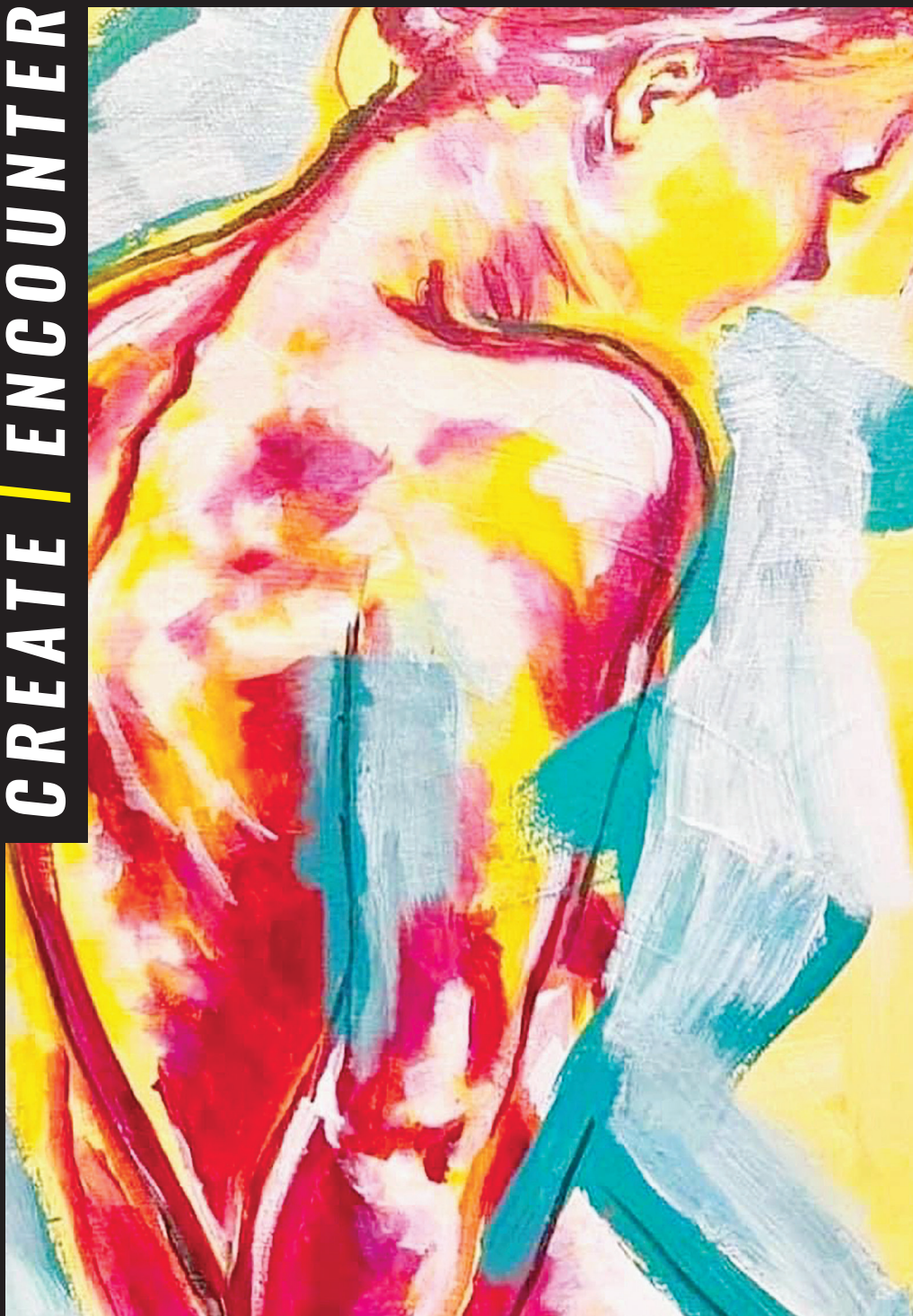


**CREATE | ENCOUNTER**



**APRIL 2023**

**7TH ANNUAL CREATIVE ISSUE  
OF LIFE MATTERS JOURNAL**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## VISUAL (2D)

- 10 1st Place: *John: ch.8 vs. 7-11* by Hilary Beall  
2 2nd Place: *Truth Worth Grasping: Both Worth Protecting*  
by Cecilia M. Delaney Druffner  
**Honorable Mentions:**  
20 *The Storm Chasers* by Michael Jezewak  
8 *20 Veterans per Day Lost* by John Evans  
16 *Equality, Nonviolence, and Nondiscrimination* series  
by Ellen Campbell  
16 *Black Trans Lives Matter* by Elise Ketch  
21 *Harriet* by Ellis Carlson

## VISUAL (3D)

- 12 1st Place: *Tragedy* by Rosemarie Tischer Stith  
18 2nd Place: *Sunrise or Sunset* by Sara Leonard  
**Honorable Mentions:**  
15 *Women's Bodies* by Elise Ketch

## POETRY

- 3 1st Place: *Song of a Broken Soul* by Joseph Leo Hickey III  
9 2nd Place: *Shared History* by Molly C. Sheahan  
**Honorable Mentions:**  
13 *Adoptive Mother's Lament* by Rachel Ventress  
11 *Prayer of the Glass Woman* by Cheryl Johnston

## PROSE

- 1st Place and **Best in Show:**  
6 *I Am the Illusive Firing Squad* by John Evans  
14 2nd Place: *Blind Spots* by Sarah Terzo  
**Honorable Mentions:**  
17 *Would've, Could've, Should've* by Nick Sansone  
19 *Forking Paths* by Julie Gilmore

*Our music and video winners are published online; you can find them at [rehumanizeintl.org/create-encounter](http://rehumanizeintl.org/create-encounter).*

*Scan the QR codes at the end of the magazine for direct links to each piece.*

## MUSIC

- 21 1st Place: *Appalachian Abortuary*  
by Ayala Isenberg and Kristin Turner  
21 2nd Place: *Cease Fire* by Liv & Learn  
**Honorable Mentions:**  
21 *The Only Way* by Krista Corbello  
21 *One Eye Open* by Kristin Turner

## VIDEO PERFORMANCE

- 21 1st Place: *Origami Lesson* by Kara O'Connor

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

The power of art to raise awareness, inspire action, and shape culture cannot be overstated. It has played a central role in many historical social movements, and continues to be a driving force in contemporary activism.

