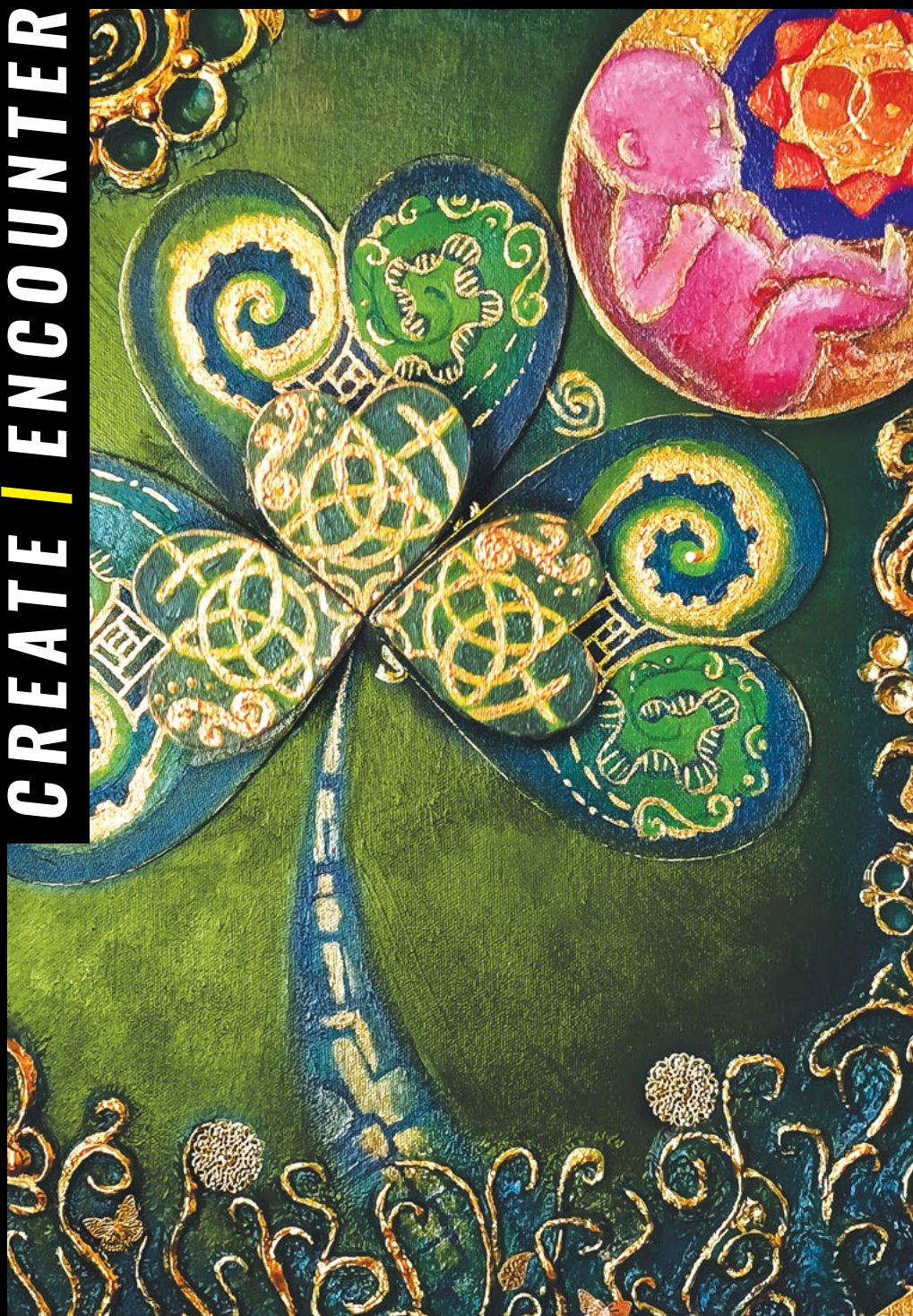


CREATE | ENCOUNTER



OCTOBER 2025

**9TH ANNUAL CREATIVE ISSUE
OF LIFE MATTERS JOURNAL**

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LETTER FROM THE COORDINATOR

Dear Reader,

Consuming an endless scroll of headlines and social media posts can make it easy to feel despair at the current state of the world. We seem to be constantly inundated with bad news, bad opinions, and nasty rhetoric, all at our fingertips. Every now and then, we need a palate cleanser, and that is what I hope this collection of art can provide for you today.

