Senses of Self

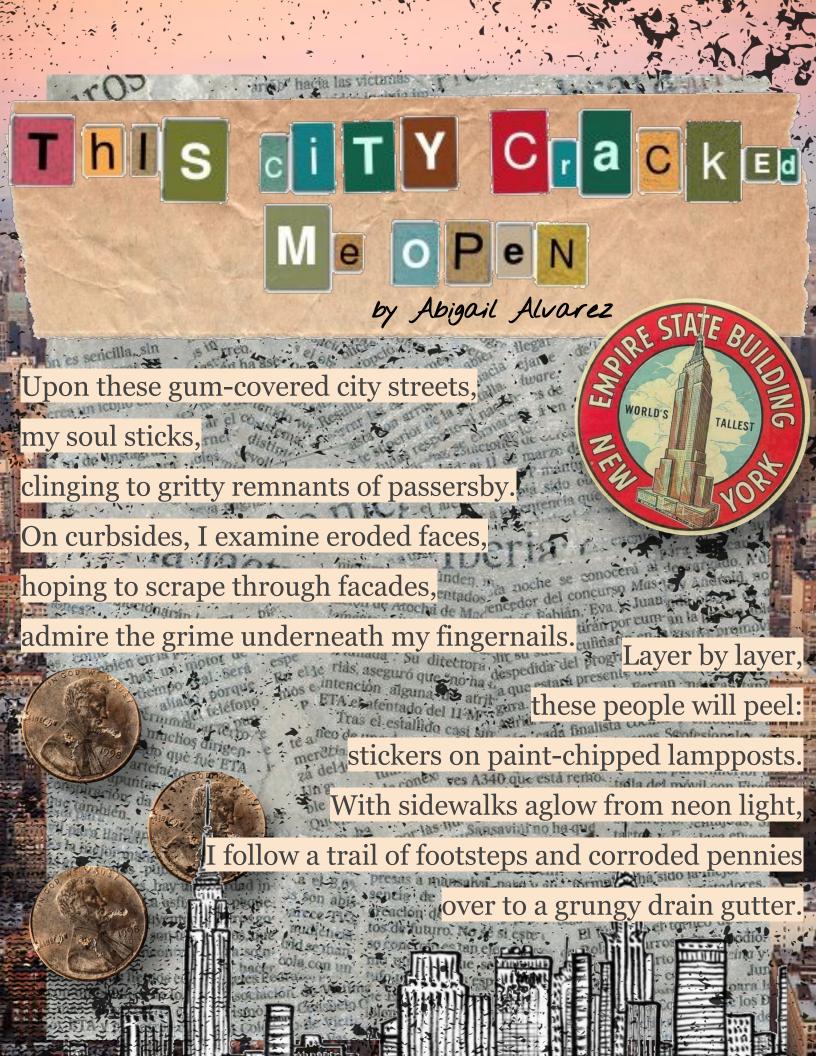
A Zine

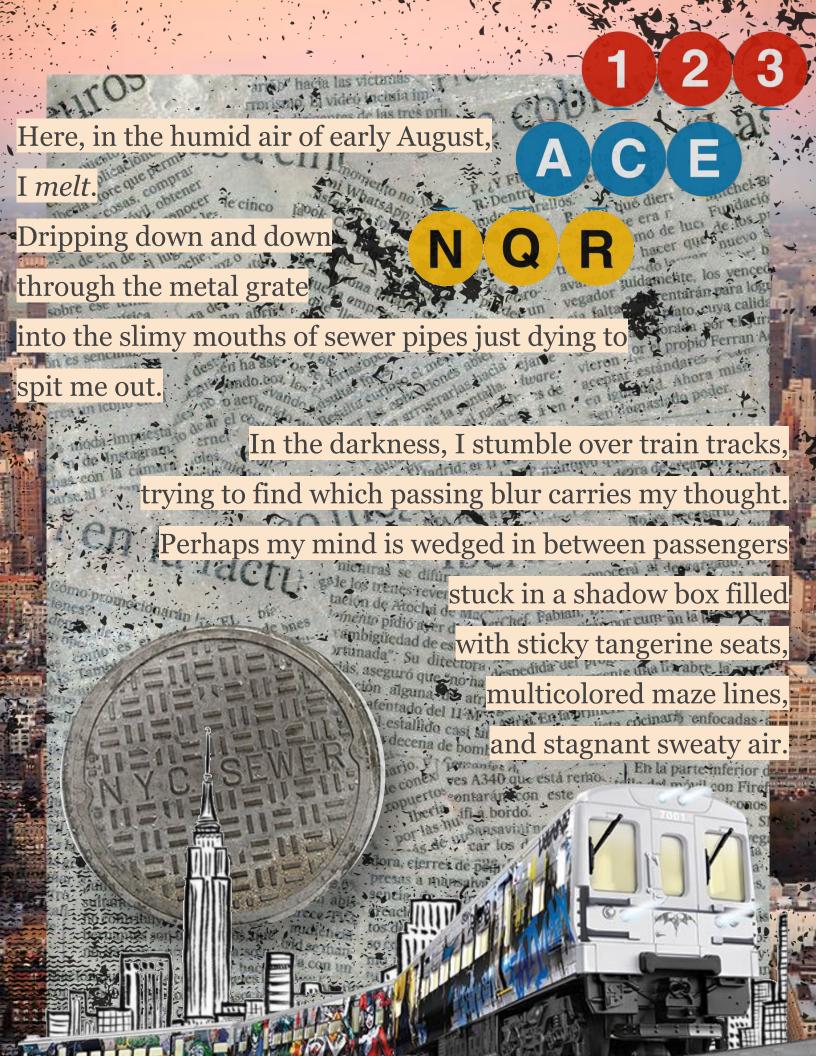
This collection of poems from students at Get Lit's Why I Rise Summer Fellowship spans the a wide range of geographies, creating an account of struggle and hope across distance during quarantine.

