REFLECTIONS
STUDENT LITERARY MAGAZINE OF THE WAYNE COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

2021
New Day, New Way
MISSION STATEMENT
Wayne County Community College District’s mission is to empower individuals, businesses, and communities to achieve their higher education and career advancement goals through excellent, accessible, culturally diverse, and globally competitive programs and services.

VISION STATEMENT
Wayne County Community College District will be known as a premier community college and innovator in the areas of high quality academic and career education, talent development in support of regional economic growth, diversity and inclusion, and technological advancement.

VALUES STATEMENT
- Excellence in teaching and learning
- Diverse, international and intercultural education
- Student and community service
- Integrity

ACCREDITATION
The Wayne County Community College District is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission
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We are very pleased to bring you the fourth annual Wayne County Community College District’s **Reflections** student literary magazine. Our theme for this year, “New Day, New Way,” shares how we are embracing and moving forward with the “new normal” during this continued unprecedented pandemic.

We hope you will enjoy reading this publication. Our diverse student contributors have worked tirelessly while balancing studies, work and life to share heartfelt poems, essays, artwork and photography with you. We are extremely proud of their creativity, talent, courage and resiliency.

It is truly an honor to work with our **Reflections** team, who, under the leadership of our Chancellor, Dr. Curtis L. Ivery, takes pride in highlighting our talented students in this award-winning publication.

The buzz phrase for 2020 became “the new normal” and like so many people what that would look like and mean caused me a bit of anxiety. What people thought would last a few weeks in 2020 has continued now for two years. This “new normal” may just be our normal for the foreseeable future. I wondered how long we would have to wear masks, when the vaccines would be available and would they be effective.

I wondered if people would go back to in-person workdays and school days. The pandemic forced us into a New Day and a New Way of doing things that includes working, going to school and living life. So, it seemed fitting to design this issue of **Reflections** around that theme – A New Day, A New Way!

Again, we share the stories of our Wayne County Community College District students as they reflect on this new way of life as we move forward and put the pandemic behind us. Part of that new way of life could be forever living with COVID-19 like the fact we will always have a flu season. These stories weave those experiences into them and give individual perspectives on “the new normal.”

It has been a pleasure to - once again -work with a fabulous team. Thanks to Chancellor Curtis Ivery, Unbreen Amir, Dennis Niemiec, James Melton, Maddinah Ahmed and the WCCCD students. I am proud to reflect on another engaging publication.
It has been said you can learn a lot about a person or organization during adversity.

That’s why the theme of the fourth annual Reflections literary magazine—New Day, New Way—is so intriguing. Faced with a life altering COVID-19 pandemic, the Wayne County Community College District developed New Day, New Way as its mantra, a positive approach to the dire realities of the world.

But is such an approach limited to a pandemic? Or is change itself a key element of progress?

In this award-winning publication, WCCCD students reflect on the pandemic and other topics through their original works of creative nonfiction, essays, poems, artwork and photography. I think readers will find their creativity and candor to be enlightening and entertaining. And, we thank Chancellor Dr. Curtis L. Ivery for his vision in establishing Reflections as a way for students to express themselves.

There has been no lack of uncertainty in our lives these past few years. Our students taking the time to share their growth though art expression has certainly restored assurance. I commend all of the students for being inventive, brave, and compassionate along the journey. You all should be very proud of yourselves.

Thank you to the student contributors, my colleagues, and the Wayne County Community College District for sharing this opportunity with me. It has been a pleasure being a Contributing Editor for Reflections.

This role has truely energized me- what an honor!
Babalola Afeez is an international Wayne County Community College District student from Nigeria. He is an accounting graduate from Lagos State University with a Master’s of Business Administration from the University of Lagos, both located in Nigeria. Creative writing is a way he expresses life around and within him. He also loves creating memories with his family.
From lockdown to crackdown, the streets are empty in downtown.
Countries’ economy indexes are going down, as businesses and related activities are shut down, borders are on complete lockdown.

Families are inside with their doors shut.

The world is upside down.
I have never seen such global turmoil since I’ve been around.

And for this plague that is ravaging our world, the cure is yet to be found. coronavirus, the invisible agent of death, visited us and emptied our town and gave our cities an unusual sound.

Now, I understood, how the world is together bound, from China to Italy, from Italy to Spain, from Spain to England, America, Canada and Africa are not left out.

Together, we are in this as one, regardless of color and race. The virus is visiting every place, beating boundaries of every space, taking lives and keeping people in isolation. We keep counting the numbers and wondering how many more days will this invisible enemy among us, leave us.

Humans are the world, existing and co-existing in different spaces of the earth.

At this point, nothing matters to the world than human lives, as we have abandoned almost all skyscrapers for corners of our rooms.

We have canceled our so called “important social gatherings” for social distancing. Retiring to our little families, waiting to hear the next narrative, that our common enemy has been defeated. But instead, what we hear is how many more lives have been deleted.

Not knowing who is going to be next. Well, at this point all we can do is keep fighting and believing that together we can beat the Virus, coronavirus.
Empire
by Babalola Afeez

Up north Michigan at the village of Empire, the heart of Leelanau.

In the wake of the night after a meal at the Village Inn, I visited the Kearns’s house on top of the hill, right in front of the lake.

Later, I took a walk to the lake after a plate of salad Suzan made. I sat at the feet of Lake Michigan with my skin buried in my blue with yellow “M” Wolverine Michigan cardigan.

Beneath the burning cloud from the sunset, rising above the lake like lantern was a view like Mount Logan.

Right there, I was seated feeling the cold breeze blowing through the waters, listening to the melodious sound as the water shatters along with rhythmic wavering of the waters.

At this point, nothing more matters, other than the deep feelings and sensation oozing from the mouth of the lake.

I wish I could jump into the belly of the lake and become refreshed by her strength. Instead, I was satisfied at the sight of the beautiful nature of Lake Michigan seated beneath the burning cloud at sunset.
If 20 children can’t play for 20 years, as they say, then fewer children can be friends forever. I say, it’s amazing how times and seasons change before our own very eyes.

Without even realizing it, time passes until we sit back to take account of the events of our lives.

I travelled back in time, I turned back the hands of time, between 1991 and 1997 by my time.

At my destination (CDSS, Ikeja-Lagos) My childhood friends - are Shittu Saheed, Ohunayo Gbenga, Bode Kehinde Olusola, Ogundele Saheed and Akinola Akinmoladun.

I brought them with me on my journey to the present and hopefully I can take them with me, on my journey to the future.

I am back to the present; I am in Detroit, while a friend is in New Jersey, two are over in Australia and the last one in the UK. On the same continent, we met in the past.

On different continents, we live in the present; And yes, when we met on zoom of recent, I heard the same old voices but different accents. Seeing their faces was the best present.

Recanting old memories was a blessing because not many people are opportune to take a trip to the past and bring the treasures therein to the present like we did.
Caterra Selly

BIO

Caterra Selly is studying Computer Information Systems at WCCCD but has a goal of being a writer. She decided to participate in Reflections because she wanted to showcase her perspective on her experience with life.
People say I’m weak, but I take it as unique. Yeah, I got me a man out the streets; I talk to him a couple times a week.

Yeah, know I love this man. He’s cute. I want to be more than just friends. He’s got somethings going on with him, trauma or baby mama drama. Sometimes, I think he forgets the words of his own mama. Haven’t heard from his father.

I don’t know what’s wrong, but it makes me cry when I’m alone. I see the frustration in his eyes, the lost and the confusion.

He needs help but I don’t want to draw conclusions.

