

# THE WORLD IN ME



Writings by young people at  
Broadview Shelter & Transitional Housing

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Solid Ground | Seattle, WA | October 2016

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## Editor's Note

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*The World in Me* is a compilation of original poetry written by young people ages 8 - 17 who stayed with their families in housing 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 our authors and their families.

With the help of Broadview Children's Advocates and the Pongo Poetry Project, they 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 shared how they make sense of their world amidst the confusion, trauma and instability they've experienced, and in turn created 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 that shared their stories.

### *A note from Pongo Poetry Project*

The Pongo Poetry Project is proud to have worked 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](http://www.pongoteenwriting.org).

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# Bridge from Fear to Hope

*A poem by Alaska, age 11*

---

I hope the end of every year  
Will be followed by happiness

I hope the weakest dog will find a family  
Of five people  
And one more dog, so the dog isn't lonely  
The second dog is big, very fluffy  
Playful  
They become really good friends

I hope the fiercest storms bring rainbows  
To part the storm:  
A never-ending rainbow

I hope every empty room will eventually have  
A lamp that can brighten  
A lamp with flowers on it

I hope gunfire in the distance is just thunder  
Striking the tree  
An evergreen tree  
An evergreen tree that is 24 years old

I hope when life passes there is a new life for me to call home  
The first thing I would do in a new life is get a dog  
A Pomeranian  
Named Pom-Pom

---

I hope the angriest person in me will learn to find calmness  
Calm like a white butterfly  
In a sea of bees

I hope the loneliest person in me will discover a friend  
Imaginary or real  
It doesn't matter

I hope the most lighthearted person in me will find some structure  
Structure like a sturdy bridge  
From fear to hope

I hope I will someday be able to walk that bridge  
I would not look down  
I would look straight forward  
I might even bring my dog

# **Lemon Flavored Noodles**

*A poem by Tiffany, age 8*

---

You see that I have a big family  
You think my siblings are disgusting  
And that we're weird cuz my mom and dad are separated.

You see that I am quiet when you point and stare,  
My silence is begging you to stop staring  
But you don't know me.

You would know me if...  
You knew how hard it was to be pointed out like homeless people  
Or if you knew how I feel hurt sometimes, like a caged elephant or giraffe  
Or if you knew how my sister and I help each other do our hair  
It takes 4 hours and hurts so bad  
Or how my sister and I gather our 4 siblings when they misbehave at the store.

You see that I am not what you think  
You see that I don't point at you the way you point at me  
But you don't know me.

You would know me if...  
You knew how I color butterflies like I'm a famous artist  
You knew how I cook noodles with lemon flavor for my whole family and  
I'm only 8 years old.

# **I Am Old & New**

*A poem by Gohan, age 10*

---

I feel old when I can't run super-duper fast cuz I'm tired

I'm always tired cuz I have to wake up so early for school

I feel new when I'm at a new school

I'm so shy until school gets out

I feel old when my problems are like only having one birthday a year

I wish you could have 3 million birthdays a year

I feel new when everybody knocks on my door to see me

I feel old when I'm at the same school for 3 years

I feel new when I meet celebrities like Taylor Swift, Selena Gomez, Miley Cyrus, Kim Kardashian, and Jennifer Lopez when I sneak into Hollywood

To be new is impossible when my brothers punch me

To be new is possible when I can erase everyone's mind

And I can win something like be president

When I'm president I will put Donald Trump in a straightjacket and send him to Mars and make him explode

Then I'd give all the kids and moms a \$30 discount to any store

I'd be the best president

---



# Standing in the Dust

*A poem by Alaska, age 11*

---

Dear Dad,

I just thought you should know what I'm doing now.

I am an energetic person who spends lots of time hanging with friends.

When we lived with you, my friends would all have sleepovers and when I asked if I could go

You would yell "leave me alone!" and would never let me make friends.

You used to tell me I wasn't worth your time.

I just thought you should know how I'm feeling.

I feel so much hatred towards you

Because you left us standing in the dust.

You were supposed to be a good dad and you weren't.

We would still be in our house if it wasn't for you.

The shelter is dumpy.

I miss the reading nook in my old room, the trees behind our house.

Behind the shelter there's only concrete and drunk people.

I just thought you should know what I've been through.

Since the last time I saw you, I have changed so much.

I'm not in constant fear all day,

I don't have to pretend to be someone I'm not since we left you.

