

Voices of participants from the  
**Eyedentity: Words & InSights** weekly  
writing workshops guided by author,  
podcaster, writing coach, **Janna Lopez**

Issue 1: July 2020

A Collection of Words & InSights

# Eyedentity





## From fear, born were our voices...

March 2020. I will look back at that month and never forget when the world came apart. At the front end of a deadly pandemic, Covid-19, to date, worldwide, has claimed 535,000 lives, and 11.5 million people have been infected. Amidst unprecedented uncertainty and constant fear, I felt called to help people work through that fear, and importantly, the deep waves of grief. It seemed paramount to make room for the voices of so many who struggled to make sense, let alone meaning, of such tragedy. Factor in quarantine, being alone, isolated, all daily freedoms and ways of being in life, suddenly taken away.

Connecting through words. That's what I know as a truth. Words shape, unearth, relieve, and heal. So I started a free weekly online writing workshop to guide people through the grief, the pain, the uncertainty, and the anger of where humanity had landed in this unique place and time.

People have all kinds of fears about writing. We're afraid of our voices, afraid of being wrong, afraid of making mistakes, afraid of not saying enough, afraid of being seen—even to ourselves. I've come to intimately understand this fear, as after having recently completed my first book, "Me, My Selfie & Eye" I too struggled if what I had to say was worth anything.

Week after week, brave courageous souls show up for themselves via Zoom to explore the many facets of Eyedentity, grief, and belonging. Some come because they're interested in writing more often, others want to dip their toe into the writing water, while others aren't sure what they need, but give me, my class, and writing, a try. Through designated prompts and loving support, I lead, they allow, by spilling out hearts through words. They explore a swath of deep emotion. Every week someone has a tremendous breakthrough or discovery. I am blown away by the talent, quality, and expression that is birthed through our group.

A crucial part of writing is being heard. Being seen. I teach that people need to hear and see their own voices in the world, their words contribute to our human experience and have value—that's part of the writing process, which ultimately, is a sojourn of Self discovery.

This collection comes from writing produced through guided prompts during our weekly classes. It's brave, it's raw, and I can't thank the members of my group enough for the honor of being your guide. You've shown up for your Self! And this has been a beautiful honor to witness! xoxo - Janna Lopez.

For info on classes or Eyedentity writing coaching, visit [www.jannalopez.com](http://www.jannalopez.com).

## *Prompt: Redemption*

By Angela Tipton

Words, like knives, spear out of my mouth  
hurtful and destructive,  
spoken in thoughtfulness and insecurity.  
The moment they escape my rusted, caged heart  
the remorse settles over me  
like a death shroud.

My pain becomes your pain,  
becoming my pain  
an endless loop of self-loathing.  
It sets in my bones  
deep and unnerving.  
This is not me.  
I don't want this.

And so I surrender.  
The white flag waving  
in the hot, desert wind of my shame.  
Delivering my battered heart to you,  
my humble offering,  
I feel the Karuṇā compassion  
through the cosmic gaze  
of your deep abiding truth.

Redemption flows into my soul,  
through channels of rose quartz rays,  
soothing the invisible wounds.  
And in this the path of suffering,  
I am reborn anew.



All photos by Janna Lopez \* [www.jannalopez.com](http://www.jannalopez.com)

By Julie Beck Joachims

Redemption song, a chant for freedom.  
Bob Marley and back in time, so far back.  
Pirates with ships of gold, mention of  
mermaids, the sirens of the sea. All tales  
untold, kept tight in Davy Jones locker.  
Slaughter of reality. They pillaged, they  
stole. They never paid for their treasures  
of gold, or the lives they stole.  
Buccaneers of war.  
But-the palm trees sway, as the people  
pray, for the souls that stay.



*Prompt:*

*(April 7th) A letter to yourself as if it's October, and you're looking back on quarantine:*

By Johnna Wells

Yes, you were born in January during the most startling snowstorm Alabama had seen in half a century.

Your father pairing his Idahoan ingenuity with Purex from Winn Dixie, coating the tires of that black Chevy van your mother had begged him not to get.

The burnt rubber dissolved before his expectant eyes, setting forth their traction and movement. "Push", she'd yell, as he rocked the metal body back and forth. You, his first born, soon on your way.

Yes, you were born in January.

