

YELL OUR OWN NAMES



fire in my throat,
burning, scorching my
voice as though
something has latched
itself, unwilling to let go.
to leave me be, I cough,
and choke, and I try to
rid myself of it, doing
anything to make it
leave, to find some
form of peace,
but it is unchanging
and it grows and
it grows until

I feel I can
no longer
breathe. I can think it,
and sometimes I
manage to write
it, but it is impossible
to say, however much
it fears, love is horrifying,
and however
small three words
are, I fear them
as pachyderm
fear mice.
A gasp can't
satisfy aching
lungs,
when it lets nothing in,
but as my mouth opens
it leaves
and it flies,
soon falling from
its perch,
as wind of amber leaves my body
the most beautiful thing I have ever seen

THE 2021 INSIDE OUT YOUTH PERFORMANCE TROUPE

It is a chilly autumn day in mid-November and we are 20 months into the pandemic. **20 MONTHS!** I never imagined we would *still* be in a pandemic in 2021. But here we are.

Despite the global grief, joy very much abounds.

The 2021 InsideOut Youth Performance Troupe have been one of the brightest spots in a year still plagued with uncertainty. Sunlight bursts through our computers when we start the Zoom each week. Cassidy enters radiantly and blooming to remind us that even though crazy things happen, we're still here. Laughter ensues the moment Alayae' reads the room like only she can with her spiciness. She keeps us in stitches and yet holds space with such kindness to everyone. Sweetness seeps into our souls when Algeonay tells us our work inspires her – seemingly unaware that she also ignites us. Cosmic and creative energy surrounds us when Fiona logs in with so much empathy and compassion. And Ife. Ife is a star that we're grateful to know and behold. She is the greatness we all feel inside of ourselves. She isn't fully aware of how powerful she is – none of my babies are – yet they **will** set this world on fire with their talent.

InsideOut Literary Arts has been bravely forging joy into all of their hybrid programming this year. This intentionality has afforded Cassidy, Alayae', Algeonay, Fiona and Ife the chance to participate in in-person and digital performances for this season. Vaccines, COVID safety protocols, dedicated staff, and outdoor events have truly contributed to the ways the troupe was able to engage and share the light of their work with the broader community. In September, after my babies gave an amazing performance for the first ever Motor Bella Detroit, the troupe was rewarded with brand new iPads from Toyota. I was gifted with the biggest hugs from the artists who became more than just one-inch squares on my computer screen. It is a moment that I'll hold close as COVID cases rise in Michigan and the potential for another shutdown looms.

This isn't a somber moment, though.

Yell Our Own Names is packed with poems by artists who really had to tap into themselves to see what hidden gems could be unearthed in a world of madness. From the newly-starting to seasoned performers, each poet forged through hectic schedules, grief, joy, school, local and national politics, and a global pandemic to create work from their hearts. The pieces centered a lot on what they thought about themselves – as self-care and showing grace and love to others has been paramount to these artists at this time.

As always, I am humbled to be a guiding force (a phoenix, if you will) for these talented artists. While the lasting effects of this pandemic are still very much unknown, these wordsmiths have taught this old bird a few new tricks to keep me going. Through them, I have learned that prioritizing the care of myself is important. I have learned that being in love with myself positions me to be a better lover to my neighbor and community. Above all, I've learned that yelling my own name at the top of my lungs with genuine love and intention can **ABSOLUTELY** bring my wildest dreams into fruition.

I pray the magic of self-care and neighborly love enchants all of you...that there will be a resounding chorus of names overpowering all of us with love for our fellow humans.

La Shaun phoenix Moore
Coach. Mentor. Fangirl.
Quarantine 2021

In spring of 2020, amid the challenge and upheaval of the early pandemic, I was bestowed the incredible good fortune of discovering the magic and warmth of the InsideOut community. In a time and space that often felt immeasurably heavy, it is here with the youth of InsideOut that I found light, joy, strength, and invigorated hope. Through their courage, honesty, and vibrance, these powerful young voices have moved mountains, restored spirits, cultivated hope, and inspired greatness in all whom they have reached.

As a language enthusiast, former teacher, and only a mere sliver of the writer I see in the young women of the 2021 InsideOut Youth Performance Troupe, I am in awe of what these bold voices have to say and how fearlessly they say it. I am reminded of what we as communities gain when we take the moments to hear from -- and really *HEAR* -- our youth, to suspend our own inner monologues and running commentary and instead listen at *their* feet, gaze on *their* every word, and let *their* wisdom and experience wash over us to nurture our souls. Despite the pandemic, I availed myself of opportunities as often as I could to hear from these rising writers and performers, to listen to these artists blossom and bloom in Zoom rooms, craft and record magnificent works, and rock stages at Toyota's MotorBella and downtown Detroit's Beacon Park.

