

# **BETWEEN THE HOUSES**

**SARABANDE WRITING LABS, VOL. 12**

# SARABANDE WRITING LABS

An Arts Education Program from Sarabande Books

Sarabande Writing Labs is an arts education initiative created by Louisville-based, nonprofit publisher Sarabande Books. We partner with social service organizations to promote writers in under-resourced communities through free workshops, literary events, and publication.

Visit our website for photos, digital downloads, and upcoming events: [www.sarabandebooks.org/swl](http://www.sarabandebooks.org/swl)

## ABOUT THIS VOLUME'S COMMUNITY PARTNER:

Americana World Community Center is bridging the gap from surviving to thriving for Louisville's refugee, immigrant and underserved populations through education, family support, youth achievement, and career and financial development.

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# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	<i>Hannah Rose Neuhauser</i>	5
I AM FROM	<i>Kam K.</i>	6
COMMUNITY	<i>Victor F.</i>	7
IF I RULED THE WORLD	<i>Victor F.</i>	9
I AM FROM	<i>Tony H.</i>	10
IF I RULE THE WORLD	<i>Tony H.</i>	12
SEPARATION	<i>Tony H.</i>	13
CELEBRATIONS	<i>Milena W.</i>	14
LOCATION	<i>Tariah H.</i>	15
I AM FROM	<i>Humam M.</i>	17
STOP BULLYING	<i>Humam M.</i>	19
MY SYMPHONY	<i>Magan K.</i>	20
STAND TALL	<i>Magan K.</i>	21
FEAR	<i>Magan K.</i>	23
JUST BECAUSE	<i>Ayen A.</i>	24
THIS IS AMERICA	<i>Ayen A.</i>	25

# INTRODUCTION

by Hannah Rose Neuhauser

Whenever I go into a classroom to teach a workshop, I bolster myself with writing prompts, ideas, and examples—all tools to help students face the challenge of a blank page. But this class was a little different. These high schoolers knew exactly what they wanted to write about.

In *Between the Houses*, you will find poems that explore injustice and violence. These poets catalogue what they see, hear, and feel—but also what they envision. These poems house both truth and dream. These poems remind us to look at the ugliness of the world, but never to lose sight of what could be. These poems encourage us. As Ayen says, “Let’s speak more. Let’s say something.”

Grateful for these voices,  
Hannah Rose

# I AM FROM

Kam K.

I am from my bedroom.  
Cold. Sometimes hot.

I am from Abdi.  
A good friend.  
In the classroom, we work together.  
My best friend.

I am from New York City.  
So fun that we take a picture.

I am from vegetables.  
Healthy for everyone.

I am from soccer.  
Playing with my friends.

I am from a dog.  
Smart. Listens to what you say.

I am from people.  
So many people.  
Between the houses.  
So many people.

# COMMUNITY

Victor F.

We all live in a community where all you see  
is mothers crying and brothers dying.  
It seems like they carry their child  
to their hearse more than they carry their purse.  
All the people see  
bullets flying and children crying  
but every time a teen dies,  
they always think it's gang related  
just because of the neighborhood.  
How come they always bring up the neighborhood  
and leave out all the positives?  
Like he could have been the next big athlete  
on the cover of *Slam High School Magazine*.  
What if he was a big track star  
and made it to the Olympics  
and kids watching TV hear, "runners take your start!"  
For all that we know,  
he could have just been a normal kid trying to just help  
his mom.

# IF I RULED THE WORLD

Victor F.

I would change a lot of things.  
I would change everything wrong with the world.  
I would change what people go through.  
What parents have been through and  
how it influenced everyone around them  
and made them who they are.  
Everyone would have the same freedom  
instead of some people being treated differently  
just because they are from different countries.  
All I see are kids being separated from their families.

# IF I RULE THE WORLD

Tony H.

I would change a lot.  
Change everything that has thrown the poor under shadows  
and shined the rich under a light.  
Through everything people go through,  
everyone should be treated right.  
No matter what has happened  
everyone is equal  
hoping to see the end like a high school musical sequel.  
I will rule the world with care  
and treat people as people  
no matter religion, ethnicity, or color  
because everyone should be treated as one another.  
Every man is my brother.  
Some people shouldn't be treated like kings  
just because they have money.  
Respect is earned.  
Hard work is learned.  
So everyone should be treated  
equal.  
Equality can't be spelled without equal.  
So why should people be treated differently from  
other people?

# I AM FROM

Tony H.

I am from a dark room.  
A place where I can listen to my thoughts.  
No sound.  
So quiet—it seems like nobody is here.

I am from my momma who gave birth to me.  
I show her all the worth in me.  
I am from my birthday.  
I always shed tears, because I'm not promised it every year.

I am from home. A place that keeps me safe.  
Secures my family while my momma works, trying to  
get paid.

I am from my family. Pushing me to be great.  
Telling me through my progression.  
I will make mistakes, but it's a risk I'll take.

I am from my phone—the only thing that keeps me together.  
Helps me whenever and through whatever.

I am from a lion that allows me to be king  
and not worry about anything else,  
because it is my jungle.

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I am from basketball.  
My second home. A place forever in my heart.

