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My Poetic Journey Maze

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State University of New York College at Buffalo
Department of Creative Studies

My Poetic Journey Maze
by
Shalisa C. Crews

An Abstract of a Project
In
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Masters of Science

May 2018

Abstract

From a brief history of poetry, to words of scattered yet sympathetic thoughts my obsession with poetry will be unleashed. My thoughts and different approaches with this project will take on a few different short intoxicating narratives and excursions. Different sections of my project are simple yet complex indirect reflections of verbal asymmetrical shapes, and visual connections. Ultimately, you will be able to experience the visual connections through the photos that I took and my poetic approach. I hope this project is found to be seen as an exhilarating experience as I share my personal self, my thoughts on creativity, and the positive impact it can have on our youth. My world is filled with creative imagination, chaotic verbal chemistry, and divine surprises. Here is where you will take a journey with me through this wild maze that you may not directly understand, but indirectly I will make sure is understood. Creatively and ultimately the maze will also reflect the game connect the dots in a divergent and convergent formality. This complicated, yet tranquil maze will start out with caged in mental thoughts, my personal incubation moments, and questions to consider with the intent to make you think. The maze will also take on many twist and turns as the journey takes a walk with my daily mental and emotional self through words of expression. The art of poetry, what it sounds like, smells like, and feels like. The series of poems that I created seem to be appropriate to the narrative are presented for eyes to see and wisdom to gain. You never know you might just find some value in this journey maze and may even feel yourself being able to relate to the subject matter.

Keywords: at-risk adolescents, education, creativity, success, youth, art, expression, poetry

Date

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Dates of Approval:

Project Advisor

Candidate

Acknowledgements

I would first like to give thanks to my father from up above for giving me the strength to move my feet back into the right direction when I did not have the motivation or strength to move them myself.

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of the Creative Studies program. You are one beautiful special lady and will remain close to my heart forever. It was the little things you said and did that made me start paying more attention to my own actions and reactions. You took the time to try and understand this complicated girl, and that was my breakthrough to push forward, and go harder in regard to both my studies at Buffalo State, and creative potential. I will always respect and love you for that no matter what. You were my inspiration to continue my poetry, and you will truly have more students stalking your beautiful, outgoing, original and unique self for years to come. Thank-You. Dr. Acar to you and your beautiful wife Dr. Nur, you guys are just all around two awesome well rounded humble individuals/professors. Your teaching style and knowledge for creativity speaks volumes and for itself. Thank-You.

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To every person out there who might ever run their eyes across this very ink, and feel a connection to anything I have mentioned, when things get tough just hold on to the grips of life a little tighter. In my father's voice, "It is okay to bend just don't break."

When you find your inner-self defining you as an individual that is hurting.... love more, live more, laugh more, give more, cry more, smile more, and just simply fall in love with all of your imperfections...

-Shalisa Crews

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Figure 1. The Ink that walks the walk through my inner left leg (calf muscle).

Section 1: Project Background

Introduction

The purpose of this section is to introduce to the reader how through poetry, I found my voice. I also wanted to show how through poetry, methods of creative expression can potentially enable troubled youth to find their voices as well. After being exposed to all the wonderful things about creative problem solving (CPS), I came up with my own method for my own personal use called the Triple S Method. Triple S stands for self-exploration (explore and challenge new things about myself; as I continue to craft my poetry), self-evaluation (stay in touch, in tune, and consistent with my inner thoughts to ensure my expressions reflect who I truly am as an individual) and lastly, self-nurture (make sure I take good care of myself internally to spread the love externally as I take on the self-exploration and self-evaluation process).

I find that writing poetry allows me to dig deep from within and release the inner-thoughts that bring forth trouble to my mind. Poetry to me has the ability to take a hardened rock that has lost its shine from sitting in still darkness and nurturing it back into a soft gentle tranquil jewel that is full of shining light. Poetry has not only helped me with the scattered thoughts that run through my mind, but also helped me grow as a person. I feel at-risk youth (ARY) who display negative behavior can be easily misunderstood and may just need a small dose of self-expression to help them sort out their mental frustrations, hurt, and pain. Whatever the case may be, I feel negative behavior can stunt an adolescents mental growth, cognitive skills, and have an extremely negative impact on both their internal and external environments. When I was younger, I was not considered a nice person at all. On a regular basis I was very unapproachable and carried a very non-optimistic view on life in general. One day, I was given a journal by an educator who saw something in me that I did not see in myself. I was told to just write out my feelings whenever I

was feeling sad or frustrated. When no one was there to hear my cries, feel my pain, or listen to my thoughts poetry stepped in and had become my secret weapon that eventually became my mental break through. Yes, indeed it was in that very moment that writing poetry had become my “AHA,” moment! I had decided from that moment on to free my negative thoughts and emotions and turn them into positive ones by simply letting go of the little negative pieces each time I had the opportunity to express myself. In my opinion, I feel youth have way more challenges and obstacles to face nowadays than ever before. In contrast, I feel through the arts of self-expression they also have the opportunity to seek, find, and explore ways to dig deep and develop solutions that can create a more stable and positive solid foundation for them to rely on. I feel fostering creativity to youth that are at-risk can become a forced self-reflection that ironically resembles the forced connection tool I learned about through the CPS process. For instance, defining the term forced connection in my own words occurs when you are able to make a connection between two things that are of no relation to one another. That connection is then connected through force, and as a result eventually helps you come up with more ideas that will eventually lead to some solutions .

When a child has the opportunity to express their inner-thoughts, those negative feelings in my eyes can indirectly be forced out, and soul searching can begin through self-reflection. The soul-searching process is where I feel many different ideas and thoughts can begin to develop, and in return create options that can ultimately turn into some solutions for children. In other words, I feel it forces a child to figure out what may or may not work for them (soul-searching), and how will it display them as an individuals as they go out into the world (self-reflection). I feel most children are pushed to focus more on their academics, and never really have the time to learn about personal and intellectual things like learning how to deal with their emotions, which can

possibly crutch their creative potential. Furthermore, through the words of their own voices (thinking out loud), I feel at-risk youth can start to think about who they are as individuals. For instance, a child that does not like to speak in front of the public may discover they are more introverted, and that awareness may inspire and help them to work on becoming more social. In my own opinion, this approach may also be the key to helping them free up their negative mental space and replace it with their creative potential. As I mentioned earlier, poetry helped me run away from my negative emotions that basically almost robbed my very soul and reversed them into optimistic and positive emotions. Our minds become broadened when positive emotions connect us to creativity, but our minds become detrimental to our creativity when our negative emotions occur, because our focus then becomes very narrow (Kaufman, 2015). Since I view creativity as having no limits when it comes down to serving its purpose this project also gives descriptive details on a few different other ways creativity can nurturer the minds of our troubled youth as well.

It really saddens me when I see classrooms that are filled with students that have behavioral problems, because it takes so much energy away from everyone who is around, and especially the peers that really want to learn. On the flip side, it also saddens me that I feel like troubled youth seem to be missing something that we as adults have the ability to offer them, and that is the opportunity to express themselves. Having the opportunity for one to express him or herself is something that is very crucial to me considering the type of cold and uncertain world that we live in today. I feel that a child who displays signs of being very troubled eventually may lose their desire to learn, and never show up when their creative potential is ready to arrive.

The Creative Studies program at Buffalo State has really opened my eyes on different ways to creatively strategize, sharpen, and stretch my thinking skills. I have even developed my

own method of operation that I call the triple E process (explore expressions, expand expressions, and expose expressions). I use my triple E method as a direct approach when I am feeling down, and or just simply want to be heard. When I explore my expressions, I try to pinpoint my feelings. When I expand my emotions, I try to think of all the ways I can expand my thoughts through my emotions. Finally, when I expose my emotions, I express my thoughts through my emotions to anyone willing to listen. When I am done with my triple E process, I feel like a wild bird that has just been released from a cage, except it's my emotions that resemble the cage, and my thoughts that have been released. I view a voice to be heard as such a terrible thing to waste, because of the lives it may have the ability to impact in a positive manner. At the same time, I feel a child that holds everything in, and is never given the opportunity to be heard is such a terrible thing to witness as well, because it may cause a sense of hopelessness. In the end no one wins. We all must be mindful in my opinion, to think twice before we make any judgements on this new generation coming up, and of the ones thereafter, because in reality they will be the ones that will be given the key to our future.

Poem 1: Lost

Find me because I cannot find myself

I checked out my mental self and for that reason I will remain on this very bookshelf

Things that I have seen and heard I wouldn't wish upon my worst enemy

Catch me and you will see I have already fallen and don't desire to ever be free

Understand myself and you will see I really dislike this person called me

Doomed from the start and confused about who I truly am or what I really want to be

I get it if you look away and as a result never look back

Nothing I do is done maliciously; It's my thoughts and my mind that I myself often attack

A simple reflection of what happens behind the walls of my private space

I'm immune to destruction and resemble the poster child photo of the child with no face

*So in this moment I see nothing of me that can be fixed
 Like a blackened wall that seeks a rainbow; the colors of my life cannot be mixed
 I say mamma loves me not; as she straps her arm tightly to inject her vein
 Sometimes I just feel like I'm just going insane
 Because mirrors are the only thing that can hear and understand my pain.....*

One in eight individuals between the ages of 16 to 24 in America are not attending school or working, and about 71% of our youth are unable to join the military due to criminal records, lacking basic academic skills, and health issues such as obesity (Bernardo, 2017).

Poem 2: Thunderstorm; Run Quickly

*I can hear the noise say **drip, drip, drip** as the huge rain drops **hit, hit, hit** to my window pane. At this point I cannot see the destruction that it has caused, but as the drops get more aggressive I can hear the sounds go **boom, boom, boom**. I then become overwhelmed with a sudden sense of fear as I feel a soft wet drop begins to shout **roll, roll, roll** gently down my cheek. As I begin to stare out this very window, I begin to feel sympathy for the lives of our youth. In this moment I realize the raindrops have developed into a thunderstorm that produces a fierce sound of **knock, knock, knock** that almost resembles the sound of a lions roar. No longer are there soft noises, and clear innocent rain drops that were once seen as crystal clear. The new raindrops have turned into black hardened rocks that hurt me as I try to stick my arm out of the window, eagerly waiting for the noise to just stop. Suddenly, I finally respond to the noise from earlier and say **hello, hello, hello**. It has finally dawned on me that I am caught up in the middle of these fierce raindrops as if I am caught up in the matrix. I am saddened that I do not have enough buckets within arm's reach to stop these hardened raindrops that appear to be saying **help, help, help**. What can I do to stop these floods from coming in at such a rapid pace? What have we*

*done? Such madness in the sky I cannot help but stare out this very window and think of ways to just **run, run, run**. These seemingly once so soft raindrops begin to resemble that of troubled raindrops, because there is no solid or safe foundation to this landing. So I decided to stay put and come up with plan B. Although there are floods, I suddenly smile at all the joyful raindrops begging me to just come and dance with them on that very playground that I am watching. As the raindrops attempt to **stop, stop, stop** reality strikes, I realize the playground is completely silent, and that the raindrops had left the playground a long time ago. I feel hopeless as I **look, look, look** at that the once so soft innocent raindrops with sound of tranquility that offered us all an image of hopes and dreams. It's insane for me that it is no longer of existence. No rainbows to create or develop that represent colors of a beautiful opportunity **and** second chances. I'm helpless as I sit and try to **listen, listen, listen**. "The lightning is taking them out by the seconds in every part of our community." I feel my ears are at a point where they are saying it is **time to really pay attention, attention, attention**. There are hardly any happy raindrops anymore, because they are drowning by these very seconds as well. We must **focus on what we truly might be missing, missing, missing; before this occurs again and I also feel the need to just mention, mention, mention**. They are drowning from within and may just need to feel verbally liberated. **Can you hear and feel the noise of their silent tears, tears, tears? In what ways might I get you to help me get more buckets? It is time for us all to just stop running; and just face and challenge our biggest fears, fears, fears**. A start that may just keep the raindrops from flooding, might just be a solution or remedy for a mistaken delusion. Sorry for this chaotic mess but these thunderstorms are only going to add to our own undeserved confusion. Let's stand up and allow our voices to be heard, anything is a start when trying to find some form of CPS solutions, that can ultimately lead these raindrops to a beautiful conclusion.*

Schools are trying to come up with solutions to decrease the behavioral problems, that I feel our youth seem to be displaying more and more. I feel creativity can help decrease the number of ARY that have difficulty remaining in the classroom and participating in academic curriculum by giving them a purpose that can fulfill their stimuli in some energetic verbal/physical formality. Torrance stated (1995) "One of the most powerful wellsprings of creative energy, outstanding accomplishment, and self-fulfillment seems to be falling in love with something- your dreams, your image, your future" (p. 131). I chose to do this project based off my love for children and poetry. Whether I am at home or work my love for children is represented every day of my life. I love all children and the ones that cannot seem to connect to anyone seem to have a desire to want to connect with me. I often wonder if there is some unknown emotional connection regarding those deep invisible childhood scars, that only those who have endured such childhood pain can see or sense without the human mind even have the verbal knowledge?

Poem 3: Back then vs. Now

As I watch them point to their cell phones their eyes widen with excitement; so intrigued with what they consider to also be "so trendy." I tell them it is time to read a book and their eyes suddenly become allergic to just the very thought. How sad that I once sat in that very same seat as them. I found words from a book to be delightful to not only my mind, but also my ears; I couldn't get enough because I got lost in those words, and as a result my imagination ran free; Nowadays words from a book seem like pure scribble; a bored dim light that has no purpose, rhyme, or riddle. Too far off into a distant land that only can be reached through what they call wi-fi. I ask myself "Is it too late to reach for them?" As I sit in this corner and begin to cry; I am eager to know WHY, WHY, AND WHY.