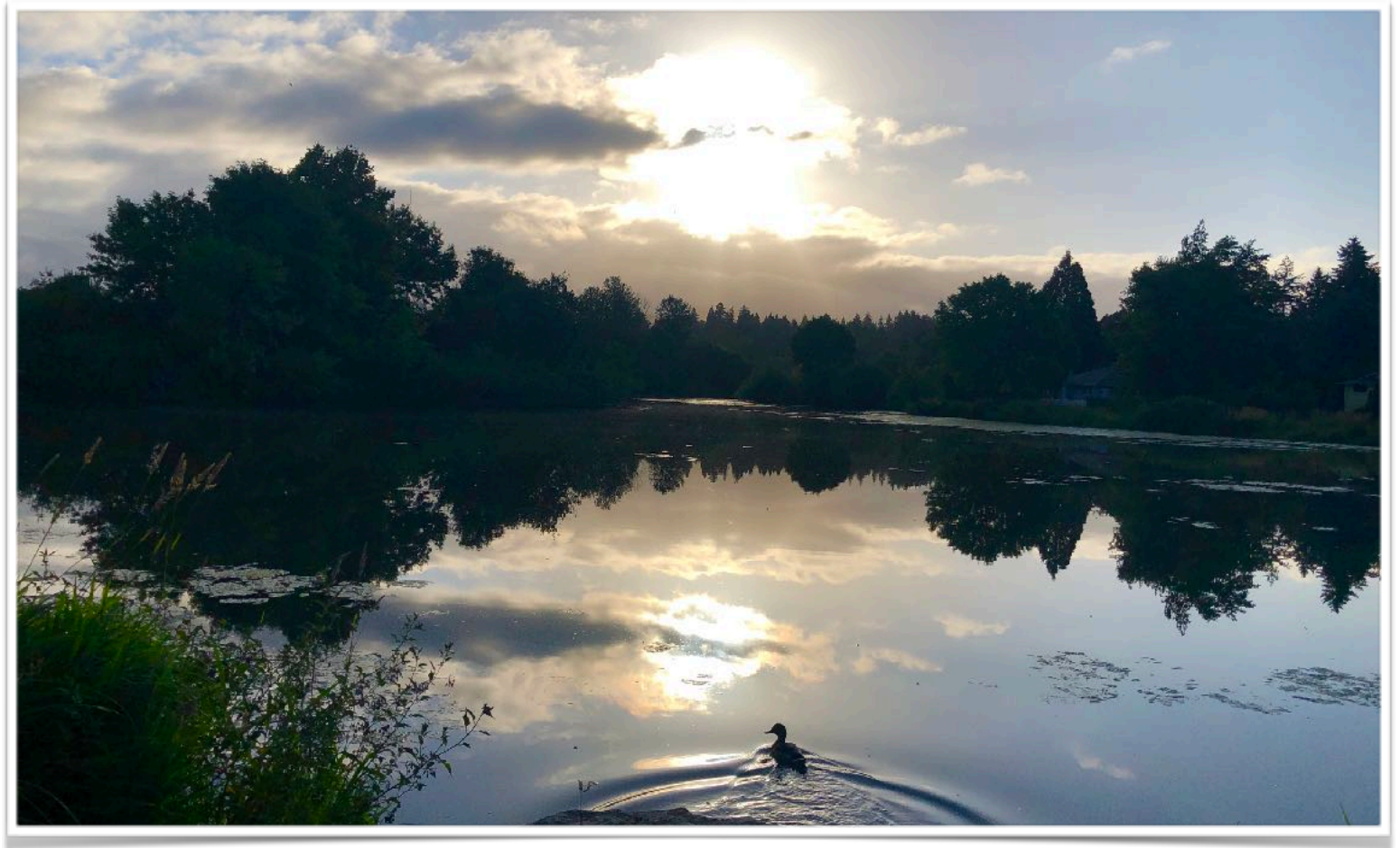
But you were reborn in October.

You were reborn when you pushed and broke and bled your way into motherhood. When your own first born burst forth into this world. Reshaping all that you have ever been, and all that you will ever be forever more.

And now, here we are again.

Another October stretching out before us. The veil between worlds growing thinner.

And you've been gifted with the birth of another life.



Your own.

All that you had known before has taken on new meaning.

Like a newborn child.

The sights, smells, and sounds of autumn's rhythms, awaken your senses.

All is new.  
Your rebirth.  
Your revival.  
You begin again.  
For ever more.



