

CREATE | ENCOUNTER



MARCH 2021

**5TH ANNUAL CREATIVE ISSUE
OF LIFE MATTERS JOURNAL**

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Video winners are published at rehumanizeintl.org/create-encounter.
Alternatively, you can scan the QR codes below for a direct link.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

Though only half a year has passed since our previous edition of *Create | Encounter*, so much has happened in the world! As always, I am honored to be in a position to share with you all such insightful art during these turbulent times.

I loved the wide range of submissions we received this year. Our winning pieces cover the gamut of Consistent Life Ethic issues — from the recent federal death penalty spree, to disability-selective abortions, to generational trauma from war, and more.

All of our submitters really showed up and showed out this year; our judges certainly had a tough job. I am grateful to all who chose to participate, and I hope that you enjoy this 2021 edition of *Create | Encounter*.

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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and Editor-in-Chief of
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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.

Song of Sarajevo

by Mallory Nygard

1st Place, Poetry

Best in Show

When Gavrilo shot the Archduke
as he rode unknowingly in his funereal motorcade,
the heir's blood a blooming poppy on his chest,
he surely did not anticipate
that the trigger pulled on the pale gray morning
would induce me to sit shaking
in my linen closet,
door closed and lights off,
wrapped in a worn comforter
trying to dredge my soul back into my bones,
one bitter February evening a hundred years later.

An unbroken line of broken fathers
was born from the bullet
fired that Sunday in June.

Did Gavrilo know that the shot would echo
echo every day in the hearts of men
as they wrestled with their bloodied shoulders and short-
sightedness?

I hold his bullet in my hand
and carry it with me through four moves,
never quite losing it among the packing tape and boxes.

Until one afternoon, in a different darkened closet,
I sit knee-to-knee with a man
whose power I resent but cannot dismiss
who asks me to release my clenched fist.

At his end, the damp and the rats
had made sure Gavrilo didn't even
have a fist to unclench.

On my way out the door
I dip my opening hand in the water
to be blessed, and with the softest slump,
the steel weight of my father's unhappiness
settles at the bottom of the basin
to wait and to rust.

Artist Statement

Song of Sarajevo

I wrote "The Song of Sarajevo" to reckon with the generational trauma that results from war. My family history played out in the path of the First and Second World Wars, and the more I looked into my own life, the more I saw how I am still paying the cost of a war that I never chose to be a part of.

Last Meals

by Kaine Spatak

2nd Place, Visual (2D)

Artist Statement

Last Meals

These are the last meals reported of three death row inmates in 2020. Food brings us sustenance, but it also brings community and culture — this makes us human. For those on death row, food functions as one of the last moments of connection, and it is important that we “rehumanize” people when we think of the comfort and connections we build around our meals.

Brandon



Donnie



Nathaniel





The Battle

by Joyce McCauley-Benner
Honorable Mention, Visual (2D)

Artist Statement

The Battle

I first created this piece after having my son (the baby in the pic is him) as a college student. The abortion pill was just becoming more widely available in the US at that time (1999/2000) and it was seemingly the “better” option for women versus surgical abortion.

However, abortion has always been a capitalistic venture, hence the dollar bill reflected behind the image of the bill. I wanted this reality to be juxtaposed against the reality of the child in the womb--so I pasted in an image from a doctor working on a child within the womb--you can see that baby’s arm reaching out...that baby will grow to become the child outside of the womb. Yet, many fail to see the humanity of the child within the womb. I wanted that connection to be more evident.

Finally, there is the agony of the mother, who is carrying stress, and any number of emotions and expectations.

This is the complexity of the abortion “Battle.”

The Last Supper

by Nick Sansone

1st Place, Prose

FADE IN:

1 INSERT: IPHONE SCREEN

1

A dimly-lit iPhone screen displays a scanned picture of a MOTHER (34) and her two-year-old DAUGHTER playing on a farm.

After a moment, a slim finger swipes left and we see this same mother and daughter on a playground, smiling, happy, care-free...

Another swipe left and we see the mother and daughter posing for a picture with the FATHER (34) in a pumpkin patch...

After a moment, an ALARM CLOCK BLARES and we see we are in...

2 INT. AIRBNB - BEDROOM -- EARLY MORNING

2

A medium-sized tri-level house in Terre Haute, Indiana that's being rented out as an Airbnb. The space feels empty, impersonal, as if imitating the look of a bedroom without actually feeling like one.

