

UTAH POETRY ROCKS!!! 2021

An Anthology of Poetry Created by Utah Youth in Care

“Without poetry, we lose our way.”

—Joy Harjo, U. S. Poet Laureate

Dedicated to the rhyme of everyday words, the rhythm of the beating human heart,
the sacred repetition of the extraordinary rippling through the ordinary moments of life,
and the poetry we all sing when we bravely speak our truths to the world.

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Thank you for respecting the poems of these young poets and artwork of these young artists.

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ABOUT UTAH POETRY ROCKS!!! 2021

“There’s a reason poets often say, “Poetry saved my life,” for often the blank page is the only one listening to the soul’s suffering, the only one registering the story completely, the only one receiving all softly and without condemnation.”

Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Therapist, Storyteller & Poet

Poetry in a time of COVID. Who knew? And yet these poems were created one after another after another in the spring of 2021, in a time of COVID. The majority of the poems in this anthology were created with a little feedback communicated on Zoom by me, a humble, hardworking teaching artist and sometimes writer of poetry. But a few of these poems were written under the direction of the young poets, period. It is often said that the poem writes itself. Well, of course it doesn’t, but a poem does come into being through its own energy and force. When a young poet is in that flow, then who knows what magic will be made?

This maybe a time of COVID, but only one of the poems in this anthology is actually about COVID. The vast majority of the young poets here wrote about the topics they have always written about: first love and disappointments; familial love, hate and abuse; love of their own wonderful children; life in lockup; the stress of treatment; gangs and life on the street; fun with words and ideas; love of the natural world; declarations of identity; cycles of pain and addiction; staying and running; lessons learned; changes made; regrets; memories; dreams; and hope for the future. These poems written in the middle of the great pandemic of 2020-2021 explore the same ideas and themes as any ordinary year.

I love these poems. I love the ones that won prizes, and I love the ones that did not, especially the ones that were first-time efforts, brave words right from the heart. Bravery is the heart of the matter in poetry. Some poets risked working on their poems with me on Zoom; a few poets risked writing something on their own and dared to submit their creations. These are all acts of bravery, young voices daring to tell the world all about life while rhyming with a beat, finding just the right words, the right sequence of images and ideas while pondering the crafting of line breaks and the shape of stanzas.

Thank you to each poet, whose poem appears in this anthology, and because I love all of these poems so much, I included them all. Every brave poet is now a published poet. All deserve the praise and recognition.

As you, dear reader, enjoy these poems, you will be rewarded with a wide variety of fun and pathos, art and magic. Enjoy the sadness and pain, the silliness and joy, the rhyme and rhythm, the repetition of each beat of these young poets words and hearts. May the bravery of their poetry make you braver, kinder and more aware of the roads these young people have travelled and are still traveling in order to make a life in this challenging, confusing, and magnificent world.

Bonnie Shaw, PhD, Utah YIC Creative Arts Coordinator

“I can no other answer make but thanks,
and thanks, and ever thanks.”

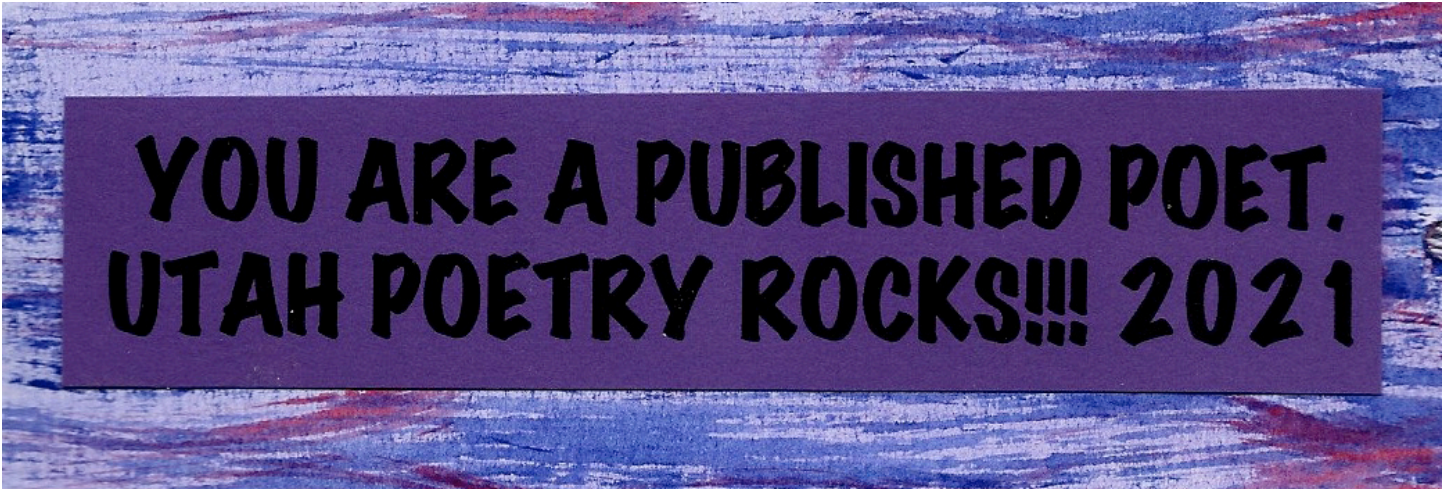
— *William Shakespeare*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Thank you to all the teachers who encouraged their students to participate in Utah Poetry Rocks!!! 2021, including: Deina Mitton, Manti Youth Academy; Dieter Holstein, Decker Lake Youth Center; Lorraine Simmons, Slate Canyon Youth Center; Lindsay Eberhardt, Canyons Youth Academy; Tori Allen, Mill Creek Youth Center; Andrea Carter, Farmington Bay Youth Center; Daren Gisseman, AIM at Granite YESS; and Anders Kvaal, Odyssey Adolescent. In order for me to work with students on Zoom in these extraordinary times, a teacher with solid technology skills and much patience had to be on the receiving end of the Zoom. Thanks to you all.

The artwork in this online anthology was created by students at Odyssey Adolescent and dropped off in the large urn on my front porch by Anders Kvaal. What fun artwork!!! Thanks to you all.

Juliann Law, graphic artist, formatted this online anthology; Nic Shellabarger, USBE, provides the administrative support; and Adam Sherlock, Spy Hop, Inc., designs and maintains the website. Thanks to you all.

The poetry readers who selected the finalists and winners were Trina Valdez, Educational Liaison, the Department of Human Services and USBE; Kathleen Nichols, retired English teacher at Weber High School; Jacqueline Chamberlain, the Juvenile Competency Attainment Program Administrator for Utah State Department of Juvenile Justice Services; Marv Luddington, Education Transition and Career Advocate at Farmington Bay Youth Center; Linda Lowe, retired DJJS Transition Counselor and full-time mother & grandmother; and Adam Sherlock, Community Partnership Director at Spy Hop. Thanks to all our readers for their careful consideration and evaluation of these wonderful poems.



**YOU ARE A PUBLISHED POET.
UTAH POETRY ROCKS!!! 2021**

The Top Ten



*“Poetry is that time of night, lying in bed,
thinking what you really think,
making the private world public,
that’s what the poet does.”*

—Allen Ginsberg, Poet

gutting My Family Tree

Written by E. L. at Granite YESS at AIM

1 cigarette shared between
2 junkies
Ignited a toxicity
That could only be alleviated
By a 3rd party member

My mother's bipolar
Passed down through generations
Like a precious family heirloom
An imbalance I fall victim to
Until death do us part a
Chemical cocktail riddling my mind
With intoxicating thoughts
Yes liquor burns
But the only thing hotter
Is the burden I've received
From being my mother's daughter

My father's addiction
Passed around like bong's 'n' blunts
Through a rotation which always
Ended and began with me
His mind too fried to see
That every designer drug
This world has to offer
Can never sum up the love
A daughter has for her father

I still can never tell
What truly hit me harder the
Mood swings of my mother
Or pipe which is my fathers

My past has paralyzed
The way I perceive others intent
For you see
These things are prophesized
I am of my mother and father's decent

1 cigarette shared between
2 junkies
Ignited a toxicity
That could only be alleviated
By a 3rd party member



Golden Days

Written by M. K. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

One night
my Light and I went walking
in the field
behind her house
to enjoy being hand in hand.
As we walked in the moonlight
I began to notice
the meaning of life
in the love I felt for
my Light

Suddenly the field came to life
for me
Its breath was cool and calming
Silently singing
Pungent sweet, earthy smell
was enough to time travel

Golden grass
Crisp crunching
Its warm embrace
Wildly whispering

Hiding what's Hidden
A land that's been abandoned
Its rocky, flat landscape
Covered in trash and trinkets

Its hair is golden
Pure white eyes
Its red shirt and blue jeans
Holding bits and pieces in its hands

Parts of cars set about
Four trees
Carry memories in their branches
A concrete platform
Weathered and worn

A tree house
Smacked by lightning
A small home shaped from boards
and weather
A place kids gathered
But no longer

A broken down railroad
Rumbling
Only in the midst of
Night



Lucy's Light

Written by L. A. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

Lucy. Lucy means light.

Light. I light pride and strike matches of knowledge inside of
Lucy.

I live in Lucy's den.

Sometimes big lions go into Lucy's den
and put those matches out
leaving Lucy in darkness filled with ashes.

When Lucy comes out the den
she's surrounded by the Nile River
growing miles from the roots of the Sudan.

Praised by relatives,
unknown to ancestors before her,
Lucy, her untamed locks of hair, a flood of cocoa skin
marked by brown eyes, small alerted ears,
a bulbed nose and thickened lips,
steps out and into the world
embracing God's golden sun and everything beneath it.



