



CHICAGO COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

Horizons Virtual Showcase

2021



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MISSION STATEMENT

Horizons is a creative writing workshop program dedicated to helping participants find their creative voices through poetry, expressive writing, and storytelling. Horizons seeks to break down the barriers that often exist between people by bringing them together to explore each other's perspectives.

Horizons is about empowerment—both for its writers and those experiencing their work.

Horizons offers creative writing classes twice a month at several transitional shelters and supportive living programs within the Chicagoland area.



Art by: Stolzman Carrie

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The sweetest memories I have
start with my mom.
She was so good to me.
She would always stay close by
She would never leave her children.
Because she said,
we were her life.

She was kind and loving
& knew what to say
when I was feeling down
She was also brave and strong
& taught me to stand up to the bullies who brought me harm.

She wiped away my tear and fears
By telling me – **it will be alright!**

My mom would fill my whole heart
With her kind world and her warm hugs
In my saddest moments
&
In my hardest times
I think of my mother.
&
I feel alright.

Margaret Bingham.
– My Mom



Artist: Olga Walsh

He estado viviendo sin hogar durante diez años.
He conocido las calles de Chicago y Michigan.
No para paseos placenteros.
Si no, por las circunstancias pésimas de la vida que tocó vivir.

Estar sin hogar es demasiado frustrante
Algunas personas me ven como un estorbo
Algo insignificante.
Me ven con desprecio y me gritan frases muy ofensivas

Por eso se me hace muy difícil pedir ayuda
He recibido mucho rechazos - que han dejado traumas en el alma

Por dieciséis años he estado viviendo con diabetes
Pedir ayuda para mantener mi insulina en buenas condiciones.
es necesario para sobrevivir
pero el miedo al rechazo invade todos mis pensamientos.

Nací ciego, pero veo la realidad muy clara.
En mis sueños tengo un hogar
Pero cuando despierto estoy en esta realidad
Y aunque "él hubiera" no existe
me pregunto a mí mismo
"¿Qué pasaría si yo tuviera un hogar?".

Vicente Hernández

I have known the streets of Chicago and Michigan.
Not for pleasurable trips
but because of the terrible circumstances of the life I live.

Not having a home is very frustrating.
Some people see me as a burden,
Something insignificant.
They see me with disapproval and yell very offensive phrases.

That is why it is very difficult for me to ask for help.
I have received a lot of rejections - that have left traumas in my soul.

For sixteen years, I have been living with diabetes
Asking for help to keep my insulin in good condition
is necessary to survive
but the fear of rejection invades all my thoughts.

I was born blind, but I see reality very clearly.
In my dreams, I have a home,
But when I wake up, I am in this reality,
And even though "what ifs " do not exist,
I ask myself
"What if I had a home?"

Vicente Hernandez
Reflection of my truth



Artist: Carrie Stolzman

Sunshine after the rain.
Somebody, please put this time capsule away, full of pain.
My rainbow has not come to me,
Until I let toxic people diminish out of my life.

The misery of growing up too fast.
Having the world on your shoulders
Not knowing how long you will last.

See, I have been a soldier since I was young.
I lost my mother at fourteen,
And my father shot by a gun.

Take a walk with me, to see,
The domestic violence from my family.
I was locked up in the penitentiary for thirteen years,
And nobody heard my cry beside the man upstairs,
And I kept asking him, "Why?"

I am so much stronger than I used to be,
I have grown into a better me.
I had to experience homelessness,
And being down,
To create this queen that defeat all the sounds.

I had so many naysayers say, "You cannot do that,"
And now, I stand before you with a list of accomplishments that keep me on track.

I am a woman that knows how it feels to have and not to have nothing at all.
Having your stomach growling and going to bed hungry was half of my feats.
The day of knowing where I would sleep.

When I got my SRO – which is single room occupancy,
It helped me even greater to grow.
I became more self-sufficient and did not let anyone take me out of my space.
I challenge the course and beat the race.
Through all the suffering and pain,
My sunshine did come after the rain!

