THE BOOT 2017

A COLLECTION OF STUDENT VOICES

YOUTH & FAMILY
Untitled
By Mukhtar Omar

I am dedicated to ensure
I escalated elevated
you can say I levitated
maybe even detonated
but the truth is estimated
real or fake
fact not fiction
another rap from scratch I’ve written
the government is like a chain
try to break it they’ll be maintained
no shame
frame other people switch lane to lane
despite the leaders
our country soon to be betrayed
I came to persuade
I begin to display
It stays on replay
but as they use the pawns
day by day
the government closes the box
they always have a way

Ima become a journalist
It’ll be permanent
I’ll find out the truth
Straight to the world news
withdrew I still had the dream to pursue
overview I looked
and turned at every avenue
The government got the upper hand
in their make-believe cartoon
This is reality so please stay tuned
Greed and starvation
One nation but all they see is
domination
Competition constantly
Uncommon curiosity
But soon to be continued
the truth will come
I am not frustrated, I am frustration.
because my mom works night and day just to further my education,
where education is between poster-holding expenses and college-bound generations
where the isolation my father gave me and my siblings changed our situations
but my dad, my dad is between a dedicated tattoo artist and an alcoholic
where him missing felt toxic.

I am not frustrated, I am frustration.
because those men promote violence while the sirens protect their blue wall of silence.
Where the kids holding picket signs is their rival alliance,
where rival alliance is between politics killing kids and having their hands up saying “stop I won’t resist”.

I am not frustrated, I am frustration.
because my dad is a metaphor for the men in blue, claims my mom as his wall of silence,
yet treats his kids like his tattoo clients.

I am not frustrated, I am frustration.
because at a young age my brother and sister became my responsibility,
and I had to see my life differently.
Where I taught them beauty is in the eye of the beholder, Jesus Christ
where I did everything for them out of love, never sacrifice.
But my siblings, my siblings are my new beginning.

I am not frustrated, I am frustration.
I know I’m going places, but I’m leaving with the heathens
We in a rush, ain’t no breaks for breathing
Not even if we’re beaten and bleeding
We are only like this because even when we’re pleading,
It’s like our words have no meaning

When I’m up there, I won’t join the trigonometry
But I won’t present myself dishonorably,
Because honestly, honesty is the key to success

But the boom of the lock dropping has been suppressed
Like the voices of the kids in poverty,
That have for so long been oppressed
They only do this because if they heard what we had to say,
They would have no breath left in their chest,
All we need to know is that we are truly blessed

The beauty of a forest fire is only temporary,
When it leaves, everything becomes very scary
You love it because it took away the hate,
but the fire was never caring
I hated how it could give me so much, but with happiness
it was never sharing
Now my grip on you is loose, like a professional skater’s bearings

I am from the deep blue Pacific Ocean
The island of palm trees, coconuts, and bananas
Most people think of it as a beautiful island that is
believed to be incredible
Yet my people are suffering day and night just to afford food
We come to American shores in search for a better future
Yet just to be called FOBS,
Fresh off the boat, for speaking broken English
Can’t really afford the American style well,
Blame that on the $4.52 minimum wage given by the American government
that has colonized Samoa
But never once felt accepted because my thighs were
thicker than average
Never had my people succeed in life
So they turn their backs and resort to the military,
become high school dropouts and gang bangers
But never once did I give up on my people
So I keep my head up and embrace what my ancestors created.
Bad Blood
By Alexa Sanchez

Your family
The ones you live with happily
But in all reality
The truth behind it can be a tragedy
You see, I never want her to feel like she failed as a mother
They didn’t appreciate her raw beauty, my father and brother
I never want her to change, I adore her affection
We all have our issues but in my eyes she is perfection
My father has been gone
I was only 9 when he was withdrawn
Out of our home by dawn
Making the kids feel like we did something wrong
My older brother got kicked out
Mom and him argued with shouts
The drugs were what it was about
And it broke my mother’s heart with no doubt
Now the oldest daughter
Her mother always taught her
Love yourself and nothing smaller
But her insecurities are like a disorder
The family tree doesn’t talk to each other
Not even my mom to her own mother
Not even my aunt to her own brother
If that were me I would suffer
To have bad blood with my own blood
The sadness would overwhelm like a flood
I just want to be surrounded by love
But it just seems to not be enough
Fifteen By Peachy Lopez