When I asked “what are you good at my dear child?” They replied with a blank stare and said “I don’t know.” They then mentioned since you’re the first to ask I would like to mention “In this city we have nothing to see or places to go.” I suddenly reach out and begin to creatively figure out the way’s I can collaborate the old way with the new way, because change is reoccurring rapidly and is eternally stuck in our lives forever and ever....

I find this new generation of children to be very interesting and sharp little beings. I compare them to the times when I was young, and they seem much more aware, alert, and do not seem to have any problems voicing their personal opinions whether good or bad. I laugh at the very thought of what adults were probably thinking of my generation. Although my discussion is more directed towards ARY, I decided to put twist and turn on my narrative, because I am indirectly speaking for the lives of all children as well. I decided to conduct it this way, because my journey maze reflects a journey that has the intent to keep an open mind to all things and people as well. In life, I feel as we go about our daily routines we are a reflection of scattered events and thoughts. For instance, when we step out of our homes and out into the world we interact, react, respond, assume, forget, remember, question, answer, explore, and express. Also, whether it be very simple, brief, and or long-term, I feel things as simple as the quick eye contact that we make with the people sitting next to us at traffics lights throughout the day are scattered events. Our brief conversations we have with strangers as we are grocery shopping is another example I would personally consider to be scattered events. In my opinion, as a result these scattered events create scattered thoughts and create moments in our daily lives. Although I am specific on ARY, as I had mentioned earlier I wanted this project to represent how I feel about how alive the unique openness to creativity is, and in a scattered way. For example, I feel it is important to keep an open mind that even children who never display troubled behavior may need

to be heard and given opportunities to express as well. For instance, I feel even if a child is okay and has a perfect home life, expression is expression just like a child is a child. I also personally feel, creativity does not want us to limit ourselves to one thing, because it wants us to explore and expand our thoughts into an innovative mindset, think outside of the box. Creativity to me allows us to put the pieces of the puzzle together even if the pieces do not a match. Sometimes when things are not meant to match or fit, I feel creativity creates a way for us to work around that factor, and in the end allow it to make perfect sense.

Poem 4: I Know

I see it in your eyes you are already broken

I see it in your walk you don't where to go

I hear it in your voice you don't know what to say

I know when the storms hit they come all at once and in every single way

I know why trusting is not a resemblance of your character

I know life seems to be like boxing barrier after barrier

I know dreams are of no content to your thoughts or mind

I understand your thoughts of just wanting to give up at times

I also know it's because the ice seems to crack every time you try to get to the other side

When you look again you will see you finally arrived because that is what happens when you do not run or hide...

Most of the poems in my project were written at different places, and times. Some were written in my car, on my breaks at work, in my bed at night, at the park, and in my backyard. Whenever I felt the need to write I just did. I chose to stop and write these poems wherever I happened to be in that moment, because I wanted the reader to really take this mental journey maze with me. I also wanted the reader to hear the voices of the youth that I have encountered in my life, and my personal thoughts through my own personal observations.

Poem 5: HEAR ME?

My energy runs me away from my emotions and my loud laughter is actually a cover-up from all the painful noise that scribbles all over my thoughts that run me away from myself. I tried to erase them, but the markers were permanent. Do you have any suggestions? I know your listening, but did you really hear me?

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to put myself into a vulnerable space. I wanted to share a piece of me along with my experiences working with youth not only from the present but the past as well. I also wanted to take a risk and just pretty much put myself out there for my project, because to me that is what creativity is all about. I have lost a couple of pages to my life book, and sometimes even considered myself too crazy to understand my own chapters, but I kept reading along anyway. Eventually, I led myself to a chair sitting in front of a mental health counselor that helped me get over some things that I really needed to get over. Eventually, and thankfully, I was able to polish up my life book, and even put a spell check on my very own name.

Not too many people get me, because I admit to having several different personalities. At times I can be the funniest most outgoing person you ever met, while other times I can be very distant and introverted. The introverted side to me usually occurs when I am what I call “deep thinking.” It is in those moments of my “deep thinking,” that the scattered thoughts begin to race my mind, and the only two friends that are able to understand me is the pen in my hand and the paper that I begin to write on. I have never really shared my scattered thoughts, and invisible

scarred emotions, with anyone until now. Thanks to the Creative Studies program at Buffalo State College, I am able to feel fully confident about who I was, and the person that I am becoming.

I chose to travel all over different place, as I mentioned earlier on things like an unopened piece of mail in my car, and even a cereal box! Whatever was available for me to write on I just simply put it to some use. That is how I deal with my own creativity. While there is no real noise, I create divine music from within with a simple melody to stimulate my mind. When I am all done, I express my lyrics for ears to hear the same divine music I not only heard myself, but also created.

My intentions are to invite the reader into the mind of person who like myself expresses poetry without any limits. I fall in love with words, and love to create and catch phrases that do not make any sense but make sense. Really good poetry to me is something that is not meant to understand, but can be understood when you open up your mind. That is why I compare poetry to scattered thoughts all the time. I have been writing poetry for over twenty years now. I love the mystery of poetry, and the way it ignites my brain with a reflective journey of abstract asymmetrical thoughts that elevate my mind into a deeper sense of purpose. Whether the purpose resembles that of a person having a psychotic episode or pure and fun humor, I feel poetry can take us where ever it wants to take us. It is like standing in line waiting to get on a rollercoaster ride to me except you do not know to expect. For instance, with poetry you can read the title, and guess what the poem might be about, but the poet who wrote it might actually take you on an entire other journey. There might be emotions that you were not expecting to jump out at you, and or you might be left with a connection that you really were not expecting either. I feel it defines and resembles the care-free side to me. The side of me that is very spontaneous, adventurous, and full of surprises! There are no guidelines to follow or rules to surrender to when it comes down to

writing poetry in my eyes. I intentionally chose to jump around from a story to visual imagery, to a poetry session, to a story line etc. My intentions are to show the reader just how insane, yet beautiful my scattered thoughts can be when my poetic words are written out on a piece of paper. I wanted these scattered thoughts to also reflect the caged in mental and emotional rollercoaster ride that I go on every day of my life. I find beauty in the littlest things that in my eyes the average person will usually seem to look over. For instance, a small ant that runs along the sidewalk with a little piece of bread, or the very seemingly wise old man that stands alone with a cane at the bus stop. I feel they are secret representatives of the silent creatures that breathe air just as we do. They find small creative ways to find space and survive in such a big world that they view as being filled with lots of noise, constant movements, and both stable and unstable reactions and responses. The highs and lows of the verbal mental chaos that I too find myself a part of. Yet, tranquility seems to find me when such experiences are able to get lost and expressed through scattered words written out left to be understood to some, and not to others. Hence, just like I feel going fishing serves the purpose of catching fish, I believe reading poetry serves the purpose of diving deep into the water to catch the purpose.

The more time I mentally surrendered myself to the Creative Studies Program, the more I began to understand myself as a person. The self-evaluation plot thickened as each semester got closer and closer to the end for me. I had to ask myself a few times “Are you really just crazy?” The ironic part about that question that often runs across my mind is crossing paths as I did my research on author and researcher James Kaufman. James who has been studying creativity for over twenty years, found creativity to be linked with mental illness, and especially that of female poets (Kaufman, 2017). I was stunned when I first heard these findings but instead of taking things personal, I simply learned more about his idea, and compared my actions, thoughts, and

took some notes. Only to sit back and say to myself “Yes you are often depressed, full of energy, bright, sad, emotional, upset, outgoing, and isolated, and all within one day.” With all this information I honestly became a bit depressed, but then I realized that it is okay to be misunderstood, and it is okay to be crazy enough to share my craziness with the world! Hence, that is what being a part of this universe is all about right? Living and not just existing, being you and feeling liberated about every aspect of your very existence. If I am crazy, I am a good crazy because I embrace being human with imperfections.

I have a passion and love for kids all over the world, and if I can help one child overcome their negative thoughts and emotions through self-expression then I am satisfied that I have done something right in my life. Students have said to me as they find me very humorous “Ms. Crews your crazy,” and then they say “don’t ever change or leave us!” I know it is due to my willingness to surrender to my position sometimes, and show kids it is okay to relax, and just be free. Free from societies expectations, free from rules, and guidelines. I feel when I show students the real me, I am showing them we are actually not robots in a structured environment, but just human beings at its finest! My mother tells me very often that I talk too much, and I simply tell her it’s because I been through a lot and maybe I just simply might have a lot to say. She then replies with “okay tell me more!”

Project Description

To start out I did some research on poetry. My thoughts on what I discovered was very similar to how I myself view poetry on a personal level. For instance, I have always viewed poetry as expressions without guidelines or boundaries, and that’s what made me decide to conduct my project the way I did as well. I also volunteered my time to work with students, not just to help them with their work, but also had regular conversations with them. For instance, I

would ask them questions like “What do you think you are good at?” If they said singing, I would make them sing me a song or two. I had a lot of smiling and blushing faces with the singing responses, but it was fun and a very delightful experience. Some had such beautiful voices that I had to show them the chills on my arm after they sang for me. I would notice that they would start out singing really low, but the more I complimented them the more confident they became, and I made them sing louder. One student in particular had such a beautiful voice I almost shed a tear, and so did she after I explained to her that she had a voice that the world needed to hear. Other students would dance, and or draw me something only to tell me to keep their art work as a gift. I tell you, I really felt a lot of appreciation from the students during this volunteering time with them. Their eyes would light up with excitement, because they seemed flattered at the idea that I wanted to get to know more about them on a personal level. I also observed a sense of comfort as well, because it was as if I made their day. That was one of the biggest highlights of my entire project. I felt so much love as I watched myself make students laugh, and some almost cry. The talent that I witnessed made me realize just how creative these kids are in this world today, and I only had the opportunity to work with just a limited amount of them. I can only imagine what creative talents other kids in this universe have that I was not able to witness. I am sure half of them deserve for the world to hear, and or witness their creativity as well. I also did a poetry jam session with a group of students called the “All you need is 1 mic: Poetry Jam session.” Since I view poetry as a very close relative of music, I created a space afterschool for student to just walk up to a mic and show off their talents. Finally, I did a poetry session activity with a younger group of students (ages 11-13) called “letting you the students be the critics,” which allowed them to be critics of two of my poems that I wrote. I wanted to show them they mattered enough for me to value their opinions. I also wanted to give them the opportunity to reverse normal student/teacher

roles by getting their feedback, reaction, and response to my work. They loved this experience, and boy did they break their necks trying to give me their feedback! Later on, I will get into my poetry jam session and experience with “letting you the students be the critics” activity. I cannot express it enough how much fun this entire experience was working with some of the greatest group of students I have ever met. I will forever appreciate those very same students, and school staff members that allowed me to make things happen for my project.

Section 2: History and Inspiration

Poetry is the Rhythmical Creation of Beauty in Words
-Edgar Allen Poe

History

2285-2250 BCE – Enheduanna (daughter of Sargon the great) is earliest poet known with a recorded name. While there is no proof of Sargon and Enheduanna being blood relatives, there is proof that Sargon admired and trusted Enheduanna so much that he gave her a high priestess position in the city of Ur (the most important temple). Enheduanna is recognized for creating the paradigms of poetry, psalms, and prayers that were used in the ancient world. Eventually this created the genres that are used today in modern society (Mark, 2014).



Figure 2. Enheduanna.

From the Greek *poiesis* meaning “making” or “creating,” poetry has been around for decades, and was used to record cultural events or tell stories in prehistoric ancient times. “Epic of Gilgamesh” is one of the oldest poems to survive and was written as early as 3000 BC (Hess, 2018). After I did my research, in my opinion I found that historical poetry had a “specific” goal and message to emphasize. For instance, it seemed in earlier times poetry to me was either geared toward biblical and spiritual purposes or the purposes of theatre/role-play. I also felt satisfied that poetry has since then seemed to have stepped away from targeting specific messages and goals to a more intoxicating purified freedom to express, and without any limitations or guidelines for any purpose, group or population. Simmons (2014) mentioned how poetry allows teacher’s to show students how to write, read, and understand any text, because it fosters empathy and trust within the classroom. He also goes on to mentioning that it is an alternative route for students to take that do not like to write essays. I personally feel poetry has become very trendy regarding expressing personal thoughts, and especially in the music industry.

My Inspiration

My idol Maya Angelou is the woman that inspired me to continue my poetry when I first began writing in the 1990's. From "I know Why the Caged Bird Sings" to "Still I rise." Maya is truly the apple of my eye. I feel she is the true definition of what self-expression should not only look like but feel like. I also feel she represents how I just mentioned modern day poetry seems to have taken on more of a liberated approach. Maya is such a beautiful woman inside and out to me, I feel she defines the natural beauty of struggle, and survival. I admire her so much, I even have a tattoo of what I consider one of her best written and most popular poems (Figure 1; Still I Rise) tattooed on the calf of my inner left leg. I use my tattoo as a daily reminder to keep pushing forward despite of every negative thing or challenge I have had to face in my life.

