



THE PHOENIX OF PHILLIPS

Literary works and photography from the Phillips neighborhood

Volume III • Fall 2016

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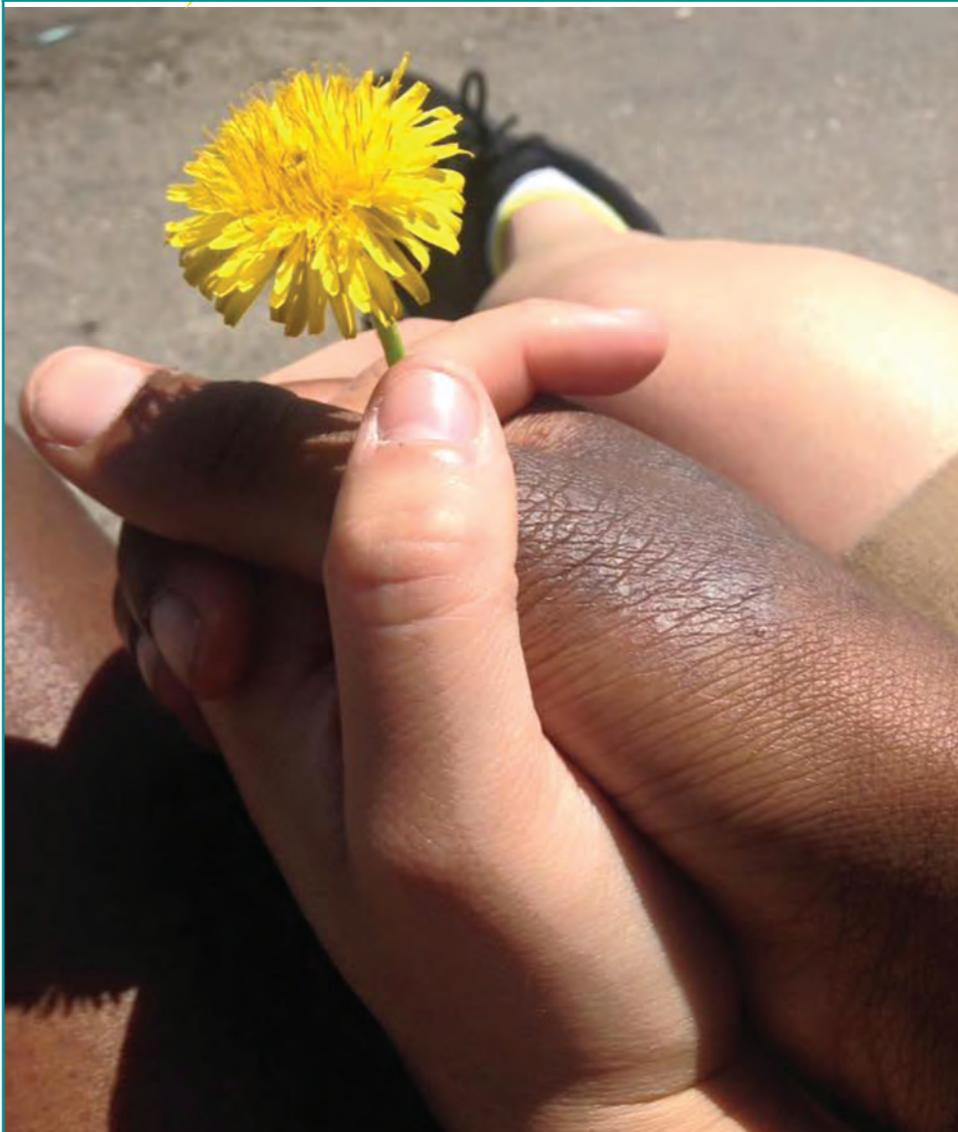


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Volume III

October 2016

The Phoenix of Phillips
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The Phillips area is comprised of four neighborhoods: Ventura Village, Phillips West, Midtown Phillips and East Phillips. The boundaries of the Phillips community are Interstate 94 to the north, Hiawatha Avenue to the east, Lake Street to the south, and Interstate 35W to the west.

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Natasha Cabello Hansel says this about her photo Breaking the Glass Ceiling: "I wanted to show how working together as a community helps to break the glass ceiling. There are many glass ceilings—for women, for people of color, even for older people. I've seen a lot of changes in my life, but there's still a long way to go."

Photograph "Breaking the Glass Ceiling" © 2014 Natasha Cabello Hansel

CONTRIBUTORS

ED EMERSON lives at the Ebenezer Tower Apartments.

PATRICK CABELLO HANSEL has published poetry, short stories and essays in over 30 journals and anthologies. His novella “Searching” was serialized in 33 issues of *The Alley*. You can see his work at http://www.mnartists.org/Patrick_Cabello_Hansel. He blogs about his passion for justice and beauty at www.spiritwound.blogspot.com

ELIZABETH HENDERSON is a resident of St. Paul’s Home, a senior apartment building in Phillips.

STEVEN JONES is a Native American and a Veteran. He participates in programs at the Peace House.

