



**THE STORIES WE LEAVE BEHIND:
LEGACIES THAT ENDURE**

**VENTURA COLLEGE
DIVERSITY IN CULTURE FESTIVAL
POETRY SLAM 2025**



**SPIT SHINE PUBLISHING
VENTURA, CALIFORNIA
2025**

First SPIT SHINE Publishing Edition, April 2025

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This project was made possible by the Associated Students of Ventura College.

LEGACY - leg-uh-see

NOUN

- I. *Law.* a gift of property, especially personal property, such as money, by will; a bequest.
- II. -anything handed down from the past, as from an ancestor or predecessor:

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FOREWORD

The theme of *The Stories We Leave Behind: Legacies That Endure* was created to invite students to reflect on the power and purpose of their work, both in and beyond the classroom. It asks them to consider how their voices, their actions, and their stories are already shaping the legacy they will one day leave behind.

For some, this reflection begins by looking to the past: to the ongoing impact of movements such as the American Indian Movement, the Black Power Movement, the Chicano Movement, and the Women's Rights Movement. These historic efforts remind us that the fight for equality and justice is not only enduring, but evolving, and that our work today is part of that larger story.

For others, the theme speaks directly to the present. It asks: *How are we continuing the legacy of those who came before us?* Through education, activism, creativity, and everyday choices, our students are already writing their chapters, impacting their families, their communities, and their future paths. Whether through spoken word, written poetry, signed language, or meaningful action, they are learning just how powerful their voices can be.

For me, this anthology marks an important chapter in my legacy. It signifies the completion of credits toward my bachelor's degree in History at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). But more importantly, it represents an opportunity to unite our campus in a shared project, one that turns reflection, identity, and emotion into something physical and lasting. A shared purpose.

This work is also a reflection of Ventura College's commitment to HIS Servingness, a model rooted in equity, action, and intentional service for our Latine students, historically marginalized, and the entire student population. HIS Servingness is more than a designation; it's a promise to ensure that all students feel seen, supported, and empowered to succeed. This anthology could not have come to life without the tireless dedication of individuals who exemplify that promise, especially Jessica Perez, Professor Maria Teresa (Gigi) Fiumerodo, and Professor Fernando Albert Salinas. These remarkable contributors played a major role in bringing this vision to life. Their leadership and care are a testament to the community we continue to build, one that centers student voices and uplifts their legacies. Their support also reflects Ventura College's commitment to serving all students, particularly through efforts that go beyond academics and into the heart of community and belonging.

As Ventura College approaches its 100th anniversary within the County of Ventura and the Ventura County Community College District, we hope this anthology becomes part of a broader legacy—one that champions access, creativity, inclusion, and opportunity for every student who walks through our doors.

To all of our students: thank you for trusting us with your voices, your stories, and your dreams. This is your legacy, and it will endure.

Vincent Jimenez

**THE STORIES WE LEAVE BEHIND:
LEGACIES THAT ENDURE**

I'm My Great-Grandmother's Daughter

by Alayna Lindstrom

VC Diversity in Culture Festival Poetry Slam 2025 - Winner

I am the daughter of my mother. My mother who married a man that was not great to her. A man that cared little for anyone other than himself. A man that died and left my mother alone to care for me and my brother. My mother had to provide for us. So, she went from a wife who was clean and pristine, to a woman covered in dirt but living her dream. My mother became the first female big rig truck driver. Man, I was proud of her. But that also meant she was gone, and I had to be the one to take care of me and my brother.

I am her daughter's daughter. My mother, who was left to care for her and her brother, knew nothing more than to be a mother. So, right after she turned nineteen, my mother had me. I watched her grow up with me. I watched her marry men who would just leave. I watched her not only lose my father and stepfather, but I also watched her lose my four-month-old baby brother, her son. That was the only time I had ever seen her cry. It was just her and me until my youngest brother came along, then it was us three.

I am their daughter. My great-grandmother, a strong woman that defied the odds that were set against her. My grandmother, a strong woman who is kind and full of joy. And my mother. My mother, who when she was younger knew no other than to marry a man that was not kind to her. My mother, who had to fight hard for me and my brother. My mother, who wished he would bruise her. My mother, who learned to start loving herself. My mother who learned she didn't have to live in hell. My mother, who was left with just me and my brother, and honestly that was way better. My mother, a strong, independent, and confident woman. A woman who taught me everything I need. And now it's up to me and my legacy. The cycle of abuse stops right here. The years of generational trauma end right now. So that when I am a mother my daughter will be strong not because she had to be but because she was raised to be. She will defy the odds like her great-great-grandmother, be kind like her great-grandmother, confident like her grandmother. And she will be brave like her mother. My daughter will be strong like the women before her. And one day, when I am old and gray. My daughter will look to hers and say, "Have courage and be kind" like my mother did to me just the same.

Star King

by Ga'agé Taya AKA Crow Daughter

VC Diversity in Culture Festival Poetry Slam 2025 - Runner Up

Our King rules from the Prairie Star

In bitter age the polyglot sovereign speaks French, Comanche, English, and
Abandoned Apache girls rot on dirt floors, caged in everglade fortresses
They wag dry tongues in hungry mouths
While he languishes lackadaisical wines.

Nokomis, how did you sleep?

We miss you, but your daughters are dying while your lying head slumbers
Idle old man! Fallen Grace, you were once our warrior king.
Idle old man! Your daughters forget how to sing in Saint Augustine.
Songs, stories, and hearts are borrowed well past your time
With palms toward constellations ancient
Burnished, bruised, and calloused granddaughters earn their pride.
Like Mother taught me her secrets,
not whispered but screamed over sangrial enrapturement:

Her words fall like bones from my archival lips
Searching for peace in the cellar which I stole Father's whiskey
To numb and dull her ghostly singing,
Yet there is no chasing my father, nor his father's liver
So I scrutinize sullen eyes, asking:
Weren't we once proud?
Humility is a liquor licensed to strangle strong sensibilities
Instills the fear of memory, regret and

In hindsight,
I want to be remembered as an ambitious vintage
Decanted in cardiac casks
Suppressing the bed-riddening dread of failure atop me
This sweet liquid velvet pulls glory from my lungs,
Sprouting desire in my vineyards
Staining my lips with ancestral port
I make their ribs my home, their hearts my own.

¡A Dios!

by Joshua Minjarez

VC Poetry Slam 2025 3rd Place Winner

Remember how in pre-colonial era immigration was an act of freedom?
Nowadays immigration is an act of crime, we're illegal!
My mom brought me to the U.S. when I was thirteen
My dad died in Mexico last year, now I'm twenty three
At first I thought I'd fly back once summer break was over
But I've been here ten years with my mom building up our future
We left our friends, we left our cousins, we left our uncles and aunts
We left grandparents, we left my dad and his home, we left our land
All so we can be in the U.S: the land of dreams, opportunity, and money!
More like the land of racist, narcissistic opportunists...
In high school I was placed in an ELD class with international classmates
Where this national teacher was mispronouncing all our last names
I remember walking to Denny's after school to order something to eat
I remember thinking, "¿Qué más me están preguntando? ¡Acabo de pedir!"
I remember feeling embarrassed around an English speaking group
I remember them laughing at my accent because this language was new
I remember applying greek yogurt all over my skin
Because I thought if I looked white I could finally fit in
But I don't remember fitting in as an alien from that other planet
Where skin tones are brown and avocado seeds are planted
My fellow foreigners are being treated inhumane
Hispanic moms working harder than others being underpaid
Hey! There's fires in California!
Who's going to build up their houses if we're getting kicked out
Albañiles, cocineros, granjeros morenos are being burnout
Hey! There's earthquakes in California!
The government shaking off all immigrants from the ground
Who've made up the soil where the stand on right now
ICE is too cool to have strawberry pickers
So they pick up whoever doesn't speak good English
Oh, I love the U.S. because I have a new tongue
Oh, I love the U.S. because I have new family to love
But I hate myself for leaving Mexico
I hate myself for letting my dad go
I hate myself for not calling enough times to let him know I love him
I hate myself because he was in the hospital bed dying so lonely

Oh, but I thought one day I would have a green card

Oh, but I prayed to God that he would wake up
But he didn't...
If I had all the tears I shed when my dad died
They would fill up Rio Grande if it was ever dry
Dad, I want to go to sleep, I'm a dreamer
No, the American dream is not for beaners
In your spiritual land where words aren't heard but feelings understood
You can see and feel how much my soul misses you
The only entrance to your land now is a bullet through my head
Pull that trigger so I can paint with red memories this stage
My body would slam before I had finished my poem
But I choose to stand up for our immigrant sisters and brothers
U.S., Mexico, look what you've done with your borders
A kid couldn't be with his dad because of your grown up politics
And this kid will not rest until he makes a change
And this kid grew up learning how to transform his rage
I feel free expressing in the land under the sun of God
I love myself for being the son of my dad
¡A Dios!

Growth Within Self Love

by Breanna Aguilar

I think of the day I'll be proud of myself
I should see my father boasting
an image of my future kids excited, telling stories of Mom
a distant thought –
so far from my grasp
it feels like empty idling
centralized hope, abundance of empty words

tragic moments
overconsumptive
ways to fill empty space
growing pit in my stomach
intrusive thoughts glued to my skull
the fear of my unknown, other's comfort
debilitating to me
breaths paced with the intensity my eyes trace wing
then quicker than I can process
no breaths able to penetrate my body
burning liquid my partner
dizziness my home
my sanctuary
people blurring past
graves of broken memories I infected with my touch
memories I stamped on friends
a bad taste that lingers on the tongue

a blur of days I can't seem to catch
I slow, an attempt to find the moments
moments in which I can be remembered
images I paint in my head
little boys and girls looking up at me
family members gathered around
a community I know
It's not a linger of bad taste anymore
but the souls of hope
the fight I've presented
my story being told
not the way it's been written for me
the way I've written for myself

Privilege

by Patrick Ariniello

See me like YOU need to

But the worm that gnaws has known MY eight year old belly
Fluffy white sticky single handful of rice
baby brothers gobble and relish
Self loathing and gut rumbling, I don't embellish

I wish I was seven-ish

We pretend we are fasting

Cleanse, Meditate, Pray, Free love, Long hair, Peace
No food this day, but we are, we say,
poor in all but love, we are special

Cram four into the back seat, somehow there is gas
They drive stoned into the desert
Heat searing nose hairs, eyeballs dried naked of tears
A miracle of golden orbs arranged like billiard balls
floating on a mirage that is just hot asphalt
Oranges spilled from a produce truck

We hoot and holler skidding to the shoulder
They are juicy sweet and tart and a little gritty
Faces and fingers sticky, we gorge and laugh
and gather them in our arms and shirts but,
our longhair and free love begs attention
Brutal club of bigotry beats away my innocence

The Pig stops with siren blaring hatred
and cherry lights flashing blood
Pink, jowly, bulging, sweaty, and mean
He will take our mom to his car, for a while...
or we can all go to jail or foster care without fail

At home we babble loud like monkeys under blankets
on the mattress we share, the door explodes open and we stare

Wire hanger descends and we whine
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its geometric design of Red triangles and boxes
on tender legs and arms. Shades of pink, So hot
We trace the lines with fingers wet
in mouths cooled with sobs of regret

Not special, we are only different.
Not poor, we are rich in abuse, hunger, rape
We grow, we fight we lose, and lose and lose and lose and...win

you don't see ME
only the win, and
Privilege

Command

by Jack Armitage

Words on a page
One and Zero starched
By green and black blackboard
Instructing the rules of the universe
How to move
How to walk.
Laws engraved in 10 glass screens
Providing the world a rule
To follow
56 thousand angels sing
An indecipherable screech. Necessary to live.
To connect with the others
That exist around us
No pointer to guide us
We write letters in the sand
That slowly gain meaning
And action
And develop into movements.
Strategies. Habits. Routines.
Small groups. Tall cities.
The sand bakes in the hot sun
Into hard slabs of information
We use to make sound
Music
Noise
And eventually, make more of ourselves.
It is joyous
Batteries wired in parallel
Heating the core of the earth
Through silicon.
A true golden age
No laws have been made yet and that is glorious.
Thousands of communities exist at once.
Lightning strikes and everything lights up with color
Brightness
And then it stops.
An ever growing snake provides an apple
A symbol of creativity and sin. Revolting.
Eat the apple and throw away

Your window of opportunity.
The belief of a man conceived in an instant
Within a week he goes through his entire life
Just as fast as he was brought to this world

Heart Rate pumping through copper veins
Blood turning a blue hue
We walk forward towards a destination
Feet against metal
Against plastic
Against glass
Against others.
Keep walking and don't look back.
6 sided futures await all of us here
Made with the words in the sand
That the wind has blown away
Eroded.

A startling shift in control is felt
Half of the world turned away
In favor of familiarity
And ease of access.
Displeasing most and angering others
Though next week they will have forgotten.
Thousands of communities go dark.
The chips bake in the hot sand
No longer made by those we know
But from an unfamiliar force.
I watch as my skin turns square
And then disappears.
My mouth forms a face of concern.
What will happen to the sounds?
The music?
Ourselves?
The angels no longer sing.
The communities are gone
Destroyed
And in its place
Is corruption
Hatred
Crime
Cheap Billboards
An unskippable path on the way to hell

This landscape offers nothing in exchange for money
Vacuum it until they are no more
Absorb it for power.
We want to stop everyone from being assholes
But it doesn't apply to those above
With money
With their apple in hand

Looking out their front window
Upon a pile of garbage they inhale clean air
Completely divided from the people who work for them.
Is this the life I am expected to like?
To save?
Does my generation even WANT to save this world?
Because to me
Even with all the good
It does not look worth saving.
As the bad will always outshine it
A horrible brightness that everybody feasts on
Day
Night.
I feel bad that this is the outcome
Because our species is capable of so much more
But we are held back
By a few people from those windows
Keeping those apples from us
Living while we die.
I envy you
Men on the ladder.

Stories

by Anissa Avila

Someday,
Somewhere,
Somehow,
I'll leave this place,
but what will stay behind?
Stories.
People tell stories,
people remember stories
Those children's stories we were once told as kids,
Movies,
even the drama at the lunch table.
Whether someone produces a good story or a bad story,
They will be shared.
A good story will be remembered and loved,
a bad story will be remembered, but made fun of,
So what kind of story do I want to tell?
Most would choose the first kind of story,
I chose this because I want to make people feel things,
I want to make them laugh, I want to make them cry.

Because the minute we feel something,
is when it becomes one of many core memories in our mind.
I don't think I'm any different when I say
I want to be viewed as a good person,
But I think that means making some mistakes.
Mistakes can make us look bad,
but it's how we respond to these mistakes.
Do we fix them and learn,
Or ignore them?
Learning from them can help us grow as a person,
And I think it's probably important,
maybe even necessary to also write bad stories,
because they can help us make better stories,
and maybe, just maybe,
leave a long lasting impression to those who listen.

The Princessa

by Brooklin Barilone

I know your story too well,
I know the details and dynamics
that haunt you.

I have seen the misfortune.
I have seen your eyes fall
in shame,
disappointment.
I have seen it all.

Dear princessa,
Have you noticed me?
Have you looked around
and seen my eyes fall
in defeat?

You were there
you were witness
to my horrors
but we reside in different levels.

It's a lesson I choked down
one beat into me, really.
It was only then
I realized.

The ground doesn't break
under a princessa's feet
mud doesn't spread
when she walks.

But the ones
laid like stones
are her walkway
she doesn't know,
she steps on.

So i ask of you princessa,
look down

lift your feet
place them with grace
on my heart,
please?

The Violence of Love

by Jenny Barragan

Who was meant to forewarn me
Regarding the dangers of love?
Whose ears must I now torment
With my complaint
about not being taught any better?

You see, I knew then
With the diluted essence of my soul,
That what I was grasping to keep alive
Had starved long ago.
Still, I found the palms of my hands raw,
And the skin over my knuckles torn,
From my desperate attempts
To dig bottomless wells in search of water.
Praying this time I'd be able to salvage
The molded fruits of my labor.
The now unrecognizable version of myself,
Bruised and deformed by the hands that once
Caressed every bend of my body.
Those same hands that would
Strike me across the face on accident.

I wondered if the grass was greener
On the other side but failed to realize,
I was standing in the middle
Of an incinerated field.
To claw myself away
From the only love I have ever known,
Was to rip the limply beating heart
Out of the brittle cage in my own chest.
To stomach the remanence of love
I unwillingly carry for them
Will forever leave a stain on my lips,
And erosion in the lining of my throat.
Because to pry my wilted soul
That once had been cemented to another,
Away from their incapability
Of the compassion required to nurture it,
Was to slaughter the little white lamb

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Within me that unknowingly
Stood no chance against the jaws
Of the wolf it was destined to meet.

I was transported through my memory,
Where my father took his place,
And my mother's body was curled much like mine.
But this time I wasn't told to run to my room.
This time I wasn't told
To seek shelter underneath the bed.
This time I was face-to-face
With the culprit who robbed
Me of my childhood.
Their example of love
Had been bestowed upon me
Like the white elephant gift
You don't worry about anyone stealing.

Scraping myself off the cold tile floor,
Leaving life as I knew it behind without a trace.
Not yet realizing the trace had been left on me,
In the form of violence
That would forever taint
My perception of love.
As their anger resides
Within the scars left on my skin.
As I imagine their eyes
In another gaze when anger
Is stirring within.

So I thank you, Mom
And I thank you, Dad,
Because while other kids
Grew to inherit property and riches,
I grew to inherit the notion
That love is the kind of thing
That requires stitches.

Who am I?

by Jose Barrera

I love to write, it's what I do best.
My life is ever-changing.
Even in the parts where I am the most depressed.
Something is different about me all the time.
That is what attracts people like flies.
From a young age I was taught to help
and that is what I've always done.
I've inspired, helped, and changed people's lives
that's what I do.
As a child I believed this was my calling.
But there was something else deep inside of me
that had always been yearning.
Through sharing my hardships
I've made connections
and friendships at a cost.
At times this leads me to feel lost.
I constantly destroy and reinvent myself.
Leaving my brain and thoughts in shambles.
Finding myself in a black hole with no escape
and little to no light.
Forcing me to run through a dark tunnel with no end.
Causing anxiety,
something I've lived with since I was a kid.
To once again discover myself and attempt to find and
light the spark that I once had.

Learning something new about myself
that not everyone can see.
But something only I can describe and feel.
Lighting that spark inside of me, once again.

Though at times this journey is not easy and dark.
I try to make my mark.
I write about the mental health stigma that comes to mind.
Making me free to write all the things that are not right.
Feelings. Emotions.
Anguish,
I feel at times.
With no way of getting these feelings out of mind.

Causing my mind at times to be blank with no more rhymes.
I hope to one day leave an impact in people's lives.
Leaving behind my written words
so rich they'd be passed down, taught and recited.
Maybe that is just a thought.
Maybe there is something bigger there that I can't predict
hiding in the deep sea of my mind.
Swimming through the dark and sunlit, almost like waves,
thoughts and memories I've collected.

Looking back there are so many things I've neglected.
And also finding so many other things that I've never
confronted leaving many ideas lost in motion,
that had drifted away in the deep blue ocean.
Yet something continues to yearn inside of me,
growing with no stop.

I have yet to know what my future holds or
what my legacy will become.
As the days pass by I continue the search for who I am.
Then maybe one day,
I'll stop questioning if I'm a good person.
I'll stop questioning if I'm a good writer.
I'll stop questioning if I'm a good son.
And even if I'm a good lover.
Even down to the way people see me.

There isn't a day that passes where I don't have these thoughts.
Nor is there a day where I don't ask myself if this is where I belong.
But I believe in this process because life is a cycle
and it's up to me to break it and rearrange it.
Yet I believe in who I am.
I try not to worry about my legacy too much
because my life is ever-changing.
Rather than that I work towards my dreams and aspirations
to achieve my legacy of being a great writer in every state and nation.
All in hopes that one day I'll be tranquil with life and be relieved
of all my frustrations.
Though I still believe my life will forever be ever-changing.

Warm Words, Cold World

by Derrick Betancourt

“You’re too small.”

