



Issue #4

Theme: Identity

A series of poetry, short stories, and more produced by the students of OCSA



Seed of the Next Generation

Jo'nea Mathis 11th Grade

I am the second-generation seed
Of the flower my ancestors planted
My grandparents—born and raised in Jamaica—
Traveled to Ellis Island
To nourish a new garden

I don't struggle like they struggled:
Wrestling with looming trees,
Just to see a bit of sunlight,
Tangling their roots into
U.S. soil.

I struggle differently;
I force myself to blossom before my peak,
Only to display underdeveloped petals.
I strive to prove my heritage
To show that I am black
I fight for my own patch of sunlight,
In a country that judges me:
Kills my brothers in the streets
And demands my allegiance.
I no longer stand
For the pledge.

Every day, I call on the strength
My grandfather must have had:
A flower embedding itself in foreign land,
Overshadowed by the looming trees.

I am the sapling my mother planted
Commanding my roots to stay,
Locked in the unwelcoming, unforgiving soil
Next to weeds that overwhelm me
And flowers trying to steal my light
I curve around the normal path
Between branches and leaves that to hold me back—
The limbs of society.

But I can't stop fighting,
For myself and my family,
For the ones who will follow.



Clouded Reflections

Victoria H. Cagle 12th Grade

Often, I wonder,
If anything truly matters.
With the stories of cultures long past,
And the faint ghost sound of a Celtic drummer,
The beliefs of my youth shatter.

History stretches long and vast
With the bodies of the peaceful,
And the hostile alike
Piling high until seeping
Down
 Down
 Down
Into Mother Earth's tear-soaked embrace.
And for what, but the advancement of
Greed, pride, and power
Cloaked with the guise of religion and moral integrity.

As I inhale the breath of stars,
And feel the solid earth beneath me
As though the Mother took her hands
And supported my weight,
I long for the insight my Gods can give.
Yet, even then, I wonder at my own beliefs
For how can you believe in something you cannot see?

Perhaps it would be simpler to not believe,
Only believing in
Molecules,
 Metalwork,
 And the solid flesh and bone of animal.
Then the Crusades would have never happened;
The scalding breath of arguments
Of the "true" religion would be dissipated smoke.
Instead, a great beacon of understanding
Would fall upon mankind,
And there would not be judgement.

Yet – and perhaps I am a child in this,
Searching for truth in fairytales –
A world without the wonder of things unseen
Seems desolate and colorless to me.

In the blanket of Nyx,
I gaze with longing into the face of the Goddess
Who has been named Diana, Frigga, Isis,
Hecate, Cerridwen, and many other names
Of which to label the divine,
And feel a homesickness for a place
that has never existed solidly.

I am not alone in this sentiment;
And if people can feel this deeply
For beliefs that are smoke
drifting through searching fingers,
Then perhaps . . .
It does matter.