TAMMY KEITH wrote the poem in the issue with her non-dominant hand. Previously a resident of St. Paul’s Home, a senior apartment building in Phillips, this is her second appearance in *The Phoenix of Phillips*.

CHRISTINA KIELTYKA lives in Phillips, is a retired teacher, artist, gardener, and poet. Although handicapped now, she still loves nature and celebrates beauty.

LORETTA KLAWITTER was a resident at the Ebenezer Care Center, in the Memory Care unit. She passed away just weeks after telling this story, which she called “her obituary.”

JIM MAHER is an Ebenezer resident.

FRANCES S. NELSON lives at the Ebenezer Tower Apartments.

SIGRID PETERSON is a resident at the Ebenezer Care Center in the Memory Care unit.

JOHN RICHARD works as the Employment Manager at Waite House (Pillsbury United Communities) in the Phillips Community. When not at work, John is an avid reader, amateur poet and urban gardener. This is his third appearance in *The Phoenix of Phillips*.

BETHANY RINGDAL loves Jesus. She’s also a fan of gardening, wearing skirts, and meeting her Phillips neighbors.

SARAH DEGNER RIVEROS nurtures five children and a flock of backyard chickens, writes poetry and letters, and teaches Spanish.

ROXANNE wanted to only list her first name for privacy reasons.

PAT WILLIS VINCENT is an artist and poet, and a resident of St. Paul’s Home, a senior apartment building in Phillips. This is her second appearance in *The Phoenix of Phillips*

In the interest of safety, no identifying information is provided for our youth writers. They’re all great!

Except where note, photographs in this issue were taken by two of our wonderful youth photographers: Belem and Talia. Drawing on page 12 by Azareel, age 12.

THE PHOENIX OF PHILLIPS VOL. IV

We have not set the date for the next issue of *The Phoenix*, but we have decided the theme: “Healing.” We are open to submission year-round. Please submit to semillacenter@gmail.com



EDITOR’S NOTE

Welcome to the 3rd edition of *The Phoenix of Phillips!* This issue’s theme is “This Is My Story”, a theme that challenges what others say about our neighborhood and our people. Especially during this election year, we have heard so many negative narratives about what we and communities like ours are about; narratives that disdain diversity and seek to divide us.

The poems and essays in this issue of the Phoenix tell a different story. Yes, we have suffered challenges, yes, we have struggled. But we have survived—and more than that, we are thriving and bringing hope to others.

The writers featured here have stories that are unique and personal, but also touch universal themes. They range in age from eleven to people in their eighties. Some have memories of a world radically different than the one we live in; some have memories that are slowly ebbing away. But all have the hope that their story is important, and their lives can make a difference. What is your story?

NOTA DEL EDITOR

¡Bienvenidos a la 3a. edición de El Fénix de Phillips! En esta edición celebramos el tema “Este es Mi Historia” Hermosa Comunidad” – un tema que desafía a otros que piensan acerca de lo que dicen de nuestra comunidad y nuestra gente. Especialmente durante este año electoral, hemos oído tantas narrativas negativas acerca de lo que nosotros y comunidades como la nuestra son; narrativas que desprecian la diversidad y tratan de dividirnos. Los poemas y ensayos en esta edición del Fénix cuentan una historia diferente. Sí, hemos sufrido retos, sí, hemos tenido problemas. Pero hemos sobrevivido, y más que eso, estamos prosperando y llevando esperanza a los demás.

Los escritores en esta revista tienen historias que son únicos y personales, pero también tocan temas universales. Se extienden edades de once hasta personas que tiene más de ochenta años. Algunos tienen recuerdos de un mundo radicalmente diferente que la que vivimos; algunos tienen recuerdos que están decayendo lentamente. Pero todos tienen la esperanza de que su historia es importante, y su vida puede hacer una diferencia. ¿Cuál es tu historia?

LA COMUNIÓN

La vida se renueva al altar.
 No cabalgamos ni siquiera corremos.
 Nos acercamos cabizbajos, chuecos, cojeando.
 La panza gruñe, se queja
 al contemplar la carne y la sangre, y con
 una mordida de pan casero,
 se satisfacen las ansias del alma.
 En el vientre, el chamaco pateo.
 Le llega el sabor a través del agua amniótica.
 Sigue vivo.
 El sabor de trigo cosechado por manos braceras,
 el vino antaño, la miel del espíritu contrito.
 Las promesas nacen del perdón,
 los himnos llenan los huecos del silencio, y puedo orar.
 Los niños miran, grandes, grandes, y reciben la
 bendición.
 En la rutina de comer, la vida se renueva al altar.

Sarah Degner Riveros

DRIVING WITHOUT A LICENSE

Stay away from rich suburbs,
 especially at night. Never wear
 a hat that makes you look
 especially Mexican. Try to have
 a child in the car with you, or
 better, a gringo, well dressed,
 blonde if possible. Always
 wear your seat belt. Check
 your taillights every hour
 or so, to make sure no one
 is out. Signal carefully.
 Turn down the music, or turn
 on country. Never take your
 phone out, or your name out,
 or your country. Or your fear.
 I know you want a Virgin
 or a santiito on the dash,
 but they work just as well
 tucked inside your glove box.