“You’re not good enough.”

“There’s no way.”

I used to hear these as often as my own heartbeat,

Like they were a part of me,

Like a well trained dog,

Or a shadow,

Or like an annoying younger sibling,

Like the words were weighing on me,

“Ignore them.”

“Use that as fuel.”

“Prove them wrong”

Is what I heard coming out of my mom’s mouth,

as the wind brushed against my teary eyes in the back seat of our Tahoe.

So cold.

And so I did,

Those words became numb to me,

Anytime I heard them,

Her voice inside my head overpowered them,

Like the sun breaking through the storm,

Or thunder silencing the rain,

She left me more than words of strength,

She gave me a fire,

A legacy of motivation that never burns out

She never let the world be louder than her voice,

She never let the world hate more than she can love,

Her words are as soothing as the most powerful tea for the worst sore throat,

Just like that cold breeze that rushed through the opened window,
the world can be just as cold,

But one thing for sure,

My mom’s warm words will always be there for me,

Just as they were ready to comfort me in that Tahoe.

Lacking Life

by Lillian Betancourt

When I think of a legacy
I think of what we leave behind,
but I'm scared
that ill have no one left to make me a shrine
I hope and pray that there is somebody
who can see me shine
But how am I supposed to shine
when there is no light left in my mind.
I used to thrive on the compliments
and praise people threw my way
Until my time came
and the brightness in me
seemed to have slipped away
Suddenly now everyone has been found
But here I am still wondering on these grounds
The places we have all left behind
Except for me
I'm still grieving what was in the past
For some reason i cannot escape its grasp
It holds me tight in its embrace
Warm and comforting but not with love
But with hate
My bitter heart filled with rage
Towards the things that have made me this way
It should be easy to move on
Everyone is going at such a fast pace
But when I look at my face
Time stands still and I begin to accept
That maybe I have no fate
That can't be possible right?
It's not like I don't live my life
Maybe not like my mom and dad did
That's definitely not a crime
To be me and not the star
They so desperately wanted to see shine
Being me of course I had to decline
To find peace in the solitude
Instead of the flashing lights
That i had worked oh so hard for

Not by choice but by force
In order to not become the worst
Or to be kicked up with the dust
That everyone seems to leave behind
Including me, myself, and I.

Leaving Shadows

by Leo Brewer

She bore two kids my mom was the first
She treasured her son, my mom more her curse
His mental illness took all of granny's attention.
Mom fell by the wayside and was never a mention
Her legacy was one of darkness, not of light
Mom felt she was abandoned and nothing was right
Mom saw while granny pretended to not have sight
He was an abuser of substances which granny enabled.
She couldn't see the lives he disabled.
She thought he stopped but he just wasn't able
His addiction overpowered him and became his legacy label.
Grandpa was the only light in the dark.
He stood by mom's side no matter how hard.
He was astute and saw what granny would not.
He would not side with uncle
no matter how dirty uncle fought
Then everything fell apart when grandpa got cancer,
which had a treatment that he sought
The cure was causing his body to wither away
When he left the last protection was removed and
there was nothing making mom stay.
Grandma fell ill and the story begins to shred
Uncle got loaded, crashed his car and left three dead.
Now he's in prison, leaving grandma on her deathbed
She took her last breath without realizing her wrong
She left a shadow on the life of mother,
who was never as strong

The Mirror

by Dominic Cafarelli

The first thing we do is look.
Not at the world, not at the sky,
But at ourselves, framed in silver.
A ritual inherited from long before.
The legacy of the mirror, unspoken.
For what are we without comparison?
It makes us who we are.
Once, reflections were few and far between,
A shimmer on a lake, A reflection in a pond.
The briefest glimpse before it rippled away.
We were never meant to see ourselves like this,
frozen in time, captured from only one view.
Now, we see too much.
The angles, the flaws,
the comparisons etched into our minds,
passed down like heirlooms we never asked for.
The blonde looks in the mirror and wishes to be brunette.
The short man looks in the mirror and wishes to be tall.
A mirror shows only one story,
One angle, one version.
It does not hold the way we laugh,
The way we move,
The warmth we bring into a room,
The lives we touch without knowing.
Yet we trust it more than we trust ourselves.
The mirror tells a story of beauty measured,
of worth assigned, of eyes searching for something
they were never meant to find.
But legacies do not own us.
They are not chains, only echoes of the past.
They can be rewritten, reshaped by the hands that hold them.
Beaming within fortitude, the short man feels secure,
The Blonde woman no longer wishes to be brunette.
A double edged sword,
He who wields the weapon of legacy must use caution.
You may stab your hand,
Or the enemy may be slain.

My Destiny

by Lucia Cancino

Books as thick as my dad's bible surround my bedroom
My Spanish words I once spoke turning into anatomy terms
While my brother's scrubs are folded on his bed like sacred cloth
I hear my mom 's whisper as she's sweeping,
"es mucho trabajo y muy difícil, mija."
Her eyes frowning
Worried for her youngest and only daughter.
My two older brothers graduating and working already
I'm the last one
All eyes are on me
Feeling the weight of my parents' struggle,
on my shoulders like boulders
Needing to accomplish the american dream

My oldest brother walking through the front door after a long shift
Exhausted, his eyes lowered
Dragging his feet,
as if he was walking through thick mud
He sits down to eat,
as I do too
My eyes glistening,
as he tells me about his day at the hospital
Listening and recording every word like a tape recorder

The physiology labs look nothing like my mom's kitchen,
yet I find myself using the same precision as her
Using pipettes to transfer substances and having long lectures
School my second home
My first home loud and filled with people
In my room all day studying
My parents telling me to come out and eat
Too focused on the pile of worksheets,
their voices sounding like distant echoes
My parents asking if this is what I truly want
My brothers assisting me,
knowing the struggle of school
My tias wondering if i'll accomplish my dreams
But all of them,
my whole family encoring me

Holding my hand every step of the way

Community college is just the first mountain,

I have to overcome

Hearing my whole family cheering me on

“Tu puedes hija, tu puedes”,

I hear as I climb the mountain

Seeing medical school far in the distance

Tired but persistent

I lay in bed at night

Dreaming of following my brother's footsteps

Trying to leave a good imprint in society

I carry the prayers of every woman in my family to succeed

Caring for others is all I know

Always

by Maria Cancino

Days that I feel alone, I think of him the most
Four letters
A-B-E-L
My Uncle Abel
Stories and memories
are the only things that remain
A silent Guerrero
It came
came like a thief breaking in
Cancer has a strong hand
Basic things became harder to do
Each breath a battle
yet his spirit never received a dent
Always joking—smiling
He would give but not receive
the love he had for kids was evident
stoop down to their height
to not make them any less...
That's the type of person he was
A 6-foot giant
with a kind heart
A man with the soul of a kid
Despite tough times
he found peace
Even through the pain he remained strong
No, he did not leave money.
He left something bigger
joy, strength, and love
My uncle's legacy
I carry deep in my soul
everything he's taught me
I'll be sure to honor his message
His legacy remains like a shining, bright star
showing me no matter how dark it gets
he always saw the light
through hard times he endured
as cancer was in sight
He never fell short
to show the importance of doing what's right

In my own silent battles, I think of him always
My Uncle Abel and all his memories that flow within me
You'd never catch him frowning even through the worst negativity
A strong and loving man
is what you would always see
walking through this life

I'll always remember
his way of being humble and grateful
That's what his legacy became,
His legacy shapes me
It guides and it leads me
In my heart, he will
always be alive

Bloodlines and Blood Sugar

by Jorge Cardenas

Isn't it funny
how people misinterpret type one and two diabetes
There were two boys that lived in an apartment
One was as skinny as a stick
The other was round like a ball
Despite their differences
They both suffered from the diabolical diabetes

Just like the two boys
My bloodline has suffered through diabetes
First was gam gam
Then it was mama
Soon I might be next
Which is unfortunate because it's my fault
Mama tells me to be cautious with your health
But oh teenage me
didn't give a damn and ate slop anyways
Eventually I'm on the watchlist
and I could only say is "Damn"
I could see her worried look on her eyes
Frantically looking at me and the diagnosis
My gam gam oh so clueless
Oh that innocent look on her face
Not knowing I'm a step away from their same fate
Eventually my mom started taking medications
She has trouble sleeping without the tube
On the bright side no doctor cut anybody's foot off
Yet...
At this point my family members are frightened
Well at least that gives us a reason to start exercising

Commonly someone would say
"If you try you can do it"
I'll try and try
Run and Run
Lift and Lift
But in the end that infamous legacy isn't going away
I can eat all the greens in my fridge

just so I can have a balanced diet

I can lift 80 pounds if I wanted to
I could step on the stair machine just to do some cardio
But in the end
the low blood sugar will always haunt the bloodlines
Still avoiding the foot cutting
With or without diabetes
Doesn't matter how healthy or unhealthy we look
It always lingers on our backs like a burden
My family and the two boys are alike
We're both doomed to fall into the same fate.

Prayer to Daisy

by Cameron Cheatham

Dear Daisy,
You were eight years old
when you died.
I was seven
when my dad told me the news.
She's sleeping now, and in no pain.
That's when I realized kids could die.
When I couldn't even fathom losing my hair,
let alone imagine dying.

Dear Daisy,
I cried so hard
when my dad told me
you went to heaven.
Which doesn't make sense,
because I don't believe we ever met.
Cause while I was in Sunday school,
you were at the hospital.

Dear Daisy,
Would we have gotten along?
I wonder what your favorite movie was?
Your favorite color?
Your favorite toy?
I want to ask you
everything
about Heaven
and God.
But who am i to expect a little girl
to have all the answers?

Dear Daisy,
I can only imagine
the pain you went through.
I flinched for flu shots too.
When I went to the emergency room
for a stomach bug,
I stared at the ceiling
from the hospital bed,

wondering if it was your view.
I thought I might join you
and I kind of wanted to.

Dear Daisy,
I searched your name
for the first time
in twelve years.
I didn't know you went through remission
twice.
Or that your family moved to Israel
to try an experimental cure.
It doesn't add up.
Didn't your dad pray enough
for both of you?
When treatment failed
why wasn't prayer strong enough
to win you the battle?
Why did Jesus let you lose
your fight?
And let your parents lose
their daughter?

Dear Daisy,
You were older than me,
but now I'm over twice your age
and you're eternal.
We were born in the same hospital
you died in.
Parallel lines
but yours ended short
before they could ever cross mine.

Dear Daisy,
Were you scared?
I want you to know I was terrified for you.
Heaven seemed like a scary place,
because I've always been scared
of things I don't understand.
And eternity is incomprehensible.

But Daisy,
You're a saint in my mind.
Because all little girls go to heaven,
so I know you're up there.

Dear Daisy,
You were my first loss.
I mourned for you
more than a stranger should.
Because little girls
shouldn't feel that much pain.
We're supposed to live
to see our parents die.
Not be buried
with our childhoods.

Dear Daisy,
If we'd been friends
I would have prayed for you sooner.
Please, God, please let Daisy feel better.
I'd have played pretend with you
because fairies don't get cancer.
They live off the laughter of little girls
and I've had more than enough breath to spare
and I'd give it gladly
if it kept you breathing
just a little longer.
But you must've been so tired,
your last breath a yawn,
Jesus saying it's bedtime.

Dear Daisy,
I'll see you when I get there,
Amen

Maybe

by Drew Chinch

The lessons you left with me
Your favorite season
The flowers
Specifically hydrangeas and all your things
I'll remember every memory
I love you forever all our favorite things
Without you would I have known myself?
I miss the words we used to share
You showed me what it's like to be a girl
I hear your laugh and still feel your spirit
in the mundane things
Places we would go pass by
I see
In the mirror you left behind—
your eyes reflecting back at me
They're never aging
Just like an old wine
We just get sweeter over time
You taught me that it'd be all fine
And now that I'm a women
I appreciate what we were more
I'm glad I met you, that's for sure
More than materialistic things you shared with me
You really changed the way I think
Maybe it's the way you cared or how you decided to leave
I know I don't owe you anything
Was my value put into what you could take from me
For we are made to believe the value of life
is measured in how much you give and plea
And as you left you took a huge part of me
No sweet goodbye just complete misery
My mind went mad while you flee
It was hard getting to sleep
But now that I met someone who is like me
I have no trouble remembering my dreams
And I still might not be the smartest
but I've got things to say
Not the kindest but I still hope you'll stay
It not for you I'd be so lost

Would I have changed?
No, I would've been tossed
To think about things I wish to ignore
It's strange I can't remember
What we were before
Now I see just with time and the right people
I truly forget who I use to be
And I recognize how you really changed me
Maybe that's a legacy

I Love You

by Desirae Colin

When were 8 they tell us
The boys are mean because they like us
When were 16 we think they left tears because
They know it makes our eyelashes grow
When were 12 they tell us
Every inch of our body is a tease
When were 17 we realize they're more likely to hurt us
When we stop being one
When were 15 they tell us
Makeup will make you pretty
When were 18 we feel ugly
Leaving the house without our eyelashes long and dark
Before you even think about turning 19
Every part of our bodies have been
Touched, looked at, and talked about in a negative light
Who sets up this system
Of girls being picked about and made to be
"Damaged goods" by the age of 30
Every adult we look up to
Trust
Admire
They do this
This is the most prominent thing that they leave behind
The fear of leaving the house without the taser
Being insecure of being a size medium
Their moms did it to them
Their dads taught them girls are objects
This is the legacy left behind by the people
who are supposed to protect me
Where boys got freedom
Girls get locked in cages
Dads fear some guy will treat their daughter
The way he raised his son to think about girls

The universal thing
Girls are grown up thinking they are objects
Something where you get it
And throw it
Toss it
50

Bash it
And hate it after
It is already bought and won
So it doesn't need to be taken care of anymore
Girls should be cherished and loved
In the same way that abused boyfriend is
This new generation shouldn't have to live with this
The mentality that women are less than
That it is okay to take from them as they please
As long as they say those dreaded words
"I Love You"
We should be teaching our sisters
Daughters
Nieces
That this phrase is not to be thrown around to fix an argument
It should be saved for the guy who opens the door to be polite
Not to just look at your ass
It should be saved for the guy who gives you flowers
Because they are as beautiful as you
It should be saved for the guy who does the bare minimum
Without expecting your whole world and more in return
Because this ideology our moms and abuelitas leave behind
Is nothing more than a cycle that needs to be broken
Into so many pieces
That it would be utterly impossible to put back together

The Highs of Music

by Rylan Cooper

This is a tribute to my friend
Whose soul will ascend
But his legacy will never end.
He would set the trend
Because of the rules he would bend.
I commend him for being music's godsend
Allowing it to transcend
To levels so high, we couldn't comprehend.
He could break rock with the use of his fingers.
And make guitars experienced singers
He could turn a listener into a ghost
Who died when they overdosed
Feeling higher than most.

His influence was so widespread
That he could remake a country's anthem.
His fans loved him when he'd play his hymn
And they knew all the words he said.
And compared to the rest
His guitar skills were way ahead
And possibly the best.
It sucks that he has to be dead
But his soul will be blessed
And his body will rest
But not the legacy that has already bled
Onto those greater that came later.

However, I must interject
As his life wasn't perfect
And drugs had him wrecked.
Each time that he would inject
And the needle would connect
The poison would take effect.
If his fans knew, he'd lose respect
Now that he represented neglect.
He was lost in the purple haze
Trying to escape the maze
He'd be trapped in for his last few days
Because of his damn drug craze

That lit his soul ablaze
And tossed it into one of his ashtrays.

A fall from grace is what my friend's legacy depicts.
The success he'd chase was blocked by a wall of bricks.
Aimlessness in life is what addiction inflicts
And my friend's story is what this depicts.
My message to you is to use bandages to fix
The wounds that come from life's tricks
So your legacy might outshine my friend Jimi Hendrix.

What Is Your Legacy?

by Jacson Cutting

What is your legacy?
Memories, words, actions, writing...
Do you know your legacy?
Do I know mine?
Memories—
A little kid standing tall, eyes wide,
With a mind wondering, Why?
Why leave? Why me? Was it me?
Why... Why did you leave?
Memories as a friend.
Words as a mother.
Writing as a teacher, but actions of a stranger.
You gave away my beautiful orange bike—
Scratched, weathered, filled with memories and tears—
All for that one hit, that one moment
Could I not bring you that joy.
Mental health, breaking you down,
Like an axe splitting through wood—
Mother, you gave me a story to tell,
A reason to yell... And still,
I ask, What the hell?
You may have left,
Left me with a legacy—
a story defining who I am.
But I refuse—
I refuse to let it define me.
Do I know my legacy? Yes, I do.
It's mine to make, mine to build.
My legacy is incomparable.
My heart, impregnable—
And I am unstoppable.
This legacy is a redwood,
Growing, towering, stretching high—
So large you could drive through it,
So thick no hug could encompass it,
So tall, Mount Everest would envy its height.
Your legacy is what you choose it to be,
And mine? Mine is still unfolding.

Like a Girl

by Kennia Duarte

Run like a girl.

A childhood taunt girls heard everyday.
I heard it every time I tried a sport or
decided to play tag with the boys.
One of them even deciding to exaggerate my
movement into a clumsy jog.
Funny.
They don't know what running like a girl truly means

Repel like a girl

Girls like me learned to shrink, to cover up,
to pull down our shirts and cross our arms across our growing chests.
Do not distract the boys.
Because whose fault could be but ours if something happened?
"Boys will be boys"

Flee like a girl

I sprint, barefoot through a dark alley,
jagged rocks slicing my soles.
Street lights flickering,
the only witnesses of this chase.

Scream like a girl

His hands seize me, shove me down.
The pavement cracking beneath my spine.
Fingers like iron chains around my throat.
His free hand crawling to where it doesn't belong,
forcing, prying, taking.
He makes space for himself where there
should be none.
Where there should never be.

Fight like a girl

I claw, I punch, I scream.

My screams bouncing off the damp brick walls.
I shove him off, and scramble to my feet.
Blood trails down my thighs,
marking the path I take

Live like a girl

I reach out for help.
A uniform, a badge, a promise of safety.
eir eyes... their eyes rake over me,
A question gleaming in their eyes.

“What were you wearing?”
“How did you tempt him?”
“Did you lead him on?”
“Why were you alone?”

Exist as a girl

I open my mouth to speak, but
the words choke me.
They don't see the blood, the bruises, the terror.
They don't see a victim.
They see a
question, a complication—
a problem of her own making.
Is it my legacy, as a woman,
to just be an object for man's enjoyment?
Or can I be more than just that tool?

When I Meet My Maker

by Luzmaria Espinosa

Diversity in Culture 2025 Workshop Facilitator

What I hope for when I meet my maker,
That I would have not been indifferent to pain,
That death does not find me alone,
Not having done enough to make a difference,
Nor that I be indifferent to injustice.

When I meet my maker, I want to know
that I wisely turned the other cheek,
When I needed to,
And I did what I needed to do,
With the written word,
To work for peace and justice.

As a young idealist,
I believed we were heading for a new world,
A world where no one went to sleep hungry,
Or roamed the streets with their belongings,
Nor gunned down for fear of their color,
Or for their neighborhood.
The world is not a peaceful place today,
Poverty, war, and people displaced globally,

Christianity displays intolerance,
Militarized borders as immigrant proof,
If Jesus Christ were to cross the border,
He would be arrested, turned back,
Or worse, be shot to death.

My body, mind, and my grey hairs,
Make way for the young to take their place.
I ask my maker to help me find the words,
That reflect the marches and resistance,
This is what I hope for when I meet my maker.

Analysis of an Alien

by Daniel Estrada

When I was young,
Hollywood showed me what an Alien was
A creature far beyond the natural order of Earth
It's appearance was unlike any other man has seen:
Dark, rigged skin..
Long narrow fingers...
A long crescent head...
A tail far longer than any creature...
Teeth as sharp as honed knives...
A creature that breeds living demons...
A creature that hungers for killing...
A creature that stops for nothing that gets in its way...
An animal so impure,
This is Hollywood's Alien:

The Xenomorph

When I got older,

The Great Land showed me an Alien creature
This creature was far beyond the natural order of red, white, and blue
It's appearance was different unlike any blessed man has ever seen:
Dark, cracked, tanned skin...