They hate how much I smoke.
They hate the way I stink.
They hate the way I look.
“Ohh,” but they love the way I speak.
My creativity is broken down and processed in a swisher sweet.
Teachers hate the knowledge that I take in from the street.
They wouldn’t ever let me produce the shit I write on a beat.
I don’t got a lot of homies neither alotta friends.
Oh well fuck it, it’s not like they’ll be there in the end.
I’d rather be in the middle,
cuz the top don’t sound like a spot for me.
I’d rather chill in a nice home, spending money on my family.
I’m only 15.
Smoking up bud, god knows I’m a fiend.
It’s all good tho, right?
At least, I’m not drinking lean.
Effortlessly waking up with the school on my ass about truancy.
Shout out to all y’all teachers and peers that believed in me.
I’m pushing and pushing,
trying to get further away from the streets.
Even in the summer we gotta have some kinda heat.
Just to walk in the streets comfortably.

Our Society By Iman Dubad

I’m tired of these people in uniforms
Beating and killing, thinking they just pulled another score.
KKK and the police: aren’t they the same?
I mean, they protect their people from the madness,
and leave us in the hurricane
Are they really going to win?
Why do we always sit back and film?
Our society
Giving us anxiety
Living in America is more of a dynasty
Invasion of our privacy, silently with authority
Don’t know if there’s someone listening on my phone
Getting hate on how much you weigh
Children are stressed, while teenagers are depressed
Government is not infallible
Why is this true?
Badges pulling triggers only of color
Why? I don’t have a clue
We need to come together and be as one
And show them that years of brutalizing are going to come to an end
WE HAVE JUST BEGUN
Brown
By Loyan (AJ)

Brown, brown, like the dirt at my feet,
So I’m dirty? Simply because my skin is a little murky, police feel the need to search me
As though my skin is some sort of weapon and I need to be taught a lesson

But I see it as a blessing because despite all the stressing
Jesus was blessed with this same weapon

Skin like the dirt but still could be hurt
forty days he spent and he learned don't believe it all

Rumors that we will fall as we dissolve
The way he foresaw
....DAMN

No matter how many times they say we belong
We will long
To be at home
Where faces are prone
To be our tone

So many cops whose sins cannot be atoned
So much of our culture being cloned
‘Till we are gone

My mother used to say
God is not the author of confusion

So I pray everyday God gives me sight to see through all these illusions
And avoid the contusions of losing Losses or lessons
Either way leading up to a blessing
Dear Parents

By Joselyn Hixon

Dear dad,

Why did you leave me at such small age? Why did you make it seem you were gonna come back to stay? Why try to replace five years you missed with toys and gifts? There were so many times I needed you but you weren’t there, you’re too selfish and put your needs first when it should’ve been your kids.

Five years passed and you finally call, but at the age of nine I had nothing to say at all. Few more years go by and still no call, but on December 25th my youngest brother was born. And it’s crazy ‘cause you were there for him but not for me. Few more years go by and now I’m 14, I see pictures on Facebook of you playing basketball with my brother and your girlfriend’s daughter. Damn, nice way to disrespect me and my brother.

Now I’m 16 and you’re still the same: still no call just to see if I’m okay. Thanks dad for showing me how to live without you, thank you for showing me not to depend on no man, thank you for showing me your actions speak louder than your words, thanks for showing me what the definition of selfish is. Before Adonis came in the picture my mom was more of a man then you were, working all day and going to school at night, and she never left me. Adonis filled all the holes and pain you left me when he showed me the love and caring support that you never did. But once again, thanks dad.

Sincerely, Your daughter

Dear Mama,

Let me start by saying I love you and I appreciate you. I’m sorry I’m not the best kid, I’m sorry I’m hard-headed and don’t listen. I’m sorry for smoking weed, but it’s the only way I can cope with my demons. I’m sorry I skip school and get shitty grades, but Mom I’m trying my best. I really am. I know everyone doubts me and assumes I’m gonna be like my dad. But watch, I’m gonna prove them all wrong and Mama I’m gonna make you proud. I will get my cap and gown and will look at you in the crowd and say “I made it, I did this for you”.

Mama thank you for not leaving me, even at my worst times. Thank you for showing me your ways of life. I know you’re tired Mama, I can see it in your eyes, but our struggle is almost over. You got this Mama, you’re strong. And I just want you to know you’re my role model, my best friend, my heart, my soul, my everything. You’re my Mama and nobody can take your place. Just do one thing for me, keep that pretty smile on your face.

