Tempe Writers Forum

Volume 4
Special thanks to Jeanne Hanrahan, Maureen Roen, Jill Brenner and Blanca Villapudua for their hard work and dedication to the Tempe Community Writing Contest and the *Tempe Writers Forum.*
Contents

INTRODUCTION LETTERS
Mayor, City of Tempe
Mark Mitchell................................................................. ix

Dean, College of Integrative Sciences and Arts, and University College
Vice Provost, ASU’s Polytechnic campus
Duane H. Roen....................................................................... xi

Deputy Community Services Director, Tempe Public Library
Kathy Husser....................................................................... xiii

FICTION
ADULT
Adam Baker....................................................... The Quiet House 3

COLLEGE
Quinton Gregory.................................................................
The Boring Last Evening of Edmond the Average 19

HIGH SCHOOL
Abigail Naranjo..................................................... Ladybug Princess 29

POETRY
ADULT
Howard Gershkowitz......................... Window on the Square 39

COLLEGE
Isabel Ranney................................. Mentally (un)Well 43

HIGH SCHOOL
Morgan Carpenter............................... Polychrome 49
CONTENTS

NONFICTION

ADULT
Sophia McGovern............... *Intersections: The Valley of the Sun* 59

COLLEGE
Nichelle Santagata................... *Nostalgia* 77

BOOK COVER DESIGN

Jennifer Testamarck........................................ 87

TEMPE COMMUNITY WRITING CONTEST
2018 - JUDGES

Reviewers’ Biographies........................................ 91
March 27, 2018

A good story can transport us to another place. It can educate us, introduce us to new ideas and show us different cultures. Storytelling also helps to preserve history for tomorrow's readers. Writing brings people together, building stronger communities through these shared experiences.

I am proud to live in a city that fosters such a unique writing environment for emerging authors. The Tempe Public Library offers conferences, writing workshops and classes all year long to help writers hone their skills. The Writers in Residence program brings published authors to the library, giving writers access to first-hand knowledge and experience. And a variety of writing groups enable people to learn from each other in smaller, intimate settings.

Every year the Tempe Public Library hosts a writing contest to encourage aspiring writers of all genres to share their work. This year, more than 100 people submitted original pieces, with topics ranging from families to life to ladybugs and more. The talent we have in our community amazes me every year. In fact, I am glad it's not my job to select the winners because I don't think I could.

I would like to congratulate this year's Writing Contest winners, as well as all of the writers who submitted their work. Thank you for sharing your talents and passion for writing. I encourage each of you to continue writing and sharing your work with others.

I would also like to extend a special thanks to the Tempe Public Library and Arizona State University's creative writing community
for their efforts in compiling the Tempe Writers Forum, Volume 4. This amazing work couldn’t have been done without their hard work.

Sincerely,
Mark W. Mitchell
Mayor
City of Tempe
March 19, 2018

Dear Friends,

Arizona State University is pleased to celebrate the fourth annual Tempe Community Writing and Cover Design contest and this resulting publication—volume four of the Tempe Writers Forum. We are delighted that the contest has continued for four years, and we are thrilled to sustain ASU’s partnership with the Tempe Public Library, an important commitment for us.

At ASU, we are driven by a charter that impels us to advance research and discovery of public value and assume fundamental responsibility for the economic, cultural, and overall health of the communities we serve.

Helping people to gain voice through writing is an important part of our responsibility because becoming a more practiced, confident writer contributes to success in many arenas of life.

This annual contest offers opportunity and incentive for individuals to hone their craft and to build community around their art.

Many classes and workshops are available at ASU, at the Tempe Public Library and in the community to help you gain writing practice and feedback from peers. I hope that you will take advantage of these opportunities.

Enormous thanks go to all those in the Tempe Public Library, the City of Tempe, at ASU, and in the greater community who have collaborated to enthusiastically support this contest and encouraged and evaluated submissions.
I especially thank the scores of writers and graphic designers who shared their work. You have enthralled us, moved us, and delighted us. And to anyone reading this note who considered entering the contest but didn’t, I urge you to share your writing next year.

Sharing our stories—and experiencing others’ stories through the arts—expands our empathy, ignites new ideas about possibility, and enhances our humanity.

Duane Roen
Dean, College of Integrative Sciences and Arts
Dean, University College
Vice Provost, ASU’s Polytechnic campus
Welcome back readers and local authors alike! This publication is by far my favorite and contains the works of the very best local authors for 2018 as selected from the fourth annual Tempe Community Writing Contest. This collaborative endeavor between the Tempe Public Library, Arizona State University and our community continues to nurture the vibrant storytellers established or venturing out as writers for the first time. Tempe Public Library encourages that next step where emerging authors can find a safe and supportive environment to help them along their journey to becoming a published novelist, poet or essayist.

I am very proud that the Tempe Public Library is a crossroads for local writers—a place where they can critique and learn from each other and discuss the pains and joys of their calling to tell stories and create. If you, too are a budding author, please check the Library’s newsletter for groups and classes that might help you take that next step in your efforts. (www.tempe.gov/library)

The breadth and depth of talent of this year’s contest winners is inspirational. As you laugh, learn, and dream through their words, the Library team hopes you find the inspiration to make your dreams come true.

Congratulations to all the authors and illustrators and the very best for future writing success!

Kathy Husser
Deputy Community Services Director - Library
Fiction
The floorboard creaked as Pa stepped out of bed to use the bathroom. The noise was faint, but still was enough to wake up Ma. It wasn’t that Ma was a light sleeper, rather, the house was just so quiet these days that any sound reverberated throughout the walls of their old Phoenix home. That wasn’t always the case.

Years ago, finding a time without an audible rumble was impossible. Those walls used to be filled with living room baseball games, tea parties and Lego wars. With two boys and two girls all within eight years of one another, there was always a shouting match or a singing contest that would trigger a 5.5 on the Richter scale. But now, all four kids had grown up and moved away. Sure they came back to visit from time to time, but now the house was still — unless Wheel of Fortune was on, that is.

When the kids were younger, Ma longed for a quiet house. Whenever a baseball game broke out inside, she shooed the kids out to the backyard. That solved one problem, but caused another. The outdoor contest killed off the grass in the spots where the bases were placed. Ma would yell at the kids to
move the bases so she could save her grass. Ma would turn to Pa and say, “I’m never gonna have grass.” Each time, Pa would reply, “yes, you will have grass, but when you do, you are going to be very sad.”

He was right and Ma had thought about that a lot since the kids grew up and moved on. She also thought about the many other fun memories their active family created. Like how the kids ewww’d and stuck out their tongues at the thought of having to eat fried okra…until Pa renamed it “fried grass-hoppers.” Then it was their favorite dish. Or how they never wanted to wash their hair…until Ma’s makeshift car wash for kids opened for business in the backyard and the kids had to be turned away from getting their hair sprayed with the hose. Ma and Pa never won any parent of the year awards, but they just had a way of piecing everything together to solve any problem that came their way.

Right then, her thoughts were interrupted by a loud tapping sound coming from on top of the roof. Ma looked outside thinking it might be raindrops, but there wasn’t a cloud in the sky.

“Pa, wake up,” said Ma.
“What is it, honey,” said a groggy Pa who had fallen back asleep after using the bathroom.
“What’s that noise?” said Ma.
Clack-clack-clack-clack-clack!
“That noise,” said Ma.
“Probably just rain,” said Pa. “Go back to sleep.”
“No, I looked out the window. It is not raining. Go up on the roof and take a look.”

“No?” said Pa. “Are you crazy? It’s four in the morning.”

“Yes, now. What if it is a burglar?”

“A burglar? What are they gonna steal, your Elvis memorabilia collection?”

“Just go check it out,” said Ma.

Pa grudgingly rolled out of bed and slid his feet into his worn out slippers. He wrapped on his robe and sleepily shuffled out of the room. This reminded Ma of Christmas, when the kids would barge into the room at the crack of dawn and force Ma and Pa out of bed so that wrapping paper could be destroyed and presents discovered.

Just like back then, Ma followed Pa out of the room. She went straight for the corner of the living room where her shrine to The King was held. Just in case the noise was coming from Elvis burglars. Ma stared at the Elvis wall clock, marking the time of Pa’s return. Boy that man’s hips could move – the King’s, that is.

