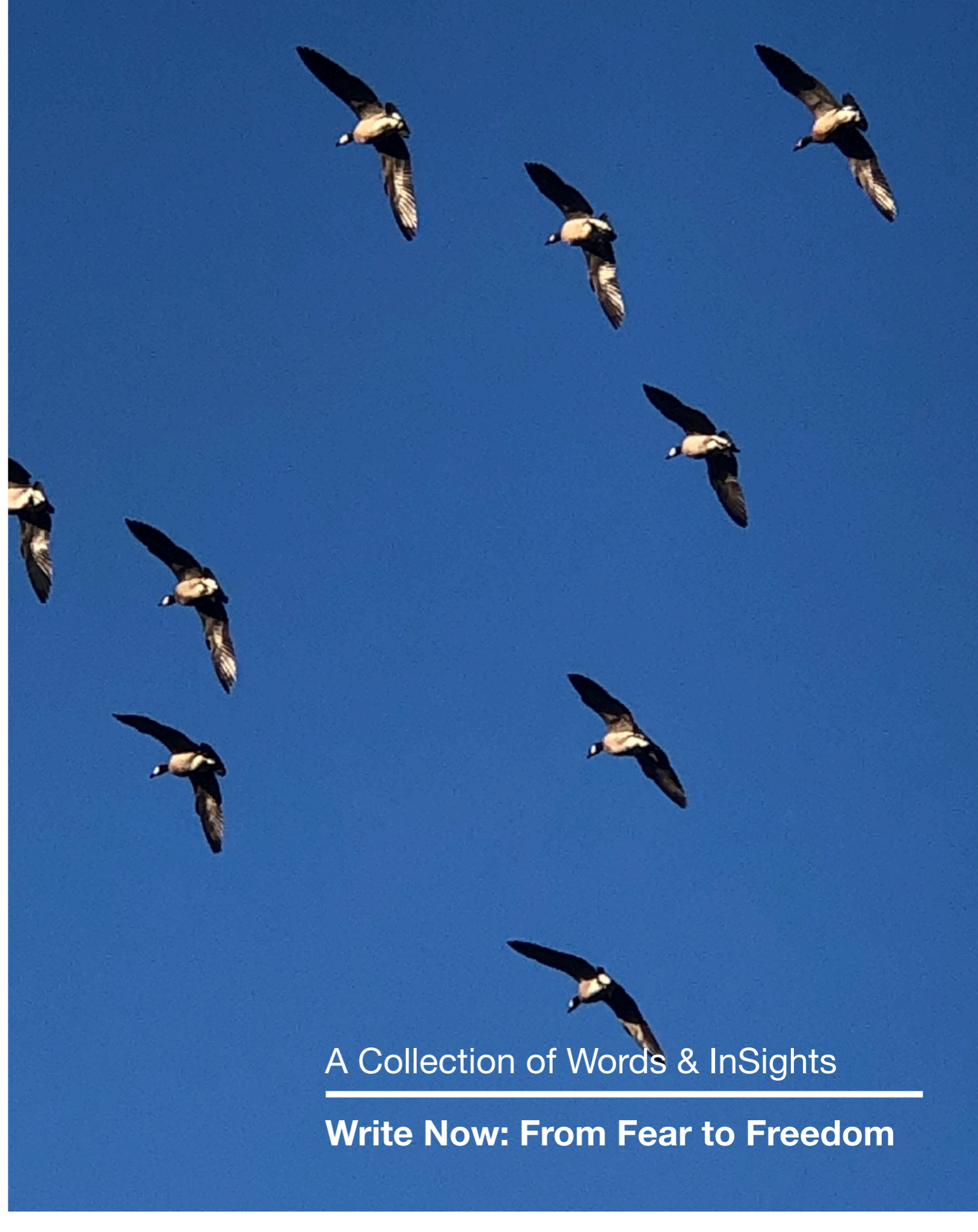


Voices from the
**Write Now: From
Fear to Freedom**
weekly writing
workshops guided
by author,
podcaster,
transformational
writing coach,
Janna Lopez



Issue 3: November 2020
www.jannalopez.com

A Collection of Words & InSights

Write Now: From Fear to Freedom

Prompt: Something Began When...

Things began many months ago, much like tonight with me sitting in front of my computer screen. I took a chance and logged into a Zoom call for Janna's writing class. I was nervous, anxious, and didn't know what to expect. *Why am I here? I'm not a writer*, I said to myself. Yeah, I had a few things get published but that was just luck. Well something happened when I kept returning each week for her class. The growth of my creativity in words, the freedom of expression, the confidence, and the friendships. I am a writer and I show up for myself!

