he had taken her to the store with him on a walk like he always did.

I was always concerned because on my walks I would always go without her leash and this time she ran out in front of a car. After he told me what happened, I felt numb, annoyed, and let down by my step dad.

I was sad, hurt and angry for months. Time passed and I noticed I wasn’t feeling grief about the incident. Other things took up my time and energy but once in a while I will see a dog and it would remind me of Oreo. Years later I was with my friend at his house. He had a lot of dogs since he was breeding Huskies and Pitbulls and he said, “Choose any dog you like.” I said, “ let me get a Pitbull instead”. An all gray light eyed Pitbull caught my attention. Unfortunately when I brought it home “my mom said, “I don’t want any dog here.” The next day I took the dog back to my friend’s house. I asked him if he could watch her for me. To this day he’s still taking care of my dog. I’m looking forward to the day I get my forever though.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

One cold summer night I remember I was walking in my neighborhood with one of my homies. We were in Escondido on Mission and fig feeling bored. Then we saw a car,a black Hyundai parked in front of some houses. I thought to myself im gonna kill two birds with one stone, I’m gonna steal this car.

This was going to be the fifth car I stole. I knew it was going to be easy because I had the right tools with me, a flathead screwdriver, and a charger. While I did it my friend looked out. I had the homie stand down the street and keep a look out while I opened the car door with a flat head and started the car with a usb charger.

I learned to steal and drive cars with practice. When the car turned on it felt amazing. I felt confident and paranoid, in the back of my mind the thought of the owner noticing their car is missing and calling the cops is always present.

Once we were in the car driving down the street the homie started to call the other homies. We picked up my 3 closest homies. These guys will never leave me on stuck, in other words they are willing to do anything.

Now there’s five of us in the car and we’re feeling hyped, free, and ready to have a good time. I decided we needed sundries and the grocery store was the perfect place to go since there’s an exit in the back and a no chase policy. We parked in the back of the store and two of the homies walked to the front. 5 minutes passed, I heard the store security system go off, and the homies jumped in bottles in hand. I turned my head to the back and said, “That’s right, let’s get outta here”!

We were driving towards the freeway, listening to music, and sharing drinks. The homies and I are getting rowdy in the car and we catch the attention of an epd squad car. I looked up at the rearview mirror and noticed the officer typing in the squad car computer.

Instantly I got nervous. My heart started racing, it felt like it was gonna jump out my chess. I turned around and I told the homies, “act normal” but the homie said, “ step on it!” and that’s exactly what I did!.

The odometer read 130 mph and I’m zig zagging through the freeway. I’m driving city through city and I’m hearing the sirens blaring but the music inside the car is all the way up. I decided to exit and at that speed the car is hard to control.

Before I knew it we crashed into the cement barrier on the side of the exit. We hopped out of the car and continued the pursuit on foot while evading the police, we ran through houses and apartments. Everyone separated towards different directions, I ran to a house and hid in the backyard. The police stopped looking for us because they couldn’t find us. We busted a ghost and disappeared in the neighborhood. We waited a while for it to be calmer. Once we stopped hearing sirens,we all met up and called one of the homies mom to pick us up. While we waited for the homie’s mom to pick us up we noticed police were still nearby patrolling looking around for us. One of the OPD squad cars stopped in the middle of the street and turned their lights on. Instantly we ran towards a community that had many places to hide. I ran towards a gated community and hid in between all the cars. While I was ducking in between all the cars I made eye contact with one of the police officers. I started to run and hop fences but I ran out of breath. I felt exhausted with zero energy to keep going. My legs hurt. As soon as I heard the police officers footsteps right behind me I gave up. The police officer screamed, “Don’t move!” Suddenly I noticed two guns pointed at me, walking up to me.I was handcuffed and searched for weapons.

Three weeks later I’m in a cell sitting on my table thinking. I am replaying the events that got me here. A feeling of regret hits me like a wrecking ball. I started asking myself why I did this. I started pacing back and forth in my 11 foot cell and realized I could be at home had I made different choices. I decided to change some of my ways even though I know it’s going to take time. I know people can change if they want to.

THE REASON WHY

By Erick

My memory was fuzzy but I remember waking up early one morning disoriented from the loud noise of my mom and sister arguing. This happens normally living with nothing but females so I just go on with my routine but as I’m brushing my teeth, I’m spooked by the sound of glass being thrown on the floor. I quickly ran and saw my mom and sister viciously squabbling in the kitchen. I immediately ran in to break it up

“Why the f**k are you guys fighting again?” I said as my sister Katelyn accidentally slapped me.

“Get out the way next time” Katelyn says, not noticing a slight red mark on my face.

I instantly put my shoes on and left because all I wanted to do was help. Instead, I was reminded why I should never try to help a situation in this household. In moments like this I think to myself I wish my dad was around so I wouldn’t be the only man in the house dealing with the girl drama. My dad passed away when I was three years old, so I’ve been the only male in the house for most of my life.

On the way to the park I ran into a couple friends who are always there,drinking and bumping gangster music. I always wondered why but I never asked, that’s kinda how everyone was. We never talked about our house problems, we would just do activities to get our minds off it. Moving from place to place growing up I never really got close to people but with these friends it was different. I felt like I belonged, I felt loved, and it felt like home.

Later on that same day I got home around 7-8 at night. I was kinda out of it because of all the drinking I was doing. I dragged myself to bed but as I layed down I felt a vibration in my right pocket. It was my tio Robert calling. This was strange because he rarely calls me so everytime he calls I pick up cause I know it’s something important.

“What’s up tio?” I said, kinda nervous.

“You busy?” he says in what seems like a rush.

Not understanding where this is going I give him the obvious answer “no?”

“Come outside in five minutes. I need to talk to you and your sisters but come by yourself first”.

I’m confused and kinda scared because with my tio you kinda never know what you’re going to get into. I walked outside to the parking lot waiting impatiently for him to come, then not even a minute later, I saw his big red Tahoe with the darkest windows I’ve ever seen.

When I got in the car,it felt kinda awkward as we looked for parking, for some weird reason he wanted to be parked to tell me. He looked down at the wheel kinda looking disappointed with watery eyes so I’m thinking what is going on because my tio never cries.I thought I must have done something as he dramatically looked at me he wiped his eyes and said.

“I can’t lie to you Alex, I just got a call from your mom and she didn’t want me to tell you but you’ve been lied to for too long”.

Right now I'm speechless because he can say literally anything and I'm scared I'm not going to like what he has to say because my mom has always lied to me growing up. Even for little stuff but every time I end up finding out the truth, I get so upset because it's the same excuse every time that "I'm too young" or "I'm not ready to hear it". Even if what he says hurts me I appreciate him for being truthful.

"Alex, your dad is still alive" he says crying and smiling at the same time". I was completely out of words. I didn't know if I could believe him.

Almost immediately we hugged and started crying together. Suddenly I believe him, but I have so many questions. We both look at each other and he says.

"Your dad is living the life he always wanted in Washington"

I don't know how I should feel about him being alive. Should I be happy that he's alive or angry because he let us struggle for so long while he's living the dream in Washington. I'm now curious why would he do this, was his family not enough, did his kids not mean sh*t to him.

"Your dad was in the gang life deep, I knew he was a big time dealer, maybe he saved some money up and had this all planned out, maybe he wanted out of your life to keep you guys safe" Robert says trying to help me stop overthinking it.

Finding out all this stuff about my dad and who he is made me feel like I want that. For some weird reason I wanted to be like him and to do that I was going to follow in his footsteps but I had to start from the bottom up.

About a week later, my friends invited me to the park for a little "kick back". My grandma didn't let me go out whatsoever so I knew if I wanted to go I would have to sneak out and get a ride. I sneakily pack a tooth brush and a charger in my backpack because with my friends you never know how long you're gonna be out for. Then I slowly tip toe to the front door, I carefully opened the door then when I had enough room to fit I sprinted out to my friends car waiting on the sidewalk for me. I've never done this before but I like the feeling it gives me.

"What's cracking lil homie" my friend Enano said while laughing because he saw the look of shame on my face.

"What's the deal" I said while doing this hand shake that all my friends do at the park.

We got to the park and I greeted all my friends with that same hand shake but there was one older homie I didn't know and when I did that hand shake he questioned me asking me.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Alex, who are you?" I said feeling a little nervous because this guy is big and scary looking but I was told don't ever act scary cause the moment you do people gon take advantage of you so even though I was scared I put on this mask as if I was the same size as him.

"You from the hood?" he asked me, not fully understanding what he meant I said.

"I grew up around here so I guess I am from the hood" man the look on this guys face it looked like he wanted to rip my head off.

"Oh yeah, caile to the bathroom and show me how hood you are" he said with an upset tone in his voice.

I've been fighting sense I could remember so a fight was never nothing but in this case it felt different I got a feeling in my stomach like I shouldn't be doing this but I enjoyed it. Walking into the bathroom I was anxious that I was gonna get beat up but I didn't let that stop me from continuing. We fought for what felt like forever, I was exhausted and so was he. After we stopped fighting he shook my hand almost like he was proud of me. I felt good even though he just beat the crap out of me. I felt the love from the "gang". From that day on I walked a little differently and changed the way I spoke. I'm feeling like I'm getting closer to being my dad but this was just the start.

At the age 16, I was deeper into the gang life, not as deep as my dad but I was well known. I started trying to move weight like my dad but that wasn't my thing. I enjoyed stealing, fighting, and shooting way more. The adrenaline it gave me was addicting like a drug, till one day I got arrested for assault and robbery. I knew I was meant for this life when I hit the holding tank. I didn't feel even a little fear. Instead I was excited that I was going to a unit filled with people who don't know me but they hate me. I got out on August 9th, I told myself I was going to do better when I got out but realistically I didn't take anything serious, I was just getting started.

At age 17, I was really well known. Started talking to older cats that knew my dad and finding out more to the real story. I found out my dad didn't forget about his kids; he was looking after us the whole time. He left cars and houses to his mom to give to so we would be good and left money in the backyard so we wouldn't have to struggle. Finding this out my anger is no longer on my dad, it's not his side of the family. I started thinking why would they keep this from us this whole time, after years of moving from house to house, mom going from man to man. I was furious that I was searching for the answers but they were in front of me this whole time.

January 1st, 2025, I found out from my mom she was getting information about my dad this whole time. My blood was boiling, she kept this from me for three years. I started banging so I could talk to my dad, the whole time my mom was secretly talking to him. I thought everything I've done was pointless now because he might actually be dead and I don't know. I crashed out the worst way possible after finding out this information, I thought I had messed up my life for no reason.

I got arrested for attempted murder, January 14th, 2025. I was fully in this game now, not getting out of it no matter what. I was fighting back to back right when I hit the unit, I'm back. I got a 707 and I still wasn't doing good, till I heard "prison". I started thinking to myself what do I want for myself, am I going to keep living for others or start living for myself.

Now I'm 18, I'm somewhat doing better and changing my ways because I now see I did all this for no reason. The people in the gang I looked up to got locked up and rolled it up, others stopped banging, I am the only one left from my generation. Although I'm not going to drop my neighborhood I'm going to represent it in a different way, lacing up little homies to go to school and get a job there's no good in fast money. I'm now realising I've been playing my cards wrong this whole time.

November 3rd, 2025, I received a sentence of three to eight years "YDA", finally, I know when I'm going home. I'm now moving forward with my life and leaving the people who want to see me doing bad in my past. I'm now living for myself not caring about what anybody else thinks of me.

ANGER

By G. Kevin

It was late February 2025 in a sunny afternoon, I felt eager and thankful to finally be out. My mom met me at the waiting area and immediately hugged me out of happiness.”Mijo te quiero mucho.” She told me. I had just gotten released from YTC (Youth Transitional Campus).

I went straight to my homie’s crib because he had invited me and a bunch of other friends. We were all in my homie’s living room, We were listening to music and talking about what everybody has been up to.

We started to get a lill tipsy. It felt good being out, it felt like home. I was fluid, everything felt vibrant and then I blacked out. Before I knew it I went back to my old pattern of making poor decisions.

Only a week and half after being released I was locked up again. The unit I hit was in YTC, I had one enemy in the unit but we didn’t instantly fight for some reason. There was another character there that I noticed, it was my friend Chapparo from the Hood. Once he was let out of his room he came to my table and said “They got you too fool?.” I told him how the cops stopped me and took me in. It felt weird being back. I mean I was just here a week ago, I was angry with myself and even more angry at the world.

About a week in, a new kid came into the unit. I noticed who it was, he knew me too,

it was Tremendo from San Marcos. I knew this guy from my first commit over there in YTC. He was a good friend of mine. That day we went to school together, we were done with our work so the teacher let us watch some YouTube videos on the TV screen in the front of the class, a video of a rat popped up on the screen and my enemy that was still in the unit said “Look it’s a rat!” I got mad because that word is my hood’s diss, so just like that I told him to bounce up and we started fighting.

After we fought and were put in RC we were okay, we didn’t talk to each other much but we were cool with each other we just didn’t need to say, we even played cards together. After about a month later I got sentenced to another 250 commit, which is about four months. I was only committed for about four days before getting reassessed. I went back to gen pop. That’s when I started to let my emotions take control over me and I started getting into more trouble.

After many fights, almost killing somebody with a kick and even more fights, I got sent to east mesa, which is another juvenile facility more down south and which is where I am today writing this story. This is when I knew I was heading towards YDA(Youth Development Academy), I knew I was gonna do a couple of years for how much trouble I had gotten into, so during the time waiting to be committed to YDA.

In doing this I got sentenced to three years with a maximum of seven which is juvenile life. I am 18 now. I am trying to calm down a little now that I’m an adult because I gotta be careful about being sent to county jail. I want to try and do better for not just myself but for my family as well, so I can be released earlier and start working as soon as possible. This isn’t the end of my story yet I still got three more years ago but it is the end of this essay. Ill see how far I’ve come at the end of my sentence.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

The full moon was shining over my shoulders as I laughed with my girlfriend Chloe and some of her friends in an overcrowded parking lot. The parking lot was packed like most nights, some people showing their cars off others talking and drinking.

Then suddenly a guy that I know as KP pulled up in front of my car and said “What’s up James? I’ve been hoping to see you.” KP said,

I smiled as I looked over into KPs car. “Is that right?” I asked, hopping off my car.

“Ready to lose to the best?” KP said, punching his accelerator, making his car sound like a beast turning everyone’s heads toward him.

A crowd is starting to form around KPs and my car. “What’s the stakes?” I asked, getting serious.

“This is for being the best driver in town.” KP said laughingly. The crowd eggs me on then I look over at my girlfriend who looked a little nervous but gave me a little smile “Come on bae, show him who’s the best.” Chloe said in a confident way.

Everybody that was in the parking lot with KP and I are now lined all the way down the two way street and everyone’s screaming and cheering for the race before them. The windows were down in my car. The midnight air was icy and made my white skin pink. I looked over to my girl and smiled and looked over her and said to KP, “may the best man win.”

KP smiled and looked in front of him and was ready to take off. The beautiful girl in front of us counts down from 3 and drops the bandana and we take off. As we start I get the upper hand on KP but out of nowhere he sideswipes me and I spin out of control hitting a brick wall and the last thing I saw was Chloe slumped in her seat as my vision faded.

I woke up hearing the hospital monitor beeping and felt my chapped lips. As the doctor walked through the door clicking his pen reading the cart on his report. He asked me “How are you feeling?” Confused, I said “what happened? Where’s my girlfriend?”

The doctor looked at me with sad eyes and said, “you were in a car crash and your lady friend.she died in the crash.”

I started to cry at the news I just heard. It was too hard to believe I was just with her, how could I make it and she didn’t. As I tried to jump out of the bed to leave, the doctor stopped me before I could try.

A couple weeks later I was just at my house, almost scared to leave because of the accident. I got a text from an unknown number saying, “It’s KP sorry for what happened to you and your girl, but people are asking are we going to finish the race, what should I tell them?”

As I looked at the text I got heated and tears started to well up in my eyes then I started to think if i should race again but not just to win but for chloe. I told KP that he was still on after I got my car fixed.

Two weeks later

It was the middle of the night at 1:30 to be exact and I got a text from KP, “are you still trying to race or are you gonna forfeit?” i think long and hard about getting back in my car and racing but i hear chloe telling me to win in my head and after getting ready i go outside to my car and look at the car getting flash backs of the crash and i started to form some tears but i push through it and drive to the parking lot. As I pull up and it’s loud and people have music playing, then I see KP and instantly get furious. He’s surrounded and I get out of my car and make my way through the crowd,

“Look who it is, I was starting to think you’d never show, ready to race?” KP said with his cocky smile

“Yea im ready lets just get this over with” I said with hostility. KP looks at me and he can see I’m angry so he just nods his head and everybody starts to get in their cars and go to the vacant street. We line up on the two way street an me and KP are side to side and the same girl from last time and she counts from 3 and we start as we drive I get mixed emotions and KP starts to get in front of me but I go around him and he tried to do the same thing he did last time but it doesnt work and I get pasted him and i win bit i keep driving till I get home and on the way i start to cry and think about chloe and i vowed to never race again.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

I’ve been with my girlfriend, Andrea, for two and a half years. We met in middle school, when I noticed her like a blooming flower in an endless field of withering flowers. I was sheepish in getting to know her since she was a forbidden fruit unable for me to grasp.

Eventually our paths crossed in seventh period math class, and we instantly gravitated towards each other. From then on, our connection only grew stronger. Unexpectedly, the girl I have always loved revealed a painful secret that would alter my life.