Patrick Cabello Hansel

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

What's it like to be somebody else?
 I was one once
 Several, in fact but
 When words fail
 Reality's veils fall.
 I stand face to face
 Speechless
 Before the fading story of my life...

Ed Emerson, Ebenezer Tower 1707

LIFE ALONG THE GREAT RIVER

The morning sun had subdued and was pampering
 the countryside.

Little birds in their innocent intoxication were singing
 songs of celebration as sage plants tossed their
 fragrance around in generous portions.

On the other side of the river a doe in her graceful
 and watchful manner drank without greed with her
 young spotted one beside her.

I stepped closer in amusement to watch a row of
 ducks in their handsome attire as they glided along
 uttering their playful grunts.

I then turned toward the glassy surface of the water
 that revealed the world of the fishes that skated here
 and there with unrehearsed skill fulfilling their part as
 keepers of the earth.

As I stood admiring life along the Great River, I
 couldn't imagine thinking of these things as wild and
 needing our overbearing and disrespectful restraints.
 In my mind, they being tended to by their Creator
 who made them for His own good pleasure and ours.

Steven Jones

CIRCULAR LOGIC

the way I love you is like this:
 like loving and being loved
 and loving because of it.

It is like when I wake up
 and turn over and you
 are smiling in your sleep,
 and so I smile,
 and your eyes open
 and you smile more.

Or like the way we
 hashed circles into the
 snow last winter,
 deciding and then
 turning back again
 on ourselves in fear
 and then in hope
 and then in fear again,

fear, I think, of just these
 circles; of the way that love
 holds in itself both loneliness
 and warmth, or of the
 years that may pass or
 may not when we will wake
 to smile and to be smiled at.

Bethany Ringdahl

A SEASONAL ESSAY

If I were to take a poll of people on the street and ask, "what is your favorite season of the year... winter, spring, summer or fall," I have the feeling most people would choose spring. To be sure, spring is the season of new life, the greening of the earth, renewal, the warming of the sun and the gentle breezes of the night. My answer to the question would be fall. Why? Let me count the reasons:
The crispness of the air that can fill your lungs;
The changing colors of the trees from their summer garb of green to the yellow, gold and red jewels that rustle with the cool breeze and then fall in crackling piles beneath them;
The intense blue of the sky, the brilliance of the sunsets that you hold in your minds as the sky darkens and night falls;
The laughter of children as they play games in the elaves and hunt for the ones they want to take home to Mom or present to their favorite teacher.
Why is this so appealing to me? Could it be that in these last years of an unusually long life I am preparing for my departure from a known to an unknown, from a season of harvest to a season of rest to yet another season of new life. How wondrous, how predictable. Yet... to think that every living creature is a small part of such wonder fills me with awe.

Frances S. Nelson

I AM A SURVIVOR

My whole life I've survived messes.
What year was it? 90-something.

A nurses-station desk, half-moon shaped around. A regular chair, I think. There were always people, back and forth to the desk. Always people around. Always people around & the phones were ringing.

Cardiac intensive care floor, into late evenings, eleven o'clock. One time a man... was he dead? They tried to save him. What was I supposed to do? Find certain doctors, pull them out, & they were all trying to save his life. I didn't know how to do that.

He died. I remember seeing the bottoms of his feet. His feet didn't look old!

After that I thought
I would have a
Heart attack.
So I survived.

Roxanne

HEALTHY LIVING

There was a lot of snow in the wintertime,
And skating,
And going down the hills.
In the summertime it was just walking, mostly.
It was healthy living,
And my parents didn't have to worry about Traffic.
Cars were
Someplace else.
You walked around wherever you went.
It was a pretty quiet time.
Healthy living. Very healthy.
We had to wear long underwear.
Stay warm.
Walk to school with
Overshoes on.

Sigrid Peterson

FRIDAY NIGHTS AT THE NINETEEN BAR

Among the things
I was too shy to tell you:

Sometimes I was jealous
to see how softly
your hands
held the cue stick

jealous to see the tiny flick
of your tongue
as you focused.

Sometimes I smiled in my beer
when your split-second
hip-shake of a victory dance

said the green felt universe below
was moving
according to your plans.

John Richard

Small birds
Are concentrated song
Feathers
Colors and loss

Ed Emerson

THE PASTURE—AN EPIPHANY

As I entered the pasture, I could sense it. Everything was right there: humidity enough to soften the air gently stroking my cheek, wind enough to cool my brow. There was a view of the Cauca river glinting down below, and snow-capped mountains on the other side of the valley. An eagle soared above. The graceful undulation of the landscape where I stood led my eyes afar to a preternaturally green hill; on it, a white bull and a tree aflame with yellow flowers. There was a Presence there in the pasture. As smoke can reveal the outline of the wind by its streams, curls and eddies, everything about the pasture revealed the outline of an ineffable living Presence. I could feel its warmth. I could hear it in the buzzing of bees. I could see it in the iridescence of the emerald hummingbird hovering over a fragrant orchid. And ther! There was that very same green-blue iridescence on the back of a scarab beetle, busily plowing a cowpie – as if by magic creating the rich black earth that grew the grass. And the grass fed the sacred white Brahma cattle which dropped the cowpies that fed the beetles. Stooping to look at the beetle, I saw another sign of the Presence: a network of tiny white threads interlacing the fecal disk with the earth beneath: a mycelium, a single living being that inhabited the whole pasture like an unseen spirit, and had the power to teach and transform the lives of human beings with its fruit – the sacred mushrooms. In the vast panorama that the eagle beheld, I was a speck – alive, but not prey. Being fully present in that moment, I realized this isn't my life. Life doesn't belong to me: I belong to Life.