I'm so confident without you in my life.

The time that I moved to the shelter was especially important to me.

I don't have to see you or live in a crappy hotel.

---

I've made friends that are like sisters to me now.  
I don't have to worry about you hurting my brother anymore,  
Which is one less thing on my list of things to worry about.

I just thought you should know what I wish for the future.  
I hope that you go to jail for doing this to my family.  
For hurting my brother,  
Yelling at us,  
For being a horrible father.

I just thought you should know what I don't miss about you.  
I am glad I don't have to worry about you yelling at me anymore,  
Or about my mom still being married to you.

I just thought you should know what I miss a lot.  
I miss the way we used to get Sunday breakfast,  
Yummy pancakes at IHOP.  
Back then we had a lot of money, and I could get things I wanted,  
Not just things I needed.  
My aunt even had to run over my phone cuz you put a tracking device in it.  
You're a butt face.

I just thought you should know that I'm finally happy.

---

# Home to Me

*A poem by Jamal, age 7*

---

When I think of home, I see my mom  
with her long, blackish-red hair in a bun.

When I think of home, I hear glass breaking sometimes.

When I think of home, I smell my cats, Rambo and Rex,  
and their litterbox.

When I think of home, I taste Hot Takis.

When I think of home, I touch my collectibles  
like Kyla, Chucky, Jason, Michael Myers, and Freddy.

When I think of home, I feel safe  
because my mom doesn't buy creepy dolls.

When I think of home, I feel video game-us.

# If God Were Looking at My Life

*A poem by Alaska, age 11*

---

If God were looking at my life  
He'd guess why I'm living here in an old dumpy shelter that can change before  
your eyes.

He'd understand that I'm okay.  
He'd know the way things had gone for me –  
They've gone uphill and downhill like a Metro bus in Seattle. Up and down.

He'd remember how things went when I was very little, like when I'd get a  
vanilla-chocolate swirl ice cream. My dad and I would be sitting together on  
the back of his truck and the sun would be setting.

He'd know that I was very energetic. When I was two, I'd sing a good morning  
song to everything I could see, "Good morning mom. Good morning dad.  
Good morning stuffed animals."

He'd know I'm trying to change certain things, like my future and a little bit of  
my past.

He'd know how hard it is to change because sometimes you can't accept  
things like change.

He'd want me to understand that life is a bumpy ride. Life is as bumpy as  
driving up a mountain in a red Jeep. You know that red is a lucky color and  
you need luck to get up that mountain.

If God opened a new door for me, it would lead me to a new home.

Then I could start over with my life.

---

## **How to Live**

*A poem by Jennifer, age 11*

---

Eat spicy fried chicken

Because it will improve your taste buds

Dance like Zendaya

Because it will improve your strength

She dances like she's free

And when I dance I'm free too

Laugh like little kids are tickling your feet

Laughing a lot will cause you to smile

My mom said smiling will make you look beautiful

Talk with honesty, if you don't you're letting people know you  
don't respect them

Look them in the eye and speak truth to them

Seriously listen, listen like you mean it,

So people know you don't take them for granted

Be silent so you can clear your mind

I do that when I'm upset about not doing something right and my  
mom yells at me for it

So I go breathe in my bed, after that I'm as calm as a koala

Being silent will help you deal with life

Life can be a hard game

---

First thing when you wake up, breathe to prepare yourself for  
the day's unknowns

Because it will help you through hard times

Like when my mom left home without telling my dad

I breathed through it

I knew she didn't want to be a slave the rest of her life,

And wanted to keep us safe

I breathed through that

Enjoy the good times when they're there

You never know when things will change

When you've had a bad day, you can always think about the time  
when the whole neighborhood came to your first birthday party  
And you were smiling big with your two front teeth.

# Why Do Dads Lie

*A poem by June, age 9*

---

Why do dads have to lie?

Do they just want us to believe what they are saying?

Why do dads have to make kids cry?

Let me tell you my story

Whenever I go to my dad to visit him

He talks about my mom

And he will cry,

then make us cry,

And he puts lies in our mind

I felt sad after this

Why do dads have to make us believe them?

Do they just want us to believe them?

## **Dragon Lives**

*A poem by Sarah, age 8*

---

I think I'm gonna live forever

In my next life I'll probably be a dragon

And then when I die I'll just come back to life as another animal

Like a dinosaur, yeah, a dinosaur!