One summer night, I remember walking to the front door of my house to answer the belligerent knocking. When I opened the door, I was presented with a face of culpability that made me feel uneasy. It was at this moment, I had an idea of what she would confess.

She looked at me hesitantly and said “I did something bad..”

With shakiness in my voice I questioned her, “What did you do?”

Nervously she admitted, “I cheated on you with someone and got pregnant..”

I stared at her in disbelief, not knowing what to say at that moment. With a million thoughts racing through my mind, I questioned every sincere moment we shared leading up to this moment.

Although I didn’t express myself negatively towards her, I couldn’t help but feel a great sense of sadness come over me. After what seemed like an eternity of trying to find the right words, I blurted out, “Did this have anything to do with us?”

She retorted reassuringly “No, this has nothing to do with us. I just wasn’t thinking at the moment and got lost in it.”

Avoiding eye contact, I looked towards her miserably and pleaded “Please tell me the truth, I won’t be mad with you, I just want to know if you still love me or if you’ve been leading me on.”

Brittled, she admitted “It’s not that I don’t love you anymore, it’s just that my interest doesn’t peak for you as it usually does. I was never leading you on, every moment we had meant the absolute world to me.”

Dazed, I responded “How can I help rekindle our relationship, I don’t want to lose you after all these years to an unprocessed action. I can learn to forgive you and help when the baby is born.”

In a state of shock to what I confessed and replied “I think it’s past the point of rekindlement. I’ve told the baby’s father already and he doesn’t believe that it’s his and being with you during this time will only make him believe that. I just don’t want to raise my kid without both of his parents. At that point, I couldn’t imagine my life without her. In desperation I said, “I would do anything for you to stay with me.”

With a confused look on her face, she muttered no words. The room filled with silence and all that was felt was a wave of discomfort. Throughout the next moment all she could do was explain how harmful her actions were, but the only thing on my mind was all of the memories we shared and the determination to see it through.

I knew our relationship wouldn’t be the same, and we would have to change our dynamic to acclimate with the family that she wanted. Regardless of everything that happened, I still trusted her and wanted to go back to how things were. After everything, my decision was to be there for her and be a part of her family dynamic.

In the end, my love for her remains eternal.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

I remember the day like it was yesterday November 6, 2023 11pm. The homie and I made a last minute decision to get some money. I was thinking it might not go as planned, but I like to take risks. The plan ended up not working. I was kinda irritated that the plan didn’t work but that’s what happens when you take risks, it’s 50/50. Shortly after we heard the helicopter and saw blue and red lights. I thought to myself, I either run or I’m going to jail. My heart raced while running from the police who pulled on the side of me.

I ran the other way and hopped a fence. In my head it felt like I was running for an hour but I was really running for about 30 mins. The chase ended after I was tackled by an officer.

They put me in the back of a police car. When I told them to “call my mom”. In the back of the car I felt nonchalant because I had been arrested before. My mom pulled up to the scene and the police informed her that I was going to jail.

They took me to Clairemont police station where I sat in a cold room. The police took around 5 hours to get me transferred to a jail. It felt like I was in the police station all day, which felt draining. On my way to the Juvenile hall I was asleep in the police car.

I got out of the car and entered the jail. They had me take a mugshot, take an icy shower, and put me in a holding cell waiting to be moved to a unit. One of the officers woke me up early in the morning and took me to a unit. I went into the cell with a flat bed and blue sheets looking at the walls. There was tagging everywhere. I was thinking to myself this place was nasty.

I came out of my cell with all the other kids and I ran into one of my homies. At first I didn't know he was a homie until we talked. Him and I had a talk and he basically laced me up about what to expect here and how it ran.

At the end of our conversation he told me I had a fade tomorrow with one of the other kids because he was from a rival neighborhood. The next morning I waited at my door anxious to come out. The probation officer came to my door to let me out. When I came out I saw the kid I was supposed to fight and we started fighting. Officers escorted me to my room and placed me on RC for an hour. That's when I realized I was really in jail.

MY STORY

By Anonymous

I remember several years ago when it was the first day of high school. I didn't know where I fit in but I knew a friend who had a bunch of other friends and they all dressed a certain type of way with baggy clothes, chains and, wore hats with the same V lettering on them. One of them turned to me and said "you wanna skip school with us?"

I didn't know what to say because in my mind I didn't want to get in trouble but I knew I wanted to fit in.

Deciding to skip school with these friends turned into hanging out at the local park all day till the night turned black, drinking the "poisonous juice." Throughout that night I got into fights to show where my heart stands by having to use a spray can on a wall & tag the letters of our gang.

After vandalizing the random building there was a bright light coming from a car. That's when I then realized it was jura (aka cops). Someone yelled out "trucha jura!" Everyone started running in every direction trying to get away so they can be out for another night or live another night. The jura was always out to get us, always lurking in the corners stopping anyone who they think is affiliated.

After getting away from the jura we decided to go cause havoc in another city named San Marcos. This city is a rival of the homies. After riding through San Marcos, I sat in the back left seat. I saw someone who dressed like the group I was with walking down the street. He had on baggy clothes, chains, and with a hat but with a different lettered hat that said 'SM.'

I pointed it out to my group. That's when the driver did a fast u turn. Rolling up on the person who looked exactly like us. I rolled the window down and said, "Where you from?"

The guy who I didn't recognize looked at us and said, "San Marcos!"

Once he said that, t all of us hopped out of the car and charged him. After jumping my first rival. We went to go and celebrate but while driving back to our city, I had the thought to steal something. That's when I saw a random bystander. I told the driver to pull over. I hopped out with two other people and all we had to say, "Show me what you got." That man decided to give up everything he had. We then went back to the park and continued out at night till the sun came up.

These choices I made got me mugging anybody I see in the streets and causing havoc in the city by doing these things. This was the first night hanging with the homies. I ran from cops to get away from trouble and cruised through the night looking for the rivals. I proved I was worthy by getting into a fight with the homies known as a friendly fade/ heart test. Also getting into fights with the rivals being a part of my heart test, just like that I had my second family.

Since then I realized over time I started wearing baggy clothes,chains, and had the same V lettered hat just like them. Hanging out with these friends I knew there was no turning back because the deeper I got the harder it was to dig myself out of the gang life. I wasn't trying to turn my life around because I loved the adrenaline rush, the love, and a second family I can rely on.

By the end of freshman year I became a part of the homies. Wanting to prove myself and to them I'm loyal to the gang. By then I had already earned my name. "Lil Mugzy" was what they called me.

I remember the day of my 15th birthday I decided to be out with my second family because I had already ran from home and was staying at homies houses or sneaking into girls houses I knew because they loved to help out "lil Mugzy." Up to my 15th birthday I never thought I would ever use a weapon and by doing so I didn't realize the impact it would have on my life.

Using a weapon impacted me a lot by stressing over when I would get caught. Wondering who saw and wondering when my time will be up. The reason I used the "weapon" was because I reacted to the "poisoning juice" in my system and was angry about a couple things I had going on in my life at the time. I didn't know I would use that gun.

By the time I was 16yrs old, I was always in and out of juvenile hall but I did get my second family. We were a tight circle who didn't trust anyone who wasn't in it. From 14 all the way to 18 years old I spent my teenage years in EM with the feeling of losing time I wasted in here and as for my second family they still are with me today doing the same time with me. This wanting to prove myself and be a part of them showed me it wasn't that it showed me i wanted to feel wanted and find people i can rely and trust on.



Kenneth — San Pasqual Academy

THE STORY OF - TO WHAT EXTENT IS IT NECESSARY.

by AIDAN.J

One gloomy day, I was driving my 1998 Ford Ranger pickup truck from the job site. I was having mixed emotions about getting laid-off work because there wasn't enough work for me to do, so my boss told me he will call me when there's work needed. While driving home, I was beginning to stress about how I was going to keep the lights on and feed my four year old daughter.

With anger running through me, I had developed a plan to get some quick cash and there was this gas station a couple miles from town which was perfect to hit. Then I slowly pulled up to the gas station and put my truck in park.

I ran this plan in my head one more time and then I was ready to go through with it. Before I got out of my truck, I scoped the place out. When I thought the place was clear, I reached for my glove box and pulled out my pistol and made sure it was loaded.

I got out of the truck and anxiously walked towards the door. I made my way to the first aisle I saw, picked up the bag of Lays chips, and headed toward the counter. While walking over there, I tightly clenched the gun hidden in my hoodie pocket.

"Will that be all for today?" asked the cashier as I put the chips on

the counter.

"No, that won't be all for today," I answered as I quickly clocked back the pistol, pulled it out, and pointed it at the cashier.

Surprised and terrified, the cashier slowly puts his hands up afraid that I would end his life. Out of nowhere, an old man calmly

approached me and said "Here, take my wallet instead. There's more money in my wallet than in the cash register." I stood there stunned

that he offered his wallet.

I grabbed the wallet from his hand, leaving the money in the register. After grabbing the chips from the counter, I fled the store. I quickly hopped in my truck and pulled off as the tires loudly screeched as I drove away. Freaked out, I started to question myself on where I should go.

In order to figure out what to do next, I decided to go to the park near my house. When I arrived, I got out of my truck and headed towards the benches to contemplate what I should do with my money. While thinking about it, the old man from the store started to walk up with a six-pack of beer in his hand and a smile on his face.

Perplexed, I sat there wondering why he was approaching me. He sat next to me and asked, "What made you go to that extent?"

Puzzled, I decided to share, “I just got laid off from work and was already struggling with finances and needed to provide for my daughter.”

After our long conversation, the old man got up and gave me his card. He said, “ If you need any help, contact me.”

That’s when I noticed his police badge which startled me and I asked, “Aren’t you going to arrest me?”

“No,” he said, “I am looking out for you.’

I told him, “Aren’t you going to want your wallet back?” The old man says, “Don’t you need the money?”

“No, I said to him, “I will figure it out the right way.” I handed him his wallet back before he walked away.

After everything, I was sure that I needed a fresh start and to do the right thing. A week later, I received a call from my boss who said “I need you to do some work for me.” I replied “I will be there in 30.”

From then on, I began saving money from a couple jobs and was able to start a small tool shop in town which gained a lot of foot traffic.

With all the income I made and saved, I was able to buy a small house and get my daughter into a nice school. It was then I knew that even in desperation, you should never go to that extent and everything will fall in place eventually.

THE END
By Anonymous

It was December 14, 2023. I woke up in a frigid hospital in the middle of the night confused. A sharp pain went through my arm, and I noticed an IV going through it. Next to me stood my mom crying. I asked my mom “What happened?” I then started to recall my day.

It was December 13 2023, the 13th signified the hood reunion which was the day all the homies got together. The day started around seven in the morning, then I showered and got ready. I called my friend Marco of two years and told him to pick me up so we could go to the park. Moments later, Marco picked me up and we headed to the park. At first, we contemplated picking up another friend along the way.

“Lets go pick up Anthony and David,” I said.

“Hell nah!” said Marco.

I knew there was tension between Marco and my friend, so we just went to the park instead of picking them up. Marco dropped me off at the park, and I waited for the homies to pull up. Thirty minutes passed by, and Anthony, David, and his uncle showed up. At first, we just chilled, but then arguments ensued and tensions were high. Anthony and his Uncle argued over not being from the hood and it resulted in a violent fight. The fight quickly ended, they got their problems out the way, and we just chilled and drank some Forty’s.

Throughout the day, more and more friends arrived at the park. As they came up to us, I greeted them and started a conversation.

“How’s life going?” said Antwone.

“It’s going good. How about you?” I responded.

“Do you want to get some money?” He said.

“Nah, I’m good” I said.

I knew what I would have to do for the money he was offering, but I didn’t want to get caught up in it. Everybody was on high alert and expected something to happen. I then noticed a car pass by twice and thought it was suspicious. I heard Anthony yell, “Trucha!” The car windows lowered and I heard gunshots. Next thing I know, I felt a punch in my right leg. I stood in shock and stared at the car where shots were being fired from. In a daze, I took off running away from the gunshots.

I ran to a fence where my friend helped me climb over it. Shocked, I sat down behind a tree as my friends fled from the police. Police flashed their lights looking for anyone who was involved. I walked over to another area to wait out police. An hour passed by as I sat there bleeding out. A blinding light shined above me and I heard a loud voice over the intercom.

“Come out with your hands up or we will shoot you! The helicopter sees you”.

Slowly, I stood up with my hands held high and immediately fell over. The sirens of the

ambulance grew closer and paramedics swiftly checked me for injuries.

“Did you get shot?” said the paramedics.

Yes, in my legs.” I said.

I was transported to the nearest hospital and lost consciousness on the way. When I awoke, it was December 14 2023..

UNTITLED
By Ezra

People know me as Ezra G. now, though I used to be someone else then. I’m proud of who I am now and I’m glad I got away from my old lifestyle. One day, there was something I changed or did different so that I could overcome this dilemma. I was saved by God’s grace. He guided me away from sin, laziness, and lust. I realized my potential and saw how much I could do with it. It was up to me to decide what to do with it.

Overcoming this challenge wasn’t easy nor was it fast. It took me time and doing things day by day that I had kept myself from before. I was waking up earlier and tired after little to no motivation. Eventually, this made me realize how to make myself useful and to appreciate myself more. I started gaining confidence and felt

like the same person I was before. I learned how to care and name out things I disliked or felt uncomfortable with. I learned myself more than really needing others. All these influences that were surrounding me made me put expectations on myself. I kept telling myself who I was and enough of what I needed someone to be for me. I also found myself wanting to be and the people I looked up to had real values.

There was a time when I wke up outside not knowing how I ended up there or wha happened the night before. Twenty-seven missed calls and nineteen messages from people that cared about me. I went to the bathroom and saw who I was. I looked at myself in the mirror and told myself, “You let yourself go.” I asked myself, “Are you satisfied with how you are?” I came to my senses. I realized the things I could have done differently. I reminded myself to forgive myself, forgive others, and build a family.

The following Sunday, I went with my father to church. We were there from 10 p.m. till 6 a.m. I couldn’t describe what I felt in my heart, in my soul on life crying alone. What I did know was that I didn’t want to lose that feeling. I chose to lose myself again when I just started to find myself. I made a decision. I cut off all bad influences, all unhealthy habits, and bad values. I picked up a Bible for the first time in years. I dedicated myself to what I could do for others and for God. 3. All in all, what I experienced was a shift in my lifestyle. A change of habits and the grace of God. When I look back on my day-to-day activities, I realize how much time I wasted and how much I hated myself. My future is bright and all those losses I took in the past were really just lessons.

UNTITLED

By Yurem

My name is Yurem. I was born on October 26, 2008, in Chicago, but a few months later I went to Sinaloa to the ranch, where I grew up most of my life living with my mom and my maternal grandparents. I did not live with my dad, but he was more present. During the first seven years of my life, I had a normal ranch childhood without internet. I played a lot outside the house. I would go fishing to a dam near my house with a bottle, string, and hook. I made bows and arrows with tule reeds, flew kites, and drew. My grandfather would give me money and I would pay a man fifty pesos to let me borrow a horse, and I would ride all day. I also had many pets and plants. I played the drums with my grandfather while he played the guitar or cooked food together with my mom and my grandmother.

When I was eleven, my godfather died in a very tragic way. A few days before, I had just gone to Tijuana on vacation, so I couldn’t attend the funeral. When I returned to Sinaloa, they murdered my godmother in a very tragic way. She was my second mom, and it was one of the worst things that has ever happened to me. But the most painful memory she left me was my cousin, who is like my sister and who promised to take care of me for the rest of my life.

At fourteen years old, I started working in the fields with my dad and uncles. I worked because I liked it and I liked earning my own money. When I turned fifteen, the situation at home became very difficult, and after leaving school I worked with some friends blasting music. After that job, I started doing deliveries of salt and helping load it onto trailers. Later I worked planting and cutting cucumber, and after that harvesting beans. I also worked as a delivery driver at a hamburger restaurant, as a cook, and as a cashier. I also worked at a shrimp farm.

My favorite hobby was dancing and singing, which I enjoyed the most. I really liked living in Tijuana, going out, and playing soccer, riding my bike, and at the ranch going to the beach, fishing, and playing marbles with my friends, or climbing the hill and making food, playing the guitar and the accordion, and singing. After turning sixteen, I went to Tijuana to live, since the situation in Sinaloa became very difficult. I made the decision after seeing that that lifestyle led to death. One of my best friends died, and several others started ending up in jail.

I realized that school really is important, and that the best thing for me would be to finish school and pursue a career in something I like. For example, I would like to study nursing or become a firefighter, because I would like to help people and at the same time live from that. In the future, I want to have a home and a family and live peacefully.

PERSONAL NARRATIVE

By Luis

My name is Luis and at one point my credits were really bad. I only had 30 credits out of the 210 I needed to graduate. Because of that, I was told I would probably have to do a full extra year of school just to catch up. Hearing that made me feel discouraged and stressed because I thought I was falling too far behind to fix it.

Later on, my credits were lowered to 130 instead of 210 because I qualified for AB16, which reduces the number of credits needed to graduate. The school I attend also allows students to earn about 30 credits every month or two. That meant if I stayed focused, I could graduate much sooner than I originally thought. At first, I didn’t even know this was an option. A school counselor pulled me out of class one day and explained the credit reduction to me. I remember not knowing how to feel at first. I thought it might mess up my diploma or make it less important.

When the counselor explained it more, I realized that wasn’t true. The reduction didn’t mean my diploma would be worth less. Instead, it gave me a real chance to graduate and move on with my life. Once I understood that, I felt relieved and motivated. I started to see that graduating sooner would give me more opportunities and more freedom to focus on my future.