Section 3: Follow Me this Way

Poem 6a: To My Girl Maya Angelou

*When your name first crossed my eyes
I thought to myself "who is this woman that seems to be of some disguise?"
Her name; her look; just has me mesmerized
I need to find out more about her name; Only to find you in the National Women's Hall of Fame
From there I was floored with your imagination
Your reflections on pride, abuse, and even discrimination*



Figure 3. Maya Angelou

*Your beautiful impact on people of color in this very nation; A true inner beauty of God's creation
Maya I have laughed your laugh through my pain
I have beat the odds despite the rain
I wish you were here to hear my story
I know you're in heaven giving your blessings and sharing your glory
They have tried to knock me down while I was already down
But I learned from you to smile anyway every time they try to make me frown
To show them I will not shut-up, or just stay in my lane
Humble dignity becomes my weapon; I have no eagerness to put them to shame*

No bitter or sweet; Cuz love and humanity have nothing to gain

*I swear to you Maya sometimes I feel like I'm going insane
It is your delightful voice I begin to hear as I try to avoid their spitefulness and deceitful lies
As I remove myself from ignorance at its best; I smile and say to myself "still I will rise!"*

Poem 6b: "In That Moment" as a Child: Part A

*In that moment we locked eyes as if we were frozen in time just me and her.
As me and my siblings all sat in the back of that old beat up pick up she only locked eyes with me.
At just nine years of age many mixed emotions had come over me in that moment.
I thought to myself; run as fast as you can, and don't you dare look back.
As she dove into my eye sockets I only had seconds to ask why and what if?
I wanted her to be okay; I wanted to know that she would survive in the wilderness all alone.
That narrow road that seemed like eternity I could still remember it like it was yesterday.
The sight and smell of the fall leaves that surrounded me.
The eerie sight of the trees that seemed to swallow us up in that moment.
I felt happy that she would suffer no more at the hands of an abuser.
I knew her pain and suffering because it smothered my universe.
She was lucky; she was getting away.
As our frozen moment begins to thaw out I hear the wheels crunching along the gravel road.
In that same moment her four legs begin to move in the opposite direction.
My heart falls out of my soul because I knew this was it. Our final departure had arrived.
Her eyes lost me in that split second of a moment.
But her wagging tail told me she was excited to finally be released from such ugliness.
As she took off running into the unknown I wanted to jump out and disappear with her.
The long slow silent ride home seemed like eternity.
my imagination replaced the pain.
A little girl ran away from her negative environment.
Through the darkness of life and into the woods she stumbled upon my four-legged friend.
She learned that she was my age as well and they comforted each other the same way we use to.
They had both become each other's angel in disguise.
Together they clicked their heels and began to repeat "there is no place like home."
From that point on her and the little girl lived out their lives happily ever after with a loving and nurturing family.*

She never forgot me; the only girl that washed, fed, and showed her love when she had no voice to explain her pain.

Traumatic experience blocks me from saying her name, although I do remember it.

I wonder if she too created a Happy ending for me "In that moment".

Come take this exciting journey into nature with me. Let's sit under the tree, incubate for a second, as we watch the children at play. Turn on the music, and together let's practice some mindfulness. Do you ever try and hear the sounds of life? The birds chirping flying high and low as their curiosity keeps forming a steady flow of a rhythm that resembles the steady beat of a child's energy who is discovering play for the first time. Can you feel it? The wind is soft, and tranquility has captured my stillness. Can you smell it? The smell of life, and my five senses have finally been awoken by the sounds of my creativity alarm. I have sniffed away the bad, the bitterness, the hurt, the pain, and even the ugly, and as a result my next Aha Moment has just occurred! When we arrive we will see if we are any closer to where our final destination will be, and if the dots connect we have accomplished our journey maze correctly without getting lost.

I have suffered in silence. I have given up on my dreams. I have had times life has seemed to have given up on me. I even found myself a few times in the lost and found bins that often sit off to themselves in the corners awaiting for their rightful owners to arrive. Poetry, my creativity, my own piece of divinely created art that allow my words to be spoken of found me by connecting my emotions and expressions to a pencil and a piece of paper....

Two patient adult educators that carefully discovered something in me that I eventually was able to discover in myself helped my broken wings fly again, and my voice chirp a sound of sweet melodies. I now feel creativity can be used as an intervention stepping stone for all adolescents that are being labeled. Most at-risk adolescents want positive relationships, but do not understand what it looks or feels like (Wolfe et al., 2006). A study was conducted on ways

mentors can help the youth by facilitating leisure activities with them. At one point an adolescent that was hanging out on the street corner was asked by an adult mentor for their opinion on way's mentors could help out young kids and this is what he had to say Mutere et al.'s (2014):

I like to write raps. I like to draw. I'm really talented at it. Marijuana doesn't stop me from that. Those are things that I know I have a gift in. It's like everyone else... electronics, computers, whatever the case may be... A mentor can help them get past that problem and help them go somewhere in life... Cause that's what most people feel like they don't have...no life-meaning. You can't just directly say 'no.' You have to explain to them and encourage them to do better **“now”** (p.282).

The articulation in this child's voice I not only heard, but also felt it. I am not sure how you feel, or felt after reading this child's response, but I was drawn into their world through their words. I imagine him or her mentally stepping away from the street corner in that very brief moment and feeling very bitter-sweet emotions. I mention sweet due to someone taking out the time to actually listen to what they had to say. I mention bitter, because they probably questioned whether or not their life would have taken a different turn had someone reached for them a little earlier on before they turned to the streets. *Poem 7: Age 21? I look at my glistening watch; but will my time be up with this world and before I even turn 21? When no one is looking I ask myself is the street life worth the run? Then I look at the father from a distance who walks his son home from school every single dam day; the ironic part is this kid and I grew up in this very same place where the playground was where we would always play. He stayed on the straight and narrow and we drifted apart. Same world and different upbringing; I predicted both our futures from the very the start. Then a thought crosses my mind and I say to myself “My dad didn't care when he got popped for killing a man with an illegal gun. I mean really why should I care if I make it 21?” As*

I stand on this very corner it becomes a satisfaction to know they look at me and probably say "look at him like father like son."

If you notice they mentioned marijuana not effecting their creative abilities. I feel that moment captioned their perception of feeling judged, while at the same time they continue on using magnificent and very articulating vocabulary. I feel the average person might drive pass this very child hanging out on the street corner every single day and say to themselves as they lock their doors "what a shame." The ironic part to me is the scenario in itself. The person (interviewer) that did not just drive by this particular child that day, and actually stopped and took the time to walk up to them and hear what they had to say. The last three words the child said, "do better now," reflects a strong ironic message to me, because when he said "now" it was kind of like him saying indirectly "If you do not reach out "now" them same kids might just end up eventually like me right on this street corner." Hence, I feel looking on the outside in regard to where a child may be heading only signifies the start of empowerment for our youth if we as adults stop, look, and extend our ears to listen. I feel if someone had come to this child with the same approach I just mentioned, they may have stood more of chance and walked to their school bus stop, rather than the corner of their street. The image that I get when I think of a child on the street corner makes me think of the term "dead end street," because it ironically resembles where a child is headed that chooses to live that type of life style.

Poem 8: They had No name

She had no name. She sat and waited around for something different. Something different like for a reason to live. Today is different because she has a place to be and the world will know her situation, but not her name. As she stares out the window she questions the blank noise in her thoughts. As the cars zoom past her eyes begin to fill with tears. The second heart beat

inside of her grows stronger by the minute, and she wonders if the turnout would have been different had someone heard the beat of her broken heart through her eyes that once were so vibrant and full of innocent youthfulness. If only for one second someone had reached out and heard her silent cries. Maybe even seen her deep secrets that only happened at night time. Those touches as a result ended in pain. She still got up and went to school, and played on the playground, although inside her head she was screaming and enraged with disappointment and this place we call a world. Her innocence was taken without permission, and it remained a secret until another heartbeat developed inside of her. He stands and watches as the world now knows what he has done to her, her innocence, and the creator of her second heartbeat. Those nights when his hands should have remained for the purposes of the woman who birthed her only. She cringes at the very sight of such an ill human being. She imagines plunging something into his back when they take him back to those metal bars. If only in this moment he can feel the same pain he has endured upon her life, her family, and possibly her future. The time has come, and they say to her "It is your turn to speak if you wish," and she bravely takes the stand, takes a deep breath and replies:

"the heart that beats inside of me will have no name when she is handed over; you created something out of pure selfishness and hate; I cannot be reminded of you every day for the rest of my life; You took my innocence, and for a long while I forgot I even had a name; but when you go back into your cage you will no longer have a name; you will have a number.

Eventually my second heartbeat will be given a name, and just as she will be adopted I will adopt a new name. My new name is even more beautiful now. It stands out, it is unique, and it will forever serve me a purpose to unchain myself from this pain you have caused. When I turn

away I will not look back, but I do want you to know my new name as a friendly reminder for you to never forget it. My new name is called SURVIVOR.”

If they do not know what nurturing is supposed to feel like how are they supposed to be nurtured and love themselves or the people around them? How can they be optimistic about their personal circumstances and their futures? Through creative problem solving divergent strategies can empower and identify critical issues adolescents face and finish off with the convergent process that ends with the most realistic and meaningful solution that will have a positive impact on their lives (Wolfe et al., 2006).

Adolescents-21st Century

Gleason (2015) described adolescent years as a time of emotional sparks of passion, a social engagement of collaboration and connection, a novelty-seeking of courage, and a time when creative imagination is ready to explore ideas and options. More than 33.5 million 10 to 17-year olds make up almost 12% of our population, and at least 15% of teens live in poverty (Dryfoos & Barkin, 2014). This is the age where students begin to learn about reasoning, logic, and argumentation as well (Fisher & Frey, 2015). Adolescents these days are also living in a rapidly changing world that is an unstable, unpredictable, and precarious globalized society (Levesque, 2016). With everything continuing to change I feel one thing that does not is creativity, and how we can articulate it into the minds of our adolescents. There is a push for schools to develop 21st century skills, and the main focus is based on three categories of skills: learning and innovation (collaboration, thinking, creativity); technology, media, data (digital literacies); life in itself and career skills (Ball et al., 2016). I feel the need for these skills are

already on the forefront of the entire education system, and we must not forget kids hold the key to our future.

Creativity Through the Art of Play

Poem 9: Play I

As I swung on that swing very slow that day my body was stiff, and the swing barely moved

Misery had defeated my thoughts and robbed my soul

So many thoughts crossed my mind as I watched the children at play

Their innocence spread across that playground like a limited edition of a wild fire

I thought back to my days of their current existence

I missed that smile of innocence so very dearly

I thought to myself there must be a way to get it back

My emotions took over that question in mind very quickly

I went back to swinging slow as the bitter cold was no worse than the pain I had endured

My thoughts were so deep I wanted no one around; not even the children at play

As she begins to run towards me I notice her caramel skin and her unique big blue eyes; my frustration tried to hide from my very non-existent state of mind

She began to pull and tug at my arm as if she wanted me to get up and join her; Hesitant to get up I knew it was my job as the leader to get up, but sorrow had drowned my energy

As my feet move me towards the playground; the air began to run through my veins; oh, the fresh air

My thoughts became a vacuum collecting the dusty emotions; My stimuli began to meet the same stimuli that surrounded me on that very playground

The common behavior of a begging child rang through my ears as she continued to tug at me

Those big innocent blue eyes stole my pain and replaced it with comfort that created a mental space of existing awareness

So, we ran off; through the loops; through the tunnels; as I laugh at my dangling legs hanging over the narrow metal I tightly held on to her as our bodies slid downward creating a rush of energy that became very comforting to my soul

As I looked around I saw the kids laughing at me with eagerness for me to continue on; in the split second of stillness I realized they had noticed my emptiness prior to this very moment; so, in return I smiled and found myself laughing right back

Also, in that moment I saw play as a simple reward to our innocent being; no age, price, color, or smell, just simply life

Something so simple indeed; nurturing to me, you, him, her, them, and us; yes indeed; so rich yet free; that I now find myself smiling swinging high, low, and fast as I happily scream to the children "hurry come and play with me!"

When I hear the word "play" I tend to think of things like joy, laughter, and fun. I feel when troubled adolescents have time for play it allows them to escape from their negative emotions. Children who don't play generally have serious cognitive, emotional, and behavioral disturbances (Gearney, 2001; Rutter and Rutter, 1993). Milgrom (2010) mentioned the themes during role play assesses and invites adults into how adolescents function in the real world and is an indirect way to get usual involuntary students to become voluntary without them even realizing it. I personally feel this is not only similar to, but also a reflection of the creative problem-solving tool called forced connections that I mentioned earlier. The importance of play in my opinion is inevitable for the all lives of our youth, and especially of those who are at-risk. When I was younger sports kept me in tune with the consequences of my actions. For example, I was very quick tempered every school year, but when it was sport season my coaches gave me a steadily reminder that if I did not control my temper, I would not be able to play with my team on game day. As I write this I really have to mention I am sure my teachers were so glad when it was my sports season time. I can laugh now, but I feel horrible thinking back on some of the things I put my teacher's through. Whether they will ever know it or not they most certainly got there revenge, because I now run into those same students that were just like me at times. Sports gave me a purpose, and it made me feel good to know that I was actually really good at something. My

coaches were my heroes, because I felt I built a bonding relationship with them, and they relied on me the bad girl to bring my school some wins. I also knew they wanted the best for me, and I really respected that, and still do to this very day for those very reasons. Time for play to me gives adolescents the opportunity to tune into the simplicity of innocence by just being kids and having fun. It is a fundamental aspect of human nature that provides pleasures through body movement, environmental exploration, achievement, and assist in socialization (Carroll, 1999). Individuals with high negative emotionality tend to react to situations quicker, and display emotional distress more frequently (Haymen et al., 2002). It is in this moment I feel through play adults have the opportunity to indirectly reverse the child's negative emotions without the child even recognizing it. For example, I can recall a time when no one could do anything with this particular student that always threw fits, because he had issues sitting in one spot for what he considered too long (usually 30minutes or more). I happened to be in the gym one day and recognized this same kid running, smiling, and just really enjoying himself. So, what I decided to do was suggest to the administration that maybe they should consider giving him a daily pass to the gym for fifteen minutes or so to allow him to release his energy. I also recommended they give him ultimatums, and consequences. Administration agreed, and within one week this child began to calm down and relax as long as he could go to the gym and play. Milgrom (2010) stated the fun factors in role play allow at-risk adolescents the opportunity to see authority figures in a less threatening way, which also can create a trusting relationship, and allow different issues the child is dealing with to be worked out. Ironically, thinking back I find it interesting that I never really had any issues with my physical education teachers. Running as fast as I could around those tracks made me feel as if I was running away from all of my problems, and the wind was wiping my pain clear. It was in those moments that I created for myself a new wave of energy that really needed

to be restored, and as a result I felt a sense of empowerment. Lavoie (2007) stated the sole antidote to hopelessness is empowerment (p. 67). Gotay (2013) stated:

The integration of games into therapy has become common as counselors incorporate nontraditional approaches to meet diverse client needs. This is particularly true when working with adolescents who are often uncomfortable with traditional talk therapy. The utilization of games creates a less intimidating environment in which clients may be more inclined to explore. Therapy utilizing free play, games, and art activities has been found to be more effective in achieving cognitive and behavioral changes in adolescents when compared with traditional therapy (Paone et al., 2008). Expressing oneself through physically engaging activity creates some distance between the client and the emotion, thereby promoting an increase in rationale processing of emotional events (p.151-152).