Mariposa

Written by M. R. S. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

I'm like a butterfly, emerging into the world
 a drug addict
looking up at her dreams
 yet wanting to go back to smelling the metallic, melting meth
coming from the stained, black deadly pipe.
She came from an imperfect household
 believing what was told to her by her father – *You are*
a true slut, whore, disappointment,
words transforming her world
into something people won't stop talking about
 and the voice in her head telling her – *Kill yourself*
and she gives into the darkness of the drugs.
She has her heart locked away,
 white, deadly lines waiting for her in the bathroom
speaking to her to come when she's feeling low, hitting rock bottom
as she tries to prepare another round, her hands shaking, vision blurry.
As her heart tries to escape from the prison cell,
yet it always gets hurt
like a butterfly in the rain,
a butterfly learning the world isn't what it seems
 and she gets lost lying on the dark, cold bathroom floor
still as beautiful as the world sees her beautiful wings
but she can't seem to believe in herself,
 her love for herself
is as low as the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.
But still emerging into the world, I'm a butterfly,
 looking up at her dreams.
We all have reasons for moving.
I move to keep things whole.



The Child

Written by C. S. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

The child's happiness drifted
after the drunken giant,
the haze of whiskey
in the ogre's breath
as he lunged at the TV in anger
because the child wanted to finish his game

In the child's eyes reflected
the loss of imagination
Loss of hope, heart, emotion
The boy rushed to tell his mother
passed out into a drunken slumber
as moments passed out into fear
held out at knife point
now nobody knows how the child feels,
nobody sees what the child sees
as the drunken stepfather
holds the boy in drunken deception
of what is right, what is truly not right

The mother is right there, but not right
confused with the anger, the drunken ogre,
the knife, the child, the yelling,
the flashing of red and blue lights,
and the wasted giant taken away,
and the child's happiness faded away
into the night but never forgotten,
is now this poem



Beautiful Nature

Written by S. S. at Slate Canyon Youth Center

A day in the canyons
 like a breath of freedom.
Feeling the breeze blow across my face.
Drops of mist in the air
 make you feel
 the calm of life around you.
Hearing bird chirping nearby
Watching the stream flow down the mountains.
Laughter everywhere
 we play in the river.
Smells of Mama's barbeque beckoning us
 to come in from a long day of swimming.
Watching the beauty of the sunset
 as it tells me something new each day.
Getting inspired to make my own way.

Enjoying life like nothing else is important.



No Pieces

Written by D. L. at Mill Creek Youth Center

I've been telling myself
to trust no one
When I did, I got hurt, my heart
torn into pieces
Then I put a wall up to protect myself
from being hurt again,
being betrayed in love.

Slowly I started to take it down,
removing the phoney smiles,
the times alone and lonely,
the fear of opening up and
letting someone into my heart.

I took a chance and she took my heart,
ran off and never came back.

I found pieces of my heart,
picked them up,
threw 'em away.
Now having this hole in my chest is
empty, easy to hide.
Smile on my face, phoney, with a look
of "I'm fine."
In reality
I have a demon deep inside,
angry, full of revenge,
ready to get even.

And I fight my demon to keep him inside.
As long as I'm in control of
my broken heart,
stay empty, don't pick up
the pieces,
I think I'll be all right.
Heartless, safe from the pain.



Black Cat

Written by E.F. at Mill Creek Youth Center

black cat, black cat
you fearsome wildcat
hunting in the night skies
waiting to arise and attack
with your cries, with fearsome
burning eyes to take your prey
from behind and make
the kill of the night
but it puts up a fight
under the moonlight, makes it
through another cold night,
oh, black cat,
oh, black cat, you fearsome wildcat
with your burning eyes,
ruler of the entire night skies



Chasing the Moon

Written by K. A. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

You were my everything
from pleasure to pain.
You told me what I wanted to hear
in the shape of ugly lies
And took the name of love in vain.
You showed me things I've never seen
from the seas to the skies.
The sound of your voice made me weak
and left marks in my mind.
I'd give up anything for you to look back into my eyes.
I want my soul to burn again with passion and love.
We were a fine line between love and lust.
You told me we would run away and get matching tattoos.
It would just be us,
chasing after the moon.

I miss the touch of your skin,
your fingers brushing through my hair.
I miss the taste of your lips
while my hands played with your hair.
I miss tracing your tattoos,
and the way you would smile and stare.
I miss the way you would call me beautiful
while you wiped away all of my tears.

I gave you the world and all the galaxies in the sky.
In return you just seemed to love making me cry.

From all of our talks and dances in the rain,
You left me for a girl, who look like me,
causing me to break from the absence of you.
Because let's be honest, you really do have a type.
But tell me, do you experience déjà vu?
Do you almost call her by my name? Kiss her the same way?
Do you play her our song on the piano?
And tell her you love her in between the chords? Like we played?
And do you hold her in your arms? Like the way you held me?

Do you plan out your future, lusting for life with her?
Like you did with me?
Giving her the same feeling, excited and ready to take on anything?
As long as she has you by her side, telling her what she wants to hear,
in the ugliest shade of all, your beautiful, beautiful lies.

I just want to hear you say tattoo again, one last time.
Before our final goodbye, I'd like to show you something.
I made you a beautiful painting,
with a shiny, sharp silver paintbrush drawing the richest of reds.
I'll have that painting forever, a tattoo
reminding me of your face.
A tattoo from now until death of these feelings for you.
Till death do us cut in two.



Photo Album

Written by G. S. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

ALONE. When I am with
People I feel alone.
I feel like I'm the only
One in the room,
Yet people are all around me.

HELL. I am a girl who
Has been through hell and
Back through heartbreaks.

COMMOTIONS. My life
Wasn't the greatest.
My life has commotions,
But the best part is
I fought with it.

SIXTEEN. I'm sixteen,
Sixteen and dreaming.
As I walk through the
Dark streets, I feel the
Wind in my hair and know
I can get anywhere.

PAIN. They say, Don't do this.
Don't feel that, but it
Hurts living in this pain.
This pain hurts. It's like
My heart is on fire
Burning with flames I've
Never felt.

BOY. He tells me he
Can't be comfortable with
His homies. He can only
Be comfortable around me.

FLOWER. I am like a
Flower. I bloom when
I am nourished, but
If I don't have that,
I die slowly.

REMINISCING. I lie
In bed thinking about
What you said as I'm
Reminiscing in the bed
Overthinking.

MONSTER. That monster
Doesn't live under my bed.
It lives in my head.

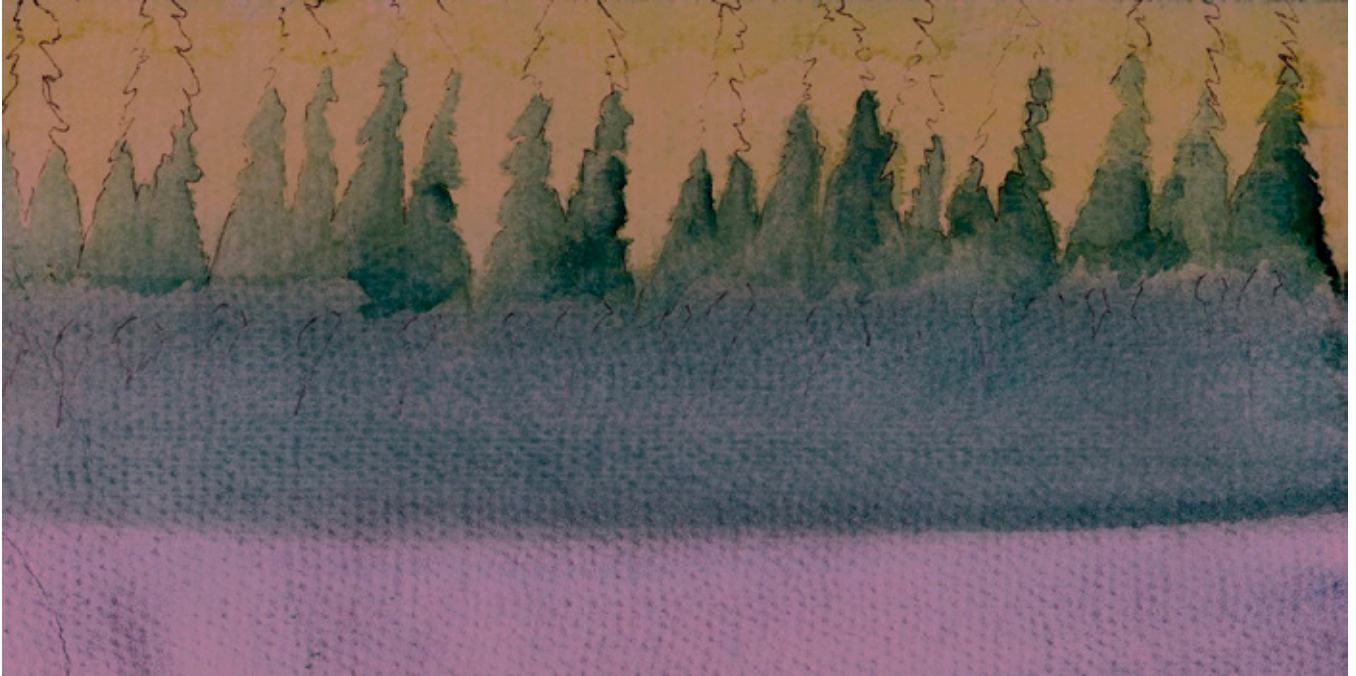
GONE. Once I'm gone,
I'm not the problem.
I'm not the burden.
Once I'm gone, all
The problems will
Be gone.

NEW DAY. Every day is
A new day. Every day is
A day to be good. Every
Day is to be something new.

PHOTO ALBUM.
The memories are scattered
All in one album.
None of them are replaceable.
My photo album is full of
Memories.



Finalists



“Poetry is eternal graffiti written on the heart of everyone.”

—Lawrence Ferlinghetti, poet

Our Father

Written by A. M. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

To the family,
the mother, brother, the sister,
it felt like no father,
in the house
but there was a brother who
took over, was much loved,
more respected than the absent father.

Then there is the hardworking mother
who kept secrets to protect our love
for our addicted father,
who was always a stranger when he returned home,
when the children had lost recognition of who he was,
to them a different persona who left as one person,
returned as another.

They'd find themselves asking: Who is our father?
This made our father cry as he held us in his arms
for the first time after disappearing for months,
begging for our forgiveness.
We, his children, were lost in his tears
as he asked for forgiveness for something we did not know.
We forgave him.