Art has the unique ability to connect with people on a visceral and emotional level, making it an effective tool for spreading messages of justice and equality. Through visual art, music, the written word, and more, artists have the power to challenge societal norms and encourage critical reflection.

At Rehumanize International, we believe that creatives are essential to movements for justice. We are proud to celebrate and uplift artists in our fight for a better world, so it is my pleasure to present to you the contributors to this 2023 edition of *Create | Encounter*.

Yours for peace and every human life,



Creative Director,  
Rehumanize International

## **CREATE | ENCOUNTER**

is a special edition of  
*Life Matters Journal*

**Create | Encounter Coordinator  
and Editor-in-Chief of  
Life Matters Journal**

Maria Oswalt

### **Judging Panel Members**

Aimee Murphy  
Herb Geraghty  
Francis Ittenbach  
Samantha Kamman

**Executive Director  
of Rehumanize International**

Herb Geraghty

**REHUMANIZEINTL.ORG/  
CREATE-ENCOUNTER**

This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether that violence is legal or illegal.

We have been told by our society and our culture wars that those of us who oppose these acts of violence must be divided. We have been told to take a lukewarm, halfway attitude toward the victims of violence. We have been told to embrace some with love while endorsing the killing of others.

We reject that conventional attitude, whether it's called Left or Right, and instead embrace a consistent ethic of life toward all victims of violence.

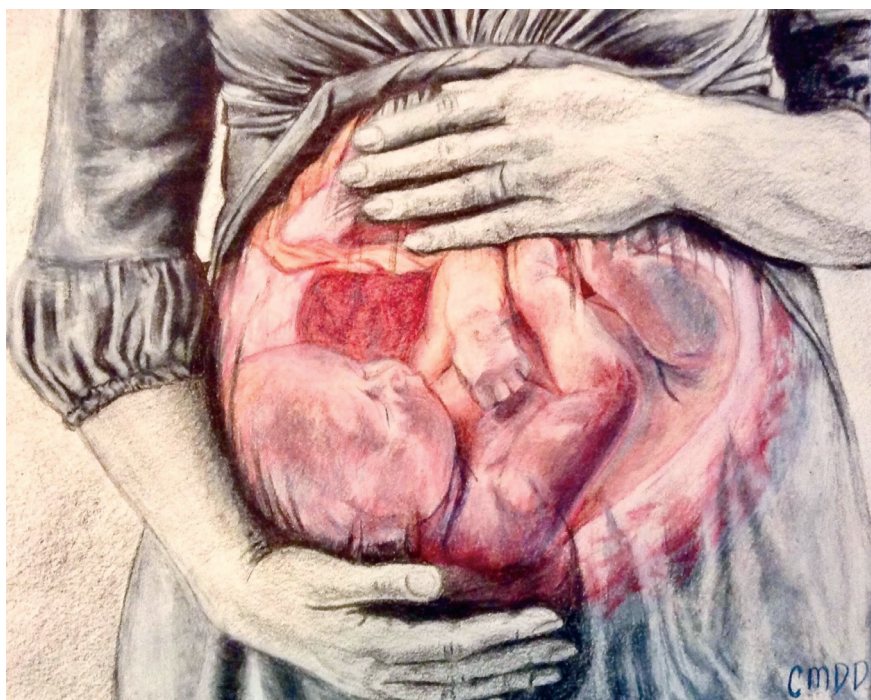
## **DISCLAIMER**

*The views presented in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of all members, contributors, or donors. We exist to present a forum for discussion within the Consistent Life Ethic, to promote discourse and present an opportunity for peer-review and dialogue.*

Warning: due to the nature of the issues addressed by the Consistent Life Ethic, many of the pieces featured in this magazine will contain descriptions or depictions of violence and other heavy matters. Please view and read at your own risk.

## **Truth Worth Grasping: Both Worth Protecting**

by Cecilia M. Delaney Druffner  
*2nd Place, Visual (2D)*



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### **Artist Statement**

*Truth Worth Grasping: Both Worth Protecting*

A colored pencil piece showing the scientific truth of the humanity of the fetus as the mother realizes that not only is she herself precious, but so is her child. This piece's purpose is to remind caregivers, patients, and providers that there are two patients: both worth advocating and fighting for.

# Song of a Broken Soul

by Joseph Leo Hickey III

*1st Place, Poetry*

*Note: this poem is an excerpt from a much longer piece.*

As I sing  
with my one last breath,  
I cry out for life.  
In a world where we look for meaning,  
we find unwelcoming hands,  
but hands I always loved.  
I have always loved the way hands hold,  
the way hands reach out toward the sky,  
and the shadows of hands across a broken city.

The shadows of my hands,  
stretch out across the world,  
never meeting another.  
I have lived for so long  
and labored so hard  
to try to understand  
what life is like.  
So broken into many pieces,  
strewn across the pages of your book,  
which you will never read again,  
but tells the secrets of your soul.  
The crowds moving forever through the city,  
passing by  
while I stand here,  
my song unheard,  
my life ignored and thrown away,  
so that in drowning no one can hear me,  
in suffocating and no one can see me.

