

The Light in My World



Writings by young people at
Broadview Shelter & Transitional Housing

Solid Ground | Seattle, WA | September 2017

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Editor's Note

The Light in My World is a compilation of original poetry written by young people ages 5 - 12 who stayed with their families at Solid Ground's Broadview Emergency Shelter & Transitional Housing for women and children. The young authors in this book are not identified by their real names, and some details have been changed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the authors and their families.

With the help of Broadview Children's Advocates and the Pongo Poetry Project, the authors found their voices. Over the past few months, they have laughed, cried and bonded over shared experiences while bravely speaking their truth. In this chapbook, they courageously share how they make sense of their world amidst the confusion, trauma and instability they've experienced, and in turn create language for their pain and perseverance.

In the words of one young poet, "This writing experience has really shown me who I truly am!" Oftentimes in our society, we don't listen to kids or value what they have to say, but we have so much to learn from them. Thank you to all the writing mentors, the support from Pongo Poetry Project, and to all of the young people who shared their stories.

A note from Pongo Poetry Project

The Pongo Poetry Project is proud to work with the staff at Broadview to support this poetry project. Pongo believes that personal writing can help people understand their feelings, find their voices, and articulate their life challenges and best hopes. We are inspired by people who write from the heart. Pongo teaches our methods through a book, training and consultations. Please visit our website for poetry and free writing activities: www.pongoteenwriting.org.

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I Am Beautiful

A poem by Asha, age 5

I am beautiful because I have a friend that's beautiful just like me.

She's my god sister.

Once I was afraid to be beautiful.

My eyes are beautiful like a diamond.

Once I was afraid to see a dragonfly because I thought it'd sting me.

It didn't sting me.

I am beautiful just like a poem

Or having a shiny gold strawberry for a heart.

It's beautiful that I like to read even in the summer.

My heart is beautiful like a pink star shining on my whole family.

I love them so much.

I am beautiful.

My Bossy Family

A poem by Princess, age 5

I have friends in my family just like my normal friends
My big sisters teach me how to do backflips
I get sad when they don't play with me that much
Then I get left with my brothers and they're mean to me and don't want to
play with me
I like when my mom buys me lollipops
I liked when my dad used to take me to preschool
I didn't like that he prayed for my mom to die,
That's why we had to move far away.

He used to lock my mom in the house
But he loves me and my twin brother
I love everything about my mom
I wish my dad would be nice to my mom and not pray for her to die
I wish my mom could have fun and live all together, even with my dad
I wish we could live in our old house and have fun there together
I love my family
Every second of every day.

If I Were Magic

A poem by Julian, age 8

If I were magic
I would use it for good
I would heal people's wounds
I would bring fish and people back to life
I would make rotten things good again
I would make hair grow faster
Or shorter if that is what people want
I would make my Grandma younger
I would make my teacher famous
I would make my best friend famous.

When I'm in Pain

A poem by Tiffany, age 9

(physical or emotional)
(I shouldn't feel this way)
(Accept your emotions)

When I'm in pain the kindest thing I can do for myself is
Cry so I can let the tears of anger discouragement and sadness drip down my
cheeks

When I'm in pain the kindest thing I can do for myself is
Sleep so I can forget the bad times and have amazing dreams (without the
awful bedbugs biting)

When I'm in pain the kindest thing I can do for myself is
Whine so every single last word of anger can be set free

When I'm in pain the kindest thing I can do for myself is
Eat so I can focus on my food instead of my anger

When I'm in pain the kindest thing I can do for myself is
Play so my tears of sadness can turn into tears of joy

When I'm in pain the kindest thing I can do for myself is
Breathe so when I count to ten my angry thoughts can go away

When I'm in pain the kindest thing I can do for myself is
Call for help so there is always someone there to help me when I need help

Where I Come From

A poem by Kaeden, age 10

I'm from a street that is dark

I'm from faith in God

I'm from a long line of people who are kind

I'm from confusion about what happened

I'm from laughter over jokes

I come from a place that has love

I'm from love, and I know that because people care about me

I come from a long line of kind people

I come from experiences like my mom and my dad divorcing

I come from LOVE

And I wish my life would become the way it is forever. I like the challenges.

