

Serving Justice: *Love & Loneliness*



a project of COSACOSA art at large, Inc.
at the Veterans Empowerment Center
2023-2024

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about the project

Love & Loneliness is part of *Serving Justice*, a project of COSACOSA art at large, Inc. at the Veterans Empowerment Center (VEC) of the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center in Philadelphia.

Participating Veterans met weekly to write, record, and illustrate new works on the themes of hope, community, identity, and bearing witness. Their collective vision resulted in this book of original poetry, songs, and essays, along with an accompanying spoken word album.

Serving Justice creates multidisciplinary art projects with Veterans throughout Philadelphia and is made possible through a Creative Forces Community Engagement Grant, part of the National Endowment for the Arts Creative Forces® Military Healing Arts Network initiative, in partnership with Mid-America Arts Alliance. Additional support was provided by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, and the Independence Foundation.

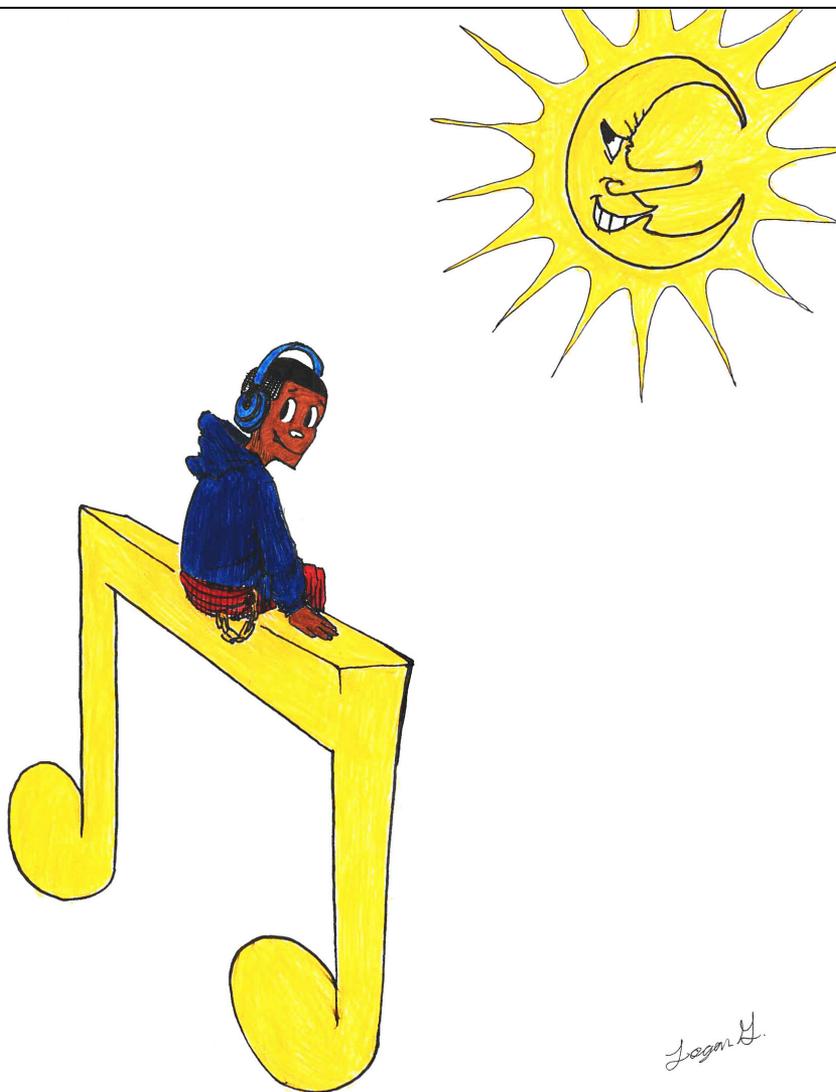
about COSACOSA

COSACOSA art at large, Inc. creates new public art and media by, for, and about Philadelphia communities. Our projects reassert art's original role as a catalyst for community dialogue, creative cooperation, and positive change.

Since 1990, COSACOSA has connected thousands of citizens from over thirty Philadelphia neighborhoods to learn about art, about each other, and about how to plan together for their communities. Learn more at cosacosa.org



Michael D. Harvey



Logan G.

drawing by Logan Grant
concept & color by Michael D. Harvey

*Imagine growing up in a small town...
Now view yourself as being as determined as clouds,
with no wind to reach an unknown destination...
Now it's time to wake up and realize - you've moved to Philly...*

Serving Justice

by Michael D. Harvey

I'm here through time, serving justice.
I only want what's mine, serving justice.
I'm breaking down what's in me,
letting go what should be free, serving justice.
Serving justice.
Serving justice.