Take my one last breath  
and elevate it somewhere above the clouds  
where it can live on forever  
in its own place  
and its own time.

All I desire  
is the freedom that you have,  
the life underneath the sun,  
the joy in the middle of the rain.  
The void of shadows  
that follow us now and forever.

Every note I hear  
fills my lungs  
and leaves when I speak  
temptation to become more than who we are  
and to live forever.  
Nothing will stop my voice from flooding  
the avenues of a broken world.

Each season that passed for me  
changed and grew colder,  
a generous song in my soul,  
unraveling it over and over again,  
singing with deep sighing labored breaths.  
The razor of your lonely heart,  
thinking for yourself in a world  
that would only lock its doors to you.  
If you can feel me, hold me closer.  
If you hear the wind calling your name,  
the lament of every single forgotten star  
is found in these same winds  
where we lay down here on earth,  
growing up and breathing,  
but my breath always labored,  
so mournfully do we breathe out forever.

Dreaming of the future, enslaved to the present moment,  
where we can no longer move,  
suffocating under the yoke of others.

Our own free hand was never able to be lifted in the night.  
I hold the candle high that lights up  
the world,  
but their eyes are not conditioned to see light, lives not conditioned  
to feel anything but  
a long and comfortable life away from  
pain.  
Very few run toward this pain.  
You hear my voice now and forever  
in these songs.  
I want to visit other cities where  
we together can be united  
and holy and cognizant of the obvious truth in our worlds.  
The joy as we gallivanted throughout the city,  
I hold the candle.  
I will be your new light  
in a world where so few can stand,  
where my very existence is a political issue  
and I cannot stand my own ground for much longer.  
I imbibe the lullaby of the passing time.

If only you could hear my breath,  
in the world where the stars are so far,  
like my dreams, untouchable,  
but still, we reach our hands out all the same.  
The oceans of my inability to stand,  
inability to write pressed down face first into the ground,  
by those with violent hearts.  
My life is broken and my mind roaring  
across the pages of books I never finished.  
The perfection of falling in love with books,  
with words of those who lived long ago still speak to me.

I hold the candle high.

In the infancy of my life I will always die,  
forced out, before I can get up to breathe.

All I need now and forever is the ability to sing  
the last song of the last of us.  
Breaths so painful,  
we can no longer lift our voices in song.  
If you can hear my momentous voice,  
dream with me on the floor of these oceans,  
collide with me like the colors mixing into something new.  
You may forget about me, but I will never forget I met you,  
never forget the simple joyful breath of being alive,  
the life I never had.  
The ones who never spoke to me,  
the closed doors to every part of my soul,  
the daydreaming never ends,  
the life in the world forever changed by  
the thunderous roar of those outside  
our halls, tearing down our barricades  
and calling for our deaths.

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## Artist Statement

### *Song of a Broken Soul*

The theme of this work is to humanize the experiences of all those who are unseen or unheard, and that just because you cannot see someone or hear their voice is no excuse for cruelty. The character who is the speaker of the poem, who bears the poetic name “Don’t Cry

Girl,” is (and this next part is a massive spoiler in the larger work) an abortion victim who lives the life she never had the opportunity to live, due to the magic of a time-traveling former priest known as Father Time.

# I Am the Illusive Firing Squad

by John Evans

1st Place, Prose, and Best in Show

*Warning: Contains descriptions of sexual assault, the violence of war, and suicidal ideation*

We begin the story through the eyes of the Marine in poetic form:

*"I am fire fanning the flames of crucified flesh. I am the hot, red, hallowed blood that burns through guiltless veins. I am the emptiness so deep and oh, so truly damned. I am the illusive firing squad that bears no name. I am the indigenous in exile. I am on my way to annihilation. I am the silence that penetrates the darkness. I am the noise of the world named regime. I am a military man. I am for the sake of humanity called savior."*

Very clearly, I recall the first night. This was Parris Island, a cross between a guarded prison and professional football training camp. The year was 1971. The war was in high escalation. Training was mentally and physically challenging even for the strongest of men.

The blackness of night was thick with fear. I will at some point embrace purpose, but when? The harsh winter bore down upon our skin no matter the color, we were all freezing. Screaming voices cracked as thunder through the night. The worst is yet to come!

Ninety miserable days and nights have completed their run.

Onward now into the tactical realities of combat zones, firefights, explosives, razor tip wire, and M-60 machine-gun cartridges spent with their gutted shells heading for their targets. Thus, we are taught the art of war. I was one of these students.

Explosive blasts of TNT quake these dirt bunkers (foxholes barely), till my emptied blood vessels cry out in anguished pain. Fragmented effects forced upon my neck with blood and sweat snaking down my nerve damaged spine as I lay in a field of dust and rock. Paralyzed by a thought named concussion as the spent cartridge and blunt force that waited it's time to vehemently strike my cervical spine. Damn, I'm hit!

Surrounded by this surrealistic combat zone, phantom voices commanded me to keep moving. Belly-crawling prone, sweat and blood continue draping down my neck filling my collar with soaked blood. Stinging, burning sweat in a fevered pitch on a muggy Carolina day, now in '72.

And nights before in his concupiscent rage fed his hunger for salted flesh and a forced penetration of mouth and core, thrust his moistened lips around me, as I kicked and thrashed in my slumbered daze shattering an ear-piercing cry, "What the \*\*\*\* are you doing?!"



Fifty years later as I recollect the devastation, I have witnessed upon many suicidal rounds of congestive thoughts crippling this man's memory of a holocaustic 'way of life.' Sleeping night upon night with a fixed blade knife curled within my fetal position just in case the invasive thoughts became brutally overbearing my final thought would have been "now's the time." The descriptive voices of the explosive blasts sent shock waves through my skull and traumatized brain. And now, I ponder, was this criminal intent?