We never understood until we grew older,
old enough to understand the monster that overtook him.
By then we had built up our resentment of pity and pain
created by each time he would abandon us for the monster,
then return home angry and begging for forgiveness
until one day his begging meant nothing.
We could no longer forget or forgive.

To the family,
the father is now a lost soul, a lost child,
with "Father" as a title of unproven, unworthy.
We will never forget, but
in our own way he is forgiven.

FINALIST

“27”

Written by R. M. at Canyons Youth Academy

Real feelings and past stealings
When people counted me out until I grew up to count millions, huh?
Like I guess it's good to be different, huh?
I'll be a star, so I guess the sky isn't the limit, huh?

I let these words seep through my soul
And speak through a song.
'Cause if I'm no longer here in the physical
Then at least I gave you my voice.

What is a beautiful life without a beautiful death?
What is a beautiful mind? How is our beauty defined?
Is it for you to decide, or is it my duty to die?
No matter how I'm a member, just let me be remembered.

And if I must go and die at 27,
Then at least I know, I died a legend.
Will you roll and ride like we're together?
And keep the vibe alive forever.
Keep the vibe alive inside forever.

If I must go and die at 27,
Hopefully I'm going to heaven.
Will you roll and ride like we're together?
And we will fly with white feathers.
We will fly with white feathers.

How I Feel

Written by A. L. at Farmington Bay Youth Center

Until you've been arrested
and spent too many months in a cell,
Until you've had to sleep
on a concrete bed,
Until you've had to use
a cold metal toilet,
Until you've lost most your family
and feel completely alone,
Until you've faced a judge
and entered your guilty plea,
Until your days have turned into months
and your months have turned to years,
Until you've lost all hope
and are fighting to keep your sanity,
You cannot look at me and say
you know just how I feel.

Don't tell me I can graduate,
don't set such high expectations
until you have lived my life.
Don't tell me I'm going to be successful
until you know and understand
the struggles within me.
Don't tell me how I feel or how to feel
until you have spent a day
inside my skin.

Until you know, understand, have lived
and spent a day in my life,
Don't tell me.

FINALIST

I AM

Written by R. D. at Mill Creek Youth Center

I AM
Humble & Strong.
I Wonder . . .
Where I'll be 2 years from now?
I HEAR . . .
An UNwanted Silence
in my Environment, in my Life,
in my Heart.

I SEE . . .
Lost Potential .
I WANT . . .
More than what I settle for,
More what's at stake!

I AM
Humble & Strong.
I Pretend . . .
My situation isn't all that bad.
IT IS. It is Dark & Gloomy & Unstable.

I FEEL . . .
Hollow when I think of my victims.
Hollow
when I think of the things

I have done
in my Past Life.

I TOUCH . . .
Freedom but can't Keep Hold of it .
I CRY . . .
Tears Of Sorrow
for the things I have done
& the Outcome
All of That has brought 2 my Life.

I AM
Humble & Strong.
I UNDERSTAND . . .
I settle for Less sometimes.
I SAY . . .
This Life Is All I Know And I Mean It.

I DREAM . . .
of Better Days.
I HOPE . . .
My Sins Don't Come Back To Haunt Me.

I AM
Humble & Strong.

FINALIST

Love

Written by C. C. at YIC at Horizonte

You can still have feelings and have a broken heart, but you can't forget what was said,
even if they were forgiven.

Most people don't understand
it's just not about flowers and gifts

Love's about being there for each other,
even if u feel like things are going to switch.
You never lose feeling for the ones u love,
even if they're gone, they're still watching you from above.

It's not just about the lust,
It's about being there for each other when you're stuck in a rut,
Making the person you love feel like you're takin them to the moon,
With all the stars in the sky

Making them feel like they're the only ones you need in your life;
they're the ones that get you high.

Love can easily be lost and hard to find,
But just because you lose feeling,
your love for them will never die.
No matter the weather or distance
Your love for them will search
the world to make sure they remember,
How u felt.

And that every word and every action was for them and only them.

FINALIST

My Day 1's

Written by S. M. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

My black Nikes
covered in dirt and scratches
hold good and bad memories,
go with me everywhere,
place to place, city to city,
meeting people, skating with old friends,
running from new enemies,
long or short walks,
my black Nikes go through a jungle of wild animals,
are worn out and will always be there
for me
during my worst times
and good times.
My Day 1's go through what I go through.
Someday my black Nikes will hang over a power line,
good memories hanging forever.

FINALIST

Rewind

Written by J. H. at Mill Creek Youth Center

I wish I could
 rewind,
and fix all the bad choices in my life,
 rewrite my history,
 replay my decisions.
I'm not proud of the selfish & mean
 things I have done,
 the drugs I have sold,
 the lies I have told.
I'm not proud that my heart has grown cold.

Life has taught me lots of lessons.
If I could say I'm proud of something,
it is learning from my mistakes,
 learning to not be selfish,
 not be mean,
 not be coldhearted.

I'm not proud
that I've disappointed my family, my close friends.
I am very sorry
for putting them in a rough spot,
 making them see me in handcuffs,
 making them sad, confused about
 how I ended up like this,
 locked up.
I'm not proud of any of this.

But just know
I'm trying to change my life around
and fix the relationships I have broken.
I want to rebuild the relationships
 with the people closest to me.
Again I want to say –
 I'm sorry.
 Please forgive me.
 I want you to be
 proud of me again.

I will
rewind my life.
I will make good choices.
I will rewrite my history.

FINALIST

Right from Wrong

Written by X. L. at Decker Lake Youth Center

I wish I could go back
before
I was in the streets
slanging sacks
I remember the day I got tossed
my first pack
Pops told me to watch out
never slack
or the cops gonna put you in
them chains
lock you up,
then send you back

I never listened
I was living
so fast
now I'm in a cell reminiscing
on my past
thinking 'bout when Pops
told me it would never last
he was right
I was wrong
that's why I'm locked up, sentenced
to so long

I just want to see better days
right all my wrongs
I wish I could go back
before I was robbing,
getting racks
now I'm just trying to get
my life on track
before I go to prison
I don't want all that

I want to give back,
make Pops proud
not telling me
watch out
never slack
right my wrongs
move along
do my own thing, no need
to belong
see better days, know
right from wrong

FINALIST

The Becoming

Written by K. K. at Farmington Bay Youth Center

I ask the same question
 with so much aggression,
How do I overcome
 what I will become?

My mom fell in love
 with a syrupy liquid,
made her go crazy
 with memories so vivid.

Always left me alone,
 constant days of unknown.
So, I took to the streets,
 called them my home.

My dad was entranced
 by a clear little pipe,
 blew limitless clouds,
blurring days with the nights.

His years spent in prison
 never cured his addiction.
So, we've only talked twice
 and I've never forgiven.

I have the same demons,
 a life filled with fire
With no real reasons
 and little desire.

With limited resources,
 my hands are now tied.
I have nowhere to go
 and nowhere to hide.

My days are unclear
 with limitless fears.
How do I take away this pain
 without spilling tears?

Now I have a decision,
 but I just want to run.
So, someone, please tell me,
 What do I become?

FINALIST

The Flower and the Bee

Written by J. H. at Manti Youth Academy

the little flower growing oh so slowly
the bee landing on that flower
taking up the pollen onto its back legs

lifting and lifting into the air
back to the hive ever so slowly
waiting for the delivery bees to do their jobs

making the rounds of the hive
the sun beating down upon the swarm
melting the honey to liquid

back and forth from the hive to the flower
picking up pollen and nectar
moving from flower to flower to flower

and the bee on the flower in too much pollen
stuck once or twice, stuck once or twice
while sitting and picking up nectar

and bringing it to the hive, to the honeycomb
to the worker bees doing their jobs
building their hexagonal cells

moving from flower to flower to flower
little bee zigging & zagging, prancing & dancing
to tell other bees what he has found

little bee ends the day back in the hive
telling tales to his friends
about the days hard work

as I remember what it takes for the bee
to move around the flower, the pollen, the hive
to build a home, a hive to survive

FINALIST

The Rose of Blue and Pink

Written by R. C. at Farmington Bay Youth Center

She was a rose,
protecting herself with her thorns.
She hoped that she could present
herself with courage and pride.

Yet she felt so foreign
when she presented her beautiful
Blue and pink.
Even though she was beautiful,
she was unique.
She had to be careful because
otherwise she would be
the one who took the fall
and be left behind, un-chosen.

And all she could think about
was how she wanted so badly to be that rose,
the rose picked for that girl, the prettiest in class,
the rose that girl would cherish forever,
just because it was the first.
Yes, she wanted to be the first rose for someone.

She was unusual. Would she ever be chosen?
And even the prettiest girl in class wouldn't want
something so different. Would she ever be chosen?
The prettiest girl would want a plain red rose.

So, as she sat, watching all those other roses be taken, chosen,
and she sulked and thought that she'd never be picked.
Then a boy walked past the flower stand.
He noticed her beautiful colors of blue and pink,
and he bought her.
Then he brought her to the love of his life, that prettiest girl.
And finally the rose thought, "I'm home at last."

FINALIST

The War

Written by A. T. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

I'm losing
this war I fight daily
putting down my weapons
waiving of a white flag
I surrender

now second guessing my decisions
maybe I should stay and fight another day
but it's as if my body gave up long before my mind
exhausted
unable to take another step
crawling through a blood soaked battlefield

and now
now When will this war come to an end?
this war that lives inside my head
this war that they have named depression
this war that has left my body scared and weak
this war that slowly consumes me

tired of standing I fall to me knees
tired of breathing
the darkness overcomes me

me
Who am I?
What's left of me?
This war
I'm fighting
I'm losing
I am lost

FINALIST

Through the Darkness

Written by C. M. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

The night sky is lonely
but makes me feel safe
Its intrusive light comforts all
unapologetically
It's a confusing friend, but a good one
It sees all
but doesn't pay attention to any
An underappreciated visitor
Fills the atmosphere

When I feel lonely,
the night sky protects everything,
my private abandonment
Its grim shadow is misleading
as it covers me gently

The night sky,
it's your consistent friend
allowing you companionship
through the darkness
Next time the night sky comes by
be thankful for its friendship
the night sky is lonely

FINALIST

To My Daughter

Written by J. B. at Slate Canyon Youth Center

I'm sorry that my pride made my actions so foolish
I'm sorry that my pride made my morals slide
You may only be two
So, you may not feel the pain
Just know I'll always be here
Till my dying days

I want to change now for the best
So someday I can stand out among the rest
And I'm gonna do it all for you
You don't know how proud I was
That I'd been given you

I'm sorry that I wasn't there
To hold you when you got hurt
have fun with you when you were bored, and
kiss you good goodnight.