Under the extraordinary mentorship of professional spoken word artist, vocalist, culture creator, and all-around phenomenal human and artistic force (...*shall I go on?*) Ms. La Shaun phoenix Moore, this troupe explored their artistry, enhanced their writing, and developed as both people and performers. Phoenix poured herself into these young artists, sharing her professionalism, motivating them, inspiring them, and truly caring for them. She embodies a true spirit of community, growing others by giving of herself. Into no better hands could we imagine placing this Performance Troupe, and InsideOut is incredibly grateful for all of her talents.

And to these mighty, poetic forces! These young women! These masters of art! Alayae', Algeonay, Cassidy, Fiona, and Ife, what an honor it has been to come to know you. To peek from behind Zoom screens at your greatness. To be a face in the sea of Instagram and Facebook Live viewers snapping, clapping, and crying along to your moving words. To watch firsthand as you shine, stretch, and set ears ablaze at your summer performance. Each of you speaks and writes your truth so courageously, so confidently, so eloquently, and in a way so uniquely your own. Thank you for sharing your gifts, and thank you for sharing this book with us.

Sincerely and ever-gratefully,

Michelle Bolofer
Program Director



Yell Our Own Names: Poems Writing Poetry
Copyright: 2021

Cover Art: Fiona Colson

All rights reserved. This book may not be reproduced in whole or in part (except in the case of reviews) without written permission from the author.

InsideOut Literary Arts teaches young people to *“think broadly, create bravely and share their voices with the wider world.”*

Citywide Poets is a writing community that meets weekly at various sites across the city of Detroit, and offers a number of open mic and performance opportunities. The InsideOut Youth Performance Troupe members are the official youth community ambassadors for InsideOut Literary Arts.

InsideOut Literary Arts would like to acknowledge generous support from:



For more information contact:

InsideOut Literary Arts

(313) 577-4601

info@insideoutdetroit.org www.insideoutdetroit.org

Yell Our Own Names is a publication of InsideOut Literary Arts. Copyright © 2021 InsideOut Literary Arts.

Printed in USA.

Table of Contents

Alayae Hicks

What is Love?

I Am Poetry

A Cry for Help

The Secrets of a Writer

My Favorite Love Poem

Algeonay Jackson

Life

Miss Me

Show Me

My Love Letter to Myself

My peace/My poem

Cassidy Howard

sunshine

butterflies

Hey, me.

Things I Never Really Talk About

beautiful

Fiona Colson

Zany Alphabetical Thoughts

Ars Poetica: Poetry Undefined

Pen to Paper

transparency

Yell My Own Name

Ife Martin

American Dream

Ars Poetica: Spilled Milk

A Letter For Your Dorm Wall

Crushed

About That Cute Couple on Instagram



Alayae' Hicks

Alayae' Hicks is a 16 year old Detroit-based artist. She's been obsessed with poetry since the second grade after reading one of her favorite books, Where the Sidewalk Ends, by Shel Silverstein. She wrote her first official poem in the 10th grade and has been writing ever since. She sits on her school's poetry team, which led her to many performance opportunities.

As a member of the 2021 InsideOut Youth Performance Troupe, sponsored by Toyota, Alayae' has performed at Beacon Park, The Redford Theatre, and The Durfee Innovation Center. Alayae' has had some of her poems published in her school's anthology. Outside of poetry, Alayae' cheers, maintains a part-time job, and attends school at Thurston High School. She serves on the 2021-2022 InsideOut Youth Advisory Board.

What is love?

What is love?

Is it a strong romantic connection
or maybe a physical lust or distraction?

I know it is a dangerous feeling.
Someone is bound to get hurt
especially if it's a shattering sad ending.
But love is forever –
it never goes away.
You could be in love with someone who is only temporary
and that's why it's scary.

Is it really beautiful and lovely?
Is it a pain ready to snatch your soul?
Is it flowers, rainbows, and unicorns
or darkness, hell, and rage?
From my experience,
love is a dangerous game to play.

If you want to fall in love
be ready for the long nights of crying and overthinking.
It does have some benefits.
But it also leaves you with doubts.
If you get too attached and your love leaves you,
you'll be in drought .

Nobody really knows what love is.
Everyone has their own definition.
You fall in love and you feel so happy
then wait, SNAP!
come back to reality.
Every relationship has its ups and downs.
If you love that person you should be able to stick it out.

WHAT IS LOVE?

Do all love stories have a happy ending?
Is love just a word?
Is love more than a feeling?