Marketta Sims
Poem: Sunshine after the rain



Artist: Priscilla Amaral-

From rhymes I pull lines that define my timeline
Memorize them emotionally in the furthest recesses of my mind.
I'm trying to be kind
Manifest this vision of mine
But these times are extremely trying

Focusing my thoughts on society's woeful conditions
Transfixed on the path forward and those willing to listen
Fixing isn't easy, but possible is the messaging that's in order
Reaching out to brothers and sisters being held up at borders

Orders for genocide systematically enforced
Interrelated black robes assisting in keeping the course
Voices suppressed that tend to lend to progress
While divisiveness is highly promoted as the way to solve this mess
I'm stressing the extreme
Trying not to scream
Countering those who are mean
Because those results I have seen

Shattered lives deemed redundant no matter where I look
Suggestions to pull ourselves up without the necessities that were took
ASTRONOMICAL fees just to wake up safe
Exclusion from the opportunities that would allow me to visit that place

Lies to my face about my ambition and others
Secretly plotting obstacles that are intended to smother
Ideals of destruction enticingly dangled
24-7 I see the lives that have been mangled.

By: Ali Simmons
Untitled



Stolzman, Carrie

Where the Brown Family Stands

By Maxica Williams

Spoken from A Mother's Point of view, Spoken from a Father's point of view, Spoken from a Child's Point

It's like I'm here by Myself
As life goes by day after day
Time moves forward
I move on and care for my kids as you walked out on me
The World criticizes me
I have a career, not a job
The World prods at me
I'm an independent woman
I get my own, I conquer my life, & live free
I'm a single mother doing the best I can
A single mother raising two brown princesses and two brown prince's
In a world so cold, so wicked, so one-sided
I'm prejudged that I'm bitter and full of hate
When I'm just tired of being a mother and father to my children alone and dealing with the struggle alone
Told I'm not beautiful because I'm darker than a paper bag
Always having to smile through my pain, weariness, and loneliness
Just because I'm built strong doesn't mean tear me down
It doesn't mean take me through war
It doesn't mean I'm a revolving door to crush every chance you get
The World's on my shoulders, and my Children are on my back, and It's up to me to survive bearing this heavy load
It's hard to be a brown woman today

I came into this World with so many strikes against me
No matter what I do, I am a target
I do my best to push on and be positive
I'm judged for my skin color and being a brown male
Persecuted time and time again
Constant harassment, persistent stigmas about me, and constant destruction of my foundation
Others just waiting for me to slip up and make the wrong move
Waiting and ready to put me in jail
Kept from my children if my record isn't clean and I can't pay child support
Deemed a deadbeat Dad
Educated but my freedom stolen from
So many obstacles in my way
Standing with the World on my back, my family on my back, my ancestors on my back
As I do my best to honor their pain and sacrifice
I do my best to be a husband, father, brother
Even though the deck is stacked against me

It's hard being a brown man today

Always being told I won't succeed

Just because my parents made mistakes

Never given a chance to be me

Prejudged based on the path my parents took

I'm an honor student, happy, and carefree child

Always told you wouldn't amount to anything because your Mama was a professional street worker,
your Daddy was a drug abuser

Not even knowing the pain that led my parents to their paths

I'm not my parents; I'm Me that's it

My path is different because my parents always taught me to walk a different path from there's