Just know it wasn't anything you did.
Never forget I'm sending I love you's,
warm feelings so true.
I will do anything
To make it up to you
I'm sorry.

Toxic Love

Written by J. M. at Farmington Bay Youth Center

Don't tell me everything's going to be okay.
Those words aren't in your place to say.
You don't even love me but choose to stay.
Don't do me like that, just walk away.

Just leave me behind like you've done before.
If you choose to come back, I'll be at the door.
The love I have for you grows more and more,
though, body and soul, you leave me bruised and sore.

I know you're toxic, you don't like to play nice.
Only time I forget about you is when I pick up the pipe.
You're the only person who can really make me feel.
It's true what they say – Love can kill.

As I sit, drink the Henny and smoke the clear,
Your punches, I know are coming, I don't fear.
You see, I can't move on, I can't do right,
I'll end up missing you at the end of the night.

I know times not real, but time will tell.
I have all these thoughts as I sit in this cell.
If you loved me for me, you'd do me right.
I love you for you, but I have no more fight.

FINALIST

Tweet Tweet's Poem

Written by L. B. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

I remember the good in your eyes, the warmth
that radiated from your body, and my falling asleep
on the phone to the sound of your breath
It makes me sick to imagine your eyes closed,
body cold, lungs stopped in the grasp of death

Evil led you to the needle,
and now God has welcomed you into his kingdom
Tired of outrunning all of your demons, hopefully you're at peace
and you've finally found your freedom

I'm angry at you, I can't lie
So many emotions from the past and from now
I wish I could deny
I was scared to return affection,
You persisted for so long
there were moments I resented you,
I was confused
Now I have been left
with eternally unanswered questions about our connection

I'm angry that you made this choice
We all had so much faith in your potential,
Instead you gave into the temptation's voice

I'm stuck in how this world feels without you
Everything feels dark,
The sky isn't as blue
In the back of my mind,
I know you're in a better place
I think of that day you held me,
how my heart would race,
how one of us always ran,
and the other one would chase
Right person, wrong time, we never found the correct pace

But now your time's run out, I always thought
we'd have forever
I know you did the best you could,
Now you've found your way to better weather

FINALIST

What's Next?

Written by E. J. at Decker Lake Youth Center

a dark sky opens
a golden supernova
the birds sing
the church bells ring
everybody stirs early
girls make their hair curly
men and boys in suits
girls in dresses
talk to the Lord in conversations of praise
devotional hope
so that we all can cope
I hope we never chose

but where everything blows
but we all know what
awaits us
oblivion
we all wonder - what's next?

FINALIST

When I Died

Written by A. A. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

A normal day out with friends,
What could go wrong?
Don't overdo it, they said.
I didn't listen.
In seconds feeling normal to numb
I thought,
What is this feeling?

Later a friend told me
my words slurred and slipped.
It happened
without me knowing.
I do remember
I felt cold on a sunny day.
Everything went silent on a busy street.
The idea of not recalling time
confused me.

Slipping from normal to numb
I wanted to know that I was alive
Panicking I banged one fist into another
They, my "friends," laughed at my confusion
Made me think I was not in reality

Suddenly I was holding a cup of water
and shaking, water splashes on my face,
a stranger says – Medics are on their way

Still not knowing what was
going on
Their words delayed,
It'll be okay
in the ambulance
I began dying by drowning,
then dying by burning,
cold to hot, hot to cold,
dying but I try not to remember
then I was gone

Waking up in the hospital
I was embarrassed when I saw you,
I saw you, *Mi Mama*
I heard your words,
your lecture, *no son tus amigos*
I understood, they are not your friends
I was not confused anymore
I saw reality for what it was
Mi Mama, Gracias

FINALIST

Editor's Choices



*“Poems come out of wonder, not out
of knowing.”*

—Lucille Clifton, Poet

RED & BLUE

Written by B. S. at Canyons Youth Academy

I'm gone in the dark sea
deep and cold

RED & BLUE
just like the colors I
see, that you see
everyday, everywhere colors

fight or flight? no one cares
dead or alive?
YOU STILL THERE?

RED & BLUE
in the flag, peace and liberty
lights on the cop car, alert and warning
you see, I see
RED & BLUE on the streets, a war!

Why DIE for the RED?
Why DIE for the BLUE?
DIE for you! Why DIE
for the colors?
RED & BLUE, the danger can kill

Keeping you safe they say,
they promise when they take you in,
all RED & BLUE, and you don't know
you owned, not free
Yes and no, you know and you don't
until you are too far in, and they
putting you out to die

Roof and Food,
and FAMILY is what they call themselves

Why would your family put you in
DANGER?
It's hard to live alone or with
the death they bring but yet
why do I find myself going
BACK?

I need the help
I need the people
I want the thrill

I cry
I'm losing myself into a war of death
My pillow is dry from my tears of silence
I stopped myself from this death
I'm gone from the dark sea
RED & BLUE

I feel dead but I'm still alive
I fell for the trick of FAMILY
Now I know
all I need is My Self

EDITOR'S CHOICE

The City

Written by D. H. at Manti Youth Academy

Awoken
The night still heavy
On my eyes

Lights still on
Bright as day
Through the night

Even the stars
Shining in beauty
Drown like flies in honey
In this urban sky

In the distance
Darkness
Peace of mind
The quiet countryside

The city binds me
I may never leave

I may never see

The autumn leaves
The midnight sky

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Dancing with Death

Written by V. W. at Farmington Bay Youth Center

As I inhale
drowning in my own puddle of addiction
I'm too far gone
to think
My addiction took and broke my spirit
It takes everything from me and still wants more
As I inhale
I'm dancing with death
God has completely abandoned me
He is not here, I know he is not here
He does not hear me, does not answer my prayers,
my prayer for love and loyalty

All I do is cheat, steal and lie
and nothing more
As I inhale,
confused and lost
My soul is trapped
in a haze of meth
eating me alive
As I inhale
I become trapped
the constant need for more,
more release of pain,
the pain of being unlovable,
unhappy, unforgiving

Drowning in my own puddle of addiction
Am I too far gone
to have a life?
A life without meth?
As I inhale
I choose my answer

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Walls of My Making

Written by D. T. at Mill Creek Youth Center

It's hard out here for us mighty young men
It's hard out here for us hardened minorities

When I wake up in the morning,
I see the sunshine beaming through my window,
feeling its warmth on my face,
shining through that narrow slit of a window
that prevents my escape and separates
me from nature, from sunshine like the summertime

And when I wake up in the night,
I see the light that never goes off,
the shaft of light shining through
the small window in my door
allowing me to read into the night,
the shaft of light that guarantees my presence

Sometimes all I see are bricks, bricks
and more bricks -- 438 to be exact --
white cinderblocks secured by concrete and rebar

It's hard in here for us young men
It's hard in here for us minorities

I wish I could fly past these walls holding me in,
locking me down
these walls that separate me from freedom,
these walls that separate me from my family,
these walls that I will one day break through
will not hold me forever, will be broken by my love for
freedom and my desire to be with my loved ones

It's hard to change for us young men
It's hard to trust in a world of hate

Because of these walls, it's hard to remember
that the road goes on
The road does go on

Boom

Written by J. H. at Slate Canyon Youth Center

Boom, Boom, Boom . . .

as every door slams shut
and the night is over.

Drip, Drip, Drip . . .

as the sink gets loud.

I'm thinking about my family . . . and
it cuts deep.

Thump, Thump, Thump . . .

my heart letting me know
I'm still alive.

My hollow soul fills with hatred.

Thud, Thud, Thud . . .

head pounding from all
the weight.

Dosing off, I drift away
into the nightmares
that haunt me.

I jump . . . now wide awake.

In tune with myself
I feel the silence as if
it were nothing.

There is nothing,
nothing to be heard.

Published Poets



*“Poetry’s job is to discover wholeness
and create wholeness,
including the wholeness of the fragmentary
and the broken.”*

—Jane Hirschfield, poet

Decker Lake

Written by D. L. at Decker Lake Youth Center

The schedule is redundant
Like a two-year old watching Frozen,
Like a six-minute shower, need it or not

The teachers bully the youth
Like we're their younger siblings
Telling us - Do as I say or leave!

The food is always undercooked
Like pancake batter served as supper
Like I had any choice, could order out

The staff abuse their power
Like Jaffar in Aladdin by saying,
No talking as if we were barking dogs

The toilets are cold, gray steel
Like sitting on ice, frozen
Redundant, never warm up

The beds are hard, rock solid
Like sleeping on a granite slab,
No comfort, no warmth

Lockup is not for teens,
For petty crime, not for stealing,
Not for anybody, for me or you.

Exploring the 7 Sins

Written by J. H. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

The Bible says not to sin,
But I commit all seven with a grin.
Those who wander on my path
Will know nothing but my wrath.
I want it all so says my greed,
Deeply rooted in me like a seed.
For a woman's touch
I lust,
But it's always me left in the dust.
Those with family counted plenty,
Towards those folks
I have only envy.
To this day I wear my Goth,
So each morning I commit sloth.
Since I will have all the money,
I will quench my gluttony.
I may not show it,
but inside
I'm filled with tons of pride.
But at my age if sinning is okay
I'm yet to decide.

Feeling Alone

Written by J. G. at Mill Creek Youth Center

It seems like everywhere I go
it's not far enough.
I stay remembering past events.

People say I'm a clown, but I don't live in a tent.
I guess I'm just looking to vent,
to talk to people,
to express my feelings,
to connect,
to not be depressed,
alone.