That would be awesome.

I'd roam freely and probably go live on other planets that are better than this one

And I'd never really die, just become other people or other animals.

Yeah, that's how it works actually.

You didn't know that?



# Letter to Mom

*A poem by Jazmin, age 14*

---

Dear Mom,

I want to thank you for taking care of me,  
for helping me when I'm struggling.

I tell people you are really beautiful  
because every time I see you, you glow.  
Your eyes sparkle like the stars in the sky.

I remember you holding me at night when I was a baby.  
The last time I cried, I was in our car because I fell down  
and scratched my knee.  
But I knew to be strong because you were strong when you caught me.  
We've always wanted a dog that's a German Shepherd.  
You've always wanted to be happy, every time I'm sad and angry,  
like the old sky is blowing.

You never stop taking care of me. You just keep going.  
You are warm like the sun,  
healthy like a banana,  
and strong like a superwoman,  
and I'll always love you every day and night and won't stop,  
thinking of you every time you're gone.

Love,  
Jazmin

# **This Is What You Mean to Me**

*A poem by Jennifer, age 11, in honor of Mom*

---

In my ocean, you were a dolphin  
Because you made me jump with joy, you kept me afloat  
But I doubted you would keep me happy all the time  
In my grassy field, you were a flower  
Because you were delicate  
I admired your beauty  
In my galaxy, you were a planet with moons  
Because you kept our family in your orbit  
I want to be just like you  
I wondered how I can be like you  
In my heart  
You were the beat  
Because you kept me alive  
I will always remember you  
But I will always regret why I was a bad child  
I will always dream about being like you  
And this is what you mean to me.

# Red Flags, Bees & Robins

*A poem by Alaska, age 11*

---

Anger is a bull with a red flag held in front of my face taunting me,  
weakening me

Anger is a swarm of bees whose nest just got chopped off their tree

Anger is a baby robin who just can't find out why they can't fly

Angry because no one will listen

Angry because no one will do the right thing

Angry because they just won't quit

Maybe anger won't always attack

Maybe there is a new day for me when the man holding the red flag  
will just drop it

Maybe the bees will find a new nest

Maybe the robin will finally learn how to fly

# Start the World Again

*A poem by Jennifer, age 11*

---

When I was young I used to wish to be a princess  
Today I wish the world would be a better place to live  
Every day I wish people would understand other people  
My wish is the color of purple  
It is the sound of elephants stampeding through some sand  
My wish feels like an empty stomach  
My wish is always in my head  
My wish is never going to happen  
My wish is to start the world again

# Things I'd Like to Understand

*A poem by Destiny, age 17*

---

The things I'd like to understand

About fathers

Why do they act so protective?

Why do they use weapons as a joke when it comes to boys?

Why do they treat daughters like little kids?

About mothers

Why do they get super nosy about everything?

Why do they think they're doing something wrong as a parent

When we choose to be ourselves?

Why do they cry so much?

About boys

Why do they have to be so confusing?

Why do they do one thing

But mean another?

Why do they think they can't show emotions?

About girls

Why do they bash one another?

Why do they date boys who are jerks?

Why do they think they have to look a certain way to be pretty?

---

About love

Why is it so cliché?

Why do adults think you need to be a certain age to be in love?

Why is it such a big deal

What gender you love?

About life

Why is life considered a race?

Why do people work so much?

Why are there so many expectations?

About death

Why are there so many crappy ways to die?

Why do people make so many jokes about death?

Why isn't it talked about?

## Patterns

*A poem by G, age 12, dedicated to my sister*

---

I feel old when I can't find something important,  
Like when I forget where my phone is

I feel new when I can make good deals with my mom  
Like "if we go outside for a little, I'll let you play videos on my phone"

I feel old when my problems are the same  
Like getting evicted all the time, same old problem

I feel new when I learn more about life,  
I learned a tremendous amount by observing relationships,  
I learned I should always take things slow

I feel old when I'm used for the same things,  
Like helping people

I feel new when I have new purposes in life,  
Like getting the relationship with my dad back

To be new is impossible when I'm at school  
Trying to have as many friends as possible

To be new is possible when I am helping my mom

I will be new when I have a good friendship with everyone.

## **What If?**

*A poem by Tiffany, age 8*

---

What if people never died?

What if they died for four days and then came back to life?

What if people never got sick or fat?