That's where I'd like to be from.

The One with Scars

A poem by Mohamed, age 10

I am the happy one, who likes to joke around.

I am the hyper, crazy one, who might jump off a couch.

I am the defiant one, who would never stand down.

I am the one with the scars and their secrets.

I am the messed up one, who thinks weird.

I am the helpless one, who can't change a thing about anything.

I am the hurt one, but much more hurt on the inside.

I am the one with the scars, and their angry message is to fall and not get up.

I am the strong one, who is determined to do what I want with no obstacles.

I am the dreamer, who imagines a different life, imagines a time when it was equal.

I am the childlike one, who remembers the days I used to ride my bike.

I am the one with the scars, but they are not me,

And one day their meaning will be nothing.

ANGRY

A poem by Jennifer, age 12

Anger is an explosive bomb
Anger is when your heart cracks
Anger is a dead gorilla

Angry because people touch my stuff
Angry because people put me in a box and throw me away
Angry because the world stomps on the world (generation after generation)

Maybe anger won't always hurt like a bullet wound
Maybe there is a new day for me when things will finally change
Maybe anger was meant to be

My Body

A poem by Latasha, age 12

I am grateful that my body is the way it is
Even though I want some parts to change
There's no form of your body to be perfect
I really am happy about my body
If people don't like what they see that's their problem
But the only thing that matters is that you love your body
Don't let people's words affect you
I know that my body is not perfect and I like the way my body is formed
I like the way my hands are and the way my legs are and my body
There's no one form of body that is pretty or perfect
Be grateful that your body is formed
No matter what people say about your body, don't let it affect you
Be glad about what you have

Inside

A poem by Julian, age 8

I have a heart in my chest

I have love in my heart

My friends and family are inside my love

Inside my friends and family is their love for me

Inside their love for me is my love for them.

Together it's like my favorite cookie.

The Strange House on Main Street

A poem by Tiffany, age 9

Have you ever heard of the strange house on Main Street? Inside that house lives a strange family. The family is strange because they do things differently. The other people on the street think the family is stupid and doesn't belong on the street. On the street, there are many people who do things perfectly and they do everything the same. If something goes wrong, they try to fix it and make it perfect again. Like if they even have a stain on their shirt, they get threats of being kicked out of the neighborhood if they don't change their shirt. They are obsessed with being perfect. But not the Strange family on Main Street.

The Strange family does fun and interesting things. Instead of eating plain pasta every day, they eat Fu-Fu,* yam, and spaghetti. They have six kids when all the other families only have one or two kids. They have so much fun and laugh big crazy laughs, while the neighbors don't ever laugh.

But one day, one little girl from a perfect house looked at the family and their differences, and decided to be like them. She thought being perfect was impossible and boring. She asked the Strange family, "Can I be like you guys? You guys seem fun." And the Strange family said, "Anyone can. You don't have to ask us."

And so, the street is now amazing because it's not all the same. The lesson from the Strange family on Main Street is a story that teaches everyone that no one is perfect and it's okay to be different.

*A traditional Nigerian food

If I Were a Poet

A poem by Kaeden, age 10

If I were a dog
then I would love to run around
and I would hate to be kept in a cage
and I would know my owners love me

If I were a child
I would love to be taken care of and I would hate to be punished
I would notice my parents love me
I would believe my parents love me
I would realize my parents love me

If I were a basketball
Then I would sense someone dribbling me
I would think that they like to play with me
I would never want to be flat

If I were a poet
Then I would want to write about something good
I would feel calm because I would get to say all the things I want to say
And I would hope people like them, my poems!