As Pa’s hips climbed up the ladder to the roof, he found the source of their noise. It was not a burglar but a bird. A woodpecker, to be exact. It was pecking away at the air conditioning unit. Clack-clack-clack-clack-clack.

“Hey, you! Scram!” shouted Pa. The woodpecker turned his head sideways, glanced at Pa and kept right on pecking.

Pa learned how to deal with the combination of a side head tilt and a blank stare many years ago. “Don’t you tilt your
head at me, young man,” Pa said to the bird. “I told you to stop it. You're upsetting your mother.” It just came out of instinct. It reminded Pa of their oldest son, Michael, who never seemed to listen the first time. Pa always thought the head tilt was Michael’s way of trying to empty the words out of his ear, just like a swimmer would do with water. Tell him to turn the television down and he gave you a head tilt. Tell him to quit using his sister’s dolls as hostages in his GI Joe war and you got a head tilt. Pa used to think Michael’s head would one day end up stuck at a 45-degree angle.

Pa marched over toward the AC unit and the bird got the message and flew away. Pa’s march worked once again, just like with their kids. Pa loved their kids very much, but he meant business. A longtime sufferer from arthritis, he was often in pain. So, his kids knew that if he was marching toward them, he wasn’t joking around.

Pa climbed down the ladder and triumphantly strolled back inside the house. “Problem solved,” he said, as he wiped his hands in a mock sign of accomplishment.

“What was it?” said Ma.

“Just a mangy woodpecker. But don’t worry about him. He won’t be bothering us anymore,” said Pa. “Now, since we are up, how about some pancakes?”

-----

The next morning, Ma and Pa were fast asleep when, Clack-clack-clack-clack-clack!
Ma jumped out of bed and wacked Pa on the arm. “I thought you said that woodpecker wouldn’t be coming back,” she said.

“I gave it a good scare,” said Pa. “That thing must not have gotten the message. What time is it?”

“Four o’clock.”

“It is consistent, I’ll give it that,” said Pa as he rolled out of bed.

“Consistent was right,” thought Ma as she watched Pa head out of the room. Assuming her precious Elvis knick-knacks were safe, she stayed in bed this time. As she listened to Pa climb up the ladder, she thought about how consistency was a big part of their family, years ago.

She and Pa had gotten pretty good about juggling the day-to-day tasks that cropped up with a family of six. Shuttling the kids to school, then to sports, followed by dinner and homework, all while balancing a tight budget. Rinse and repeat, day after day.

Things had certainly slowed down since then. In fact, their only excitement seemed to be coming from this bird. Every morning it showed up at 4:00 a.m. sharp and started pecking. For a while Ma and Pa tried to cover their heads with their pillows to drown out the noise. But that didn’t work any better than it had with the kids. The woodpecker kept right on going until Pa was forced to climb up on the roof and scare it away. This bird was really testing his patience. And his arthritis.

After about a month of dealing with the noise, Pa decided to take a different tactic. One afternoon, Ma heard clanging
and crashing coming from the backyard storage shed. She went out to see what was going on and found Pa rustling through a mountain of old boxes.

“What are you doing?” said Ma.

“I’m looking for that old inflatable football dummy,” said Pa.

“You mean the one the boys used to play with in the front yard?”

“Yes.”

“I thought we got rid of that thing,” said Ma.

“No, I kept it,” said Pa. “We played with that thing so much when the kids were little, I couldn’t bring myself to toss it.”

Ma thought about all those front-yard football games for which she had a front row seat. Pa would act as the quarterback and the inflatable football player would serve as a defender the boys would have to run around while trying to catch the ball and make it to the end zone. There were plenty of touchdown dances and scuffed knees. One time, the two boys challenged Pa to a game of 2-on-1. Pa had the ball and the boys were tasked with tackling their old man. What could be more fun than the chance to send their dad to the ground with a big hit—every boy’s dream?

As Pa was zigging and zagging down the field, the boys raced to try and keep up. They nearly had him cornered when Pa spun away from one defender. Unfortunately, the other defender didn’t see the spin coming and the boys collided. Michael’s two front teeth lodged into the forehead of Jeffrey, just
above the left eye.

Blood poured down Jeffrey’s shirt. Tears were shed and stitches were needed. Ma prayed the entire way to the hospital, putting a new spin on a football Hail Mary. It was a surprise that she didn’t pop that dummy right then and there.

“What do you want with it now?” asked Ma. “If you think I am going to play football with you, you’re crazy.”

“No, don’t be silly. I’d wipe the field with you,” said Pa with a wink. “I thought I could use it to scare that darn woodpecker and keep it off our roof.”

“Well, if you are going to scare it away, you are going to need to make this football player a little more intimidating,” said Ma, pulling the dummy out of a box.

When the kids stopped playing football, the dummy took up residence in the storage shed. What was once a stout inflatable linebacker was now shriveled up. It looked like a football player who had spent too much time in a cold tub and was becoming a raisin.

Ma started unpacking boxes in the shed, searching through them and then moving to the next one. “I found what we need,” she said.

“What the heck is that?” said Pa.

“This is the box of Halloween costumes,” said Ma, holding up a curly rainbow wig. “Here’s the clown outfit that Lisa wore in eighth grade and the bumblebee costume Donna wore in kindergarten. Oh, and here’s the cute little tiger costume Jeffrey wore when he was four years old.”

Sensing they were close to taking a tear-filled ride down
memory lane, Pa interrupted. “What do you want with those?”

“I thought we could use them to spice up your dummy,” said Ma as she placed the clown wig on its head. “Every good football player needs a helmet.”

Pa laughed and said, “Let me see what else is in that box.”

An extreme makeover scarecrow edition took place over the course of the next 30 minutes. Ma popped the wings off the bumblebee and grabbed the nose from the clown. Pa used the bandana from a cowboy costume and a ghost mask. At the end of it all, Ma and Pa’s sides hurt from laughing so much.

“The neighbors are going to think we are crazy,” said Ma as Pa carried the dummy up the ladder.

“That ship sailed a long time ago,” said Pa. “Plus, we just spent a half-hour playing with children’s toys from the 1970s. We may actually be crazy.”

-----

Clack-clack-clack-clack-clack!

“Hon, I don’t think the bird found our inflation creation very intimidating,” said Pa as he rolled over to see the alarm clock read 4:00 AM.

“I knew the princess dress was too much,” said Ma.

For what felt like the one-millionth time, Pa climbed up the ladder. When he got to the roof, he found that not only was the bird unafraid of the dummy, but he was actually using it as a perch to get a better angle on pecking the air conditioner. Ma
and Pa had created a ghoulish booster seat.

“Okay, this is getting ridiculous,” thought Pa. “Time to get serious.”

Pa had spent 42 years as an electrician. He worked long hours on jobs hundreds of miles from home. It crushed him being away from the family so much, but his profession did have one perk. With a few wires, some pipe and duct tape, Pa could build pretty much anything. He used to tell the kids that MacGyver was based on his life.

Stepping down from the ladder, he went right to the shed. He flipped on the light and bypassed the Halloween boxes to go for his toolbox. That old thing didn’t get much use these days, aside from the occasional job to install something at one of the kids’ houses. Now it was going to be put to work.

As Ma came out to see what was going on, Pa had gathered all of his supplies: a wooden block, a tin can, a nail, a few screws, cable, coil and an old battery. He wrapped the coil around the nail and hammered it into the board. Then he cut the tin can into strips and screwed the strips in line with the nail.

Ma watched as the nutty professor was at work. Seeing Pa at work reminded her of how their kids always had the best science projects. Pa may have done a little too much of the work, but she couldn’t help but be proud when one of the kids took home a blue ribbon for a homemade battery or a rocket ship made entirely from kitchen supplies.

Pa grinned when his creation was finished. “If that bird is so fond of noise, well, we will give him a taste of his own
Pa connected the loose end of cable to the battery. This caused current to flow through the coil and attract the strip of tin to the nail. This created a sharp buzzing noise as the tin bounced off the nail again and again. Pa had fashioned a homemade buzzer.