Ed Emerson

SLEEPING BEAUTY

The roosters got up
long ago –
Sun is shining like hell.
Why don't you get up, Momma?
Is it too much to ask, sweet soul?
Why don't you
open those pretty eyes and
pull aside the white lace curtain.
Are you waiting for a prince, Momma,
a knight in shining armor, perhaps?
Bake a pie, Momma.
Spit in his eye, Momma.
I wish to God you were awake.

Pat Vincent

CITY

rip it open
what do you see
a little change for the bus just
trying to feed my kids
shut down
keep your wallet
no fire escape sorry
next aisle next window
next lifetime

Pat Vincent

PINK MUMS

Pink mums
held in a woman's fist.
picked before the final frost.
She sits on the aisle
next to no one.
Outside the sign flashes
a quick piece of meat,
tries in a bag.
Some kid was shot,
the other day, last week...
They didn't stop to order.
Boarded-up buildings
don't talk or listen.
She sits blank,
far from the garden
found next to a shoe store,
lulled by the stop and start
of the bus.
Tomorrow she will
stand in line,
sort bits of frozen meat,
wear gloves to
protect her fingers.
Eyes closed,
she can see flowers
on the counter top,
a bottle being filled
with water.

Pat Vincent

HOLY SATURDAY AFTERNOON

Mid afternoon brings a break
in the rain. Puddles
on Hennepin Avenue
shine back toward the April sky.

Steve, working the early shift
at the queer bar,
calls it a farmer's rain.

His afternoon regulars,
older, mostly local,
know the term -

seasonably cool,
slow, steady,

soaking
in at right time
after a dry winter.

The rain settles in with the crowd
like muted background music.
The guys aren't getting drunk, really,
this crew is long past cruising -

they're just swapping stories,
remembering long ago passions and passing beauty.

When the young crowd arrives later
the old guys will smile quietly,
as at a half-remembered joke.

Walking back to the light rail stop
I pass a familiar scruffy tree
growing next to the dirty bookstore
with a survivor's stunted dignity.

Catkins lie on the sidewalk
beaten down by the rain
and the blind feet of passers-by.
Soggy brown things -

who could see they were once flowers?

Tomorrow
will bring sun
and dryer winds.
Choirs will chant songs
of victory and new beginnings.

Few will notice
these seeds when they scatter.

John Richard

MY STORY

My real mother came from Wyoming. Just a mile from
Montana. She was full-blood Cheyenne. When we come
down to Kansas, they came to my mom's house. My mother
fell on the porch and died. I was two and a half years old.

I was adopted, me and my sister and brother. They were Swedish.
I faced that all my life. I dreamed about it. My real parents. I
dreamt that I was with them. They was wonderful people. At least
they took care of me and my sister and my brother.
Oh, and Hank Williams was my father.

Then I grew up and I married my first husband. I was
eighteen and his name was Bill. And my second husband...
let's see, what was his name? I can't even think of it. He was
so rotten. All he cared 'bout was chasing wild women. I hear
he's coming here. He better leave me alone. Then I married
Larry. He was number three and I'll never get married again.
I've had all the marriage I want.

Larry and I got married in the gift shop. He was a big guy, but
I loved that man. Most of the people in here were jealous of
him, but they couldn't have him 'cause he married me. We'd
dance and everything. I'd like to dance again, but I can't,
that'd hurt me. I won't ever ever get married again. Unless I
meet someone I like, then I might. It depends.
Oh, and my dad was an FBI guy.

Loretta Klawitter

ONION

You'll want to sharpen the knife yourself -
it helps to begin with a sense of control.
Nip the bud that once stretched up
seeking warmth and light.
Find the root bud opposite on the orb.
Nip that too. Your thumb can roll

away the first layer, that paper dry
skin, brown and brittle from its attempt
to be impermeable. It's best to
rinse the onion now - you know how when
you try to hide from the earth, she
covers your wrong-headed ego with dust.

Slice through the flesh,
bitter layer after bitter layer,
each moist with tears
it cannot help but share,

each holding another
like a series of excuses you've grown tired of,
each protecting the pearl-like heart,

each waiting to be cooked down
to its secret sweetness.