I am poetry

Sometimes I feel sad, empty, and hollow.
Other times I feel joyful and unstoppable.

I pour my thoughts onto paper
those words fade into shadows.

I fear being read and given no applause.
I fear I'll be hated and brought to a fall.

I'm sometimes overlooked and underappreciated.

Sometimes when I write
I'm nerdy and lame.
I'm the author of art
call me by my name.

I am POETRY.

Poetry is a guiding light
Poetry feels like being in flight.
Poetry is not boring little words
Poetry is the voice of the lost daring to be heard.

Within the lines that a poet writes
There's pain, hurt, and love seeking to right.

Poetry is not just some worthless piece of art.
It's the deep lost thought
in this little poet's heart.

A cry for help

Written between these lines is my cry for help
My feelings go unnoticed
You read my poetry
hear my voice
but do you know the meaning?

You pass over what I'm saying
You tear me down and shut me out
as if my life, my words, and my power have no meaning
Why do you bring me to my knees?
Leaving me crying and breaking begging for help?

My freedom is in these poems.

They tell my story
Nobody knows what goes on behind closed doors
when I'm cold and alone

My cry for help is getting louder
It's roaring like a lion ready to devour
When I needed it the most nobody was there
But now that I'm doing better and living for me
Everybody has their hands out asking for a favor

My fingers touch my keyboard and my pen hits the paper
I try and I try to get you to notice my cry for help
But you never see it
You were so focused on all the little things
You couldn't even see the raging and the hurting growing inside me
My breaking, my healing, my powerfulness, my shining
My cry for help within these lines is slowly demolishing

My freedom is in these poems.

The secrets of a writer

Why do you fly through the breeze?
What keeps your head high and able to push?
How do you get past the pain and vulnerability?
Once you break out of that cocoon, are you new and improved?

Your free spirit I cherish
you roar with independence
A bright blue butterfly dancing in the wind
without a worry about anything, not even her sins

She lives her life to the fullest with nobody's opinion
She picks up her pencil and pours out greatness
Her talent increases and becomes so much better
Her words shape shift into poems

The thoughts in her mind begin to roar
She holds the power of word play in her hand
This poem is written at her command

My Favorite Love Poem

Tapping my foot
I have this nervous feeling
Is it a crush? Is it lust?
Whatever it is,
I never want it to come to an ending

When it comes to a love poem
I'm often at a loss for words
But when I go to my playlist full of love songs,
you come to mind
our conversations
our memories
Seeing you in the hall
but staying my distance
because I can't put the words in my mouth
that are in mind

I love it when you
call me pretty instead of fine
How you listen even when I overshare
and never tell me to shut up or that you don't care

I love our car rides
Looking at you with a smile
as you bob your head to the music while you drive

You show me things
I never thought could exist
You pull me in for hugs
that I always miss
when you're long gone

When it comes to a love poem
I'm often at a loss for words
Thankfully
You are my favorite love song
You are my living love poem



Algeonay Jackson

Algeonay Jackson is a Detroit-based artist. Poetry is one of the hidden talents that she is excited to share out loud with the world.

As a member of the 2021 InsideOut Youth Performance Troupe, sponsored by Toyota, Algeonay has performed on the Toyota Main Stage at Motor Bella Detroit, The Durfee Innovation Center, and several digital performances. She is a member of the 2021-2022 InsideOut Youth Advisory Board. Algeonay's primary focus is school, but she still makes time to safely hang out with her friends.

Life

Days went by
I felt hopeless

Days went by
I felt numb

Days went by
I fell
Days went by
I failed

Days went by
I prayed

Days went by
I tried

Days went by
I tried again

Days went by
I got up

Days went by
I chose to succeed

Days went by
I planned my future

Days went by
I learned to feel again

Days went by
I felt that old feeling come back

Days went by
I feelt

Days went by
I thanked god

Days went by

I WON.

Miss Me

You're gonna miss how I checked on you. You're gonna miss how I fought for you. You're gonna miss how I made u laugh and you're gonna miss how I could turn your worst day into your best. You're gonna miss how I prayed with you. You're gonna miss how I was there for you. You're gonna miss how even tho u broke me, I was still there for you. You're gonna miss how I never gave up on you. You're gonna miss how I stayed on the phone just to hear u vent about your past and the days u felt like u had no one. Most of all you're gonna miss that love that you've never felt from anyone else. Yeah, you're gonna miss me. You're gonna miss me. Miss me. Miss me. Miss me.