Yeah, he’s a fine and educated man. He’s one of the strongest men I’ve ever known. He laughs like nothing’s wrong.

They wonder why I’m still here.

But people rather keep searching for what they probably never find, instead of investing in solidarity within their own kind. Just give the person you love time.

I want to water to grow this man. He hands me the can. But, to him I don’t know who I am—a woman that perception can moisturize his expanded dry lands. I know my man is thirsty. He’s maturing looking at 30.

And to me age ain’t nothing but a number. But knowledge is power and wisdom is what pushes you further.

I have enough to fill oceans. But I can’t make him drink. I speak to him in ways that makes him think. It’s important to me that he breaks free from the prison that he settling to live in.

He loves me now, but is having trouble expressing it. He’s honest, a hard worker, a man who is loved. He is moving on but his past is fighting in his future. He demands a change but he has adjustments beyond his range.
He told me I wasn’t strong. I think he thinks it’s my fault, but a man usually takes the lead is what I was taught.

I watch him settle for things no man in the world deserves. A black man from the streets needs a strong black woman who, besides herself, puts him first.
Lissette Torres-Santana has lived in Michigan for 10 years but was born and raised in Puerto Rico. She is pursuing a degree in nursing at WCCCD with credentials in the International Board of Lactation Consultant Examiners (IBCLC) because of her compassion and commitment to caring for others. The opportunity to participate in Reflections gives her the chance to inspire others. According to Lissette, her writing reveals what is possible when one has trust in God, desire and dedication in reaching a goal and effort.
We lived in Rincon, Puerto Rico, when my life took a 90-degree turn. After a busy day at Antillean Adventist University, I received surprising news. My paternal grandfather Oscar had visited my mother and gave her two airplane tickets. However, we were a family of four, parents, my brother Luis and myself.

As my mother had health issues, my grandfather, with good intentions, decided to surprise my parents with airplane tickets so she could live at his house in Detroit. His idea was that my mom could take care of her health with doctors who had advanced technology and treatment for her illness.

Mom had several health issues; obesity did not help her. Mommy’s height is 5 feet 4 inches, and at that time, she weighed 298 pounds. She was diagnosed with diabetes in her early thirties and a thyroid problem. In addition, her blood pressure was dynamite type, could explode at any time. She always carried her asthma pump Albuterol Sulfate. Before a rainy day, mom knew it would be the best day for her plants, because of, as she described, her “achy bones thanks for arthritis.” My mom is a caregiver. For instance, usually she cooks and fixes up plates to feed many homeless. So, many people described my mom as having a big heart. I often heard my mom replying to those persons in a joking tone, “Yes, my heart is so big that is why I have a heart murmur.” Despite making silly jokes, my mother struggled with depression and low self-esteem.

A doctor informed her that she had a deficient blood oxygen level and needed to carry an oxygen tank at all times. I remember that news was devastating for us. A particular doctor alarmed us when he said, referring to my mother, “Ivette, if you keep up with health like a rollercoaster, out of control, it will not last long in life.” Ominous news spread quickly. Someone notified my grandfather that my mom’s health condition was deteriorating. And he wanted to provide my mom with more options, the reason he surprised us with the airplane tickets. I saw mom covered with grateful tears mixed with worry tears. Regardless of how appreciative my mom was, she expressed not leaving Puerto Rico without both of her “Chiclets” (gum), as she used to refer to my brother and me. Finally, after a couple of days of debate, they reached a decision. My parents made a plan to live one or two years in Detroit. My mom would get medical assistance, my brother would finish class at Western International High School, and I would do university research completing the Registered Nurse (RN) program. My parents wanted me to focus on college and, as a full-time student, I would become an RN in a short time. My father would stay in Puerto Rico and take care of us economically.

This situation was concerning. The fear of failure was a chain in my soul. I asked myself, “Would moving to the USA be the best choice in helping my mother’s health conditions?” I also was worried about not being completely proficient in English. I understood English enough to pass the English exam but not to have a fluent conversation. Previously, I had no interest in learning another language. Suddenly, it was no longer an option.

Then there was the difference in weather. Puerto Rico is a tropical island (75-90 degrees Fahrenheit year-
From Puerto Rico to Detroit, Learning a New Culture (continued) by Lissette Torres-Santana

round), while Michigan’s climate is unpredictable. My mind had too much to process in a small amount of time. Saying goodbye to family and friends is never easy. I was going to miss all our farm animals. I was also going to miss the coqui, a tree frog singing its name all night long.

While my mind was spinning with all these concerns, time was speeding. Anyway, anxiety started to wash away when I started praying and trusting in God. A day before leaving Puerto Rico, we went to the beach to see the sunset with my mom, brother, and dog Pinky. I felt it would be nice to walk on the beach’s warm sand after a sunny day. Watching the waves of the ocean and listening to the seascapes was relaxing. I tried not to think; I enjoyed the moment after praying and felt the caress of a warm breeze. It was a good day. My mom shouted to us, “It’s time to go before mosquitos start to eat us for their supper.” She made me smile with her sense of humor.

Grandmother had a house cluttered with family living with her. We would live with grandma, Aunty Yvette, Uncle Ivan, and cousins Xavier and Alex. When arriving at my grandparents’ house, I picked wildflowers, especially the dandelions, from the empty land in front of their house. I decorated my hair with wildflowers and made a dandelion bouquet. They were new flowers to my eyes and gorgeous. My uncle Harvey mentioned that “dandelions are despicable flowers for many, and they sell herbicide exclusively to eliminate from the grass that yellow flower.” I could not believe it; flowers give a comfortable ambiance.

Not sure if I am exaggerating, but I noticed a global “culture seasoning” immediately upon arriving in Detroit. I was surprised in a good way. I had not expected to hear so many languages, dialects, cultures, and even Spanish accents. In Puerto Rico, the primary language is Spanish. Puerto Ricans learn English in schools on the island but talking in Spanish the entire time in the English class. Many of us read the English word in Spanish to memorize the vocabulary. Thankfully, we have an English writing and reading education. I wish in the near-future Puerto Rico public schools can be provided with English verbal practice and exams. In Puerto Rico, it is unusual to hear tourists speak their language or see people using their cultural clothing. Tourists mostly try talking Spanish or communicate in English. For me, everything from other cultures is fascinating. I confess I was annoyed by some female cultural dressing practices initially, but I respect and learn from them.

The second thing I noticed in Detroit, was that many people barely knew their neighbors, and there was a lot of vandalism. At that time, Detroit had many “charcoal houses.” I would see a minimum of one or two houses on fire every month. If I ever got lost and needed to find my home sweet home, Detroit, I did not need GPS to get to our residence. I would only have to look at the sky and search for the black or dark grey smoke. It was sad, but I did not want to dwell on that and go into a depression mode. I grew up in Rincon, a small town (municipality) where everyone knows each other by full name and maybe a reason people do not damage anyone’s property. But I also believe the moral respect for each other in Rincon, Puerto Rico, was different from the U.S. Most Puerto Ricans, also known as Boricuas, think in a hard hand discipline. A stubborn child will have a lot of “chancletazo” (whipping with mamma’s sandal).

I also experienced an upsetting situation while looking for a job and finding a college. After all, since the beginning, dad would provide us with money throughout one or two years. However, we lost communication with dad. He did not answer the phone or the letters we sent him. I tried searching for him throughout social media with no luck. Worried about him, I started calling friends and neighbors from Rincon. There were rumors he was with another woman and declared a divorced man. However, my dad never divorced my mom. I believe
he did not want to face us. He disappeared from our lives. I understood that my parents were not on good terms. They used to argue frequently, and I thought it was normal. In my opinion, if there is a separation between couples, parents should not lose the relationship with their offspring.

