



THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE

The HEAL Mission

HEAL is a place for medical students to share their growth and development, for faculty and staff to impart their knowledge gained from experience, and for members of the community to express how health and healing have impacted their lives.

We hope this work increases your appreciation for the art of medicine.

Thank you,
HEAL Newsletter team

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Heal

Humanism Evolving through Arts and Literature



The Woods

Kevin Yan, Class of 2015

The Forgotten

Katy Wood, Class of 2016

They sit side by side, looking like ancient sisters. Their hands are gnarled, twisted and worn, wrinkles pooling together. They speak to me in slow soft Spanish in a rural pueblo of Nicaragua. "I am going to die here," one says. "My children have grown up and no longer care. The government will not help us. We have no food. Maybe if my children were responsible like you, they would help..."

The invisible, the unclaimed, the forgotten. There are cracks, ever growing, and ever expanding all around us. More people are falling down, slipping through. But not to their death, no, not to any type of release, but to no-man's land. Down beneath the under-belly of the lumbering beast.

The frail grandmothers are reasonably dressed, their long white hair flows around threadbare sweaters. Not forced to sleep on the streets, they will probably retire to the same house they have been occupying for 50 years. But for food, there is no

Editors:

Aruna Kahn
Stacy Ranson
Amy-Joy Thompson
Juan Lopez
Jason Lesnick
Tyler Wellman
Jane-Elyse Henkel
Nathan Wass
Andrew Kramer
Tana Jean Welch, PhD
José Rodríguez, MD
Layout by Jodi Slade

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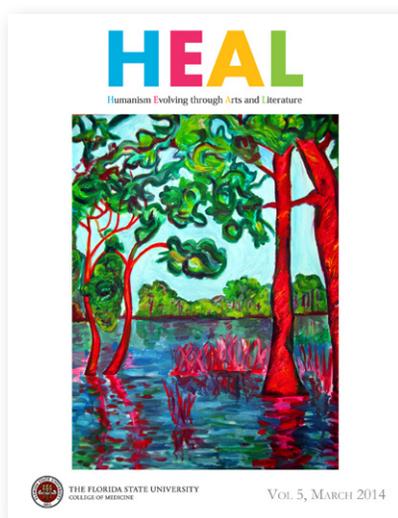
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Arts and Literature

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assistance, no food stamps, no agency to call. There is only us, a small medical group, here a few times a year, and we only have so many resources. We can try to help, but will it be enough? Will they be here when I return?

Back in the US, individuals share the same story with me, but with actions instead of words. Poverty may have a different face, depending on the country, but still it shares many similar unpalatable themes. On an urban street corner, a man sits, hands reaching out—a simple request: food, money, shelter. He holds a decrepit sign. His face peers into the cars, watches, waits, swallows the shame and judgment that passersby inflict. There are soup kitchens, so hopefully his body will be maintained. However, there is a dearth of other resources.

The ground beneath many in this country is thin, fragmented, jagged, and in constant motion. Those who live paycheck to paycheck are trying to sprint ahead of the shifting fractures in the asphalt. Those on the street had less fortunate luck. The cracks opened and swallowed them whole. In the underland, they are lost, wandering blind, trying to keep their distance from the packs of frothing dogs that terrorize this land. Addiction, loneliness, brokenness—these are their companions. Full of self-doubt, and in competition with all those around; they try to just make it. It is hard to contemplate climbing out of the hole when each day safety, food, and shelter consume their energy. If there ever was an idyllic time when people were united with joined hands and hugging arms, that time has surely passed now. People are unaccounted for, unlooked for, blamed for where they are, not often given the chance to explain how they got there. Just that one incident, that one lost job, that one disease—that defining moment when the floor beneath them shattered and they fell headfirst into this

sparse land. Now they roam through the dark, alone, struggling, and afraid.

I see the man sitting on the corner. I see his face, I imagine his pain, and my helping hand twitches at my side (I promise it does). As I walk closer and closer, I tell myself, today I will help; today I will stop and offer kindness. I will build a new

**People are unaccounted for,
unlooked for,
blamed for where they are,
not often given the chance
to explain how they got there.**

community, I will show compassion... But then I remember that dark night and the lonely hallway and the man. I hear the hate and malice creep up as if he is standing behind me again, “I’m going to fucking kill you.”