Show Me (a mantra)

Show me POWER
Show me GROWTH
SHOW ME TO PUT MYSELF FIRST
So I'll never let anyone deceive me

Show me STRENGTH
So I can walk with my head high
Show me RESILIENCE as the Lord walks with me

SHOW ME BEAUTY
So I'll never be insecure

SHOW ME PATIENCE and PURPOSE
So I can see me in 2023 graduating
SHOW ME LOVE
So I never have to find it in someone else
let me open my heart to the best love

self-love

SHOW ME GOOD DAYS
When it's raining
When it's cloudy
When it's storming

SHOW ME REAL
SHOW ME CONTROL
So I don't feel like I should fight when we disagree
free this anger that keeps ahold of me

SHOW ME POSITIVITY
For a new year
clear the negative thoughts in my head and heart.

SHOW ME.

My Love Letter to Myself

I love how your soul is sweeter than the type of candy that gives u a toothache.
I love your love for God and the happiness you bring from being His creation.
I love how you pray when you overcome your toughest battles –
how you never lost yourself
but surpassed yourself 2x greater than the last hurt.
I love the way you are when your dedication inspires others.
I love the way you never let the hurt break you
but shape you
how you prove your mistakes wrong.
I love how you react to the lyrics of a song.
How you laugh at everything like a broken record that keeps replaying
I love how you can express love more than you say it
But most importantly,
I love you for you.

My peace/My poem

My strive? The dedication.

My hope? Success.

My enemy? Not my concern.

My words? Dangerous.

Why poems?

Poems understood with no explanation.

Poems LOUD when I was silent.

Lost soul sought poems as a home

Gave me growth as a caterpillar –

Yeah, I'm flying with beautiful colors.

Now everyone's impressed with ME.

Poems glanced and took the words out of the secret compartment

I forgot and forgave when poeming every night and every other day

Poems are in the words that haven't yet escaped

Poems speak.

Poems opened me

Poems untied tongue.

Poems undo hurt.

Poems heal.

Poems peace.

Piece.

Peace.

Poem.



Cassidy Howard

Cassidy Howard is a writer currently based in Metro Detroit. She has had poetry shared in a global conference connected to the Corona Multimedia Showcase and completed one term on the 2020-2021 InsideOut Youth Advisory Board before joining the 2021 InsideOut Youth Performance Troupe, sponsored by Toyota. Cassidy has performed at Beacon Park, The Redford Theatre, the Toyota Main Stage at Motor Bella Detroit, The Durfee Innovation Center, and numerous digital performances. She has also helped to curate various workshops and has thrived during her time with InsideOut Literary Arts.

Cassidy helps run poetry workshops at her own school, Lee M. Thurston High School, where she will graduate this spring. Aside from constantly coming up with ideas for her next project, Cassidy loves to volunteer in her community and can usually be found playing music at full volume and/or hanging out with her two cats.

sunshine

i talk to the sun.

and i know that doesn't make a ton of sense,
but i'd almost rather wish on that than a star.

because
his sky is kissed by carnation hues
before my sky wipes the sleep from its eyes and blinks into the day.

and the sun touches the pond in his backyard
before it encompasses the arch in mine.

so it makes sense,
before i bid her goodnight
to ask her to say good morning.

maybe ask her to shine a little brighter.

i ask her to make the sky
that burnt orange as she appears –
his favorite color.

you know,
oddly enough i never used to like orange.
i never saw the appeal.

but now it's his orange
and i search for it in everything.

i have always loved sunsets.
my phone is filled with beams of light
and clouds across the horizon,
their colors filling every mile of skyline.

but i take more pictures of orange skies
than of any other.

i just adore them.

and they say,
that love makes you blind.
but i don't think i've ever found the world more beautiful
than when his hand is in mine.

or when he calls me love.
it's like watching a million sunsets at once.

there is no amount of wonder
or awe
or beauty in the world

that'd ever begin to compare.

so, i talk to the sun.

i ask favors of her most times

but i thank her too.

because she's shone so much brighter since he's been here.

butterflies

fire in my throat
burning
scorching my voice

as though something has latched itself
unwilling to let go

to leave me be

i cough
and choke
and i try to rid myself of it

doing anything to make it leave
to find some form of peace

but it is unchanging

it grows and grows until i feel i can no longer breathe

i can think it
and sometimes i manage to write it
but it is impossible to say
however much it sears

love is horrifying
and as small as these three words are
i fear them as pachyderm fear mice

a gasp can't satisfy aching lungs
when no air exists

but as my mouth opens

it leaves
and it flies

cocoon falling from its perch
as wings of amber leave my body

the most beautiful thing i have ever seen

Hey, me.

I'm supposed to write you this love letter.

This is an assignment.