Though they address controversial topics, the artists featured in these pages have chosen to approach such issues slowly and carefully. The creative

process necessitates time for contemplation, for reflection, and as a result, these topics that can often feel overwhelming begin to feel more manageable. We need more of that in this world!

Yours for peace and every human life,



Maria Oswalt
 Creative Director,
 Rehumanize International

CREATE / ENCOUNTER

is a special edition of

Life Matters Journal

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**REHUMANIZEINTL.ORG/
 CREATE-ENCOUNTER**

This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether that violence is legal or illegal.

We have been told by our society and our culture wars that those of us who oppose these acts of violence must be divided. We have been told to take a lukewarm, halfway attitude toward the victims of violence. We have been told to embrace some with love while endorsing the killing of others.

We reject that conventional attitude, whether it's called Left or Right, and instead embrace a consistent ethic of life toward all victims of violence.

DISCLAIMER

The views presented in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of all members, contributors, or donors. We exist to present a forum for discussion within the Consistent Life Ethic, to promote discourse and present an opportunity for peer-review and dialogue.

The Phantoum

by Oladejo Abdullah Feranmi

1st Place, Poetry

Like every traveller
with eyes that swallow and feet that flee.
How the truth,
with its infant fingers,
clasps our hands—
until its prints remain;
bones folded into smaller boxes.

How beautifully we open.
And how we don't—
a tear inside the mouth
becomes a new tongue,
then another face,
then another.

The broader arms of lies
swoop us from the earth,
in case we forget
how falling felt—
the season arrives either way.

The naked trees
inherit the whistling of the whirlwind.
The naked trees
are all that's left.

Dust from those who once were
scattered over a place
that someday
will remember how to bloom.

All the flowers in your mouth
petaling across winter's teary face,
each one certain
there will be enough wind
to carry it forward.

Artist Statement

My work centers on the human cost of violence—how it shapes memory, identity, and the will to live. I write to honor the dignity of those often silenced or unseen, and to reflect on what it means to stay human in inhumane conditions. I hope readers engage with my work gently, allowing space for feeling, reflection, and care.

Stop

by Peter Queenan
1st Place, Music



Artist Statement

The 1980 brutal murder (and rape) of the three nuns and their lay assistant in El Salvador has always dwelled as a stark and troubling event within my store of memories, and it played a significant part in the creation of this song. The song, however, has more of a general anti-violence and anti-war message to it. It is also a reminder that violence like this requires more than just sadness or sympathy as a response from us - we need to be shocked into working for change.

The Gamble

by Kelsey Hazzard
2nd Place, Visual (2D)



Artist Statement

Much of this child's life is a matter of random chance; the so-called "birth lottery" starts with genetics, but hardly ends there. Where is this conception occurring? Will he grow up in a democracy, or in a

dictatorship? What kind of education will he be able to attain? Will he even make it to birth? The ultimate goal of the consistent life movement is to make human rights a guarantee, not a gamble.

Dear Terri...

A LETTER TO THE WOMAN WHO CHANGED MY LIFE

by Taylor Hyatt

1st Place, Prose

Dear Terri...

I was just a few weeks away from turning 13 when you died. An observer might say I “grew up” in an instant: in that month or so between when I first became curious about your story, and when your life ended. After your passing, I continued to grow “alongside” the world’s reaction to your death – trying to figure out my place in the world:

- as a young girl – dealing with family upheavals and middle school life at the same time that you prompted my radical “awakening” to the world’s capacities for cruelty, indifference, and injustice.
- as a convert to the Christian faith – that, too, was inspired by you and those around you who believed in the value of your life post-brain injury – although much of it is a tale for another day...
- and – as I grew in knowledge, skill, connections, and the tools I had at my disposal – as an activist.