After-School programs have made tremendous efforts in helping at-risk adolescents through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Kremer et al.). Due to the No Child Left Behind Act a financial increase for federal funding between 1998 and 2004 went from forty million to over one billion, and in regard to closing the achievement gap for at-risk adolescents in predominantly high- poverty and low performing schools (Kremer et al.). Through my personal experience working with both suburb and inner-city school districts I really admire and appreciate these kinds of programs they are making available to students. Personally, I view it as a space for students to look forward to something other than academics. I feel children are rushed off to school to learn, and when they get home they are rushed off to eat dinner, do homework, and go to bed, just to do the same thing all over again. If play is something that can enrich the lives and minds of our youth, then I feel it should continue to be implemented in our schools. Not only because I feel it is free, but because it allows time for kids to just be kids. We should never

underestimate the power of play, because it promotes creativity and imagination, as well as vital skills including social skills, curiosity, resiliency, and the ability to assess risk (Sher, 2013). The emotional part of our brain (right hemisphere) is free to express because play speaks language of symbolic, artistic, creative, intuitive, and holistic, which also co-exist with the language of the right hemisphere (Schaefer & Drewes, 2013).

Poem 10: Play II

Let the playground be the start of your foundation

Run, skip, hop; hop, skip, run; don't you dare worry about this very troubled nation

Just don't stop

Run, Play, Skip; Skip, Run, Play

Let the dust that flies upon your face be the joy of your aliveness each and every day

Just don't stop

Dribble down the court side and don't hesitate to take the shot

Run as fast as you can and give everything all that you got

Just don't quit

Boogie on down to the music; clap to that natural beat

Let the beat become a motivational rhythm to your mind as you your feet

Just don't stop

Let the smell of nature take you away as you explore

Hold onto to the tides of life each time before you reach the shore

Just don't quit

Play the role of those characters and get lost in the moment

Beat life obstacles like you beat you Xbox components

Just don't stop

If play ever turns to evil always turn the other cheek

Hike that mountain as if it is your last peak

Just don't quit

Listen to the voice of the crowd chant "you can WIN!" "you will WIN!"

In that moment my friend; Laugh like you have never laughed; Play as if you have never played; Skip as if you have never skipped; and just Play child Play

Because when you play the bad is forgotten and you will realize everything will be okay

When you see you never stopped or quit just love yourself even more and in every way

When you sit still to reflect; Fly high my child; fly high; and just continue to fly high.....

Creativity Through the Art Music/Song Writing

A lot of times I feel kids struggle to relate to others, because they have a hard time figuring out who they are, and what purpose they serve in life. Using songs and songwriting allows them to explore themselves, and how to relates to others (Baker et al., 2005). Hence, I am an adult, and when I listen to songs I feel it connects to my emotions. For example, when I am sad I like to listen to music that has a soft melody. When I am happy and feeling a lot of energy I like to listen to fast upbeat music with more of a hardened melody, because it seems to stimulate my energy even more. Baker et al., (2005) stated:

Songwriting increases students' confidence and independence. The production of a song can provide a real sense of achievement. It can help turn around negative ways of relating to others into positive interactions because the work is a shared process and based on the therapeutic paradigm of listening and supporting (p.71).

Songwriting in my eyes allow adolescents the opportunity to not only release their thoughts but also create something new. Creating something new is an act of defiance in the face of destruction' (Smyth, 2002, p. 76). Musical meanings create sensations in our bodies that can lead the imagination to creative ideas, and possibilities far beyond what the norm originally may

have anticipated (Odena, 2012). I feel if sounds/lyrics have the ability to stimulate our thoughts then it may have the ability to positively stimulate a child's thinking process as well. Since some students to me are already considered to be "at-risk" I feel it is worth the risk to discover all possibilities. Mihaly Csikszentmihaly conceptualized the idea "flow of consciousness" also known as optimal experience. It represents the specific state of consciousness that happens when cognition, emotions, and motivation work in an integrated and interactive way as it responds to request from the outer and inner world (Inghilleri, et al., 2014). If you ever been to a good musical performance I feel the artists on the stage seem to maintain a steady flow throughout their entire performance. I feel the same efforts can be applied to adolescents when given the opportunity to conduct group musical performances. Musicians flow with each other through musical conversations as they perform, because they have developed a give-and-take silent language through idea collaboration (Sawyer, 2003). In my opinion, adolescents can learn their skill individually while at the same time learn to communicate through understanding others in their group. Musical therapist Kenneth Bruscia (2012) did a fascinating comparison and mentioned the steady beat of a mother's pulse is like a reflection of how she teaches a fetus early on its lifeline as it relies on the mother's pulse to remain stable. Therefore, I feel the same thing applies to our pulse when we hear musical sounds, and beats. The sounds of music to me signals our aliveness and becomes symbolic to the beats of our hearts. I feel lyrics in music can allow adolescents to say, "hey I can relate to this", and the rhythm and melody just adds to the aroma of their emotions, and the connection becomes a tranquil relationship that has no limits, boundaries, ties, or judgements.

Poem 11: Some Kind of Forced Connection!

As the beat goes on my adrenaline begins to pump steady

Something about that beat

As the beat goes on my fingers say tap, tap, tap

Something about that beat

As the beat goes on my feet say boom, boom, boom

Something about that beat

As the beat goes on a title waves hit my ear drums saying splash, splash, splash

I realize my eardrums are drowning but I ask the waves to keep coming

Something about that beat and I realize my eardrums are drowning

As the beat goes on my head begins to sway back and forth; up and down

Something about that beat

As the beat goes on the waves take my body into twist and turns of circular motion

Something about that beat

As the beat goes on my troubled emotions evaporate as the waves begin to steal my stimuli

When I came up for air I realized I was drowning because I was swimming in paradise

Creativity Through Mindfulness

The times we are living in seem to be moving faster and faster, and as an adult I often find myself asking “where did time go”? Willard & Saltzman (2015) stated young people no longer have the privilege of slowing down, investigating, and learning about their own experience and the world around them through exploration (p.3). Working with high school students I often get caught up in the “hallway” traffic jams in between classes. I find myself in disbelief of how they move so fast they do not even realize I’m an adult sometimes as they bump into me. Mindfulness teaches you to observe your experiences as oppose to feeling attached to it. (Marshall, 2015).

Kabat-Zinn (1994) described Mindfulness as:

Paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally. This kind of attention nurtures greater awareness, clarity and acceptance of present-moment reality. It wakes us up to the fact that our lives unfold in moments. If we are not fully present in those moments, we may not only miss what is most valuable in our lives, but also fail to realize the richness and depth of our possibilities for growth and transformation. (p.4)

I feel exposing at-risk adolescents to mindfulness is probably one of the best gifts an educator can offer to them. Mindfulness allows you to “pay attention” on purpose by facilitating what is good vs. what is not (Ostafin, et al., 2015). It is a powerful technique because of the mental relaxation it offers as you live in the present, and it reminds you to let go of worries from the past, and fears of the future (Ginsburg, 2014). I feel, this is a very good way for at-risk adolescents to learn how to deal with every day-to-day challenges, because it allows them to learn how to move forward no matter what is going on around them. Personally, I feel anything that ties in with creativity has the ability to teach adolescents that we cannot forget our past or predict our future, but “in the moment” of innovative thinking we can be mindful to ourselves and others that all things are possible just may involve using different approaches, techniques, strategies, methods, and formalities.

Poem 12: Just be mindful

Do you mind that I was not asked to be a person of color?

Do you mind that just like you I want to make people proud as well 2; like my mother?

Do you mind that I see and refer to you as a human being; not just an “It”?

Treating someone different due to a different “shade of color” is something I will never get

I am fighting for a life just like you

Be mindful that I am human and when your treating me differently I have feelings to

Do you mind that I view your openness to accepting me as a resemblance of tenuity?
Do you mind that I know your loud laughter is more of a mockery than of pure genuinely?
Do you mind that everyone is watching you; need I say you're on public display
Do you mind; your playground "is not" your playground if open to the public everyday
Do you mind that I admire my imperfections and that's something I just love to say?
Do you mind that your mindfulness is just not okay?
So please just be mindful and especially of others just simply trying to find their way....

Harsh Realities of Our At- risk Adolescents: Through Creativity There Is Still Hope

Risk factors are defined as the individual's characteristics and especially developmental difficulties or environmental hazards that increase his or her vulnerability to experiencing negative outcomes (Margalit, 2010). Human biology gives us the structure of our development, but our psychosocial context like family, birthplace, and community factors influence how we develop and who we become (Steiner & Hall, 2015). Gullotta et al., 2005;2007, stated the problems experienced by youth who do not meet the criteria for internal or externalizing behavior problems may engage in problem behaviors that put them at-risk for becoming involved in the mental health or juvenile justice system or experience future psychiatric problems (p.103). I find it very alarming that 43-56% of students with emotional and behavior disorders (EBD) drop out of school, a rate twice as high as other students with disabilities (Wagner et al., 2005). Nearly one-quarter of teen mothers are likely to be high-school drop-outs and have a second baby before they turn twenty years old, and on top of that suffer from low cognitive ability (Dryfoos & Barkin, 2104). Young mothers have not fully mentally developed themselves, which is very unfair for the innocent babies, because you have babies raising babies. Problems also arise when the adolescent faces envy when comparing "normal" family structures from other peers (Rathus, Miller, & Linehan, 2014). Also, some people that strive for power have surprisingly very low-

self-esteem and are rooted in a feeling of helplessness and inferiority (Lavoie, 2007). This applies to adolescents as well. Working with adolescents I have seen the toughest students turn into soft spoken vulnerable little babies when I am able to pull them to the side and find out the reasons behind their negative behavior. Sometimes when a child is labeled as aggressive I feel it may be due to them being abused at home. The results of at-risk adolescents who are being abused at home is they tend to become abusers themselves, and this can bring forth many negative outcomes (Dolgin, 2010). Creativity relies on confidence, and confidence can allow a student to be understood (Fisher & Frey, 2015). According to a youth risk behavior survey 29% of high school students felt sad or hopeless, and 17% considered suicide while 9% made an actual attempt (Dryfoos & Barkin, 2014). Camiller (2005) stated future outcomes that comply with youth that are at -risk is depression, education failure, addiction, death, poverty, and unemployment. I feel the impact of these results are not only detrimental to parents, teachers, but the entire community as well. Torrance (1972) found that teachers are more favorable over students that are punctual, courteous, and follow assignments. Nonconformity, autonomy, and conventionality are all considered a “troubled student” as oppose to the “ideal student”, but also common characteristics that are associated with creativity (Runco, 2006). Based on her research Dryfoos (1990) stated one in every four adolescents can fall into the “at-risk” category, which creates limited potential for them to become productive adults. I feel, we must not blind our minds to these facts, because this allows us to create way’s for at-risk adolescents to have a chance to still win at life. There is so much at-risk youth can learn early on through creativity and self-expression in my opinion. Creativity includes imagination, experience, emotion, and social-cultural experiences that we all interact with (Ryan, 2015). I feel, it is not only a genius approach to help the lives of our at-risk adolescents, but also one thing in life that is free, and one of the richest forms of self- resilience

that money will never be able to buy. In my opinion, when educators along with other adults become curious enough to take their time with troubled adolescents it allows paranoia to fade away, and trust to develop. At-risk adolescents do not have bad brains, but rather just on alert all the time due to learned unpredictability and internal harm from home life (Craig & Sporleder, 2017). When mental doors open and allow creativity to get comfortable and settle in, I also feel personal growth, and self-driven ambition will eventually begin to show. For instance, during his childhood Scott Barry Kaufman was labeled as a student with a learning disability. Instead of allowing his disability to limit his opportunities he was able to empower himself through creativity, and possibilities became a positive reality for him. He is now an American psychologist, author, researcher and has accomplished so much more. Kaufman himself mentioned that a lot of people have different levels of greatness that far exceed their prediction based in their IQ test scores alone, and multidimensional and multiplicative developmental process should be the way talent is viewed (Kaufman, 2103). This to me proves that if given the correct tools no matter how adolescents are labeled, nothing or no one can truly define, predict, or prevent children from reaching their highest creative potential. Karen Szillat (2013) stated that as teachers and parents, we owe it to our children to allow them to gain self-confidence as they attempt to create, and master new skills as they travel on the road of independence. As a troubled adolescent I needed to be reassured that I mattered. Ginsburg & Kinsman (2014) stated even if an adolescent does not directly experience hardship, they know of others who have and have become aware of the unfairness of suffering. These realities are unsettling as an individual transforms from viewing the world as a child to holding the more complex worldview of adults (p.11). Experience dependence, suggest that depending on the experiences one has will impact different ways the brain is developed. Human development can take many forms; however, children fail to