“All we need to do is run some wiring up the wall and out the air vent so we can place this thing next to the AC unit,” Pa told Ma. “Then, I will keep the battery by the bed and as soon as the woodpecker comes back, I can turn it on. The noise should scare him right away.”

“Well, aren’t you handy,” said Ma. “I think you just earned yourself some pancakes.”

-----

In an ironic twist, Ma and Pa couldn’t sleep the first night with the homemade buzzer. They were excited to test out Pa’s new invention. They both sat up in bed, just waiting for the bird to show up for his 4:00 a.m. shift. They had finally dozed off when, *Clack-clack-clack-clack-clack!*

Pa sprang out of bed and grabbed the battery. He connected the loose wire and *tap-tap-tap-tap-tap.* The pecking stopped and they heard the bird fly away. It worked! Too excited to go back to sleep, Ma and Pa got up.

The buzzer worked again the next morning. And the morning after that. Before they knew it, the woodpecker just wasn’t showing up anymore. Weeks went by without a single
4:00 a.m. wakeup call. But a funny thing happened.

Ma and Pa still awoke at four o’clock in the morning every day. They would roll over and look at the alarm clock, then lie in bed with one eye open, waiting for something to happen. When nothing would happen they would kiss each other and say goodnight…but neither went back to sleep.

-----

The floorboard creaked as Pa stepped out of bed.
“Where are you going?” asked Ma.
“I’m just going to get a drink of water,” said Pa.

But Pa bypassed the kitchen. He quietly opened the back door and crept to the shed. Ma would never admit it, but Pa knew that she missed the bird. The house was quiet again. Too quiet.

Seeing the boxes of Halloween costumes and the tools made Pa realize that the weeks dealing with the woodpecker were some of the most exciting Ma and Pa had had in a long time. They didn’t get much sleep, were constantly working and their feet hurt from running around the house to get things done. They laughed, hugged and smiled. It was just like being a new parent again. Pa knew that Ma liked that feeling. He did, too. With that in mind, he scooped an old can into a bag at the back of the shed.

“Getting a drink, huh?” said Ma.

Pa was busted. He tried to hide the can behind his back, but Ma spotted it.
“What have you got there?”, she asked.
“I was just going to go on the roof and take down our buzzer,” said Pa. “Guess we don’t need it anymore.”
“Is that so? What do you have behind your back?”
“Just a little something I thought I might put on the roof,” said Pa. “You go back to bed.”
Ma smiled and gave him a kiss on the check. “I love you.”
“I love you, too, honey,” said Pa and he held the can, grabbed the ladder and walked out of the shed.
Ma thought about all the years with the kids. All the frantic days and all the funny ones, too. She looked at the grass in their yard and Pa’s words all those years ago echoed in her mind, “yes, you will have grass, but when you do, you are going to be very sad.”
As time had gone by, Ma had thought about those words many times. But Pa wasn’t entirely right. Things had changed now that she had green grass, but the years of memories were by far worth the worn out grass and sleepless nights. Ma zipped up the bag Pa had gotten into and read the label: Bird seed.
Her house may have been empty, but her heart was full.
Adam Baker

Adam Baker is an Arizona native who wrote his first published story at age 3. The story was titled *Batman & Ghostbusters* and by published we mean that his mom stapled a few pages together and called it a book. This helped develop a love of writing that led him to create his first real books, the Maury C. Moose Children’s Book Series.
The Boring Last
Evening of Edmond
the Average

by Quinton Gregory
Edmond was going to die the next day, which is kind of funny in a way. Not ha-ha funny, mind you. But like when you spend ten minutes looking for your glasses only to find them on your head. That kind of funny. He would be hit by a car during his walk to lunch when, realizing he had left his wallet on his desk, he turned back to retrieve it. He would be dead before the car hit him, though. You see, Edmond came from a long line of weak-hearted people (medically speaking). He would suffer a massive heart attack when he realized the unfortunate and irreversible path of the maroon SUV. This sort of medical event is referred to as a “widow-maker,” which, given Edmond’s marital status, is quite funny or quite sad. I only tell you this so you know he never felt the brutal impact of the car.

The thought that this would unfold tomorrow never occurred to him as he sat on the back porch of his shabby rental house at 344 South McMurray Road (“It has character,” he often said to justify the place to others who, as a matter of fact, never asked for justification). In his thirty-one-year-old mind, dying was something that happened to other people. And in fact, other people never seemed bothered by dying either. They
thought dying was everyone else’s business, too.

As he lit his fourth cigarette of the evening—he was going to quit any day now—he picked up his phone from the table in front of him. He’d been given the table by his neighbor for free, yet it was somehow still worth less than he paid. The thing, an aluminum frame with a frosted glass top, wobbled as he lifted the phone, the slight displacement of the small device enough to upset its balance.

Edmond pulled up his recent calls, all of them outgoing, and pushed his thumb on the name “Rebecca.” The tip of his cigarette glowed red-hot as he took a long drag, waiting.

Ring.

Ring.

Ring.

On the fourth ring, it occurred to Edmond for the first time that his calls might be going intentionally unanswered. As he sat there smoking and waiting for a hello, he realized the coffee date may not have been as successful as he’d imagined. It was now Tuesday night, two days since he had spent an hour-and-a-half with Rebecca at the cafe only three blocks away. In the intervening time there’d been one text message and three calls, respectively unreplied to, unanswered and unreturned.

So it was a shock when the hello came just as Edmond began to accept that he’d never speak to Rebecca again.
“Edmond!” the voice in his ear gasped, “I’m so sorry.” What followed was an unprompted slew of excuses, but Edmond understood. He was familiar with those. Making the quick mental shift back to believing Rebecca had enjoyed their date, Edmond all but forgot he’d thought she was ignoring him just as quickly as the idea had occurred to him moments before.

“Really, it’s fine, Rebecca!”
“Becca,” she reminded him.
“Ah,” he smiled, “of course.” She’d insisted on him using that name the instant they had met. “I’m just glad you answered.”

And Edmond was glad. He’d enjoyed their time together more than he had anticipated, considering the last blind date set up by his sister-in-law was about as enjoyable as a visit to the dentist. He’d actually told that to his sister-in-law the following day: “I’ve had smoother conversation before with four fingers in my mouth.” Edmond had been proud of that one—he thought it was clever.

Leaning down to put out his cigarette among the hundred black dots on the cement porch, Edmond ventured, “Well I’ve just wanted to say I really enjoyed meeting you the other day, and I was hoping we could do it again sometime?”

“Sure!” The response came quickly, sweeping away the last fragment of Edmond’s earlier creeping doubt. “I’m free for lunch tomorrow if you can spare an hour from work?”

As a matter of fact, nothing would make Edmond happier than a one-hour reprieve from the office. He didn’t exactly hate his job, but an intermission did him good. “Tomorrow
works great. I’ll meet you at one, let’s say . . .” he thought for a bit, lighting another cigarette in the pause. Becca didn’t know he smoked—she never would—so she didn’t recognize the faint pop she heard through the phone as a cigarette lighter.

“Let’s say Tom’s Bakery. They have a decent lunch and it’s an easy walk from the office. Not too far from your apartment either?”

Becca agreed, and made some more unnecessary apologies. Then goodbye, see you tomorrow, I’m sorry again, click. Edmond set the phone back down on the table, which shifted again under the negligible weight. Feeling a little taller as he stretched out his legs, he propped the cigarette between his lips, not noticing the quarter-inch of ash that fell into his lap.

He was looking forward to lunch the next day, which was saying something. Edmond never looked forward to much of anything. Unfortunately, as you already know, Edmond would never make it to that lunch. While you can never be sure, for whoever really can be, you cannot help but think Edmond would have been fine if Becca hadn’t picked up the phone. He’d have skipped lunch or eaten the bearable in-office cafeteria food. He wouldn’t have needed to turn back for his wallet, wouldn’t have stepped off the curb without looking. So it goes.