Even though I had to go through a lot of unnecessary stress to become eligible for AB16, it was worth it. Because of it, my credits were reduced and now I will be able to graduate on time, or even earlier. This experience taught me that asking questions and accepting help can completely change your situation. Thanks to my counselor, I now have a clearer path forward and a stronger belief in myself.

MY LIFE JOURNEY

By Anonymous

My early experiences as a young kid would be having a rough childhood growing up, like going through things at an early age, like seeing people pass away that were very close to me that had affected me growing up, making me feel numb to a lot of things, also not having no emotions to certain things I was supposed to. Also just living a fast life as a kid, like doing grown up things at an early age, which I overcame through time. I would be being more patient with myself and everyone else, not being so hardheaded like I used to before. This time I am different. I react differently at a lot of things than before and learned how to be more mature over time, acting my age instead of acting like a little kid, looking at things as the bigger picture. My breakthrough would be currently right now being locked up, not knowing when I am coming home. Has it made a big effect to my life? Because I'm at a point in my life where I am fighting for my life. I either have another chance at life or go to prison, so I'll say currently right now that's my breakthrough. My achievements would be learning new ways to do things so I don't be stuck in my old ways. Also about to finish high school, starting a new chapter in my life which is starting college very soon. Gonna be studying business so I can get my business degree and have a career whenever I get out of jail, so I can do something for myself instead of doing the same thing as before. So stopping the cycle and starting a new cycle for myself and whenever I have kids of my own one day.

UNTITLED

By Edgar.

My name is Edgar. The first big challenge I had to deal with is my boxing condition. The first ever fight of my boxing career was nerve-racking, but I told myself that I got this and I will win. Multiple rounds had passed, then on the seventh round my opponent gave me a good uppercut and I almost got knocked out. After the seventh round, doctors came and checked my heart rate. They said my heart rate was slowing down, then after 15 seconds my heart rate went to 120 beats per minute. I woke up and was ready to fight again. I had so much energy and felt so strong. Then I felt so fast and kept hitting my opponent and knocked him out. After the bell rang, I won my very first boxing match.

My hardest challenge is being able to deal with my condition while boxing. Boxing was very hard, especially with my condition. In my first match, I almost got knocked out. When the seventh round had ended, they checked my heart rate and it was slowing down, but after seven seconds my heart went to 120 beats per minute. Then my eyes were tearing and going down my cheek. My dad got scared and worried, but the bell for the next round rang and I got up instantly. My father and my brother were screaming, "Are you okay?" but I ignored them and just focused on the match. I felt so much stronger and energetic. It was like everything around me I could see and my reflexes were much better and I became aggressive. After the match, I won, but my opponent got really injured.

INTRODUCTION: MY LIFE JOURNEY

By Adam

My name is Adam. I am 14 years old. One particular challenge that I overcame was having trouble in school and falling behind in credits. I overcame this challenge by going to school every day, doing all of my homework, going to Saturday school, and completing extra assessments to get my credits back up to normal. I also had to do extra work.

At one point during school, I was going behind in credits and I was not going to graduate because of how badly I was doing and the trouble I was getting into. The reason why I changed my situation was because it would not let me graduate, and I couldn't go on field trips or do fun things like that. Also, my mom was mad from all the phone calls from school about the trouble I got into and my grades. What I had to do to change was go to class on time and do extra work. I also had to test and go to all my classes and stay out of trouble. How I did it was listening to people who want good for you, and also keeping distance between your normal friend group.

One incident that made me realize I needed to change is when the principal told me I wasn't going to pass classes and was going to get kicked out of school and not pass any classes.

One positive outcome if I embrace the change is I will pass all my classes, do fun things in school, and get a diploma. I might also go to college or a school for welding.

A couple specific changes are staying on track, doing all the work I have to do, and being on all of my credits.

The way I plan to stay on course is by going to school on time every day, staying out of trouble, and listening to my principal.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

The football score was flashing 21-16 on the jumbotron at the end of the 4th quarter as the Skyline Tigers scored, winning the state playoff game just as the horn blared on the scoreboard signaling the end of the well-fought game.

As my friends and I pushed out the football stadium, the frigid air didn't matter as the body warmth of everyone moving brought forth warmth and excitement. As we went our separate ways and broke off into our carpool groups, my girlfriend India and I approached her car to head home.

As we were swimming through the cesspool of traffic merging in and out of lanes, India went on shooting off about anything and everything, but something caught my ear when she mentioned a halloween party.

"Who's going?" I replied.

"Everybody and they momma. You know how people get about they festivities. Alija and them been planning

for this party for the last month talking ‘bout ‘bring your own, but asking if people can help support and bring supplies, she is so messy ugh.”

That’s when I stopped listening, don’t get me wrong I love India a lot and she my been my girl for the last 3 years but sometimes she get to going and I cant take it so I reply with a “yeah “or a “hella” just so she think im listening but it get annoying sometimes.

The groupchat was pinging off for the last hour about the game, who’s with who, and the upcoming party, but I was getting tired so I put my phone on DND and tried to get some shut eye for the rest of the ride. When I looked out the window in the midst of the abyss, I saw the grave yard where my best friend was buried around this same time last year.

“What color should I get my nails? I think a burnt orange would look nice with this dress I bought but I dunno I really like a lavender purple. You know that’s my favorite color.”

“Yea fasho” I replied because I was too busy getting in my head reminiscing on the time when my pops had just got sick and Sino was the only person who went to the hospital with me. Now after school, I go talk to his headstone so he doesn’t ever think I forgot about him or all he did for me.

“Whats wrong with you ?” India interrogated.

“Nothing, I’m just tired and been moving around all day. You know how it get.”

Omitting the fact that it was really that the flashback of my best friend bleeding out with holes in his face was getting to me. I was just ready to get home and go to sleep.

“Oh... well okay then I got something for you when we get to the room” she suggested, alluding to something that, after the day I had, I was not in the mood for.

“Nah its good love, I gotta get up early tomorrow I’m straight” I said sluggishly.

“Hmph yea ok.” she mumbled angrily. By not replying I decided against starting a losing debate tonight and closed my eyes for the rest of the ride.

A week later

I was sitting in class brooding about the fight I had with my friend, King, over the weekend over him kicking it with the Parkside dudes that were talking spicy about Sino. Me and King have been friends since the sandbox. Our parents were friends as kids growing up so he’s basically my “brotha from anotha motha”.

My history teacher, Mrs.Harris, who has always shown me tough love and filled in where my mom hadn’t, passed out all the graded homework from over the weekend. I received mine and got a 32% on the most recent pop quiz. I crumpled the paper and threw it across the classroom.

“You’ve got a real attitude problem Elijah. I don’t tolerate slackers, keep this up and you won’t graduate. This is your senior year now colleges will be looking at these things.”

“Yeah right, Mrs Harris.” I replied respectfully as possible, trying to hide my irritation about this conversation.

The bell rings and I storm out of the classroom like a tornado recklessly bumping into my schoolmates as I pass the doorway rushing to India’s house as fast as possible.

“What’s brakkn’ with you?” India said being the one of many people to try me today as I slumped through the door.

Although I know it’s kind-hearted and from a place of playfulness, I didn’t want to come home to my girl talking to me like some dude on the street.

“Fool please. Do you know what you finna wear? So I know what to throw on, so we can do all that matchy-matchy girlfriend mess you love to get into.” I said exhausted.

Halloween night

The party at the BnB was live. There were so many people in the house. The air in the room was thick from all the body heat. The pungent smells of the types of cologne and deodorant floated through the air making it hard to discern one person from the other.

A random girl approached me, obviously riding the high of the night. “Heyyy, EJ whats with you I haven’t seen you in so longggg,” she slurred, being too touchy for my liking especially when I keep tuck.

“Nothing much chilling, who are you?”

“Stopp playing we went to grade school together. You turned somebody ‘round here and you start acting brand new like you don’t know nobody no more.” she continued seeming like she hadn’t had water in years with the thirst.

“Oh...” I said, faking. “I remember, good night to you too,” I said as I saw over her shoulder a group of individuals that I couldn’t pin but seemed familiar and pushed off towards the group.

As I approached the group it hit me who they were, these were the same people who downed Sino. A wave of happiness came over me because I knew today was the day I had been waiting on for the last year.

Blindly, I blitzed to the first person I saw. His friends cover for him almost instantly, and what was just a cordial environment turned a heated brawl.

With a vector and extra button on my .40 the party went up.

“HADDAOOW!”

Only hearing screams and sounds of the guests stampeding towards the nearest exits, everything went black.

Two days later

Dazed, I arose in a hospital gown cuffed to a bed. I assume the sound of me trying to leave alerts the staff,

and a doctor crossed the threshold of the doorway.

“Hi Mr. Herman, how are you feeling? It’s good to see you awake. Seems you had an eventful Halloween...”

“What am I here for?” I replied irritated from her optimistic attitude.

So... you have three wounds most likely from a knife or blade given the size and shape, but you’ll live, nothing critical was damaged. I’ll let the officers know you’re ready.”

Then it came back and I remembered it all. “Wait wha-... hell..”

In the courtroom I sat in front of the judge waiting for what I knew was coming when I noticed the group at the party.

“Elijah Herman you have been sentenced to 80 years to life...”

HOOD STORY

By Anonymous

I was 14 years old when I got into the gang life. I still remember the day I got jumped in. I had gone to the park to meet with my homies and they had asked me, “Be from the hood lil bro? yours pops and the whole family is from the neighborhood.”

I responded, “Yea I will.” So we hung out the whole day and there was beer in the cooler because it was a hot day. When I was ready I told them, “okay let’s get it.” 1 saw three of my homies jump up and surround me in a circle. They started to get in their fighting position. Next thing you know, swings are coming from every direction. I’m taking punches to the face and my upper body. I felt like I couldn’t breathe. 1 dropped to the ground like four times. Each time my homies helped me get up and every time 1 fell. Getting jumped in it was painful. It lasted 22 seconds, but it felt like it had lasted minutes.

The hardest part after I got jumped in was going to my house. I tried to walk in as fast as I could, covering my face because I had a busted mouth, blood everywhere, bumps, bruises all over my body.

My mom stopped me in the middle of the hallway and asked me “Why are you covering your face?”

“Im tired, I just want to go to bed and rest,” I responded, trying to avoid my mom’s eye.

As soon as the words came out she tried taking my hands off my face. We were going back and forth but I was in so much pain I could barely even move a muscle so 1 stopped covering my face looking at my mom’s reaction. She looked dissapointed at me and couldn’t even look at her son. She walked away crying, her heart broken.

Weeks have passed and my mom still hasn’t been able to look me in the face. A couple of days later she comes up to me saying “pack your stuff and get out of my house” 1 get up from sitting on the couch go get my clothing and walk out the door. Waiting for my homie pick up from the Mexican restaurant I walked to I

saw two older guys that looked at me, so I chunked my gang signs mad dogging them in anger.

Minutes later they walked away but I was able to see where they went, then I got tapped from the back by an older guy saying” Wassup homie where are you from?” “Homie I’m From Vista Home Boys Gang” I responded. It went silent for a little then they introduced themselves Saying” Oh yea that’s right boy we from VHB also come kick it with us homie you got heart.”

I got into their car and put my bags in the trunk then one of them asked me “ You good do you need a place to stay?”

Yea I do, I just got kicked out from the pad But if it’s too much then I don’t want to bother you” I responded. Then he had told me “Don’t trip Homie I have been in your shoes anything you need I got you, You from the hood so we got your back no matter what it is.”

Soon after that I started to be in the neighborhood everyday either by myself or the homies trying to earn a name in the streets by doing stuff that meant hurting people. Honestly I didn’t care who got hurt in the process as long as I had earned respect from the hood I didn’t care about the consequences. That’s when the unexpected had happened and everything I did had caught up to me, detectives started to ask questions to family, friends and homies about me but nobody knew where I was staying.

Months passed and older homies had respected me more than I wanted, I had earned a name in the streets. It felt good. It felt like I had belonged and made a new family that loved me and appreciated me, 1 had everything I wanted: money, females, rank and my hood by my side who were down to ride with me.

It didn’t last long my past caught up to me the sheriff’s had a warrant from my arrest I went on the run for a good minute until they caught me but I knew I wouldn’t be able to run forever so I turned myself in and faced the consequences. I was only fourteen when 1 first hit juvenile hall but it had become a bad habit because after I had got out I just kept going back in, now I’m telling you my story from juvenile hall how the gang life is fun and you will get what you want but it won’t last long and sooner or later you will have to face the real world plus the consequences.

One day was im having dinner with my dad outside by the pool When the subject of my last girlfriend popped up. My father was upset with me because I had chose to ignore his warnings after he saw how she was only in it for the money.

“I tried to tell you how she was wasting your time, my dad said, raising his voice.

“She only chose to see you when you had a gift for her or had something to offer”

“Dad i was blind i was so caught up in the moment i thought she really liked me”

As our Argument escalated I chose to remove myself I hopped in my car and kept driving I ended up in a run-down neighborhood since I skipped out on dinner I decided I would grab some donuts and a coffee at a local liquor store.

When I realized I didn’t have my car on me I then up to just pay with the cash I had in my pocket I came \$2

short and I noticed this gorgeous cashier I told her I was short and she said not able to worry about it that’s both volumes about her character and I instantly fell in love .I decided without being too forward that I would ask her out.

“I’m sorry I’m just not interested in a relationship right now,” she said

I chose then that I would give up my pursuit for today but that I would be back at a later date to ask her again I became a frequent customer, always saying how beautiful she was complimenting her without being too forward.

“I think your so beautiful give me a chance. if you dont enjoy your self or im to boring ill leave you alone”

“Confident and persistent i see. i just dont know mama told me about guys like you,” she said with a warm smile.

“I promise you youve never meet a guy like me give me a chance what time you off today?

“Im off at seven,” she said finally relenting.

“You down for dinner at eight? That gives you an hour to get ready. ill pick you up,”I said smoothly.

“Okay” she said slightly blushing

The date went great and we hit it off immediately. Over the next two months we spent almost everyday together and getting to know each other.

I thought it was time to invite her over to introduce her to my father. However, I didn’t know that evening he had already invited some of his friends from the country club.

His friends had already showed and were dressed to the nines by the time she showed up to the house. When I opened the door, there she was in a t shirt and tight jeans that hugged every one of her curves perfectly

YOUTH TRANSITION CAMPUS

COURAGE/EXCEL UNITS

PERSONAL NARRATIVE

By Adam E.C.

Imagine how your whole life changes when you lose a parent. One day I was at a lowrider show in my neighborhood. I was with my homies. We were just chillin, and then out of nowhere some guy comes up to us and shoots my homie in the stomach. He was on the ground bleeding in pain, and we were saving him the best we could. The ambulance came and took him to the hospital. When he got to the hospital we found out that he was put in a coma. He was in a coma for a while, then we got some sad news and that he sadly passed away.

I was just hanging out with him. I felt like I could’ve been a victim. Later that day we went to his memorial spot where his candles were. We were there for a while then out of nowhere some guys came and knocked down his candles. We were so shocked that that had happened. We chased the car down and popped his tires. In regret it so much because later that night some guys chased my down when i was walking home.i was so scared that my heart was pounding for like 30 minutes.i went to sleep then i woke up in the morning i was kicking it with the homies then out of nowhere they asked me if i wanted to join the hood i was said hell yea. I felt like I would be more respected and more known for my actions.but one night i was walking around in our rival’s neighborhood and they said where you from foo i said where i was from and that didn’t go so well after that. They jumped me and beat me to a point where I couldn’t even move a single muscle. One of the civilians around saw me on the ground and carried me to their house and then they took me to the hospital.