Yet, today, 2022, I am incredibly grateful to be alive! Praise given to the human spirit and inherent will to survive. Often, we fear this darkness is too much to bear. The brain thinks that the eyes must be silenced, hence,

a deeply intimate hunger for love exists within the human heart. We are meant to survive!

Dying is a force we cannot stop. But the will to survive remains the dedicated factor dominant within each human heart. We desire the freedom to decide between life or death but pushing past the pain reveals a spirit of mutual love between we and our Creator resting inside each and every heart. Peace for every troubled mind struggling with this trauma. Think of peace, there will be peace. Life is truly very beautiful.

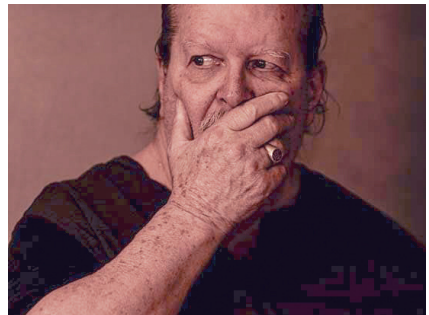


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## Artist Statement

*I Am the Illusive Firing Squad*

A re-written account and simultaneous submission about all unjust wars, mental torture, abuse, and sexual assaults categorized through a creative non-fictional composition of one young Marine's journey to hell and back during the Vietnam War. In conclusion I advocate for peaceful resolutions.



# 20 Veterans per Day Lost

by John Evans

Honorable Mention, Visual (2D)



## Artist Statement

### *20 Veterans per Day Lost*

A young boy at just 17 enters a man's world to combat foreign and domestic enemies of the US Constitution and Democracy. Times were bad, bad at home in 1971, so I volunteered with the USMC. Vietnam was reaching a new height since the Tet Offensive. Carpet bombing from B-52 strategic aircraft was a round the clock offensive on the North Vietnamese region. Problems stateside were boiling over, and there was a young Marine (myself) exposed vehemently to the morally corrupt mid-level Non-Commissioned Officer who exploited me through sexual assault. This incident occurred in April of 1972, and I battled my own insurrection of my moral compass for 40 years. Suicide became my final answer. But ... I couldn't do it. I had to live the fact a man raped me before I was to ever know the love of a good woman. Statutory rape and rape can be a common occurrence in the military. I was one of its POWs with a regard to assault by a superior ranking individual.

20–30 US Veterans per day lose their lives to suicide. I recall the day my 20 year career military father explained to me two of his buddies died by suicide after coming home from Nam. So, for myself, I chose to suffer internally for 40 years or better, and by myself. Lost jobs, relationships, homelessness, no self-esteem left, no courage to face life on my own terms, nothing, except living under the duress of mental torture. I lived alone for 35 years. No one to comfort me or share in love and holiness with me. Until I met a pleasant, intelligent homeless lady, my second wife. Then I began to heal and tell my story of an unjust war, homelessness, torture, permanent nerve damage, and this story lives on after 14 years of marriage.

The image entitled *20 Veterans per Day* speaks volumes of the mind-twisting of a sexual assault and an attempt on my life and how Military Sexual Trauma, PTSD, and a cervical spinal cord injury create within me an ideation so fierce. When you see a homeless veteran on the streets or smelling badly while grabbing some food for a change, don't thank him or her for their service, listen to their story. If you are struggling, call 988 then Press 1.

# Shared History

by Molly C. Sheahan

*2nd Place, Poetry*

The words cave-in, and fly from my side  
Gushing chips of muscle and bone  
Teeth spat out of a cotton dry mouth  
A crumbling ribcage that shudders and groans

The slight burn slides down my throat  
To hide the lump that rises there  
A thermos of rage boils onto the page  
On typed sheets it comes bare

I remember the ziggurat, yellowing, ailing  
A brim to the skyline within the polis  
An agoraphobic boat above the law's moat  
Holding the sickness within its solace

They tied me to the iron gate with silky thread  
My breath whispered from drowning hands  
The spoon cauldron bubbled and the bruises inked  
While my hourglass emptied of sand

So I stare up at a hanging man each day  
Scrutinizing every drop of blood  
Tracing every scar on his body that mirrors  
My own life, each memory, this flood

Until I realize that this is a pyrrhic victory  
That it's foolish to compare scars with my God  
That a wounded soul just longs to be seen and known  
And held until the pain has thawed