Here we are serving justice.
Giving all our hearts serving justice.
We have our scars.
We have our scars.
We have our scars.
We have our scars serving justice.
Serving justice.
Serving justice.

My mind may be blind, yet I am not.
When I say I love you, I want you in my spot.
It's the mentality of knowing that
I've lost everything serving justice.
Serving justice.
Serving justice.

As soon as I can turn around,
I'm turning back to turn it on.
I can't ask about the past no more
unless I reside there,
unless I go.
Life goes on and on and on
like the love of my favorite song, serving justice.
Serving justice.
Serving justice.

Opening Day

by Michael D. Harvey

This time the rain came.
The sun would shine, yet never the same again.
It was a moaning sound that would tame the beast within.

As lightening struck, you could feel its love yet.
The terror outside gave a thunderous roar.
Spectating hearts were warned, yet ignored
the fact that love could change because of what's in store.

Clouds form, colors change.
Once again it's the sound of the rain falling harder
as though making sounds as it strikes the wind.

Find solace as you see the light within.
Care for those who don't have a reason to pretend.
Yet as it gets harder, you do it again and again.

Because on opening day, those who open the doors
know what's to gain within.

I Changed My Name

by Michael D. Harvey

I changed my name to hide the pain.
This way no one could remember me again.
There is no one to answer to when I hear that call.

See my face, yet knowing my old name
means you don't know me at all.

You can't give me a warm embrace the way you yell my name,
excuse me; it's so scary. I really thought you meant me.

Your eyes had a gleam as though you had seen
someone from your past with whom you could share

friendly little stories, while we make shouts of glory.
Well that's it for that. I don't know where you've seen me at.

Maybe you saw me invoking my right to freedom of speech.
Maybe you've seen me yelling a chant while marching.

I could have been at work to increase my worth.
Did I speak kindly to you?! To be honest, it's my only value.

Maybe I was a cashier that gave you winning lottery numbers, too.
You remember me so gladly, yet this is the first time I've heard you.

Well see some payback while you probably paid it forward.
No need to be worried; maybe I can help you remember for us.

Well it's my turn to check out my things
yet you still don't know from where you know me.

Like I explained, my name has changed,
yet my face remains the same.

Maybe you saw me in the dark; maybe it was shadowy.
Yet that's only when I'm walking.

I've lived in tents, just been regular homeless, just to find
myself sleeping in newly constructed buildings.

Now before I put my code in and pay for my things,
you still haven't spoken from where you know me.

So, since my name has changed, what can I do for you?
I thought for sure you'd have more to say for me, too.

Yet you've followed me around and haven't shopped for a thing.
Oh well, next time I'll be a little more careful, officer security.

Unknown Cologne

by Michael D. Harvey

The aroma captivated me for the first time.
My thoughts decapitated me – who in here will be mine?
Someone I will embrace with a smile.
There is a reason to show love.
There is a reason to show it now.

This unknown cologne is a mysterious scent of its own.
I could search for hints of it yet I'd be wrong.
Let me sit in the back because it's so strong.
Besides, the wearer may hear my compliment
while I'm on the phone.

Remote Control

by Michael D. Harvey

By the time the message started, I was at the stop sign,
Looking for parking and asking myself why.
I could have taken the bus; why did I drive?
Finally, there's an open parking spot.

Rushing to the elevator, I don't care to check my mail.
It's just time to head upstairs.
All day I've been waiting, and now I'm here.
Let me take a shower and relax with a beer.

Oh no wait – what will I wear?
I forgot it's late; I'm prepping for bed.
Where is my thermos? My lemonade is still cold.
I can lay in bed and watch TV; this never gets old.

Maybe some music instead while a muted video plays
to clear my head.
Wait – clear my head?! I didn't care!!!
Now I have to go back downstairs. How could I not care –
the new universal remote came in the mail.
It's the main reason I was happy to go upstairs!

Wages of Sin/Life

by Michael D. Harvey

The Holy Bible does say the wages of sin is death.
Well, the wages of the spirit is life!

Trust in GOD, He wants to Bless you!
We may not always see the Blessing, but it's there.

GOD wants to Bless. He's actually waiting to Bless us.
Yet from what I can tell, a loving father will tell you
the good/bad and allow you to be the judge of your choice,
then reward accordingly.

Wages of sin/spirit?

Because if we know what sin is and what its wages are,
well now it's 2024 - it's time to learn the Gifts of the Spirit
and the characteristics of those fruits.
It's time to cash in on a different payroll!