I am from my personality.  
It's like I'm a clown, but as smart as a rock.

I am from life.  
Being able to see how the world works  
and having the opportunity to change it like I change  
clothes daily.  
I dream of becoming someone who changes the world.

## SEPARATION

Tony H.

Kids getting separated from family.  
I can see  
kids getting separated from families.  
It is happening.  
President not being a good person.  
Kids without families.  
Is it really worth it?  
I think he wants to see families cry and bleed.  
But why doesn't he learn from the horrific things we've seen.  
I don't believe it.  
Watching TV. Not knowing what I'm seeing.  
Not knowing if this might happen to me.  
Why is Donald Trump separating families?  
I'm still trying to process this  
by any means.  
I see babies crying.  
Mom and dad get sent back.  
I don't know why it's happening.  
If they are going back, they should go back together.  
The only time they should be separated is  
NEVER.

# CELEBRATIONS

Milena W.

I am from my parents' room.  
A place where there is not bright future.  
As dark as a basement in the night.

I am from my mother.  
A person who gives me everything I need.  
Always there for me through thick and thin.

I am from a culture where celebrations happen every day.

# LOCATION

Tariah H.

I am from the kitchen.  
A wide area, filled with many different foods.  
The place where holiday meals are cooked.

I am from my mother.  
A woman who held me for nine months.  
A woman who gave me life and a room to live under.

I am from Christmas.  
A time where temperatures are low.  
Smiles are warm.

I am from my home.  
A place where memories are held.  
Movies watched.  
Popcorn popped.

I am from confetti cake.  
My mother bakes a cake filled with many colors.

I am from a writing notebook.  
Filled with surprises and memories held close.

I am from a polar bear.  
White and fluffy.  
Fur as soft as as clouds.

- I am from cooking.  
Tastes are held.  
Different flavors.

# I AM FROM

Humam M.

I am from a place where there is no peace.  
I am from my bedroom where I play Fifa and beat my friends.

I am from my mom and dad.  
We went to Michigan and had fun.

I am from Eid.  
We go out and have fun.  
Spend time with family.

I am from Baghdad, Iraq.  
It didn't look very nice,  
but it was okay.  
Got into a lot of fights.

I am from Shish Kabob.  
Grilled. Made with meat.  
Sharing with my family.

I am from my iPhone.  
I use it every day.

I am from a dog.  
I've never found one, but I bought one.

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I am from spending time outside with friends.  
Playing soccer and chilling.

# STOP BULLYING

Humam M.

Bullying hurts people physically  
and mentally.

Sometimes you might be bullying someone  
but you don't realize it

because you are used to it

and that goes as far as even joking.

You might really be hurting feelings.

You might not notice because you are not the,

The most bullying that goes on is in schools.

People hate each other because of bullying.

Without bullying, everyone would be friendly.

No fights.

No hate.

No negativity.

# MY SYMPHONY

Magan K.

I'm really from a place where you know goals and dreams  
don't exist.

Every kid is told he ain't made of nothing.

But even though the stars are far,

I believe I can pursue my dreams and prove to those people  
who said goals and dreams don't exist wrong.

(A year past)

What you don't understand is through my whole entire life,  
I've been through misery.

I am from a place where there's literally no imagery.

Momma once told me that I was raised differently. I made it  
from the bottom.

You don't know my symphony.

So after all this criticism of being told I ain't,

I finally made it.

# STAND TALL

Magan K.

One man down,  
the other man up.

One son gone,

While the other still alive.

My own people kill each other.

You can see it in their eyes.

This is such a shame,

look what society became,

a world of violence,

a world of no peace.

We got mommas crying,

screaming rest in peace.

We got police tryna

stop all the crisis in the streets.

Pow pow pow.

I guess we covered another sheet.

God, please, we is desperate in need.

I'm bleeding from within,

but not bleeding out.

I'm seeking for help,

god, please help us out.

I'm tired of people taking

these innocent lives.

If we want to stop this,

we got to change and unite.

In the United States we are all divided.  
We got to stand tall and become a nation.

# FEAR

Magan K.

Funny how people say they don't fear nothing.  
I can't trust the world  
'cause this world is like Monopoly,  
looking left and right,  
tryna watch my back constantly.  
Silence in my soul,  
I'm just trying to walk casually  
but hastily, my quality the best it can.  
Man, hope when I die,  
they gonna make a biography  
from the day I was born.

# JUST BECAUSE

Ayen A.

Just because I'm black doesn't mean  
I'm would rob you.  
Just because I'm black doesn't mean  
I'm going to be a highschool dropout.

I may wander the streets,  
but it doesn't mean  
I'm going to join a gang.  
I'm just a lost girl  
who doesn't know where to go.  
Everyone that says they're gonna stick around,  
but wasn't there when I needed them.

# THIS IS AMERICA

Ayen A.

We see on TV the world is not getting any better.  
We see people getting separated from their parents.  
We see people coming to get a new life.  
We see guns being used.  
We see people protesting for new laws.  
We see our brothers and sisters getting shot left and right.  
Why can't we speak up and say something?  
Why can't we shout and get their attention?  
Let's speak more. Let's say something.