My heart races, inexplicable dread fills me. My hand that was kind only moments before is stilled; my ears that longed for a story are now deaf. My heart, so soft, yearning to ease his pain seconds earlier, hardens. I’m sure that man sitting there—looking cold and alone, simply asking for food—has a story, one that I could probably relate to. Why do I not look his way? Like a scared rabbit, I scurry away. Away from this unknown man, from his problems, and possibly from his solutions. Away from reaching out, back to comfort, back to the routine, back to my hole: safety.

However, in the safe, dark nest of my hole, questions always echo in my head. Why can I travel hundreds of miles to help a stranger, yet it is so hard to reach out genuinely here in my own community? In the end, it is the grandmothers that always haunt me in moments like these.

They sit side by side, looking like ancient sisters. Their hands are old and bent, wrinkles pooling at different angles. “We are going to die,” they say. “Our children have grown and moved away. Maybe if they had been responsible, like you, they would have cared for us. But they were not. And our government will not help us, either. We have no food to eat... what will we do? What will we do?”

Walking with an Angel

Tamra Travers, Class of 2016

I went for a walk with an angel today. If she wasn't an angel, she was nearly one.

I don't know why I was feeling lonely, or why I drove to the other side of town for a simple walk, or why I even began walking with her at all. But the warm sun and cool breeze drew me out of my studies and into a journey with this unforgettable angel.

I first saw her intriguing figure from across the pond. She was beautiful and worn. But her energy and smile bounced with every step. Her short, white hair hid under a floppy sun hat and her used-to-be-white Keds crunched the gravel path as she moved, almost dancing around that pond, tugged along by a big fluff of golden fur with a wet tongue.

What started as a brief exchange with a smile and a pat to the fluffy friend turned into a journey around the pond and into her intimate experience of life that I could never forget. She opened her soul to me; raw and exposed, she shared it with me.

I almost passed her by, assuming she would rather not be bothered. Or was I hoping not to be bothered on my pleasant, lonely walk around the pond? But something about her radiant smile and that curious dog named Mango captured me. And we began to walk together.

The soul sharing didn't begin right away, and I assumed we would keep it brief and distant. Surely discussing the weather, the park, Mango, and the birds we saw along the way would fill our time. Before I realized what was happening, she was opening herself to me. She knew nothing about me on which to base her trust. I was just another stranger on a walk around the pond. But she did. And how much she gave!

She spoke of a husband who suffered from polio. A mother who passed from breast cancer. A father who died at 36 from cancer. Two brothers who also battled cancer as young men. Her own journey of breast cancer and "a heart that started going crazy." And then, she began to speak of her two beautiful children.

Both suffered from rare genetic syndromes, like hers, involving their hearts and hands. It makes sense that the heart and hands would develop together. Isn't it from your heart that your hands do their work? She held her beautiful hands out for me to see—all bare and exposed. Scars trailed down her arms, reaching back up toward her heart. I imagined the



Home; Papoli, Uganda

Tyler Wellman, Class of 2017

embryonic struggle—that I later found resulted from one mutated gene—for a tiny protein vital for the development of the heart chambers and upper extremities. With no family history of the syndrome, this gene was altered specifically for her.

These scars uniting heart and hands continued to extend down to her uniquely shaped fingers, and were unlike any I had seen before. She held her hands open and wide, welcoming me into these intimate extensions of her heart and life-long battlegrounds.