“Before you,” I was...a preteen: young enough that I didn’t follow the news on a regular basis, other than keeping up with a few big events on TV and in the papers. My world was a pretty small one. I lived in a little town in Ontario, Canada, and spent time with 7th grade classmates and friends, a close-knit family, neighbours...and medical professionals. I was born with a physical disability which required

regular therapy and monitoring in my formative years. In order to make sense of my experience and take the best possible care of myself, I was immersed in information about the workings of the human body. I would describe myself as “a medical nerd” – I was fascinated by it all, and read *everything* I could get my hands on. My earliest career dreams centred around working in healthcare in some capacity.

At the same time, I felt the need to prove myself to people around me, compensating for my physical limitations by throwing myself into academics and intellectual pursuits. As a young kid, I was obsessed with books about “fun facts” and trivia, and the “weird and wacky” sections of news outlets. To name two questions I saw: *What would happen if a would-be robber dozed off on his victim’s couch and got caught? What common condition affects the health of Dutch elm trees?*

One day, in February 2005, I saw a headline on Sympatico News that read “Man Seeks to Pull Plug on Wife in 15-Year Coma.” I had never heard of a coma lasting that long, but had to find out more. I remember nothing about the article, but your name would stay with me.

A few weeks later – on **March 18, 2005** – I was home from school on March Break, bored, and channel-surfing in my room. “Florida Woman’s Feeding

Tube Being Disconnected” said the headline on Channel 36: CNN. Again, I saw “Terri Schiavo” at the bottom of the news ticker – and froze.

There you were: the video clip showed your eyes open, as you smiled at the person in front of you. Despite clear cognitive and physical limitations, you were clearly aware of at least *some things* – not completely “comatose” and “non-responsive” as the newscaster claimed. I had known people with similar disabilities. There was nothing unusual about the supports they used to eat and communicate every day. As I watched, I learned that your feeding tube was going to be removed at the request of a court ruling initiated by your spouse, who insisted that you would not want to live with these conditions. When, then, was the tube going to be put back in?

I came to a horrifying realization: *Wait...they’re NOT!? Don’t we *all* need to eat? Didn’t they know you would starve? Why is a feeding tube such a big deal?* No human being should be treated this way, and our common status as disabled people added greater insult to injury. I was immediately outraged, and terrified for you.

Yes – supporters of the feeding tube’s removal knew you *would* starve – and that was the point! Your condition, of course, was different from the situation of someone who is truly dying. As someone’s body shuts down, they are no longer able to process food and water. In fact, maintaining

access to food in this case may be painful. You were “supposed to slip away” – gently, quickly, painlessly – from the “prison” your body had become. (As your brother later recalled, your last days were far from peaceful: “After almost two weeks without food or water, my sister’s lips were horribly cracked, to the point where they were blistering...Terri’s breathing became rapid and uncontrollable, as if she was outside sprinting...What will be forever seared in my memory is the look of utter horror on my sister’s face.”¹¹)

Suddenly, I was drawn into far-reaching questions of bioethics, and the landscape of American politics. (My family lived in small-town Ontario, *Canada*, and up to that point, I had hardly observed political developments closer to home!) I went from occasional glances at news stories to watching CNN whenever I could. I found myself in a new routine: I would come home from school and head straight for the TV. I stayed up late at night to watch interviews and court proceedings, and

1 Schindler, B. (2015, March 30). *I will never forget the look of horror on my sister Terri Schiavo’s face the day she died*. LifeNews.com. <https://www.lifenews.com/2015/03/30/i-will-never-forget-the-look-of-horror-on-my-sister-terri-schiavos-face-the-day-she-died/>

I had known people with similar disabilities. There was nothing unusual about the supports they used to eat and communicate every day.

quickly learned who saw your inherent value, and who did not. Many people thought you were no longer alive, or at least better off dead than disabled after your brain injury. Commentators called you a tool of the Christian Right. They did not see, or maybe intentionally overlooked, the disability rights advocates who saw your torturous end for the human rights violation that it was – even though most of those same activists would not touch matters of faith with a 50-foot pole. Having used similar aids themselves, they knew that use of a feeding tube and assistance of nurses were nothing to fear. Of course, your mom, dad, and siblings – along with many others who shared their traditional pro-life and Catholic convictions – also did everything they could to try to save your life and care for you.

