

Questions YOU CAN'T ANSWER

WISDOM & ANTIBODIES

FROM OUR HEROES' VIRTUAL JOURNEYS

QUARANTINE ANTHOLOGY PROJECT
VOLUME 3, 2021

Read and Write Kalamazoo exists to
celebrate and amplify youth voices
through the cultivation of reading and writing skills
via **joy, creativity, equity, and access.**

On March 25th, almost two weeks after Michigan schools closed and one day after the statewide stay-at-home order began in response to COVID-19, RAWK launched the Quarantine Anthology Project:

“Hello RAWKstars! We hope you are all settling in, taking care, and staying creative during the school closure! We’re all in the same situation. Stuck at home, missing our school routines, and our friends. And we don’t know what to expect next, so we have to wait. Now is a great time to write and create, of course! Not only will you keep your skills sharp, but writing about these uncertain times could help get through these next few weeks with kindness, empathy, and gratitude.”

And here we are after a year of living amid a global pandemic. We’ve struggled, we’ve changed, we’ve learned, and we’ve grown. The revolutionary anti-racist organizing and the development and bolstering of community mutual aid we’ve witnessed and experienced over the past year have created massive momentum for change. There can be no doubt that each of our fates are intertwined, and we need to get in right relationship with each other and with change if we hope to move forward.

RAWK’s mission has always been to celebrate and amplify youth voices, but the past year has underscored why we exist and why we’re going to keep working and adapting to support the young people of Kalamazoo. Now more than ever, young people need space to process and express, to explore and grow, and to step into the inherent power of their words and stories.

. . .

The writings collected here were compiled on
March 15th, 2021.

RAWK would like to thank **Anne Hensley** for the time and creative efforts spent in the editing of this anthology, to **Eliseo Blanco** for the main title, and **Jason Conde** for the conception of the Quarantine Anthology Project.

Contents

Jose-Luis Olivo

1

Salvador Blanco

2

Kali Burciaga

3, 4

Yaralecsy Brito-Arevalo

5

Amaya Olivo

1, 6

Adahy Garcia

7, 8

Soleil Valeii

9

Dristynn Riggs

11

Eliseo Daniel Blanco

13, 14

Gus Roman

15

Jack Stefanick

16

Kendall Herrmann

17, 18

Taegan Rademacher

19

Adam Justa

20

Rebecca Ruiviar

21

Malaika Sow

22

Maira Springsteen

23

Caleb Meskin

24

Harper Petke

25

Jacob Milliken

26

Mara Boyea

27

Jacob Williams

28

Anabelle Vargas

30

Tony VanStream

31, 32

Amairany Arevalo

33

Xaydriana Gann

34

Yamilet Brito-Arevalo

35

Regina Castillo-Castaneda

36

Elizabeth Bippley

37

Masha Canfield

38

Giuliana Bush

41

Kailah Gaines-Harris

44

Questions You Can't Answer

Wisdom & Antibodies
From Our Heroes' Virtual Journeys

Horchata

by Jose-Luis and Amaya Olivo

Water first, put it inside the cup
then this — the powder
you need a spoon
mix the water and the powder together
then add the sugar and mix it up
and we're done
Boom — horchata
try it now
1-2-3
Mmm! It's good



Random Stuff

by Salvador Blanco

Can you see into my head?

I can see the future through your forehead.

Dow now now now

da na nowww

when you fart and what's going on in your head

ha I farted

or

I hope no one heard

or

ya someone better smell it then they'll be the one who

dealt it



What I Don't Like About Watermelons

by Kali Burciaga

They look like one of my least favorites, strawberries! They look so juicy and good but they taste terrible. I don't know why! Yesterday I ate a little bit and I still didn't like it at all. I can't say enough about how disgusting they are. Some other words to describe a watermelon: Bleh! Hate!



What I Don't Like About Pop

by Kali Burciaga

They make your mouth sting! When someone says, “pop” to me, the first word that pops into my head is, “little,” because I like it a tiny little bit. Also, you can pop the bubbles in it. I like Sprite a teeny-weeny bit. Sprite looks green because of the bottle, but when you pour it, it isn't!



