

Youth Voice of the Central Valley

Winter 10-11

# the know

#Issue  
7

## MAKING FRESNO A BETTER PLACE

Inside  
Louie Kee Market Mural  
Fighting hunger  
Natural remedies  
High speed rail  
Overcoming violence  
Healthy food  
Fatherhood

theknowfresno.org // youth stories // poetry // videos // photography



# Just Down The Street

Photography by The kNOw Youth

Through a series of workshops led by freelance photographer Joseph Smooke, The kNOw youth capture photos that portray the many sides of Fresno's urban and agricultural landscapes to tell the story of a community that has experienced transition and growth over the last three decades. From farm fields to alleys, apartment complexes to more urban settings, this is Fresno as seen through the eyes of its youth.

Sunlight, By Gabby Vang



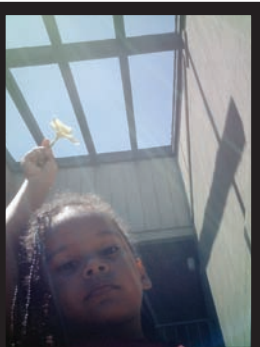
Playground, By Chanda Clark



Farm Women, by Yee Leng Vang



Flower, by Meme Garrido



Outside The Apartment Complex, by Gabby Vang



Play Time, by Meme Garrido

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## Editor's Note

All over town, young people are creating change in their neighborhoods. Whether it is cleaning up a park in southeast Fresno, painting a mural on the west side, or hosting a candidate forum in the central part of the city—great things are happening here in the “NO” town.

Over the last year, The kNow has banded with several youth-serving organizations to take part in a community-wide effort to empower ourselves, our young people and our residents to be the change that we all have been waiting for. Through The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative, we have been busy making Fresno a healthier, safer and better place to live.

Many of you have seen the mural on Louie Kee Market at the corner of Tulare and B streets in West Fresno, which we spearheaded in partnership with other youth organizations (page 34). Creating a mural for a wall that measures about a half-block long took months of planning and weeks of work, some of which included days of being outside in the heat and the rain. But after all is said and done, nothing quite compares to the feeling of standing back for a moment and appreciating the way different colors, shapes and objects come together on one canvas.

On the final night of working on the mural, William, a member of our Youth Mural Team, out of nowhere suddenly said, “That’s the 100th person!” We had no idea he had been keeping track in his head the number of residents passing by who had said something positive about the mural, whether it was “Great job,” or “This is what our community needs,” or even just a loud honk of encouragement from a passing car. We are humbled that many people share in the pride and accomplishment of this beloved mural.

In this seventh issue of The kNow magazine, we embark on the theme of making Fresno a better place. You’ll find stories of young people coming to terms with the issues that impact their health and safety as they seek alternatives to improve their lives, and in turn improve their community. On page 2, Miguel writes about how people playing in a nearby park nearly saved his life, while on page 21, Jaleesa shares natural remedies that she uses as a result of not having health insurance. Both Jana (page 24) and Luis (page 25) write about the connections between food, economics and health, while on page 5, Marcus shares his ongoing fight against hunger and poverty.

These stories and so much more capture the hope that young people have for improving Fresno. Change is taking place, and we at The kNow believe Fresno is ready for it, even if it comes in the form of paint brushes and spray cans.

—Mai Der Vang

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# Getting **ROBBED** On My Way Home, And The Park That Saved Me

By Miguel Bibanco

I gently took a bite of my pizza. An instant later pain spread throughout the right side of my face. It was sore and had begun to swell in a couple of places. Although the physical pain was completely bearable, it was discomforting and the events leading up to it were less than pleasant.

The moment passed quickly and I did not give it too much thought because the consequences were not severe. My mother's reaction was the complete opposite. She was almost hysterical in her fits of concern, indignation, and anger. She was anxious to know if I was all right or if I had been hurt. She actually called the police. All of this happened because I had been mugged, sort of.

It had been a failed attempt by some people who wanted to rob me. They were unsuccessful due to the help I received from a couple of people playing basketball inside the park near Bethune Elementary School on Fresno's west side, which is where the attempted robbery took place. I still remember the events clearly.

I was walking home on the same path that I had taken for almost a year, which stretched only a mile or two long. I had never had any troublesome experiences on my way home despite the negative reputation of gangs, drugs, and violence that my west side neighborhood had gained according to what I was told by my friends and family. I was running a little late and the only thing that was on my mind was the possibility that my mother might be mad at me.

As I passed the school almost making it home, I heard someone call out to me. The voice was not familiar but I decided to stop. Out of the children's playground ran out a lean, tall teenager of about seventeen. The moment I saw him I asked myself what this stranger wanted with me.

He ran right up to me and simply said hello in a casual way. "What's up man?" was all he said as he shook my hand. He talked to me as if we were friends even though I had no idea who he was. He asked me if I had any money and I replied in a sincere way that was almost apologetic. I told him I did not and I emptied my pockets before him to drive the point home.

However, he wasn't convinced. "C'mon man," he said, "let me see your backpack." I quickly realized he was about to rob me and make a quick buck.

I was calm about the situation because I had absolutely nothing of value to give him. I thought he wouldn't try to mug me if I didn't have anything valuable. I thought he wanted to make sure that I didn't have any money or valuable electronics in my backpack so I actually swung it over and opened it just to show him that I had nothing except papers and a broken calculator. I kept one of the straps on my left shoulder because I really didn't trust him and I thought he might try running off with my backpack.

It seemed that he wasn't interested in anything I had so I began to place my backpack on my shoulders when he stopped me. "Let me have your backpack man," he said, "maybe I can sell it and get some money for it." In a casual tone, I said, "I'm sorry man, but this is my only backpack."

He insisted strongly so I decided that the best thing to do would be to leave. I placed my backpack on my shoulders and I began to leave. As I did so, he held out his hand and was saying goodbye. I reached out to shake his hand and before I knew what had happened he had struck me with a quick right. After that, he backed off, got his hands up, and was ready to fight.

**It had been a failed attempt by some people who wanted to rob me.**



# The Strength Of A Child

## *My Little Sister's Fight Against Leukemia*

By Denise Yang

In June of this year, as I finished dressing up in my royal blue top and black skirt with a traditional green sash tied around my waist, my dad's cell phone rang loudly from the living room. I thought nothing of it. My mind was busy with curling my hair and fixing my friend's makeup. It was the day of the Sunnyside High School Cultural Show and my five friends and I were getting ready for our Hmong dance performance that night.

As everyone gathered in my living room, ready to leave, I heard my dad's voice. It was a mixture of astonishment and confusion. When he finished talking I asked him who it was. My mom had called with bad news. Jasmine had a relapse. At that moment, I was struck with overwhelming sadness and I began to feel like the world was very unfair.

It has been almost three years since my five-year-old sister Jasmine has lived with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL). ALL is a cancer in which the body produces white blood cells that are abnormal and don't function properly. This causes the immune system to not work well; therefore, people with Leukemia can get sick easily because their bodies don't heal as fast as a normal person's body.

I was about thirteen years old when Jasmine was diagnosed. One day she had a fever that lasted abnormally long. My mom noticed and took her to the hospital. At first, the doctor said it was just an ear infection and prescribed some antibiotics. But Jasmine didn't get better. She only grew paler as the days went by. She was taken to the hospital again, but this time we got the correct diagnosis. From that moment on, my parents knew it wasn't going to be easy for us anymore.

In the beginning it was hard for all of us to adjust to my sister's sickness. Jasmine was frequently hospitalized

at the local children's hospital because she was receiving chemotherapy, which is a medication to kill the cancerous cells.

Our family's life basically revolved around her. We couldn't go out as much anymore, we had to be more cautious, and we had to adjust to a lot of things to accommodate Jasmine's schedule. It was hard getting used to giving her medicine every day and always being cautious about her health, even if it was just a minor cold. In the process of the treatment, chemotherapy prevented Jasmine's hair cells from growing and it resulted in her hair loss. We tried our best to make her feel comfortable so she wouldn't be sad about what she was going through.

Medical bills for all of Jasmine's treatment have been pricey. Her constant hospital stays, medicines, blood transfusions, and other fluid transfusions are all part of the charges. Luckily, both of my parents have jobs. My mom's work provides us with health insurance, and it covers some of the costs for

all these hospital bills. We have to come up with money out of our pockets to pay for the rest of it, which can range from twenty to several hundred dollars.

After all the treatment, it was so difficult to receive the news in June that Jasmine's cancerous cells came back. My parents had to decide whether to repeat the whole treatment again, the only difference being that it would be more intense, or to try something called radiation to wipe out the body's entire cells followed by a bone marrow transplant from someone, preferably a family member,

**After all the treatment, it was so difficult to receive the news that Jasmine's cancerous cells came back.**

whose cells matched closest to Jasmine's. The doctors said that with new cells, Jasmine would be cured.

My eleven-year-old sister Jennifer turned out to be the exact match. What the doctors will do is draw blood from Jennifer's bone marrow and give it to Jasmine. It will take approximately one hundred days for Jasmine's body to get used to Jennifer's cells and grow new and healthier ones, so my mom and Jasmine will be staying at another hospital in Palo Alto, CA.

I have had to be really careful about my personal health. My sister's bodily defenses aren't as effective as a healthy person's. It is highly recommended for her to not go out in public where there are large crowds. When relatives come to visit, Jasmine has to wear a facemask in order to decrease her chances of getting sick. If I get sick in any way, no matter how small it may seem to us, my mom doesn't let me stay near her for too long because it's very easy for her to catch it. I try not to get sick by washing my hands frequently, and carrying around a small bottle of hand sanitizer.

Continued on page 26







by: kevin shelton

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# WHEN HUNGER TAKES OVER

By Marcus Vega

**W**hen I was homeless a few years ago, I remember being hungry several days of the week. I remember one time spending hours outside the home of a relative, just being hungry the whole time. I was locked out, waiting for hours to get in.

I became homeless when my grandmother passed away, and I got kicked out of her house. I ended up staying in a pretty empty apartment that belonged to a friend who I moved in with. I was seventeen, in high school, without assistance from family and relying upon the kindness of strangers and three friends. I felt as though all was lost. I didn't have resources, like money, refrigeration, a stove, electricity and gas that I needed.

My family is scattered about, doing their own thing. Right now, I am sort of staying with someone who I consider my "mom" although she is not my biological mother. Even though I go to her place a lot, I am still pretty much homeless without a stable place, so I know what it is like to be hungry all the time and never have enough to eat.

The hardest part about being hungry is not knowing if I will eat anytime soon. Multiple thoughts and feelings arise as a result, from the feeling of helplessness, to the confusion of trying to figure out how I got into this situation.

When I get hungry, I feel like I am being hit by a tidal wave of emptiness. I feel weak and get drowsy yet my stomach seems to engage in warfare for nourishment. My lips get dry and feel like sandpaper against my tongue.

Due to my lack of money, I often eat things that are unhealthy and/or not filling, which leaves room for hunger to return. For example, I have had to live off Top Ramen noodles, microwave burritos, or anything else I can prepare right there inside the store.

I have also done some pretty crazy things to get food, which I cannot completely share in full detail. But I will say that in the past I have robbed a few people at gun point, stolen from stores, and unknowingly solicited myself for money and for food. These options were always a last resort, and I always felt scared and unsure doing them.

A lot of people in Fresno go hungry. Either they lack funds for

food, or do not have anywhere to store or prepare a meal. I have also seen other people in Fresno go hungry-strangers on the street throughout Fresno, especially in the Tower District, and on the southwest and southeast sides.

Since I am over eighteen and pretty much without stable housing, at least I am able to receive about two hundred dollars a month in homeless food stamps. But it still feels like never enough. Most of it gets used to buy food at the house where I stay.

I have also signed myself up for cash aid, Medi-Cal, and other assistance including emergency housing. I have an appointment soon to take care of these matters. I hope it all goes through okay.

I learned recently that a report came out saying that one in four students in California lives in poverty, and that a hunger affects many counties, especially Fresno. Most students do not eat when they get home from school. I believe these statistics are true and reflect what I went through when I was homeless in high school.

Without proper healthy food and nutrients in my body, I have little energy to carry on. I thought it was normal to have headaches and fatigue, but I realize now it is because I am always hungry.

Along the way, I am lucky to have met so many people who extended a helping hand, such as a few family members, friends, and people I have met at community organizations.

Our community needs more places like Catholic Charities, the Poverello House, the Fresno EOC Sanctuary, and Transitional Living Centers so that more services can be provided to people like me. I know these places do the best they can, but we need more here in Fresno. I know Mayor Ashley Swearengen also has a new program called Fresno First Steps Home to help homeless people, and I hope it works.

I strive so much to make sure I never have to endure this struggle again. But it is not that easy to bounce back. We all need food to survive, and lately, it feels like I have been only living off of faith and encouragement. I hope one day food becomes more accessible to everyone so that no one has to experience what I went through. ~tk

**The hardest part about being hungry is not knowing if I will eat anytime soon.**



# My Life's 180

## How I Saved Myself From Academic Failure

**D**uring the start of my freshman year of high school, my grades were awful. An F in Sociology for Living, an F in Algebra, an F in Theatre, an F in JROTC, an F in English, and you guessed it, an F in Earth Science, for a whopping grade point average of .00.

I was a very bad student. Ditching, not doing schoolwork, and getting in trouble seemed to be my predominant hobbies at the time. To be honest, I do not even know why I did it. I do not even think I knew the reason why back then either. But as I look back on it, I believe I was committing these acts because of my young age and my dislike for school in general.

It's weird because I actually liked some of my classes. For example, I loved my Sociology for Living class, but I only really liked it for the extracurricular activities. This involves activities like putting on the drunk-vision goggles and learning about different diseases. But I hated doing class work and taking tests, and we had a lot of that!

I absolutely felt disgusted about my JROTC class, which is a military-oriented class for students. This class replaced my Physical Education. At the time, I had a problem with law enforcement and authority systems.

I also had a theatre class. In this class, I wanted to be on the big screen, but I still didn't want to do the work. I procrastinated with projects and upcoming tests.

My second semester was less than a tad bit better than my first. I actually showed about a half of a morsel of initiative. I still had "Fs" in all my classes. But if I remember correctly, I got a "D" in Introduction to Business because I passed my final project. It was fun so I actually tried. We were required to create a picture and put it on a shirt. It was easy and fun. In the rest of my classes, I put forth somewhat of an effort but I was still against the concept of having to do

homework.