March 31, 2005, was, for the most part, probably like any other day in seventh grade. It was the 13th day that you had gone without food and water, and the last day of your life on earth. I will never forget the urgency that came over me. Forget the normal house rules: my shoes were still on, and my bag remained unpacked. Instead, I had to know how you were doing. **Click** – on went the news. I sat through 10 agonizing minutes of chatter about taxes, oil prices, and elections... *hurry up, where's Terri?* Then the 3:30 breaking news: "At approximately 9:05 this morning, Terri Schiavo died."

I remember wanting to scream – diving face-first into a pillow next to me, hoping to muffle the sound – but the cry of my heart never made it to my lips. Instead, a few minutes of tears felt like two hours.

And then...I learned to measure time "after" you. Truly, it ripped my life in two. As the shock passed, a question took its place: *what was I supposed to do now?* You were the first person I watched die in such a cruel way, and some part of my teenage naivete desperately wanted you to be the last, too. I made a promise to myself, to you, and to the higher power I was discovering that I would do anything I could to prevent others from meeting the same fate. Being in middle school at the time, my only option was to stay informed about your family's advocacy, stories of people in similar situations, and the legal mechanisms behind them. Around the 10-year anniversary of your passing, in 2015, I had begun to transition from advocating primarily for prenatal human beings to ill, disabled, and aging ones. The summer before, I had the chance to connect with your mom and brother. What a privilege to let them know how your story changed my life!

Now, **twenty** years after the world watched (and, to a large extent, supported) the brutal way your life was cut short...what has changed? In some ways, a great deal: support for the mindset behind your spouse's actions has only increased. (To this day, if someone searches for your name online, one of the most common queries has the demeaning and dehumanizing term "vegetable" after it – "Terri the Turnip," you were called. The insult still makes my blood boil.)

Governments around the world are beginning to open the door to medical practices specifically designed to kill – not to heal, and avoid harm, as in medicine's original aim. Legislators

– in a gesture of apparent mercy and kindness that is actually *anything but* – seem to think an injection of a lethal substance is preferable to life with disabilities as severe as yours, *and* an easier way out than the starvation and dehydration to which you were condemned. This intervention – or lack of it – was intended to give you peace and rest. As family and spiritual leaders who visited you in your last weeks attested, slowly starving and dehydrating a woman with multiple disabilities, while she looked at those around her with sadness and fear, begging for rescue...led to neither of those states.²

For my part, I have appeared on news websites and TV broadcasts, made media statements at the Supreme Court, worked full-time in disability policy for a few years, testified before the Canadian Senate about lethal disability discrimination in the medical system, and so much more. Even though it is no longer my main employment, I continue to engage in writing, policy work, and advocacy whenever I can.

Tremendous as these accomplishments may be, none of them change the fact that they were motivated by your unjust death, and the deaths of many others. Every March 31st has become a day to grieve and remember you, and the growing number of people whose lives have ended with the cooperation of the

medical field. As I've written this note, I've revisited video footage that your family has saved. I am left convicted and heartbroken – my heart is transported to your last days all over again. All I can say is *I'm sorry. It didn't have to be this way.* Terri, you should still *be here* – able to delight in good music, nature, and the presence of people you loved as you used to.

My chief consolation is this: that my work to promote the dignity of the human person will hopefully help others to be acknowledged – and may lead to lives saved – in ways that you were not. I will keep the promise I made: to spend my life doing what I can to combat injustice against people with disabilities like ours, and to honour your memory.