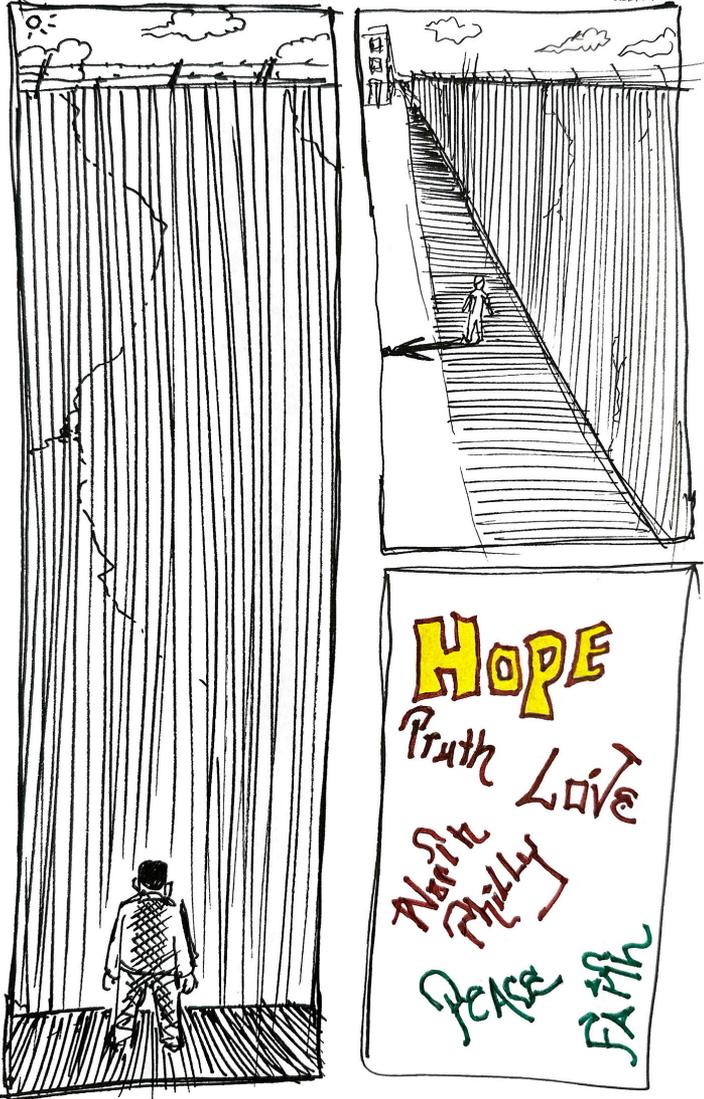
What if GOD wants you to walk off the Earth with HIM?
What if there's a flood in your area and GOD wants you
to walk on water and save them?

What if GOD simply wants us to humble ourselves
and mutually reconcile old friendships?

Well, everything is a work in progress.
Rome wasn't built in a day.
I still haven't been physically introduced to anyone from Heaven!
Yet the Blessings abound.

Ronald B "Doc" Speight, Sr.

THE TENEMENT WALL.



drawing by Logan Grant
concept & color by Ronald B. "Doc" Speight, Sr.

I Know

by Ronald B. "Doc" Speight, Sr.

I know that I am younger than the old Veterans of the Greatest Generation and older than the young Veterans of Generation X.

I know what it is like to save a soldier's life.

I know I have experienced hostile fire incidents.

I know that I have never been in combat.

I know what it is like to leave a soldier's body in a foreign country as I returned home.

I know the pride, the loneliness, and the many hours of hard work it took for me to become a Medic, a soldier, and a leader.

I know what it is like to have no one care what you have done or where you have been.

I know what it is like to be judged by where I had been and not what I had done.

I know what it feels like to be given a medal and told that I am a hero but not feel it in my heart.

I know what it is like to look into the eyes of someone that I could not save and watch them die.

I know what it is like to be alone in a room full of people.

I know my triumphs exceeded my tragedies during my service time.

I know that the triumphs were short-lived and the tragedies are everlasting in my mind, my heart, and my soul.

I know my PTSD issues are as real and painful to me as they would be for any other - no more, no less - only different and only mine.

You Will Forget About Me

by Ronald B. "Doc" Speight, Sr.

When all the parades are done
When all the flags stop waving
You will forget about me.

While others take credit for what I have done
And all of the handshaking and back patting has ceased
You will forget about me.

When you refuse to honor the dead of my era (The Cold War)
And instead of a well-deserve medal, you give us a piece of paper
You have forgotten about me.

With over 5000 dead from acts of terror, training accidents,
and incidents in Europe
With over 300 killed by Communist forces
You have forgotten about us.