thrive without certain experiences (Music, 2011). I feel, creativity offers great experiences, because it can enhance an at-risk adolescent perception of themselves, and the people around them. Kaufman & Sternberg (2010) suggested the more we learn about arts and healing, about our own unconsciousness and conscious creative process, and about the bravery that can be involved in creatively facing our depths, the more we can realize our common humanity as well as celebrate the health that can shine through in our resilient creative coping (p.197). This concept can indirectly echo an adolescent's insight as they discover themselves through creativity, because I feel bravery relies on resilience, and innovation. In return, I also feel adolescents can gain self-confidence as well, because it also creates a positive defense mechanism towards negative emotions. Bernard & Shea, (2015) felt emotional strength is needed, because families are changing with times, and we need to recognize times are highly stressful with unprecedented technological changes that are affecting every aspect of our lives. If emotional needs are not being met in the home I feel educators can creatively come up with a way to make sure it is at school. For example, I feel playing sports and writing poetry are also ways that can creatively guide at-risk adolescents along the way. Sports allow adolescents to improve on learning skills, health, mental strength, teamwork, and social skills (Carroll, 1999). I feel writing is a very deep emotional self-therapeutic way to release the thoughts that as I mentioned earlier can often become scattered in your mind and allow your frustrations to become limited. Both indirectly and directly adolescents have been taught to avoid unpleasant emotions, and as a result they do not know how to manage their challenged emotions, which cause negative "behavioral" escapes (Harvey & Rathbone, 2014). I feel creativity is almost like a sweet escape for young kids to take a free vacation away from the guided daily curriculum. I am also a true believer that with imagination anything is possible. Beghetto & Kaufman (2010) stated in the imagination one, can

travel from a stormy day in the midwestern United States to a land where scarecrows dance, lions sing, and magic red shoes protect you (p.322). I am not sure about you but that is a journey I would love to take every day! James & Brookfield (2014) stated alternating verbal and visual modalities, silent and oral ways of communicating, individual and group activities kinesthetic and cognitive activities, and abstract and concrete ways of processing information keeps the class moving forward as it calls on different elements of students' personalities and skill sets (p.39). I feel, one of the most commonly tools used in creative problem solving for both individual, and groups that can also be applied to working with the youth is called brainstorming. Lovoie (2007) stated:

Today's students have become accustomed to being passive spectators as a result of their intense exposure to television, movies, and video games. Activities that encourage youngsters to become intensely involved in creation, gathering, and organization of ideas are useful in motivating these passive learners. As the students become involved in the creative process, they also take more ownership of the material. As they exchange ideas with others, they develop their social, emotional skills on a parallel course with academic skills. In a free-flowing brainstorming activity, points of view are exchanged, ideas are analyzed, and all participants (even the teacher) become active and involved learners. This noncompetitive activity emphasizes teamwork, mutual support, sharing, and collaboration. Many students are reluctant to volunteer responses in class discussion because they fear that the teacher will pose a follow-up question that the child cannot answer. Brainstorming activities eliminate this concern (p.177)

Children require freedom for healthy development (Bernard & Shea, 2015). Through my personal experiences, I feel creativity is all about feeling free to express oneself and all the while

remaining unique in your own simple way. As adolescents learn more about themselves and what their interest are, I feel they rely on that knowledge and develop a better sense of direction. When you guide adolescents into “owning their solutions” you are facilitating a way for them to make their own decisions (Ginsburg, 2014). In relation to Ginsburg’s philosophy I agree, and feel it ties into poetry, because when the youth begin to “own their scattered thoughts,” poetry has the ability to release all of those thoughts and the process of healing, and or possible solutions can occur as well.

Section 4: Project 1 and 2



Figure 4. The Scattered Livingroom.

Poem 13: She Reflects

**Before she is set to leave she takes a look around
She is thankful for the opportunity and wants no sound
This is a photograph of her living room
She is ready and excited like a bride and her groom
The little scattered space with asymmetrical shapes reflects an ironic split-second thought
As she thinks to herself look how hard you have fought
The final moments are finally here
I'm glad you woke up and faced your fear
Fear of the unknown is sometimes good
My past mistakes.... "I wouldn't change if I could!"
It's not what you do it's how you bounce back
I'm the poster woman of no more excuses or reasons to slack
Before I leave this very space, my stomach feels as if it is tied in knots
I'm okay because I stuck to my task statement aka "Abstract" by connecting the dots
I took a leap and risk to try and connect
And indeed, it worked because now I will explain to you my project**

**The flier has went into effect as you can see. My intent is to show these young ones
expression is not only free, but may even help you be all that you truly wish to be!**

*All you need is 1 Mic: Poetry
Jam Session this FRIDAY
Afterschool
In
Cafeteria!*



Are you ready to have your voice be heard amongst your peers? Are you good with your words? Can you rap? Well come join me this Friday after school and share your creativity with us! There will be no judgements made just an open space with a mic for you to feel free and *EXPRESS* ya self! Singers are also welcome. If you need a beat we will be welcoming you to create a physical beat (hands, feet, voice box) to spice up the creativity. There will be no *First, Second, or Third place winners, since you guys are already winners! All I ask is that you keep all words clean and act accordingly or you will be asked to leave. This session will just be about sharing some love and creativity! Nothing more or less. We will have a sign in sheet when you arrive. First come first serve basis regarding the performance line up. I look forward to hearing your voice! Candy will also be given out as a token of appreciation!*

Conducted By: Ms. Crews

Questions or Concerns Email me @: crewssc01@mail.buffalostate.edu

Figure 5. One Mic.

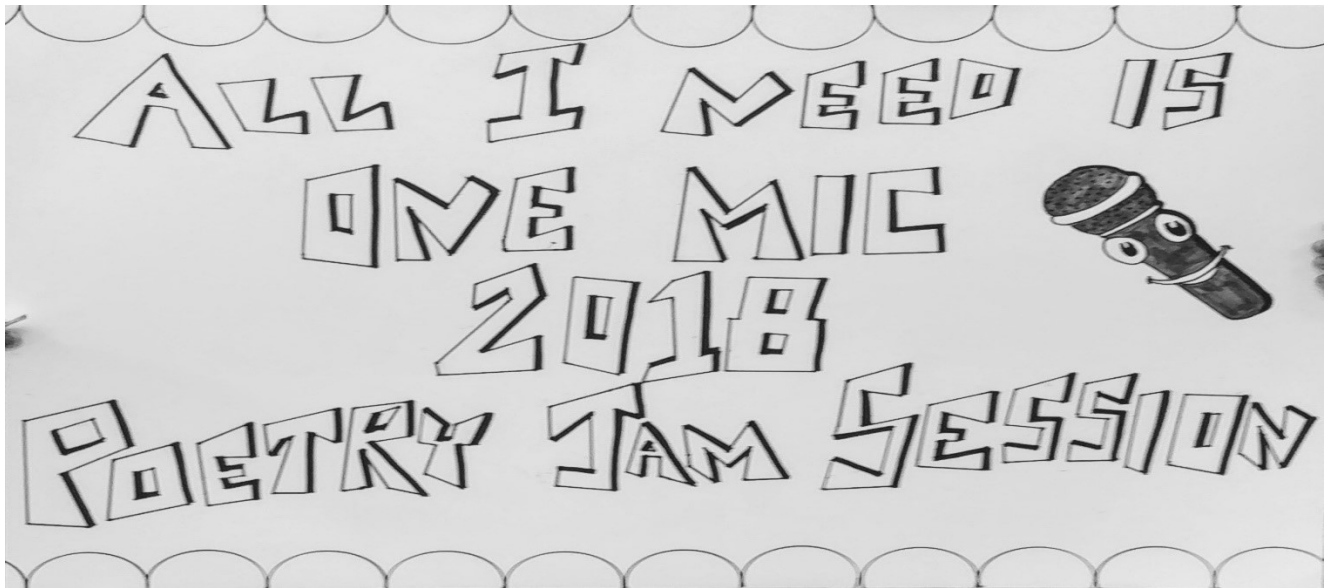


Figure 6. Visual Connect.

The setup has begun, and the space has no noise. No walking, talking, no girls or boys.

Just a picture to display up on the wall; I hope when they arrive they are ready to have a ball!



Figure 7. Empty Space.

As I set up the tables I admire the beauty of the stillness. There is a forced connection to this photo. That is creating space for students to freely express themselves and simply let things go!



Figure 8. Sweet Tooth.

The smell of sweet candy brings in two. I have to remind them it is not time for you. As I smile and laugh at their silly and innocent youthful ways. It brings me back to my Highschool Day's. Before they were gone and out of my sight. I remind them to come back and join us for some funky and fun positive insight.



Figure 9. Set-up man.

The finalization of my project is becoming more closer now than ever. I view the equipment man's object as a visual connection, because it represents how innovation creates things for us to utilize that are so very clever.



Figure 10. Set-up man continues.

Here you see it is coming together. Like knowing what to wear because by observing the weather. I feel so good in this moment because there was a time when I was my own opponent. The love that I have for creativity can't be spoken. International Creative Studies program thanks for be my token. A token that represents a place I was not supposed to arrive to because I was always missing my bus. I reflect on the times when I had no one to talk to, turn to, or even trust. Maybe that is why my expressions were so descriptive and deep. The respect that I have for you guys will always remain deep. I know at times I could be overly impulsive, fussy, and even non-conforming. Ironically, I think to myself those are common characteristics of a creative person as I was just brainstorming.



Figure 11. Standing; "Still I rise."

And so, stands ready to be put to use. I hope with this object the students will release some truths. Oh, how admire this object that just became the clothing to this naked space. I have a feeling the results of this jam session is something I will defiantly embrace and never erase. The noise is getting closer and seems the time has arrived. I see them coming and out of excitement I'm going to slap them all a big high five!



Figure 12. The Asymmetrical Girl.

They are here and as you can see the energy is high. This one told me she doesn't do poetry stuff, but she is good at other stuff. I said well the space is open show me what you got just be careful and not be rough. Just as I said there are no rules when it comes to creativity. It's just pure to openness and it's unique simplicity. This photo is the best from the rest. Why do I say? It resembles that of the Art, visual connections, Asymmetrical shapes, forced connections, and if you notice these are of all the things that I mentioned today. So, in regard to us walking this maze we must be headed in the right direction and going the correct way.



Figure 13. Together they sat-N-sang.

The girl in this photo was too shy to stand and sing. So, I told her to take a seat and being shy is not a problem or a new thing. I wanted her to feel comfortable and she sang the heck out of that song. She sang it so well my eyes tear up and she ask me “what’s wrong”? I say to her “your voice is one of the best that I ever heard,” and you should of every single word!” These kids did amazing as they played, laughed, expressed, and just felt free. My mission was accomplished by showing them it’s okay for you to be you and for me to be me. That’s what’s it is like when you’re dealing with creativity.

I really enjoyed my project with these young students. I admired their trendy new generation personalities. Everything went smooth and that very space seemed to have arrived for me and really served its purpose. I was very emotional at the end when a student waited for

everyone to leave to walk up to me and just Thank me while giving me a hug. He informed me that he really enjoyed himself and that my creative style was just as awesome as I was, and that I was one of his favorites. Some of the students got on the mic, and sang the ABC's, while others pretended to be comedians at a comedy show and shared a few jokes. One girl in particular who rapped for us was undeniably talented. The speed in her raps and rhymes were the fastest I have ever heard. I told all the students they did a wonderful job before they left, and I reminded them all to keep striving with their creative abilities. The last step I took with this beautiful young group students was I had them answer how expression makes them feel whether it be through poetry, rap, or music. Figure 14 is what six of their responses were:

Images that captures those very tranquil sweet escapes. Like a wounded bird and a broken wing that flies again when it hears it's other birds sing...Something like a lovely emotion. Something

like a mutual
verbal love
potion except
there is no
notion.
Freedom to
feel. Something
so real and for
that one reason
poetry is where
I seal the deal.