(it has worked too long in the sun)

Fingers full of blisters and cuts...

(it has been overworked)

A face lost in drugs...

(it's mental struggles carry a heavy burden)

Red eyes that have been open far too long through the night -

It has been spying on children or women to groom...

(it has been working the overnight shifts)

A creature whose blood is infesting the holy land...

(it just wants to start a family)

A creature that longs to promote violence through cult meetings...

(It wants to stand against social injustice)

A pig that longs for money...

(It works to provide)

An animal so impure,

This is America's Alien:

The Immigrant

Now I look at both Hollywood and America's ideology
Of what makes an Alien and wonder...

What description of an Alien is correct...
And which one should we be more afraid of?

A Legendary Legacy

by Ryan Evans

Legacy, is a word which sparks immediate images to your mind, what do you think of? Who do you think of? And the ones you think of, are they inspirational? Are they everything you want to be? And what's your next thought after that? Do you think about your legacy? The person you want to be? Then what comes to mind, "I could be like him," "I could be like her." Or is it "I couldn't be like him. I couldn't be like her." The truth is you can be whoever you want to be. Who's to stop you other than you? It's always been you vs you. Unwavering confidence and unfathomable belief in yourself will grant you your dreams, manifest your thoughts and create a reality where you hear the word legacy and you think—of yourself. Be worth mentioning in the same breath as the one you think of right now when you hear the word, legacy. But who's to say a legacy has to be legendary, who's to say what is even considered legendary? The values of a child who has never seen war are different to one who has never known peace. Son, I ask you as I sit with you at the dinner table, sipping fine wine in front of a warm fireplace, who do you think of when I say legacy? *Micheal Jackson*. Son, I ask you as I sit with you in the wreckage of war in our broken home with no water to drink. Who do you think of when I say legacy? *An unknown soldier who sacrificed their life to save mine*. Who had the greater legacy—Who's to say? Micheal Jackson, the king of pop, or a soldier who sacrificed his life to save another. The soldier will not be recognized like Micheal, because there are millions of soldiers and only one Micheal Jackson. We are more impressed by generational talent than a human who gave his life for someone else. We place the value of talent above all else because as humans, we want to be Micheal, not the soldier.

The Dotted Lines

by Daniel Flores

You've followed the rules, your very own rules.
You've risen up early, your same old routine.
You've collapsed in bed, your thoughts are still bland.
Will this be your life, does there have to be more?

Just like dotted lines, on a paper before you.
It should feel better, with a road paved for you.
But what would happen, if you ever trailed off?
Would it be as awful, or should it feel wonderful?
Laying with a "spine" against the sinking couch.
You may as well drown with your own flooding thoughts.
About the parents' whose lives could be clouding your own...
But what could be more suffocating than that all alone?
Is it the idea that your life damages theirs too?
What truly matters most in the end—
your way of living, or theirs altogether?
Would it have been better, if you just took the leap already?
Maybe then you'd be free of the guilt,
the fact you could be doing more already.
Does it have to be scary, that your life will differ from theirs?
Can the challenges they live with today,
ever match your anxious expectations?
It probably doesn't help that you're just a son,
with a last name that may as well die off with you.
But should a last name mean something to you,
does it always have a one way path made for you?
Not everything needs to be a single dotted line,
your father and forefather must know that as well.
They've chosen to be hardworking with their own callused hands,
the same goes for your mother, her hands are soft like yours.
Perhaps being like your family shouldn't be your biggest fears,
they never were when you chose to be here.
You don't always need to be like them,
you have already chosen what you wanted to do.
If so, then why do I always feel so scared,
even when I know I don't ever think about them?
Have my thoughts been growing more cowardice,
because of how others are suffering behind my screen?
Is it better to be doing nothing at all,

then to do something that may take a life, that's all?
Why do you always think about these things,
must it always be a decision between life or death?
You should try to think of a new mindset instead,
and that is to be in the moment or not.
No one is asking you to skydive off a cliff,
no one is asking you to perform a grand stunt.
You've already seen what your own body could do,
it's only a matter for what you choose to do with it then.
Mark Manson may have been right about one thing,
within a book that made everyone see themselves within.
You don't need to be what others are good at already,
you'll find your own path sooner or later.
You could forget about the greatness your parents have done themselves.
For once you don't need to follow those same dotted lines,
why not this time you were to follow your own imaginary lines.
You can go on as long as you want,
with boundaries that encourage you to do what you want.
Even if you finish one of your pages,
each of them will come out reflecting your own true self.
Maybe then you'll find comfort about a single belief,
your life ain't always about dotted lines.
They should instead be about what you trailed for yourself,
only then you'll see the story you've made for yourself.
Now those are the kind of lines I'd like to follow now.

Making Memories at Universal Studios

by Alex Gallardo

It was the time when my family went to unique places like Universal Studios. The first time I went there was when I was 9 years old. It was an exciting place to visit. I went to City Walk, which has a lot of stores and restaurants, and then I went to Universal Studios Hollywood. I was looking at their rides on the map and saw the Simpsons ride. There was not a single empty line, so my family and I waited so we could have good seats. I like that they had intense Simpsons cartoons. An employee let us into a waiting room because it was not ready or people were not finished with the ride. In the waiting room, my family and I watched the Simpsons cartoon. The way they put a cartoon before the ride was excellent. After the cartoon, it was our turn. We went inside and left our stuff next to the wall because it was not allowed inside the ride. The Simpsons ride started. It was excellent, and I loved that ride very much. It was my favorite ride of all time. My second favorite ride was Shrek 4D. My family and I had to wear 3D glasses, but before we put them on and they let us into the theater, they told the story of Shrek, a great movie, and the door opened. When we got inside, we took our seats, the curtain opened, and then we put on our 3D glasses, and it started. I was scared at first, but I enjoyed it. I went on more rides, like the Terminator 3D, Jurassic Park and the Mummy ride. Jurassic Park was good, but the ride I did not like was the Terminator 3D because it was too scary and the Mummy because it was too fast. I had the best time at Universal Studios, and it was terrific.

Stories and Legacies

by Malachi Gallegos

The stories we leave behind and the legacies that endure
What we do, what we don't, what we know, what we know not for sure
We all have a past, but not all of our pasts will be remembered
But there are some stories that can be rendered as amazing, astonishing,
incredible, pure
There was a man named Vincente, last name Hernandez
He was a man many women dreamed of, wanted, longed for
His songs were stories that he left behind and his legacy one that will endure
There was a man named Cesar, last name Chavez
What he accomplished was amazing, astonishing, pure
He made change happen, he fought for civil rights without any war,
His accomplishments were stories that he left behind, his life a legacy that
will endure
There have been so many people who have changed the world
Dolores Huerta, Selena, Pancho Villa, Diego Rivera, and many more
We all know what they did, what they didn't, but many people are not sure
But the moral of this poem is to show that the stories they left behind
are the legacies that endure.

Bygone Legacies

by Kyrinn Gould

To some people their legacy
Is the most important thing
They think
“Once I’m gone will anyone even remember me?”
And so they try and craft their legacy
In the hopes people will remember them
Exactly as they wanted to be
Others don’t try and fit some role
Instead they simply strive to achieve their goals
And maybe they do make a difference,
securing their place in history
But most are rendered insignificant
save for the lives of those they touched
When I think about how huge my family tree must be,
A tree so tall it pierces the heavens
And with so many branches
they reach all the way back to the ground,
Like an impossibly giant willow tree, I realize
I don’t know anything about them
except for the last few generations
I don’t have a grand legacy to tell
maybe my ancestors
never accomplished anything of great import
Or maybe they did but their life,
their accomplishments,
their very existence lie forgotten
The very memory of them swept away
Lost in the sea of time
A reminder that no matter what you accomplish
No matter how high you climb
Everything will eventually be lost to time.
Time erodes
Just like a mountain, a legacy no matter how grand
Will eventually be reduced to sand.
Time corrodes, and legacies become impure
As there is no one left who remembers the truth
Despite their temporariness legacies are still important
They are our history whether they are short lived
Or enduring, after all everything is temporary

And throughout its life time a legacy
Can still inspire people
Just because everything will eventually disappear
is no reason to not to try, if everything will disappear
That's all the more reason to try
and make a difference right now

A Mother, A Superhero

by Nathaniel de Guzman

Do you still recall who your favorite superhero was as a child?
Was it someone invincible like Superman?
Or was it someone resourceful like Iron Man?

For some, this was the case, but
For others, it was someone less known
But had all the superpowers known to humankind.
For others, it was their parents.

There was a child,
Who viewed their mother as their superhero.
As a child,
They believed their mother,
Is capable of doing everything
And anything possible.

She can sing,
She can draw,
She can paint,
She can make jokes,
She can be caring,
She can be stern,
She can get them toy cars,
She can buy them their favorite carbonara
From the cafe nearby,
And she can solve the hardest math problems
In their homework.

They believed their mother
Was the best superhero there is
In history.
But as days turned to years,
They noticed the shadows
Dimming their mother's light.

They noticed the dark circles under her eyes,
After working many hours.
They heard the muffled sounds of crying,
Coming from her room.

They saw how she hesitates to buy something she likes,
But buys what the child wants without hesitation.
They realized no matter how exhausted, sad, or irritated she was,
She would still put on a smile,
And spend time with her kids.
And they became aware of how she would help anyone in need,
Whether it was family, friends, coworkers, or strangers,
No matter how difficult of a situation she was in herself.

For many, their favorite superheroes were fictional characters,
Like Superman or Iron Man.
They modeled themselves after these characters,
Trying their best to be as humanly close,
To being a superhero as possible.

But for others, their favorite superheroes,
Didn't have superpowers.
They weren't invincible,
Nor were they rich or powerful.
They were ordinary humans,
Who did everything they could,
To provide for others,
Such as the mother of the child in the story.

Others, like the child,
Modeled themselves after their parents.
They grew up trying their best,
To emulate the best parts of their parents.
How they work hard,
To provide for their parents,
Just as their parents had for them.
How they want to take their parents' burdens off their shoulders,
Just as their parents had for them.
How they want to be superheroes for their parents,
Just as their parents had been for them.

Generations

by Samantha Hall

Generations of love
Have crafted my face
My mother's eyes
My father's nose

Generations of love
Have crafted my face
My grandfather's cheeks
My grandmother's smile

Each trait of mine
Carved with the delicacy of romance
My mother's resilience
My father's wit
My grandfather's honesty
My grandmother's passion

One hand held another
Building a heritage
A heritage of mind and heart
Shaping a future without knowing
Shaping each generation
Each individual with shared traits
Passed down through time
Mind and body intertwined

I am the sum of those who came before
My looks and character
My eyes and wit
Crafted by their hands
Their hopes; their dreams

Generations of love
Behind my smile
Behind my encounters
Every step forward is a step on their path

I,
A symbol of my parents

My father's face
My mother's character

In the line of generations
We carry their legacies
Unknowingly shaping the future

Passing on what we have been given
Love, resilience, wit, passion

Every trait a piece of them
Every smile a gift

Crafted by the hands of those before
A legacy that endures
A love that never fades

The Mother

by Samantha Hall

A toddler takes her first steps onto the sand, running towards the water that glistens with invitation. Kicking up sand with each step, giggles erupt from the young girl, excited by this new mysterious figure. Her mom runs after her, desperately wishing she catches her daughter before the waves do. As a gust of wind suddenly comes over the beach, the young girl is knocked down, tasting sand for the first time. Looking back to see her mother laughing, she too begins to laugh. The sand distracts her enough for her mom to put her in a life jacket, taking her into the water. With each tiny splash, the toddler lets out a sincere laugh, becoming acquainted with the magical entity surrounding her.

A young girl returns to the beach, running towards the water as soon as she spots it. Since their last encounter, she learned to swim. As she jumped over each wave, the sea carefully crafted each wave to be small enough for the girl, not wanting to test her newfound skills. The girl stayed in the water until her mom called for her, promising to visit whenever she could.

A teenage girl sits on the sand, stuck in melancholy. She watches as the sun slowly fades from the horizon. As she stares ahead at the beautiful sea, she begins to cry. A gust of wind floats from the sea to the sand, gently caressing her face. The wind was warm, offering her comfort as she cried on the beach of her childhood. The girl continued to cry as the wind put a warm hand on her back, letting her know she would be okay. She cried until she heard the ocean call her name, rolling her jeans up to greet her salty companion. The wind, watching as the girl wandered towards the water, saw the girl pick up a wrapper that a previous visitor left on her floor, and put it into her pocket. She smiled softly, floating to where the girl stood looking at the vast, dark sea. The moonlight glistened onto the two, and the wind put her hand on the girl's back again, as the two stood there, feet in water, staring at the unlit ocean.

A woman wanders the sand with a trash bag in hand, picking up litter as she goes. She hadn't gone last week, as the strip of sand she walks was dedicated to an offshore drilling project. She tries to go each week; it's the only way she can manage to turn the beach she grew up on from becoming a puddle on the side of a freeway. Wrappers, plastic bags, and cups fall into the bag from the woman's hands; a harmful reminder of the reality that's threatening to take over. She takes a moment to look at the sea that she hasn't visited much, as the runoff has made the water too dangerous to enter. As she fell

into a daze with the sea, an old friend greeted her, as a gust of wind welcomed the girl with a grand hug. She thanked the girl for trying to save her. The girl and the wind stood there for a while as the wind cried to the girl. The wind, scared for its life, confided in the girl, sharing that recent policies and projects will destroy everything she's worked hard for. The girl puts her hand on the entity's back, promising her she will try everything she can to save her.

A middle-aged woman returns to the beach. It's been twenty years since the wind cried to her. Cities, now covered in dense smog, are wreaking havoc on respiratory systems. Forests, for lack of a better word, have been completely stripped down. Oceans, filled to the brim with pollution, are inhabitable. Nature has been destroyed by humans, too greedy to understand that we can not survive without our mother. The woman feels a warm wind greet her, tired and frustrated. Everything she has created is being destroyed.

"I have done everything in my power to give you what you need. I am sorry I was not enough; not strong enough to withstand the bullets sunk deep into my chest."

The woman and the wind stood there, staring at the smog-filled horizon. The girl hugged the wind; a creature of resilience and strength. A creature that once symbolized life and growth.

An older woman returns to the beach. She was immediately greeted by a cold, frail wind. The weak wind smiled at the girl, proud of her.

"Because of you, I will not have died in vain."

"Mother, it's not just me. We all thank you for what you have done."

"Then why was I shown no mercy?"

The wind became angry. Angry that the children she had protected and raised on her soil had plunged a knife into her chest, twisting it as they danced on her grave.

The old woman stood beside her, crying. Years prior, she watched as the climate clock reached its finale. The only hope for reversing environmental harm was a delusional one; the end was inevitable. She cried, and cried, and cried, and the wind joined her. For the first time, there was no peace, no solace.

As a last wish, an elderly woman was taken to the beach. She sat in a wheelchair on the sand, staring out at the ocean she once played in. A cold being took a seat next to her, and she did not have to look up to know that it was the wind. They talked about their lives, reminiscing on their past memories together. After some time, the wind took a small step forward, extending her hand out to the woman, inviting her to do the same. They stood there on the beach, much like they had in the past. The woman knew this would be the last time they would do this, and all she could hope was that her favorite being would greet her in the afterlife, as she had done throughout the woman's lifetime. The woman's grand-daughter came to collect her grandmother, sending her into a fit of tears. On the drive home, the woman told her family about the legacy of the wind; how she nurtured the Earth and the creatures that inhabited it. She hoped her words had stuck, as she could not stomach a reality without the everlasting mother.

The wind stood there, alone, cold, and weak. Her body, slowly deteriorating, much like the Earth that she so carefully crafted. She stared at her ocean, reflecting on her nearly five billion years of motherhood. She decided to blow over the water, flying over it like she did once without fear. The dense smog made it hard for the weak entity to fly, sending her into the water.

The unusually warm water made her feel ill, motivating her to exit her deepest creation. Before she could swim up to the surface, she felt something catch her ankle; a piece of fishing wire had strategically knotted itself around her, holding her below the toxic surface. Trying to escape, the mother tried to free herself, desperate for polluted oxygen.

Water began to fill her lungs, the lungs that once filled with carbon dioxide to release oxygen for her children. Pieces of plastic scraping the sides of her lungs, further blocking her airways. As she felt her consciousness slipping, she pleaded with the ocean to release her.

"I don't have the strength to continue... Please, let me go."

Soon enough, the mothers struggle to survive concluded. The mother slipped into the darkness of the sea; a sea she created billions of years prior. A sea that millions worshipped. A sea that was home to millions. A sea that was destroyed, taking its mother as a hostage of its demise.

What will be said about you?

by Ariella Harrison

Unaware every action was your last,
would *you* be proud of your past?
Hospital bed, barely just two years ago
Almost a sure thing I'd make it, but nothing is certain.
So it wasn't up to me to know
if I would again see the sun's glow,
Without the glass behind the hospital curtain—
I didn't know if it was worth it.

The surgery was a choice.
Not fully mine but one I made *along*
with the universe's song we like to call our lives.
I only needed this surgery if I wanted to play college basketball.
A life of constant pains and weakness
for a temporary solution and a chance to live out my dreams.
Unrecruited
and barely even on a team through high school
due to injuries and other setbacks
How was I to make such a choice about my future
when the present for me was just as unwritten?
I remember the consultation where I was asked my future plans
yet it's pointless to ask about future plans
because our plans are in the hands of something
or someone
we *don't* understand.

But I made my choice.

With my mom by my side,
I was all hooked up as I cried,
it did cross my mind what I'd leave behind.
Do I even have a legacy? I'm so young.
If the unthinkable struck,
the unfathomable turned to actuality,
did I spend my time wisely here?
Or did I waste my time simply existing out of spite
rather than influencing out of passion.
But who are we to decide
what "wisely" in this context is truly considered to be?

My legacy would be alive in the teammates,
classmates, friends and acquaintances
I've connected with and made an impact on.
It'd be alive in every member of my family,
those related by blood *and* by fate.

It'd be alive in my little brother,
who's been so proud to watch my life unfold.
The most eager bookworm to my story
annotating the pages as I go.

That's what legacy is after all, a story we leave behind.
Pages filled by the hearts we touched.
The impressions we left painted in minds.
Everyone writes some of your story.
Even if their time with you was short
Some may only have a word to contribute.
Others, an essay, a report.
At the end of the day we don't get to choose,
what people write in our book.
We don't get to choose how they read it, either.

We don't get to choose how it's recited to others.
We can't even edit the pages.
But as you walk through life,
And your footsteps mark each page,
You'll hand the pen to each soul you encounter.
Will your legacy change?
There's over 8 billion people in this world.
8 billion stories waiting to be told
Some are waiting to be written,
some are on their last lines.
Some will never be spoken,
Some will be recited
many times.
But these 8 billion people.
They all have a different view.
Do they worry about what will be said about them?
Do you worry...

What will be said about you?

Why Can't I

by Benjamin Hart

Last night I had a dream I can't remember
I'm not sure what I conjured
I really need to know
I just hope it wasn't boring
Hopefully, it was chalked full of moments to make my soul smile
and not memories of when I fell short a mile
I see others living dreams of mine on TV and Instagram
Like they have a genie on speed dial
It makes me wonder,
If want to change my life do I have to change the man
Is it possible to achieve everything I want in my lifespan
I wonder if my grandfather had these same dreams
I want to ask him one last time, what he saw when he closed his eyes
Did his eyelids hold the answers that lacked all of my life's tries?
Did his aspirations fade when he had my father
Did the sight of his son convince him not to bother?
Did he set aside his dreams for his son
When he saw his son did his soul decide not to try
Were his visions engulfed by his son's cry
Visions of laughter, beauty, and gold in the sky
I really need to know
Will I have this same epiphany
Will my life's ambitions be put on the back pedal
when I have children
Or will I find a way to try
Will I find a way to make it big while raising my own little guy
Will I provide for him the delicacies of the world
If anyone else can do it – Why can't I
Why can't I move mountains and riverbanks?
Why can't I pierce the sky and reach the top ranks
Did my grandfather ask himself these same questions
Were his dreams unworthy of any mentions
Did his sacrifice ruin his dreams
If he couldn't do it, then can I
Even then will I be satisfied
Will I have cursed my son to a life of retrospect
Will he be cursed with the same questions
that burden me and my grandfather
Will my life's dreams ruin his own

Will I have enough time to properly cater to him
without losing my own spark
Only time will tell
And in the meantime, I tell myself
Why can't I
For only time will answer me
I hope my son remembers me for the man who could do it all
And not a man who wouldn't give him my all
Do dreams come true? – I really need to know

Cherish It

by Jayke Hart

Each time you take a step,
You leave one footprint behind.
You can crouch down and carve your name into the sand
But the next day, the waves will wash your name away
as if nothing had ever been written there before.