The Berlin Wall is down - the Iron Curtain has fallen
The Demarcation Line no longer exists
You continue to forget about us.

Never a "Well done, Soldier" or "Welcome home, Troopers"
Defending the border and others' freedom in Europe
since the 1940s
While we fought for our rights just to be citizens
in our own country.

Standing against Soviet aggression and still never recognized
by NATO or America
We have no day to commemorate our victory
When those who sent me over there to guard and secure
the freedom of foreign nations
have faded away
You will continue to forget about me.

This is dedicated to those who died in Europe during the Cold War.
I will never forget about them.

R.B. DOC SPATE SPEIGHT MEDICAL NCO

3/11 ACR The Border Legion and the 3 ID 1/64 Armor Bad Hersfeld

She Was There

for the army nurses

by Ronald B. "Doc" Speight, Sr.

She was there.
She was in charge.
She was competent.
She was hardworking.

She was there.
She was young
and willing to learn,
and then able to teach others.

She was there.
She was the woman warrior,
the Angel of Mercy,
GI Jane.

She was there.
Without her skills many would have died or suffered needlessly.
Although sometimes never receiving the recognition that was due her,
she was there. Never noticed until needed,
she went from a WAC (Women's Army Corps) to a soldier.
She is unique in every way and strong beyond belief.

From wars to the ward, she was there.
And I am proud to have served with them -
my sisters, my nurses, my fellow Veterans.

Truth

by Ronald B. "Doc" Speight, Sr.

I don't hug the flag;
I salute it
or kneel before it in peaceful protest when social injustice is done.

I don't use the flag or the Bible as a photo op;
I believe in both of them.

When called to serve I did not avoid my duty;
I am a proud Veteran.

I do not see people from other lands as threats or
destroying my way of life or "poisoning our blood."

This country has no official language or religion;
I will not insist you follow mine.

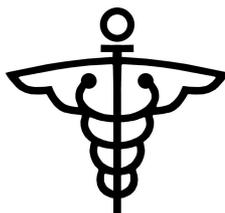
No one gave me millions of dollars;
I earned my money by hard work.

I do not believe a building being named for someone is important.
My name is on what matters most: my FAMILY.

I have never been given someone else's medal;
I earned all of mine.

I do not encourage people with lies and hate to commit violence;
I inspire people with faith facts and truth.

Ron "Doc Spate" Speight
Former U.S. Army Medic
Served with honor,
Served with pride,
And saved some lives along the way.



David L. Allen



drawing by Logan Grant
concept & color by David L. Allen

Hate Me!

by David L. Allen

World around me make me wanna die,
but I keep living, and I don't know why.
Thought I was dyin'; Jesus don't -
my life died, my body won't.
Gorilla Pimp number one,
now I'm lookin' down da Barrel
of my own F'in gun.

Went to sleep, no knots to untangle;
two hours into my day I'ma fallen angel
just gettin' the cold out my eyes,
already my day's full of lies.
People mad - powers that be!
'cause I got tired of them using me.
Because this pimple doesn't pop,
it's puttin' cancer in that spot.

Can't walk on water,
maybe I can fly.
My man 2nd Peter did it,
then why can't I?
Seeing from a bird's view now;
wish I could stay up here somehow.
Fell out of heaven on my knocker,
now Beelzebub's doin' divide and conquer.

Never had a dad;
he attacked my mom.
Mom busy serving God;
got my name from the 23rd Psalm.
I'm still here;
but all she feels is fear.
Who supposed to be da Christian here?
All this dependence from above -
don't mom's love
show God's Love?

All this discipline without love -
what in the world they thinkin' of?
Maybe the book of Exodus
not necessarily for us,
takin' my punishment,
dyin' of thirst.

Gotta find that Water,
keepin' faith on earth.
It truly brings mad curses
when your prophet forgets the verses.

She couldn't stand how I was made
and that I could never clear.
Made of rape and hate,
wonder why fight's my fate.
Scared straight to Iraq -
tanks, helicopters, ruck on my back!
Maybe I should have died out there;
my peeps would be paid and nobody'd care.
Lost good men in America's win;
wearin' a prosthetic for most of them.
But I'm still here;
sorry I didn't make a name.
No one to blame
for my no fame.

Like Abraham to Esau
Pop left, now he's gone,
without answering questions.
Now all I get
is selfish suggestions.
Never even looked to see me;
all he did was beat on me!

I really don't know
what they went through;
talking in the crib
ain't somethin' we do.

Tryin' to teach me boys get dirty,
and girls are formal.
Head all messed up
tryin' to be normal.

Hope they didn't ruin me on purpose
or even knew my hurt would surface.
Makin' it each day is all they could do.
I bet Willie's letters was killin' them, too!