Love, Kya
This is for my Grandma for looking after me ever since day one
You know I’ve been making you proud of me
Ever since I was young
Been there for me all my life
My parents abandoned me
But know they gotta pay the price

Everything you bought me I’d be looking nice
I’m thankful for you teaching me how to act right
Taught me how to be man
Taught how to be a good older brother
Taught me how to make the right choices

I appreciate you for being my lovable grandma
I appreciate you for supporting me when my parents are not there for me
I appreciate being your wonderful grandson

I’m gonna make you really proud, Grandma
I’m gonna do everything for you when I make it
I’m gonna show you that I’m going to exceed in life
I’m gonna show you that Ima be a high school graduate
I’m gonna show you everything that I can to make you really proud
The only thing I wanna say to you is that
I love you very much Grandma
Camera
By Jayla Harris

Life is like a camera just focus on what’s important and capture the enjoyable moments.
Take a picture of every time you go out to eat with friends.
Take pictures when you are babysitting.
Snapchat when you’re walking your dog.
Take pictures of family reunions to capture moments that are unforgettable.

Camera, lights, action!
Capture the moments of getting your first pet.
Sometimes cameras don’t capture everything like emotions, ghosts.

Camera, lights, action!
Filters capture the beauty and fun moments that are viewed by friends.

Camera, lights, action!
A camera is one of my favorite things to be on
Because it captures moments that you can always Look back on.

Cameras can be annoying when your friends take or post pictures
That you look weird in.

It captures the details. Light dark, and melanin.
It holds memories in a safe place
No worries about “I had no childhood.”

The lenses may be small, while the image is full screen
My camera develops but the start is all there
The beginning, the middle, the end.
CLICK CLICK CLICK.
Why do we suffer in poverty?
By Ilia Aga

Because of you I had to live a life where being evicted was
how I seen my childhood going.
Moving from place to place with anxiety was
like a bathtub overflowing.

I had to see my family in distress.
Seen my mom and dad having trouble
Their love was becoming less and less.

My dad left me at the age of 10.
Had to figure out how to go on with life without him
So I used a paper and pen.

Still living in poverty yet nothing phased me.
Haven’t got any calls to see if I’m alright.

The darkness hovers above my family because
we can’t afford lights
A night containing so much fright
Will we have to spend the rest of our lives using a candle light?

So why do we suffer in poverty?
You see, my family has helped people in the airport
get their baggage, helped people get
one place to another.
But we get left with less than enough money and we’re
still being treated unequal
If you look at it this way hard workers are
set to be poor or homeless
while owners are set to be regal.
LOVE OF THE ELEMENTS by Magic Chen and Devonte Antonio
Intro By Magic Chen

4 Elements, 1 Definition
4 Elements to help this world avoid total Annihilation
4 Elements to keep this world balanced with no Hesitation.

4 Elements, 1 Meaning.
1 Meaning with no, one size better fit all, like a glove
For it is something people cherish and people look for
Which is Love.

Words you will hear words so elegant
For it is not just love but rather the,
Love Of The Elements.

EARTH (Love of the Elements)
By Devonte Antonio

She keeps me from straying too far from her
She has so much beauty that I cling to her
Her atmosphere is great, she fills me with joy
She's not fake; it's not a ploy
She will never destroy
My feelings I employ
I live with her; she lives with me
She's seen my love, money, and greed
But still looks at me in envy
She'll never take me for granted
But I can't say the same
I've lived on Earth so long
It's not shame, it's pain
But she still loves me she explained
Exclaiming saying she isn't ashamed
Now as I sit in dismay
I fade into the planet called Earth
And wait for judgement day
WATER (Love of the Elements) By Magic Chen

Hair flowing smoothly,
As though it were from a movie,
I see...I see her there, looking like the powerful god, Neptune.
Words silent, as though it turned night in my bedroom,
I know...I know she notices I care for her,
Nothing in this world, but her, I would prefer.
Trying to talk, but all I get is hesitation.
Trying to get my thoughts to flow, like a river reaching its destination.

Down on my knees, please hear my plea.
I want to be able to break free, and ride the Seven Seas with her,
So that I can find out if she is the key to breaking me free,
I hear...I hear my thoughts, as they scream to be written on paper and ink.
Wanting to find the link to the brink of my mind,
In order to help me rethink, and keep my thoughts in sync.

Calling my mom for care, I know she’ll deliver,
Because my thoughts of the girl she certainly felt.
Remembering her getting cancer it gave me shivers,
But I helped her through her illness, so she can flow like a river,
And now, she can help.