Aalayah Did Something Embarrassing

by Yaralecsy Brito-Arevalo

There was a time that Aalayah accidentally pooped her pants. This was a time that her sister was going to a sleepover with one of her friends. Keep in mind Aalayah was outside just having fun with the brother of her sister's friend. He was doing cartwheels and she could do cartwheels, too. When they were about to leave Aalayah thought she could hold her poop for just one more second ... but then her poop slipped out to her pants. She felt embarrassed and held her pants until she got to the bathroom. Her underpants were stained and she threw them out and got new ones. She didn't want her mom to know because she was talking to someone.

When she started to poop her pants it felt like a rocket ship ready to blast. She was laughing on the inside but not on the outside because she didn't want her mom to think she was a little bit strange.

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Cookbook

by Amaya Olivo

the first ingredient is a cup
second ingredient is water
third ingredient is powder
fourth ingredient is sugar
fifth ingredient is a spoon
ingredient six is mixing it up



Transformer Instructions

by Adahy Garcia

open the doors to put them back
then take this arm out
then flip it this way
then turn the body
put these arms down when it's closed
open these legs
then boom
yup



Transformer Instructions Continued

By Adahy Garcia

I put both feet to the back
connect both feet which connects the legs kind of
then flip it up
just put the arms up
then put these back and then — hold up
flip these double legs, the tires
then put the arm with the big sword inside the window,
there's a hole in it
and then ... now it's a car



Hector and the Groundhog

by Soleil Valeii

I was flying joyfully and then I flew into a garage and the doors shut and I was trapped. I bonked into the wall plenty of times. I fell to the ground and I spread my wings and I flew around the garage looking for a weak spot. I saw tools and a big base. I heard groundhogs whistling, birds singing. It was scratchy and hard. It smelled like dust and it tasted like dust.

Then a small, fat groundhog came in and said, “You stuck?”

And I said, “Yeah.”

And the groundhog said, “Live in a log. There are a lot of logs, they all have bugs.”

I said, “Thanks,” and asked the groundhog, “What is your name?”

“Wilbur,” said the groundhog. “What’s yours?”

“I’m Hector.”

“Cool,” said the groundhog.

Wilbur said goodbye and left.

I blinked my bright eyes, feeling joyful. “I like my new friend,” I said. “I hope Wilbur comes back.”

And then I found a big log and I pecked and pecked with my long beak. I’m so good at pecking wood because I’m a woodpecker. Finally I made a hole that I could fit in and found some bugs and ate them. I laid down in a comfortable spot of my new home and fell asleep.

The next morning I woke to the sound of the groundhog rustling and I said, “Hi!” in a kind voice.

And he said, “Hi!” And then he asked, “Do you want to play?”

I said, “Sure.” We ran around and tagged each other for three hours. We laughed and sat down. And then I said, “I’m tired,” and we took a nap together.

When I woke up it was six o’clock in the morning. I woke up Wilbur and flew to the window and shouted, “It’s snowing!”

And Wilbur said, “Why you so excited? You can’t play in it!”

I said, “Just wait.” I saw the man go into the garage every year and get sleds so I knew I could get out when he came in the garage.

Three hours passed and then a tall man with brown, curly hair swung open the garage door. I felt excited because I was going to be free. The man got some sleds and I dashed out the door. I went by the garage and found my nest at the tippy top of the tallest tree in the yard.

Me and Wilbur stayed friends. We loved to play tag, hide and seek, and some ball tag with some balls we found. I gave Wilbur some worms that I caught and he didn’t like them. He puked and Wilbur and I laughed. One year later, I had three baby birds. Wilbur had five baby groundhogs. Our babies became friends and we would always hang out with each other and Wilbur would ride on me while I flew to the beach.

The Secret Behind the Dog

by Dristynn Riggs

One day Katey was playing with her dog. Her brother walked in the room and said, “Dinner’s ready, Katey!”

Then Katey replied, “OK.”

They were sitting at the dinner table and then suddenly — bam! — the shelf in the other room fell. They had to discuss who it was. Katey said, “What if it was the dog?” she asked.

Her mom said “No, honey, he didn’t. We just got him.”

Then Katey said, “OK.”

The next day at lunch — bam! — the TV broke. Nobody heard or saw. They moved on to something else.

Then at dinner Katey was waiting for something to happen but nothing did. She was suspicious. Then after dinner her mom said, “If you break the next TV we buy, you are in big, big trouble.”