*Prompt: Light is easy to love. Show me your darkness.*

By Susan Bender Phelps

She was driven to be perfect. She was told, over and over, you must behave a certain way or you'll NEVER get married.

She believed "them." They were her parents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, and teachers.

Don't cry, never let them see you sweat - from TV commercials. Be demure. Be agreeable. NEVER reveal your darkness, your anger, your rage, your sadness.

Imagine the joy when she finally met people who would embrace their darkness, her darkness and loved each other because of it, not in spite of it. Not because the darkness was masked.

That is the love that changed my life forever.



*Prompt: Ascension*

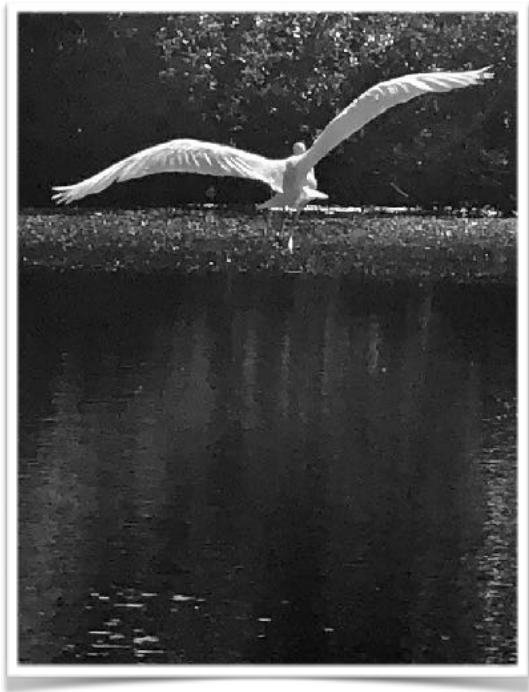
By Leighann Barrie

What really happens when you die?

We've all seen the pictures of saints rising from the Earth into heavenly glory. But it really doesn't work that way in real life or should I say real death.

The brain, heart, and lungs stop doing their jobs. The person dying may see a bright light but those in the room only have the silence of the machines that previously beeped and whirled as they maintained the life that is now gone and their service is no longer needed.

Having gone through the death of loved ones, both four and two legged, I have often ponder what is it like to die. My scientific brain thinks that it is a natural process that would vary little from person to person but the curious side of me wonders if each death experience is as unique as the person whose life is ending.



## *Prompt: When Did You Learn the True Meaning of Goodbye?*

No Truer Goodbye

By Fara Gold McLaughlin

December 26, 1974, I learned, at age 13, the true meaning of goodbye. Standing in the Newport News, Virginia airport terminal hearing Perry Como singing “Silent Night”, my Daddy’s hands felt so warm and so alive. His big broad smile was beaming as he boarded the plane and gave our little tribe a long last wave.

Just a week later, I never imagined as I stepped off my school bus, January 2, 1975, the end of the first day back to school from Christmas break; I would find my Mother entertaining friends in the afternoon. I opened the front door to see our church Minister, school nurse and two officers sitting around my weeping Mother.

In that moment, I dropped my books and screamed, “Daddy’s dead!” As my bewildered little sister and brother came into the house from behind me, I turned around quickly to run back out the front door. In that instant I started sprinting faster and faster. I was running, running, running for blocks away from my house away from the million scattered pieces of myself shattered in the moment I had screamed, “Daddy’s dead!”

I ran until I couldn’t run any longer and found myself on some street I didn’t really know but had seen the bus stop to drop off a boy, a nameless boy, who went to my school. I think he lived in the house where I rang the doorbell. Yes, it was his house as he answered the door to find me sweaty, panting, out of breath with a wet face smeared with tears.

His eyes were bulging and he slowly said, “Uh.. Fara? Uh... what... what is wrong?” I looked like a broken bird and whimpered, “My Daddy’s dead.” He looked stunned and scared and backed up to mumble, “Mom. Mom!” I saw a hair sprayed, slipper wearing, flowered house dressed lady put her hands on his shoulders and look at me with a bit of disgust to say, “Honey, you need to get along to your home now.”

I mumbled tears flowing down my cheeks stinging from the cold January air, “My Daddy is dead.” She now looked at me with pity and a bit of concern and said, “Well now you really need to get along to your house now, your Mama is going to be worried about you.”