After one week at my grandmother’s house, Grandpa Oscar returned to his home in Puerto Rico. We had no phone or transportation. We did not know how to use the bus, get a taxi, or get around the hood. We did not receive the support we expected from my paternal family, excluding my grandfather. Asking for a favor was an issue. Even when offering money, no one had time to guide us. "Will the dead stink after the third day?" That was us! As soon as we got to Detroit before grandpa evacuated, my mom started to apply for assistance with the Social Security Income (SSI) and food stamps and made her doctors appointment.

Because I was shy speaking my Spanglish, my mom helped me apply to some universities, including Wayne State University, University of Michigan, Madonna University, etc. Of course, I was excited about that! However, my brother was easier to enroll in Western International High School since our cousin Xavier was going to that school.

I needed to keep myself together and be there for my mom and brother. Earning income was the only solution I could think of. I had to gain strength so that my shame in speaking English was not a stumbling block in moving ahead. With an income, I could buy a car, move, and get out of so much drama that happened in my grandmother’s house. In addition, my mother would not have to pay for lodging using our food stamps and cash from Puerto Rico savings while waiting for her possible approval on the SSI. The consequences of our situation delayed my desire to finish college. I started walking and asking for a job at the nearby businesses.

Eventually, I got hired as a bilingual security officer at the Wellness building. Finally, I was able to help. Soon, I purchased my first transportation—a secondhand bicycle for $20. Unfortunately, my bike wheels were not aligned, causing my legs to be shaky when I arrived at work the first couple of weeks. But I cannot complain, I got in good shape. My supervisor, Kina Smith, an angel from heaven, helped me unconditionally. While I was teaching her Spanish, she was helping me to improve my English.

I never imagined I would have difficulties understanding other Hispanic cultures, like people from Spain, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Salvador, Honduras, Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina, and others. Yes, we all have the same language, Castilian (Spanish). Yet, we all have different language variations. The same way an American speaks English to a British person, they still understand each other despite the peculiarities and differences. For example, the word “mosquito” in English: Hispanic/Latinos spell the word the same but pronounce the word differently from English; centra American Latinos pronounce the word with a different accent than someone from South America or Spain.

Once in a conference meeting, this lady shouts out in Spanish, "Estos bichos me están picando." She means these insects are biting me. But it was not my interpretation; I felt discomfort because I did not know her meaning for "bichos." I frequently experienced embarrassment because a Spanish word from me could be offensive to another Hispanic culture—what a way to learn.

I missed Puerto Rico, struggled with personal issues, and had difficulty understanding people who spoke English too fast. Still, I also was having the stress of
understanding other Hispanic cultures. Changes can be smooth or complicated but they help expand your knowledge.

Today, our lives have changed significantly. Grandpa Oscar lives in our hearts. But those airplane tickets he gave us, in the end, were worth it. With the help of doctors from Junction Clinic, my mother has her health stable. She lost 98 pounds and no longer needs an oxygen tank. She sleeps with a CPAP machine to prevent low oxygen in her bloodstream.

My mom likes to live in an active neighborhood, an energetic community, as she refers to Detroit. Other places are too quiet, and she describes them as “boring.” Mom is working with the divorce process, I’m happy to report. My brother Luis graduated from Western International High School and became a truck driver. He moved to Taylor. Luis is single and does not have kids.

A couple of weeks later, my father used a different identification name to send me a Facebook friend request with his picture profile. I thought all this time he did not have any social media accounts.

After a long and difficult conversation with my dad, I relieved myself of all the anguish I had been feeling. I understand living with a soul full of bitterness does not allow spiritual or emotional growth. I decided to forgive him after I realized all the poison tears came out of me. I pardoned his abandonment and family mistreatment. I no longer hold a grudge against my father.

After many challenges in life, I am finally mentally stable, married, and a mother of two. My oldest son Emmanuel is now 10, and my daughter Ivelisse is three years old. With dedication and hard work, we’ve made Romulus our home. Transportation is no longer a problem. I have multiple vehicles, including motorcycles.

I took an English class, a Communication course, and also acquired a certification as a Lactation Consultant that made my life easier. For seven years, I have worked at the Moms and Babes Too Women, Infants and Children Office. Presently, I am a breastfeeding counselor working from home since COVID-19 started. I am also a nursing student at WCCCD with a goal of earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree in 2024.

I have experienced a long learning journey with continued growth. The school of life can have difficult lessons that many times scar us. We all have different experiences, and we are capable of learning. I have learned that a friend often is more helpful than family and that forgiveness helps to move on in a different chapter of life. God provides growth in every obstacle, but sometimes we do not understand that.
Nathan Duchene

Nathan Duchene lives by the quote, “The more I know, the less I understand.” According to Duchene, education is everything. “What is a world without knowledge? Is it even a world worth living?” Knowledge inspires Duchene and inspired him to do the Early Middle College Program at Woodhaven High School. He is grateful for the experience of learning at a college level in high school.

For Duchene, writing is a power; the forefront of human achievement. Words are simply a stringing of letters but when masterly combined, flow like a river through humanities with scopes of emotion, eventually formulating into a mighty ocean, an ocean deep with the past and future of humankind, an ocean ever growing, an ocean Duchene hopes his poetry can be added to.
Three blind mice, dressed ever-so nice. Thrice scythed the knife, killing life and making life.

The life they make is troubled, life that is muzzled, jumbled, and most certainly is struggled; The life they destroy is lovely, life that was pure, sure, and would endure.

They control life through three fabled white houses. They are tricky little mice, thrice scythed the knife. Death looked so nice.
O’ Heavenly Light

by Nathan Duchene

O’ Heavenly light, you are my might, my most gracious flight.

O’ you are lovely, and most certainly dovely, through your ultimate wisdom that leads to self-discovery.

O’ Heavenly light, you make my greatest enemies bask in fright. You chill them, you mill them; you warm me, you swarth me. Your brilliant light enlightens me, destroying the ancient-casted cotted webs, and brewing a most illustrious mead.

O’ Heavenly light, you cast out the Moon’s precarious light. You are the light of humanity; you are the chime that keeps our sanity. For without your Xianity, we are lost -simply glossed, tossed, and crossed. O’ Heavenly light, guide and confide me, for I am only human. Foolish and mulish; but with your light, I am made right.
Nekabari Glory Vareba, an international student from Nigeria, earned her first degree in Maritime Transport studies in Nigeria. She is seeking an Associate’s Degree in General Studies and earned a Certified Basic Emergency Technician designation at WCCCD. She said WCCCD has exposed her to a diverse culture, society and a different approach to learning. Her career goal is to become a nurse, a writer and an artist in painting, drawing and ceramics.

Vareba wanted to participate in the Reflections magazine to show her artistic material and express her thoughts in writing. She also is writing a book about her journey to the United States and hopes to meet a publisher someday who can assist her to publish it and, encourage others. She is a new member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society (PTK). The quote she lives by is: “Never wait for an opportunity to come before you; start anything, just continue doing what you love and at the right moment, the sun will shine on you. Never give up!”
Before you came and stole my joy, I learned the regular way, coming to class, interacting with peers and professors. I enjoyed every bit of a normal class setting, with hands-on training, different cultures and tribes and having fun as a student.

But in March 2020, we had a strange visitor, the COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed so many lives and still counting!

We were asked to stay indoors for our safety. But this monster has never left. It has kept visiting every other country and made sure it covered the entire earth.