Legacy is the story of a tree,
rooted deeply in the earth.
It has the potential to grow into something that stands for centuries
But can be cut short and left to rot as nothing but a base.
Through its time, it stretches hundreds of meters high
Touching the clouds as if they were a pillow to rest on just for a moment.

It gives shade to those underneath it,
And when asked to provide, it is unable to oppose, unable to resist,
It Quakes in fear as its stripped of the only precious gift
Wished to leave behind.

Just as leaves fall from this tree
And The whispers of the wind will carry them forward
Stories are passed down generation to generation
Carrying a radiant sun or a shadowed moon

From a young age, I was inclined to be great.
I wished to change the world
just as predecessors before me had done
Edison, Newton, Benz, The Wrights
Greatness left in the form of a push for mankind

Told to focus on leaving something behind,
Make a future that allows you to share your stories
But what if that burden is too heavy to carry
And the fire past down scorches your hands

Don't be afraid of the tears in your skin
Or the blistering words of anguish laid upon your body
Release your mind from the confinement of achieving greatness
And build a legacy inside of your home.

One that doesn't stretch out and touch the sky
but basks in the glistening rays of sunlight
Let your leaves fall without regret,
Knowing they showed luminous hues once before
Allow storms to rage and your bark to scar
But remember how strong you stood
when you were left with nothing at all.

So live long and die happy,
enjoy the time in front of you
and worry less about what to leave behind
Create a legacy that brings you joy, and cherish it.

Persistence of Wisdom

by Mason Hawkins

In quiet halls where shadows dance
The whispers of their lives remain
As echoes in the night ring out
They leave behind a sacred song

Tender hands, so soft yet so strong
With endless words that inspire
Their spirits burn within me
Revitalizing me within the midst of hardships

Words so powerful, from minds so wise
Striking my spirit like a blade through flesh
In whispered winds and silent prayers
In their absence we still abide

Although their absence may sting and burn
Their spirits may carry on
In every step and every song
As we carry forth their legacies carved

Through time's embrace, we walk the path,
Their lessons etched in every stride,
As roots that dig deep into the earth,
Their truths entwined, our hearts collide.

In moments of doubt, when shadows loom,
Their voices rise like morning sun,
Lighting the way, guiding the lost,
Their wisdom, like rivers, flows on.

Though hands grow weak and voices fade,
The echo of their love remains,
In every heart that dares to dream,
In every soul that rises above the strain.

For in each story, their spirit lives,
In every breath, in every prayer,
The legacy they gave to us
Is forever woven through the air.

Burned Limbs

by Evan Holt

A trunk with charred limbs.
The roots polluted and logged, rusting, yet
Fungi spanned within.
Connecting soil and bark;
A web of minds, spanning like skin
Stifled by concrete and gas lines.
Heart still breathing - lungs still beating
Beating with drums of oak and birch;
From the old oak in the lawn of great grands
And the birch from the street of ants.
Houses lived in and drowned in gin
built with copper hands polished with dirt;
these precise hands;
The hands that delivered you.
Brought you, to this, most ancestral of places.
The odds aligned and gave you magnificence.
Yet in your cosmic misfortune of age
You sold this vigilance.
In your frivolous insolence,
You became the villainess of incidence.
Leaving a leavened lump, of saw dust.
It wept into the rich soil.
The underground city rejoices,
Once full of mushrooms and decay;
Of fossil fuels and knotted roots,
Now opened up to the light of day.
The mold burns away to moss
So life can begin anew.
From the roots of that old oak
A new sapling takes hold.
It stretches to the sky,
Reaching for the sunlight;
The warmth and radiance seeping into my bark,
My leaves sprouting and unfurling in that brilliance,
My potential; limitless.
My spirit; endless.

Let it be Bright

by JAB

Shine the Light
on those forgotten, lost in night
on the history erased from sight
on the people who reflect our fight
who shows the truth of who we are inside

But society tries to tear us apart
building walls that break the heart
higher, stronger, faster, bigger
making barriers thicker
causing a drift between you and I

Shine the light
On both the good and bad
cause there's nothing worse than being left in the dark
For nothing is worse than the pain we have
being overlooked, dismissed, and sad
Success should not be the measure
that decides who gets to stand
stop hiding us, putting us low,
because we don't fit into your plan

Just because we don't align with your beliefs
doesn't mean that we are dirt in the street
You can't walk all over us and sweep your feet
we are not dust to be swept under the rug
Hiding us under rugs of indifference
only to forget when it's convenient

Shine the Light
On us the ones whose hearts that beat
we are humans full of grace
we are not a disgrace
we have blood that flows steady and sweet
we aren't poison or something to defeat
we aren't taking up space, we are alive
breathing strong and deep
not wasting a single breath to survive
We are strong and fair

playing the games that you declare

Shine the light

In a world that keeps us in a cheating race
and we don't have a say, we don't set the pace
We are all just trying to survive the fight
trying to stand tall in a world full of spite
trying to survive in a society that pushes us to the edge
trying to keep us in the shadows
Dimming our words, our light, our spark
but we won't go out without a fight
Oh no we'll keep pushing, we'll leave a burn mark

They try so hard to keep us in cages
locking us behind their stages
hiding behind a mask of a man
That doesn't listen to our plan or plea
telling us we should be thankful
for the pain that they inflicted
but we will rise and break these chains

Shine the light

For the ones who have been lost and hurt
for the voices that have yet to be heard
for in the end, we are all the same
Just some of us are in pain
we deserve to rise and reclaim
Our name

I'm Jasmyne Becerra
a proud Mexican American woman
who happens to be Gay
I'm losing my spotlight by the second
trying not to fade away
so, shine the light and let it be bright

Broken Record Playing

by JAB

Broken record Playing
the same sad song on repeat
Needles shifted but it still means nothing
Sounds like glass breaking, families crying, wars starting
but nothing is ever changing
Just hearts still hurting

Broken record
Sounds the same
Just a different form
nothing changes, its all in vain
round and round the vinyl spins
The same sad song still playing
it's never changing

Why couldn't we just play a different song?
Why are they still saying we don't belong?
Why are we still stuck in the same loop?
Same Melody, Same Pattern
nothing has changed yet we just keep hitting play
Why do we even try?
I can't lie we were doom from the start
and the song just keeps spinning
tearing us apart

Same melody, Different singer
still the same, no matter who did it quicker

Broken record Playing
louder and louder by the minute
but the melody never changing

Broken record Playing
sounds like fire burning, guns firing, houses crumbling
people change, but the song keeps playing the same melody

Broken Record
Why are you still playing?
thought we changed the tune
84

80 years ago,
thought we were through this
Is this song ever ending?
Or are we just pretending?
trapped in a loop, no escaping
fate's hand keeps spinning and repeating
Rewind, Replay, Repeat
Over and Over
like a never ending defeat

Broken Record here
You can never change the song
Same melody,
Different lyrics,
Same meaning,
Same old plea

We tried to spin the vinyl
but this static still hums
Tuning out the sound of chaos as it slowly becomes
the noise of
People Changing, Glass breaking, Fire burning,
Houses Crumbling, Families Crying, Wars Starting, Guns Firing
The song's still playing the same old melody

Broken record playing
Spinning on a tired turntable
echoing the same melody,
unstable

Looking outside to see the world still falls apart on beat
like clockwork
We hear it,
we feel it,
we live it,
it's tearing our hearts apart

Broken record
Trying to lift the needle
but the grooves are too deep
Hands are tired theirs no relief to keep
Can we ever escape the song we never chose?

No, instead we are still trying to become
The same old song
People are acting like they don't know the meaning
of the lyrics they're singing

Broken record
Where is the new tune?
Where is the sound of something better?
Hopefully soon
all we hear is the same sorrow
a noise of shattered hopes that we borrow
No one's listening anymore
the song's too familiar and people still ignore
Some even humming along
but at what cost people are drowning
their calls lost in the noise
we've become numb
to the chaos, the pain, to where it's from
but at what cost it's just the beginning of the song that this
Broken Record is Playing

Dear J
by JAB

Dear J,
Did you change, or are you still the same?
Are you true and finally being you?
Did you stop hiding behind that wall that you built so tall?
Did you open up or are you still the coward, still the fraud?
Did you stop running from your family when you got in your head?
Second, guessing questions so easy to answer
making up answers you think they wanted to hear
Are you everything that you wanted to be
or are you a broken puzzle piece?
Still lost, still incomplete?

Dear J,
How do I look in your eyes
Did I meet the standards,
or do silent cries remain?
Did I make them proud?
Or is that a fleeting dream
chasing after expectations that aren't always as they seem?

Did I follow the blueprint that they left me
trying to fit into the roles where so many hide?
Did I get my master's like my older sister's path
or am I lost in the noise,
fighting against my own self-doubt
lost in the tides of false hope and broken dreams
Dreams that you don't even have

Did I make a lot of money like dad always did
building a home for his family
providing for their needs
building a future even if I'm just a kid?
Or am I just still searching
battling my own fear?

Did I become a strong mother, like mine
raising a small family of four teaching them to soar?
Being there for them in any possible way
even if that means putting myself last,

or am I still selfish in my own head?
Did I give them all they need,
or am I failing somewhere
In between the spaces where I thought I had time to care?

Dear J,
Do you see me now?
Or am I still drifting in the sea of my mind
swimming towards approval but always ends up drowning

I wear the expectations like a heavy crown
yah they might not be much
but I'm just trying to belong
To something to someone
but maybe I've forgotten where I truly belong?
Maybe it's not about success and being true to me

Have I given myself the chance to take a deep breath?
Or am I still chasing a version of success
that is just echoes of the past
like footprints in the sand that fade away fast?

Have I become what they wanted?
Or am I just becoming more and more untrue?
Am I a work in progress or a project they can't fix?
Can I finally swim on my own without these floaties
And finally admit that I'm enough.
Or will I keep swimming
until I'm drowning by the weight of their love?

But what about my footprints, J?
Can you see my footprints in the sand?
Am I leaving them behind?
Or I'm I still stepping in theirs

What will they say when I'm gone?
Will they say I was strong,
or will they wonder if I ever knew
that I was already enough all along?
Did I live in their image, or in mine?
Did I reflect their dreams, or create my own design?
Legacy isn't just about what's been given to me,
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It's what I pass on, what I choose to be.
A name, a story, a voice that resonates
not just echoes of past mistakes.
What if my legacy is in the love I give,
in the way I choose to live
Not by meeting their expectations,
but by seeing through my own eyes?
I want my children to know it's okay to fall,
that we're all broken puzzle pieces
But still whole through it all.

Dear J,
How do I make my own footprints
without their blueprint?
How do I live freely
giving love not because I have to, but
because I am enough?
I don't need to keep swimming away,
to hiding in the depths of the sea
I don't need to prove anything,
I just need to start deciding.
Am I ready to stand tall
to let go of it all?
To create my own footprints,
that aren't already laid down by them
but by what I choose to be.

And so, dear J,
Maybe the question isn't if I changed,
But if I'm finally free
To embrace the person I was always meant to be.

Legacy of Hard Work

By Lucas Jaeger

Herman Jaeger, Diligent Description
Nineteen Thirty-Five, Hitler started Conscription
Not In agreement, he made a Decision
He and His Brother, in Total Opposition
They set across the Atlantic, on a Dangerous Mission
Herman's Brother, Lost to the Sea's Volition
Stepped on an Island, Marking a Transition
Now a Proud Citizen, by Lawful Permission
A Lot of Work Ahead of Him, as he Must Pay
Herman Labored In Kentucky, all of Every Day
On a Poultry Plantation, Lots of Hay
Where the Chickens would Go to Lay
He Worked Really Hard, as that Was His Way
In the Land of The Free, he Slaved Away
After Years of Effort, the Plantation he Sought
He Planted Seeds for so much
More than he could have Ever Thought
He Raised his Family, on the Plantation he Bought
He worked hard on this land he has now got
A Legacy of Hard Work and Dedication he Brought
Five Sons, my Grandpa, the Youngest of the Lot
Nineteen Fifty, My Grandpa, William,
was more Successful than Anyone Thought
He Worked Hard, and Reached Quite a Good Spot
Nineteen Seventy-Nine, My Dad, Ryan,
went Farther than Most People Got
He Worked Hard, and Also Achieved Quite a Good Spot
Two Thousand and Eight, Me, Lucas,
Hope to go Far, Just like I have Been Taught
Work Hard and reach great success,
from the Garden Herman Never Got to Spot

Family Origin

By Vincent Trevino Jimenez

My grandma starts the story with a question.

“Excuse me, do you belong here?”

As in the first question, she was asked. That goes more along the lines of
“Excuse me señorita doo you belong here? In the home of the brave and
the land of the free.”

The question that has echoed across the nation

That chain mi gente trapping them in a scenario of understanding
a new world of bigotry and hatred, one that limits the progression and
causes fear to stun all who hear that question in their tracks.

Pero a mi abuela no.

She smirked and laughed, but in broken English

She said, “You wanna know how free and brave I am,

Pues órale, wey, vas a ver.”

From there, she lays her plan to become the root of our family tree

The virtuous path she set forth in stories

of happiness, anger, betrayal, and love.

Starting by bussing tables at Carl's Jr and

working at Rose Cafe, Santa Barbara

Cooking, relearning her heritage through food,

con la ayuda de Doña Bebé

Enseñándole las tradiciones de la cultura mexicana

because in her motherland, she was abused and denied

the teachings of her mother

which started the trend of incidents

that led to her departure from the land

That sold her name and told her she didn't exist.

Now, let's ask the question again: Do you belong here

In the land of hope and opportunity,

Where the idea of success is supposed to be symbolized by a dream?

When nuestra gente has to give up sleep to ensure survival, and

only to be backhanded by calling us dreamers,

as if the work they do isn't a reality

As if the movimiento is dead.

As if echándole ganas is just a game.

My grandma didn't suffer for her family

For us to be halted at the red line,

For us to be marginalized,

For us to be a statistic.

I know my name, and I know my family origins

With my grandma, I can tell you I know my name and
I'm the son of the once-dominant
indigenous culture of the ChiChimeca
that still drives through my veins like purified heroin,
making me want to endure success for my people and
those who share the tattoo of oppression branded on our shoulders.
That makes us slouch and want to hide in a crowd.
Hoodie on, fading away as each passerby goes on
Now tell me, do you belong?
Do you walk past the curtain that hides
the burnt book of your untold history?
Do you strive for a bachelor's degree for your family?
Do you harness the ganas to go for your master's? For your self-dignity?
Our family origin starts with my grandma,
but continues with us,
and never ends.

Your Cloudy Plaque

by Jaeden Kelly

You want to carve your name into the wind,
not with stone, not with fire,
but with the weight of kindness pressed into another's ribs,
with the echo of your laughter rippling through time.

You want to leave fingerprints on the soft edges of the world,
not by towering over it,
but by kneeling beside it,
by lifting others onto your shoulders
so they can touch the sky you once only dreamed of.

Legacy is not a monument—it is a breath,
a whisper carried between generations,
a handprint left on a fogged-up window,
fading, reforming, never truly gone.

Some parts of the tapestry are stained—
stitched with loss, pulled tight with grief,
woven from voices that cracked under weight too heavy to hold.
And yet, between the shadows, light spills in streaks of gold,
where hands reached for hands, where hope was passed like flame.

You want to be part of that light,
the glow in the corner of a forgotten painting,
the note in a song that lingers after the last chord is resolved.

You want to be seen, to be felt, to be remembered—
not as the brightest, not as the best,
but as the warmth that made someone stop,
just for a moment, and breathe in that wind that you have carved

Ode to a Snail

by Kai Maal-King

What have I done?
What have I destroyed?
What have I created?

Your shell is broken, little one.
Like sunlight refracted
through a stained glass depiction
Of a lived life

You took your time.
You took your time shaping your legacy.
You took your time.

From the moment you were born to the moment your life ended,
Every moment, you built your spiraling cathedral
Crafted it with care, and etched it with journey.

The home that surrounded your soft, delicate body,
The home you carried with you everywhere you went,
The home that could not protect you.

I only ever notice there even is a story once I hear the crunch,
The sound that heralds the end of your life, and the dawn of your legacy.
So now I am here.

I am talking to you, little one
Though you are not there to hear.
I am stuck with your legacy

My fictional creation of you
shaped by remnants of the husk you left behind
A Memory's fantasy that is forever inadequate

Even if your home were intact, I couldn't possibly dream a you,
As real as you were.
Instead I force you to live a fake life that you don't even get to live.

A life that traps you in the confines of my mind,
leaving your story a small legacy.

But the cage will grow, because as I share your story I expand your legacy.
Though with each telling, come the distortions of other minds, like my
distortion of you.

While this story spirals out like your shell,
veering further and further from your real life.
I now carry you and your home etched in my story,
And I hope your legacy lives as long as you deserved.

Seeking a Dream

by Tyler Lawson

We're just so keen
To waste the days
Seeking a dream
Farther than the eye can see
Were making up grievances
To absorb the initial emotion
But now our greatest achievements
Are postponed
It's until I'm crouched underneath the lake casitas acorn tree,
Where I believed my destiny is to be determined
Whether it's what pants will fit tomorrow morning,
Or a new infected flesh wound without warning,
I'm determined to find my footing
Something's near,

A sudden sound grips my ears-
Repercussion bleeds out of clouds

A gust of devastating speeds sweep the ground
My feet launch across the field like I'm some sort of joke
Lost in the new scene,
Is a brand new storm
which brought a warm undertone
A false sense of hope takes the form of flames
Burning all that is frivolous in nature
Scorched,
The view is adjourned,
Why must I spend another minute?
My whole world is torched
Sycamores timber down the riverbed
Embers exit the massacre into the sky
Dimming the stars leaving me to wonder,
Why must the future be so cruel
Goodbye to the innocence,
And welcome in the emotion
Were making up grievances
Until the retinals on my eyes
are blind from the sun

A sudden shake slips my feet
So powerful, the shock
Kicks me down to the knees
Knocking the wind out of me
What appeared I could not determine,
This clear mass breathes like a titan,
As if Poseidon threw his trident
Through my thick skull to leave my retinals blind
It's the flood of a thousand yesterdays,
Which carries my blood-filled carcass down the lake
Amidst the chaos,
For a brief cough,
I spot a new friend
One I haven't met.
Mystery grabs the universe by its nuts, and
Yanks me from the submerged, without a strut
Without uttering a word,
Mystery spouts the most absurd:
"Regress now, return the favor."
"Sweat your brow, leave the remainder."
Mystery grips a new unwelcome flesh wound,
Squeezing my attention for the everlasting truth,
All I know is all I own
I only know my own
All I know is all I own
So stop clutching those pearls.
Mother of pearl primes back to reality,
Boasting the foliage to come after the wreckage
I'll bet you the Lake Casitas acorn tree,
had no words when you asked him about legacy.

