Hear Us:
Teen Voices from Across DeKalb
2019
Statement of Purpose

In May of 2018, the Clarkston Library in DeKalb County was awarded an Ezra Jack Keats Mini-Grant to create a “Teen Zine” that would focus on creative writing, media and visual arts. The publication, “Hear Us: Teen Voices From Across DeKalb” is the product of our grant program experience. Principal Librarian, Effuah Chisholm was one of 70 educators in 29 states who implemented a new program during the academic year ending in June 2019. Since 1987, the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, which fosters children’s love of reading and creative expression in this diverse culture, has awarded annual grants of up to $500 each to qualifying teachers and librarians in public schools and public libraries. The goal of the “Teen Zine” program was to provide support and resources to help share concerns from a teen’s point of view. As a result, teens in DeKalb County would have a platform to be a part of a larger conversation about issues that affect them.

Facilitators

Ellen Gadberry
Ellen Gadberry has spent most of her life in the classroom, the library and the art space — as student and teacher, patron and librarian, maker and guide. Currently, Ellen leads community children’s and adult art classes for Paint Love, DeKalb County, and local churches, and facilitates local family literacy initiatives including Prime Time Preschool and the Clarkston Tell Me A Story! Festival. Ellen’s art work and very occasional blogposts can be seen at contemplativecrafting.com.

Lisa Ezzard
Creative Writing was led by Lisa Ezzard, longtime educator and poet published in literary journals and anthologies with a graduate degree in comparative literature from the University of Colorado.

Jerri Wilson
Magazine layout was assisted by Jerri Wilson. Jerri currently works as a graphic designer for DeKalb County Public Library.

Bob GlickSmith
Bob GlickSmith is a photographer, visual arts consultants and an educator. He specializes in portraiture, events and customized photographic workshops. Additional information about him can be found at www.bobglicksmith.com.

Sharon B. Dowdell
Sharon B. Dowdell is owner and operator of Lady With The Candid Camera LLC. Her photographic enjoyment comes from photojournalism and special events coverage. She is a self-professed student of life and photography.

Cynthia McCoy
Cynthia McCoy is a skilled professional photographer who is continuing her education in photography at the Lou Walker Senior Center in Lithonia GA under the tutelage of Bob GlickSmith. She specializes in portraiture and events coverage.

Special Thanks
Special thanks to the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, Chuck Canty (Decatur Library), Clarkston Library Staff, Clarkston High School Teachers Amy Jaret, and Linda Jones (Ms. J.J.), DeKalb County Public Library Coordinators George Ford, Gina Jenkins and Kitty Wilson, Arthur Ratliff, Jill Joplin and the Friends of Clarkston Library.

Front Cover Photos: Center by Jessica Rao; Clockwise-Collage by Michaela M.; Flower photo by Jessica Rao; Collage by Malak; and Tree photo by Malak.
I invite you to dream aloud
Fully open with the sky.
As it changes day by day
Never knowing what the time will bring.
Will it be the spinning and soaring
Of the world of reds and yellows?
Or will it be dancers slowly drifting
In a synchronized routine?
Or perhaps it’ll be fragile, delicate
Petals flying endlessly in
A storm of all the senses.
But maybe it’ll be brightness
And radiance wherever you dare to look.
No matter- This is you- This is us- this is me.
So don’t look back and simply be.

There’s still a little girl inside me
Who taught her dolls how to read and write.
I still am that girl- yes older- but I’m still her.
Despite the days where it’s like I’m falling
Just like Alice- only there is no stop-
only falling-
Just falling and falling.
Because everyone tries to crush that little girl
With work and expectations.
But she’s still there blowing bubbles through
the rain
Never stopping- and never fearing-
What seems like tornados in the distance.
Because she knows-
that no matter what they say-
That a rainbow is always waiting
behind any storm.

Sincerely, the Stars
Save the Best Ones, Leave the Bad

Keep the friends that you know will accept you and never judge. Leave the friends who will bring you down, talk about you in a bad way, or pressure you to do something that you know isn’t right.

Cherish the Moments

Cherish the moments with the people you care about. Whenever you feel upset just think about the good times that you had.

Writing by Max H.