My mom asks if I have a girl or not;
Of course I don’t.
I thought I could ask the girl, but words didn’t come up.
Thoughts spilling all over, like water from a cup.
But I...But I know I wasn’t built to hide away forever
Wherever, and whoever I was with
Getting me to talk about the girl, well, I plead the fifth.
Because I wanted to say something before our class dismissed,
But I...But I couldn’t.

People telling me I got a gift to give,
Is that gift enough for a kiss?
Asking myself,
“Are you cool, like the seven seas you promised to show her?”
“Are you gonna give a lecture to her about each one, as though you taught literature?”
All this drama feels like a blur,
Waiting for another moment like this to recur,
Wondering, “Is fear the life you’d prefer?”
“Or are you ready to grow out of it, like a Douglas Fir ?”

It’s okay to take chances, much like the rapper,
What I’m going to say to her, it will matter.
I’ll look towards her and say,
“You make my thoughts flow, like the water cycle”

She sits and stares in utter silence,
I look at her knowing she is full of shyness.
She wants to bring her barrier down, like a wall.
She finally finds a way when she looks and says,
“Baby steps Magic, it’s okay to start small.
Soon you’ll flow gently, just like a massive Waterfall.”
WIND (Love of the Elements)
By Devonte Antonio

I can feel her emotions flow into me like I’m breathing in air
She was really cute so I showed her kindness
I knew I was the one to be her guidance
We might just sit back relax and talk about the make believe
But she always be the one I see
She might flow by me like the wind to the trees
But I’ll always be there and show her my feelings
She’ll deal with all my dealings that I’ve been meeting
And teaching her all my teachings in the evening
So I inhale and breathe, thinking she’s done so much for me
She’s the wind and air so pretty much I can’t compare
And I’ve come to find that that’s fair
So I exhale and she turns into thin air

FIRE (Love of the Elements)
By Magic Chen

Spirit so bright,
It almost gave people frights,
For they thought it was their last night.

But her soul burns, as you look at it from a distance,
looking like a candlelight.
Skin as pale as the night, yet her hair burns with inferno like curls.
I know she isn’t your typical teenage girl,
I see...I see her wings expand, just like a graceful Phoenix.
Standing with confidence, almost showing no weakness.
Leaving people with joyful tears, as though they needed some Kleenex,
I feel...I feel my soul ignite, releasing my inner flame,
Filling me with confidence, something I could not even tame.
It seemed to grow more than Donald Trump’s fame,
I know...I know inside her mind she still lives in fear,
It seemed like her future was a dirty mirror: Unclear.
Unclear about her path, still wondering about her past.
Wondering will I make this moment ever last.
She sits calmly, searching for an answer,
I never knew a Phoenix would lay in defeat.
Looks turned to worry, questions not answered.
She thought her life was incomplete.
Looked like she needed a moment of silence,
But in reality, the flame no one could put out just needed
a little guidance.
It seemed hate consumed her thoughts,
Thinking she were in the wrong spot
Believing her life was full of cruelty
But, in my eyes, I see her as the definition of true beauty
Her eyes showing her true self, with pupils like a blaze
Making my thoughts confuse me, as though I were in a maze
Searching for the closest way to her heart, it seemed unlikely
Trying to persuade her, like the love from Aphrodite.

Thinking I could tame the fire no one could put out,
though it seemed unlikely
Not able to see the path, making me move around blindly
Wondering if I should prepare a speech, as if ready to read a monologue,
Thinking as smoke clears the area, covering it like fog.

I see the Phoenix wounded, with no injury.
Thinking to myself, “how will I soothe this fiery spirit’s misery?”
How could I help the fire no one could put out
The more I looked towards her, the more my soul wanted to jump
and shout
And the more it relieved some of my self doubt
Making my soul grow, just like a sprout.

She looks at me, as I do to her
Thinking, nothing else in life, I would prefer,
But this moment.
This moment of silence, giving her a little guidance
Finally taming the fire no one could put out, leaving people in silence.

Looking and asking, “how did you tame the flame?”
Looking and responding, “you only have yourself to blame”
Not able to stand up, something that they could not foresee.
Now look at me, taming this Phoenix, and finally, setting her free.
CLOSURE (Love of the Elements)
By Magic Chen

Just got done dealing with Mother Earth,
Flowed with Neptune, just to see what it was worth.
Feeling that energy push me, like the force of the wind,
Making me write a poem filled with fire,
Thinking it was a new Discipline.