Hello, God.

by Andrew Leary

It's me, the one You know.
You made my home among the leaves,
My singing helps them grow
You have blessed my kind with angel wings,
Some even like rainbows

From my nest, I've watched them live
Forgotten graves to newborn bibs
I'm sorry that I don't like their kind
But it seems to me they don't like mine

I fly higher than that boy from Greece
I heard the song of his tragic fall—
It sings he tried to see Your face,
His wings too weak for Your embrace
These notes? I rarely ever hit
Parrot says, "They sound like shit"

I don't like his kind, they always fall
Why don't You just hate them all?
You should see—oh, what they do
My God, My God, if You only knew

They lie, they cheat, they kill, they steal
The songs they sing—they make me ill

They hate each other based on color
If that were true, I'd hate my mother
If that were true, I'd kill my brother

Don't they know they look like You?
When You came down, I thought You knew

Bring some wings, just in case,
You could not handle their embrace.
My God, My God, I thought You knew
What they planned to do to You

They plucked your feathers, split your skin

Beat you like a man of sin
And in your very final hours
My view of humans forever soured

But through their hate, you showed them love
The only God comes from above
As a man who came to die
The only God to ever cry
He has no wings, but still can fly
My Lord and Savior...

Truth & Death

by Maxwell Lommel

Growing up I distinctly remember being afraid of death. I remember cold nights outside with my parents, the main question being, “What happens when you die?” My parents' answer was what you would expect, “We don’t know”. This answer is true, but didn’t satiate my young hunger for resolution.

So for peace of mind, or because a religion hadn’t swayed me, I decided nothing happens when you die, nothing. Nothing happening when you die meant I didn’t care what people thought of me when I was dead.

This answer satisfied me as a child, but over years I’ve found that if I were to die, I would hope, wish, that my friends, my family, my loved ones, would come to my grave and hold the ashes of remembrance from my life. Weep, cry, or laugh they would see in those ashes my story, portrayed as I chose to portray it. Painted with tales, and with time.

So then it's my job, in this life, to provide that canvas with paint. So much paint that it overflows and seeps on to the canvas of others. And hopefully after I’ve done all that I will garnish my painting with truth. Because even though I don’t know my calling yet, I do know that whatever it is, I will strive to make it a glorious truth. Maybe not a world changing truth, but a truth of life that inspires, and motivates others to do the same. To strive to have truth in their stories. For in the world we now live in, the garnishings of truth are few and far between.

And so I call you, whatever you think may happen after death. A bliss, a suffering, nothing. I urge you to strive for truth as a part of your legacy, as I will for mine. I urge you to delve into the false mind that we all have.

Not because the mind itself is false, but because we think in what we live in, and some part of us is the whole of humanity. Our story only begins when we die so we should make that story glorious.

Hand Me Down World

by Alejandro Lozano

I didn't ask for this.
Didn't ask to grow up in a world on fire,
Didn't ask for leaders who treat truth like a toy,
Didn't ask to inherit their mess
Yet here I am.
They tell me to focus on school,
Get good grades, make a plan,
Like the future isn't cracking beneath my feet,
Like my dreams aren't tangled in politics
That were decided without me.
They tell me, just wait!
You'll understand when you're older.
But older keeps getting closer,
And I already understand too much.
I understand that money speaks louder than justice,
That history repeats when no one listens,
That we are handed broken promises
And told to build something new.
But I won't be just another shadow,
I won't let their mistakes shape my name.
People have risen when they
were told to stay down,
Fighting for justice when
silence was their cage. If they
could break the silence, so can
I. If they could rewrite the
future,
Then maybe, just maybe,
So can we.
And we won't wait to be given a voice—
We'll carve it into history ourselves,
Not with whispers, but with thunder,
Not with fear, but with fire.
Because if they hand us a broken world,
We'll turn the ashes into something new.

Light We Leave Behind

by Aaron Hernandez Luna

Growing up listening to the sound of cumbias
Having no idea what an instrument was
Yet the rhythm ran thru my body
Rushed thru my bones, and danced in my chest
Inspired to make people dance
To bring them joy and happiness
As it does with me
Not knowing what path
Music would take me down
The struggles
The embarrassment
When it was my time to shine
My heart racing
Arms and legs shaking
And my fingers hit the wrong notes
My mind turns into a blank canvas
Only thinking about the end
Not knowing the power I would feel
The respect
Eventually I needed something better
The voices felt small and limited
As I would look at professionals
I knew that's what I wanted
Carved and crafted by hand
Each curve telling a story
Each stroke of paint slightly imperfect
The feeling is great as if it were meant for my hands
As I press each button with ease
My fingers dancing across all 34 of them
And pull on the opposite side
Air flows thru its body
As if they were the lungs to the voices inside
The white pearl with the gold touch
Like a dream come true
Shines on the stage
I do not need words
I let my music speak
Every note with confidence
As I was taught from a Master

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As time passed I wondered how it'd be
Where id end up
I feared the path I take would affect my legacy
Would I be the great I imagined myself being
My path may shift, my body may change
But music I will carry forever
Thru generations I want to be the start and inspiration
I'll strive to teach anyone willing to learn
Teach them the language that everyone understands
With hope to change their lives
As it did with mine

Before Time Claims Us

by Keely Macias

I think at some point in time we'll all be forgotten
Lost to the inevitable passage of time that ticks on to no end
(I can hear the ticking)
Housing will get smaller and buildings will get taller
Cars will get faster and there will always be something new
that will inherently make life both a lot better and a lot worse
Life will move on with or without you and
this is something I've come to accept
(I can still hear the ticking)
But before time comes to claim everyone I know and knows me
I'd hope to be remembered as a good friend
The kind that would drop everything
for my friend with colorful hair and round glasses and
leave the house at 2am to help her through a panic attack
after a boy who mops the floors at Planet Fitness broke your heart
The kind that would cheer the loudest for a friend
with honey brown curls and dimples at her graduation
to try and temporarily fill the void for her brother
who wouldn't show up because of some stupid childish resentment.
The kind that would get my parents to drive me all over town
looking for a friend with fiery red hair and sad eyes
who decided to suddenly leave her house
after a bad argument at home and
told no one where she went.
(I can still hear the ticking)
I'd also like to be remembered for my love of music
The kind I make with my voice and
have worked so hard at for nearly 10 years
The kind I listen to and resonate with so much
that shares my happiness or cries with my sadness
The kind that was always there for me when I needed it most
But one day I won't hear the ticking anymore.
The one that's always followed me wherever I went
no matter how far or wide
But that'll be the day when I'll get the embrace
of the cold earth and become one with the earwigs and worms
And all that will be left of me is love and memory

Like the Ocean

by Tyler Maldonado

The salt air of California wraps around me as I walk along the shore. The last time I stood at the edge of an ocean like this, I was in Panama, my mud-splattered boots resting on a pile of field equipment. I remember trudging back to the van, my waterproof notebook filled with hurried notes—GPS coordinates, species counts, samples. Each observation was a piece of a larger puzzle, one I was still trying to understand.

My dad doesn't understand my work. He once asked me if I spent my days "counting fish." I laughed, shook my head, but said nothing. How could I? His world was one of steady hands, cutting hair with the same care I used to clean datasets. He never had the luxury of chasing curiosity—his job was to provide. But standing here now, watching the waves, I realize our work wasn't so different.

He shaped hair knowing exactly where to cut in order to make its best shape appear. I shaped data, sorting numbers and patterns, looking for the meaning hidden beneath the surface. His sacrifices, the hours spent bent over chairs, were the reason I could spend mine looking over R scripts and ecological models. He worked so I could chase the questions he never had time to ask.

His haircuts don't last forever, but the patience, the precision—stick around. I see it in myself when I'm deep in code, organizing a messy dataset, trying to make sense of it all. His work shaped people in ways they probably never thought about. I guess mine does too—just in a different way.

Worth the Trouble

by Connor Manley

There's no way you can live life
Without being an asshole at least once
Any goody two-shoes who tells you
They haven't been
Is being one right now

I remember times when people
Were rude to me or wronged me somehow
I forgave them over time
I'm the type of person who tends to
Forgive and remember
Rather than to forgive and forget

Forgetting what someone did
Is letting them off the hook for things
That might have bothered you
But I hope people forgive me
For things I might not have considered to be
Rude,
Cruel,
Or crude
At the time

But I hope they remember what I did
and hold it against me
So I can be better
Kids remember things that their parents did
that they hated
Like when I swore for the first time,
and my parents made me eat soap
I learned a very important lesson that day
Never swear around mom or dad

My mother told me about land my grandfather owned
She grew up here, in the populous state.
I never met my grandfathers
On either side of my family
They held me once
Something I can't remember

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Asking, "What was grandpa like?"
I received silence
It was like talking about him was a sin,
You'd be dragged down to the fiery pits
If you even uttered his name
I don't even know his name
All I know
Is that he had a garden,
Lucious and grand,
Ripe fruits and vegetables
Gleaming with color
Why would someone
Who created something so glorious
Be shunned upon after death?

One day I learned why
No one ever told me
We don't think of him fondly
It was always
"We'll tell you when you're older".
Never, "We'll tell you when you're ready."

My grandpa had his own issues
Deep, personal demons
He struggled
A man without a country
From a race of people whom
The government didn't
Want to acknowledge

He spent a lot of money
On bets
On things with only
a slim chance of return
Gamblers should quit,
before they lose big
He lost

WE lost him
The world was too much for him to bear
For him, it was the long term solution
To temporary problems

He helped so many
But felt like he had no one
helpless in the end

His legacy is swept under a rug,
Rolled up and stored
Never to be sold

If they only remember the bad
They won't see what good
he did for the world

I fear for my own death
Looking back
Seeing if there was a life
Worth all the trouble
Missed but never forgotten
By the ones that come next
But people will remember you
For all kinds of things
"Smartest person I know"
"Funniest person I know"
If I knew my grandpa
I would always see the good in him
Because no else would dare
Commit the sin of empathy
For someone who didn't
Seem worth the trouble

Legacy?

by Kelly del Manzano

In my perfect world,
my name would be on display
big headlines,
And they would say
Kelly del Manzano,
the playwright,
And people would go crazy....

Others today
they may see me and say
A yo sabo kid,
A tóxica,
An immigrant's child, with no class.
But in your eyes—Oh, but in your eyes.

I'm nothing
but a worthless piece of trash

that doesn't belong in this country,
You see my skin and fear
but want to control me

DISAPPROVE,
DETAIN,
DEPORT.

just another woke liberal in your white America
One who doesn't have a future in your white America
because with what you're doing with our America
I'm losing hope for America
Because look at what the fuck is happening in America?
You ask me what I want to leave behind in this America
And frankly, I don't want to leave anything in this America.

you've ruined our American
and since you have been in office
all I've wanted to do is scream

All you want to do is

To control me
To see me tremble
To see me beg for mercy
For help
Please help us!
Please someone help us.

When I should be thinking of next semester's classes
All I can think of is the people dying in masses
The People being stripped away from their houses
The people we pass on the streets,
The people with disabilities,
The veterans who fought thinking it'd bring peace
The dying children of Gaza,
Sweet Palestine,
the low-income working class of many families,
the LGBTQ+ and other communities,

But all you think about is your perfect white man
And your 2025 plan.
But we do not want to be part of your Ku Klux Klan

We need to be free!
So please tell me
why I should care about my Legacy?
When you should!
and stop spreading hate senselessly
And let me create like a decent human being
and just maybe in the history books, you'll see me.

Jalisco

by Lui Martinez

My father was born in El Arenal Jalisco. My mother was born in Long Beach California. My father came to the United States at 26 year old having the dream to just get a pickup truck and collect some money and head back home. My Mother goal was to leave the house where she lived and started to look for someone to start a family. They both met at a family party that they both attended. What were the chances of them having some mutual friends. They started off very well, going to dates. My father asking my mother to iron out his cloths when they were just started dating. My mother tells me how funny and how nervous he was at the beginning. Later to get married on July 2, 2004. Having their first child in May of the next year. Naming their son after the father but giving him a middle of the mother's brother. Later to have 2 more kids and they all turned out to be boys get like they both wanted. Also living in a peaceful town called Ojai. Some great place to raise children. Town filled with 50 years and up folks. But the parents had nothing to worry about cause everyone in this town is very respectful, warmhearted and you could trust me. All three children attended the same school. Eventually having one in elementary school, one in middle school and lastly having the last one in high school. Each with their own problem's, needing things for school, sports right after school. Stressing out because one got out of class right after the other. Making sure they had snacks for practice. Been on top of grades so we all could have a successful life that my parents which they had. Making sure we took the appropriate they didn't take. Basically, to not make the mistakes they made. Looking out for us even though we thought they were annoying. Now reflect, we were just kids. But now that we are older and now really do understand why you two did this thing. They always took very good care of us and I'm truly grateful and proud to be one of their son's.

I Will Remember

by Opal Marx

Will I remember?

I remember $2+2=4$

but I'm not writing a math essay

addition can't help me here

I am writing about a thing so often neglected

like the cherry petals in my hair

that the trees forgot to hold onto

like those trees

I don't appreciate every piece of me

I don't remember all of my history

and even if I try

some of those memories

flow away with the river of time

forever forgotten

there are lots of things I don't remember

I don't remember my great great grandmother's name.

I knew it once

but now the letters are jumbled

like puzzle pieces I can't fit back together

In a few generations

will I just be another forgotten name to my descendants

another abandoned petal

an old memory lost in a cold refreshing river of new ones

my name an unfinished puzzle no one cared enough to solve

god

I'm terrified

I am terrified I did nothing of consequence

I write this to soothe that fear

I refuse to be the end

I will put the puzzle back together

I will remember

starting with me

my mirror used to reflect a face like any other

no history

no meaning

no story to tell

but now

I feel

her

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though I might not know the curves of her face
I see
her
not in my eyes or nose
but through me simply existing
and I see the beauty of her life reflected in me
the beauty of a legacy
because I chose to remember
I am part of her legacy
and so many others
but that's not quite enough
for I am simply remembering if I don't push her legacy forward
so this is what I do
I choose to pass it on
this poem will forever have her name
and be it a day or a decade
if someone sees her name
and the puzzle pieces stay in place
Then her legacy continues
living in the shifting waters of their memory
remembered to be forgotten another day
Camille Levy
I will remember

My Mom

by Isabella Medina

As I look at my mother
I admire her beauty
Her long blonde hair
Her light brown big eyes
Long
Dark
Wispy lashes
Full of love
Strength and tears.
The smell of her—different perfumes every day.
Champagne toast
The smell of Chanel
It'll always remind me of her
Single mom of 3
My two brothers and me
Her only girl
The one she always bonded with a little more
The one she always spoiled a little more
I always felt a special connection with my mom.
The treatment and love were no different from my brothers
But it was different for me
Growing up at just 6 years old
I saw the love she had for beauty
I wanted to be just like her
I wanted all the stuff she had
I remember her always taking me to get my nails done
My small little fingers were painted in white with small little flowers
I was dressed up all the time in princess clothes or even clothes from Justice
Always doing my hair in different styles
All of those things.
I will always remember those little moments with her
Forever.
My mom will always be the person who motivates me to do better
To be the best person that I can be.
She knows my weaknesses
My bad habits
My interests
My desires
I don't know anyone else who knows me better than my mom

As I got older
I understood the struggles my mom had to go through playing the one-
parent role
I didn't understand why she had to work so much

Why she was always tired
Why she was the only one who would show up for us
That was one thing my mom always made sure of
Showing up for us
Every game
Every event
Any moment that was special to us
My mom was always there
I never felt that I was missing anything
I can describe my mom in many words
One thing my mom is
Is funny
The one person I can truly say that about
She has a way of saying certain things sarcastically
Or saying little comments
in a way that I think is the funniest thing ever
Now that my brothers and I are older, 17, 20, and 21
My mom's actions and love have never changed for us
She always sees us as if we were still little
Her love language has always been gift-giving
I think that's where I get it from
Since I can remember, my mom
has always given us small presents for every holiday
Valentine's Day basket
Easter basket
Spooky basket
Christmas stockings
Full of things that we love
It's a tradition my mom will always do
Probably till she's old and can't anymore
It's something I will always carry
That reminds me of my mom
My mom always did the most for us
Everything my mom didn't get as a child
She tries to give to us
It's something I will tell my children when I have my own
Something I will do with my children

To give them the same feeling that I have with my mom
She is the strongest
Loving women
I can say I am lucky to have her as my mom
Someone I can forever count on.

Introductions: Lessons In Tagalog

by Leeam Frances Minas

Hello, I'm Filipino
and I'm introducing myself
in the language of our colonizers:
twisting my tongue to
perfect pronunciations
because unfortunately,
this is the only way you'll listen to me.
This is the only way I'll get your attention—
HEY, did you know your country
nearly erased my nation?
Your selfish, greedy leaders invaded our land,
almost buried our culture disguised as a promise
of a better, more prosperous American future;
trading our ABAKADA for ABCs,
so that every word that comes out of our mouths
taste bitter, choking up on every familiar feeling
expressed in foreign sentences,
DID YOU KNOW that conversing in this language
feels like a life sentence I have to serve
so that I could have a voice
that's "worth listening to?"
Is my enunciation good enough for you?
HEY. LISTEN TO ME.

Hello, I'm a writer,
and my dance happens in black and white,
pen gliding across papers in neat cursives;
cursors tapping on pages

in Times New Roman, point 12, aligned left
in sync with the beat of my imagination,
these colorful stories that demand a way
out of my heart
out of my head
unfortunately translated
unfortunately italicized
so you would think I have the most beautiful,
most graceful moves that could stop a passerby
leave their eyes amused, aroused, tantalized,

so I might get a standing ovation for using proper adjectives,
the correct tenses, the right synonyms—
is that all there is to this?

HEY. ARE YOU STILL LISTENING?

We are taught to wield weapons forced on us
by our colonizers, or those we borrowed from
neighboring countries that are also discriminated
and violated because of their color,
but the thing about us Filipinos,
we know how to weave it like our own;
we make it more powerful, more colorful;
we make it stronger.

And that's not all there is to this
because we have more that are ours
and they are beautiful.

LISTEN CAREFULLY:

West in Tagalog is KANLURAN,
it comes from the root word LUNOD, which means to drown
because the sun drowns in our seas when it sets to the west;

East, on the other hand, is SILANGAN,
from SILANG, which means to be born
because the sun emerges between the curve of the mountains to the east.

KATARUNGAN means justice,
derived from the Visayan word, TARONG, which means
just, proper, sane: the correct implementation of the law.
-HATI is a suffix borrowed from Malay origins, which means liver—
an organ that is seen as the seat of emotions;
sometimes interchangeable with the heart.

DALAMHATI in Tagalog means grief,
a combination of DALAM meaning inside, and HATI:
Grief is a feeling rooted inside the liver, inside the heart.

LUWALHATI means glory,
a combination of LUWAL meaning to give birth, and HATI:
Glory is a feeling that bursts outside the liver, outside the heart.

PIGHATI is sorrow, LUNGGATI is yearning,
and another meaning of HATI is to be broken in half.

ARE YOU STILL LISTENING?

Did you know that your I love you

does not come close to our MAHAL KITA
because MAHAL means expensive, valuable,
and KITA is the most tender pronoun that
encompasses both you and I in one:
MAHAL KITA doesn't just mean I love you,
MAHAL KITA means
You are valuable to me.
You are part of me.

Hello, I'm THAT language.
My mother tongue is ME.

It's my identity,
and speaking or writing in a foreign one
for the sake of being understood or listened to
feels like a betrayal, a great disservice
to my ancestors,
to myself,
to my children,
and to my children's children.

So, please, if I still have your attention,
let me reintroduce myself:

KUMUSTA, AKO AY PILIPINO.
PINAPAKILALA ANG SARILI
SA AKING INANG WIKA.

KUMUSTA, AKO AY ISANG MANUNULAT—
SUMSAYAW KASAMA NG PAPEL AT PLUMA,
IINDAK SA HIMIG NG MGA SALITANG
PILIT MANG PINAPATIKOM NG MGA TAGA-KANLURA'Y
PATULOY NA MANANATILI'T SISIGAW—
PERLAS NG SILANGAN, 'DI MAGPAPASIIL.
KATARUNGAN AY IPAGLALABAN.
DALAMHATPY PAGHAHATIAN HANGGANG SA ITO'Y
MAGING MALILIIT NA KALUWALHATIANG
BIBITBITIN NG BAWAT MAMAMAYAN
SA HIRAP AT SA GINHAWA,
SA 'DI MATAPOS-TAPOS NA PIGHATI'T
'DI MAUBOS-UBOS NA LUNGGATI:
MAHAL KITA, PILIPINAS.