- Judge Kemp

Something Began When we all came together with an encouraging writing mentor. She created a community, and we are still coming together 8 months later in a safe place to try our writing experiences & share them with each other. She helped open us to our hearts, our experiences, our memories, our dreams, our fantasies and our conversations with ourselves to allow word creations to flow from us all we had maybe never tried to tap previously. Something began, is continuing and is creative. So cool to be a part of and so appreciative to be a part of this generous gift....Thank you Janna Lopez

- Mary McCargar





Reflection...

Somehow we've made it to a near-end of 2020. I'm still floundering to make sense of all that was impossible to make sense of. I know many people are sifting, sorting, evaluating, seeking, shifting, and in many cases, just trying to breathe. After all, it's not easy when everything about daily existence, and truth, and certainty, and reality, completely transforms before our eyes. We're talking about human physical, emotional, and financial survival. How do we find words? Yet that's what I create each week during my online writing workshops: Connecting to ourselves and each other through words.

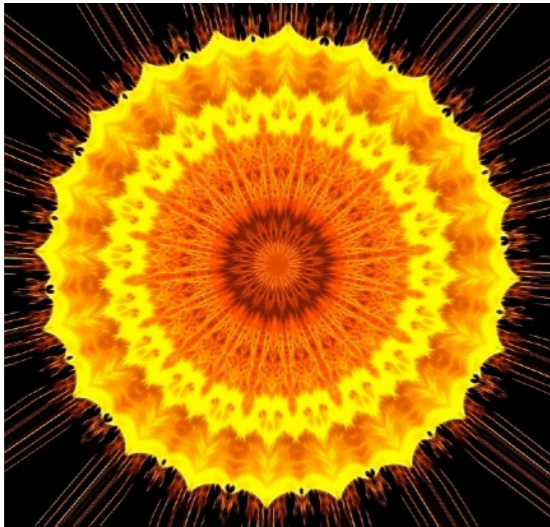
People fear writing. We're afraid of our voices, afraid of being wrong, afraid of making mistakes, afraid of not saying enough, afraid of being seen—even to ourselves. I intimately understand this fear, after recently completing my first book, "Me, My Selfie & Eye." I struggled. Is anything I say worthy?

Week after week, 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, others want to dip a toe into 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, pouring vulnerable hearts through words. Some prompts only allow 5 minutes to respond; The idea is to create a structured space for emotional reaction, not mental analysis, so inner words spill onto a page. Some continue work on their prompts after class. Thus, the work may appear raw, unedited, or unpolished and that is as intended. Participants explore deep emotion. Every week someone has a tremendous breakthrough or discovery. I'm blown away by the talent, quality, and expression that is birthed.

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.

If you're at all curious, I highly encourage you to join. Thank you to our group for the honor of being your guide. You've shown up for your Self! - Janna Lopez.

For info on classes or Eyedentity writing coaching, visit www.jannalopez.com.



Prompt: I'm Thinking About...

By Judge Kemp

I'm thinking about the kaleidoscope of colors in the world;

the multitude of hues and various shades in the spectrum;

I'm thinking about how some colors are hot and others cool.

I'm thinking about the safety I sometimes feel in a space absent of color; a space quiet warm and dark.

But,

The yellow rays of light pull at my soul and draw me out into the light.

Afraid, I keep my eyes closed as I try to hold onto the feeling of hope knowing that I must face the truth; a truth hidden from myself.

I'm thinking about the light as it shines even brighter exposing now my body naked and free.

I see myself with my mind's eye, I see myself now and for the first time, without shame and without judgment.

I see a face of compassion; I see a face of humanity; I see a face of love.



Prompt: What is Self-Suppression?...

By Lula Fantroy

where did your words go are they hanging around now?

Right back down my throat, that's where those words went

they're just now trying to find their way out.

They know it's time, time to come out and be heard.

Those words are meant to heal, to bring hope, light, and freedom to those that hear them

That's why they were stopped, that's why they were pushed back down my throat.

For as they are released; my words, they will multiply and produce more of their kind.

They will enlighten, and uplift, but if they continue to be pushed down, oh the torment, the agony, lack of confidence, and dis ease that will follow.

Keeping those angelic beings, my words, hidden under the canopy of fear will only keep the real me hidden.

so what will it take to let them go, will it be a pen and paper, a microphone in hand expressing, explaining, releasing?

No, just no more suppressing me.