Every second spent, you know it caught your attention
With words looking like craftsmanship, no need for an intervention.
Elements help to keep the world balanced, call it Equilibrium
We got enough thoughts to drop another Album.
A poem or a stanza guaranteed it gonna be an Anthem
Showing the definition of love, call it our Emblem.

Love Of The Elements words so Elegant
Putting both together as though they were both Relevant.
Great minds think alike I guess that's the word
Placing our thoughts on paper and ink and not leaving it unheard.

Had to write a poem for this program,
you know we had to contribute.
We’ll see you next year, until then,
To Be Continued.......
Overcoming Challenges
By Edwin Garcia

How am I going to do this?
How should I do this?
What if I fail?
What should I do?
What can I do?
Is there a second chance?
Can I overcome these Challenges?

There is no other choice,
I have to and I will.
I will work hard to overcome these challenges.
I will have no fear.
I will succeed.
I am Success.

When I succeed, many people will be proud of me.
I will have things I could never get for myself.
I will do things for myself and for the ones who helped me overcome these challenges.
I will be somebody.
Happiness will arrive.
Nothing will stop me.

My Brothers
By Kevin Pham

I love my brothers.
They always have my back, like a backpack.
My brothers were with me when I was down,
I promise you we coming up.
If I ever get in trouble,
They defend me like a castle.
Whenever I fall,
My brothers are always there to pick me up, like UPS.
Whenever I ask for help they always help me like a teacher.
Me and my brothers always chilling like a freezer.
Thanks my brothers!
Police Brutality
By Jeniyah Calloway

1,134….. It seems like just a number
But when you’re put into a system where you’re set up to fail
you sit and wonder
Who am I? What is my purpose? Why was I put on this
blue textured sphere?
I’m not here to make friends, I’m not here to sell dreams, but
something is pumping through my body like fear
See, we ruin neighborhoods, you ruin continents
Then you spread our blood around our house
like we’re some sort of condiment
Mad at us for not snitching, yet you hold up your
blue wall of silence
You need a whole life evaluation, we just need a little guidance
Every Black life taken a year, that’s what the number means
And I hope you didn’t forget it, but it’s kind of what it seems,
Black bodies found buried and sitting in streams
And you’re telling us there’s hope and we should follow our dreams?
It’s funny that you say that since school is where
all of our time is spended
Graduating from high school, applying for college,
and then BOOM! It all ended
“My job here is to serve and protect”
Nahh, your job here is to beat and neglect
I’m sorry I’m a light-skinned Black, now am I being too real?!
You say “This land was discovered”
Nahh it was just here for you to steal
The same people who say slavery is no longer legal
Are the same ones who tell us not to spread our wings,
yet our nation’s animal is an eagle
Growing up without our fathers since they’re
snatched out of our homes
Can’t teach us about life, so we gotta learn it on our own
Times are rough you never know what you might face
Have a nice day and you better stay safe
“Black” By Da’Quarious Smith

Yes I’m Black
Doesn’t mean I’m vulnerable to attack
That’s something they always seem to track
I’m just like you, a human,
But you’re seeing the wrong image like an illusion
Red blood, emotions, just another moving figure
So why should you treat me like I’m about to pull a trigger

Born into the color of my skin
I was not made for jail
A lifetime full of trials and tribulations
hitting me like hail
I didn’t create sagging
I didn’t create gang banging
So why would you wanna put the worst on me
To get me jailed, tortured
But you still can’t put down a Black kid like me

Father By Lexi

Loyalty and respect tattooed on your hands written in cursive
The name dick tattooed on your forearm
But it should be on your forehead
Disgusting little bastard
Disguising yourself from others
They don’t know your deceiving ways.

The father you never were
Because the drugs controlled your brain cells
Double crossing your own family is who you are
Stealing money and dealing drugs is what pushed me away
Leaving my six year old sister on the streets
And you think you’re a father?
But that’s not the name you deserve
Posing as someone who’s loving
But you’re just dozing off sleeping
on this family that you never deserved

To you I’m not even your daughter
And that’s what boils my blood
Telling the court you don’t want me
It’s fine I don’t need you in the long run.
Where I’m From
By Lisa Gascon

It’s getting harder to recognize where I’m from

It took decades for houses to made into a home
But now my neighborhood is filled with hard hat zones
First it starts with a cute, overpriced gourmet coffee shop
Then wealthy developers barged in,
requesting an increased presence of cops
“We promise to upgrade this neighborhood and make it glorious
(but we’ll raise the rent, cause displacement, and proclaim U$ victorious!)”