If I Wrote a Poem

A poem by Jennifer, age 12

If I wrote a poem it would be all about me
It would talk about my everyday life like the time I went shopping for my
mom's birthday gift and bought her a beautiful bracelet
Or like the time I went to a Seattle Storm game with my friends and we sat in
a suite and there was lots of food
It would talk about my family and friends and the people around me
It would say how I have changed from who I used to be
From going through hard times and learning to accept this is the way life is
It would talk about my personality and the things I like
Like how I like to dance and that my room is my favorite part of my house
If I wrote a poem it would talk all about me



Myself: Revised Edition

A poem by Tiffany, age 9

I am revising myself, an improved edition. The new version will say something on its freshly printed pages about forgiving myself – to help me start over.

Chapter One would be called: *Not Letting Self-Hatred Have the Last Word*, highlighting the benefits of acceptance, and how those older versions of me still need my love...

I need to show kindness to myself by not caring about what I look like
Just thinking I'm beautiful just the way I am
I need to mend myself by eating healthier, eating less candy
I know it's bad for me but the flavor is so good

Chapter Two will be titled: *Where You Stumble, There is Your Treasure*, exploring the clever way my mistakes, that I thought were my enemies, have also been my teachers...

I made a mistake when I got prediabetic
But I learned to eat healthy
Except it's hard when I see other people eating candy
Then I want some too

Another chapter, Chapter Three, will be called: *Things I Am Dropping Down the Garbage Chute*. In my life I want to toss out some feelings and experiences...

I want to toss out the bad things my dad did to my mom and the times I was disobedient

Definitely, the last section will be Chapter Four: *About My New Hopes*, which describes my many aspirations...

My aspirations are to eat healthier, go to college, become an Obstetrics and gynecology doctor
My aspirations are the color green (it's my favorite color)
And they look like a big grassy field
With a bunch of flowers and trees
And hope and courageousness

Many Seasons Inside of Me

A poem by Jennifer, age 12

In the spring inside of me
I grow
Happiness blooms inside of me
In the summer something inside of me is burning
School is more interesting
We go on field trips
In one of them the theater was filled with gold
In the fall the leaves let go of their branches
And I let go because life brings new things
In the winter it gets cold and I get cold too.

The Things I Trust

A poem by Jennifer, age 12

I trust my mom because she provides and takes care of me
I trust my siblings because they got my back
I trust Broadview because it kept me from becoming homeless
I trust the people who trust me
These are the things I trust



5 Reasons I Hate Bees

A poem by Tiffany, age 9

- 1) They bug me. They are annoying.
- 2) They have power over all animals. Bees have power to hurt any animal.
- 3) One time when I was in a park a bee went inside my shoe; it stung me and died there. It ruined my favorite shoe.
- 4) When I was taking out the trash in summer, a bee went up my skirt and stung me.
- 5) On my birthday, it went up my dress and stung me.

I might hate bees, but here are two reasons I know I should love them.

- 1) They pollenate flowers to give us food. Without them, the planet wouldn't be the planet and everything would become extinct.
- 2) They make honey and sweeten up the world.

What a Poem Is*

A poem by Jennifer, age 12

A poem is when you write thoughts from your heart.
It can feel like when you turn on the lights in a dark room.
A poem is like the feeling of a full stomach when you've been hungry.
Writing a poem is like a cozy place you build.
A poem is like when the clouds touch the sky.
A poem is like the moon rising at sunset.
A poem is when words compliment you.
A poem is when you have the sky in your mouth.
It is like hot, fresh bread,
When you eat it a little is always left over.
A poem is when you hear the heartbeat of a stone.
When words beat their wings,
It is a song sung in a cage.
A poem is when words are turned upside down
And suddenly the world is new.
A poem is what poets write.
A poem can be anything.

**In part inspired by 'This Is a Poem That Heals Fish' by Jean-Pierre Simeon*



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Our community is stronger when everyone can access support & resources to build well-being & achieve their full potential.

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