Katey said “OK, Mommy.”

The next day they got a TV ... it never broke ... the shelves never fell, because the dog was at the vet. Her mom said, “So it was you doing it and you’re blaming it on the dog?!”

She replied, “No I didn’t, I swear!”

When they got rid of the dog, nothing bad ever happened again!

They got a new dog named Camy, the dog was white with black spots. Everybody loved the dog with all their hearts. The dog was already trained, but the dog always broke stuff.

Her mom thought, *Hmmmmmmmmmm what if it's her brother Mike, he's a troublemaker.* Then her mom said, "Mike!"

Mike came in and said, "Yeah?"

She said, "Have you been doing this?"

He said "No!"

She never believed him. They bought a TV but he broke it and her Mom blamed it on Katey. She was grounded for three months. She couldn't leave her room and her brother had to give her food. Three months later Katey broke the TV but she still thought it was her. She was grounded for 12 months. 12 months later she was ungrounded. Nothing ever happened again.

One year later something did happen. Their house caught on fire! They were sitting on the couch when it happened. They called a firefighter. The house cost \$1,000,000,000,000. They were so mad. Three years later they got a \$2,000,000,000 house. Nothing surprising happened ever again.

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Questions You Can't Answer

by Eliseo Daniel Blanco

Are we still dreaming or Are we just a thought?

Is the future Dead or is it happy?

When we die will there be darkness or will it be family?

Is life gonna be worth living or not?

What if we never wake up?

What if there is no light ever again?

Is corona gonna end? (hopefully it does)

What would life be like if everyone was the same?

What if we had no names?

What would we call each other?

Why do we say thank you or please?

What is the reason for rewards?



If I Was From Mortal Kombat

by Eliseo Daniel Blanco

It would be in a newer Mortal Kombat game where I am called Sacred Destroyer. I would have big muscles and a mask kind of like Scorpion but I would have bright eyes. I would be inspired by Scorpion's past and how he dressed but my powers would be really different.

There are a few things I could shapeshift into. I could shapeshift into a dragon, a super-mode, or a person I know, but I would need to know all the details about them. I would also have powers kind of like Johnny Cage's but it would be blue light instead. I would kind of be a mix of Scorpion, Subzero, and Smoke.

Another one of my powers would be raining huge balls of ice covered in spikes with lava inside. When it hits the spikes would pierce and the lava would come out. But then you would go back to normal, like you do in Mortal Kombat.

When there is a tournament I'm part of the Earthrealm team. I can get us a lead and we always win. When the tournament ends and I'm not busy fighting the people from other realms who want to seek revenge on me, I read, do art, play the games made after me called Mortal Kombat, and watch TV.

P.S. If you don't know what Mortal Kombat is, I suggest you Wikipedia it.

Acrostic Poem

by Gus Roman

Dream of freedom for all.

Religion guided him.

Miraculous guy who changed the world.

And he made people think.

Remembered for making it so black and white people
were able to do the same thing.

Trustworthy.

Ideas that are unimaginable.

Noticed by many.

Loved by many.

United people.

Truthful.

Helpful to many people.

Encouraging.

Resented by some.

Kind to others.

Integrative.

Never forgotten.

Gone forever.

Acrostic Poem

by Jack Stefanick

Dreams he dreamed changed the world
Rallying people toward a cause

Marching for freedom
Across the nation
Rule breaker because they weren't fair for all
Tireless in his fight for civil rights
In a time of segregation
Never giving up

Lightning only makes sound if it strikes
Us with the power of bravery
Thoughts towering in his mind
Helping Black lives
Even if he faced the consequences
Resistance was his daily fight

King of protecting lives
In a plague of segregation
Niagara Falls isn't as powerful as his heart, even though
many tried to break it
Giving peace to the world is his legacy

Acrostic Poem

by Kendall Herrmann

Do you have a dream?
Rights should be equal

Maybe we could all get along
All of us together
Right here forever
Today is a change
In all of our hearts
None will be hurt

Let's all think this through, it is the right thing to do?
United, we stand
Tonight we fight, with our powerful words
Here we all are together
Everyone is getting along
Right here, right now

Kindness everywhere
In and out
Not worried
Great people, all of us here together!

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An Ode to Snow

by Kendall Herrmann

Oh snow, Oh snow, you have only made it to my toes
Oh shmicums, Oh shmanckles, now you're up to my
ankles!