Homework was like blasphemy in my world. It was against my logic and I never did it. I would have much rather stayed at home and stared at the ceiling than do my homework. I felt like being at home was my time off, so why should I do any homework?

As time progressed, I began to improve but still had a GPA of 1.0. The good thing though was that I passed Algebra with a C, which was a subject I struggled with a lot. Math was so hard for me, even when I took

**Ditching, not doing schoolwork, and getting in trouble seemed to be my predominant hobbies at the time.**

notes. But my teacher Mr. Reyes, who was and probably still is one of the best teachers I've ever had, made me see math in a whole new light. Mr. Reyes explained math in ways that I could interpret and relate to. He knew that I didn't like it and that I had a hard time with it, so he showed me all the possible shortcuts for it. Of course math was still hard for me, but I felt more confident when I took a test.

Although I was doing a little better, I still neglected the concept of school, thus causing me at times to not even show up. It's crazy because back in elementary school, I gave all my effort to be awarded with Perfect Attendance.

I wondered often to myself why I strayed from educational satisfaction and acceptance. These are common questions I ask myself nowadays while I look back on my past. Perhaps I gave into urban propa-

ganda and started thinking school was for losers.

Finally, I decided to switch schools and go to Edison because things were just not working out at Fresno High. It turned out to be for the better. I ended up taking more classes, but at least I started getting A's in some of my classes and my GPA went up to 1.8.

I think I had a change in attitude because of a meeting that took place between my counselor, my mother and me. "You can still graduate on time, but you're gonna have to go through hellfire and brimstone," my counselor said, "You don't have much more room for failure!"

That brief statement sparked something in my head. By this time I had begun to mature, which helped me realize the severity of the situation. I had to make a change!

When I first arrived to this new school, I was technically a freshman in credits, but I was supposed to be a junior by age. Through hard work, I quickly transitioned to a sophomore. I was at the top of my game, and I was proving to my former self that I could change, slowly erasing the mistakes of the past. My grades shot up drastically, and I never thought that I would have a 3.2 GPA on my report card, but I did!

Then one of the best things happened to me...I skipped a grade and became a senior. I was finally on schedule, but still, I knew I couldn't slack off.

**Continued on page 29**



# The Crash That Killed Me

## Dangers of Teen Driving

By Yee Leng Vang

**M**y name is Phillip Ly. I am fourteen years old and I am the second oldest son in my family. I have an older brother named Doi, older sister named Hong, and a younger brother named Parker. I am a freshman at Hoover High School. I am energetic and very funny. I love playing video games and relaxing but I will always lend a helping hand to anyone in need. Also, I am Vietnamese. My life has just begun. But on March 7th 2006, it all ended. I died.

My friend and I were coming home from Lost Lake. We had gone fishing. It was a nice spring day, not too hot or too cold. The car accident happened around seven or eight in the evening. My friend was driving and I was in the passenger seat. As we were coming home, a drunk driver hit us. I died instantly.

I regret going out that day. Now that I am no longer with my family, I missed out on so much. I have a new little brother named Kevin who is now three years old. I missed out on the birth of my nephew Aidan who is now four and I also missed out on my brother Doi's wedding.

My name is Mike Xiong. I have five brothers and one sister. I am the third oldest son in my Hmong family of nine. My favorite hobby is playing the piano. Every morning, I used to play my keyboard while my mom made breakfast. I graduated in 2009 from Roosevelt High School. Four weeks after my graduation, I died.

I went with many of my friends to Avocado Lake for a graduation party. We had a fun time. It was great to know that we were finally done with high school and I had my whole life ahead of me.

We were coming back home in the evening and there were four of us in the car. I was in the backseat. My friends in the other car wanted to race, so we did. We were going about seventy miles per hour. The other car stopped, but we didn't. We turned at a curve and lost control. We hit a tree. The car wrapped around the tree like a child holding a teddy bear for comfort. But it wasn't a comforting sight at all. Everyone died except for my friend who was sitting next to me.

There were a lot of family and friends at my funeral. At one point, there were no more seats so many people had to sit on the ground. My friend who survived the crash was still in the hospital in serious condition. Who would have thought that my graduation picture would be the best picture to sit alongside my casket? A year later, my dad passed away. Many people believe that it was partly due to the sadness of losing me. I feel as though my death could have been prevented.

My name is Yee Leng Vang. I am seventeen years old and I attend Edison High School. Phillip was my brother-in-law. It was tragic to hear that he passed away. We were close and I had known him for years. We used to always play video games together and he would

always make fun of me.

Mike is my girlfriend's nephew. I did not know him personally, but his death impacted me. I learned that I should not disturb or encourage my friends or the driver to drive recklessly. It can endanger my life as well as the lives of others.

I attended Mike's funeral. I saw his picture. I cried even though I did not know him. Everyone cried. When his parents spoke about his life, I felt as though something had been taken away from me. It was the opportunity to befriend and build a relationship with him. I sat with my girlfriend. We cried. I paid my respects and I went home. I could do nothing more.

It is heartbreaking to lose someone in a death that could have been prevented. It is also hard to let them go if they were important people in your life.

Driving is a hard task. I do not yet have my driver's license, but when I practice, I feel uneasy behind the wheel. Unlike many other teenagers, I dislike driving, but I know it would make my life easier if I learned. That's what everyone tells me but I fear the idea of crashing or getting crashed into. It scares me to know my life can end at the blink of an eye. Maybe if I practice more, I will triumph over my fears and become a better driver.

I know many teenagers at this stage in their life can be oblivious to safety precautions and do not yet have enough experience driving. They take their eyes off the road, sometimes text or talk on the phone while they drive, search for music to play, or get distracted by other friends in the car. Other teens simply make bad decisions such as speeding or driving drunk.

The cause of so many teen car accidents is the lack of focus on the road. It is important to focus while driving in order to be safe and not endanger your life or others. It's as simple as that. But because of bad decisions and poor driving habits, many teenagers die each year from car accidents, most of whom are between the ages of sixteen to nineteen. In this country, about five thousand teenagers die per year, and four hundred thousand teens are seriously injured. Within these deaths, more than half are male drivers and passengers just like Phillip and Mike.

I am over the death of Phillip. I have let him go but he will linger in my memories. Mike will too. They were so young and their deaths were preventable. If only the other driver was sober that night. If only Mike had encouraged his friend not to race. If only they could have heard other stories like this before they got into the car, they might still be alive. ~tk



**The car wrapped around the tree like a child holding a teddy bear for comfort.**





# blog

Visit [theknowfresno.org](http://theknowfresno.org) for more writing!

## Transportation Stories: Getting Around Fresno Is Not Easy!

By The kNOw Youth Media, Various Authors

*The kNOw writers share how the lack of access to reliable transportation is an invisible social and economic barrier to success, especially in a city like Fresno where walkable communities and safe public transportation are limited.*

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When my uncle isn't around, I use my bike. Or when my uncle is around, I ask if he can take me to my destination. I give him gas money because sometimes my destination is far. I use the city bus to get around town too. Sometimes I use my bike to go to my friend's house or even around town to do stuff for work. Last month, I rode my bike all the way to Wal-Mart on the other side of town with my brother, which is about five miles away. I was going to ask my uncle to take me, but I didn't, because I feel bad for asking him too much. I feel that I should go get my driver's license, so that I can go anywhere and drive my mom where she needs to go. **-Luis, 18**

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When I was younger I didn't have many needs that required transportation. I caught the school bus to get to school, and I would then catch a ride from my parents or the city bus to go places on weekends. Now that I'm older, I have many places to go, such as school, work, and I squeeze my recreational time in when possible. At times I need to catch the bus to go home from school or for my recreational purposes.

I don't enjoy riding the bus that much though because there is always some creeper trying to get my number or trying to flirt with me. I recall a time when I was on the bus minding my own business just waiting for my stop to come when a random guy sat next to me. I had no idea why because the bus was empty, but still he sat next to me. He attempted to talk to me a couple of times, and I didn't say much to him, just a nod or two. I didn't want to be mean and tell him to leave me alone, so I acted like I was listening, just wishing my stop would hurry and come. His stop came before mine, and while he was getting off the bus he asked me for my number. I smiled and shook my head to tell him no. After that I try to ride the bus as little as possible. **-Gracie, 17**

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I'm all over the place, and I'm still a kid. Here, there, everywhere. I'm constantly asking for rides. I always need a ride to school. I go to The Know meetings twice a week. Once a week I go to McLane High School for leadership meetings. But I live on the other side of town near Edison. Also I'm always doing community service activities, most of them are at Lost Lake, Woodward Park, and Fresno State. I also play football and volleyball about twice a week, each time on different days. On the weekends, I tend to go to my friend's house near Sunnyside High School.

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Transportation is difficult for me. I tend to ask for rides from my dad and sister but I usually carpool with my friends. I wish I knew how to drive already. I only have my permit and so I'm not allowed to drive yet. One time I went to a friend's house for a party but I had no ride back home. I asked my friend to take me home but he had no more room for me. His girlfriend decided to call for a ride so he was able to take me home. I felt so bad. I really hate depending on others but that's how I get around. **-Yee Leng, 17**

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Now that I'm a young adult my need for transportation has only become more immediate. I go more places than I used to, and because my options are limited, I have to explore new ones. The bus usually gets me where I need to go, but lately, that method is proving to be quite unreliable.

In recent months, transportation has become substantially difficult. I have to plan my time accordingly. I can't really go anywhere on the weekends. I'll never bother thinking about planning to go somewhere past four or five p.m. since I won't be able to get back home. The only real reliable way I have of getting around is walking. Other than that, there is no guarantee I will get to or back from where I need to go. Usually, though, I rely on the bus. The places I often go are reachable by bus. However, the bus can be late, and they only run for so long. Nowadays, I just catch a ride with my boyfriend in his van. **-Jalessa, 20**

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I have a driver's license, but I need my own car. For some teenagers who have their own car, they have to worry about gas money, and insurance. Some even have to work to pay off their cars. Before I got my license, it was pretty hard getting around. I felt like a burden to others who would pick me up and drop me off. Little has changed since I got my license because I don't have my own car. I still depend on people. Sometimes I feel like a burden. What has helped me is carpooling with friends who live nearby or having my boyfriend pick me up and drop me off.

When I first got my license, I was overjoyed. I thought I would get my own car, but now I don't think I want one anymore. Cars are pretty stressful to own and maintain. I would rather wait on owning my own car because I want to know that I can afford it. For the next four years, I think my means of transportation will be to walk, bike, take the bus or train to Fresno (since I'm going away for college), and carpool when possible. **-Arenia, 18**

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I have to worry about missing the bus, and which way I have to go. I need to get to a certain place at a certain time, and sometimes I'm not able to make it, so I have to cancel the whole thing.

I remember one time when I was getting off the bus to get onto another one, and the bus I needed to get on was just pulling off into the street. When I walked up to the bus, the bus driver said no I couldn't get on. I didn't understand because he was at a red light and I could have gotten on.

It made me really mad because I had met a lot of nice bus drivers but there are a few crabby ones. Running into one just made me mad because it's already hard to deal with the heat and the running around, and then waiting, but somehow it gets that much worse. One of these days I'm going to have my own transportation and not have to deal with buses! **-Meme, 17**

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# I Want My High Speed Rail Train!

I don't travel outside of Fresno often. I don't have the means to travel out of Fresno unless I have something important or on vacation.

But there have been a few times when I've gone to San Francisco or Los Angeles, and have been bored out of my mind sitting through the long hours of driving. On top of that, going such long distances, I've had to deal with whether there will be a restroom break, if our car has enough gas, and other things.

I believe the new high speed rail train will be a solution to all Californians and the long hours of driving across the state.

Years of planning went into this high speed rail train and now it is finally going to be constructed and on the move. This is no regular freight train or some commercial train; this is the amazing "High Speed Rail Train" that can travel up to 220 miles per hour through a route of over 800 miles while carrying thousands of passengers.

In order to understand how this new train works, I did a little bit of research. I learned that the 800-mile route will cost approximately 40 billion dollars to construct and will take five to eight years to build.

It is also called "high speed" for a reason. Unlike normal freight and commercial trains, which can go up to 75-80 mph, the high speed rail can travel up to 220 mph, which means travel time from San Francisco to Los Angeles is cut down dramatically to two and a half hours, as opposed to the six and a half hours it takes to drive, all at \$55 for a one way trip. Each year the high speed train expects to transport over 117 million passengers by the year 2030.

Fresno will be one of the connecting routes on the High Speed Rail System, which will go from northern to southern California. It will only take about an hour to get from San Francisco to Fresno, and the High Speed Rail Train station will be built right here in downtown Fresno next to the Chukchansi baseball stadium. The train will also run throughout the Central Valley to cities such as Stockton,

Modesto, and others.

In November 2008, voters approved the High Speed Rail Train. The train will also create up to 450,000 permanent jobs and reduce pollution since it will be powered by electricity instead of gasoline. This will dramatically help reduce greenhouse gas emission and improve the air quality. Also, most people traveling across the state may choose to take this train instead, which means there will be fewer cars on the road, and a reduction in air pollution.

As Fresno grows and becomes part of this larger network, Fresno will attract more attention and people. I believe over the years, more construction will be done on local roads, old buildings will be modernized, and Fresno will have a cleaner environment.

This train is a first step in that direction, and it will be something glorious to set our eyes upon.

I even had the chance to ask our Mayor in Fresno, Ashley Swearengin, what she thought about the new train and she believes that it will be one of the most successful things to take place: "I believe that the High Speed Rail Train is a potentially radical change

upon Fresno."

Fresno still has many local transportation issues to solve in the city, such as the bus system, which can sometimes take forever to get me where I need to go, but at least Fresno won't be left out of the high speed rail network.

I am personally enthused about the high speed rail train and I hope others are too. But I know there may those who oppose the train because it may be a financial burden to California, and other reasons too.