Remember to Laugh

Natalie Pleitez

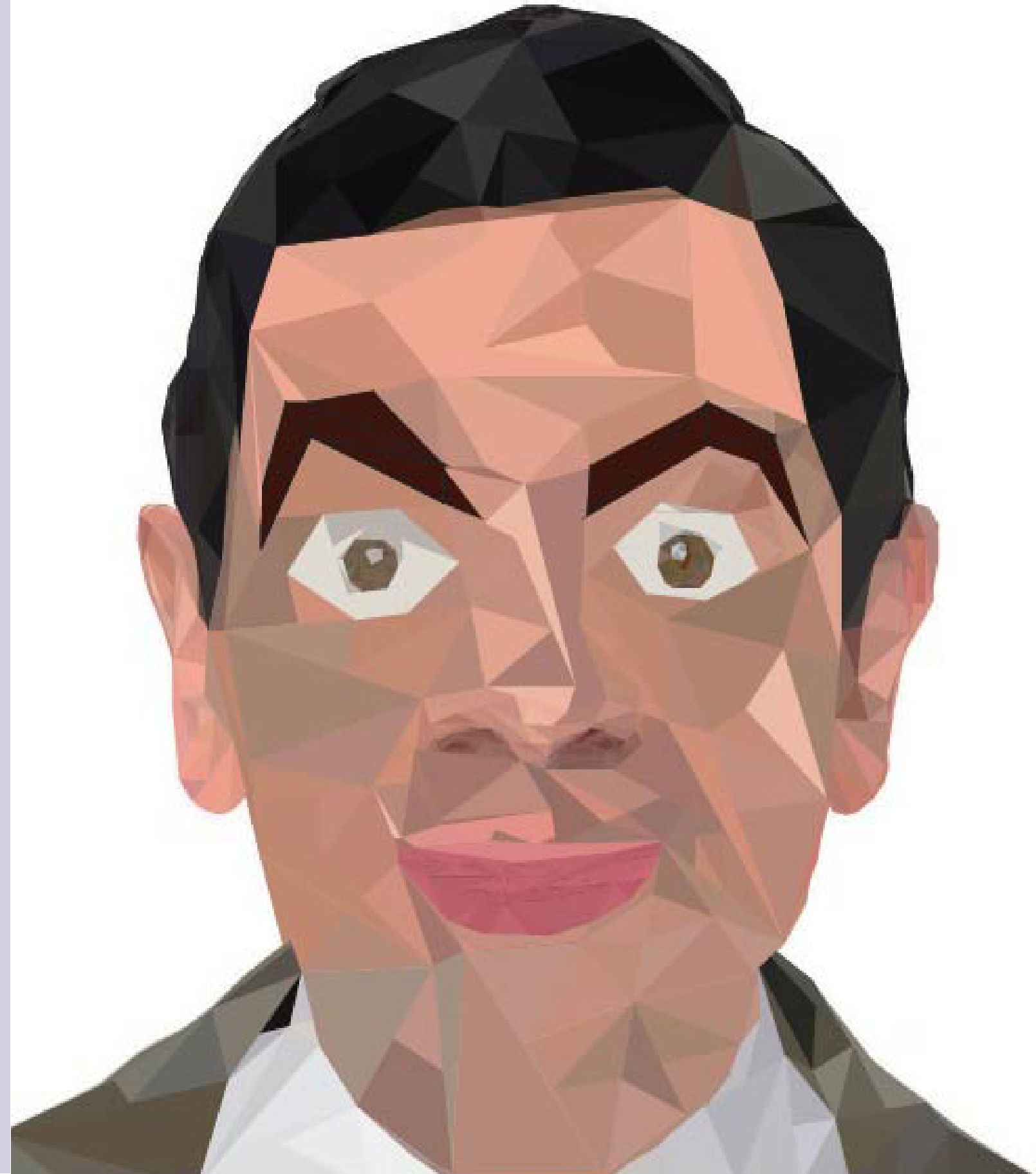
12th Grade

I'm not ticklish
like I used to be, but I
pretend anyway.

Laughter rings about.
Oh, did someone tell a joke?
Remember to laugh.

I'm not that funny
like I used to be, but I
pretend anyway.

My plastered smile is
too obvious. They know me
too well, much too well.





Let me Fly

Natalie Pleitez

12th Grade

Every once in a while, flying
Is no big deal.
It's simple to tumble headfirst
Into an ecstatic wind and
Grasp the nothing underneath.
It's easy to will yourself
Up into blue infinity.
Nonexistent sparks pulse in your vision
And a silent scream peals from your throat
As you push to be
Faster
And laugh at those below who couldn't
Ever figure your secret.
Every once in a while, they jump,
Grab you by the ankles,
And
Drag
You
Down.
Every once in while, they won't let you fly.