Prompt: Difficult Conversations With My Self

By Fara Gold McLaughlin

*I am thinking about words
All of the words I've repeated
All of my life
My first words at nine months old
"Chismas Tee"
My empathetic tears watching
As the World Turns with my Mommy
To declare, "Oh, Mommy! Penny cry!"
To all the words floating in my head
Said and unsaid
When numbers didn't add up or make sense
Words were always there
For me
I am thinking about how easy
Effortlessly the words flowed
Spilling out like Niagara Falls
Cursing a Lover with
"Fuck You!"
I am thinking about the words
That made my career
The turn of a phrase to describe
The solutions to problems
Today, I am thinking about
The words that are floating away
Now the words are sometimes
Hard to grasp
They come and they go like a morning fog
On the pond of my mind
I am told by my husband and friends
Of the places we have seen together
They are no longer postcards in my mind
I am thinking about how I love them and trust them
But, no longer trust my brain*

*That once stable ground I could count on
Erupting with words
Sprouting new ideas
Is now a Black hole where words
are lost, never to be found
I am thinking about how desperate I feel now
As I am doing therapies once meant for others
Now meant for me
Find the word
Grasp the word
Hold onto the word
Mark the word down
Repeat it again
I am thinking about how long
This will work
Or if like so many people I have seen
My Words
My Mind
My Self
May slip away
Where will I go
When there are no more words
To find
Will I still be here?
Will I still be me?
Breathing
Heart beating
Brain Broken*



Prompt: Since You Left My Life

By Janna Lopez

*In an eye of a blink,
unfelt
memories tangle time
gilded knots
shimmering twists
snarled inside
some other
cosmic tapestry--
one never woven.
threads left bare
dangled beyond
golden dreams
sewn of
love's constellation*



photo Julie Joachims

Prompt: Since You Left My Life

By Julie Joachims

I've had nobody to chase waterfalls with, as nobody loved them more than us.
The goodbye is still on my lips, trembling just next to the apology I was saving, in case I needed it, to keep the peace.
The holes in my life now are vast canyons, with ripples of blue. I've cried rivers over you. Floating rivers, so many, with you, the adventure girl with the vivid dreams, that she grew into and followed around the world, daring them to come true.
Oh Kristin.
She was in charge of my raft, shouting orders with the bossiness of the youngest child, tired of taking direction and ready to forge her own way.
She thought it would be fun to push me in the Deshutes one afternoon, because I had specifically told her not to, and I almost wacked her in the head with my oar because she surprised me, and she was the most annoying person I could imagine in the whole world at that moment.
But moments, like rapids, are wild that way. We can't hold them back, nor the spiraling spray. The current can trap you, big rocks in the way.
We hit a whirlpool, and I catapult through the air, and without missing a beat she stretched out her lovely, long arms and snatched me out of thin air, and pulled me back in the raft, without losing her cool, or an oar.
Just like a good captain, and a good baby sister.
Since she left my life, there is nobody to save me from drowning, not even myself.
I return her to the river as ash.
She races through canyons, flashing mist and light and she tumbles over boulders and memories, twisting and turning until she spills over the edge, and she is now the roaring, crashing, majestic waterfall.
She caught it, alone...



Prompt: Fire, From Another Perspective

By Angela Tipton

I am the flame. The eternal heat, the devourer of oxygen, the destroyer of forests. I am the warmth on a chilly night and the fuel for your food. I am neutral, I do not judge. I do not choose who to wrap in my passionate embrace. I will consume all in my path as long as I can be fed. I lick and dance and crackle and roar.

By Susan Bender-Phelps

Matches are magical. I strike the bulb of phosphorescence and focus on the birth of the flame. Then, I touch the flame to anything I choose and with amazing concentration and a sense of fascination see the puff of sulfurous smoke rise - making my nose crinkle. The flame flares and catches what I have touched. Engulfing it. I am the queen of destruction.