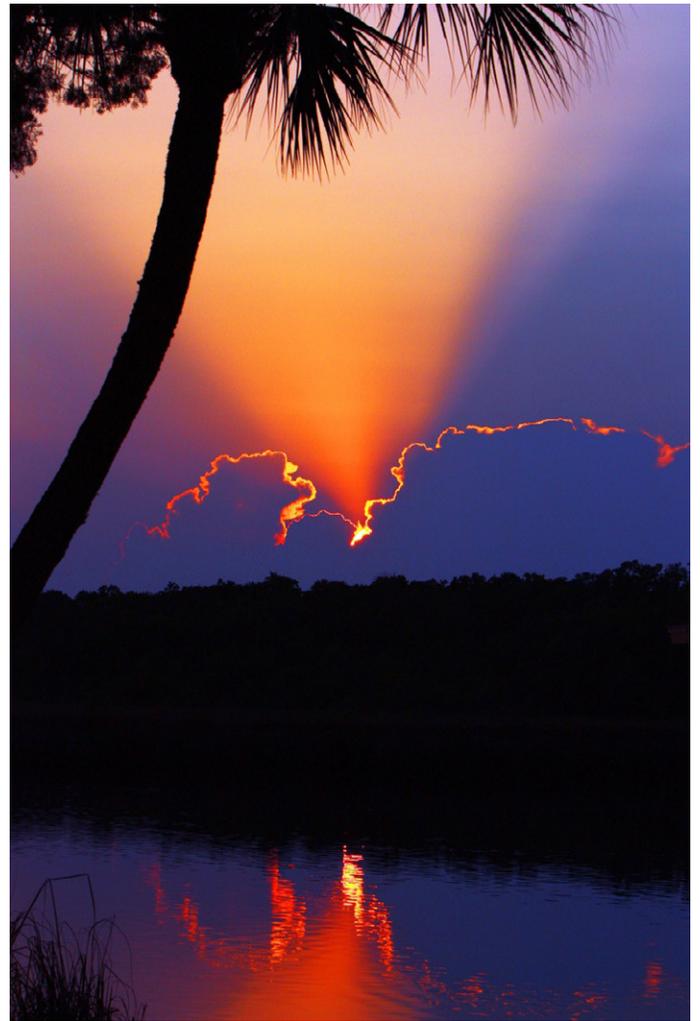
Joy sparked in her blue eyes and she walked on with courage as she spoke with awe of her precious babies. Together they faced struggles upon struggles. Both children were constantly in and out of hospitals, going through surgery after surgery, and taking numerous flights across the country for the best care. Both were misdiagnosed at first, but it seemed that both lived full lives in their short years. As I began to react with

grief, she instantly expressed her gratitude for the years she had with them. She said she might not have had any time at all.

She spoke with a mother's pride in telling of their bold and courageous journeys. The oldest lived to be sixteen, and with his last wishes, he encouraged his baby sister to be all that she could be. And she honored his plea. After endless work and achievement in some of the best schools, universities, and abroad, she passed suddenly at the age of twenty due to an infection.

This family surely was blessed with so much heart that their anatomical flesh could not contain their strength. Her inner courage and boldness was so evident, and yet contrasted with her playful, dancing figure on this beautifully sunny day at the pond. I couldn't understand why she was so open and honest with me. Why did she trust me? Why was she filled with so much joy? How could that smile not leave her face? Where did her bouncing energy come from? Why do I feel such a profound connection with her soul?

I do believe in divine encounters. And I believe this was one. Whether she is an angel, or a beautiful woman with the soul of an angel, it makes no difference to me. I still had the honor of sharing a walk with her, and receiving her soul gift to me. I can't thank her enough.



Sky
Harry Moulis, MD



Butterfly Closeup
Trung Tran, Class of 2014

Shadow in the Dark: Immokalee's Migrant Workers

Chase E. Den Beste, FSU College of Law

There's a shadow in the darkness,
You can't see it, but it's there.
Move away from your hardness,
Let my words make you aware.