Your presence has also made us have a unique way of dressing with a covering on our faces, denying us the pleasure of kissing, smiling, hugging or touching anyone, even our own face. Your presence has caused depression, loss of jobs and businesses and increased poverty, deaths, fear and havoc.

What a year, the universe will never forget this strange monster!

Why are you still hunting us? You have taken our loved ones both young and old, and are not yet satisfied.

Even though I followed all the rules and precautions, you still got me. I have survived but, not because I’m strong or healthy. I survived because I did some rituals, burning myself with heat because you cannot survive heat.

I encountered you when I went to the store. It was so jammed packed that I could not breathe. I felt like passing out. I had to pull down my mask. Little did I know, you were everywhere.

I ran through the store just to get the things I needed, thinking I had escaped this strange monster! Later that night, I felt an uneasiness as my throat started itching. I was sweating but feeling cold at the same time.

In the middle of the night, I woke with a terrible headache and tried to use the bathroom when suddenly I started throwing up. Within two days, I had loss of appetite, no taste, no sense of smell, dehydration, increased mucus build-up, coughing, a cracked voice, and general weakness.

Immediately, I did my research and found out I had all the signs and symptoms of COVID-19. I had exposed myself to an unwanted guest. When it was nighttime, I feared sleeping. The mucus would clog up my chest and throat. I could hardly breathe. I called the emergency service about my condition, but was told the hospital was full.

I was instructed to self-treat and call back if my condition worsened. I had to remind myself that my exams and classes and loved ones were waiting for me. I had to do some rituals and fight this monster, or the monster would kill me. I had no choice.
I proceeded to make some herbal tea. I boiled about one liter of water with aloe vera, pineapple, cloves, lemon, ginger, and some paprika. This was my tea. I needed to have five cups a day. Three times a day, I would do steam therapy by cooking a whole onion with ginger and covering myself with a blanket while I inhaled and exhaled the steam. These rituals made me throw up because of all the mucus buildup, but, slowly I was getting better. My mom told me about the steam therapy. Her method was to use hot water with vapor rub inside and to inhale and exhale the steam. The herb recipe was from YouTube. Out of all the videos I had watched, it was only Sweet Adjeley’s Kitchen that caught my attention. Her recipe was all organic and filled with nutrients, antiviral, antibacterial, antioxidant and a lot more!

These rituals continued for about 15 days. I was isolated in my room for 13 days with no help from anyone. I saw death as a monster. It kept telling me it had already infected me. But, I convinced myself to keep fighting the deadly virus and not give in. COVID-19 is real and I do not wish it upon anyone.

No wonder my dad somehow knew about the rise of COVID-19. He knew his heart condition would not let him survive this monster. He passed on December 5, 2019 from a heart attack. A few months later, we were in complete lockdown. It would have been difficult to take him to the hospital or bury him. I am grateful to God, family and friends who were able to help me with their financial and spiritual support, prayers and otherwise!

My battle with this strange monster took time to win. At first, one of my lungs was not acting properly. I continued my research with the help of my wonderful pathophysiology professor, who never stops giving us research and homework to learn about diseases, conditions and their treatments. I discovered natural remedies to help me heal completely.

No matter what challenges we face in life, sometimes, it’s not about how smart you are. Rather, it’s about how consistent your strength and faith are and your ability to not give up on yourself. People will encourage you. Some will discourage you. Some people are hypocrites while some are genuine. It’s your choice to decide what you really want for yourself. We all learn from the good, bad and ugly. There’s always a lesson to learn. Choose wisely.

COVID-19 has changed our lives unexpectedly, but, the way you handle it matters a lot. My condolences and regards to those who lost their dear ones to this evil monster that had no mercy on the young and old. Let us be safe and cautious even though we have the vaccines. Please follow precautions. Little things count and I have learned from my mistakes.

We are all in this together and can overcome this. The monster forgets we can be virtual and still have a life! But I hope someday we will all be back to normal.

Congratulations to all class of 2020/2021 students all over the world! We came, we saw and we conquered by graduating without holding back.

Never Give Up! Remember this- I learn is not just to achieve success and improve your knowledge. To learn is about how to better yourself and your community and how to make a positive impact wherever you find yourself.

I will humbly say that her recipe was also part of my healing and my efforts. With God on my side giving me the strength to be active enough to do all these rituals was indeed a miracle of how I survived COVID-19. Like I said earlier, giving up was not an option. Always strive to succeed no matter what life throws at you!
Paintings

by Nekabari Glory Vareba
Ceramics
by Nekabari Glory Vareba
Drawings
by Nekabari Glory Vareba
Tonesia Nesbitt

BIO

Tonesia Nesbitt is studying health care and pursuing nursing at WCCCD. Her career aspirations are to become an obstetrics and home health care nurse, researcher and motivational speaker. She wants to be a published author of children’s books and stories. Tonesia participated in Reflections because she believed this would be a great opportunity to display some of the work she was blessed to be able to write in hopes it would inspire and speak to somebody else.
Wake Up!
by Tonesia Nesbitt

It’s time, time to get it together.
Life is for real, not light as a feather.
It’s full of toss, turns, highs and lows.
In order to reap, one must sew.
Dream as far as you can;
tell GOD about it, He’ll understand.
Take your path and run;
remember the race is already won.
Sometimes feeling as if it just begun;
it’s all up to you,
I’m trying to tell you something Booh.
GOD is in control.
Keep believing things will get on a roll.
Just don’t forget about your soul;
that goes for all young and old.
Expect the unexpected, dream the dream,
see the vision, road blocks come at you, don’t stop,
not until you make it to the top.
Dreams are meant to be outrageous.
Pass the message around, it’s contagious.
The best part is, you won’t catch anything but restoration.
So, keep believing, receive this exhortation.
God wants you to have the best so, wake up.
Keep dreaming and believing,
because GOD will take care of the rest.
Promise Land by Tonesia Nesbitt

A place that is great,
a place that looks like new,
a place full of surprises, potential,
hand selected for me and for you.
   It is a place of total rest,
a place on the scale of 1 to 10
   it is the best.
A place that is flowing with milk and honey,
a place to smile, laugh at things that are funny;
   funny from skin onto the bone,
a place called home.
Home, a safe haven of security,
a place of earthly serenity.
   Relax, reflect
and in it, there is no defect.
Land, land you call your own,
   and a place that is
   truly, truly home!
So, you think you’re down,
mouth all skewed, face a frown?
And you think you are down and out,
fists clenched, stomping, pout?
Shouts, screams
tears flowing, shattered dreams.
Country in disarray; hatred searing,
angry crowds, jeering.
Wine bottles, broken glass, windows shattered,
littered streets, fires, crash;
angry voices, raise.
Crowds assemble; peaceful praise.
Praise the broken-hearted
praise the targeted,
praise the educated,
praise the level-headed.
Praise the call,
the cry and call, includes all.
Praise the call for peace.
Rise up in the west, south, north and east.
Hands together, let’s take a stand.
Our country will heal again - together;
joined hand and hand,
solutions will come as long we
rise up, and stand!
Destiny
by Tonesia Nesbitt