They would be healthy all the time

And no matter how much they ate

They'd still be skinny

What if predators weren't invented?

But all animals are predators

What if people never kill people?

What if guns weren't invented?

What if schools weren't invented?

People would just grow up and wouldn't even know they're not learning

What if there's no such thing as foster homes or orphan cages?

Parents would learn to love and take care of their kids

Even if they didn't want them.



## Ten Reasons to Love Me

*A poem by Gohan, age 10*

---

- 1) I may not be perfect, but I can punch you.
- 2) I always wish to be Super Saiyan.
- 3) I do my best to understand being mad.
- 4) I can create potions.
- 5) I want the people around me to feel happy.
- 6) I hold onto some things forever, like my Xbox 1.
- 7) I have unusual ideas, like I am smart.
- 8) If I were an animal, I'd be a cheetah.
- 9) I have a secret talent – I can slam dunk.
- 10) I am Goku.

# **I'm Me**

*A poem by June, age 9*

---

I am the happy one, who likes to eat chocolate ice cream.

I am the hyper, crazy one who might eat candy and drink coffee.

I am the easy going one, who would never say "No" to nobody.

I am the one with the scars and their secrets.

I am the messed up one, who thinks that it's always my fault.

I am the helpless one who can't change my life.

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

I am the one with the scars, and I say, "No one talk back or be mean to me."

I am the strong one, who is determined to change my life.

I am the dreamer, who imagines a different life, imagines a time when I get to see what happens to me.

I am the childlike one, who remembers when my sister was playing around with me.

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

And one day their meaning will be happy.

# **You Don't Know Me**

*A poem by G, age 12*

---

You see that I'm respectful  
You see that I have lots of friends  
But you don't know me

You would know me if...  
You knew how hard it was to be homeless  
How tired I am of losing housing  
It'd just go away  
And we'd be back in the hotel, heartbroken

You would know me if...  
You knew how I feel anger sometimes  
I'm usually the one that brightens people's day, but I'm really angry  
Angry about this lifestyle  
Just sitting with my mom with nothing to do,  
Suppressed in my room like I'm under a thumb

You see that I am a joyful person with no regrets about my past  
You see that I help you a lot  
But you don't know me

You would know me if...  
You knew how I got in trouble a lot in my past,  
Jumping over fences  
And playing with things a child shouldn't play with

You would know me if you knew  
How I felt when I was your friend

---

# **I Am**

*A poem by Alaska, age 11, dedicated to the haters*

---

Today I am 11 years old, I feel young even though I am old and aged

Yesterday I was younger, more lively, like a newborn butterfly

On the street I am anonymous, lonely because no one knows me

In my room I am me, I can be who I want to be, I do what I want to do

(In moderation, my mom has rules)

To my mom I am her Gemini twin, her first born, responsible young woman

To my dad I am worthless, a waste of time, not applicable to his life

My friends think I am energetic, that I laugh too loud,

sometimes like a howling hyena,

other times like a caterpillar, quiet and barely heard

Really I am loud, caring, and a good person

But not everybody sees that, because people judge a lot

From rumors, what I look like, things I did in the past

But I know I am who I am

I look like what I look like

And there's no changing that

I wouldn't want to

So don't try to drag me down, because I'll just come back up

Like a floaty

When you push it down, it always comes back up

---

# Life's Backflips

*A poem by June, age 9*

---

I wish I knew how to do a backflip.

I wish life was easier.

I wish I knew a whole different group of friends.

I wish life was easier.

I wish I could remember the days when I was a baby.

I wish seeing my dad for only eight hours was easier.

I wish I had a phone to text my friends with, especially Tianna.

I wish my friends wouldn't joke around with me because they hurt my feelings.

## **Courage & Fear**

*A poem by Alaska, age 11*

---

In my life I've known Courage.

We met when I was two:

I had to start walking – my mom and dad were trying to hold and guide me  
But I just kept falling down.

Then I met Courage

And it made me stand right back up.

Nowadays, Courage hides under bridges and in ceiling cracks and shadows;  
It takes a while to find,  
But when you do, it will embrace you warmly.

In my life I've known Fear.

We met when I was four:

When I thought there were monsters under my bed.

Big

Scary

Monsters.

These days, Fear is knocking at my door.

Fear finds me when I think of a bad memory,  
When I'm at the wrong place, at the wrong time.

I've learned that Courage and Fear are different.