Fear

Elizabeth Sipple

9th Grade

I am not like the others
I watch cautiously
Troubled by the outcome
While those around me take chances

I sit paralyzed
Unable to take action
Stressed to the point of pain
Kept still as stone by the worry in my mind

My anxiety keeps me from doing what I want to do
From making decisions, from doing as they do
I sit, unable to make a choice, unable to do anything
Except stay in place, filled with fear

If I tell people about it, they scoff
They tell me not to let it take over my life
They tell me that I should just “do what I want”
They don’t understand that I can’t

I hate my anxiety
And yet it is a part of me
A part without which I cannot imagine my life
A part inseparable from who I am as a person

I can’t imagine a world in which
I make those rash decisions
I do those reckless things
Without even thinking about it

And so, I suppose
Anxiety is more
than a “disorder”
It’s who I am
A part of my identity forever



Identity

Ruby Long

10th Grade

There's a mirror in front of me,
A wall of light skin,
A barrier with brown eyes.
Wonderment of individuality.
An immersion of wealth.
Nightfall on essence,
the sunrise on existence.
Sense the humor in my individuality
And taste the adoration in dependence.
It is my character,
The tone and quality of my voice,
And differentiates my personality,
from the likeness of the alternatives.
I can see through myself,
Through the achievement,
An implementation of performance.
Is there a body before me,
Or a memory of attainment?

Himself

Cindy Paccor

9th Grade

Sitting and watching as my soul falters and descends;
His mind does not match her matter
And he cannot help but contemplate his existence,
Spotting invisible flaws that only he can see.

When they ask for handsome suits, not lovely dresses,
As society should not decide who they ought to be.
Yet, they still do not own those set of clothes
As their guardian does not want to understand their intent.

The decision to deepen their speech and adjust their physique
Will not end up in regret,
When they've been living in a deep sea
Of smothering "hers" and suffocated self.

While I watch as he shifts and frowns,
People watch him, their opinions dark and impolite
As they observe with no words,
Despite saying so much more than was said.

I've seen him in a state of surrender.
I assure him that he is not broken, that he is not himself yet,
And her past, I'm sure, he'd rather people forget.



Robot

Delaney Lazarus

9th Grade

It was an item
An accessory
A toy
Relevant when needed by others

Not important enough to keep longer than necessary

Almost like a disposable
Who molds to fit the standard where it is required
A chameleon amongst the peacocks
A hunk of clay sitting meekly in the palm of the person
An imposter

It craved the freedom, emotions, colors and thrill of life
It craved for its controls
It craved for its lost integrity
that had tumbled out of grasp and rolled away before showing it
off

Weighed down by its own insecurities
Program linking to the same pattern and routine
It rolled through life, wishing for difference
It didn't know how to make

It tears itself away from its coding in a rush of determination
To change before scrambling to pick up the pieces in robotic claws
Ripped in half by fake confidence in a hurried moment,
for all it knows how to do is follow these very guidelines
But maybe that was it

Those guidelines, which acted as a safe space, it realized
Had been holding it back from truly being whole
From being itself

It strives to roll out of the shadows
And now it starts to flourish
Step by step, day by day, rewriting its programming and install-
ing its own standards
Allowing itself to believe that it is more than just a robot
That she may be something more

Why Shouldn't You?

Justin Nazario

9th Grade

It's described as imitation,
Mimicking, rather,
Repetition through waves of uneasiness,
Subsided with
Towers of sparkling Brandy,
Sitting on the kitchen counter.

I watch from behind foggy glass,
Reciting surrender from the comfort
Of a red-striped flag,
Children giggle, brandishing plastic pistols
Hot-pink handcuffs delude liberty
But don't ask
Or doubt
For happiness isn't found
In skepticism.

Drown yourself in a bottle
Of French White, and watch
Anchors of ambivalence
Trench beneath
Murky waters, polluting
Life stained in
Fluorescent onyx.

Remember to wear lust on your cheek,
Bury cynicism beneath pounds of concealer,
And bandage your blisters
With the petals that fluttered into your palms

When the sky fell down.

Maybe you and I share the same blisters,
Always waiting for the day when
The flowers would regain their petals
And the auburn paint splattered onto the sky
Would be washed away
With the blood
That God weeps
From his tainted eyes.

A stylized smiley face where the mouth is formed by a spiral of words. The words are arranged in a clockwise spiral starting from the center of the smile. The words include: HARMONIOUS, WE, LIFE, BIRTH, UNIFICATION, LOVE, UNITE, RECONSTRUCTION, VALUABLE, WORTH, COMFORT, FORGIVENESS, COMPASSION, MENTALITY, COURAGE, EMPATHY, TRUST, WAR, and FEEL.