Photos by Tirhas T.
Dear Reader,

It’s not the end. Stress is definitely a deal breaker. Throughout all the pain, confusion, and tiredness it causes, it’s certainly not comforting. However unfortunately it will happen, and when it does it’s important to know that whatever the situation is or the reason of your stressful discomfort, this will not last forever. You will go through moments of stress and moments of peace. When stress comes, don’t have that be your weakness. Instead have it be your motivation. Few may know that stress can fuel you to do what you should or want to be doing. In those moments where you want to just procrastinate all day and waste your time, stress can motivate you to do the work while reminding you that there WILL be some big consequences, mostly not for the best, if you don’t get to WORK.

“It’s not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it.”
-Hans Selye

“A year from now you may wish you had started today.”
-Karen Lamb

“It’s not the load that breaks you down, it’s the way you carry it”
-Lou Holtz

I personally find that Hans Selye and Lou Holtz quotes represent that the way you handle the work or a situation that’s giving you stress may just be the answer to your problem, meaning your way of handling that work or situation might be wrong. Think about when you’re stressed over something and try to solve that problem in another way and remember it’s not the end. If you need to tell someone you trust and ask for help you should.
You Are Invited:
I invite you to ask.
To be aware of what’s around.
Listen. Feel. Ask.
I invite you to care.
Have fun and be inspired.
You will find inspiration
Just use a little of
your imagination.
Don’t ask. Just do.

Ode to my father:
A man who doesn’t stop.
Works every night and
sleeps all day.
Wears clothes on top of clothes.
One hurt leg, but still
stands up.
An old man that’s very strong.
Exhausted, but never stops.
Makes sure you are smiling,
not frowning.
A huge inspiration to all that
surrounds him.
Cold, hot, raining, or snowing
He will not stop until you get
what you want.
After that, he will get the rest
that he wants.

I Have The Right To
Dream:
Somewhere inside me, there
lives a little girl who once
Wanted to be a cop.
Wanted to save the world
without being judged.
Black or white. Skinny or buff.
I was still strong enough.
Had family who didn’t
support me
But that did not stop me.
Chose what they wanted me to
be, and still do.
But I am my own person
I should be able to choose.
They still laugh at my
dreams today
But when I get what I want,
they won’t have a word to say.
I am who I am and I choose
what I want to be.

Ego Tripping:
I am Malak.
It means Angel in Arabic.
I am a Muslim.
I wrap my scarf with style
and make everyone want
to wear one.
No. Only angels do it
with style.
I walk with my head held high
and say “Oh hi”.
I am nice, but only when you
treat me like an angel.
I am like a firefly, but I
shine brighter.
I make your days bright.
Believe me
Angels don’t lie.
You can’t do it like me.
It’s hard work. Trust me
But what can I say. I’m
a natural.
I am an angel who got style.

Poems by
Malak Haroun

Art by Malak Haroun

Photo by Fartun
FINDING AN OASIS IN A FRIEND

A kid alone in the world
Room full of people, but still alone
Mentally lonely, physically flourishing
In a pursuit of stable state of mind,
He gives out a cry for help, a friend
Endlessly searching for an oasis
His mind is like miles and miles of sand dunes
Not ending any time soon
He senses a serene environment
But his thoughts are clouded with winds of orange
His sanity is now nonchalant
As he finds his true friends,
He finds his oasis.

I INVITE YOU TO COME

I invite you to come,
Come see about me
See me through my happiness
Comfort me through my pain
Help me through my fury
Lift me up when I'm weak
I invite you to fly,
Fly through this big maze
That I'll surely be.

EGO TRIPPING

I say I originated in Ethiopia
But no, I come from the heavens
I walked on the oceans to create land
I got bored and colored the Earth
I drew little creatures on water and land
My power and strength could not be denied
I build empires
I bring them tumbling down as I please
My eldest son is Zues
I made him the king of thunder for his birthday
My heart could be as soft as the clouds
But in my rage, I tend to stir the oceans, blow away things in my way, and even shake up the Earth
I come in a variety of forms and have different names
But, to all, I'm known as Mother Nature

A LITTLE GIRL'S DREAM

There still lives a little girl inside me who once dreamed of growing up and having unicorns take over the world.
She dreamed of conquering the world. Changing the world into a colorful place where everyone could live.
But of course, the world took a toll on her.
She learned the world is not candies and unicorns
Yes, it’s a cold, cruel world.
Now she dreams about conquering the world, but not with unicorns.
I INVITE YOU TO COME

I invite you to sing and dance with me
Let’s sing and dance like there’s no tomorrow
This is the beginning of our happiness
We are stronger and powerful together.
That is a powerful happiness,
That no one can take away from us.