Incidentally, “Thank God I didn’t show up without my wallet” was Edmond’s penultimate thought, followed immediately by the “Jesus-fucking-Christ” that popped into his head as he saw the SUV and his chest seized up. It’s funny how poetic people’s dying words and thoughts usually are in books and movies. We all know it doesn’t work like that.
Lighting his now-sixth-and-last cigarette—he really was going to quit soon—his thoughts of lunch with Becca were replaced by thoughts of the following morning’s work. Edmond worked for a big insurance company—the kind where the CEO makes 300 times more than the Edmonds. The insurance claims waiting on his desk seemed suddenly less of a bore. Actually, Edmond would be much more productive the following morning than he’d been in months, and would greet Jack the Security Guard with a most enthusiastic version of his routine “G’mornin’, Jack.”

Jack’s desk sat in the elevator foyer on the ground floor of Edmond’s building. Also, Jack the Security Guard was actually Zach the Security Guard. He had accepted Edmond’s greeting as an amusing routine, so Zach never bothered to correct him. In perhaps Edmond’s only memorial, Zach would tell that story for the rest of his life. It always ended the same: “After that I always kinda missed the guy, comin’ past every mornin’ and callin’ me by the wrong damned name. Jack.” He’d emphasize the misnomer with a chuckle, then a sigh, then a couple seconds of silence before moving on to sports or the weather or “Get me another beer, would ya?”

Edmond stretched his legs again, this time feeling his usual height. Yawning, he muttered, “Ah, I’m tired,” to no one, not even to himself. He took this as some sort of cue to go to bed, even though he subconsciously knew that the empty cigarette pack was more of a cue than the yawn.

I can’t help but wonder what Edmond would have done that night if he’d known he was to die the next day. It’s a good
ice-breaker, that question. Almost poetically, he had asked it of Becca over coffee. Her answer had stricken him as slightly underwhelming—she had said she would spend the day with her dog, her favorite book (The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho, of which Edmond had never heard) and a bottle of her favorite wine. Becca likewise had found Edmond’s answer to be underwhelming: “I’ve never really thought about it.”

The fact is that the night before Edmond died, he cleaned the dishes from his earlier dinner, loaded the coffee maker for the last morning of his life, forgot to brush his teeth, and fell asleep watching an old rerun of America’s Funniest Home Videos. One of the clips showed a boy chasing his dog around the yard with a remote-control car. Edmond had chuckled at that.
Quinton Scott Gregory is a third-year law student at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. He is from Fort Worth, Texas, where he graduated from Texas Christian University with a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and English Literature. His passion for writing stories far outweighs his ability to write them, but he would not have it any other way. He is immeasurably grateful to his parents for providing the firmest foundation of love, character, and a never-forget-where-you-come-from disposition; for instilling a love of literature and supplying him with books that never failed to spark his imagination; and for always refusing to take credit for any of it.
Oliver was playing—as he did every day now that school had ended—in his mother’s garden. Countless times she had told him, “Do not play in that garden!” but he feigned forgetfulness any time he was caught. Today was a rather cloudy day and Oliver imagined thunder racking through his body and lightning blazing through the sky. When he looked up, though, there were only soft gray clouds blanketing blue skies, so he carried on.

His mother’s garden was plentiful with greens and reds and purples and yellows. Tomatoes and carrots grew there, and squash, too. Tulips and dahlia flourished under the warm sun, who burned to give life. Oliver was entranced as always. But what he loved most of all were the creatures who also came to get lost in the little world. Naturally, he feared the bees, but would still watch and admire their work from afar. Oliver sometimes pretended the hummingbirds were jet planes flying from one country to another, gathering supplies. Yes, he loved his mother’s garden.

Today he could smell especially the leaves of the cilantro plant, and when he looked over and saw the small white blooms
at the top gently swaying in the wind, he noticed a speck of red. He ran over and bent down to the ground, scanning the stems for the ladybug. She crawled out, timidly at first, and sat near his foot. However, Oliver noticed something distinctly different about her, something special.

“She has purple spots,” he whispered to no one in particular. But oddly, a voice answered, “Indeed.” Oliver thought it sounded like a young girl, and was very confused seeing that no one was near. It was only him and the small ladybug. He looked back down to her.

“It is I, boy,” the voice said again, “I am the Ladybug Princess.”

“How can you speak?” the boy asked. “You’re a bug, and bugs don’t talk.” The Ladybug Princess fluttered her wings in frustration.

“But I am no ordinary bug that you can find in any garden! I am a princess; just look at my beautiful spots.” She fluttered her wings again, carefully and gracefully this time. They really are beautiful, Oliver thought. The princess hummed loudly, obviously proud to have impressed him.

“I can forgive you, boy,” she mused, “but only if you will become my friend. You see, it seems no one stays friends with me for very long, and I am desperately lonely and in need of a companion.”

“Why don’t they stay friends with you?” Oliver asked. “Oh, but that doesn’t matter,” she said.

“Well, I guess we can be friends,” Oliver decided. He had never been friends with a ladybug nor, for that matter, a
princess.

And so, being friends, they played and laughed until their feet groaned and their tummies ached. Oliver took great care not to step on her fragile body, and she to not fly too fast for his short legs. Every day Oliver found her waiting for him in the cilantro patch, and always she would fly giddily towards him and call out his name. They never tired of the other’s company, even if they simply sat in silence watching the clouds sailing past them. Truly, they were the best of friends.

One day, however, the princess did not fly out to meet Oliver. He searched all throughout the cilantro patch, but there was no sign of her. He called out, “Princess! Ladybug Princess! Friend!” while he searched through tulips and dahlias. The boy began to feel his face heat up and tears on the verge of spilling over, and finally he fell to his knees. He cried out for his missing friend, and imagined she had been eaten by a wasp or spider or some other terrible predator. Or perhaps she had been sleeping on the ground, and he had accidentally squashed her in all of his excitement. The thought broke his heart, and he started to cry louder.

“Oliver..?” a weak voice gasped. It was she! The Ladybug Princess lay next to his leg, breathing heavily.

“What’s wrong? Where were you?” Oliver asked quietly, but with concern.

“I’m sorry, Oliver, but I don’t feel well today. I think…”

“What?”

“I think I may be dying, Oliver.” Dying? The word struck his heart like a bullet. An overwhelming wave of both sadness
and emptiness rushed through him.

“No, don’t leave me,” he choked. He could barely see her now, his tears flooding the surface of his eyes and blurring his vision. He shut his eyes.

“Don’t cry for me, friend. I won’t be going anywhere. This will be over soon,” a voice sounded from above. Oliver opened his eyes, but he did not see the princess. Instead, a shadow covered the spot where she lay. When Oliver looked up, he saw something that was a mixture of mystery and horror. There was a ladybug at least twice the size of a regular man, its violet spots glistening like the sea, the deep red of its wings entrancing.

But where a bug’s head should’ve been, there in its place was the too-large head of a child. Her eyes were huge and her lips were thin, and her pale skin contrasted with the blackness of what hairs she had left. Oliver found he could do nothing but watch as he sat, paralyzed on the ground.

She opened her mouth.

Oliver screamed.

And then, all was silent. The grass swayed softly. The wind whistled its sad song amongst the trees and flowers. A boy’s body lay unmoving on the ground, blood draining from the neck with no head.

Mya loved picking clovers near the playground and making small rings out of them. She had just finished making rings for her index, middle, and ring fingers. She would’ve made another, but when she plucked a nearby clover, underneath was
a ladybug. Not an ordinary ladybug, though; this one had spots that were purple rather than black.

“Pretty,” Mya uttered.

“Why, thank you,” answered a voice like a young girl. Mya glanced around, but there wasn’t anyone close enough to say that.