A sense of purpose,
also called a Magnum Opus.
A purpose of deed,
a deed to fulfill an inward need.
A need, a cry for help,
hear it calling: Yelp, Yelp, Yelp!
Destiny knocking at
your door, do you hear it?
Hard, repetitive,
Knock, knock, knock;
Insistent, hard as a rock.
Onward looking, meal planning,
prepping, cooking.
The smells of great expectation,
tastes delicious, warm
satisfying anticipation.
Reach across the table, touch the horizon,
like a cellphone that’s connected to Verizon.
Signals, services medium flow,
destiny’s inside
Go, go, go!
Let the stars be your guide,
the call, the knock.
On the inside,
knock you cannot
silence or hide,
even if you tried.
It is like the burning bush, fire
blazing, consuming heart’s desire.
It is growing louder
and louder.
Meal cooked, ready for you;
eat the flounder fish;
brain food, knocking
continued, pounding, understood?
Answer like I knew you would.
The call, the knocking is inside you and me.
So, reach out and grab your Destiny!
Yemi Ogunleye

Yemi Ogunleye is a digital entrepreneur and an investor in real estate who lives in Detroit. He was born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria in a family of seven. He moved to the United States in 2016 to study and majored in Project Management at Wayne County Community College District. He is headed to the University of Michigan to finish his degree in project management. According to Ogunleye, his journey has been an amazing one that has helped in his zeal to become an entrepreneur. His aim is to create financial freedom for himself and his generation.
I am a student and an entrepreneur, born and raised in Lagos, Nigeria in a family of seven. I moved to the United States in 2016 to study and transferred to Wayne County Community College where I began to study Project Management at an amazing school that has helped in my zeal to become an entrepreneur.

Growing up, I enjoyed being able to do things myself and get involved in the daily running and functioning of activities or programs. I always had the idea I would be independent and work for nobody. I didn’t want to defer to anyone or always seek permission before I could have time out for myself and my family. I always wanted the freedom to work and do other things at the same time. All these feelings drove my zeal for being an entrepreneur. I started working on projects that would serve as a building ground for my entrepreneurial skills. One project included starting an e-commerce website, where I sell goods and also promote people and brands.

In August 2020, a friend introduced me to the foreign exchange market. The foreign exchange (forex) market is a $7.7 trillion market that provides opportunity for everyone who is willing to tap into it. The market is open 24 hours for trading and offers a wide range of options to make profit.

Since being introduced to the market, I have attended different trainings and workshops to improve my skills in trading and selling products online. Presently, as a digital entrepreneur, I have been teaching people how to gain financial independence and wealth through this platform by trading binaries, cryptocurrencies and currency pairs.

Being a person who always had the zeal to run activities on my own, when faced with a tight financial situation I became interested in finding ways to make money that would not affect my schooling. After searching for the perfect opportunity, I learned about an educational platform that specializes in digital trading and multi-level marketing. The instructors help people to trade on the foreign exchange market, which features many different options and packages for investors of different backgrounds and financial strength.

I can boldly say that making money online is easy if you go through the right channel. You can make money from your home, or even if you work or are still schooling. I am grateful and pleased to be part of people’s success stories, to be able to impact their lives for the better. The requirements to start trading are a smart phone, internet connection and a willingness to learn.

Going forward, I plan to impact more lives with the knowledge learned in the course of my journey. To date I have directly or indirectly educated and impacted almost 500 people. I also plan to start my own company, where I can be fully independent and finally enjoy the freedom I’ve always dreamt about.
Tiffany Sampson is pursuing an Associate’s of Science Degree at WCCCD. She is also involved with St. John’s ministries and wishes to open up a faith-based shelter one day for the homeless in the Detroit urban area. She plans to continue her education at Central Michigan University where she will study African American studies as well as community development.
You asked me to describe myself. Immediately, my excitement took a turn with my heart beating out my chest.
The worry of fear, here comes anxiety.
See there are two sides to me.
There’s the person you see sitting right in front of you putting on a smile, seemingly confident.
Then there’s the one hiding.
In my reflection, you don’t get what you see.
You see deep inside I am confident but on the surface I’m broken lost in a dark space.
I’m dealing with my mind getting the best of me and fear taking place.
It seems as though telling family and friends no one listening as though their audio deaf.
My cry for help is almost like a screaming victim, lots of times viewed as dramatic tension.
There’s no help, late nights everyone’s out partying while I’m sitting in a dark room balling in tears can barely breathe ask why and please just make all of it go away.
Daily my mind versus my heart is the biggest opponent.
I don’t like to meet new people because I’m afraid someone might see what’s truly what I’m trying to keep hiding inside of me.
People often say I’m a sweetheart and it bothers me, see the last man that told me he loved me said it too but it didn’t stop the physical or mental abuse.
He told me I was bitter and it played in my head so often I came off as sour and sweet.
Often, I hid from the company I keep, I pretend as though I am ok because no one respects the weak.
I don’t stare too long in the mirror because I’m afraid the face I’m looking at is mocking me, and all the things he said are repeating, so my make-up isn’t blending.
Trying to hide the scars and the depression.
Post a pic on Instagram pretending life is great just to see what remark I get. If there’s no like I start questioning myself and immediately those words of failure appear.
See my reflection of me it’s hard to hold a smile long and when people seem to greet me, I hope they don’t hold a conversation long.
I often find myself speed shopping to avoid the crowd, an attractive guy is looking at me I turn my head, thinking what if he sees the misery, I’m facing that’s on the surface of me.
All I can think about is how I gave that guy a chance that took my joy away.
The reflection of me, I tried to take my life but I couldn’t there was something in me.
That night I cried myself to sleep and had a dream.
God came to me with his embracing hands over me and said it’s not over and I am better than what I think.
See I was created to be unique and my story was meant to be told cause there’s a girl or boy that’s facing what I been through.
They don’t speak their truth because they too haven’t been heard or truly seen so I’m asking you to be the voice from the abuse and express that I am the one that will get them through. For I am the breath and you’re my muse and if they seek me, they will get through.
So, I woke up and a feeling I never had, my confidence was on the surface and I forgot about the things people have said.
Every day I prayed and soon my life starting to have meaning, be, and appreciation for everything I learned new.
My reflection could be you, maybe you feel there’s no hope, maybe you feel you are alone, but you’re not and it will get better.
Depression is real and it should be heard and if you’re facing it know you’re not those words, dark places, and if you have faith, you can turn your reflection into a muse. If I turned my life around you can choose.
Be the voice that helps others find their voice too.
Ashanti Hill, is a singer and songwriter born and raised in Detroit. She finished school in the summer semester at Wayne County Community College District. She has a 3.06 grade point average and has relocated to Orlando, Florida.
Overlooked

by Ashanti Hill

A chipped tooth, snotty, dry nose kid, who got bullied, that was me.

I did not recognize the power; I had Dunamis. How could I miss, what I had in the inside of me?

It was something beyond me, it shined brighter than the sun.

Words ripped me apart like a shredder. How could I be put back together?

There had to be a source greater, bigger, stronger than me in the world. Nobody but Jesus carried me.

Grades slipped right along with my confidence.

Oh, great something else is happening, crying, asking why?

My hair completely absent, like a father running away. If you had asked me, I would say – “No, I’m not okay.” Singing, I am not my hair. I dared to be different; cutting off my hair had me feeling free.

Is this thing on? Is this another thing I overlooked? I could have been set free; God had me realize that I had the key. Freedom from insecurity, religion, not feeling like I was enough but enough was enough.

I had made up my mind this was it, 2019 was the year.

I had gained my confidence and the highest G.P.A. I have ever made - 3.66.

But to sum up everything, do not overlook what you have in front of you and do not write me off.