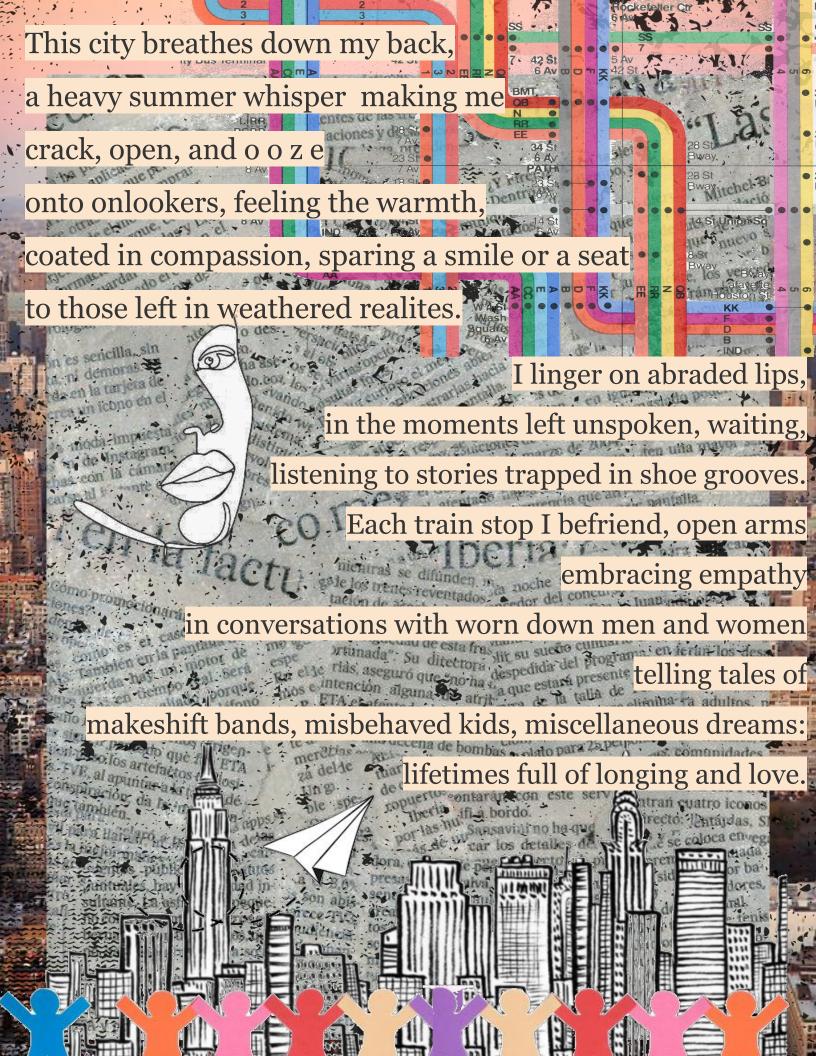
Written in the path of a hurricane on the East Coast and in blinding West Coast sun and late into the night in North Africa and the Middle East, these poems are as universal as they are personal. In the face of heartbreak, they find their way to hope, to connection - they rise.