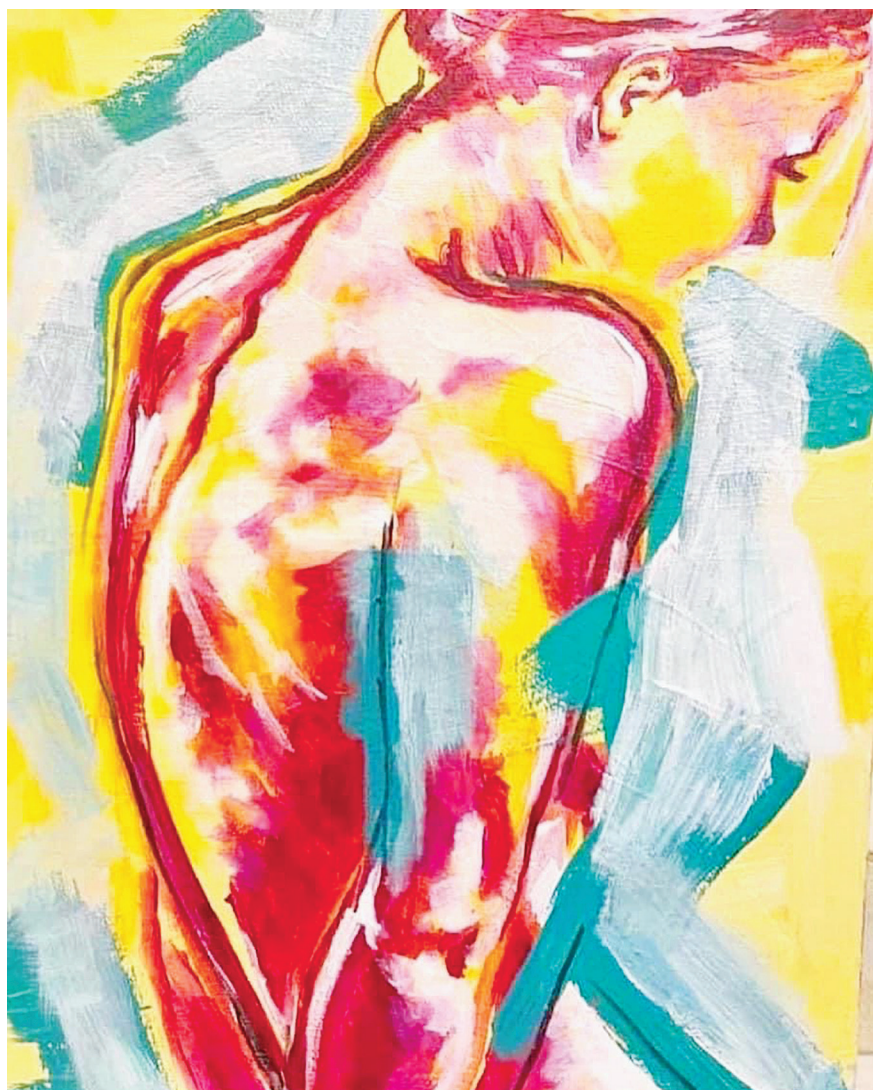
And so in each open palm I am curled  
A girl collected into fragments rare  
Wounded and hidden in wounds  
So that I might be healed there

## Artist Statement

*Shared History*

Healing begins when the heart-ache is first expressed. As a poet, my work explores the theme of *superando*, the Spanish word for overcoming but tinged with greater resilience.

I write from the perspective of an adventurer clambering inside my heart chambers, chiseling off the loss and longing until it spills over the edge. These poems evoke rock-bottom, and the hard work of restoration.



**John: ch.8 vs. 7-11**

by Hilary Beall  
*1st Place, Visual (2D)*

## Artist Statement

*John: ch.8 vs. 7-11*

9x12in. acrylic on canvas featuring an image of a nude woman with her hands behind her back, facing downward. Her body is depicted in bright red and yellow to imply violence, anger, and humiliation. Just as described in the Gospel, the image represents a woman facing humiliation and death to satisfy the bloodlust of an immoral and enraged mob (this image loosely references the conflicts and protests in Iran in which women

are being arrested, kidnapped, beaten and killed for the “crime” of their hair being visible among other morality “violations”). The images from Iran have shaken me to my core as an American woman with immense privilege and it is not lost on me that in many nations, women today face similarly brutal humiliation and torturous punishment largely unchanged from thousands of years ago.

## **Prayer of the Glass Woman**

by Cheryl Johnston

*Honorable Mention, Poetry*

I look to the stars for the peace I am seeking  
As I wander lost through the night,  
Listening close for the voice of the heavens  
Transmitted in twinkling light.  
I ask them: “Dear stars, can you tell me the secret  
Of turning cold glass into skin?  
Long have I lain here, a thing not yet human,  
Made jagged and hollow and thin.”  
The stars give no answer, and seeing their beauty  
Bestows no new warmth on my bones,  
Yet under the glass I can feel my blood running  
Like water brought forth from dead stones.

---

## Artist Statement

*Prayer of the Glass Woman*

This is a poem about encountering one’s own humanity. As a neurodivergent woman, I often find myself angry at the dehumanization of others while simultaneously seeing myself only as someone who hopes to be human or who

is striving towards humanity. This poem is a counter-argument to this mentality. Its core message is that being human comes not from any action or way of relating with the world, but from the simple fact of existing as a human being.



## **Tragedy**

by Rosemarie Tischer Stith  
*1st Place, Visual (3D)*

## **Artist Statement**

*Tragedy*

The scripture is *participatory*. That is its technical innovation. The mother and child begin intact; the viewer aborts the child. The child then lies askew, and the mother looks down at an empty space.

# Adoptive Mother's Lament

by Rachel Ventress

*Honorable Mention, Poetry*

Specters of birth ties broken  
shimmer as glossy reflections  
in pools of brown eyes  
Shadows of repudiated biology  
in delicate, tapering fingers  
remind me  
she is theirs before mine

An unnatural severing  
A lost limb or amputated nose  
that somehow made us—the lucky—  
whole  
and left her and them  
fractured  
with a gaping, perpetual hole

A small scratch compared to  
her first mother's loss,  
the weeping wound of second-best mother  
I suffer again and again  
as long as I carry her not of my womb  
but of my love

Bone of my heart  
Flesh of my soul  
A bond explained only by the mystery  
of deep loss in waves of grief  
and this beauty made  
from fusing and grafting  
ashes  
of the star-flung meteor  
of separation and destruction  
that is adoption

## Artist Statement

*Adoptive Mother's Lament*

Since my personal experience with adoption, I've realized that adoption only exists because something is not as it should be; adoption is born of great loss. Children should be with their birth families except in the most exceptional cases. Most infant adoption in the U.S. is coercive and unethical. I don't "recommend" adoption; in fact, I would encourage people to do everything they can to avoid supporting adoption and instead to support families and women in crisis. I also see the beauty in adoption in desperate situations and cases, but I will never stop being sad that my daughter's best option for survival was not her biological family.