It’s just the beginning.
Benny L. Richard is three credits shy of completing requirements for an Associate’s Degree in General Studies. His career goal is to transfer to the University of Michigan-Dearborn in the fall to pursue a degree in Elementary Education with a major/minor in Reading/Social Studies. He would like to teach, inspire and train the next generation to greatness.
Now is the time.
The time is now.
My time
to improve
someway, somehow.
It’s my time to go forth,
to realize my dreams, potential
and self-worth.
It’s my time
to rise and soar.
My time
to open up my mouth and roar.
It’s my time
to stand and be a man.
My time
to endeavor to be
the very best that I can.
Obstacles, hurdles, and stumbling blocks,
I must once and for all overcome,
to prove to myself
the intelligent, upright, and responsible
individual that I can become.
Now is the time.
The time is now.
It’s my time!
My time!
My time!
It’s my time!
Carnesiea Charlmayne Sims is studying Criminal Justice Law Enforcement at WCCCD. Upon graduation, she plans to continue her education at a university in criminal justice and African American studies. She decided to participate in the Reflections magazine because she thought it would be a great opportunity to cultivate better writing skills. Carnesiea has participated in writing groups in the past, and has not lost any love for the craft. She continues to write in her free time.
Shackles hold me down in my sleep,
flat footed in a tornado
of my ancestors’ voices
screaming messages to me.
“You gotta keep going.”
“Gotta be bigger than the world
that’s swirling wild around you.”
“Look at those hands;
those hands are your mother’s
and your mother’s mother.”
“Be something child,
something I never could.”
I see the reflection of
my grandmother in the wind,
singing sweetie pie baby higher
and higher until my eardrums burst.
I embody every black woman before me,
they dismantled their bodies
to stich me whole
using dirt from their
knuckles to color me brown.
I bare the heavy of their sacrifice.
When I wake,
my youth aches and groans,
bones weighed down by lineage.
China Leandra Polite is studying science at WCCCD. Her career goal is to become a funeral director and help people who are grieving because someone they love has transitioned. She wanted to participate in Reflections to meet new people and enhance her writing skills. China also wanted to show women they can be ambitious. Even if they live in the poorest part of the community, they can still find success, and receive an education. Her advice: Never give up on yourself, follow your true passions and goals.
Divine Creation  by China Polite

The world is just like magic. Flowers grow before our eyes without people pulling the flowers out of the ground to help them grow. Fruits blossom on trees, and they make us healthy, happy, and beautiful. A thick substance breeze passes us, and we call it the wind. Although I don’t believe in magic, I do believe that God is near.

A large circle of life and heat give warmth to our bodies and we call it the sun. Even a life agent falls from the sky, and we call it rain. Rain is very important; it has filled the ocean, even helps trees and plants grow. I do not believe in magic, but I do look forward to seeing the creator of this beautiful work.

The earth is so divine, and I am glad to be here. Oh, and the human beings, the gift of life with good and bad personalities. Isn’t it amazing how two people can create a new life form? After nine months of pregnancy, a baby is born.

We learn to walk, and we learn to speak, but we must remember to reach our peaks. We must treat ourselves and others right and be mindful of our time and the things we think. Though we are taught to learn the alphabet and create words, then sentences, we must use words of life to emancipate ourselves from unglorified habits.

Some live rich and some live poor but life is about choices, so always choose more. Do not settle for less if you desire love, peace, and happiness; then this is what you’ll possess.

I believe in love, but I do not believe in magic; if magic were real, then life would have no tragedies. When people die, where do they go? That is a serious question that people in the world want to know.

Some believe it's heaven, and some believe it's hell. In fact, I believe in heaven on earth, and I create this by preserving my life within my desires. I am inspired by grace, faith, and everything I see; everything is a learning lesson, even me.

I do not believe in magic, but I sure do believe that I can do anything I set my mind to. Determination and proper preparation are the key to achieving. So never live deceived by your own value and greatness. Having positive thoughts is important yet very basic.

I do not believe in magic, but I do believe in willpower. I use my power for good and not to devour. I do not believe in magic, but I can certainly believe in truth. It can heal a heart and a mind that is lost and confused.

I could never hold back my desire of changing and evolving instead of remaining the same every day. If you examine the earth, you will witness the earth changing every day.

The Bible says to consider the ants and be diligent, work for everything you want because if you sleep long, poverty will come upon you like a thief. I had my taste of poverty, and the flavor made me sick. Imagine the taste of poverty on a popsicle stick. You cannot spend money because you don’t have it. Poverty should be the world’s hot topic.

The people that starve for food, the people that work long hours and receive little money, and the people that lack knowledge will certainly see brighter days. If, and only if, they have help or someone shines the light on their obstacles, and helps them conquer poverty. Poverty is very wretched, and no one should be poor. Thankfully, poverty has a door.

Once you close the door of poverty and open the door of wealth, keep in mind success is not like magic. You actually have to work for the things you get.

I do not believe in magic but I do believe in being focused because our lives are filled with true purpose and not hocus pocus.

I always put God first because I was taught about God, and right from wrong all of my life. My grandfather was an assistant pastor, so I spent a lot of time learning good, bad, and life choices. The word God was invented before the word magic so this is how I know that God is not a magical illusion.
Gabriella Mettes

BIO

Gabriella Mettes is studying Computer Information Systems at WCCCD. Her career goal is to go into IT. Gabriella wanted to participate in Reflections because she wanted to expand her creativity in writing.
In 1981, my parents got married and shortly afterwards, my mother was told she would not be able to have children. Seventeen years later, on June 22, 1997, I was born into this world. My mother was the last of seven children in her family to have a baby.

I was born four months prematurely. Immediately after birth, I stopped breathing because my lungs were not fully developed. I was put on life support. Even though I did manage to make it through the night, the doctors felt I would not survive for long due to all the medical issues I had at the time, such as blood transfusions and a staph infection. Despite that, the doctors saw something in me and knew I was a fighter. I managed to beat all the odds and became what they call a “miracle.” Four months later, I was released from the hospital, but I had to keep going back every month for the first year of my life so the doctors could monitor my progress.

To this day, I have no medical or physical limitations from my premature birth, despite the doctors saying I would likely have become blind, deaf, paralyzed, etc. My mother tells me, “Your dad would go to your incubator, hold you and tell you about his day at work.”

By the time I started school, I still had little to no medical issues. Fast forward twelve years, I graduated high school, went to college for two years and earned an associate degree, graduating with honors. I was not told of my birth story until I was in fifth grade, and I was amazed by the fact that I was born extremely early and briefly died the night I was born. At the time,
I wondered how I came to this world and asked my parents about the day I was born which was how I first learned about my birth story. Ever since learning about my birth, I think about it often and how I would not be here today if I had died mere hours after being born. My aunt, Robin Salinas, even wrote a letter to me on the night I was born that goes into full detail of everything that happened that night.

This experience made me realize that one should appreciate every moment of life and live it to the fullest. One of the events that helped shape me into whom I am today occurred when I returned to the neonatal intensive care unit every year for the first 13 years of my life. Seeing all the kids with the same medical issues I had when I was born and meeting the doctors and nurses who took care of me made me feel grateful I was able to pull through and have the quality of life I have today.

That has instilled in me a great appreciation for life. I feel terrible for victims and their families when I hear of people, especially young children, who commit suicide because of troubles like bullying, or someone killed in moments where it could have been avoided, such as getting in a car crash caused by drunk drivers or falling from heights accidently. These incidents also make me feel grateful for the life I have and how lucky I am for the support from my friends and family. I always pray for those victims and hope their families recover from the losses and receive closure and support.

My parents have always told me to be kind to others and treat them with the same respect that I would want others to give to me. I took this advice to heart and continue to do so to this day.