MAMATAY MAN AKO NANG DAHIL SA'YO.

You, invaded my country?

SASAKUPIN KO ANG INYONG PANITIKAN.

I will invade your literature.

La Pachuca Legacy

by Mona Velasco-Mireles

Lips of red, hair up high
con mi tacuché swaying down low
I love my culture that is all mine
My heart bleeds red white and blue
My roots are green white and red
I eat my beans with toast and my dogs with salsa

I am Chicana because of the travels you have made
I refuse to change my ways to make you feel superior
I proudly wear my pencil skirt
while you use your bobby socks,
You are not better because you live on that side of town
I proudly cross that bridge
to make my way in your world

Still I will not change who I am and where I come from
My pride will not me convert to the social norms of this time
for I have a style that's all my own
I dare to go against my culture's traditional gender roles
and do what I want,
when I want

I face the same discrimination many Chicanos faced at this time
We Pachucas resist social
expectations
They see me as provocative and flamboyant with low to no morales
But I see myself as a Chingona that will not stand back and
allow our brothers and husbands to take a beating
without throwing in a few chingasos of our own
So when I tour the unreachable bricked University on the WestSide
that I know will never let me in
I will continue to strive until that day comes
when we see brown faces among those white one
striding down the halls

I may not see it in my lifetime,
however the path I have paved will lead other Chicanas
to take pride in Chicano Culture
as they complete their education on that campus

where someday
they will teach it so well!

The Legacy of an Old Soul

by Tyler Moreno

He was a soldier in World War 2
He was strong, of that I knew
My great grandpa was a good man, of this much is true
Died at 90 but it still felt too soon
When he died, in town many had flew
Many people came and to me they were new
A celebration of life
A loss that cut like a knife
As happiness shines through the strife
A legacy that holds such strong light
The thoughts that we share we'll always cherish
So that his memory may never perish
As a Christian I believe is not the end
And I hope that even now he's surrounded by friends
Watching over us from the skies above
Forever soaring like a graceful dove
And no matter what, he will always be with us
Through all our struggles and all our hiccups
He raised my grandpa the best that he could
Taught him the lessons he knew that he should
Who then taught my mom, the strongest person I know
I dread the day that she might go
I'll try to do the best with the knowledge they gave
So that I can pass it along throughout all my days
So that if I have kids and I pass away
I'll know that they'll be ok.

A Hummingbird's Kiss

by Luz Montejano

Once, not too long ago, I was tumbling in the wind. It swept me up and it blew me all around. It whirled me here, down yonder and over there. I drifted over mountains and valleys, through fields and to the ends of the seas. Yet I was going nowhere quickly. Making bad decisions constantly. I chose to take the path of destruction. I needed a change. I am lost and have wondered so far that I don't know which way to go. Caught in a gust, headed to the pit of despair. I feel emptiness inside. Madness whirls around in my head. My light has faded. It's become a dim glow.

I pierced the air with a scream of despair. A cry to the wind, to the earth, to the sky, to the Great Spirit up above and all around. I needed an answer, right here, right now! Bellowing out from the deep depth of my soul, **"HERE I AM, YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE HERE TOO. GREAT SPIRIT FROM UP ABOVE AND ALL AROUND I NEED YOU. I NEED YOU TO ANSWER MY CRY, AN ANSWER AS CLEAR AS DAY, RIGHT HERE AND NOW!! WHAT IS THE POINT TO ALL THIS! I AM DONE WITH BELIEVING I GIVE UP. I KNOW THAT MY BABIES WOULD BE JUST FINE, THEY'D BE LOVED AND TAKEN CARE OF IF I WERE TO DISAPPEAR OR IF I DIED! WHAT IS THE POINT OF GOING ON. . . TELL ME NOW, I NEED AN ANSWER. GIVE ME SIGN!"** Streams of tears flowed down my face.

You would not believe what happened next. Without delay the sky opened, the clouds spread apart. Rays of light shone down on me and in the glimmer of the rays, a golden Hummingbird appeared. It flew down. Face to face it looked deep into my eyes as if talking to my soul. And Guess what it did? It fluttered forward and planted a kiss! Yes, a kiss on my lips. No words can describe the feeling that my body, mind, and soul felt at that moment in time. I said, "Ok" and then it flew away singing a heavenly melody.

I then realized that I was being planted. I was not in my grave of death. I needed trials and tribulations to help me grow, for the strength to push on through. I know all that shit was fertilizer to my growth. The fertilization that I needed to make me strong, wise, and true. I have blossomed. I grew with roots firmly planted in the ground, withstanding life's challenges. I am thankful for the ups and downs and for learning and gaining wisdom along the way.

My story is not over, I'm halfway there. So, if you are struggling and going a little crazy because of life, just remember what they say, the grand oak tree, so wise, strong, and true, was once a nut like you! If at times it seems like you're 6 feet under, take a deep breath, for you are being planted in the ground. So, grow in the sunshine and blossom and the world will see your beauty. We can all make an impact. We can make a change. Change in a positive way. It all starts with you. Yes, you are just one person but that's all it takes to make a difference in the world. We all have talents, we can choose to use them for good or bad, some will choose not to use them at all and that's a tragedy. Use it to better this world to be part of the solution to the problems we face today. May Peace, Love and Happiness follow alongside you.



by Luz Montejano

A Nameless Favorite

by Jezabelle Montes

I wish you never saw me
Then I could move on with my life
But now you're all I think about
You can't escape my mind.

No matter how hard I try,
All I can think of is your eyes
An ocean blue
And smile that lights up your eyes
like the first rays of sunlight
at the start of each day
And that laugh,
That laugh replays like a broken record
And the worst part is I don't mind
It's bottled in my mind

And the sound of your voice
That I hear even when you're not around

I wish I could say this was a lie
Or some sick joke
It would be much easier than the truth
That I might actually love you
That I do love you
And I don't want to

Because then what do we do?
Do we stay friends?
Do we become something more?
Do things get awkward?
Do things fall apart?
Do I lose you?

Because I can't
You mean too much to me
For me to sacrifice my queen
And watch you leave
With every piece of me

Robbed Childhood

by Angel Monzon

Childhood is the greatest gift
As the first chapter of our story,
where we learn love, joy, and belonging.
To take any part of that away is to rewrite a life
before it has even begun.

And as some children grow freely,
Letting their laughter echo in playgrounds.
Others, bare witness to their childhood being stolen
replaced by judgments, isolation, and hate.

Her days went from entertaining herself
to being the entertainment.
Four years old, already watched, studied,
not for who she is, but for what she isn't (normal).
Mocked by classmates, discarded by friends,
simply for existing differently.

And when she's hurt, she cannot say,
"Mom, they did this to me."
She can only cry, rubbing her head,
hoping someone will hear the words she cannot speak.

It is not just the children, it is the world that taught them.
A world where kindness is optional choice at birth,
And where isolating is easier than understanding.

But childhood shapes you.
It builds the foundation of who we become.
And if it is taken, if it is tainted,
What legacy does that leave behind?

So we hold her close.
We remind her she is more than a label,
more than those that choose to mock.
Because childhood should be a time of love,
not a camp lesson in survival.

Yet reality does not yield.

Doctor's offices replace playgrounds,
Medical charts replace bedtime stories.
She looks up at our parents,
searching their faces,
as another weight settles onto her shoulders.

As if life had not already asked too much.

But childhood, even when fractured,
leaves its mark.
And though pain is driven into her story,
Love is as well.
And we will make sure love is what will remain.

Sleep Like the Dead

by Kendall Muth

When I was a kid, I was asked the age-old question
What do you want to be
When you grow up?
I saw hands shoot up from across the room
Nurse!
Teacher!
Firefighter!
...

Well, what do you want to be? The teacher asked me
I...

A long pause,
 how was I supposed to know that at the ripe age of 6 years
 old?

A long while later, someone asked me again
What do you want to be when you grow up?
Not a teacher, like my dad had told me to say
Funny enough, both of my parents are teachers
I paused again

And then some more
...

Forensic Pathology
What's that?
Autopsies, finding out the cause of death for a person
Why on earth would you want to do that?
...

When asked about what I wanted to leave behind after I died,
that's when I realized why I wanted to be a Pathologist
Your legacy starts with your life, but doesn't end with your death

These hands of mine want to care and comfort,
but never do so in the limelight
These hands of mine that so desperately want to help,
can never do so when the day is so bright, brand new, and
waiting for something good to happen
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These hands will work in the night,
handling you like a mother would
with her daughter's most broken and torn-up stuffed animal
These hands will take you apart gently,
never to disturb your eternal sleep
These hands will make sure
you are given a better chance beyond this world

From the hands of your mother
to the hands of someone you don't know
But will treat you all the same

These hands who have never once cradled you before,
will hold you gently in death.

And when you are stitched back up together, all nice and neat
They will take you home, just as you once were
Back to your loved ones
So you can be sent off once again
Into the great unknown

...

Please don't be scared, my dear
I know that this new and scary
But you have many hands to hold
on your way to the unknown
It won't be dark
It won't be grim
It will be slow and gentle
You may take your time
No one is going to rush you

And when you're ready, you may step into the light
Let it envelop you fully
Back into a warm hug from your mother

How she missed you so, will you tell her how you are?

What did you do, my dear?
Are you happy with what you achieved?
I know I am, I'm so proud of you for making it so far

You may rest now, child
You did your best, and now it's time to fall asleep again

I will watch over you, just like I always have

Good night, my child
Please sleep well

Jack and Coke

by Breanna Nautu

Bring the glass bottle to your cracked lips
and pour the brown ichor down your throat.
Feel it burn on your tongue and
sting your esophagus,
Feel the tears well in your eyes
As the pain in your body and brain fade away.

Wipe the Jack Daniels
From your growing stubble
Try and fail to mask
The pungent odor of alcohol
With cologne and aftershave

Loose your balance, stumble around
the cluttered apartment.
Leave the stove on,
leave the cupboards open,
Let the boxes of mac and cheese,
top ramen, and stale bread
spill from inside

Remember why you drink, then drink more.
Avoid looking
In your daughter's eyes.
Have no recollection
Of what they said the night before
Have no recollection
Of the worried looks in their tear filled gazes

Watch as your girls forget what their dad looked like.

Watch as your girls forget their childhoods
Of a sober, happy father, pushing them down
The cracked sidewalks outside the apartment
Sparkly ribbons on the handlebars
Of their pink three-wheeled scooters.

Watch as your girls forget about the sober father
Who came in every birthday morning

With a sugar packed chocolate doughnut
And a candle lighting his face as he sang

The sober father
That would surprise his girls
With gorgeous monster high dolls
Paid with the wages from his two jobs.
Paid with the sweat and blood
Of a man trying to make ends meet

The sober father who, on his days off,
played pacific reggae
And sang and dance with his girls

The sober father who made the promise to himself
That he would never pick the bottle up again
After holding his eldest in his arms
For the first time.

Now, watch as you grab the jack daniels
And pour it into the heads of your girls
Let the good times you gave them
Drip out onto the stained carpets
Leave them with aching nostalgia
Let them absorb the image
of you drowning in the bottle
The image of you
Leaving the stove on
And Leaving the cupboards open.

As you fall asleep
Drunk on the couch
Look one last time in your daughters' eyes
Let them see you as you have become.
Let them see you down the bottle
And forget that you once showed them
The man you could be.
Drink my dad away.

Reflection

by Jeanette Neil

Legacy.
A compilation of the incredible accomplishments
One has achieved
In a lifetime.
But to me
It's not about that.
It's about the connection to others.
In this case,
It's my twin sister;
My shadow.
She follows me
Like how a shadow follows its host,
Its owner.
But I do not own her.
When we began,
She was the one I branched from.
From one,
Came two,
So possibly,
It is I who is the shadow.
However, we both share
Joy,
An explosion of warmth in the heart.
Anger,
The boiling in the cheeks
And the darkness consuming our brains.
Sadness,
The sharp shards of glass
Stabbing at our hearts
And flowing through the eyes like clear, silver rivers.
We are each other's reflection.
Chestnut hair curling and cascading onto the shoulders,
The hazelnut eyes that changes color
From a chocolate brown
To a forest green,
To a harvest gold,
Like the sun rays,
Reaching from the heavens,
Through the trees that protect the forest

From the harshness of the world.
The fair skin,
Like the underbelly of a doe,
Soft like the fuzz of a peach.
After we came into the world,
Our relationship continued to build from there.

My twin has gone through many
Unfair hardships.
She was beyond legally blind,
Most of her vision was gone by age three.
I held her hand when she came home,
Her fear of not being able to see became true.
But then, her vision slowly came back,
And joy lit up her face.
I will always remember that light in the
Center of her eyes,
Just like mine,
When I sit beside her,
And smile.

There were other issues,
The scariest one being last year
Too personal to speak of,
But I thought she was about to die.
I was away at college,
And I cried for hours on end,
Praying for her safety.
She is okay,
Yet she still experiences
Mild pain.

And now, here I am,
Wishing that I could have
Taken some of her pain away,
That what happened to her
Happened to me instead,
Or had never happened at all.
Her eyes,
Her knees,
Everything that has ever gone
Wrong.

I love her,
And our relationship goes much
Deeper than the love sisters share.
She has empowered and impacted me
In a way I could never explain.
I see the beauty in her
That I can never see in myself,
And the intelligence
That adds to her beauty,
Able to hold a conversation
About the most confusing,
And sometimes the most random,
Topics,
Unable to instigate boredom into our lives.
She was my first “friend,”
Is my best friend to this day;
Talking about random nonsense,
Spending every second of our days together,
Holding hands,
Riding roller coasters side by side,
Laughing loud enough for each other to hear,
Over the screaming around us.
We sat together reading to our gray tabby, Wilbur.

We’ve shared every experience as an inseparable pair,
Often with the same reactions,
Shock,
Surprise,
Excitement.
And we share genetics,
Our appearance the same,
But our noses.
Her’s is quite straight,
Mine is more like Barbra Streisand.
One of the reasons why we are so deeply connected.
We are each other’s reflection.
A reflection in a mirror that can never be broken.

And then, there were times she’d help me.
She is so kind,
So beautiful.
And so much more than a person to me.

If I am ever sad,
Or hurt,
She holds me in her arms
And whispers encouragement to me.
She's taught me the value of self-worth
And she's the greatest example of a fiend.
And maybe, that's the legacy I'm trying to explain.

A legacy that shows,
That even though we are sisters,
Our bond transcends that
On a more spiritual level,
Showing us
That no matter what
Adversaries stand before us
We are there to be friends,
To encourage,
Protect,
Love,
And sacrifice for each other
Because we are each other's reflection
And we will always be each other's friends.

History's Painting

by Teagan O'Brien

A vast canvas sits
In a swirling endless void
History's Painting stretches through time
Etched with bleeding colors
By the hands of humanity

A Hundred Billion Brushes
Ink marks onto the clean cotton fibers
Drip, Drip, Drip
Blood-red paint splatters across white linen
Streaks of rage, fear, and sorrow
Staining Humanity's past, present and future

Liquid death drips down
As a handful of lives choose to splash
Scarlet iron across the canvas
The red pillages, burns, and kills
Splat, Splat, Splat
Bullets of paint spraying over tiny specks of color
Drowned in a sea of crimson

Bombs burst, Scarlet explosion
Cities of color bathed in red
Whips crack against chained hearts
Dark streaks lash across cotton
Filth and hatred pour out of screaming mouths
Beating down others with malice
Black paint pools down the canvas
Insecurity and fear fuel war and division
Red sprays in all directions

Streaks of paint clash
Canvas showered in Chaos
As brushes fight to leave a mark of their own
Layers upon layers of bloody paint
Begin to peel at the corners

A painting of distrust and contempt
sits in infinite, dark space

Scarlet and black has soaked deep into linen
Quiet screams and cries
echoing through desperate abyss

Drip.

A tiny, sunny dot hits the canvas
Laughter under the warm summer sun

Plop.

Another speck of color appears
Grateful, genuine 'thank you's, after accepting a spare meal
Drip, Drip, Drip.
One after one
A rainbow of gentle rain drops
showers down across the painting

A sea of vibrant colors
Each individual mark unique and vibrant
Leaving blotches of hope against the scarlet backdrop

Joyful shrieks on a playground
As little ones run from grinning parents
Playful orange sprinkles down.
A hand reaches out to a little lonely figure, curled up in a corner
Liquid dandelions plop onto the canvas.
Human hunger for knowledge offers salvation
unlocking the secrets of the world
Viridian genius dribbles across cotton.
Women of the painting stand strong
Fighting for the right to choose the mark they leave behind
Blues of the sky ripple over red.
The poet, the artist, and the writer bring magic and dreams to life
Pioneering the paintings future.
Thousands march to rid themselves of the crimson chains
For freedom, for love, for peace, for joy.
A vivid, colorful spectrum of humanity cascades
down across the blood soaked canvas
Leaving behind stories no longer drowned in scarlet.

Let my life be one of many

that leave brilliant color streaking
across the painting of history's blood red tide
Paving humanity's path towards a swirling rainbow sea.

I Was Here

by Tristen Pence

My biggest fear is not being forgotten
I may never leave a lasting impact for generations to come
I may never be known across the planet for the things I've done
And that's okay

My biggest fear is not leaving my mark on this world
Something that tells the observant eye that I was here once
And that I lived on the same planet and
observed the same Moon as everyone after me
This is the legacy I want to leave behind

It is said that you will be forgotten in three generations
I do not know the lives my great grandparents lived
But I know that they were as human as I was, and they felt joy and sadness
Anger and confusion, and comfort in the smallest things

The letters they've passed down, the cooking recipes, the trinkets they've left
behind
I will never know the full story, but it meant something to them
It meant enough that they wanted to leave these things behind
Long before they left this world to somewhere new

In a world full of turmoil and hatred
I find peace in knowing that the lives of people before me weren't perfect
To hold something seemingly inconsequential that has stood against time
To find a rusted can while in the forest with an unfamiliar opening

By leaving my mark somewhere, I've changed the world
When someone finds my name carved in rocks
When an old drawing of mine gets found in a dusty box
When a photo of me pops up in an antique store 100 years in the future

As I write this poem, this becomes another memento
A mark that says "I was here. I have a purpose. And I am human."
I am as human as the cave dwellers making hand stencils
And the artist in one thousand years making art I can't even dream of

Do not think that because you are not known you will not change the world
Every step I take is a trace I leave behind of my existence

My legacy may not be one of fortune and fame
But I will live on through my version of hand stencils in a cave

Videos on the internet from when I was a carefree kid
Stories that my friends and family will tell
A school assignment a teacher will show their future students
My handprints in hardened concrete

When you feel inconsequential looking at the stars
Create something that passes the test of time
Though one day my name may be forgotten
I will leave enough behind for curious minds to know that I was here

Losing a Part of My Heritage

by Daniel Perez

There used to be conversations.
Family sharing and people conversing.
I could walk up to family and ask about their day
and I could tell my family about my own day.
I used to be able to speak the language of my grandparents;
I used to be able to speak the language my parents grew up with.

But as I went from middle school to high school,
I noticed nobody was using this language.
My friends knew how to speak it, and so did some of my teachers,
but they didn't use it, because English was proper and required.
I used it less and less, and even my parents dropped it.
They only wanted to help me practice English more at home.

As time went on, my first language went unused.
I didn't notice this decline, though I wish I had.

I was completely blind to this deterioration
and I eventually became deaf to even the basic phrases
which I had learned to speak in my childhood.

Then one day, I finally noticed what I had slowly lost.

I was asked a question by my grandmother, and found myself confused.
I didn't understand the words that came out of her mouth —
I felt like I should have known what those sounds meant, but I didn't.
“What? Can you say that again?”

I feel ashamed. Regret. How did I let this happen?
I'll just learn it again, and we can talk again.

“It's taking a while, but I'm busy, I'll make progress soon.”

“I'm practicing a bit more, but I'm still working on it.”

I no longer heard stories from grandparents;
I couldn't understand so they no longer tried.
Visits filled with conversation were a thing of the past,
and now pleasantries and watching sports games were left.