I turned around in a daze and realized I didn’t really know where I was. While the school bus did take the left turn and then the right turn and then another left turn. I didn’t know my way back home.

The boy, I cannot to this day remember his name, seemed to intuitively know I was lost, said, “Mom, I will walk her home.” She nodded yes and the two of us awkward eighth graders walked slowly in silence back to my house. I guess he paid attention to my bus stop as no words were said between us, he simply knew which way to go.

As I approached my house, a sick dread of entering the place I didn’t want to be came over me and I thought I would throw up as soon as I saw my Mother crying with her arms around my brother and sister on the sofa.

The white clad nurse in white cap, stockings, starched dress and sharp pointy glasses came over to touch me and I ran up the stairs to my room and slammed my door so hard it seemed to shudder the whole house. I flew onto my bright chartreuse green flowered bed spread into a lump of tears and snot to hear the sound of a knock on my door. “GO AWAY!” I screamed.

I thought go away and please don’t comfort me and make this real. Go away and don’t try to make me feel better.

Go away and don’t try to soothe what I know can never be mended, can never be fixed and is too broken. Don’t try to stitch together this deep open wound which I can’t imagine will ever heal.  
Not now.

You can’t imagine what a true goodbye is and I hope you never do.

Maybe not today.  
Maybe not next week.

But, maybe next year? Maybe he isn’t dead. Maybe he will return as planned in a year.

No. His was my true goodbye.  
Never to return.





*Prompt: Less Than...*

By Judge Kemp

I am a Black man often having less than in my life, I am shackled with a history that has been branded on our backs by a population that has viewed me (and others like me) as less than, that we are animals, dumb, and are no good. I am vilified, falsely accused and imprisoned. I am drugged by your powdery poison to suppress me and numb me into submission. I wear the marks of your justice on my neck. My pride, honor, and color I shall take to the grave.

I am undeniably NOT less than, but GREATER than you can imagine. I AM A BLACK MAN

*Prompt: I Wish I Knew What Happened to...*

By Mary McCargar

Divorce's Losses  
Boys to Men .... Once Shared  
    Bartered Away with Blood Lines and Bitter Feuds  
The Strings Still Play Vibrations to My Heart  
    Sometimes I wonder if we'd even recognize each other  
if we passed on the street....?  
Sorrows with Strings...

*Prompt: What of Sandcastles?*

By Rainy Karnes

Beautiful Creation  
soon to be swept away  
Time and effort  
    given to the sea  
Was it worth it  
when there is no trace  
Be in that moment  
    in that place  
    Just Be

*Prompt: Ascension*

By Robert Zozaya

it becomes a luminous path, an ascending passage-way, with no walls  
Uncontained, no place for previous footsteps to be seen  
Guided without land marks, map, or known geography.  
A gentle nudging into a spacious wonderful unknown,  
knowing full well my Spirit is climbing higher, finding clarity,  
above that which is left in a foggy mist, of previous incarnations in this walk of life.  
This dance with mystery, searching, studying, turning stones, finding clues  
all the while knowing the gentle invisible hand is lifting me to the pinnacle.....  
Ascension.





## *Prompt: Discarded Boot Photo*

By Shannon Milliman

Where has this boot been? Was it the casualty in a drug deal gone wrong? Look above and do you see its match tied to string on the telephone wire? No? Was there a murder, a discard out the window, a pit stop for a pee break and the boot came out of the car unrealized until 9pm at their destination? Today I feel like this boot, incomplete, I have potential. The ricrac and piping show this thing is fine. Look at my jumpsuit I am wearing today? Cute, High waist line flattering, feels like pajamas, looks like a party suit. No one would guess I got this thing at a garage sale for 50 cents in Burley, Idaho but here I am feeling like that discarded boot. Give me the boot, the bam, the alacazam. I have too many dreams and too little support and too little space. I am wearing no shoes, no boots to protect my calves from snake bites and goat heads and cheat grass or heroine needles in the park near my house. I am barefeet in my bedroom on my bed with an empty Cheez-it box next to me. I have a list thirty items deep with things I can't quite commit to or pull up my cowgirl chaps high enough and wrangle. Progress has come today. Today I created a first podcast episode. I decided on a course platform. I swivel my heel in my imaginary boot stomping out the cigarette I never smoked. Did that move make me look cool hand Luke, collected, in charge, large? Or did it waste more seconds and fail to cross another list item off? Who wore that boot? Was it a real cowboy? Who is to say who is real and unreal, anyway? I can wear that one footed boot and hop and sip and bend. What can you do with one foot? Arabesque, pirouette, pivot and scrape the crumbs from this Cheeze-it box.