Artist Statement

March 31st, 2025 was the 20th anniversary of Terri Schiavo's death by starvation and dehydration – an especially cruel and heinous contrast to the rhetoric of "peace" and "dignity" used by promoters of euthanasia. Terri relied on a feeding tube after becoming disabled due to a brain injury. Her spouse successfully campaigned to have the tube removed; he believed Terri would not have wanted to live with these limitations. Terri's death – and the response of those who fought to save her life – motivated me to become a disability rights activist, and later, a promoter of the consistent life ethic. Although I have written elsewhere **about** Terri's impact on my life, I felt the world needed to be reminded of what happened to her in light of the anniversary, and was inspired, this time around, to write **to Terri** directly.

2 Pavone, F. (2015, March 30). *Terri Schiavo's inconvenient life*. The Washington Times. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/mar/30/frank-pavone-terri-schiavos-inconvenient-life/>



Turning Deaf Ears to the Music of War

by Skanda. R

Honorable Mention, Visual (2D)

Artist Statement

People get displaced, families torn apart and all appeals of help and aid are met with closed doors of deafness to the perpetrators

that cause torment. The very feeling of despair is often not shown among the people which is what drove me to create this artwork.

God Shaped

by Sara Leonard
1st Place, Visual (3D)



Artist Statement

God Shaped combines the theological illustration of St. Patrick and the moral statement of Dr. Suess. Both use the

imagery of a clover. St. Patrick uses it to describe the threefold personhood of God; Dr. Suess uses it to say: "A person is a person no matter how small".

Wonderfully Made

by Nick Sansone
2nd Place, Prose

Note: due to limited printing space, we could only include a snippet of the full piece. The rest of Wonderfully Made is published online at rehumanizeintl.org/create-encounter.

3 INT. SANTUCCI HOUSE - DINING ROOM -- NIGHT 3

Lisa and Dave's faces go white. Andie immediately looks back down and she begins singing to herself again. Nathan begins shaking, likewise feeling the weight of his parents' stares at him.

DAVE

When did you find out? Be honest.

Nathan looks down slightly, trying to avert his parents' stares.

NATHAN

Two weeks ago.

Lisa stands up and begins shaking her head.

LISA

No, no, no! I thought we talked about this--!

NATHAN

What do you want us to say, Mom? You know we want kids!

LISA

Yeah, I know, but not like this!

NATHAN

What's that supposed to mean?!

LISA

Do either of you understand just how
messed up this kid is going to be with
your genetics?!

Andie finally looks up and stares back at
Lisa.

ANDIE

Why?! Because we have autism?!

Lisa appears taken aback by this. She
pauses for a moment and takes a deep
breath.

LISA

I never said that you two couldn't be
parents. I just...thought you would do it
differently than this.

NATHAN

So what do you want us to do?

Lisa sits back down at the dining room
table in front of Nathan and Andie.

Artist Statement

This script came from a deeply personal place as I navigate a new season of life, pondering future marriage and family in a more serious way than I have previously. Particularly as a pro-life man with autism, I have had to navigate difficult conversations with my family that revealed ignorant, outdated, ableist, and eugenicist assumptions about people with autism conceiving and raising children. Specifically, as ableist and eugenicist rhetoric about autism is on the rise again

from the highest levels of government, I sought to tell a story that both sheds light on how dehumanizing this rhetoric can be at the most personal and familial of levels, and to show how individuals with autism can, in fact, conceive children and start families, ultimately showing how both people with autism and people conceived by people with autism are all equally worthy of life and being treated with dignity.

Under the Mercy

by Elizabeth Jennings

2nd Place, Poetry

Here we are
Earthworms, cut in two,
Growing back to root forward;
Skyworms, digging home with no wings,
Silkworms, boiled inside our cocoons.
Yet enough take flight
In a field under a storm under God
To hold hope.
I hold the shards of the shattered bowl
Dropped by my tiny hands.
I hold the shouting that came after.
Is anyone there to pick up the pieces?
Of the shards of the image of God?
All around us
A still pool, an honest mirror,
A creature, lost in the dirt,
In a field under the stars under God
Bravely thrashing
--Will it make it out alive?
We are eels seen from a glass-bottomed boat—
The dome of heaven—

Our very selves too slippery to grasp
The tap-tapping of angels
—How can we hear them?
In a pool under the sun under God
I hold what is barren and bursting,
A branch bewildered by the glimpse of a tree.
I hold a new creature, God's homily, in me,
Straining to be free
Not knowing what that means.
When pain ferments in a dark place
What will it taste like?
That depends what's added to it
In a heart trembling open Under the Mercy.