Tryin' hard to please my people.
They just take, take, take, and there's always a sequel.
My cup, once full, is now totally empty.
Why doesn't anyone pour into me?
Guess only Big Brother JC
has manna that can fill me.

I love my wife but she HATE me
All she care about's
lap of lux she kept in -
spittin', "Yo, you ain't blood
you only steppin'..." "

I love my dear;
she think Ima slave and a boy.
I love my daughters;
one's stealing my joy...

My angel loves me but she all caught up
in a world full of all this superficial stuff.
Used to would die for you,
now just dying to talk to you.

So here I am hoping this will end
so I don't have to feel this pain again!
Hearts are for fools in this hateful world
doesn't matter if you're man, woman, boy or girl.

Broke boys make broke men,
or am I backwards again?...
"I fear for my soul
but I fear fear more!"

Don't pay to be young and black, man.
World applies pressure wherever it can.
Black man or just Handy Man,
maybe they're one in the same.
Either way you better know
there's no winnin' in this game.

Tired of crying
just thinking of dyin' -
can death set me free?
or disappoint me again.
Like it or not, my hour is nigh.
Do I duck around the corner
till St. Gabriel walks by
or do I press the down elevator
to where my nigs gittin' high?

Why wait any longer
tryin' to start where I began.
I'm sure it's just Lucifer waitin' for me in the end!
HATE ME!

Feelins

by David L. Allen

Gotta go through life without you now.
Been such a long run, don't think I know how.
Though you held me up, you've also been crippling –
almost like a crutch, but now I must bow,
out of this death game and into the now.
Your job was only to mask the pain,
not to make me healthy again.
After the cut, you perked me up;
the cut healed, now I can't pass this cup!
Caught up ten years, I must be trippin'.
This *shit* is death you can swallow.
Don't step in this room; it's mean, and it's hollow,
inhabited by Satan, filled with sins.

Woe, woe, woe, feelins!

Tried to shake you a few times.
You found me easy, cause I kept looking back.
But my body kept giving into my mind,
found you, now I'm a child on Similac.
See it wasn't the entrance that hurt,
it was the withdrawal.
Every time I'd run away,
something so deep within could hear your call.
No ends,
just begins.

Woe, woe, woe, feelins!

Always sleepy, always stand,
wit my hook up in my hand.
Can't be trusted.
Always busted.
I lay lowly in daylight,
so I can vampire with the night.
Like the earth does the sun,
I keep circling till my life is done.
Wish somebody do me right,
and my being would take flight.
Need it to quickly end.

Woe, woe, woe, feelins!

Riding this horse without a saddle,
up till the crickets and birds do battle.
 Been fourteen hours,
 still hear you callin'!
 Tryin' to keep it movin',
 outta my mind.
Pray my angel, ain't already fallen!
 God help me walk this valley,
 till the morning Sun can rally.
There's gotta be a new beginning,
where my heroin ain't winning!

Got a twitch and an itch!
Woe, woe, woe, feelins!

Down K-Town gettin' down,
Woe, woe, woe, feelins!

Feel my way past your symptom.
Tired, sleepy, total Imptom!
 I feel strength coming,
 and death goin'.
Totally new body found.
Some of my burdens down.
 Picking life back up.
In this decade, I lost my crown.

Woe, woe, woe, feelins!

 Been two days,
 lost in these waves.
 Don't feel human,
 my pain does amaze.
 But I feel alive,
 and my abdomen ate!
Never lookin' back like Lot's mate!

Woe, woe, woe, feelins!

Thought my mind would soar,
and the pain never more.
But that's crap,
the mentality trap.
Jedi head trick,
till your life ends.

Woe, woe, woe, feelins!

Make your teeth chatter,
and your breath badder.

Woe, woe, woe, feelins!

Takes all your green.
Gets in your genes

Woe, woe, woe, feelins!

Seekin' a win, He is Him
Woe, woe, woe, feelins!

Soldier Boy Blue

by David L. Allen

Hey there soldier boy blue, where you been?
Round the world and back again?
Tell me why you left the war.
You not really brave no more?

Hey cavalry trooper, where's your tank?
Did it get erased from your memory bank?
Hey there cav scout.
What's that cryin' all about?
Has the battle with your brain and heart
Torn your fragile world apart?

Soldier Boy Blue,
Heard you traveled the sea.
Heard you put in work!
Brought them to their knees.

Soldier Boy Blue did you blow your horn?
Are you the ram in the thicket?
Where's our Shepherd gone?