LILLY MCALLEN (17) drops her phone on the ground next to the small trundle bed she's sleeping on. She groans, leans down, and picks it up.

After a moment, she gets up off the bed and walks down the hallway to where her father, TOM MCALLEN (late 40s) is in the master bedroom, reaching to hit the snooze bar on the alarm clock. She stares at him, exhausted and annoyed...

LILLY

You know you could have just used your phone alarm, right?

TOM

Sorry. Didn't think about it.

Lilly just rolls her eyes, turns on her heel and walks toward the main bathroom.

3 INT. AIRBNB - BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

3

Lilly slides the shower curtain open and turns on the shower.

She's wearing a decades-old short-sleeved bathrobe and appears tired, sullen, a sense of dread about her, her right forearm displaying scars from past self-mutilation...

5

Just then, her cell phone buzzes.

Startled, she turns to check her phone, seeing a text from EMMA reading, "Hey, it was nice to talk to you in class! If you don't mind me saying this, I think you're really cute."

Lilly quickly presses the "Call" button on Emma's contact info and puts the phone to her ear.

LILLY

Hey, Emma, can you talk for a minute?

Lilly listens for a moment, then laughs, blushes, and smiles sweetly.

LILLY

I just wanted to say...I think you're really cute too...

(listens)

Yeah, I'm in Indiana right now... it's my mom's --

(listens)

Yeah, I mean, this is literally the last time I'll ever see her.

(listens)

Thanks so much, that...means a lot.

(listens)

Yeah, absolutely, I'll...I'll let you know when I'm back home, okay?

(listens)

Thanks again. Bye.

Just as Lilly hangs up, there's a knock on her door.

TOM (O.S.)

How's it going in there?!

LILLY

Fine!

TOM (O.S.)

Alright, we don't have all day!

As she hears him walk away from the door, Lilly sighs deeply.

Lilly, wearing a dark blouse and jeans, comes out of the bathroom and walks down the small set of stairs toward the living room, where she is immediately greeted with the voice of a

CABLE NEWS ANCHOR:.

CABLE NEWS ANCHOR (on TV) (O.S.)
-- At the United States Peniten-
tiary in Terre Haute, Indiana,
Lara McAllen is scheduled to be
executed this evening. After being
sentenced to death back in 2009,
McAllen will make history tonight
as the first woman to be executed
by the United States government in
over sixty-five years --

Upon hearing this, Lilly quickly tenses up and turns to her
father, who is in the kitchen making scrambled eggs and toast.

TOM
(nodding to the TV)
Remote's over there.

Lilly just shakes her head and marches over to the TV, she
grabs the remote and shuts it off. She then takes a deep
breath and walks over to the kitchen.

5 INT. AIRBNB - DINING ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

5

Lilly sits down at the dining room table as Tom puts two piec-
es of buttered toast on a paper plate and sets the plate down
in front of her.

She just sits there, staring at the plate as Tom puts the
scrambled eggs on another paper plate, turns around and sets
it down in front of her. He then pauses after noticing her
just blankly staring...

TOM
Well? You gonna eat?

Lilly looks up slightly, shakes her head, and then goes back
to staring into space.

TOM
You need to eat, Lil.

Realizing that she's going to have to eat one way or another,
Lilly takes a small bite of her toast and then sets it down
on the plate, mind still elsewhere...

Tom then pours himself a bowl of cereal with milk and sits
down across from her. Everything is silent for a long moment.

TOM
(trying desperately to make conversation)
So who were you talking to in the bathroom earlier?

LILLY
This girl I like.

Tom smiles and nods.

TOM
What's her name?

LILLY
Emma.

TOM
Is she nice?

Lilly nods.

TOM
That's good.

She and Tom both eat silently for another long moment. Then...

TOM
So how long have you known Emma?

LILLY
Oh my God, do you want me to eat or do you want me to just sit here and tell you about my whole fucking social life?!

Tom sighs and shakes his head.

TOM
I'm just trying to have a normal father-daughter conversation --

LILLY
Which of course you decide to do now instead of, like, any other time in the last thirteen years --

TOM
God, please don't go there --

LILLY
I heard you tell Hailey that you wish I had never been born.

Tom opens his mouth to respond but then shuts it as he slowly realizes what Lilly is referring to. He then puts his head in his right hand and attempts to avoid Lilly's burning stare.

TOM

All I told her was that things would have been a lot easier if your mother and I had never met --

LILLY

And if I had never been born.