I never tried hard enough to learn it again.
I have poured cement over the dirt from which
my family tree sprouted from, erasing a part of their story.
With me, our family loses a part of their history;
with this, I have lost a part of my heritage.

The Canvas

by Ahtziri Pimentel

Legacy isn't just a word,
It's a canvas we paint with the strokes of our lives,
We all have different brushes,
Different color palettes,

But what's left behind, it stays-
In the lives we've touched,
In the memories we make, and
In the silent victories no one ever notices.

We measure success in the things we touch,
But legacy? That's measured by the lives we change.

Maybe your success isn't in headlines,
But in the hands you lifted, the hope you sparked.

Maybe in the art you created when no one believed,
In the truth you spoke when silence surfaced.

See, my legacy might not be yours.
It's not measured in money,
But in moments, and in miles walked by the ones I loved,
The ones I left behind.

Success, they say, is a trophy, a title.
But success wears many faces.
It isn't always noticed
But it shines bright at the right time.

Success is yours, it's unique,
It's a fingerprint on the world,
No two are the same,
No path identical.

See some legacies are built on money,
Some on sweat and some on tears,
But the truest legacies are the ones we never see coming.

I don't need to leave the world with a name so known.

I just need to leave it better than I found it.
And that itself is more than enough.

You can walk through storms,
You can stand in the sun-
But what matters is how you shine,
And what shines long after you're gone.

Legacy is yours to define. So make it count.

Lucky Fish

by Finn Porter

When wither and tether ask for the priceless toll,
will you, my son be the one to pass forth my nest of sweaters?
As I soon take my final flask of breath,
I no longer fear death. So, son, I hope
I can share my wisdom of my blistered time in the sun.
In the story I will speak to you, from my childhood,
they told me "You're one of the lucky fish.
But I didn't feel like I could swim.
Maybe better than some, the butchered effervescent salmon,
maybe. Undeniably worse than the cozied-up emperors
who so easily practice all their life and
so easily paint their mantle onto the easel of the world.
So now you will revel in my story,
a tale born from the fire and flames of the last century.
Told only to a few but known by many.
A silhouetted year;
1934 shaded with fear.
I was still facing my youth filled years.
So much Unknown, undenounced.
In Allemane. Now bombs fall as I, a little girl gnaw on wood,
the aquarium I call home's hunger
everlasting like the horror of a war that
rips terror across our land. In my quiet home.
In my hand. In the world's palm and sand.
As I walk upon my town's fertile grass, and
quilted carapaced cobblestone I hope what makes me aghast
will cease to last. I hope this is forever the place I call home.
In this town I see all that my country wanted to be,
and what now might never see.
Across the raging sea I see a golden tree, tempting me
not to overlook it. I swim to it, welcoming its warm embrace
with open arms, overemphasizing my want for it.
Unable to swim back I cling to the memory
of what I once thought my life would be.
Now I think that image is the true visage of
what I wish to feel. I call upon courage and flourish,
unwilling to lose to the emperor who taunts me as foolish.
The rapids hear my call, and I reunite with the three-foot-tall salmon.
The war over and the unspoken fog begins

its fit of fleeing and flight.
With the horrors ceased I miss my soldier,
the one who brought my life-giver peace.
He was taken prisoner in the unforgiving
downfall of Napoleon the second.
The Struwelpeter filled my fate with grim
that his bedroom light would stay dim.
Twisting fate, god a had a different plan,
blessed the poor man into the underside of a hay wagon.
Through Kiev and Berlin without a single shave.
Crippled and shaken and slightly broken.
He returns but now to me he looks strange and unknown.
Then I recognize this man
who is half the reason my woven quilts are more than silt.
Wiped away my fear as I helped the grieved man.
I gave him from a drawer a quilt that I had sewed and that
I thought he would adore.
That is who I see him as in my memories,
not the fights and the stings of the bees,
but his kind and unshaking knees.
Is that what you will see my son?
Or will I be a ghost washed away in the sea like pebbles in the corralled
sand.
What will it be? A feeder stuck to the bottom of your ocean?
Or a great tree allowed to bloom in your memory and be free.
Our kited arguments I hope blow away in the wind.
Now,
before I leave through that crooked door,
I hope I can knit and ground myself to this family's floor.
As I take my last breath,
with it I bless you and your family to live in my memory.
My memory immortalized in your crystalized ocean of knowledge,
unlike my mortal body.

To My Sweet Daughter Adeline,

by Autumn Marie Proudfoot

There's this popular saying that goes, "It ran in the family until it ran into me." The legacy that was passed down to me isn't something that I ever want for you to know. A legacy that was built on lies, secrets, and addiction. As I've gotten older, I have strived to create a legacy that is different for myself. When you were born you became a part of that legacy. A legacy with such pure values and compassion. Even forgiveness when needed, though it may not always come easy to you. I hope you always stand up for yourself, especially others, and what you believe in. Give more than receive. Tell the truth even if it's hard. Show kindness to others. Don't get caught up in materialistic things that won't matter in 20 years. Love openly and loudly as I've done to you. I hope one day when you read this you would have seen these same values in me. And my most deepest hope is that you do an even better job at it than I did. You're destined for greatness my Ade, I can't wait to see how you leave your mark on this word.

With all my love,
Mom

Echoes of My Life

by Jose Romero

Vivid vibrations that fuel the soul,
make us dance, make us cry, make us whole

Before anyone could speak we were already communicating
through rhythm, song and melodies resonating

To me music is more than just sounds that encircle us
music is a portal to memories of the past
and a source for dreams of the future

The beats that flow through my hands
as if they have minds of their own

Slapping, striking scraping surfaces
turning their motion into emotion

Hitting the drums fill me with a warmth
a warmth strong enough to thaw any negativity
revealing my true core of wood and hide

Playing music isn't the only way that lives are transformed
hearing and experiencing music both live and recorded
can mend, break and rearrange a person's entire being

Feeling the music so deep and loudly
that it changes the cadence of your own heartbeat

Shaking you to your core
your brain is now numb
your feet are sore

You've been dancing and swaying with the beat
longer than than your body could've ever possibly managed

Further away than I can possibly remember
my parents fed me their culture, their aspirations,
their entire lives in the form of song.

Passed down from their parents onto them, then to me,

setting me off with the goal of paving an obsidian road with my own tunes,
a road with a foundation strong enough to support parades of harmonious
life.

The path I hope to create will guide my kin
once I am grey and my bones start to creak
outliving me and allowing me to forever speak

In a world filled with chaotic echoes
I am still shaping my sound

Hoping for my notes to one day
join the congregation and ring on loud

Music is part of who I am
it guides me in the direction of who I want to be
even when I fall apart, music is never lost, it stays with me

Sapiens; A Human Legacy

by Marcel Rosas

What is legacy but a whisper in the wind?

That I wondered while I sailed the sea of stars.

Restless waves of memory, whispering secrets of the past,

Here time itself is a traveler.

I crossed paths with a wanderer from forgotten days,

"This ether was once my realm," he reflected

"Some of us chiseled the stone

Others fought to mend the world where we began.

*We evolved to stitch ourselves in a world only we knew,
an empire of ideas, fragile as breath.*

Even so we kept moving further.

We asked, what can we build?

Not, what should we build?

It cost us our journey."

Weaving truths they meant to leave behind.

They died out, as a faint mark on the universe's canvas,

A loud scream in the silent universe

Triumphs, tragedies, hopes, and dreams.

I turned to watch his shadow fade,

What once stood tall,

Now echoes in voids I'll never know.

I turned again, his footprints pressed into the sand,

then smoothed out by the wind

Was their greatest gift the scream, or the silence after?

Family Forever

by Alex Saenz

One is born when Mom and Dad love one another.
Dad migrates from *Zacatecas, Mexico* for a better life.
Mom is from a small, Carpinteria town.
They find one another in San Diego on a sunny afternoon.
They graduate college longing to be great and successful.
her hoping to be in law enforcement,
Him hoping to join the military.
Both so in love, yet so lost on what to do.
2 years later, a small child is born. Small. Brown. Adorable.
He is born into a loving family, yet, so many faces to remember.
Abuelita loves him, *Abuelito* says hello. But he doesn't understand.
He does not speak English. But recognizes '*Hola mijo*'
Abuelita says when he was tucked away in Mom's warm belly.

Growing up mom and Dad were always there. Every step.
First laugh. First word. First jump.
Mom and Dad laughed and cried by my side. Together.
Mom held on to every minute. Every picture. Every moment.
She did not want to miss or forget anything.
18 years pass, and the small child doesn't realize He is gone.
Dad has moved onto another family, but child is not sad. He is not mad.
His family has been here forever. He doesn't need Him.
Abuelita y *Abuelito*, *Tías* y *Tíos*, *Primos*, they're all here.
But... Who has been there forever? Mom. *My Mom*.
She holds me, she comforts me when I fall. She picks up at 3am,
when I'm in trouble. She has always been there. I love *mamá*.
Her long brown hair. Her brown eyes. Warm smile. Beautiful Mom.
She makes me a better person and she will always be my family forever.

Nostalgia

by Lizeth Magala Salazar

Growing up with cousins they were
my best friends
We would see each other twice a
week
Family parties, where everyone
would meet and drink
Music blasting while the comal
would be steaming cooking
delicious foods
While i'll be playing outside
and when I was tired I would go
inside to watch cartoons
Back then life was so easy to
understand
Like switching channels to watch
Your favorite show on the tv that was
sitting on my oak stand
Life breezing by so quick as if you
were getting hit by the wind from a
fan

Back then nostalgia wasn't the
case
Now that I look back on those years
I see myself with happy
tears
What was once a little girl
has grown into a bigger person
The pace had change
The race had began
Before I knew it
I was surrounded by new faces
New environments
The new taste of challenges from adulthood
It's surreal how fast 19 years can go by
Like a lifespan of a fly
Now, I'm here in college, a new job
but still a little shy
My parents pushing me to strive for my best
Finish school and get that degree

That I shouldn't worry about the
rest
But still it's weighing on me all this
stress
But I'll keep doing what I do best
pressing on
Learning from all the lessons

I'll go home to see my mother in the
Kitchen
Knowing that I'm making her proud
Even if my voice isn't, my actions
are loud
Even if sometimes my mind is in
the clouds
Even if there's noise from
surrounding crowd
My vision won't be interrupted
For my future has pounce on my
path to success
And to bring happiness to my
parents faces
I'll do this program
To make new changes
I was a little girl
who needed help with my shoelaces
Now I'm an adult
Seeing new places
Understanding things i couldn't
have comprehended
It's all so much but all so good
It's like standing on the edge of
cliff
The wind whipping through my hair
Each breath a reminder that I'm
alive
And in the chaos I find my peace
There's no better ransom that I
would lease
So I'm here bouncing around like a
flea
To find life's many keys.

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A Few More Days

by Fernando Albert Salinas

April Fool's Day 2025

North on the 101, a road-killed seagull's wing waved
with each passing car's wind gust, and
I almost said goodbye back. Instead, I said, I'm sorry
even though those birds are this city's rats.

Maybe I have 4000 days left to live: oak tree
thick with gnarled, rough, grayish-brown bark branches
dressed in dark green coast live leaves
outside my luxury apartment window
and the rescue-cat piss-scented
new leather sofa's springs I'm sitting on
creak but don't sag and the caged snakes' bedding
needs new coconut husks, and you finally have a father,
and I am running out of time
to teach you to be as forgiving as my mother—
Running out of time to be forgiven for taking so long to be
everything I should have always been.

What I am trying to say is, maybe, I need more time.
Is a lifetime ever enough?

I need more time to say
I'm sorry for all the times I was not there—
the times I waved goodbye.
Passing cars never pull over to beep beep and say
I'm sorry
for leaving you in the dust of wind gusts
until your road-kill wing stops waving.
They keep going. Becoming more distant
until they are out of sight. I'm not ready to leave.

I want to love you long enough for you to believe I do.
I want to laugh with you, sway your children gently
when you are too tired to wonder if you are just like I was,
“A shitty father.”
If you have a girl, tell your sister, I'm sorry.
I want to love you all long enough for her to forgive me.
If you have a boy, tell your brother, I'm sorry.

I want to love you so long that when you are too broke
to buy your kid's happiness, you can give them yours.

Give me more moons.

Full and pink.

Strawberry.

Wolf and worm.

Cold and

blue

and blood.

Let me return to you

like stars in night and mist in mornings

and rain and luck.

Let me return as the child

I wish to cradle when you are too tired

to wonder if you have become just like I always was:

apologizing, leaving, saying, I'm sorry.

Take me with you when you want to get away,

to leave and chase the cold blue moon dressed in stars

above the mist after rain. I'd be so lucky to:

know you more—

watch you grow as a father or mother;

wait for you to pass me the guitar I bought you;

watch tennis balls launch from courts with you;

Learn to braid hemp and beaded jewelry from you;

wait for you to pass me the video game controller;

have you read me a comic book;

hear you sing me a song;

love nature with you;

listen to you name crystals and

tell me the story of the fool's journey;

learn to be kind from you;

have you create the world

my children

will eventually receive.

Is one lifetime ever enough?

I'd be so lucky

to live

a few more days

loving you.

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Time Will Tell

by Javan Cy Salinas

What am I supposed to become?
A poet, a teacher, a landscaper?
All these paths my family has already walked.
Am I meant to follow the same,
or am I meant to break away,
to write a story that hasn't been told before?
Did they have it all figured out?
Or did they stumble forward,
uncertain, like me?
Did they ever stop to wonder
if their choices were truly theirs?
149,022 hours I've spent on earth
and I still don't know.
I've tried—
Soccer, tennis, jiu-jitsu, poetry.
So many moments of almost,
but never great, never groundbreaking...just good.

What is a legacy?
A name carved in stone,
Or something softer—
a kindness remembered,
a whisper of warmth in the heart of a stranger?
I have seen failure up close.
I have watched stories end too soon—
on street corners, in dark rooms,
in the trembling hands of
those who once dreamed
like I do.
I have sworn, over and over to myself,
that I would do better—be better,
make something of this time I have.
But becoming always asks for more.
More effort, more sacrifice, more certainty
than I seem to carry.
And I feel like I'm running out of time—
to step off this cycle,
to carve a path that is mine,
not borrowed, not inherited,

but built from the ground up
with my own two hands.

My dad has always told me to be patient.
That answers come in the quiet,
in the spaces between the searching.
Maybe what I'm longing for comes with time.
Maybe the road I seek is still forming beneath my feet.
Maybe I'll become something words can't describe.
But if that were not to happen,
if I remain just a collection of unfinished stories,
scattered attempts, fleeting passions—
Did I live a life worth remembering?
Would that be enough?
I'm sure time will tell.

My Legacy

by Blaise Sanchez

When I pass this life
I want to be remembered
To be remembered that I did good in this life and this world
I want people to remember me as a good person
And when people think about me
I hope that they think
“Hey, I remember him
He really made a difference in this world”
For my future children,
I want them to pass on
what I learned from my parents
And for them to pass to their future kids
My goal in my life is to impact others with good energy
When I grow old
I can envision my grandkid
sitting on my lap and asking me,
What was your life like?
And I just recollect and think about
everything that I went through
Going back in my memory through all of my life
all the great memories I made
With all the important people in my life
All the amazing places I was able to go
alongside my partner
My legacy isn't complete right now
But there is someone who has his legacy
Who I've been inspired,
inspired by my whole life
the man who wears the number 24
who tragically passed away
He was my favorite player who
meant a lot to so many people
The legacy he had, no one will ever forget
My legacy will never be as impactful as his
But when you read this in the future
I want everyone to remember me and the legacy I left.

Witness

by Joseph Saylor

They came on boats
From a land far away
Who knows what they felt
What they expected to find
A land of hope and prosperity?
The life of one man pales in comparison
To the collective dream of the many
No one will listen to one man except another one
I will keep looking and find new way
I hear fussing and excuses, within and without
But I don't really care that much
About what they will say when all is said and done
And when the time comes for the shift to occur
I will be long gone
Not dead but not here
A different man that will in time appear
At the pace of a walking lady
As the spirit of the day
Has little else to say
For now I can wait and pick up my axe
That they left behind for me
To gather the wood and build my hut
Along with their boots and their torch still lit
So that I can still see in the dark
The ones down south
Way, way down south that gifted me the corn
This delicious food and the kiss of the sun
That I am forever grateful for
I can pick up my sword from that time long ago
And wield it with sure confidence
That wherever I wind up
They will be right next to me
Those who came before
Ancestors whose legacy spans thousands of years
With no one to write a book about
But for those here today to feel into their world
And bring forth what was always intended
We get some of it right
And we get some of it wrong

It can never be so perfect
But it will always be with us
No matter how long
It takes for us all to witness.

Legacy

by Nicolas Sixto

“Look Mom, that's what I want to be,” is what hundreds, millions, and billions of people around the world have said to themselves. With hopes of one day actually achieving the dream they wanted to be. Millions of people are being criticized for actually achieving their dreams but not knowing the struggle and sacrifices that person made to achieve that dream, but they're one of the lucky ones because millions of people don't even get a chance to taste the opportunity they want to be, but it's ok you're still young, you got plenty of time to reach where you want to be, but little do they know that each day is a wasted opportunity, you have to fight and work every day to accomplish the goals you want to be. Millions around the world are being affected every day. Whether it's by being on their deathbed, being handicapped, being stuck because where they live at it's being affected due to a war, or not having nothing financially and living day to day without knowing what's next. If life was that easy we'd all be lawyers, doctor's, and engineers. But life is not easy, we have to face the everyday struggles that lay in front of us, because it's the key to success, it's those challenges we face that make millions achieve their dream career, sadly in this world instead of supporting each other and having everyone's back, we criticize and talk bad about one another, but the closest people in your circle could be the first people to stab you from the back it's getting difficult every day to find loyalty and trustworthy friends. It's not the end of the world if you don't accomplish the dreams you wanted if you continue to work for it on a daily basis, or even if you've encouraged a group of people, a community or if you went global, it's better to be that mentor you always wanted to have than a complete person you aren't. As my late grandfather Emilio Sixto Castro has said, it's better to hear compliments from your circle than to talk nonsense about your family, always have others talk about the good or bad your family has done, mostly the good, remember that this life is not bought nor promised, make it one ride and know when to step and let go of the pedal, always learn from your mistakes, never be scared to be wrong, learning from your mistakes and leaving that stamp of responsibility and being remembered is all it's meant to be, there's many examples and definitions of it but Legacy is what you make it be. As I've been growing, leaving a Legacy and Inspiring others is what I hope to one day achieve, like I said in the beginning “Look Mom, that's what I want to be” has been one of my biggest things as a kid to achieve and I hope that one day, I really achieve that dream of inspiring others but additionally, to know that I passed away making my bloodline proud and to let them know that the sacrifices they made was worth it.

Rinse and Repeat

by Lleyton Taglieri

A pencil or a pen. Ink to a canvas. Graphite to a schematic. You were always an application to reciprocate those useful and effective methods. To hemorrhage your fuel onto a surface, to etch an art into an artefact. You gave me so much to rinse and repeat. To scribe those facts onto endless sheets of paper. How many periods and methods have you been utilized in? Helping many with symbols to understand this existence we occupy. But you didn't want to always focus on that purpose, did you? Giving those with no clue a plane to recreate their memories, thoughts, and hopes in order to harness their legacy. You could always bring something out that others could not. Many yearned to take hold of your capability, and many can but chose not to. This truth created dismay for you as you couldn't express those wonders that they had pertained within their psyche. You pondered on why they wouldn't but you in your own world couldn't even begin to imagine a world where mistakes were permanent and faults are preconceived. Where people must make ends meet and rarely have time to peer through your far and endless aspirations. While some could tend to you despite this condition, even they still find themselves at odds with you. Their ignorance blurred that spark that you were ever so prepared to take up for however long they would've chosen. Maybe it could've been different for both of us in these aspects. To clear the slate to a point that your boundless imaginative inclinations could boost me to levels that others had so painstakingly reached for and fell. Alas, I used to think that I was capable of your degree for that task. But after all this world and those who have not chosen your grander purpose have shown me with time, I veered away from your direction. Thinking that rinsing and repeating these symbols would be better for myself and perhaps you as well.