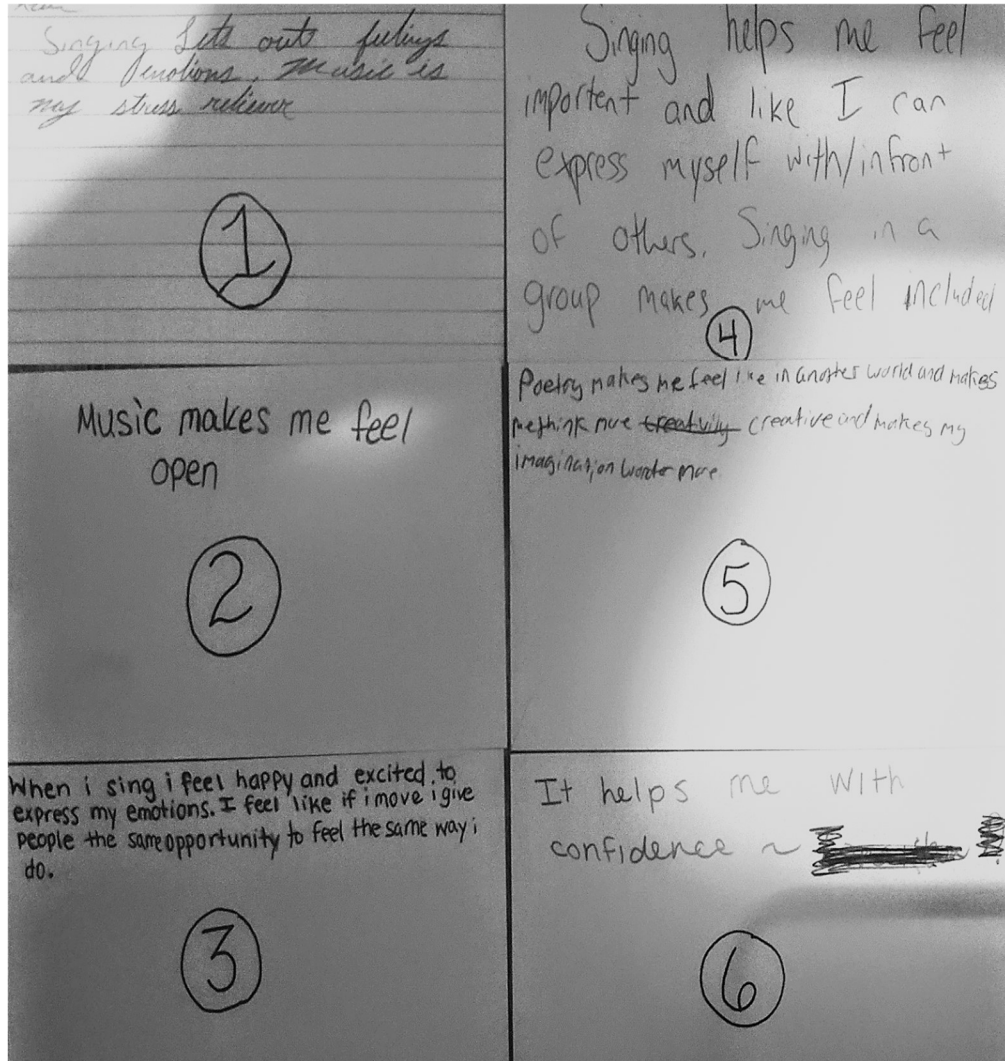


Figure 14. Your thoughts matter.



Figure 15. Blackout.

This was given to me by a student during the project as a gift. She insisted I add this to my project to show how cool poetry really is. This is Blackout Poetry. It reads

Lover her

He stayed

She was going

She stopped

And

Is

Sad

He isn't here

Words from blackout poetry are kept while the rest of the words are colored over. Words can be taken out of any book, magazine, and any other resource that have words. I was honored that this young girl gave this to me, and if you notice she colored in a broken heart. The connection is brilliant with the poem she created.

Project 2: “Letting you the students be the critics” Activity



Figure 16. React.

Poems 9 and 10 (Play I & Play II) swam through the canal of their ears. I had through my expression shared both my emotions and fears. Each time I stopped you could hear a pin drop. Those hands went high as the sky went I asked for a reply. How many of you liked what I read? As you can see what happens when real knowledge is fed. Look at those hands raised so high; felt so good I never wanted to say goodbye. A frozen moment in time that I, Shalisa Crews had actually created; Really made me realize how far I had made it. I had captured the very minds of the young, and the visual art you see in this photo made me realize I had actually won. Won at reaching their favor to both poems and my life story. Words cant express how I felt such glory. This moment for me was more than just exquisite; it was a dream come true to have approval from young minds that had become my lovely little critics.

It has been awhile since I have put myself in a situation where I feel very vulnerable. As I mentioned earlier about how I view this new generation as seeming to be much sharper, and more straight forward I was a little nervous. I knew before I began this activity that it could either go two ways, and that was good or bad. Through my obseravtions as an educator, I just feel kids these day's do not hold anything back, and are pretty honest when it comes down to their opions as well. As you can see I was very pleased with the outcome. The way they responed to my poems after I read them out loud just left me speechless. I had to tell them to speak one at a time when I gave them the oppurtunity to share their thoughts with me. I saw excicement, and even a connection with a few that may have been able to relate to some of things I had read in my poem. The exitement they presented also made me feel like I had touched their little hearts in a way that they were not expecting to even occur. It was as if they had a experiences a mini version of an Aha! moment, because of their reaction from me catching them off guard. When I asked them to write down their response some of them asked if I could help them write a poem sometimes. Ofcourse, you know the answer was yes, yes, and yes! Below in figure 17 and Figure 18 you can read a few of their responses.

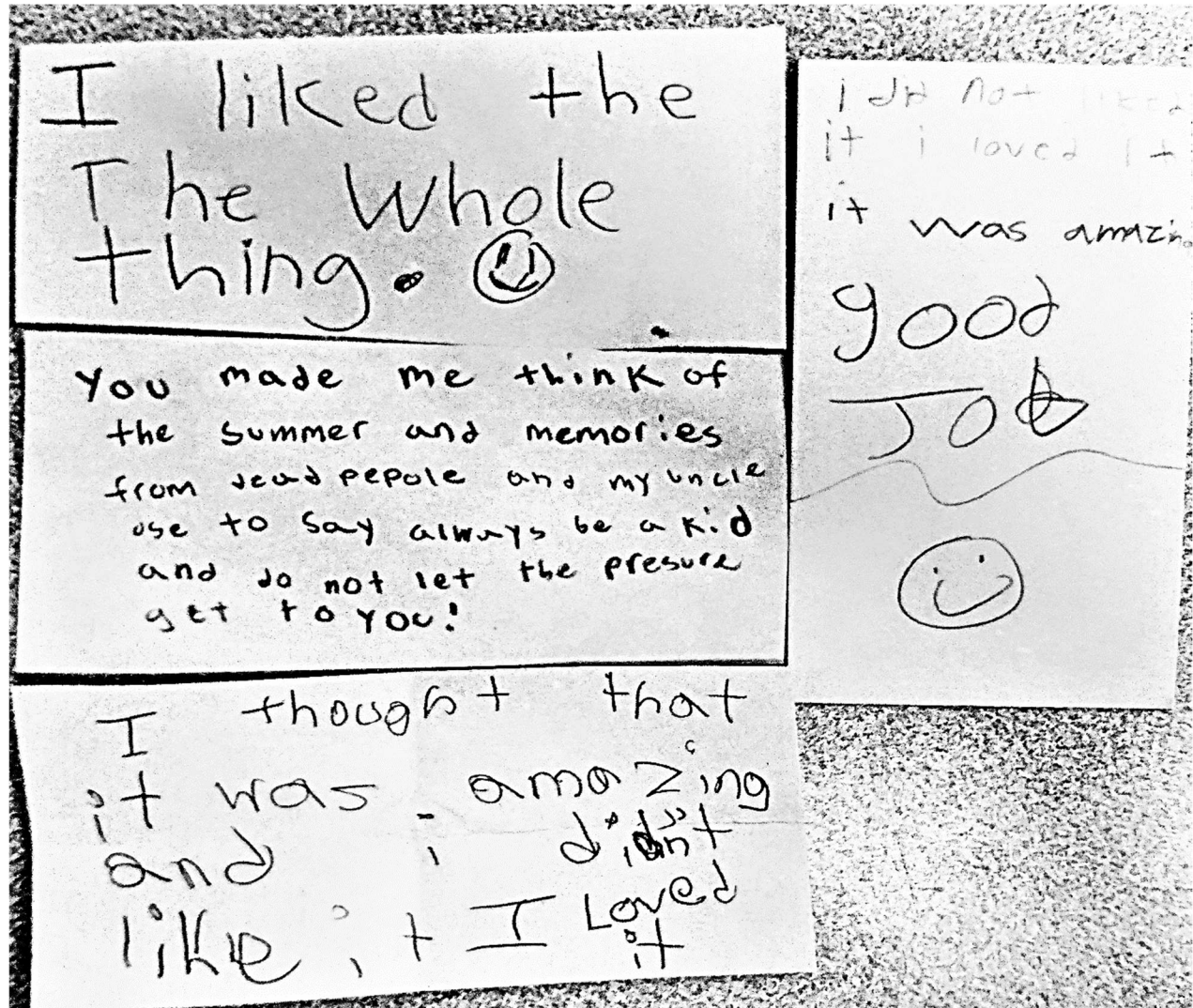


Figure 17. Critics Response 1.

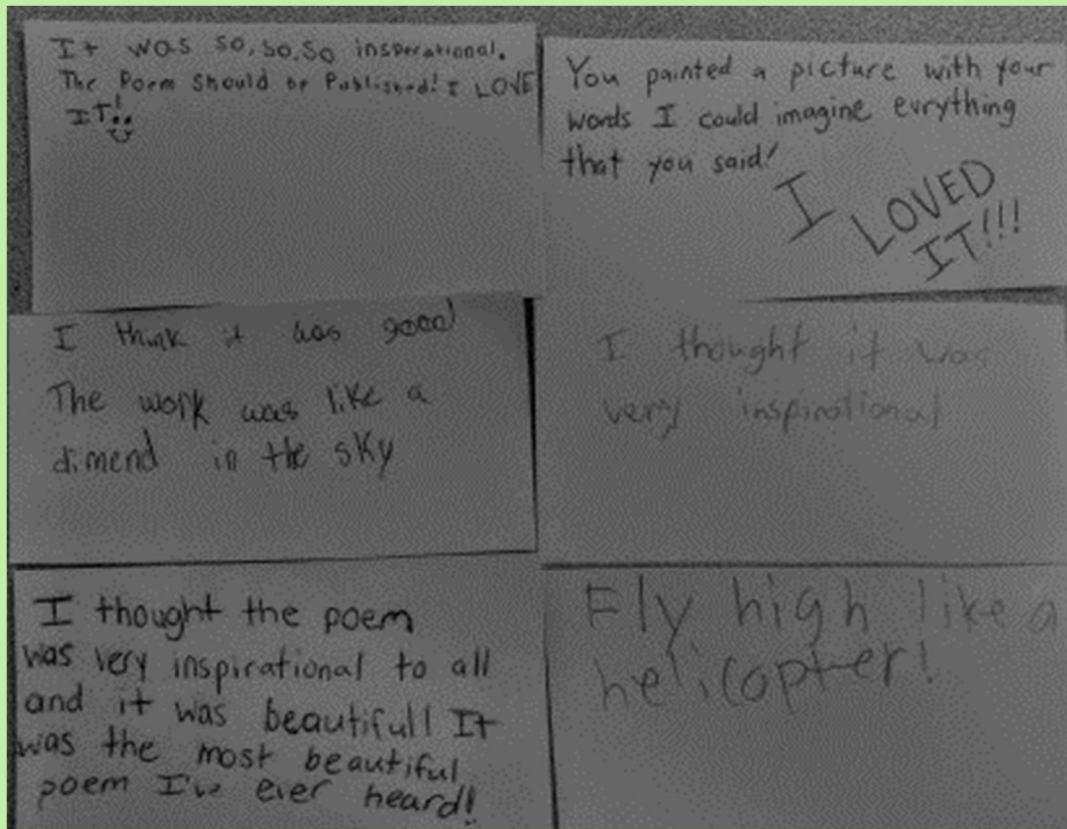


Figure 18. Critics Response 2.

Speechless like I said.... That night after these responses it was difficult for me to go bed. Those kids had touched me heart as well.. Like a good witch with her potion their responses had hooked me with their innocent little love spells!



Figure 19. A symbol of love.

This very photo was taken by me. Awhile after the activity I let the kids go outside and just run free. As they played I just stayed out of their way and reflected on what had just happened earlier in the day. As I stood there all alone a student walked up to me and had such a beautiful thing to say. “You are the best Ms. Crews”, and in the cutest little way. This is the main reason I have so much love for kids, and for there safety I would walk a mile. If you notice the odd flower of the bunch is no different just a little unique style. I view it as me and the messages that I speak. Love gives us permission to keeps us strong; Hate gives us permission to keep us weak. Through this entire project I completed my mission. That when it comes down to the youth I just want us adults to STOP, LOOK, AND LISTEN. These kids need to know no one will never be a perfect human being, and that their creative selves will always be worth the entire world seeing! The one odd color also represents me. I am unique and have faced many struggles just trying to be all I can be. It takes struggle to make progress, and that’s a message I want for the world to know and see!

Love is the only emotion that can make us cry, play, sit, listen, laugh, jump, run, hop, skip, hurt, scream, shout, and most of all *express in one still moment....*

POEM 14 (Connected To Part I Of Poem 6b):**“IN THAT MOMENT” AS AN ADOLESCENT**

*The transition; the heart beats heavily; pounding and eating away at my **winning thoughts**.
In that moment innocence begins to fade away.
Everything has become a fog that follows me everywhere.
How can I get away from such madness?
I have become hardened by this place called life.
I buried her in that moment; The dirt in my mind had crumbled my soul.
Why me? What did I do to deserve this life?
Home became a place I wish not to consider.
That four-legged thing was one of my many triggers.
Labeled as an at-risk adolescent became my educational diagnosis.
How dare they? These small band aids will never heal or cover these internal scars.
Fresh wounds that only surf board on my thoughts like waves without an ocean I was lost at sea.
That once soft and bright girl no longer existed, and my thoughts became a hurricane of mental chaos.
Two angels crept into my path like white doves being released into the sky.
My funeral then became an **innovative construction site**; My journey creatively became theirs.
I was awakened by the rumors of what my life could be; Their very presence; the sweetest new smell of life.
Patiently peeling away all my hurt and pain; discovering me as I discovered myself.
Caution arises as I am immune to many disappointments.
But they stay anyway; **Love me** for what; I am a nobody.
They creatively articulated my strengths and weaknesses by mentally birthing creativity into my mind.
What a beautiful moment; A beautiful moment yes indeed...*

*Tormented memories became my drive to **think outside the box** and **strive to do better**.
 In that moment I found a way to **escape my pain**; tranquility had become my mental reflection,
Resilience abducted that at-risk girl and she escaped that chaotic mental hurricane.
 I often thought to the moments that **allowed** me time with her as I discovered creativity.
 I wonder if her eyes fixated on **me** because I the nurturer got her through those rough times?
 I wonder if she **to** creatively dug me out of that grave with her paws, so the angels would **discover me**?
 I wonder if she created a **Happy ending for me as well** in that moment?
In this moment; **this very second** of my moment; there is no hesitation to say her name was Sabrina.
 In this moment I must say Thank You; **Creativity has saved my life...For I am SOMEBODY.***

Poem 15: Arrival

*You want me to **arrive**, but no one ever showed up
 You want me to **arrive**, but I was never told to get up
 You want me to **arrive**, but I never have clean clothes
 You want me to **arrive**, but I been giving up due to empty promises
 You want me to **arrive**, but I didn't have a coat to stay warm
 You want me to **arrive**, but I had holes in my shoes
 You want me to **arrive**, but I have no one to take me
 You really want me to **arrive**? Well take be by the hand **and show me** the way cause I have no idea where or how to show up*

POEM 16: SUNSHINE?