“Down here,” the voice said again. Mya turned her head toward the ladybug. “It is I. I am the Ladybug Princess.”
Abigail Naranjo

Abigail has been writing seriously since middle school and is thrilled to be recognized by the City of Tempe. Currently she is part of the creative writing club at McClintock High School and is working on her first novel in addition to her short stories. Abigail won honorable mention in the Young Authors of Arizona Scholastic Writing Awards in both 2015 and 2016. She loves daydreaming, listening to music, and reading fantasy.
Poetry
Window on the Square

by Howard Gershkowitz

Adult Poetry
Anything is everything and everything is anything in-between the lucid moments unencumbered by distractions slinking by in short skirts or hard hats or flashing neon thoughts like giant billboards on skyscrapers that hide their infrastructure from the light with artificial incandescence and elevators rising and falling, rising and falling like heartbeats from the penthouse to the basement on cables made of steel attached to weights that don’t distinguish any floor from any other. Yellow cabs and bicycles honk and scream obscenities at pedestrians crossing ‘gainst the signal oblivious to the urgencies pushing past them like the stillness interrupted by the buzzing sting of cellular reminders that others have their hooks in me. Scaffolding surrounds construction next to manhole covers camouflaging access to the sewage ‘neath the streets that runs parallel to water pipes and power lines that share the underworld out of sight, out of sight but integrated, unattended to until they break, then pandemonium Pandemonium!
Howard Gershkowitz

Howard is 61, married with one child and two grand-children who provide extraordinary inspiration. He has lived in Arizona since 1981 but at age 55, he decided it was time to get serious about his poetry and started taking classes through Maricopa Community Colleges and the ASU/Piper Creative Writing Center. Maintaining a journal for most of his life, he’s accumulated a significant amount of material about which to write.

To date, he has had a dozen short stories published, the most recent, A Christmas Story, appearing in an anthology, Ghost Stories published by Zimbell House Publishing (December 2017), as well as two dozen poems published in both online and print magazines and collections. His novel, The Operator, is under contract for publication in early 2018 by All Things That Matter publishing house.
Cold, so cold.
Paper maroon scrubs indicate status.
Sick. Danger to self but not to others.
Prognosis: severe.
Can’t sleep? Take this.
Shh. This’ll help.
Anxious? Try this.
Look how colorful they are! So fun!
Depression.
Depressed; Common.
Silly you! Everyone is depressed these days. Take this, try three.
Voice in head: self.
Thoughts of suicide? Friends.
Do they know? Out. Get out.
Hi my name is: I’m here to die.
Misheard. Try.
Beeping. Beeping.
Heart monitor: normal.
Mind: slipping.
Mark the walls, count the walls.
Green pill.
*Take the green pill, stop the tears.*
Five, now. No, six.
Punching, screaming.
She yells until the voices stop.
His hands return coated in sticky dark maroon.
Maroon indicates status: sick.
Prognosis: severe.
Danger to self but not to others.
Isabel Ranney is a political science major and a criminal justice and criminology minor at Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University. In her free time, Isabel works as a writing tutor and writes and performs her poetry at various events. She is very fond of the power words can have and she hopes that her poetry means something to someone.
Polychrome

by Morgan Carpenter

High School Poetry
I am made silent by the spectrum -
The glorious color,
The shifting hues,
The shades of the inner soul.
I see them worn across collars -
Wrapped about shoulders
And sketched out on faces.

But what use has color?
What can it tell me,
That fickle thing?
I know nothing of these rainbows -
Of their truest meaning,
Of what they reflect,
Of how they sit in nose, on finger.

What sound does their yellow make?
Does it sizzle -
like the sun must do,
burning with heat and power?
Or does it murmur joy -
the quiet happiness
of a thousand flowers?

How must her blue smell?
Does it burn down your throat -
the briny scent
of the salty sea?
Or does it wrap around you -
humid and musky and damp
like rain deferred?

What texture has his red?
Soft and velvet -
as rose petals and painted lips,
romantic to the touch?
Or is it sleek and paper-thin -
shiny apples and dripping blood
like cold but liquid metal?

How does their black taste?
Flavorless and unfulfilling -
like crumbling flour
Or unsalted pastry?
Or is it a cacophony of warmth -
a thousand hues and spices
in a single bite?
Perhaps I may ask them
But they’ll not tell me -
For they’ll not know.
No more than the taste of one’s tongue,
Or the sound of one’s voice;
Too familiar to them
To ever be known.

Instead I am silent -
Wrapped in their quilt,
Their coat of many pigments,
Their shadowed eyes and glowing hearts.
And I ponder -
What are the names
Of the colors in me?

I smell their scent -
Their floral perfume,
A field of honeysuckle
Growing their petals up the back of my throat.
I taste their flavor -
Sour and dancing, sharp and still
Like lemons dipped in salt

I feel their edges -
Grainy yet smooth,
Worn away by my ages
And sanded by their own roughness.
Polychrome

I hear their echoes -
Which ring like bells,
Clear and pure of tone.

I see human colors,
Their spectrum and shadow
And I title them by droves,
‘Orange’ and ‘Green’ and ‘Purple’ and ‘White’
I see and I name them
Little though they tell me
Little though they mean.

They tell me too little.
Watch them as I will,
Name them though I might,
I cannot match to them my own pigments.
I cannot look within myself,
And those who look in me,
Like I, cannot sense their truth.
Morgan Carpenter

Morgan Carpenter is a 17-year-old high school senior who attends McClintock High School. She loves creation of all kinds - art, sewing, writing, crochet - and enjoys reading, singing in her school choir, and playing Dungeons and Dragons with her friends just as much. Her geeky and nerdy interests are pretty eclectic, but she finds nothing more fun than adding another subject to her repertoire of bizarre knowledge.
Nonfiction
Intersections:
The Valley of the Sun

by Sophia McGovern

Adult Nonfiction
Southern & Mill Ave.

My steps speed up with my breathing.

Fresh from the bus and weighed down by my cash tips, I walk past the plaza every day, to see the same man between the oleander bushes.

Consignment store, dive bar, drip, drip. I step over the same puddle pooling from the roof. Auto repair shop, record store, drip, drip, drip. I step over the second puddle to see the first oleander bush. His empty 44 oz. Thirst Buster peeks through just past it, but after two more steps I still can’t see the landmark of his bare feet.

For weeks I’ve walked past him, unconscious and in nothing but ratty basketball shorts. My girlfriend says beggars are liars. At stoplights she doesn’t read their cardboard signs. She makes eye contact.

One more step. Crossed legs. Shirtless. He’s balancing three twigs into a pyramid on the concrete. A hanger and new shirt juts out from a ledge of the building in his home between the oleander bushes. He has no sign.

I never make eye contact.
Second bush, thrift store, veterinarian, street light, home.

She sits in my bed. All the pillows support her back. Crossed arms tell me everything about her day, but hide the details I scavenge from conversations meant for someone else.

Her work—hours of documenting adults who can’t buy groceries or pay bills. Addicts curse her, and men off the streets pull knives on her. She can’t do more for them than she already does.

I lay next to her. She complains about the money she isn’t making, refusing to tell me what she really needs. Her arms are still crossed, her stomach is still soft and smooth, but reading her body isn’t enough.

**Southern & Central Ave.**

I stand in a parking lot across the valley from my childhood, where Trader Joe’s filled my family’s pantry, and Mormon churches sprinkled every block between swimming pools and browning pine trees. There isn’t any green in sight.

I head to the 99 Cent Store at the edge of the plaza. The aisles are bare, and the ceiling tiles are stained from past rains. I give a woman enough space to see me before I start talking. “Hi, ma’am. Can I ask you a quick question?” She breezes past me. “Are you registered to vote?” I say to the back of her head.

“Yes ma’am. I’m sorry you just looked so creepy there. You really scared me.” Her tiny son peers past his mama’s skirt stretched tight over hips twice as wide as mine as she keeps walking. I leave the store feeling like an intruder.
A pickup truck pulls up to the Water & Ice kiosk on the other end of the plaza, and a man with empty blue jugs fishes change from his pockets. Families file in and out of the barber-shop and the bargain clothes store across the way. None of the faces are as white as mine and all the shop windows have bars on them.

The woman on the corner sways in the sun as cars swish past. This is a dance meant for translation by a man’s hand and dollar bills. Her tank top’s straps droop down her dark shoulders and are swept up by a stranger who leads her to some private place. I hope she has enough water, but I’m sure she’s drinking something stronger.

At the bus stop in front of McDonald’s are two homeless men. One of them starts playing his guitar, and the other ignores me. The sweat-stained bandana wrapped around his neck is an American flag. With every step away from them, I list all the times I’ve ignored homeless men, an impossible task.

At the next parking lot, I register one woman to vote with my very broken Spanish. She struggles to hold all of her grocery bags as she signs the Voter Registration form, and smiles while offering me water. After thanking her, I call the rest of my team, which is made up of Hispanic/Latinx teenagers. I have four people registered after five hours. They are half a mile away and have ten people registered—each.