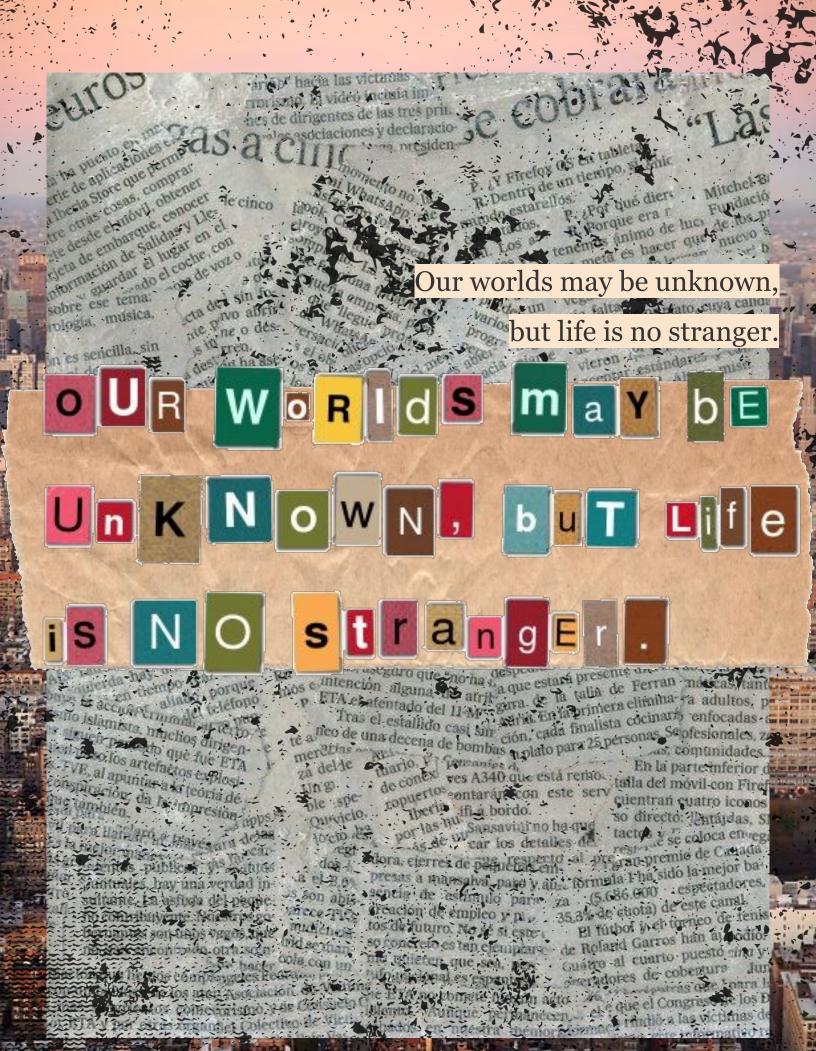
-Brian Sonia-Wallace, Instructor

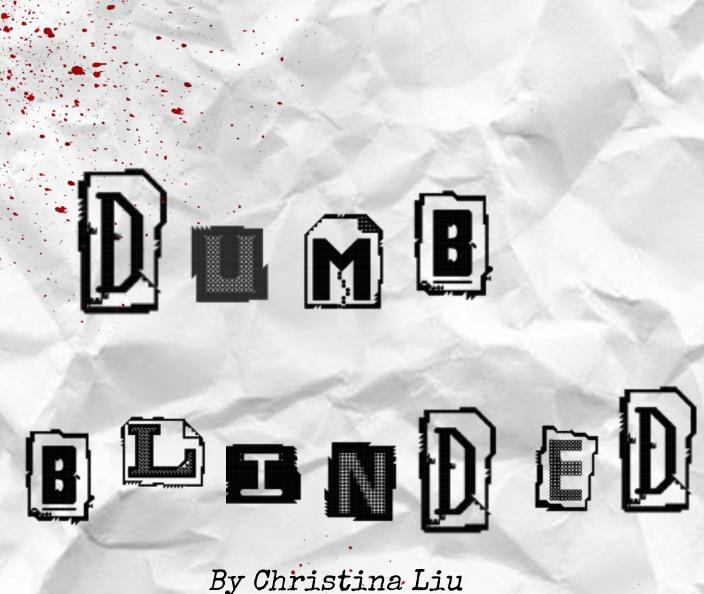


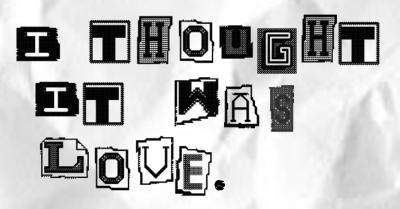












To ignore your sweaty palms, fingers intertwined.

Laid out on that picnic blanket, scratchy like a cheap napkin,

we loved the discomfort.

White foam flowed through the sea sky, cries and cheers of the playground in the distance.

Cologne over dirt and wet grass,
your sun-lit irises,
moles like constellations, more enticing than
any star I've seen,

made my heart beat just a little fas te r.

I thought it was love.

But love is sense-blind.

A year passes.

Smoke billows from joe's philly cheesesteak house
the sun has set,
a chill seeps in.

We enter,

fingers interlocked, tightening my chain to you, our Hands, keyless cuffs. With cloudy-dim eyes

Your teeth crunch crust and meat.

I wasn't hungry,

too full on 364 days worth of tears.

I watched as you greedily, steadily ate

the other half of my heart.

You, so hungry for love.

But I did not grumble for yours any more.

The half heart wheezing in my ribs weighs 364 grams in guilt.

You opened your mouth to consume,

but I opened my mouth so

super glue and spackle bubble out.

Trying my best to fill ignore the house's broken tile floor

our faulty foundation,

correct ignore our puzzles that can't fit to create a whole.

The way you'd mountain me.

Me, waiting.

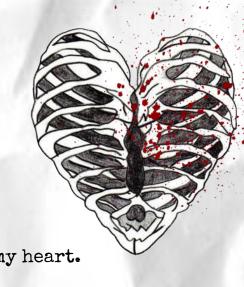
Always waiting.

Until I burst of impatience, geyser,

torrent, flashpoint.

But you, unswayed, unmoved,





When you finished, bloodied napkins piled around you. You spat my heart all back in a bucket. But super glue does not stick to muscle, fat, tissue, and veins.

> My heart doesn't fit quite right back into my chest.