And I'm gonna tell you that's what it is,
Because I lie to you enough as is.

And I shouldn't do that.
I talk you into saying you're the bad guy,
and that everything is fine.

So I won't tell you this is without prompting.

I just cried for like two hours,
and quite frankly this is the last thing
I want to write at the moment.

It's not that you don't deserve some love letter.
I'm just not good with words for a poet.

And we are too exhausted to worry about ourselves most of the time.

That's pretty great, I guess, if you think about it.

You put everyone else first.
You care so much.
So deeply.
About everybody.

I just can't offer you the same sometimes, but I'm trying.
Y'know?

We're getting better at this.

You're bad at letting people in sometimes.
But you're brave.
And you've let the right people in.
And you've made things better for yourself.

You are so creative
In the ways you write, and problem-solve, and think, and everything.
You write well for someone who claims to be bad at words.
You just aren't as kind to yourself as you should be.

You've gone through it.
You've lost people you loved.
And you never gave yourself the time to grieve,
Because you took care of others first.

You take care of everybody else.

And you find time to take care of yourself.
You put on the brave face.
You try so hard to keep the smile.
You help people so often.
You brighten up days.
You have learned how to show love
Despite as much as you say that you are bad at it.

You have learned to love,
However scary it was.
You did it.
You've always been a quick learner.

You've dealt with all of it so well,
You always do.
Everything you touch, you bring light to it.
You aren't as kind to yourself as you should be.
Yeah, you are a mess,
But I think I love you for it.

And you're honest.
You tell them you're a mess,
And then you wrap that mess up in a classy bow
and carry on.

You are so strong,
so resilient,
you are quick witted,
and talented.

You do deserve the good that comes to you.
I know it's hard to believe,
That imposter syndrome kicks your ass,
that overthinking really outdoes itself.

But you deserve it.
You deserve the good.
You try your best and you don't let them see you down
and it is truly beyond incredible.

You can be in the clouds,
And still manage to give others so much light.

You're funny, too.
And god what a glow up.
That's definitely a point of pride.

But you've got this.
You grew up a little too fast, I know.
A lotta too fast.
But you're balancing it well.
You're doing your best,

And that is so much more than enough.

I love you, Cassidy.

Or at least I'm really trying to.

Things I Never Really Talk About

I have really high expectations of myself

they told me I was special
what feels like ages ago
and I've been doing all I can
to make sure that they've believed it since then

I've been trying to make myself believe it

I wanna make sure they don't regret
having so much hope in me

Somewhere along the way
my own standards became more than anyone else's

It's an uphill battle with a constant point to prove
the mountain just gets steeper
and the wind just whips harder
An unending attempt to make someone proud

How am I hiking and drowning at the same time??

I was put on this path,
and now that I'm on it
apparently it isn't the safe choice

my future was planned
before i knew what a future was
and now it's too risky

so please
where do I go from there??

I barely have faith in myself,
so I'm begging you
please have faith in me

why does no plan stay in place?
there is never certainty

the puzzle pieces are constantly rearranging themselves

I don't know the final picture anymore

It's not that I think I need to be the best or
the greatest at what I do

I don't think I need to be some legend
some people do
they need me to be some icon

but I really don't think I do
I think I just have to leave a mark
somewhere

however small

I'm afraid of fading out
not a shadow behind to say I was ever here
no trace

I am terrified

so I act self-assured
and outgoing
and carefree
pray they don't see through me.
ray YOU don't see through me

because I feel like I'm not enough

I just
I'm trying to prove to everyone
that I'm worth betting on
and yet I struggle to even bet on myself

what fool doesn't bet on themselves?

beautiful

People only seem to see what's wrong with the world.
They only seem to see the ugly.

And it's hardly their fault
when the media shows only a black and white picture
of such a vibrant world.

It leaves them wondering
if that's all there is.
Only cruelty and corruption
and ugly.

But when I see the world
I wonder if we are even looking
at the same thing.

I see a blanket of stars
glistening and glimmering
waving to the people below.

I see lovers holding hands
those same stars are trapped in their eyes,
their laughter ringing like music.
A symphony composed in joy.

I see mile high buildings that scrape the clouds.
The sun settles between them,
saturating the world
painting it like a skilled artist.

I see sapphire waves crash
upon miles of shoreline
the last sparks of fireworks
fading like embers.

I see the way people
smile at one another.
The way they sway
when dancing
as if they are the only beings on earth.

I see the people
no,
the *poems*
which are writing the poetry .

I see the world
and I wonder how anyone
could look at something so beautiful
and call it anything else.