Boy Blue Boy Blue
What you gonna do?
What you gonna do when they come for you?
Gonna lay my trouble down,
buried deep in the ground,
and ensure humiliation be my determination.
To live with love without condition
and help Mother Earth defeat haterism!
Help Father Earth eject His Realism Jism.
Break Hardism; intercept sexism.
Maybe death won't win
After my life's end.

Hey now broken one.
Are you waitin' for the sun?
Praying hard no more night will come?
Running frantic from the night.
Everything will be all right.
Just cause you must lay down,
We're all good here on the ground.

Hey now old and thru.
No wonder people call you blue.
Just cause you fell and bumped your head,
Don't mean we all gotta pour out red.
That's why you went and volunteered.
To keep our color coding clear.

You're the red.
And you're the blue.
Being purple's all we do!
If it don't amount to green,
We send you back,
And things go black.
No matter what we gonna do,
Your day is thru,
Soldier Boy Blue.

Gerald "Osaze" Coliman



drawing by Carlos Aviles
concept & color by Gerald "Osaze" Coliman

Jealousy and Hatred

by Gerald "Osaze" Coliman

The people next door
with all their outlet noises,
fear invoking sounds of jealousy and hatred.
The ridiculous games they play
to create sadness and gloom
that their hearts hold
embodied in hatred for themselves
and jealousy that doesn't exist.

Accept the one thing that's separate to each of us
is the love of God - to remove the Guilt and Shame
harnessing their hearts for no reason
except their own dumbness and gain.

The way they play themselves
is so obvious; it's sad for them.
Sad enough to fuel their games
of dumbness, revenge, and stupidity.
Idiots like themselves, games of lost lives
and fear of what's real.

Lacking of love and understanding
they've harnessed their children's ability
to grow and be productive citizens
It is the unknown in their hearts.

Samuel Williams



drawing by K. Deng
based on the poetry of Samuel Williams

For Years

by Samuel Williams

For years, few knew my challenges -
dodging these adjacent rooms,
doctors striving to restore imbalances.

All the while, Doogie Howser spewing,
"I never thought you'd recover from inhaling fumes
that preserved the dead,
assist pathologists with bodies that's exhumed."

Struck me like whales killed for thrills
and rather than sell, consume
with the finest perfume.

What led to imbalances?
Early life tragedies and challenges.
Imagine losing your father to suicide.
Suicide surviving through vivid memories -
family pictures three years prior,
the first time of the first Black police commissioner
that brought my family pride.

In the city, in another that,
after Daryl Gates resigned,
after the LA riots,
it took twenty years to seek and provide
the five stages of grief I was seeking to find.

Surviving off the cheat code
in the game of life,
rollin' on the river
when Tina left Ike.
Seeking to find the center
or, at least, the last winner.
Seeking the divine.

Now this may sound egregious -
ghetto therapy consists of PCP, TAC and nicotine,
not assembly,
since you know how most people
are addressed and treated.

This ain't to make light of,
or to joke, or be facetious.
Where there's truth in every joke we spoke of a few weeks ago,
though it need not be repeated.

Ain't a Catholic or Christian or the mass they said,
"take this in the name of blood," broke the bread in half.
That's the love that was shown
from providers on this floor since twenty years ago.
I say, "thank you, Jesus."

Tracking

by Samuel Williams

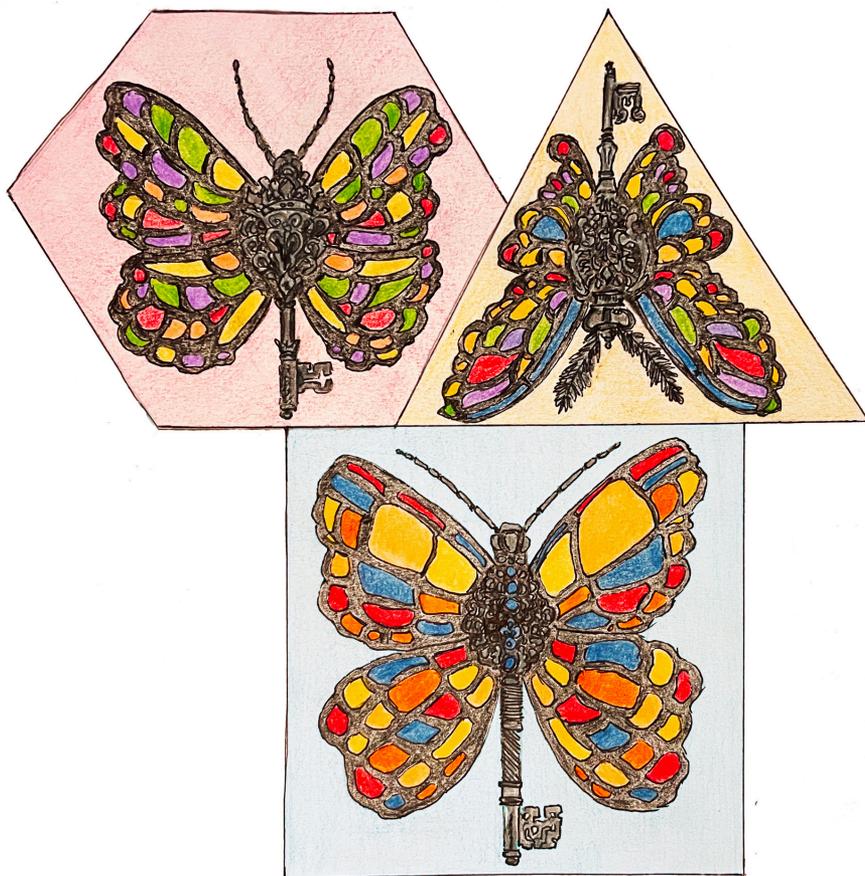
Elf was on the shelf for mental health
waiting for the season to come.
My father, to u he's a son from a lady who also had 7 more,
but now there is 1.