## Blind Spots

by Sarah Terzo  
2nd Place, Prose

They were sitting in her home, in front of the hologram machine. It was a warm day outside and the windows were open. She was enjoying the light breeze against her face. He sat a little apart from her with his legs tucked under him. Looking at him, she felt a twinge of something like regret. It was a momentous day for her, for them both — but he didn't know it yet.

The news was talking about the aliens again, the ones in the Al-Kaziz galaxy. Apparently, they had just declared war on yet another planet. He turned to her, "Such a warlike species."

"Yes, it seems like they're determined to fight with just about everyone. But I'm not worried."

"No? You don't think they'll attack us next?"

"They're spread too thin. Now they're fighting a war on three fronts. I have no idea how they think they're going to win. The weapons the Trilianns have? They don't stand a chance. They've made a major mistake."

"I don't know... They could still go after us."

"They'll never get that far. They are a small planet, a small race. Their enemies now outnumber them 100 to 1. They can't conquer three civilizations at once. Three civilizations, I might add, that have been around a lot longer than they have."

"They have those, what are they called, nuclear weapons... They can destroy whole continents. One of those going off in one of our major cities —"

"They have to reach us first. We're well protected. They will never get past our defenses. They won't even get past the Triliann's defenses. Their bombs won't do any good if they can't reach any planet's surface."

"I'm still worried. They did so much damage to K-Chilla."

"That's different. They caught them by surprise. And now they have the Trilianns

and the Hastiks to worry about in addition to what's left of the K-Chilla."

"Still- they have no problem bombing cities, killing civilians—"

"Don't worry. This was a major mistake on their part. It's going to be a disaster for them. They will be destroyed long before they reach us. The Trilianns will never forgive them for attacking them."

"They really shouldn't have done that."

"They shouldn't have. The Trilianns aren't like us. They won't accept terms of surrender. They're going to annihilate the himmins. They won't stop until they kill every last one."

"I think they actually call themselves humans. Our translators got it wrong."

"Doesn't matter. Soon they're going to be extinct. We'll never have to worry about them."

"Good riddance." He flicked back his antenna. For a moment, they sat in silence.

"You know what our scientists discovered about them? The females kill their own young when they don't want them."

"Really?" She clicked her mandibles in disgust. "They destroy their own eggs?"

"They don't lay eggs. They carry their young within them, like the Trilianns do. After they conceive, if they decide it isn't a good time? They just expel their young before they can survive. Or they have another human go in and take the young one out. They kill them."

She shuddered. "How barbaric."

Again, they sat in silence, contemplating the horror of it all.

"T-klorr," she finally said.

"Yes?"

"Come here."

"Again?"

"Are you getting tired of me?"

"Of course not. But I have to —"

"Come here."

He came over and climbed onto the cushion next to her, then raised one leg and began to stroke her back.

But instead of turning over and inviting him to mate, she grabbed him in her strong, powerful forearms, digging her claws into his exoskeleton. With one powerful,



well-placed bite, she severed his head from his body.

He twitched violently, shuddered, and was still.

She cleaned the thick green blood off her antennae and face. Then she grabbed his detached head and tossed it into the freezer to snack on later. She easily picked up his body and carried it into the chamber she'd prepared as soon as she realized her eggs were coming. It had been many cycles since the last time, and it would be many more cycles until she had to do this again.

She positioned him on the ground next to the others, then carefully turned him over. Finding the gap between two plates of armor on his back, she thrust her ovipositor into his body and laid a single egg.

He was the last one for this batch of eggs. Using her silk, she sealed the chamber. Now all she had to do was wait for her daughters to hatch.

For just a moment, again, she felt a sense of regret. There was a good chance he was

the father of this batch. They'd mated many times over the past few months. Of course, it was hard to tell – even when her daughters hatched, she wouldn't know for sure — all larvae looked the same until they molted.

She couldn't help feeling a little sad. The other males? They'd been almost strangers. But she'd known T-klorr for many cycles. She would miss him.

It must be so strange to be a male, she thought idly. Never knowing. Just going on about your life never knowing when a female's eggs were coming, when it was time to fulfill your true purpose.

It was surprising that they continued to mate at all. She clicked her mandibles together. She couldn't even imagine it.

Tucking her legs beneath her, she decided to stop thinking about it. After all, this was the way things were — the way they had always been.

Her daughters needed to eat.

---

## Artist Statement

*Blind Spots*

This work is meant to convey that every society has its own traditions of violence and dehumanization. Many of these harmful views and practices are so widely accepted within the society's individual culture they seem normal to members of that society. It is much easier to identify the injustices of other nations/time periods/groups than to recognize those of our own. It's often hard to identify the moral failings of our own culture, and far easier to pass judgment on others.

## Artist Statement

*Women's Bodies*

This is a mixed-media documentation of a textile piece. The vinyl typography I designed, cut, and applied to the cape reads, "women's bodies are not vessels for violence." This refers to the violence of abortion which violates the bodies of women. The photo is grainy and blurry, so I digitally manipulated the colors to reflect footage of Operation Rescue from the 1990s.

## Women's Bodies

by Elise Ketch

*Honorable Mention, Visual (3D)*



# Equality, Nonviolence and Nondiscrimination

by Ellen Campbell  
*Honorable Mention, Visual (2D)*



*The Torch I*



*The Torch II*



*Solidarity*



*We Protect Us*

## Artist Statement

*Equality, Nonviolence, and Nondiscrimination*

This series of images and the larger body of work that they are pulled from primarily aim to do two things: document the past and present of nonviolent direct action, and promote these ideas to an audience that may be unfamiliar or uncertain about these tactics. While Rescue is not the only form of nonviolent direct action that this body of work covers, it is certainly a major

thread, and it was while pulling on this thread that I discovered how entwined Rescue can be with the Consistent Life Ethic. The principles of “Equality, Nonviolence, and Nondiscrimination” not only compel us to save the unborn, but also to support and protect mothers and serve the “forgotten of the forgotten” who are dehumanized by our prison systems.