“I don’t know… Everyone’s just super nice and willing to talk to us. They love what we’re doing out here!” they tell me.

While the woman on the street corner sways at the passing cars, my privilege is defined and dismantled from intersec-
tion to intersection. More often than not I will be useless.

Hardy & Southern Ave.

Sprawled across my living room floor, he tells me about canvassing the Salt River—part of a project aimed to assess water accessibility in homeless populations. He dreams of a city that doesn’t overlook the homeless, or addiction, but he needs his brothers in the desert to speak to him first. He knows which curves in the landscape to search. His history is filled with near-deaths at the bottom of bottles, street corners, and transience, too. If anyone can translate the language of the forgotten, it’s he, and his story leaves me captivated and guilty.

I must let him go.

Roosevelt & 3rd St.

A week after the presidential election, my friend and roommate, Megan, performed in her first poetry slam downtown. I invited seventeen-year-old Nataly, a fellow canvasser, along. We crowded into the backyard of the old-house-turned-independent-bookstore, and sat on metal foldable chairs.

Megan performed a poem she’d just written about a note I’d left by the overflowing kitchen sink.

“I’ve seen your hands write beautiful things, but this—this broke my heart. ‘I’ll clean I promise,’ you said. ‘I’m sorry I’m despicable...’”

The campaign sandwiched my post-graduation phase of crippling self-doubt, and anxiety. After ending a toxic relationship during a global health internship, my plans to follow the
woman I loved were replaced with the need to claim my life. 

Every night, I came home from canvassing and was fixated on the most vulnerable parts of my body, and how easily the blue veins of my wrist could be unstitched. It took too much energy to stay alive and maintain my denial. Cleaning was impossible. I was lazy.

“You say the world is like a tapestry, and we are constantly weaving. I wish that you could see the thread in your own hands. Your hands have told me, ‘You are braver than you think...’”

Nataly sat next to me as I cried. I was laid bare and validated.

Every time I left my room, I counted my reasons to live. From then on, every time I locked myself in, I remembered that this was real.

**Peoria & 29th Ave.**

At Metro Center Mall, a man in jeans and a sweat-stained, tattered t-shirt sits on the cool marble floor in front of an empty store. He sips from a Styrofoam cup, and a Jack in the Box bag sits next to him.

I am reminded of childhood summers sneaking across the dark golf course on the greenbelt next to our dingy apartment in Scottsdale. That was before the complex became “luxury condominiums” and we moved to Mesa. It was too hot to hold hands, so we ran in the sprinklers instead. The jets were taller than I was. By the time we’d get to Scottsdale Fashion Square Mall, we’d be drenched. All we wanted was any break
from the heat.

But my memories have no context here. The armed security guards stroll past the man, not even looking at him. The people shopping carry hardly any bags. They look nothing like the affluent white ladies I’m used to seeing around malls: the kind who demand the manager’s attention, and are too rich for cops with guns.

It’s my first day back to canvassing after working for a professional photographer, assisting him with shoots for interior designers for the social elite. The very last shoot was at a home tucked into Desert Mountain. Through patio doors the height and length of my entire apartment, I looked out across the massive golf course opening into desert sky. The only people I saw were workers maintaining the green. This was the owners’ third, fourth, maybe even fifth house.

I moved a side table in the study to expose an outlet for the maze of cords. The glass pieces on top of it wobbled and nearly fell to their deaths. The photographer cleared his throat, “Those are probably worth more than all the money you have. Please be careful.”

For lunch, we ate sandwiches from a deli, and the designer paid. I packed down the carbs, relearning how to eat. Food that didn’t slice deeper at my bank account was the friendliest. The designer looked around the house, taking inventory between chews. Her short hair was maintained nearly as well as the golf course. Her eyes strayed to the granite countertops where the owners’ son left the mail. “Isn’t it amazing how many different ways there are to live?” I nodded with my
mouth full of food, thinking of the West Valley, Mesa, Scottsdale, and this new land where people hid behind their money. She continued, “Most of my clients, you go to their houses, and it’s absolutely spotless.” She stared at the mail, “To each his own, I guess.”

Back in the West Valley, I walk past the man sitting on the floor of the mall. I eye a dress in the window. I tell myself I’ll wear it and leave the store, calculating where exactly I fall in the pecking order of people and place, and how far the power in my skin stretches.

**Vernon & Central Ave.**

On Election Day, our goal was to get people to the polls—even drive them ourselves. I knocked on 100 doors, but only twelve people answered. Most of them had already voted.

Back at the balloon-strewn office, we had no idea what was going to happen. “I think Arpaio will be out, but I have a bad feeling,” Nataly said as we watched the results.

A shout erupted from the back of the room, and our boss ran to the microphone. “He’s out! Penzone is 80,000 votes ahead. Arpaio is out!” Arpaio won by just 80,000 votes in 2012. This campaign registered almost twice that amount while pestering people, and it changed history.

I watched as the room melted into cheers and sobs, and a band began to play outside. For me, it was a second-hand change. For them, it meant the security of their families. It was the assurance that cops in riot gear would not burst into their homes on Sunday mornings. This was not my fight.
“Is this what it feels like to be a minority, and win at something?” Nataly asked.

We laughed and hugged, amidst the impending red seeping over the Electoral College map.

Nataly wanted to stay and dance, so I headed home alone. As my car sped through the curves of I-10 East, I sobbed. Millions had voted for Trump already, jeopardizing the fragile home lives of everyone in that room. Everyone who finally had cause to celebrate. The rough pavement pulled my wheels. Trump could decide what I was allowed to do with my body. He could take away my freedom to love, and build a non-traditional family, but he directly threatened my friends. Crying was useless, but where were the other allies? Why were there so few of the guilty and privileged fighting?

**Thomas & Granite Reef Rd.**

The sun poured onto the fabric lain across the dining room table. Excess oranges rotted under the trees in the backyard, picked apart by grackles. Outside, decay was the sign of life and home. Inside, my grandma taught me the dying art of sewing. Needles and thread stitched together laughter, conversations, and another era’s expectations.

She praised the consistency in my stitches. She reminded me that at her wedding at nineteen she was just months older than I was then. None of her daughters knew how to sew, or cook, and I questioned whether I would stand next to a man or woman at the altar, if I believed in marriage or love.

Years later, brushing past that summer’s dress hanging
in my closet, I wonder who killed domesticity: the daughters who wanted to rebel, or the mother who wanted freedom for her children.

**Southern & 32nd St.**

Southern Avenue stretches from east to west across the valley, pulling together my apartment and South Phoenix. Nataly sits in the passenger seat, her eyes grazing over her neighborhood as farmhouses, gated communities, and Mexican restaurants fly past my car’s window.

Tall trees scrape the blue sky against the South Mountain backdrop. These trees are corralled with fences and the large open space of The Farm.

“I’ve never been there…” Nataly says.

This farm is filled with picnic tables and white families basking in sunlight and expensive, fresh, locally-grown produce. The tall trees block out the congestion of South Phoenix, the people of South Phoenix, just as a fortress would.

Every reunion spent there was a getaway from the world. Every year, my family and I enjoyed a slice of life outside of my reality. We laughed and soaked up Vitamin D in the middle of neighborhoods raked over by preferential laws hunting the brown-skinned.

My dad and his fiancé are moving to South Phoenix. We sit on the back porch in Mesa with his best friend, sipping craft beer and taking hits of medicinal marijuana from vape pens. My dad lists the crossroads and talks about how cheap the house was, how much space the lot has, how it’s so much better
than the others…

“Nice,” his friend says, “you’ll be right next to The Farm.”

**Peoria & 47th Ave.**

Eight months after the federal election, the focus is on 2018. The fluorescent lighting bounces off the young women from the last campaign, two men, and a state representative.

The state representative says a personal connection with voters is vital to initiate change, especially in underrepresented voting districts. She says even our boss, a straight white male Ivy League alum, uses his story for power. We must learn from him and rehearse these stories.

Nataly closes the door as we begin. Her undocumented aunts and uncles solidify her privilege as a citizen. Unlike theirs, her life is not full of dead-ends, part-time work and fear.