Take the 2 number in reverse is where the story begun,
coldest winter ever seeds where planted...
where you think this good wine come from?

That u buy from Amazon Prime, tracking so when in real time
it arrives u can claim and consume
before porch pirates claim they prize.

For this u need a membership they only sell it online.

Keith Ockimey



drawing by Carlos Aviles
concept & color by Keith Ockimey

The Holder of the Key

by Keith Ockimey

I am the Holder of the Key.
I use it when I am ready to let you in.
There are secrets held within...
there might be a little pain
(but it diminishes).

These are two of my favorite things,
and I just put them together.

These are not butterflies.
They are moths.
They have to hide or blend in for survivability
To me, they are just as beautiful as butterflies.
There are shapes around them.
There's a hexagon - that means stop!
There's a triangle - that means completion.
(It's not really a circle, but it has a beginning and an end.)
There's a square - equality of all sides.

Remix

by Keith Ockimey

On a daily basis, am reminded of truths,
have pondered and stressed; oh, what's the use!
I said it yesterday.
It gets in the way.
But it makes me feel funky,
makes me feel loose!

Re-order Things

by Keith Ockimey

On that very cold morning, I decided to talk to her about acronyms,
and she really struck my interest. She made me think about one of
mine that has been making me fuss a little...and that would be
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
I decided to change it to Please Try Something Different...or I can
revise it all together to call it Post Traumatic Growth.
I can go on and on, but I will end it here -

The Truth Hurts

by Keith Ockimey

I hear you crying.
I hear a train in the distance.
I hear love is in the air.
I hear my memories catching up with me.
I hear bacon frying.
I hear my lulled heartbeat.
I hear fish jumping in the brook.
I hear "oh, what a wonderful world."
I hear broken dreams.
I hear resistance.
I hear nighttime whispers.
I hear empowerment.
I hear creativity.
I hear hopefulness.
I hear you crying.
The only one that can stop me from moving forward is me.

Disharmony steals your piece of mind. Worryation is not necessary when it come to your future events. The past steals joy in the present. My family needs engagement, and memories interrupt my life.

My mind contains cul-de-sacs, and I need to have positive stuff fulfilling them!

Pain has proven to be an annoyance that as to be stopped. Noise totally drains me. I need a break from it all. (I have to think straight.)

Peace of Mind – I am not angry or worrisome with my intrusive thoughts... first step in flipping the script is to identify the problem. I need to come back to a place where the cul-de-sacs are not so monopolizing.

Self

by Keith Ockimey

In my conventional journey,
I have learned to take a time out to heal internally.
As I pause, I meditate in stillness
to backup and regroup.
I owe it to myself.
Now I show up as my authentic self.

Father

by Keith Ockimey

When I am with you, I feel safe...
Cannot wait 'til you get home...
The greeting I give you when you get home is genuine...
Very authentic...
Now I miss you! Void!

Cancer

by Keith Ockimey

Enemy that comes to rob, steal, and kill -
Rob - Joy
Steal - Happiness
Kill - Body & Soul
Enemies have to be conquered.

Lifestyles Unsinkable

by Keith Ockimey

Little Keith,

I know that your life is not always wine and roses, but I do know that the sunlight shines on you, too. Keith, I saw you struggling in grade school, and I know, within due time, that you would triumph through your challenging setbacks. Fast forward, you watch Gwen cut herself and mutilate her body and you remember that you said that this was going to lead to nothing but a great deal of heartache and pain. You decided, while writing this paper, that you would not elaborate on details, but then too, this group is just a few weeks in, so not yet, when you are ready...