Tom slowly looks up and meets Lilly's stare.

LILLY

It's okay. Half the people at school wish I was never born.

TOM

Don't say that --

LILLY

It's true. They think I'm the literal spawn of Satan.

TOM

Emma doesn't.

LILLY

Well, Emma's special.

Those words linger in the air for a moment. Then...

TOM

What does she think about all this?

LILLY

Other than feeling sorry for me? Not much. At least to her I'm more than just the girl who's mother got involved with a crazy cult and killed a bunch of people.

Tom nods in understanding. Lilly picks up her fork again and continues to eat. Another long moment passes. And then...

LILLY

You think she'll finally admit that what she did was wrong? You know, when we see her?

Tom shakes his head.

TOM

All I've been praying for the last thirteen years is that she'll repent and show some freaking remorse. She won't though. She'll sit on the gurney in that chamber spewing the same crap she spewed to the parents of those dead kids in the courtroom --

LILLY

But I'm just saying...she's going to die. She doesn't have anything to lose now.

Tom takes a deep breath.

TOM

Lilly, when you've been brain-washed as badly as your mother, there's no going back.

This hits Lilly hard. She fights back tears.

LILLY

I just want...I just want to know her like she was before --

TOM

She was the same woman before it as she was after. She just hid it better before.

Editor's note: this prose piece has been abbreviated due to limited printing space. The rest of "The Last Supper" is published online at rehumanizeintl.org/create-encounter.

Artist Statement

The Last Supper

The initial idea for this short screenplay was inspired by the story of Lisa Montgomery, the only woman with a federal death sentence (who was executed on January 13, 2021). Through the writing process, I became more interested in exploring the social and psychological effects of capital punishment on the families of death row inmates through a specific, personal lens, and ended up focusing the story on the teenage daughter of a female

death-row inmate about to be executed. In this screenplay, which takes place immediately prior to her final visit with her mother, I seek to capture the emotional turmoil that the aggressive systemic violence of capital punishment has on one particular individual, as well as the failure of retributive justice to provide closure and emotional healing to the families of those involved.



Tree of Life

by Haley Spencer
1st Place, Visual (2D)

Artist Statement

Tree of Life

Seeds can't form from scars.
Every fragile branch cut short-
Halts generations.

This Tree of Life piece (painted with acrylics on two 10" x 20" canvases) was created as a gift to the Marshall Pregnancy Resource Center. The imagery of the sprout demonstrates the fragility and potential of new life. Two canvases were combined to represent the two parents needed to create life and

their partnership and unison needed to complete the image. The circle represents the protection of a mother's womb, as well as the unending circle of natural life and death. The rows of "seeds" add texture to the background and symbolize the countless generations that must have aligned in perfect harmony for every new person to be created. As my grandmother says, "there is too much fate in a pregnancy."



Visitation

by Rosemarie Tischer Stith
1st Place, Visual (3D)

Artist Statement

Visitation

As a very young child, Rosemarie Tischer Stith lived through Allied firebombings in what became East Germany. Fleeing west to escape the Russians, Röschen (“Little Rose”) and her family settled as refugees in Schleswig-Holstein, where her parents built a home in the dunes of the North Sea. After meeting her future husband, Richard, in Berlin in 1969, Rosemarie found her way into the art world in New Haven, Connecticut. There she threw innumerable clay vessels on the potter’s wheel. Similar pieces were later embellished by hand and assembled as sculptures, such as this one entitled “Visitation.” It shows the pregnant Elizabeth telling the pregnant Mary about the movement in her womb, while Mary remembers the commencement of her own pregnancy.



Everyone Deserves a Birthday

by Rosemarie Tischer Stith
Honorable Mention, Visual (3D)

Everyone Deserves a Birthday

Rosemarie has also done works in cloth, such as this 13-foot-tall, and visibly pregnant, Hispanic-style “gigante,” which strolled down the street in a Valparaiso, Indiana, homecoming parade some years ago. On her back appeared the words “EVERYONE DESERVES A BIRTHDAY”, while a birthday cake was carried in front of her and birthday party goers handed out candy bearing the same slogan to the crowds on each side of the street.

Editor's note: Due to limited printing space, we could not fit the full text of our Prose Category Honorable Mentions. Below, we have published brief excerpts. These pieces in their entirety can be read at rehumanizeintl.org/create-encounter.