Oh shoot, Oh shoot, now you're up to the top of my
boots:(

Oh my, Oh me, now you are up to my knees!

Why, Why, now you're up to my thighs

Oh bumper, Oh shmutton, now you are up to my belly
button!

Oh no, Oh heck, now you're up to my neck!

Oh, now I can't smell a rose, 'cause you're up to my nose!

Don't you dare, Oh great, now you're up to my hair:(

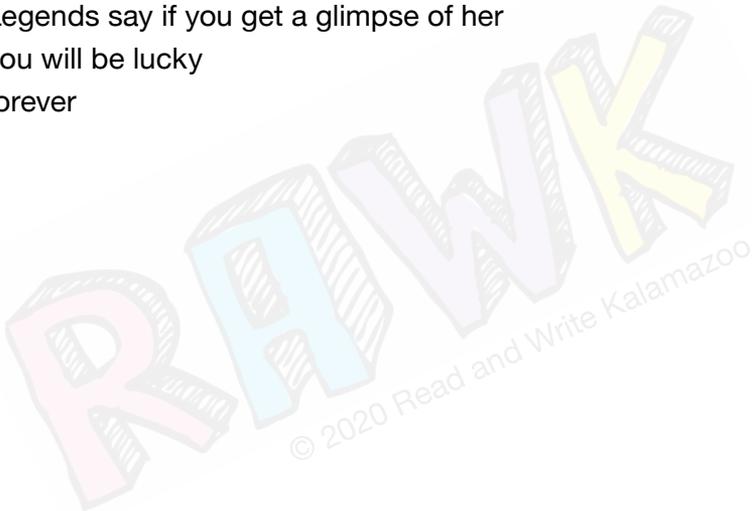


Enchanted Dragon

by Taegan Rademacher

The enchanted dragon
spread her enormous, spiked wings.
Purple, blue, red, and black flashed
through the swirling snow —
falling silently to the ground

Humans have never fully gazed upon or known her beauty
aside from the spectacular color in the sky
She appears,
then disappears in the blink of an eye
It is only in the quiet of the white snow
that a human is lucky enough to see
her magnificent colors show
Legends say if you get a glimpse of her
you will be lucky
forever



Virtual Snow Day

by Adam Justa

Snow, snow, you're so cool
when there's too much
we can't go to school!
In virtual school, when it's snowing
the snow doesn't bother us
we keep the learning, going
by video, ice fishing with our teacher in a shanty!
class must go on all day
we just do it the virtual way.



How to Make Hot Chocolate

by Rebecca Ruivivar

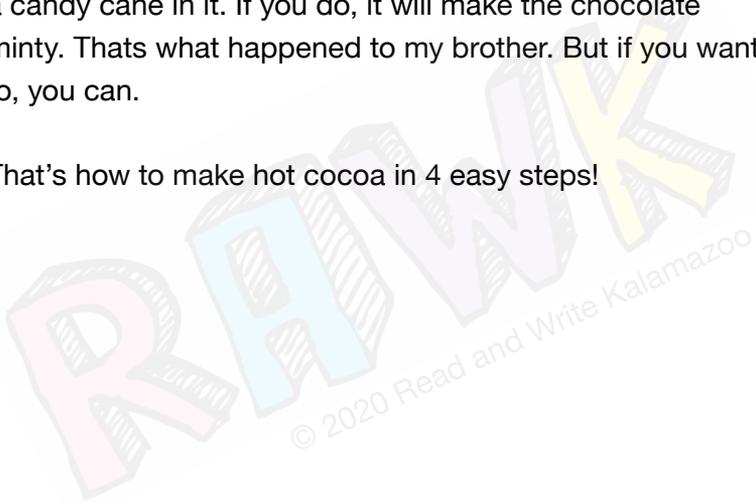
Step 1: Pour in as much milk as you want, as long as you can finish it. Put it in a mug, or a bowl if you want hot chocolate soup.

Step 2: Put the milk in the microwave for 30 or 45 seconds on regular heat. When the milk is done, move on to step 3.

Step 3: For people with chocolate powder or things from a box, pour in 1 or 2 tablespoons of the powder. For people with chocolate syrup, like Hershey's chocolate syrup, pour in 1 or 2 tablespoons of the syrup.