The next team member is from the neighborhoods we canvass. He discloses his brother’s heroin addiction, his own hatred for Arpaio’s Tent City, and the silence around the epidemic.

Five years after coming out and being disowned, the next team member is finally rebuilding a relationship with his family. His life’s mission is to advocate for men and women facing similar pain.

Next to him, two first generation college students and Mexican-Americans explain how their parents hoped to offer them better lives, but opportunity is just out of reach, impossible to afford, and clouded by debt.

The young woman next to me is a Dreamer. She wants
to become an engineer, and the more barriers in her way, the more ready she is to “throw hands,” and get everything she wants in life.

The pain my team faces is unfamiliar. Instead, my family’s battles with mental health are now woven into my DNA as our government fortifies silence, and access to care is defined as luxury.

While not all equal, each of our vulnerabilities make the gaps in legislation come to life.

Outside the office, the sun roasted at 114 degrees—cooler than it had been all week. A conservative family of four answered the door, and we connected over health care struggles. Their premium was $900 a month. Their two boys had asthma, and their medication was an additional $250 each. They were terrified of being uninsured.

When the conversation switched to immigration, I told the mother about my friend, a Dreamer who is applying for college, but could be deported if DACA is repealed. “How is that possible? It’s not her fault…” the mother said.

At the end of the night, we share the stories we heard that day. The state representative said the strength of our voices gave her the will to push through the heat.

Our power comes from stitching our struggles together in a call for change. Every conversation is a potential vote.
The morning after the Phoenix protests, I sit at my desk in the alternative high school. I can see the silhouette of some students through the blinds, waiting to be let in. As my computer boots up, the gong can be heard from the yoga studio below us.

We’re in a bubble of Phoenix between Arcadia and Really Not Arcadia. None of the students have done yoga, but most have interrupted a Savasana.

We let them in and they find their places. One grabs my attention. “Miss, were you there last night?”

He had tried to intimidate me on the first day of class by asking which drugs were popular when I was in high school. Once the conversation managed to switch to the upcoming protests, he couldn’t believe I actually knew who Arpaio was, let alone had worked to get rid of him, and would be there protesting his pardon.

In the campaign office before the protest, we ate pizza, as several people new to the movement wriggled into t-shirts.

We were representing the union and its political sister organization. This organization also runs the Immigration Center through which I teach an ESL (English as a Second Language) class to prepare applicants for their citizenship interview. We convinced one of the students to attend the protest with us.

In front of the Phoenix Convention Center, strangers surrounded people I’d grown close to in the past year. People from all walks of life passed out water, praised each other’s signs, and came together for chants. I stood next to my student,
and photographed her in the middle of the crowd.

At around 7:00, the euphoria crashed. Being in the middle of all of those people suddenly was nothing I could handle. I curled into a ball on a curb and rocked back and forth until my breathing calmed. Two of my friends walked up and I left with them, feeling like a fraud.

That night, I lay in bed and ignored my phone, shutting out the rest of the world. The next morning I learned about the tear gas and the riots. I learned that some of my friends had left just in time, and others had not.

When the student asked me if I’d been there, I told him honestly, “I was there, but I left before it got bad.”

“Miss, we stayed the whole time. We were far away from the cops, but the gas was still in the air. I could feel it on my face and eyes. It burned.”

Along with thousands of strangers, friends and people from every one of my circles were there that night. For many, it was their first protest during this administration, but it will not be their last.

Something awoke in this city.

...

The day DACA is repealed, a student breaks down in the middle of class. Friends from the Immigration Center attend protests. Many lead walkouts from their high schools, and union officials all over the country post about marches, actions,
and stand-ins.

At around 1:00, the fluorescent lighting goes dark and my body feels heavy. In the sunlight outside, my breathing speeds up. I have no control over my body. The women I work with tell me to go rest. I struggle to stay alert on the drive home. My ESL class is taught by someone else. I lie in bed, once again frustrated and removed from the action.

I’m out the rest of the week. My coworkers tell me that attendance and enrollment at the school drop. What importance is a diploma if families are torn apart?

Together, we set up an information forum for our students, and for us—to learn how to protect them.

The room is packed when the presenter arrives. Two students, who spent every day staring at their phones instead of working, ask several questions about getting involved in the fight, how to protest, and what their futures mean without legal protection.

A few days later, both of them tell us they attended a community event, and one stays late to catch up on his classes. Fear is strung with hope.

…

The chorus for change beats from every sphere of The Valley of the Sun—from the arts districts, from our schools, from our prisons, from politicians’ chambers, and from neighborhoods threatened by gentrification and deportation. Born
with different blessings and struggles, we all have the responsibility to listen, a reason to raise our voice, and the passion to act…

This is our time, and we must claim it together.
Sophia McGovern received her Bachelor’s degrees in Creative Writing and Global Studies from Arizona State University. She splits her time between editing for Rinky Dink Press, working in an alternative high school classroom, running an ESL program for naturalization preparation, and designing a creative writing program at the Grant Woods Branch of the Boys & Girls Club. Her work was nominated for the 2017 Pushcart Prize, and can be found in *Crux Magazine*, *Unsellable Inventories, bioStories, Four Chambers Press’s anthology Weaving the Threads: Women + Community + Art*, and *Write on, Downtown*. 
Nostalgia

by Nichelle Santagata

College Nonfiction
I stepped off the plane with tears still running down my eyes from the previous flights it took me to get back to the desert. My tears were heavy with animosity, and a feeling of failure enveloped my entire body. That familiar air was air I had already breathed in. At that time, it was nothing but nostalgia that I felt was trapping me in the past that did no good for my future. I came from Bristol, England, where I worked extremely hard to get to and to stay. I sacrificed so much, sold off my belongings to get to England for grad school, and jumped through hoops in order to receive greater opportunities away from where I no longer could progress with my cultural writing career. Arizona was a desert with mirages, a hell-hole, a dead-end.

I screamed to myself in my head, “You’re 23, dear, and you’re walking back into your mother’s arms as if you need coddling right now. No, you need a solution. You left Arizona in the dust for endless reasons!”

I could see my mother as I walked opposite all the gates to other worlds, and I was angry. Angry that we came from a life where money isn’t easy to grasp. To use up all my money
to live a progressive life and to come back to not having a pot to piss in was failure to me. She saw how angry I was, while others saw tears they thought were from missing my mother. A woman working at the airport came over to me to give me a tissue and said things would be fine. But they weren’t. She didn’t know my struggles to stay in England, where I felt more myself. I thanked her and tried to carry a smile but drew one on with creases filled with lies. I couldn’t stop crying. My toes curled in my shoes and my eyes swelled up full of red fury. I wanted to punch a wall in with my own face. But no, instead I stepped forward because that is all I could do.

My next step I took outside the airport hit bright red-brown Sedona dirt surrounded by tall rocks. These tall rocks met blue clear skies with pearly white clouds that drifted along with each gust of wind that brushed my face. My Merrell hiking boots had previously crossed the New Zealand Tongariro Alpine Crossing where I felt most alive. It was a time where I had previously left home but had to return again. I thought hiking with them on would help me again somehow safely cross a path unknown to me.

I was hiking in the desert to try to see if my lungs could expand and feel life again—if they could feel as if they were not heavy with black gunk like 70-year-old smoker’s lungs. This nostalgia was making me still feel trapped. I was alive and dead simultaneously. “How does that happen?” I ask myself. My lungs were receiving air in an out as I was walking down a dirt trail, but it didn’t feel like enough was making it through.
I’m with my friend but I still felt alone in my thoughts. I just felt different. We hike through the trail with the sun beating its Vitamin D down on our backs. It couldn’t have been a clearer day. I felt myself getting darker (that feeling where your skin is kind of pulsing and you definitely know the sun is burning you). Ah, the nostalgia hitting me again like the sun’s rays. I asked myself if should I just stay in Arizona even if I know I don’t belong. I already knew the answer so why ask again. I only asked because I possessed pride in where I grew up most my life and it’s a certain pain that still lingers, telling your past it isn’t good enough for the future.