I had to make a choice and I decided that I wanted to make a difference in my life. Finally, I was doing good. I was going to school, getting my grades up, and making new friends. But after school one day I was walking home and I saw one of the guys who jumped me that one night. I was still healing from that incident. He saw me and immediately started to chase me down. I just wish I had my old life back with my mom and dad. I was just a young innocent boy - I was everywhere with my mom and dad and my sister. We would always be at the movies, if not on the train going to the beach. I just wish that things can go back to how it used to be, especially when my dad was here. When my mom and dad were together, I would always be home and never be out in the streets.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

Imagine sleeping like a baby then suddenly feel like there's a tornado and earthquake happening right where you are sleeping. I open my eyes and I see my aunt. She looks pale and worried like she just saw a ghost. I ask what is wrong and she says to get up, grab my little brother and get a blanket. Now i'm wide awake i start looking for my phone on my bed i look up and see a bright light shining through my window i find my phone check the time it was 4:22 and the 20th day of April 2020 I get up and go to my window and try and see what the bright light is I couldn't see it for very long it hurt to look at all I seen was it was coming from the front of my house and it looked like my whole street was blocked off. I then heard my aunt waking up my cousin,sister,uncle,and older brother. My uncle was asking what's wrong and he went to grab his glock, my aunt got mad and slapped him in his head and she said to put his gun down and that swat is at the door and told her to wake everybody in my house up and then they gave her a search warrant to search my house for any weapons and to look for one of my older brothers. At this point I was looking at my sister and brother. I got worried because the brother they were looking for was here before I went to sleep with a couple of his friends but I didn't see him when my aunt woke everybody up. I checked my phone to text my brother and saw he had texted me a couple hours ago telling me he took my playstation to his friends. He'll be back in the morning. I then felt a little reassured for his safety. My older sister started shaking my little brother to wake him up and wrapped him around a blanket. The swat knocked on the door again my aunt opened the door and i seen them armored up i seen 3 of them one had a riot shield and a flashlight the other ones had 2 ar's my aunt said yeah and the swat officers said okay youngest to oldest walk out the door when called they walked back they had a loud speaker and they said to walk out the door youngest from oldest i walked out with my little brother with me i seen an armored vehicle they were talking to me threw the loud speaker they told me to turn around slowly and i told my little brother turn around and he looked scared so i told him we will be okay and we slowly walked backwards listening to an an officer's voice he grabbed me and my brother and put us in a van my little brother seemed scared so i let him play roblox on my phone then i seen my cousin,sister,aunt and uncle come into the van. I asked my aunt where my other brother was and she said the swat officers put him in cuffs and put him in the back of a cop car. My uncle asked my aunt what was happening and she said that my brother who wasn't here was in an investigation for a shooting, armed robbery and attempted murder. My aunt seemed mad but worried and she called my mom asking where she was and my mom said she was at work working graveyard. My aunt told her everything and my mom sounded worried and said she'll be on the way to my house soon. A couple hours went by and we were still in the van. My little brother fell back to sleep playing roblox. It was me, my cousin and sister awake trying to see what was gonna happen to my brother in the cop car. My aunt asked an officer what would happen with my brother in the police car. He apologized and said he'll grab him. Then my brother and the swat officer came to the van and the officer said that we were good to go back into the house and we saw the armored vehicle drive off and the other cop cars drive off one by one.But i before all of them left my uncle was arguing with an officer asking where his gun was and my uncle said he showed him his permit so why were they taking it. But the officer said he'll get it back soon. I picked up my little brother while he was sleeping and carried him into my house. We walked inside and saw it was a mess, clothes all over the floor and pictures on the floor and just a total mess. My mom got home around 20 minutes after they left and we all tried getting ahold of my brother and my sister called him he answered and let him know what happened and he said sorry for putting us through that but my aunt and uncle were just worried for him and said if he

was okay my mom came home crying asking why her son and me, my sister, and my brother comforted her because my mom was saying she was a bad mom. My aunt said everything will be okay and not to be harsh on my brother because they have no evidence but someone had snitched and said my brother was there but the cops were going off word and had no evidence and they searched the house for any evidence and to look for him. My mom then started to calm down and wipe the tears off her face. I was around 11 at this time and didn't know what to tell my mom so I just went to go talk to my cousin cause we were both close to my brother and we were just talking wondering what happened. Everything turned out to be okay. My brother never got charged with anything but got put on probation.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

Imagine this: you are sleeping at home like any other day when you are interrupted by a loud tapping at the front door. You get up off your bed, open the door, and there's a bunch of police officers.

One morning I woke up like any other day scrolling through my phone and watching videos when my Probation Officer texted me. She tells me I have to meet her at 2:30 or I will have a warrant for my arrest. I had plans to chill with my friends, and I didn't think my probation officer was serious. I get out of my bed, pick an outfit to wear and then hop in the shower. My friend texted me saying "I'm on the way." Before I leave the house my mom says "Your Probation Officer texted me that you need to see her. Don't forget." I let her know I wouldn't, but in reality I was going to chill with the homies. In my mind all I'm hoping is that my Probation Officer is not serious.

My homie picked me up and said "we're goin' to the park" and I asked if before we go, can we get Mc Donalds. We got some food and went to the park where my other homies were waiting for us. A few hours later, I remember I was supposed to see my Probation Officer. I told the homies I was supposed to see my Probation Officer today, and they said "You blew it. You're gonna get your house raided." I told them, "She's not really gonna put a warrant for my arrest." Eventually, after it got dark, my homie dropped me back off at my house. My mom wasn't there when I got there, which was good for me, so I just went to sleep.

I shot awake when I heard a loud pounding at my front door. I jumped off my bed, opened the door and saw a bunch of police officers. They cuffed me as soon as they saw my face. I instantly realized my Probation Officer wasn't joking. My mom ran out from her room mad at me for lying to her and ignoring what my Probation officer had told me. They read me my rights and explained to my mom that I had a warrant for my arrest since I didn't meet with my P.O.

At that moment I foresaw what was about to happen. Images of court, juvenile hall, and nasty food flashed in my head. This is how I ended up in juvenile hall for the first time. I learned to set my priorities and listen to my mom even if I don't agree. Unfortunately, I made some bad mistakes to get arrested again. It is currently 1/22/26 I am in Juvenile Hall again while I am writing this story.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

The air is still. Leaving nothing but room for doubt in my mind. I look at the guys to my left then look at the guys to my right. We all came for the same thing. Only one of us is going to get it. Everything is slow and the people surrounding are yelling but it's muffled. I can only hear my heart beating. I dropped down, determined to show what I can do. The shot fired and my ears rang. Without consciousness I immediately began running. I kept at a steady pace so I didn't burn out quickly. I had already sized up the other runners but I still was unsure about how I'd do against them. As I sped up my pace, I felt my legs turning into jello and my heart beatboxing. The wind was thrashing against my body as if it was trying to push and hold me back, making me feel exhilarated. "You got this, you're almost there." I plead to myself. I surpassed the runner in second place and I heard the crowd roar into excitement. I slowed my breathing and concentrated. As I saw the lead runner become second in my peripheral. I was so close I could taste victory. All doubt left my body. I knew why I was here and what I came here to do. My team chanted my name. It felt like a power up. My legs went even faster. I had the strides of a cheetah as the last couple of meters came into vision. I rushed through the finish line. I did it! "YEAH!" I exclaimed. Even with a weakened body, I felt victorious. Nothing could take this feeling away. I went up to check my time then went with the rest of my team. I saw my little brother smiling big. "Good job Yahkel. You're pretty fast. But I can beat you easily." He said. I laughed as I chugged the rest of my water bottle. My team congratulated me. "That's right. 1st place! What did you have to be afraid of?" said my twin. I learned that day that you can't base everything off of what you see. Sure they look faster and maybe even stronger but never doubt yourself because pushing and trusting yourself is all that matters. As long as you finish the race, even if you're not first it counts. You only fail if you quit. And that is something I won't do.

"LAST BIRTHDAY AS A JUVENILE INMATE"

By Angelo V.

One moment I will never forget is when I realized that I had my last birthday as a kid in jail. This hit me like a car going 100 miles per hour, because that meant a whole year had gone by. At first it made me think, then I started to feel regretful for the things I did and wished I had a Do-Over-Day on the day I came back to jail.

When I first woke up I was sad because I was not with my people and felt that I let them down, and most importantly my twin sister. It kills me that she had to spend two Birthdays back to back without me.

My emotion changed to laughter when I remembered my last birthday on the outs and I was working on lyrics in the recording booth with my good friend Smoove pulling on my shirt trying to dance with me. I had woken up around 11:30 on a Thursday and it felt too good and too late to go to school, so I went to his pad to work on some songs. It was a great day that day and I thought it was the best birthday ever, until I remembered how I ended up here.

After laying down a couple of tracks, we hopped in the ride to get something to eat and for whatever reason, a cop pulled up behind our car. I still remember seeing those all too familiar red and blue lights whirling round and round in the review mirror, then being hand-cuffed and put in the back seat of a police

car. Remembering that event made me feel worse. I knew that this second birthday in a cell was going to be my last birthday before turning 18.

As I was allowed out of my cell, one of my friends greeted me with a big Happy Birthday! "Happy B-day bro!" As he said that a good sensation rushed down my body thinking that maybe this day might not be as bad as I thought it was going to be.

If I could do the day I got arrested the first time over again, I think I would have woken up on time and gone to school.

HOW ONE POTHOLE CHANGED MY LIFE

By Diego E.

I didn't know if I could handle it when I broke my arm. It started when I was going to meet my long-term soccer friend, Trey, to spend the night at our friend's house. The problem that occurred was that I was texting my friend while riding my bike.

Then out of nowhere, I felt the bars twist. I flew over the handlebars and fell on the ground.

I looked down and saw the pothole that made me fall.

I felt excruciating pain on the right side of my arm. I saw a white piece of bone sticking outside of my arm. I couldn't believe I broke my arm. I thought I was dreaming.

A sharp pain went through my arm.

Then a lady came up to me and asked, "Are you okay?"

I said, "No, I am not.

She called the ambulance. The ambulance came. They put me on the stretcher in the back of the ambulance.

After I got out of surgery and had a cast for a month or two. Once I got it off, my arm felt weird. I had not moved it for a while. My mom made food, and when I tried to eat it, I couldn't help myself. I tried to use all of my strength, but it didn't work.

A RAINY DAY

By Donald O.

One day, when I least expected it, a rainy day occurred right away. I felt the breeze of the wind and the drops of rain on my head while I was sitting on the porch. Before this happened I was inside the house at the dinner table with my family. We had pizza that night. Everything was going great at the time until the thunder clapped. It was so powerful that the windows were shaking, and my cat got scared. He was running through the house meowing loudly and jumping on the furniture. I had to tell my family.

I tried to open the door. I walked out with slippers on my cold feet. But instead, I looked up and down the streets and it was flooded. At the moment, I thought we had to evacuate. I ran back inside. Then I turned on the TV to the news, and they mentioned there was a hurricane coming. I was nervous; this was my first time having a hurricane in San Diego. When the chaotic storm passed. I watched the news once again. They said twenty-five people lost their lives and ten people were injured. I went outside, and I saw trees and debris in the street. I saw the American Red Cross looking for more victims. Finally, a day later, things were starting to get better. This moment taught me how to handle emergencies. I will always remember this because it was tough, but my family and I were okay.

UNTITLED

By Patrick C.

One late night when I least expected it I almost died, at least I thought so at the moment. I and my three buddies were driving on the 5 highway going south at 60 mph with no other cars visible. All of a sudden one of my friends in the back seat yelled, “Watch out!”

I immediately felt anxious and insecure. I did my best to stay focused on the road. I swerved to my left barely getting out of the way of a small indistinguishable car to my right. I had no idea where that car came from. We were all alone on the road.

Where did that car come from? Sandy in the front passenger seat said, “You weren’t even close!” “Why were you screaming dude?” “Your screaming is what made him swerve!” I took the next exit to get out and change drivers. Sandy with her “let me do it” attitude took the wheel and we continued south.

After that I realized that it doesn’t take much to freak me out. I do my best to drive alone to make sure I can keep a leveled head and stay with my composure. I learned that when I get overstimulated and can’t focus I need to change my environment and find a way to relax, like listening to music and breathing.

MY FIRST CRASH

By Ruben R.

I will never forget the day I got into my first car accident. It was an early Saturday morning and my mom was finally letting me drive her new 2024 Chevy so I could impress my friends instead of the old clunker leaking oil in the driveway that I learned how to drive in. She warned me before I left that the brakes seemed to be acting a little strange and that I should make sure I didn’t drive too fast while on the freeway. In my head, I heard her, but was too busy being happy that I was given the permission to drive. I got into the car and quickly drove to my friend’s house. As soon as he jumped in we were off and flying to a party in Hemet.

We made a couple more stops along the way to pick up my girlfriend and her friend, then it was back on the freeway. There was a morning fog thicker than a wooly blanket and we were just cruising and listening to great music thinking today was going to be a great day. One of the girls in the back rolled her window down and a chill filled the car. I didn’t think about it at the time, but that chill may have been a premonition that

something bad was going to happen, but I was too busy thinking about the good time we were going to have in Hemet.

An hour and a half later, we were cruising northbound on the 15 with maybe a half an hour left to drive. The music from the radio was loud in my ears and the wind from the freeway was blowing on my face when suddenly I realized I needed gas and proceeded to exit the freeway. As we entered the off ramp, I began to press the brakes, but nothing happened. “Oh no”, I thought, trying to keep calm and not panic, but my nerves were shaking all over and I pressed harder on the brakes hoping for something good to happen, but that was our fate.

The car started shuttering, but wasn’t slowing down fast enough and there was a row of cars in front of us. I was very concerned because at the time, my girl was pregnant and I didn’t want any of us to get seriously injured. I also didn’t want to hurt anyone else, but that wasn’t in the cards. I tried to swerve as much as I could off the road to avoid hitting anyone, but that was unavoidable.

BAAAMMMM!!! We smashed into the rear end of a red mini van and the airbags exploded in my and my friends faces. The girls in the back screamed. For a split second afterwards, it got really quiet and then I thought about the people in the car we hit.

When I looked up through the busted windshield, I could see a couple and their three kids coming out looking bewildered and scared. The younger looking kids were crying and I felt really bad, but was relieved when I found out everyone was okay, just really startled.

LATE NIGHT

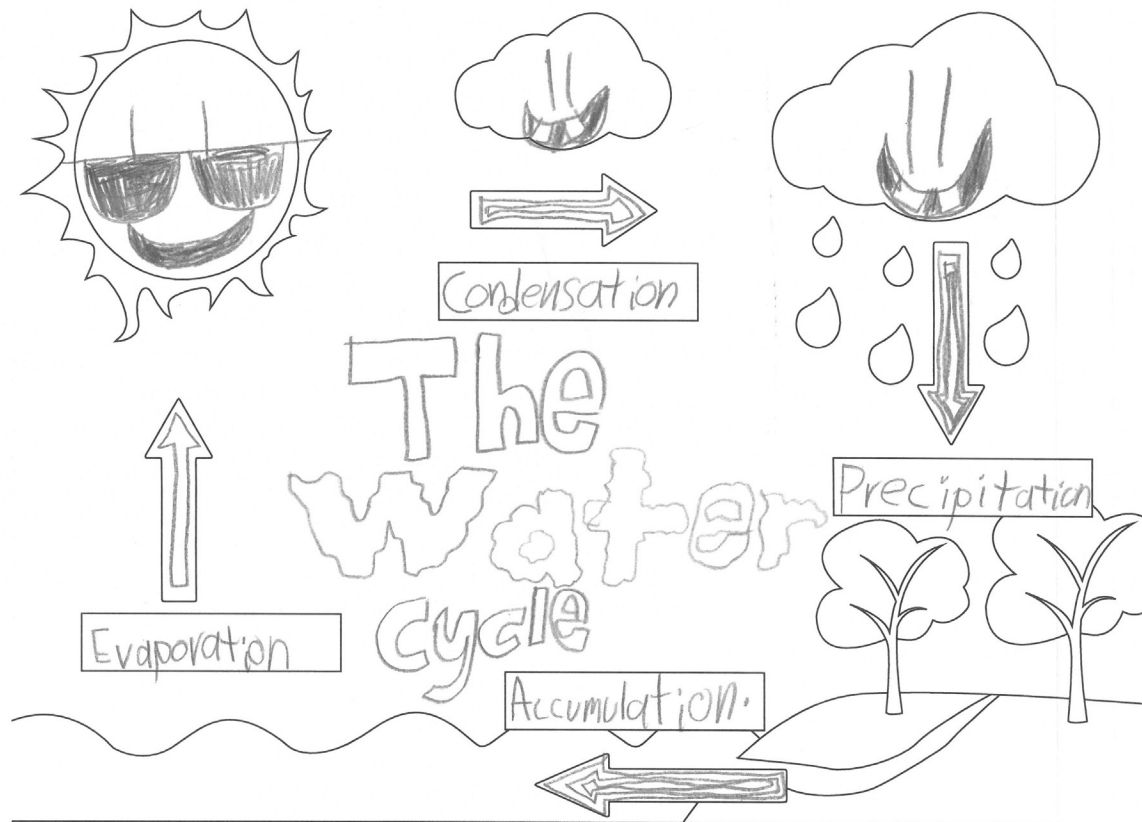
By Steven B.

One moment I will never forget is when the homie’s body dropped. It was a nice night at the park with my four friends. . At 1am we were just chilling listening to music and laughing. Keep in mind it’s 1am and the streets are empty in my small town.