Alrighty then, let's break it down. You have decided to use this moment to lift yourself up just a little bit. I know you've decided that it is very stressful living in the past, so let's stay in the present...

Ockimey

by Keith Ockimey

O is for outstanding, a heart full of fun.

C is for creative, a talented one.

K is keen, talented and smart.

I is for impressive, a cheerful heart.

M is for manly, a handsome li'l man.

E is for excelling, talented and grand.

Y is for you, a hero of a boy.

Ockimey, pure pride and joy.

The Struggle is Real

by Keith Ockimey

The uneasiness and meticulousness

is causing unrealness!

I have PTS, but PTS does not have me!

Core self - positive choices, self-understanding,

healing, emotions, love,

what others think...

I think we have more commonalities than differences!

I Can't Remember

by Keith Ockimey

*"I am powerful beyond measure
and I use my gifts for the Greater Good!"*

I am smart. I am great, and I deserve to be happy.
I still feel non-threatened, and I still feel safe.
I first met you, "very kind," I thought.
I cannot remember exactly what I thought,
but I can remember your smile.
I cannot remember the song you hummed,
but I do remember how good it made me feel.
I can't remember everything about you,
but I do remember how you've grown.
I can't remember your name,
but I do remember how nice you are.
If I didn't have a grandmother, I'd want you to be mine
I can't remember a month ago,
but I do remember right now.
I can't remember your teachings last week,
but I do remember the here and now.
I can't remember your speech,
but I do remember it gave me chills.
I can't remember the last time I called you a friend,
but I do; but I do!
I can't remember the newspaper article,
but I do remember how we connected for the cause,
continually connecting for the cause.
I can't remember the intricate details of that particular trauma,
but I do remember that I will heal because I choose to remember.
I can't remember to remember because I choose not to remember.

Are the memories really gone?
Not really - just occurrences and instances,
just something to talk about.
Something of substance!

1st, 2nd, or 3rd Person Speech

by Keith Ockimey

On that day I saw her,
and she reminded me about truths.
I like her, and she gets me thinking...
She motivates the heck outta me!
But let me stay focused...
Yesterday, as we hiked, I kept thinking...
it is into the trees I go to heal my mind and relax my soul.
I like it there because my connections
help me to live my days blissfully,
challenging me to thrive -

The Ability to Transcend

by Keith Ockimey

Thru these doors walk some of the best people in the world!
There are two types of people in this world...
those in recovery
and those that need to be!
Recovering from something, anything,
recovering from everything.

I am in the right place
doing the right things
around the right people.

Mindfulness is a powerful tool in your toolbox.
Acceptance helps you when you want to look at life differently.
Things that steal my piece of mind sap the energy from me
that I need for my family.

Look Forward to Problems (Know They're Coming)

by Keith Ockimey

I look forward to certain things in this world.
I know for a fact that Murphy's Law will kick in
and that things will go wrong.
My life will get turned upside down.
These things enable me to kick it into overdrive.
I start making some very serious choices
and I know that I can choose wisely...
I can choose to change the situation.
I can choose to handle it correctly.
I can choose to pray until something happens.

about the writers

Michael D. Harvey is a writer and Veteran, as well as an activist/speaker for the Black Lives Matter movement. He displays his work as a rockhound on most social media platforms under the name BlackIceNow. Michael also sings and has appeared on the daytime television show *Couple's Court with the Cutlers*, Season 3 Episode 68, Thomas v Bright. Check out his music at reverbnation.com/michaelsbates4.

Ronald B. "Doc" Speight, Sr., United States Army Medical NCO and Pastor, served with honor and pride. He was among the first recipients of the Humanitarian Service Medal for Medical Support of the Evacuation of Vietnam.

David L. Allen is a Philadelphia-based poet, rapper, screenwriter, and Veteran whose creative work weaves personal experience, including his military service, with religion and history

Gerald "Osaze" Coliman is a Philadelphia-based writer, health educator, and Vietnam Veteran whose creative work explores the power of connection and understanding.

Samuel Williams is a Philadelphia-based writer and Veteran who is fascinated with philosophy, mindfulness, music, current events, history, and media.

Keith Ockimey is an artist, writer, and Veteran with over twenty-nine years of Army service, including with the 104th Cavalry in the multinational peacekeeping force deployed after the Bosnian War, Operation Desert Storm, and other locations around the world. During his Tours, he received the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, North Atlantic Treaty Organization Medal, National Defense Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, and Overseas Service Medal.

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