Everyday seems the same.
I still feel the pain
of poverty,
drug abuse,
incarceration.
I still feel days where I was
skipping school,
acting like a fool
at just thirteen,
staying out months at a time
when I would not go home,
and I still feel alone.
I'm growing old while the world seems
to be getting younger.
Locked up off-and-on for the past five years,
I am older than my age.

Should have thought
about the consequences,
but I told myself I didn't care.
Now everyday
I try and keep from
going insane, falling into despair, no hope,
going
down
the
drain.

Fight or Flight

Written by L. T. at Canyons Youth Academy

This woman's smile is never weak.
Her dream is a velvet dress covered in perfume.
Most would laugh, but she soars above you.

This man's personality manipulates him
using his life as a show
by never letting go.
He's a puppeteer pulling the strings to change the story.
He thinks he's the one receiving all the glory.
He looks into his set
a sudden feeling of regret.
The show must go on he thinks,
but he looks into the crowd and sees nothing but darkness.

The woman dreams and soars.
The man uses people as props for his entertainment.
He is left empty.
The woman is fulfilled and happy.

Heartache

Written by R. M. at Mill Creek Youth Center

I never thought he would do it.
He was loved
 as a father
 as a son
 as a husband
 as a friend
 but in the end
he still took his life.

Why he did it no one knows,
 but forever in our hearts
 his life still glows on.
His legacy will live on in all of us,
 in my mother,
 in both my brothers,
 in my three sisters,
 and in me, his son,
and his legacy will live on in
 our kindness,
 our happiness,
 our hard work,
 our care for each other,
in all the good we will do
 that he would have done.

I never thought he would be gone
 this soon
 but life dealt its wildest of card,
 the Card of Death,
 the Grim Reaper.
And I must deal with it.

We will be his legacy
 for we are the ones
who loved him endlessly.

If You Were Still Here

Written by R. V. at Mill Creek Youth Center

when I am thinking
to myself,
I tell myself that
I am crazy
I wish I could be normal,
not commit crimes
not steal cars,
just for fun,
joyriding,
not fight my enemies,
or drink before
I joyride or fight

all these people look
at me
and tell me what I'm
doing wrong
they say - you have
anger issues
you do not know
how to control
your anger
what you do is wrong
stop stealing
stop fighting
it is not worth it
you must comply
stop breaking
the rules

I sit and listen
and
it comes in one ear
and
goes out the other
I don't remember what they
tell me
nor do
I really care.

at night in my cell
I sit and talk to my mom
my mom in heaven
I ask her how she is doing
then I tell her
I am doing bad,
say I am sorry
I am doing bad,
I would be doing better if
you were still here
I would listen to you
I would remember
what you say,
and I would care.

Just a Kid From the 3 1 4

Written by C. I. at Slate Canyon Youth Center

Just a kid from the 3 1 4,
raised by a mother
who couldn't take no more.
Moved her family to Utah
because life was tough,
because of the stuff
he was doing with his cousins
would've ended with him
in a cell...
dead in a ditch...
or in a box with a tux...

Why?

He would ask himself
after years filled with losses,
after constantly getting nailed in the courtroom
like the man on them crosses.

Second chances he was given,
time and time again.
But he always lost no matter what,
when all he really wanted was to win.

So much hurt that's inside,
but too stubborn to show the pain.
When on the outside he shows a façade,
'cause reality is too much to contain.

Speaks his emotions
through pencil and paper,
no one understands him.
not even his creator.

So much talent he's wasting
is what they keep saying.
He knows that he's gifted,
but his time keeps on fading.

No one else to blame
except for himself.
Walks a long, long path
just to find himself.
Searching, finally finding
that lost kid from the 3 1 4
Who was fed up with life and
thought he couldn't take no more.

And...

Now, that kid from the 3 1 4
who long ago changed his address
is standing strong at the door.
headed straight for success.

Laugh With Me

Written by A. A. at Canyons Youth Academy

I am the kind of person who makes people laugh
I don't know why I do it
But they laugh from the words I say

I am not a jokester
I don't tell jokes
But I enjoy a good joke

Sometimes I don't even have to say anything,
I can just make people laugh
With the words I say and when I say them
I have good timing
It is a gift

Once I said to my teacher –
Remember, Mrs. E., we are all going to Hawaii
When are we going? We don't know
Because you have not bought the tickets
Then everyone laughed
I just think stuff up
And say what I think.
Then people laugh

I don't know why laughing is important,
But it gets me through the day

Smiling, giggling, and can't-catch-your breath laughter
Are my top skills.
I wonder if they will pay the bills?

Lonely Days 'n Nights

Written by M. K. at Manti Youth Academy

Every day I find myself all alone.
It's just me and this phone.
Got all my stuff along with my hat.
Got no friends on my Snapchat.
On my own throughout
these lonely days 'n nights.

It's all just me and this fight.
I be strugglin' through life,
Just feel like grabbin' the knife,
Tryin' to end it all.
Looks like I think I might fall.
I'm just tired of bein' all alone throughout
these lonely days '&' nights.

You think I can handle it with all my might
but it's like flyin' it all alone like a kite.
I know it's hard to understand,
But I just want someone to take my hand.
So I might as well take a stand –
I don't want to be alone through
these lonely days '&' nights.

How am I goin' to make a new life?
I'm just tryin' not to grab that knife.
Walkin' over the doormat
Finally got friends on my Snapchat.
I'm finally not alone.

My World

Written by G. W. at Decker Lake Youth Center

I remember a time when each day was long,
The world, a playground, my life, a song.
I flew through years with barely a care,
Ignoring the future and what waited there.

School was intriguing and filled with delights.
I played away daytimes, dreamed away nights.
My parents assured me I had nothing to fear.
No matter what happened, they'd always be there.

Little I knew of a world outside home
Where tragedy and sorrow do roam.
As a child my biggest concern was just me.
I had to be happy - I had to be free.

I often think back to when life was a game,
But no matter what happens it can't be the same.
By the time I was ten, I noticed a change.
What used to seem normal, now felt quite strange.

I as I grew older, confusion and darkness set in.
My bright world had turned to concrete and tin.
I now saw the violence I had looked past before.
As my friends began dying, my heart hit the floor.

I often think back to when my life was a game.
Now no matter what happens, it can't be the same.
There are days I want to break down and howl,
To give up completely and throw in the towel.

But I'll hold my head high, push my way through.
I have too much to give and so much to do.
I make a vow that though it will be hard.
I'll go on with a smile and play every card.

I'll give all I can to help others and love.
The strength I don't have will come from above.

Now I'm Wishing

Written by J. M. at Mill Creek Youth Center

**when I woke up this morning
in juvenile lockup
looking at a room with full
of bricks and concrete
in my past life I wasn't so wise
just a fool,
who did know the good from bad
knew the consequences,
still did it anyway**

**the voices in my head are saying
"You should have never forgotten
about your family"
but I did,
wish I had more memories
with my nieces
and now how big they've gotten
over time**

**when I look in the mirror,
I'm wishing
I had more time like the past
when I was free,
when I went to school,
when I was with my family
but I can't go back and correct
my mistakes
yet I can learn from them and
be a better person**

The Rose of Love's Colors

Written by D. G. at Decker Lake Youth Center

The Yellow Rose of Love
Is your happiness,
when you first feel Love,
your first love.

The Red Rose of Love
Is the anger,
when you fight with your Love,
your old love.

The Blue Rose of Love
Is your sadness,
when you dislike your Love,
your angry fight.

The Orange Rose of Love
Is the hate,
when you run from your Love,
your damaged love.

The Green Rose of Love
Is your sickness,
when you hate your Love,
your detested Love.

The White Rose of Love
Is the One
you've always desired,
your true Love.

11:11 Love

Written by I. M. at Manti Youth Academy

I looked into her eyes and saw something different.
We talked through the night. It felt like for first time I wanted
To listen this much.
Beautiful lips and mighty fine, she was the piece I was missing.
And I was her missing piece. We knew for sure after the
Kisses.
She was my inner peace, made me feel like I was ready for
Commitment.

I wish I could see her face,
Everyday,
But I'm away.
She makes me feel pain,
But the good kind. It motivates.
And when you said, "Hey,"
At 11:11,
I wanted to see you the next day.
Then after that, I knew I loved you.

All I've Been Feeling

Written by I. V. at Mill Creek Youth Center

All that I've been feeling is a lot of pain
as I think about the happiness
I'm trying to gain
I'm trying to run from my problems
but I'll never get away
I pray to the Lord – I'll live another day

I want everyone to listen to
what I got to say
I'm sick of seeing the people I love
disappear, do you hear
I feel like everybody who's against me
trying to surround me
Everybody who claimed to be "family"
tried to take me down
I'ma be the first one in my family
to make it out
Where I'm from everyone wanted to know
what I was about
I don't have to prove myself to anybody
but myself
You gonna be on the bottom and I'ma be
on the top shelf
I keep feeling alone, all by myself
I keep thinking who I had but I had
nobody else
but myself
I just keep feeling
alone,
and that's
All I've been feeling

Don't Tell Me Who I Am

Written by I. B. at Mill Creek Youth Center

Don't tell me who I am.
I won't let you tell me who I can be.
I went through too much to be told what I can do.

Don't judge me off the things you've heard of me.
Judge me from the things I tell you about me.

Don't say you are like me.
We ain't gone through the same struggles.
I remember when all I worried about was
 watching cartoons before school,
 playing games with my friends,
 being made to go to bed too early.

Now I'm just trying to get cash to have things,
 I never had the newest things growing up,
now I want to get things while staying out of trouble.

You ain't never been there while I was down,
 doing my downs,
 rock bottom in my troubles.

Now you're mad I'm up,
now I ain't messing with you clowns,
 who never wanted the best for me,
 who'd rather see me on my back than on my feet,
standing tall.

I can't go back to you clowns who ain't never been real.
 Now I'm up there,
 I got what I need,
 no need to steal.

Don't tell me I switched up, changed my ways,
 now that you see me winning.
I never trusted you,
 you were all fake from the beginning.