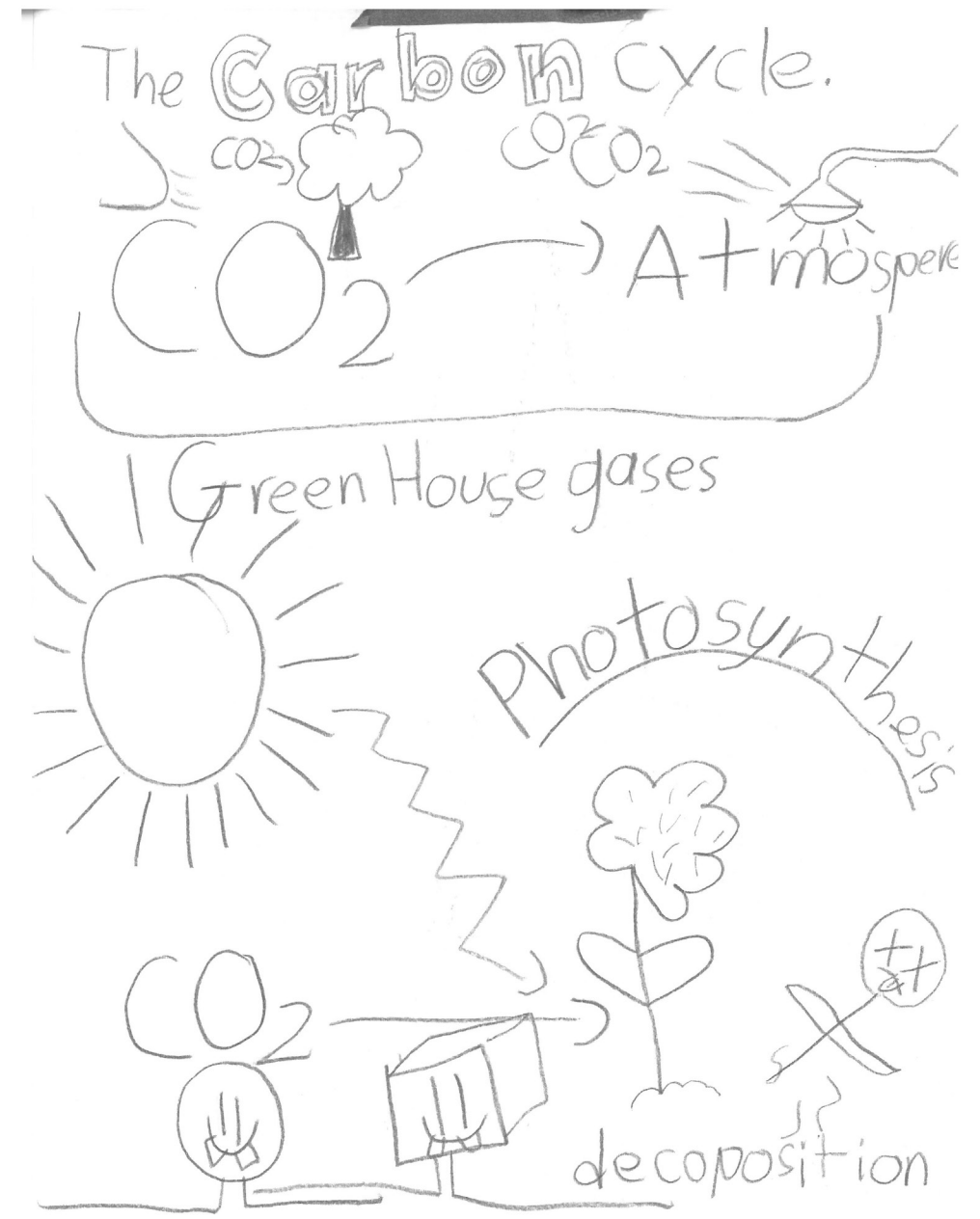
Out of the blue a white BMW was speeding down the street pumping loud music. It didn’t seem too crazy until the car came back 4 minutes later and parked in front of the park entrance. We were just a few feet away. Chase decided to walk up to the car to see who it was. “I was thinking that it was a stupid idea”. Once Chase got there the back seat passenger side window rolled down. A blue laser crept through the foggy park and aimed first at Chris, “Boom!” then immediately at Zack “Boom!”. They both dropped into the full creek that wound through the park. Chase ran down the street and away from the park and Mando hid behind a large oak tree. I just stood there frozen in fear. The BMW sped off never to be seen again.

Moments later Zack and Chris crawled out of the creek wet and scared but ok. Chase came back to the park to join us. Mando said, “Bro, that was scary!”, as he came out from behind the tree.

In the end everything turned out ok and we continued our fun at the park laughing at what had just happened. I’ll never forget that moment because it could have gone way differently.



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SUCCEED/RESILIENT UNITS

A FATHERS PERSPECTIVE

By Juan D.

At first, everything seemed to slow down when I saw my son's first moments in this world. My heart was racing fast and everything around the room started to feel like it was in slow motion, as his Mother gave birth I felt terrified but happy at the same time.

The last thing I heard before this moment was his Mother screaming and the Doctor rushing in the room and helping her push him out while I was sitting besides her.

The moment I held my son and laid eyes on him for the first time I felt a happiness I never felt before, the room lit up with colors and for the first time in a long time i felt like I had something to fight for, I changed his first diaper and also taught him how to feed from a bottle. I took my son home 2 days after his birth and since then my life has had a meaning.

THE SLOWEST MOMENT OF MY LIFE

By Hector H.

A time that went slow for me was when my mom called me and told me that my little sister was born. I had just got off from school. As soon as my brother texted me my mom called and told me the news. I felt so happy and wanted to see her as soon as I could so I ran home as fast as I could. I ran and ran until I was there then my heart was beating fast. I could feel my hands shaking as I walked slowly inside my house.

There I saw my mom holding my baby sister. I looked at her sweet face and I told my mom I wanted to hold her little baby's hands. This was a slow time for me because I wanted to see my new born baby sister. The time I spent running felt slow but this was one of the happiest moments I had and one of the slowest moments I ever had. I felt so happy knowing I have a little baby sister I can take care of. She's the only female in the family in over 100 years so it makes me so happy because my family gave me the chance to name her. My mom loves telling me that she looks like me when I was a baby. I hope the family takes it easy on her because she's the only girl in my family. I always take care of her when I can. My mom told me that she wants me to be good to her.

My mom said I should help her out with my baby sister. Now it's been 4 years and she's getting big, she's smart, she's always running around, she's the best now that she's grown she's cute. My baby sister is the only thing that's keeping me from not crashing out anymore.i been trying to tell my family that it's best to be sweet to her since she's just a baby and it's different because she's a girl and we should take it easy on her because she lives in the house with a lot of boys and they play ruff with her but the moment where I ran from school was one of the slowest moments of my life.

THRIVE UNIT

A BAD DAY

By J.T.

It was December 19, 2025 when my bad day started. I woke up with a tooth that had been aching for 3 days. It felt like a pulsating heartbeat in my jaw. I wanted to take some medicine, get ready for school, and see my girl. Instead, I did the right thing by calling my mentor and going to see my PO. I looked at my brother who was asleep with his newborn. It was his birthday and I didn't want to wake him to wish him a happy birthday.

My mentor came to pick me up and we headed to see my PO. I got the vibe that he thought I was on drugs because my tooth was hurting. As we were driving I didn't realize I had a bench warrant waiting for me when I got to her office. When we got to her office I checked in with her and she handcuffed me to check me. I knew then that I was getting locked up. She said, "You are getting detained because of a bench warrant." I wanted to get out for my brother's birthday but I just sat down and accepted it.

I then had to get in a police car and do the one minute drive to YTC. I spent 4 days in Empower before going to court. At court, the judge told me I was getting 90-120 days in Thrive because I didn't follow the rules of my home supervision. I thought I was going to get 120-150 days so I felt happy.

I realize now that I should have listened to my mom and brother. I know not following my curfew, calling in and out, and failed drug tests kept me on probation. I now know I need to stay clean, stay home, focus on myself, and stop caring about other people more

WISDOM/RISE UNITS

UNTITLED

By Kalani

I grew up in a place that was happy where I was around my friends and family. We had lots of fun together, we played games, talked, and enjoyed each others company. In this essay I will show how one small moment can make a big change in your life.

One personal experience that stands out to me is when I was sent to Juvie. This stands out to me because I had to be away from family and friends for a long time and I really missed being at home. It was also challenging not having my usual freedoms like wearing what I want and being around who I want.

From this experience, I learned that you should always appreciate your family because they care about you the most. I also learned spend your free time wisely and that you should use most of it for family and friends. One more thing I learned is that one mistake or incident doesn't define you.

To do better and show growth I plan on making sure my knows how much I care and appreciate them. I also plan on showing respect to everyone and making sure I never go to juvie again. Lastly I plan on doing good in school and respecting higher authorities.

In this essay I showed how one moment can make a big change in your life. I was locked up and couldn't see my family which was challenging but I pushed through. Do you think you appreciate your family enough?

UNTITLED

By Jared B.

Life in Poway,

When i was born, i lived in orange County, then me and my family moved to san Diego.

We live in Poway, Sabre Springs parkway, Ridge-wood Village, apartment 97, Poway has, Walmart, Wells Fargo, Target, McDonalds, Jack-in-the box, Smart & Final, In'n'out Burger, etc.

My mom drives a Ford Explorer, and my dad drives a Subaru. My sister likes: Anime, Cats, and love, my 5-year-old brother likes vehicles, and my 3-year-old brother likes Preschool Prep.

We have lived a very nice life in california, my mom is a nurse and my dad delivers food.

And this good life shall continue forever and always. ☺

UNTITLED

By Cruz A.

I Grew up in a place was
children, But could get bad at any second. A lot
of Stabbing, Shootings, robberies and more. You never
know what can happen with anyone outside
and my community was
poor and filled with lots of
trouble. In this essay, I will show
how I lived, how my environment
was and growing up in it and more.
One personal experience that stands out
to me is when I had to sleep
house to house. I still have to learn my
own ways to make money to put
food on the table to get what I want
and try help out at home for me
and family. From this experience, I learned that
not everything has to be in my hands and
my actions have consequences. I learned how
I actually need to lay low and stick
to myself. Dirty money is not always
always best to get or use. To do better
and show growth I plan to stick to my
self, get money, help out others, and help out
my mother while I still can. I learned
it is not always gonna be bad, and you can
make it better. In this essay is how
how I lived and how I learned
better. Stay to your self and learn
from my mistakes, Don't follow, Lead.

LA HISTORIA DE MI VIDA

- 1 Se llama Guerrero, en un pueblito pero ahora estoy viviendo aquí en Estados Unidos. En este ensayo enseñaré sobre un poco de mi vida lo que he pasado y estoy pasando,
- 2 Todo lo que he vivido, una experiencia que recuerdo, he tenido muchas experiencias pero ahora estoy teniendo una experiencia nueva aquí adentro de la cárcel por no cumplir las leyes, lo que aprendí de esta experiencia es que siempre vamos a pagar las consecuencias de nuestros actos por eso hay que hacer todo bien y cumplir con los que nos piden,
- 3 Para mejorar o crecer es llevar todo con calma y tranquilo y ya no hacer lo mismo que hice antes para que ya no me vuelva a pasar lo que me está pasando, este ensayo trata de mi crianza en Guerrero y de mi situación que me encuentro aquí en Estados Unidos, lo que escribí en el ensayo es con el fin que sepan algo de mi vida lo que he vivido y estoy viviendo, que he tenido cosas buenas, también cosas malas.

All about me

In my house I show up in a rich place
I'm all rich type of all but I was never
rich so I tried to get rich for my mom and
show love and love everyone that I see and want to
help show love show you as the boy you are in
life so be you always.

Always do what good for you in life that's always
been with you when you was a baby at a time.

I got ran over and the car hit me I was
walking I got ran over and got rock out in the
mind and lost of thinking and a lost is going on
my life so just walking up feeling good and happy
I hope to see better in life as the time gets
to the top when so much is going on in my life so
I say to everyone to yourself and do what good in
life

that's is all about me and what I love all about
me and what the love I got for everyone and
and what I got to give and looking for the
good I have in me.

To do the better thing in life as it show
the time and day lot more to see in life I
can do what's good in this life as want to
go and day for the good in life I think that
life is a good thing for us to give to have.

UNTITLED

By Jeffrey B.

I grew up in a place that was populated by a majority of white and Hispanic people. The city I grew up in is called Escandido meaning "Hidden City". I think they named it this because of all the mountains surrounding it. In this essay, I will show how I grew up in Escandido and the experiences that shaped my life.

One personal experience that stands out to me is the morning I found out my homie passed away. This experience stands out to me because it woke me up to reality. How I found out was from my mom, she woke me and homie up asking if we were okay, we told her "yeah why" and she told us a 14 year old kid had been murdered last night.

From this experience, I learned that life is a gamble, meaning that every thing can be taken in an instant. I learned that life is valuable and should not be taken for granted.

To do better and show growth, I plan to focus on getting off of probation successfully. I also plan to catch up on all my credits and graduate high school. In this essay, I talked about growing up in Escandido and the experiences that shaped my life.

UNTITLED

By Marc C.

A loving community but also dangerous and was known for trafficking drugs and selling women. I was just a kid when all that happened. I would go to Chichono Park. How I am and how I was living in my community and the experience I went through to be a better person. I first hit the halls, I felt scared because people were hitting me up and telling me where I was from too then they were telling me that I was gonna be their friend or son. People were getting to my head but then I learned that people were my friends. Jail is not for anyone. I learned I wanna do better and not go back to jail. I also learned that I belong with my family and loved ones. Stay in school and graduate high school and go to trade school.

UNTITLED

By Jorge M.

I grew up in a place that was full of community. In my community it's mostly blacks and mexicans, and we all get along. My area was a bit hectic, corrupt, and poor. A lot of gangs around my area.

In this essay I will show how my community shaped who I am and the experience made me a better person.

ONE personal experience that stands out to me is when I got locked up and wasted my freedom. Right now I'm missing my family, friends, and girl. I could of been outside spending time with family but instead I'm in here.

From this experience I learned that being locked up is not good cause you start missing things like family, friends, and your girl friend. The lesson I learned was to not do stupid actions and start doing good. I also learned how to tell the time and divided in juvie.

To do better and show growth I plan to get a job and not do the things I did on the outs. Also start going to therapy classes.

My community made and shaped me into a better person.

FINDING GOD WHILE LOCKED UP

By Aiden R.

The moment I saw those officers waiting for me, I knew I messed up... My story starts off at Aurora Hospital. I was excited to finally leave that place after a week of being there, especially since me and my family were going on a cruise later that week. The charge nurse that was there called my name saying I was getting picked up now, so I was walking out super excited to see my family again, until.... I saw those cops waiting at the door.

All I could think to myself was "are they here for me... I hope they're not." They said, "Hey Aiden, we're gonna have to take you down to juvenile hall," and my heart sank. They patted me down, read me my rights, and took me to their patrol car. When we got outside all I felt was the cold breeze hit my face for the first time in a week, and the charge nurse was just looking at me with a sorrowful look and mouthed "I'm sorry" like she knew it was going to happen and didn't tell me.

When we got to the cars I saw my parents waiting with tears in their eyes as they watched their only son get arrested for the first time. The cops gave me and my parents a moment to talk and all my parents could say while sobbing was, "Don't worry, we'll get through it, these cops are liars," for they said I wasn't going to get arrested. The police then put me in the car and they took me to the Youth Transition Campus.

When we get there, they wake me up and pat me down once again before putting me in the cold holding cell. As they are booking me, all I can think to myself is "why did I do that?" but I knew why I did what I did. After a long 4 -5 hours of getting booked in, finger prints done, shower and change, the officers finally took me to my unit through the dark cold night. As I get the unit, everyone is sleeping and my cell is the only one with the light on.

The morning came and when I woke up, I felt cold and anxious. When we started the morning routines, some of the other kids started interacting with me, asking "where I'm from" but luckily I don't live that life and they respected that. The night comes and I make my first phone call to my parents. As I am catching them up on how I am in here, my little sister asks, "where is brother? Is he okay?" At that moment, my heart breaks but I don't show it, and I just say, "I'm doing okay, I love you so much." After the call, my attorney called saying, "You have court on Wednesday," and I feel a slight bit of relief.

Through the three days I'm there I take that time to better myself by building a stronger bond with God and the Bible than I already had. I started working out whenever I could, and I constantly pray, not to get out, but for a stronger relationship with Him and that He teaches me His way. Wednesday comes and as I'm getting ready for court, I start getting anxious again and my gut tells me that I'm not going to get the results I want.

When I get to court I talked to my attorney and at that moment my anxiety cooled and I realized that "gut feeling" was God. The trial comes and as I'm sitting in there waiting for it to start, my supporters come in which are my dad, my aunt, my girlfriend's mom, and my pastor. I wave at them with a smile because I know what is about to happen, luckily enough I didn't get sentenced, but I had to stay for one more week to wait for a rehearing.

My lawyer says for me not to worry as this will give us time to make a plan. Throughout this whole time, I am not stressing because I know God has a plan for me, and as long as you have your trust in God, the ultimate judge, you have nothing to worry about.

DON'T CALL ME MOTHER

By Anonymous

I was born May 8th, 2009. My Mom was around 23 when she had me, I was around 5 years old when she got diagnosed with schizophrenia. My childhood was all a blur, mostly because my mom's sickness got worse by the day. She tried to get help, she really did. Eventually, she gave up because whenever she tried to see someone they always told her she needed an appointment or something.

My little brother, Zachary, was around 2 years old when my mother got sick. He was just a baby so he didn't understand a lot of what was happening. As I got older, the outbursts got worse; almost always ending up in a visit from the police. My mother had physically and mentally abused me without really knowing it. From getting dangled in the air from my arms to getting shot at with BB Guns with marbles in them. I always excused it because I knew she was sick. I didn't know it then, but most of her outbursts are when she would be high on meth.

One day, I wanted to stop calling my mom "mommy". I went up to her after school and told her I wanted to call her mom or mama. She told me, "Don't call me that, I am not your mother." I was confused and sad. Wasn't she my mommy? I thought about that situation for a while.

My mom and I started to drift apart over the years, and while I watched her get worse, I promised myself I would never smoke or drink, I would never put myself in her position. I went to school like normal everyday, came home and ignored her and slowly built hatred for her. I was extremely embarrassed of her. She would always talk nonsense, it was so obvious she was insane! One day at school, she just showed up out of nowhere, demanding to see me to make sure I was at school and not missing. It was the most embarrassing she had done to me yet. I had to calm her down like she was the child, and then send her home promising I'll see her at home. I was so thankful no other kid saw the exchange. The only person who knew about my mother's sickness was my best friend Daisy and her family. Eventually, my grandma was in the process of getting guardianship over me, after multiple court dates and signatures, she finally was named my legal guardian.

When I was around 9 years old, my grandmother finally got guardianship over me. It took longer than expected because my mom was refusing to sign custody over to my grandma. My grandma took care of me very well, but I still had struggles with the law and eventually landed myself into juvenile hall. My mom's addiction got passed down to me and that's what put me into the position I am in today

MY FIRST BIKE RIDE

By Edgar S.

Do you remember when you first rode a bike? What were you feeling? Were you scared?