John Richard

LA BESTIA

Besieged gringos and terrified lowans
Scream: a barrier with razor wire and guns
So no dirty Mexicans break their doors
No humble posada north of the border
El Monstruo, El Norte

Mayan princess, proud Zapatista daughter
Quinceañera, seated for la misa de acción
Dreams, hopes only 2000 miles and some
With Jose she plans to start a family, a life,
In the hopes of el Norte

The grandmamma with gnarled hands and misty eyes
Gives the new señorita a worn rosario
So God will always know where you are
I have prayed too long, but I will pray for you
Lost in El Norte

Leaving Los Pinos atop a rusty boxcar
Past amputated limbs amid unnamed tombs
Niños, criminals, strong campesino backs
Cling to their hopes and schemes
For the dream of El Norte

Five long weeks, 3000 unbearable Kilometers
Thirsty, sunburned, sleeping in the cold sand
The Saltillo junction ended childhood
Horrors deeply sealed in a sobbing heart
But on to El Norte

El tren de los desconocidos, so crowded,
Runs on dead souls and dashed hopes
From the Yucatan jungles to Sonora deserts
Slowly, erratically, carrying more young bodies
to feed El Norte

Dawn, soft sunlight bathes the far banks,
Separated only by the dirty waters of Rio Grande
A slip, an exhausted fall, so close so far
Un unnamed body, clutching a worn rosary
Drifts by El Norte

Dago, wetback, some man's beloved esposa
Finishes her journey, however brief or long
The virgin of Guadalupe silently weeps.
A solitary desert flower bloomed and died
Far from El Norte

As a cocky vaquero hops on la Bestia,
New young blood for El Norte...

Jim Maher

COMMUNITY

Red yellow black & white—
All beloved in God's sight;
Every race from every creed
Equally loved by Jesus' deed.

Though all our perspectives
May not be the same;
By kindness, truth and compassion,
We honor His name.

In ways we will differ,
That's just what humans do;
But I promise respect
And dignity to you.

Fear & Hate can cause walls
To be built so strong;
But through understanding
We can see them come down.

So I'll be hope for you,
You'll be hope for me too;
Building community
Is the goal we'll pursue.

Tammy Keith

*(Written by her non-dominant hand,
when her writing hand was in a cast)*

Oblong food, dissected, trisected, put into bite size
pieces. Pop right into the zipper dapper. Watch it
change color and miniature replicas of the Radio City
Music Hall Rockettes will dance for your enjoyment.
Wait 5 minutes after the dancers have melted to tasty
goo before opening the door to your zipper dapper
and consume the entire thing.

Pat Vincent

I GIVE YOU

I give you friendship.
I give you a piece of my peace.
I give you loyalty.
I give you my honor.
I give you my surrender.
I give you love.
I give you substance to fill you empty spaces
I give you all that I can to do as you will.

Elizabeth Henderson

SIX A.M.

Stretching into my skin,
I reach for the lamp.
Fumbling through a rounded trunk,
I find a clown nose,
glowing test tubes
that never spill,
a book, which when opened
grows a tiny maple,
and at the bottom
there is a face of a flower.
I slip it on,
turn to the East,
absorb the morning mist.

Pat Vincent

SOUTHERN BARBEQUE

Sparks fly
Grease melt
Juices boil
The gods of the godless gleam
The sons of the slave owners scion
Compliment the chef
We have fried a mother's son

The governor: an arm
The sheriff: an eye
The entrails to the panting dogs
But not the throbbing heart
For it, it will still beat in us.

Jim Maher



GHOSTS OF LORING PARK

Nineteen-eighty-three, south of downtown in the city,
 the kid can make the rent
 if the neighborhood stays seedy.
 Drives a rusty Karman Ghia, gets him around,
 twenty-two, riding solo, watching this life for fun.
 Drinks draft beer when someone's buying,
 weed is still damn cheap,
 Kid knows all the pretty boys working
 these half-lit streets.

Works cement when he can find it,
 saves night-time for the street,
 learns broke young queers live outlaw
 lives in the wrong part of the city.
 But the kid hears early whispers
 that the street life's not as cheap
 as the thugs who run the seedy
 dives the boys flock to for their fun
 want them to believe. (Sniff the wind here)
 Something new is coming round.

Pretty boys working trade for cash know
 when to come around
 swapping lies and gossip, the life-blood of the street.
 Neon lights and juke box rock blast out
 each night's fun,
 But microbes travel like bad news,
 and from New York City
 comes something that's about to teach
 this seedy style comes with a price,
 and, boys, that price ain't cheap.

The kid sees the first few boys learn
 the price is never cheap
 when you try to keep your game up,
 and something vicious comes around.
 A killer still without a name prowls the seedy
 end of town. And ghosts that once were
 pretty boys start drifting through the streets.
 The kid watches, he's uneasy,
 with new darkness over the city.
 Fear curdles the night's hot blood,
 and sours all the fun.

The preachers preach a God of love,
 who hates queers for their fun,
 And thank him for sending a taste of hell to show
 that sin's not cheap.
 Reagan keeps his mouth shut tight,
 he polls bad in the cities,
 and strategists think it best not to name
 what's going round.
 Decent folks don't want to hear about
 the dangers on the street,
 But the kid keeps his eyes open wide,
 'cause bullshit feeds new seeds.

So he watches for new seeds sprouting in the seedy
 side of town – seeds of safety in plastic packs just
 blend into the fun.