Deliverance from Wounded Hearts

By Ty Hitzemann

Nothing beats like a wounded heart
Worn upon a sleeve
huffing its lament at you thru its musty linen
stare
Sanguine profuse inflicted by
once the confidant's blade
pummeled broken and shattered
brick blackened
unforgiving thud
When nothing
Begets a matter
loss is more
From a lesser friend
Wishes nor nod
or nary a wave
a what, a why or who
make them guess
to some unknown end
Spiraling well
found water none
for a fountain of love
Coughing in the dust
further along a painful heart's refrain
fearful pangs
They never snore
deeper still trickling thru oxalate caverns
Alchemy rages in galore.
far and below deeper still
Rich mineral rivers flow
marching Lemurian warriors
steady the earth's core
dressing wounds in shadows
on sidelines, immortal aggressors
dance wildly to their await.
Cupid looms scant behind
bow taught squeaking tight
Tendriled arms suggest
a struggled aim
taught flex shaking the arm's
strangled display
like some imposter
lurking breathless

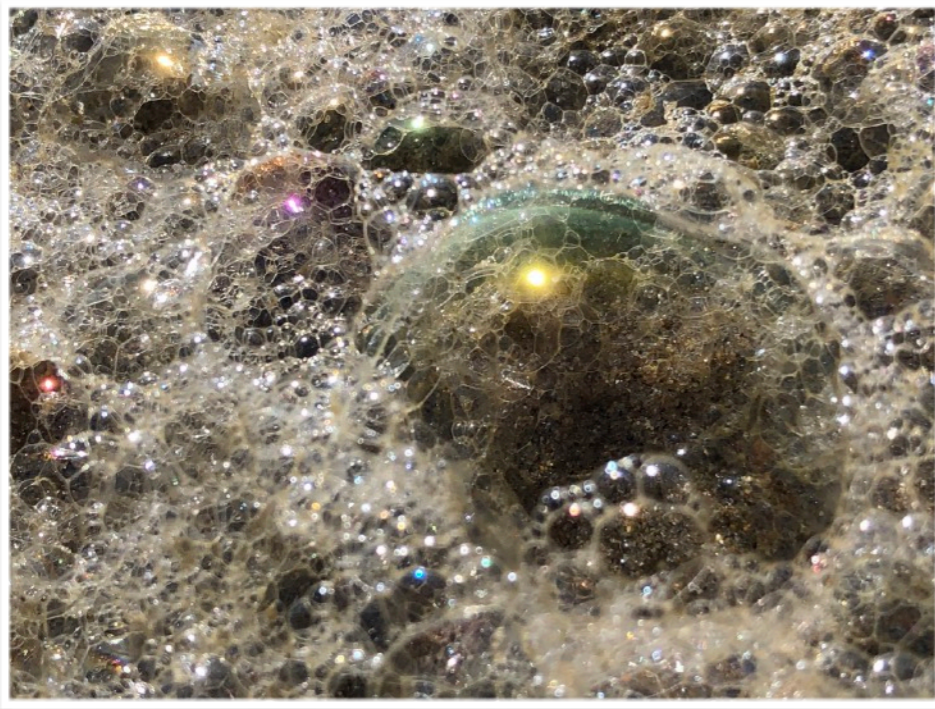
a tendered display.
It is he who controls
This magnetic pull
like some spinning glide
an undercurrent of secretive glares
That float neath the shallowest waves
docile, soon the shark grows an appetite
Eventually its only fair in nature
the teeth reveal
its true intention
its no puzzle
results of nature
can be viscious
It is calculated
A fair numbered to die
but never a muzzle
Solves these answers
Strongest survive
Only to serve the dao
Stranger still is this truth in love
Never measured free from
agenda, surprise
Or mysterious overtone
Leveled nature can deal us unfair
Though she operates blind of ambition, revenge or
of teaching some lesson.
Indeed, there exists natural disasters
And what of
love and desire
Should the other turn sour
facing off at the mat
competing for
some title or trinketed fame
Perhaps even
man of the hour
Skillbobbing for a heart of gold
Pitted against the steely resolve
of some bottomless devour
For who is you and what am I
In consideration of and, but or if
would it make a matter
If they fell off the cliff
skillbobbing for the heart of gold
Pitted against some bottomless
Devour



The query meets its receptive destination
behind the fabric wave
of the curtain's dry woven eyes
Stubborn, obstinent the answer unwilling to say
What price wagered to pay
for some reticent gift
Rare indeed mere possession
to stand lucky
Tallied near none to most valuable
as a permanent sentry
to pull the handle warmed with a winners hand
or run a personal fingerprint
upon a weaponized word
to which the winning ticket belongs
exist no gold emboss.
neither by sea, by day, come dusk or dry land.
Words familiar to love
gain the real access
in the hallowed halls of entry.
They can be heard
Even a whisper
There is little room to mistake
For it is not words at all
but in the dispersed aerosol
of a silent kiss most likely for love's preferred tryst
to sink a tip of the tongue
into a letter
of a word
or run on sentence
dropped below
the rumors of some
gossip laden paragraph
tastes the nectar of the centaur
while the endless gaze into the eye of love
the endless steep of depth
feels no need of
surfaced return
for in the womb exists no need.
salient and aerobic
in viscous suspension
symbiotic is the aquatic dance of love beneath the heart.
Desire confused
is of sublingual wisdom
A mirage of
eventual bone dry aerosol
lost to an endless direction
in the Saharian wind.