Another step in the dirt was another question, or perhaps the same question in my mind being asked in different forms. With each step, I still felt somewhat lost even though we were on a trail. I looked at my hands as we started to climb up through various shaped rocks. I saw my hands and really felt the dust and sharp edges with each grip. I didn’t want to fall. One step at a time. Where was I even climbing to? One foot after the other stepping to a higher ground that seemed unsteady with pieces of gravel rolling in all directions. I heard many voices echoing from a location I could not quite figure out yet. The laughter mixed with the “oohs” and “ahhs” made me eager to see what they saw. My hands were getting dirty but I didn’t care. I was getting excited. I felt myself breathing better with each lunge forward. I hadn’t hiked Arizona trails in what felt like forever.

I could see it now. I saw the Devil’s Bridge. We were hiking to this!? I couldn’t believe my brown eyes. I saw where
the mountains met the sky. This was where humans could be in
the middle of the heavens and the earth. We could stand right
in the middle along the bridge where the tall rocks met the air
where birds fly high. This view was the view you see in Western
films when a character rides on a horse into the sunset.

We stood on the other side of the bridge between a huge
gap that I was not okay with falling into. I heard the mixture of
accents. People came together in this one location in the middle
of Arizona. We all took in the beauty of the earth where we just
stood. We stared at the earth and it looked like it wasn’t mov-
ing—but it is. Erosion. A human is the same. I could stare at my
body and know that cells are constantly being broken down and
rebuilt again—my mind constantly growing with knowledge
and new perspectives. Being stuck in the middle is part of life
that I could not accept because of how much progression I live
for. I lost myself with trying to embrace the beauty beyond the
dusty vision I had in the desert.

We watched as others laughed and took photos along
the bridge where lovers kissed and siblings posed to please
their mothers. We were up next. I posed on the ground upside
down with my legs in the air because that’s how I felt being in
the middle of life while feeling tossed around and needing to
look at life in a new way. Where was I going from there? I didn’t
know. We sat and took a break with oranges, people watched,
and talked with others while cheering on more picture takers.

I stepped with excitement along the bridge and took
pictures on the other edge just trying to accept my life the best
I could. One thing leading to another somehow. I was there to
just take in the breadcrumbs life liked to scatter around. There were no real answers where I was in the desert. It was a reminder to accept the past and how it had shaped me and a reminder to keep pushing forward while being shaped into someone new. No one ever stays exactly the same, just like the nature we were immersed in.

I was taking those steps to try and take a step back from an environment in England. Nothing was working there anymore with university life, no matter what angle I viewed the situation from. That step back helped me take the next step forward, back into my progressive lifestyle. I was fleeing a life I was once sprinting straight towards. “Is this an endless paradox?”
Nichelle Santagata lives an adventurous life of progression and enlightenment while studying literature, dance, film, and music. She takes pride in understanding a range of aesthetic, political, and social issues while immersing herself amongst an abundance of cultures around the world, thus, leading to different critical and theoretical perspectives as she travels. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature and a minor in Film & Media Studies from Arizona State University, spent one year in Bristol, England earning a Postgraduate Certificate in Comparative Literatures and Cultures, and is now completing her Master of Liberal Studies at Arizona State University. She is currently writing her first chapbook about being a half black and half white female stuck between two different worlds, she's creating her first zine documenting mental health while living in England during grad school, and writes for her travel website at NichelleSantagata.com
Book Cover
Design
by Jennifer Testamarch

Book Cover Design
The cover design started by simply flipping through my photos on my phone, because I knew I might have a good image or two to work with from all the photos I take at Tempe Town Lake when I go on runs in the mornings or take my dogs for walks. I came upon the image (seen here) and then started playing with the colors in Photoshop. Gradients seem to be trending now-a-days, probably a shout out to the 80s, so I really enjoyed playing with the pink and purple tones. The handwritten, graffiti-like font, stayed within that theme, but also resonates with a writer’s written hand, the idea of a handmade creation, and community art.
Jennifer Testamarck is the owner and creative director at MakeJoy Studio, providing graphic design services to small businesses and non-profit organizations. She first moved to Tempe fourteen (14) years ago to attend ASU for her undergraduate degree in Design Management. Since then, she purchased her 1951 home near Downtown Tempe, completed her Masters in Visual Communication Design from The Design School at ASU, and is currently working with Tempe First United Methodist Church to get more involved with the City, ASU, and the local community. Jennifer is married to her husband, Colton Testamarck, a senior web developer for ASU’s University Technology Office. Their favorite part of the city is Tempe Town Lake, where they walk their two dogs, attend the 4th of July fireworks each year, and Jennifer has completed two half-marathons with all her training mileage from running around the lake.
Tempe Community Writing Contest 2018 Reviewers’ Biographies
FICTION

Tom Bonfiglio’s stories have appeared in two dozen publications, including Fiction, Lake Effect, Wag’s Revue, Evergreen Review, Fringe Magazine, mixer and The Literary Review. He teaches writing at Arizona State University.


Marc Mason lives in Tempe and teaches in the Academic Success Program and in the Masters of Liberal Studies program at Arizona State University. His works include the young adult novels Schism: Out of the Shadows, Battery: the Arrival and the forthcoming Schism: Fearful Symmetry; non-fiction books The Joker’s Advocate, and The Aisle Seat: Life on the Edge of Popular Culture; and comic books Red Sonja: Raven and Red Sonja: Sanctuary.

POETRY

Andrea Janelle Dickens is originally from Tempe, but spent much of her childhood in Virginia. She currently teaches in the Writing Programs of the ASU English Department. She is the author of The Female Mystic: Great Women Thinkers of the Middle Ages and of several dozen published poems. Her poems have recently appeared in The New South, streetcake, Found Poetry Review, *82 Review, Of Zoos, and anthologies by Kind of a Hurricane Press and Silver Birch Press.
Rosemarie Dombrowski is the founder of rinky dink press, the co-founder of the Phoenix Poetry Series, and the inaugural Poet Laureate of Phoenix, AZ. She is the recipient of five Pushcart nominations, a 2017 Arts Hero Award, the 2017 Carrie McCray Memorial Literary Award in Nonfiction, and a fellowship from the Lincoln Center for Applied Ethics for her Phoenix Community Poetry Gardens project. Her collections include The Book of Emergencies (2014, Five Oaks Press), The Philosophy of Unclean Things (Finishing Line Press, 2017) and The Cleavage Planes of Southwest Minerals [A Love Story], winner of the 2017 Split Rock Review chapbook competition. She is a Senior Lecturer at Arizona State University’s Downtown campus, where she serves as Faculty Editor of the student and community writing journal, Write On, Downtown.

Ryan Holden received his Masters in Fine Arts in Creative Writing from Arizona State University. His poems have been published in Hobble Creek Review, Adirondack Review, and Ampersand Review. He currently teaches at Arizona State University.

Patricia Colleen Murphy founded Superstition Review at Arizona State University, where she teaches creative writing and magazine production. Her book Hemming Flames (Utah State University Press, 2016) won the 2016 May Swenson Poetry Award judged by Stephen Dunn, and the 2017 Milt Kessler Poetry Award. A chapter from her memoir in progress was published as a chapbook by New Orleans Review. Her writing has appeared in many literary journals, including The Iowa Review, Quarterly West, American Poetry Review, and most recently in Black Warrior Review, North American Review, Smartish Pace, Burnside Review, Poetry Northwest, Third Coast, Hobart, decomP, Midway Journal, Armchair/Shotgun, and Natural Bridge.

Kelly Nelson is the author of the chapbooks Rivers I Don't Live By and Who Was I to Say I Was Alive. She's been awarded a grant from
the Arizona Commission on the Arts and an artist residency from the Cultural Center in New York Mills, Minnesota. She received a PhD in Anthropology from Brandeis University and teaches Interdisciplinary Studies at Arizona State University.

NON-FICTION (PERSONAL ESSAYS, MEMOIRS)

Rebecca Byrkit is an award-winning author of four books of poetry; her work appears in Ploughshares, Best American Poetry, Crazyhorse, Arizona Highways, Rolling Stone and New Letters, among many other journals and anthologies. She is a founding faculty member of the Masters of Liberal Studies program at ASU, teaching Special Topics and teaches creative writing workshops for the ASU English Department.
Co-sponsored by:

Tempe Library

ASU

College of Integrative Sciences and Arts
Writing Programs in the Department of English,
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences