

I COULD TALK ABOUT IT



Principal Vadewatie Ramsuchit
Assistant Principal Evelyn Idoko



TABLE OF CONTENTS



Mudjana Colin...	5
Sokhna Fall...	10
Gustavo Ferreira...	15
Sol Nascimento...	18
Jhoren Rosales...	23
Wasin Shihab...	28
Adja Thiam...	33

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TEACHERS & WRITERS COLLABORATIVE (T&W) partners with New York City schools and community-based organizations to offer dynamic creative writing programs led by professional writers and resources for teaching the literary arts. Learn more at www.twc.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This residency was sponsored by M438 International High School at Union Square and Teachers & Writers Collaborative (T&W).

T&W programs are made possible in part by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature, and public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. Additional funding is provided by private foundations and individuals.

A Teachers & Writers Collaborative Publication

Copyright © 2022

Hello, friends-

FROM LIBBY



I wanted to use this letter to say thank you. After a year and a half of teaching to a bunch of black boxes on my laptop, and sometimes only building relationships through the chat box, you helped me remember what I love about my work. I didn't realize how much I had missed interacting with groups in person until I met all of you. I started to notice after each class that I would walk in, feeling a bit tired from the relentless gray winter skies, and walk out, feeling, in a single word, happier.

I knew early on that our club would focus on connecting through our writing, and discovering how writing and sharing can be a way to strengthen our relationship to ourselves, and to others. I could see how hard you work academically, how much rigor you approach your schoolwork with. I wanted to create a space that could feel more laid back, more like a necessary break where we could just be ourselves, and share ourselves. The kind of space that had been missing in all of our lives since March of 2020.

Throughout our time together, we responded to writing prompts inspired by poems we read or listened to- Rudy Francisco's "Honest Poem," Renee Watson's "Where I'm From" poem, Idris Goodwin's "Say My Name" poem, Joe Brainard's "I remember" poem, and other prompts, like writing from personal photographs, or writing anti-odes about things that irritate or frustrate us. But more importantly than any content we covered, we listened to one another when we shared. The way you support each other & care about hearing each other was one of the first things I noticed about you. One of the only times our small group was truly quiet, was when one of you was sharing your words. You inspire me with that simple kindness, the act of really listening.

Special thanks to your Assistant Principal, Evelyn Idoko, who is responsible for coordinating our sessions, and who graciously dealt with us when we were late packing up after every class! And to your principal, Vadewatie Ramsuchit, who recognized the importance of having a space like this at IHS.

You've missed out on so much because of the pandemic, and yet you are also so strong. You are determined to pick up where you left off, and create unforgettable high school memories. I'm so glad we get a bit more time to work together and make some magic!

With gratitude,
Libby

MUDJANA COLONY



Illusive or
ephemeral bliss...
midnight a day or
a night
cries of
happiness or
sorrow...

I do not mind,
but I'm crying
tonight.

I'm crying for
myself, for you,
for him, for us.
I'm crying for all
those times I
remained silent,

escaping me: a little
more every night.

I'm crying for this meaty heart,
I'm crying for my missing self.
Tonight I'm crying, I'm crying as
I've never cried before, as I'll
never cry therefore.

I'm crying for
you who
pretend to be
happy,
for him who
surely will never
come back.
I'm crying for
us, who we've
broken, and for
those who
believe they
know us.
I'm crying for
this taste of
happiness.

Hi, my name is Mudjana

I love to watch the sunrise in the train,
Even though I hate the sun

I try to be right as I was born in the wrong place

I smile when people call me skeleton,
then go home to eat until I throw up
or starve for days when I get touched
without my permission

Hi, I was born on December 7th
but my mom wanted me on the 8th

I am bad at communicating, so don't be surprised
If I ghost you, someday, somewhere

Along the road my heart has been broken,
But the pieces are still pumping blood for my dreams

I am that friend here for 1am talks and 3am tears

I'm the girl with the shovel to make bodies
disappear from your roads

I am strong,
that was not honest,
actually I am weak,
so weak that I have to play strong to not fall in pieces.

I'm obsessed with perfection- A+, 100
B+ makes me cry, I can't be second because my whole life I have been
last.

Anyways, I love black, it's beautiful as it matches
The darkness of my mind

I also love silence, its where all my emotions have been since 13

Hello, my name is Colin
They say I'm smart, a great debater
They say I am supportive, brilliant
A love or die rider

I say I do not know who I am,
I am just part of a life that is not mine.



HONEST
COLOR

WHERE I AM FROM

I am from dirt cookies and boiled mango for food,
I am from Hispaniola, the pearl of the Caribbean,
but also from a “s#\$% hole” country
I’m from the infusion of almond leaf,
assossi, and bitter coffee

From deforestation, erosion, from a land devoid of roots
From the colorful hibiscus, from the mapou tree
we feed better than starving children

I’m from submission, to be married at fifteen,
sold for an ox or a tile

I am from “dinner when you can”
or grains of salt under your tongue

I’m from sleeping on the cold floor, at best on a mat,
From singing konpa to “leve cecilia”

I am from India, Spain, Africa, a pinch of Portuguese
seasoned with German

I am from Griot and fried green plantain covered with dust

I am from the fire of the 1804 independent nation
From french blood fresh of the soil, fresh on my veins
I am from dictatorship, rape, incest, and domestic violence
I am from *education is the key* from twelve to seventeen
Yet money and your body open up every door
once turned eighteen.

Ultimately, I am from this world.

Anti-Ode to the Sun

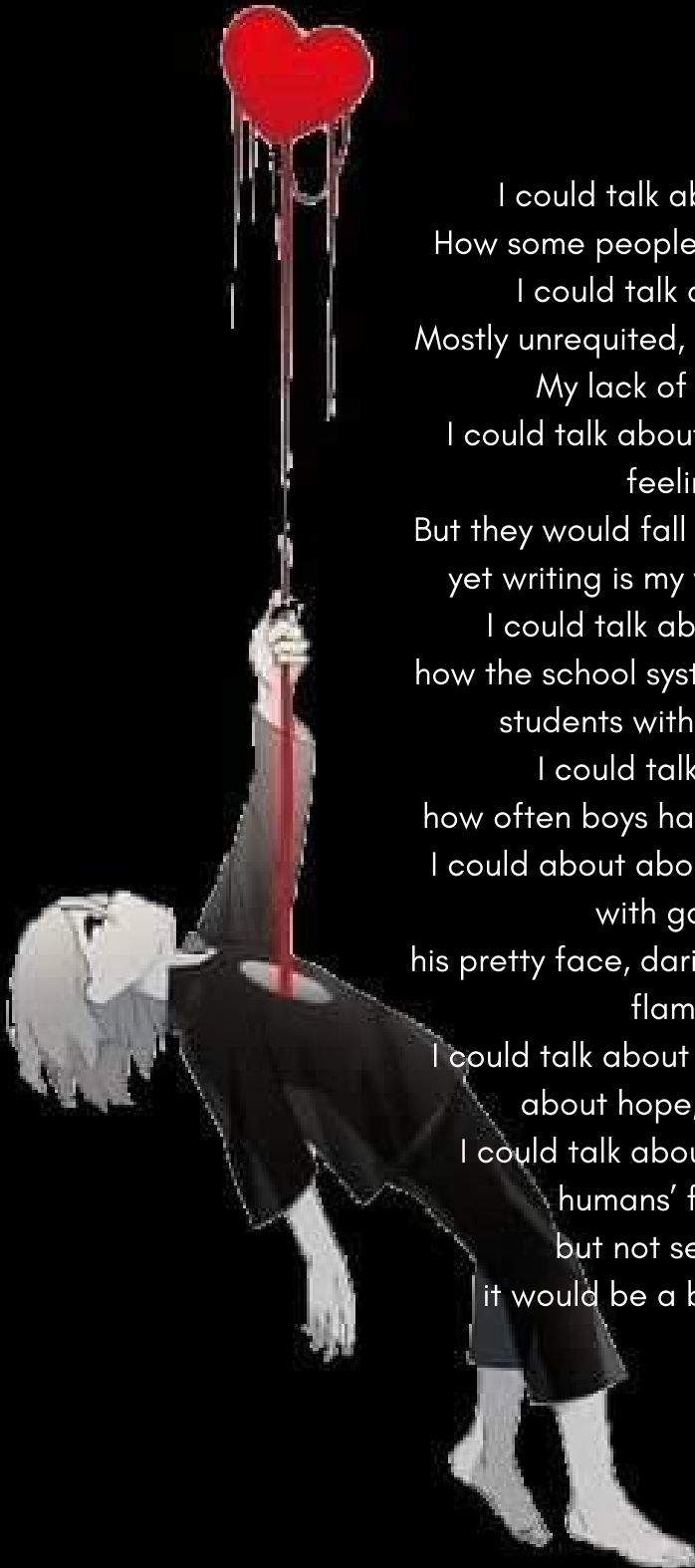
Sun, you were supposed to be a star
To come up during the night,
to be looked up at with a cigar
to be sung at your light with a guitar
But you chose to be a superstar

Sun, why the f#%\$ do I have to wake up once you are up
To see your face every morning,
I need a cup of coffee or two
On a rail you make me want to jump
Every day when my sleep you interrupt

Sun, tell me what's up, are you dumb or too dense?
Don't you have any sense
Please stop my penitence
Go to bed to come up
upon humanity's deaths.



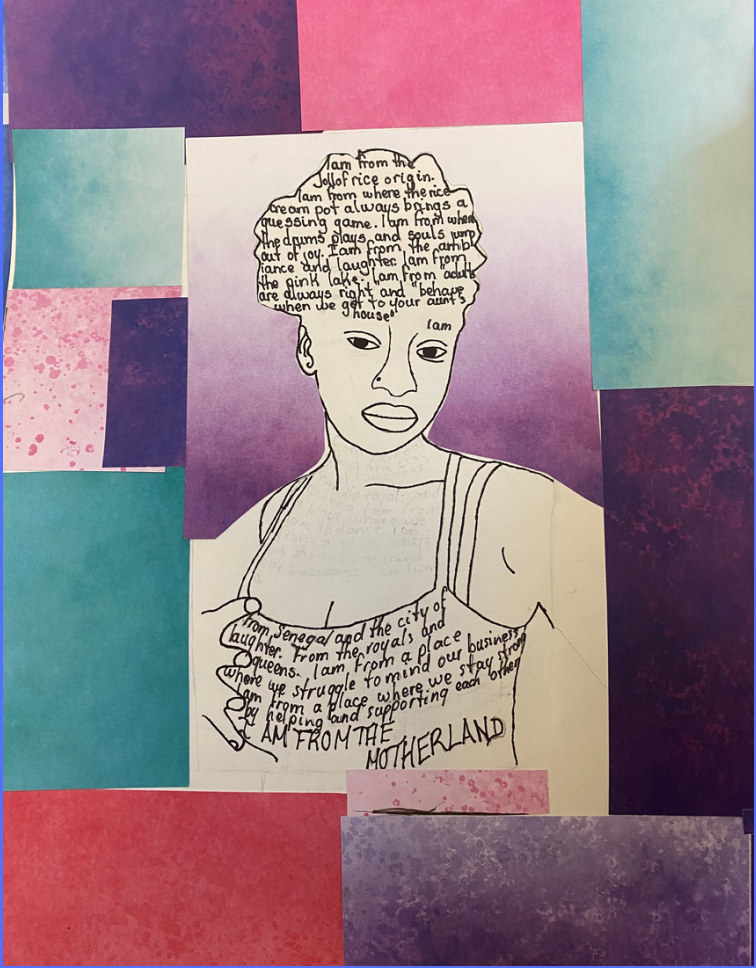
IF I WAS ALLOWED



I could talk about winters
How some people have six fingers
I could talk about love,
Mostly unrequited, to run away from,
My lack of self-love.
I could talk about all my "taboo"
feelings
But they would fall under censorship,
yet writing is my way of healing.
I could talk about treason,
how the school system is a prison for
students with bold vision.
I could talk anxiety,
how often boys have to cry quietly.
I could about about his obsessions
with games,
his pretty face, daring smile, his eyes'
flames.
I could talk about love, pain, stain,
about hope, end, rain.
I could talk about all the odds,
humans' feelings,
but not self-love,
it would be a bitter ending.

SOKHNA FALL

My name is Sokhna Amy Fall, also known as "Sonia"
To strangers and new friends, I'm "Sokana" and "Sona"
My name stands for "woman" in Arabic



it because Sokhna Aminatou gave birth to the prophet Mouhamed. My name is not Sonia or Sokna. To me, my name means the one who brings flesh to life. To me, my name means the one who doesn't hesitate to stand out in her own ways.

name comes from the royal names of multiple tribes that fought for Senegal's religion and freedom from the Europeans. I was named by my father, who chose

My middle name, "Amy," means "friend" in French. My last name, Fall, most English speakers mistake as an actual person falling. I constantly get asked, "Is it like Sokhna Fall, like you're falling down the stairs?" Nonetheless, my last

WHERE I'M FROM



I am from the jollof rice

I am from where the ice cream pot
always brings a guessing game

I am from where the drums play
and souls jump out of joy

I am from ambience and laughter

I am from the pink lake

I am from "adults are always right"

and "behave before we get to your
aunt's house"

and "your parents just want the best
for you"



I am from Senegal

and the city of laughter

From the royals and queens

I am from a place where we love to
dance

I am from a place where we struggle
to mind our business

I am from a place where stay strong
by helping each other and supporting

I am from a place where we never
forget
to greet each other.

I am from

the motherland.

Hi, I'm Sokhna
For some reason I'm always late,
even when I wake up 4 hours before school starts.
I'd love to regain my ability to focus again someday.
I love talking to people but oddly keep very quiet
around very talkative people.
I dream to become so successful
that no human around me will get hungry,
or have their needs not taken care of
I'd love to travel the world someday
I'm really good at literacy and horrible at math
A perfect day for me is one where the sun is out
and the waves rock back and forth.
My favorite place in the world is anywhere with my mom's company.
When winter waves goodbye and spring begins to settle,
there's no moment I enjoy as much.
I love almost everything about myself, but mainly how free I've become.
My life has completely shifted from innocence
to eye opening moments, since August 30th of 2016-
I guess you can say that's why I don't care for much but my goals,
and the beautiful moments I try to make on the daily.
Horrible moments have come from the one I least expected,
from the father I once loved so much,
but it's turned me into the most forgiving person I know.
I forgive so much, I frustrate some friends
But forgiveness, oh forgiveness, makes me so free.
It dusts the wings that were once stepped on,
so I fly so freely,

with a heart full of love.

I remember her being the first thought on my mind
when asked about who I love the most.

I remember her beautiful eyes filled with warmth.

I remember the moments we laughed so hard together.

I remember the homesickness I felt when she left my presence.

I remember the delicious meals she always prepared.

I remember her tenderness.

I remember how she's always right behind me,
no matter how big the battle is.

MY MOTHER



I remember how she always reminds me of her love for me.

I remember the rainy nights when she became the sun
that brightened the next day.

I remember how alive everything around her was.

I remember my blissful, comforting, and dearest mother.

PROM 2018

I was extremely anxious and shy, with all the eyes on us
We all seemed pretty happy, but personally I had never felt more relieved
thinking about the fact that I was about to get out of that building for good.
Our hopes and dreams- to try and make good, if not better memories.
My fear- for high school to be the same as middle school.
A secret I held was how happy I was to leave- even though I didn't
celebrate it out loud.
I had no idea that I'd be experiencing chapters
full of love, happiness and change.
I wonder how 15 year old Sokhna would feel
looking ahead at all the beautiful moments and drastic changes.
I wonder if the three others knew that that would be the last time we heard
from each other for the following 6 years.
Looking back, I wonder how they're all doing, and if life is doing
them as good as it's doing me.



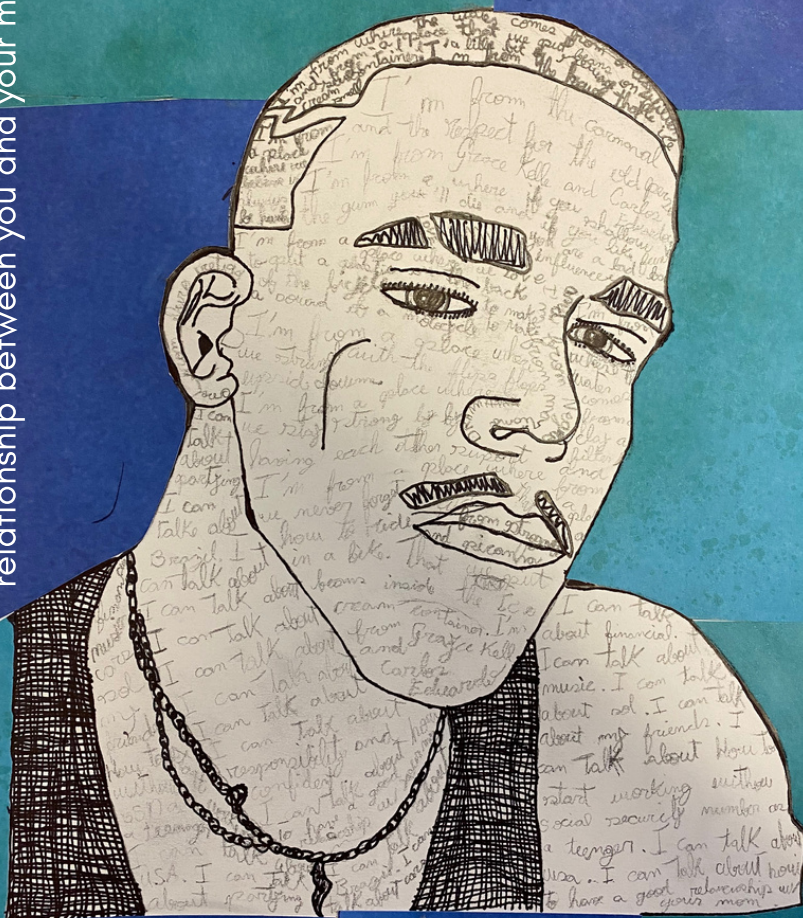
GUSTAVO FERREIRA

I can talk about cars, I can talk about Sol, I can talk about my friends,

I can talk about partying, I can talk about Brazil, I can talk

I can talk about responsibility and confidence, I can talk about how to start working as a
about financials, I can talk about music, I can talk about the USA, I can talk about me.

relationship between you and your mom.



teenager without a SSN. I can talk about how to have a good

HONEST POEM

Hi, I'm Gustavo.
I'm Grayce Kelle's son, a son who tries
and most of the time achieves
control of his mind,
who cares about other people's hearts
and thinks about them.

Yes, it's me, a boy who learned
how to ride a bike but didn't know
how to turn,
and fell off into a garbage can.

A teenager who thinks about all
his companies, goals and future plans,
which makes him a teen
thinking and feeling like an adult.

It also makes him uncomfortable
when some things don't go
the way he wanted,
but he keeps an open mind.

Yes, you heard right, a guy who likes
to be happy and grateful for the things
in his life and takes the necessary breaks,
who loves to drive
and feel any kind of adrenaline.

Okay, that's me- was nice to meet you.





WHERE I'M FROM

I'm from where the water
comes from a clay filter,
And from a place where
we put beans on the ice
cream

I'm from a house that
smells a little bit like
sewage.

I'm from carnival and
respect for the old people.

From Grayce Kelle And
Carlos Eduardo

I'm from a place where we
believe in always being
humble

I'm from where if you
swallow the gum you die,
and if you like funk you are
a bad influence
And From Nego Drama

I'm from Mariana
and Ouro Preto
From the Stroganoff
and Picanha

I'm from a place
where we love
to put a plastic cup
in the back of the bicycle
to make the sound
of a motorcycle.

I'm from a place
where we struggle
with the flips flops
turned upside down.

I'm from a place
where we stay strong
by having each other's
support.

I'm from a place
where we never forget
how to ride a bike.

SOL NASCIMENTO

I can talk about family, I can talk about happiness, I can talk about parties, I can talk about loss, I can talk about pain

beauty, I can talk about love, I can talk about ME.



I can talk about sadness, I can talk about beaches, I can talk about

Brazil, I can talk about Sokhna, I can talk about Gustavo, I can talk about losing, I can talk about music, I can talk about

THE ONE WHO SHINES

My name is Sol Nascimento
Also known as Solito (Vanilla Baby)
And Baby Sol to my mom
Soczinho to my family and friends in Brazil
And Solito to my Spanish friends.
My name, Sol, means the sun,
the one that illuminates people and shines among others.

My name last, Nascimento, means birth, so both
names together means *the birth of the enlightened one*.

I was named by my cousin who told my mom
she would have a son before my mom even knew.

My name is not Sal, or Soul, or Sol
with the Spanish accent. To me,
my name means the one who shines
(and is hot.)



Hi, my name is Sol

I have dyed hair
But I do be going black again

I love people
But I do like to be by myself smtms

I love energetic songs
But I do like slow songs smtms

I love sushi
But I do prefer rice and beans smtms

My life is very happy
But I do get sad smtms

I don't live for money
But I do need it smtms

I love summer
(But I do still love summer)

I love to make people happy
But I do wonder,
who makes me happy?

I'm from where the drinking water
comes out of the clay filter
I'm from the place where we use the
requeijão cup
to drink water
I'm from where you wake up
with birds singing
I'm from the family that always makes some
churrasco and is always happy



From Ana and from Elizete
I'm Brazil and from Brasilia,
From the spicy rice and beans, and the corn
I'm from a place where we love to play in the streets
It can be soccer or pique esconde
I'm from a place where we struggle
with safety and money
I'm from a place where stay strong
by seeing people happy
I'm from a place where we never forget
to hide our goods.

JUST THE TWO OF US

No problems before
No problems before
Before we were happier
Before we could just play soccer
Before there was no pressure
Before we could be ourselves
Before we could be innocent
Before there was no secrets
Before we didn't know how hard it would be
But now we know.

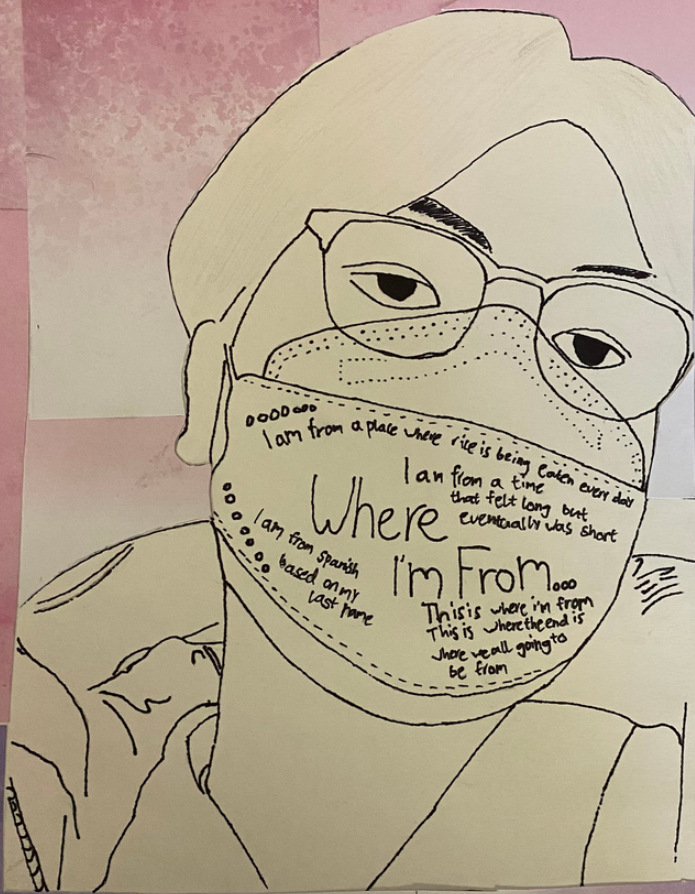


I remember my cousin
I remember how short he was
I remember playing soccer with me
I remember me and him being bunt buddies
I remember how funny he was
I remember him calling his ex when he was drunk
I remember going to parties with him
I remember him jumping into a water fountain with his clothes on
I remember all of his jokes
I remember Peterson.

JHOREN ROSALES

been hurting me to death/ or better bout the things that are about to come next.

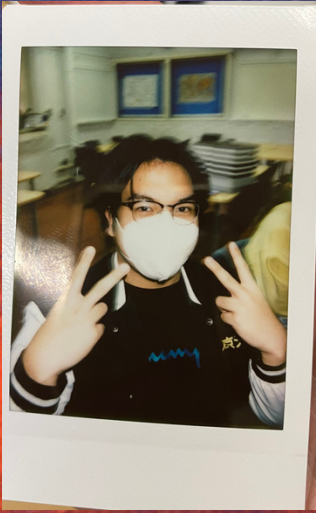
I could talk about this/ or I could talk about that/ I could talk about



things that I never knew/ maybe bout things that I'm going through/ I could

talk about change from old to new/ maybe bout the past that has

My name is J.H.O.R.EN.
written with 6 letters, and not 10,
I also go by Patrick if the first one
is too complicated to remember or pronounce,
(That's also my official Starbucks name,
whenever I get coffee.)



My name comes from a mixture
between my mom's and dad's name
(Jhon and Irene)

How do I feel about it?
Idk honestly, never have I thought
about how I feel about something
I am referred to everyday,
but something I know is that
I will always carry a part of my dad with me--
I don't really want to talk about it because I prefer
to forget everything that has happened with him.

Anyways, I am also known as Koji, doesn't sound
special or holy, but my music speaks for me
and who I am as an artist and person.

I am definitely not Jordan, ha! Michael Jordan,
funny right? No, but seriously, my name is Jhoren
and I'm writing this with a pen,
rhyming it like 50 Cent,
ending it with peace and love
that we all share and send,
during this lovely time that we all spend.



WHERE I'M FROM?

I am from fresh cheese, alps and chocolate,
A town in the mids of Europe, a place known
for its famous watches and skiing resorts.
A place where I don't really fit in, because of the judgment
of the people, and my blood.



I am from a place where rice is being eaten everyday,
From the Pinoy people, part of my blood and soul—
But a place I've never really seen in life.
A place where I'm not present, but still observe
the culture and traditions.



I am from Spanish descendants, based on my last name,
and my talented pronunciation skills in the Spanish language.

Other than my background, I am from a place where
pain becomes one with you, a place where nothing
hurts anymore because you eventually get used to it.

I am from bad behaviors trying to solve my
problems, because there wasn't any help around,
Cuz I'm lost and out of bounce like a volleyball.
A part of my passion is crossing the line out of the court,
I am from a time that felt long but eventually was only short.

This is where I'm from,
and this is where the end is,
Where we are all going to be from.





Hi, I am Jhoren,
To be honest, I'm scared to talk
about myself, but we all have our insecurities.