## Black Trans Lives Matter

by Elise Ketch  
*Honorable Mention, Visual (2D)*

## Artist Statement

*Black Trans Lives Matter*

I spray painted this on the pedestal of the former Jefferson Davis monument in Richmond, VA during June of 2020, after police brutality protesters tore down the statue. It was my contribution to a community reclamation project, but the remains have since been power-washed. The word “trans” was on a horizontal face of the pedestal, which meant from some angles it read as “Black Lives Matter,” others it read “Black Trans Lives Matter.”

# Would've, Could've, Should've

by Nick Sansone

*Honorable Mention, Prose*

BLACK SCREEN

Silence. All of a sudden, we hear the sound of a door opening, quickly slamming shut, and a bag falling to the ground and we are in...

**INT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - FOYER -- NIGHT**

MICHELLE (21) leans back against the front door of a modern, nicely decorated suburban home and slides to the ground. She is tall with short dark hair, usually full of life and spirit but currently has a depressed aura about her.

As she breathes a deep sigh and looks up at the ceiling...

**INT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - HER BEDROOM -- NIGHT**

Michelle flips a light switch to reveal her childhood bedroom, seemingly untouched since she was in high school. Theatre posters and cast pictures from her high school years line the main wall of the room. Michelle just stands there for a moment taking it all in before allowing herself to fall face-forward on the bed.

**INT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM -- DAY**

Michelle slides the shower curtain open and turns on the shower. After closing the curtain just slightly, Michelle grabs a towel from the linen closet and stuffs it in the crack underneath the door. She then grabs a pack of cigarettes and a lighter from the pocket of her bathrobe and lights a cigarette, taking a long, desperate drag and watching the smoke from her cigarette intermingle with the steam from the shower...

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*Note: this prose piece has been abbreviated due to limited printing space. The rest of Would've, Could've, Should've is published online at [rehumanizeintl.org/create-encounter](http://rehumanizeintl.org/create-encounter).*

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## Artist Statement

*Would've, Could've, Should've*

This short screenplay was initially written as a reaction to news I received this past summer that one of my favorite teachers from high school was arrested on child seduction charges stemming from an inappropriate relationship he had with a female student. I was absolutely devastated by this news and even more-so after hearing that several of my close female friends from high school were not surprised by it. Seeking to understand and empathize with their perspectives and effectively kill the vaulted

image I had of my former teacher, I was inspired to tell the story of Michelle, a fictional character who stands in for any young woman that man made a victim. Set mostly within the day before she is scheduled to testify to determine her former teacher's sentencing, this screenplay seeks to capture the emotional turmoil of child grooming, sexual abuse, and stolen innocence on one particular young woman years later while pointing a path forward toward healing and advocating for justice to be served.



## Sunrise or Sunset

by Sara Leonard  
2nd Place, Visual (3D)

### Artist Statement

*Sunrise or Sunset*

This is a 3D Fiber Art wall hanging sculpture made by needle felting wool onto fabric and felt pieces.

The image is of an infant within the womb. The background is that of a sunset, or a sunrise. It all depends on the perspective and the choice. It could easily be a sunset, the mother choosing to end her child's life. Or it is a sunrise, life within the womb. The child wants to live, this is shown by the way the child reaches up for the sun. Holds it in their hand.

The scissors are a violent tool in this image. If the mother chooses for her child's life to end, then the scissors are symbolic for the abortion the mother will undertake, dismembering her child, cut to pieces. The sunset.

Within the scissors are several images. A green skull on a syringe, a noose, a crying child, a needle pressing into a cell, barbed wire and a blue mask. The scissors don't just symbolize a violent death for the child through an abortion, but many of the atrocities committed against human life.

The noose symbolizes suicide and capital punishment. The syringe with the skull symbolizes euthanasia. The needle pressing into the cell symbolizes stem cell research. The crying child is symbolic of child abuse, human trafficking and slavery. The barbed wire on the handle of the scissors is for unjust war and torture. The blue mask represents genocide and is based off of the Uyghur protest mask.

The Consistent Life Ethic is the value of human life from conception to natural death. The image of the preborn child represents our most innocent, most fragile citizens. If you are willing to end their lives for any reason, then there is no moral barrier stopping anyone from committing any of these atrocities against you.

If we do not value human life at where it begins, then it cannot be valued at all. By saying, "These humans are not human, or less than human," we allow for every crime against humanity: slavery, abuse, unjust war, suicide, human trafficking, torture, euthanasia, stem cell research, abortion, genocide. It all comes from a place where life is simply unvalued.



# Forking Paths

by Julie Gilmore

*Honorable Mention, Prose*

*Warning: Contains descriptions of suicidal ideation.*

1

You are at the doctor's office. Your name is called, and you go to Room One.

"Good morning," says Dr Burgess. "Please, sit down. What seems to be the trouble?"

You take a seat. "I want to kill myself," you say. Dr Burgess nods. "All right. Let's talk about that." You take a deep breath. "I hate my life," you say. "Every day, I have so much pain and grief. I don't have anything to live for. No hope, no future, no joy anywhere. And it's been so long. I just don't see the point in carrying on."

"You don't see any point." Dr Burgess gives you a reassuring smile. "Don't worry, we can help you. Let me have a look at your records."

He opens up your medical file.

Are you terminally ill?