And, yeah, queer ghosts still roam the night through
 these half-lit streets
 the kid only sees old friends passed on,
 who 's lives were never cheap.
 They were just a bit too slow to dodge when a killer
 made the rounds.
 Like the weeds that grow in side walk cracks,
 they stay part of the city.

The seedy city
 Low-life funks still spins around
 The streets. Not much has changed,
 but the old guy knows the price of ghosts ain't cheap.

John Richard

OURSTORY, OURSTORY

The wall holds the weaving, huge,
 with orange tipped goddesses, free-falling, swinging,
 over the magenta canyon.
 Laughter, tiny echoes from the corners of the room.

Azure threads whisper through silk,
 the tender mercies of saffrafras infuse, linger,
 with turmeric gold.

Of queens these histories are made:
 Rabia, Mira, Hildegard of Bingen, Christina Rossetti,
 Virginia Wolfe, Alice Walker, Georgia O'Keefe,
 Rebecca Adamson, Leslie Silko.

By women told, history, ourstory, ourstory.
 We hold it together,
 the moon and sun course through our bodies,
 the light enfolds the dark . . .
 dark music and horns and hopes,
 rich damp moss and garden gates heavy with vines,
 wisteria purple, morning glory pure.

Our art, our minds, our bodies, we weave, we dance,
 we paint and we serve up life as one thick held
 gumbo, variations on color, texture and theme.

Perhaps we can trust . . .
 the only true thing -
 the threads, the indigo taint and magic,
 the cures of blood and years,
 the cinnamon scented skin,
 our internal dialogue, our weavings -
 the cerulean, purple and neon green
 cloth of our souls.

Christina Kieltyka

I DIDN'T KNOW HOW MUCH THEY DID NOT LIKE ME THE NIGHT I ALMOST DIED...

Me and about four "friends" went hanging out. We went to a friend of the fellas, and after a while of getting high the four "friends" decided to go get something else to drink and left me all alone in this stranger's apartment. I was there for hours, fearing to leave the door unlocked; and what if my "friends" came back? My heart knew what was going on and yet I was trained to be responsible, and loyal I guess you might say. Finally, someone came. It was a room-mate. Why didn't I leave when he arrived? He left and again I sat alone, waiting for my "friends" to return. My mind started racing, only to stop on the obvious: I had purposely been brought there and left there; yet I was so hung up on loyalty, dedication, honor, and responsibility. The other room-mate came home, the "bully" of the community. People hung out with him so they wouldn't be terrorized by him. He asked me to come to him. I told him no. He was in another room. So he came and picked me up off the couch and carried me into a bedroom. He wanted me to take off my clothes. I said no, if you want them, you're going to have to take them off, and he did. He

forced me to have sexual intercourse and he went to sleep. I took out the ice pick I carried in my purse. I was going to kill him for what he had just done to me. I raised the ice pick and started bringing it down aiming for the base of his head at the end of his hairline. Suddenly, the vision of a newspaper article front page story stopped me. It reminded me of what my mother had done years before this. (She shot my alleged step-father to death in front / back of my young daughter and sister.) I was reminded of all the pain and suffering the families went through as a result of what she did regardless to why she did it. I put the pick away, gathered my things, and left. When I told my mother I had been raped, her reply was as I expected because it was me. She said in her drunken stupor: "you probably asked for it!" I never told another soul after that except for my alleged boyfriend who also took advantage of me the very next night, the same night I told him about what his friend did to me. Many years and a daughter later, I got a chance to letter these words to him: "I forgive you but I will not forget; I cannot." Those final words gave me back my power and self-esteem. I did not believe in abortion, except under certain circumstances, yet I could not bring myself to abort the child I carried that I knew to be his. I claimed and still claim today the victory, although I hurt for my daughter who knows her father is a serial rapist.

Elizabeth Henderson



DEAR DEAR ONE.

The summer of 2016 was especially challenging to youth of color.

During the summer intensive of the Young Leaders program of St. Paul's, youth ages 11-16 wrote letter poems to Philando Castile, a young African-American man killed by police, his family members, and to the five police officers killed in Dallas. They also wrote persona poems in the voice of the person they were writing to.

Finally, some of the youth wrote to Micah, the shooter of the policemen.

These are their poems.

We have included only first names for the youth, in order to protect their privacy.

Special thanks to Patrick Cabello Hansel, writing teacher, Young Leader staff Sally Fifield and Becky Germanetti, and our Young Ambassadors Belem, Raheem and Talia.

TO PHILANDO

Philando—
Good job, for now you are history, and can tell us how the word is around the kids and adults and seniors. What things are as bad as it is and what things are good. Justice!

Frank

To the 4-year-old girl: I'm sorry that you had to witness the killing of your mom's boyfriend. I hope you can try to keep your head up and I hope you and your mom get justice for what happened to your stepdad. I wish you didn't have to witness the killing of your step dad. I hope y'all can get over this terrible tragedy. Sincerely,

James

Dear Philando Castile,
I feel sorry for your loss.
I'm sorry that your wife
And daughter had to see you die
And the policemen still
Didn't go to jail

Martell

Philando: I'm sorry you had to go through that. I'm sorry your girlfriend's daughter was there. I'm sorry you had to get shot and die. I'm sorry that he's still not in jail. We're gonna keep fighting for you and protesting until this comes to a stop.