Even so, it still amazes me that the train can go that fast. I am excited about the positive outcomes it will bring to all Californians, and someday, I want to be a passenger on the amazing high speed rail train. ~tk

**The high speed rail can travel up to 220 mph, which means travel time from San Francisco to Los Angeles is cut down dramatically to two and a half hours.**



# She'll Remember

By Maria Valdez  
Artwork by William Thao

A little girl will remember being kicked,  
slapped, choked, punched, and whipped,  
slashed with a cable as thick as a snake.  
She'll remember being taken to CPS  
because she had nowhere to go and  
was roaming the streets of San Diego County,  
Escondido CA, Juniper and Grape streets.

She'll remember crying every night,  
in a little room with a window with bars.  
Two twin sized beds and a switch for the light.

She'll remember how she cried  
at the end of every visit telling her grandma to  
take her with her and not let go.  
She'll remember her grandma handing  
her a sweater with a Pooh Bear in the middle,  
her warmth and her scent on Christmas Day  
telling her to hold it tight when  
she missed her and not let go.

She'll remember holding it at night  
as well as every scheduled day after  
hygiene, breakfast, school, naptime, lunch,  
playtime, dinner, and her own time, bed time.  
She'll remember how the police took her away  
from her family, her friends, her mother's grave  
on Sundays and the sound of her tree  
holding a wind chime.

She'll remember how she hated holidays  
like Mother's Day, Thanksgiving, and especially  
Christmas because she wasn't with her family,  
she wasn't at home, she was in that little room  
all alone, on her own.

She'll remember holding the sweater  
extra tight on Christmas day, after another visit  
she wished her grandma had stayed.

She'll remember seeing a blinking red light  
hoping it was Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer

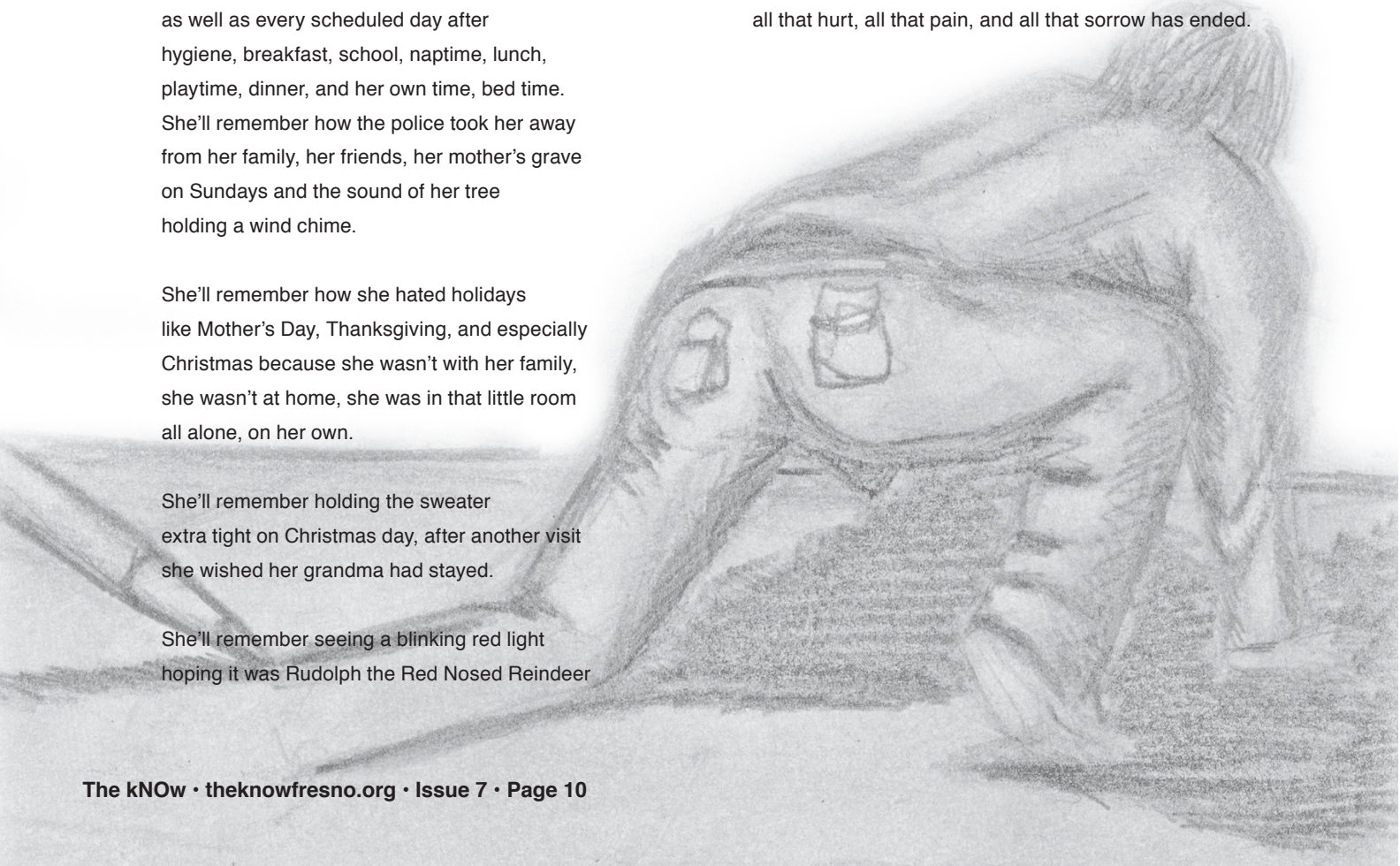
because she was begging on her knees  
that Santa would come because going home  
was all the items on her wish list this year.

She stared out her window hoping  
Santa would come closer but he never did.  
Until she realized that the light was nothing  
but a pole with a blinking red bulb that was finally lit.

She'll remember being extra good,  
and she didn't get to go home.  
Instead she got a piano, two dolls, Hot Wheels,  
and a foster home, she was still on her own.

She'll remember being beat by her other grandma, an alcoholic,  
and by police being taken. She'll remember  
being alone on Christmas as her dreams were falsely waken.

She'll remember CPS because she'll remember  
all these things, all these things that taught her what  
life really means. She'll remember being wise the next time  
she was threatened, and she'll remember how today  
all that hurt, all that pain, and all that sorrow has ended.





By Amelia Garrido

# SUSPENDED AGAIN!

## *The Struggle To Resolve Student Conflicts*

When I began middle school, I thought school would be a breeze. But somehow, it wasn't enough to just have friends and good grades. It was challenging for me to get along with students at school, because I would easily lose my temper and fight, which led me to get suspended many times and now I am behind in credits and struggling to graduate. Most of the conflicts I faced could have been fixed by talking it out.

Looking back, I realize now that I needed something more, like a program or more teachers and counselors who could help me resolve the problems I was having with other students.

In seventh grade, there was a girl who would give me mean looks. One day, I had a friendly conversation with her boyfriend and soon a rumor spread that he liked me. It offended her when she heard the news so she came looking for me and was asking me questions, but I had no clue what she was talking about. Then she said we were going to fight.

She swung at me, and I blocked with my fists. We tumbled and screamed at each other until the principal pulled us apart. Our punishment was suspension, but I thought little of it because I didn't think one suspension would hurt. Afterwards, she and I got over the situation and went our separate ways.

School went smoothly until the following year, which meant new classes and new people. In one of my classes, everyone had at least one person they knew except me. I felt uncomfortable so I sat at the first table I saw. During class, I got up to sharpen my pencil, but when I came back, a girl was in my seat across from her friend. The teacher knew I had been there first so the girl was told to get up. She glared at me and left.

Later that day at school, the same girl bumped into me and gave me a mean look. After that, I found myself, many times, being followed and bumped into by that girl. I couldn't take it anymore, so I decided I would go to the office and tell the principal but before I even got there, I saw her coming my way. She bumped into me again! I lost my temper, turned around, grabbed her hair, and asked her what was her problem. Somehow, we both fell down and started rolling and hitting each other on the floor. Teachers broke up the fight and we were suspended. I was transferred to another middle school.

I did not stay at my first high school long because I was suspended my freshman year for following a girl around school and trying to ask her a question about a conflict between our moms. I simply wanted to talk to the girl about the conflict, but each time I tried she would run off. I just wanted to talk. It felt unfair to get punished for that. Now I see that she felt threatened by me, and the school was trying to make her feel safe. I was transferred to another

high school.

After four months at the new school, I ran into trouble with another girl. She accused me of getting too close to her boyfriend, but I knew I was only sitting beside him. I didn't want to worsen the situation so my sister and I decided to talk to her older sister, which turned out to be a bad idea.

My sister and her sister started arguing, and then the girl called me a bad name. I lost my temper and hit her. My mom couldn't stand it anymore so she placed me on home studies. I tried going back to school but people kept staring at me and there were rumors about me that forced me to go back to home studies. I felt so neglected by everyone.

I finally enrolled in a continuation school my senior year. When it seemed I was beginning to settle down, I was suddenly sent to the office. My mom spoke to the principal, and they told me there were no records of my sophomore year and that it was going to take me another year and a half to graduate. I was crushed.

I thought the school would help me graduate on time but that wasn't going to happen. The principal offered an alternative, which was to get my GED. It was the best idea because I would still graduate on time and the GED would be almost as good as a diploma. I felt relieved, but I still have to worry about the tests I'll have to pass in order to obtain my GED.

I think about how many transcripts got lost, and how being suspended, out of school and transferring all the time took its toll on me. I appreciate all the teachers and counselors out there who are doing the best they can to help students, but if I had only had more of them to help me along the way, I might not be in this situation.

Thinking back, I wish that I could have been the bigger person and walk away to find help instead of fighting. I wish my sister and I hadn't gone to speak to that girl. If only there could have been someone to help me resolve the problem in a better way, maybe even just having a friendly conversation would have helped us clear the air.

In most cases I was wrong, and it is my fault that I am in this situation. Still, I shouldn't have been juggled from school to school and there should have been something to help me as a student get along with other students. Today, I just have to deal with my situation and try to not make any more mistakes. I've hit rock bottom, but I know I can only go up from here. ~tk

*This article appears as part of the SUCCESS project (Students United to Create a Climate of Engagement, Support and Safety). To learn more about SUCCESS, contact MaryJane Skjellerup at the Youth Leadership Institute, 559-255-3233.*



# The Pain She Causes

## Breaking Away From My Mother's Anger

By "Vector"

Every day my mom cleans, cooks, takes my brother to school, but not much else from what I can tell. She doesn't even take the time to ask me "How was your day?" That's what hurts the most.

My mother had me when she was only 19 years old and on her second child. If this wasn't hard enough, my father left her for the woman he was cheating on her with. He told her lies that confused her mind. He promised her the world and that they'd have a family together and be happy. She depended on him for love and support.

When she was fifteen, she dropped out of high school to be the mother of his child, and he turned his back on her, just like the rest of her so called "family".

I have three brothers and four sisters. I am close to one sister and that's all. It's not unusual to be ignored in my family. My mom's parents were drug addicts, and my grandfather always beat my grandmother so my family has some serious issues. My mom never learned how to love so I feel like I don't know how to either. I can't love my friends, my family, or myself.

My mom ran most of the time. That's what she became good at. When she didn't like the situation, she picked up her things and started over somewhere else. We've moved to so many places, from Palm Springs, to Whittier, to Las Vegas, to Riverside, to San Pedro, to Torrance, to Wilmington and now Fresno.

I hated moving at first. It wasn't easy for me to make new friends. As I got older it became harder. We moved to Fresno about two years ago and when I started school no one talked to me. It took over a month for me to make friends. But all of that doesn't matter to my mom because she hasn't worked in a while so she has nothing to lose.

Moving has been a way for my mom to run away and I now use it as a way out if I'm not enjoying the situation.

You see, my mother has anger prob-

lems. When she gets upset, she doesn't cry. She transforms it into anger and causes destruction. She'll throw things: plates, TVs, cell phones, furniture. She lets the fire take over. Growing up around this, I've inherited that trait as well. To me, crying is unnecessary. It doesn't solve anything, doesn't make me feel better.

Now, throwing things, hurting people, and causing a scene satisfies me. Safe to say, I have learned to control my anger in most cases, but sometimes it gets the best of me. Not everyone sees the "Hulk" side of me. Not everyone gets me that angry, but those who have seen me that way label me as "crazy".

**When my mother gets upset, she doesn't cry. She transforms it into anger and causes destruction.**

Take my boyfriend Marvin for example. All he wants to do is love me but sometimes I push him away. Once I was at the library doing my volunteer tutoring work which I do every Thursday. I was there with my friend, my sister, and Marvin. It was almost time to go and it didn't occur to me why, but for some reason I began to get irritated.

As we all began to leave, anger slowly grew inside of me. I threw down the chemistry book that I was carrying in my hand and continued to walk home. My boyfriend ran, picked up the book, and came to my side to comfort me. All I remember was yelling at him, "Get away from me!" and pushing him away. I later realized that the reason for my outbreak was due to the fear of arriving home.

My mom and I fight a lot. There have been a few times when it's gotten really out

of control. Money is always an issue and my mom spends it like crazy. So I tell her of her wrongdoings and she doesn't want to hear it. We fight. Punching, scratching, kicking.

My mother also has a sad addiction to cigarettes. She will sell the couch, the TV, the radio, whatever she can to buy a pack of cigarettes. When she does have money, she chooses to buy cigarettes over the things I need, like once when I desperately needed a new pair of shoes.

There have been plenty of times when I have felt second to the men in her life. My mother was in an abusive relationship and instead of being strong and leaving, she stayed. She let herself be pushed around and beat, knowing that all her children knew about the situation. When I confronted her about this problem, she ignored me or yelled at me because she believed that the "love" they had for each other was justification for his actions. Why didn't my opinion matter? I hated seeing bruises on my mother and her being treated worse than dirt.

I know it's a little too late to try and change my mother and maybe it's because I'm so much like her that we always clash heads. But I'm not afraid to stand up to her and speak my mind. I'm not afraid of being on my own because emotionally I already am.

Being a teenager in this situation is very difficult. College, friends, grades, graduating, everything! These days, I chose cutting to relieve my stress. It's not the best idea, but it gets me by. There was a time when my mother made fun of me for my weakness. I remember my mother and her friends taunting me about my cutting and how silly they thought it was.

Living here in Fresno away from all our family, I already feel isolated. Having my mother not only turn against me, but criticizing my way of coping with the pain of our stressful life hurt me feels like it can kill my soul.