None of ours do.

We spackle or spit

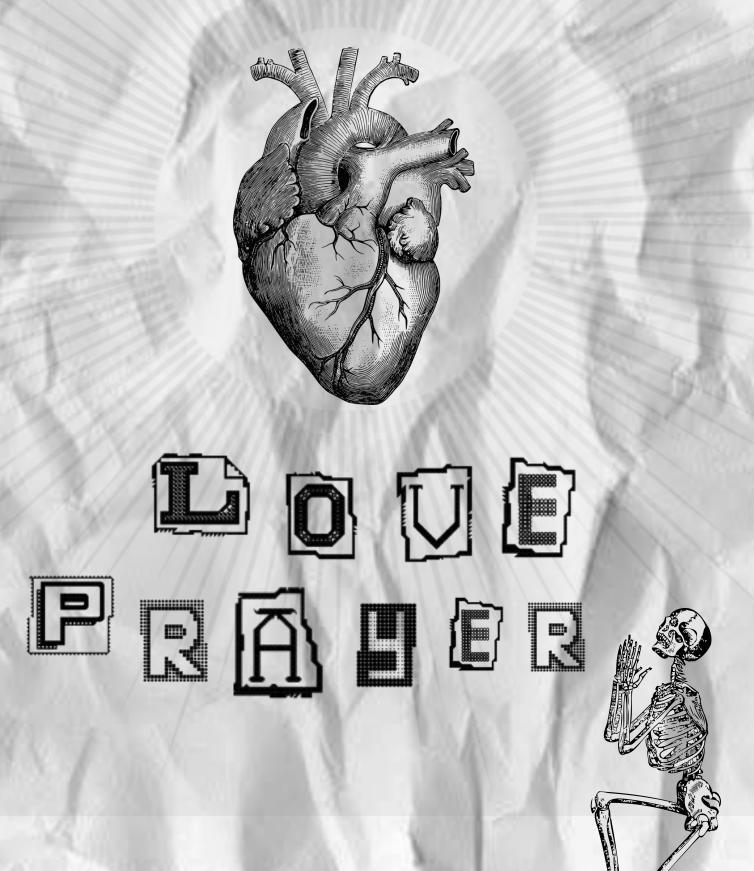
at Hearts,

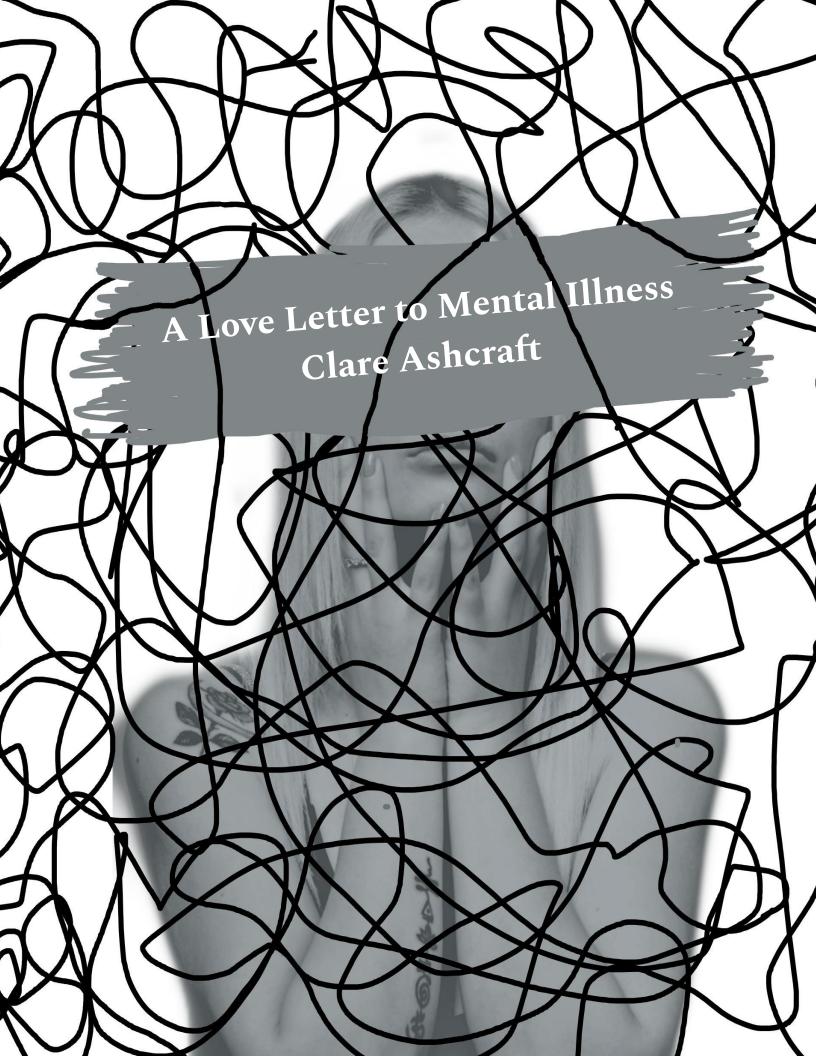
our own or others,

Alone, Together, Separated, United,









I do not love you; no matter how many times you appear at my friends' parties claiming they will never understand me like you. I do not like you;

you cannot entice me with the easy familiarity of our history, stuffed in bottles with broken habits.