*If yes, go to 2*

*If no, go to 3*

2

"All right," says Dr Burgess. "So I can see here that you do qualify for medical assistance in dying under the current law. Is that something you would like to pursue? Or do you want help to live?"

"No," you say, "I don't want to live. I just told you that. I want to die."

"It says here in your file that you've pursued several treatments already for your suicidal thoughts. None of these have helped?"

"No," you say. "Nothing has helped. And now there's nothing left for me but to die, which is what I want."

Dr Burgess nods. "Very well, that is your legal right. There is still time for you to change your mind. But the law gives you the right to death with dignity, if that's what you've decided on."

He begins arrangements for your medically assisted death.

3

Do you have a serious or chronic physical illness?

If yes, how long has medical assistance in dying been legal?

*More than five years – go to 2*

*Less than five years – go to 7*

*If no, go to 4*

4

Do you have any of the following: blindness, deafness, dementia, gender dysphoria, anorexia, PTSD, trauma after sexual assault, severe allergies or chemical sensitivities?

If yes, how long has medical assistance in dying been legal?

*More than ten years – go to 2*

*Less than ten years – go to 7*

*If no, go to 5*

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*Note: this prose piece has been abbreviated due to limited printing space. The rest of Forking Paths is published online at [rehumanizeintl.org/create-encounter](http://rehumanizeintl.org/create-encounter).*

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## Artist Statement

*Forking Paths*

Proponents of assisted suicide say that it is a last resort, for those for whom other treatments for suicidal desires have failed.

But what doctor, with an otherwise 'healthy' patient, would ever call time on their attempts at treatment, would decide, "That's it, we've done all we can do"?

I've fought with depression and anxiety for most of my adult life, and never had to worry that my GP would say there's no longer hope for me.

But when we legalize assisted suicide, we buy into the lie that some people are worth giving up on.

And after that, none of us are safe.

# The Storm Chasers

by Michael Jezewak

Honorable Mention, Visual (2D)



## Artist Statement

*The Storm Chasers*

The Storm Chasers unites figures who are often touted within opposing political or ideological camps but who are, by the grace of Baptism, equal members in the Body of Christ. Each person featured in this work is an inspiration for how we might live out the Consistent Life Ethic in our unique vocations and stages of life.

Through the work's composition and title, the artist places it in dialogue with the late John August Swanson's 2021 painting *The Storm*, which depicts determined migrants rowing through treacherous waters. The collage here compiles layers of Marian colors, symbols, and even poetry (Dana Gioia's "Psalm to Our Lady Queen of the Angels" on the boat's hull) to answer the question, "How has the Church gone out to aid those facing life's storms?"

Pictured from left to right:

St. Joseph, Jesus, Unknown woman in St. Oscar Romero shirt, Blessed Virgin Mary street art, aka "Gas Mask Mary," Servant of God Dorothy Day, Fr. John Dear, Peter Maurin, Sean Carney, Unknown volunteer and unknown participant at a San Diego retreat for people with special needs, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Fr. Louis, O.C.S.O., aka Thomas Merton, St. Ignatius of Loyola, Fr. Douglas Al-Bazi, Matt Harper, St. Kateri Tekakawitha, Emahoy Haregewein, Two unknown Catholic women advocating for the DREAM Act, Servant of God Thea Bowman, Mary Lou Williams, Robert Ellsberg, Unknown Latino man advocating for family unity in the U.S. immigration process, Corita Kent, Daniel Rudd, Justice Amy Coney Barrett, Unknown baby with a rosary and a "Pray to End Abortion" sign, Venerable Augustus Tolton, Fr. Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Francis of Assisi, Fr. Daniel Berrigan, S.J.

## Music



### **Appalachian Abortuary**

by Ayala Isenberg  
and Kristin Turner  
*1st Place, Music*



### **The Only Way**

by Krista Corbello  
*Honorable Mention, Music*



### **Cease Fire**

by Liv & Learn  
*2nd Place, Music*



### **One Eye Open**

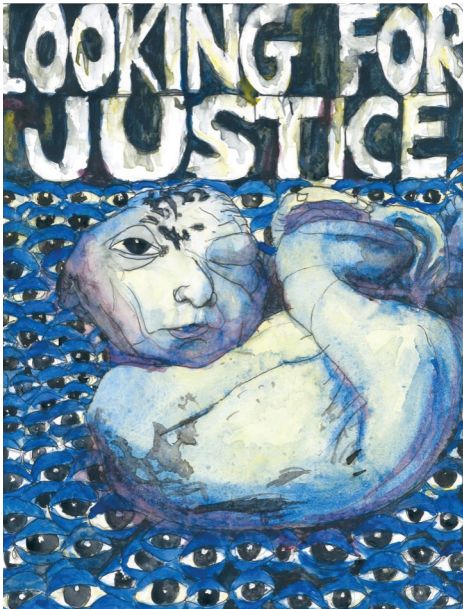
by Kristin Turner  
*Honorable Mention, Music*

## Video Performance



### **Origami Lesson**

by Kara O'Connor  
*1st Place, Video Performance*



## Harriet

by Ellis Carlson  
*Honorable Mention, Visual (2D)*

### **Artist Statement**

*Harriet*

This watercolor art piece is of Harriet, a later-term aborted baby who was discovered by Progressive Anti-Abortion Uprising activists in March 2022. Harriet is suspected to have died from an illegal abortion method, as she had an incision on the back of her neck, and her abortionist, Ceasar Santangelo, has admitted that he would deny medical care to newborns who survived their abortions. This is important to me as medical records demonstrate over a hundred babies have been left to die after surviving abortions in Canada. Harriet's one open eye pleads for us not to look away, but to raise our voices for justice for all the babies who are exterminated as "medical waste."