EGO TRIPPING

I was born in Ethiopia
I would go to the big white clouds
And built a house castle
I designed the house castle with pure gold
I’m the goddess of the clouds
I have four powers the FIRE, WATER, EARTH, last but not least the AIR.
No one would dare challenge me, Cause I’m the beautiful, Powerful goddess of the clouds.

A LITTLE GIRL’S DREAM

There still lives a little girl who once
Tried to go back to her hometown
She is happy with what she had
But there is still a piece missing,
Her other half
The missing piece is her father
She loves her father a lot,
He is like her everything
But she had to leave her father one day
She was really sad
Now she wants her missing piece back.

A SAD RAINY NIGHT

The wind blows through the silent night
Raindrops pounding on the roof
Trees scraping at the window
The girl sat in her bed thinking,
Could the night get even worse?
She stared at the dark room
Drifting into her mind
Reminiscing on happy days with her friend
Beautiful memories bringing tears to her eyes
Moments she feels fondly of
Suddenly remembering the news that she received
She sits there, claiming it’s all lies
In denial of reality
Her best friend is no more
Hello, my name is Travon Chenault, I am 17 years old. As of right now, I am going through the phase that all teenagers experience, the master artist stage. Most people my age, stick to this fantastic part of growing up, but in the end they choose another activity to pursue and don’t draw as much as they used too. Me on the other hand, my story of being an artist is totally different.

Ever since I was 6yrs old, I’ve always had a passion to draw. At this point of my life, I only did it for the purposes of doing something fun, because of being a little kid. But everything changed, after I entered my tweens. My mind began to generate amazing ideas for making a comic book series that was going to be a smash hit, worldwide! Knowing it was just a simple dream about becoming famous on my first attempt, I didn’t care what the outcome was. I wanted my ideas to be noticed and hopefully be greenlit for television.

In conclusion, I know that I’m just a beginner and I have a long way to be with the big dogs. But that will not stop me from achieving my dream of becoming an artist.

Artic X was supposed to be a mighty dragon, with huge wings and a smaller body. But as I was drawing him, the design didn’t come out the way I imagined it to be. Instead, My creation was better than its original concept. He still has the body build of a dragon, but he has no wings on his back, and there are no horns on his head. You could say he’s a crocodile, when you first take a look at him.
My name is Jessica Rao, and I’m 17 years old. I run cross country, and I’m the president of the photography club and the animal club at my school. I also enjoy volunteering, and I work with three different organizations: Girl Talk, Focus, and Furkids. A fun fact about me is that I have a very athletic cat named Oreo.

My name is Malak. I was born and raised in Jordan. I enjoy doing art and using my hands to work with different types of art. My passion is to become a dancer and a photographer. I grew up dancing and it is something I really enjoy doing. I also spent some time taking pictures one summer and I was interested in taking pictures ever since.

The Teen Zine project was very helpful. It help us to communicate with each other, make friends and learn something new.

Michela joined the “Teen Zine” project to explore the challenges teens face in achieving success in today’s world.

Not pictured: Amya Anderson, Lidya Mila, and Luwam Ftan
Max H.

The main thing that I’m passionate about is photography because I like to take pictures and I want to practice so that I can become a professional photographer so that I can travel the world taking a variety of different pictures. I think that I love doing photography the most besides my other hobbies because it makes me feel happy when taking photos. I have always loved taking pictures because it’s fun and exciting, and you’ll never know what you might find in a photo, something amazing that you’d never thought would be there, almost like a secret message.

Roma T.

My name is Roma Tuka and I’m a 9th grader at Clarkston High. I joined this group because I wanted to explore my creative side and this group helped me to write poems and have fun with it.

Paskolina

My name is Paskolina Lolo, I’m from Ethiopia. I go to Clarkston High School. I have been in America for 6 and half years. This project helped me have fun and enjoy myself. I was happy that I got to meet new people and teachers. Thank you for creating this project!!

Travon

I enjoyed participating in the Teen Zine project. My artistic skills have a chance to be recognized, by adults and teenagers in the community.