Step 4: Mix until a light brown comes up, or you taste test it and it tastes good. You can put marshmallows in your hot cocoa for a little sweetness. But do not put a candy cane in it. If you do, it will make the chocolate minty. That's what happened to my brother. But if you want to, you can.

That's how to make hot cocoa in 4 easy steps!



How to Win a Snowball Fight

by Malaika Sow

This is how to win a snowball fight. Follow these quick and easy steps.

Step 1: Get a hiding place, maybe like behind a big tree or on the side of your house.

Step 2: Get as much snow as you can and make big snowballs.

Step 3: Once the game has started, maybe find an easy target and throw!

Step 4: If your target comes toward you, start running. If you see snowballs coming at you, dodge or run faster!

Step 5: If you're running out of snowballs, go back to your base and restock.

Step 6: Tag out everyone and be the proclaimed winner.

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Metaphor Me

by Moira Springsteen

Moira is an open book
her life is a story
she is the main character
navigating an interesting plot
can't wait to see what happens next

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Bittersweet

by Caleb Meskin

Holiday break was super fun
I got lots of winter activities done
we went to Bittersweet's powdery slopes
my favorite thing was riding the tow ropes

some like to ski but I like snowboarding

I took a break to sip a cocoa drink
Hot and thick as a chocolate lava lake I think
It was finally time to get back out and ride
I whooshed down the wintry mountainside
my board flies gracefully on to the rails
I'm admired by all the teenage males

At Bittersweet



Kevin's Winter Day

by Harper Petke

Kevin kindly, curiously kicked
snow coated leaves,
and grass kissed by winter's ice
Kevin is my brand new dog
and he sure is nice

He leaped so high
that his paws nearly touched
the shivering clouds in the sky

Slish, slosh, *sloosh* — Kevin pounces
through the mounds of melting snow
he's like a bunny bounding,
leaping wherever we go

I give him my scarf because he looks wet and cold
he shakes it off, shreds it — never doing what he's told
it's almost time to head back inside
leave the cold, blowing winter wind
we step inside for a puppy bone
and a marshmallow, hot chocolate blend

Spring

by Jacob Milliken

When winter is gone and the chills go away
the ice starts to thaw and the snowmen give way
then flowers start blooming,
scary winter storms stop looming

after the winter,
lumberjacks start chopping timber
down the mature trees go
this gives space
for new, young ones to grow

When winter is done
the best feature of spring
Is new baby birds
bringing Earth a new song to sing



Poem

by Mara Boyea

We can do anything we want
Unless it is bad
So set goals and do them
 You be you
 Try new things
 Live life



Bob's Mutant Snowman

by Jacob Williams

“Hello everyone. Today I’m here with Catherine, live on *Who’s your Daddy?* But today we have a guest. Bob. Now, Bob here has a story to tell us about his weird winter vacation. Bob, the floor is yours.”

“OK, so my mom said, ‘Bob, you should take me on a walk,’ so ...”

“This is gonna be good!”

(Catherine sighs.) “Meh.”

“As I was saying, I was taking my mom on a walk during winter vacation. My mom turned over to me and said she was very glad that I was taking her on a walk. I looked over and saw her trying to eat some snow, but she couldn’t see so she was going to eat yellow snow and so I smacked it out of her hand.”

“Hahaha! Bob you have such funny stories, right, Catherine?”

(Catherine sighs.) “Meh.”

“It was so funny, but then I saw something strange. There were weird footprints in the snow. We started to follow them and then through the snow we saw two glowing green eyes. My mom kept walking toward the eyes saying, ‘Grandma, is that you? Where are the cookies at?’”

“When it heard her it turned around and I could see it. It was a mutant snowman! It looked like a snowman, but it had enormous rocks for a mouth shaped in a big smile. It had a long orange nose that was the biggest carrot I had ever seen. It had logs for arms with

branches and it reached its arms out to my mom. She said, 'Did you change your hair grandma?' She reached in her pocket and pulled out her glasses and put them on and what she saw was not her grandma. She immediately fell to the ground and fainted. The mutant snowman felt bad and helped carry her back to our house and baked both of us cookies and in return we told him when summer came he could come back and we would put him in our huge freezer. Well, Jacob, that's ... the end."