Martell

Thank you for caring.
May God bless you.
We will have justice soon.
And peace will be spread soon.

Marcellus

It's sad, it's sad that you're dead
It's sad you had to go like that
It's sad our society is like this today
It's sad your girlfriend was right beside you when you left
It's sad that they had to shoot you instead of using another weapon
It's sad they thought you were a robber because of the way you look
It's sad that you had a child in the back of the car and that she had to experience something so horrible.
It's sad

Talia



(Philando responds): Thank you for thinking about me and giving me your blessings. Thank you for spreading awareness for me. I'm sorry that society is like this right now, and how I had to go away is not what I wanted or how I imagined I would. But I guess that's how life is right now, and I'm sad that my other brothers have to go away in the same way I did, and I hope that it will stop.

Talia

I'm sorry you had to go that way
I'm sorry the police have no heart
I'm sorry that the police boss didn't do anything
I'm sorry he didn't get fired
I'm sorry he still got pain
I'm just sorry

Raheem

(From the little girl in the back seat):
I wish I had my (step) father with me.
If my father was with me I would feel more safe. At least I still have my mom, but it's not the same as having both my parents. But one day I'm going to get justice.

No Name Given

TO MICAH, THE SHOOTER OF THE DALLAS POLICE OFFICERS

Micah, I know how you feel
Waking up every day

Micah, I know how you feel
Waking up every day
Watching the news
Hearing people dying every day

Micah, I know how you feel
Waking up every day
Watching the news
And hearing that black people
Are dying every day and week
And year, but killing
Is not the way to solve it

Chris

Micah: STOP
killing white people
and STOP killing black people
and STOP killing everyone.
STOP killing people that are close
to other people. STOP the violence.

Elizabeth

Micah: I know how you felt and I know what was your intention but violence is not the way, and violence is not the way. We just have to protest and fight until the end of the day.

Martell

LETTERS TO POLICE OFFICERS

Dear James
I'm sorry you died
But I'll pray
For your family everyday and
We all need to protect
Us, so I'll pray every day.

Sylence

James: you were a good police officer and you were doing the right thing. I wish you were alive, and I wish her knew what you were trying to do, but it's okay. You were a very good dude.

Martell

Michael:
I am sorry you had to die that way. People will remember you for what You did for the community. Most of all, your family will remember You.

(From Michael)
Thank you for remembering me.
Thank you for writing a letter for me.
Thank you for making me feel good
About the job I picked. I could have
Been something else, but I wanted
To protect my community,
and my family.
My family told me that being
a policeman
Could be dangerous
—like leaving them—
But it was something
I wanted to do

Valeria

PATRICK

I'm sorry you had to die
You probably didn't treat
African Americans
Like other police officers
But my people assumed
Just like your people do

(From Patrick)

Thank you for
writing to me
I appreciate all
the love y'all are
showing me
I hope in the
future I get
to see you in
person
wish you
the best,

Jorge

YOUNG LEADER GROUP POEM

I can erase mistakes
I can make fire out of my hand
I can make everyone have a shoe
for a head
I can cook marshmallows inside my
mouth
I can make a bird turn into a gorilla
I can make a pizza the size
of the earth
I can make the moon small and play
soccer with it
I can make a butterfly drive a train
I can make a cat out of plastic
I can make the moon jump
over the cow
I can make God sneeze
I can out talk Oprah

I can live without sin
I can treat everyone with respect
I can keep the peace
I can stop villains
I can make peace on earth
I can stop racism
I can stop sadness
I can help people who need help
I can feed the homeless
I can show up for justice

MY FAMILY MY SELF

The following poems were written by Young Leaders, thinking about families they had seen depicted in art, and their own families.

I wish you can see
The real me
And how I feel inside
When you see me
I wish you can see
How scared I am

Christopher

There are two kids at the park,
holding hands by the swing and
slide, looking at the sun and the
harvest moon, hearing birds flying
around and there is peace and
quiet. Also they might be blessed
by having God like we did today—
they won't have to worry.

Frank

There was violence,
and from violence came death.
The child cried as all he saw
was that the earth was red
with innocent blood.
His tears turned into hope.
As he grew, he added
color to the world.
Slowly there was family,
nature and love.
Block parties were thrown
and the only red
there was to see
were the apples that hung
from growing trees.

Belem

They all had tan skin and dark hair,
except for the girl—hers was blue.
It was just the four—the mom, the
dad, and the two siblings who
looked alike. They were seen as
perfect, but the problems were
simply kept hidden. The dad was
old fashioned when it came to
discipline, the mom was always
stressed, the daughter had an
anxiety disorder and depression,
and the 9-year old son was
growing up to fast. They were all
so different, and they always had
fights, there were separate ideas,
but there was always love.