Happy? It was a bright summer day November 8th 5 days after my 4th birthday. I woke up to a present from my mom and dad. It was a bike not just any bike, my first ever bike was a bright ocean blue with grey stripes. I was so happy screaming with joy. I said "thank you ama thank you apa" They said "well let's go use it."

I was so happy it was the best birthday present ever. I got ready and put my shoes on I

was the first one downstairs waiting for my dad to bring my bike down we put my bike into the car and got to going to the park on the way to the park we stopped by 7-11. I got a blue slushie I was so happy this was the best day ever we headed to the car.

We drove down the street to the park. I began to feel nervous and scared. I got out of the

car and waited for my dad to get my bike out. I grabbed my training wheels and passed them to my mom I waited I finally got on my bike and tried to balance my dad held me while I was trying to balance my dad said "Ok pedal slowly and stay near the grass" I said "Ok" I started pedaling and was doing fine.

I began pedaling faster and started losing balance I hit the curb and fell my dad rushed

over but I was getting up I got up with tears in my eyes but I had a smile I picked my bike up and noticed I had no training wheels that gave me the hope to try again I got my bike up and got on with the help of my dad I started pedaling once again and started to get the hang of it I pedaled faster I pressed my brakes barley to try to get the hang of them and learn to use them I was slowly getting the hang of it I went around the whole park.

I spun around the park and made it back to the car from a distance. I can see my mom and dad smiling and recording despite almost crashing into the car. I got off my bike with the help of my mom and hugged them both. This was the best day ever. What are some feelings you felt the first time you rode a bike?

ONE OF MY MISTAKES

By Jordan T.

This is my third time locked up. It started on a cold day when I went to my girlfriend's

house to eat, and I had a firearm on me.

You see, I had gotten beat up with a firearm pulled out on me, so I didn't feel safe

walking home without something. While I was at my girlfriend's house I checked the time, it was 7:10pm. I had a curfew of 8:00pm, so I told my girlfriend I should leave soon, so at 7:15 I started walking home. When I was about two blocks away from my house, I saw a cop car and I had a fanny pack on me. The police saw

this, so they hit a U-turn and I threw the bag away before they were able to see me. I was walking with LED lights in my hand and they drove past me like nothing happened, so I went back to go to an apartment to call someone to pick me up. I looked to my left and saw the cop car again, so they turned on their lights and detained me.

While being detained by the cops, they asked me about the “Fannypack I was wearing.”

They started a search, and after about two minutes of sitting in the back of a cop car, I looked through the windshield and saw the cops touching the firearm. At that point, I knew I was going to jail. I’m currently sitting in juvenile hall right now.

Let this be a lesson to stop being a bad kid and get your money together so that you can

drive and not get caught slipping. Another good thing to do when you get out of jail is to not do drugs so that you can get off of probation. It is important to also be home before curfew and not hang out with your friends until you are off of probation because they can have a bad influence on you by smoking and doing drugs around you. If you partake in that then you are going to end up incarcerated again. So when you get out, focus on getting off of probation so that you don’t have to keep coming back for the same stupid stuff. Do good so that you can be with your family and loved ones because being in jail is just going to keep you away from your family.

ONE OUT OF NINE

By Anonymous

When I was born I was already going through a lot of trauma. It gave me the fight or flight

response I have today. My story starts in my early years at birth. My mom was beaten by my brother’s dad. My bio mom told me this story almost a million times about how she went to jail for domestic violence and assault for protecting herself. She thought she was going to lose her only daughter not only to death from being beaten, but by being taken by the system (CPS).

My mom was rushed to the hospital from jail 2 days after getting booked into Las Colinas

Detention Facility. She had me but she couldn’t keep me. My blood tested positive for heroin and meth and I was also 2 months premature. I was born dead and the doctors had to fight to get my heart to beat. My mom knew that day would be the last time she was going to see me in a long time.

She knew I was going to get taken, but I had to stay in the hospital hooked on so many machines just to keep me alive.

My mom was able to visit the hospital on her special furlough days. I was so small I could fit in one of her hands. I was her 7th child, she already had 6 boys with 2 more after me! She knew she had to give me to someone who was going to love and care for her only daughter. I was put in foster care as soon as I was off the incubator. My Foster Mother, Lorraine’s home was the only foster home I’ve been in. Lorraine adopted me at 1 1⁄2 years old. It was an open adoption so my biological mother was still able to see me. I’m so happy I got

adopted into a loving family of 7. I had a good childhood like a normal kid. A year and 3 months later Lorraine took in my little brother. He was my bio mom’s 7th boy. We were in the same foster home, but me and my brother got separated because Lorraine didn’t adopt him. I still question my Foster Mom about why she didn’t adopt him. Sometimes I think things would’ve been different if we grew up together. How his life would’ve been different. When I was 14 I met him again. Sometimes it makes me mad we weren’t raised together. I’m grateful to my Adopted Mom but I will always wonder what could have been.

FIRST DAY OF HIGH SCHOOL

By Rafael B.

My first day of high school felt good for many reasons. The first reason is that I’ve heard

a lot of good things about high school and I was very excited. Another reason would be that I knew some kids there as well. Finally, I had lots of friends. Honestly, I didn’t think I was going to like the school, but it wasn’t that bad at all. There was also a school football team that caught my attention, but I never ended up joining it.

As days went by, I really liked the school. Everyday I would wait for my friends at the

front gate for them to come to school so we could all walk in together. Every lunch period, my friend group would always walk around and go to different spots around the school. During lunch, most kids were able to walk around and hangout and talk to each other.

Most of the classes weren’t even boring. Almost every class went by quickly and was

pretty easy. I also had good grades when the year started. Many people would ask me for

answers to certain questions because most people didn’t really pay attention so they always asked everyone else for answers.

Sometimes the school would even do prep rallies on the football field. We would

celebrate as a whole school with the football team on the field and the cheerleaders. Everything looked really nice. They always decorated everything very colorful and eye-catching for people to see. The school goes ALL out for football games with banners, cheerleaders, dancing, and waving in the air while the football players run on the field. They have a long pole with a banner that says the name of the high school and their record of how many times they won and how many times they lost. Honestly, the school’s football team was pretty good, but not the best in the city. There are many other football teams that have out played them and defeated them. After a couple weeks, I ended up moving schools. That short period of time was very fun and something I’ll always remember.

THAT IS NOT MY FATHER

By Angella

Hello, my name is Angella and today I will be telling a story about an incident that changed my view on life. This day completely ruined the rest of my childhood and how I viewed everything. This was all after my father had jumped out of a moving vehicle during a police chase. My father was never the same and it gave him multiple disabilities including severe TBI and schizophrenia. I was around 11 years old and could not capture the fact that my dad wasn't the same person I used to know. I ask that you sit back comfortably to experience this night with me all over again.

With my eyes heavy I knew I was about to knock out. As I'm getting comfy trying to find the right spot I hear yelling and screaming. Me and my sister Karlha looked at each other with confusion and headed out into the noise. Then and there I witnessed the most disturbing picture I could see as a child. My father is holding a knife to my mothers throat. I'm frozen watching my mom laying down on the couch tucked in wondering if my father would make that her final resting place. There I thought "What do I do without

having him do something to her?" . I'm guessing my sister thought the same thing because she was just as frozen. "Back away from her Rick." Karlha said. I tried looking into this man's eyes looking for a piece of my father but knew there was no hope.

There he is, a man I've known my whole life looking at me like a stranger. My stomach turned watching tears drop from my mothers eyes. "Dad, what are you doing?". Is the only thing that could come out of me. After a minute of sitting in pure shock he eventually moved away from my mother. Shockingly he made his way to me... what could I do. I was a stupid little girl because all I could do was stand there.

He moved towards me and started stabbing himself in the thigh. "DAD STOP!". What else could I say in that moment without being the next victim? My mom and Karlha eventually gathered around him and pushed him out onto the balcony. Minutes went by and he started to calm down. He started to lay down on the floor by the balcony door. There it was, I was watching my own dad lay down like a dog outside. I knew he couldn't be inside but all I could do was feel bad for him. I knew feeling bad for him was normal but it broke my heart to see that image. There he was with no blanket, no pillow and no dignity. I slept the whole night begging my mom to let him inside but even I knew he couldn't. What happened to my dad? Is this the person he's become, a crazy drug addict? Ever since then

my dad was never the same. He would sneak out the house to go do drugs then break back in. He would rob everybody in sight just to get some cash for his drugs. Even then I wanted to let him in the house but of course I didn't know any better. It's been 6 years since and my dad is still a brain damaged drug addict. My father took none of my mothers offers to get help and chose the streets instead. He is now in a mental health facility within the prison. He's doing 25 to life for murder. I hope to never become my father. Thank you for listening to my story.

ACHIEVE UNIT

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

Something that happen in my life was when my boyfriend shot some one in front of me this was a big thing because I got in trouble because I did something dumb I shouldn't have done I had called my boyfriend if he wanted to hang out he had told me who was there my friend told them who was there he hanged up on my face and a couple minutes come by and he pops up on me while im going to the porter boty he told me to open the door I said hold on I came out I told them to leave they didn't my boyfriend ~~was~~ started fighting and they jumped him so my boyfriend shot the guys and we ended up going to jail because I told him to put the guns in my purse. my heart was pounding and I was crying because I was scared because I was getting locked up once I got to the jail I was just drained and scared.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

One a pond a time my friend has asked me to go drink with her and her friends I was so excited and I said yes I had asked my father my father told me to ask my mom so I called my mom hoping that I can go so was nervous to let me go and told me that I couldn't go so I had to beg her to let me go until she finally said yes and told me to turn on my location I said okay I lied to my mom about where I was going and so I left and got into the car when my friend got to my grandpas house we were going to just park to drink and I had told my mom that I was going to the movies insted I went to the park I had told my boyfriend that I wanted him to come and hang out with me he was mad that I was out side with boys and so he popped up on me I was so scared because I didnt want him to get mad at me he saw my friend's friends and went up to them asked them were they were from and he got mad becase he thinks it with the boy and they started fighting the boys started doing my boyfriend and my boyfriend got up and shot the boy he was fighting I got so scared and I was shaking so much and my boyfriend was also scared that he was going to jail I told him to put the guns in my purse and so he did and I gave him a big hutz and I told him that I loved him so much he told me that he loved me so much and that everything is going to be okay and to keep my head up no matter what.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

Angela >
My heart dropped as I heard yelling waking me out of my sleep. I walked out to the living room to see my dad holding a knife to my moms throat. I was paralyzed in fear not knowing what to do. Before I could even blink my dad is charging at me. Now I'm crying trying to wiggle out of his arms. For a moment I tried to look him in the eyes to see if any part of my dad was left. there I knew my dad was gone. physically my dad was there but mentally he was dead. After I got out of his arms I ran to cover my mom. I stood there terrified but certain I would not let him get to her. So there I am face to face with a lunatic staring at me with a knife in his hands.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

I Couldn't breath, my heart was pounding. I looked at my boyfriend he's speaking but all I could hear was the names and the word "kill/killed".

November 10th 2024, it was like any other day. My boyfriend had picked me up in the morning. All I could notice was how off he was? It was like he was planning something like almost anxious about every move he did. I asked him over and over "baby whats wrong?" he would always say "Nothing mamas" towards the end of the day the tension got stronger like almost thicker. He dropped me off at my house

I kissed him goodbye, but it felt like a "see you later" type kiss. November 11th 2024 approximately 2:00am I woke up to the phone ringing. My heart dropped it was my boyfriend. I answered "hello?" all I could hear on the other end was panting "hellooo?" "open the window mamas" it was him... I open my window faster than I could take a step back. He jumps in, He starts crying saying quietly "I killed them they're dead." I was in shock all I could think was the main words "killed", "they're dead." "what?" "I tried to rob them and let out 2 shots hit them both." I took a

Step back. "No, No, No who, why?" "mamas it was needed to be done". I screamed "No! it didnt need to be done, killing someone is never to be needed done no matter how much you hate the person!" "Im Sorry" I burst out into tears thinking "what did I get myself into?" later that day I look at the news, I freeze "2 Shot dead in a robbery gone wrong, suspect found to be 16 year old 'logan rider'." My life felt like almost over, the so called "love of my life" is arrested, 2 people are dead. whats next?

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

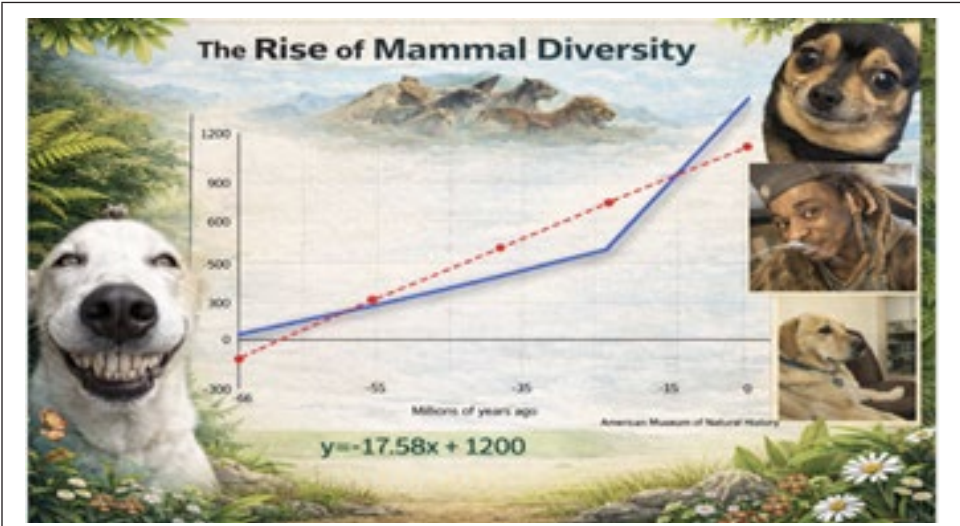
The most ~~angry~~ time is when I got taken into YTC. I went to Court around 8:30 in the morning and I talked to my public Defender. He has told me there was a 60% chance I went in and there was a 40% chance I'm staying out on GPS Ankle. But the day before my P.O. told me I may or might not get in. I don't know what I was thinking but I thought I was going home I ended but going into Court around 10:00 and I still thought I was going home but I went in and they ended up taking me in. I was so mad that that most mad I've been in a while. During the whole time of me waiting to go in the Court room my body was shaking. I was very nervous and I was ~~feeling~~ having a panic attack my therapist was at Court with me so she was giving me strategies to stay calm and she ended up helping and calming me down but my emotions were hitting me a lot when I was in front of the judge my heart was beating so fast and when I got taken through there's back doors my emotions were hitting me.

UNTITLED

By Anonymous

It all started when I was 6, I didn't know what was going on till I started getting older at the age 8-10 years old my mother is Turkish/Lebanese and my father is Iraqi and grew up in Baghdad Iraq as I was getting older I realized how Bipolar my parents were, I was the first born in March 6 2011, as I went to the U.S it's been good since I was only a year old and came. I have a little brother and sister my brother's name is Robert but me and my family call him BoBo and my sister's name is Maryam short for mini we always grew up very close, when I first came to the U.S I went from Utah to Ontario Oregon, to California, when me and my family was in Utah my family Kettargum, divorcing and at that time I couldn't process it since my father met a new woman and my dad made me and my little sister call her mom so it felt weird and cars were always around then me and my siblings, parents and grand parents moved to Oregon, it was chill and showy which was fun for the holidays and my grandparents were always apart of my life, wherever we moved, my grandparents were always there for me and my sister, at September of 2017 my baby brother was born, BoBo is what I called him I always make sure he slept and was well fed till he started getting older, my family was still broken, it never got better, but my grandparents were always just a door away from us if anything happened, during around that time, my mom almost had a fainting problem which never got solved and CPS got called and we got taken away from our parents and stayed with our grand parents for a month or two it never got better, only worse...

By Diego M.



RISE OF MAMMAL DIVERSITY SUMMARY

From my research, I learned that fossils are important because they help us know how species were back then and it can trace the history evolution of organisms. Though, fossils are not a complete record of life but it does help support the theory of evolution of animals. Finding fossils are difficult. I learned that the chance of an organism becoming fossilized doesn't happen often and most fossils have yet been discovered because they are often destroyed, or still buried. Finally, fossils are old animals, plants, organisms that get stuck in rocks or other things and it can be found in tracks or imprints. I feel that we can learn from fossils because they have important evidence that can be collected and we can learn not just from the past but may help us learn about future.

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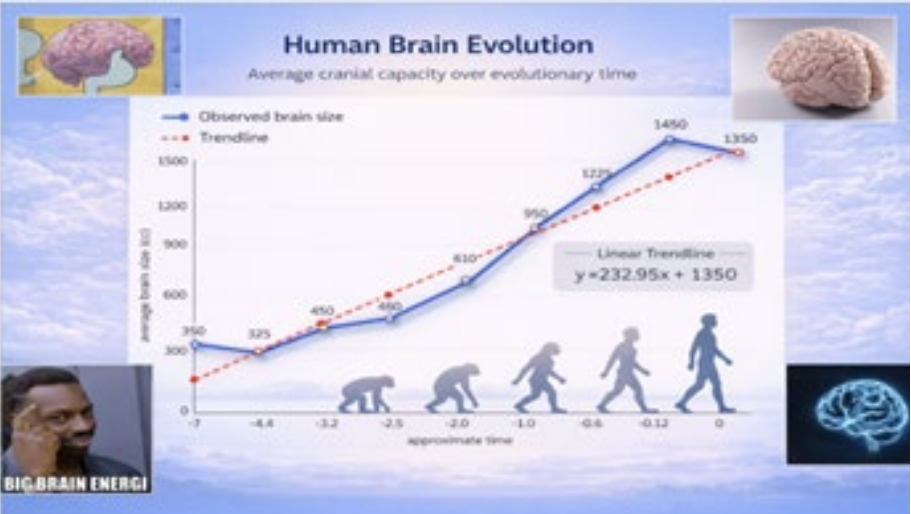
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Time Period	Time (Millions of Years Ago - x)	Number of Mammal Genera (y)
1. K-Pg Boundary (Post Extinction)	66 Mya	~40 genera
2. Early Eocene (Rapid Diversification)	55 Mya	~150 genera
3. Late Eocene (Niche Filling)	35 Mya	~380 genera
4. Middle Miocene (Peak Grassland Evolution)	15 Mya	~450 genera
5. Modern Era (Present Day)	0 Mya	~1,200 genera

By Joshua J..