"What a great story Bob! Catherine, wake up! I think I might need a new assistant! Alright so that's the end of today's episode of *Who's Your Daddy?* If you want to see more of Bob, go to his Youtube Channel Show *Bob da Man*. Tune in next time to hear about Todd and his man-eating flower friend.



Lila and the Dog

by Anabelle Vargas

Once upon a time there was a girl named Lila. It was a normal school week for her. She had one wish her whole life. She always wished for a dog. On the playground at recess she saw a dog. When she sees dogs at recess, she always goes to the fence and looks at the dog. She also says, "Hi," to the owner of the dog.

One day after walking home from school Lila saw a dog running around. The dog was loose and was possibly lost! She quickly went inside, grabbed some Cheerios and went back outside. She made a path of Cheerios to her back yard. When the dog followed and ate the trail leading to her backyard, Lila quickly shut the gate and trapped the dog in her backyard. The dog was happy checking out the yard.

Meanwhile, Lila was knocking on all the neighborhood doors to look for the dog's owners. She knocked and knocked and knocked. She couldn't find the dog's owners. After knocking on everyone's door for an hour, she was ready to give up and go home. Just then she saw a lady put up a poster. When Lila looked at the poster, she saw the picture of the dog on it! The poster said, "Lost dog. If you find it, please call (123) 456-7890."

She saw that the lady was about to put another poster up but she yelled, "Wait! I know where your dog is!" She showed the lady her backyard and showed her where her dog was. Then the lady went home with her dog and they both lived a happy life.

Like a Star

by Tony VanStrein

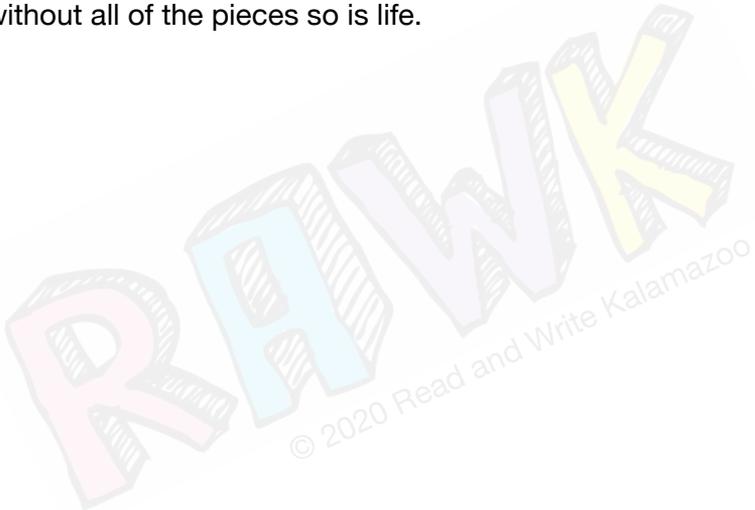
Life is like a star Big and Bright or little and dim. We don't know which it will be but we do know that we can make the best of it. Like a star life can collapse. Like a star people can expand to become a void that sucks in everything including the light of others. Like a star people die so that there's room for others to come. Like a star if we all come together we can shine so bright that all darkness flees. Like a star.



I Hope

by Tony VanStrein

In the future I hope that the hurricane of doubt, guilt, grief, and hatred spreads so that all people can feel those feelings but then become more determined to defeat the hurricane. I hope that the ball of unity blasts the hurricane away. In the future I hope that everybody is accepted. In the future I hope that everyone is kind enough to help one another. I hope one day that a new world is created so that all the creatures both light and dark can make a new balance. I hope that the voids of people extinguish only leaving people and their emotions. I hope that a tidal wave or memories floods this world reminding us of our past and mistakes so that we can learn. I see life like an airplane model. And an airplane model is incomplete without all of the pieces so is life.



The Old Willow Tree

by Amairany Arevalo

I remember growing up going to the lake behind my house. Sitting under the willow tree for hours and hours, just admiring its beauty. The long vines that hung from the branches providing shade on hot dry summer days. All of the little animals that lived in the tree had names like Sammy the squirrel, Baubles the bird, and Chancho the chipmunk. But I think the best part of that willow tree were all of the memories, memories that would have not been made if it weren't for that old willow tree.