I am inspired by melodies.
They carry me like a cloud going
from one place to another.
They make me fly like a bird and free my mind.

I am inspired by these melodies
and utilize them to make music.

I like how I don't give up easily on things.

I may not be resilient,
but I learn my lessons after a hurtful sting.

People like my strong sense of empathy.
I continue to be like that so I could be a remedy.

I dream of being successful.

But I'm scared of failure.

I feel nervous around crowds,
but safe around people I trust.

I have rights and wrongs
just like everybody else, yet I've never felt
good enough for anything.

I feel pressured like I'm tied on a belt.

I tend to doubt myself.

They say once I fall, I'll rise.

And each time I rise, I ask how high?

I feel hurt about goodbyes,
but people come and go and that's alright.

I'm in pain but I'm also healing.

I'll get over the things I'm dealing with.

I'm happy with the people that I love.

I'll remember them even when

I hit the abyss and sit high above.

The perfect day is the day when you enjoy the present.

Yeah, it does, it feels very pleasant.

I am who I am and that can't be changed.

I am Jhoren.

ANTI-ODE TO OVERTHINKING

I hate it, I just hate it so much,
it drives me crazy,
yet I manage to stay quiet about it
and let it eat me slowly.

If there is one enemy
I have in this life,
then it's gonna be overthinking.

Just let me be concrete with something
for once in my lifetime
without making me feel bad.



You are the reason for
my depression and anxiety,
making me seek out help and advice,
I'm too scared to get.

You're the reason I feel anxious about
getting close to people, turning me
anti-social and feeling lonely.

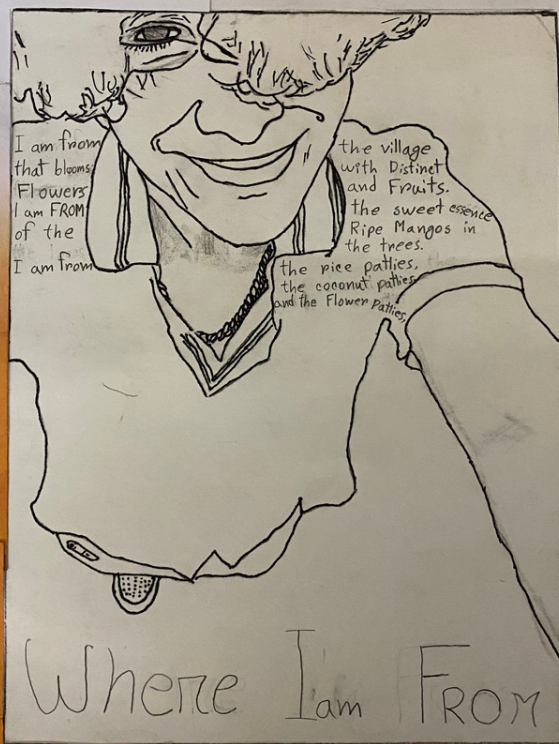
But it's okay I guess, eventually I get used
to what you're doing in my life.
But you make me sick, and tired each day.
And since I have a hard time to define
what you really are,
I barely know what to say.

WASIN SHIHAB

ease. I. could talk about how peaceful my mind and soul feel after praying.

I could talk about the world coming to an end because of

climate change. How lazy I feel after a meal. The pleasure and calmness rain



brings. How being around nature makes me feel at

I am from the village
that blooms with
distinct flowers
and fruits.

I am from the
sweet essence of the ripe
mangos in the trees. **I am from** the rice patties, coconut
patties and the flower patties, that have mesmerizing
designs. **I am from** Bangladesh, where everything is
surrounded by nature. From the country that
has 6 seasons, each with their own
fragrance. **I am from** the memories
that bind me to my past, **I am from**
the morning sounds of birds, from
the sunlight that shines through
the young green bamboo
forest, from the smell of
the newly coming fruits.



also known as Shihab at home. also known as Shihabba when someone is angry. My first name means a shooting star, though I am not really a meteor. It points to a glimmer of hope or a wish, just like what we do when we see a shooting star." My middle name, Hossain, is derived from the grandsons of the Prophet Muhammed. The grandsons who had an unbreakable bond of love. My middle name, Hossain, is the same for all my brothers: it is to share the same bond between us. My name is Wasin, not Wasim. A name with no known meaning, but unique.