Who Am I?

Jay Baez

11th Grade

I thought I knew who I was as a person,
I thought I could look into a mirror and recognize myself.

Instead all I can see is a blur;
A short grey mass of fast movement.

I began to realize that at
I could see a figure forming.
There were sea green eyes, and long golden hair;
But it would vanish by morning.

Today there was a short pointy nose,
But all that I loved yesterday never returned.
I didn't like this nose, and hoped it would disappear,
Much like all the other pieces of me.

But that nose was soon accompanied by small ears,
Why, I thought,
Why such small things when they could be more?
Why was this grey mass riddled with ugliness?

Those sea green eyes never returned,
Instead, I was granted ones blacker than onyx.
The light did not shine in them the way I wished,
Instead they mimicked a bottomless pit, the darkness never ending.

I stood in front of my mirror,
Tracing out the waist it had bestowed.

How do other people see me?
How do other people feel?

How can someone look at me with wonder?
There is no secret in my eye,
There is no chink in my waist.
And my nose isn't that of a perfectly provisioned procedure.

The day has given me my smile.
How I love to see my lips curl up,
To see the light sparkle on my chiclet teeth.
Oh, how I love this smile.

The shine from my smile,
It ricocheted from my eyes.
And there it was, my very own secret,
I didn't need any other eyes.

Now the day has given me legs;
How could I get around on such short legs?
But I noticed the sparkle in my eye started to dwindle,
What is the harm in trying them out?

Sadly, they stood, but I received new hair.
It was long, black, and shiny.
I loved how it swayed behind me,
I loved it.

I loved how I could see a me,
Who I am, who I was all along.
Even though I never saw it myself,
I was always there.

I never knew who or what I was,
Simply because I couldn't appreciate it,
I couldn't visualize the pieces of me that were there.
But I could see others.

That's why those pieces of me disappeared
Because they weren't me.
And if I could accept other things,
I could love my own identity.

Adjustments

Armani Rosario

11th Grade

She changed for him
He said she was too wistful,
So she used her lipstick
To give herself a smile

When he told her she was too garrulous
She changed for him
She shut her lips tightly
Hoping to be the display doll he wanted

He told her she cared more about work
Than she ever did for him; so,
She changed for him
Replacing her keyboard for an apron

She could not see herself in the mirror
She hid inside the toy person he desired
She hadn't realized how much
She changed for him

My Mask

Megan Rodriguez

9th Grade

I hide my face
I hide my emotions
I introduce everyone I meet to a shadow
A shadow that is not me
A shadow that hides who I am
A shadow that conceals my pain

My mask is my face, but it veils my identity
It does not show who I am
It resembles me
It looks like me; it talks like me
But it's only a mask
It does not shield me from others' ridicule
It does not guard me from their torment
It's not there to protect me
It is there to shelter them from me
It protects them from my faults

I care for them more than I should
I help them through their turmoil and tribulations
But I am left hurt and forgotten
I do not learn from these mistakes
I have to help them since I can't help myself
I want to protect them from my hideous face
Protect them from my identity
Save them from me
Shield them from the demons in my head
The demons that tell me lies
Lies that hurt me more than anything else has

They see my mask, not the scars I made
They see my mask, not the tears I shed
They see my mask, not the pain I hide underneath



We Are Life, We

Maireni Nunez

11th Grade

We are all familiar with how independence
Is celebrated in this land of red, white, and blue
Through the concerts of booming fireworks
And the feasts of food not fit for a vegetarian.

The story between two countries
Battling for liberty and the finale resulted
With a land where people of all ethnicities
Can live and work toward American prosperity

Prosperity being the reason why people
Immigrate and assimilate
Yet they remember the tells of their homelands

The homelands that stretch from the Caribbean
To Mexico, with South America in the middle
Hispanic Heritage celebrates the independence
Of our ancestors, with whom we share a bloodline
Yet, that bloodline is like a trail of gunpowder
Ready to ignite with the flick of a flame

A flame that danced with ash and smoke
As nations fought and freedom was caught
Between the fleeting moments
Where dawn and morning embraced

An entwinement that stroked through the canvases
Of nations, a future portrait that is still being
Illustrated with the hues of twilight

By hands that bear resemblance to our Creator's.