Serendipity (Excerpt)

by Grace Malinee

Honorable Mention, Prose

At this stage, it would likely be a matter as simple as taking a couple of pills, and perhaps a day off work. Or perhaps just spending her first day of Christmas break on the couch with a heating pad.

Simple.

After all, it was safe, it was legal.

At least that's what she told the students. And the [Women's Resource Center] volunteers whom she trained, should any scared and panicked girl come seeking their counsel and a free pregnancy test of her own.

But as often as Colette had told students to repeat those words, to tell their peers that

it was no big deal, that it would all be over soon, or that it was a simple fix, really —

At that moment, she couldn't convince herself to believe the same.

As much as the image of a scared under-grad girl walking into the clinic to do something about her situation filled her with a sense of relief, she realized then that the image of *herself* walking into that very same clinic and asking for two pills in a brown paper sack filled her with nothing but a dread and anxiety far greater than her fear of what the pregnancy tests perched on the back of the toilet were about to tell her.

Not My Choice (Excerpt)

by Beth Fox

Honorable Mention, Prose

She tried to comprehend what was happening, but she was only catching snippets of what the doctor was saying.

"...may be Spina Bifida... should have miscarried... rare complications..." Filled with fear and sorrow, Rhonda looked back to the monitor. She looked at her child and moved her hands to protectively cover her abdomen. She didn't understand how this man could be talking about her child in this way. Her baby was very tiny and unmoving, but she looked perfectly formed from her little head to her tiny toes.

Rhonda was looking for anything, other than the size, that was noticeably wrong

with this beautiful child, when the doctor's next words sent a shock of terror through her. "...fatal anomalies... schedule a termination..." Confusion swept back in. Had he just recommended abortion for this child she'd carried for months and was so madly in love with?

She shook her head and echoed the word aloud, "Termination?"

"At this point," the doctor responded, "your most merciful option would be to terminate. It is not likely that you'll be able to carry this pregnancy to term. If you do, the child will have such severe disabilities, she won't have a life worth living."

子宮内生命尊重の俳句・短歌

Haiku and Tanka Respecting In-Utero Life

by Stephanie Midori Komashin

2nd Place, Poetry

Japanese (Hiragana)	Japanese (Rōmaji)	English Translation
子宮の子 細胞分裂 えらいよね	<i>Shikyuu no ko, saiboubunretsu erai yo ne.</i>	Child in child's palace,* your cell division so impressively capable!
胸キュン! 御利巧ちゃんの 心音だ	<i>Munekyun! O-rikou-chan no shinoto da!</i>	My chest tightens (from emotion)! It's the sound of the heartbeat of my well-behaved, clever little one!
<i>To children separated by miscarriage:</i>		
お付き合い 短時間でも ありがとう	<i>Otsukiai, tanjikan demo, arigatou.</i>	For keeping me company, even for a brief time, arigato.
皆の価値 遺伝子なんて 無関係 掛け替えのない 貴重な命	<i>Mina no kachi idenshi nante mukankei. Kakegae no nai, kichou na inochi.</i>	Everyone's value has zero relationship to anything like genes. Irreplaceable, invaluable lives.
必要の ない人間は いないんだ 唯一の胎児 ヒトは皆人	<i>Hitsuyou no nai ningen ha inain da. Yuitsu no taiji, hito ha mina hito.</i>	An unnecessary human: there aren't any. Utterly unique fetuses: all humans are persons.

* The Japanese word for "uterus" [子宮] literally means "child's palace" [子+宮].

Haiku syllables are 5, 7, 5 and tanka syllables are 5, 7, 5, 7, 7 in the Japanese.

Artist Statement

子宮内生命尊重の俳句・短歌

Haiku and Tanka Respecting In-Utero Life

After experiencing miscarriage, I have heard and read many unintentionally inconsiderate, as well as intentionally impolite, comments made to me and fellow members of the baby loss community, each of which seem to convey a socio-cultural view that overlooks or minimizes the uniqueness and irreplaceability of humans in utero. This, in turn, exponentially increases isolation and pain for the born people who love and miss them. Sadly, many people devalue human lives by misconstruing them as disorganized and undeveloped rather than intricate and self-directed, by suppressing accurate sexual education and body literacy so that women find themselves surprised to hear an embryo's heartbeat, by considering earlier miscarriages less tragic than later ones

or claiming that a particular baby can be replaced by subsequent siblings, by pressuring parents to abort based on prenatal testing results, or by expressing that certain existing humans are unneeded on this planet. I have aimed to express that, in reality, nobody can replace or make up for the loss of another because every individual human life is equally valuable, and to communicate this through a Japanese linguocultural perspective. Out of my own experience, and in response to a differently-abled person questioning, "Are we really unnecessary humans?," I hope that these words hearten those who have been hurt by callousness, rudeness, and even verbal abuse from medical professionals, well-meaning relatives and friends, and discourteous strangers.