Untitled

by Xaydriana Gann

Who are you? What I love about myself is reading and writing and talking things out when I just need to get my whatever-it-is that is stuck inside. What makes me feel proud of myself is helping with my baby brothers and cleaning my room and making my bed.

What do you wanna be? What I want to be is a book writer about animals, any animals and there are specific details and what some people don't know about certain animals, and it could be an animal they have or had in the past, or if they have it now they will need to get it cleaned often, and more about your animal or animals because you can have one or two animals. You could have three or four for all we know.

What gets in the way? One thing that gets in the way is when people correct you but it is the wrong correction. Another thing is not doing what you're told to do right, or not listening, or not participating in what thing or project you are supposed to do.

Thank you so much for reading this.

Braids

by Yamilet Brito-Arevalo

My hair will be handled by my grandmother's hands quickly braiding my hair or making up her own hair styles.

"I remember having long hair like you," she will tell me.

"Really?" is what I will ask.

"Yes." She will tell me the stories of once when she had long hair. The times when she and her sisters would braid or style each other's hair. She will tell me the stories of when she used to braid my mother's hair. All of these stories while she is braiding my hair.



My Smile

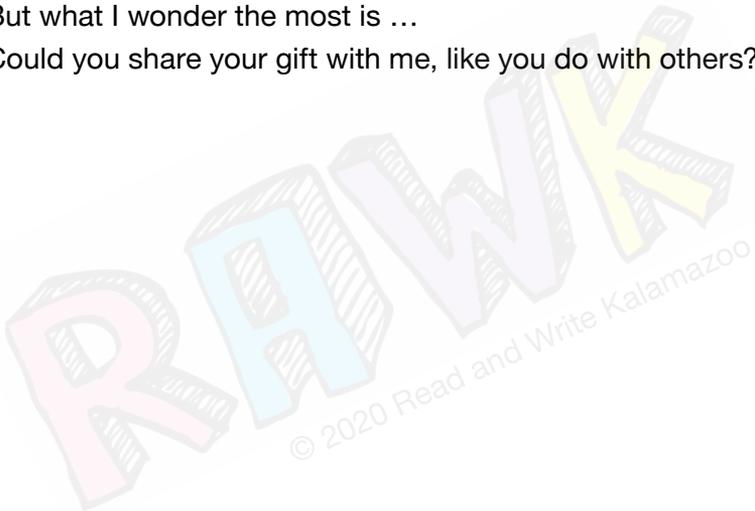
by Regina Castillo-Castaneda

My smile is a crescent moon.
My smile feels like a beam of moonlight;
It is simple, sparkly, subtle.

My smile protects me.
It makes me feel joyful, beautiful, and calm.
But I wonder if my smile is a gift to cover my pain.

I wonder why you were born, my smile.
Was it to protect me?
Are you a wall to keep my pain hidden?
Are you meant to share with people who fill my days?

But what I wonder the most is ...
Could you share your gift with me, like you do with others?



The True Future Of Me

by Elizabeth Bippley

Doing the impossible.

Daring to break.

Break all those barriers for once and for all.

Doing the thing that some think you shouldn't, just because you are a girl.

Doing more than one thing.

Helping millions upon millions through your dream.

Speaking truth.

Helping others.

Doing math and physics.

Daring to do what you want.

President of the United States.

Astronautical Engineer.

Anything ...



The Future.

by Masha Canfield

When I look into the future,
I'm still not sure what the fates hold in hand for me.
I still see myself spreading love,
And understanding those with their own path,
So I can help carry them through life's wonders,
Like a road filled with endless potholes and bumps,
But also intersections,
Crossing with the promise of possibilities.
For then I can share the knowledge,
That I've gained throughout the unfaltering sea called life.
And for the others I meet,
They shall choose to pass it on too,
For then the truths of the world will be met with courage,
Not fear of the unknown.
Like knights we'll rise,
Full of the quake and pride of tomorrow,
Strong as the hope we carry.
For we shall strive to build a better place,
A future full of love and honesty.

The future.

And as we stand tall,
On the shoulders of giants,
The ones that have pushed us to climb this high.
We must not let them down.
For we must leave behind a better past,
Than the pasts before us.