nary ever to know safe passage
thru her tunnels
impossible a pedestrian
near her luxurious armoire
To some If only a glance
into her illustrious peaks
A look back
for nothing beyond
a markedly reductive price
render us please anything of deduce
worth is the throw of loaded dice
though caught in a clumsy toss
dutifully gamed marked deck
shame worth the
gluttony of the chase
or stolen sinful glance
for this they'll gamble
all that is is won
more so for everything more to loss
they would hasten the chance
an unhealthy reflection of retinal decay
for a leveled look
upon the surface of her tray.
"Behold" as her echoed voice grows,
...I wasn't there. Yet
I was somewhere."
Fools whom mistake love for wanton for flesh
are not to know the silk in my heart
for it is everywhere...
The presence quickly to fade
distant and gaunt
her whisper
a traveling echo
a ghostly whither
Suddenly she disappears
some isolate galactic distance
unreachable and isolate
to the safe wonderment of her comfortable egg.
Nothing beats like a wounded heart
The next ones ready their hearts upon the sleeve
hoping for she whom is out there
kindled excitement
hormonic bubble
in rapt amazement
brooding secret stares
Unknown excitement
surely await

Light dances close to shadows
unworthy for the prize
wishes squirm
like the lusty larvae
in some unwilling compromise
stifled explosion of desire
unable to disguise
Their hapless costumes
looming scant behind
like souls detached from
unamended soil
"Ahh, there she is!"
One of them said
Caught up in delirium
A moments display all eyes
in a unison raise
share but a glance
thru the sand
and windburn haze
she was a beautiful mirage
above the rage
Just as quickly
she was gone
bird sans the cage
sans the coup
confiding only to the secretive stage.
But there she stood. bright as a luminous and shimmering web
they saw her. They saw her.
Tired but undaunted
their hearts still beat strong
heavy and painful, they longed for what they'd never know
but for a brief but brilliant flash.
"She was brilliant as a shooting star.
a veritable comet
a fire ball of love and light
of wisdom
of undying beauty
and of love
she burned across the overhead sky
thru the heavens
Romanic candle upon high
We had to pay attention
she was so fast
A look back and final wave
some final tracer then
she disappeared
There was greater need for new missions beyond the sphere.



Prompts: Glue, Cigarette, Rearview Mirror, Thermometer

By Janna Lopez

Glueless

ash faintly trickles
from a wilted cigarette
like desert rain
tobacco fragments
bound, forgotten memories
tangled by lost webs--
of hide n seek
thermometer snatched
your frigid blood
cubes of violet sorrow
and coffee
can you appear closer
than an object glaring
in a sun's
rearview mirror?
no.
we are not so.
desert ash
reigns of smoke and ghosts.
no glue to begin.
no remorse.
no glue.

Prompt: What is it You Expect of Your Self?

By Shannon Milliman

I expect I won't hole up again on my purple mattress under a flannel blanket over a silk red blanket. I expect I will sit my ass down next to my kids on the squeakie third pillow 1960s couch and will watch Arachniphobia on my daughter, Adrianna's 15th birthday. I expect the bare minimum out of myself. To output sufficient so that in the comings and goings of life these kids tryin make their way home like some holy rollin' stones will recall their mother around. Present. I expect the unexpectable of myself. I cannot meet the expectation. I care more for and of myself. Care more that I finish Wentworth on Netflix cause season 7 is up with new episodes. Will Joan Ferguson remember who she is? She is fake and they on the coach getting scared out of their minds by imaginary spiders are real. Really, Phineas, my youngest who has a way of meandering into my distant bubble making it feel like I am normal, there and a mommy. He tells me he can't watch it. They promised it wouldn't be that scary but now he can never roll up in a blanket ever again because a spider killed the guy. I tell him to come get in the blanket with me but hell no he won't go. I lie to him telling him I checked the blanket. He knows I didn't. But he pulls off the shelf the "What If" Question book, our favorite conversation starter prompt book, I peruse through it and find a few good ones and then. He is settled enough. Maybe he senses I need to get back to the women's New Zealand prison show or maybe he doesn't care what the heck I do. Maybe he and they are not obsessed with what I am not doing. Maybe. Maybe not. He skips out and says good night with his floppy hair he hasn't washed in four days. If you don't tell him to shower "he forgets". I "forget" too when I trace through what expectations, dreams and goals are. My expectation is to actively mother. My dream is to distantly mother, to observe and reflect on them and our moments through writing, breathing, smelling and tasting. Suffering and loving via on location sites. My goal is to bring them with me. Bring them with me on my walk about where I smell the urine in the gutters in India, letting them point toward the favelas in Brazil and seeing it looks like the homeless camps on the Springwater Corridor. My goal is that by noting reality. Noting my inept, my inadequacy, my misalignment as a mother they will be more alert, hypertuned to what their observations are. That they might see their good works and use them. That when they do I will celebrate them and will not hide in my room to watch the next episode.