Fiona Colson

Fiona Colson (she/him) is a Detroit-based artist. He is 15 years old, non-binary, and began writing poetry in the 7th grade. She started doing workshops with Citywide Poets in Spring 2021. As a member of the 2021 InsideOut Youth Performance Troupe, sponsored by Toyota, he has had the opportunity to perform at Beacon Park, The Redford Theatre, the Toyota Main Stage at Motor Bella Detroit, The Beaumont Teen Health Center, The Durfee Innovation Center, and numerous digital performances. She is also a member of the 2021 InsideOut Youth Advisory Board and enjoys many creative ventures in her spare time.

Zany Alphabetical Thoughts

All the things I used to pick apart
Because I didn't think my reflection was worth it.
Coexisting with my inner child who hadn't fully healed.
Drowning in tears because of how lonely I still end up feeling.
Entering a state where nothing feels real makes you question your sanity.
Finally trying to stop coexisting with that inner child and just healing.
Going home and seeing the sidewalk you had your first kiss.
How you thought things were permanent.
Insisting to yourself that "you're loved" in the mirror when no one else said it to you.
Justifying toxic love because of how much you craved affection.
Killing any ideas of love when you started to taste the toxic waste.
Learning that love can be found within yourself.
Making room for the affection of others creeping in slowly.
Not understanding the collisions of our storylines.
Opening yourself to new beginnings hurts more than you thought.
Prioritizing the needs of others all your life makes you question if you'll turn out okay.
Questioning your sanity as you live out high school through your bedroom walls.
Rethinking if you're actually okay now or if you just tell that to others for their comfort.
Searching for this person you're becoming.
Tending to your needs finally.
Understanding that you are enough.
Venturing into happiness.
Wondering if you'll crave stability even after finding happiness.
(e)Xpressing how you feel is now something healthy... not weak.
You realizing you're loved and not just by yourself.
Zany alphabetical thoughts are perfectly okay.

Ars Poetica: Undefined

you are the overwhelming voice inside me that tells me i'm beautiful
you are the voice i'm forced to listen to
you are the part of me that savors attention and that loves to be seen
whenever i've tried to keep you a secret
you find your way to make me succumb to you
make me surrender to that
 feel good
 butterfly
 you make me experience

you make me yield to the part of us
i would otherwise run away from: HONESTY

i feel.

i feel.

I FEEL.

you make me feel
embarrassed for forcing out truths i didn't know existed
ashamed i didn't know they were true
guilty that sometimes i feel like i've just met you

you take on different energies
one moment you're a feline
wise and poised
coordinated and graceful
the essence of what i've been told it is to be feminine
the next moment you're a hound
loyal and honest
masculine
way too kind and loving
for the world

even though you confuse my mortal mind
you always come back to me
as a butterfly
undefined
refined
seeking to find yourself

Pen to Paper

sometimes the pen hits closer to my heart
than any words my therapist can say

i write about loss

i write about

how

i

can't

stop

feeling

i keep writing

at home with these new people

when i thought i needed to keep missing home

to feel human.

when the pain stops what will i have to fill these beautiful pages?

how long will the pen call out my name?

a pen through your heart

is hearing the words that were meant for you

stab right through you

the pen touches my paper

but my words are sometimes lost

i'm thinking of what i should be doing instead

what i should've said,

why he doesn't love me

why i wish he did

my pen is lost in my thoughts

i come up for air

hoping that putting my pen to paper

will be enough

transparency

i always look for the best in people.
i'm a kind person.

rainy mornings in bed
floating in the middle of a lake
are where i find the most peace.

i love too much.
i used to give love to people
who might love me back
and after waiting to taste something
that had the same kind love i was giving,
i tasted something bitter
when all i wanted was to taste something sweet
something that tasted like what i thought love was.

it may be childish to crave something so sweet,
but all i wanted was love.

maybe that was the child in me
just wanting to be loved in return
craving affection and attention
like apple pie on my tongue.

i thought it was love.
it felt like love.

the truth tastes like a rotted pomegranate.
it's seeds crack under my teeth
like my sheer anger towards him.

i'm angry because i feel hurt.
i'm angry because of how much i loved him.
i'm angry because he said he loved me when he didn't.
i'm angry because i thought i was biting into a ripe peach
it's juice pouring over me
nourishing me and intoxicating my taste buds with sugar.

instead i found myself biting
into something that made my teeth ache,
that numbed my tongue
a biting truth
instead of the peach

i thought was mine.