So don't tell me you were my brothers.
And don't ask me what happened between us.
 I will tell you the truth.
The answer is now I know who I am.

Everything Will Be Okay

Written by H. B. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

Her life was so unfair.
She was begging for help, but nobody
was there to save her from herself
and the prescription pills she consumed.
The bottle was full, but now it's empty, 42 pills are plenty . . .
plenty enough to kill
although she thought it was
plenty enough to heal.
She was running from something very real.
Depression is no joke.
“Everything will be okay.”
She didn't believe the words the doctor spoke,
but deep down there was a grain of hope.

Her life was so unfair
until she woke up in the hospital
surrounded by family, by the ones who cared,
and then she woke up to the reality
she was loved,
and the pills would not save her,
that what would save her was just a hug,
a friend, a little hope, a different way to cope.
But now she knows everything might be okay
if she stays, if she prays, if she finds a better way.

Goldfish

Written by A. M. at Canyons Youth Academy

In the morning when I walk in the classroom,
I grab a bag of Goldfish

They are orange, salty and crunchy
I eat them one and then two at a time

I login and I do work

I grab another goldfish

And another goldfish

Click, click, click
I scroll through my lesson

Another goldfish, another vocabulary word
Another goldfish, another slide complete

How much longer is this class?
How many goldfish do I have left?

Final quiz, final goldfish
The goldfish and I earned the grade

Life is Strife

Written by T. M. at Slate Canyon Youth Center

I have learned life is strife.
Living in a one-bedroom apartment is my life.
The hot water don't work, the toilet is broke.
my heart is full of hurt.

I have learned life is strife.
I go outside and risk my life.
Free my brother doing a hundred years.
He told me, we live and die
that's the way it is.

I have learned life is strife.
Walk down the wrong street, and
that will cost you your life.
Some people cry
we live in a world full of death.

I have learned life is strife.
Seen too many homies die that the
tears no longer come.
Trying to remember them good ole times
before I left.

I have learned life is strife
They told me if I ever die to never cry.
Just relive my life, and don't
forget to say good bye.

Me or Mystery?

Written by N. S. at Mill Creek Youth Center

*I'm scared of a mystery,
a mystery that is me.
I'm solving, then I'm failing.
I'm failing, now I'm angry.*

*I'm scared of the me
no one can see,
the constant Anxiety
making my Anger take over me.*

*Me, the mystery,
is someone only I can see.
You perceive Anxiety and Anger
all because I am not Free.*

*I'm scared of the mystery
that is me,
scared of being free,
scared of being angry,
scared of becoming a mistake,
scared of becoming the fallen,
scared of making more of me,
the mystery.*

*When will I understand the mystery of me?
When will I know the outcome of this mystery?*

Misfit

Written by C. W. at Manti Youth Academy

People say I have one choice,
but when I come to say it,
I have no voice
 like a candle that is lit
 it burns just a bit
like in my life I just don't fit
sometimes I want to quit

What people talk about me
let them think out loud
When they think about me
I feel them hating
 like a fire that is lit
 it burns all over
like in my life I'm not free
from all this stress, from all this pain
 like I'm dragging a chain

Like water in the ocean
just go with the motion
don't bother with the commotion
Let it all go
just go with the flow
like the voice you can't bare
let it blow through the air

Let it all out
and let it drain out
and I have my voice,
and I have one choice
to walk away
 from this cloudy day
 to have my say
to change my life

Red Rose

Written by H. A. at Decker Lake Youth Center

your life is like a red rose
it grows, it dies
it dies, it grows
but it depends where u want to go
every petal u drop
u lose but u could grow
again, win
I lost
but I'm looking through
the hidden doors
my choices on the way,
on the paths into the future
into a new life, a better life
red rose
I choose my own road
the little things I don't worry about
the arguments, the setbacks,
I won't look back
keep my red rose
and my life will grow
like a flower on a summer day
beautiful, alive

The Butterfly Is Free

Written by A. H. at Mill Creek Youth Center

*I wish I was a butterfly,
so I could fly away
into the neverending sky,
for the butterfly is free.*

*The butterfly lives in no doubt,
flies gently with the wind,
lands on a flower or a tree,
for the butterfly is free.*

*I wish I was a butterfly
so I could leave my stress
behind and my negativity.
So I could fly away.*

*The butterfly is free
but I am not. I am trapped
in a revolving circle
of pain and sorrow.*

*The butterfly flies with pain
and sorrow of its short life,
for the butterfly is old in one
week and is dead too soon.*

*I wish I was a butterfly
that could fly away from
pain and sorrow, fly away
before the sorrow returns.*

The Mask

Written by B. M. at Decker Lake Youth Center

The mask that I hide behind
 is breaking
My soul is deteriorating
My mind is running in circles
This smile
 that you see
 isn't real
It's just the mask
 that I put up
 and hide behind

If you look into my eyes,
 you can see all the pain
Look into my soul,
 you can see the demons
 that took over
long ago

The Pain of the Run

Written by N. C. at Manti Youth Academy

The pain,
 the pain of love,
 the pain of loss,
the pain of not belonging.

I have felt it all.
I never chose this pain,
 the pain chose me.

The run,
I ran from the pain,
I smoked the pain,
I drank the pain,
 but the pain kept coming
back like a bad hangover.

I choose to drink
 and smoke
only making the pain worse.

My girl left me,
my family left me
and I was alone.

Friends got me
 in the dope game,
 caused me to go on the run,
caused me the pain of loss.

Lost my mother
at the young age
 of 12 years,
caused me pain

and I chose to go
on the run
from the pain of past.

With all of this pain
I still never learned
to stop
running
and face my fear,
the fear of loneliness.

When you run,
 you lose everything
 you lose yourself
 and your life
to the run.

The Deathly Touch of Silence

Written by B. B. at Slate Canyon Youth Center

tick, tick, tick, tick

The clock strikes 11:30.
Twenty minutes left I tell myself.
Sometimes the deathly touch of
silence can be dangerous to your mind.
I know it can be for me.

I'm constantly in my head trying
to focus on the here and now...but
the deadly voices of the past still haunt me.
Occasionally I get interrupted by the sound
of the unit door opening and closing,
my impatient but calm body listening
to the sounds of the fan blowing,
feet tapping against the
metal desks coming from a fellow peer.

tick, tick, tick, tick
11:45

Five minutes left.
I tell myself that the
deathly touch of silence can't kill me.
Even still, I feel empty, and I'm desperately
trying to fill a void.
A void that can't be filled in five minutes.
Therefore, I will wait patiently...
until the clock strikes 11:50.

Addiction

Written by A. B. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

I feel like a turtle.
I'm stuck in my shell.
I want to come out
but I don't know how.

The hopelessness
fills my heart as I'm slowly
giving up.
I try to do it all by myself
because I feel that there's
no one else left.

The anger and aggression
fill my heart, but
I can't do anything to stop it.
I hear the sound of the cries
when a family's loved one dies.
I scream, but the room is so empty.
My voice just echoes back to me.
The choices I've made
have caused nothing but
sorrow and regret.
I've broken the trust of
almost everyone I've ever met.

The sound of the whispers saying,
"You're not strong enough,"
make me want to try harder.
The thoughts of regret
keep growing stronger.
Thinking of all the things
I want to do over
help me to decide,

I need to get sober.

The moment I am brave enough,
I crawl out of my shell.
The sense of relief
fills my body.
The coat of ice covering my heart
is melting away.
My body fills with emotions,
as the numbness slowly fades away.

All the thoughts and feelings
that have been locked away
are rushing out of me all at once.
All the hurt and pain
I pushed deeper with a razor blade
flow out of me like a waterfall.

No longer trapped
addiction's cycle of death,
I now am creating a new life.
I watch the people I pushed way
come back into my presence.
Times will still get rough,
but now I have people
who support me anyway.

I am not a turtle.
I am a bird flying free.

Be Precise

Written by K. S. at Decker Lake Youth Center

Are there
connections and transitions
 between your ideas,
 events and scenes?
But how are your in-betweens?
Are your details relevant
 and/or
do they contribute to your plot?
Did you take into account your task,
 purpose
 and audience?
Have you described your events
 and characters?
Have you written with your tasks,
ideas, purpose and audience
 in your mind?
Have you left anything behind?

Make it interesting
before your reader cuts the strings.
 Be precise,
 add some spice,
 shoot the dice,
but do not overuse the things
 that mean the most
 to you.
All your words, both simple
 and complex,
 should reflect
the apex of your text.

You cannot use anything,
 but your ebb
 and flow
to match with this glow.
You should already know
 how to match
 your flows.

Breaking Free

Written by D. H. at Manti Youth Academy

Every day that I awake,
the pain to me returns.
As soon as I get up,
it burns, it burns, it burns.

I do what I am asked
to please those around,
but no matter what I do
I cannot please myself.

I treat others in a way
not many would expect,
even those I confide in
rarely return respect.

The routine is not hard
after doing three years.
The monotony of treatment
is comforting after time.

It is hard to think
and even harder to know,
that every day I'll feel the pain
and that I'll never go home.

The choices I made,
the people I harmed,
the trust I damaged,
I strive to make right.

The friends I've made
are truly the ones
I will come to value
when this time is done.

I work for a better day
when I'll feel loved again.
When I can trust, and I can love,
the pain will slowly disappear.

It started years ago
and always stayed with me.
I look forward to the day
I can finally break free.

Change

Written by S. R. at Decker Lake Youth Center

I never thought I'd be locked up
like an animal in a cage.
I was only seventeen years old when I came
in and so full of hate, so full of rage.
I was selfish and helpless
looking for someone else to blame
for my choices and wrongs,
for my mistakes and my shame.
I felt like a lone wolf in this place
alone and afraid.

It's been over a year now
and I have made a positive change.
Finally realized that I can do more with my life
than to be on the streets trying to bang.
I know it's easier said than done
but I didn't change to be saved
from the streets, my old gang.

I'm not even doing it for me,
I'm doing it to represent my last name.
I will do better with my life
because I have learned from my mistakes,
from my heartaches, heartbreaks.
Now I know what it takes.

I must be strong, solid to change.
I can't go back.