Then comes the boutique pet store and eco-friendly bicycle shops
In comes the microbreweries with specialty beer made out of specialty hops
That old house over there? It was converted to a new yoga studio
Where the rich stretch out their limbs from their crowns to their pedicured toes

Single family homes with backyards and porches
Replaced with high-rise condo units and boxed in fortresses
Skinny townhomes constructed on what used to be called the wilderness
And you wonder why cougars and bears stalk your garbage with vigilance?

$80,000 homes were affordable to working families in the eighties
Now go for more than half a million dollars, ain’t that crazy?
Neighbors used to consist of every race, creed, and color
Turned into yuppy folks disrupting our community infrastructure
They keep pushing us out, further and further
Waving their dollar signs like a magic wand converter

It’s getting harder to recognize where I’m from
It causes me headaches, hurting my cerebrum
The tsunami of “progress” is leaving us drowned
They redlined us in, now they’re redlining us out

The changes in my neighborhood are happening so fast
Soon, the memories I have of it will only exist in an old photograph
Curly Queens
By Nia Cole

To the little girl who straightened her every cruel curl that cursed her world
Society silently beat her in a box she couldn’t fit in
The lies she told herself only spoke louder in her years of school
Day by day her self esteem got lower and lower
She has a damaged soul
When the mirror is clear
She is foggy
I was that little girl

Comparing myself to others was my hobby
Why does that bitch have that light weight, straight, long, strong, flowing hair that’s on the Victoria’s Secret commercials?
And I have this short kinky madness, weird shaped, nappy natted shit
I want to be that bitch

But one day I got tired of trying to be a copy
I dug deep into my roots
Started asking myself questions
Like.. wtf is good hair?
Why did I hate my hair in the first place?
Taking care of my mane is like meditation
Mind, body, and soul healing
An indescribable feeling
But when I’d walk into a room
The mood would completely change
As if I were Kunta Kinte himself
But my hair is a political statement
I am no longer apart of the white enslavement

To the people who told me to fix my hair,
And taunted me for it
I’m making up for all the times I was unspoken
You cannot fix what was never broken
Rise up black girls,
Embrace those naps and curls
The Love For My Family
By Jalanie McMillan

I love my brothers like a twin, when we are against the world, we will always win.

Our bond is like a stream of god’s energy. The protection we have for each other is like a forcefield that deflects off all atomic weapons.

Niggas get knocked down when we run that at the park. The fights be so intense, it’s like a battle between dolphins and sharks. We may smoke weed but in the end, we will all succeed.

As you see, we are just a group of black young men all we just want in life is to make as much money as we can.

Some of us didn’t have our fathers around to hold us. Is that a shame now that i see what life is like, it’s no game. We don’t get treated the same, so i guess we are gonna have to man up as a group and deal with that pain.

I love u brothers.
Blacks killing Blacks  
Chicanos killing Chicanos  
While we got Americanos hating on marijaunos  
The War On Drugs  
Was set to discriminate against my people  
I also can’t forget about all my Black people  
Black and Brown pride!  
Put us together and we’re both lethal  
I speak for my people  
We sell drugs cause that’s all we know  

Going to school didn’t show us how to run the show  
Living in a white man’s world  

Didn’t really talk to us about police  
Or  
Tell us their true side, that we never seen  
Or  
Where not to walk in the street  
Or  
Whether to tell me what skin color I have to be  
So these cops won’t be harassing me  

Living in the slums  
With no jobs to hunt  
Momma got a hunch  
Don’t want me selling drugs  
Can’t seem to make my money the right way  
Gotta thank the government for throwing life away
Locked Up  By Rahwa Abraham

Dark cell
Wall covered, gang signs everywhere.
Free her, Free him, all over the walls,
But nobody really knows I’m here.

Woke up at 8,
Locked up
Get ready in your cell
That’s fucked up.
Hurry up and line up.
Hands behind your back.
I’m sad for thinking
My own family really had my back.

Walk in a straight line
No looking back
One security walking us
I thought kindergarten was way back
Straight to school,
Not really school
I meant a basement, but it’s all cool

5  classes
Kind of like real school
But how would you feel
Showing up in a blue on blue jumpsuit
Yeah we get time between classes
But we’re just back to the cages
And what they expect us to do,
Some gymnastics?