I hate you;

The way time hates standing still.

"How many of you struggle with mental illness?"

The teacher asks.

314 of the students' hands go up.

So does mine.

"How many of you would undergo a procedure that could remove your mental illness?" 314 of the students' hands yo up.

But mine does not.

I should want you gone. I hate you. But, I do not have to like you, To appreciate all you have given me.

Without you, I would not be an artist.
I would not be a poet.
I would not inquire about philosophy or psychology.
I am not sure whether I would be more or less lost.



A tall boy with dark hair tells the class

He gets panic attacks.

Describing all of the sweaty, shaky breathless details.

He wouldn't hesitate to leave them behind.

Maybe it would be ok to be somebody else.

Your shoes walked a mile in me,

Buried a seed of unwholeness and watched it bloom.

Only I am not dirt.



A sweet girl with a round face says to us

Her depression started with her mom

abandoning her.

Now, she never feels good enough for anyone.

She would give anything to make it stop.

I understand the weight you put my peers, Because I, too, have felt it. Without you, we would not have this unspoken connection.

You expanded my cavern of compassion.

Without you, I would be so obsessed with my own
Life I would not know how to entrench myself in
someone else's.

I understand why they want to leave you. You left us with plastic hope, shredded memories. I can never forgive you like you want me to.

But I would not change you.

You force me to feel in such extremes,

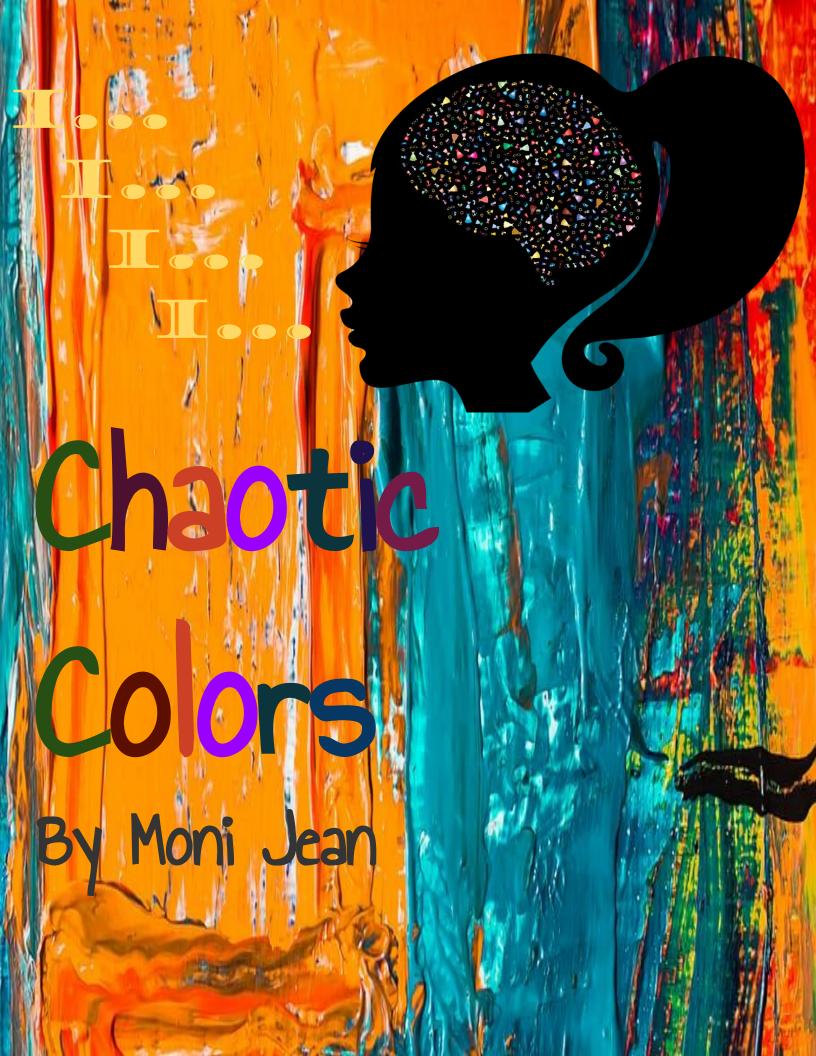
Allow me to love so fiercely.