My parents led by example. One Christmas, my mom volunteered to feed the homeless at a shelter and I went with her. Seeing people getting a hot and delicious meal for the holidays was a real eye opener and gave me great satisfaction. My dad always helped our family and neighbors with outdoors jobs or home improvement during the spring and summer, in addition to working on our own yard. He constantly helped those around him and passed along those traits to me. Just like them, I want to show kindness and generosity to those who require my help or just need a little cheering up.

This experience made me realize that one should appreciate every moment of life and live it to the fullest.

My life lessons have contributed to my success in my three-year career with Amazon. My current job at Amazon is mostly to help keep track of inventory that will be shipped for delivery and send it to the packing department. I also problem solve issues reported by those counting inventory, such as damaged items, mislabeled barcodes or unscannable barcodes. Problem solving is my favorite task at Amazon because it involves using computers and various applications to perform our jobs correctly. I love learning new things that involve computers, which is why I am back in school for my second associate degree in Computer Information Systems.

My parents have made me a person who is very self-reliant, responsible, financially smart, well-educated, and with a good appreciation for life. Even during the current COVID-19 pandemic, I gained a greater appreciation for life and kept making sure myself and everyone I know and love would stay safe and healthy. It’s a new day and society looks at things in a new way.

Treating everyone with proper respect can make you feel good and show people you don’t judge others by their race, gender, religion, or daily lives. In the end, I am truly thankful for everything I have and hope others will do their best to live their lives to the fullest.
John R. Dotson, is a mechanical engineering major at WCCCD. He recently participated in a STEM internship at Michigan Tech and hopes to transfer to Michigan Tech. He enjoys time with his family, going to the gym with friends, playing frisbee and soccer, days at the beach, hiking with friends and reading. John never thought of writing as a career, but he hopes this experience can help him develop a new found passion.
On a brisk afternoon, my father and I took the dogs for a walk as we usually do, but I had no idea this walk would have such a large impact on my life.

It was a bit chilly, but not cold enough to the point where you’re uncomfortable. Things were bothering me. I felt the immeasurable pressure of figuring out what steps I was going to take to further my academic career. My internship was cancelled, I had no job, and school had taken an unprecedented turn for the worst.

In an attempt to lighten my mood and get an idea of where my future might take me, I asked my dad: “How did you end up doing what you’re doing?” He explained to me how things can sometimes not work out as planned. “You have an image in your head of where you see yourself in the future, but things steer you from that path and you just try to piece things together.” he said.

We then continued our walk as he enlightened me with stories of his career choices from high school to present day. Normally on our walks, I would pick up wrappers and other litter and place them in the dog waste bin. But as I reached for the wrapper and proceeded to throw it in the bin, my dad’s towering voice, that I know all too well from my childhood, yelled: “John Ryan! What are you doing?”

I hadn’t heard him speak like that to me since I was a child. It made me feel as if I was two feet tall. I was in shock. How could this little, insignificant wrapper have such an immense impact on my emotions? It reminded me that this isn’t a normal time in the world. Things are going to be very different from now on. Even just the simplest tasks that you used to do, like picking up trash, genuinely good tasks, are going to be very different. I realized everything is scrutinized in the middle of a global pandemic. Thousands of people are dying every week and I could have added another tally mark to the global death toll by picking up trash.

Often I think of whether things will go back to the way they were before. How can we ever escape this paranoid way of living? How can I go back to the grocery store and have a pleasant conversation with a random stranger? They say after the plague, came the renaissance, but I can’t picture myself being the same high-spirited person I was in public before all this happened.

Just the other day I was trying to say the words “black, plastic trash bag” and I stuttered like a Who from Whoville trying to say the “grinch.” I have never stuttered in my life, but this shows it will take time to grow from this experience and go back to enjoying weekend barbeques and bonfires with our friends and family. It’s going to take a lot of motivation and a strong sense of community before we have our own renaissance.
Marjana Begum is pursuing an Associate’s of Science degree at Wayne County Community College District. She wants to become a radiologist in the future. She decided to write for the Reflections magazine to show her passion for writing. Marjana believes it is a great opportunity to show her creativity to others.
Dream of a Castle  by Marjana Begum

One day, I had a dream of walking in a castle with a beautiful golden dress; a servant came and asked, “Do you need anything princess?”

I went toward the garden where lots of flowers bloomed. I looked at the garden, it is spring again I assumed.

I went inside and asked if I could have something; the servants brought many delicious foods on the table that had everything.

I wasn’t happy because I felt so lonely.

I asked myself, “Why I don’t see anyone else here, am I the one and only?”

I said in anger, “I don’t want to be here” and closed my eyes instead.

I opened my eyes and found myself on my bed. It was a dream that gave a message of struggle; nobody has perfect life even if they live in the castle.
My Colorful Paintings by Marjana Begum

I wanted to paint a sunset with an Islamic message. Then I thought of painting a masjid with the message Alhamdulillah (thanking Allah for everything).

I love colorful flowers. I used watercolor and acrylic paints for this painting to create a beautiful piece of artwork. It is a painting of mandala with many different colors.

This painting was made while thinking of the fall weather. When you walk through the road during fall season you see this view very often. It is a beautiful painting of river with a bridge and lots of trees with red, orange, and yellow leaves.

This painting was made thinking of spring. The trees have new bright green and yellow leaves. New small flowers have just bloomed. It looks like things are coming to life! We all go out to enjoy the weather.
Life is a rollercoaster. It could change at any moment. I never knew my life would change after my marriage. I knew I had to get married one day, but, I never thought of changing my personality after marriage.

I was busy with my studies, family, and friends. All I wanted was to make my family proud of me. My life was very simple with no stress. I was happy the way I was. I still remember the day when I first came to the United States. I had so much hope. I thought this country would give me everything I wanted. I was a very angry person in Bangladesh. My personality changed after coming to the United States.

After I graduated from high school, I met my husband at Wayne County Community College District. He is my best friend’s cousin. He helped me with my financial aid for college. He was a decent guy. Now when I think back, it sounds so funny when I think of those times when I used to refer to him as a brother. My best friend and I were very close and I would see him too. He used to give us a ride sometimes. He was very helpful and kinds towards me. Then, he proposed to me three times and I finally accepted.

We wanted to get married after we completed our studies, however, you never know what is coming for you next. My family also found out about our relationship. They did not support us at first, but they did give up after few months. I stopped my study at that time and lost a year in college.

We got married in the summer of 2019. It was the best day of my life. It was hard to adjust to a new family, but his family was very kind and friendly towards me. The one thing I love about him is his love for Islam. I also became a more religious person. My husband encouraged me to start studying again. He wanted me to reach my goals and ambitions.

I am surprised that I still maintain a 4.0 GPA. It was hard at first to study and take care of the house at the same time. My career goal is to become a radiologist. I plan to transfer to Wayne State University and join the Radiology program. I’ve been to a radiologist many times with my mother-in-law. She also supports my studies.

I think you should reach your goals no matter what happens in life. I love the person I became after marriage. It’s a beautiful change with more love and respect. I am happy with my love and my life.
Photography of Nature by Marjana Begum

I took this picture in my backyard on the rainy day in the summer. It shows how the flowers became bright after it rained.

This picture was taken on Belle Isle Park in the summer. I love the red bridge on Belle Isle.

This picture was taken when I went to visit the River Walk with my family. My family and I always liked to visit the river side to watch the sunset.
Photography of Nature by Marjana Begum

On a fall day, after coming back from the grocery store with my husband, we decided to take a walk in the park. This picture shows the bright blue and red sky during a beautiful sunset.