Belem

There's a big family there, the
mom, dad and two sisters. They
both like different things. The
small one likes cats and the bigger
one likes dogs and one day they
went to the pet store and they
didn't know what to get, so they
decided to get both, but they
each wanted different names for
the pets so they both let each one
pick the name.

Valeria

You won't believe that I had a
good time with you. You won't
believe that I was happy the
whole time. You won't believe
that I was getting along more
with my sister. You won't believe
that sitting next to you and seeing
the fireworks made me feel that I
could do anything.

Valeria

I wish you could see
I'm not always happy.
Not everything is okay.
I wish you could see
that you are automatically
privileged if you are white.
I wish you could see
that black lives do matter.
I wish you could see
that your words trigger anxiety.
I wish you could see
that I'm not going to forget you.
I wish you could see
how scared I am
that I won't be remembered.
I wish you could see
how beautiful and important
you are.
I wish you could see
how much I want
to have kids when I'm older.

Belem

You won't believe that I am finally
starting to feel happy.
I've made new friends I didn't
know I needed.
I feel comfortable in my own body.
I got accepted into a summer
college program because of my
intelligence.
I am defeating my anxiety and I
am no longer scared.
I feel beautiful and I feel loved.

Belem

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH WELCOMES YOU!

¡La Iglesia Luterana San Pablo
te invita!

- English worship 10am
- Misa en español, 12pm

Activities for children, youth and adults.
Actividades para niños, jóvenes y adultos.

YOU CAN FIND THE PHOENIX OF PHILLIPS AT THESE MINNEAPOLIS LOCATIONS:

- St. Paul's Lutheran, 2742 15th Ave S.
- Heart of the Beast, 1500 East Lake
- Quatrefoil Library, 1220 East Lake
- The Loft, 1011 Washington Ave S.
- Midtown Global Market, Eliot and Lake

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The Phoenix of Phillips is a publication of the Semilla Center for Healing and the Arts at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. For the past ten years, Semilla has taught mosaics, mural arts, photography, puppetry and creative writing to over 2200 people and installed murals and artistic place holders throughout Phillips. Semilla means "seed" in Spanish, and it is our passion to plant seeds of hope, justice and beauty in our community. We do so, conscious of the challenges facing us, but more conscious of the great hope we have.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

on the Phillips Avenue of the Arts, Wednesday Night Free Open Studio, and workshops in photography, creative writing, mosaics and murals:

SEMILLA CENTER FOR HEALING AND THE ARTS

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OUT OF BROKENNESS COMES BEAUTY

Every Wednesday night, Pr. Luisa Cabello Hansel hosts a free mosaic workshop in the Semilla Center's studio at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. If you walk into the studio, you may hear the sounds of children and adults laughing, the sounds of tiles and glass being broken, music from around the world being played on a boom box. It is one of the few places in the community where people are encouraged to break things! Because a mosaic cannot be made from wholeness, it can only be made from broken pieces put back together.

Throughout Phillips, mosaics made from broken tiles, glass and even cups and plates adorn murals, flower pots and trash cans. They give a visual brightness to the neighborhood, but they also help us to see something deeper. That we belong here, that our community is to be valued and protected, and that even with the brokenness

When Lake Street was under assault by crime and violence, In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theater decided to Light Up Lake Street. The Semilla Center at St. Paul's, Banyan and other groups and artists conspired together to create pop-up performances on the corner to give a sense of safety and belonging. We continue to work to bring consistent city services, beauty and safety to our neighborhood. Like the Phoenix, even ashes do not keep us down—we rise in beauty and in power.

The poem below was written by Patrick Cabello Hansel during Light Up Lake Street, as a call to love and protect our community.

**We all breathe the sacred air
We all drink the sacred water
We all walk the sacred earth
We all keep this sacred space safe**

**Todos respiramos aire sagrado
Todos bebemos agua sagrada
Todos caminamos en tierra sagrada
Mantenemos seguro este lugar sagrado**



Photograph "La Natividad" © 2006 In the Heart of the Beast

LA NATIVIDAD

DECEMBER 15-22, 2016

St. Paul's and In the Heart of the Beast present "La Natividad", a bilingual telling of the Christmas story, from the point of view of an immigrant family. Come walk with María and Joseph as we move through several venues on Lake Street, culminating in a candlelight march to the church for the final scenes and the fiesta.

For ticket information: <http://hobt.org/performances>



OPEN MOSAIC STUDIO NIGHTS

EVERY WEDNESDAY NIGHT, 6:30-8:30

All artistic levels welcome! Families are welcome—we ask that children under 12 be accompanied by an adult. Call 612-724-3862 or e-mail: semillacenter@gmail.com



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
612-724-3862 or semillacenter@gmail.com



CREATING A GREEN NEIGHBORHOOD OF PEACE ONGOING

The Semilla Center for Healing and the Arts @ St. Paul's works with block clubs, community gardens and schools to build a safer, greener and more beautiful neighborhood. Projects for 2017 include workshops on growing food in small places, planting pollinator-attracting gardens and expanding recycling and composting in the community. Call 612-724-3862 or e-mail semillacenter@gmail.com if you'd like to be involved.