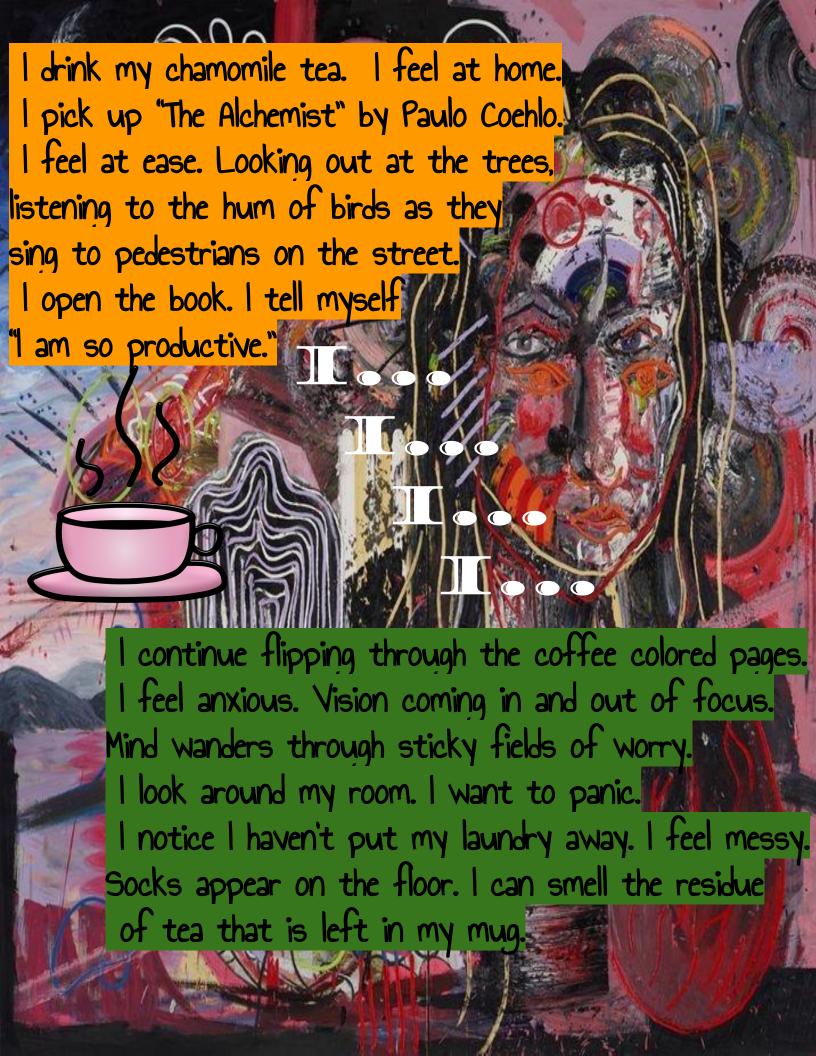
Those small glimmers alighting with a passion, too tenacious for you to take from me, are the snippets of life that keep me alive.

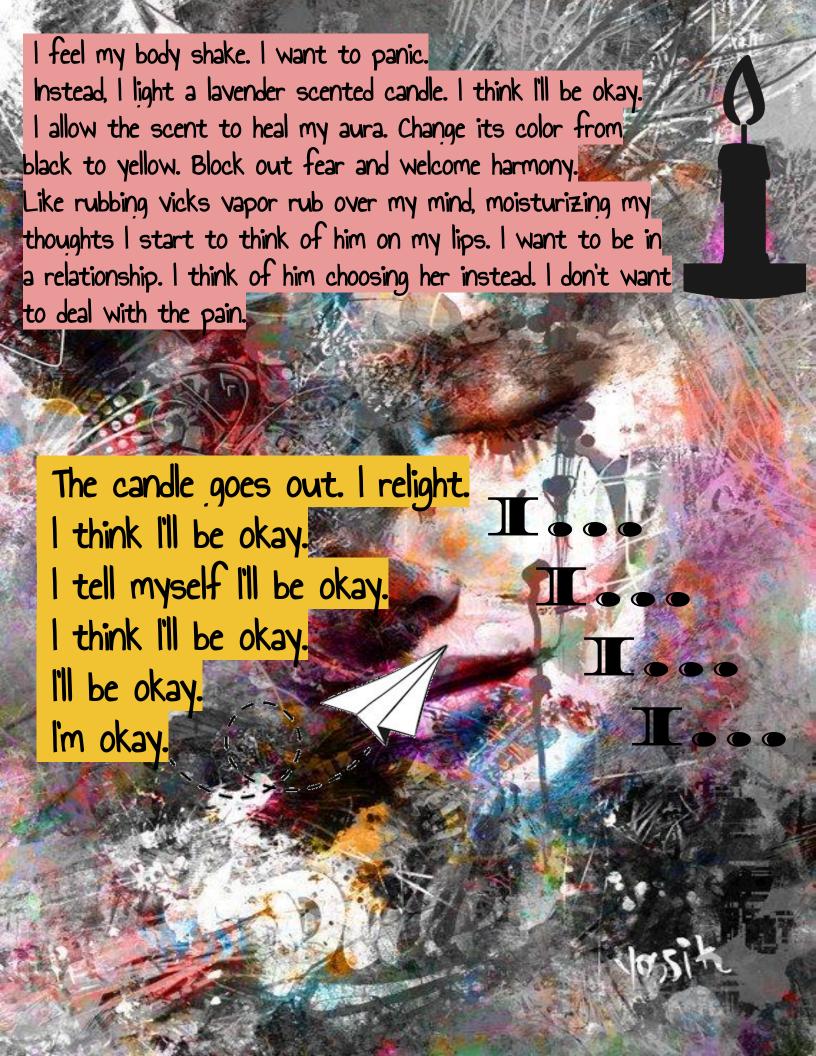
at least I tell myself they are.