Artist Statement

This poem emerged after I attended last year's Texas Right to Life convention. I was seeking an artful way to express the pain and possibility I felt to the pro-choice Christians I know. The poem speaks to the transcendent value of every human life, however difficult and complex. We are all of us, mother and child, and innocent and guilty, *Under the Mercy*.



Still a Good Life.

by Hilary Beall
Honorable Mention,
Visual (2D)

Artist Statement

For those who may be on the verge of giving up: my past life with depression feels like someone else's life entirely. but this is the truth- it is still a good life. I have been where you are. I plead with you- make your way through. It is still a good life.

Courageous Woman

by Mariam Jones
Honorable Mention,
Visual (2D)

Artist Statement

I painted this while I was pregnant. I wanted something to show that woman are amazing, especially when being open to life! The original has since been donated to my local woman's resource center.



Letter to Mercedes

by Eugene Wynyard
Honorable Mention, Prose

Hello Mercedes,

My name is Eugene. I am your biological father.

You were never born, and I never held you—but I carry you now, in a way I didn't understand back then. I don't know if you knew I existed. I don't know if you searched for me. But I know this: you were real. You mattered. And you still do.

I was born in Rotorua, New Zealand, and grew up in the Bay Of Plenty—places where the waves rolled in like time, where we chased adventure and thought it would never end. At 22, I worked in a music store by day, DJ'd nightclubs by weekend, and lived like tomorrow didn't matter.

That's when I met your mother. She and a friend would stop by the shop most Fridays, flicking through CDs, laughing at our bad jokes, dancing later to the music I spun behind the decks. It was playful, innocent, effortless. The beginning of something I never imagined would lead to you.

In 1995, we were living together when you were conceived. You weren't planned. We were caught off guard—young, unsure, afraid. The world told us we could “try again later,” that this wasn't the right time. So we listened to fear instead of love.

By the time we made the decision, you were already into your second trimester. We drove to Auckland, two-and-a-half

hours in silence. I sat in the waiting room. They wheeled your mother out after the procedure. She was dazed. I was numb. We drove home without a word, as if silence could erase what we'd done.

But it didn't. Not then. Not ever.

We believed abortion was the end of a problem.

We learned it was the beginning of a fracture.

It didn't solve—it split.

It split us apart as a couple, and it tore something deep in me I couldn't name.

A few months later, we ended. And that chapter closed like a door slammed in the dark.

Two decades passed. I buried it. Pretended it didn't shape me. Until one day, someone asked:

“Have you ever been involved in an abortion?”

It was a bomb—detonating twenty years of denial.

And in the blast, I heard something I can never un-hear.

Your cry.

That was the moment I met my Abortion Kryptonite—the soundless scream that broke through the silence, cracked the concrete of my heart, and forced me to remember.

Not the procedure.

Not the pain.

You.

From that cry, a journey began. I followed the fragments. I picked them up, one by one. And it led me here—to the Four Healing Paths of the Unborn Father. Through those steps, I began to understand what I couldn't admit back then:

You were never a "choice."

You were a child.

My daughter.

Mercedes, I thought we could have you later.

But later never came.

Because there is only one you.

And I let you go.

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry we didn't let you breathe air, taste summer, sing your favourite song, or chase your dreams across this strange and beautiful earth.

I'm sorry we listened to the world and not the whisper inside.

I'm sorry we thought you were a problem to be fixed, not a person to be cherished.

I'm sorry I didn't protect you.

I hope I know where you are now—as your spark didn't die—it simply changed form. That's how energy works. And you, Mercedes, were never empty.

Through my journey, I built this space—Your Great Unborn Wall.

It's your place. Your name. Your legacy.