Prompt: Time

By Janna Lopez

NOTCH 8



when blood rides the train
violet droplettes
station to station
laughing through
time's
wayward veins
track by track
click clack click clack click clack
move blood move
hum remorseful tunes
along a trestle
shades of Otis blues
bleed on through
snapshot wounds
click clack click clack
flow blood flow
click clack click clack
rush blood rush
no moondust stop
to stave a leaking heart
painted talisman
painted talisman
scarlet red
fresh smears across
a dirty vestibule window
cracks don't lie
cracks can't lie
'cause that's all
a rushing locomotive
plush with blood
and blues humming heart
deems as alive



Prompt: Guilty Pleasure

By Paula Greenstein

My guilty pleasure. What would that be? It has changed over time, many times. Right now, I feel caught off guard. Isn't that part of a guilty pleasure? Being caught? The shame and guilt that comes up from treating my self, some deep vulnerable dark part of myself?

What would be my guilty pleasure now? Hmm. I really have to dive deep to find it. I feel so much pleasure, enjoyment on many levels. That feels like an out.

What is my guilty pleasure for today, my fantasy. If I'm honest with myself it would be waking up with the love of my life and spending the day in bed together. Like the first time. Feeling so excited and courteous about being with her. Talking and touching almost non-stop. Sharing stories and laughing, real gut laughing.

Eating breakfast, eggs and coffee and some chocolate later. Falling asleep in each other's arms. Feeling the pure joy of skin to skin, heart to heart and soul to soul.

I wish. A guilty pleasure is a fantasy fulfilled.

Prompt: Glitter

By Leighann Barrie

Sparkling bits of plastic in every imaginable color. Once released from its sealed container the spread is everywhere. Just a dab on my face and steaked into my hair before heading out for the night's rave. My glitter marked those I touched, held, and kissed. It made its way to my clothes, my car, and my pillow. A continual reminder for weeks of the folly of one carefree evening.

Prompt: Self-Suppression vs. Self-Expression...

By Crystal Chanel

What is Self Suppression vs self expression?

It's the idea of telling you who I really am

Exposing myself fully - removing my garments - my cover ups

My walls and layers of skin thickeners

The experiences that have chiseled away at my soul

You want my bareness. In exchange for acceptance. It's a tall price.

It's the idea of allowing you to enter my heart and mind.

Into a place that often time confuses and scares me

It takes time. Or rather timing.

I can't predict when I will feel safe, love and ready to be completely naked and unashamed before you

But in due time, I hope to wake up one day disrobed and still present

I can tell you, however, that this is likely going to be a 2 way communication.

As my value far exceeds rubies and gold.

I invite you to converse with a goddess.

I wanna express my Black Girl Journey

Of glitter and ghettos

Of After-school cartoons and shady neighborhood characters

I survived drug addicted neighborhoods

Where the ice cream man delivers all sorts of fun white substances for adults and children



I avoided crack, cocaine, and meth.

I assimilated. I became the suburbs, walking my dog at sunrise, sipping tea at high noon and tucking my kids in at night in a gated community.

I cut her off. I hope they don't see my past.

I buried it. It's covered with the shame of being African on American soil.

It's a mixed affair where being Black is the slight edge.

But she is labeled too much, too strong, too insecure, too resilient, too loved, too extra, too determined

Whereas, I know her.

she is collard greens and cornbread rich.

She is grandparents raised with farmgirl diligence

She is a single mother on government assistance reared.

She is an overcomer.

She is nothing new. She is statistics recorded by the US bureaus.

It is a consensus that she consented to her own self suppression.

She is me. Bound by the fear of self expression. I fell for the okie doke.

Self inflicted wounds and neglect.

I am grasping for straws while not giving up.