Yell My Own Name

dear past love,

would you think twice if you knew i still used your name to comfort myself? i sometimes wonder if the same things that make me think about you remind you of me and then i wonder why the idea of this person you used to be and who i used to know is still running around my mind?

why do you always seem to stay?

i want you to leave.

yes, i know you already did...but that was you. you left. it was over for you; it wasn't over for me. Why can't you understand that?

dear cocoons,

i don't understand why love is something that i feel so in touch with, that i love so deeply and yet it's brought me the most pain? i don't understand. i don't understand. i don't understand why i care so much.

i try to find answers in old diaries and polaroids i find buried under my bed. i find things i didn't think i needed to be looking for. instead of time, i find hatred and pain all bottled up to fit into toxic words that i would throw back at myself. when you start shoving the words "i hate you" and "you aren't enough" into your own ear you start to believe yourself. instead of re-realizing dissatisfaction, i realized how hurt that soul had to have been to say those cruel words to someone who was already hurting.

i've realized now how much I love myself.

i've realized how the words i write are supposed to embody and embrace who i am and not tear me down. i've realized how beautiful my mind is and ended up finding the art that was lying dormant within my heart all along. i've realized that i like how much i care – it's come to be one of my best qualities. because having a heart that's lived so many lifetimes, makes me capable of love that makes those who try and hurt me afraid.

i've finally realized, that when my sister once told me that the person who loves you most should be able to yell your name from the rooftops, that i needed to be yelling my own name.

dear fiona,

I LOVE YOU, FIONA!



Ife Martin

Ife Martin is a Metro Detroit based artist. She wrote her first poem in 2018 in response to the shooting at Majory Stoneman Douglas High School. In 2020, she truly fell in love with spoken word poetry. She is a 2021 YoungArts Honorable Mention winner in Writing - Spoken Word. She also is a two-time regional Gold medalist in Poetry at ACT-SO. Ife is a member of the 2021 InsideOut Youth Performance Troupe, sponsored by Toyota, and serves on the 2021-2022 InsideOut Youth Advisory Board. Ife has performed at Beacon Park, the Toyota Main Stage at Motor Bella Detroit, The Durfee Innovation Center, and numerous digital performances. She is also a member of the Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit.

When she is not performing, Ife enjoys traveling and immersing herself in new stories.

American Dream

What is the American Dream?
That's not a rhetorical question,
What *is* the American Dream?
'Cause I'm American
and my dream is to have my voice be heard over society's ruckus.
But y'all know how that goes.
You get shut up and shut down if your views don't align
with those of who this country was built for
Because the American Dream is a stolen dream.
Drenched in the blood of its true people
and built on the backs of mine.

I mean, how do you find a country that was never lost in the first place?
How do you steal a people but still don't treat them like people?
Look at these founding fathers.
These men who created this so-called "American Dream".
How am I supposed to believe that this dream is for me
when all I see are the faces of those who have historically hated me?

See,
I've read the textbook
and I've heard the truth,
Which one am I supposed to believe?

But I understand where y'all get confused.
No, I see where the picture gets blurry.
'Cause if you stare at the sun for too long you start to damage your eyes.
The American Dream is Icarus.
Overzealous.
We getting hyped up off this false high, so the harder we fall.

But sis here's the tea,
I heard it through the grapevine that the American dream is to be free,
To be equal, to live in this place where you can be anything that you want to be
And I'm proud to say that some of these things we have achieved.

But if this is the American Dream
I guess we woke up.
Welcome to the American Reality.

'Cause in reality,
it's my dream not to be scared
when my brother walks out of the house,

not knowing if he'll come back or not
Not knowing if he'll be charged for simply LWB.
Living While Black.

The American Dream is a dream in slumber.
And I know that sounds redundant
But how can it stay dreaming when its children are crying out
Black Lives Matter,
Hands up, don't shoot,
Stop! I can't breathe, I can't breathe, I can't breathe
Crying My baby,
My son
My husband
My father
We're prosecuted for being armed with our melanin
And burned at the stake for wielding our black girl magic.

The American Dream is a broken dream.
A hurting dream.
Bleeding the blood of its people
through bullet wounds and scraped knees
from being pushed aside one too many times.

But we know this.
We know this.
No matter how imperfect this American Dream is,
it *is* our American Dream...

Right?