COVID 19 Poem

Written by B. W. at Manti Youth Academy

The cure,
It's right there
In front of your face.

Stop, don't move.
Just stay in one place.
Stop, don't touch.
You're doing too much.

If you go to 2 places,
Then there's 2 cases.
You need distant spaces
Or you'll see worried faces.

They're scared.
They need to be prepared.
If you are not feeling well,
Exclude yourself.
If your friends are well, go ahead,
Let them include themselves.

And remember,
Wash your hands.
I know,
You might not be big fans.
Keep it clean.
You guys know what I mean.

We need to beat this COVID 19.
Between us
We can work as a team.

Grandpa Forever

Written by I. M. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

I sit and stare in awe
knowing that this will be final,
and won't be final.
Trying to take up the moment
as much as possible,
I reminisce on the past,
beating myself up
for not appreciating
the purity
and the fine moments I had with you.
I see people mourning and shedding tears,
but I know it won't bring you back.
So I listen and hear
all my family wiping their tears.
I'm still thinking about you, Grandpa,
day after day all the rides we had,
the missions together, inside the car,
to the mountains, shopping, helping others,
working on the trailer, talking and laughing
about how our days went.
I know I'll see you on the other side,
but until we meet again
we will keep on mourning,
I will keep on mourning forever
because you are my Grandpa Forever.

Missing My Freedom

Written by R. G. at Mill Creek Youth Center

I woke up this morning with my freedom missing.
Why is my freedom missing?
I am missing my freedom.

Others woke up with their freedom,
nothing missing.
Others are not missing their freedom.

Why do others still have their freedom?
Others just woke up not thinking about their freedom.
Why do others just wake up?

I don't know.
But some people don't get to wake up.
Are the people who don't get to wake up free?

Why do some people not wake up?
When you die, are you free?
I don't know.

What I do know is that my freedom is missing.
I miss my freedom.
But I don't want to die. I want to live free.

My Life

Written by K. M. at Mill Creek Youth Center

When I look in the mirror
I see a menace to society,
All these thoughts in my brain
Giving me anxiety.

In my past life
I was doing things right,
Made a wrong decision
Pray I see tomorrow night.

Only thirteen when I made
My wrong decision.
Tryna do things right,
I don't wanna go to prison.

Now I'm sixteen.
I still make mistakes.
My life is really hard,
But Ima give it all it takes.

I never thought
I would have a son.
Time's going fast,
My baby's already one.

I'm scared to lose my son.
That boy is all I got.
So much on my mind,
Got my head up in a knot.

I see your face.
It makes my heart smile.
Daddy's gone for a bit.
It won't be but a while.

Shadows of Pain

Written by J. B. at Manti Youth Academy

Shadows across the room,
I see them like no other before.
Even though they seem
Millions of steps away
I never seem to understand them.
This goes on inside my brain
Like no other before.

These shadows are like elders
Running through the trees
That never really loved me
And sooner or later
Will leave me
Like the pain, they will go.

The pain is like a bad drug
Stuck in my veins
That will never go away.
Like a broke heart,
When it is just not enough,
It makes me cry
When I hear people say good-bye.

Will I have to die
In the pain
That never seems to ever
Really go away?
Will I always see these
Shadows running?
Will I always have a
Broken heart?
Will I always hear people
Say good-bye?

The Hot Summer Day

Written by S. L. F. at Decker Youth Center Youth

The sky is blue.
It is a hot summer day,
no cloud in the sky,
no rain.

The kids are playing in the pool
heat hitting their bodies.
Not knowing what they are facing,
they bounce the ball.

The guy comes closer.
The fun will soon be over.
The guy says, Hi, and grabs some lollipops.
The bouncing of the ball stops.
The kids stop and get out of the water.
They don't know the guy.
They think he is a friend, yet he is a monster.
The monster says he has more candy.
Follow me and things will be dandy.

As they go and follow him,
Clouds start hovering in the sky.
Rain comes down, hits the ground
as the kids get in the van,
there is more candy but suddenly
he shuts the back door and begins laughing.
The man gets in the van and drives away fast.

The parents come for their kids,
look for their kids,
the parents shriek out loud.
No one knows where the kids are.
Cops come and file a report.

Just more lost kids,
another short.

The Life I Live

Written by J. V. at Mill Creek Youth Center

I keep telling myself
not to trust anyone
anymore
in this game you have to
be brave
feel no pain.

I keep praying to God
to let me live
one more day
because the life
I live
is not the way – not God's way

I hope the Lord has mercy on me
I hope that one day I'll change
the way
I think
I act
I liv

O heal my soul, and be with me,
to change the way
I live
and make me a good example
for my kids
so they don't have to go through
gangbanging
drug dealing
robbing, fighting
inking tats
smoking fat
spending time
in lockup
just living the life
I live

Oh Lord!
I hope that one day
you make me realize
all I did wrong

What Goes Around Comes Around!

Written by C. M. at Manti Youth Academy

I was not supposed to remember
what happen in December
when I was a member
of a game called the Musical Chamber,
where I heard haunting music whispering.

The Chamber was filled with chairs
with random numbers
and gathered into a circle.

The floor was pretty sticky
so it was hard to walk around
so I didn't know
if we should stick around!

There was a deck of cards
with the same numbers
as on the chairs
and on the other sides
of the cards were the fortunes
that could happen
sooner or later.

You might not expect
the unexpected!

Once something is unexpected,
you must except what is expected.

This means that once you sit on one
of the chairs,

you must find the card
that has the number of that chair.

Once you read it,
it will tell your fortune
and in about a second,
the unexpected of your fortune
will come true.

You will not come out
of the Chamber
until each person has
had a fortune told.

When I was in the Musical Chamber,
I sat on the chair with the number 81.
And once I found card 81,
it said: What goes around comes around!

I wait for a moment.
Then a person
who stepped in the chamber
looked exactly like me,
wearing the same expression
I had when I came in the Chamber.
I asked: Who are you?
He said to me: I am you.
And I mumbled: Impossible!
His last words: It is!
What goes around comes around!

Don't Tell Me

Written by S. E. at Manti Youth Academy

Don't tell me what to do.
Don't call me by my last name.
 I hate to be framed.
 I hate to be blamed.
 I don't like to be lame.

One day I was blamed
 for breaking the law.
I was framed
 for breaking the law.
I did not like that,
and that same day
 I was blamed
for being rude to others.

My mother said: I was lame.
 Nobody likes you.
I keep telling myself: I am not lame.
I need accept the fact
 that people call me
 by my last name.

And one day I had one last chance
and only one chance.

I have a lance
and a spear,
and I always have fear.
Sometimes I can control my fear.
 And I hide my fear
because I don't want people
 to see my fear.

I have tears in my eyes.
My anxiety goes up and down,
but I drown myself
 under water.
I need to control my anxiety.
 I feel mighty
because I can stick up for myself.

One day I will wake up in the morning,
 saying: It is a new day.
I make it a new day,
 saying: I can have a great day.
My counselor always tells me:
 Wake up
on the right side of the bed.

For My Daughter

Written by J. N. at Mill Creek Youth Center

the voices
 in my head are tellin me
it's the right thing to do
but my homies tell me – No
 Man, I'm so confused
 Should I stop?
 Or should I pursue?

I wish
I had my daughter here
cuz then
I'd know what to do

 my daughter died
cuz she couldn't breathe right
 her mother wouldn't
 give up meth
Man, she never even tried
 now I'm feeling
 all this pain
cuz Baby Girl died

now I'm sittin in my cell
 going through my hell
of grief, pain and anger
 sitting here cuz
 I needed to fight
away the pain of losing her
 ever since she died
I feel that I've lost my life, my light
 my reason to live,
 almost died
I wish I could have her back
 but I'll never win that fight

I Never Thought

Written by F. R. at Slate Canyon Youth Center

I never thought I'd see myself
locked in a cell.
Each day before this
living by my own rules
Doing what I wanted to do.
Not caring about anything... anyone
Believing, this was the
"normal" way to live.

I never thought I could get along
with people here.
At first, no one talks to you,
and you are lonelier than you could imagine,
but... then you start fitting in.
You dismiss the sentinel
and take your walls down.

I never thought anyone would care.
Some make time feel like
a thousand years
While others make time... fly by.
Some could care less about you.
Others actually want
to see you succeed

I never thought I'd be waiting to get paroled.
Now, here I am sitting
at my concrete slab
thinking back on my time,
looking forward to
my first day out...
taking the first step to freedom,
and finally going home.

If You Ever Hurt Them

Written by T. T. at Canyons Youth Academy

I don't like you.
That's nothing new,
and you didn't start off well
especially when you left
and returned, left and returned,
always indecisive like a jack-in-the-box
popping in and out
but this is not funny.

I'll co-exist with you
only for my sister
only for my nephew
never for you.

So help me God,
if you ever hurt them,
I. Will. Kill. You.

I know I am only
a fourteen-year-old girl,
but I am strong.
Do not take me on.

So when you show up,
make sure you're here
for all the right reasons,
Because I will not stand by
and watch you walk in and out
of their lives,
Because you have other people
other things
other places
other reasons

so
are you here for the long run?
Or are you just popping a game
Because it's not like
WE
need you.

But this
is for
HIM, and for HER
So don't tap out.

Will you be here to comfort them?
Or will you be leaving,
resuming your role as the absent father?

Will you ever stick around for
the hard parts
like a real man?
So you should listen to me closely.
Don't walk in and out of their lives
again and again.

Let me reiterate
and make sure you hear this
once more.
If you hurt them
or
make them shed so much as a tear,
I will come for you,
and I will be the thing
that you will fear.

Nothing

Written by K. S. at Slate Canyon Youth Center

I remember nothing.
Ice cold thoughts ringing in my head.
The sad voices won't stop.
All around pitch black with no chance of light.
Inhale ice... Exhale fire.

I remember nothing.
Feeling detached but connected,
feeling warmth in a blizzard.
The tug at my wrist compels me,
the warm wet twinkle down my arm.
Even still, I feel that warmth.

I remember nothing.
Wanting nothing.
Wanting to disappear.
Wishing I could go.
Wishing for that warmth.
I remember feeling cold.
I remember feeling warm.
I remember something.