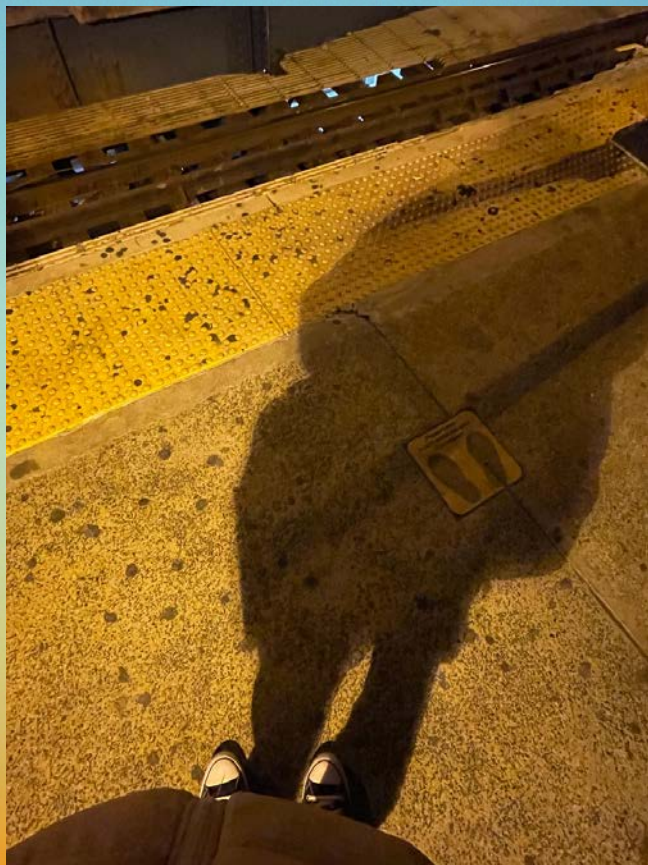
MY SHADOW

**This is me, and that's my shadow,
standing in the place
that I shared with you.
I know it's been long,
I know it's been hard,
I know I had a flaw,
Somewhere in my heart.**

**I just wish I could be
by your side,
holding you and telling you,
I will be there whenever
you need time.**

**Did you feel lonely,
did you feel not enough
did you feel that you
don't belong
in this cruel world?**

**I want you to feel
deserving,
I want you to feel
like you belong,
And I want you to feel
enough, because to me
you are everything
I could ever want.**



**I see my shadow,
I see our past,
I see the place where
I thought you would
last.**

Hi, I am Wasin
Taller than you might think I am,
5'9, not 5'6.

I like to play the guitar, not to impress,
but to feel the melody of noise.

I like playing games, outdoor games.

I like to watch the sky,
count the stars,
or imagine clouds as toys,
characters, and furniture.

I want to sleep,
sleep on the clouds.

But I feel heavy,
Heavy like a Burden

and I don't want to
add more weight.

I am a boy without a compass-
lost it when I was 8.

I grieved in tears
while being held by my brother
and being told,
"From now on I will be your father."

I didn't know the value of what I had lost
and that's why I'm in debt.

I like green, gross? No, it's gorgeous.

I am a country person.

mixing the colors of the countryside-
makes me feel alive.

I wanna feel light, just like a feather,
and also just like the weather.



I wish to be a feather, and just want to fly,
Fly, fly to the sky, to the clouds and high,
With guidance from that butterfly

But that's just my imagination,
which makes me cry.

THE APPLE EATER



Adja Adama Thiam is my full name.
Some friends call me "Ngoudiane"
A lover calls me Maria
A friend calls me "Adjita"
My mom calls me Adja with such a melody
that I can recognize wherever I am.

Adama is my real name
Whenever people hear it, they think I'm a man
I am the fruit, the apple eaten.

My last name is Thiam
Whenever people hear it, they think I'm Chinese
I have endless perceptions of the meaning of my name,
I still don't know what it means to me.

THE SAME FEELINGS

Here's a picture of me
when I was 8,
sitting
on my aunt's lap.
I had recently come to
the US.
I really needed
chapstick.
Smiling with
bloody eyes.
I wonder how many
people I fooled
with my
overwhelmingly sad
smile.
All I wanted was
to survive.
All I wanted was
to revive,
in Senegal,
my country.
Life feels strange
when I look back at it
and
I'm experiencing
the same feelings.



THROUGH MEMORIES

I remember craving
any type of appreciation from you
But you criticize every little thing I do

I remember the bitterness of your eyes
when you pointed
that knife at me

I thought you wouldn't do it,
but you stabbed it in my chest

Four days?
Four walls?
For who?

Please move
Oh I remember, how I loved you

Now I despise you
I wonder: who wears it better?

You, who act like we never
knew each other,
Or me, who acts like you didn't screw
my heart in the summer.

I remember giving up on you.
I remember giving up on me.
Now I live life through memories...