Endeavoring to find the words...

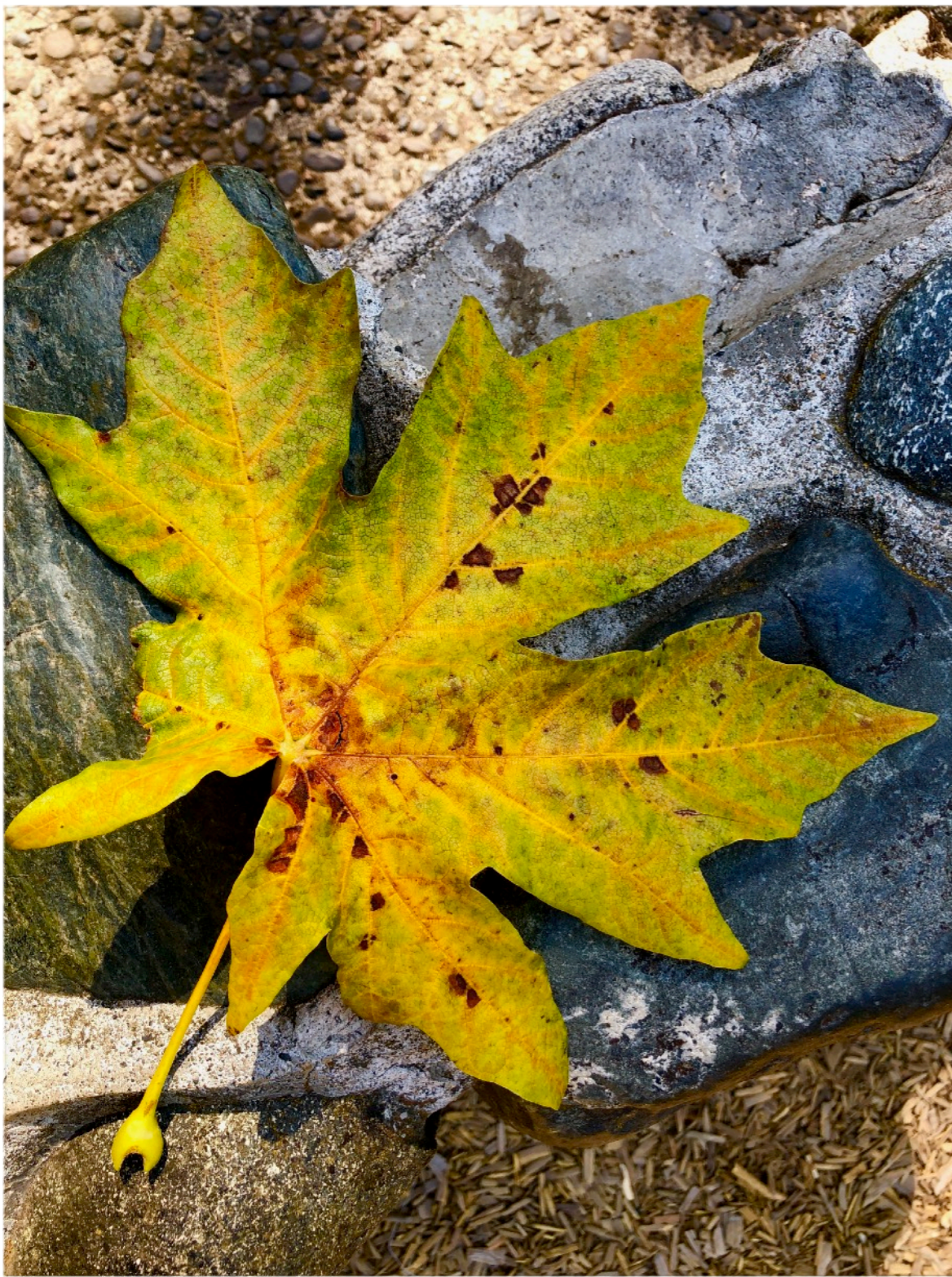
To show up for myself and bring light to what only I can.

Election Night 2020: We felt it would be critical to explore words in community as voting results trickled in. Prompts were intentional to create meaningful reflection and dialog about feelings of stress and uncertainty. This following section's pieces derive from our election night class.