**Continued on page 29**





# LONG LOST SIBLING

## MY BROTHER SERVING TIME IN THE PEN

By Yee Leng Vang

About twice a month, my brother calls my family from the Colorado State Penitentiary. I don't remember his face. All I remember are broken windows, broken tables, and broken hearts. I come from a family of eleven, but for so long now the number has been ten.

My brother is much older than me. I was still a little kid when he got locked up. My brother was a delinquent, a troublemaker, and never cared for anyone but himself.

There is only one day I can remember about him in my entire life. I guess I didn't go to school that day or maybe I wasn't old enough for school yet. The night before that day, my brother was kicked out of the house.

I remember hearing the gates to our garage rattle as if someone was climbing it. My mom yelled, "Your dad will kill you if he found out you were back." My dad was at work, luckily, so my brother was able to hang around the house for a bit although my mom wouldn't let him come in. He sat in the backyard, complaining to my mom.

All I could hear from him was, "Mom, I'm HUNGRY!" Our family didn't have much money so we didn't have much to eat. My mom went to the fridge and found what she could. She brought back half a watermelon for him. He ate the whole thing and asked for more. My mom gave him the other half and he finished it too but he said he was still hungry. Mom couldn't do anything; she couldn't give him any more food. All she could give him were tears.

She yelled and scolded him but I know that those words went in one ear and out the other. He left before my dad got home. For days, he tried to avoid my dad. I think he came back a few days later but got himself into even more trouble and has been gone ever since.

I can't remember much else, not even how he looked, only his attitude and his actions. Is he even my brother? He is flesh and blood, but he hasn't been there for me; not like a brother should. I know he feels regret but I think it's a little too late for him to change.

I'm seventeen now. I wonder a lot about him. I know he's smart and talented but he took the wrong road and because of it, he landed forty years in the worst place anyone can go. He could have done so well if he was still here. He is very artistic and has the skill and talent to become a great artist. He even drew a picture of me and sent it as a keepsake. It is a great portrait. I was 12 years old,

and I had a dragon around my neck. I always miss him when I look at this drawing.

Each time he calls home, my mom cries. It's hard for her to know her son is in jail, and to hear him say that he's starving, that he needs clothes, and needs money. He's trying hard to get out as soon as he can, but I know he won't. I console myself by telling myself that he'll be out soon...when I'm fifty.

People like my brother don't realize the impact they have on their younger siblings when they get locked up. I know they hurt but we hurt too.

My brother's absence has heavily impacted my family. My mom can barely walk, and his absence causes her to stress a lot. I guess that heightens her blood pressure, which can lead to another heart attack.

But with my brother gone, I guess the family has a little more peaceful. He always had a short-temper. I guess one more gone is one less mouth to feed, and one less voice to hear when an argument occurs, but it is one more person to worry and stress about.

People say I look like him and sort of act like him. The hardest thing about not knowing him is that I feel like he's not my brother anymore. I'm not trying to be mean, but it's like he's already dead and he calls back once in a while from the grave. I just have to wait until I am an adult so I can go visit him and get to know him, the real Chue.

His experience teaches me that I should care about others and I should always think before I act. I should learn to be there for others and I should not to do stupid things. But we were all taught that at a young age so I really don't think I learned anything from him.

For others who are in the same situation, you should forget the people you lost. You should still love them, you should keep in contact with them, but don't hold such a strong bond with them, especially if you know you might not ever see them again. Talk and communicate with them. Let them know you'll be there for them but live your own life. Don't let their mistakes affect your life.

I know I don't. I talk to him. I ask about his life and I try to comfort him but after the phone hangs up, it's back to my life. I've learned that sometimes you have to be selfish in order to move on.

~tk



# Scarred For Life

By "Candace"

## The Night My Brother Beat Me

**I**t happened almost two years ago. It was dark outside, around ten o' clock at night. I was trying to stay awake and finish my homework before I could finally lay my head to rest on my pillow.

There was a knock on my bedroom door. It was my nieces and nephew. They told me my older brother wanted me to go downstairs. I got mad at my nieces and nephew for going upstairs to my room because I didn't like it when they went up and down the stairs, especially at night, when the staircase was dark.

I went downstairs with them and there my older brother stood with a knife in his hand.

He started yelling at me about how he needed to get sleep before going to work. He then said I don't do anything to help the family and that I do things so I can have fun.

### He dragged me by my hair through the hallway, and kept kicking.

He asked me WTF I was doing upstairs that I couldn't hear the kids crying loudly and waking him up. He kept getting angrier.

I said I was doing my homework and my door was shut and I thought my other older brother was downstairs with them. He didn't want to hear what I had to say, instead, he just got angrier and said I was talking back to him.

Then my brother grabbed me. I was pretty sure he was going to stab me, but he didn't. He put the knife down, but I knew he was too mad to let it go. He raised his hand as if to slap me and I covered my face and ducked. He hit me, and he wouldn't stop hitting me.

Somehow I ended up on the floor and I tried to crawl away. By then not only was

he hitting me, he was kicking me too. He dragged me by my hair through the hallway, and kept kicking, almost stomping on me.

As he was doing this, he kept yelling at me for me to hit him back or get up. I knew if I did this, it would provoke more anger. I felt like I blacked out. I laid there, afraid to move. He grabbed me by my hair to tell me to get up and then he kept hitting me. I don't remember much after that but some how he just stopped. He started pacing back and forth in the room and then he left. When I was sure he was gone, I got up and ran upstairs to my room and locked it. I couldn't stop crying all night.

That night changed the way I saw my older brother. He used to tell me that he would never hit me, but he did. I felt I couldn't trust him anymore. I was scared to leave my room. I was traumatized. I still get scared and I could feel my tears begin to form every time someone, especially my older brothers, raise their voice at me. Having experienced this violence from a close family member, it felt like the walls were closing in on me.

Every time I think about that night, it still scares me and brings tears to my eyes. I hate loud noises and people yelling. I still blame myself for what happened. Sometimes when I think about what happened, I question what I did wrong. I must have done something wrong to provoke my brother's anger. My mom even blamed me for my brother's aggression. Ever since that night, I began to put myself down and blame myself for everything bad that happens.

My brother targeted me because he says he always does what is best for the family. If one person is "out of line" he'll intervene. He likes to be in control and watch out for everyone, but sometimes he takes it too far and forgets how we feel.

It's been nearly two years since the incident and I haven't fully gotten over it. My

relationship with my brother has improved somewhat since then, but I am still haunted by the thought that one day he might just hit me again. I don't like being alone in the same room with him and I can't talk to him the way I used to.

It still hurts deeply that even my mom blamed me for what happened. It felt like she turned her back on me when I needed her most. It was as if she only cared about what my brother felt and forgot about me. It was like for that moment in time, she didn't love me. I felt as if I didn't want to be her daughter and she disowned me.

When the people closest to me find out about this incident they always say I should have turned to them or called the police and put my brother in jail. But I know in my heart, I love my older brother and I know he cares about me. I forgive him for hitting me. What hurts most is how my mom treated me. No matter what, I have to be able to forgive them because they're my family and will always be in my life.

Every family has some kind of problems or issues, but family will always be there. All families work things out together. It just takes time, understanding, and forgiveness. I may not have forgotten about what happened but I forgive them.

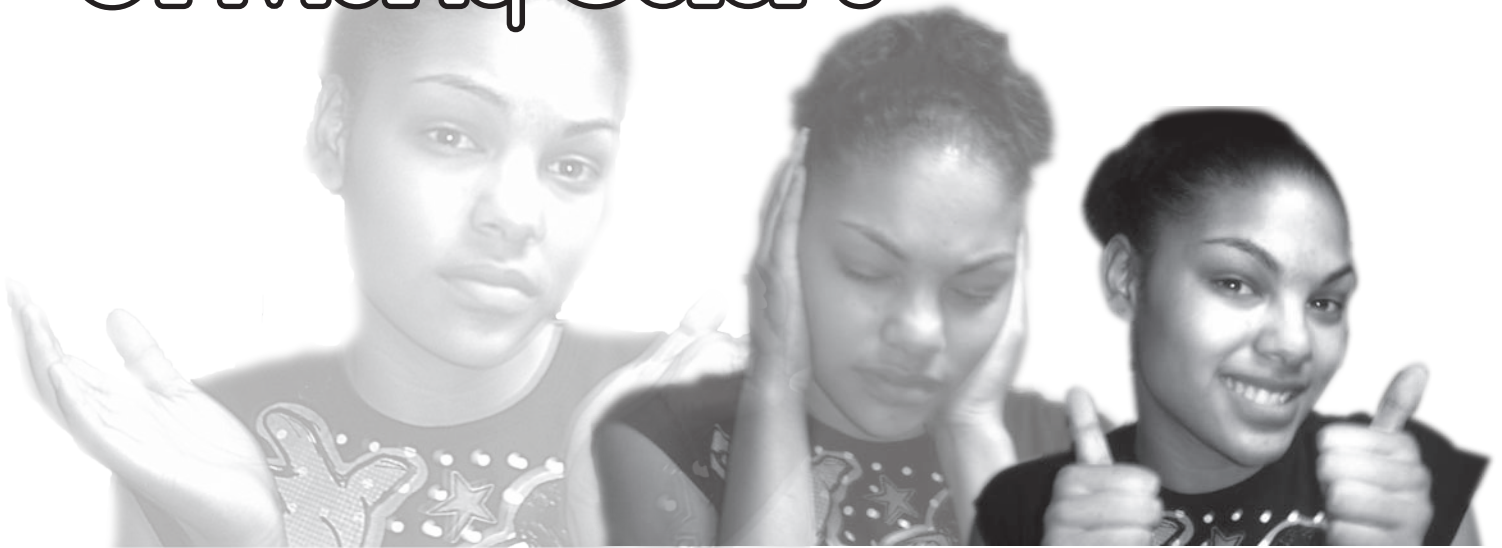
My story is an example of the violence that young people experience in their families. It shows that violence doesn't only occur on the streets or in gangs, it also happens within the home. It's not a subject many people want to talk about or reveal. It's hard for youth to talk about how someone they love or trust has turned their back on them and abused them.

But sometimes talking about what we keep bottled up inside helps us get over it. It's the first step anyone can take in order to heal. Every wound has its own healing process. This was my first step, and it won't be my last. ~tk



# Of Many Colors

By Amelia Garrido



## Learning To Be Proud Of My Mixed Heritage

**W**hen I was younger I did not know why people treated me and saw me the way they did. But I have a feeling it was because I am a mixed person who is African American, Mexican, Indian, and Puerto Rican.

In the fifth grade, I started a little late in the year so I was put into a class where most of the students' second language was English and the first was Spanish. I had gone to this school since I was in preschool, but I knew not one student in the class. My mom speaks Spanish, but never really taught me how to speak it. I hated that I was put into this class. It didn't seem fair and I didn't understand why.

I walked into the classroom and all eyes were on me. I was appointed to my seat and a girl named Ruby was in charge of me. She showed me around the classroom. Lunchtime came and the boys sat on one side of the table and the girls on the other. I was happy that it was lunchtime because I could see other classes and hear conversations that I actually understood.

This boy named Abel sat across from me at the table and kept staring at me. I was getting tired of it so I stared back. Out of nowhere, he said, "Que miras?" I knew it was a question because of the tone in his voice. At the time I didn't know what it meant so I just ignored him.

When we finally got back to class after lunch, I asked Ruby what it meant and she said it meant, "What are you looking at?" I just said, "Oh" and turned away. I knew where Abel sat so I had to find a way to make sure he asked me that question again! The pencil sharpener was close by his desk so I asked to sharpen my pencil.

I stared at him again and when he said it to me again, I said, "I haven't figured it out yet but when I do I will let you know!" He turned away, said something to his friends, and raised his hand. He told on

me and for the next couple of days I was inside for recess. What a great first day of school.

Ever since then I put myself inside an invisible bubble. I didn't talk, look, or listen to anyone but the teacher, only when she spoke English. It's weird because I didn't have a feeling of loneliness or sadness; it was more of anger and hate. The rest of that year I kept to myself. I felt as if because I was mixed and didn't know how to speak Spanish, the other kids took advantage of me. I couldn't play all the games they did or have a conversation as a group with them. I felt like I had nothing in common with them.

Then I transferred to a new school. This time they put me in a class of Mexicans, Blacks, Asians, and Whites so I had a variety of people to talk to without mistaking if they spoke English or not. I thought I was going to go through the whole year without any trouble, but I spoke too soon. A girl named Brendalyn had to ruin it. She was Black and came toward the middle of the year. We were at recess and she asked me if I had a problem with her. I told her I didn't and she walked off saying, "You better not, you stupid b\*\*\*\*!" I didn't say or do anything but kept thinking about what I could have possibly done.

After school I saw her again. She was with two of her friends and she was talking about me, and it was loud enough so I knew she wanted me to hear. As soon as she walked past me, she bumped me. After that I just remember my whole body getting hot and putting my hair back into a ponytail. One of her friends was telling her to go get her sister, but I wasn't going to wait, and that ended up being my first real fight. We didn't get caught or anything, except my mom saw my hair and the scratch on my chest; she called the school.

**I felt as if because I was mixed and didn't know how to speak Spanish, the other kids took advantage of me.**

Continued on page 29



# The Afterbirth

By Demar Duncan

## Teen Fatherhood

Holding him, I stare at his little face as he quietly falls asleep in my arms. Watching his nose wiggle or his eyes wrinkle, I know he's having a dream.

At the age of eighteen, I found out I was going to be a father. It was a crazy decision for both myself and my girlfriend at that time to make, but it happened. Although I don't regret it, having a baby has changed my life in many ways. My son is now a year old, and he is happy as can be.

She and I are not together right now, but it seems like we are married and just don't live in the same house. Sometimes we get a little feisty with one another talking to other people or doing things the other doesn't approve.

One time I was at a friend's house hanging out. I hadn't gone out in months so I thought I could use some time for myself. Then suddenly she calls. "What are you doing?" she asks. "Oh, I'm with some friends," I reply. Then out of nowhere, she says: "How come you didn't tell me? I'll let you go have fun." We continue to fuss for a bit, until finally, she tells me, "Bye! Our son just got up!" Click!

It made me feel bad like I shouldn't be going out. Yet when she goes out, I tell her nothing. Sometimes I want to make her feel as bad as she made me feel that day.

Other times, things are good between us and my feelings for her slowly come back, but then bam, she goes out with another guy! It feels so difficult to make things work between us.