Human Brain Evolution- math

We want to figure out how fast brains grew over time. In order to figure this out we had to use $y=mx+b$. I used to points from the data 4.4 mya and 325 cc, and also 0 mya and 1350 cc. I used this formula $m = \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1}$ to find the slope. When I did the math I found the number 232.95. This how many cc the brain grew over a million years. The y-intercept is 1350 cc because that is where we are today. The final formula is $y = 232.95x + 1350$.

Human Brain Evolution Summary

From my research, I learned that scientists have found fossil organisms that represent intermediate steps between living mammals and their ancestors. Scientists have used fossils to trace the evolutionary history. The fossil record is not a complete record of all life on Earth. But it does provide evidence support the theory of evolution.

Human Brain Evolution Data and Sources

Discovery Education. (2017). Fossils and evolution. In Science techbook: The living earth. Discovery Education. <https://www.discovereducation.com/>

Spoor, F., Zonneveld, F., & Macho, G. A. (1999). The evolution of hominin brain size: A review of endocranial volumes and implications for human evolution. *Journal of Human Evolution*, 37(2), 235–246. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10517302/>

Species	Approximate Time (x-axis)	Average Brain Size (y-axis)
Australopithecus africanus	2.5 Million Years Ago ¹²	480 cc ¹³
Homo habilis	2.0 Million Years Ago ¹²	610 cc ¹³
Homo sapiens (Modern)	0 Million Years Ago (Present) ¹²	1350 cc ¹³

mass extinctions

by: nicholas mercado and jallynn gonzalez

The "Big Five" Events: The five major mass extinctions in the last 500 million years are the End-Ordovician, Late Devonian, End-Permian, End-Triassic, and Cretaceous-Paleogene (K-Pg)



The Permian Was the Biggest: The End-Permian extinction (The Great Dying) around 250 million years ago was the most severe, eliminating about 96% of marine species and 70% of terrestrial vertebrate species.



Causes Vary: Each event had unique triggers, including massive volcanic eruptions (Permian), asteroid impacts (Cretaceous), global cooling/sea-level drops (Ordovician), and algal blooms (Devonian)



The Sixth May Be Happening: Scientists believe that rapid species loss today, driven by human activities like habitat destruction and pollution, may signal a sixth mass extinction, notes the World Wildlife Fund.

form google



Human evolution timeline

by Mariah Gorza



Dryopithecus
considered an important early hominid, a relative of the common ancestor of modern great apes and humans (13-9 million years ago) in Europe scientists believe Dryopithecus split from the human lineage about 14 million years ago. Dryopithecus is thought to have spent much of its time living in the tree canopy where it moved about by swinging from branch to branch.



Ramapithecus
(around 14-11 million years ago) in India, once thought to be a direct human ancestor due to its teeth, but is now considered an ancestor of the modern orangutan. Early fossils suggested human-like features. Despite the orangutan link, Ramapithecus is significant as it shows early hominid-like traits.



Australopithecus
Australopithecus africanus was once considered to be a direct ancestor of modern humans. This species was the first of our pre-human ancestors to be discovered, but was initially rejected from our family tree because of its small brain. Many scientists now believe this species represents a side branch in our evolutionary family tree.



Homo habilis
Homo habilis is an extinct species of archaic human from the Early Pleistocene of East and South Africa about 2.4 million years ago to 160,000 years ago. Homo habilis is considered one of the earliest members of our genus, the Homo, and a key transitional species, also first recognized species to show significant human-like traits like tool-making and larger brains.



Homo erectus
The extinct ancient human Homo erectus is a species of first. It was the first of our relatives to have human-like body proportions, with shorter arms and longer legs relative to its torso. It was also the first known hominid to migrate out of Africa, and possibly the first to cook food. There have been evidence they are from eastern Africa and western Asia, and are about 1.5 to 1.9 million years old.



Homo sapiens neanderthalensis
En este estilo artístico los artistas buscan el sentido del arte en el inconsciente del artista. Los escritos y teorías psicoanalíticas de Sigmund Freud fueron la base científica. Sus principales exponentes fueron: André Breton y Salvador Dalí.



Homo sapiens sapiens
Fue una vanguardia anarquista que se mostró absolutamente en contra de cualquier norma social, moral o estética en el arte, se basó en lo aporoso, lo absurdo, casual y elemental. Su objetivo fue cuestionar los criterios artísticos de la época. Exponente: Marcel Duchamp, creador del Ready made.







NORTH REGION

NORTH COUNTY TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY

MASS EXTINCTIONS

4 FACTS ABOUT THE
MASS EXTINCTIONS

BY JAILYN
GONZALEZ

BY: JAILYNN
GONZALEZ

1. THE BIG FIVE: THERE HAVE BEEN FIVE MAJOR MASS EXTINCTIONS IN THE LAST 450 MILLION YEARS, INCLUDING THE CROCODICIAN, DEVONIAN, PERMIAN-TRIASSIC (THE LARGEST), TRIASSIC-JURASSIC, AND CRETACEOUS-PALEOGENE (WHICH ENDED THE DINOSAURS).



2. CAUSES AND CATASTROPHIC MAJOR EXTINCTIONS ARE LINKED TO EXTREME GEOLOGICAL EVENTS, SUCH AS MASSIVE VOLCANIC ERUPTIONS



3. IMPACTS ARE GLOBAL: THESE EVENTS KILL OFF VAST NUMBERS OF SPECIES (E.G., 96% OF MARINE SPECIES IN THE PERMIAN) AND ENTIRE GROUPS



4. **ECOLOGICAL RESET: THEY CREATE HUGE GAPS IN ECOSYSTEMS, ALLOWING SURVIVING GROUPS (LIKE MAMMALS AFTER THE DINOSAURS) TO DIVERSIFY AND DOMINATE**



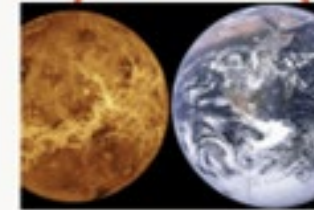
DINOSAURS WERE A DIVERSE GROUP OF REPTILES THAT DOMINATED EARTH FOR OVER 160 MILLION YEARS DURING THE MESOZOIC ERA (252-66 MILLION YEARS AGO), EVOLVING INTO THOUSANDS OF SPECIES WITH VARIOUS DIETS, SIZES, AND FEATURES LIKE FEATHERS, HORNS, AND PLATES, EVENTUALLY LEADING TO MODERN BIRDS. BEFORE MOST WENT EXTINCT DUE TO AN ASTEROID IMPACT, BUT THEIR LEGACY CONTINUES THROUGH FOSSILS AND THEIR AVIAN DESCENDANTS.

• RESEARCHED FROM GOOGLE



Why So Lucky?

- 1



Planet Earth got here through a combination of early solar system dynamics, where it formed in a stable orbit due to conserved momentum, and later geological processes. A massive impact reshaped its core and fueled plate tectonics. This created the internal heat needed for Earth's unique geology and magnetic field. Those actions prevented it from becoming a Venus-like planet.

- 2

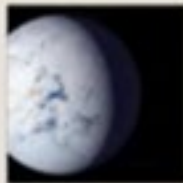
If Earth weren't in the "sweet spot," it would mean enormous changes, likely a frozen or scorching world with no seasons or water. If it's too far or too close, there would be extreme temperatures, causing tides to lock.



What would happen to us if the world moves out of the Habitable Zone?

Earth Moves Closer to sun

The temperatures on earth would rise which would cause the oceans to evaporate into the atmosphere. This would cause hydrogen to leak into space which would leave our earth dry. The Loss of crops and fresh water would lead to biological failure. This means every human and all living things would become Extinct.



Long-Term Natural Timeline

In a billion years, the suns increased brightness will make earth uninhabitable. This change will occur regardless of any shifts in earths orbit. Consequently, the environment will become unsitabale for life. This will lead to the extinction of all living things.



Earth moving away from the sun

The earth would eventually freeze over because the solar system wouldn't be able to keep water in a liquid state. The planet would become coved in ice. Only certain organism might be able to survive for a while in the subsurface environment.



Can Earth be knocked out of the orbit?

It is possible to knock earth out of its orbit. However this would require a lot of power. The energy needed to do so would be incredibly substantial. Any force with that much power would likely destroy the planet.

Impact of Melting Glaciers/Mountains



When ice melts in the areas that hikers climb in, it can cause mountains to be unstabilized and cause normal routes to be hazardous. It can also cause landslides and ice avalanches which can harm people when hiking and result in very serious injuries.



When temperatures exceed normal circumstances, it can force climbers to change schedule or abandon climbs. Hikers would be wise to change plans and avoid taking such risks. As a result, they would need to map out the mountain again and see what remains a hazardous path and what route is safe to climb.



Another problematic cause that happens when icy glaciers or ice in general melts is that it can also cause sea levels to drastically rise. The reason being is that when it melts, land ice stores fresh water and doesn't mix well with the melting ice already in the ocean system. It is like pouring more water into an already full cup, thus causing disaster. This could make climbers potentially cause tsunamis by triggering massive landslides and cause the lake/ocean to burst into massive waves.



Another problem that can arise is when polar ice caps/icy mountains start to melt. They can release trapped organisms/diseases that have been sealed away for years. The problem with this is it could make unnecessary contact with animals/modern organisms like humans. These organisms do not have immunity to these pathogens. Permafrost contains matter/pathogens frozen for thousands of years like Small Pox and Spanish Flu viruses.

Peter Tawfiq

ARE THERE PLANETS JUST LIKE EARTH?

Kenta Rankin



Potentially Habitable Worlds Found:

Astronomers have found numerous exoplanets (planets outside our solar system) that are Earth-sized, rocky, and orbit their stars at a distance where liquid water could exist (the habitable zone).

Earth's Uniqueness:

So far, none of the planets discovered match Earth's perfect mix of temperature, water, and protective atmosphere. Earth remains the only world we know that supports life.

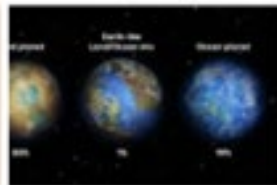


What a Planet Needs to be Earth-like:

An Earth-like planet needs liquid water, a suitable mass for gravity, and an atmosphere, orbiting a stable star in the habitable zone to maintain surface temperatures for water, plus internal activity like plate tectonics and a magnetic field for nutrient cycling and protection, creating a stable, life-supporting environment.

Why It's Hard to Find Earth-like Planets:

Many of these planets are so far away that powerful telescopes can only gather small bits of information. The distance makes it challenging to study their surfaces or atmospheres in detail.

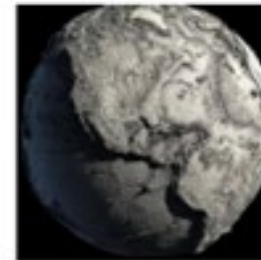


EARTH WITH LITTLE TO NO WATER

If Earth's position changed, its climate, weather, ocean currents, and potentially life would not exist. For example, reversing its spin would swap desert and forest regions. Moving further from the sun would end life as we know it.

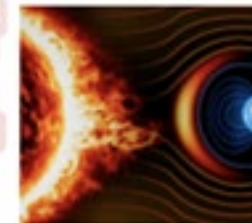


Yes, Earth would have water but much less. Most water came from hydrogen rich materials (like asteroids and dust). Without them the Earth would be drier similar to Mars. The planet would become a superheated, dust filled desert wasteland, leading to immediate death of all aquatic life, rapid dehydration, and extinction of land animals and humans within days to weeks. This would result in a barren, inhabitable world dominated by intense winds and dust storms.



We were wrong about why Mars is red—new research suggests its rusty hue is evidence of a watery past! This means the Red Planet may have once been a potentially habitable world.

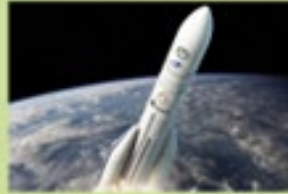
Earth's distance from the sun keeps temperatures in a range where water can exist as a liquid. Gases like carbon dioxide trap heat, keeping the planet warm enough, it blocks solar radiation and burns up most asteroids.



Earth is the only known planet with stable liquid surface water. Many other planets and moons in our solar system (like Europa, Enceladus, Titan, Mars) and beyond (exoplanets like K2-18b, Kepler 138c/d) have significant water as ice, vapor, or subsurface oceans.

Keith McLean

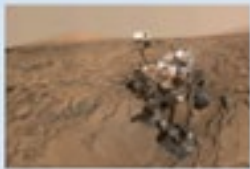
Soaring Through Space



It typically takes 6 to 9 months for a one round trip to Mars. The distance to Mars from Earth is an average of 140 million miles. If the planets are aligned differently the travel time can be doubled. The rocket ships use the Earth's fast spinning to get momentum and power to get out of our atmosphere.



SpaceX aims to reduce the distance time to 6 months in 2026. In 2030, NASA aims for a human landing for 2 to 3 years. This is a positive thing because we learn about the Earth's origin. Mars could be our plan b plan to life on another planet.



However, making Mars liveable would be very difficult. People would face issues living on Mars. For example, nights get extremely cold, often below -100F. Mars has dust storms and a bunch of disasters. Mars also has way less gravity than Earth. We would have a lot to work on to make Mars our home.



Even the healthiest of astronauts may experience bone loss, muscle atrophy, an enlarged heart, and vision problems traveling to and living on Mars. There is also cellular mutation and destruction from high energy photons from the Sun. Going into space could also have a negative effect on you. After the rover on Mars found some rocks, they studied it and found signs that microscopic life may have existed. If so this could be a good sign that it may be possible to live on Mars one day.

THE WORLD OF ASTRONAUTS IN SPACE

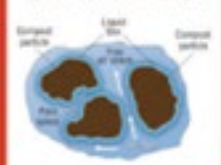
JORGE VILLA

Some of the tools that astronauts use to go to the bathroom are special vacuum toilets with funnels and small seats.



The process they use is air flow instead of gravity for waste. Restraints are used to hold them in place while urine is ragged and solids are stores.

Figure 1. Air flow in a compact pile



Astronauts relearn how to walk after they return by doing physical therapy to help strengthen muscle weakness, regain balance and adapt to earth's gravity again.



Eating in space is very difficult for astronauts. All of their food has to be stored in bags or cans. Even the forks come in bags. It is difficult to eat because everything floats around at the same time





Jesus Cruz, Inc.

PREMIUM KNOWLEDGE UNDER THE PRESSURE



Our service: Why do we explore space more than our own ocean?

- ✓ First one of the reasons is because it's actually visible in space unlike the ocean. The ocean water is murky and the deeper you go the darker it is. You would need strong flashlight which needs to be efficient.
- ✓ The ease of exploration is another one, for one with the ocean you have to deal with all the pressure of the water like 50 jumbo jets. It's more complex than sending satellites to space.
- ✓ Or could it be for the fame, the marvel it gives the public excitement. Also space provides immediate global impactful applications.
- World Atlas sums it up this way, "While we know more about the visible universe from observation, our physical exploration of space is incredibly limited compared to the expansive direct exploration conducted in Earth's oceans. Thus, counterintuitive as it may seem, humanity has physically explored more of our oceans than space. However, the journey of discovery in both fields has barely begun, promising endless opportunities for exploration and discovery in the future." [Source: www.wykt.com](https://www.wykt.com)

Between Experts on both fields there's issues on the comparison



MORE DETAIL

www.Mybrain.com

FALSE MYTH

People often think NASA stopped exploring the sea because of a big and terrifying discovery. But that's false. Here's why.



NASA started exploring the ocean in June of 1978 and never stopped. The research simply "slowed down."

The reasoning for its delay was thanks to the sea's vastness, extreme depths, crushing pressures, darkness, technical difficulties and high costs.