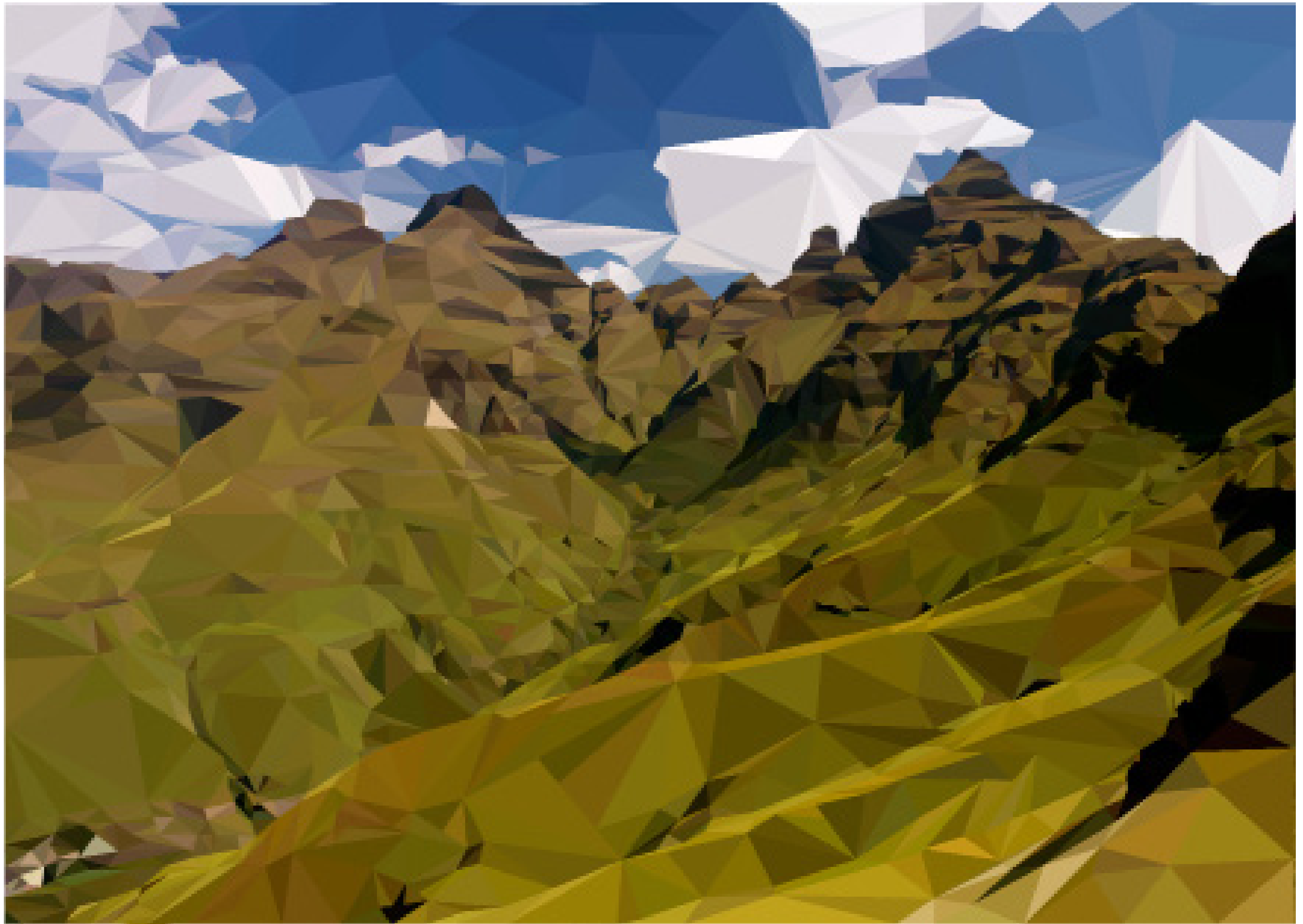
A Creator that looks down at us to see
His masterpieces at work-even though
We're crafted from the same essence of
The earth, our blood is what distinguishes
These bones from dust