On a summer day, while driving back to my house from college, my friend and I decided to stop and watch the sunset. This picture captures the beautiful view.

My husband and I planted many vegetables during the summer. This black and white picture shows our snow pea plant.
Ruthlina Brissett

BIO

Ruthlina Brissett is studying to become an allied health/surgical technologist. Nursing is her passion. She'd like to pursue a career in nursing as an operating room (OR) nurse. Ruthlina wanted to participate in Reflections because she loves to write and sees this as an opportunity to bring some originalities to light about what she's facing currently in life. She hopes to see her name in the magazine and say, “Yes, finally, I did it!”
The Missing Peace

by Ruthlina Brissett

You would think marriage is about togetherness and fun, two people coming together as one, but for me it was neither or none. I lost myself trying to hold on to you, so now I don’t even know what to do. How can I find me without you? I guess I’d have to separate the two. So, here I go trying to find peace, even though you existed how I can even look to you when you were already deceased.

I tried to make it right, but you were so uptight. I did everything I can, but you still were never a fan.

I guess I have to walk away, just so you can beg me to stay, that’s not what I want, but I’m sorry I’m not going to let you have it your way. It hurts to let go, yeah, I know. Why be your fool, when I can star in my own show?

Starting over is never easy, but sometimes it’s the best thing to do, just so you can rid yourself of the dead skin, and see yourself brand new.

So, here I am in this place; life all by myself, asking my inner self all these questions, sitting on the top shelf, where did I go wrong, what did I do to deserve all this? But then here comes peace saying, there’s nothing in your past that you missed so don’t you dare try to reminisce.

Every decision I make, there’s always a road to take. Moving on for better so I won’t have any regret later. The choice is mine to leave all my regret and painful memories behind, so they won’t be a bother to my weary mind. I’m going to enjoy this life I choose, and I’ll be singing and dancing to rhythm and blues. All I wanted was to be at ease and here I go, I found my missing peace.
As I reflect on the effects of COVID-19, I realize this virus has impacted everyone, no matter the color of one’s skin. The world is undergoing a phase described as the unravelling of far-reaching medical impact.

My life has changed. There are times when I’d visit families and friends just to have a laugh or chit-chat, but for the past year things have not been the same. Everyone is living in fear that this monster called coronavirus will show up in their system. To cope with the stress, I take a break from watching, reading or listening to news stories and I avoid the media.

Mentally, it is draining for me as a Certified Nursing Assistant working with the less fortunate who are not able to physically see and touch their family. Sometimes I’m caring for more than 15 patients per day, working short-staffed, not able to get a lunch break and sometimes feeling overwhelmed. What I find very sad is that some family members have to see their families over video or from a distance through glass windows. I also work with patients who have Dementia and Alzheimer’s disease and are especially troubled during this time. It is very difficult for them to understand why they have to stay in their rooms; some feel anxious and are very agitated.

I wish this was all a dream and that soon I’ll wake up to the reality that this virus never existed or it’s in the past. I’ve learned to appreciate the smallest things in life, learning about myself, spending more time on the phone or even video calls with family members and making one day of the week a designated day for game night. I’ve learned to apologize and forgive and focus more on the positive side of life. I smile more often even when the situation seems unpleasant and complain less.

Not able to interact in close proximity with my family and friends due to the virus, I feel like I’m living in a box with no one around. I find I have good days and I’m highly motivated to get through the day and bad days where the motivation is nowhere to be found.

What makes a good day? Seeing my daughter happy and smiling, telling me to have a good day at work, even though we’re living in a tedious time. Or when I see the smile on my patient’s face and know I made a difference in their life. And, encouraging my co-worker that we’re going to get through this day, even when only two of us are working on our floor with more than 50 patients.

What really helps me cope is reading my bible, listening to gospel music and talking about my day at work with my husband and daughter. They encourage me and tell me I was built for this.

You never know how strong you are until your strength is tested. Every day I learn to adjust to this new life, knowing this too shall pass!
Shanu Ahmed is majoring in Business Administration at Wayne County Community College District. His goal is to become an IT specialist in the future. Shanu decided to write in the Reflections magazine to share his writing and his life lesson with others.
Struggle is the key to success. It makes you strong and experienced. My struggle made me who I am today.

My life dramatically changed after coming to the United States from Bangladesh. I thought life would be easier in the United States. I thought people easily get rich in America. My expectation was to become a rich person and live a suitable life.

But reality was considerably different than my expectation. When I came to the United States, I had the responsibility to take care of my family. I did not know the language and did not have any work experience. I also wanted to study. I was confused about what to do. I decided to work in a company and study as well.

My first job was in an automobile factory. I struggled with everything. Even though there were many times I wanted to give up, I did not want to give up on my dreams and goals. I attended school in the morning and worked in the evening. My job ended late at night and I had to do my homework afterwards. I had awful time management and couldn’t sleep well. This grueling schedule lasted three years.

Life in Bangladesh had been very simple. My father was responsible for the family. He had a suitable job and we were never out of money. I used to go to school and meet my friends. I often spent time walking around with them.

I figured, I did not even know I have to select a teacher by looking up their rating. There is a website called “Rate my Professor” where students rate their professors up to five stars and write comments about them. In Bangladesh, we were never able to choose our classes or teachers. If you passed the final exam, you would get into the next grade.

I was tired and depressed most of the time. My grades were poor because I didn’t have enough time to study. I couldn’t quit my job at the time because I had so many bills. I did not have anyone I go could go to for advice. In Bangladesh, I did not have this much responsibility. But in the U.S., I was overwhelmed and felt my life was spiraling out of control. I was angry most of the time. I did not know who to confide in about my situation.

My family told me I should focus on my education more than the work. They started supporting me so I could have some time for myself. I quit my job and began working at college part-time. My work-study position at Wayne County Community College District gave me more time to study. My life started to change at that moment.

You should do what you like in life. I wanted to study because it makes me happy. Work-study helped with my time management. I used to work at the Downtown Campus where I registered for most of my classes. With work-study, I could choose my own schedule which is helpful for students. I used to work for five hours, five days a week. The job was not difficult like my previous job. I am still working and studying at the same time, but I focus on my studies more than work.

My life started to change at that moment. I think you should do what you like in life. I wanted to study and that makes me happy. Work-study helped with my time management. I used to work at the downtown campus where I registered for most of my classes. In work-study, I could choose my own schedule which is helpful for a student. I used to work for five hours, five days a week. The job was not difficult like my previous job. I am still working and studying at the same time, but I focus on study more than work.

Many famous people have struggled with failure before they reached success. Abraham Lincoln failed many times but never gave up. He was born in poverty in a one-room log cabin, but that did not stop him
from becoming a president of the United States. He lost in elections and failed in business many times. He did not give up until he became successful.

A famous scientist, Albert Einstein, who is known for his intelligence did not even speak until he was four. When his father died, he had to take care of his mother and sister. It was very difficult for him because he was unemployed. He struggled to get a job with his diploma. Then he took a position as a clerk at the Federal Office where his success began.

Some people struggle and keep failing while others struggle and succeed. A life lesson learned is that you will fail many times, but, you should never give up. Failure is a part of success and it strengthens you. Some keep failing because they do not believe in themselves. I never gave up on my dreams because I know if I keep going, I will reach my success one day.

There will be a time when you will not get any support or help from anyone. You must trust in yourself. Although I am still struggling, my life has improved. Learning time management made my life easier. I learned from my failures instead of letting them become my stopping point.

I now know that struggle is a part of success and I will reach my success one day.
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