## *Prompt: Long & Winding Road...*

By Paula Greenstein

The long and winding road leads me to the center of my heart where I can connect to you. Your heart, your soul, our soul contracts of love. The difficult strange switchbacks of life take me into unforeseen regions of old pain. Struggles to divert, release and learn from. For my heart and soul cry out for more love, more connection, more feeling of your embrace. The worthwhile home where I have journeyed along the rocky road of ego experiences. I wonder why I care so much about the goal, some end, when the path is so good for my soul and so much fun and joy can emerge along the way. The simplicity of the road is love. I love you as I love mySelf!

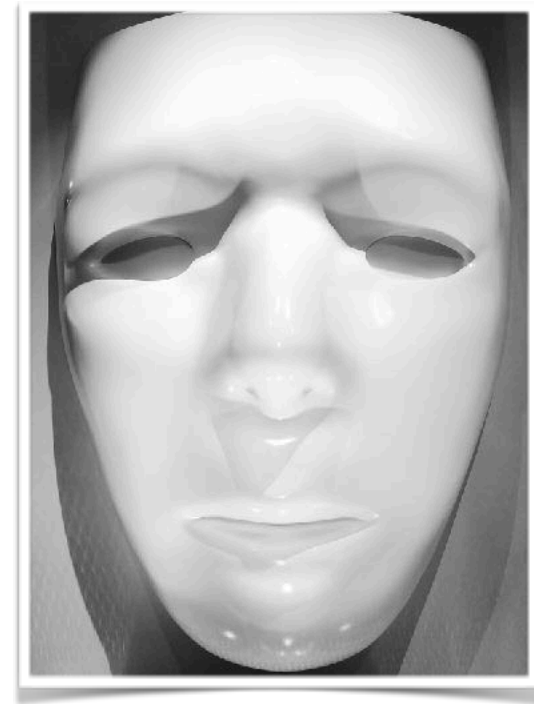




*Prompt: (Repetition) - I Have Discovered...*

By Kimberli Ransom

I have discovered that life is made up of curved lines and straight lines. I have discovered that art can be seen this way as well. I have discovered that my best attempts to interpret life into art can be broken down and simplified into curves and straights. I have discovered that beyond this there are darks and lights. Rivers of darks and lights. Saturations of pigment or lack thereof. I have discovered that color is no place to start but is exactly where I did. I have discovered that open space in visual art, a big black negative space in a photograph, is the same as a rest in music. A pause, a breath, an empty stage onto which an actor can enter and be the center of the world. I have discovered that clutter on a page, in a painting, in a conversation needs some blank space.



*Prompts: Faces & Mirrors*

By John Welch

We show and share many faces both in the mirror and away. Work face, serious face, concerned face, funny face, oh shit! face. It's not a cover in the sense a mask is but the effect and reaction are often the same from others.

I use a mirror to see the external when the image I see of my self is a combination of my internal sight and my external visage. Do I reflect myself or do I reflect the me I wish others to see always? Introvert or extrovert if it wasn't for mirrors, what would we see of ourselves except through other's eyes





## *Prompt: (Repetition) - I Have Discovered...*

By Janna Lopez

I have discovered I am free and the discovery has me thirsty--thirsty to be lost  
in the wilderness of maybe, and why not and who knows.

I have discovered I am a girl who can love her Self,  
who knows how to love her Self,  
how to walk into love and admiration.

I have discovered feet take me closer and deeper than I've ever been  
into the crevasse,

falling,

freely,

like a moment in time, only I don't dissipate.

I have discovered I'm no longer lonely, I'm here.

I. am. Here.

Here I am.

See me.

I see me.

Love me.

I love me.

I have discovered I have love to share and give to help others on their way to  
love, through words, through allowance. Through guidance on a dark path of  
exploration and belonging.

I have discovered my voice

she speaks

she laughs

she dreams

she hopes

she believes.

I have discovered.

**info on Eyedentity writing coaching, classes, or Eyedentity Talk  
podcast, visit [www.jannalopez.com](http://www.jannalopez.com)**