Back to class, here we go again
Back to the line
and no I don’t need you to hold my hand
Sorry security,
Please don’t write me up
I’m not tryna have the judge see it
And expect to extend the clock
I’ve already done enough
Wait.......... Excuse my words
I meant accused enough
But it’s still all absurd.
They say I don’t eat much
But they got it all wrong
I eat alright.
I’m just picky
And that’s real talk.
Knowing that,
You think ima eat your shit?
I know it’s juvi,
but you can’t just serve me spit.

Juvi juvi juvi
It’s a bad hideaway.
They think it works for the Bad groupies.
But trust me, You don’t know me.
And when you work for me later on
You’re gonna plead you’re guilty!!

I am not accused. I am accusations.
I am not a suspect,
They just say I do things.
I am not a delinquent. I am delinquency.
The whole court system stays having their eyes on me.

I am not irritated. I am irritation.
Don’t say my name,
If you’re just tryna disturb my patience.
Attitude is a big setback.
I’m bothering you?
Oops, I dont give 2 fucks

I don’t start fires. I am a fighter.
I fight for my rights
I fight with or without others by my side .
I fight the rules they give me.
But then I’m wanted,
See why I’m angry?
What happened to it’s a free world
Say it all. But the “heroes” get offended
And now you’re a know-it-all

All I’m tryna say is,
the system’s fucked up,
but lemme say no more
before I get my ass locked up.
Unfree Labor
By Ramon Jimenez

I make everything you see
But never am I free
I am undocumented and illegal
A servant to all the wealthy people
I am labeled dangerous and criminal
But the way you treat me is unforgivable

I construct massive structures
Risking pain and fractures
Building high rises, hotels and schools
But, men with money only see me as their tool
I clean your house, I pick your crops
While you make bad choices at the ballot box
I make everything you use
Yet you demonize me on the news

I bend iron and mend bricks
Never do I get to take trips
Instead my boss plays tricks
Working low wage and high risk
But I stay poor as I work two jobs
Every check I cash, I get robbed
I make homes that I will never afford,
You can see me running from the landlord

I am not permitted to protest,
One phone call leads to one arrest
Agents of ICE kicking down my door
Chained and cuffed straight to the floor
On a one way flight to El Salvador
That same place you backed a civil war,
Planned politically pernicious plots,
And supported diabolic death squads

I know you want us gone
Yet we are 11 million strong
We will rise and organize
Demanding equal rights, no compromise
If we stop working, you go hungry,
So good luck building up your country
Money Isn’t Everything
By Selesa Taamu

Money cannot make me forget about the time you left, Just so you could go out and get drunk again. Money cannot make me forget about the times you’ve treated me more like a friend than a daughter. You didn’t even care if I skipped school, or if I smoked. But I know what you did care about: my appearance. You made sure I had new clothes, the newest shoes, everything. You tried sweetening me up by buying me whatever I wanted so I’d forget about you not coming home the next day. I still don’t get why you chose to drink, when you knew it was just going to make you sick. No matter how many times you’ve ended up in the hospital, with a tube down your throat, you still kept hurting yourself. Not only yourself, but also us, your kids. We all sat there and cried, wondering why you would let this happen again. I’m tired mom, tired of wanting to spend time with you. Tired of wanting you to make the right choices for yourself. But at the end of the day, you’re still my mom and I love you more than ever. Even if you feel like everyone is against you.
The Illusion Of Happiness
By Shreveinna Saran

I am not depressed
I am depression
I am the many questions that doctors ask
after every blood draw session

I am not sad
I am sadness
I am sick and tired of this madness

I am not a victim
I am victimization
I am the never ending effect of this killer depression
I am the little voice in your head telling you to give up,
You're not worth the fight,
Nobody will ever love you,
And that is why you are always gonna get hurt.
It'll be just like all the people you ever loved and cared about
that have ever left you.
You will always be alone.
Live alone.
Die alone.

I am not abandoned
I am abandonment
I am your minds crushing dismantlement
The fear that runs through your blood,
The shivering cold sensation that tingles down your spine
when you're awake,
Crying yourself to sleep at night,
Wondering why, "IT'S YOU"

I am not "used"
I am useless
But even knowing this, did it ever trigger my rudeness
All of people's words and actions just became meaningless
Truthless
Dear Mama
By Trinidad Garnica

Sorry I’m not a perfect young son, never listening to all the good advice you always told me, getting suspended in school year after year, getting into fights all the time, skipping school day after day, never getting good grades, being in the streets from am to pm, smoking weed with my day 1 bros, always texting me and telling me to come home already, but mama, one day you’ll see me graduating, walking across the stage with my diploma, working and making my own money, living in my own house, and driving my own car.