La Monarca

by Maeve Gilheney-Gallagher
2nd Place, Visual (3D)

Artist Statement

La Monarca

"La Monarca" was inspired by the migrants and refugees who have had their lives forever changed by the cruel and racist policies the U.S. government enforces through I.C.E. A carceral system does not increase safety and decreases quality of life for the many people who come to the U.S. in hopes of finding stability and opportunity. The monarch butterfly has become a symbol of immigrant rights because it is known for its migratory patterns; travelling peacefully across North America without concern for man-made borders.

She Has No Voice

by Citlalin Ossio
2nd Place, Prose

The first thing She hears are raised voices, echoing off unseen walls. Her eyelids are heavy and her mind is so tangled, She can't distinguish the words being thrown across the room. Something cold and heavy clings to the skin around her ankle and when She gains the strength to open her eyes She realizes it is a metal chain. Her head, her whole body, is difficult to move, but her gaze follows the linked iron and stops on the ones who hold it.

Two human Judges sit behind a gold accented, white full bench and both wear glistening white deer skulls for heads. The Judge on the right is distinguished from the other by his majestic antlers.

It is only then that She takes in the courtroom. It is a circular room with leafy vines clinging to white stone as they crawl up the walls, stopping short of the round glass ceiling, where early blooms of light pink roses frame the window. The sweet scent of the blossoms wafts weakly through the air. Stained glass windows paint rainbows on a white marble floor and make the gold accented furniture sparkle. It is truly beautiful. Too beautiful to be a courtroom. And why was She in the criminal's chair?

On her left, prosecutors shout, bone scraping bone as their sharp teeth slam together, and on the right counselors shout back. She looks back at the Judges. They don't notice her, too engrossed in the screaming match before them. The others don't see her because they are too busy arguing.

"She trespassed into their land!" shouts a prosecutor, his tone as sharp as each of his three thousand teeth. "She deserves death."

Death? Panic sets in her heart and She opens her mouth to speak but her throat stings and no words come out. Ah, that's right. She remembers.

She had been told to go to the Judges' house for they would protect her, during her

time of refuge. So She trusted them when they gave her to drink. It burned going down and her eyelids grew heavy. The potion worked its magic instantly. They stole her voice when she drank from their glass cup. Now the song she had inherited was gone and she was a criminal. But for what?

"Nonsense!" counters a counselor. It is impossible to know she is barring her fangs without the low growl emanating behind her wolf skull. "She is seeking refuge."

A second prosecutor steps forward, the ends of his gray tusks pointing towards the ceiling. "If we accept her, we must accept everyone. We do not know what danger she will bring."

"You do not know what hope she will be," chirps his opponent, a bird skulled counselor.

"We have enough problems as it is, we don't need another. Our resources are limited. If she lives, she'll only suffer."

"If she was even alive to begin with," says the Shark. "Why should we believe she is who she claims? It could be a mask, a shell, hiding nothing but dust and shadow."

The Wolf says, "You'll say anything to get what you want."

"You're no different."

She draws her attention from the screaming match to her bare feet and to her relief wiggles her toes. The poison is wearing off, soon her voice will return and then they'll hear her, they'll see her.

The cool tile makes the plant of her feet sweat, so She moves her foot, and the chain follows. The Judge Without Antlers must feel it because she looks at her. She sees me. But at the sound of the gavel the Judge Without Antlers looks away and the shard of hope She has disappears.

With a booming voice the Judge With Antlers says, "Bring the witnesses."

Two witnesses appear on either side of her. The first wears a ram skull with spiraling horns and the second has the skull of a lion with four sharp canines and each holds a staff. Mage prophets.

"Give your testimony," orders the Judge With Antlers.

The Lion speaks first, "I have sought council with the moon and sea and have heard her laughs. I have smelled the sweet fragrances of the fruits she will bear."

His words get a rise out of the prosecutors and cheers from the defense.

She hopes again that her innocence will be proven.