It's not made of bricks or marble, but of truth, healing, and honour.

This is where you are remembered.

This is where I stand.

And this... is my promise to you:

I will not hide from what happened.

I will not forget who you were.

And I will not let silence have the last word.

This is your memorial, Mercedes.

May it light the dark for others, the way your cry lit the way for me.

With all my love,

Dad xxx

Artist Statement

Letter to Mercedes is written from a father to his unborn daughter, whose life was lost to abortion. This letter is the spark that ignited The Great Unborn Wall— (<https://www.thegreatunbornwall.com>) a digital sanctuary where the unborn are honoured and parents are invited to heal, remember, and create a lasting legacy.

It is best read slowly and thoughtfully so you can consider how this letter became a living legacy that re-humanise the unborn and empowers men and women to find hope, help and healing after abortion.

Forgotten One

by Peter Queenan
2nd Place, Music



Artist Statement

A song about social injustice, in its various forms. It's about the 'forgotten ones' of society, those whose lives we don't want to hear about because they disturb us and destabilize our comfort level. This is their song.

Rooting

by Oladejo Abdullah Feranmi
Honorable Mention, Poetry

Softest legs, hardened pace; wading
the marshes of time one step at a time.
You taste life when you inhale with your mouth—
every brittleness, every gust that never knew storm,
rushing to the tunnel of your breath,
finding light in your lungs; breeze swaying
the leaf alveoli to the rhythm of dandelions.

Like sleeping time that dreamt of spring
forgetting how crusty autumn lips were,
eyes hollow into nightmares, dragging behind
a bag of tears. But the emptiness of some days
is not enough. The day forgets its ray hands,
and nothing soft might touch you until life
chases the sun into the west,
hoping your eyes can gaze just outside the tunnel
of the horizon into something new.

The meadows resurrect those who remain.
Everything else is rooting for you.
But you can still walk into something new,
let your steps fall into yourself and forget
how long a shadow can be, enough to slip
into every tomorrow you approach.

The Antiphons of Embryogenesis

by Sarah Burchart

Honorable Mention, Poetry

O Wisdom, ordering the end of potential and the beginning of fusion and life,
Come and teach us Your presence even as a single-celled zygote.

O Adonai, whose cleavage flourishes a vibrant flame
yet stays steady like the burning bush,
Come and lead love to mature in us.

O Root of Jesse, whose junctions compact into the ensign of humankind,
Come and deliver us from our vain pilgrimage to decay.

O Key of David, whose scepter differentiates and appoints each cell to its purpose,
Come and liberate those graded and found wanting,
open the gates for those shut in stasis.

O Dayspring, whose inner cavity is not formless and void but an enlightened axis of symmetry,
Come and share Your shining splendor.

O King of the Nations, whose hatching prepares the next steps in Your pilgrimage for us,
Come and preserve the cornerstone of unity between mother and child.

O Emmanuel, anointed to implant in this stable place before reaching the stable of Bethlehem,
Come and plant in our hearts the hope of Your salvation.

Artist Statement

The biblical narratives read by Christians during the Advent and Christmas seasons always lead me to reflect on how Jesus Christ's assumption of human nature did not begin at birth, but is recognized even while He was in the Virgin Mary's womb as an embryo (Luke 1:39-45). While doing some research into the earliest stages of embryonic development, I was struck by a visual chart outlining the activities of the first seven days of embryogenesis. My mind quickly drew parallels to the "O Antiphons,"

those poetic chants reflecting on the titles of Christ traditionally used on the last seven days of Advent (and further popularized by the hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"). This poem seeks to reimagine those roles and their connotations presented in the O Antiphons with the processes of fertilization, cleavage, compaction, differentiation, cavitation, zona hatching, and implantation – and how Christ identified with us even through the overlooked earliest days of human gestation.



Heart of Life: Fragile Beginnings

by Haley Hartsfield Spencer
Honorable Mention, Visual (2D)

Artist Statement

This piece is acrylic on recycled canvas. Earth life began in the ocean. Like the surface of our planet, our bodies are 80% water. Water is life, quite literally. It is in the depths of salt water that our oldest ancestors were formed, and we are still to this day formed in the dark salt-water wombs of our mothers.