Mama I appreciate all the things you have done for me like cooking me tacos, and soup when I’m sick taking care of me when I couldn’t, and being there for me when I needed you.
Imagine it is Aug 10, 2217. 200 years from now. You are 17 years old.

You are walking through a dense forest covering the ruins of the King County juvenile detention center. The purple webs of the post-arachnids glow in the trees. They mutated from spiders during a genetic engineering experiment back in the 21st century, and now they have their own internet, sharing information in their webs. Luckily, these ones are friendly to humans, and they want to help us fix our mistakes.

In a clearing up ahead, you notice the wreckage of a drone someone must have shot down during the revolution. You wonder if the shooters were youth trying to escape the juvenile plantation. A gentle swarm of antgrass wanders in circles around the rusting drone. It’s also a mutant species, evolving to help the planet heal, and it seems to sense the atrocity toxins in this land. As your stomach tightens, so do you.

You came to this place with your friend A.Q. You have a crush on A.Q., and you are admiring the patterns the tree shadows make on their back, trying to guess what they are feeling right now. The two of you have been learning about this place in preparation for your rite of passage, where you earn the tattoos made of post-arachnid ink that all adults in your community wear. You have come here with other youth to prepare together by researching and doing healing rituals.

You’re in a hurry to earn your tattoos, because you want to share them with A.Q. The tattoos can change colors and patterns, revealing the emotions and soul energy moving through your bodies - but only when you both want it to happen. You and A.Q. have asked around about it, and people say that opening tattoos to each other is more exciting than sex or drugs.

But to earn your tattoos you will have to face the the painful past of places like this. At any point in your journey you might be bitten by a certain species of post-arachnid, and when it chooses you with its bite, you will hallucinate the stories of past generations: the oppression, trauma, dreams, and moments of rebellion that gave birth to your world.

You are scared that if you are bitten in a place like this, you might hallucinate the early 21st century, when the government used to lock youth in cages. You look down at the ruins of those cells, broken open and covered in moss and detoxifying mushrooms. It’s a fear you need to face, and you know when you come back to the present moment your elders will hold you safe, helping you heal. They will guide you into adulthood. Then you will finally be able to share moments of ecstasy with A.Q., who looks back at you with a smile as you brush the gentle webs away from your face.
Now imagine it’s Aug 16, 2217, 6 days later.

There is no history class, only the coming of age ritual. You are preparing for it by studying historical artifacts, sorting through objects that were buried in mud when Mt. Rainier erupted. You are curious about the youth who they used to lock in those cells back when the USA still existed, the youth who the schools used to fail, who the police used to harass and the adults used to abandon. So many people talked about them, but what did they have to say about their own lives? You open up a time capsule someone had sealed, and in it you find a copy of a booklet that looks like the one you are holding now. It was called the Boot, written in the summer of 2017.

After you read it, you can’t stop thinking about it. What if the post-arachnids make you hallucinate some of the stories these remarkable youth shared in their poems? Would you be able to handle it?

In their pictures they don’t look much different from you; despite their odd 21st century styles they have the same skin tones as you and your friends. But you’ve lived free since birth in a community without police, where everyone looks out for each other; you wonder what it must feel like to have an armed oppressor treat your skin like a weapon. You have a whole village of healthy elders raising you. What was it like for these young poets when their parents abandoned them, lost between conviction and addiction?

And how were they able to express so much dignity and power in the face of it all? How did they resolve conflicts among each other without calling the police? How did they support each other to open up, when their skin had become so thick with pain?

You scan the internet archives and find that some of the youth who wrote these poems later went on to participate in the movements that abolished the Washington State Prison System and the Seattle Police Department. This was part of the Revolution that finally ended global capitalism in the late 21st century, bringing abundance and peace through solar power. The minute you discover this you send A. Q. a holographic text message, full of emoji hieroglyphics expressing your excitement to encounter these historic poems.

Then you write your own poem, sending love back in time to the youth from 2017, the youth who built the world that you are about to inherit. You tell the post-arachnids that you’d be honored to experience these ancestors’ stories in your body, even if you end up with some scars in your tattoos. You pray to enter adulthood inspired by the courage these young people showed in their poems and their lives.
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Southwest Youth & Family Services partners with youth and families to transform their futures.

For more information, please visit www.swyfs.org, email info@swyfs.org or call 206.937.7680.

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