Fighting, Praying, Watching, Absorbing, and Seeing what not to do

So I can make it and stay on the right path

My Dream is so close I can see it in front of me

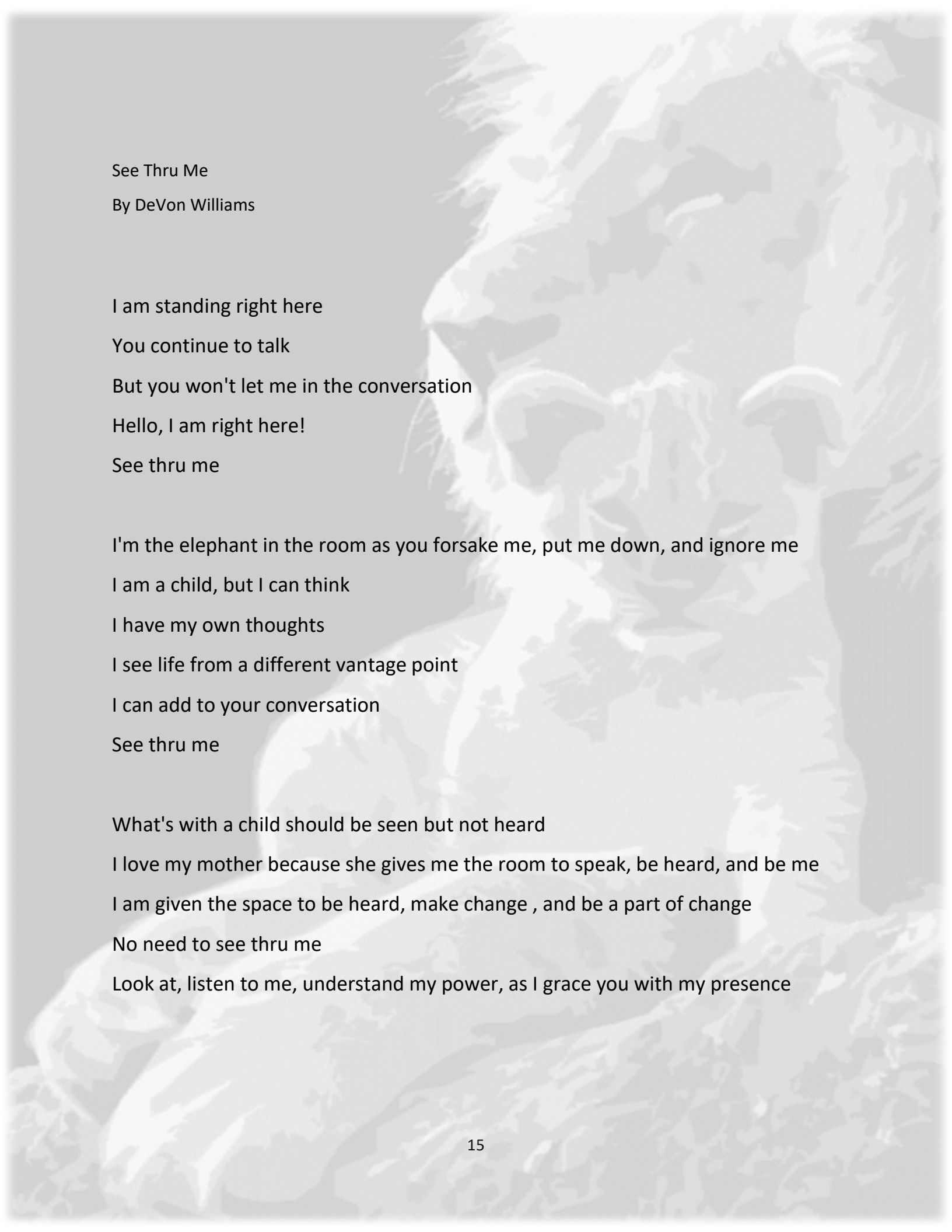
The best of my parents is in me, and I carry those essential qualities as I travel a long road to defy the
odds

I have my family members on my back, my parent's wrong paths on my back, and World that's waiting
for me to give up and mess up

It's hard being a brown kid



Artist: Suzanna Vasko



See Thru Me

By DeVon Williams

I am standing right here

You continue to talk

But you won't let me in the conversation

Hello, I am right here!

See thru me

I'm the elephant in the room as you forsake me, put me down, and ignore me

I am a child, but I can think

I have my own thoughts

I see life from a different vantage point

I can add to your conversation

See thru me

What's with a child should be seen but not heard

I love my mother because she gives me the room to speak, be heard, and be me

I am given the space to be heard, make change , and be a part of change

No need to see thru me

Look at, listen to me, understand my power, as I grace you with my presence



Artist: Olga Walsh

What is a Safe Place?

By DeSera Williams

They say home is your "safe place," but not for her.

All you hear is pain when she speaks, voices shattered, lost in emotion, as she cries,

But no one knows.....

They want her trust,

So she gave them that.

But when she opened up, they kept leaving

More pain and guilt from being abandoned.

Like a sharp pain but ignoring it

She says to herself, "Is this okay?"

As she stands in the distance,

She sees someone who looks like her.

Noticeable is the prick of her chin.

Hair as long as vines, bright glowing surrounding her, and cheer running through

At last, she is happy.

She knows she is not alone, and she always has someone with her.

She will always have herself to depend on

This what a "safe place looks like."



Artist Alexia Wilm

On the Foundation

By DeNaysa Williams

The structure of peace,
on the foundation.
Our silence will never cease,
turning craft into creation.

Broken from guidance,
standing in my vision.
My desire of reliance,
remaining in loneliness.

A belief to embrace,
This noise of question.
I long to deface,
Why do I skimp the foundation.





Suzanna Vasko

Chicago Avenue Blues

By *Poetress Maddam X

Standing on the south side waiting on the bus,
Listening to the City blues, trying not to cuss.
Frustrated as all outdoors,
this city has gone to disgust.
Keeping my mask on my face.
I can't breathe.
I can't trust.