Ars Poetica: Spilled Ink

I paint my nails as not to bite them
A rainbow of polishes splayed before me
A shaky eager hand drags long strokes
I blow it dry, unsatisfied by the shade
Cover it with a prettier, shiner layer
The rainbow of paint now weighs down my fingertips
The final layer is black
A cultivation of all the colors that wouldn't catch my eye
I stare at my masterpiece to the beat of my droning clock
Each tick strips away my meticulously perfected work
It dissolves in front of my eyes
until I see nothing but my empty nail
I chew off my nail as reality fades back
The taste of chemicals stains my mouth
as I stare at half dried bottles of nail polish

A Letter For Your Dorm Wall

I hope you take this time to grow up
Not blaming you that you haven't yet
I ate one of those sweets from Alice in Wonderland
Grew up too fast
My legs pulled and arms stretched
Hoping if I could wrap myself around us
I could make everything better, easier, clearer
I burst out of my play clothes
My watch became too small to make the time I needed to live like the kid I no longer was
My tiny heart felt heavy in my grown-up chest
My grown-up mind told me to pull up my big girl pants
And I can't blame you because I asked for this
I tempted the rabbit to lead me down its hole
Our paths diverged and you continued to walk
You didn't notice I was gone
You reveled in the silence left where my old self used to be
So I returned without a sound
I watched you stumble over jagged rocks and pierce yourself on broken twigs
With each observed fall, I became stronger, smarter
I no longer needed to follow you
but I wanted to hold your hand and walk this road with you but the path was too small for the both of us
I'd grown up
I stepped into the role that you couldn't occupy
But I don't blame you
I just want to take this time to be a kid
If I can even remember how to
I always thought this would be a journey we would take together
But time was never on my side
I'll forgive you for the mistakes of your youth
And I'll forgive myself for blaming the world and forgetting that it has no hold on me
So having fun growing up
I'll try to this time

Crushed

I drop hints like a pencil knocked off of my desk
It rolls under your chair and sits there

I make eye contact with the side of your head
willing you to look my way
Or process the sound of my pencil hitting the ground
Wanting your reflexes to kick in

The years of chivalry your mama drilled into you
Every morning anointing you with Vaseline
and the fact that she raised you right
 Raise your eyes to look at me
 Or my pencil
 Or even the board
So I can ask you for help on problem number five
So you can wonder aloud if there's a test on Friday
And I can answer yes

Your brown eyes,
hidden under thick lashes
that no man deserves to have for free,
will find mine

Your lips will part into that half-smile
I've learned to love from two seats over on your left
And I'll know you're on the archery team
 The way you'll shoot me a thank you
 and have it pierce my chest
 Finding its way to my heart

How do you make love look so easy
Like the answer is hidden in the back of our books
I'll ask you to tutor me on the rhythm of your heartbeat
and the waves of your hair
that crashes on your over your eyes
and engulfs me in the ocean of you

You'll show me the answer for x is tucked into the crook of your arm
And y is your hand draped over my shoulder
pulling me into the equation of $you + me$

But I'm more partial to English
So I'll teach you the sound of my name

You'll work it around your mouth
Flexing your jawline as if you think
I need to fall further in love like damsels in the book
Forgetting that when I spill letters onto a page
U and I always find each other

We stare into the night sky
You tell our story through constellations
I'll write our name in the stars
 With my pencil
 That I knocked off my desk
 It rolled under your chair and sits there

I make eye contact with the side of your head
willing you to look my way
And grab my pencil
expecting it to be curled into your hand
A hint of my love
waiting for you to experience
the fullness of my heart

But
the bell rings
waking me from my dream

You kick my pencil under the broken heater
My love for you finding a home with the dust and trash
Hoping to be forgotten
as it finds company in a collection

of unwanted things

About that Cute Couple on Instagram

At least they have pictures.

How does a machine capture his admiration for her?
Why can I feel the chemistry between their lingering hands
longing to wrap each other around its missing partner?

His cheek is a canvas,
Her delicate lips, brushes
they've captured a painter at work

It's not fair

I want to scream
and cry
and hug them
and tell them they're beautiful –
because I've seen their pictures
and CVS still prints them out

At least I have scissors.

My face sloppily pasted over hers,
His cut out completely
The bodies separated by the creases
they've taken on to fit into my pocket
I hold it up everywhere I people watch
Waiting for my him to appear in these pictures

One day a boy will walk into my life
Perfectly lining up
in this relationship I sinfully covet

I want what they have.

Find me soon, Love
I hate how you make me want what everyone else has
I hate how you make me want to be happy
I'm happy my hate means love

So I'll patiently wait to hate
the day we'll get to have pictures
that some random girl will cut out and
write a poem

about wanting what we have.

Gratitude

The 2021 InsideOut Youth Performance Troupe would like to thank Suma Rosen, Michelle Bolofer, Justin Rogers and the entire InsideOut Literary Arts staff, writers, sponsors, and donors for making this year's troupe a huge success. We also extend our deepest gratitude for all of the guest writers that touched our lives and our digital workshops during this extended quarantine season.

We are bravely holding the line for every youth artist who comes after us as we forge ever forward.