***I want to shine like you shine**
It just isn't that easy
I want to give like you give
My world just aint that kind*

I want my voice to be heard just like you

Where I'm from nobody listens

I want to be just as successful as you

Nobody around me made it out

I want to talk with intelligence

I will probably be made fun of

I don't want this dark dim place anymore

Please wake me up from this drawn out nightmare

Maybe if possible enlighten me and guide me to some sunshine?

Poem 17: Tap

Tap me once I might turn around

Tap me twice I might tell you to go away

Tap me three times I might not be able to look you in your eyes, so I will ignore you all together

Tap me four times my anxiety might get in the way of my voice speaking

Tap me five times I might become skeptical of your true intentions

Tap me six times I just might consider I might just actually be worthy of your time....

Did you find it? To seek may just help us discover the smell of sweet roses. Do you feel it? The feeling of love that is too powerful for explanation. Can You smell it? The flowers have bloomed, and the grass smells good on both sides of the fence. They run in that same grass, as they laugh with one another. They are in their comfort zone without a care in the world. The playground stimulates that goodness that is always alive and present within them as their creative potential just awaits to be stretched to no limits. They do not realize they are already worth it. Help me help them find their way, because we do not have much longer for before our maze ends. We have watched the kids at play, listened to some music, practiced some mindfulness, and I feel great. I feel free from caring about if I am misunderstood or not. In this moment I wish upon them to be of that very same mindset. Using the statement starters convergent tool, I have an idea on how to start trying to fix things. Instead of saying “these teenagers these days are horrible” I have decided from this day forward to say things like “It would be great if we could possibly take children on journey mazes as well.” After all, it may just allow them to seek some novelty, defer their own judgments against themselves, and come up with a lot of different options that can turn into some life changing solutions, and have a positive impact on them for the rest of their lives.

Section 5: Marquita - Divergent and Convergent

Follow Me: (Hint) The Bold Black Is a Divergent and Convergent Area: We Are Getting Closer to the Exit

There was a beautiful story that I ran across and it stuck to me because it really represented how divine Creative Problem Solving truly is in regard to helping the lives of our youth. It was about a young teenage girl named Marquita Sanchez that lived across the street from the library. Marquita never really considered the library a place where she really wanted to ever be. ***The Challenge:*** It just so happened her friends were in question by the librarian for continuing to loiter on and around the libraries property.

Instead of trying to take disciplinary actions against these teens the librarian decided to pull the teens together for a meeting. **Task Statement:** *The librarian was curious to find out in what way's the library could become of use to her and the kids in the community.* Although Marquita was not one of the teens in question she just so happened to join them out of interest.

Divergent Phase: While there the librarian took to Marquita, and asked her to become a volunteer for them, and help them put together a teen advisory group. As a volunteer Marquita had to ***come up with different ideas*** to keep teens interested in coming to the library.

Convergent Phase: Eventually the advisory group developed into a group called Club Beat that involved (***Solutions***) the teens coming up with their own teen blogs, open mic events, poetry groups, art classes, and (***team building***) even tutoring for the younger kids. This group not only began to conduct their own (***independence***) teen meetings and gatherings (***social skills***), but also (***innovation***) organizes events for the community.

Results: The librarian spoke highly of Marquita, and how unlike adults she gave other teens an opportunity for their voices to be (*expression*) heard and brought the teens together. Eventually the librarian offered what she called a creative leader, self-starter, and very bright Marquita a part-time job (*opportunity*) that Marquita gladly accepted. In 2005 Marquita did finish Highschool (*motivation and confidence*) and went on to college where she is taking classes for library technicians to potentially become a librarian, while at staying involved with her other passion which is dance. Marquita remains the President of Club Beat and hopes that she can be a prime example to the youth on how hard work (*Success*) eventually pay's off when you keep striving (Frank, 2006).

Poem 18: Ugly Into Pure Beauty

When you see me, and I don't see myself don't turn away or immediately make judgment on the clothes that I wear or the slang that I use. Teach me how to speak proper and take me by the hand. Maybe I am just a product of all that I myself did not choose to be a product of. I don't know any different. I am surrounded by this stuff each day and honestly, I don't care to wake up as a result; Nothing to smile about or look forward to. Will you show me a different world? Make yourself available to me, and give me a reason to feel alive?

In return I will ARRIVE, and our products together will become so rich that money will not be able to afford to buy. Pure Beauty.

Poem 19: SCAMPER

Substitute viewing of a child's ignorance with maybe they just might be hurting.

Combine tough love with some TLC.

*Help the child **A**dapt to a tranquil mental space.*

*Help them to **M**odify their perspectives with a more positive view.*

*Expose them to the idea that their anger can be **P**ut to other uses.*

***E**liminate a child's hopelessness and create options.*

***R**earrange those options and help that child come up with some solutions.*

Poem 20: Star

It fell on me so many nights

My star eventually started to fall apart and break

My star tried several times to even get fixed but it never did

My star had lost its shine

In fact, my star had even lost its shape

One night I finally asked why it kept falling on me if it really was trying to get fixed

It replied "Because you never reach for me to keep me from falling"

Poem 21: She Dances

She sits and waits

She cries and waits

She doubts herself as she waits

She never pays attention to time anymore

She watches as other people laugh and smile

She is present yet very distant

She is mentally still; yet her two feet are moving

Don't try to love her

She is too far out of touch

She consumes poison to drift away from all her hurt and pain

No one is present to wake her up

She questions whether or not her existence is even worth sticking around

She sits and waits

She is not awake, and nobody will wake her up

She observes herself for the first time in a long time

The mirror somehow connected with her in that moment

Don't let yourself down

They have disappointed you

You have disappointed you

You are beautiful

You are special

You are somebody

Wake Up; Wake up

She slowly opens her eyes as she picks herself up

She sleeps off the things that brought her false happiness

She looks at a photograph of her old innocent self

She's afraid but her very weak stage is starting to gain strength

She stays away from the mirror and the world as she is cleansing the toxins out of her body

The curtains open up one day and she realizes she is no longer weak

She pulled through and woke up

The sun gleams into her eyes and she doesn't feel the need to hide behind her shades anymore

The heat from the sun resembles a convergent phase of innovation thinking

She realizes it is time to move

It's time to put the pieces of the puzzle back together

She looks in the mirror and smiles

You are beautiful; You are special; You are somebody

If all you have is, you invite yourself to a ball

She looks at that old photograph and she begins to dance again

She's dancing and she's looking up to the sky as she spins around and around

Smiling free she can't stop spinning

Regrets, hurt, bitterness, pain, anger, sadness turned into forgiveness and she is dancing on this very paper your reading... She dances for you, her, him, them and says

"It's okay to dance when it snows; it's okay to dance when there are thunderstorms; it's okay to even dance in hurricanes; it's a part of nature that we cannot change. We are very existent upon these various characters of nature. It's all gonna be okay as long as you just keep dancing to the beat and pay no mind when it arrives.

Look at her go!

Poem 22: Let go

What might be all the ways I can help you take the pain away

How might I prevent you from going mentally astray

In what ways might I be able to make your day become a brighter day

What might be all the way's I can make you see your somebody and should stay

How might I make you understand you are beautiful no matter how much you weigh

In what ways might I get you to feel free to express; it's good at times to have something to say

How might I get you to see it is okay to be you and I feel this is best message yet that I must relay

I will tell you there is a reason we refrain from walking backwards. Old wounds might still remain but the more you look forwards the more they will adapt to remaining unbothered and eventually stay tranquil kind of stillness.

Poem 23: Journey Maze: Final Destination aka "Love You Lane"

I see you looking at me nobody

Your inside thoughts are dumb and stupid; want success but I refuse to give you the key

Keep walking around with your head down

Never smile and just keep a frown; look at you; your skin is a dark brown

Never give eye contact and be afraid to speak

*When no one is around feel alone and afraid of success
Tell yourself you're not a winner and that your life will always remain such a huge mess
Always listen to me; Negative things are the only things I will allow your ears to accept
Don't wake up Beautiful woman and ever realize I tried to ruin that beauty in you as you slept
I'm awake alright scattered thoughts and you should be ashamed for trying to take my glory
Too bad it backfired because I went on a journey maze and took people with me to tell my story*

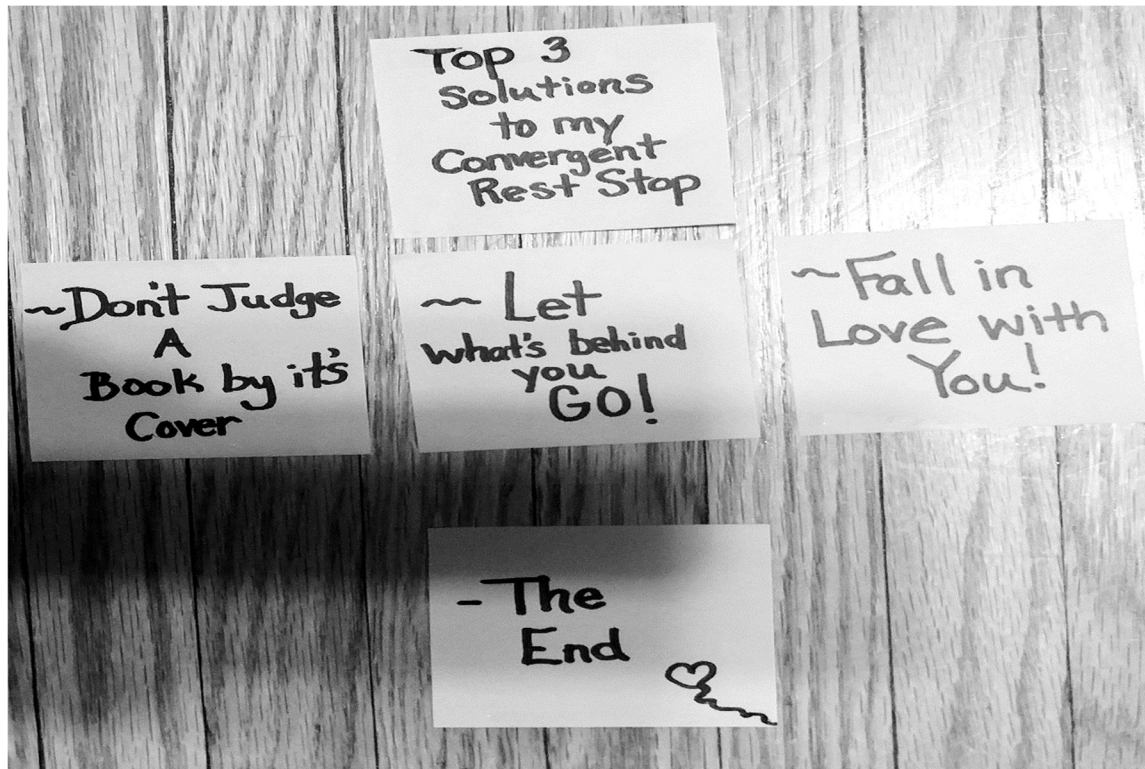


Figure 20. Path ZERO.

Section 6: Final Thoughts

Creativity offers an open mind that I truly feel can discover greatness in everyone. I view writing poetry as an incredible survival tool, because it has the ability to allow children to express themselves, cope with their emotions, and deal with their everyday challenges. Puccio et al., (2012) stated that living in the 21st century we must recognize creativity is a crucial life skill that should be nurtured in home, and at school before our future leader's step into the workplace. In my opinion, adolescents are awaiting the picture frames of our future, and creativity is something that can blemish out the imperfections in their photos. I feel creativity liberates thoughts and as a result creates a journal of mental freedom that can free us from our doubts and fears . All adolescents deserve to have a shot at life, and for all their dreams to come true. Kaufman (2013) mentioned greatness is not born, but takes time to develop, and there are many paths to greatness (p.19). When we find ways to instill the arts of creativity into our youth, I feel we help them see they can control their choices in the *"now"* no matter what label has been slapped on their identity, because labels can be removed no matter how hard they stick. I feel, we teach the young to be fearless and take risk when they start out in the "real world," in my opinion we must not ever forget to take the risk with them and pass the creative baton to them as they sprint through their young adolescent lives. Last but not least, I feel this world is filled with more raindrops than people, but through creativity, innovative mindsets, CPS tools, and expressive outlets we can take on these storms, and begin to build bridges slowly but surely to ensure the floods do not take over the minds of our youth.



Figure 21. The Thunderstorm Breakthrough??



Figure 22. Love N.



Figure 23. Poetry.