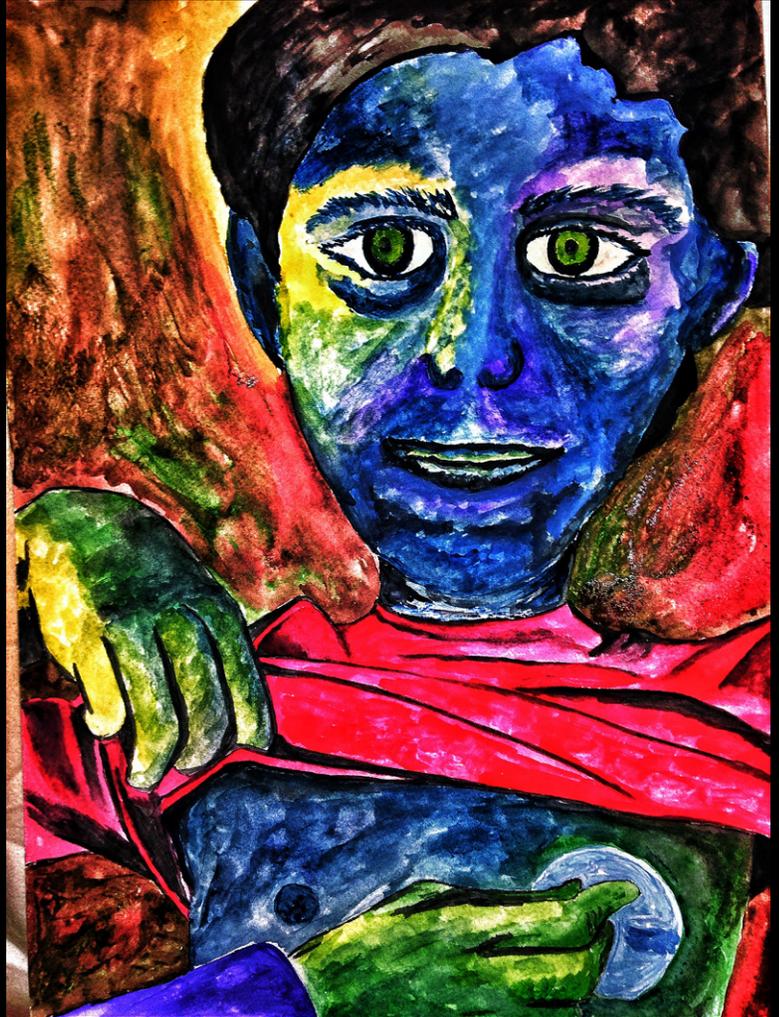
It's early in the morning,
The children are still asleep.
Their father leaves with warning,
To earn his family's keep.

At the fields he bends his back,
Fills buckets for coins in his can.
Picking relentlessly with his pack,
Yet no benefits for this working man.

Many hours and many days,
He twists his fingers through the fields.
Returning home with eyes ablaze,
And whispers of fear that never yield.

His shadow darkens as he moves,
Bearing his family up the coast.
And until his work and life improves,
He must stay quiet at his post.

He is a shadow in the darkness,
But he's not the sole one there.
There's no more room for hardness,
Immokalee needs your prayer.



Blue Boy

Rennier Alejandro Martinez, Class of 2015

God's Got A Hold On Me

Charles Howze

God's got a hold on me,
A grip on my mighty hand.
Lord, I don't wanna go back to prison.
When I had the chance to run, I should've ran.

Really I'm glad it's over,
Cuz I'm tired of livin a lie,
Robbin, stealin, doin drugs,
Everybody just wants to know why.

God's got a hold on me,
I just thought I'd mention.
For 40 years I've been living in sin,
Jesus finally got my attention.

God's got a hold on me,
And I'm glad he finally did
Cuz I'm tired of looking in the judge's face,
Waiting for him to give me a bid.

God's got a hold on me,
I ain't seen my folks in years.
Walking through the jailhouse with my head down,
I ain't droppin nothin but tears.

God's got a hold on me,
You've seen it all before.
Hell, I just got out of prison doing 31 months,
Now they wanna give me some more.

God's got a hold on me,
Satan thinks I ain't got no sense,
The devil uses a lie,
Cuz in my heart I already repent.



Denver

Katie Longardner, Class of 2014



Orphanage—Dumay, Haiti

Rhea Ramjit, Class of 2017



Night of the Lechuza

Robinson Herrera, FSU Department of History

On a moonless night nearing the cockcrow, a drunken Güicho Gudiel stumbled home on a lonely roughhewn pathway. Three men waited for him, each for his reasons, but all savoring vengeance; Gudiel's death would restore their honor. They pressed their hats firmly on their heads, unsheathed their machetes, clutching handles tightly in clammy hands, cold sweat beading on their temples; no man alive could match Gudiel's machete skills, the 45 notches on his blade's sheath silently attested to his prowess. Whispered rumors claimed sorcery, devilry, loathsome demonic things were credited to Gudiel surviving countless altercations without a single opponent ever landing a cut or even a nick on his allegedly impious flesh. Determined, the hunters braced their bodies and souls to battle the unknown.