"Good morning Queen can I pray for you?"
She was smiling from ear to ear.
I looked down at her dingy white shoes, and said "Sure."
What else should I do?

She held my hand and began to pray.
She asked God to bless me on that day.
She asked God to bless my children as well.
I felt the anointing rushing in I could not wait to tell.

But God said to me, *hold on let her finish.*
She said she was hungry, not to mention she said she'd had been up all-night walking.

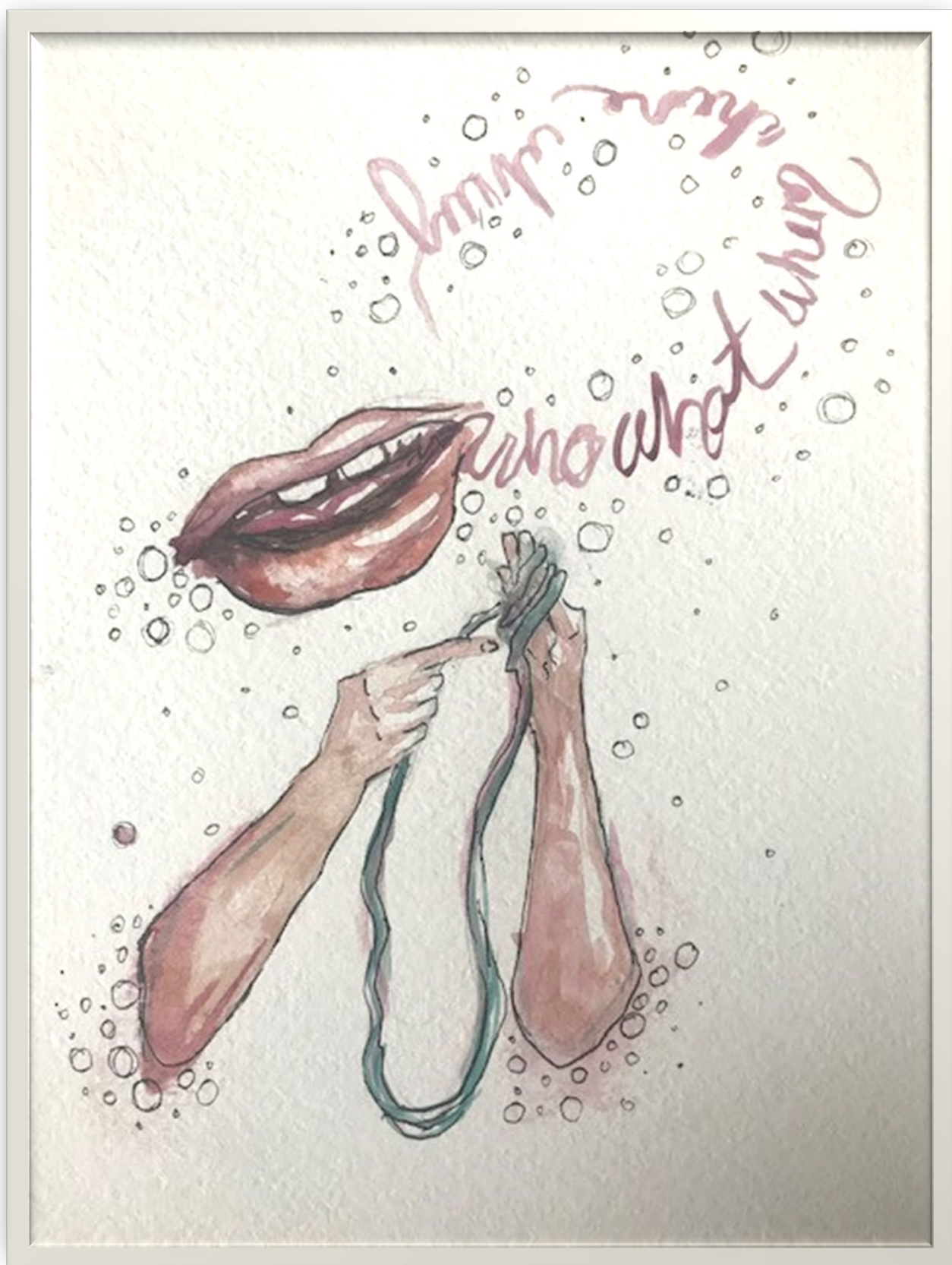
I couldn't help to think it was me she had been stalking.
See, I've seen my mother face so many times.
This time it was a stranger who could have robbed me blind.