Creativity is a form of art that lies so deep from within, I feel it becomes one thing in life that can never be erased once it is discovered. Figure 22 and 23 are my permanent tattoos that reflect me and my permanent love for poetry. Thank-You to anyone who finds peace from within and appreciates me sharing a piece of me. If you had any difficulties following me through my maze, I created my own little maze below. This maze shows how we connected the dots during our mental walk throughout my poetic journey. Keep in mind that all the photos represented in my project are a visual connection through my verbal expressions. If you noticed I was not specific with periods, and question marks when writing my poetry most of the time. I also may have seemed to be at my final words, but I had to keep going to represent me and my scattered thoughts that are also a reflection of my lovely imperfections. As I mentioned before, I feel creativity and poetry have very limited guidelines and are very liberated when it comes to thinking outside the box. Creativity to me has the authority to reverse, push forward again, and reverse again until the final product has pushed itself to the envelope. I also feel, the arts of creativity that is really good is the art with mystery, and leaves our thoughts feeling lost at first. It is like going to an art show and looking at a painting that creates different visual perspectives for everyone who sees it. Ultimately, the painter has a description of what he or she wanted us to get through their eyes. In my opinion, creative problem solving seems to step in and allow us to realize things are not so puzzling, just a way to get our thinking skills sharper, ideas more resourceful, and solutions that can be more beneficial to our lives. Just like Poetry allows me to be whomever I wish to be, and that is difficult, lovely, moody, loud, unsocial, crazy, beautiful, misunderstood, understood, quiet, social, and very outgoing all in one. In the end maybe just maybe it sums up to me just being a very articulate and Creative person....who knows...just Maybe? Once again Thank-You to the Creative Studies department at Buffalo State. If the

world could experience what I experienced in regard to self-reflection and meeting a great department of people that push you to craft your personal creative potential that also leads to personal growth, I feel this world would truly be a better place.

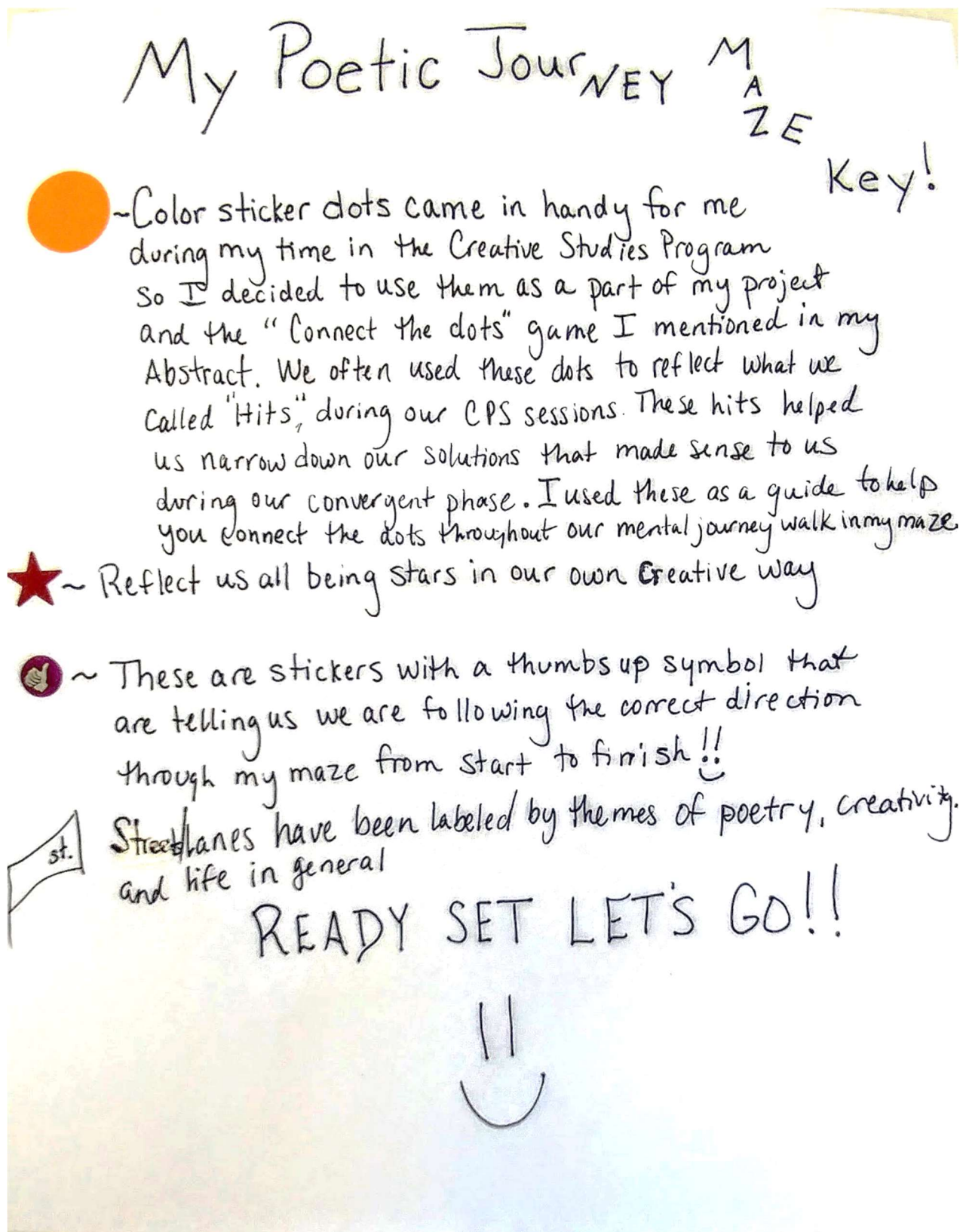


Figure 24. Creative Journey Maze Map, part A.

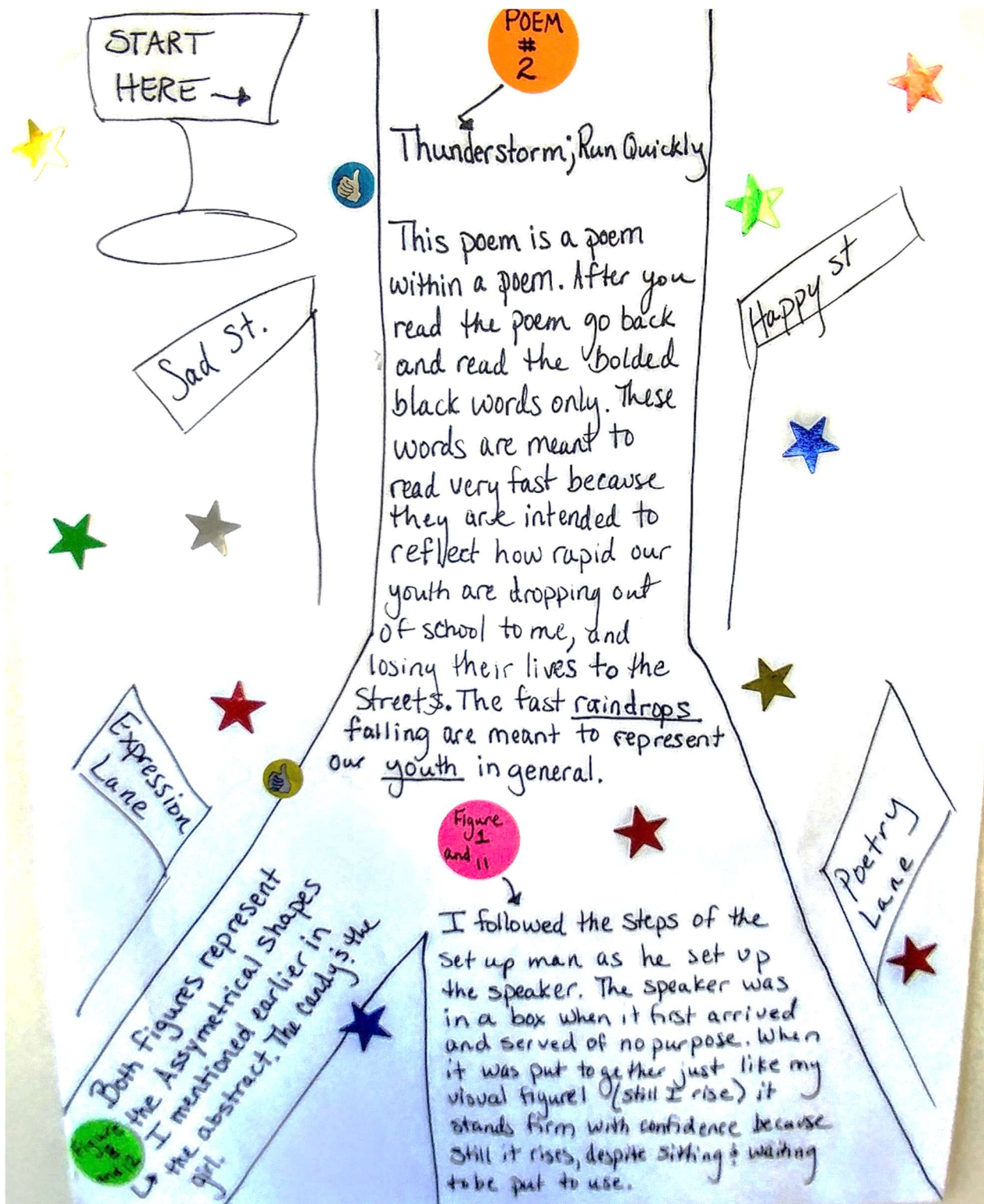


Figure 25. Creative Journey Maze Map, part B.



Figure 26. Creative Journey Maze Map, part C.

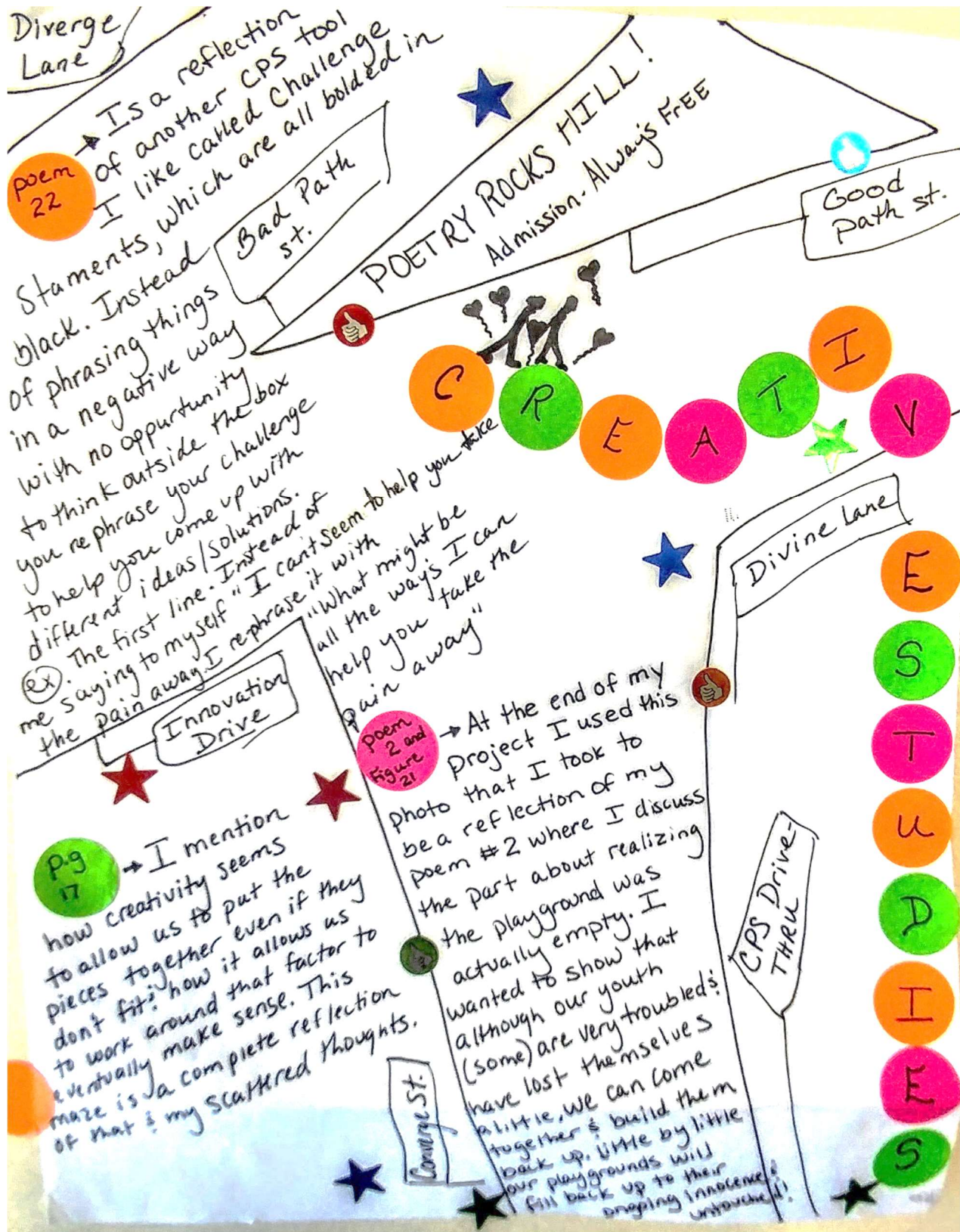


Figure 27. Creative Journey Maze Map, part D.



Figure 28. Creative Journey Maze Map, part E.

Dedicated to the all the youth that have lost their lives due to senseless and meaningless school shootings occurring all over the United States...Also dedicated to those who found a reason to live again through the beautiful purified words of expression aka poetry....Most of us only get one moment in life, so live it....

Peace and Love

- *Shalisa C. Crews*

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