But when it comes to being parents, we manage somehow.

We are on welfare, which helps a great deal since neither of us work at the moment. Our social worker is telling us to go back to school, which is what we want to do. It's a good thing that welfare helps with daycare so we can go to school and not worry too much about it. Our families help out here and there too. We're also lucky that we get Women, Infant and Children (WIC) benefits. They help us get food for the baby.

I live with my grandmother, and she

lives with her mom. It's hard to balance out where the baby goes. Sometimes she and the baby will stay with me for a few nights then go home and then come back again.

Things got a little difficult when we thought we could just go on with our own lives. We fight a lot, but it feels normal because we are young parents still learning how to handle all of this.

She gets mad because she thinks I get more free time than she does, so we fight about it. Sometimes I feel like she finds reasons to make me take the baby but most times, I don't care since I like to see my son as much as I can. Other times she makes me feel like I'm a bad father. She drives me crazy to the point where I want to give up and just walk away, but I won't do that.

It can be stressful taking care of a baby. When my son was teething, I was so depressed and all he wanted to do was scream his head off. This might sound bad but I put my headphones on and turned my iPod all the way up to tune him out. He fell asleep from all the screaming. It was hard because I couldn't do anything.

As a parent, I'm learning how difficult it is to see your baby in pain. When we took the baby to the doctor to get his shots, it was so hard to hold him down. She couldn't look. Once again he was screaming his little head off and she started to cry. They had to give him three shots and although it was tough to see, I had to be strong about it.

Despite the struggles, I'm grateful for the memories that have already begun. My son turned a year old in August. I got to pick out his cake, and I kept the number "1" candle. I also helped him blow out the candle, until he put his hand in the cake, and that was pretty funny.

Later that month one evening, after coming home from performing at a youth poetry show, I watched my little boy take his first steps. When I told his mom, she started to cry because she was so happy.

Neither she nor I have finished

school, and soon, we will both go back. It will be hard on us because we won't be going to the same school and we won't be able to talk as much. When we were going to the same school, at least we could keep an eye on one another. She wants to hurry and finish, but I will have it harder because I have to do part of my studies at one school and the other part at a different school.

Even though she and I don't see eye to eye, we are still close. She is the mother of my child and I am the father of her child, it's as simple as that. We have each other's backs when we really need it, and what we've learned in all of this as young parents, even though it has not been easy, has only made us better people.

I wish all young people could realize that you shouldn't just go out there and have kids. Babies are harder when they are yours because when you don't want them, you can't hand them off to your parents. Even more important is to make sure you have the baby with someone you know won't change on you.

My son's mother and I never fought until after my son was born. I'm not saying she changed completely but I do feel that I have changed. I still act like a kid sometimes but when it comes to my son, I act more mature.

I learned that I have eyes behind my head so I see everything now. It's really funny and weird. But that's one of the things you learn becoming a parent—you always have eyes on your child, and now, it makes me appreciate what my single mom went through to raise me. ~tk



# Surviving The Worst

## HOW **Therapy** HELPED ME

By Maria Valdez

I never thought therapy would be able to help me through my struggles. I never thought anything or anyone could help me really, but therapy turned out to be my last and only option.

As a child, I lost both of my parents and had to grow up without them. When I was a year old, my dad was imprisoned because he accepted the blame for a crime he didn't do, and my mom committed suicide while intoxicated.

Since both of them were gone, I had to live with one of my grandmas. Unfortunately, I was placed with my maternal grandma who was a violent alcoholic. I was still a little girl and I needed someone to care for me, but I didn't get that from my maternal grandma.

She always drank and fought with my step-grandpa. She wasn't a very good choice even though the court figured she was, but I knew she didn't care about anything or anyone.

Finally, the court realized they had made a huge mistake putting me with her. When I was six, I was taken into Child Protective Services (CPS) because my maternal grandma beat up my step-grandpa. I was taken to an orphanage for kids with nothing left. I felt lonely there. I needed a family. Luckily my paternal grandma would visit me once in a while.

When I got out of CPS, I was eight years old. The court made another mistake and gave my maternal grandma another chance. She began to drink again but this time she began to hit me. She started small with spanks, slaps, and smacks on the hand, and worked her way up to cables, hangers, shoes, and belts.

I was afraid to say anything because I was afraid of her, but I was more afraid to be alone again in CPS. I hated living with her. I became depressed. I was suicidal and had a death wish.

When I was eleven I built enough strength to run away. While I was on the streets, I met a lot of gangsters. Before making the choice to join them, I thought about my paternal grandma and how much I loved her for being the only person in my life who cared about me. I didn't ever want to die like my mom, so I joined the gang. I figured that if I joined, a rival gang would kill me and my paternal grandma wouldn't find out about my problem and death wish.

Then the police caught me. They saw my fresh cable marks, black eyes and scars. The first thing they asked was about my maternal grandma hitting me. My paternal grandma had told them. I didn't want to say anything but I didn't want to go back there either, so I told the police everything. It was all worth it even though I had to live in a group home for a while. I got out and was placed with my paternal grandma.

I thought living with my paternal grandma would be better, but I

was wrong. It was different than what I was taught or wasn't taught. My maternal grandma never taught me to ask for permission before going outside, but my paternal grandma did. I brought all of my past problems to her home. I hated living with her too, because of her rules. We didn't understand each other and because of that, I would solve everything by running away. Every time I was in her home, I thought of dying, but I didn't know how to tell her or anyone. I felt and knew I was the reason she suffered, and I hated that though I loved her too much, I was still rebellious and out of control.

One day I was outside with some friends. I didn't want to go home, so I didn't. I told one of my friends to give me a ride to my boyfriend's house, but he didn't want to. He told me he liked me and that he was jealous. So instead we walked around the neighborhood. We ended up sleeping in his car.

I went back home at eight the next morning. My uncle was pissed and he didn't let me sleep. He took my blanket off and told me, "You should have stayed with your friends!" I got angry and told him, "Shut up!" and I said to him, "Fine, I'll go back." I started to put on my makeup when my grandma arrived and threw my makeup on the floor. My uncle was holding me down on the bed and my grandma was yelling in my face. I felt like crap. All I could think about was dying because I loved her so much, I didn't want to see her suffer because of me. I saw a saw blade on the floor and reached for it, but I couldn't get out of my uncle's grip. I kicked him in his crotch and I ran to the blade. I slashed it against my skin three times as deep as I could.

My uncle grabbed it and threw it to my cousin to keep it away. My grandma called the police, and I was locked in the restroom until the police arrived. They knocked on the door and asked if they could come in. I said, "No" but they walked in anyway. As soon as they saw the blood and cuts, they asked me about them. I told them and soon after they took me to a mental health facility. It was filled with teens my age or a little bit older. I was scared to see people like me with the same problem.

I stayed for three days and had a therapy session that was a complete failure. She said I was completely fine, but I didn't even speak. When I got out they placed me in a group home where I had to have therapy in order to be able to go home.

I hated therapy at first. I didn't want to have to answer my therapist's questions about my past that I tried hard not to remember. I don't want to tell a stranger my life period, but I had to. My problem was already too serious; I didn't care if a car ran me over as I crossed the street carelessly. I needed help but I didn't want it anymore. Finally, I started to open up when my therapist asked me a question I often asked myself, "Why didn't your parents think about you before making their choices?" I didn't say anything but I broke down and cried. It was after that I said, "I don't know."

We started to talk about my parents first and soon I began to feel better about life. She taught me how to let go. After my therapy sessions with over 7 different therapists, I released more and more of that hurt, pain and anger, and I slowly learned to let go.

Today, I am back living with my paternal grandma. I am in school, I love to write, and have a pretty normal teenage life.

I know a lot of teens who experience depression, suicidal thoughts, or maybe even wish they were dead. People called them my "emo" friends. But I think they just need someone to talk to or someone who will listen to them. I know it's not easy to trust some random adult, but sometimes that is a healthy risk we have to take in order to get help before it's too late. ~tk



rtwork

artwork



by: jaleesa vickers

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# Sewing

By Gabby Vang

## My Heritage, My Talent, My Trade

Growing up as a Hmong child, I spent most of my childhood days watching both my maternal and paternal grandmothers sew. My mom's mother, my "Niam Tais" taught me how to thread needles and cross-stitch. Every Christmas my Niam Tais would sew Christmas trees for my aunts' and uncles' teachers.

The grace and eloquence of my grandmother's sewing techniques always amazes me. Whenever she sews, she does it with so much passion. Niam Tais inspired me to sew, and it has become a very beneficial and useful talent for me.

Now and then I like to pick up a needle and thread and just cross-stitch as a hobby. When I began high school, I took a clothing/fashion course. In that class I learned how to use a sewing machine and also learned other hand-sewing techniques.

Almost four years have passed and I've taken three levels of clothing/fashion courses. I've really improved my skills. I've even sewn locker organizers for sewing competitions and class projects such as a dress, jacket, skirt, and shorts. I never knew this talent of mine would become so handy in so many ways.

Now, I can even make my own clothes with just a sewing machine, fabric, thread, notions, and the right tools (which will last a long time if they aren't misplaced). Being able to sew has made a lot of things in life easier. Since I am a short person, I always have to hem my jeans, so I don't ever have to go to a tailor to get my jeans hemmed.

Being able to sew has also helped me financially. Just recently, a counselor at school paid me to hem her pants and take in her blazer. That was an extra 15 dollars for me to spend on going out with my friends when I didn't have

any money.

If I had not discovered my talent, I wouldn't know what else I would be good at doing because there are very few things I feel confident enough to do alone. Everyone has a talent, and it is a good idea that they put it to good use. Talents that linger around go to waste, so my best advice is if you've got a talent, use it.

If you're great with jokes, you can become a stand up comedian or even publish a book of jokes. If you're great at playing an instrument, you can join a band. All I'm trying to say is, you can really make a living from the talent that you have. ~tk

**I never knew this talent of mine would become so handy in so many ways.**



Eyelash Concentration, By Gabby Vang



# Just Down The Street

Roof Access, By Kevis McGee



Mannequins In The Window, By Jaleesa Vickers



A Walk In The Tower District, By Jaleesa Vickers

Behind The Store, By Maria Valdez



Sky And Cement, By Luis Pacheco



# Natural Remedies

## My Alternative Healthcare

By Jaleesa Vickers

When I turned eighteen about three years ago, I didn't yet realize how much my life was going to change. I was an adult, free to do just about whatever I wanted. Reality set in when I became responsible for just about everything, and I was no longer sheltered by my parents, the law, and the most vital, my health insurance. I was immediately dropped from my mother's health insurance. What if I got sick? What if I got into an accident? I was now living the reality that so many Americans live.

Of course, going to my regular hospital was no longer an option. Going back for a check-up or to refill my prescription meant somehow pulling money from my empty pockets, or hoping for a miracle. The sad thing is no insurance equals no doctor. Also, my mother let me know right away that there was no way she was putting me back on her health plan; it would just be way too expensive. So either I find a way to get my own insurance, or deal with it. I chose neither.

I've tried free clinics and health fairs, but neither one suits me or my condition well. I have asthma (a condition that affects the lungs) and I need very specific medications to control it properly. I've always been a healthy person, but as I've gotten older, my body has changed and I've developed more severe allergies. I can't go to a doctor to get a new inhaler; I was in so much trouble when the one I had expired. Such situations can be stressful, which makes my asthma worse.

I started helping myself by using over the counter (or OTC, non-prescription) drugs. For allergies, I would take loratadine and an ordinary antihistamine, but those would either not last, or cause adverse effects, such as drowsiness, dependency, and hypersensitivity. Buying these medications can be very costly, and may not always be effective for treating my condition. I was never told how to treat my allergies because I developed them after I lost my insurance.

As for my asthma, I have to use an OTC epinephrine inhaler. It only works when my symptoms are mild, not after I've had an attack. No matter when I use it, it hurts and irritates my lungs, so I have to use cough drops immediately afterward to alle-

viate the pain. This can be uncomfortable, not to mention it creates a huge dent in my finances.

I sought out more ways to keep myself healthy after the pain from the inhaler became too much. I have heard of people using more non-traditional, nature-driven ways to help various sicknesses. As time went by and my symptoms became more severe, the use of these methods became more tempting for me to try out.

I had never imagined I'd be using things like herbs and oils to cure everyday ailments. Things that didn't come in a prescription bottle were foreign to me. I had heard of people from other countries using natural products for health; how was I going to get those things here? I was born into a culture that regularly uses modern medicine, and oils and herbs with unusual names weren't readily available to me.

But soon I got the idea of using alternative medicine from my boyfriend. Because of his lack of health insurance as well, he was introduced to these methods before I met him. He told me how much it helped him, which prompted me to try it myself.

I began reading books on alternative, holistic methods of healthcare. I educated myself before going to my local metaphysical store, where they helped me choose the best products for my condition. I found out that tea tree oil is particularly effective with treating my asthma symptoms. In the cold winter months, it provided relief from my congested airways. Tea tree oil is most commonly used in its normal oil form, but also comes in creams, soaps, and lotions used to treat burns and various skin conditions. As you can see, it has many benefits and uses, but just like all medicines, it can affect each person differently and have side effects.

When I used it, it did cause an uncomfortable but temporary sensation in my lungs when I inhaled it. If used as a topical solution, it can cause skin irritation with people with sensitive skin. Never should it be ingested, or handled by children.

But tea tree oil is just one of the many products that can be used for health. Most of the time, the benefits outweigh the risks,

but if you're not sure, be sure to ask someone who is knowledgeable with natural medicine to see how herbs, oils, and other products may affect you.

Peppermint oil has great benefits as well. Peppermint can be used for calming a sour stomach, or for cleaning up the airways. If I eat too much, or I eat the wrong thing, a small glass of water and one drop of peppermint oil usually does the trick.

For light to moderate sleeplessness, I use valerian root. It has been used since ancient times to help alleviate sleep problems. Its name is derived from the Latin word "valae" which means strong. It is usually found in pill form, and has a distinct, pungent smell. The smell however should not deter a person from using it. In capsule form, it can be found in places like Wal-Mart or even some 99 Cent Stores. It is inexpensive and non-habit forming and is a great alternative to more well known sleep-aides like Lunesta or Ambien, which carry a risk of dependency.