I saw this same lady riding on the train.
The truth remains,
She must have been chasing a different high.
Yet two days ago she was an angel from the sky.
Every time I walk down Chicago Ave,
I think about that lady and hear the Chicago Blues.
Crying out to the city, please help us we are dying.
Can't help to notice this city is still crying.

Politicians still keep sweeping this issue under the rug.
They have the money for us,
Yet we can't say a simple word, without them thinking we all are just strung out on drugs.

Open back the mental institutions
"Bring Chicago Home" is the permanent solution.
As we watch the city still is self-destruction!
Covid-19 was just an introduction.
These people are still looking for the right direction.
So, stop plating with our lives will be more repercussions.

*Penname do not correct spelling.



Artist Suzanna Vasko



You are the very Essence of Who I Am

By: Timothy Bell

You are my light,
whenever I am in a dark place.

You are my courage,
When I would seek to hide my face.

Who and what are you to me?

When I am overcome,
by my own emotions and thoughts,
You step in and sweep them away.
I know in my heart that you are the boss.

Who and what are you to me?

You are my friend, my father, I heed your call.
You are my life, my everything, my all.

Who and what are you to me?

You Are My Creator,
You Are My God,
You are the very Essence of Who I Am



Artist Jeremy Papillon

Devils in disguise with badges and guns.

Here to serve and protect, but instead, they are taking lives.

*They left me with no air
I was seen red.*

*Screaming with rage,
I felt no peace, oh, I was hurt!*

They left me with no air.

Oh, I was angry!

They abandoned my spirit in a dark place.

Oh, I was in such sadness!

They try to steal my dignity, sanity, and my life

BUT IT DIDNT WORK

Their power took my home.

Their power put my family in danger

BUT IM A SURVIVOR

Devils in disguise.

They are here to serve and protect

but instead, they are taking lives

Those devils will never take the best of me

New horizons, new skies, new friends

I finally found peace in my heart and in my soul

Putting God first, I was able to make a new home

By: April Harris

They left me with no air



Artist Carrie Stolzman

The mind can be a trickster.
Idle creates idols and distorted views.
While awake, become dreams made of hope that we name prophecies and visions.
Our natural responses to danger when induced by kisses we name love.
Knowing the heart is deceitful we follow into the polar opposite of the only truth.

Everyone screams real but when the veil is lifted and lives are shifted suddenly we forget the matrix altogether
settling for what looks and feels real enough.

We never needed to be trapped we only needed to be presented with looks, likes, and feels offending the Gods we
believe to deliver us into promises it seems we made ourselves.

Everything for a reason until your baby dies, your heart gets broken... where is your praise then?

Bless the ones who live in spite of a not so pretty picture and the ones who die fighting or merely existing in a
world designed to snatch their dreams before they ever come true.

Have mercy on those who know they never will but swallow pills to smile all day and cover up the tear marks from
crying all night.

Grace to the ones who've convinced themselves that they have any real control,

Claiming to manipulate a system when they're manipulating people, serving the system like a good ol boy.

The only time any of us seem to care is when caring is trending.
That's not a judgment just an observation.
We long for applause cry to be measured sending messages that we are not worthy and not good enough of
someone who isn't there to see it.

We dishonor our own greatness, giving too much credit to charts and reports rather than the good we may be
doing in lives, especially our own.
We envy creation rather than joining creations.

We make everything a competition and the only prize is bragging rights.
Whatever you think you won is only to tower the next guy.
Whole time it's set up that way so we don't complain and we develop a mentality of "wait my turn" or "take what I
want".

The people on the screens we worship every morning aren't there by accident.
Are you really paying attention if you believe God pays them billions for a talent?
I wonder if their voices held a key and while life got too hard the devil made it comfortable.
Where is their fight and grit now?
But who am I?
Just another voice lost in the static of the quarantine giants.

Because surviving this won't be enough.
This is the time to figure out years and generations of trauma and oppression.
And if you don't, well, that's on you.
Because everything happens for a reason, until it's one of our own.

By Lorna Bennett



Artist: Suzanna Vasko

Credits & Special Thanks

Wayne Richard Horizons Founder
Edrika Fulford Master of Ceremonies
Claudia Cabrera Program Leader
Claire Sloss..... Video Editor

Horizons thanks Dr. La Civita and the students at Alder University Art Therapy
Masters and Ph.D. program for their generous and inspirational support.

Special thanks to Claire Sloss for her ongoing support.

Horizons would also like to thank:

Doug Schenkelberg, Executive Director, CCH