Dust is one word, one term, one ingredient
To describe the simplicity of our making
Yet, it took more than divine power
To build, establish, and erect a culture

It took communities to build cultures
Ethnicities to forage heritages
And artists to manifest the liberty

People free to be free
Free to interweave their language
With the rhymes of drums and trumpets and fire
Free to express their past through
The wrinkle of yellow pages
Free to capture moments
With art and memory
Memories holding the past
That has led us to this present
Where yes, we live in a land of
Red, white, and blue

We are forever akin
With a culture crafted by ancestors
Who fought for a mission and
Flourished in art



Somos Vidas, Somos Arte

Maireni Nunez

11th Grade

Todos sabemos cómo la independencia
Se celebra en esta tierra, de rojo, blanco y azul.
A través de conciertos, de fuegos artificiales
Y las fiestas dominadas con un surtido
De comida, no apta para un vegetariano.

La historia comienza entre países
De diferente aborígen
En tierra de todas las etnias
Que viven y que trabajan para la prosperidad nuestra

Prosperidad: la razón por la cual las personas
Emigran y se asimilan a esta sociedad,
Sin embargo, nunca se olvidan
Su historia, ni de su tierra natal.

Las patrias que se extienden desde el Caribe
Hacia México, y América del Sur
Y nosotros, hoy, celebramos la independencia
De nuestros antepasados,
Con quienes compartimos un linaje
Un linaje que es más como un rastro de pólvora
Listo para encender con el toque de una llama.

Una llama que bailó con ceniza y humo
Cuando las naciones lucharon y la libertad fue atrapada
Entre los momentos fugaces
Donde el amanecer y la mañana se abrazaron.

Un entrelazado que acaricia los lienzos de las naciones,
un futuro retrato que todavía está siendo ilustrado
con los matices del crepúsculo.
Por manos que se asemejan a las de nuestro Creador.

Un Creador que nos mira para ver
Su obra maestra, aunque
Aun estando hechos de la misma esencia de la tierra,
La sangre es lo que distingue
Nuestra cultura, nuestra etnia.

Le tomó al hombre mucho esfuerzo,
Trazar su propia verdad
Mientras el artista magnifica
Su existencia, su libertad

La gente libre para ser libre
Libre de entretener su idioma
Con las rimas de tambores, trompeta, y fuego.
Libres de expresar su pasado a través del
Parpadeo de las páginas escritas.

Momentos de captura gratis
Con arte y memoria.
Recuerdos sosteniendo los eventos
Nos ha llevado a este presente.
Donde sí...vivimos en una tierra de
Rojo, blanco y azul.

Sin embargo, estamos conectados para siempre
Con una cultura elaborada por los antepasados
Quien luchó por una visión,
Y en el arte florecio.

I Am

Kevin Garcia

10th Grade

I am infinitely smaller than the universe around me,
Therefore, I am a speck in the grand scheme.

I breathe; I eat; I drink; and I ache.

Therefore, I am alive.

I think; I love; I laugh; and I cry.

Therefore, I am human.

I affect others as I act.

Therefore, I have power over life around me.

I can use this to improve things around me; I can make life great. I
can be great.

Therefore, I am destined for greatness.





Equal

Paige Neumann

8th Grade

Equal?

I am not equal,
For the color of my skin
Deems me better.

For my skin,
Is untouched paper
A dancing painting of peach
with privilege.

Every person is a different painting
One is not the same as the other
Their paintings include variations of brown, yellow, and black.

They are looked at
as if they are less
because a painting
different than I;
is an untouched canvas.

As beautiful as me;
Colors that tell a story
Warriors,
Freedom fighters,
Sculptors,
Creators of our world.
Their ancestors
paving the paths
we walk now.

We should thank them
and their heroic past,
For it does not deem them unfit for a job.
Throwing words their way
calling them less than who they are

We are equal,
humans of the same creation,
a unique masterpiece.

Equal?
We will be equal.

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