And as we stand resilient,
In the ashes,
That still rings from the memories,
Not forgotten.
From those who extinguished the fire,
Still burning,
From the ashes we build and always will.
And as we stand proud,
Meeting the right and wrongs of us as a people,
Still carrying the bright burning torch of before, now, and
later.
We stand with the brilliant smiles given to us,
Gracing the faces of tomorrow,
Our unwavering perseverance,
Made from the strength we've found,
Molding a path we'll take.
Together we will overcome the new dawn.

The future.

I will surround myself with those whom I love,
The pulling of my needs,
Warmth, kindness, understanding,
They will build the future.
For some shall deny the future.
But I shall meet it towering over my past mistakes,
Proud and strong.
From the ones that have taught me to vanquish my fears,
Back to the pit of darkness and demons.
Hoping,
That one day someone will learn to feed the light to the

monsters too,
Just like I will.

The future.
And the present will be made,
Shaped by the ones who scale the mountains,
Of doubt and uncertainty.
Marked by the ones who open the veil of possibilities to
others,
Educating to bring light to our woes.
Decorated by the ones who bring the small smile of the
sun,
And help drive away the cloud of anger and misery.
Painted by the ones who soothe the mistakes and doubts
of others,
Like angry splats of ink on thick white paper of
vulnerability,
Accompanied by the same array of messes showing,
For we are all the same,
But unique.
Tomorrow will be shaped,
By the ones like you.

The future.
Our future.

For some shall deny the future. But the future shall not
deny me.

Once Upon a Time ...

by Giuliana Bush

How about we write a story
This is a story about a little girl.
A little girl who loves school.
She loves school because she loves to learn.
And she knows education is how she's going to change
the world.
So in the first chapter,
This little girl walks into school one day,
When she is told by her teacher
To stop speaking her home language.
Fala sério, professora.
The very language that rolls off her tongue like a rhythm
Or a sweet song
Her language is ugly.
Her language makes her dumb.
Her language ma —

Wait, no.
Back up. Rewind.
This is a story. That's not right.
Let's start over.
In this story, everything is different
In this story, societies stop oppressing
communities of color
Those who come from nothing and everything
Who are trying to get an education.

In this story, I don't wake up everyday with the weight on

my shoulders
Of the worry
Of my friends getting shot.
In this story, nobody gets left behind.
Nobody gets killed by a gun.
In this story, there are no bombs.
There are no walls.
In this story, my country stops killing black and brown
people.
In their own backyard and abroad.
In this story, none of my classmates get called criminals.

No bullet holes in the protagonist
No blood coming off the hero
In this story, those in power start caring!
And in this story, there are no saviors
Because communities empower themselves
Through their own stories
Told in their own language
In this story, nobody is treated differently,
For having caramel or ebony skin
Because yours is as pale as the headlights on your police
car
And in this story, no one is hated for living outside your
boxes
No one is shot for having a dream
And nobody is arrested for challenging
The demoralizing ways
Of white America
In this story, cultures don't become costumes
In this story we are treated as fully human.

And in this story, our language is rich.

It makes us beautiful.

And it is respected.

Empowering.

Ancestral.

Because this is really just a story

For the little girl

Who could feel her dreams so near

So real.

Possible.

Alive.

So close.

Right ... there.

In this story, a little girl loves herself.

Her body, her skin

Her mind, her hair

She loves her neighborhood.

And her people.

Her land and her language.

And most of all, her future.

Rise Above

by Kailah Gaines-Harris

In Memory of Maya Angelou

They may try to put you down
Because you're not like them
But you don't need to be like them
No matter how hard they're trying to change you
You rise above.

It doesn't matter if you don't look like them
Or if you don't like the same things as them
Because you were born your own way
And they were born their own way.

They're going to try to make you upset
And make you turn against your own thoughts
But you need to support yourself
Don't let them stomp all over you
Instead what you do is
You rise above.

Keep doing what you do best
Don't stop and fall
Work very hard
And be the sun rising above them all.

When you start losing confidence in yourself
Rise.
When you feel like you won't make it
Rise.

When things get hard
Rise.

Rise against all those voices in your head
And those people
Who made you feel like you were behind
And they were ahead.

Rise above
Rise above
Rise above.





Read and Write
Kalamazoo

YOU can support the work of celebrating and amplifying youth voice and assure that more young people in Kalamazoo County get to see their words in print by heading to

[*www.readandwritekzoo.org/how-to-help*](http://www.readandwritekzoo.org/how-to-help)