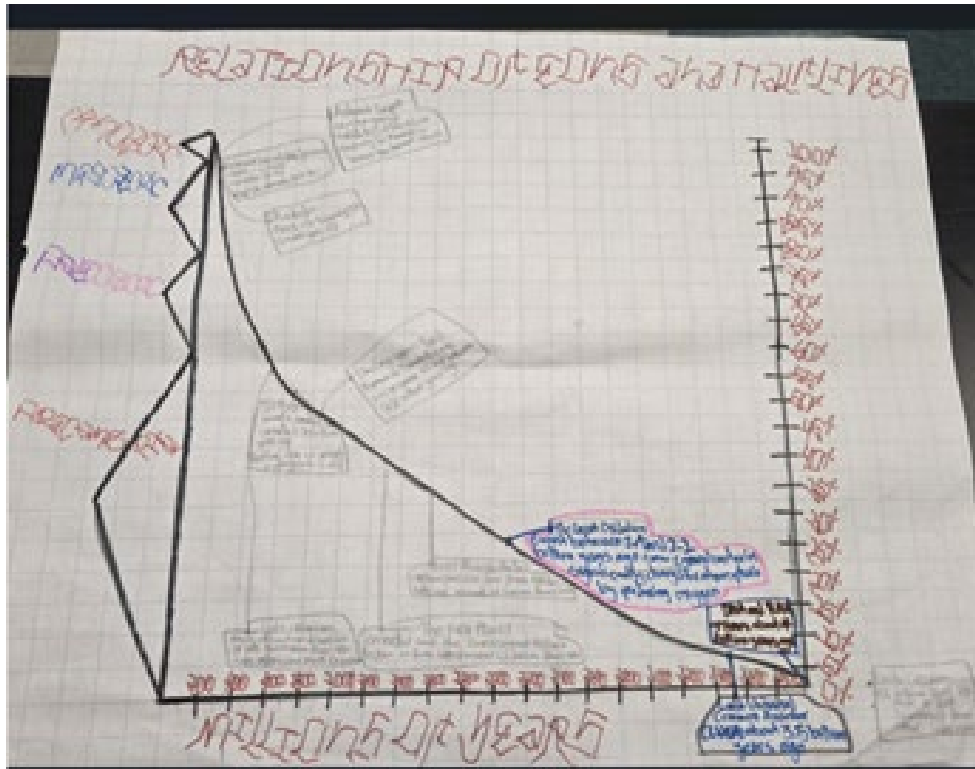
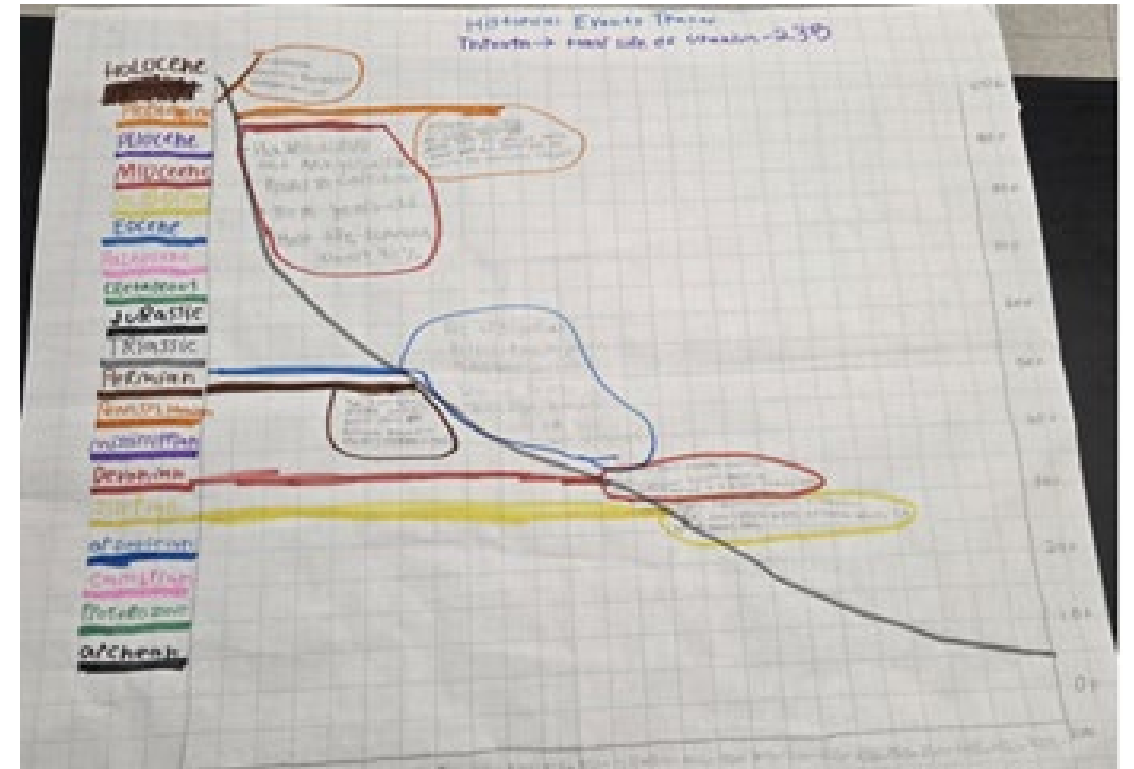


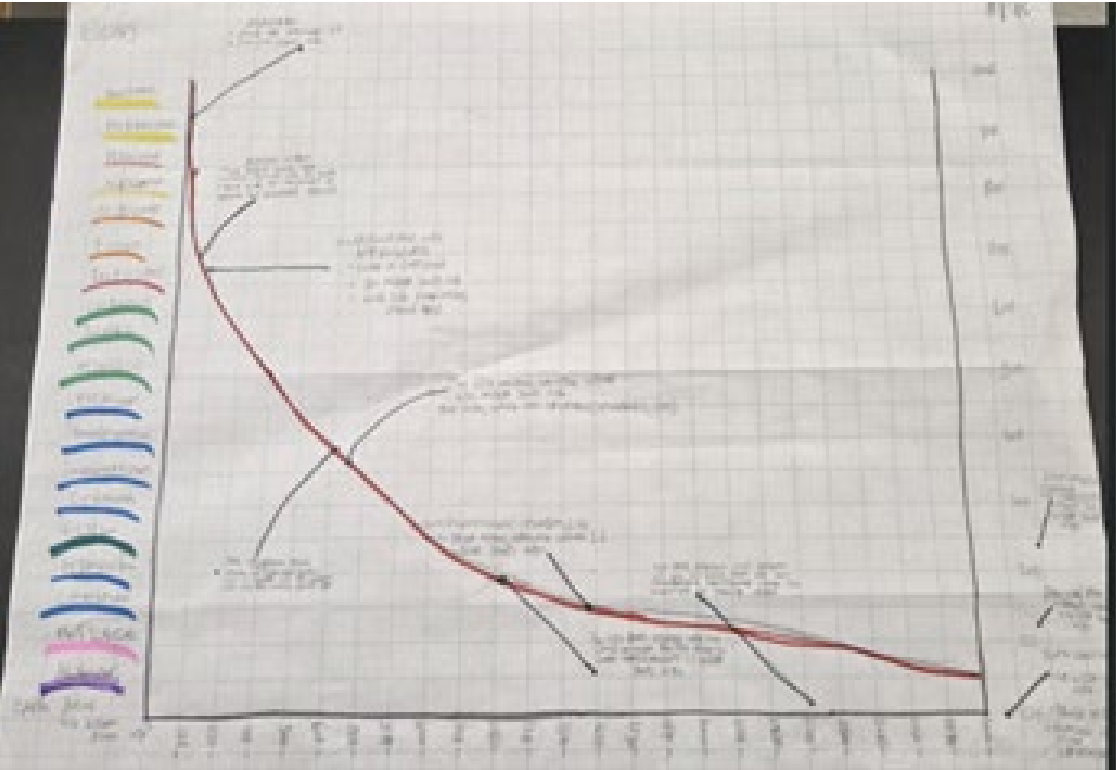
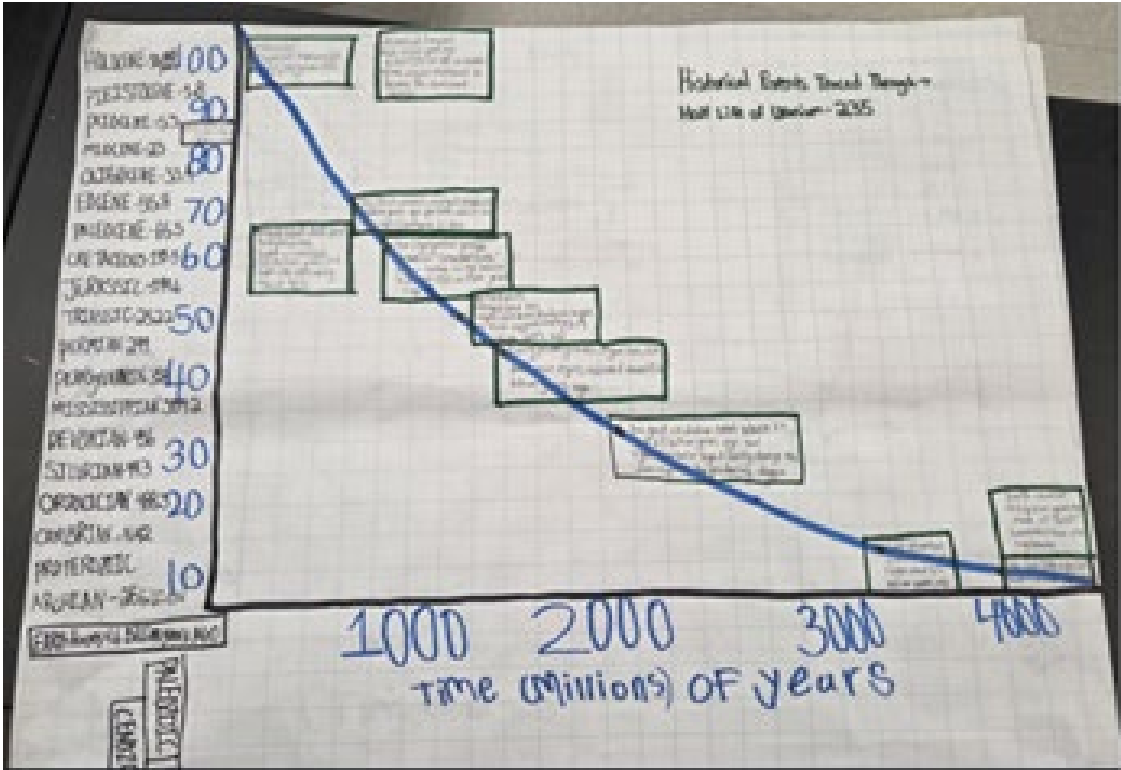
In 1978, NASA launched the "Seasat Satellite" that helps NASA monitor the ocean using radar and microwave sensors. This advance technology maps the sea's surface winds, waves, temperature, currents, and ice.

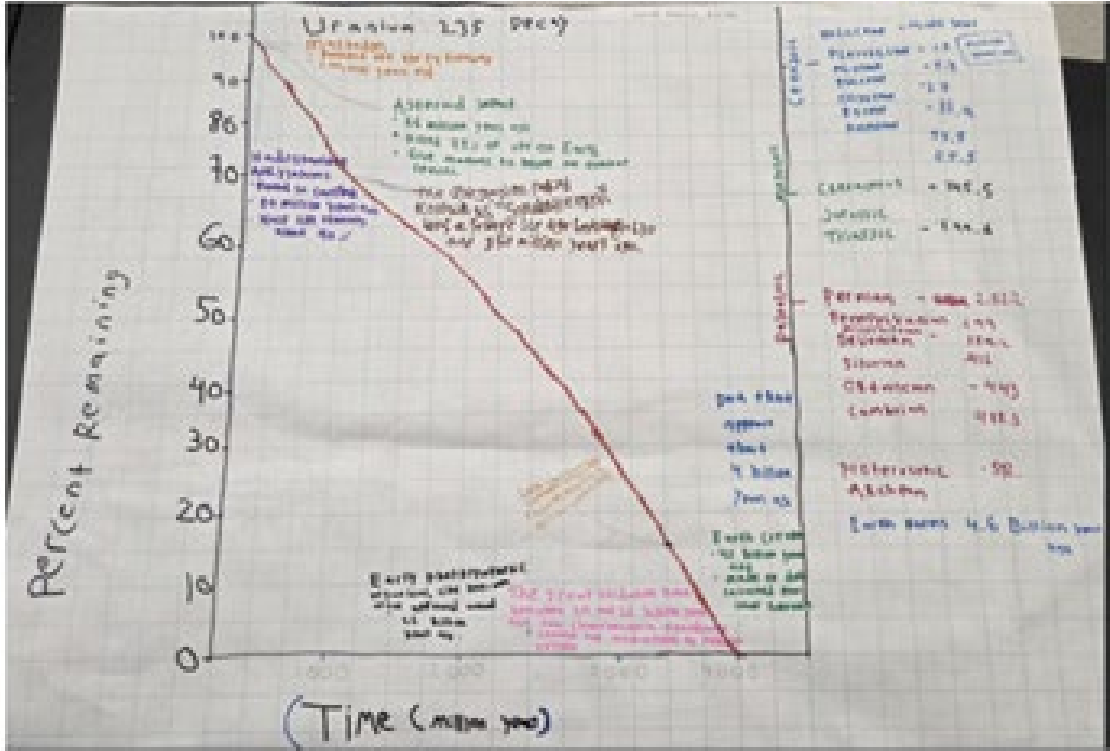
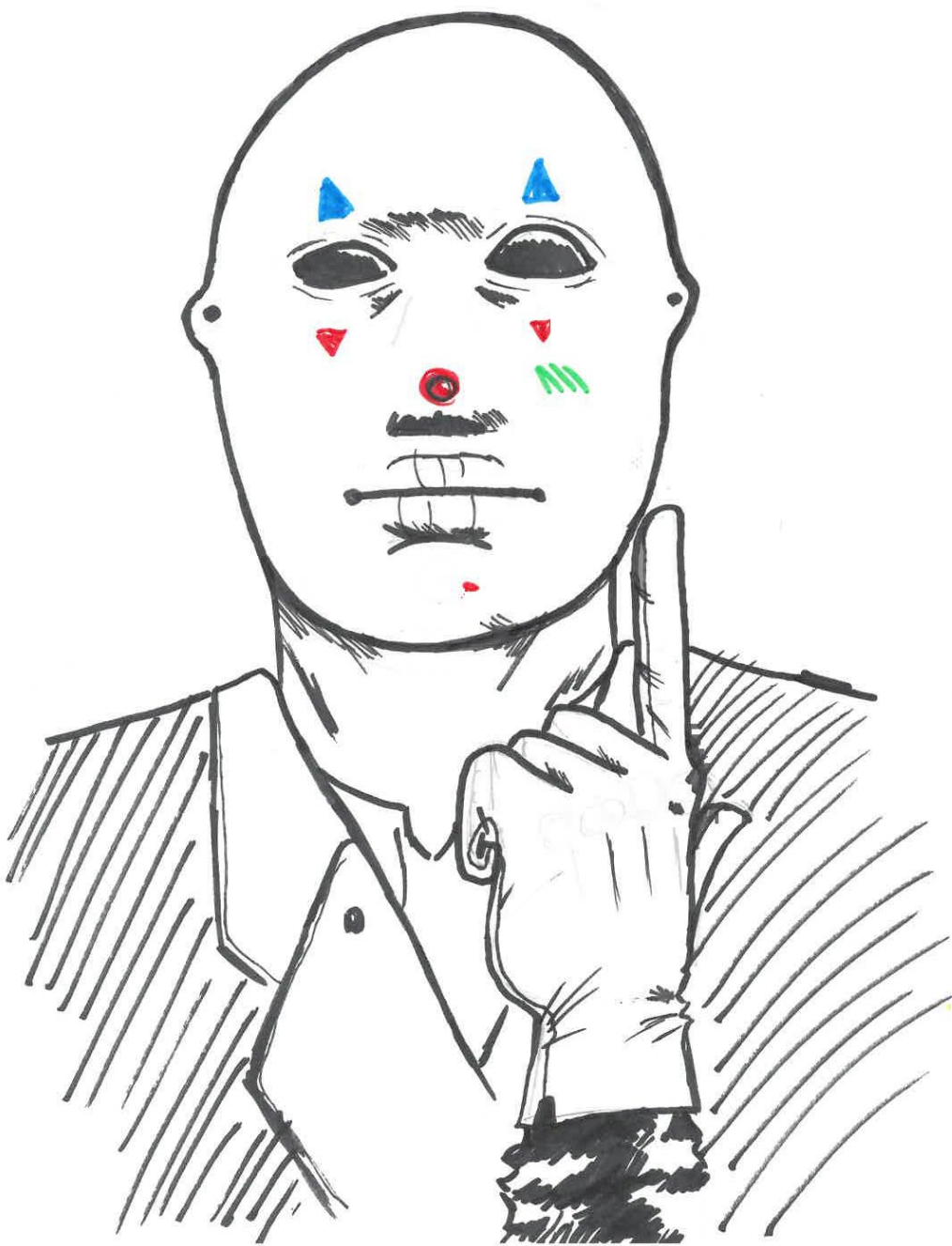
Nasa sends satellites and drones to the ocean to mostly focus and study climate regulation, ocean health, marine ecosystems, and global carbon cycles.



FUN FACT: the ocean covers 70 percent of earth and we've only discovered 20 percent.







Kenneth — San Pasqual Academy

As our San Diego County Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Gloria E. Ciriza said, “Every child deserves to feel accepted for who they are and to have the opportunity to share their greatest assets.” This anthology is a collection of personal narratives and data stories from our JCCS students countywide that showcases their strengths, critical thinking, identity, and resilience. The goal of this anthology is to build community, belonging, and ultimately connection. As Jimmy Neil smith said, “We are all storytellers. We all live in a network of stories. There isn’t a stronger connection between people than storytelling.”

- BAYSIDE COMMUNITY SCHOOL
- CAREER TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTER (CTEC)
- CUYAMACA COMMUNITY SCHOOL
- ESCONDIDO COMMUNITY SCHOOL
- MONARCH SCHOOL
- NORTH COUNTY TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY INDEPENDENT STUDIES
- NORTH COUNTY TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY (NCTA)
- PROJECT SAFE NORTH
- SAN PASQUAL ACADEMY
- SOAR ACADEMY - EAST MESA
- SOAR ACADEMY - YOUTH TRANSITION CAMPUS
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