Other than my boyfriend, no one in my personal circle uses alternative medicine. My mother however questions my methods at times. She seems to be curious about what I get into. It's different for her because she still has health insurance. She has access to all the medication she needs. Even though she has what she needs, I'm glad she supports my efforts to take care of myself.

Most people are fortunate to be able to go to the doctor and get a prescription, but I have sometimes had to use alternative medicine out of necessity. Though it may not be for everyone, I recommend trying natural medicine out if you're in a financial pinch. It can help your pocketbook and may be more tolerable than prescribed medicine. However, this is not a guarantee. Always go to a doctor whenever possible to get your healthcare formatted to your needs.

Most important, the easiest way to stay healthy is to eat, sleep, and exercise properly. Practicing good hygiene and staying happy (eliminating stressors) is a good way to keep your body performing at its best, whether you can see a doctor or not. ~tk



# Stop Stressin'

...And Listen To Some Music

By Houa Chang  
Artwork by William Thao



That morning, I arrived late to school. I had a surprise quiz in my biology class. It could have been a surprise, or maybe I wasn't paying attention to remember we had a quiz that day. And yes, I failed it, which dropped my grade from a B+ to a C. When I got to my English class, I discovered I had forgotten to print out my essay so I was going to lose ten points for turning it in late.

My day didn't get any better. When lunchtime came, I found out that people were laughing at me because my zipper was open. I was so embarrassed! I walked to the locker room like nothing had happened and changed into my shorts because the zipper just chose to break that day. Ugh!

While I was in the locker room, I heard a song playing in the background. It was "Bad Day" by Daniel Powter, and just the song I needed for a day like this. I sat in the locker room listening to the song until my friend came and asked if I was okay. I said yeah, just a little embarrassed. But the song reminded me that no matter how bad my day is, I shouldn't let it put me down and that I should "...sing a sad song just to turn it around..." Not literally, but it made me realize that perhaps someone else could be having a far worse day than I am.

Hearing that song play at the right moment was weird, but it proves my point that music provides calm and relieves stress.

There are so many things I face each day, such as chores, homework, babysitting, work, relationships, and family issues. Sometimes I get frustrated and have no way to spend time to myself. Music helps me escape and get away from all of those things.

Singers such as Justin Bieber, Taylor Swift, Lady GaGa, Usher, Jason Mraz, and Rascal Flatts are just a few mainstream examples of what I and a lot of other young people are listening to these days.

I asked some of my friends why they listen to music and most of them said it helps them feel better when they're down or mad. For example, my friend Carlie said, "It sets my mood, like when I'm sad, happy, hyper, or mad."

It's not good to keep stress inside because it can affect a person's health. I've seen how teen stress can cause some young people to drop out of college, high school, even middle school. Some of them are too busy worrying about family troubles, relationship issues, bills and money, or even where they will sleep that night.

I find that music is great for relieving stress because it helps me cool down and be in my own "little world". "It allows me to feel what the other people are trying to perceive," said my friend Kevin,

"Music helps me get away from the world."

The songs that I listen to usually have lyrics that focus on the problems I'm facing and that allows me to put myself into the position of whom the song is being sung to. For example, Taylor Swift's songs "You Belong To Me," "Tear Drops On My Guitar," and "Love Story," are songs that many teenage girls, including myself, can relate to because they tell the stories of what most of us face everyday. A young girl who wishes for the guy of her dreams to notice her and ask her out on a date or just to have him look at her. Some guys I know listen to songs that are directed toward a girl whom they have feelings for, such as "Just The Way You Are" by Bruno Mars and "I'm Yours" by Jason Mraz.

I remember when my boyfriend and I broke up this year. I felt torn and useless to the world. I love him a lot and still to this day. My friend suggested I listen to the song "Just A Dream" by Nelly. As I listened to it I began to cry. The song reminded me that there is a difference between dream and reality. I knew that he and I would never be together again and what I dream of is our good times together, just like the lyrics say: "...open my eyes, yeah; it was just a dream...if you ever loved someone, put your hands up, and now they're gone, you wishing you can give them everything..." I didn't know what else to do but listen to that song. It really cheered me up and reminded me that sometimes reality hurts.

Then there are other types of music that have a different approach, like Mozart, which is classical and believed to relax the brain. Whenever we did standardized testing during my freshman year, my teachers would put on Mozart. I asked one of my teachers why she puts that kind of music on and she said, "Mozart's music is to help you focus on what you are doing."

I didn't really understand what she meant until I took the test. It helped me focus but just for a while because I get sidetracked easily. I was shocked when I got my test scores over the summer. I finally scored in the middle of being proficient in English! I had never gotten in the middle before. I always had a "barely there" proficient score. Now I understand what my teacher meant about Mozart helping me focus.

I've learned that music can help cure just about anything. For me, it really has become a helper, a friend, a reliever, a healer. There are probably enough songs out there to explain every emotion or situation. So regardless of what you're feeling, listen to that one unique song that fits your mood and stop stressing. ~tk



# A Young Person's Exploration Into An Ancient Earth-Based Religion

By Jaleesa Vickers

## Wicca

When asked the question, "what is a witch?" what comes to mind? You might think of bubbling cauldrons, or an ugly, green-skinned woman throwing in eye of newt, or spouting incantations like "hocus pocus" or "abracadabra." Despite common belief, that couldn't be further from the truth. Witches, or Wiccans, are ordinary people. And yes, they are real.

Wiccans practice Wicca, an earth-based religion that draws aspects from pre-Christian Pagan religions of Europe. With the incorporation of nature, wiccans practice the belief as a way to seek truth and understanding to affect inner change. There is no way to explain Wicca in a nutshell, because it is a personal practice. There is no single set method for practicing Wicca.

To a young person, there are quite a few aspects of Wicca that can be very appealing. Among the most appealing: the power to

**Because of old myths, a lot of people may think that wiccans are only out to hurt people or put a curse on them. In reality, most wiccans are out to better themselves and the planet.**

choose. There are always going to be people who tell you what to do, but with wicca, what you say goes. You can be solitary or join a coven. You can choose to honor as many or as few deities as you want. All of that and more are up to you.

Wiccan practice "magick" (not at all related to stage magic, note the spelling). Magick is the use and control of natural energies for positive change. This involves spell casting. You can cast as many, or as little spells you need or want. Also, you can use charms, talismans, amulets, and fetishes (like a rosary, or a pentagram). These are portable forms of magick and have significant and very particular meanings. However you approach it, you can choose to be positive or negative in your spell casting. All wiccans always have to keep something in mind, Karmic Law.

Many young people can easily grasp the concept of Karma: what goes around, comes around. The same concept is applied to Wicca, only it is called the Rule of Three: whatever you do comes back to you, times three. Consequences are ever present, and they have to be dealt with whatever the actions may be.

As an earth-based religion, Wicca places nature on a pedes-

tal. Everything from nature is a gift. Plants, animals, metals, rocks, moon cycles, weather patterns, and even colors are very important elements in Wiccan magick. This is something that may be easy for a youth to accept; it teaches one to appreciate what the earth gives.

There are some tools used in Wicca that are easily recognizable, but few people know their true purpose. For example, cauldrons really are used, but not for strange, slimy concoctions. They are used to hold water, flowers, fire, or any other substance, depending on what you plan to use it for. Brooms (or besoms) are used to sweep out negative energies from your sacred space. Other tools are chalices and goblets (for water, or drinks), athames (a ritualistic knife) and mirrors. All of these and more have a place and a purpose.

But not everyone thinks Wicca has a place in society. There is a stigma attached to Wicca, making some people hate, or even fear the religion and those who practice it. Because of old myths, a lot of people may think that wiccans are only out to hurt people or put a curse on them.

In reality, most wiccans are out to better themselves and the planet. There is another simple, yet important rule that wiccans follow, and it is: harm none.

Wicca isn't always easy to understand. I've had many of my own difficulties when it came to Wicca. When I first heard about it, no one was around to answer my questions. I had to read many books and magazine articles just to find out basic information. At the time, I didn't know any Wiccan youth, and I was too afraid to come forward about my curiosity.

At this time, I guess you could say I practice Wicca, rather, I have practiced Wicca. I had first heard about it when I was sixteen years old. I would take trips to my local bookstores, reading a few of the books they had on the subject. My love for reading tarot cards made me want to learn more about psychic abilities and ancient religious practices, and that is what led me to studying wicca.

I was attracted to how I could connect with the earth, and my inner self. For me, it was a good alternative to the pressures of Christianity, and what was viewed as being "sinful". I felt that it was a way to make peace with what was happening around me. Wicca for me is what I use to recognize a higher power, and have the ability to do things my own way. ~tk



# When The Family Budget Does Not Allow For Healthy Food

By Jana Fuller

**A**s I go in to the grocery store I notice that junk food is priced lower than healthier food. Some cereal and bread are highly priced at \$3.96 to about \$4.50, whereas most chips, noodles, and cookies are as low as seventeen cents to \$1.98.

So I ask myself, is junk food cheaper just so that companies can make more money while also making the community and poor people unhealthy at the same time?

For me, chips, noodles, massive amounts of potatoes, fast food, soda, and candy are some of the things I consume on a daily basis.

My diet doesn't consist of much since I don't eat breakfast or lunch, only after school mostly, but then dinner is a different story. When my mom cooks I usually eat chicken with mac and cheese, mashed potatoes, and corn.

At school I usually don't eat because the food isn't very appealing. It looks like someone chewed it up and spit it out. The turkey, mashed potatoes and gravy look rotten and burnt, and it has no flavor. Most of the other food like pizza, burritos, and sandwiches are the same: no flavor. When I do eat at school, I usually go to the salad bar to either make a salad or a sandwich. The cafeteria does at least have fresh veggies and fruit.

Not having enough money for the healthier things in life forces my family and I to eat unhealthy. My mom pays all the bills and supports my brothers and I on her own. Sometimes she doesn't have enough money to get healthier food since it can be expensive.

It is difficult to live without healthy food in the house, especially since I'm female, African American, and diabetes runs in my family.

Last year at my annual doctor's appointment, my doctor told me that I needed to exercise more and change my eating habits to avoid going in that direction. We discussed the fact that my mom spends most of her income on rent, so with the little money she has left she buys bags of cereal, noodles, burritos, hot dogs, lunchmeat, ground beef, Rice A Roni, canned fruit/vegetables, and anything else that is cheap. She also places a monthly order at a meat store where she gets packs of beef, deli, and chicken for \$135.

Knowing that I'm a borderline diabetic is painful. I'm scared because my dad had one of his legs amputated since he is diabetic and never took care of himself. Sometimes I think to myself that if I don't change the way my family and I eat, we'll all be in the same boat as my father, or even worse.

There was a time when my mother was feeding my three brothers, three friends and I. Things got really tight for us so my mom set up a schedule of when we could eat. After she bought the groceries she would separate our food and put them in Ziploc bags with our names on it. She would also do the same thing with our cereal. She'd pour the dry cereal into a bowl just until it reached below the top of the bowl and then pour it into Ziploc bags as well.

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During that same time, when it came to dinner, my mom would typically cook a big pot of what we call "elbowginni" which is like spaghetti, and we would eat that for four or five days for lunch and dinner. After all of it was gone, we would eat sandwiches until my mom made something else that would last us a few days.

These days, when my mom does have enough money, she will also buy fresh fruit, but only enough for us to have two pieces of different fruit. If she can't afford it, then we settle for canned fruit.

I wish there were an easier answer to this unhealthy food issue because many other families also struggle to put food on the table. I notice that usually around the first to the tenth of the month, when

**My mom pays all the bills and supports my brothers and I on her own. Sometimes she doesn't have enough money to get healthier food since it can be expensive.**

people get their food stamps, most of the prices on healthy food are up, like for example, bread, cereal, eggs, milk and fruits. I think they go up because this is the time people need them most.

This may lead poor customers to believe that they are better off purchasing burritos, noodles, processed meats, starchy items, and other cheap food.

I asked my brother's friend Christian why he thinks this problem exists. He told me, "If you think about it the only reason why junk food comes off as 'cheap' is because there are a lot of artificial ingredients in it, and they're easy to make."

His answer is understandable, but I think there's more to this problem. Maybe if we worked together as a community and did things like have more community gardens and nice parks where people could walk, we would gradually change the health of the community.

Through community gardens, we could also have food giveaways like the Convoy of Hope that took place the other year in West Fresno. The goal of the event was to bag as much food as possible and give out fresh produce so families could have something a little healthier to eat.

My mom says that studies show that kids aren't eating healthy. She also says that with the economy as bad as it is, most people make enough money to pay rent and utilities, and then use what's left to buy food.

**Continued on page 29**



# ADDICTED!

## To Junk Food



### The Challenges Of Healthy Eating

By Luis Pacheco

I remember the first time I ate junk food. I was eight years old, and my uncle took me to the store. He asked me what I wanted. I told him I wanted the chips he was eating last time, the red soft sticks, which at the time I did not know were called Hot Cheetos. After that day, I became hooked.

To this day, Hot Cheetos are still my favorite brand of chips. My siblings and I are addicted to junk food. My mom tells me I need to stop eating unhealthy, and I tell her I can't.

She also tells me that I shouldn't consume so many energy drinks because it's bad for my heart. In the last year, I know I've probably drunk over 112 cans of energy drink. I drank so many because they tasted so good, and because I was always tired from all the training we did in my youth karate program.

In my family, we don't often use money to buy food. We use our EBT card, which lasts us at least a good month. We depend on this EBT card to get us all the food we need. At the grocery store, we buy fruits and bread, but we also buy a lot of junk food like soda, chips, cookies, ice cream, candy, corn dogs, and Hot Pockets.

One time, we ran out of food and had no more money on the EBT card since we ate all the junk food within two weeks. So my mom had to buy more food, which cost her about \$60.

For me personally, it's hard to stop eating unhealthy. If I don't buy junk food, my mom does even though she says we need to stop eating unhealthy. So it's difficult, as you can see. I feel I can't stop eating unhealthy because it's everywhere. When I see it, I must have it, whether it's at home or going out with friends.

For my family, junk food is way cheaper than healthier food. We don't have a lot of money since my mom uses money to pay the rent, electricity, phone bill, and cable bill. When the school year begins, she barely has enough money for all of us to get new clothes or supplies for school. My mom doesn't work, only my stepdad does, so it's not easy for my family. My mom does not work because she has

so many things to do, such as taking care of the house, my siblings, and running errands.