When Courage tells me to keep moving forward,  
Fear says there might be dangerous things out there.

Fear's voice is shaky, afraid of his own shadow.

Courage's voice is powerful – her voice is strong enough to defy the Universe.

Usually I listen to Courage,

And wish that Courage and Fear could get along,  
Not fight over who I will choose.

I wish that Courage and Fear would just shut up,  
So that I can think for myself.

Find my own path,

Afraid or not afraid.

I will go anyways.

---

## Dear World

*A poem by Jennifer, age 11*

---

Dear World,

*I just thought you should know what I'm doing now.*

I am a strong person

    A disciplined person

    A fun person

Who spends a lot of time hanging out, watching TV, and going places –  
going shopping, going new places.

*I just thought you should know how I'm feeling.*

    I am nervous

    I am unhappy

    I am confused

        Confused about everything, about this place, about these buildings  
Because ... life.

*I just thought you should know what I've been through.*

In the last month, I have changed so much.

Change that is black.

Black that is depressing.

Change that hurts like fire.

What happened is this:

    The first thing was moving to a new place.

    The second thing was experiencing change.

    And the third, the third thing was understanding.

Moving, changing, understanding.

---

---

*I just thought you should know what I wish for the future.*

I hope for a better future.

The future looks like this:

Better education – a better school

A house – I really want a house

Those two things will make me a better person.

*I just thought you should know*

That I have grown from who I used to be.

Grown like a cheetah.

Growing fast

Changing fast

Understanding fast.

*And that is what I want you to know.*



# Lies Like That

*A poem by Tiffany, age 8*

---

When I think of my home I see my mom taking care of me

When I think of my home I hear my dad snoring

When I think of my home I smell my mom's sandwiches

When I think of home I taste my mom's noodles

When I think of home I touch my bed of clouds

When I think of home I feel safe with my mom and in danger with my dad

When I think of home I feel safe with my mom because my dad tells lies  
and says bad things about my mom

My mom never lies like that.

# Running

*A poem by Malikah, age 12*

---

When I was really little, I ran away from home and I was mad and really wanted to leave.

I was afraid of getting in trouble.

At the time, I ran toward my favorite hiding place, a swimming pool.

I dreamed about being famous and I wish Gohan and Geo was with me being famous.

When I got a little older, I ran away from my grandma's house to my auntie's house

when my grandma was asleep.

When I ran, I expected that my grandma was worried.

She called the police to search for me to bring me back to her house.

At the time, I ran toward my friend's and my favorite restaurant.

When I ran, I hoped for my mom would come and pick me up.

Today when I run, I run away from nothing.

More than anything I wish I could run away from my life.

Today when I run, I run toward my mom.

More than anything I wish I could run enough to be a football star.

# Words of Wisdom

*A poem by G, age 12*

---

Dance calm and steady so girls won't think you're doing too much

You could say I'm a comedian among my friends  
We tell jokes about boy stuff, you wouldn't understand

I talk with friends about their day or what's going on in our families  
My old friends in Kent, I could talk to them about anything  
My new friends here don't have time for all that,  
Too busy on social media  
I think social media makes you braindead,  
Only caring about popularity and looks  
I care about making people happy and respect, that's it

Be silent so you can learn  
When no one's around for me to talk to  
I Youtube math skills and games, silent and learning

First thing when you wake up, take a shower  
It will wake you up so you don't fall asleep in class like me

In the Winter of your life, make sure you have a good heart  
When me and my mom were homeless people helped us  
Because we gave respect to them and they gave respect back to us

In the Spring of your life, make sure you remember life's steps  
How did you get here?  
How did you treat everything and everyone to get where you are?

---

In the Summer of your life, make sure you never forget where you came from

In the Autumn of your life, make sure you cherish having your whole family around, don't take that for granted

When I have a bad day, I can always think about the time when I was ten and people accepted who I was  
Now people don't accept my jokes or who I am

I still have these memories though  
When I was ten I was right at home at my school  
Right at home with my family  
Right at home with my Italian cousins, eating and laughing  
The scent of real wine and good cheese  
We don't see them anymore.

I still have these memories though  
They keep me warm through the Winter.



Building community to end poverty

.....  
**[solid.ground.org/get-help](http://solid.ground.org/get-help) | 206.694.6700 | [info@solid-ground.org](mailto:info@solid-ground.org)**  
.....

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