Video Prompt: Otis Redding, "Change is Gonna Come"

By Angela Tipton

A Change Is Gonna Come -
I want, no I need, to move forward,
to shed the old.
So, my feet move to take a step,
my knees locking in denial.
I stretch for the horizon, hands splayed,
towards a new path,
but the cobwebs of the past
cling to me like sticky fingers.
And I realize, in order to change,
I need to disentangle the silky threads, one by one.
They are tenacious, clinging to me
like tiny razor, sharp claws.
But I choose one and acknowledge it.
I learn to forgive it.
Accept that it has played a part of my story,
one I once transcribed to believe,
the hardcore truth.
And yet, now I have a choice.
I can choose a different story, a new story.
My story.
Full of hope, and new beginnings.
That thread grudgingly releases
with bitter defeat.
It was hard, facing that truth,
which I my eyes were blind to.
Again, I push forward, groping for change,
And the cobwebs snatch me back.
So, I dig deep, down the spiral,
struggling to find another truth.
Another old belief, or pattern
That I can part with.
There. That one is red and gnarly.
Pain pulses down its length,
Like a dark heartbeat.
I take a deep, slow breath,
full of light and determination,
And rip it off, like a band aid.
Another violent release.
And I feel it, with each thread,
a bit more,
feather light.



Prompt: Otis Redding, "Change is Gonna Come"

By Ty Hitzemann

Loose change for stiff odds
hefty bills
can one draw with a pencil
from empty accounts
bail ransom dues this time around
any change just won't afford
empty pockets
a ball but aint no socket
empty intent empty suit
love done and left
from its photo locket
freight train long derailed
save for muscled flex
steep terrain
can barely walk it
Worlds of gain mean little
with chump change in hand
when heart and soul
literal life faces
the steel of its stare
death looms a frown
just outside
your transparent door
walls built to separate
the us or them
at any intersect
casts no shadow
maybe never existed
Oh yes it does
always comes to collect
built with words
and the reptilian's
hateful intent
it cannot last
just won't do
nothing withstands
the stench
the ugly chilly breath.

tight fists for hands
a saving grace the one we know
lucky Otis dead and gone
a warm message
before he jumped
the last outbound freight
a boxcar
chock fulla love
he done left us
no walls between
the message
change is bound to come
lighter load
won't be long now
to take us home
change of cars
feel the warm whisper
its powerful swagger
handfuls of grip
we can hear
ch- ch -change
beneath the rails
of locomotive breath.



Prompt: Otis Redding, "Change is Gonna Come"

By Judge Kemp

Like the waters of time, the tides keep moving taking me away to a place of pain and opportunity;
This life is hard and unfair, but I push forward with the strength of my ancestors behind me.

Change is going to come.

The winds of the storm are unpredictable and spray an air of confusion in my ears, creating
indecision and self-doubt; not knowing whether to listen or cover my ears.

Change is going to come.

I shout to be heard, to be counted, to be valued, but my voice is silenced by the nature of my skin; I
am invisible yet singled out as lazy and a thief when it's convenient.

Change is going to come.

A system of justice blinded by wealth and influence, uses its weighted scales of bias to leave my
brothers and sisters behind.

Change is going to come.

My hopes and dreams make me want for a better way of life, even as I am threatened with violence
for doing no harm.

They say change is going to come, but the question is when?

By Paula Greenstein

The dark night of the soul has been running our lives and tainting our dreams.

A change is gonna come!

Working hard, hard into the night to be able to stand in some light somewhere.

A change is gonna come!

The fear that rattles the bones and sets into the skin that we use as protection is
now playing outside.

A change is gonna come!

Whether we know it or not, we're all in this life together, here and now.

A change is gonna come!

The heart of the land is crying in anguish to be seen and heard, boiling over in
release.

A change is gonna come!

Our souls can't stand the hardness of our hearts and the control of our minds.

A change is gonna come!

Deep down inside erupting like volcanos of "NO MORE".

A change is gonna come!

A change is gonna come!

By Leighann Barrie

So much anticipation built up around this one night. The entire country is on
edge. What does it say about our country's values if a change doesn't occur?

Can the country handle four more years of continued divisiveness? And yet,
here we are on the precipice of another four years of the same.

A change is gonna come

I believe that most people are kind, can see beyond the lies, and are dismayed
by the number of 'unprecedented' events of the last four years.

A change is gonna come

The country stumbled and scraped her elbows and knees. The wounds
became infected and threatened the healthy tissue nearby. It will take an
arsenal of salves to heal the varied wounds endured but scars will remain
reminding us of our past.

A change is gonna come, in some form, and will be bestowed upon us. Its
manifestation may not be readily recognized as this country needs a thoughtful
and deliberate course correction.

Regardless of the outcomes of this election, a change is gonna come.