I say none of this aloud.





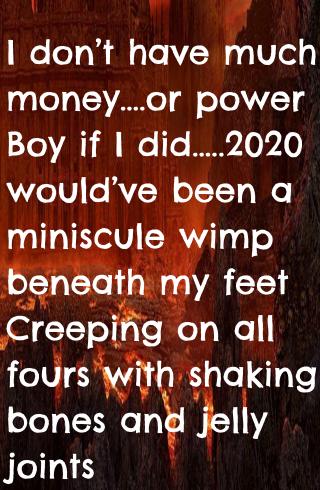




Under a decaying tree, on a hill overlooking a city in wildfire

My shock and awe in the REPRESENTATION

into By Ame 1... By Amr Abboss ideas in a Moleskine notebook I'm not one of those who can easily hide how often I've dreamt of being the world's caped crusader, but with words instead of my fists



If I was a sculptor of new legal silver bullets with the people's energy being the golden gun to eradicate all xenophobes till the last drop of flesh I'd be standing on top of This barricade of xenophobia and racism

And command my fellow rebels to smash through Charging towards these bigots with my flag of peace, reading:



Give the Black and Arab nations
Their long awaited release

But then again no, I'm just a kid. The best form of activism I know is splatter a black square across my Instagram
Cross my fingers that I get heard In the meantime, I journal my thoughts on



Regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality

SCREAM IT FROM THE ROOFTOPS THIS IS MY ANTHEM AND REPRESENTATION WHERE OUR FREE WORLD ISN'T TRAMPLED ON BY CORPORATE INDECENCIES AND DELUSIONAL PRESIDENCIES AN ANTHEM WELL-WRITTEN AND PRISTINE, IT CRUSADES FOR BLACK LIVES AND FREEING LILOULO LIFT YEMEN OUT OF THE FAMINE BRING LEBANON BACK STRONGER TO THE GLOBAL SCENE MAKE INJUSTICE A THING OF THE PAST SO WE CAN ALL RESTART FRESH AND

CLEAN

I sat on the coarse, red brick roof under Orion's shadow

Pulled out my blue pen and Moleskine notebook out of my messy backpack Started scribbling verses and choruses, trying to figure out how to celebrate..... Beauty

Some of these verses would've made Apollo quite cross

Music's god would've cursed in Greek and smacked me with his lyre But the moon's been quite kind while I wrote this song, this silver bullet

Because beauty comes in all shapes and forms
Beauty shouldn't be unfairly incarcerated
Beauty shouldn't be labeled as an illegal alien
Beauty shouldn't be deported
Beauty isn't skinny

Beauty doesn't have to be fair but it has to be fair

Beauty.... All beauty should get be regarded as a Monet painting, framed in gold motifs. This song's for you, for all of you, regardless of who you are

SCREAM IT FROM THE ROOFTOPS THIS IS MY ANTHEM AND REPRESENTATION WHERE OUR FREE WORLD ISN'T TRAMPLED ON BY CORPORATE INDECENCIES AND DELUSIONAL PRESIDENCIES AN ANTHEM WELL-WRITTEN AND PRISTINE, IT CRUSADES FOR BLACK LIVES AND FREEING LILOULO LIFT YEMEN OUT OF THE FAMINE BRING LEBANON BACK STRONGER TO THE GLOBAL SCENE MAKE INJUSTICE A THING OF THE PAST SO WE CAN ALL RESTART FRESH AND

CLEAN



Moonlight, breezes of April.

Rainy in the morning, but sunny in the afternoon,

cool at night.

I sit in front of My mirror My Eirene holding My hand She says:

remember

I've been always

You

You

Remembering

On this day years ago you screamed, welcoming life.

On this day years later you longed to leave it all behind, a numb smile on your face.

I remember what you said to me that night. You seemed too far gone.

I held your hand in the glass standing between Us,

Just like this,

And I told you:

Wait.

Wait till your bright hair becomes gray,
Wait till you draw some lines on your forehead,
Wait till you know for sure the color of your eyes Are they green or hazel?
Everyone we know debates over it.

I roll my wet nut eyes.

You didn't care back then,
But I cared and I still...
I wanted to know you.
I wanted to know Myself through
You.
I look her in the

I look her in the eyes and see the sparkle of every life and the passion of every love on earth.

See? she says, It was worth it. Maybe you're still alive to tell your story, our story. Maybe it's not that WOW but it's **OUR** story and I am here to help you

enough to tell it.

stay long

I smile ...
but this time I feel it.

If you are a daffodil,

I will be your blackthorn





When the storms make you

unsteady, I will strengthen

your stem.

I will take your marigold

and give you

meadowsweet.



I will wipe your tears.

Ask me to stay. I will

give you white cloves.





down.

You are arbutus.

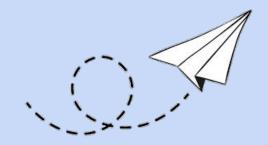




You will always hold my

heart.





I worked hard to create a safe space for you.





I planted

white heather.

It offers protection.



violets.

They offers peace.