When we go to the grocery store, my mom is always careful about what we buy. Every time we put something in the shopping cart, she adds up the numbers to make sure we have enough money. Sometimes we don't use up all of the money on the EBT card, because we know we will need it for later.

I always tell my mom not to buy junk food, and sometimes she listens and other times she still buys things like chips, soda and ice cream. I know she wants us to eat healthy, but she still buys junk food because of my younger siblings. They always want it their way, and my mom says "no" but they keep begging. She finally gives in because it gives her a headache.

I wish I could eat more fruits and vegetables. Although I do have access to those kinds of food, I still don't eat them. I don't know why but I just don't.

I know I'm not a very healthy person. If I keep eating the way I am, it will impact my future and I will have all sorts of health problems, like diabetes. That's why I want to stop while I can, but it's hard.

My mom tells me, "Luis, look at yourself, you have gained more weight because you keep eating junk food." Its true. Back then, I was fit, but now I've gained a little more weight. She has told me to go back into my karate program, to exercise, not stay home, and do something, at least run. I have tried but it is difficult for me now since I get more tired quicker than I used to.

Everywhere I go, I just can't seem to eat healthy. When I go to the liquor store by my house, I always buy chips and soda. I love eating junk food too much; it's a horrible habit now and I wish I hadn't started when I was eight years old. ~tk

**It's hard to stop eating unhealthy.  
If I don't buy junk food, my mom  
does even though she says we  
need to stop eating unhealthy.**



## Getting Robbed On My Home, continued from page 2

My first reaction was one of disbelief! After all, why would he try to rob me when I had been willing to show him that I had nothing of value? I simply asked him, “Dude, man, what IS your problem? What the heck did I do? I don’t have anything valuable you can take.” What made me mad was that I was telling the truth, I had nothing at all. I got my backpack from Wal-Mart for about five bucks and I had nothing in my backpack except my homework, a pencil, and a broken, worthless calculator.

I was indignant at the fact that although he was trying to rob me, it appeared to me that he was in a much more secure financial position than I was. I had shoes that cost roughly twenty dollars. I looked at his feet and saw that he wore ninety-dollar Nikes, not only that but I also saw an I-pod sticking out of his pocket. He possessed material items that my family could not afford. Therefore, I could see that he had not been driven into this situation out of financial destitution.

I thought to myself why anyone would try to steal from people in an impoverished neighborhood in the manner that he had attempted to rob me. In the process of these thoughts, I decided that I wasn’t going to get mugged. After he swung again I blocked his left hook and I elbowed him in his left eye. The force of the blow knocked him back. I told myself that this guy had chosen to mess with the wrong person. As this happened a large group of his friends rushed forward and I knew that I had to prepare myself for a fight.

Lucky for me some guys playing basketball decided to help me out and we scared them all off. They saw that I was no longer alone and that they would be in for a fight.

I am glad these people saved me, and it is thanks to the fact that they were playing basketball in the park. Otherwise I would have been in for quite a fight. It makes me realize that having parks where people can hang out is one way to help make the neighborhood safer. I am thankful to them and to the basketball courts near my home. Surprising that just one place can make a neighborhood so much safer and contribute to our community.

When my family first moved into West Fresno, I had thought that the warnings my mother had given me were exaggerated or that there was no way something like that could happen to me. Yet because of this experience I have a complete change in attitude about the way I travel my neighborhood. I no longer wander aimlessly and every time I walk the streets I always have a heightened sense of awareness and paranoia.

This experience opened my eyes and I saw that these acts of violence were problems that occurred more often than I thought. Just last spring, a young person was shot and killed near a community center here on the west side. It was very sad to hear about this, and it lets us all know that we need to do something more to help young people so we can stop hurting one another and start feeling safer in our communities. ~tk

## The Strength Of A Child, continued from page 3

I have had to stay home a lot and help out more than ever since I’m the oldest in my family. I’ve even learned to give Jasmine her medications at the right time of day.

Some of my friends know that my younger sister has Leukemia, but they don’t really know how we cope with it all at home. Even some of my closest friends don’t know the whole story. It may seem like I have a normal family, but really, if we were compared to the other “normal families” it would be clear that we have it much harder. When Jasmine is at the hospital, my parents always have to worry about how me and my two other sisters are going to get sent to or picked up from school since one parent has to stay with her. I see them working hard and changing their regular schedules to take Jasmine to doctor’s appointments or to stay with her if she’s admitted to the hospital. There is constantly something to worry about.

The friends I’ve talked with about Jasmine and her treatment are supportive and they give me an escape when I want to think of happier things rather than my family’s problems. Sometimes I get time to myself, but other times we’ve had to go to the hospital everyday, and it sucked. Sometimes, I’d have a ton of homework, but I’d have to work on it over there. I didn’t mind spending time with Jasmine at all, but I soon realized I needed to go to the hospitals less often so I can focus on finishing up homework for the next day.

My parents are the ones who have ultimately been stressed to the max trying to ensure our well-being while taking care of a sick child. More importantly, Jasmine is one who has grown accustomed to her sickness and she knows that she has to be cooperative in order for her to be healthy again. Every time she comes home from the hospital she tells me about her “metaport” and “LP’s” and like most people, I have no clue what she is talking about. This whole experience has made Jasmine so mature for a five-year-old.

It hurts to think my little sister grew up not with other little kids, or nap times, or the freedom of being and acting like a little kid. Instead, she grew up with the sight of terrifying needles, doctors, nurses, pain – both physically and mentally, and having the hospital almost as a second home.

But Jasmine is still as strong as ever and she is one of the bravest little kids I know. She can handle needles without resisting or sometimes even crying, and she can take her medicine as pill tablets really well.

She motivates me to work hard so I can finish high school, go to college, and become someone who can help young kids like her. I’ve learned so much from her, and I know now that being healthy is something that everyone should appreciate and not take for granted. ~tk

#KNOW



# FRESNO BHC YOUTH IN ACTION!

To support the development of communities where children and youth are healthy, safe and ready to learn, the California Endowment (TCE) identified Central, Southeast, and Southwest Fresno as partners in Building Healthy Communities (BHC), a ten-year initiative that includes 13 other communities throughout California.

The Youth Engagement Team (YET) is a group of dynamic young leaders ages 14-24 from across the community who have received training to ensure youth voice and input were integrated into the Fresno BHC planning process. YET is a collaborative effort consisting of the Boys and Girls Club of Fresno County, Californians for Justice, the Center for Multi-cultural Cooperation, Fresno Barrios Unidos, The Know Youth Media, and Youth Leadership Institute.

## PHOTOS FROM 2010



Youth Workshop, Jerking Contest  
Jan 2010



Meeting with TCE Reps  
Mar 2010



Youth Workshop  
Mar 2010



Hinton Center Park Clean-Up  
May 2010



YLI Latino Market Store Conversion  
May 2010



Kickoff Rally, Candidate Forum  
May 2010



Youth-Led Candidate Forum  
May 2010



Youth Workshop  
Aug 2010



Presentation to TCE Board  
Oct 2010

## NEW AMERICA MEDIA ANNOUNCES: STATEWIDE YOUTH MEDIA HUBS IN 5 BHC PLACES

Learn more by contacting

Anna Jacobsen 559-425-6698

[ajacobsen@newamericamedia.org](mailto:ajacobsen@newamericamedia.org)

Richmond

Fresno

South Kern

Long Beach

Coachella



Mosqueda Park Clean-Up  
Nov 2010

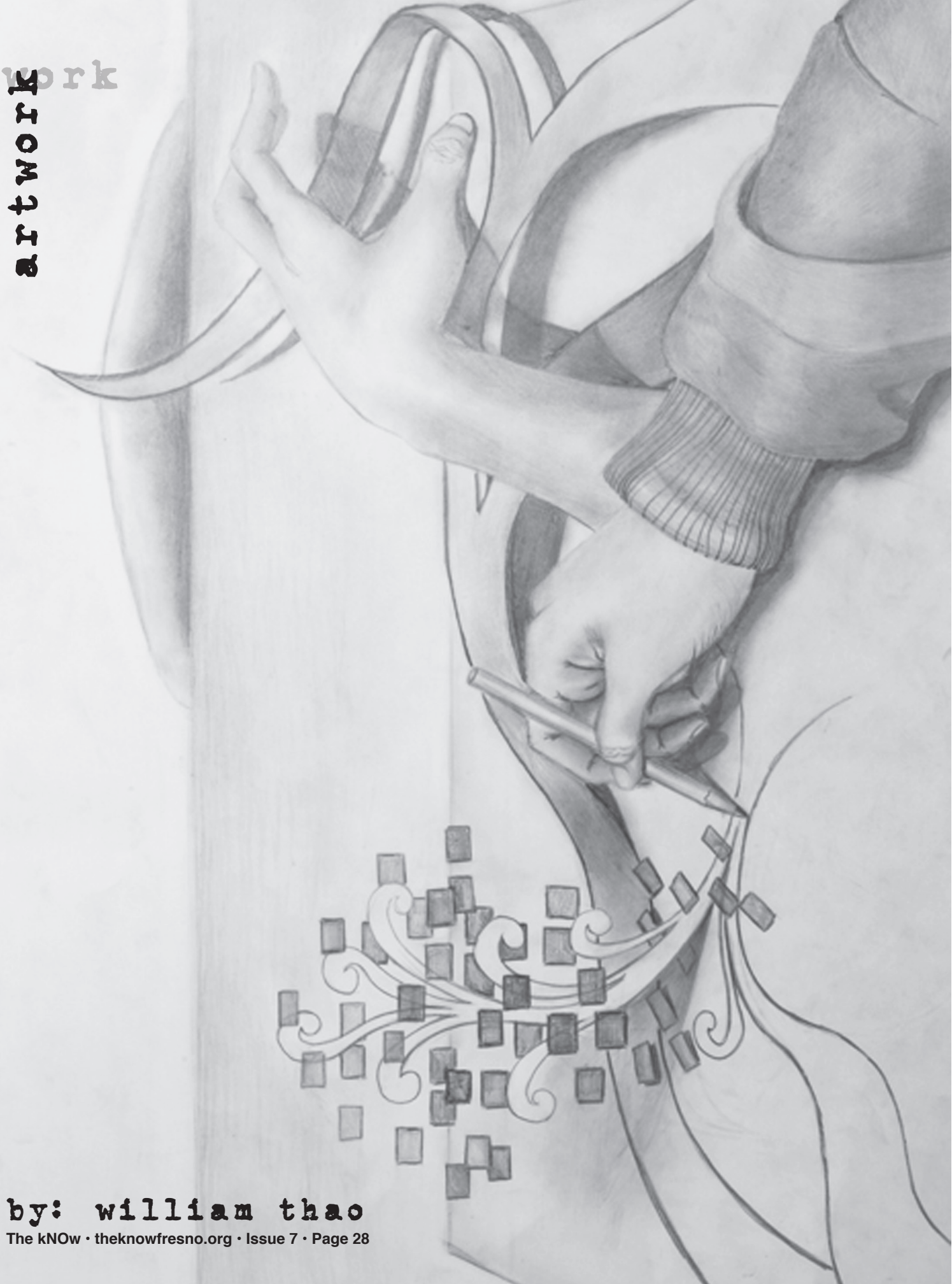


Mutual Presentation  
Dec 2010

TO GET INVOLVED IN FRESNO BHC'S YOUTH  
ENGAGEMENT TEAM, CONTACT UE YANG:  
[UEYANGCMC@GMAIL.COM](mailto:UEYANGCMC@GMAIL.COM) 559-445-0015



rtwork  
**artwork**



**by: william thao**

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## My Life's 180, continued from page 6

I was feeling so good my senior year that my grades began to dip slightly. I let my Spanish and American Government classes get the best of me. They were hard, but that wasn't a reason to receive the low GPA of 2.3 I got that year.

As my senior year came to a close, my grades got a little better and I was able to graduate on time with my peers. I still can't believe I started with a 0.0 GPA. I'm just lucky I was able to graduate on time.

Now that I am out of high school, I can start focusing on other aspects of my life. I most desire to go to school for mechanics or video game design. And my unrealistic dream is to become an actor, but that's something I'll think about when I have a day job. For now, I can be proud of the fact that I was able to fix my academic failures and not give up on my education no matter how difficult things got. ~tk

## The Pain She Causes, continued from page 12

All of this makes me want to leave home. I'm ready to leave and start my own life, whatever it may be. But I know that I will never be able to get away from her because she is inside me. I don't know who is to blame for the things that are wrong with me mentally. I try to face the fact that it's because of my mother, but I'm not sure. My SAP (Student Assistance Program) counselor helps me overcome the obstacles that my mother throws in my path. But she won't always be there for me. One day I will have to avoid the traps on my own.

Going to the SAP counselor makes me feel horrible. I feel like I can't fend for myself and I need someone else to help me walk on my own again. I reached out to the program because I hated feeling alone. I didn't want to hurt myself anymore for things I didn't do. It helped me in the beginning. I enjoyed having someone to talk to, but later on I became too dependent on my counselor and felt I couldn't survive on my own. My counselor and I came to the conclusion that my mother may be depressed and that's why she doesn't go out or have a job or have friends. Maybe her cigarettes are her only "friends".

My mom doesn't set a good example for any of us. She acts like a child most of the time and it's disappointing. She constantly wastes money and ignores reality. It's embarrassing to call her my mom.

I have tried to keep up with my schoolwork, but it's hard to concentrate at home. I try to just sleep so I can wake up the next day and go to school. I'm looking forward to college and getting away from my family. It's sad but it's the truth.

My mom can react two different ways to this article. She may take offense to my freedom of speech or she may take what I say into consideration and understand me a little better. It's possible that she may even be stuck in the middle and won't know what to feel or do. I would even understand if she "hates" me after reading this article. My words are harsh and I said things that she may have never thought I felt. Either way, I stand by what I feel. Either way, I still love her. ~tk

## Of Many Colors, continued from page 15

I had to explain to them what happened and they told me I had to be careful because Brendalyn was a little mentally slow. I felt bad because she was in the same class as me and I could never tell she was mentally challenged. But the kids at school told me that Brendalyn was saying that I got my butt whooped because I acted too good for everyone because I was mixed-race, and so she had to knock me down a few notches. I was so confused!