This piece honors the common origins of all life and the value to all lives that our oceans serve.

Artist Statement

The quote "live simply so others may simply live" is attributed to multiple people including Elizabeth Ann Seton (who I think is the originator). Either way it's a quote that has always struck me as profound as well as itself being simple. It evolved into this reggae style song.

Living Simply

by Peter Queenan
Honorable Mention, Music



I Dreamt I Saw

by Peter Queenan
Honorable Mention, Music



Artist Statement

This song is about the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians and was written during the invasion of Gaza after the October 2023 attack. The lion is Israel that tries to eliminate the Palestinians out of the land that they wish to fully occupy, but the brutality of their efforts makes it

hard to sympathise with their cause. The vixen represents the Palestinian people, but their problem is that they have repeatedly refused to accept a two state solution as recommended by the United Nations. Finally the United States is mentioned for failing to help bring about a just solution.

My Brother's Keeper

by Audra Buchmiller

Honorable Mention, Poetry

Who am I, that you would deem me worthy?
Worthy of drawing my first breath.
Worthy of being safe and warm.
Worthy of defending.
Worthy of walking down the street unbothered.
Who am I that you would do anything to protect me from those who wish me harm?
Do anything to hold me and bring me comfort-not hasten my death.
If your answer to either of these questions is, "I don't know," or, "I don't care,"
Or, "You are not worthy, you are a burden. You are no one, you are no-thing, to me,"
Then I ask, who am I not to you?
Who am I not to you that you would deny me life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?
Who am I not that you would withhold a safe haven, a warm bed, and food for my body and soul?
Who am I not that you do not come looking for me?
Who am I not that you would rip me from existence, and equate me with trash?
Who am I not that you would turn a blind eye to my removal from your world, or the only home I've ever known?
Who am I not that you care nothing for my dignity, refusing help in my time of need?
Who am I not that you would say, "That's what you get," or "That's what you deserve?"
And if, whether through ease or discomfort, you answer, "You are not my problem,"
"You are not my responsibility," "You are not me,"
Though I, too, am *here* and I, too, am *human*, then tell me- who are you?

Artist Statement

I wrote the first draft of this in less than five minutes one day after reading stories of ICE rounding people up, and the White House releasing sounds of people being deported as ASMR. I've been appalled by how people are responding. I've been angry with the lack of respect for the dignity of the human person, and collective responses, on so many levels for quite some time: abortion, assaults and vilification of POC/racism, the missing and murdered indigenous women crisis, euthanasia/assisted suicide, capital

punishment, lack of resources for the poor and perpetuated cycles of poverty, human trafficking, etc. The most grievous offense to me has been seeing and hearing people that I know, that profess to believe in and follow Christ, echoing support and defense of some of these very atrocities. You cannot profess to be a follower of Jesus and then continually harm or destroy those who are made in his image and likeness, either through direct action or inaction. It is the antithesis to who we are called to be: My Brother's Keeper.



One Voice, Burning for Freedom

by Natalia Recinos Chang
*Honorable Mention,
Visual (2D)*

Artist Statement

My work is a calligraphic portrait of Yeonmi Park, a North Korean defector and human rights activist.

Treading in Job's Footprints: New Eden

by Bonnie Kallis

Honorable Mention, Poetry

Rising from the clutter of broken promises
and unfinished projects she finally stood to make her way past
the electrified barbed-wire fence—gingerly and cautiously—
at first.

And despite the barbs of her doubts and the clamoring criticisms of others,
She made it through.

Stunned, she moved slowly at first,
but suddenly found herself racing (considerably faster than she had in years).
Until she plunged through to the lush other side—to an amazing cornucopia:
Drooping vines of plump grapes, glistening oranges with their sticky-sweet smell
engulfing the air—everything alive and vibrant.

She had arrived.

Artist Statement

This work chronicles the traumatic harm caused when one's church turns its back on abuse.