The first assailant fell on Gudiel, but before he could even raise his machete, in a blinding blur of movement, the quarry unsheathed his own blade and landed a deadly blow on the tender flesh of the man's nape, cutting so deep that the jugular immediately spurting blood. With each heartbeat the attacker's life departed from his soon listless body. To

the ground he collapsed, limp, his blood mixing with earth. Gudiel's inebriation had fiendishly evaporated; alert, weapon in hand, he faced the remaining assailants; three against one, now two versus one, so suddenly had their advantage disappeared that the two assaulters stood immobile, but they could not abandon their task. Gudiel had seen their faces, and they could either risk death now or certainly die that day, evening, night, or whenever Gudiel decided on retribution. Thus, the second attacker swung his machete, but hesitation provided Gudiel with an opening, and before he could finish the stroke, Gudiel had sliced the assailant's abdomen with such deftness that the attacker dropped his machete. Mercilessly, Gudiel decapitated him with one powerful blow that severed head from spine with a supernatural ease that no man should possess. The third assailant abandoned concerns of honor and slashed at Gudiel from behind, a cowardly action, but better to live fully and combat traducers than to live as the 48th notch on the enemy's sheath.

Gudiel turned in time to avoid the full power of the attacker's slash, but nonetheless he suffered a cut to his right arm, the

first combat wound ever landed on his immaculate flesh. Gudiel stared at his assailant with the glare that few lived to describe and at that precise instance, spoke the encounter's first words, "Kill me, if you dare." As the attacker lifted his machete to strike the deathblow, exultant in victory, already thinking of the stories he would tell and the fame he would accrue for smiting Gudiel, from the deep inky blackness of the night came the screech of a *lechuza*. Long rumored to be the son of a powerful sorceress who could metamorphose at will into a lechuza, a creature feared for its connections to the underworld, night spirits, and other loathsome things, Gudiel smirked at the attacker, repeating his chilling words, "Kill me, if you dare."

The attacker looked to the starless black sky, the moon hiding from fright; he saw the lechuza fly towards him, and he would later swear that the raptor spoke to him in a mocking feminine voice, "Kill him, if you dare." The lechuza glided towards the attacker and seized his hat in its gnarled claws, flying back to the maw of the sky from whence it had emerged. The would-be murderer dropped his machete and ran, ran faster than he ever had, ran towards the fields, towards the town, towards the river, anywhere that would distance him from Gudiel and his demonic protector.

Six days later Gudiel stood in a saloon's doorway, three additional notches on his machete's sheath, the wound on his arm completely healed without so much as a light scar where

metal had cut flesh. A funeral procession quickly passed in front of him, the dead's family not daring to look at Gudiel for fear they might suffer the same fate as their beloved.

What killed the third attacker remains debated; some claim Gudiel's blade cut so deep and fast that the deceased didn't notice the wound until he arrived home where he died of exsanguination. In frightened tones others describe what truly happened, the man had died of fear. Gudiel's assailant became gruesomely ill immediately after reaching his house; he refused to eat or drink, he resisted medical help. His family sought the assistance of a healer who dabbled in the magical, but the curer abjured when she heard Gudiel's name. As the days went, the assailant's body thinned at a macabre pace, eyes sank into sockets, muscle turned to sinew, and skin tightened on bone. All the while the sickly man murmured indecipherable words, and repeatedly yelled the same curdling phrase, "Give me back my hat! Give me back my hat!" The lechuza had done her work.

The town's educated folks mocked the story as superstitious peasant nonsense, but they surreptitiously prayed never to raise Gudiel's ire. Science and reason rule in the light of day, but at night old beliefs reign.

As the burial procession passed Gudiel, the cadaver's brother, in a nearly inaudible voice, asked the widow, "Why is Güicho Gudiel wearing my brother's hat?"

Conquer the Sun
Christopher Martin, Class of 2014



Time

Chris McDonald, Class of 2015

Like a river ever flowing
Time pushes us on but we keep rowing,
Fighting against the current.
Every moment is unique, but our focused efforts
Only seem to tire us against the torrent.
Should we slow our quest? Or keep pushing
Towards what we think is best?
Take a step out. Look at what you see.
The destination is always waiting,
And so much beauty surrounds us
At each step of the journey.



Wes Tindell, Class of 2017

Jaime's Hug

Kenneth Kriendler

If I could hug you one more time, I'd still tell you that I love you.
If I could hug you one more time, I'd hold you tighter.
If I could hug you one more time, I'd hesitate to let go.
If I could hug you one more time, I'd thank Jesus for the blessing that is my child.
If I could hug you one more time, I'd assure you that you're special.
If I could hug you one more time, I'd promise to spend more time with you.
If I could hug you one more time, I'd offer more spiritual praise.
If I could only hug you one more time, I'd tell you that I love you.
If I could only . . . hug you . . . one more time.