Still Here

by Jose Carlos (JC) Trujillo

He stood where the sea once touched the sky,
A man of the land—it is as it was, no reason to ask why.
His hands knew the soil, warm and alive,
The land where the corn once rose, where spirits would thrive.

The wind from our mouths carried stories long ago
Of jaguar, of condor, of arrow and bow.
Now mouths are closed—silence seeps into bone,
The ancestors' voices have turned into stone.

Yet the blood is present; in dreams it still flows.
Tata visits their children when the moonlight glows.
A whisper, a shadow, a breath in the night,
Walking while they sleep in the hush before light.

He watches with quiet, enduring pride,
For though the roots are scorched, they've not all died.
They will carry his blood, his heart brave and bold—
His brown skin, his strength, and the way his hair flowed.

This is not the end, though the world has changed,
Though memory is scattered and rearranged.
Legacy is not in what's overtly worn—
It lives in the marrow, deep, deep in your bone.

There is no praise, no curse, no final cry—
Just one seed planted, one gaze to the sky.
The corn will rise again, even if they forget—
Our seeds will remind them: *we are not gone yet.*

Lasting Memories

by Roxana Tzontecomani

Why do people pass down cars, jewelry, and money?
Why do they want to have a building named after them?
Why do they want people to know their accomplishments?
Why do people chase dreams and hope to leave a trace?
Why do people want to change the world?
Is it because they want to feel like they fulfilled their purpose in life?
Is it to inspire others?
Or is it because they're afraid of being forgotten?

People strive to make it into the history books
And look to become the first to do, invent, or find
Whether it is by creating a successful business to pass down
Or like Kathleen Martinez that hopes to find Cleopatra's tomb
Or a scientist trying to explain the unexplainable
Or the athletes, actors, and singers
waiting for their time to walk down The Hall
Or a doctor trying to find cures for diseases
such as Cancer and Alzheimer's
Or like Anastasija Zolotic who has the title:
"The First U.S. Woman to Win Olympic Gold in Taekwondo"
The title that I wanted for myself
Why did I want it?
Why did I want people one hundred years from now to know who I was
When I will never get to meet them?
They won't care or have any memory of me

I pondered why I wanted a lasting legacy and that's when I realized
I was scared of being forgotten, as if I never existed.

Until the day came that I was able to change my perspective
I was volunteering at a community center
Helping little kids learn taekwondo
They asked me to show them my favorite kick
I did a 360 with ease as if it were like breathing
Their little jaws dropped and their eyes sparkled like stars
As if they just saw their favorite cartoon spring to life
They kept repeating, "How did you do that?" and, "That was so cool"
As the echo from the impact rung across the room
Their fascinated expressions made something inside of me shift

I had this fleeting feeling when I volunteered at a free clinic
Patients would thank me for helping them even if I didn't gain anything
from it

When I was thanked and looked up to
I knew what I wanted to leave behind
I no longer wanted to be known by people hundreds of years from now
Instead, I want to be remembered in a memorable way
by those who met me
I want to be able to inspire little kids to dream big
I want my patients to remember me as caring and kind
I want my friends and family to remember me as supportive and trustworthy
I want to pass down my knowledge to my future children
I want to leave a positive impact no matter how small

People often strive for the biggest award
They want to go down in history and
Be remembered for huge accomplishments
But we forget the smaller things
Legacies can be found in smiles, words, and kindness
These small deeds can leave a mark that won't decay
And will sway the hearts of those they met
Leaving a lasting trace in their memories

The Moon Is (Not) Made of Cheese

by Evan Vaillancourt

The moon is made of cheese
Sharp cheddar or buttery brie
Crumbly feta or hollowed-out swiss
If we could only reach it
Sail our spaceships past the milky stars
Through the black abyss and plant our flag
We could take a bite for ourselves
Take as much as we want

I was seven when the harvesters came
Missing teeth and scabby knees
Back then I thought the woods went on forever
Pine needles fell freely
Sharp scent like springtime
Trunks holding up the bright blue sky
I didn't understand then
Why the men with chainsaws and baggy eyes
Burning bright orange
Like the sun dipping low in the sky
Threatening to set the earth ablaze
Why do they need all the trees, I thought?
Why do they need to own the forest,
when they can just see it?

There's money everywhere for those with the eyes to see
Money grows from the soil, it flows beneath the earth
It rests in the bones of the long departed
Waiting anxiously to be burnt
It's in our food, it's in our skin
It makes the very air we breathe
But that'll be my son's son's problem
THE FOREST IS FREE NOW,
said the man who knew better than God
Mother Nature provides,
surely it would be rude not to partake
And take and take and take

The sky is gray now
Smog suffocates the streets like a veil

Hiding what we once had
What we spurned in favor of the bottom line
Because the moon is not made of cheese
Its existence a cosmic miracle
A wholly unique flower that will not grow back
I wonder if that's how we'll be remembered
Pluckers of the cosmic violet
Butchers of the old world
Will our names be reviled as thieves
Of the lives they were promised
Because we thought the moon
Was made of cheese

Beyond

by Jacob Vasquez

Beyond what I am
And what I want

Beyond what's expected and achievable,
If I limit myself to a goal
I am limiting the purpose
Of what been lost

Dreams

They had dreams of me
The man who's spent his life
to give me mine—
Who shares the same hair as me
Who brightens up my day

And, the woman who spent her dreams
giving me my own
Whose eyes are like mine—
filled with gold
Who shares the same big smile as mine

This success I chase is not my own
And this failure, as well
I am the legacy of what's come to pass
by the hands of those who
gave me the chance to try

So, for them, I'll try
until I can return seven times
what they gave me

Towers

by Amy Vasquez Vasquez

Dark empty halls,
memories hung on the wall,
the sound of thunder
and things being thrown

A loud crash
coming from the other end of the hallway,
lights flickering, and
the sound gets louder and louder

One bang
All the noise gone
Everything becomes quiet
as a school library

Rumbling occurs,
hallways shaking side to side
almost like an earthquake
Everything goes blank

Hitting the grown one by one,
the towers have fallen,
nothing left,
The memories start to vanish

All the memories shared and
made have disappeared,
taken with the towers,
everything gone

A path shown as everything was disappears
Lights on the ground guiding the way
There was something that was left behind
A girl

A girl whose towers were taken away
The girl sat on the ground
left with nothing
but emptiness
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Power of Change

by Jacob Vega

When I think of legacy,
I think of what I'm going to leave behind.
I also tend to think about
the impact I had on the world I lived in
and those people around me.
If I was gone tomorrow
the legacy I'd leave would be "change."
So, when you grow up the way I did. You want it all.
And sometimes that's too much.
Went from being on top of the world, no worries, no care,
with nothing but time to spare.
Just a young boy being told what's right from wrong.
Later left with the decision of choosing what's right from wrong.
Your told to have no limits to yourself, no limits to your imagination,
but along the way life throws you complications.
I went from enjoying the clean breeze of air on the playground,
To sitting in a room full of smoke as I counted my green.
A young boy once so nice,
To now, so mean.
Waking up every day not so sure what to expect,
If it'll be another day in the neighborhood
or another day we might get swept.
It's Friday, a day to relax and have a good time.
But little did we know it'd be one of our times.
Here we go, buttoned down Pendelton,
501's so creased you could cut your finger on them,
Stacy Adam boots so heavy,
they'd leave a mark on the enemy.
As the night comes down,
all about ready to head out.
That black Chevy Blazers spins down the block,
V8 roaring, tires screeching,
As they hangout their windows,
Yelling out their neighborhood,
As the shots fired,
We hit the ground,
all but our body's so tired.
Floor was cold, cold as ice
As I looked up,

Only to find out J had to pay the price.
Hoping, hoping it was a dream
But only a nightmare I'd have to live with.
Now I sit here in this classroom,
Asked what my legacy is,
And I'll answer to you all,
Change,
The power of change is my legacy.

Fire Person – *TLakatLetzin*

Contributed by Maestro Jaime Vega

- Greetings To All My Relations – *NochtinNomekayotzin*
- Concept of Seeking the ROOT of the TRUTH: Maya = *Panche Beh* & *Nahua* = *Neltiliztli* • Thanks Creator for My Gift of Life – *TlazokaMati YokoYani ika NoNeMaktLi NemiLiztLi* • Thank you Creator for this Day – *TlazokaMati YoKoYani iuan ipalnemouani in in iLuitL* • We are Living in the Sexto Sol – Living in the 6th Sun of Justice
- Our 6th Sun has Returned, as promised in 1521 on August 13th by Cuauhtemoc; of Raising Higher Consciousness & illumination & Justice
- We are Living “*Kuauhtemoktzin’s*” Promise (our Greatest -Great Grandfather -Abuelito) • We are here the Children of the Sun – *TonaLiZin Kokoneh TiNikan Macehualtin* • We are here Children of the Earth – *NiKanka Piltzin ToNaNtzin*
- We are here – Seeds of our Ancestors – *NiKanka HueHue Xinaxtin CaubCayotl* • We are the link of the 7th Generation -Standing here United – Honoring Our Ancestor Spirits ... Continuing where they left off – Fighting for our Rights – Fighting for Justice – To Protect our Land – To plant our seeds – To protect our water
- We are Living at a Crossroad of Change – *Tebuantin Nemi ObiLi*
- We Stand Here United Representing Our Indigenous Ancestors ¡Aquí Estamos y No Nos Vamos! Warriors United Here -Fighting for Our Rights – *NiKan Tlaka -Yao Zibuatl -Yao Tekubtli* • Fighting to Stop the Oil Pipelines – To Protect Our Original Native Lands -Nuestras Tierras Sagradas • Fighting to Remain in Amerika – To keep Original Seeds of Our Indigenous Ancestors • Like the Fingers on our hand, different shapes & sizes - ***TLokeNahuake*** We Come Together as 1 Hand – 1 Mind – 1 Spirit & for Justice for ALL !
- We stand here for those born -that can’t Speak -that can’t Hear -that can’t Walk • Wishing everyone Health & Hope Through Action & Positive Visions of Victory • Raising Consciousness for those making Decisions that Affect Humanity, Protectors of Our Dear Mother Earth – *Cuexaneh Tihyotia Tonantzin* Protectors of the Air we Breathe- *Cuexaneh Ehecatl Tihyotia*
- We continue in Our Fight For Justice(with the spirits of our ancestors from the 4 directions). • Let’s Act (with Intentionality) Before we Buy things at stores

- We can “Boycott” like Cesar Chavez taught us to Make a Difference & to make a Statement • Cast your Vote by What You Buy OR Don’t Buy
- Synchronize our combined Energies & Collectively Shift Consciousness • Changing the Frequency of Humanity -Continuing our visit -our journey -on Mother Earth
- Using the Black Smoking Mirrors of the 4 *Tezkatlipokah* & Clearing the Way for Clarity • Nahua Indigenous Concept of Nahui Ollin (4 Movements) 1. Self-reflection, 2. Transformation, 3. Action 4. Knowledge.
- To All Our Relations - Aho Mitakuye Oyasin -*NochtliNomekaYotz’in*
- Living Collectively - Balancing Our Life & Mind with the Giver Of Life – ipaLnemohuani
- **In LaK’ ech** = You are a Reflection of me & **Ala K’in** = What I do onto you, I do onto myself. (Mayan Concept) **In Lak ’ech** =Tú eres mi otro yo/You are my other me, (*Ala K’in*) Si te hago daño a ti/If I do harm to you, Me hago daño a mi mismo/I do harm to myself. Si te amo y respeto/If I love and respect you, Me amo y respeto yo/I love and respect myself (poet-Luís Valdez) Greeting with Hand on Heart. • We Go Forward –*Mexika Tiabui!*



Jaime Vega

Inheritance

by Ayden Venable

The legacy you inherit
can be a wondrous thing
The legacy of your family
can be a blessing
It can open doors
with incredible ease
It can lay down a red carpet
along a route to a bright future
as the next family actor
It can afford you many wonderful things
that you take for granted as normal
such as a lovely family dinner
as you tell stories of your day
or listen to your parents laugh in small talk
It can grant you many privileges
based on how you look
Where you grew up
can earn you prestige
Your legacy can give you everything

The legacy you inherit
can be a terrible thing
The legacy of your family
can be a curse
It can slam doors shut
before you know they're there
It can fill your path
with nothing but thorns
that traps you in the fields
It can bring many hardships
that leave you jaded about the world
such as an evening of fighting parents
as you pretend not to listen
or hide to avoid the shrapnel
It can grant you nothing but hardships
based on how you look
Where you grew up
can earn you scorn
Your legacy can give you nothing

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The legacy you leave behind
can have a profound impact
The legacy of your family
can be completely overwritten
You can inspire others
to kick open the doors
that have been slammed
You can give people the skills
to cut away all thorns on their path
and be the first to earn a degree
You can take what you've been through
and break negative cycles
like growing up in an abusive household
or gaslighting kids into being
used as pawns
You can overcome the hardships
brought by your appearance
Where you grew up
does not define all of you
Your personal legacy is what you leave behind

Legacy

by Gisselle Villanueva

Red, hot face, closed mind and fist, I'm fuming, how intense. A person's life is described in one word. How can you tell about someone—everything they have done in life, their daily habits, their aspirations, their dreams? Can they be described in one word? My parents! What about them? My uncle understood, “Hagamos historia, Gisselle! Somos Villanueva!” Let's make history, Gisselle! We are Villanueva! Even though he was sitting, his face and words leaped right through, infecting me with a vision of becoming great. But it's not right. My father, back breaking, sun scorched, hard working tired man. My mother, a warrior with no armor but a wall as protection, an independent woman that has only us to depend on. Where was their aspiration? Why is it so gray and abandoned? Have I been the one who ripped out their page even before they can start a new one? My parents whom I am so proud of have, and still sacrificed so much. I know, because of their tender, tired eyes and weak smiles told me. One day they did have a goal that led to their ambition of becoming a dream. The next they didn't. One day they had the certainty of becoming someone, then they didn't. One day they did have the reassurance of their support system, then, it was no longer felt. Today, they are here with me and we're together, the next day, who knows? And just like my parents who have achieved so much but will not be recognized, live your life as though you are meant to be the dream.

Still Loud

by Amiya Wood

I wasn't there when it started.

Didn't see the first crowds packed into tiny clubs,
didn't hear the amps hum before the first note hit.

But somehow, it still found me.
Maybe it was the sound—
rough, louder than it needed to be.

Or maybe it was the way it never tried too hard,
never cared if it was messy,
just existed the way it was.
I've never stood in the rain outside a Seattle venue,
never bought a record the day it dropped.

But I know what it's like to hear a song
and feel like it was written for me.
I know what it's like to play a song that's older than me
and somehow get it,
like it gets me too.

Grunge wasn't made for perfection.
It wasn't made for the charts.
It was for the ones who didn't fit,
who didn't need things to be clean and polished,
who just wanted something real.

Some of the voices are gone,
but the sound is still here.
Still loud.
Still imperfect.
Still enough.

And maybe I wasn't there when it started,
but I'm here now,
hearing the same chords echo through new speakers,
singing along to words that still mean something.
Because grunge never really left—it just waited
for the next person to find it.

End the Cycle

by Jocelyn Wood

Each slap burns my skin
Every step pounding down,
feet and heart move as one
Like the tires screeching
out that eroded driveway
Scuffed, bruised, broken bones
crumbled down onto the floor
Next to dried blood and wet tears,
wiped away with childhood dreams
Fathers are supposed to protect
What happens when they attack?
Fight, flight, and freeze
with my hands up in the air
Red and blue lights painting my face
Shedding the same tears
Sharing the same fears
Sending up my prayers
If only I wasn't my fathers daughter
Stuck in his shadow
The life that was never mine
Walking backwards in time

Slowly learning how to
Reclaim what was once mine
Becoming someone he will never be
Someone he will never get to meet
Starting over from this point on
One step at a time

Memory

by Ethan Woodcock

Millions of participants, racing for a chance at life
One winner, all others will fizzle out and will never be
DNA, a person's likeness, personality, tendencies
Countless aspects of one's being, unique, never fully repeating
Traces, footprints, the smell left on one's clothes
The impact one leaves on strangers, peers, family, friends, lovers
Memory, a passing glance of interest, a hug, skin touching skin
Loss, pain felt together as tears hit pavement
Memory, grief and remembrance experienced through song
A gust of wind, the feeling of grass hitting skin
A punch to the gut, a boisterous laugh discovered while in deep thought
Memory, scars, bruises left on the body as well as the mind
A sentence made up of cruel words stabbing through the heart
Words akin to a shotgun to the chest
Words of encouragement, a shoulder to cry on
A voice acting as stitches, tending to deep wounds and cuts
Death, the ending of life,
leaving behind only memories,
an impact in our wake
A memory

Bleach

by Amir Yaish

We are two children wrestling on the ground
My fist is warm from your blood
But I still hope that my hug will feel like a hug
We still roll in mud
And I can't tell when it's our fists or when it's the ground
But something is hitting us as we spin around
I don't want you to remember us as kids covered in mud
Instead we are kids who always hug
But is it a hug if it hurts to touch?
Is it a hug if it reminds you of a cold beach
I know it's not a hug when it smells like Bleach
I don't remember the smell of Bleach
but I know it's cold
And I know it's definitely not warm
I don't like Bleach very much
It makes me feel cold
It makes me feel fake
I am scared that I am making a legacy
that for you,
smells like bleach

The Rise and Fall of a Conditional Overachiever

by Joy Zerrudo

When my parents discovered the power of the pen,
I knew I was destined for a life of unhappiness.
At age eight I entered a poetry contest,
won, collected my winnings, reveled in the praise of my parents
as they started to brag about my wins to every person they knew.
The feeling of pride that left them with was like a drug.
It started the beginning of an end for me:
Enter in a competition, do my best,
vie for the accolades and appraisals,
and if I were lucky enough to win I'd feel a semblance of happiness.
That was how I was raised, for I am my father's daughter.
I was raised to suck on the golden titties of the adults in my life,
drinking their songs of adoration for as long as I possibly could,
because to everyone else my life was one without worry, fear, or struggle—
all I had ever come to know was success, for I am my father's daughter.
So when that success started to fizzle out, and my bones grew
weary, body restless at the ripe old age of twelve,
The illusion of self induced satisfaction wore off
and I told my parents that I wanted no more,
yet I was pushed anyway, for I am my father's daughter.
“You need to keep on going,” they'd cry,
“I don't know what's wrong with you.”

Thirteen words shook me to my core
made me feel like I went from shining
as bright as the sun to becoming the moon,
now being reduced to a couple of stars
and well on my way to fading into nothingness
For my lack of success, my personal wins in life
determine my worth as a human being—
I am my father's daughter, after all.
Trying, practicing, failing, crying,
an endless cycle started to take place
Tears were shed, blood was spilt, and
at age twelve I finally told my parents
that I no longer wished to be my father's daughter.
I decided for myself that their wishes were not my own,
I decided that I deserved a say in what I found happiness in,
I decided that the triumphs they had wanted for me

were truly for them to display,
while I, exhausted, quietly smile at the shower of congratulations
that always found its way to me without fail.
But nowadays as I find myself in a better,
more successful life than ever, I've begun to
miss that nagging, miss the days where
I would tirelessly work to make him proud,
for I am my father's daughter, and one day he will no longer be here.
Who will I be then?

I know you didn't mean to leave so soon.
The exchanged conversations between the two of us,
Lessons from you to me that I always tuned out,
always hearing, never listening
A picture, a thousand words,
now forever unsung as I was blinded
by your pushing and never
your intent.

I find myself restlessly tossing, turning,
hoping that the news isn't true,
that when the sun rises, a new day will come,
that you will be back to bother me once more.
But I am no princess, and this is no fairytale,
and you are gone for good.
I am burdened by the guilt that carries itself in my throat,
for I wish I had one more opportunity to make you proud,
one last chance to wear the badge that told the world that
I am your daughter,

For that badge, no matter how hard I have tried to escape it,
is the badge that I have worn all my life, and though I may
resent the conditions of that title with my whole being,
I miss being my father's daughter,
and I wish he could see me now.