Feeling the cold at my head.
Feeling the cold at my heart.
Feeling the cutting at my arm
where it was warm.
I remember something.

I can hear a beat.
I can hear another beat.
Senses awakening,
fuzzy objects becoming clearer.
Breathing slow and shallow,
but...I am breathing.
I remember something.

On the Streets

Written by T. B. at Decker Lake Youth Center

Eighteen years on the streets
and you can learn a lot
But all the wrong things
Not the things you want to learn
Eighteen years on the streets
and you see a lot
But all the wrong sights
Not the sights you want to see
Ima product of the block
I hit the streets
Tryna find the definition of love

Sovereign

Written by C. Y. at Manti Youth Academy

Can you believe that you are of high blood?
Royalty unto yourself?
We are all sovereigns, our own ruling class,
Our lands, our lives and our charges, our future
But not all are tranquil.

It seems as if I am at war within myself,
And have forgotten the shells.
My lands are torn, ravaged by the struggle.
My charge, my duty is escaping my grasp.

I am at war within myself,
And have forgot the shells.
Anger, shame and fear all push me back.
The temptations incessantly hold me down.

It seems that I am alone in this fight.
I fend off the darkness inside myself
But have forgotten the shells.

My gates are down with nowhere to run,
But this is my war and mine to fight.
And I will fight to the last.

My war is eternal,
And I am a sovereign.
I will keep my crown.

Voices

Written by A. C. at Mill Creek Youth Center

the voices in my head are telling
me – you're not going nowhere
in life
and here I sit behind these walls
feeling neglected,
feeling rejected,
not feeling respected
wishing to change the sick thoughts
going in and out of my brain,
driving me insane,
and the pain is a chain
dragging me down

and here I sit behind these walls
feeling scared that my life is going nowhere,
no freedom,
no family,
no good fortune,
wishing the voices in my head would stop
telling me – you're not going nowhere
and wishing the voices would be saying
to me – you're going to succeed

and here I sit behind these walls
wishing I could go back in my life
to when everything seemed all right,
back before the drugs
and gangs came into my life,
back before I committed those
heavy
crimes that are weighing me
down,
locking me up

the voices in my head are telling me –
you're still your mother's son.
I wish I could say – I am sorry
to my mom
sorry mom is all I can say
because I don't know what to say
now that I am locked
away

When I Saw Her...

Written by T. M. at Manti Youth Academy

When I saw her, it all came back,
the look on her face, it was black
and empty.

When roses bloom, they also wither.
When roses die,
it's a sign of winter.

The ice in my soul, the heat of her hand,
the warmth of her heart, I can feel
as I am leaving
the lies and manipulation, the truth deceiving.
As people are crying, the lies I am seeing,
make me who I am,
a human being.

When I saw her, it all came back,
the dreams, the memories,
once faded to black,
came rushing to me like a shooting star,
hit me hard.

Her smile was forgiving, but there was also blame,
blame for my actions,
my emotions to maim.

Her heart, once kindness, now taken by depression,
the feeling to never be mentioned.

The feeling of drugs, the feeling of addiction
makes me feel fake,
like my life is all fiction.

When I saw her, it all came back,
in a million questions.

The day I left, leaving home forever,
and the questions that won't get answered ever.

What will I miss? Will I ever fix
the heart I broke, the girl I kissed?
I got addicted to the feeling of her warmth,
but I failed to realize
my actions weren't just.

Next time I see her, I will be in heaven,
with so many things adding up
to those million questions.

Diamond Baby

Written by J. M. at Decker Lake Youth Center

You chose this life – You knew the rules.
Don't ever lack – Better keep yo tool
It got so deep, can't go to school
He miss his momma – Her son a fool.

You can't take that stuff you did back think before you pull
Really from the trenches these folks think it's cool
Shorty think I'm chillin whole time we finna make the news
She want me to talk about it – I'm 2 confused

Lil bronem sliding – I swear they goons
Don't make no phone call – feds watch your moves
Link at the spot – don't bring no swisher
Hit shorty one time – tell her that I miss her

Hope she gon hold me down – let's get rich together
Just a young bull tryna get some chedda
Can't let up – I know I'm betta
Real Diamond Baby – I'm rich foreva

Don't Tell Me, Ask

Written by A. B. at Manti Youth Academy

Don't ask me if I'm okay
tell me I am.

Don't ask me if I'm crazy
tell me I am.

Don't ask me if I'm happy
tell me I am.

Don't ask me if I like myself
tell me you like me.

Don't tell me I'm sad
ask me if I am.

Don't tell me I'm psycho
ask me if I am.

Don't tell me I'm mad
ask me if I am.

Don't tell me I might run
ask me if I might go.

If you don't understand,
then I might be
a little mad.

When I am mad then
I've had no fun
now I better run.

So from now on
Don't ask me
tell me
and
don't tell me
ask me.

Falling to the Bottom

Written by T. C. at Horizonte at Odyssey Adolescent

water
falls
and
falls
but keeps on flowing

rain
falls
and
falls
and keeps on going

things
fall
and will continue to decline
but when
you
fall
where will you go?

you could
fall
back into the
past,
into raw emotions,
memories of
sadness,
the misery of broken promises,
glass
shattered across the floor
of my childhood
home,
falling into sleep
to escape

where will you fall?
you fall out of power,
locked away
with no ties,
no connection to the outside,
no connection to family,
no connection to friends,
falling into
a concrete bed of lies,
my lies,
family lies,
lies of the system

falling into my hands like
snow from the sky
cold,
so cold,
so hard to grasp, hard to hold
falling into
despair
falling

like
water
like
rain
like
things
that
fall
apart
where will I land?

Gang Life or Dead

Written by C. C. at Decker Lake Youth Center

Locked up in a dark cell like a prisoner.

In life I was a failure,
Kicking it with my homies
And a whole lot of players.

Gang life or dead,
Is this the life I want to be in?
Four walls staring at a fool.
Life is always difficult.

Do you know what I be seeing?
Caskets hugging them young kids.
You know what my mama said?
You keep going down this road
You'll end up dead.

Slanging and banging,
Where I'm at
Days are full of gangs.
They lead you behind bars or the grave.
Come on, Vato, forget all that.

Life is always a game.
In my cell I was hurting
Yet asleep to my pain.
Life or death are like playing
With ice or fire.
Live that life and don't be full of lies.

The gang lies while my life full of games.
End the lies. Change my life around.
Unlock the doors and go my true route.

I AM A STAR

Written by Y. A. at Mill Creek Youth Center

when I look in the sky
and I dream
I see money
in my future
cuz I am going to work, work,
work for the money

now I'm locked up
my life
like a movie
like John Wick
and I will be out of lockup
someday soon
I'll be free, free, free
from asking,
listening,
obeying

I miss home
and I love my honey
so sweet
don't ask me
bout my life story
born to be
greatness
too much light on me
I'm too fly
I imagine
looking out my window
seeing night stars
and I am seeing myself
I am a star

Lost & Found

Written by C. C. at Slate Canyon Youth Center

Looking in the mirror I see a seventeen-year-old
Lost, unable to find his path.
Taken, away from the things he loves
Living, with people he does not know
for what seems like forever.

Trying to find his way back
to the people and things, he loves

He is the same person now forced
to go to sleep alone in a cell
forced to co-exist with
people he barely gets to know and
may not even like.

Fighting anyone in his way to get back
the people and things he loves

groups with peers
mindfulness activities
relationship-building
learning to co-exist
Every day learning and growing

Wanting to change his ways to get back
The people and things he loves.

Looking in the mirror I see an eighteen-year-old
Determined, to stay on his current path
Focused, on helping his family
Willing, to accept change and do things
to better himself.

Excited for the great unknown of life and
being with the people and things he loves.

Me Want to Go Home

Written by K. C. at Canyons Youth Academy

I want to go home
When can I go home?
I know I just got to school,
But I want to go home.

Why do I have to do this?
Who signed me up for all this?
I don't know.
I don't know.

Every day the same thing
Pickleball and Smash Bros makes me
happy
I like sign language
I like my friends and teachers

I am home alone
Every
Single
Day
Until 5 o'clock

My foster dad comes home
He checks in on me
I am in my room
I eat in the kitchen
They eat in their room
Sometimes we watch TV together

Can I go home?
Can I go home?
Can I go home?

Me is dumb
My brain is numb

Me is wanting to go
Home, but they say no

Me is hungry right now
for grandma's special taco burger chow

Me is putting my head down
So you can't hear a sound

Me is thinking and thinking
My emotions are on the brink

Me is huffing and puffing
I'd rather be sluffing

Me is over all this nonsense
All of this is too intense

I want to change everything

I am strong and know who I am
I am Me

Pain Is Me

Written by K. R. at Manti Youth Academy

Pain is always there.
She is everywhere
but people just choose not
to experience her,
choose not to feel her energy.
Why?

Because she hurts.
Pain has long red hair,
a beautiful black face,
a young face covered in tears,
sometimes a face with no emotion,
blank like a dark screen
reflecting the energy
of all around her.

Sometimes you can't see her
because you do not want
to feel her. It will hurt
when you see her,
when she is there.
Sometimes you can hear her
when you hear sadness
like a rainy day
falling like tears
washing away the ocean.

She can talk to you,
and she can cry with you.
But no one knows
what pain
really has to go through.
All she wants is to feel loved,
but no one knows that
because she is always in pain,
her pain.

You must set pain free.
Release your emotions.
Feel her.
Let the tears flow.
Feel no shame of her.

Pain is me.

Success

Written by R. R. at Mill Creek Youth Center

When I look in the mirror,
I see a future ahead,
something to look forward to,
like staying out of the system
and
like graduating from high school
and
like having a job as a mechanic.

I see all the happiness
that coming towards me
like all the small things
like staying home, doing my homework,
like being with my family,
like continuing to go to school
every day.

I see all the success that I will accomplish.
Success is like a bright star
or like the sun shining
or like a pot of gold.
I see myself doing what I wanna do in life.
I will accomplish my goals.
I will be successful.