The Classics Inspiring Our Poems

This City Cracks Me Open by Abigail Alvarez

These Poems by June Jordan

Dumb Blinded by Christina Liu

Love Elegy in a Chinese Garden, with Koi by Nathan McClain

A Love Letter to Mental Illness by Clare Ashcraft

Brief Notes On Staying// No One Is Making Their Best Work

When They Want To Die by Hanif Abdurragib

Chaotic Colors by Moni Jean
My Therapist Wants to Know about My
Relationship to Work by Tiana Clark

My Anthem and Representation by Amr Abbas

Harlem Sweeties by Langston Hughes

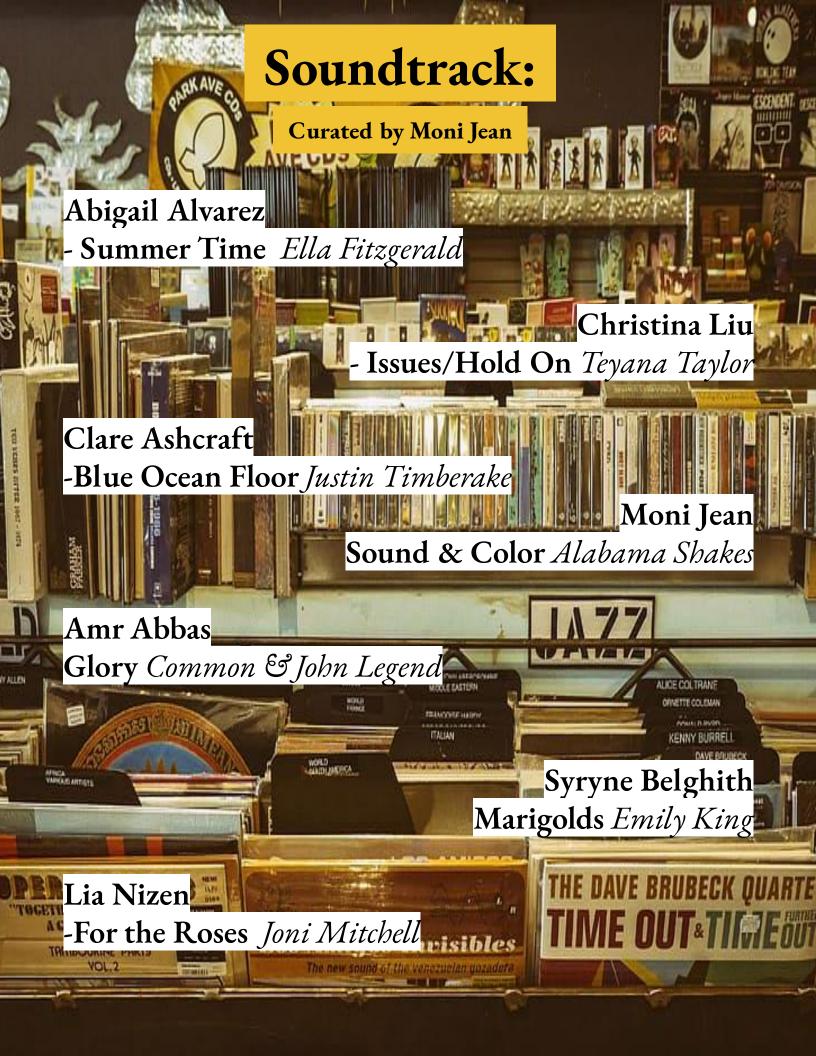
Talk Spring by Syryne Belghith

To the Young Who Want to Die" by Gwendolyn Brooks

Seed and Soil by Lia Nizen

Characteristics of Life by Camille T. Dungy

Anthem and Representation by Amr Abbas
Harlem Sweeties by Langston Hughes



Yearbook:

Christina:

Artistic Basil, design maven, talented, Creative & cute style :), considerate, color and text enthusiast, thoughtful, powerful

Lia:

The Gardener, poetry space-maker, confident, really warm and inspiring, truthful a survivor hopeful. We stan a flower encyclopedia.

Clare:

Sophisticated, nuanced appreciator, Beautiful Soul, true to herself and others and sweet, great to talk to, potential royal family member

Amr:

Playwright, Mr Director Author, most enthusiastic, hilarious, give a synonym to super duper funny please vibrant and lively, innovative

Moni:

Butterfly Dream, warmest smile, music and coffee lover, sweet, so friendly, an artistic soul with an innocent inner child and a kind heart, powerful

Abigail:

Quokka in the kindest way possible, urban explorer, Really cool hair(styles), creative, very smart calm and collected, love her intelligence

Syryne:

Sweetheart, Enthusiastic Angel, kindest soul, striking, down to earth :), powerful

Brian:

The Teacher, Sloths and hats (at the same time!), welcoming, very helping and considerate, a lovely human being

RESOURCES

Created by: Christina Liu & Lia Nizen

LITERACY PARTNERS





Mental Health

Resources

The Power of Vulnerability

Brené Brown studies our ability to empathize, belong, and love.

Sources to Aide Worldwide:

- Lebanon Needs
 You
- Lebanese RedCross
- EducateYourself onPalestine
- Donate Food,
 Save Lives, End
 Global Hunger