The Judge With Antlers hits the gavel for order and the Ram steps forward. "I have sought council with the sun and the earth. I have heard her cries to heaven and breathed the smoke of the fires she will set."

A commotion breaks out at her prophecy. It is so chaotic She can hardly discern any words. The Judge With Antlers bangs the gavel but he is ignored.

She shakes her leg and the chain rattles. The Judge Without Antlers glances in her direction but her gaze does not linger.

She saw me, she did.

The gavel echoes in the hall and She knows what to do. With all her strength she stomps her chained foot. *Thump-thump. Thump-thump.* It rings louder than the gavel and after a collective gasp, silence finally falls in the courtroom. All eyes are on her now. Has she finally made them understand?

"You said the potion would numb her. You said she would feel no pain." It is the first time the Judge Without Antlers has uttered a word.

The Elephant says, "It is a trick! Some form of twisted magic. It means nothing."

No! She screams, but no one hears. *That's not true.*

The Bird shrieks, "It is proof! What more do you want?"

"She is a criminal," bellows the Elephant. "It shouldn't exist!"

Why? What did I do wrong! She gathers every ounce of strength to yell, but she remains silent. Her throat is on fire. She has no voice.

They move to their closing statements.

The Wolf says, "She is alive. She may cause harm, but she may also bring joy. Please give her that chance."

The Shark steps forward. "Honorable Judges, this criminal trespassed into your

home. It is *your* choice how you deal with it."

The gavel rings, each hit louder and heavier than the last. It is the Judge With Antlers that speaks, "We have heard enough. May the executioner come forth. You are all dismissed."

The executioner, draped in all white, almost blends in with the walls. His broad sword shines a reflection on his serpent skull.

She stomps her feet. *They're lying! I am alive!* She screams, but no one hears. She has no voice.

The witnesses and the counselors leave.

They're lying. I'm here.

She hangs her head, her last bit of strength exerted.

Mom. Dad.

Please don't let them kill me.

But they don't hear her. She has no voice.

When She looks up only one judge remains to watch her execution. The Judge Without Antlers. Her knuckles are white from gripping the chain taut, and her daughter sees her fear.

She has no voice, but She hopes her mother hears her words. *I forgive you, Mom. I forgive you. You were lied to. I don't blame you for believing their lies. You were scared. I forgive Dad and I even forgive the liars too, because they were also lied to and they believed the lies.*

"I forgive you." Her words echo against the marble as the sword falls.

I forgive you.

Artist Statement

She Has No Voice

I wrote this experimental piece because I am against abortion but I believe in restorative justice. I don't agree with parents who have aborted but I have compassion for them, especially mothers, because out of fear they believed the lie that abortion is the solution to our problems and specifically for women, our problem of inequality. Also, because I am a fantasy writer I wanted to write about abortion in a fantasy setting.

Portrait of a Young Girl

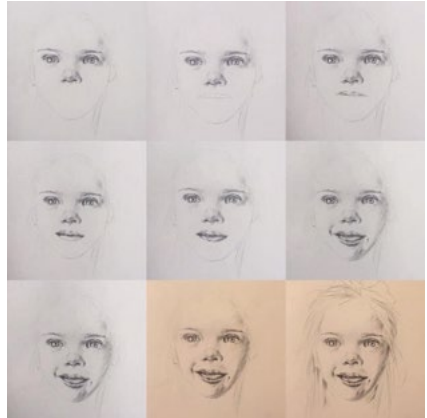
by Hilary Beall

Honorable Mention, Visual (2D)

Artist Statement

Portrait of a Young Girl

After reading about certain countries bragging about their “elimination” of Down Syndrome, I felt heartbroken. I thought about how entire generations of children would be erased, and those left will eventually go “extinct,” because they are seen as lesser. I drew this portrait to remind myself, and others, of the undeniable beauty found within all humanity.



Two Portraits of the Late-Stage Republic

by Michael Jezewak

Honorable Mention, Visual (2D)

Artist Statement

Two Portraits of the Late-Stage Republic

American decadence takes many forms, only two of which are symbolized in “Two Portraits of the Late-Stage Republic.” Addressing the many prongs of American decadence, though, requires overcoming the forces of tribalism and negative partisanship that cloud Americans’ political and moral considerations, and those forces are only exacerbated by the micro-targeted precision of social media algorithms. Thus, simultaneously confronting these two pieces, “Crucifixion by White Ethnonationalism (January 6, 2021)” and “American Herod,” is intended to



provoke self-critical conversations within each of the two dominant political coalitions and among the one body politic in the world’s oldest democracy in existence. Worth noting are two inspirations for the piece(s): Flannery O’Connor, the great 20th-century American writer who defended her Southern Gothic style by explaining that for “the hard of hearing you shout, and for the almost-blind you draw large and startling figures,” and Martha Rosler’s anti-Vietnam War series “House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home.”