My mom gave me a long talk about keeping to myself and hanging around the good crowd. She told me that I am going to meet people who don't like me because I'm Mexican and people that don't like me because I'm Black. So either way I feel like I get the short end of the stick.

I am a culturally mixed person and I realize I have had problems with almost every race. I feel like people don't like me because I'm mixed. It really sucks to get treated this way by people who are my own kind. It is constantly a hassle. It could be someone in school, on the streets, or just professionally with a job.

About two years ago, I used to wish I were one race for the simple fact that there was only one to worry about. I used to try and make the people around me happy by being someone I'm not. But today, I see myself as a strong, mixed girl who has struggled with other ethnicities but still carries herself well.

It took me a long time to realize that being mixed isn't just about looks, hair, and good complexion, nor is it about getting whooped on or feeling left out; but it's about knowing who I am, and that I should never be afraid to just be myself. ~tk

## When The Family Budget Does Not Allow For Healthy Food, continued from page 24

They buy what fills the children up or can feed a lot of people. It's not healthy or a part of the daily servings, but it's all they can do to make ends meet. She says parents do the best with what they have, and she would rather buy noodles, hot dogs, and burritos for us to eat two weeks of the month so we can eat meat and fresh veggies the other weeks. My mom estimates that we spend about \$300 on food every month. I asked my mom why we can't get food stamps, and she informed me that she earns too much as an office worker even though we barely get by each month.

I realize that I am a little more fortunate than others, but I still struggle with trying to eat healthier. I have to start somewhere, so I've decided to exercise more, cut most of my junk food habits and gradually replace them with food that is less filled with starch, sodium, and fat. Using my family history and my fear of becoming a diabetic as motivation, I know I that I can become healthier in the years to come.

~tk



# The Beat Within

**A Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside**



## Voices From the Fresno County Juvenile Justice Campus

The Beat Within, a program of Pacific News Service/New America Media, provides writing workshops and a weekly publication for incarcerated youth nationwide. Through the support of Focus Forward, The kNow staff and volunteers conduct weekly workshops at the Fresno County JJC. The Beat Within, Fresno Team, is: Patricia Johnson, Nigel Medhurst, Lily Romero, and Mai Der Vang.

### Miss My Daughter

The last time I had tears in my eyes was when I was in my cell layin' in my bed thinking of all the stuff in my life and how I miss seeing my daughter's pretty little face with her big brown eyes looking up at me, smile upon her face and all. I thought back to the first day I held my baby in my arms and watched her grow as the months went by. To the day she first sat up, said her first word, learned how to crawl; to when she took her first steps.

I cry when I think about how lonely I really am without my baby girl and how lonely she must feel to not see her mommy around. Without my baby girl I feel like a whole part of my life is missing. I cry when I think about how the things I'm doing have affected my baby. I've tried to do good but in reality the streets are so addicting.

I cry when I think about how my mom wasn't there when I needed her the most and with a father doing life in the pen, the only one I really have is my baby. I regret the things I do and the things I did that got me here because now my little girl needs me like when I needed my mom and I can't be there for her and that's the part that hurts me the most.

**-Ladie Droopy**

### Clear The Smoke

My eyes so low  
My body so weak  
I try to think fast but my mind's incomplete  
Always so hazy cuz the drink and the weed  
Push all emotions inside so deep  
Never want people to see the real me  
But now all that's gone and I'm stuck in pod D  
Feeling scared and confused no more feelings  
Forced to confront all these things that I hide  
Bullets of thoughts ricochet in my mind  
It's been so long since the last time I cried  
But now there are constantly tears in my eyes

**-Jake**

### Dreaming Of My Dreams

I write because I dream of myself as an artist. Now, if people want to look at me as an artist or not, that doesn't matter because I know that I have the mentality of an artist, or at least someone who would like to be one day.

I dream of making it big as a photographer, movie maker, photographer, sound animation person, musician, director, painter, designer, actor, author, or anything along those lines. Every second of everyday, something is going through my head. Whether it's music, choreography, or a new idea for a poem or video, it's always something.

Now with that said, being locked up here, closed into a tiny room that restricts my freedom is one of the hardest things for me

right now. I no longer have the option of expressing myself freely. I can't write when I want to, I can't draw when I want to, and I can't go out with my friends to make this movie I've been dreaming of for the last year that can only be shot at this time of year.

Everyday I wake up, I feel my mind dulling into that drone like mentality of what I imagine a robot feels like. I've lost everything that makes me who I am. I've lost my ability to express who I am. I feel like I am no one anymore. My identity is gone and the longer I am in here, the farther it drifts.

The silhouette of hope that I held onto is faltering. I have certainly lost in life. I hope that no one has to go through the pain I'm going through. The worst part is that I don't even have my family here to support me. Peace, love, groove, everyone. Life is so much more than this.

**-La vie boheme**

### A Hard Life

It all started when I was 5 years old. I got taken from my mom and my dad because they were always fighting and never getting along. My dad basically ruined my life because he robbed a bank and and let me hold onto a Glock-9 and it was fully loaded and already clocked back. There were eleven bags of money in the back of the car.

I was holding the Glock-9 when we were on the freeway and then I dropped the gun and it slid in the back of the car where the money was. Then the cops came and pulled us over and took me and my sister and brother away and locked up my mom and dad.

I haven't seen them basically since then. I was put in a foster home after what happened and I got separated from my sister and brother and have never seen them since. So I grew up in a hard lifestyle with my family and without. Thanks to the Beat for letting me talk about my life.

**-Ephrim**

### Getting Shot

Bang-bang," then everything goes numb and silent on the left side of my face. Meanwhile, "Bang-bang," more than ten shots are heard throughout my neighborhood.

Ouch, it burns and all I can say is, "I'm shot! I'm hit! It burns! Someone call the paramedics! Hurry, somebody get some towels!"

I'm told, "It's all right, you're going to be okay; just don't let your eyes close." "Oh my God, my baby!" my mamma says. "I'm all right," I say. "He's bleeding a lot," someone says.

"What? How? My son has been shot?" my mamma says. "Mamma, I'm okay," is all I say in an attempt to calm her nerves. She walks up and says, "Look there, he's been shot in the neck!"

The paramedics lift me up onto a stretcher and into an ambulance, suctioning my mouth. I can see lots of blood coming out. I get to the hospital and fall asleep. I see nurses and family members at my feet. The drugs are working, and I can't stay awake.

"It's okay, you can go to sleep, son," the doctor says. "What if I



don't wake up?" I ask. "I promise you will," he says.

I go to sleep and wake up two days later. I open my eyes but I can't open my mouth because I'm hooked up to a bunch of tubes and machines. "Son, you're okay," says the doctor.

I try to talk, breathing, pushing air out from my lungs, but air comes out instead of words. I can't talk.

"Here's a pen and paper," says the nurse. This is how I communicate for the next two weeks. This is how drama started for me.

**-Mike Dee**

### **Bedtime Stories**

When I was out I read bedtime stories to my daughter. She's about to turn one in January and every time I read the "Three Little Pigs" she loves that story. She laughs and giggles and jumps up and down.

She likes that story like I liked it when I was small. Another one she likes is "Cinderella" but she loves any story that I read to her. Any chance I get I would read to my daughter. I love my baby girl! Missing her every day till I die.

**-Wis**

### **Like My Father**

I remember as a child, when my mom and I came to the courtroom to see my father in shackles. Now, I'm the one in shackles. I look at my mom and next to her, I see myself as a child, looking at myself. I look like my father in this courtroom.

Mother's crying, I'm crying. Now, I really look like my father. But, I will change. Or will I do the same as him?

**-Osvaldo**

### **An Unexpected Friend**

I'm going to talk about this subject today to let my readers know that no matter who you are or where you're from, you're always going to have someone who will be there for you. Whether it's a friend, a person you don't know, or especially a family member. You may think you're alone in this world, like I did at one point, but if I'm one of the people that has to have someone by my side twenty-four-seven, then I'm 99.9% sure that you'll have someone too.

In my case, I had a problem with a lot of kids at my old school my freshman year. I had my brother by my side at one point. But then he got locked up for a long time. So I was on my own, or at least that was what I thought. I ended up being an everyday target for these kids. I fought back all the time, but never won. One day, some kid came to help me.

I was confused at first, ready to defend myself, thinking he was going to try to do something like fight or run his mouth. But instead, he asked if I was cool (if I was ok). I told him "yeah" and moved on. The next day, the same thing happened with these kids after school. They jumped me. I'm fighting back, swinging as I'm getting hit from all sides. That kid came out of nowhere and helped me fight even though he didn't know me.

When it was over, I left to catch the bus, not saying anything, not thanks, or anything. I ended up chilling with him the next day, and the next day, and the next day. Next Friday, I got jumped again. My new friend helped. He was by my side the whole year until he left. He moved, but that's not the point. The point is that you're always going to have someone there for you, no matter what. So you always keep your head up high because you are never alone. Thank God for friends.

**-Anthony**

### **Haunted By Scars**

The scars I have are physical and emotional. Each scar is a passage into my past, a remembrance of my life. There are scars that haunt my soul.

They represent the ones I couldn't protect, the ones I could only watch in vain. Other scars remind me life isn't worth anything unless I make it so. My physical scars tell me of the beatings I took and the abuse I handled, while emotional scars tell of the horrors I have witnessed.

Being locked up will break me, but it will not scar me. My family has a few emotional scars, but they are tough.

To tell you the truth, my past life is nothing but a scar to me. I don't even remember my past. I only think of what the future will bring.

**-Damien**

### **The Addict**

I woke up at night to the smell of cocaine. I try to go back to sleep to sleep off the pain. I hurt every day because my mom is a crack addict. My dad is absent. My mom sold her body just to support her habit. I lived house to house and sometimes I didn't eat.

Sometimes I didn't have decent shoes on my feet. I always wanted what my friends had. I was always hurt and I didn't know what to do. I didn't know how to pray but I still wonder if God knew. My mom smoked crack all night and slept all day. I hold grudges against my mom still to this day.

I told my kids not to call her Grandma because I didn't want her to hurt them like she hurt me. Still today I can't stand to look at her. I hate cocaine because it took her away from us, and she helped me to prevent my daughter from being an addict/hooker.

**-Orlando**

### **Don't Know What This Is About**

I look through my window and all I see is a reflection of myself looking back at me. All I have is a bed, a toilet, a mirror, and a sink, but all I can do behind these walls is think. Nothing in this world is more important than getting out, but I'm stuck in my cell again, wanting to shout. Waiting and waiting for my time to pass by, thinking about that night when I got high. Knowing I've messed up the life I'm in, with no one else to be or even pretend. So, as I look at myself in the window again, I see another kid just trying to win.

**-Tru**





# Just Down The Street

photography



## Clockwise from top left:

Just Down The Street, by Gabby Vang

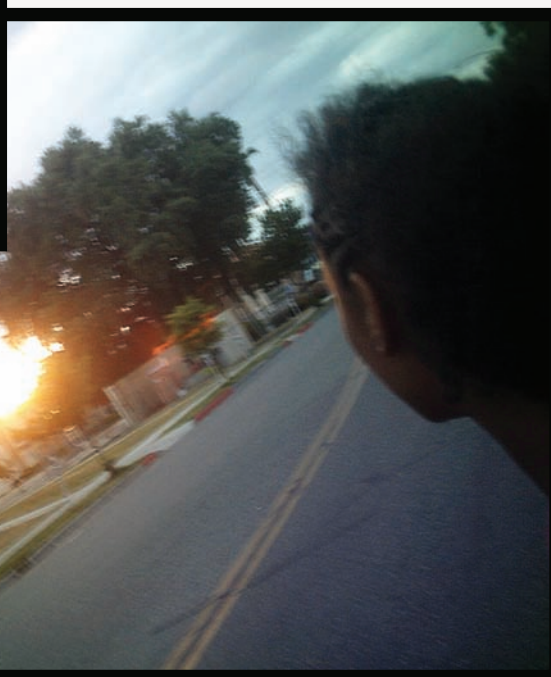
Broken Barrier, by Dasen Thao

Canal, by Gabby Vang

A Stretch Of Road Leading Home, by Angelina Thao

Two Worlds, by Yee Leng Vang





**Clockwise from top left:**  
 Sunset Over The Trees, by Marcus Vega  
 TVs Without An Owner, by Arena Phaphilom  
 Watching The Sky, by Meme Garrido  
 Couch In The Alleyway, by Arena Phaphilom  
 Bedroom Storage In The Alley, by Dasen Thao



“Let’s Make Fresno A Better Place”



## Louie Kee Market Mural

1041 Tulare Street in West Fresno (Tulare/B Street)



**Thank you** to all the youth, volunteers, donors, and community residents who helped **create this mural**. Together we make **Fresno healthier and more vibrant**. With special gratitude to the **Louie Family** for their service to West Fresno. This mural is made possible by “**Building Healthy Communities**,” an initiative of The California Endowment.

**Youth Artists:** Alonzo Cabello, Gabriel Cortez, Jesus Diaz, Maya Kratzer, Ricky Reyna, Abigail Rodriguez, Kevin Shelton, William Thao, Jaleesa Vickers, Miguel, Janet, Otillo, Marcus. **Advisors:** Josue Rojas (New America Media) and Mai Der Vang with support from The Muralists, Youth For Christ, Anthony Cody, Tam Gallery, Mauro, Jacob Simas, Sarah Reyes and Kevin Louie.

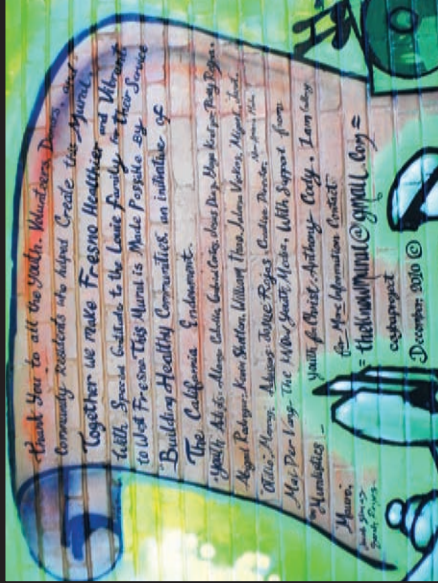


Photo by Robert Rodriguez