Ritual

by Francis Ittenbach

Honorable Mention, Poetry

What more could I have asked of you today;
My bloodstream, had I given you a say
You would have brought a corpse to mind, the weight
Of haunted summers waiting in the wings
To choke the cherry blossoms with amber waves
And desolate another holy thing –

Oh, how I tripped on the selfsame tripwire time
And time again, and thought I'd seen the final day
But never doubted you, Brutus, that damned
Et tu still clanging in my skull.

And I might trip again tonight, I know,
So I'll swallow the blood of heaven, begin to babble

And resurrect a prayer I once knew,
Recite the midnight verdict of my sin.
This pig Latin like summer's chill pursues
A sacred verse I may have known before
Across Atlantic moon-drug waves, the sound
Like something a child might have said, ignored,

These engines' quietus a pregnant pause
Underscored by a penitential sword.
This confession is a cup, a black swan,
Reminding me of rituals and saints,

And relics and relations between hopes
And hatred that I hold and hear in those faint

Wingflaps which bring to mind an image of
The sacrament, the one I run from now,
The picture of a lifelike soot-black dove
Descending, only then to catch a lift
And open into canyons cut from air,
To tremble on the rim then drift away.

Artist Statement

Ritual

This piece is a poetic engagement with self-abuse, both physical and mental, though with an eye toward desiring to move beyond such practices while still being firmly entrenched in such a pattern. Deeply intertwined with mental illness, the poem is a reflection on struggling with the value of one's own life while in the thrall of depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder. It is an acknowledgement through religious motifs and those of the natural world, in verses moving from six to four to two lines with a protean rhyme scheme derived from the early poems of T.S. Eliot, of the deep beauty found when reminding oneself of their inherent worth as a human.

For the Corporeal

by Grace Von Lehman

Honorable Mention, Poetry

We held the hands of Miss Joann
in the cold room where
she died, rosary
wrapped around her eight fingers.
Disabled body in thin pale
skin, woman, “vegetable” green
glass beads graced by mangled grip.

Washed a child’s chapped, rough wrists
at the border, at McAllen,
dusty desert-tracked shoes duct-taped up by
the dark hands of her “alien” father,
now handcuffed. Not enough
they wouldn’t tell her
who they were, where they took him.

Put our hands Up, in July,
fingers clasped in fists thrust high, toward
Tomorrow, justice, upturned palms
where a “thug,” young, Black, placed packs
of chalk, said to write what that world would be.
Thumbs scraped the concrete
with the stubs we had left.

Sifted through debris of disaster
after disaster, deplorable
“them,” hands tied to half-done
hand-outs of ungenerosity, still within
same bones, blood, tissue, skin.
Carnal, carpal reality intertwined,
Inseparable from mine. Yours. Ours.

*Promised when it starts to seem the center cannot hold,
I’ll hold you to me hand in hand with everything I have.*

Artist Statement

For the Corporeal

This poem centers solidarity in physical connection as resistance to semantics that divide and dehumanize. Amid so many abstractions of harmful language, a person’s humanity is undeniable in these moments of tangible recognition.

Lost Language

by Terry Jude Miller
Honorable Mention, Poetry

before we can form words
before we have a mouth
we speak
in the vocabulary of the body

all of us here
all not here
all who are seen
and the unseen
all who are valued
all who are devalued
for lack of sentience
for redefinition into a mass of cells

for those--language betrays them
the rhyme of the scapula
the iambs of flesh

system shut down is initiated
what would have been eyes
what would have been the tongue
what would have been the arms
that reached for a mother

vacuumed away to the realm
of non-personhood

silencing its song
within cremation flames

Artist Statement

Lost Language

Terry Jude Miller is a Pushcart Prize nominated poet from Houston, Texas. His work has been published in scores of publications including the Southern Poetry Anthology, the National Federation of State Poetry Societies' "Encore," the Texas Poetry Calendar, and more. He is a member of the Academy of American Poets and the Poetry Society of Texas. He is the creator of the Texas Poets Podcast.

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